

2010 and 2011 NFHS  
**SOFTBALL UMPIRES MANUAL**



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# OFFICIALS

## CODE OF ETHICS



### NFHS OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

Officials at an interscholastic athletic event are participants in the educational development of high school students. As such, they must exercise a high level of self-discipline, independence and responsibility. The purpose of this Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all interscholastic officials.

**Officials** shall master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, and shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.

**Officials** shall work with each other and their state associations in a constructive and cooperative manner.

**Officials** shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interaction with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues, and the public.

**Officials** shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, and shall comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.

**Officials** shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.

**Officials** shall remain mindful that their conduct influences the respect that student-athletes, coaches and the public hold for the profession.

**Officials** shall, while enforcing the rules of play, remain aware of the inherent risk of injury that competition poses to student-athletes. Where appropriate, they shall inform event management of conditions or situations that appear unreasonably hazardous.

**Officials** shall take reasonable steps to educate themselves in the recognition of emergency conditions that might arise during the course of competition.

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# Section **1** *Prerequisites for Good Umpiring*

Any umpire representing the National Federation of State High School Associations is performing a service to his/her fellow umpires, to the state associations which he/she serves, to the coaches, student athletes and fans of softball. A competent umpire performs his/her duties with established signals and procedures. A thorough knowledge of the rules is important, but more important is the understanding of their purpose, and the ability to interpret and enforce these principles.

Good game control begins with the umpire's appearance at the game site. Players and coaches alike base many of their actions during the contest on the amount of confidence they have in the arbiter. Umpires who perform their duties in a brisk, business-like manner upon their arrival at the field, who are courteous with players and coaches (without being overly friendly) prior to the game, whose calls are made promptly and confidently and with an emphasis which dissuades argumentation, yet are non-dictatorial, and who cooperate with their partner(s) in the efficient coverage of all situations, are rarely questioned.

When you enter a ballpark your sole duty is to umpire a ball game as the representative of the state association. In all your actions and conduct, keep in mind that as an umpire, your position calls for the settling of controversies on the ball field and not in starting them elsewhere. It is a trying position, which requires the umpire to exercise patience and good judgment. Do not forget that the first essential in working out a bad situation is to keep your temper and self control. Be courteous, but firm, and you will gain respect from all. Never lose sight of the fact that friendship for the umpire, appreciation for the duties and cooperation in decisions rarely exists when a difficult situation occurs on the ball field.

The proper handling of any softball game demands each member of the umpire crew to hustle at all times. In addition, the following three factors are essential to the success of any umpire:

1. Judgment
2. Mechanics and technique
3. Knowledge of the rules

1. **JUDGMENT** may appear to be an inherent factor of officiating. The calm style of the finished umpire when confronted by a spontaneous uprising, apparently bears out this assumption. However, the truth is the umpire, through a trying apprenticeship, has become casehardened to a degree that enables the good umpire to take a most disagreeable incident in stride. Early in the career, the average umpire will likely respond to rowdy tactics or abusive language with some show of fear, but the umpire who advances in the game learns a tight rein must

be kept on temperament. No provocation, not even physical attack, should cause an umpire to lose sight of the primary responsibility — keeping the game under control. An angry umpire is never a master of the situation.

**2. GOOD MECHANICS AND TECHNIQUE** are factors appreciated in some degree by even the most difficult player. A lack of good mechanics is one thing that separates the best of the amateur umpires and any professional. Mechanics of umpiring deals with the who, what, where and often the why of it all, while technique deals primarily with the "how" of umpiring. Technique deals with the amount of flair or individualism employed by the umpire in any given situation.

Hustle is an integral part of good umpiring mechanics and technique. Acceptance of any umpiring assignment requires the complete attention and energy of an umpire for the entire game. Hustle is the spirited application of the principles of good umpiring. Aimless running about is not hustle or at least is not productive hustle. Briefly, good mechanics and technique consist of being in the right place at the right time coupled with strict attention to detail.

**3. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLAYING RULES** is expected of every umpire. New and experienced officials should devote ample time routinely to reading and studying the Rules Book.

### **OTHER PREREQUISITES**

Including the points just described, following are 10 prerequisites which will go a long way toward helping every umpire gain the respect and confidence he/she is striving to attain in becoming a top-rated umpire:

**1. Physical Conditioning.** All umpires should be physically fit at the start of each season and then make certain that they maintain that condition. An umpire who is not physically fit is a detriment to the game. Today's athletes are well conditioned. They are very skilled, excellent athletes and they move speedily. Umpires must be able to keep pace with the athletes and be able to move very quickly to get into the best position to cover a play.

**2. Make Decisions Positively and Promptly.** Decisions must be made positively and promptly, but an umpire must not be too hasty in calling a play. Umpires must guard against rendering decisions prematurely. An umpire has to run to get into position on a play and yet come to a stop so he/she can see all of the action clearly, before making a ruling. Whenever possible, do not make a 'fair/foul' decision while in motion. Always go out on the foul line as far as possible. Stop just prior to the ball being touched and indicate fair or foul prior to making the 'catch/no catch' ruling. It is necessary to know where the ball is when a decision is made. The fielder may drop the ball on a tag play in pivoting during

a double play, or she might juggle the ball on a force play. After a momentary hesitation for the purpose of making certain the play is complete, the call should be made forcefully. A timid call by the umpire will be perceived in a negative manner and reflects a lack of confidence. All plays should be called with an air of confidence. That goes a long way toward having the umpire's judgment accepted. Good umpires cultivate their voices to increase the authority implied by the spoken word. A strong voice in control by the umpire is a valuable asset. All calls should be made loudly and clearly so that players of both teams can hear them.

**3. Umpire Crew Cohesiveness.** Umpires working together must communicate and have mutual respect. The best rapport is obtained when there is a friendly attitude toward each other. Friendliness and respect for members of the crew (and profession) contribute to confidence in one another. Every umpire should strive to support his/her partner(s) throughout the entire contest. When one umpire requests an opinion from another concerning a given play which has been ruled upon, the opinion should be given honestly and courteously to the umpire requesting it and to him/her only. Never offer an opinion, though, unless asked. Unsolicited advice is never appreciated and will cultivate a lack of confidence in the umpire(s).

Umpires must make a conscientious effort not to infringe on the duties and responsibilities of each other. There is no cause for greater embarrassment than to have opposite decisions made by umpires on a given play. If proper mechanics are followed, there should be no conflicting decisions. Umpires must communicate with one another vocally, letting their partner(s) know the base they are covering.

Do not discuss decisions with anyone but your partner and then only in private. Be in a position to help if requested. You are there to see everything possible and if you alibi, you have lost the respect of not only your partner, but of the coaches and players as well.

**4. Complete Knowledge of Rules.** Good umpiring is dependent, to a large extent, upon a complete knowledge and understanding of the rules. To be a competent umpire, it is necessary to know the rules thoroughly. Some decisions are repeatedly made so that, with experience they come by reflex. The correct way to prepare oneself for effectively making decisions is through continued study of all possible situations. Then, basic fundamentals become second nature and correct interpretations are virtually automatic. To know the rules thoroughly requires constant and analytical study. It does not suffice to only read the rules. They must be studied so that mental pictures of plays and situations result. Having developed clarity in the mental pictures, the umpire will then be able to immediately recognize the situation and correctly rule on it automatically. Umpires who guess and who don't know the rules soon lose the confidence of peers, players, coach-



es and spectators. Veteran and new umpires alike should attend rules clinics whenever possible and learn how and when to apply the rules.

**5. Proper Mechanics.** Proper umpiring mechanics are essential in attaining the best coverage. Many umpires who know the rules well fail to be accepted because their mechanics are poor. Mechanics, or play coverage, must be mastered if the umpire is to be successful. First, a proper position for various situations must be learned, and then the coverage must be practiced. Position and coverage should be discussed and reviewed regularly at clinics with the opportunities to practice the mechanics being made available to all umpires, including both the veteran and the novice. It is important that all umpires get the best position possible for any given play without being in the way of any player or a thrown or batted ball.

**6. Tune Out Spectators.** An umpire must tune out most remarks from the spectators. Every crowd will include a number of people who believe it's their right to make comments to an umpire. Umpires must tune out most statements that are heard from the spectators and not react to critical comments. High school umpires must keep in mind that certain language and behavior/actions are inappropriate at any school activity. When language/behavior/actions become inappropriate the umpire should notify the site administration of the problem and let them handle the situation.

**7. Sell the Call without "Showboating."** The efficient umpire should not 'showboat.' Good umpires can effectively execute their duties without showboating. The umpire who discharges responsibility with dignity and in conformance with accepted signals and procedures will encourage the players and spectators to accept decisions. Being overly dramatic on routine plays too often does not accomplish the purpose for which it is intended, and such actions frequently cause the coaches and players to lose confidence in the decision made by the umpire. Selling the call with dignity is much more effective. Umpires should be part of the game but never the center of attention. In no case should an umpire ever attempt to coach a player. Umpires don't want players telling them how to do their jobs, and umpires should never tell players how to do theirs. Negative comments about a player's ability or judgment on a play by the umpire can only cause hard feelings and bring trouble to the umpire.

**8. Keep the Game Moving.** Players should hustle on and off the field between innings and it should be a case of 'Do as I do' rather than 'Do as I say.' Enforcing five pitches or one minute between innings will speed up the game significantly. Good players usually hustle, as do good umpires. The umpire and players should move quickly to and from their positions. Lead by example.

**9. Keep a Dignified Attitude.** Umpires must be courteous to players and coaches but avoid visiting with them immediately before, during or after the game. A businesslike attitude and atmosphere must prevail. Do not get into arguments with the players, coaches or team representatives. Any discussion should be brief and to the point. A dignified attitude will often preclude and prevent an argument. Be polite and professional at all times.

**10. Make Decisions Based on Fact.** The judgment necessary in making a decision is acquired through proper positioning. Each and every decision must be made on the basis of fact. First, cover the play as the accepted procedure provides, and rule on the play exactly as it was seen. Umpires must realize that they will at some time err in their judgment no matter how conscientious and efficient they are and regardless of their position and rules knowledge. When the most respected umpires 'boot one,' they continue to work to the best of their ability. The fact that an umpire makes a mistake need not cause him/her to drop his/her head or be unduly humble nor to be embarrassed. After an error, the umpire must never attempt to even it up. Each call is made on its own merits. Frequent errors in rule interpretation or in judgment quickly cause the players, coaches and spectators to lose confidence, but no one wants the umpire to attempt to even things out.

### **CODE OF ETHICS FOR UMPIRES**

1. Honor all contracts regardless of possible inconvenience or financial basis.
2. Study the rules of the game diligently, observe the work of other good officials and attempt to improve at all times.
3. Remember that while your work as an umpire is important, you must conduct yourself in such a way that spectator attention is directed at the players during the game and not at you.
4. Dress and maintain your appearance in a manner befitting the dignity and importance of the umpire.
5. Be fair and unbiased in your decisions, rendering them without regard to the score or the quality of the play on the field.
6. Cooperate and be professional in your associations with other umpires and do nothing to cause them public embarrassment.
7. Be firm but not overbearing; positive but never rude. Remember the good umpire doesn't have to have the last word.
8. Be prepared both physically and mentally to administer the game.
9. Do not use tobacco products on or in the vicinity of the playing field, nor drink any alcoholic beverages before the game you are to work.
10. Do not give information that might be used by a team's future opponent.
11. Keep in mind that the game is more important than the wishes of any individual player or coach or the ambitions of any individual umpire.

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**SOFTBALL UMPIRE GAME CONTROL**

To be a successful umpire, you will have to be proficient in appearance, rule knowledge, mechanics and game control.

Your ability to control the game and to handle situations as they arise are concepts difficult to teach.

There are guidelines an umpire should or should not follow, but what works for one umpire may not work for another umpire.

There are no rules etched in stone that will make your umpiring problem-free, or for that matter, will work in every game situation, but listed below are guidelines that have proven to help many umpires control their games while developing character and stature as a respected umpire.

Respect must be earned and this can only come from hard work and dedication.

1. Do not allow team personnel to swarm around your partner to dispute a call. Clear everyone away from the umpire involved except the coach.
2. Do not have "rabbit ears." You must learn that there will be some things you need to hear and some things you do not want or need to hear. In most cases, people are talking to the position or the uniform and not you personally.
3. Do not get into a shouting match with anyone on the field. Be calm. Collect your thoughts on the play and your interpretation while the person is speaking. Be professional in your replies.
4. Use a third party to handle an irate person if needed. For instance, if the player is the pitcher, have the catcher talk to them and calm them down before you have to do what you have to do.
5. Do not ask a player what they said or called you. This is baiting and intimidating the person. If you did not hear them the first time, ignore it until you do hear something that merits enforcement.
6. Do not stay on top of a close play after making your call. Watch the play until it is completed and then clear out.
7. Never touch players, coaches, other team personnel; and do not permit them to touch you.

Game control starts when the players and spectators watch you take the field. First opinions are so important — sometimes even in the parking lot when you are talking with your partner(s). "You will never get a second chance to make a first impression!" Your appearance should be impeccable and your pregame duties performed in a friendly yet business-like manner.

No one wants a dictator for an umpire, but everyone wants an umpire who controls the game!

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**UMPIRE GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Physical conditioning is a prime requisite of umpiring and requires a certain amount of discipline. Pre-season conditioning should include exercises designed to strengthen the legs, such as jogging, running in place, etc. Basic forms of calisthenics to prepare one's self for hours of work behind the plate should begin well before the first game. The back and leg muscles can be easily conditioned for the season by steadily working up to the point where knee-bends are easily endured. Conditioning during the season itself boils down to a matter of weight control and water level balance. Fluids must be replaced between innings during those hot days to prevent even the best umpires from running out of energy.

To discuss a mental attitude and emotional make-up favorable to being a good umpire touches many bases. Why did you go into umpiring? Many of us wish to continue an association with the game beyond our playing days. Others find the contribution we make to the game a source of great satisfaction. We've all heard the expression that the game can't be played to its fullest without the umpires. Others, however, think of umpiring as a major source of added income. These constitute a large portion of the dropouts each season. Often times they do not have a mental attitude that involves an understanding of the rules and purposes of the games they are officiating. Nor do they always respect the players, coaches or their partners. Frequently, they are in a hurry to get the game over. Rarely do they involve themselves in affairs of the association designed to increase their overall development.

To remain calm in the face of adversity is an essential plan of an umpire's make-up. Coolness must not be confused with complacency. It must be expected that there will be disagreements during the course of a competitive ball game. The closer the call, the more likelihood that a player or coach will have something to say. Many of us forget how a coach has a moral obligation to defend his/her players or their own actions. To request an interpretation of a rule is not to question the arbiter unnecessarily. An umpire must be ready to respond to legitimately raised points of the rules. To clarify a coach's misunderstanding of a rule quickly and concisely requires a thorough knowledge of the rules. In addition, it must involve some understanding of the questioner's role in the game.

**Forfeits**

The plate umpire has authority to forfeit a game, but should exhaust every means at command to prevent it. It is the responsibility of all umpires to do everything possible to prevent a forfeit. Consult your partner(s) before you make the final decision to declare the forfeit.

**Appeals**

The appeal is a unique part of the game of softball that is initiated by the defensive team only. It occurs a) when a batter bats out of order, b) a runner misses a base, c)

leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched, d) attempting to advance to second base after overrunning first base. This action is brought to the attention of the administering umpire prior to the next pitch, before the defense has left the field or before the umpires leave the field at the conclusion of the game.

If the appeal is requested (during a live or dead ball), the administering umpire whose responsibility it was to observe the base and runner will step forward and make the safe or out call.

If the appeal is directed toward the wrong umpire, that umpire should point to the responsible umpire, call his/her name and indicate that the defense wishes to make an appeal. The responsible umpire should then step forward and make the call.

### **Fraternizing with Players, Coaches and Spectators**

Many of the players, coaches and spectators for whom we umpire are our friends and it is difficult not to fraternize with them; however, prior to a game a friendly hello should suffice.

### **Communication and Signals**

Communication signals for umpires are essential. These signs enable one umpire to let a fellow umpire know the game situation on a specific play. Umpires should review the NFHS signals system prior to the start of the game and utilize these throughout the game.

Signaling is a very important aspect of umpiring. Decisions are relayed to the players, coaches and spectators by their use. The adopted signals are dignified, informative, meaningful and, therefore, shall be used by all umpires. Poorly executed and unauthorized signals serve only to confuse. The manner in which a signal is given determines, at least to a degree, its acceptance by players, coaches and spectators.

### **Umpire-to-Umpire Communications**

Besides individual signals provided by the umpire, there are several signals between umpires that assist in communication and help the game run smoothly. These include:

1. Plate umpire requesting help on a half or check swing. (Remove mask, step away from the catcher and point to base umpire.)
2. Field umpire indicating YES, if it is a strike. (Give a definite strike signal.)
3. Field umpire indicating NO, if the batter did not swing. (Give a safe signal.)
4. Indicating an infield fly situation (Right hand to your left chest.)
5. When requesting a count or the number of outs, use a verbal communication request and the partner should reply with the count verbally.

### **Pregame Responsibilities**

Arrive at the playing field no less than 30 minutes before the scheduled start-

ing time. Prior to the game, the host administration shall give each team a game ball to warmup with to remove the manufacturer's gloss. Let the coaches or game administration know you are there.

Review the ground rules with the home team prior to the pregame conference with the coaches. If there is a conflict, the umpires should resolve it before or during the pregame meeting.

Make sure the field is properly marked, that the pitcher's plate and bases are legal and at proper distances. It is good for the umpire crew to be together and tour the field so that any points or questions concerning the ground rules that may arise can be considered and the conclusion made known to all. All obstacles that could or may create dead-ball situations should be specifically noted and examined.

Discuss coverage and proper tag-up calls with your partner(s) so there will be no confusion during the game. Discuss signals to be used between the umpires to assist calls. Discuss rules only if there is some confusion or concern.

### **SOFTBALL UMPIRE-TO-UMPIRE PREGAME CONFERENCE REVIEW**

#### **DATE PRIOR TO GAME DAY —**

- Confirm game time and site with the school and your partner
- Review the State Association approved umpires' uniform that will be worn (dress alike)

#### **PREGAME ONCE AT GAME SITE —**

- Review new rules — Have a rules book, case book and umpires manual available for reference
- Discuss foul-line coverage and dead-ball area coverage
- Review pitching and illegal pitch rules and who is responsible for what calls
- Review missed base coverage, leaving the base too soon and the appeal procedure
- Review check swing mechanics
- Review keeping track of balls, strikes, outs and warm-up pitches
- Review communications between partners, if we deviate, communicate
- Review field inspection (walk the field), checking equipment, bats, batting helmets, catcher's equipment, game balls, etc. Record the number of bats and helmets on the team's lineup card
- Review procedure for pregame conference with head coaches
- Review field ground rules
- Know if there will be a National Anthem and introduction of players, or other pregame ceremonies
- Be courteous, considerate and professional
- Make sure you have a brush; indicator and the plate umpire has a mask, ball bag, etc.
- Be sure to arrive on the field in enough time to perform these duties

### **Pregame Ground Rules**

No less than five minutes before game time, all umpires meet the coaches and captains, (and game administration if tournament play) at home plate for ground rules. Check the lineups from the respective teams. Make certain you check each lineup card including first, last name, defensive position, and number of each participant and hand it back to the coach for a last inspection. When returned to the plate umpire, the lineup is now official. If an extra copy is available, it should be turned over to the scorekeeper. Next, go over the ground rules.

Discussions at the plate before the game should be handled by the plate umpire. It is not necessary for the other umpire to enter the discussion, except to ask a question for clarification.

1. The plate umpire should introduce him/herself and partner(s) to both coaches and captains in attendance.
2. Review ground rules. Begin by outlining dead-ball areas, and then proceed to home plate, third base dugout, outfield fence and foul poles, and first base dugout. Cover all openings and obstacles.

Ground rules should take care of situations for the particular playing field. Always try to make all ground rules so they keep the ball in play as much as possible. In ball parks that are not completely fenced in, the umpire should establish an out-of-play area down the left-field and right-field lines, usually paralleling the foul lines and starting at the backstop to the team bench/dugout area and then from the team bench/dugout area on out. Umpires should try to sight a permanent object from the end of the bench to make it easier to determine whether a ball is in or out of play. Make sure that all equipment is kept behind the out-of-play line and everyone stays in the dugout/bench area.

Ground rules define the playing area, not the enforcement procedures stated in the official NFHS playing rules of softball. Remember, ground rules cannot supercede a book rule.

Following the pregame discussion with the head coaches, it is advisable to double-check the data with the scorer so that if an error in recording or completing the lineup card is made it can be corrected. It is good to briefly discuss with the official scorer such matters as how you will be handling the appearance of pinch hitters, courtesy runners and substitutes. This matter is particularly important because of the re-entry rule, and in fast pitch games, the DP/FLEX rule and in slow pitch games, the Extra Player (EP) rule.

The plate umpire is responsible for the batting order and should maintain a lineup card throughout the game.

### **End-of-Game Procedures**

Umpires should leave the field together after giving the defensive team reasonable time for a possible appeal play. When the game is completed, each umpire should take care of his/her responsibilities, leave the field together on the side

where you will receive the least resistance, normally the winning team.

The plate umpire should return the game balls to the person responsible for them, and report at once to the proper authority any flagrant conduct or irregularity associated with the game.

Often coaches, players and fans will make comments to umpires as they leave the field. Do not stop to answer their questions or enter into a discussion about any controversial play that occurred in the game. Politely tell them, "I can't discuss the play with you now" or "I am sorry I can't talk with you now." Don't kid yourself into thinking you will be able to explain the play to them or make them believe you. If they didn't agree with you at the time the play happened, they most often wouldn't agree with you after the game either. Some coaches, players and fans want the umpire to stop or make some retaliation to their comments, but for the umpire to do so is both unprofessional and inexcusable. Umpires must learn to keep their composure at all times. This may mean biting your tongue on occasion, but the umpire should remember he/she does not have to have the last word. Be polite to everyone and quickly leave the area as businesslike and inconspicuously as possible.

