

# Iowa High School Baseball Thoughts & Tips

## - *by Ira Blue*

*Yikes! Two pages Ira? What the heck are you doing? Sorry fellas.*

The home plate meeting with the coaches prior to first pitch is a grand tradition of baseball at all levels. Let's visit a bit on this. After introductions, each coach provides his hopefully legible line card. Always take the home team's card first, as the visiting coach can change his after the home lineup is official. Kinda of a big deal in MLB, not so much at our level, but stick to that procedure just in case. Rule 1-1-2 speaks to the UIC announcing ground rules but sometimes we might have the home coach do that due to his familiarity with his diamond. Keep that discussion to only "ground rules". For example, we play this part of dugout live, we have a dead ball line down the right field, etc. We don't need to describe every fence hole that a ball could wiggle through, as those are "book rules". Make them verify their equipment is legal. Remind them of the 37 letters, emails, and points of emphasis from Boone and the NFHS that everybody is in the dugouts. If you see DH listed double check what kind of DH tool, they are using be it either 3-1-4-a or 3-1-4-b. Refer perhaps to sportsmanship but keep that home plate meeting brief and efficient.

Now we're playing so up comes all the understandings and nuances of 3-1-4 on those damn lineup cards. Here's some common problems and tips.

If we're using traditional DH(3-1-4-a) we got 2 guys in the same spot in the batting order. The moment that defensive player bats or runs for his DH we only got 1 player in that spot. The moment the DH went out on defense we only got 1 player in that spot. Both of those 2 starters each have a re-entry. The sticky one we often get wrong is if Big Bob is the DH and gets on, coaches like to run Fast Freddy who Bob is DH'ing for. Fine, now only Freddy is in that spot. Big Bob uses his re-entry next time the spot comes up. Fine, now only Big Bob is in that hole on your card. Bob gets another hit, and the coach brings in Fast Freddy to run. Uh-oh...has Freddy already used his re-entry the first time he pinch ran? NO, he has not.

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The NFHS considers him as never having left the starting lineup yet until Bob used his re-entry to bat, so the second pinch run is Freddy's one allowed re-entry. Fast Freddy is now on his own in that spot in the batting order. Big Bob is done of course, and back to eating a snack in the dugout.

The new DH rule in 3-1-4-b has a small nuance you won't find in the rule book or case book. It's an NFHS interpretation. The player/DH tool can be for any position but if a team is using it as the pitcher or catcher, we can't courtesy run for them as we normally do when they get on base. That's because the NFHS sees that player as a DH when he gets on base and not as a pitcher or catcher. Suspect that might get changed in coming years as courtesy running is a speed up rule, so no advantage is lost or gained.

What other tips on 3-1-4-b? Look at it as a special privilege ONLY for that one dude. We start with 9 in the lineup and this special dude occupies 2 roles. We can have substitutes in that spot-on defense and our dude then remains as ONLY the DH. Our dude has one re-entry on defense and can remain as the player/DH if he does that but the next substitution on defense leaves him as DH only for rest of the game. If anyone comes into bat or run for this special privileged dude thankfully this damn player/DH thing is terminated. Our guy can come back into that same spot in the batting order with his re-entry but now as just a regular substitute and not the special "player/DH". Seems like they've made our job harder with this new player/DH thing. The spirit and intent behind it are if we have pitch counts to protect player's arms but still let the stud pitcher after he reached 110 go back out to shortstop with his arm dragging because he's too good to take out of the batting order that all seems a bit disingenuous. So, some wise guy came up with 3-1-4-b. Do some re-reading of 3-1-4 and try the casebook plays on p.26-27. We're stuck with it, so we better know it because guarantee you not all the coaches do. Straight 9 with no DH is the lineup card I like to be handed, thinking too much gives me a headache.

***Have a good one, guys!!***