



Guide to the DH Rule

Rule 3-1-4

- **The NFHS Designated Hitter rule has changed, effective the 2020 season.**
- **This gives coaches more flexibility but makes the rule a bit more complex, especially with substitutions.**



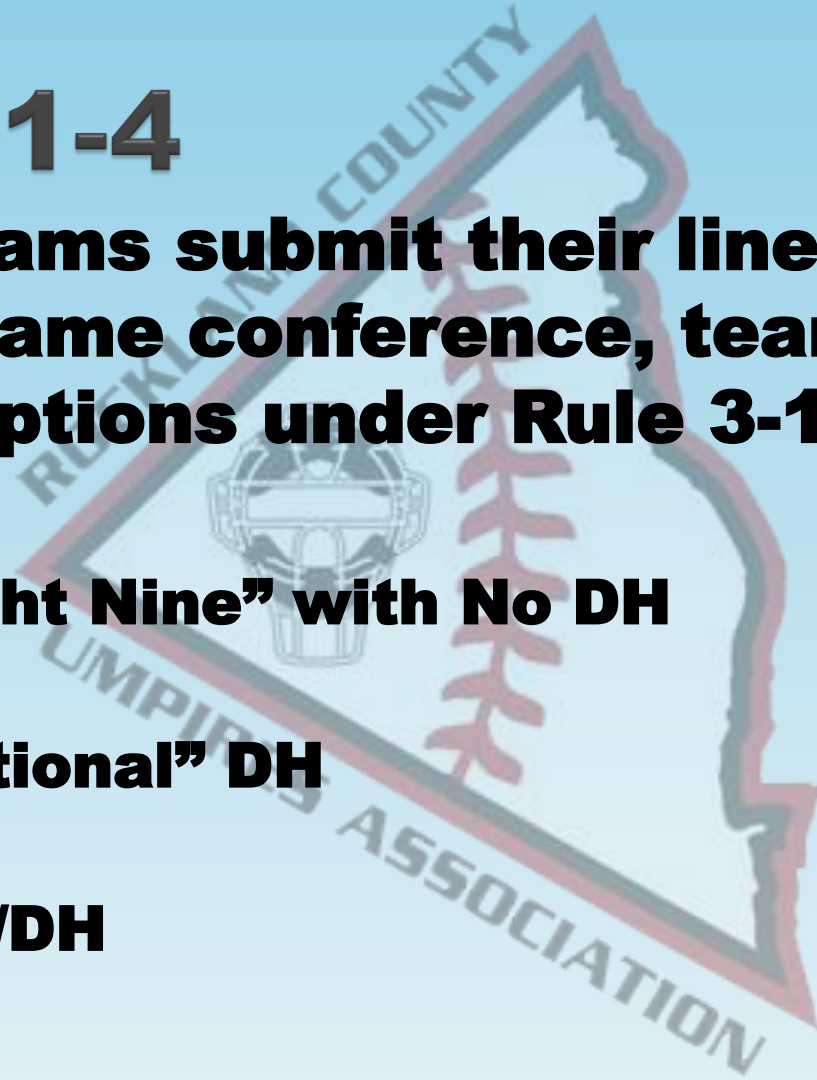
Rule 3-1-4

- **When teams submit their lineup cards at the pregame conference, teams now have 3 options under Rule 3-1-4:**

(1) “Straight Nine” with No DH

(2) “Traditional” DH

(3) Player/DH



“Straight Nine”

- **Teams has decided NOT to use a DH.**
- **Nine starting players**
 - **All playing a defensive position; AND**
 - **Batting in one of the nine spots in the batting order.**



“Straight Nine”

- **If a team starts with a “Straight Nine” lineup, can they decide to add a DH later?**
- **ANSWER: NO**
 - **If a team does not declare the use of a DH, it forfeits the right to use the DH for that game.**
 - **It’s always good practice by the UIC to confirm that everything is on the lineup card is accurate.**
 - **Just remember: Once the lineup cards have been exchanged, verified, and accepted, they are official.**

“Traditional DH”

- **The use of the Traditional DH MUST be declared prior to the start of the game.**
- **The DH may be designated for any starting defensive player, not just the pitcher.**
- **A team effectively has 10 starters.**
- **Each starter has single re-entry rights under Rule 3-1-3.**