If you are confronted by the press refer them to the game administration. Remember they make their living by writing stories, so govern yourself accordingly. Again, be polite with your answers and be certain to keep yourself under control. Do not say anything that may embarrass you later, for such things could easily result in the situation being blown out of proportion and even more difficult for everyone.

When the game is over the crew should find a location to be by themselves to review the game just completed. Cover unusual situations that occurred in the game to see if you could have covered a play better and go over any rule situation you may not be sure about. As umpires we must forget the games in the past and concentrate on doing an even better job in the future. Umpires can't hold a grudge or remember the comments made in an earlier game. Each game is a new game and a fresh start for everyone. Don't go on the field looking for trouble.

As an umpire you are expected to be perfect your very first game and improve each game thereafter.

### **Pregame Conference with Head Coaches**

1. The Plate Umpire (P) should be positioned behind home plate facing the outfield with each team's head coaches on each side of home plate. The base umpire(s) (B) will be opposite the plate umpire facing the backstop. Team captains and assistant coaches may also attend the pregame conference.
2. The plate umpire should introduce himself/herself and his/her partner(s) to all in attendance. Have all others introduce themselves to each other.
3. Ask the head coaches to verify that players are legally equipped and that



players and equipment are in compliance with all NFHS rules.

4. Review the ground rules. Begin by outlining dead-ball areas then proceed to the home plate, third base dugout / bench area, outfield fence and foul poles, first base dugout / bench area. Cover all openings and obstacles.

**NOTE 1:** No ground rule can supercede any book rule.

**NOTE 2:** If coaches cannot agree on a ground rule, then the umpires have the final say.

5. Review the overthrow rule and penalty enforcements.
6. Review the lineup cards. Explain, if necessary, the importance of notifying the plate umpire of substitutes.

**NOTE 1:** (F.P.) Make sure if there is a DP/FLEX you have 10 players and if no DP/FLEX there are only 9 players. (S.P.) Make sure there are 10 players listed or 11 if using an EP.

**NOTE 2:** Make sure first and last names are listed for all players, starters and subs.

**NOTE 3:** Hand the lineup cards back to each coach and ask them to "check it one last time" prior to it becoming the official lineup.

7. Ask if there are any questions on the rules, especially the re-entry, DP/FLEX and EP rule.
8. Ask if everyone is familiar with the ball rotation rule.
9. If a doubleheader, ask how much time will there be between games.
10. Remind the teams that the official book is from the home team and the scorekeepers should verify with each other several times throughout the game. If umpires know that there is an obvious error, they can correct the books.
11. Remind teams that if there are any questions, please only one person, the coach, approach the umpire responsible for the call in a sporting manner.
12. Remind the coaches that you are going to let the coaches coach, the players play and for them to please let the umpires umpire.
13. Review with all in attendance the expectations regarding sporting behavior and wish them all the Best of Luck!

**NOTE:** The whole time have great presence and a firm voice.

### HELPFUL HINTS FOR UMPIRES DO'S AND DON'Ts

#### DO . . .

1. HUSTLE.
2. Study rules regularly.
3. Be neat and well groomed at all times.
4. Study why bad situations occur and work to correct them.
5. Be courteous but firm.
6. Be punctual.
7. Forget the bad days.
8. Be truthful.
9. Call your own plays.

10. Keep your hands off the players and coaches at all times.
11. Keep the plate clean and pitching rubber clean.
12. Get as close to the play as possible without smothering it.
13. Back up your partner.
14. Keep your eye on the ball.
15. Use the energy necessary to make a call believable, but never embarrass a player.
16. Be alert in thinking of the game situation.
17. Always strive to improve yourself and your umpiring.
18. Stay in shape.
19. Be pleasant and professional at all times.
20. Know the ballpark and ground rules.
21. Take pride in your work.
22. Avoid unnecessary conversation with the players and coaches.

### **DON'T . . .**

1. Kid with the coaches, players, team personnel or fans at any time.
2. Call the pitch until it is caught or hits the ground behind the plate.
3. Call the strike out loud when the batter obviously swings at and misses a pitch.
4. Second guess your partner at any time, on or off the field.
5. Make decisions too soon. Take a good look first to be sure the play is completed, then make your call.
6. Tell the coaches or players what to do or how to play their position. Your job is to umpire and attend to that only.
7. Call the runner out with your mask in the right hand. It might slip out of your hand and hit the runner or fielder making the play.
8. Let the coaches, players or team personnel abuse you. Be patient and tolerant.
9. Be doubtful. Know what is going on.
10. Stand in a player's way. They then can't use you as an alibi.
11. Have rabbit ears. Ignore what they say or do in the stands.
12. Look for trouble. You'll find plenty of it without looking.
13. Walk on the field with tobacco products or your cap in your pocket.
14. Be overly technical. Use common sense.
15. Talk about anyone else unless you have something good to say about him or her.
16. Go out in the field with a chip on your shoulder.
17. Try to out-talk anyone. Let them do the talking and when they have said enough, make them play ball.
18. Talk back to the stands.
19. Use tobacco products in the vicinity of the playing field.
20. Make any of your decisions or calls too soon. It is better to be a little

- late in making the call rather than to make the call, then have to change your decision.
21. Locate the ball for the players or let on where the ball is.
  22. Alibi to anyone at any time. It won't help.
  23. Carry messages to your partner from a coach. Tell them they had better deliver their own messages and never tell your partner anything you might hear.
  24. Allow the players to keep anything hanging out of their pockets when they bat.
  25. Get the big head or try to put on an act when you are on or off the field.
  26. Get lazy. No one respects or appreciates an umpire who doesn't hustle. You're fooling no one but yourself.
  27. Pick on any coaches, players or team personnel.

### UNIFORM — EQUIPMENT

The appearance of officials is most important, for both the respect of players, coaches and spectators, as well as for comfort and safety. It is imperative that all umpires wear identical color combinations. The proper uniform for an umpire consists of a powder blue shirt (pullover or button style), heather gray or navy blue slacks, and a navy blue fitted cap. If an undershirt is worn under the powder blue shirt, it shall be white and short sleeved. If a long-sleeve undershirt or turtleneck is worn, it shall not be exposed. Pullover style jackets or knit sweaters shall be solid navy blue. No patch other than the state association patch shall be worn on the uniform.

Equipment for the plate umpire should offer the best in protection, mobility and comfort. A mask with a throat protector is required in F.P. and recommended in S.P. The inside-style chest protector and leg guards are strongly recommended in both F.P. and S.P.. Slacks should fit comfortably over leg guards. Shoes for the plate umpire should offer the maximum in protection with a hard shell or steel reinforced toe and steel or reinforced tongue. Soles should provide good traction. Shoes should be solid black with no white or colored markings. The plate and base umpire(s) should use a ball/strike indicator and plate brush. A ball bag the color of the slacks is mandatory for the plate umpire. The fitted cap is mandatory and shall never be worn backwards. Navy or black socks that are at least mid-calf length should be worn. A black belt with a small buckle completes the uniform requirements.

Umpire(s) should dress according to weather conditions and have additional or backup equipment at their disposal. Male umpires shall wear a protective cup. State associations may adopt other uniform options, as long it does not compromise the umpire(s) safety and all umpires are dressed alike.

Jewelry, except for medical-alert bracelets and necklaces, shall not be worn.

## Section 2

## Plate Mechanics

### PLATE MECHANICS — FAST PITCH

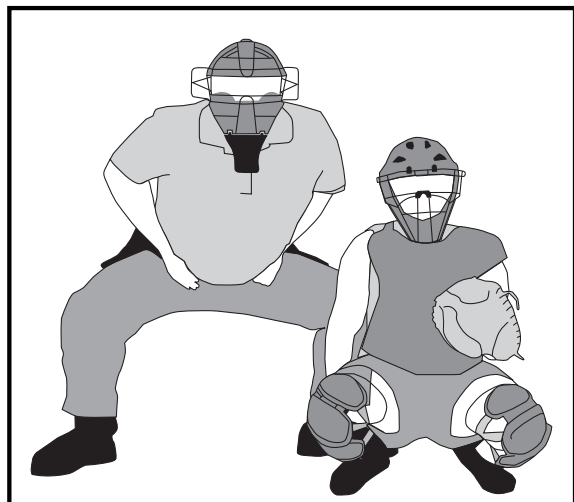
#### Set Position

Position yourself behind the catcher and between the batter and the catcher. Your inside ear should be in line with the inside edge of the plate. Your eyes should be between the batter and inside corner of home plate; positioned at the top of the strike zone. This position is referred to as working the "SLOT." It allows the catcher free movement up and down without obstructing the umpire's view and enables you to see all of home plate and the batter's strike zone.

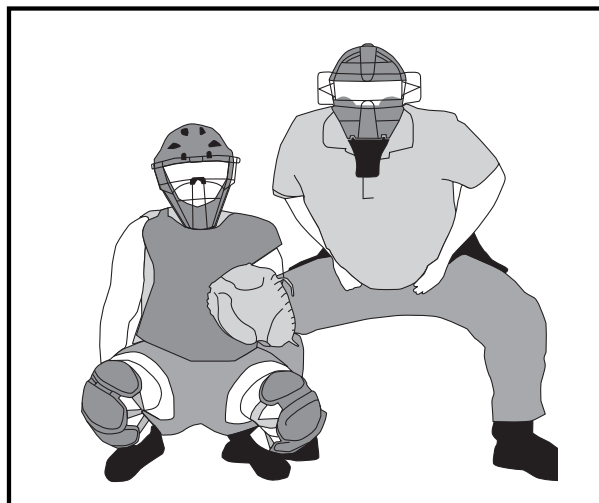
Your feet should be at least shoulder width apart with your inside foot slightly forward. This is referred to as a "heel/toe" stance. It is important that you remain balanced and comfortable, but not relaxed.

Prior to assuming the set position, the umpire should assume a ready position by properly placing the feet while waiting in a relaxed fully upright stance. The proper time to drop to the 'set' position is immediately after the pitcher has separated her hands and prior to the release of the ball. You should never be moving to the set position while the ball is in flight toward the plate. It is important to realize one can set too early, as well as too late.

To assume the set position, bend the knees, slightly bend forward at the waist while keeping your back as straight as possible. Shoulders should be square with the pitch. Your eyes should be lined up at the top of the strike zone. By lining up slightly inside the inside corner and at the top of the strike zone, the umpire has given him/herself the best possible look at the pitch. Always be able to see the plate and the batter's feet and hands.



Left-hand slot



Right-hand slot

The set position in fast pitch is much lower than slow pitch although remaining at the top of the strike zone. Eyes are usually at the batter's armpits in a definite set position looking from slightly outside the strike zone through the entire strike zone.

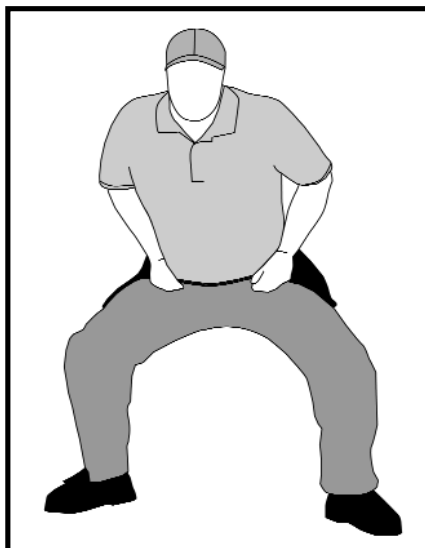
In calling balls and strikes, it is generally most accepted to bring the pitch down or up into the strike zone, and widen it out.

### PLATE MECHANICS — SLOW PITCH

Working the plate in slow pitch is different than working the plate in fast pitch. First of all, you don't have to be concerned about several things that occur in the fast pitch game. There are no passed balls, wild pitches or hit batters. Batted balls hitting off the batter's foot or bouncing back up and hitting the batter are of little or no concern in the slow pitch game. You can generally get into a relaxed position behind the plate and devote your entire attention to watching the pitcher's delivery and the ball as it passes home plate and/or is swung at and hit. Make certain your feet are shoulder width apart, with the foot closest to the batter slightly forward. This is referred to as the "toe to heel" stance. You are squared with your body facing the pitcher.

#### Set Position

It is important to develop a good consistent strike zone. Staying in an upright position will be very helpful in determining the 12-foot maximum height and especially the 6-foot minimum height required of the pitch. Do not drop to the set position until you have determined the pitch is legal. The umpire should be in the set position when the legal pitch crosses the strike zone.



A pitch that is exactly 12 feet may require a lower set position, to determine if the pitch passes through the strike zone, than a pitch that is exactly 6 feet. If a pitch has been determined illegal, it is not necessary to drop to the set position. Give the delayed dead-ball signal and make a verbal call of 'illegal.' This will be very helpful in making the call on the flat or quick pitch sooner. Once in the set position, stay down on illegal pitch calls, such as the catcher being out of the catcher's box.

### **Calling Balls and Strikes**

In slow pitch, the ball is delivered with an arc at a moderately slow speed. You don't usually have to be concerned with the batter swinging at and missing the pitch, so find a nice comfortable semi-upright position behind home plate where you can always see the entire plate area. This allows you to see where the pitch lands or is caught by the catcher. Any pitched ball, not hit, becomes dead when it touches the ground or the plate.

Since the catcher, in slow pitch, does not need to work from the crouch position, she can normally be found standing up, kneeling down on one knee or standing up and bent over at the waist. A slight movement of the body on an outside pitch is allowed. The catcher will generally take a position directly behind the plate on one knee, or off to the side of the catcher's box, where she can stand and watch the ball coming in. The catcher can catch from any of these positions quite easily, since she has an authorized area 8 1/2 feet wide to roam.

It is important that umpires work from a set position as illustrated and have a relaxed stance where the weight is forward and not back on the heels. The ball is hit and is in play so often it is imperative that umpires be constantly ready to move out from behind the plate to either trail a runner to first base, a fly ball, etc. The slow pitch umpire must be prepared and able to move out at all times. The umpire must also remember to always leave the plate and catcher from the left side.

Calling balls and strikes with consistency is as difficult in slow pitch as in fast pitch for several reasons.

1. The ball is coming in with an arc of approximately 12 feet and there is little or nothing in our daily lives with which to compare it. The umpire must develop a judgment of 12 feet and try to be consistent with it.
2. The pitch is judged to be a ball or strike by where the batter would be standing in a natural hitting stance parallel to the plate. The big problem is that batters don't stand parallel to the plate. Generally, the batter is standing all the way to the rear of the batter's box, which means you must judge the pitch where it crosses the plate, some three feet forward of the batter. Balls bouncing in front of the batter then are often times strikes. Other batters will stand at the front of the batter's box and a pitch that goes over their head can still be a strike.

3. The umpire also must cope with more illegal pitches than in a fast pitch game. Was the release simultaneous with the step? Was the step legal? Was the ball released the first time past the hip? Did the pitcher come to a stop with the ball in front of the body? Was the ball too high or too flat?

Because of the nature of the slow pitch game, umpires will generally call more illegal pitches than in the fast pitch game. Therefore, it is essential to be consistent and always extend the left arm straight out to the side (the delayed dead-ball signal) as soon as a pitch becomes illegal and state 'illegal.' The key to calling balls and strikes successfully in fast pitch or slow pitch is definitely 'consistency.'

The game is only going to be as good as the umpires who work it. The umpire should not be a dictator. Do not let the fans, coaches or players control you. This begins the moment you arrive on the field and administer the pregame inspection of the equipment, field inspection and the ground rules and continues until you leave the field.

Develop a good strong voice in your strike call and a sharp distinct ball call. Remember, balls are not 'nothings.' Every pitch is called a strike or a ball. Umpires don't remain silent when a pitch is ruled a ball. A legal pitch is not called until it is caught or hits the ground. The umpire then delays slightly and makes the call with his/her head facing the pitcher. The umpire should not delay as long on a ball or strike call in slow pitch as he/she would in fast pitch, but again, make certain to wait until the ball is caught or it hits the ground.

The umpire is not to be an announcer or broadcaster on the field. Let the people broadcasting the game describe the pitches as 'a little inside' or 'just outside,' 'ball deep,' etc. All the umpire should say is 'ball' or 'strike.' Describing the pitch is a cop out for an umpire. If a coach or player wants to know where the pitch was, they will ask, and then you can inform them. Otherwise, use only a slight head movement toward the location of the pitch.

## PLATE MECHANICS — GENERAL

### Timing

It is important that an umpire develop proper timing and rhythm in making decisions. It is not only important to know when to drop to the set position, but it is equally important to develop a definite rhythm in making all calls and your rhythm should not vary. Only the emphasis of various calls will change.

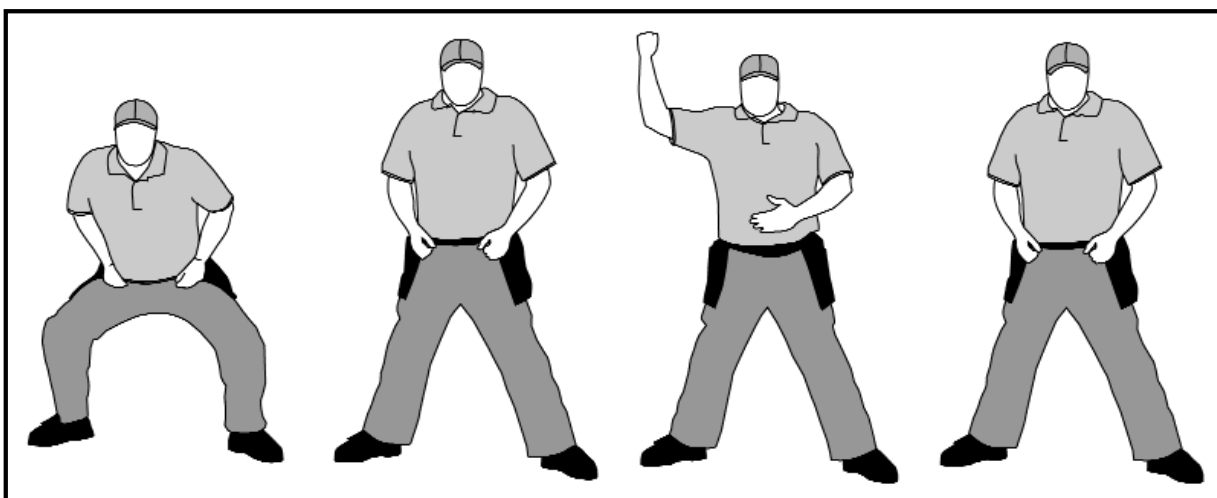
It is said that the plate umpire sets the tempo and controls the game. If an umpire is going to control and set the tempo of the game, he/she must first be in control of him/herself. An umpire who makes calls quickly on every pitch will appear to be guessing. Timing must be deliberate, consistent and slow enough to ensure the entire play has been seen and that it is over.

**Strikes**

Everyone appreciates the umpire who has developed proper timing in administering decisions as a plate umpire. This development lends more to setting the tempo and controlling the game than any other facet of umpiring. Suggested guidelines are:

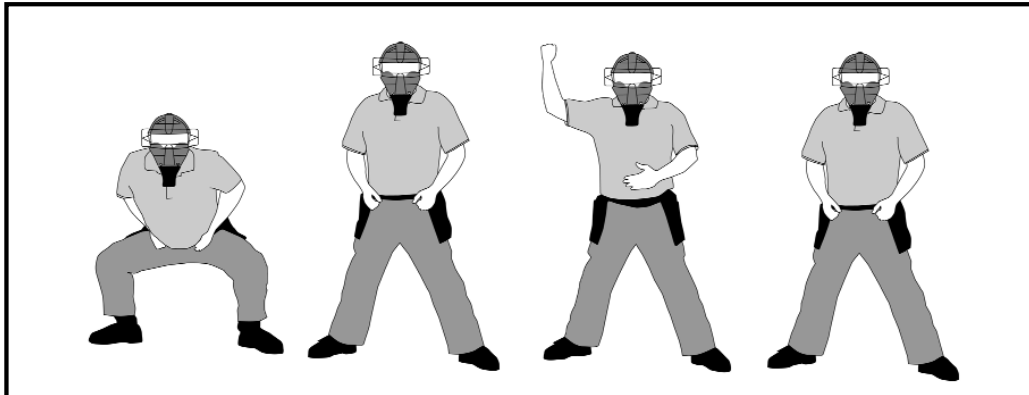
1. Drop to the set position. (See fast and slow pitch plate mechanics.) Allow the pitch to cross home plate. Do not make a call until after the catcher has caught the pitch. Even though your decision is made as the ball crosses home plate, do not make your call until the ball is in the catcher's glove/mitt.
2. You may verbalize the strike call while in the set position and then stand and signal the call or you may stand, signal, and verbalize the call all at once. Do not move your feet from your original stance position until the signal is complete. Use only one technique throughout the entire game.
3. In signaling a strike, bring your left hand into your body at, or slightly above, the belt area.
4. Raise your right hand to a 90-degree "hammer" position. The hammer should be made with the forearm and the upper-arm forming a 90-degree right angle with the elbow slightly forward and the fist facing your ear. With your peripheral vision, you should be able to see your elbow out of the corner of your eye.
5. Drop your arms to the sides, step back, relax between pitches and await your next call. Never take your eyes off the pitcher.

**CALLING STRIKES**





Slow pitch (bottom of previous page) and fast pitch (below) are identical in the mechanics of calling a strike.



### Balls

The procedure for calling 'BALLS' is as follows:

1. Drop to the set position. Allow the pitch to cross home plate and do not verbalize a call until after the ball is in the catcher's glove/mitt.
2. Follow (track) the ball into the catcher's glove with your nose.
3. While in the set position, make a crisp verbal call, 'BALL.'
4. Stand, step back, relax and await your next call. Balls should always be called from the down or set position and before any move is made toward the upright position.

### Count

The plate umpire is responsible for keeping the proper count. Relay the count periodically by giving the number of balls on the batter with consecutive fingers of the left hand and the number of strikes with consecutive fingers on the right hand. A closed fist indicates zero. In addition, give the count verbally, always saying the number of balls first.

