

BASEBALL



2013

Modern Problems

For 2013, the NFHS updated the rules dealing with electronic devices, banning most all of them from being used during a game.

During its annual meeting June 3-5 in Indianapolis, the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee changed two rules that deal with the use of electronic devices during a game.

The first was to change the word "television" to "video" in rule 3-3-1f, which deals with watching monitors or replay equipment during the course of a game for coaching purposes.

The change is the result of an increase in technology. Mobile devices, such as tablet computers and cell phones, can accurately record and play back different aspects of a game and provide an unfair advantage to a team by replaying it during a contest.

Play 1: Instead of a scorebook, a team has a tablet computer in the dugout and uses an app on that device for keeping score and doing overall statistics. The tablet has video capabilities. **Ruling 1:** The team may use the tablet computer for scoring in the dugout, but it may not use the tablet for the purposes of recording any part of the game.

Play 2: A team is using a tablet computer in the dugout for scoring purposes, but also records the game and reviews it during innings. **Ruling 2:** That is not permitted. Regardless of who is actually guilty, the head coach is ejected for the team's use of video replay equipment in the dugout.

The second change was made in



The only electronic device that a high school baseball coach may have in the coaching box is a stopwatch. A 2013 rule change eliminated PDAs and other handheld electronic devices, because of the potential of taking video during a game and using it for coaching purposes.

relation to the first and that bans all electronic devices except a stopwatch from being in the possession of a coach in the coaching box. While a number of tablet computers have scorebook applications, the committee felt that there was too great a risk of the item

being used to film or do things other than just keep score.

Therefore, the rule now reads that a coach or player occupying a coaching box may only have a stopwatch, a hard copy of the rules book and a scorebook with him. □

Baseball Injury Rates Among Lowest

Boys' baseball has one of the lowest injury rates among the boys' sports studied in the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study.

As high school sports participation continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries will also likely increase unless effective injury prevention programs are implemented.

The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sport Rules Committees use information from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO™) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes.

High School RIO™ is currently collecting its seventh year of baseball exposure and injury data.

Data from 2010-11 High School RIO™ shows that boys' baseball has one of the lowest injury rates among the boys' sports studied.

Baseball injury rates have dropped significantly over the past 6 years. Sprains (19.6%) and strains (18.7%) were the most common injuries; however, fractures represented an additional 16.0% of all injuries.

The body sites most commonly injured were the head/face (17.2%) and shoulder (16.6%). While player-to-player contact is typically the most common

mechanism of injury for other sports, the most common mechanisms of injury in baseball were contact with apparatus (31.6%) and no contact (25.4%).

Understanding such patterns of injury is one important tool when keeping risk minimization as a priority in the efforts to keep baseball players as safe as possible.

If you are interested in more information on the High School RIO™ Study or interested in becoming a reporter for boys' baseball, please visit <http://injuryresearch.net/rioreports.aspx> for summary reports or send an email to highschoolrio@nationwidechildrens.org. □

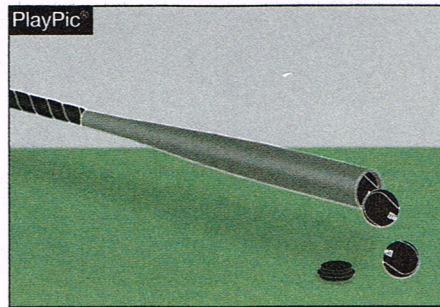
Emphasis Added to Bat Rule

A note has been added to Rule 1-3-2, clarifying and adding additional emphasis to the rule dealing with altering of bats.

Specifically, the new note reads: "The NFHS has been advised that certain manufacturers consider alteration, modification and 'doctoring' of their bats to be unlawful and subject to civil and, under certain circumstances, criminal action."

Bat alteration has been a major issue in baseball and softball for a number of years.

Risk minimization is a main focus



for the rules committee every year. Not only does altering bats provide an illegal advantage, but it jeopardizes the



well-being of the student-athletes who are playing against an opponent who has cheated. □

Points of Emphasis

Each year, the Baseball Rules Committee highlights areas that it believes needs attention, without making changes to the rules at that meeting. This year, the committee raised the following as points of emphasis:

Pace of play

The committee is concerned with the lack of enforcement of the rules in place that cover down time during a game.

