



# BASEBALL

## PITCH COUNT LIMITATION RULES (Effective January, 2018)

The following regulations are to be observed in all IESA interscholastic baseball games. National Federation baseball rules will be followed for all interscholastic games unless the IESA Office informs member schools otherwise.

### PITCH COUNT RULES

A pitch is defined as a pitch thrown during live competition. Strikes (including all foul balls), balls, balls put in play, and pitches for outs all count in a pitcher's pitch count.

Warmup pitches, pick off attempts, or other throws by a pitcher after the ball has been put in play do not count in a pitcher's pitch count.

A pitcher who reaches the pitch count limitation in the middle of an at-bat will be allowed to pitch to that batter until the at-bat ends. This is for reaching the maximum pitch count only (70 or 90 pitches) For instance, a pitcher is facing a batter and has thrown 50 pitches and the count is 2-2. If the pitcher throws additional pitches to that batter to complete the at-bat, he would then likely be in the 51-65 pitch count total and would then require three days of rest before being allowed to pitch again. If a pitcher is facing a batter with a 2-2 count and has thrown 90 pitches, the pitcher could then finish the at-bat but would have to be immediately removed from the game.

Teams must follow all IESA and NFHS rules regarding pitching substitution. **Note: Any pitcher (either the starting pitcher or any relief pitcher) withdrawn from the mound or game may return to the pitching position once per game as long as it is within the legal re-entry rule.** The pitch count limitations apply in all situations.

If the pitcher is ambidextrous, the pitch count applies to the individual pitcher, not to the individual arm.

All pitch count requirements apply to an individual pitcher on a daily basis. For example, a pitcher could pitch in both games of a doubleheader. The total number of pitches the pitcher throws that day determines the pitcher's days of rest that must follow the doubleheader. The same holds true if you bring the starting pitcher back to the mound after he has been removed. The total number of pitches thrown for the day is what must be counted and not the total thrown each appearance on the mound.

The penalty for violating any of the pitch count limitation rules is automatic forfeiture of contest. In addition, the coach who allows a pitcher to exceed the pitch count limitations will be required to miss the next two interscholastic contests at the level at which the violation occurred and all other interscholastic contests at any level in the interim.

One of the biggest questions is going to be who keeps track of the pitch count? The answer to that question is the same as who kept track of the innings when we had a pitching inning limitation rule and not a pitch count rule. Each coach should keep track of the number of pitches every pitcher throws on a given day. The IESA website contains a sample pitch count form. You can use this to assist you in your games and share totals with your opposing coach. Or, you can make up your own form to use. Regardless, you are going to have to establish a method to track the number of pitches thrown. Coaches, it is your responsibility for making certain that your pitchers are complying with the pitch count limitation rules. Umpires will not keep pitch count totals. It is the coach's responsibility to make sure that pitchers rest the required number of days based on the number of pitches thrown. Keep good records. Keeping good records of the number of pitches thrown is certainly the key to alleviate any difficulties with reference to violating the pitch count limitation rules. The illustrations below along with the Pitch Count Requirement Chart clearly explain the rule. Your review of these examples will be advantageous to give you a thorough knowledge of the pitch count limitation rule.

### Examples:

- 1.) Today is Monday. My pitcher threw 60 pitches in our game today. When can he pitch again? He must rest for three days so he would be eligible to pitch again on Friday.
- 2.) We have advanced to the IESA state finals. Our first game is on Friday. If my pitcher throws anywhere from 21-90 pitches on Friday and we win, can he pitch on Saturday? No. Once the pitcher threw 21 pitches, he must rest at least one day before he can pitch again.

- 3.) My pitcher threw 18 pitches on Tuesday. How many pitches can he throw on Wednesday? He can throw a maximum of 70 pitches on Wednesday. A pitcher who throws 20 or fewer pitches on one day may pitch the next day but only for a maximum of 70 pitches. The number of pitches thrown the second day will determine how many days of rest will be required before he can throw again. If he throws 1-35 pitches on the second day, one day of rest is required. If he throws 36-50 pitches the second day, two days of rest is required. If he throws 51-65 pitches the second day, three days of rest is required. If he throws 66-70 pitches the second day, four days of rest is required.

The following situations should assist in determining the required number of days rest and interpreting the new pitch count requirements:

**SITUATION:** A pitcher threw 45 pitches on Wednesday and then threw 10 pitches on Thursday. Is this legal or illegal? **RULING:** Illegal. A pitcher who throws 36-50 pitches in one day must rest for two days before pitching again. The offending school must forfeit the contest and the head coach will be subject to a two game suspension.

