



BASEBALL 2012

A supplement to the *NCAA Baseball Rules* • Prepared by the editors of *Referee* magazine

Managing At-Bats Remains Focus



PATRICK GREEN/ICON

The rules committee addressed pace of play for 2011 in a major way with the implementation of the 20-second and 90-second pitch clocks.

However, that is but one aspect of the many pace-of-play initiatives in recent years.

For 2011-12, the rules committee included as a rules point of emphasis the enforcement of one specific aspect of pace of play — the attention of coaches, players and umpires on keeping the batter in the box per current rules.

It doesn't matter if it's the first batter in the game or with a 3-2 count with bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth. The batter is not guaranteed to have time granted just as the pitcher comes set.

As a reminder, Rule 7-1c requires a batter to keep at least one foot in the

Batters are continuing to cause delays that are not permitted by the rules. Umpires must strive to manage at bats properly.

batter's box throughout the time at bat. The batter may leave the batter's box but not the surrounding home plate when:

- The batter swings at a pitch.
- The batter is forced out of the box by the pitch.
- A member of either team requests and is granted time.
- A defensive player attempts a play on a runner at any base.
- A batter feints a bunt.
- A wild pitch or passed ball occurs.
- The pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound after receiving the ball.
- The catcher leaves the position to give defensive signals.

The penalty is the awarding of a strike if none of these exceptions occur.

Batters have been lax on this rule and umpires have been lax in its enforcement. No one is advocating arbitrary penalties or not using

(see At-Bats, p.9)

Coach-Umpire Philosophy

The baseball rules committee reviewed a lot of information related to some inappropriate, disrespectful, vulgar and lengthy communication between coaches and umpires and placed responsibility for improvement upon all parties. Continued monitoring will occur which could lead to additional actions in the future.

For the umpire, the topic of handling situations is covered at most clinics and in training materials. Umpires must not be part

of the problem; they must be part of the solution. While most umpires are aware of their role and responsibility in attempting to diffuse potential confrontations, there is still improvement to be made.

As a refresher course for umpires, here are three things to keep in mind:

Keep your cool.

Nothing good can happen

(see Philosophy, p.8)

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Greetings NCAA Umpires:



Gene McArtor
NCAA National Coordinator of
Baseball Umpires

Welcome to our NCAA Baseball Umpire Clinics as we prepare for the 2012 NCAA baseball season. These clinics provide valuable interpretations and information for every umpire as we strive to elevate our on-field performance and national consistency in rule interpretations and mechanics. In addition the camaraderie and side discussions and arguments all benefit our profession. I recognize the individual sacrifice to attend a national clinic. There is also a movement in some sports to change to online clinics. Frankly, in my view there is no comparison, and I continue to believe in the value of face-to-face meetings. They are demonstrated to be more beneficial for persuasion, leadership, clarity and

decision making.

I want to thank all who participate in our umpiring and NCAA program. I have the greatest respect for all that goes into being a high level umpire. Working a full schedule at a conference and championship level requires a high level of commitment, significant preparation and many hours of time and travel, all of which impact jobs, family and personal time. This dedication is greatly appreciated by me, the NCAA baseball committees and by the student-athletes and coaches you serve in our sport.

I also want to thank the NCAA Umpire Improvement Program staff including our divisional national coordinators, secretary-rules editor, director of umpires, regional advisors and conference coordinators who demonstrate a passion and singular desire to aid training, education, evaluation, selection and performance. I also want to thank and express my appreciation to Matt Moore and the staff at *Referee* magazine for their work with this newsletter development and publication, which reaches all coaches and umpires.

The publication is a great assistance for all as we enter the 2012 season. I am proud to be representing the hundreds of outstanding umpires who officiate NCAA baseball. We still have improvements to make, hurdles to overcome

and our overall goals of consistency, temperament and on-field performance continue to be the carrot we chase. Any of our umpires who think the profession is stagnant or maintaining the status quo has not been paying attention. We also have some great newer umpires who are challenging for a place at the upper levels of our sport.

The 2011 NCAA baseball season and the 2011 championships were some of the best ever with a high quality of umpiring to match the outstanding play on the field. But, there will always be significant opportunities for growth and improvement with continued preparation, training and experience. We are in a new era of college baseball with increased exposure, media attention and commitment by baseball programs. We now have a clock to help make the game even more appealing to fans and followers. In 2011, we saw our first use of K-zone at the college level and will move into the age of limited instant replay in 2012. This use of technology will continue to expand in the future.

The rules committee and I continue to stress the need for civil and professional conduct between student-athletes, coaches and umpires. Each group is under greater stress for results. Each group has a few members who harm the game and its image by their unsportsmanlike actions, conduct and language on the

field. In addition to the rules committee, more and more institutions and conferences are paying attention and addressing these items. It is not the same game as it was even a few years ago and we all must recognize and do our part to adjust.

Unsportsmanlike or out of control conduct has no rational justification in today's game.

Our first full year with the NCAA baseball umpiring website on the Arbiter platform has demonstrated what a valuable tool this is and will be. Registration was significantly up in 2011 (23%) with projections to go much higher this year. Page views were up 54%. While registration is required for postseason eligibility and satisfaction of requirements, any umpire with aspirations to improve who does not register is missing a major professional opportunity. Instant communication, notes, rule interpretations, tests, quizzes and video training opportunities are all part of the value. For postseason umpires the additional communications and instructions is facilitated. Regardless of level of umpiring this website can enhance your abilities. Suggestions or questions throughout the year are welcome and may be directed to Gene McArtor, mcartore@missouri.edu; Tom Hiler, Director of Umpires, tomashiler@yahoo.com; or Jim Paronto, secretary rules editor, paronto25@aol.com. Have a great 2012. □

Acknowledgments

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2012 Focus: Getting the Call Right

No one will dispute the ultimate goal of each umpire is to get every call correct. And while umpires would like to do that, it is well known that it is not going to happen. Umpires will make mistakes; the goal of the “Getting the Call Right” philosophy is to correct the mistakes that can be reasonably addressed.

The NCAA rulebook (Appendix E) has emphasized that getting the call right is more important than umpire pride and have stressed the procedures that are to be used when applying the philosophy.

That said, there still seems to be some confusion throughout the country on this philosophy. Please follow the guidelines listed below, which are restated from the NCAA rulebook:

- Some calls will not result in an umpire conference because the rules do not allow it or it involves a judgment call.

- Some calls will not result in an umpire conference because the calling umpire is 100 percent confident in his judgment and view of the play.

- Some calls will not result in an umpire conference because the calling umpire has had the best look at the play. Just because a coach asks for help, an umpire is not required to seek it. Too many umpires are using this philosophy as a means of pacifying an upset coach. As section D of Appendix E states: “Umpires are not to seek help on plays on which they are 100 percent confident in their judgment and view of the play.”



Umpire David Savage is set and in good position for the pickoff play at first base. He should not ask for help just to calm down an angry coach. Help should only be sought when an umpire is unsure of a call.

- The calling umpire is the one who must seek help on most plays. The rulebook lists seven scenarios that the non-calling umpire can offer assistance without a request from the calling umpire. There is no limit to plays in which the calling umpire may seek help.