How often the count is given depends on a number of situations. If the field is equipped with a scoreboard, it is only necessary to give the count when requested by a player or coach or to correct the scoreboard if it is incorrect. If the scoreboard is incorrect; try to correct it as inconspicuously as possible because the scorer is an official of the game and should be treated accordingly.

If there is no scoreboard, the count should be given: 1) when requested, 2) after a delay in the normal flow of the game, or 3) whenever the plate umpire feels the next pitch would create a change, i.e., three balls and/or two strikes on the batter. These are situations where the next pitch could be a base on balls or a strikeout. This simply alerts the defensive and offensive teams of the game situation as well as alerting all umpires to be ready.

**Ball Rotation Procedure**

According to NFHS procedure, the current game ball is in play until such time as it goes out of play. However, the pitcher does have a choice of balls at the start of each inning. In addition, if both balls do not get into play in the first half of the first inning, the pitcher in the bottom half of the first inning must throw the unused ball. No choice is offered.

Each pitcher has a choice of game balls at the start of each half inning, but this does not permit the pitcher having both balls for trial purposes before making a choice. It means that after the inning is completed, the ball should be returned to the vicinity of the pitching plate by the team leaving the field or by the umpire. The pitcher taking the field now has a ball to start the next half inning. The pitcher may request the other ball from the plate umpire prior to the first warm-up pitch. The pitcher may not hold both balls at one time.

Before the plate umpire relinquishes the second ball, the pitcher must first hand or toss the ball presently in the game to the plate umpire. Then and only then should the umpire toss the second ball into the game for play. The pitcher has now made a choice and must pitch that ball.

If the umpire deems any ball unacceptable, the ball should be replaced and removed from the game.

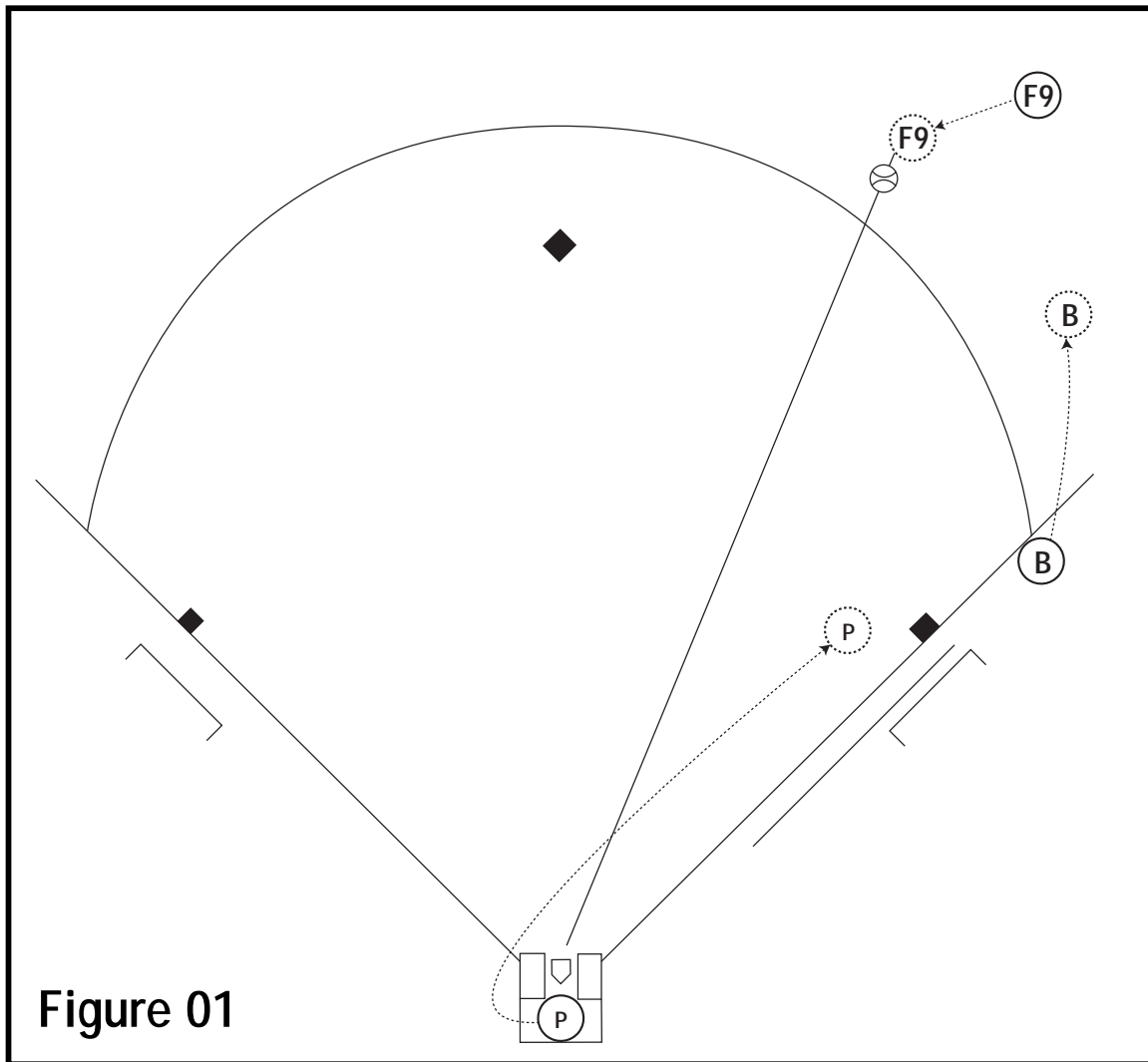
**Fly Balls**

The plate umpire calls ALL fly balls as well as rendering all decisions on Fair/Foul and Catch/No Catch, except when the base umpire(s) TURN THEIR BACK to the infield and goes to the outfield to make the call. Once the base umpire turns his/her back to the infield, it is THE BASE UMPIRE'S CALL, fair/foul or caught or not caught. The base umpire should NOT RETURN. If a base umpire does not turn to go to the outfield, he/she should NOT make a call. The plate umpire should not mirror the signal given by the base umpire on fair/foul or catch/no catch.

Any time there is a fly ball or possible trapped ball situation, an umpire should go out. Any time there is an umpire positioned up the middle in the three-umpire system, that umpire will not go out on a fly ball down either foul line. In three-umpire system, an umpire positioned on the line at the time of the pitch, should go out on a fly ball down that line, fair or foul.

Any time there is a batted ball hit near the fence or a sinking line drive, regardless of the number of runners, an umpire should go out.

In making calls on fly balls, especially on possible balls that are questionable to whether they will be caught, the umpire should NOT go directly to the play. Move to the best angle to the catch. Move parallel to the flight of the ball to pick up your best angle on the catch/no catch. Give a clear signal and use a loud voice to indicate catch/no catch.



### Fair and Foul Balls

On fly balls near the baselines, the priority call is first FAIR or FOUL, then OUT or SAFE. When a routine fly ball near the line that everyone expects to be caught is dropped, the umpire must immediately indicate whether the ball is fair or foul. Caught fly balls have no fair or foul status, they are simply signaled OUT. Dropped fly balls that are obviously fair should only be signaled NO CATCH (SAFE); and obvious fouls should only to be signaled DEAD BALL.

When no field umpire is stationed at either foul line and a ball is hit into the out-field near a foul line, or against the fence or over the fence, the plate umpire must go out as far as possible and get the best look at the ball. Ideally you should go at least half way up the line, straddle the line, and come to a complete stop.

Batted balls hit down the foul lines should be called in a very decisive manner as follows: on all foul balls, not caught, the DEAD-BALL/FOUL-BALL signal is given. On all caught fly balls, the ball remains live and the umpire signals and calls OUT. The voice is used only on foul balls and out calls; never on dropped fair balls.

Batted balls hit out of the park near the foul lines should be called very decisively, so there can be no question about the umpire's decision on the play. For balls that will obviously clear the fence, the umpire should not go too far down the line. It is better to stay back and be motionless to get a good view of the ball in relation to the foul pole.

Umpires are cautioned to judge balls hit for distance directly down the foul lines fair or foul as the ball passes the point where the outfield fence or barrier and the foul pole join. The umpire should not judge the ball fair or foul before it reaches this point. The plate umpire is responsible for all FAIR or FOUL bounding balls over first or third base regardless if a base umpire is positioned on the foul line.

### **Leaving the Plate Area Left of Catcher and Trailing the Batter-Runner Toward First Base**

Develop the habit of leaving the plate area from the left of the catcher. The catcher normally leaves the plate area to the right side as this is the shortest route to back up plays at first base.

Leaving the plate area on the left side helps to avoid any collision with the catcher.

With no runners on base or a runner on first base only, and a play at first base, leave the plate area on the left side and follow the batter-runner toward first base in fair ground. Go 15 to 20 feet toward first base and come to a stop slightly inside the foul line to observe the play at first.

This position will enable you to assist the base umpire with:

1. A possible pulled foot.
2. A possible juggled catch.
3. A swiped tag near the base.

This position will enable you to rule on:

1. Collisions by the catcher and batter-runner.
2. Violations of the three-foot lane.
3. Overthrows and blocked balls.
4. Tags made by the catcher or any infielder on the batter-runner before the start of the three-foot lane (this call belongs to the base umpire after the three-foot lane).
5. Plays at first base if the base umpire turns to go to the outfield. If this happens, continue on toward first base to get a good angle on the play.

When moving toward first base with a runner on first base, be aware of a possible play at third base with the lead runner. The lead runner at third base is the plate umpire's responsibility. After going one-third of the way down the first base line, the plate umpire should move directly toward third base for the possible play there.

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**Passed Balls (Fast Pitch), Wild Pitches (Fast Pitch) and Pop-Flys to the Screen (Fast Pitch and Slow Pitch)**

Do not watch the ball once it has been popped-up, or once the ball passes the catcher on a passed ball or wild pitch. Think in terms of priorities. Your first priority is to avoid a collision with the catcher and allow her to make her play.

Move back as you are removing your mask and watch the catcher's shoulders. The catcher cannot move in any direction without shoulder movement. Pivot out of her way, clear the area and then find the ball.

Once you have found the ball, your priorities become the backstop and the foul line. If the ball goes back to the screen, follow the play to the fence to observe the possible trap against the screen, the ball becoming blocked, or the ball leaving the field of play.

If the pop fly is near the line, the first priority is 'fair or foul', then 'out or safe' so move to the appropriate position on the line.

If there is a runner at third base, take a position in the rear-most corner of the right-hand batter's box for a possible play at the plate. If the ball is at the backstop, move as the play dictates. Keep your eyes on the ball, there will be no play without it. Be sure to avoid crossing running and throwing lanes.

**Conferences**

It is the plate umpire's responsibility to enforce the rules governing conferences both offensive and defensive.

When a conference is charged, the plate umpire shall inform the team, either offensive or defensive "That is a charged conference!"

The offensive conference may include any number of runners, players, coaches or the batter.

The defensive conference is charged only when the coach or other team representative from the dugout requests 'time' and communicates with any player in the game. Yelling from the dugout area is not a conference.

A conference shall NOT be charged if the offensive team confers with a batter or runner when the defensive team requests a time out for a conference. Nor is it a charged conference if the defensive team takes advantage of the offensive team having a conference.

However, once the umpire instructs the team that is charged with the conference to "Play Ball," both teams must immediately play ball or be in jeopardy of having a conference called on them and enforcing the appropriate penalty.

**Third Base Calls**

In making calls at third base, the plate umpire should stay in foul territory halfway between home and third base (Figure 02), while watching the play develop. If there is a call to be made at third base, cut inside the diamond about two-thirds of the way down to third, move in about 10 to 12 feet from the base and

make the call.

If the ball should get away from the third base player, it is normally going into foul territory and, from the inside position, the umpire avoids any collision with the runner rounding third and is in a position to take the runner to the plate from the inside of the diamond. This is another example of the inside-outside theory.

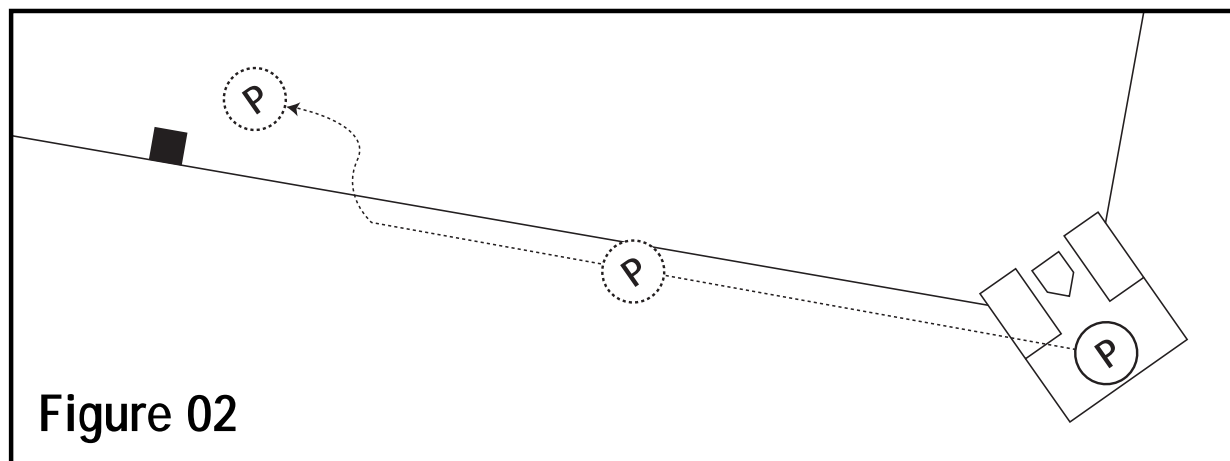


Figure 02

**Rundowns**

When a runner is caught in a rundown, it is important that the covering umpire move to get the best perspective of both ends of the play. The umpire should be a minimum of 15 feet from the runner and move parallel to the baseline. It is not necessary to run back and forth with the runner, but the umpire must follow the ball. When the actual tag is attempted, move quickly toward or around the play to get the best angle. Be alert for obstruction. One umpire covers most rundowns because they happen quickly.

With a single runner in a rundown, two umpires should 'bracket' the play as follows:

If the runner is between first and second base, the plate umpire should take the 'trail' position, closest to first base. The base umpire should take the 'lead' position at second base. The plate umpire should be inside the diamond while the base umpire should be outside the diamond.

If the runner is between second and third base, the plate umpire should take the lead position closest to third inside the diamond while the base umpire takes the trail position closest to second base outside the diamond.

If the rundown is between third base and home plate, the plate umpire will take the lead position nearest home plate OUTSIDE the diamond, while the base umpire takes the trail position nearest third base INSIDE the diamond.

In all cases the umpire should communicate, "I've got the lead," "I've got this end," etc. This communication is critical to being able to team on the call, rather than making a possible double call. When two umpires are covering a rundown, the direction in which this runner is moving at the time of the tag will dictate which umpire will make the call.

### Run Counts (Time Play)

It is important that umpires work together on situations where the third out of the inning is a tag play with a runner about to cross home plate. The base umpire must make his/her call loud and clear to assist the plate umpire in making his/her determination. This is one situation when the out call on the bases must be made without any unnecessary delay.

The plate umpire should immediately and without hesitation indicate the "Run counts" or the "Run does not count" and inform the scorekeeper. The umpire should know a run does NOT count if the third out of the inning is a result of:

1. A batter-runner being put out prior to reaching first base.
2. A force out.
3. An appeal at a base to which a runner was forced to advance.
4. A runner being put out by a tag or live-ball appeal play prior to the lead runner touching home plate.
5. A preceding runner is declared out on an appeal play. NOTE: An appeal can be made after the third out in order to nullify a run.

### Tag Plays at the Plate

Basically, there are two positions for making calls on tag plays at the plate: 1) when returning from third base to make a call from inside the diamond (Figure 03) and 2) when the play is coming from fair territory or a throw from the outfield to make a call from the outside (Figure 04).

**1. Inside the Diamond.** In returning from third base, the plate umpire should stay inside the diamond, moving parallel to the baseline and assume a position 10 to 12 feet from home plate and 90 degrees from the path of the runner.

Keep your weight distributed on the balls of your feet, move in on the play as it develops, find the ball and make the call (Figure 03).

The reason you should remain inside the diamond in returning to home plate deals with the inside-outside theory. On a play at third that allows the runner to advance, the ball could easily wind up in foul territory. If you remain inside the diamond as you retreat to the plate, all four elements will remain within your view — the ball, the defense, the runner and the base.

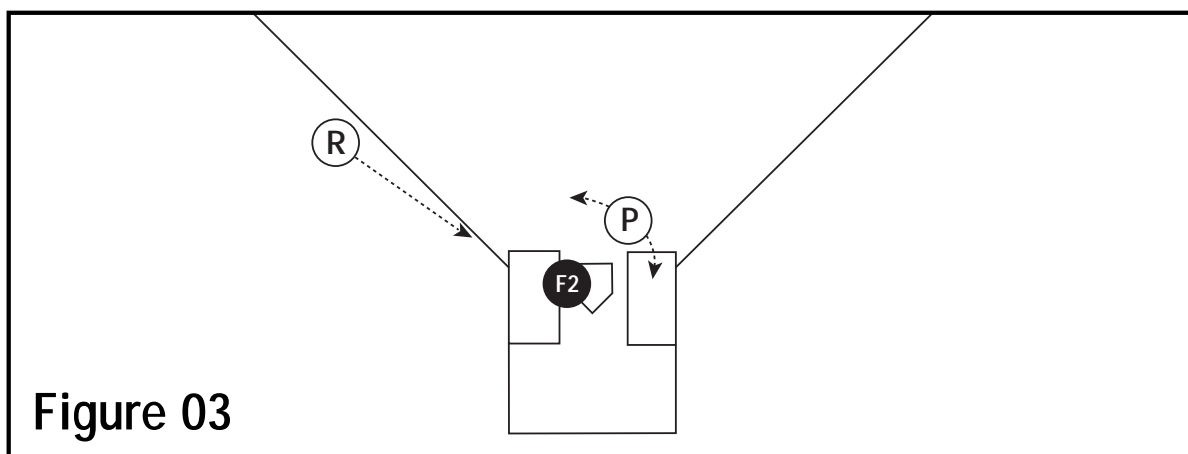
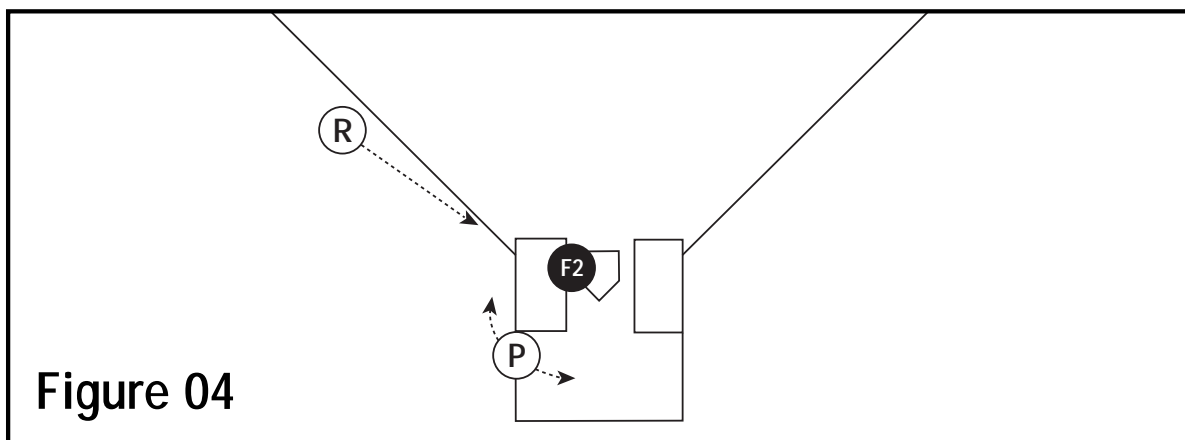


Figure 03

2. **Outside the diamond.** On plays at the plate where the ball is coming from fair territory or a throw from the outfield, the plate umpire should assume a position in foul territory, 90 degrees from the path of the runner and 10 to 12 feet from home plate (Figure 04).



Keep your weight distributed on the balls of your feet, move in as the play develops, find the ball and make the call accordingly.

Due to the critical nature of the play at home, move in to find the ball. If you can't find it, ask the player to "show me the ball," point at it with your left hand and sell it accordingly.

### Appeal at the Plate

If a runner misses home plate and the catcher misses the tag, the umpire should hesitate slightly to allow the players to finish the play, either the runner reaches to tag the plate or the catcher reaches to tag the runner. If no tag is made, the umpire should declare the runner **SAFE**. If a proper appeal play is made by the fielder, by either touching the runner or the plate with the ball prior to the runner touching the plate, the umpire should then declare the runner **OUT**.

There are two reasons why we advocate this procedure: 1) We do not want to tip either team that the play may not be over, and 2) a runner is assumed **SAFE** until put out. If proper appeal is not made, the runner is **SAFE**.

### Difficult Situations

The following are difficult situations to be handled by the plate umpire:

1. A batter hit by the pitch, including situations where a pitch is up and in, where it could hit the batter then the bat or hit the bat and then the batter, or the pitch that hits the hands.
2. A batter hitting a batted ball a second time.
3. Batted balls hitting off the batter's body.

The rules governing these situations are relatively simple. Often the umpire will add to the confusion by not handling the situation properly. In most cases prop-



er mechanics can avoid further complications more than any other factor.

Difficult situations call for definite action. Stay calm, make an emphatic dead-ball call, with arms high in the air. In all of the above situations, the play results in a dead ball.

The proper DEAD-BALL call serves many purposes. First of all, it kills the play to avoid further confusion. Secondly, it gives you, the umpire, the opportunity to clear the cobwebs and make the proper call.

There is no hurry once you make the dead-ball call. It is imperative to call DEAD BALL and kill the play immediately, but at this point a slight hesitation allows you the opportunity to think the play through and make the proper ruling.

All too often a well-umpired game falls by the wayside because an umpire fails to use proper mechanics in handling difficult situations and simply adds to the confusion. It is the handling of these and other difficult situations that separate excellent umpires from mediocre umpires.