“Traditional DH”

- **For substitution purposes, treat the DH and the player he is DH'ing for as separate players.**
- **The DH and the player he is DH'ing for are locked into the same spot in the batting order.**
- **The starting DH (and any substitutes) and the player he is DH'ing for (and any substitutes) can NEVER be in the game defensively at the same time.**

“Traditional DH”

- **The DH role is terminated for the remainder of the game when:**
 - **The defensive player (or any previous defensive player) for whom the DH batted pinch hits or pinch runs for the DH; or**
 - **The DH or any previous DH assumes a defensive position.**

“Traditional DH”

- **Can the “Traditional” DH have a substitute?**

- **ANSWER: YES**

- **Just like any other position in the lineup, both the DH and the person whom the DH is hitting are starters, can have substitutes and may re-enter the game ONE time.**
- **Any substitutions CANNOT alter the batting order.**

“Traditional DH”

- **Can the “Traditional” DH play a defensive position and still remain the DH?**



- **ANSWER: NO**
 - **Once the “Traditional” DH enters the game defensively, the DH position is eliminated.**
 - **That player becomes the person occupying the spot in the lineup both offensively and defensively.**

“Traditional DH”

- **Can the player for whom the DH is batting for pinch-run for the DH without impacting the DH position?**
- **ANSWER: NO**
 - **If the defensive player for whom the DH is batting bats, pinch-hits, or pinch-runs for the DH, the DH position is terminated for the remainder of the game.**
 - **However, another eligible sub may replace the DH while batting or running. That sub becomes the new DH.**

“Traditional DH”

- **After the DH position has been eliminated, is there still a way the original DH can legally have another at-bat?**



- **ANSWER: YES**
 - **This is possible due to re-entry rules.**
 - **This player is no longer the DH.**
 - **He is a straight substitute.**

“Traditional DH”

- **Irwin is the DH, batting for 1st Baseman Baker in the #2 spot. In the 4th inning, the coach decides to have Baker bat for himself. The DH role is now terminated for the rest of the game. In the 5th inning, Irwin hits for Baker. This is LEGAL since Irwin as a starter, has re-entry rights. In the 6th inning, Baker hits for Irwin. This is also LEGAL but Irwin is out of the game. If Baker is removed again at any point, he is ineligible to return.**

Player/DH

- **A player starts the game as BOTH a DH AND a defensive player.**
 - **May be ANY of the starting 9 defensive players.**
 - **The defensive role may be substituted by any legal sub but only the Starting Player/DH can ever occupy the DH role.**
 - **If another player substitutes into the defensive role, the original player/DH may re-enter defensively one time and retain the player/DH status. That counts as the starter's re-entry.**

Player/DH

- **A player starts the game as BOTH a DH AND a defensive player.**
 - **The player/DH and any substitutes in the defensive role are locked into that spot in the batting order.**
 - **The starting player/DH and any substitutes can NEVER be in the game defensively at the same time.**
 - **The DH role is terminated for the remainder of the game if a substitute (including a player already in the defensive role) pinch-hits or pinch-runs for the player/DH.**

Player/DH

- **Does the Player/DH have to be the pitcher?**

- **ANSWER: NO**



- **Any player in any position, including the pitcher can be the Player/DH**

Player/DH

- **Can someone substitute for the starting player/DH as a substitute player/DH?**

- **ANSWER: NO**

- **A substitute can only enter the defensive role.**
- **If a substitute, ever hits or runs, the role of the DH is terminated for the remainder of the game.**
- **Only the starting player/DH can occupy the DH role.**



Player/DH

- **Can multiple eligible substitutes substitute in the defensive role without impacting the DH role?**



- **ANSWER: YES**
 - **Multiple legal substitutions in the defensive role are permitted and do NOT impact the DH role.**

Player/DH

- **Can someone substitute for the player/DH as a hitter or a runner without impacting the DH role?**
- **ANSWER: NO**
 - **If someone substitutes for the starting player/DH as a hitter or runner, the role of DH is terminated for the remainder of the game.**
 - **No one else can bat for a player/DH without terminating the DH for the remainder of the game.**