- Umpires should not, however, come off as arrogant by refusing a reasonable request for assistance. It takes very little time to come together with your crew and confirm a decision on which there is doubt (for example, the pulled foot/swipe tag play at first base) and refusing to get help will probably take longer and leave the coach even more frustrated.

- A coach must return to his position — the dugout for the defensive coach or dugout/coaching box for the offensive coach — before the umpires get together. The coach who requested the umpires get together is not permitted to further challenge a decision. If a call is reversed, the other coach is entitled to an explanation, but

is not permitted to argue.

- When the crew comes together, it should be all members of the crew coming together at the same time. Each umpire may offer a different perspective and the final piece of the puzzle might come from an unlikely source.

- Don't take your eyes off your responsibilities to put your eyes on a call that might potentially be challenged. The base umpire in the middle of

the field must watch the runners touch bases and ensure there is no obstruction/ interference as opposed to concentrating on helping out on a potential fair/foul home run ball.

- There are some calls that cannot be changed: Steals and tag plays (unless the ball is dropped), force plays, balls and strikes, a catch/no catch with runners on base or a ball that is ruled foul and remains in play.

One deviation from the catch/no catch that can be reversed is changing a no catch to a catch with two outs. Making that a catch is the third out and therefore, no harm has been done to either the offense or defense.

As a special note for 2012, the DI College World Series will utilize instant replay in a limited role for balls which may or may not be a home run — fair/foul, left the stadium/stayed in play or fan interference. This use of replay will be an extra tool for getting the call right. □

No New Rules for 2012

Starting with the current 2009-10 NCAA Baseball Rulebook, the rulebook went to a two-year cycle for changes. Therefore, there are no rule changes for the 2012 season.

The rules committee still held its annual meeting in July and discussed the 2011 changes, the 2011 season and potential rules changes

for 2013-14. The final decision on any rule changes for 2013-14 will be made this July by the rules committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel.

Umpires and coaches are reminded to check ncaabaseball.ArbitersSports.com for rule interpretations and any issues that arise during the season. □

Clock Protocol Reminders

The new 90-second and 20-second clock rules implemented for 2011 were well received by coaches, teams and umpires and many positive results to the game were observed. In the second year of the clock, a few reminders are in order to strive for consistency of application.

The expectation is that umpires will have, utilize and penalize, when necessary, violations of the clock rules. It is not the prerogative of anyone to change, disregard or ignore the rules. When the clock is kept on the field, it is the responsibility of the appropriate base umpire to enforce any penalties.

Reminders for the 90 second clock

- Used in every half inning in which there is a returning pitcher and

therefore only 5 warm up pitches are allowed.

- Per midseason interpretation in 2011, the clock begins when the last defensive player crosses the foul line on his way to the dugout.

- The timing is complete when the pitcher begins his wind up to the plate. There is NO additional 20 seconds added to the 90 seconds between innings unless a violation has been already been called.

- Common sense may allow a slight delay in starting the clock or a pause in the clock but that shall not be abused by teams or umpires. Some relief may be provided if the windup is "imminent," but no umpire should allow that to create lengthy delays or ignoring of enforcement of the rule.

The 2011 season demonstrated that if the

pitcher heads for the mound immediately upon completion of a half inning, very few clock issues occur or are even close. If the first batter is ready on time, very few "strike" violations occur.

- Only if both the pitcher **and** batter are ready to play significantly prior to the 90 seconds expiring will an inning be started early. Neither team can require the other to begin earlier than the allowed time by rule.

Reminders for the 20 second clock

- To be timed for every pitch other than the first pitch of an inning and when there are no runners on base.

- Each pitcher can receive one warning prior to a penalty being enforced.

- The clock begins when the pitcher has the ball on

the mound (not the rubber) and ends when he begins his pitching motion. Batters must be ready with at least five seconds left on the clock.

- As with the 90-second clock, common sense may be provided for delays or pauses in the clock but stepping off the rubber (unless time is called) is not one of them. Some relief may be provided if the windup is imminent but there should not be instances of many additional seconds elapsing without a warning or penalty. A warning on a first violation should be sufficient in most cases to prevent future violations.

Coaching techniques and good communication and consistency by umpires will ensure compliance with the clock rule with minimal penalties required. □

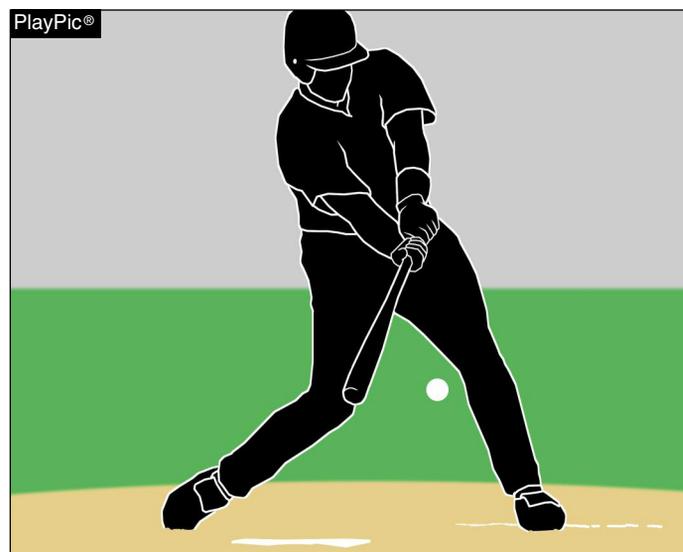
Half-Swing Definition, Procedure

For 2011, a new definition of a half swing was instituted to replace the checked swing.

The half swing is to be called a strike if the barrel head of the bat passes the batter's front hip. The position of the batter's hands is not part of this definition.

To aid in a more consistent ruling on this call, especially when appeals to a base umpire are involved, in 2012 in a three-man umpiring

system, the appeal for a half swing will always be made to the umpire positioned on the foul line regardless of whether the batter is left handed or right handed. The appeal will still be made to the "open" side if both base umpires are on the lines, but will never be made to an umpire positioned in the middle of the field. That should provide a more consistent ruling on a sometimes very difficult judgment call. □



Lightning Policies



PATRICK GREEN/ICON

Once a game has been stopped for weather, the mandatory 30-minute clock resets each time lightning is seen or thunder is heard.

The NCAA rulebook has specific guidelines in Appendix C as it relates to weather.

All individuals should have left the game site and reached a safe structure or location by the time the person monitoring the weather obtains a flash-to-bang (lightning-to-thunder) count of 30 seconds (equivalent to lightning being six miles away). That recommendation was developed as a practical way to make a judgment in situations where other resources such as technology and instrumentation are not available.

These recommendations also include that all personnel should wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field of activity. Each subsequent occurrence resets the 30-minute clock. Since at least one umpire will have a stopwatch in most cases with the new pitch clock rule, it should be easy for the

umpiring crew to monitor the elapsed time.

A new approved ruling clarifies and reminds that coaches and game management, not umpires, have the responsibility for monitoring and designating their team's activities as well as monitoring all other personnel during these lightning delays.