### Dead-Ball Situations

**Hit by Pitch.** In fast pitch, if a pitched ball hits a batter, the award is first base, providing an attempt is made to avoid the pitch and provided there was no swing or it was not in the strike zone.

The hands are not part of the bat!

Any time the batter is hit by a pitched ball, the ball is DEAD. In slow pitch the ball is dead and no awards are granted.

**Hitting the Ball a Second Time.** If the bat is in the batter's hands and the batter is not out of the batter's box (no foot touching the ground completely outside the lines) when a fair ball is contacted a second time, it is a DEAD BALL and FOUL. The ball is DEAD and the batter is OUT when: 1) the batter, while holding the bat, makes contact with the ball while she is out of the batter's box; 2) the batter intentionally hits the ball a second time; or 3) a discarded bat hits the ball on or over fair territory.

You have often heard the phrase, "Never guess a player out." If the batter (standing in the batter's box) tops the ball, it hits the plate and it comes straight up immediately after hitting the plate and hits the batter's bat, a foul ball is ruled. Consider your situation. You are behind the catcher, four or five feet behind home plate. Not a very good spot to determine a fair-batted ball that has been hit a second time. If you have any doubt as to whether it was a fair ball when it was hit a second time, it is a FOUL BALL – never guess a player out. On the other hand, if you know it was a fair ball, you have an OUT. The key is the batter's foot in relation to the batter's box line. Come up with a good dead-ball signal and a loud DEAD BALL, then point to where the bat hit the ball and make the OUT call. The important thing at this point is that you take charge and sell the call.

**Ball Off Batter's Body.** If a batted fair ball hits off the batter's body, the batter is OUT, unless she is in the batter's box. If the ball is in foul territory when it hits the batter's body, it is a FOUL BALL.

This play has to be handled immediately and properly. Many times it is difficult for the plate umpire to detect. It is important that the base umpire be alert in this situation and be a good partner; take the plate umpire off the hook.

It's embarrassing to have the batter hit a ball off the foot while in the batter's box, have the pitcher pick up a slow roller and throw the runner out at first base, only to find that the batter did not even leave the batter's box because everyone knew it was a FOUL BALL except the umpiring crew.

The proper call is DEAD BALL, followed by FOUL BALL or BATTER IS OUT. Because it is the plate umpire's responsibility, the base umpire when helping the plate umpire, should declare DEAD BALL, and then should hesitate slightly to allow the plate umpire opportunity to make the call. After the hesitation, if the plate umpire has not made the call, the base umpire should respond with a FOUL-BALL call and take the plate umpire off the hook. The base umpire should never call a batter out from 70 or 80 feet away.

Remember, this is a tough call for the plate umpire. You have to sell it. If you have any doubt, it must have hit the batter while in the batter's box. Again, never guess an out.

**Checked-Swing.** Probably one of the toughest situations for the plate umpire to handle alone is the "checked-swing" situation. The reason it is difficult is that the plate umpire has to determine whether the pitch was in the strike zone and if not, did the batter swing at the pitch? And it has to be done at the same time.

If that isn't difficult enough, add to the matter that in many cases the catcher is coming up and may block the umpire's vision.

Think in terms of priorities. First, was the pitch in the strike zone? If so, it's simply a strike. Did the batter swing at the pitch? If so, it's also a strike. Second, it is the plate umpire's call. If in doubt, ask for help from the base umpire before making a call. Do not call it a strike unless you know it was in the strike zone or the batter swung.

Once the umpire has called the pitch a strike, he/she has done so because he/she knows the pitch was in the strike zone or the batter swung. Never go for help once you have called the pitch a strike. If the pitch has been called a strike, it will remain a strike. If the umpire calls the pitch a ball and the catcher requests help, ask for it. It is not a weakness to go for help. If in doubt, go to your partner for help before they ask you.

Receive help by removing your mask as you step out from behind the catcher and point to your umpire partner. If you are working a three-umpire system, step away from the batter and, if the batter is right-handed, go to the first base umpire. If the batter is left-handed, go to the third base umpire. Ask for help on the line

away from the batter and work inside to an open umpire.

Normally there are four areas which constitute whether or not the batter has swung at the ball or checked the swing: 1) rolling the wrist, 2) swinging through the ball and bringing or drawing the bat back, unless drawing it back occurs before the pitch gets to the bat, 3) the bat being out in front of the body, or 4) the batter makes an attempt to hit the pitch.

If you rule a checked-swing a strike, let everyone know that it was a STRIKE because the batter swung at the pitch. Point at the batter with your left hand for right-handed batters and your right hand for left-handed batters, while saying, "SWING!" and then give the strike signal. Don't let there be any doubt that the batter went after the pitch.

### **Time-Out — Suspension of Play**

To indicate to the pitcher not to start to pitch, the umpire should raise the right hand if there is a right-handed batter and the left hand if there is a left handed batter, with the palm facing the pitcher. No pitch shall be declared if the pitcher pitches while the umpire is holding play.

TIME-OUT shall be called for the purpose of suspending play. The proper signal is both hands, extended high above the head with a verbal call. As opposed to the holding up play, the TIME-OUT call/signal should be forceful, distinct and very apparent to the fact that play has been suspended. A distinct PLAY BALL should follow TIME-OUT when play is resumed.

If a batter has one foot in the batter's box and one foot out, the batter is not ready for a pitch to be thrown. Hold up play under these conditions. Once the batter has both feet in the batter's box she should remain in the batter's box until the pitch is delivered. In order for her to step out, there must be a legitimate reason and the umpire should grant her time. If the pitcher has started the pitch, and the batter has stepped out of the box and has not been granted time, the pitch is called a strike regardless of its location.

### **Catcher Obstruction**

Catcher obstruction is an act by the catcher that hinders or prevents a batter from striking at or hitting a pitched ball. The award for catcher's obstruction is the batter being awarded first base and other runners advancing only if forced. If all runners (including the batter-runner) have advanced one base, the obstruction is ignored and the option not given.

When an award for catcher obstruction is in order, the offensive team shall be given the option of accepting the play or the award for catcher obstruction.

Catcher obstruction is a delayed dead ball and can occur during the back swing as well as the forward swing of the bat.

Any time the contact is prior to the pitch, call DEAD BALL, move around in front of the plate, clean it and give both players time to get set.

**Illegal Pitch**

In regards to illegal pitching, we are not concerned in this manual with the rules and types but the mechanics.

Who calls illegal pitches? Either umpire may; however, the plate umpire should call the timing elements, stepping outside the 24-inch width (Fast Pitch Only) and delivery such as side arm, etc. The base umpire calls all violations in front or to the rear of the pitcher's plate, crow-hop, leap or starting from off the pitcher's plate front and rear.

The illegal pitch is called when it becomes an illegal pitch. Use the DELAYED DEAD-BALL signal and call "illegal" loud enough for nearby players to hear you. Do not call time until the pitch has reached the plate or the play on a batted ball has been completed.

**Procedure on Home Run Balls**

The last thing to cover is the home run that goes out of the ballpark. Players from the dugout should not run on the playing field to congratulate the batter between third and home plate. Tell the players to stay back until all runners touch home plate. The plate umpire can do this by motioning them back with his/her arm and by telling them to "stay back until the batter touches the plate." As soon as the batter passes third (and not before) get the next game ball out of your ball bag, and as soon as you watch the batter-runner touch home plate, give the ball to the catcher to throw to the pitcher. After doing this, swing around to where you are facing the backstop and crisply dust off home plate and return to your position behind the catcher by going through the batter's box opposite the next batter.

**HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE PLATE UMPIRE**

1. HUSTLE.
2. Obtain the batting order from both head coaches at the pregame meeting, review it making sure there are no errors in names, numbers or positions. Discuss the Ground Rules at this time so both coaches and the umpires are all in agreement.
3. The plate umpire should always handle introductions of all umpires to the head coaches and other team personnel during the pregame conference.
4. Keep the plate clean and when dusting the plate, turn your back toward the pitcher. Always brush the plate with a lot of pep and snap.
5. Take the time spent in brushing the plate to warn the catcher or batter when necessary.
6. Say "ball" only. If it is ball four, then emphasis should be placed on the "four."
7. Never say, "Ball four, take your base," and don't point to first base.

8. Say "strike" only. If it is strike three, then emphasis should be placed on the "three".
9. Never say, "Strike three, you're out."
10. A verbal or silent strike signal is permissible when a batter swings at a pitch and misses.
11. Emphasize the call when calling a half-swing (Fast Pitch Only) or if a batter takes a called third strike at a crucial time in the game.
12. A big third strike call is important but don't intimidate or embarrass the batters with the call. Use a signal and voice that reflects the importance, difficulty, and/or closeness of the play.
13. When the batter swings and misses on the third strike, the umpire shall give a non-verbal, routine hammer for strike three.
14. Do not verbally describe a pitch, or use a hand signal.
15. Obvious foul balls back to the screen or over the fence should only be signaled. No verbal call is necessary.

## Section

## 3

## *The Field Umpire*

### Technique on the Bases

Like the plate umpire, the base umpire must bear down on every pitch and be ready for any play. Watch for illegal pitches. Should a foul fly be hit in territory not adjacent to the plate, cover the fielder as closely as the base situation permits. Be alert for check-swings or a hit batter. In fast pitch, be ready to cover the catcher's attempts to pick runners off bases. Be alert between pitches on the bases. The umpire must always keep in mind that umpiring — at the plate or on the bases — demands complete concentration, undivided attention and full energy until the final out.

Be on the play at all times, work your angles on the bases. Do not leave yourself open on a play and do not let the coach call the play for you. On a close play, sell the call; but on a wide-open play, a routine signal is all that is necessary.

Be alert at all times. Call your plays from a set position and be emphatic. Follow the ball at all times. Know where the ball is and anticipate where the next play will be. If a ball is hit to the outfield and there appears to be trouble, go out on it. If a ball is driven out of the park, to the best of your judgment be sure you know where and when the ball leaves the park.

### Decisions on Bases

The base umpire indicates decisions by simultaneously vocal and manual expression. Umpires signal safe when a runner has beaten a play. They punctuate a vigorous safe signal with a verbal "SAFE" call. In calling a runner out, the

motion of the arm is combined with the word "OUT."

As it is with the calling of balls and strikes, the volume of voice and force of gesture employed should fit the importance and closeness of the play. The base umpire's decisions may be classified as close or easy. A close decision deserves all the vocal force and power of gesture at hand. In the language of the trade, the umpire should let it out on a close play. An easy decision is given by hand for plays so obvious that the plays call themselves. The signal is merely an acknowledgment or announcement of the safe or out.

Attempted steals in fast pitch, attempted base stretching on hits, close force plays, most rundowns, almost all tag plays are close plays and the ruling should be rendered accordingly. Should an umpire, after appeal, rule a runner out, the overhand out call is in order.

For fairly close force plays, wide-open tag plays, and run-downs, the easy decision call, with medium emphasis as to voice and gesture is called for. Keep full power in reserve for the really close calls.

The 'out-safe' or 'safe-out' calls are a result of poor timing. If you give it that slight hesitation and allow the mental image or 'instant replay' to take place, you will never have another 'out-safe' call in your career. HOLD IT-SELL IT! (You can't have good judgment without good timing. They go hand-in-hand.)

Should the batter of a ground ball be thrown out at first base by five feet or the leading runner be forced out by a wide margin on potential double-plays, only a routine out is necessary.

An obvious easy decision that could be routine must be handled as a close sell call. (i.e., a fielder failing to touch a base for a force out, failing to tag a runner sliding into the base, or missing a swipe tag.)

(Fast Pitch) On attempts to pick runners off base, a routine signal may also be given, unless the play is close, then use the "SELL CALL."

Any time the base umpire's back is turned on the plate umpire on a deep fly ball or a possible trapped ball, the base umpire has all responsibility for 'fair and foul' and 'out and safe' decisions on that ball. A base umpire who goes to the outfield should not return; except to help on a rundown or a play ahead, never on the initial call at the base. This could cause two umpires to make a decision on the same play. Even if both decisions are the same, it looks bad.

The proper angle will have the ball, the base, the defensive player, and the runner in view. When watching the tag on a slide, make sure the base is in view. In watching force outs, keep your eye on the base and watch for the ball to hit the glove/mitt or let the ball take you into the play. Note: Make sure you know from where the ball is being thrown. Never take your eyes off the player throwing the ball until the ball is released and then let the ball take you into the play.

Hustle is an integral part of good base umpiring technique. In essence, it is a principle of good umpiring. Aimless running about is not hustle-at least, not productive hustle. The polished base umpire quickly finds the position for the best

possible angle of the play, yet the spectators overlook the umpire's whereabouts until the decision is rendered.

### Base Calls

There are two basic calls an umpire must master if he/she is going to establish themselves as a top notch umpire: 1) The force play, and 2) the tag play.

For the purpose of discussion, we will discuss the force play at first base as the principles involved apply to all force plays.

### The Force Play

Again, the play at first base. As the fielder is getting into position to field the ground ball the base umpire should be moving into one of the recommended positions described earlier. As the fielder fields the ball, the umpire should stop and be **no closer than 18 feet** from first base. As the fielder releases the throw, then and only then does the umpire turn into the base. (Let the ball take you into the play... a play cannot be made without the ball.) At this time, the umpire should concentrate on the base, where a) the runner touches it, b) the first base player is on it when the ball is caught, and c) the ball is not juggled by the fielder.

An important consideration for the umpire at this point is if proper positioning has been maintained (**no closer than 18 feet** from the base), while concentrating on the base, watch the runner coming down the line and at the same time actually see the ball being caught by the first base player. A position too close to the base restricts the angle, closes the range of vision, and may cause the umpire to get caught in the action.

Another element in making your decision is sound. While concentrating on the 'base' and allowing peripheral vision to aid us in seeing the play develop, the sound of the ball hitting the glove/mitt helps determine which arrived first, the ball or the player's foot hitting the base. Never take your eye off the ball or depend entirely on the sound of the ball hitting the glove/mitt for crowd noise could distract you or drown out the sound of the ball hitting the glove/mitt.

If proper mechanics are followed, the only consideration left to insure proper timing is a slight hesitation to allow a clear and mental picture to develop, insuring the proper call.

Remember, we are talking about a hesitation, not a delay. At one time it was thought that any delay in an umpire making a decision was a weakness, it even showed indecisiveness on the part of the umpire. This is not true at all, in fact, it shows that you are in control of yourself and it is the manner in which you handle yourself that is more convincing.

Consideration must be given toward being consistent in the time it takes to announce your calls. If you are quick on every call and then have an exaggerated hesitation on one particular call, it will appear to the players and fans that you are undecided and guessing. Slow your timing down and don't make a call until the

play is completed but be consistent with your timing.

Once the umpire has observed the play come to its completion, has made their hesitation and knows the outcome of the play, it is time to make the decision that will be made known by the out or safe signal.

It is important that we understand the basic elements and how they relate to each other. For example, we discussed the basic position, proper distance and how it relates to peripheral vision in setting up your timing. If you end up in a position where you are too close on a force play and you are concentrating on the bag, you may have to physically look up to see if the ball is caught and then look back down to see if the first base player is on the base, if there was an errant throw. While this is happening the runner may have already passed the base while you were looking up at the catch. If proper distance is maintained, peripheral vision will allow you to see the entire play, making your job considerably easier.

**There are two basic positions for calling force plays at first base:**

**1. Fair Ground Theory:** On all ground balls hit into the infield, the base umpire should move inside the diamond, observing the ground ball to a position which would be an imaginary line drawn through the corners of first base and at the same distance as you were positioned at the start of the pitch. This position allows maximum use of peripheral vision, a basic to good timing and sound judgment. This allows the umpire the ability to move to the foul line for a possible tag play (Figure 05).

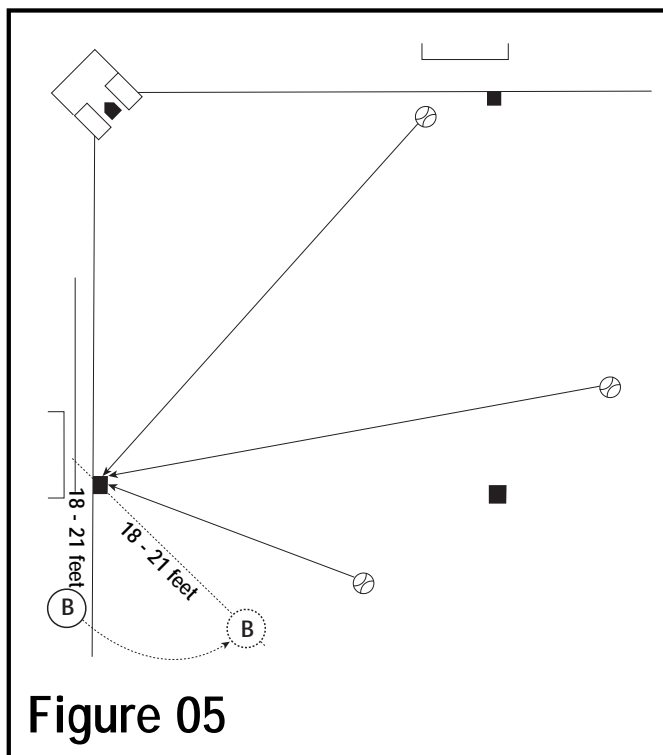
Move inside the diamond, observing the defensive player fielding the ground ball, to a position not to exceed an imaginary line drawn through the corner of first base and at the same distance as you were positioned at the start of the pitch. Stop

as the fielder fields the ball and let the throw turn you into the play.

On a double play, take one step parallel towards second base (step with the right foot and push off with the right foot) then quickly run parallel down the line to first base. Don't take your head and eyes off the ball and let the flight of the ball turn your head and body into the play at first base.

The four basic elements an umpire should keep in front of them and unobstructed as much as possible are:

1. The ball.
2. The defensive player making the play.



**Figure 05**



3. The batter-runner or runner.
4. The base, the area where all four elements meet.

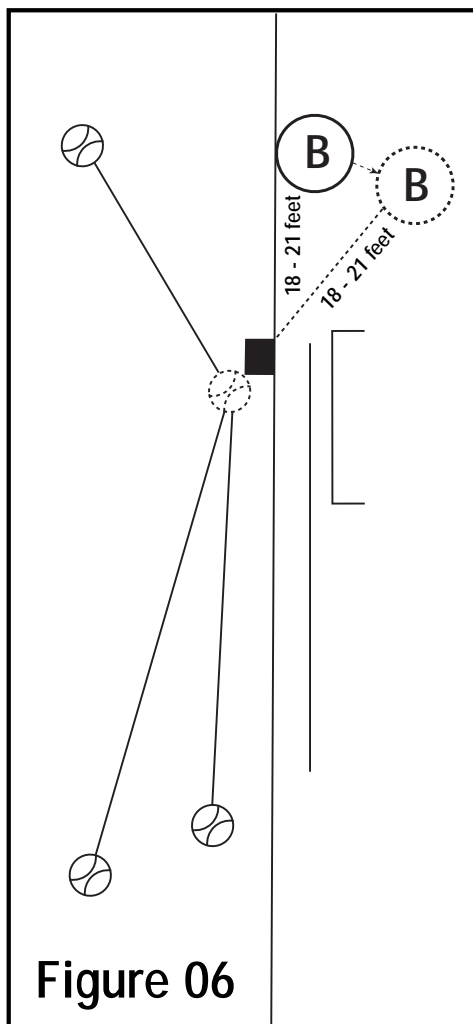
**2. Foul Ground Theory:** The 'foul ground theory' should be used as an exception when you can't get to fair territory. Only on balls hit to the first base player, the second base player extreme left, or to a short right field, where the throw is coming to the first base player from near the foul line, the umpire should stay outside the diamond in foul territory and move up the line to make the call (Figure 06). Move no farther than a line 45 degrees through first base. As the outside position is very vulnerable, it is preferred whenever possible, that the umpire move inside the diamond unless forced to stay outside by the throw to the first base player or another fielder coming from near the first base foul line.

Stay outside the diamond in foul territory and move off the line to make the call. Move no farther than an imaginary line drawn through the corners of first base.

Only on balls hit to the first base player, the second base player extreme left or to the outfield where the throw is coming to first base.

This outside position should be used only when the play dictates.

From this foul ground position it is often difficult to determine whether the first



**Figure 06**

base player juggled the ball or pulled a foot. Other problems created by this position are: a) all too often the umpire ends up in a position too close to the play which in turn affects his/her peripheral vision, timing and eventually, judgment, b) a coach legally in the coach's box must be instructed and sometimes assisted in vacating a portion of the box if you need the room, c) a possible overthrow might hit you if you are in the direct line of a throw that goes uncaught, and d) it puts the umpire behind the runner who may advance to second base.

Most of these difficulties can be overcome by not crowding the play. Maintain your distance from the base if possible for freedom of movement and peripheral vision.