**SITUATION:** We are playing in the regional semi-finals on Saturday. Our team won and we now play Monday in the regional championship. My pitcher threw 88 pitches on Saturday. Can he pitch on Monday? **RULING:** No. The earliest that pitcher could pitch again is Thursday. He could throw a maximum of 90 pitches on Thursday. The only way he could pitch on Monday following the Saturday game is if he threw 35 pitches or less on Saturday.

**SITUATION:** My pitcher threw 15 pitches on Friday. Can he throw on Saturday? **RULING:** Yes. He can throw a maximum of 70 pitches on Saturday. If he throws 70 on Saturday, four days of rest must then follow making him eligible to pitch for the first time again on Thursday.

**SITUATION:** Our regional championship game was postponed because of weather and we were finally able to play on Wednesday instead of the scheduled Monday date. My best pitcher only threw 58 pitches and we won in 5 innings. Our sectional game is scheduled for Saturday. Given that we had to re-schedule because of bad weather and the fact that the game only went 5 innings, can he throw again on Saturday? **RULING:** No. There are no provisions or exceptions for weather related situations. In this situation, the pitcher is not eligible to pitch at all on Saturday in that a pitcher who throws 51-65 pitches in a day, must rest 3 days before he can pitch again.

**SITUATION:** One of our pitchers pitched the 7<sup>th</sup> inning only on Tuesday and threw 17 pitches. He came back and threw 6 pitches on Wednesday. Can he throw on Thursday? **RULING:** No. He must rest on Thursday and is not allowed to pitch. He could pitch on Friday up to a maximum of 90 pitches.

**SITUATION:** My pitcher is pitching into the 6<sup>th</sup> inning and with a count of 1-1, reaches 90 pitches for the day. Do I need to remove him from the mound after he throws his 90<sup>th</sup> pitch? **RULING:** No. The pitcher may finish with the batter he is throwing to but once that batter has completed his turn at bat, the pitcher must immediately be removed from the mound. **NOTE:** As a coach, you will need to anticipate that your pitcher may be removed in the middle of an inning and to that end, you may want to talk with your players in advance to get them prepared when it is your turn to take the field.

**SITUATION:** I had to remove my starting pitcher in the middle of the second inning. He had thrown 42 pitches. He stayed in the game as he was moved to right field. In the sixth inning, I brought him back to the pitching position and he finished the game throwing an additional 21 pitches. How many pitches count toward his pitch count and when can he throw again? **RULING:** The pitcher has thrown a total of 63 pitches for the day and must now rest 3 days before he can throw again.

**SITUATION:** My pitcher threw 17 pitches on Monday. We had a make-up game on Tuesday and he threw 20 pitches on Tuesday. Our next game is scheduled for Thursday. Can he pitch on Thursday? **RULING:** Yes. He can throw a maximum of 90 pitches on Thursday.

**SITUATION:** We have a doubleheader scheduled on Saturday. Can my pitcher throw 40 pitches in the first game and come back and throw 45 pitches in the second game that day? **RULING:** Yes. A pitcher can throw a maximum of 90 pitches on days when he can legally throw 90 pitches. Pitch counts are daily totals.

**SITUATION:** We are scheduled to play in the IESA regional quarterfinal game on Tuesday. My pitcher could throw 90 pitches in the game. My intent is to only allow him to throw 65 pitches though because if we win, I want him to be able to throw in our semi-final game on Saturday. He reaches his 65<sup>th</sup> pitch in the middle of an at-bat with a count of 2-1 on the batter. Can he finish that batter and still be eligible to pitch on Saturday? **RULING:** No. In this situation, the soft cap does not apply. The pitcher can legally throw 90 pitches. Once the pitcher throws 66 or more pitches, he must now rest four days before he can pitch making him ineligible to throw on Saturday. The

soft cap refers to the maximum number of pitches that a pitcher can throw on a daily basis (either 70 or 90). If you want the pitcher to throw on Saturday, he must be removed from the game, regardless of the count on the batter, after he has delivered his 65<sup>th</sup> pitch.

**SITUATION:** I had to remove my starting pitcher in the middle of the second inning. He had thrown 42 pitches. He stayed in the game as he was moved to right field. The relief pitcher I brought in threw 20 pitches and then I needed to remove him from the mound and he went to center field. The game is now in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning. Can I bring the first relief pitcher back to the mound so I don't have another pitcher accumulate pitches for that game?

**RULING:** Yes. Starting with the 2018 season, any pitcher (starting or relief) may return to the mound once per game. In this case, the relief pitcher could throw up to 70 additional pitches (assuming he has 90 pitches available that day).