The safety of all game participants and of spectators is much more important than getting to the next pitch or completing an inning.

As a reminder, the existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can, and does, strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.

If available, electronic detection devices should be used as additional tools to determine the severity of the weather. However, such devices should not be used as the sole source when making the decision to halt play. □

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Background Check Program Update

**DEADLINE TO SUBMIT BACKGROUND CHECK
FEBRUARY 13, 2012**

The background check program remains unchanged for the 2012 season. As part of the requirements to be considered for the NCAA Division I postseason, umpires must fill out a background check form online prior to the deadline date of Feb. 13, 2012.

Baseball is just one of several sports where Division I postseason officials are subject to NCAA background checks. The others are football (bowl games), men's basketball, women's basketball and men's ice hockey. Those sports are considered the association's highest profile sports, so the character of the officials is important. The NCAA takes very seriously its obligation to do everything necessary to prevent gambling scandals from occurring.

History

Since the 2005-06 season, baseball umpires have been required to undergo background checks.

What's Included

The background check consists of a review of driving records, credit history and also includes a review of the national sex offenders list or equivalent state lists.

Permanent Disqualification

The following convictions will deem an official permanently ineligible to officiate in any future NCAA championship

regardless of when the conviction occurred:

- Any felony conviction;
- Any sports wagering offense (felony or misdemeanor); and/or
- Placement on the National Sex Offenders List or any state sex offenders list (for sexual assault or violations of child predator laws).

Single-Year Disqualification

The following items will deem an official ineligible to officiate in that year's NCAA championship:

- Not completing the online background check process by the required deadline;
- Not attending a clinic;
- Not taking and passing the online rules test by the required deadline;
- Failure to submit the requested U.S. citizenship documents before the deadline; and/or
- Failure to return the final authorization form confirming consent for the NCAA to perform a background check.

Possible Issues

For several years, there has been a list of several items that will trigger further investigation for baseball umpires. Based on the totality of circumstances, any of these items may also render an official ineligible to officiate in that year's NCAA championship. **These items are not an automatic disqualification.** The results of the investigation will be

presented to an NCAA internal committee that will make the determination of eligibility. This committee will be presented only with the data — they will not know the name of the official.

Decisions by this committee are final — there is no appeal process.

It is imperative that if you are contacted by the committee that you present them with all relevant data before a decision is reached by the committee. No appeals will be considered.

- Casino employment (any capacity) or employment by an entity engaged in gambling activity;
- Bankruptcy (currently in bankruptcy or any within the past five years);
- Collections (a pattern of financial delinquencies within the past five years);
- Tax liens (any current federal or state lien or lien history within the past five years);
- Unusual transactions (as may be disclosed by the applicant or otherwise learned through the background check process).

FAQs

1. Will my background check information be accepted if completed online after the deadline date?

No. No information can be submitted electronically after the deadline date of Feb. 13, 2012.

2. Can I still submit my background check forms in paper format?

No. No paper forms will be accepted. All information must be submitted using the

online background check system.

3. If I sign the release form, will my employer, neighbors or friends be contacted automatically?

No. Interviews will be conducted only if an official has triggered the standards that require further investigation.

4. Are there background check programs in which coaches and student-athletes participate?

Coaches and student-athletes must abide by NCAA Bylaw 10.3, which states, in part, that an individual may not wager on a college or professional sports contest. Each institution is responsible for ensuring that its representatives comply with this important provision.

5. Do repeated credit checks damage an individual's credit rating?

Repeated credit checks do not damage an individual's credit rating. Consumer reporting agencies are controlled by 15 U.S.C. 1681, which limits the manner in which credit reports can be distributed and used. The United States Congress included several procedural safeguards within the statute to ensure that consumer reporting agencies do not misuse, redistribute, damage or limit an individual's credit rating due to repeated checks. The NCAA's requests for credit information will fall within the statutory requirements. □

The Job Starts Before the Game Does

A plate umpire will judge more than 200 pitches during a game and a base umpire will probably have more than a handful of close plays in the field, either fair/foul or catch/no catch calls.

But neither umpire has a reasonable chance of being successful during the game if the crew hasn't taken care of business before the first pitch is thrown.

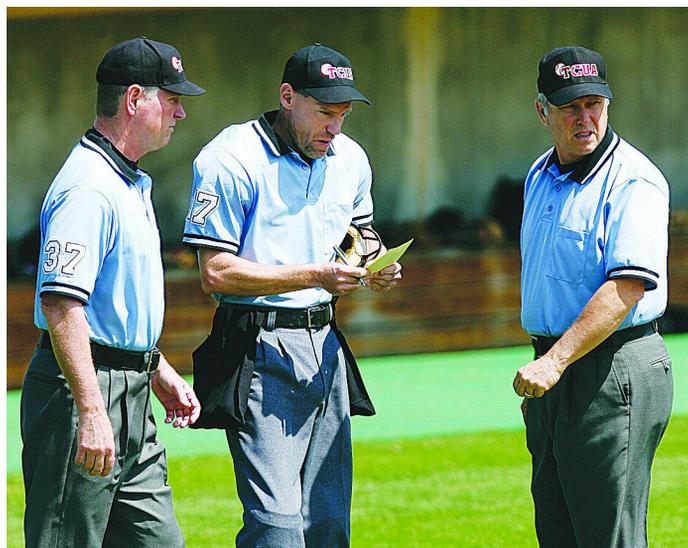
Here are seven things that every umpire needs to take care of in advance of every game.

1. Keep the assignment calendar up to date. When an assigner opens up the calendar for the season, it is imperative that umpires block out dates they are not available. Wedding anniversaries and birthdays are the same every year; so if you know you aren't going to be available on those days, block them out immediately.

Once your calendar is ready, accept the assignment as soon as it's handed out. Barring unforeseen issues with work or family, you should be able to accept any assignment that comes your way if you have kept your calendar up to date.

2. Confirm with home team, partner(s). About a week before the game, the umpires should communicate and confirm the site and time of the assignment. The crew chief should be the one to contact the school and reach out to his crew.

The crew chief should also make contact with the host school to confirm the game details as well. It



KEITH JOHNSTON

The plate meeting between Chuck Busse, Houston; Danny Moscarro, Friendswood, TX; and Larry King, Houston may have just ended, but they've been hard at work before the game ever starts.

doesn't look good for the crew to show up for a game at 7 p.m. when the athletic director and teams have it as a 4 p.m. game on their schedules.

Part of confirming with the home team is being aware of potential weather issues. Teams are likely to switch the date, time and even location of a game if weather is going to threaten the game's original starting time. By communicating with the coach or game manager in advance, you become a part of the equation.

3. Pack your bag. You should take all of your equipment and uniforms to every game. Just because you are assigned the bases doesn't give you an excuse to not have all of your equipment when the original plate umpire doesn't show up or thought he was working the bases and didn't bring his gear, either.

4. Get there. If you've been to a field or stadium before, then you likely know where to park and where your locker room is (if you are fortunate to have one). If not, then hopefully that's something you confirmed with the home team in your phone call.