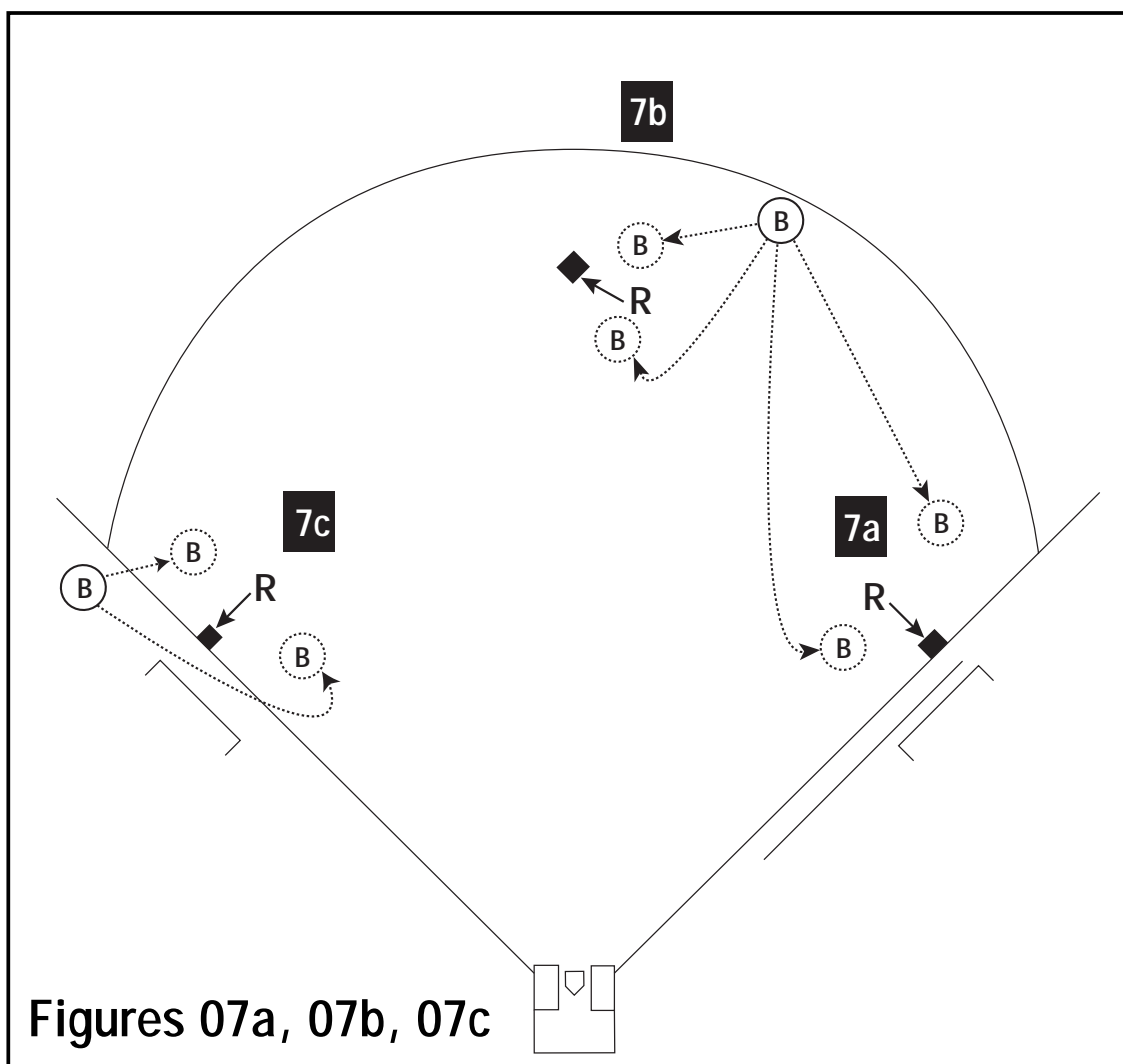
Also remember if there is an errant throw it is your responsibility to quickly get inside the diamond to take the runner into second base if the plate umpire has not come up the middle to cover the play.

### Tag Plays

Many of the elements discussed on force plays also apply to tag plays, such as position, angle and peripheral vision especially as the play develops. However, the major difference is in the fact that on tag plays you should complete the call with your nose right on the tag.

As the play develops, stay back; keep all the elements in front of you — the ball, the defense, the runner and the base, as well as the area where they all come together.

Now, as the runner and the ball near that tag area, move in. Get about 12 to 15 feet and let the play carry you into the tag. Normally the best angle on tag plays is 90 degrees from the path of the runner just short of the base at the point of contact (Figure 07a, 07b and 07c).



The angle may move as the tag and slides are made. When speaking of an unobstructed angle, this means never position yourself so that the defensive player or runner is between you and the actual tag. The umpire must also move to keep an unobstructed view.

Once you have allowed the play to develop, move in on the play, concentrate on whether the tag was made prior to the runner reaching the base or the runner beating the tag to the base. If the runner is in before the tag, the play is over, providing she doesn't slide past the base. Hesitate slightly, then make your call, SAFE.

On the other hand, the out call is more critical. Nothing can be any more embarrassing than to have the tag beat the runner on a close play, have the umpire come up with a good strong OUT, only to have the ball roll out from under the pile.

If the tag is made prior to the runner reaching the base, hesitate, make certain the fielder has the ball, point at the ball with the left hand, and call her OUT with the "over-hand" out call, making certain you sell it.

On the same play where a good hard slide causes a collision and you cannot find the ball after the tag, continue looking for the ball and ask in a good crisp voice to, "Show me the ball." Be sure to be pointing at the defensive player with your left hand while you are moving around the play trying to find the ball. When you see the ball, make the call with a good overhand signal, of course, be certain you don't turn your head away from the play when making the call. Remember, you must find the ball.

Do not plant yourself like a batter digging in at the plate, move in and around the play if necessary to see the tag and move to find the ball.

### **Pulled Foot**

Quite often the play itself will dictate your actions as to 'selling the call,' for example, the pulled foot at first base. It might be obvious that the ball arrived in plenty of time to retire the runner; however, the first base player pulled her foot off the bag before the catch. In this case you should think in terms of priorities. You do not want anyone to think that the runner was called safe because she beat the throw. Thinking in terms of priorities, your first move should be toward the play, pointing with your left hand at the base indicating that the fielder did in fact pull the foot followed with a vigorous vocal and demonstrative "foot" and follow with the proper SAFE signal selling it. If you give the "safe" signal and nonchalantly point at the base, it will appear as though you "blew" the call and are looking for an excuse.

### **Swipe Tag**

With the play where an errant throw goes up the line toward home plate and the first base player makes an excellent catch and "swipe tags" the runner prior to reaching first base.

Think in terms of priorities. How was the out made?

Never guess an out. This is similar to never guessing a strike. If the runner beat the ball, never go for help. If you do request help, make the request before making the call and let the home plate umpire make the call. If you do request help,

the ball beat the runner and now it must be determined if the foot was off the base or the tag made and you were blocked out and could not see the tag.

Move up and toward the foul line in the direction of the play, point with the left hand, let everyone know the runner was tagged, say "Tag" and follow through with a good overhand out call.

### **Inside-Outside Theory**

The inside-outside theory is simple; if the ball is hit inside the diamond, meaning at this point anything on the infield, stay OUTSIDE the diamond. If the ball is hit to the outside the diamond, move INSIDE the bases.

The purpose is equally as simple, all four elements are in front of you: The ball, the runner, the defensive player(s), and the base where they all come together.

### **Buttonhook**

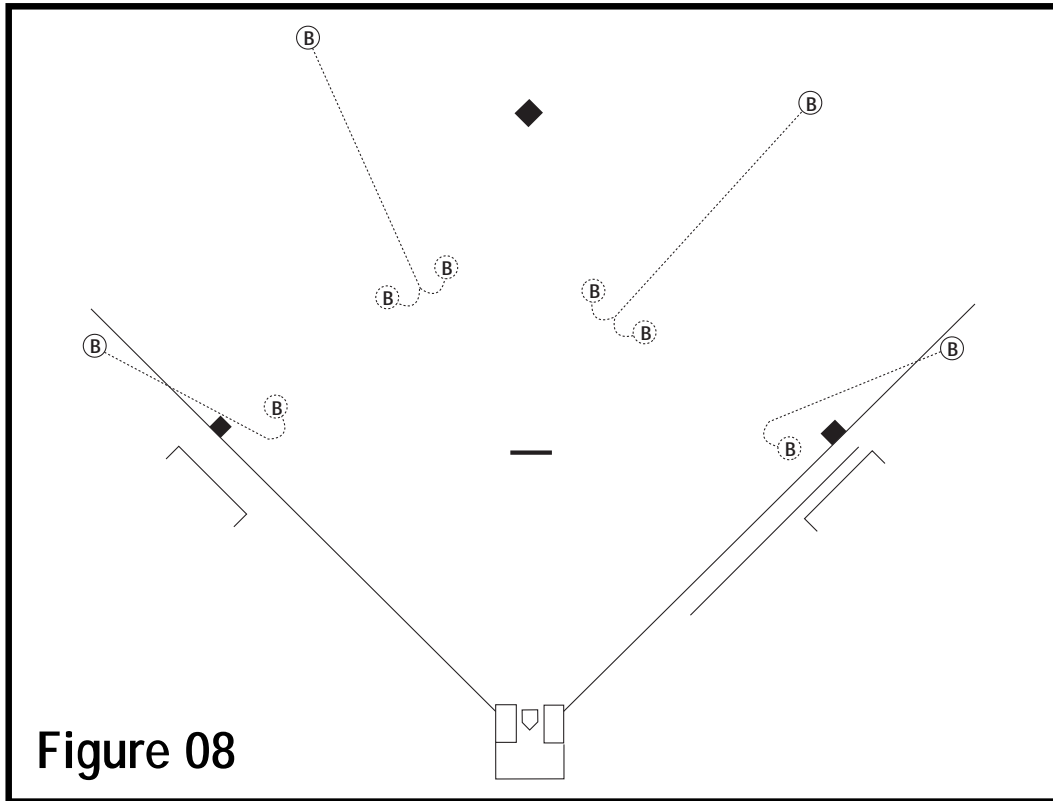
The key to the inside-outside theory is movement and the key to movement regarding the inside-outside theory is the buttonhook. The buttonhook is a term used for the method of moving from outside the diamond to the inside. As you move toward the inside of the diamond you should be concentrating on the runner(s) you are responsible for, making sure you do NOT interfere with anyone, checking for the tag of the base, obstruction or interference while glancing to pick up the ball in the outfield.

As you are moving inside the diamond, you should be: watching the runner, glancing to pick up the ball.

Once inside the diamond approximately 12 feet, pivot (or buttonhook) into the play, make sure the runner touches the base, check for obstruction and proceed with the play (Figure 08).

Regardless of slow or fast pitch, two, three or four-person system, these are the areas you would move to when using the basic inside/outside theory.

A violation of the three-foot running lane is an example of an interference call and calls for the umpire to take charge. The umpire should step into the play, throwing arms high above the head, shouting DEAD BALL. Step toward the point of interference, point at the spot of interference with the left hand and give a strong overhand out signal. At this time the runners must be instructed to return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.



**Figure 08**

### Running Out of the Baseline

Running out of the baseline to avoid a tag is also a violation but does not result in a dead ball. The umpire should point with the left hand indicating that the runner violated the rules by running out of the baseline and follow with a strong overhand out signal if needed. Other runners may continue to advance at their own risk and the umpire should react accordingly.

### Interference

For interference calls, a vigorous dead-ball signal should be given with both arms extended high in the air above your head and with a strong vocal call of DEAD BALL. It is important that you step in with authority and take charge. Halt any further play as soon as possible, as continued play simply adds to the confusion. Three things must always occur on an interference call: 1) The ball is dead, 2) an out is called, and 3) all runners must return to the base they occupied at the time of the interference if they were not called out.

### Obstruction — Fake Tag — Catcher Obstruction

Obstruction is the act of a fielder who is in the base path without the ball, and is not attempting to field a batted ball, and who impedes the progress of a runner.

All obstruction infractions require a delayed dead-ball signal and a verbal "obstruction" call. This allows all runners the ability to advance, whether they are played on or not. The umpire will protect the runner only to the base they feel the

obstructed batter-runner or runner would have made had there not been obstruction. If the runner is put out prior to this base, a dead ball is called and award base(s). If the runner advances beyond the base she was protected and is tagged out, she is out and the ball remains live.

It should also be clear that when saying "a runner cannot be called out between the two bases she was obstructed" does not pertain when another violation is being played upon. (e.g., a runner leaving second base too soon on a fly ball is returning after the ball is caught and is obstructed between second base and third base. If the runner would not have made it back to second base prior to the throw arriving, she would remain out. The same is true on a missed base).

Remember, the obstructed runner cannot be called out between the two bases she is obstructed. If the umpire does not feel the runner would have made the advance base, she is returned to the previous base.

A fielder may not make a fake tag (a tag without a ball), on a runner advancing or returning to a base. This is a form of obstruction. The runner is awarded the base she would have made had the fake tag not occurred. A fake tag could result in restriction to the bench/dugout area.

If a catcher obstructs a batter by tipping the bat or holding her glove/mitt over home plate, the batter is awarded first base. EXCEPTION: This is a delayed call and if the batter hits the ball, reaches first base safely and all other runners advance at least one base, the obstruction is ignored. It is also ignored if the above does not happen, and the offended team takes the result of the play.

## **Collisions**

Contact between defensive and offensive players does not automatically mean that obstruction or interference has occurred. When defensive and offensive players are in motion, collisions can occur; but umpires must be prepared to make a call and adjudicate the rules properly. An umpire must consider the following when making a determination if an infraction has occurred:

1. Did the offensive player alter her direction in any way to draw contact with a fielder in an attempt to receive an obstruction call?
2. Did the defensive player alter her attempt to field the ball in any way so as to receive an interference call?
3. Could the defensive player actually make a play?
4. Did the defensive player have possession of the ball?

Thorough knowledge and understanding of obstruction and interference rules will assist in making timely and accurate decisions.

## Illegal Pitches

Base umpire(s) should be aware of illegal pitch responsibilities. Because the base umpire(s) have the side view on the points, first and third base. They have the proper angle of the pitching plate, front and back, as well as the crow hop and/or leap. When an illegal pitch occurs, the umpire gives a delayed dead-ball signal, verbally calls out "illegal pitch" or "illegal" and allows the play to continue.

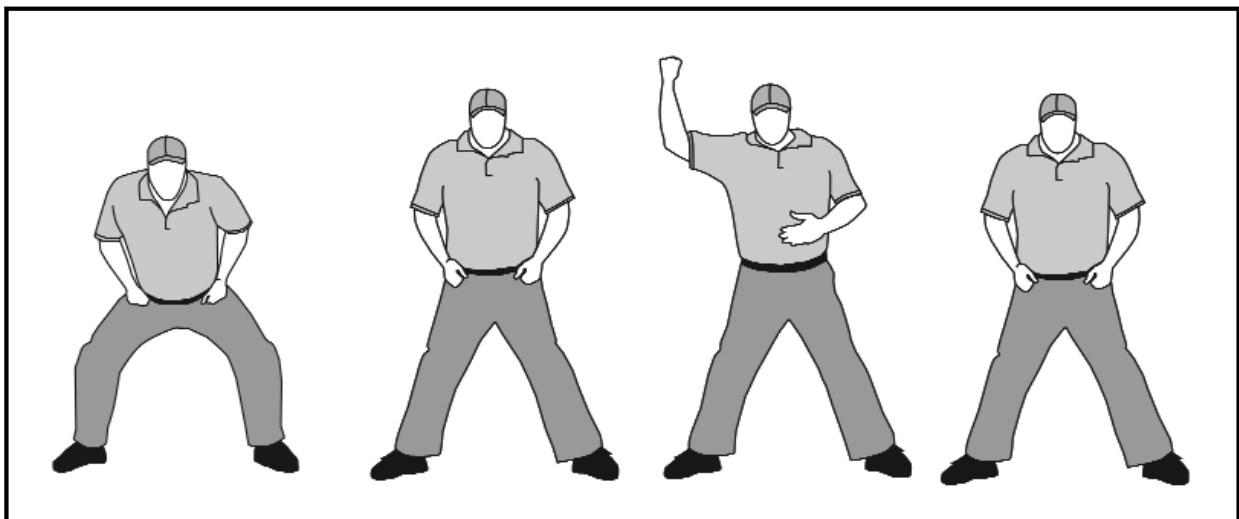
## BASIC SAFE AND OUT SIGNALS

The importance of properly executed signals cannot be understated and should not be taken lightly. Proper signals are the umpire's "life line" of effective communication between themselves, the ball players, spectators, and their partner(s). Signals were not designed for the players directly involved in the play, but for the players and fans in the outlying areas where sound alone is not effective.

Proper signals should be dignified, informative and meaningful. Poorly executed signals serve only to cause confusion and reflect a lack of pride on the part of the umpire. With this thought in mind, it is easy to understand the NFHS' consistent approach to clear, distinct signals and effective communication.

The base umpire indicates decisions by vocal and manual expressions. As it is with the calling of balls and strikes, the volume of voice and force of gesture employed should fit the importance and closeness of the play.

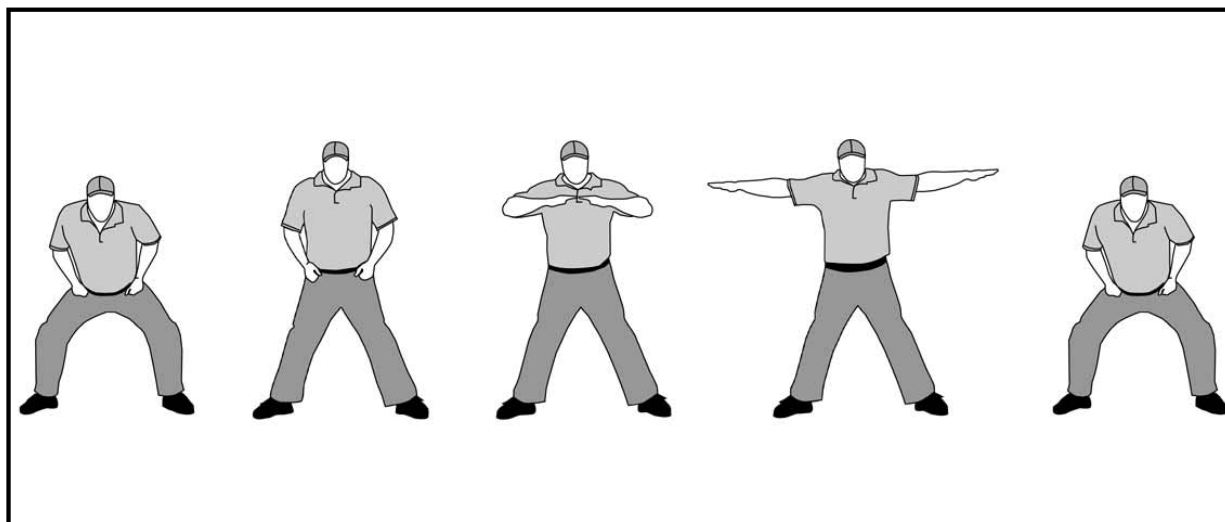
## Routine Out



Move into proper angle assuming a comfortable position with your feet shoulder width apart.

1. Drop to a position with your hands on your knees or your thighs.
2. With your head forward and your eyes on the play, come up to a standing position.
3. Bring your left hand to your body, just above your belt.
4. Give a brisk verbal call of "OUT" as your right arm forms a 90-degree hammer.

### Routine Safe



Move into proper angle assuming a comfortable position with your feet at least shoulder width apart.

1. Drop to a position with your hands on your knees or the thighs as in the out call.
2. With your head straight forward, come up to a standing position, while keeping your eyes glued on the ball and play.
3. Bring both hands up to your chest about shoulder height.
4. Give a brisk verbal call, "SAFE", while fully extending your arms horizontally, parallel with the ground and your palms down. Again, keep your eye on the play until the play is complete, unless you need to move to another position for a succeeding call.

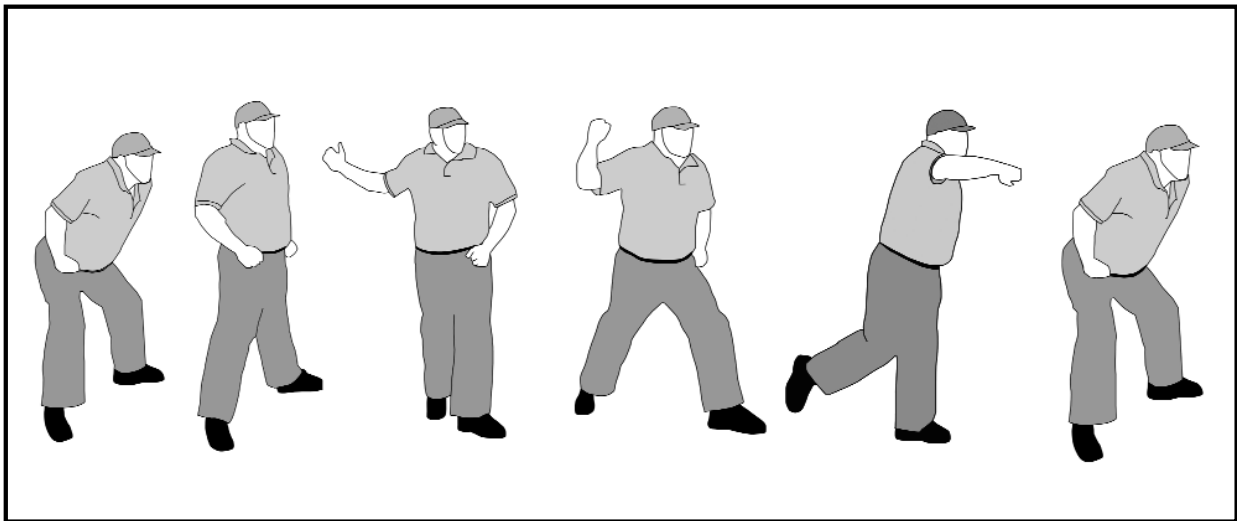
### Selling the Call

Basic safe and out mechanics will soon become routine. A tougher task is selling the call. When called upon, you must reach back and come up with all the physical and vocal emphasis available. The most accepted and commonly used call in this situation is the overhand out call.

The overhand out call starts like each out or safe call, from the basic stance.



Standing in proper position with your hands on your knees or thighs, weight forward, slightly bent at the knees and allowing for the completion of the play. Once you have given it a slight hesitation, come up to a standing position as you take a step with your left foot moving directly at the play. As you are raising your right arm with an open hand above your head and into a throwing position, you should step with the left foot and shuffle your right foot, crossing behind your left foot much like a shortstop shuffles her feet to make a good strong throw to first base. Plant your right foot and push while stepping closer to the play with the left foot as you bring your right arm over the top of your head in a throwing motion with a closed fist giving a vigorous vocal "OOOUUUTTT" call. Finish up by transferring the weight to the left foot while bringing the right foot forward and parallel to the left and with both feet at least shoulder width apart. The throwing motion of the right arm should conclude by returning to the knees as you started. Remember, your movement should always take you closer and directly at the play. When you finish selling the call, you should be on top of the play; but not so close that you're smothering the play.