In no particular order, the following issues should be given closer attention



in the 2013 season: reducing the length and amount of times a catcher goes to the mound; the batter's box rule; the length of offensive and defensive conferences and speeding up the time between innings by diligently counting the number of warmup pitches.

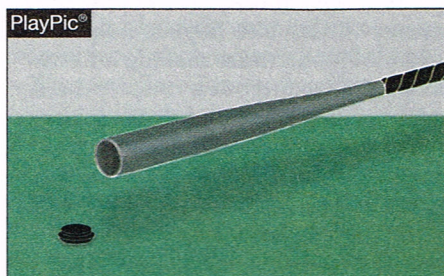
Play 1: The pitcher and catcher are having trouble agreeing on which pitch should be thrown. The catcher requests time to talk to the pitcher. **Rule 1:** As long as it is not abused, the catcher and pitcher are permitted to request time and

► confer with each other. The umpire is not required to grant a request for timeout and should not do so if he or she feels the request is unnecessary or abusing the privilege.

Play 2: A pitcher requests extra pitches between innings because his team had a long offensive half of the inning. **Ruling 2:** That is not a reason to grant extra throws. The pitcher could have gone to his team's bullpen and thrown during the inning.

Compliant bats

Bats continue to be on the forefront of the committee's mind. Umpires need to be on the watch for altered bats, in particular noticing if the end cap has been removed. Once an end cap comes off a bat (even if it was not intentional), the bat is no longer legal for play. The end cap cannot be replaced. The use of legal equipment is a risk minimization issue; it is in the best interest of the principles of fair play and sportsmanship; and it is a playing rule.



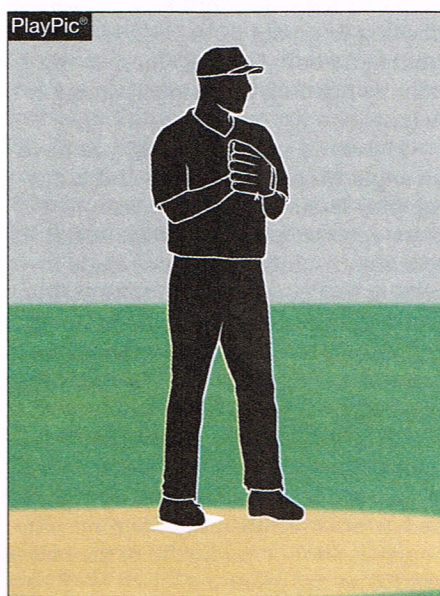
Pitcher's stance

The pitcher may only begin in one of two positions: the windup or the set. Over recent seasons, pitchers have been moving into a hybrid stance in which their feet are at an angle and it is difficult to discern which stance the pitcher is in (see PlayPics). Because the rules for pickoffs and pitching motions are different for each one, it is imperative that a pitcher be clearly in the windup or set at the start of each pitch. The starting position of the non-pivot foot determines whether the pitcher is going to pitch from the windup or set position.

Pitchers in the windup position are required to have their non-pivot foot in any position on or behind a line extending through the front edge of the pitcher's plate. If a pitcher's non-pivot foot is in front of that line and he

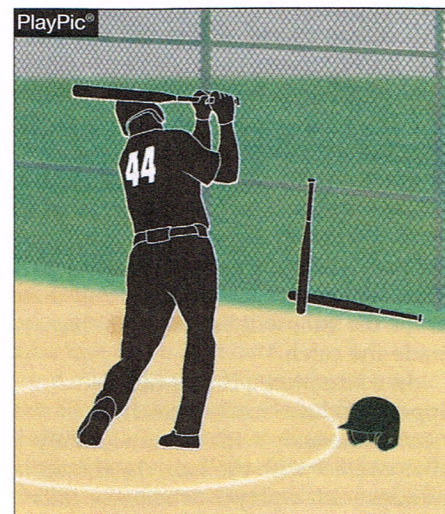
attempts to pitch from the windup, he has made an illegal pitch or committed a balk.