Make certain you leave yourself plenty of time. A game gets off to a bad start if you are rushed because you got caught in typical rush-hour traffic. Sometimes you have to leave before the rush hour hits in order to get there on time.

By leaving so early, he gets there at 5 p.m., which may seem obscene. But if he waited 30 minutes to leave, he wouldn't make it out of traffic and to the game until 6:30 p.m., if he was lucky. And if he planned to arrive at 6 p.m. by leaving at 5 p.m., the game would start without him.

5. Get ready in the locker room. The locker room should be the place where you not only get physically ready, but also mentally ready.

Physical prep is what everyone thinks of — getting dressed, rubbing up game balls and leaving at the right time to be on the field when required.

The mental side is often overlooked. First, the game deserves your full attention, so when the entire crew has arrived, the cell phones should be turned off and put away. There are obvious exceptions, such as family situations, but gabbing with the umpires at another game site is not necessary.

When you start your pregame discussion, make sure it fits the crew that you are with for that game. Three veteran college umpires who have worked together before probably don't need a complete discussion of all rotations. However, if it's one veteran and one new guy on a varsity game, going through the whole pregame not only ensures coverage, but it will likely put the newer umpire at ease. The newer umpire will hear things he's heard before, and will grow more comfortable.

6. Go to the field. Make certain you arrive at the field in time to take care of all necessary pregame responsibilities before the plate meeting.

Use the time when you walk on to the field to give it an inspection. Take note of wind conditions or potential safety hazards.

(see Before the Game, p.14)

2011 Rules Changes Revisited

Along with the pitch clock and other major changes for 2011-12, there were some changes that are not addressed elsewhere in this guide. Here is a reminder of the rules changes from last year:

Obstruction (2-54).

There are two changes to the obstruction rule. The definition has been returned to the pre-2004 NCAA rule which emulates the pro rule by dividing obstruction into two types.

Calling an immediate dead ball when the obstructed runner is being played on eliminates any confusion over whether obstruction has been called and avoids the runner having to determine how far he should try to advance. The definition has also been changed to read: "The act of a fielder who, while not in the possession of the ball 'or not in the act of fielding the ball,' impedes the progress of any runner."

Type 1 obstruction occurs against a runner on which a

play is being made. The ball is dead immediately; the umpire shall call time and then point at and call the obstruction. All runners shall be awarded bases they would have reached had there been no obstruction. The obstructed runner must be awarded at least one base beyond his last legally touched base prior to the obstruction.

Examples of a runner obstructed while a play is being made on him include: rundowns, while another fielder is making a direct throw to a base in an attempt to retire that runner, and the batter-runner en route to first base on a ground ball to an infielder.

Play 1: With one out, and runners on second and third, B1 flies out to centerfield. Both runners legally tag up. R3 stumbles going to the plate and ends up in a rundown. R2 is between second and third when R3 is obstructed by F5 during the rundown. **Ruling 1:** The ball becomes dead the moment R3 is obstructed. R3

is awarded home — one base beyond his last legally touched base prior to the obstruction. R2 is entitled to the base he would have reached had there been no obstruction. If R3 was obstructed attempting to return to third, it is reasonable for the umpire to judge that R2 could not have advanced and thus must remain at second. If R3 was obstructed attempting to score, R2 would have likely made it to third since he had legally tagged. It is thus reasonable for the umpire to award R2 third base.

Type 2 obstruction occurs in all other cases when no play is being made on the runner. The ball is not dead; the umpire points at and calls the obstruction. Play continues until all action has ceased and then time is called, even if it results in a play being made on the previously obstructed runner. Penalties are imposed that will nullify the act of obstruction.

Examples of a runner obstructed while no play is

being made on him include: a batter-runner rounding first on a base hit while ball is in outfield, a runner from second rounding third on a hit to the outfield (no throw to the plate), and a runner attempting to advance on wild throw to outfield (steal attempt or pickoff). The preceding is not all inclusive and the rule applies to any other situation where no play is being made directly on the runner at the moment he is obstructed.

Play 2: With a runner on first, B1 hits into the gap. R1 rounds second and collides with F6. He gets up and advances past third and about halfway home. He then decides to retreat back to third as the ball is relayed home. **Ruling 2:** The ball is not dead; play continues until all action has ceased.

R1 should be awarded the base that the umpire feels will nullify the obstruction. B1 will remain wherever he ended up. The throw home was not affected by the obstruction; either B1

(see 2011 Rule Changes, p. 12)

Philosophy

continued from p. 1

otherwise. Umpires are the one group who are not emotionally attached to the game. When umpires do not keep their composure, they have lessened the ability to manage the game and persons involved. Avoid inflammatory remarks and those that box you in such as, "Shut up!" or, "Knock it off!" Those

type of comments do not diffuse the situation, but rather ignite it.

Do not curse.

Regardless of language used by umpires in other settings, the baseball field is not one of them. The language is inflammatory for some, offensive for some and never appropriate. Even in casual or so-called friendly conversation, an umpire never knows when his

language will come back to create problems.

Do not initiate contact with a coach or student-athlete.

We are not protecting a partner and can make many situations much worse, even if it appears someone is out of control. That is already a policy in our manuals. With the current ejection and suspension penalties that protect umpires from

contact by coaches, umpires cannot be given the ability under any circumstances to be the initiator of this contact. Stepping in-between and holding up stop signs should be the extent of umpire actions.

If those three items can be part of every umpire's conduct, it will assist in communications and avoid criticism. □

Simplifying the DH Rule

Rule 7-2 is the designated hitter rule.

It takes up more than three pages of the 2011-12 rulebook, listing not only the rule, but also 11 different scenarios of how substitutions involving the rule can take place.

Umpires are often encouraged to take a laminated card of the rule and those examples on to the field with them in case any issues arise.

The difficulty in the rule is that one person can serve as two roles, the pitcher and the DH. And that it is possible for a lineup to switch from 10 bodies (two people serving as the pitcher and DH) to nine bodies (one person as the pitcher/DH) back to 10, back to nine, etc.

To simplify the rule, even when only nine players are in the lineup, treat it as a 10-player lineup. Treat the pitcher and DH as two separate roles and your confusion

will be reduced.

In a nine-player lineup, Smith is serving as both the pitcher and designated hitter. Treat them as Offensive Smith (the DH) and Defensive Smith (the pitcher). When one is replaced, his role as the other is not affected. Substitutions can be made at any time for offensive and defensive players, so keeping the players separate in your mind is another way to avoid confusion when the coach wants to make a change.

Play 1: With Smith as the P/DH, the defensive team wants to bring Jones in to pitch. **Ruling 1:** Legal substitution. "Pitcher Smith" is done for the game unless he moves to a defensive position at the same time. "Offensive Smith" remains the DH.

Play 2: With Smith as the P/DH, the defensive team wants to bring Jones in to pitch and move Smith to play right field. **Ruling**

2: That is the only scenario where the DH is eliminated. Smith remains in his spot in the batting order as the new right fielder and Jones enters the batting order as the new pitcher. He will bat in the spot of the previous right fielder. The team will play with a nine-player lineup for the remainder of the game.

