

Sports

Larger first base option allowed in high school baseball

LEXINGTON — Beginning next year, high school baseball teams will be given the option to use an 18-inch first base or the double first base. The larger base is presented as an alternative to the previously mandated double first base, which goes into effect in 2027.

The larger first base option was one of seven rules changes recommended by the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee at its meeting last month in Indianapolis and which were subsequently approved by the NFHS Rules Review Committee and NFHS Board of Directors.

In conjunction with the double first base, allowing a larger first base has proven to be effective in reducing player collisions and enhancing player safety.

“The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee believes that providing schools with the option of using either an 18-inch first base or a double first base gives administrators the flexibility to enhance player safety while recognizing the varying needs and resources of member schools,” said Elliot Hopkins, director of sports and liaison to the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee. “Both options are designed to reduce the potential for collisions at first base and support a reduced risk playing environment without changing the fundamental nature of the game.”

One-way electronic communication will now be allowed from the coach to the pitcher and/or the catcher for the purposes of calling pitches. Prior, the catcher

was the only defensive player allowed to receive communication from the coach. While the coach must still be located in the dugout/bench area, the committee believes this change responsibly integrates electronic communication that enhances game management.

Bat certification was addressed with USA Baseball assuming bat-testing standards. Effective in 2028, there will be an additional class of permitted non-wood bats. Bats that are not made of a single piece of wood shall meet either the USA Baseball Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (USA Baseball BBCOR) of .50 or the USA Baseball Bat Performance Standard (-4, -5, -6). Bats must be labeled with a silkscreen or other permanent certification mark.

“In addition, the NFHS remains committed to fostering the growth and development of high school baseball players,” Hopkins said. “As the game continues to evolve with the adoption of the USA Baseball BBCOR standard, expanding the available drop-weight options provides younger and developing players with additional opportunities to build proper mechanics, confidence and skills while maintaining the safety and performance standards expected in education-based athletics.”

Additional rules changes include:

- Eye shade must be a solid stroke and not include words, numbers, logos or other symbols within the eye shade.

- Use of electronic communication devices by players on the field is prohibited (except as outlined with one-way coach to player communication). This includes amplifying devices, wireless communication devices, headphones, etc., for the purposes of recording, streaming or transmitting audio or video. The prohibition does not include medical devices.
- Coaches will be allowed to use a handheld electronic scoring device or other scoring material while in the coach's box.
- When using a tiebreaker to end a regulation game, an option is now available to start each half-inning with a runner on second base. The runner would be the last scheduled batter in that respective half-inning.

A complete listing of the baseball rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Baseball” and then “Rules.” The print version of the 2027 Baseball Rules Book will be available for purchase in October at www.NFHS.com, and the digital version will be available in September via NFHS Digital at www.NFHS.org.

According to the 2024-25 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, baseball is the fifth-most popular sport for boys with a total of 472,598 boys participating at 16,110 schools across the country. In addition, 1,381 girls played high school baseball.

Heightchew wins tractor pull during fair



Photo courtesy of KITPA

Steve Heightchew won in the KITPA's 9000 Farm Stock Tractor Class in Owenton on Saturday, July 11.

One-way electronic communications allowed for pitchers under softball rules changes

LEXINGTON — Pitchers will now join catchers as the only players in high school softball permitted to receive one-way electronic communication from the dugout, effective with the 2027 season.

This change was one of four recommendations by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee during its June 14-16 meeting in Indianapolis. All recommendations were later approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

“Deliberations by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee were spirited and robust,” said Sandy Searcy, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. “Approval of these four rules proposals was the result of data collected from the membership, and specifically state association administrators. The committee is to be commended for its attention to detail, and thorough analysis of information available.”

Updated language now includes pitchers among the players permitted to receive one-way electronic communication from the dugout during games, allowing for faster delivery of information. The use of all other electronic devices to transmit or record information remains prohibited on the field of play, and players are still prohibited from transmitting or recording audio or video from the playing surface.

The committee also simplified language regarding whether a pitcher and catcher must face the first batter on defense in relation to courtesy runners. In its comments, the committee said the change eliminates the requirement — or perceived requirement — that the pitcher and catcher listed on the starting lineup card must face the first batter on defense.

“Previously, there was a misconception that the pitcher and catcher listed on the lineup card were always required to face the first batter (one pitch), which was never the intent of the rule,” the committee noted. “This change simplifies the administration of the courtesy runner rule and eliminates a provision that applied only during the transition between the top and bottom halves of the first inning. By removing a unique scenario that applied only to the bottom of the first inning, the rule becomes easier for umpires, coaches, scorekeepers and players to administer and understand.”

Additional changes allow state associations to determine umpire uniforms and clarify the definition of an initial play to better align with other areas of the rules book.

“The committee was intentional in adopting changes that solve real issues encountered on high school softball

fields,” said Andi Osters, chair of the NFHS Softball Rules Committee and assistant director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association. “Whether it’s improving communication between coaches and players, clarifying how interference should be judged after a deflected batted ball, streamlining the courtesy runner rule, or allowing states greater flexibility with umpire uniforms, each change reflects feedback from the coaches and officials who administer our game every day. Our objective is always to make the rules as clear, consistent and practical as possible.”