Player/DH

- **When a player/DH has a substitute in the defensive role and later returns in the defensive role, does that count as the player/DH's re-entry for purpose of re-entry rights?**
- **ANSWER: YES**
 - **If the player/DH has another player assume the defensive role, the player/DH can re-enter the defensive role ONCE.**
 - **In that case, if the starter is substituted later, he cannot re-enter.**

Player/DH

- **Davis starts as the 1B/DH in the #4 spot in the lineup. In the 2nd Inning, Jackson takes over at 1st Base, while Davis continues as the DH. In the 3rd inning, Davis re-enters at 1st Base. Jackson, as a substitute, does not have re-entry rights and is done for the game. Another sub could take a defensive role and shift Davis back to DH role only. If that or any other substitute pinch-hits or pinch-runs for Davis, not only is the DH role terminated but Davis is done for the game, as he has already used his re-entry.**

Player/DH

- **In the 2nd Inning, another player bats for the starting player/DH, thus ending the DH role. Is it still possible for the starting player/DH to re-enter?**

- **ANSWER: YES**

- **Provided the starting player/DH has not had a substitute in the defensive role and then returned to the defensive role, he still has re-entry rights.**
- **Once someone bats for the starting player/DH, the DH role is terminated.**
- **Re-entry would be a standard re-entry**

Player/DH

- **Davis starts as the 1B/DH in the #4 spot in the lineup. In the 2nd Inning, Jackson takes over at 1B defensively while Davis continues as the DH. In the 6th Inning of a tied game, Davis hits a double. The coach decides to have Jackson pinch-run for Davis. The DH role is now terminated for the remainder of the game. As a starter, Davis still has re-entry rights. If he re-enters, he does so as a standard player (on defense and batting 4th)**

Player/DH

- **What if a player/DH is replaced because of injury? Can that substitute continue as the player/DH?**



- **ANSWER: NO**
 - **If an eligible substitute replaces the player/DH as a pinch-hitter or pinch-runner, the role of the DH is terminated and the player/DH is removed from the game.**
 - **An injury DOES NOT create an exception.**

Player/DH

- **Is it possible for the starting player/DH and a substitute in a defensive role to play defensively at the same time?**

- **ANSWER: NO**

- **When another player assumes the defensive role, the starting player/DH becomes the DH only.**
- **While the starting player/DH can return to the defensive role, if a substitute in the defensive role ever pinch-hits or pinch-runs, the role of the DH is terminated for the remainder of the game.**

Player/DH

- **Under the player/DH rule, can anyone else ever become the DH?**

- **ANSWER: NO**



- **Only the starting player/DH can be the DH.**
- **Any offensive substitutions terminate the DH for the remainder of the game.**

Player/DH

- **Can a player/DH who starts as the pitcher, and is replaced as the pitcher in the third inning, return to pitch in the fourth inning?**
- **ANSWER: YES**
 - **The pitcher is not restricted from returning to the mound, provided all other pitching rules have been met and he is eligible to do so.**

Lineup Card Management

- **Good lineup card management practices will make it easier for an umpire to keep track of who's in the game in what capacity, who has re-entry rights and who's not permitted to return.**
- **Ideally, whatever system is used should make it easy for another umpire to pick up the lineup card and quickly understand the situation.**
- **That can become a necessity if a game is suspended and resumed at a later date with another crew.**

Lineup Card Management

- **Some key things to consider:**
 - **Always confirm at the plate conference whether the DH is being used and, if so, the type of DH.**
 - **Coaches have different ways of filling out a lineup card. With a “Traditional” DH, make sure it’s clear for whom the DH is hitting.**
 - **If a player/DH assumes the DH-only role (when a substitute enters the defensive role), circle the DH or otherwise make some indication on the lineup card that this transition has occurred. Also, make a notation if the player/DH makes his one time return to the defensive role as this uses up his re-entry rights.**

Lineup Card Management

- **Some key things to consider:**
 - **Make sure you know who has re-entry rights. That will have a huge impact of allowable substitutions.**
 - **If you're not certain of whether a change is permitted, don't be afraid to get together with your partner(s) to sort it out. Better to delay the game for a moment to endure proper enforcement of a substitution rule than to have to sort out a mess later in the game or deal with a protest.**



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