In the set position, he shall stand with his entire non-pivot foot in front of a line extending through the front edge of the pitcher's plate and with his entire pivot foot in contact with or directly in front of the pitcher's plate. He shall go to the set position without delay and in one continuous motion; he shall come to a complete and discernible stop, which does not include a change of direction with both hands in front of his body and his glove at or below his chin.



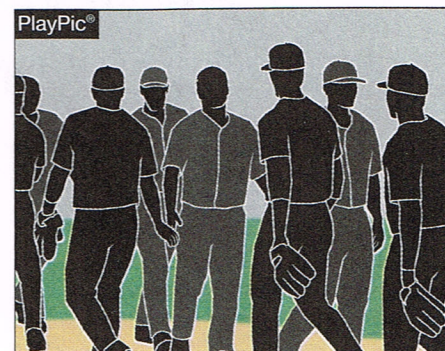
Risk minimization

Baseball has reported some of the lowest injury incidents than many of the other NFHS sports. A lot of the credit goes to the committed adults who tirelessly teach, train and officiate interscholastic baseball contests. In order to continue enjoying low incident rates, we must be ever vigilant to identify potential risk areas and address them immediately. Attention should be given with loose equipment, under-sized dugout/bench areas, field conditions. One area that is of concern is the "protector" — the non-player who is allowed on the field to keep foul balls from striking players warming up in the bullpen. That person is required to have a glove and it is recommended that he also wear a legal batting helmet.



Good sporting behavior

Umpires and coaches need to work together. Each contest is another opportunity for coaches and umpires to teach not only baseball, but also model good sporting behavior. □



The Catch About Catch-No-Catch Situations

Umpires know that what the rules say and what fans think are not always in congruence. The official rules of every sport have their own way of defining certain actions that are critical elements of the game. Baseball is certainly no different.

For example, many people do not fully understand the details that determine what makes a catch complete.

People watch games on TV or in person and see what they think is a completed catch, only to have the umpire or official rule that the ball was not caught.

Let's take a closer look at the rules that govern a catch.

According to NFHS baseball rules (2-9-1), "a catch is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in his hand or glove of a live ball in flight and firmly holding it ... When the fielder, by his action of stopping, removing the ball from his glove, etc., signifies the initial action is completed and then drops the ball, will be judged to have made the catch."

In a situation where a fielder appears to have made a catch, if "simultaneously with or immediately after contact with the ball, the fielder collides with a player or fence or falls

down and, as a result, drops the ball," no catch has been made.

There are a number of important issues related to completion of a catch that are worth reviewing.

One of those issues is positioning by the umpire who is primarily responsible to make the judgment of whether a catch has been made.

More often than not, that is the job of one of the base umpires who has decided to go out of the infield on a trouble fly ball. Getting closer to the play by hustling is obviously going to help.

However, make sure that you have an angle from which to see and judge the play is more important than how close you can get. It is always better to sacrifice distance for proper angle in getting to a good position to rule. Too many umpires run in a straight line right at the fielder who is attempting to make the play and consequently lose perspective on the play.