A complete listing of the softball rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Softball” and then “Rules.” The print version of the 2027 Softball Rules Book will be available for purchase in October at www.NFHS.com, and the digital version will be available in October via NFHS Digital at www.NFHS.org.

According to the 2024-25 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, a total of 338,315 girls participated in fast-pitch softball at 15,726 schools across the country, making it the fifth-most popular girls' sport.

Owen County among nine Region 8 All 'A' teams

OWENTON — Owen County is among nine All "A" Classic members in Region 8.

The Kentucky All "A" Classic alignment for the 2026-27 schoolyear has been finalized and released.

The additional All "A" Classic members of Region 8 are Community Christian (Independence), Cornerstone Christian, Eminence, Gallatin County, Henry County, Trimble County, Walton-Verona and Williamstown.

Various Owen County sports teams contend for All "A" Classic Region 8 titles annually.

The 2026-27 alignment for the All "A" Classic follows.

Kentucky All "A" Classic 2026-27 Alignment

Region 1: Ballard Memorial, Carlisle County, Christian Fellowship, Community Christian (Paducah), Fulton County, Hickman County, Mayfield, Murray, St. Mary.

Region 2: Caldwell County, Crittenden County, Dawson Springs, Fort Campbell, Heritage Christian, Livingston Central, Lyon County, Trigg County, University Heights.

Region 3: Cloverport, Edmonson County, Hancock County, McLean County, Owensboro Catholic, Trinity

(Whitesville).

Region 4: Clinton County, Cumberland County, Foundation Christian Academy, Metcalfe County, Monroe County, Russellville, Todd County Central.

Region 5: Bethlehem, Campbellsville, Caverna, Fort Knox, Green County, Washington County.

Region 6: Brown, DeSales, Grace James, Holy Cross (Louisville), Presentation Academy, Shawnee, W.E.B. DuBois, Western.

Region 7: Evangel Christian, Francis Parker, Highlands Latin, Kentucky Country Day, Louisville Collegiate,

Newcomer Academy, Portland Christian, Walden, Whitesfield Academy.

Region 8: Community Christian (Independence), Cornerstone Christian, Eminence, Gallatin County, Henry County, Owen County, Trimble County, Walton-Verona, Williamstown.

Region 9: Beechwood, Bellevue, Dayton, Heritage, Holy Cross (Covington), Ludlow, Newport, Newport Central Catholic, St. Henry, Villa Madonna.

Region 10: Augusta, Bishop Brossart, Bracken



LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE
OWEN COUNTY FISCAL COURT
Fiscal Year 2026-2027

BUDGET SUMMARY
AN ORDINANCE Relating to the Annual Budget and Appropriations. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE FISCAL COURT OF OWEN COUNTY, KENTUCKY: SECTION ONE: The following budget is adopted for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and the amounts stated are appropriated for the purposes indicated.

General Fund		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	2,883,975.83
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY	2,454,073.96
5200	GENERAL HEALTH AND SANITATION	396,860.00
5300	SOCIAL SERVICES	3,399,613.80
5400	RECREATION AND CULTURE	290,172.00
6100	ROADS	
7100	GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS	130,000.00
7600	OTHER COUNTY LIABILITIES	15,000.00
8000	CAPITAL PROJECTS	305,910.00
9100	GENERAL SERVICES	128,425.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	230,500.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	564,500.00
9500	DISTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER GOVT AGENCIES	
	Total	10,799,030.59
Road Fund		
6100	ROADS	3,762,550.00
7500	BORROWED MONEY	26,000.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	500,000.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	
	Total	4,288,550.00
Jail Fund		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY	543,401.52
9100	GENERAL SERVICES	5,075.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	
9400	FRINGE BENEFITS- EMPLOYERS SHARE	38,514.00
	Total	586,990.52
OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS		
5200	GENERAL HEALTH AND SANITATION	185,000.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	
	Total	185,000.00
TRANSIENT TAX		
5400	RECREATION AND CULTURE	45,000.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	
	Total	45,000.00
E-911 CHECKING		
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY	130,000.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	
	Total	130,000.00
COUNTY CLERK PERMANENT STORAGE FEE		
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPER	40,000.00
	Total	40,000.00
MONTERERY FUNDS		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	46,325.00
	Total	46,325.00
CDBG		
5300	SOCIAL SERVICES	
8000	CAPITAL PROJECTS	
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	
	Total	
RESTRICTED FUND		
5300	SOCIAL SERVICES	25,000.00
9100	GENERAL SERVICES	1,000,000.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	
	Total	1,025,000.00
	Total Budget Appropriations	17,145,896.11

Adopted this 29th day of June, 2026


TODD WOODYARD, COUNTY JUDGE/EXECUTIVE

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
All interested persons and organizations in Owen County are hereby notified that a copy of the county's adopted budget in full is available for public inspection at the Office of the County Judge/Executive during normal business hours.