Play 3: With Smith as the P/DH, the offensive team wants to bring Jones in to pinch-hit or pinch-run. **Ruling 3:** Legal. "Offensive Smith" is done for the game and cannot return to the offensive lineup. Jones is the new DH. "Defensive Smith" remains in the game as the pitcher. "Defensive Smith" cannot return to the offensive lineup, which precludes him from moving to another defensive position.

In a 10-player lineup, again treat each of the players as the half of the

game they are playing. In those scenarios, however, if they leave that half of the game and are not immediately inserted into the other half, then they are no longer eligible.

Play 4: The defensive team wants to replace Smith with Jones as the pitcher. **Ruling 4:** Legal. At the time he is being replaced, "Defensive Smith" can become the DH (becoming "Offensive Smith") or he can move to another defensive position (eliminating the role of the DH). If he does not do any of those things, he is out of that game and cannot return.

If "Offensive Smith" becomes the DH, "Defensive Smith" cannot return to the game, nor can any subsequent DH.

You'll have great success in keeping the DH rule straight if you remember to treat them as two separate players. □

At-Bats

continued from p. 1

common sense. However the rules committee wants this to improve and be enforced by all umpires.

Most batters will respond to reminders, verbal and visual. If they continue to ignore the umpire's reminders, penalties should be applied. Umpires can ask for coach

assistance to assist in the encouragement. In past years on way too many occasions, some umpires have just ignored these violations and not attempted to enforce.

For 2012, every umpire should use a hand motion that all can see and verbally encourage and ask batters for their compliance and cooperation. If the problem continues, then penalize. Previous enforcement has

been unfair to the umpires who have followed the procedure and lead to inconsistencies when other umpires do not.

That is the reason the rules committee wants specific emphasis, improvement and enforcement by all teams and umpires.

If umpires will apply themselves to this topic at the beginning of the season, there will be minimal issues

later in the year. As a reminder, unlike the 20-second clock, this rule applies at all times, including with runners on base.

Umpires must also know the exceptions so that enforcement is consistent and by rule.

A coach cannot argue if an umpire refuses to grant time out to the batter for leaving the batter's box (7-1b A.R. 2). □

Test Your Rules Knowledge Quiz

In each of the following, you are given a question or play situation and several possible answers. You are to decide which answer is correct using 2011-12 NCAA rules.

1. R3, two outs. The batter hits a ground ball to F4. His throw is off-line pulling F3 into the running lane in front of first base. F3 and BR collide as F3 is reaching for the throw. The collision is within the three-foot runners lane. The BR misses first base because of the collision and advances on to second base on the bad throw. R3 scores on the play. The defense properly appeals that the BR missed first base.

a. The BR is allowed to remain at second base on the bad throw. The collision caused the BR to miss first base, and, therefore, the missing of first base is ignored in this situation. The run is allowed to score.

b. The umpire should have called obstruction when the collision occurred and placed the BR at first base. R3 would either score or remain at third base depending on the umpire's judgment as to what would have happened had the obstruction not occurred.

c. The appeal is allowed. BR is out and no run scores.

d. The umpire should have called interference when the collision occurred and declared the BR out for the third out of the inning.

2. R1 is stealing on a 1-1 count. The batter interferes with the catcher's throw that is attempting to prevent the steal. F6 catches the throw but R1 stops short of second base and a rundown ensues. R1 is finally tagged out by F3.

a. The play stands. As long as the runner is tagged out on the play, the interference is disregarded and all action is

allowed.

b. "That's interference" should have been called the moment the interference occurred, but the umpire must leave the ball in play because if an out is made on the continuation of the play, entire play stands.

c. "That's interference" should have been called the moment the interference occurred. Then, if the catcher's initial throw does not retire the runner, "Time" is called and the BR is declared out.

d. "Time" should have been called the moment the interference occurred and the BR immediately declared out.

3. R1, the batter hits a ground ball to the right of F3. F3 fields the ball and throws to F6 to force R1. F3 returns straight back to first base for the return throw from F6. Meanwhile, the pitcher is coming over to cover first base and obstructs the BR in front of first base.

a. Nothing. The ball is live. The pitcher has a right to cover the bag in an attempt to retire the BR.

b. Obstruction. R1 is out at second and the BR is awarded first base.

c. Obstruction only if the act by the pitcher is intentional.

d. Obstruction. R1 is awarded second base and the BR is awarded first base.

4. R1 with one out. F1 makes a pitch that deflects off the catcher's leg guards and is headed toward the first base dugout. R1 was stealing on the pitch. F2 slides and intentionally deflects the rolling ball into the dugout with his foot. As the PU, you believe the ball would have entered the dugout without F2's deflection.

a. R1 is awarded second base.

b. R1 is awarded third base.

c. R1 is awarded home.

d. R1 is awarded second base and you issue a warning to the defensive team for unsportsmanlike behavior.

5. In the eighth inning, B4 gets a base hit. The defensive coach brings his lineup card to the PU and claims that B4 should be out because his jersey number is not the same as is listed on the his lineup card. B4 has played the entire game. The PU agrees that B4's jersey number does not match the lineup cards.

a. Call B4 out because he is not wearing the number that is listed for him on the lineup cards.

b. Call B4 out for batting out of order.

c. Eject B4 for not wearing the number that is listed on the lineup card.

d. B4 is allowed to remain on base and the corrected number change is made to all lineup cards.

6. R1, no outs. F1 is on the grass near the dirt mound when he goes to his mouth and then goes directly to the ball with that hand.

a. This is a ball and you add it to the count of the present batter.

b. This is a balk and you award R1 second base.

c. This is a balk, however, you keep R1 at first base.

d. This is a ball but if the present batter has no count at the time of the pitcher's infraction, the PU ignores the infraction and issues a warning to that pitcher.

7. Bases loaded, no outs, 0-2 count. B4 hits a towering fly ball in front of the plate. F1, F2 and F3 circle around the descending ball. However, the pop-up falls untouched between them. The umpires have correctly called,

"infield fly, if fair!" The ball has a great deal of back spin on it and after the three fielders fail to catch or even touch the ball, it rolls back toward home plate, rolls past the plate and comes to rest about one foot inside the catcher's box. All runners have advanced one base along with the BR.

a. Legal play, everything stands as is.

b. Legal play, all runners advance but B4 is out on the infield fly rule.

c. Legal play, all runners advance but the defense is penalized for making a travesty of the game by the awarding of first base to the BR.

d. Legal play, all runners return to their pre-pitch base and the batter returns to bat with an 0-2 count.

8. R2, no outs. B2 hits a hard line drive at F4. R2, not tagging up, sprints to third base. The ball bounces off F4's glove towards F6, who catches it before it hits the ground. F6 runs over and tags second base to appeal that R2 failed to retouch. Meanwhile, B1 makes it to first base safely.

a. Legal catch, B2 is out and R2 is out.

b. Illegal catch, B2 and R2 are both safe.

c. B2 is out on the catch. R2 is safe at third base since F4 had originally touched the ball but did not end up actually catching it.

d. Call "time" and check with your partner(s) to make sure that you are interpreting the rule correctly and then call the batter "out" but allow R2 to remain at third base.