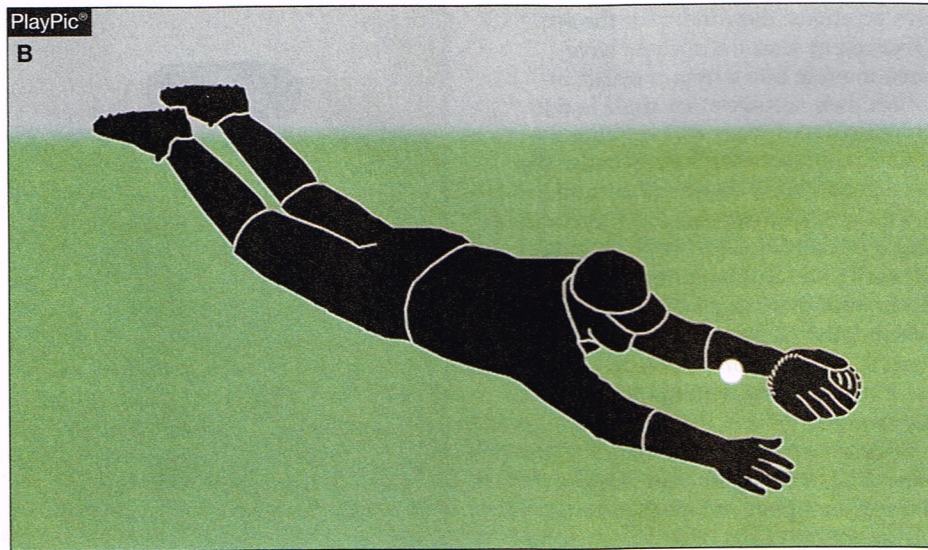
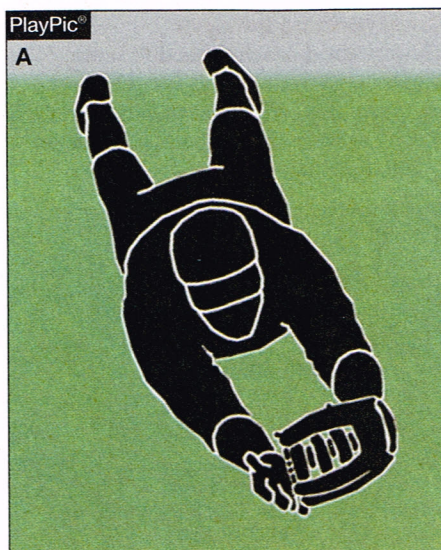
The PlayPics below illustrate that point. If you are looking straight ahead at the fielder in PlayPic A, it appears he has made a catch. But from the side angle, as shown in PlayPic B, the ball is clearly on the ground.

When a fielder has made a dive to attempt a catch, it is important

for the umpire to be stopped — that is, not still running — at that point. Seeing the moment the ball reaches the glove without your head bobbing up and down will help to make a better judgment of whether it is a trap or a catch. The same is true for situations where a crash into another fielder or a wall follows the attempted catch. After a dive or a crash, good timing is extremely important. No one wants to make the dreaded "double call" by reversing your out signal after seeing the ball pop loose. Remind yourself that the release of the ball must be voluntary and intentional.

Good timing can also avoid problems in situations where the fielder drops the ball after a catch in the act of making a throw. A common situation in which that occurs is the pivot at second base on a double play attempt. It can also happen frequently when outfielders are making a throw to attempt to put out a runner who is advancing or returning to a bag after making a catch on a fly ball.

Fielders can and do often fail to make a catch by hurrying into the throwing motion before they have secure possession of the ball. The key for umpires is to not take the catch for granted. □



Anticipate, Then React

Anticipation. Is it a dirty word in umpiring or a necessary facet of the craft of a skilled umpire?

There is no question that you can get yourselves in trouble if you anticipate what the call will be on a judgment play before it happens. Catch/no catch, fair/foul, safe/out, and ball/strike calls should be made with an approach that is not biased to what an umpire thinks might happen given the circumstances leading up to the play.

Have you ever had what you and everyone else expected to be an easy out at first on a bunt or a comebacker to the pitcher, only to have the fielder throw a bad lob to first, turning it into a bang-bang play? It never helps your judgment on a play when your self-talk says, "This guy is a dead duck" just prior to having to rule on a play.

However, anticipation plays a very important role in the mind of a quality umpire, when that anticipation involves foreseeing where the next play might be.

That is especially true in two-umpire mechanics, where all initial and subsequent plays have to be covered by only two umpires. In a classic double-play situation, the base umpire can't afford to get too close to the play at second when he or she has to be in position to rule on the succeeding play at first base.

However, in the same situation, a seasoned umpire may be able to tell when only one play will result at second or first on a ground ball fielded by an infielder. That umpire will be able to get a little closer to the only play that will result. That will mean being in better position to see a very tight play or at least demonstrate the appearance

of being in the best possible position to rule.

