

Baseball committee recommends implementing stricter pitching limits

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(Dennis Pleuss)

AURORA — CHSAA's baseball committee is recommending stricter pitch count limits for Colorado's high school players.

The committee framed the new limits during their meeting on Tuesday, and created separate rules for varsity and sub-varsity play. Their intention is for the new rules to be implemented with the start of the 2015 season. However, the changes first need to be approved by CHSAA's Legislative Council in January.

"The overuse of arms, especially young arms, is a real threat to baseball," said Bert Borgmann, CHSAA assistant commissioner who administers baseball. "Although CHSAA can't control what outside entities do, it can implement rules to help limit the overuse of arms during the high school season.

"We believe this rule will encourage teams to develop more pitchers appropriately, and ultimately strengthen pitching in Colorado."

In both instances of the new rule, certain ranges of pitch counts will result in mandatory rest, with the maximum required rest being three days.

The full breakdown of the proposed pitch count limits for one day — not one game; one day — during varsity competition:

Pitches Required rest

86-110 3 days

61-85 2 days

36-60 1 day

1-35 0 days

Additionally, no pitcher may throw more than 60 pitches over two days. If they hit 60 pitches in two days, there will be one day of required rest.

The limits for sub-varsity play:

Pitches Required rest

61-85 3 days

36-60 2 days

26-35 1 day

1-25 0 days

No sub-varsity pitcher can throw more than 40 pitches over two days. That limit will result in one mandated day of rest.

A pitcher will be allowed to finish a batter if they hit the limit (110 in varsity play; 85 in sub-varsity) during an at-bat, but must exit the game after the hitter. No pitcher at-bat can start at 110 pitches (or 85 during a sub-varsity game).

The reason the rule distinguishes between varsity and sub-varsity play, Borgmann said, is because "typically, sub-varsity players are younger players."

The roots for this rule proposal were grown by an advisory committee which met twice ^[1] in recent months ^[2].

"The sub-committee really provided the foundation for what we did," Borgmann said.

It will be the responsibility of the coach to monitor the pitch count of their team. Violation will result in restriction, which could keep a team out of the postseason.

There will be no appeal of pitch counts allowed between teams.

"What is important here is that these rules are being implemented for the health and well-being of the players," Borgmann said.

Under the current rule, players may not pitch more than 12 innings in three consecutive days. That applies in the regular season and the playoffs. Partial innings are rounded up to whole innings. A pitcher may not appear in more than 70 innings during the regular season.

Notables

The committee implemented a "final check" date of May 5 for the Wild Card points. This means that the standings on that date are official, and no changes will be made after that time. "It's up to the school and coaches to ensure their out-of-state opponents are providing accurate information," Borgmann said.

The group also looked at possibly allowing for an extension of the season via a tournament allowance. Currently, teams are allowed to play 19 games. This option would allow teams to have the option of playing 19 games, or play 18 and one tournament not to exceed five games. "If you go out-of-state (for a tournament), it would give you an opportunity to play those games and still come back and play games in Colorado," Borgmann said. Nothing will happen for 2015, but will be looked at again next November ahead of the 2016 season.

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[1] met twice: <http://chsaanow.com/2014-08-21/panel-discusses-limit-arm-injuries-baseball-players/>

[2] recent months: <http://chsaanow.com/2014-09-25/panel-sets-goal-changing-pitching-rule-spring-baseball-season/>

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