9. The nonconference contest has just been called because of weather after the completion of the 11th inning with the scored tied, 3-3. No agreement to continue at a later time was made at the plate conference



MATT BROWN

Plate umpire Dwayne Finley talks with Cal State Fullerton head coach Dave Serrano about his lineup card. Two different questions on this year's quiz deal with lineups. Question 5 deals with numbers vs. names on the card and Question 11 deals with projected substitutions.

prior to the start of the contest.

a. The game is declared to be "no game" and must be replayed in its entirety.

b. The game is declared a tie game and all individual and team averages are part of the official playing record.

c. The game is considered a suspended game and will be resumed from the point of interruption.

d. The game is a regulation game and must be made up at a later date in collegiate baseball.

10. The starting pitcher has just been removed from the game by his coach. On the way to his dugout, the replaced pitcher

blasts the PU and tells him, in an unsportsmanlike manner, what he thinks of the plate umpire's strike zone.

a. The PU will have to submit a report on the Arbiter of this ejection and the ejected pitcher will receive a two game suspension.

b. The PU will not have to submit an on-line report of this ejection. The replaced pitcher only misses the remaining portion of the game he was pitching in and is eligible to play in his teams next game.

c. The PU will have to submit a written report on the Arbiter of this ejection and the ejected pitcher will receive a four game suspension for his

unsportsmanlike actions.

d. The PU will not have to submit a written report on the Arbiter but must make a phone call to his Supervisor and the ejected pitcher will receive a four game suspension.

11. The catcher and his coach are engaged in a heated argument in the dugout. The coach sends his starting catcher to the locker room. On his way to the third base coaching box, the coach tells the PU that S1 will bat in place of the starting catcher in the fourth spot in the order if S1 comes to bat in that inning.

a. The coach cannot project a substitution. He must wait until the starting catcher's spot in the batting order comes up to bat before announcing his substitution to the PU.

b. S1 is not considered in the lineup as the fourth batter in that inning. The coach can change his mind before the 4th batter comes to the plate that inning.

c. S1 is now in the game and the original catcher is out of the game when the coach announces his substitution to the PU between innings.

d. Yes, S1 is now "in the game" but the PU cannot write his name in the lineup until he shows up to bat. The substitution then becomes official.

12. What is mandatory to have lined before the game begins?

a. The coach's boxes and the batter's boxes.

b. The batter's boxes and the catcher's box.

c. The coach's box and the catcher's box.

d. All of the above.

13. R1 and R3, one out. F9 makes a catch on the warning track. The runners are tagging. R3 scores easily and R1 is safe at second. The defense successfully appeals that R1 left first base too early.

a. No run scores because the appeal play is an out at first before R3 has scored.

Answers

1. c (5-6[1])
2. c (7-11f[2])
3. b (8-3e[2]b)
4. b (8-3o[4])
5. d (4-4a Note)
6. a (8-2d, 7-5a)
7. d (2-34, 2-47)
8. a (2-1, 8-6a)
9. b (5-9a, 5-9c, 5-10b Note)
10. c (2-25 AR5)
11. c (5-5b AR2)
12. b (1-3a, 1-3b)
13. c (5-6c Exception [2] and AR2)
14. d (5-6c Exception [1])
15. c (5-6c Exception [1])

b. No run scores because the appeal play is a force out.

c. The run scores because the appeal play is a "time" play.

d. If the ball is an uncaught fair ball, B4 leads off the next inning.

14. The bases are loaded with two outs. B6 hits a home run outside the park. He misses first and is declared out on a proper appeal by the defensive team.

a. Four runs are scored.

b. Three runs are scored.

c. Two runs are scored.

d. No runs are scored.

15. The bases are loaded with two outs. B6 hits a hard liner past the third baseman. The ball hits the third-base umpire and deflects toward F6. R3 crosses the plate before the BR is thrown out at first base by a great throw by F6.

a. Great plays are always rewarded.

b. R3 scores because the ball is dead when it hits the umpire. The batter is awarded first base.

c. R3 does not score because the ball remains live once it goes past a defensive player and then hits an umpire.

d. R3 scores but the ball remains live. If R3 crosses the plate before F6's throw retires the BR, the run is scored. This is a "time" play.

Balks Aren't Automatically Dead; So When Are They?

It is a common misconception that a balk is an automatic dead ball.

Part of that comes from the history of the rules, because prior to 1954, that was the case at all levels.

However, both NCAA and pro rules now keep a balk live if action continues.

Here are several plays that involve a balk being called and the resulting outcome of when the ball becomes dead.

In each play scenario, the play begins with R1 on first base and B2 at the plate.

Play 1: F1 balks, but delivers the pitch. B2 does not swing at the pitch.

Ruling 1: As soon as F2 catches the pitch, the ball is dead. If the pitch is wild, R1 may continue to advance toward third at his own risk.

Play 2: F1 balks, but delivers the pitch. B2 puts the ball into play. **Ruling 2:**

The ball becomes dead when it is apparent that both R1 and B2 will not advance one base safely. That happens when B2's fly ball is caught or either R1 or B2 are called out before reaching the next base.

If both R1 and B2 advance one base safely, the balk is acknowledged but ignored. In that case, R1 and B2 may be put out.

Play 3: F1 attempts to

pick off R1. **Ruling 3:** As soon as F3 catches the ball, the ball is dead. If the throw is uncaught, the ball remains live until R1 is put out. If R1 ends up in a rundown between first and second, the ball is dead immediately, because he is guaranteed second. Once R1 has reached second base, the balk is acknowledged but ignored and play continues. □

2011 Rule Changes

continued from p. 8

advanced to second on the throw or he stayed at first.

The second part of the change restores the rule to one similar to the pre-2004 NCAA rule, but with a significant caveat. It is again possible for a fielder who does not have possession of the ball to impede the progress of a runner provided he is in the immediate act of fielding the ball. If the fielder is about to receive a thrown ball and the ball is in flight directly toward and near enough to the fielder so he must occupy his position to receive the throw, he may be considered "in the act of fielding the ball."

Play 3: With R2 on second, B1 singles to right. F2 blocks the plate as R2 slides. R2 contacts F2 just before the ball arrives but cannot reach home and is tagged out. **Ruling 3:** The play stands; F2 is not guilty of obstruction because the ball was near enough so that he had to occupy his

position to receive the throw.

Play 4: With R2 on second, B1 singles to right. F9's throw is slightly wide toward third base. F2 moves up the line a few feet. R2 collides with F2 just as the ball arrives. F2 is able to retrieve the ball and tag out R2. **Ruling 4:** The play stands; F2 is not guilty of obstruction because the ball was near enough so that he had to occupy his position to receive the throw.

Play 5: With R2 on second, B1 singles to right. F9's throw is slightly wide toward third base. F2 moves up the line a few feet and braces for the throw, which is cut off in the middle of the infield. R2 collides with F2 and is dazed. F2 then calls for the ball and tags R2 out. **Ruling 5:** F2 is guilty of obstruction and R2 is awarded home. Since F2 was not in the act of fielding the ball, he had no right to contact R2 or to make him alter his running path.

