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Where Do All the Rules Come From?

That may be the question for the ages, or at least for anyone involved in high school baseball. Well for sure there are a lot of rules, and I'll do what I can to help y'all navigate through the maze.

I'll start with the beginning. Although the 1st rules were written back in 1845, the 1st baseball rule book was authored by a fellow named Henry Chadwick back in 1858. Here's a link to those 1st rules.

<http://www.baseballchronology.com/baseball/Years/1855/Rules.asp>

Henry was quite a fellow, and a very important one in the game. Not only did he author the 1st rule book, he was the games 1st Sabermatrician. If you'd like to know more, here's a couple of very interesting videos about him and what he added to the game.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSQV4CCsaV0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu10QJ2gRL4>

Most people don't realize how often the rules of baseball change. Here's a chronology of those changes from Baseball Almanac.

<http://www.baseball-almanac.com/rulechng.shtml>

And here's more from Baseballlibrary.com. The 1st on is from 1845 to 1899 and the 2nd is from 1900 to the present.

<http://www.baseballlibrary.com/chronology/rules1.php>

<http://www.baseballlibrary.com/chronology/rules2.php>

If you've been involved in organized baseball for very long, you've probably played under some form of those rules which are known as OBR or Official Baseball Rules. Those rules are owned by and can only be changed by Major League Baseball,

or really the team owners. If you'd like your own copy, you can download it here. http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/downloads/y2014/official_baseball_rules.pdf

The reason I say "some form" is that the only organization playing completely under those rules is MLB. What's important for you to understand is, everyone else is playing under modified OBR which are organizations like Little League Inc., Cal Ripkin, USSSA and almost all others. What they do is use the basic rules, then add things to them that better fit their organization, like re-entry, mercy rules, must slide rules, and many many others. I'm sure you've all played somewhere where a sheet of local rules was handed out. Those are the kinds of modifications I'm talking about.

Then ya have the rules we play under. There's an organization called NFHS (National Federation of State High School Associations), also commonly referred to as FED. You can go to their site and order their rules, but they aren't available for free the way OBR is. <http://www.nfhs.org/>

You have to be careful about mixing the rules too. While they do contain much the same information, the two are set up with different numbering systems and can be very confusing. Except for a few things, I use OBR as the basis for how I score games because it's a much clearer book with lots of comments and explanations, plus its always up to date. Often there are changes to OBR that don't get reflected in the other rules, and that gets things confused. If you're really interested in seeing what those differences are, there are books you can pick up that show those differences. Here's a web sites that does a pretty good of showing those differences. But you have to be careful to make sure what you're looking at is up to date.

http://www.stevetheump.com/nfhs_pro_rules_dif.htm

Then there are NCAA rules. Like the MLB and NFHS rules, NCAA has its own set of rules too. If you're interested, you can download a free copy here. <http://www.ncaapublications.com/p-4362-2015-and-2016-baseball-rule-book-due-late-fall-2014.aspx>

The NJCAA (National Junior College Athletic Association) also has its own set of rules as well, and you can find them here. http://www.njcaa.org/membership_resources.cfm?category=Resources&articleid=7270

The main thing to keep in mind is, all 4 of those organizations, MLB, NFHS, NCAA, and NJCAA, all have copyrights on their rules, and they are all different to some degree. Know that, it's pretty easy to understand why umpires of amateur games are so often questioned. In this area the high school umpires come from a pool of umpires that may officiate youth, high school, college and even professional baseball, not to mention softball in all its forms and venues.

In those rule books there are 2 kinds of rules. Some are for **GAME CONDUCT**, which means they tell how the game is to be played on the field. Then there are **SCORING** rules, and they tell the scorers how to score the things that take place on the field. The umpires don't have any control over how things like hits and errors are scored, and scorers don't have any control over things like safe/out calls or whether runs count or not. In OBR there are 10 rules, with rule 10.00 being the Official Scorer's rule, and my bible.

That pretty much covers the rule book, but as you may well guess, that isn't all of the rules. Every state that uses NFHS rules is required to have a state association, and those associations are given lots of leeway to modify the rules to best suit their state. In our state the association is CIF (California Interscholastic Federation). Its web site is <http://www.cifstate.org/landing/index>

That's the organization governing all sports and other things like cheerleading and bands. You can get the constitution and bylaws at <http://www.cifstate.org/governance/constitution/index>

Unfortunately, California's such a huge state, it's too big for one set of rules to apply equally well

to everyone. So, while the CIF has responsibility for the state Constitution and Bylaws, there are 10 sections, and each is allowed some leeway to modify the Constitution and Bylaws.

We are in the SJS (Sac-Joaquin Section) and its web page is <http://www.cifsjs.org/> I strongly recommend everyone takes the time to go there and look at the Constitution, Bylaws, and to look at the information available on the site.

What probably isn't a surprise to you, is that there are still more rules. In the SJS there are 25 leagues. Since they may have different requirements, they have the ability to make league rules. A good example is what happened to our league this season.

The Delta River and Delta Valley leagues have been combined into the Delta league. There's always been 6 teams in each league and each team played each league opponent 3 times for a total of 15 league games, but the new league has 8 teams that will play each league opponent twice. I don't know where to get the league rules, but if you're curious you can call the league office.

The school district also has the ability to make rules about sports, as does each school, and for that matter so does each team. Yup. There are definitely team rules, and I encourage everyone to learn what they are and to follow them as well.

But let's not forget about the most important rule makers in the whole process. The folks responsible for each student athlete whether it be home, school, or someplace else always have the right to make rules. In my honest opinion, their rules are the most important ones for each of the players because they carry over from the field and the school, into the home.

61 more days until the 1st game in the spring!

Go Mustangs