A common maxim in umpiring is to always keep your eyes on the ball and glance at the runners. Keeping that simple tenet in mind can go a long way toward helping you anticipate where the next play will develop.

Knowing the speed of the runners in various situations can also help with the anticipation of where the next play might be.

A very fast runner may be more likely to try to stretch a single into a double, or take an extra base on a hit by one of his teammates. In two-umpire mechanics, when the plate umpire rotates to third for a play, he can't get too close, especially with a faster runner going into third. There is always the chance for an overthrow or a misplay by the fielder covering third that may result in a play at the plate. Very few umpires will win a race with a player to the next base.

Another situation in two-umpire mechanics in which anticipation is key is when a pickoff throw to first catches the runner by surprise, and he starts toward second to avoid being tagged out by the first baseman.

With no other runners on base, a plate umpire who is on the ball will anticipate that there will be a rundown and will hustle up to first to cover the back side of that possible rundown. That could also happen with a runner at second only, where a pickoff move creates a possible rundown between second and third. If he can get to third in time, a good plate umpire will be able to split the coverage with his partner.

Perhaps the ultimate anticipation play for umpires to be aware of is the time play. Many circumstances arise in games that will create the possibility of a time play at the plate, where an umpire must determine if the runner scored before the third out was made on the bases. Among those circumstances is any two-out situation in which a base hit happens with a runner at first, second or with the bases loaded. Also, tag-up time-play situations can happen with only one out and runners at second and third or with the bases loaded. Anticipating a close time play at the plate will require the plate umpire to be in great position to see both the runner scoring and the third out being made on the bases.

One final area that anticipation can come in handy is when something unsportsmanlike has happened that might lead to retaliation by the offended team.

When an umpire sees a player gesture to the opposing dugout after hitting a home run, or stand at the plate and watch for a few seconds before going into his home run trot, awareness tells the seasoned umpire that you may have a retaliation pitch coming the next time that batter is at bat.

Anticipating that type of retaliation can allow you to warn the catcher of the offended team not to engage in that kind of behavior. If that doesn't forestall the expected retaliation, at least you will be in a state of mind to issue warnings immediately in an attempt to calm down what, unchecked, could become a volatile situation.

Anticipate the play, not the call, and your game should go more smoothly. □

Did He Go? Umpires Must Know

Several umpires were chatting recently at a clinic and this question came up: "What kinds of plays/situations tend to lead to the most problems with coaches?" Invariably, the discussion came back to checked swings.

Ruling on that appeal can be one of the most difficult of all. One reason is the

fact that judgment on what constitutes a swing can be so subjective. NFHS rules say, "The umpire may note whether the swing carried the barrel of the bat past the body of the batter, but final decision is based on whether the batter actually struck at the ball (10-1-4a)."

It is a myth to say a strike should be

called when the barrel of the bat breaks the plane of the plate. Same with the batter "breaking his wrists."

All things considered, the primary consideration is whether the batter "committed" to an attempt to hit the ball. It seems pretty straightforward.

See "Did He Go?" p.6 ▶

► Did He Go?

However, there are a multitude of factors that will have a significant impact on the playing of the game, depending on how a checked swing is handled by the umpires.

Most umpires will agree that determining whether the batter swung at a pitch when he checks his swing is primarily the responsibility of the plate umpire. However, that can be a very difficult task on pitches that are on the fringes of the strike zone, as plate umpires really need to concentrate on the pitch and its relationship to the strike zone.

Consequently, letting your eyes stray to the batter, and more specifically, the bat, when he attempts to check his swing may not be possible. However, if you can tell that a pitch is surely going to be out of the strike zone, it is good to allow yourself the freedom to change your focus from the ball to the hitter as he starts his swing. When you determine that the hitter has indeed committed, letting everyone know in an assertive manner that you have a swing can prevent problems.

A good technique is pointing at the hitter with your right index finger and then discernibly making the strike sign, while making a verbal call such as, "Yes, he went!" or, "That's a swing!" I believe that less controversy will follow from the plate umpire making the call himself on a checked swing than if he goes to his partner for help in the same situation.