On pickoff plays at any base, the defensive player must clearly have possession

of the throw before blocking the base with any part of his body.

Play 6: F1 attempts to pickoff a runner on first. F3 uses his leg to force R1 away from the base before the ball arrives. **Ruling 6:** Obstruction shall be called and R1 is awarded second base.

Finally, the following has been formally added: "After a fielder has misplayed a batted ball and the ball is 'within a step and a reach' the fielder is still considered in the act (2-54 AR 3)." Previously, this was an interpretation, but not part of the written rule.

Batter interference (6-3b (3)).

The following has been added: "If there is an attempt by the catcher to throw and the attempt is aborted due to an action by the offense, the ball becomes dead immediately, the batter is out and all runners return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch (TOP)." This change makes consistent the wording for 6-3b and 7-11f

with 2-50.

Play 7: With one out, R1 on first breaks with the pitch. B1's swing takes him over the plate and he collides with F2, who cannot complete his throw. **Ruling 7:** B1 is out and R1 returns to first.

Contact with home run hitter (5-2d).

After a home run, team personnel, except for preceding base runners, shall not leave the warning track area in front of the dugout (a recommended minimum area of 15 feet) to congratulate the batter-runner and other base runners. Previously the rule only prohibited other personnel from entering the dirt area at home plate to congratulate the batter-runner.

The change will reduce the amount of jockeying between offensive players and a catcher and/or the pitcher. It also reduces the possibilities for tensions to escalate between the competing teams.

(see 2011 Rule Changes, p.13)

Interference by an Umpire: The Rarest Kind to Call

When an umpire inadvertently gets in the way of a play, he may end up having to eject a protesting coach. There is no means to completely rectify an umpire's transgression. In fact, in several situations the umpire's contact with the ball or player is ignored — no interference and play continues.

Umpire interference in MLB is rare despite having

double the umpires on the field than in most amateur games. We can classify the situations in which an umpire may hamper play into four categories: batted ball, pitched or thrown ball, act of throwing and other player contact.

Batted ball. If a batted ball touches an umpire, the contact is ignored in certain situations and the ball remains live. In other cases,

the ball is immediately dead.

If a fair batted ball touches an umpire before passing an infielder other than the pitcher or touching any fielder, it is interference and the batter is awarded first base. The ball is dead and other runners advance only if forced.

On April 18, 1956, the Pittsburgh Pirates met the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds. Don Mueller was

on first for the Giants as Alvin Dark batted. Dark hit a smash toward second baseman Johnny O'Brien. However, the ball struck second-base umpire Stan Landes on the left heel. Landes was working inside the diamond on the infield grass. O'Brien fielded the ball and forced out Mueller at second. However, Landes correctly declared the ball
(see Interference, p.15)

2011 Rule Changes

continued from p. 12

Collisions (8-7).

This section has been reorganized. It has been made clear that contact above the waist that was initiated by the runner shall not be judged as an attempt to reach the base or plate and judged as an attempt by the runner to dislodge the ball.

If the runner's path to the base is blocked and the runner made an actual attempt to reach the base, did not make an attempt to dislodge the ball from the fielder, and attempted to avoid a collision if he could have reached the base without colliding, it is considered unavoidable contact.

Appeals (5-4c, 8-6b).

An appeal is no longer lost if all fielders, other than the catcher, are not in fair territory to start an appeal play after "Time" has been called. The umpire should not put the ball in play until the fielders comply. If the umpire inadvertently does so, there is no penalty (no

balk is called). A fielder may go into foul territory to back up an appeal play after the ball has been put into play.

Also, the statute of limitations for appeals has been revised to "before the next pitch, play or attempted play or before the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory." Previously, the rule had included the outfielders.

Windup position (9-1a AR 2).

A pitcher may pause during his delivery from the windup position without penalty. The most common example of a pitcher doing that would be Daisuke Matsuzaka from the Boston Red Sox.

The rule still states "without interruption," but a brief pause is acceptable. A pitcher who aborts his delivery has violated the rule; however, pitchers who hesitate at the top of their delivery do not.

Umpire jurisdiction (3-6k).

Umpire jurisdiction in regard to personal confrontations and

unsportsmanlike conduct directed toward them begins when the umpires enter the game site and ends when the umpires have left the game site. This clarifies no tolerance for unsporting conduct directed against umpires at any time.

Balks (9-3m (1) AR).

After a balk, that is followed by a base hit, a runner who misses the first base to which he is advancing and who, prior to the next pitch, is later called out on appeal, shall be considered as having advanced one base for the purpose of this rule. That clarifies the existing interpretation, which is based on the pro rule.

Runner interference (8-5k).

The rule regarding a runner that is hit by a fair batted ball has been clarified. The runner, including a runner in contact with a base, is out if he is hit while in fair territory by a batted ball before it has touched a fielder or has passed all infielders who have a chance to make a

play on the ball, other than the pitcher.

Tag (2-74).

The following was added to the definition. "The fielder shall maintain or regain control of his body and if he drops the ball due to his lack of body control or control of the ball, it is not a tag. A voluntary release is substantive proof of complete control."

Rosin bag (9-2e).

The home team is now required to provide a rosin bag prior to the start of each game (AR 3). The pitcher may apply rosin to his bare hand/hands, but the ball may not be dusted with rosin. Rosin may not be applied to the glove or to any part of the pitcher's uniform (AR 4). The penalty is a warning on the first offense and ejection from the game on the second offense.

Uniforms (1-14d AR).

Neoprene sleeves, if worn by a pitcher, must be covered by an undershirt. □

Umpire Jurisdiction: It's Not Just During the Game Anymore

The umpires are in charge of the game, but their jurisdiction over the game extends beyond the scheduled nine innings of competition.

The rationale for those rules are that coaches, players and others were acting inappropriately either before or after a game, causing problems that the rules didn't specifically cover.

The rule is spelled out in Rule 3-6k, which states: "Umpire jurisdiction in regard to personal confrontations and unsportsmanlike

conduct directed toward them begins when the umpires enter the game site and ends when the umpires have left the game site."

Play 1: Immediately after a game ends, the head coach from the losing team confronts the umpiring crew, preventing them from leaving the field. **Ruling 1:** The head coach can be issued a post-participation ejection if his conduct is in violation of the rules. The penalty for that is a minimum one-game suspension.

The jurisdiction extension for the umpires applies only

to unsportsmanlike conduct, not to game matters.

Play 2: The head coaches meet 45 minutes before the game and exchange lineups. At the plate meeting, the visiting coach has changed his mind and submits an entirely different lineup. The home coach objects, since he feels the visiting coach took advantage of him. **Ruling 2:** The lineups are not official until the plate meeting, so the lineup switch is legal.