Although all out and strike calls must be made with the right hand, when an umpire (who is left handed) makes an overhand out call, he/she can utilize their left hand and arm as this is a natural movement for the umpire.

Some caution should be exercised so that you do not interfere with a player attempting to make a play at another base. Watch the ball so you can move out of the player's way and get in position for your next play.

To sell a safe call, the same safe signal is used with a louder, more emphatic voice. To be more emphatic with your actions, take a step toward the base and drop, bending at the knees to make it look as if you are closer to the play. Eyes should remain looking at the base.

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GENERAL DISCUSSION

**Preparation and Techniques Prior to the Pitch**

With no runners, the base umpire should be positioned between 18 to 21 feet behind first base walking the line.

The base umpire should maintain a comfortable position and remain alert at all times. Do not stand with your arms folded in front of you. This gives the appearance that you are bored and not in the game.

The umpire should think like a ball player should think:

**Game situations.**

How many outs?

Any runners?

What inning?

Closeness of score?

**What does the game situation dictate?**

Sacrifice? (Fast Pitch)

Steal? (Fast Pitch)

Hit and run? (Fast Pitch)

**Study the ball players and their trends.**

Late swingers?

'Pull' hitters?

**Defensively.**

How are they pitching the batter? Down and away, or up and in?

Are there any defensive shifts?

These are questions an umpire has to constantly ask themselves to stay alert and be at the right place at the right time. All in all, develop a good "feel for the game."

Another technique you'll find helpful prior to the pitch is to be in a ready position, on the balls of your feet, as the pitcher starts her motion to deliver the ball.

1. It helps you to move quickly in any direction.
2. It physically demonstrates to coaches, players and spectators that you're in the game.

**HELPFUL HINTS FOR FIELD UMPIRES**

1. HUSTLE.
2. When stationed at first or third base, the umpire should stand 18 to 21 feet behind the base and walking the line.
3. Be alert on all pitched, batted and thrown balls.

4. Call all your plays in fair territory except when the play dictates for you to be in foul territory.
5. On a double play, take two steps toward second base (leading with the left foot and pushing off with the right foot) then quickly run parallel to first base-second base line. Don't take your head and eyes off the ball and let the flight of the ball turn your head and body into the play at first base.
6. Don't make a call until the catch or play is completed.
7. Always keep your eyes on the ball.
8. Don't let players or coaches call plays for you.
9. Check to make certain the bases are secured and keep the pitcher's plate clean.
10. With no runners on base, start on the foul line 18 to 21 feet behind first base and walk the line by taking one or two steps toward home plate. Push off with the foot furthest from the foul line to move into fair territory when the ball is batted.
11. Do not make a big call on obvious out, safe, fair or foul calls.
12. "No ball-No call" calls are not necessary when the thrown ball gets by the defensive player.
13. Do not help or console an injured player; if someone is hurt, walk away and let the coach handle it.
14. Line up runners on all fly balls to the outfield, as outlined in tag up procedures in this manual.
15. Slow up runners when the ball becomes dead because of fouls, etc.
16. Keep the game moving.
17. Be on top of your plays and hustle.
18. Take positions that will keep you out of the player's way. Check with the fielders every time you move to see that you are not obstructing their view.
19. Hustle out on fly balls and stay out until play is concluded, unless you need to come back in for help.
20. Never walk from one position to another; hustle and the ball players will follow your example.
21. Make your close calls with a lot of voice and enthusiasm.
22. When a base umpire is at second base, be aware who will take a throw for a force out or the tag at second base.
23. Any time there are runners on base, field umpires should be in a set position.
24. First base umpire should not automatically rotate to home if there is a possible play at first base. Go to a holding zone at the beginning of the three-foot line extension.
25. On rundowns, the responsibility of the call is determined by the direction the runner is running toward.
26. Don't touch balls thrown to you by the defensive team, as there may not be three outs.
27. Always be aware of the fielder's position.

# Section **4** *Umpire Systems*

## ONE-UMPIRE SYSTEM

The One-Umpire System is being used in some areas of the nation today, mostly in slow pitch. It is not recommended and should be used only when necessity demands. It is the opinion of most softball authorities that when only one umpire officiates a game, his/her best location throughout the game is behind the plate prior to the pitch.

Single umpiring is a difficult job that takes a tremendous amount of hustle, alertness and keen anticipation.

The umpire's starting position for each pitch should be from behind home plate. This is the best position for calling balls and strikes, and fair and foul balls. It also enables the umpire to have a clear view of the complete playing field.

On each batted ball or play that develops, the umpire must move out from behind the plate and into the infield to obtain the best position for any play that develops. A key to help anticipate the play is to watch the feet of the outfielder making a throw. She must step in the direction she will release the ball.

It's important to keep your eye on the ball, especially when umpiring alone. But, in some situations, this is impossible. The umpire must make the call at the base then turn to see if the runner coming home touched the plate before the out was made. The umpire must turn immediately. When this happens there is the possibility of the ball being dropped or bobbled on the tag. As soon as it is determined whether the runner scored or not, turn back to the tag play to be sure the fielder retained the ball.

Try to position yourself as close as possible on all play situations, especially tag plays. With no other runners on base, make sure all calls are made from inside the diamond. If there is a play at home, be positioned in the left rear of the right hand batter's box (this is the deepest corner). Just as important as getting close to the play is to obtain the best angle possible to see the ball, base and runner. Not only is this important to make the calls, but also to watch runners tag the bases.

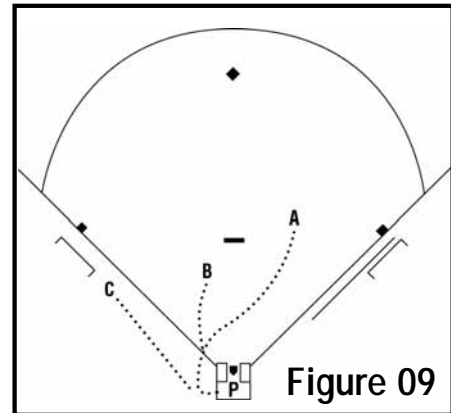
On situations where you make a call on the bases and a subsequent play develops at another base, make sure you watch the ball so you do not get hit with the thrown ball.

Movement to cover the other bases is based on judgment. Hustle to the position necessary to make a call. If the ball is live when a runner is on base, such as after a base hit, etc., the umpire is to call TIME when the ball is held by a player in the infield area and in the umpire's opinion, all play has ceased.

There is no excuse for calling a play from behind or just in front of the plate.

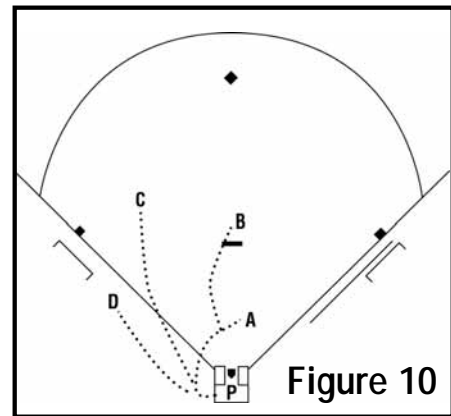
ONE UMPIRE

- | <b>Position:</b> | <b>Situation:</b>   |
|------------------|---|
| A. Ground ball   | No runners on   |
| B. Ground ball   | Runner on first base or runners on first and second base. |
| C. Ground ball   | Bases loaded hit to infield                               |



**Fly Ball Situation**

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| A. | No runners – fly ball to infield or outfield and not near the foul line   |
| B. | Runners on first base   |
| C. | Runners on first and second or second only, move to a possible call at third or to foul territory ahead of the lead runner for a possible play at home if necessary after the catch |
| D. | Runner on second and third or first and third   |

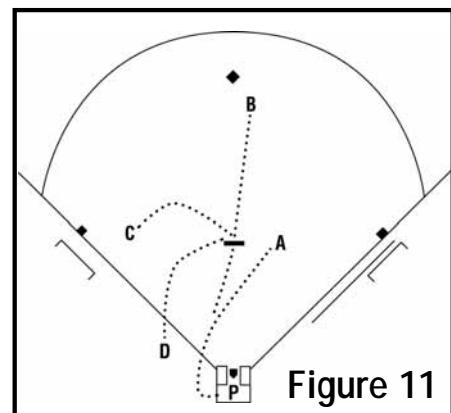


NOTE: On all fly ball situations where the ball is near the foul line, the umpire must stay on the foul line to determine whether the ball is fair or foul – then move into the infield to pick up runners and plays.

**No Runners on Base Situation**

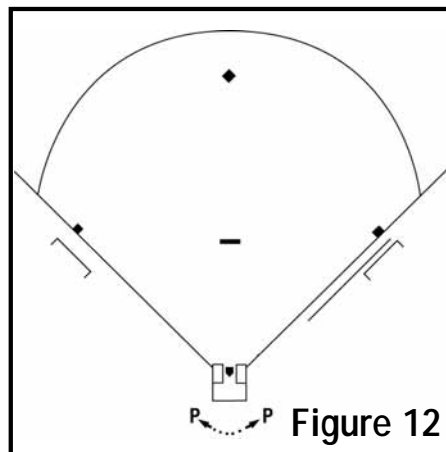
- |    |                       |
|----|-----------------------|
| A. | No runners – single   |
| B. | No runners – double   |
| C. | No runners – triple   |
| D. | No runners – home run |

NOTE: On all base hit situations, umpire must watch runner tag bases and be aware of position of the ball.



### Between-Inning Mechanics

The plate umpire shall take a position facing the field at the first baseline extended when the team in the first base dugout is coming to bat and the third baseline extended facing the field when the team in the third base dugout is coming to bat.



**TWO-UMPIRE SYSTEM**

The plate umpire should be prepared to take a share of the base plays. The lead runner, if there is more than one on the bases, is the plate umpire's responsibility. To do the job properly, the plate umpire must go to a holding zone in foul territory between home and third base, then immediately pick up the lead runner, and prepare to make the call on the runner, whether it be at third base or the plate. If there are two runners on base and the next batter hits for extra bases, which will score the lead runner without a play, the plate umpire pays little attention other than noting that the runner touched third base and the plate. Attention then is directed to the second runner and the play that may be made. The base umpire, meanwhile, ascertains that all runners touch second and first bases and takes whatever play is made on the batter-runner. If the batter-runner advances to third on the hit, and a play is made, it is the base umpire's call. If this is the third out of the inning, the base umpire quickly and vociferously makes the call, so that the plate umpire may announce whether a runner scoring on the same play has touched home before the third out is made.

The proper position for the base umpire to assume at the start of the game is down the right-field foul line about 18-21 feet behind first base. The base umpire is responsible for making the out, safe, or trap call when he/she goes out, and the plate umpire will pick up all runners — both tagging up and touching bases.

There are six times a base umpire will make a call at third base:

1. On the batter-runner on a triple.
2. On trail runners into third base.
3. On a steal to third base.
4. On any return throw from the plate or a cut-off player.
5. A throw-back by the catcher in an attempt to pick off a runner occupying third base immediately following the pitch (F.P.).
6. On the first play in the infield by an infielder on a batted ball.

Each umpire has equal authority to call leaving a base too soon on the pitch. Be in position to make the call. The base umpire should observe the pitcher (Fast

Pitch) and home plate (Slow Pitch) out of the corner of his/her eye as they watch the runner. Use common sense and think the game. In fast pitch, if more than one runner is on base, which runner is logical to make a steal attempt. Observe that runner closer than the other runner(s). Do not guess a runner out. Be sure she actually left the base too soon.

### **Fly Ball Tag-Up Responsibilities (F.P. and S.P.)**

The plate umpire has tag responsibilities under the following situations:

1. All runners at third base.
2. The runner at second base with runners at first and second base.

The base umpire has tag responsibilities under the following situations:

1. All runners at first base.
2. The runner at second base with runners at second and third bases or second base only.
3. Runners at first and second base when the bases are full.

NOTE: These tag-up procedures should be followed at all times, unless there is communication between both umpires. These responsibilities are covered in the duties listed on the following pages.

### **Positioning and Coverage – General**

Initial positioning with runners on bases is described on the following pages. When mechanics dealing with each situation differ, they will be covered individually, however, there are several basic responsibilities that will not be duplicated.

In all situations, the plate umpire will call all balls hit fair and/or foul. The plate umpire will move out and up the foul line to make these calls, remembering not to make the call too quickly.

The plate umpire should always be alert and move to a position to help his/her partner in case of a run down.

If the base umpire goes to the outfield for a possible trapped ball, or goes out on a ball hit close to the foul line, once the base umpire turns his/her back, the calls will be the base umpire's. The plate umpire must move into the infield and revert to the one umpire system, covering all bases.

On routine fly balls to the outfield, the plate umpire (with no runners on or with a runner at first base) will go to the center of the infield in the direction of the batted ball. With runners in scoring position, the plate umpire will stay in foul territory. The base umpire will move inside the bases, watching the assigned runner tag-ups listed above. The base umpire follows the Inside-Outside Theory on all balls hit. This was described under the Field Umpire section of the manual.

In fast pitch, the base umpire must be alert for snap throws and a possible pick-off of each base-runner.

Both umpires must hustle at all times, never take their eyes off the ball and be

in the correct position on all calls. The following responsibilities deal with the individual situation.

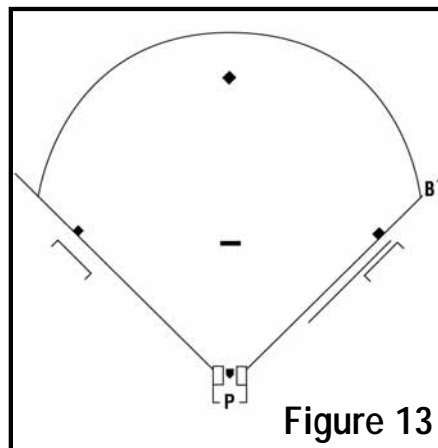
Remember, any time you deviate from these procedures, communicate with your partner.

Key to Diagrams: P-Plate Umpire; B-Base or Field Umpire; R-Runner or Runners.

**NO RUNNERS ON BASE — FAST PITCH**

**PLATE UMPIRE:**

1. On routine fly balls, not down either line, move to the center of the infield in the direction of the batted ball. Help the field umpire on runner touching first base.
2. On ground balls hit close to the foul line, stay at home plate on the line and make the call.
3. On infield hits, move up the first base line observing the play, and be prepared to help your partner.
4. Refer to the PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.



**Figure 13**

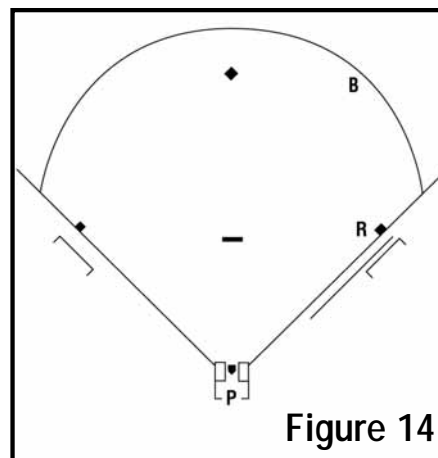
**FIELD UMPIRE:**

1. Basic position is 18 to 21 feet behind first base walking the line.
2. Responsible for the batter-runner all the way to third base.
3. Refer to BASE UMPIRE SECTION.

**RUNNER ON FIRST BASE ONLY — FAST PITCH**

**PLATE UMPIRE:**

1. On routine fly balls, not down either line, move to the center of the infield in the direction of the batted ball. Be prepared to move to third base if the lead runner advances beyond second base.
2. On batted balls to the infield leave to the left of the catcher moving up first base line to observe the play, then fade toward third base to cover the advancing runner.
3. On steals where there is a wild throw at second base, pick up the runner advancing to third base, and be prepared to take the runner home.
4. Refer to the PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.



**Figure 14**

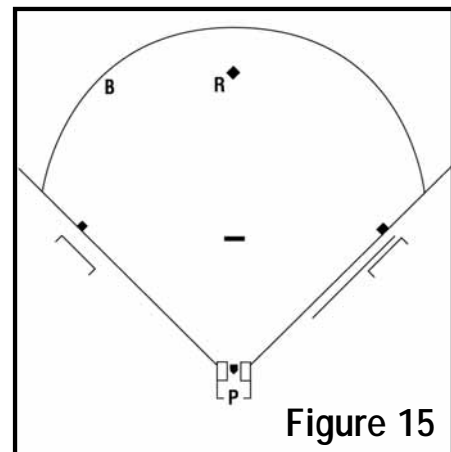


**FIELD UMPIRE:**

1. Take a position about 20 feet from first base and outside the baseline. This position will normally place the umpire two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's left.
2. If the runner attempts to steal second, move toward the base staying behind the fielder. Should the throw be wild, move inside the base paths.
3. On base hits to the outfield, immediately come inside the diamond, buttonhook and take the batter-runner all the way to third base.
4. On a double play, take one step toward second base, follow the flight of the ball and move parallel with the baseline toward first base as the ball takes you into the play.
5. Has tag responsibility for runner at first base, and takes single runner all the way to third base after the catch.
6. Refer to the BASE UMPIRE SECTION.

**RUNNER ON SECOND BASE ONLY — FAST PITCH****PLATE UMPIRE:**

1. On a fly ball, move from behind home plate to the holding area between home and third base. Be prepared to move into the infield or back to home plate depending on how the play develops.
2. On base hits, move toward third base. Be ready and in position to make a call by going down the left field foul line in foul ground. When about 15 feet from third base, quickly move into the infield for good position for the call.
3. If the first play is at first base, and there is a throw to third, the plate umpire has the call at third.
4. Refer to the PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.

**Figure 15****FIELD UMPIRE:**

1. Take position two or three steps behind and to the shortstop's left. Be cautious not to interfere with the outfielders view of the batter or a play by the infielders.
2. On any ball hit to the infield, take the first throw unless it is to home plate. If the first throw is to first, second, or third base, the plate umpire covers any subsequent throw to third base.
3. On all balls hit through the infield or to the outfield that you do not go out on, immediately come inside the diamond, buttonhook and take the batter-

- runner all the way to third base.
- 4. On routine fly balls to the outfield move into the infield to a position between the pitching rubber and the baseline. You are responsible for the tag-up of the runner.
- 5. Take the batter-runner to third base, watching that she touches all bases. When the ball is in the outfield, take a position deep enough in the infield to allow movement for a play at either base.
- 6. On an attempted steal of third, move parallel with the runner toward third base and be prepared for a call.
- 7. Refer to the FIELD UMPIRE SECTION.

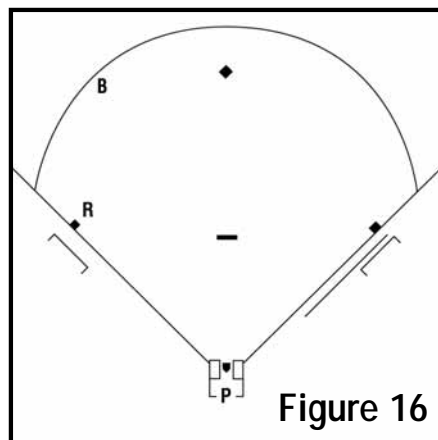
**RUNNER ON THIRD BASE ONLY — FAST PITCH**

**PLATE UMPIRE:**

- 1. If a fly ball is hit, move from behind home plate and line up the runner on third base and watch the tag-up.
- 2. On base hits move toward third base, watching the runner. If the runner goes home, drift back toward home and watch the runner touch home plate.
- 3. Refer to the PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.

**FIELD UMPIRE:**

- 1. Take a position two or three steps behind and to the shortstop's right. Be cautious so as not to interfere with the outfielders view of the batter or a play by the infielders.
- 2. If a ball is hit to the infield wait until the fielder commits herself, then move quickly toward that base. Don't take your eyes off the ball.
- 3. Call all plays made on the first throw of the ball unless it is to home plate. Take the batter-runner into third base and see that all bases are touched.
- 4. Refer to FIELD UMPIRE SECTION.



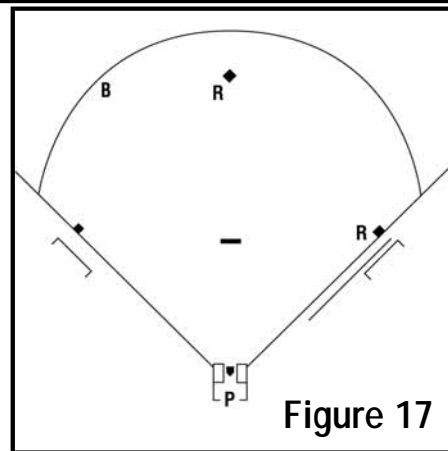
**RUNNERS ON FIRST AND SECOND BASE — FAST PITCH**

**PLATE UMPIRE:**

- 1. On a fly ball, move from behind home plate and line up the lead runner watching for the tag-up.
- 2. On base hits take the lead runner into third base and home. On steals where there is a wild throw at second base pick up the runner coming into third base.
- 3. Be ready and in position to make a call at third base by going down the left

field line in foul ground. When you are about 15 feet from third base quickly move into the infield for good position on the tag play.

4. On hits move toward third base. If the lead runner comes home and there is no play made on her, drift toward third but watch the runner touch home plate.
5. Refer to PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.



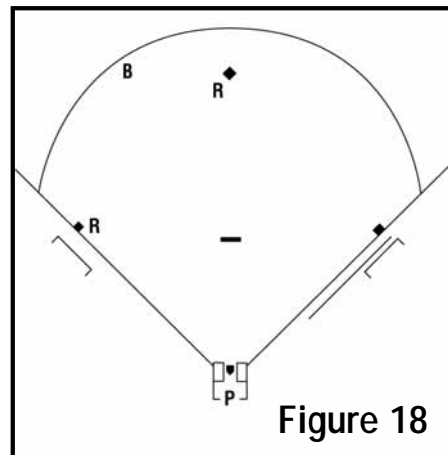
#### FIELD UMPIRE:

1. Take position two or three steps behind and to the shortstop's left. Be cautious so as not to interfere with the outfielders view of the batter or a play by the infielders.
2. On any ball hit to the infield, take the first throw unless it is to home plate. If the first throw is to first, second, or third base, the plate umpire covers any subsequent throw to third base.
3. If the runner attempts to steal third, move parallel with the runner toward the base to make the call.
4. On routine fly balls to outfield move into infield to a position between pitching rubber and the baseline. You are responsible for the tag-up of the runner on first.
5. See that the runner and batter touch second and first base. When the ball is in the outfield, take a position deep enough in the infield to allow you to move in for a play at either base.
6. Refer to FIELD UMPIRE SECTION.