Given the premise that it's best for the plate umpire to get most checked swings, the reality is that there will be many times when the plate umpire simply has to get help from one of his partners. In two-umpire mechanics, the lone base umpire has to give his best perspective regardless if he is on the line (with no runners on) or in the

middle (with runners on base). That is obviously a much easier call to make on the first-base line, whether it is a right or left-handed hitter. In three- and four-umpire mechanics, the proper technique is to go to the base umpire who is on the open side of the hitter. For example, for a right-handed hitter, it would be the first-base umpire. In a three-umpire system, there will be times when the umpire on the open side of the hitter is in the middle of the infield. That's a difficult vantage point from which to make that call.

When an appeal is made, base umpires need to make it clear to everyone that they are on top of the situation with an emphatic strike sign or the safe signal if the batter didn't go.

As in all situations, the closeness of the call and the criticalness of the situation will dictate how much you need to sell it with voice and signal. Base umpires need to always be ready to help with a ruling on a checked swing by watching the hitter closely.

However, wanting too badly to help make the call can cause problems. The only person to whom a base umpire can respond on a request for appeal of a checked swing is the plate umpire, and only when the plate umpire has ruled the pitch a ball.

There have been countless times that a catcher will point down to a base umpire on a checked swing asking for an appeal. When that happens, the base umpire must ignore the appeal until he sees the request from the plate umpire. Imagine the embarrassment if a catcher pointed down asking for an appeal not knowing that the plate umpire had ruled the pitch a swinging strike, and the base umpire ruled "no swing."

As a plate umpire, when you have asked for help from one of your partners on a checked swing, you will repeat what your partner rules and then flash

the count on the hitter as a result of that ruling.

That communicates to everyone that your crew is working as a team to get calls right. It also can avoid confusion as to the correct ball-strike count, if the original call is overturned.

The crew in its pregame meeting must discuss checked swings. You should want and expect them to rule the way they saw the play, regardless if they uphold or overrule your call.

There are some instances when a plate umpire should not wait for an appeal from the defensive team on a checked swing. One of those situations involves a checked swing on a two-strike pitch with two outs and a runner or runners on base.

If one or more runners are attempting to steal on the pitch, the catcher's throw to one of the bases could cause problems for the crew.

You might have an overthrow into the outfield, a very close play at the base, or perhaps a rundown situation will result. Each of those situations will require plays from players and calls from umpires that may be unnecessary if the batter didn't check his swing in time.

Another similar cause for confusion could happen if the catcher drops the pitch or traps it in the dirt. In those situations, and similar ones where all players need to know if the checked swing was a strike or not, the plate umpire needs to go immediately to the appropriate partner and demonstrably ask for help. That requires some real "heads up" awareness on the part of the plate umpire, but could really help reduce problems for the crew.

If the call on a checked swing is reversed and the umpires determine the changed call put either team at a disadvantage, the umpires should rectify the disadvantage (10-2-31). □

Get a Kick Out of Base Awards

When a ball leaves the playing field, it is out of play and as long as it's not a foul ball, a base award is usually in order. The ball that is declared dead may be a pitched, thrown or batted ball.

Balls that are deflected or kicked

out of play present a special challenge to umpires. In many cases, the umpire must judge whether the added force was intentional or accidental.

Pitches. When a pitch leaves the playing field, any runners advance one

base. On ball four, the batter-runner receives the base on balls, but is not given any additional award.

If a pitch rebounds from the catcher's shin guards and rolls into the dugout, it

See "Base Awards" p.8 ►

When is a Line Not a Line? When It's a Baseline

The chalk line between the plate and first and third bases is sometimes referred to as a baseline. It is not; it is strictly a foul line, which is why no line is drawn between first and second or second and third.

What then is a baseline?

A baseline does not exist unless a runner is being played upon (tag attempt). The baseline is then established as a straight line from the runner to the base he is attempting to reach safely (8-4-2a-2). The rules treat runners differently from the batter-runner.

Runners

Unless they are being played upon, runners are free to run wherever they want. Most are astute enough to recognize the shortest distance between two points (bases) is a straight line, but it is OK for a runner to arc out from the direct line to avoid making the sharp cuts that slow runners down.