Play 3: The conditions for the game are suspect, with it raining hard 30 minutes before the game. The home team is considering calling

the game, but the visiting coach wants the umpiring crew consulted. **Ruling 3:** By rule, the coach of the home team and/or game administrator has jurisdiction over the field conditions before a game starts. The only exception to that is if the game is the second game of a doubleheader. Therefore, the home coach (or administration) can cancel the game or delay its starting time without consulting the visiting team. Once the umpires receive both lineup cards, the umpire in chief is in charge of the field. □

Before the Game

continued from p. 7

Allow the plate umpire to do most of the talking for the crew. The only time a base umpire should be involved is during introductions, clarifying any ground rules that aren't clear and filling in anything that gets omitted.

The plate meeting is when all special rules for that day are decided. If a ground rule or game-ending rule such as the NCAA's halted game rule (5-9) isn't declared and agreed upon at that meeting, it can't be used that day.

Play: There is no discussion of the halted game rule at the plate meeting since

weather is not expected to be a factor. An unexpected thunderstorm forces the game to be postponed in the fourth inning. **Ruling:** Since the teams did not agree to use the halted-game rule during the pregame, it is not in effect. When postponed, the game must be started over if it is going to be completed (5-9).

The plate umpire should use the time to watch pitches and establish a good rapport with the catcher. Observe if the pitcher has a normal delivery and how the catcher receives the ball. That also gets the mind right for the pitches that count.

One other thing to watch for is to see if the pitcher is throwing from the set position, and if he is, ensure he is coming to a complete and discernable stop. If he's not, now's the time to tell the catcher, "Make sure if he gets a runner on base that he stops."

As the pitcher throws his final warmup pitch and the catcher throws to second base, brush off the plate, take a deep breath and put the ball in play.

To everyone else, it may appear that the work has just begun. But you know better. □

Pitcher's Glove Color

It was added in 2011 that the pitcher's glove must be black or brown.

By interpretation it can also be both black and brown in a two-tone glove or two different shades of brown. Laces are included in this ruling.

Tan is a shade of brown and is legal but bone is a shade of white or ivory and is illegal. Obviously umpires will need to

determine the legality of the color of the pitcher's glove, if necessary, or when requested.

If, in the umpire's judgment or from a complaint by the opponents that the pitcher's glove is distracting, the umpire may require the pitcher to change to a glove that is not distracting. □

7. Focus on last-minute preparation. One last thing to know before the meeting breaks up is if the national anthem will be performed or played. If so, it looks better for the umpires to be together during that time.

Once the pregame activities are concluded, the base umpire or umpires should hustle to the outfield. However, they should not run to their positions at the same time the defense is taking the field. Let the defensive players get to their positions before leaving the plate.

Radar Guns

This approved ruling clarifies that a team may utilize radar guns behind home plate by non-uniformed team personnel for contests in which they are competing but may not use radar guns for games in which their team is not

competing. Current rules do not allow the transmitting of any information to the playing field, dugout or team personnel. Stadium pitch speed displays are also allowed. □

Video OK for Postgame Fight

It has been clarified that the postgame use of video may be used by game management and umpires to clarify and identify participants in a fight or for unsportsmanlike conduct for the application of ejections and suspension

penalties. Video may not be used to assist in any rulings made during the game except for the limited instant replay to be used in the Division I College World Series for 2012. □

Interference

continued from p. 13

dead and awarded Mueller second and Dark first.

However, if a fair ball touches an umpire after having passed an infielder other than the pitcher, or after having touched an infielder, including the pitcher, the ball remains live and in play (6-1i, 6-2f AR, 8-2f).

Play 1: With the bases loaded and one out, B1 hits a line drive past F5. The fair ball hits the third-base umpire in the foot and deflects to F6. R3 scores, but B1 is thrown out at first. **Ruling 1:** The ball is live and in play; the run scores and B1 is out. Umpire interference can be highly contentious. Every play is different; the umpire might block/deflect a sure base hit or a double play.

Pitched or thrown ball. Almost every pitch is thrown directly toward the plate umpire. Fortunately, 99 percent of the time, the ball is either batted, caught, deflected or blocked by the catcher. In some instances, the plate umpire serves as a hockey

goalie and prevents a wild pitch or passed ball. No records are kept of umpire “saves.” If a pitch or throw touches an umpire, the contact is ignored and the ball remains live. The same applies to any thrown ball (6-1b, 8-3i).

Play 2: B1 swings and misses for strike three. That pitch is missed by F2, as B1 starts for first. The ball strikes the umpire and is easily retrieved. F2 fires to first to retire B1. **Ruling 2:** The play stands, B1 is out.

Play 3: R2 attempts to steal third. F2’s throw hits the base umpire. **Ruling 3:** The play stands.

Play 4: With runners on first and third and one out, B1 hits a one-hopper to short, F6 fires to second to start the double play, but the throw hits the umpire. All runners are safe as one run scores. **Ruling 4:** The play stands.

Act of throwing. In 1978, then-rookie NL umpire Eric Gregg bumped St. Louis Cardinals catcher Ted Simmons as he attempted to throw the ball in the third inning in a game against the Los Angeles Dodgers. The

interference call nullified a double steal by Davey Lopes and Bill Russell.

If an umpire hinders the catcher’s throw, it is most likely interference. If the hindrance occurs while the catcher is attempting to prevent a stolen base or pick off a runner, the ball is delayed-dead. If the throw is prevented or does not retire the runner, interference is called. The ball becomes dead and runners return to their bases. However, if the throw retires the runner, the interference is ignored.

Play 5: R1 is attempting to steal second. F2’s arm accidentally strikes the umpire’s mask. F2 hesitates briefly, then fires to second (a) in time, or (b) not in time, to retire the runner.

Ruling 5: In (a), the contact is disregarded since the runner was retired. In (b), runners may not advance when the plate umpire interferes with the catcher’s throw. R1 is returned to first.

Play 6: With a runner on first, F2 mishandles the pitch, steps back to grab it and attempts to throw behind R1. F2 steps on the umpire’s foot and throws

wildly into right field. R1 advances to second.

Ruling 6: The ball is live and R1 stays at second. The umpire is part of the field and F2 did not handle the pitch cleanly. That is not umpire interference.

The hindrance may also occur while the catcher is fielding a batted ball or dropped third strike. In those situations, the play is treated the same as an attempt to prevent a stolen base and is delayed dead (6-3a).

Other player contact. If a runner or fielder collides with an umpire, play continues.

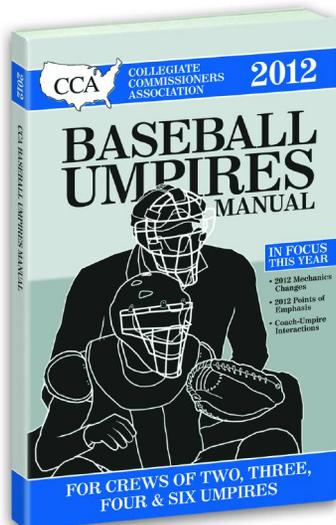
Play 7: With two out and R2 on second, B1 hits a ground ball to the shortstop. F6’s throw to first base is in the dirt and gets by F3. R2 rounds third base and is heading for home. Meanwhile, B1 rounds first base, collides with the base umpire, and is thrown out in a close play at second base. At the time of the out at second base, R2 was about five feet from home. **Ruling 7:** There is no interference. The out at second stands, R2 does not score. □

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