### RUNNERS ON SECOND AND THIRD BASE — FAST PITCH

#### PLATE UMPIRE:

1. If a fly ball is hit, line up the runner on third base and watch the tag-up.
2. On base hits move toward third base. If the lead runner comes home and there is no play on her, drift toward third but watch the runner touch home plate. If there is a play at home, move back to a position in the rear and left side of the right-handed batter's box.
3. If the play is at first base, watch the lead runner touch home plate, then go to third for a possible play on the second runner.
4. Refer to PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.



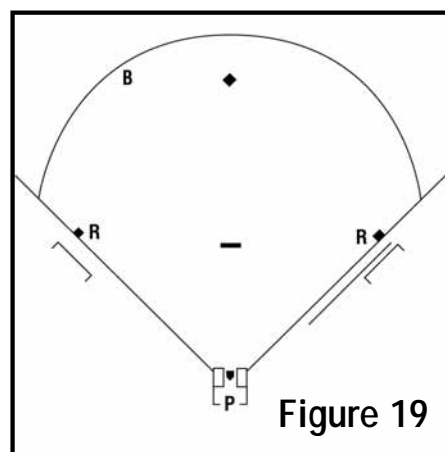
**FIELD UMPIRE:**

1. Take a position two or three steps behind and to the shortstop's right. Be careful not to interfere with the outfielders view of the batter or a play by the infielders.
2. On a ball hit to the infield, take the first throw unless it is to home. If the first throw is to first, second, or third base, the plate umpire covers any subsequent throw to third.
3. On fly balls, get inside the infield quickly, buttonhook and line up the runner on second base and take the runner to third base after the catch.
4. On all balls hit through the infield or to the outfield that you do not go out on, immediately come inside the diamond, buttonhook and take the batter-runner all the way to third base.
5. Refer to FIELD UMPIRE SECTION.

**RUNNERS ON FIRST AND THIRD BASE — FAST PITCH**

**PLATE UMPIRE:**

1. If a fly ball is hit, move from behind home plate and line up the runner on third base and watch the tag-up.
2. On base hits move toward third base. If the lead runner comes home and there is no play made on her, drift toward third but watch the runner touch home plate. If there is a play at home, move back to a position in the rear and left side of the right-handed batter's box.
3. If the play is at first base, watch the lead runner touch home plate, then go to third for a possible play on the second runner.
4. Refer to the PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.



**FIELD UMPIRE:**

1. Take a position two or three steps behind and to the shortstop's right. Be careful not to interfere with the outfielders view of the batter or a play by the infielders.
2. On any ball hit to the infield, take the first throw unless it is to home plate. If the first throw is to first, second, or third base, the plate umpire covers any subsequent throw to third base.
3. If a ball is hit to the infield wait until the fielder commits herself, then move quickly toward that base. Don't take your eyes off the ball.
4. On a base hit get inside the infield quickly and watch the runner on first touch second base and be alert for a play at that base, take the batter-run-

- ner as far as third base and watch her touch each base.
5. On fly balls, get inside the infield quickly, buttonhook and line up the runner on first base. After checking the runner tag up at first base, be prepared to take her into second and/or third base.
6. Refer to FIELD UMPIRE SECTION.

### BASES LOADED — FAST PITCH

#### PLATE UMPIRE:

1. If a fly ball is hit, move from behind home plate, line up the runner on third and watch the tag-up.
2. On base hits move toward third base in foul territory. If the lead runner comes home and there is no play made on her, drift toward third but watch the runner touch home plate. If there is a play at home plate, move back to a position at the rear and left side of the right-handed batter's box.
3. If the play is at first base, watch the lead runner touch home plate, then go to third for a possible play on the second runner.
4. Refer to PLATE UMPIRE SECTION.

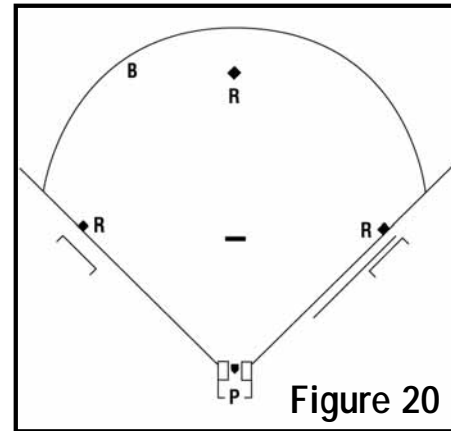


Figure 20

#### FIELD UMPIRE:

1. Take a position two or three steps behind and to the shortstop's right. Be careful not to interfere with the outfielders view of the batter or a play by the infielders.
2. On any ball hit to the infield, take the first throw unless it is to home plate. If the first throw is to first, second, or third base, the plate umpire covers any subsequent throw to third base.
3. If a ball is hit to the infield wait until the fielder commits herself, then move quickly toward that base. Don't take your eyes off the ball.
4. On any ball hit to the outfield get inside the diamond quickly, buttonhook and be prepared to make a call at first, second or third base.
5. On fly balls, move inside the diamond quickly, to take tag ups of runners on first and second base, and be prepared for any play into second base.
6. Refer to FIELD UMPIRE SECTION.

**TWO-UMPIRE SYSTEM — SLOW PITCH**

**PLATE UMPIRE:**

The plate umpire has the same responsibilities as in Fast Pitch with the following few exceptions. In Slow Pitch the plate umpire is responsible for all calls at third base and home except the following two situations:

1. The batter is the base umpires' responsibility all the way to third base.
2. When there is a play at the plate and a subsequent play at third, the base umpire is responsible for that second play at third base. The play at third is the plate umpires' in all other situations even if the first throw of a batted ball goes to third.

This system is designed so as to allow the plate umpire more active participation in the game. It is simple mechanics and will be easy to work if you hustle!

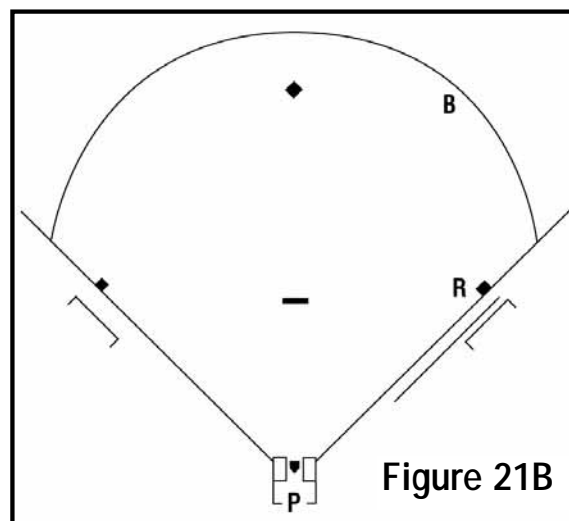
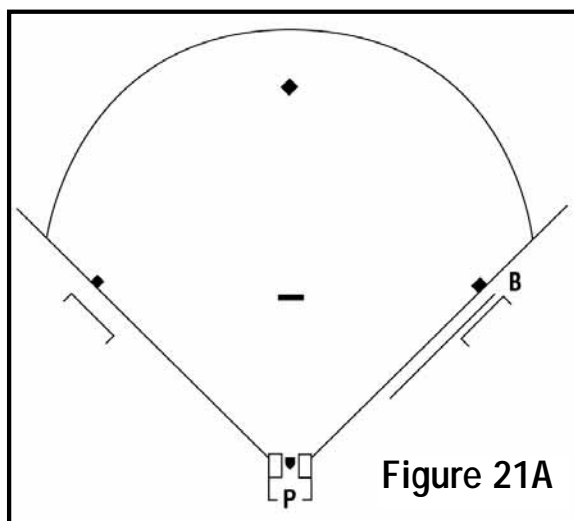
**FIELD UMPIRE:**

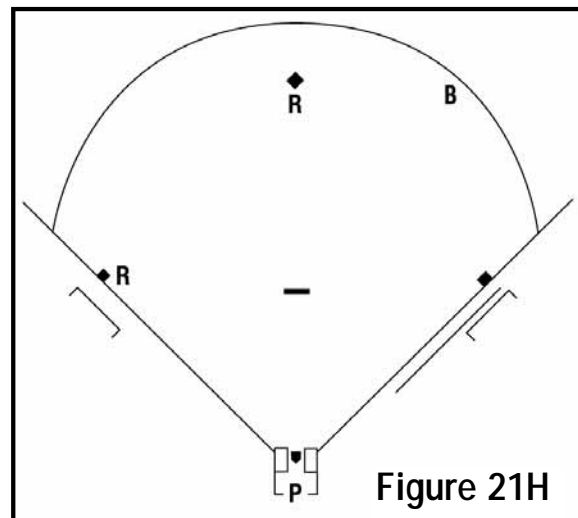
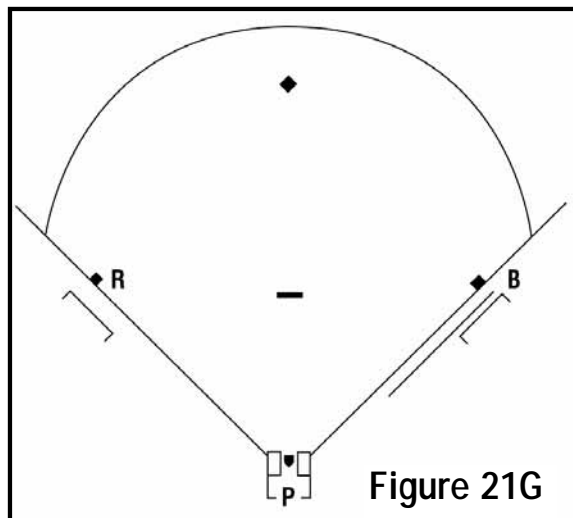
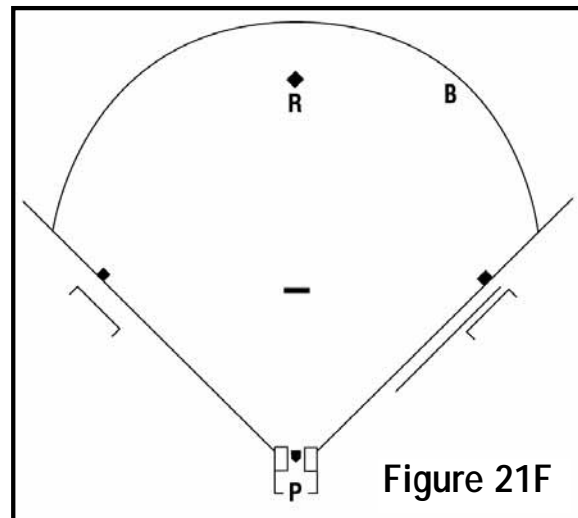
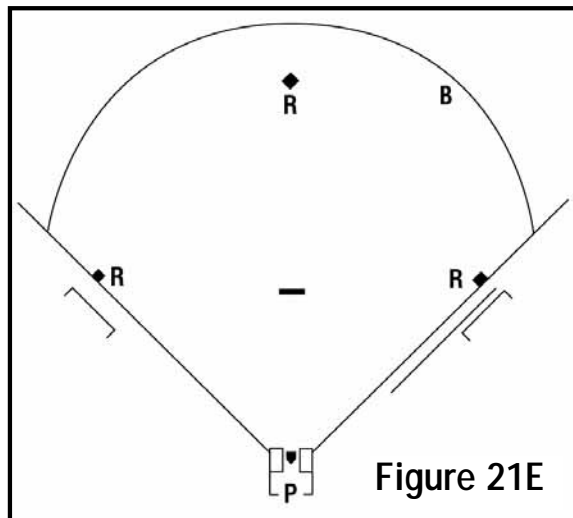
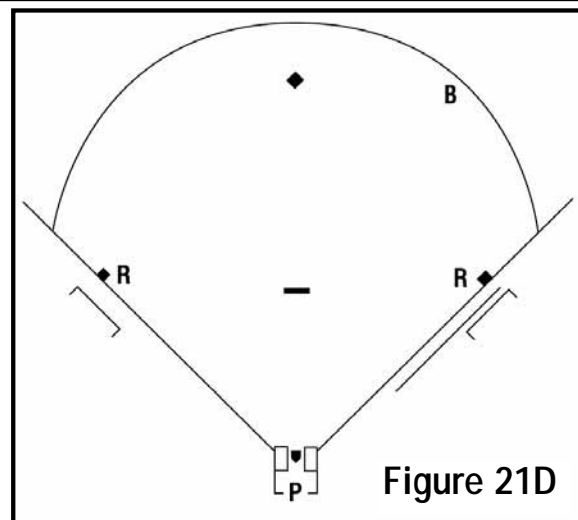
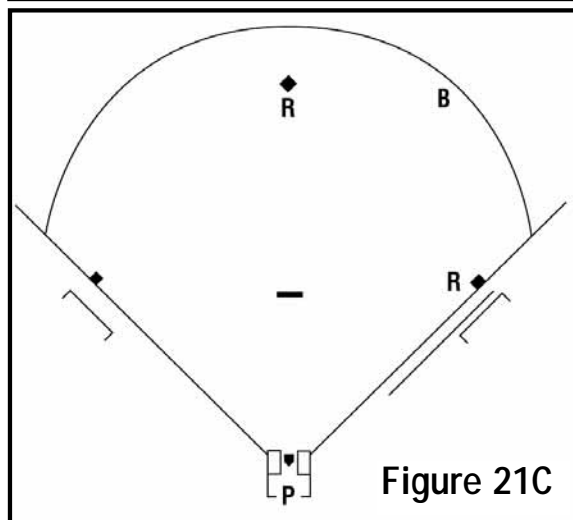
Positions and mechanics are basically the same as in Fast Pitch except for:

1. With a runner on base, the base umpire will take a position normally behind the second base player and to her right or left depending on where the second base player is positioned. The base umpire will never take a position inside the base path or on the shortstop side of second base.
2. Under normal conditions, all calls at third base will be made by the plate umpire with the following exceptions:
  - a. The batter-runner on a triple with no runners on base at the start of the pitch.
  - b. All trail runners into third base.
  - c. Any lone runner on a fly ball advancement.
  - d. Any return throw from the plate or a cut off play.

**POSITIONING:**

- A. No Runners on Base.
- B. Runner on first base only.





- C. Runners on first and second base.
- D. Runners on first and third base.
- E. Runners on first, second and third base.
- F. Runner on second base only.
- G. Runner on third base only.
- H. Runners on second and third base.

### THREE-UMPIRE SYSTEM — FAST PITCH AND SLOW PITCH

The three-umpire system, when properly employed, is not only the most enjoyable system of umpiring, but also ensures better coverage of everything that can occur on the ball field.

The two-umpire system provides adequate coverage for all but several situations that may arise, but the three-umpire system, when properly executed, insures greater coverage.

At the start of the play, the field umpires assume positions about 18 to 21 feet behind first and third bases. The plate umpire judge's batted balls foul or fair as per the section on this mechanic. The field umpires should only help the plate umpire on these decisions when they turn their back to the infield and go out on a ball hit near the fence or on a sinking line drive.

There are six (6) basic rules governing the coverage of the three-umpire system:

1. Rotation for the three-umpire system is always clockwise.
2. Once a field umpire turns his/her back to the infield to go to the outfield on a play, he/she should remain outside until the play has been completed.
3. Once an umpire goes to the outfield, you should revert to a two-umpire system.
4. When the umpires are counter rotated, there will be no rotation.
5. With an enclosed field, there should be a field umpire going to the outfield on any ball hit in the air over an infielders head.
6. With a open field, there should be a field umpire going to the outfield on any ball hit that goes beyond the infield where there is a opportunity for the ball to go into dead-ball territory.

The counter rotated position is the basic position prior to any pitch when the third base umpire is down the line at third base and the first base umpire assumes a position behind the second base player.

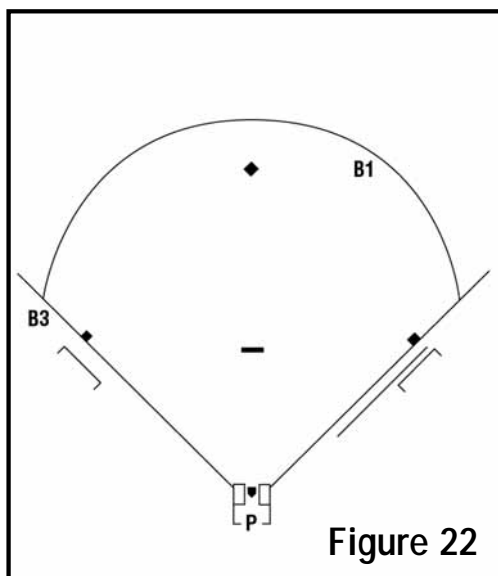


Figure 22

You will note that we have stated the desired positions for field umpires throughout this section. These are guides, but not rigid rules. Situations arise whereby your position will have to vary from play to play. Each umpire should select the exact position that will permit him/her to cover the play, yet not interfere with the play.

NOTE: Fly ball coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.



**NO RUNNERS ON BASE****Fly Ball Coverage**

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

**P:** Move to the center of the infield in the direction of the batted ball. If either base umpire goes out, trail the runner to first and assist in watching the batter-runner touch first. Return to home in foul ground for any possible play at the plate.

**1st:** Go out on all fly balls hit between the center fielder to the right field dead-ball line in fast pitch and the right-center fielder to the right field dead-ball line in slow pitch. If third base umpire goes out on fly ball, come inside the diamond, buttonhook and take runner to third base.

**3rd:** Go out on all fly balls from the center fielder to the dead-ball line in fast pitch and left-center fielder to the leftfield dead-ball line in slow pitch. If the first base umpire goes out on fly ball, come inside the diamond and take the batter-runner to third base.

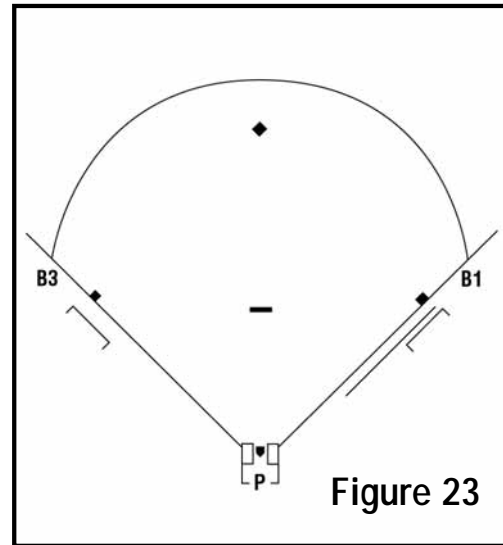


Figure 23

**Base Hit to Outfield**

**P:** Trail batter-runner towards first base. Release towards third base for possible call. Glance to home to make sure the first base umpire is there for call.

**1st:** Come inside the diamond, buttonhook and glance to second to make sure there is an umpire there. Then release and get into foul territory and be prepared to go to home plate for any play at home. (Be positioned on the right hand batter's box side of home plate.)

**3rd:** Come inside diamond towards second base for any play. Glance to third to make sure the plate umpire is there for call.

**RUNNER ON FIRST BASE ONLY****Fly Ball Coverage**

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

**P:** Trail the batter-runner to first base. Be prepared to take R1 to third if the ball is dropped. Take all plays at home plate. Responsible for all fly balls

from the left fielder over to the left field dead-ball line.

**1st:** Come inside the diamond and take tag up at first base. Be positioned for calls at first and second base. Take last runner to third base. Responsible for fly balls to right field when right fielder goes toward foul line.

**3rd:** (Positioned at second base at start of play.) Take all fly balls from right fielder to left fielder; unless either outfielder is going towards the foul line. When first base umpire takes fly ball, come inside for tag up at first base.

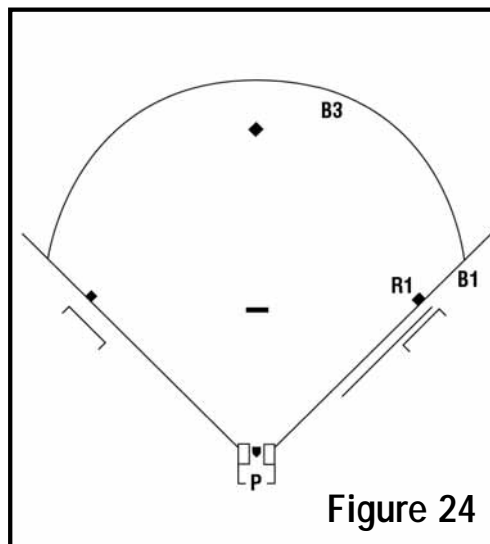


Figure 24

**Base Hit to Outfield**

**P:** Trail batter-runner towards first base, release and go to third base to get positioned for any calls at third base.

**1st:** Come inside the diamond; watch batter-runner touch first base, release to foul ground, rotate to home for any calls at home plate. Be positioned on the right hand batter's box side of home plate!

**3rd:** (Positioned at second base at start of play.) Come inside the diamond for any play at second base. Be alert for any possible calls at first.

**RUNNER ON SECOND BASE ONLY**

**Fly Ball Coverage**

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

**P:** Hustle toward third base in foul ground. Be prepared to take the calls into third and home. Responsible for fly balls hit to right field, when right fielder is going towards the foul line.

**1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Take all fly balls from right fielder to the left fielder; unless either outfielder is going towards the foul line. When plate umpire or third base umpire takes fly ball, come inside and take the tag up at second.

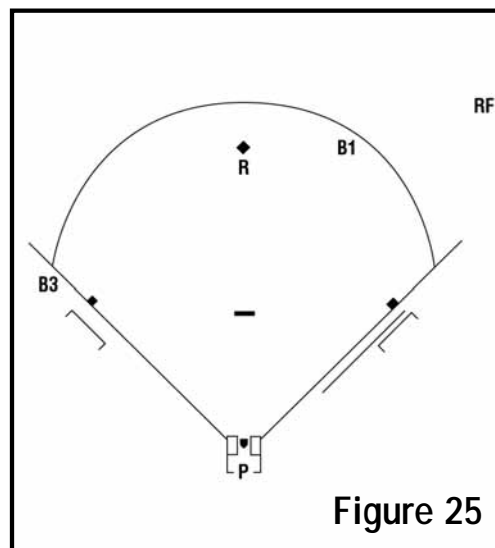


Figure 25

- 3rd:** Hustle into the diamond for tag up at second base. Be prepared for plays at first and second base. Take the last runner to third base. Responsible for fly balls between the left fielder to left field dead-ball line when the left fielder is going towards the foul line.

### Base Hit to Outfield

(No rotation when first base umpire positioned at second base.)

- P:** Move from behind home plate and get in position for any play at home.
- 1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Come inside the diamond and be prepared to take any calls at first or second base.
- 3rd:** Come inside the diamond and take calls at third base.

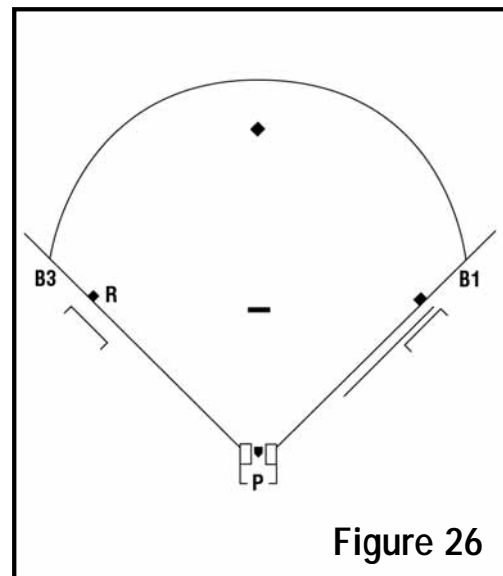
### RUNNER ON THIRD BASE ONLY

#### Fly Ball Coverage

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

- P:** Move from behind home plate, in foul ground. Take the tag-up of runner on third base. (Be alert for any possible play at third base or home.)
- 1st:** Take all fly balls between center field and right field dead-ball line. If third base umpire goes out, come inside and take batter-runner to third base.
- 3rd:** Take all fly balls between center fielder to left field dead-ball line when center fielder is going towards the foul line.

If first base umpire goes out, hustle into the diamond, to watch the batter-runner touch first base. Be alert for any possible plays at second or first base. Take batter-runner into third base.



### Base Hit to Outfield

- P:** Move from behind home plate in foul ground. After watching the runner from third touch home, release and go to third base to get positioned inside the diamond for any possible calls at third. Look to home to make sure first base umpire has come to home.
- 1st:** Come inside the diamond; watch the batter-runner touch first base. Release to foul ground after checking to see that third base umpire is at

second. Hustle to home for any plays at home plate. (Be positioned on the right hand batter's box side of home plate.)

**3rd:** Come inside the diamond for any possible play at second base. Look to third to see that the plate umpire has come to third.

**RUNNERS ON FIRST AND SECOND BASE**

**Fly Ball Coverage**

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

**P:** Hustle toward third base in foul ground, hold and take the tag up at second base. Be prepared to take calls into third and home. Responsible for fly balls to right field, when right fielder is going to foul line.

**1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Take all fly balls from the right fielder to the left fielder; unless either outfielder is going towards the foul line. When the plate umpire or third base umpire takes fly ball, come inside and take tag up at first base.

**3rd:** Hustle into the diamond for tag at first base. Take calls at first or second and last runner to third base. Responsible for fly balls to left field when left fielder is going to the foul line. Take all fly balls between left fielder to left field dead-ball line when left fielder is going towards the foul line.

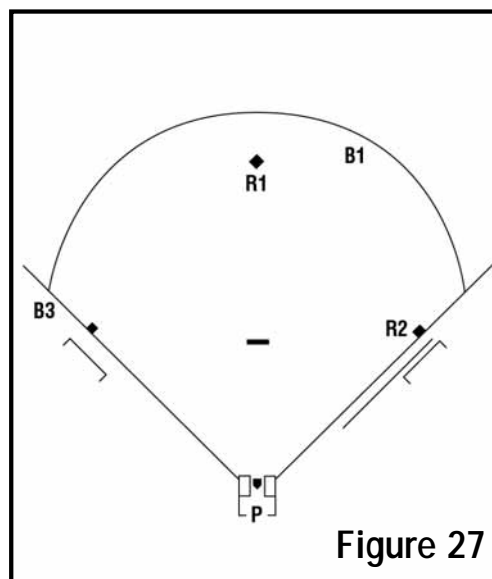


Figure 27

**Base Hit to Outfield**

(No rotation when first base umpire positioned at second base)

**P:** Move from behind home plate and get ready for any play at home.

**1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Come inside the diamond and be prepared to take calls at second or first.

**3rd:** Come inside the diamond for any call at third base.

**RUNNERS ON FIRST AND THIRD BASE**

**Fly Ball Coverage**

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

**P:** Hustle toward third base in foul ground and take the tag up at third base. Be prepared for any play at home plate. Release towards third base after R1 touches home, if batter-runner becomes runner. Responsible for fly balls to right field, when right fielder going to foul line. (Be alert for possible call at home plate.)

**1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's left. Take all fly balls from right fielder to the left fielder; unless either outfielder is going towards the foul line. When third base umpire takes fly ball, come inside for tag up at first base.

**3rd:** Hustle into diamond and take tag-up at first base. Take calls at first or second base and the last runner to third base. Responsible for fly balls from left fielder to the left field dead-ball line when left fielder going to foul line.

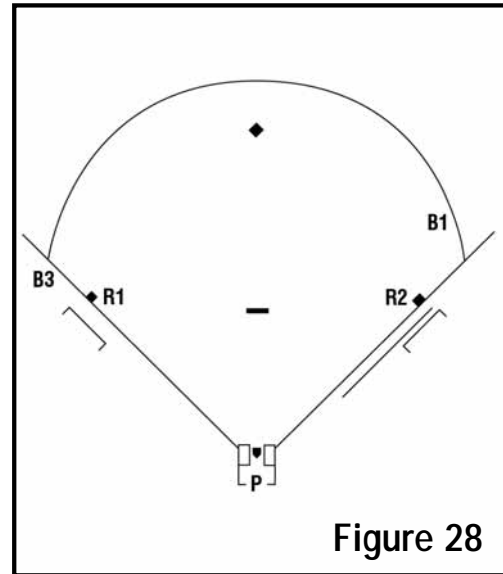


Figure 28

### Base Hit to Outfield

(No rotation when first base umpire positioned at second base.)

**P:** Move from behind home plate and be positioned for any play at home.

**1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's left. Come inside the diamond and be prepared to take calls at first or second base.

**3rd:** Come inside the diamond for any call at third base.

### RUNNERS ON SECOND AND THIRD BASE

#### Fly Ball Coverage

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

**P:** Hustle toward third base in foul ground, hold and take tag-up at third base. Be prepared to take the call at home and any possible play at third if batter becomes a runner. Responsible for fly balls to right field

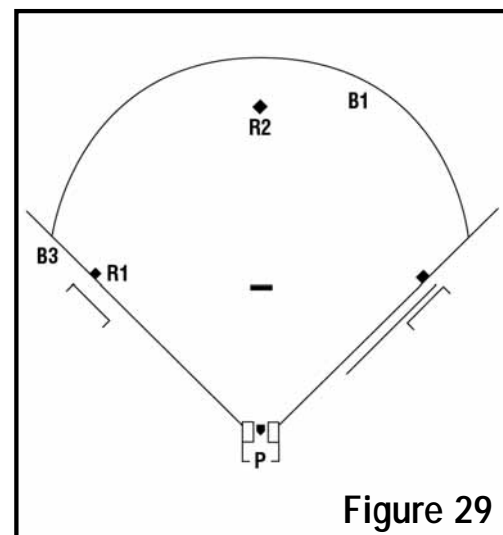


Figure 29

when right fielder is going towards foul line.

- 1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Take all fly balls hit from right fielder to the left fielder, unless either outfielder is going towards the foul line. When plate umpire or third base umpire takes fly ball come inside and take tag-up at second base.
- 3rd:** Hustle into the diamond for tag-up at second base. Watch batter-runner touch first. Be prepared for plays at second or first. Take the last runner into third base. Responsible for fly balls from the left fielder to the left field dead-ball line when left fielder is going towards foul line.

**Base Hit to Outfield**

**(No rotation when first base umpire positioned at second base.)**

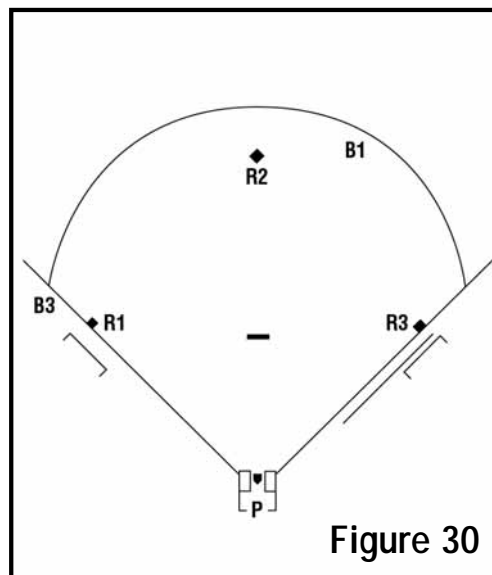
- P:** Move from behind home plate and get ready for any play at home.
- 1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Come inside the diamond and be prepared to take calls at second or first.
- 3rd:** Come inside the diamond for any call at third base.

**BASES LOADED**

**Fly Ball Coverage**

NOTE: Fly ball or line drive over infielders head, coverage will be the same for fast pitch and slow pitch.

- P:** Hustle towards third base in foul ground, and take the tag up at third base. Be prepared for any play at home plate. Watch R1 touch home and release for any play at third base. Responsible for fly balls to right field, when right fielder going to foul line.
- 1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Take all fly balls from the right fielder to the left fielder; unless either outfielder is going towards the foul line. When plate or third base umpire take fly balls, come inside diamond and take tag up of runners at first and second base.
- 3rd:** Hustle in to diamond for tag-up at second and first base. Be prepared to take any calls at first or second, and take the last runner into third base. Responsible for fly balls from the left fielder to the left field dead-ball line when left fielder is going to foul line.



**Base Hit to Outfield****(No rotation when first base umpire positioned at second base)**

- P:** Move from behind home plate and be positioned for any play at home.
- 1st:** Take a position two or three steps behind and to the second-base player's right. Come inside the diamond and be prepared to take calls at second or first.
- 3rd:** Come inside the diamond for any call at third base.

**TWO- OR THREE-UMPIRE SYSTEM —  
BETWEEN-INNING MECHANICS**

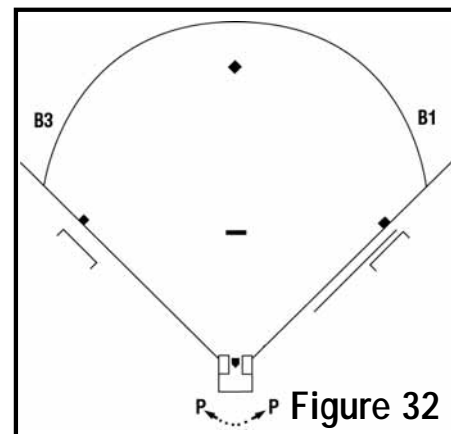
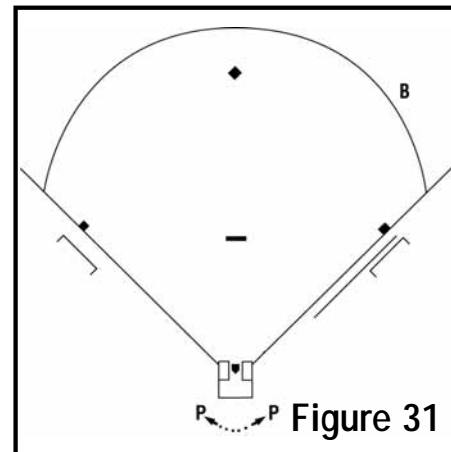
**PLATE UMPIRE:**

The plate umpire shall take a position facing the field at the first baseline extended when the team in the first base dugout is coming to bat and the third baseline extended facing the field when the team in the third base dugout is coming to bat.

**BASE UMPIRE:**

Assume a position at the outfield edge. Stand in fair territory and face the infield. Be alert to hustle players on and off the field. In a two-umpire system, the first base umpire is responsible for brushing the pitching rubber after the last out of the half inning. In a three or four person system, the third base umpire is responsible for brushing off the pitching rubber after the last out of the previous inning.

NOTE: If the umpire responsible for keeping the pitching plate brushed off is in the outfield on a play that was the last out of the inning, another umpire should brush off the pitching plate.

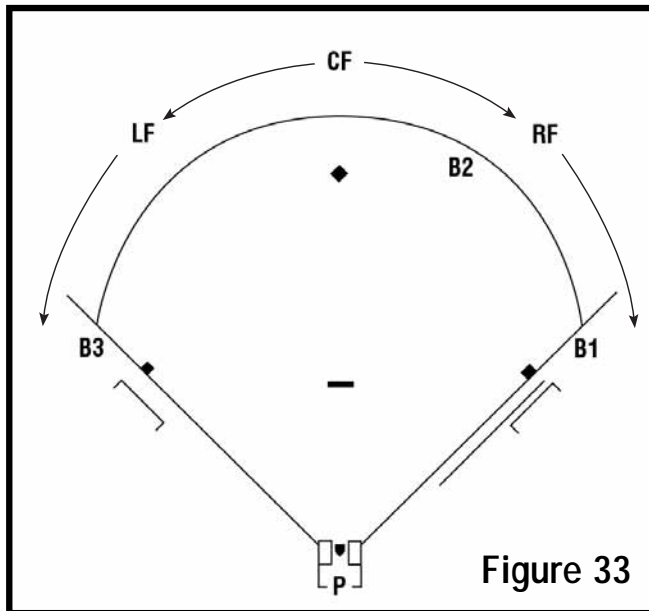


**FOUR-UMPIRE SYSTEM —  
FAST PITCH AND SLOW PITCH**

The four-umpire system provides an umpire at every base, allowing for the best possible coverage for force or tag plays at each base, or on outfield fly balls.

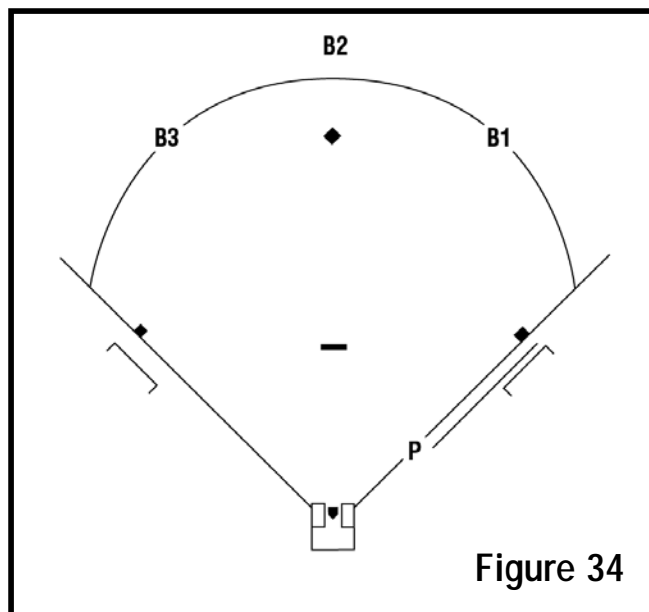
With the four-umpire system, one of the three base umpires will always go to the outfield on each fly ball or line drive hit over any infielder's head. The second base umpire is responsible for the outfield area from the left to the right fielder. He/she will spend more time in the outfield observing possible trapped balls or

balls near the fence which may bounce over (under) or go over on the fly, than he/she will in making calls at second base. The first base umpire is responsible for all balls hit between the right fielder and the dead-ball line, and the third base umpire is responsible for all balls hit between the left fielder and the dead-ball line (Figure 33).



When any of the umpires go out, the remaining three umpires revert to a three-umpire system of coverage as previously covered. This is true not only for tag-ups on all fly balls, but also for all force out or tag plays in the infield. Remember, when a base umpire goes out on a play to the outfield, he/she should ALWAYS stay out until all play has ceased.

Between-inning mechanics are the same as the three-umpire system with the second base umpire staying in the out field area (Figure 34).





# Official NFHS Softball Signals

A. DO NOT PITCH



Signal toward pitcher

B. PLAY BALL



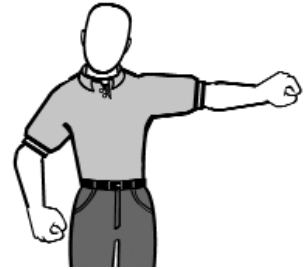
Verbally calls "Play ball"

C. TIME OUT/FOULBALL/DEAD BALL



Verbally calls "Time," "Foul ball" or "Dead ball"

D. DELAYED DEAD BALL



Extend left arm out, fist with palm down (or out)

E. STRIKE/OUT



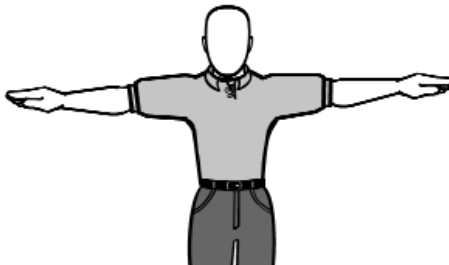
Fist to hammer at 90 degrees

F. INFIELD FLY



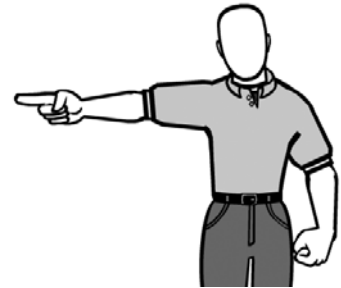
Verbally call "Infield fly"

G. SAFE



Verbally call "Safe"

H. FAIR BALL



Point to fair territory with hand closest to infield. No verbal call.

I. FOUL TIP



Fingers touch together, chest high, followed by strike call.

J. COUNT



Left hand indicates balls, followed by strikes on the right hand. Verbally give count.

K. HOME RUN



Right fist in the air, rotate counterclockwise

L. DOUBLE



First two fingers in the air

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| DATE                                    |        | TEAM |      |
|---|--------|------|------|
| Official Line-up<br>Baseball - Softball |        |      |      |
| NO.                                     | PLAYER | NO.  | POS. |
| 1                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 2                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 3                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 4                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 5                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 6                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 7                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 8                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 9                                       |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| 10                                      |        |      |      |
| SUB.                                    |        |      |      |
| SUBSTITUTES                             |        | POS. |      |
|   |        |      |      |
|   |        |      |      |
|   |        |      |      |
|   |        |      |      |
| CONFERENCES                             |        |      |      |
| CONF                                    | 1      | 2    | 3    |
| CONF                                    | 4      | 5    | 6    |
| CONF                                    | 7      | 8    | 9    |
| CONF                                    | 10     |      |      |
| COURTESY RUNNERS                        |        |      |      |
| CONF                                    | 1      | 2    | 3    |
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School/Organization Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

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E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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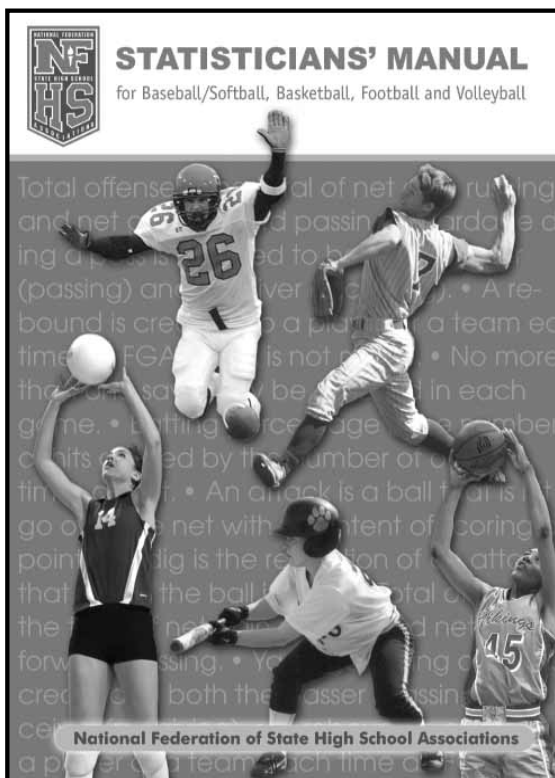
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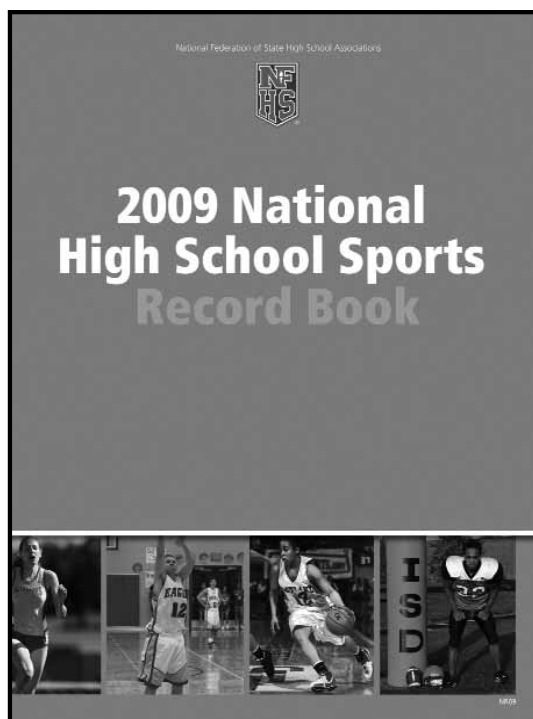
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