It is also permissible for a runner to veer sharply from his path to avoid interfering with a fielder fielding a batted ball. If however, a fielder is in possession of the ball and is attempting to tag the runner, the runner is out if he moves more than three feet left or right of the direct line to the base which he is approaching. Keep in mind he can always retreat, in which case that changes the base that he is approaching and changes the baseline.

The practical application of that rule is "a step and a reach." If a fielder moves a step laterally and reaches to make a tag and the runner evades the tag by moving outside the fielder's glove, the runner has left the baseline.

A runner who has reached a base safely may be called out for abandoning the bases if he obviously heads toward a defensive position or the dugout, believing a putout was made. The ball remains live (8-4-2p).

Batter-runner

On most plays, the batter-runner is treated the same as any other runner. He may arc out toward the first-base dugout on balls hit to the outfield.



The runner's baseline is established as a straight line from the runner to the base he is attempting to reach safely.

However, when the ball is being thrown to first base from the area of the plate, he is required to run the last half of the distance from home to first base within the three-foot running lane. If the runner does not do so, there is no penalty unless, in the umpire's judgment, he interferes with the fielding of the ball or throw to first base (8-4-1g).

The lines are part of the lane, so stepping on the line is not a violation. Also, one foot inside the lane (or on the line) and the other foot in the air is permissible. However, the runner is responsible for having both feet in the lane, which is the requirement.

In order for interference to be called, the fielder must make a throw. The rule does not require that the throw hit the runner. If the runner is out of the lane and a throw is made, running-lane interference must be called.

Play 1: B1 bunts and the catcher fields the ball in front of the plate. B1 is

running in fair territory past the start of the three-foot running lane when F2 realizes he does not have a line of sight to F3. He throws the ball over B1. F3 leaps but cannot reach the ball. **Ruling 1:** B1 is out for interference. All other runners return to the last base touched at the time of interference.

The same applies if there is no fielder in position at first base to catch the throw — any "interference" is immaterial.

The penalty for interference is to declare the batter-runner out and return any other runners to the base occupied at the time of the interference (8-4-1g).

Play 2: With one out, B9 bunts on a squeeze play, scoring R1. After R1 has touched the plate, F2 throws to retire B9. B9 is guilty of running-lane interference. **Ruling 2:** B9 is out for interference, but R1's run counts. He scored before the interference. □

► Base Awards

is a one-base award. If the ball was not going to leave the playing field as a result of the pitch, but is deflected or kicked, the award varies.

If the umpire judges the pitch would have gone into the dugout without the deflection, the award is one base. If the deflection caused the ball to go into dead-ball territory, the award is two bases from the time of deflection (8.3.3K).

Play 1: With R1 on first, F1's pitch strikes F2 in the shinguard and rolls away. The ball bounces directly into dead-ball territory without being touched again.

Ruling 1: The award is one base from the time of the pitch. R1 is awarded second.

Play 2: With R1 on first, F1 throws a pitch that strikes F2 in the shinguard and rolls away. The ball is still rolling toward dead-ball territory (and will probably make it there) when F2 attempts to pick up the ball, but muffs it. The ball continues to roll into dead-ball territory. **Ruling 2:** The pitch is the impetus that sent the ball into the dugout. R1 is awarded second.

Play 3: With R1 on first, F1 throws a pitch that strikes F2 in the shinguard and rolls away. The ball is still rolling when F2 intentionally slides into it, kicking it into the dugout. **Ruling 3:** If the umpire believes the pitch would have gone into dead-ball territory without the kick, it is a one-base award from the time of the pitch;

R1 would get second. If the umpire thinks the kick caused the ball to go into dead-ball territory, award two bases from the time of the kick; R1 would get third.

Thrown balls

For batted balls that are thrown out of play, runners get two bases. The award is made from the time of the pitch, unless two conditions have been met: The throw was the first play by an infielder and at least one runner, including the batter-runner, has not advanced at least one base at the time of the throw (8-3-5).

On a throw by the pitcher, the award depends on if he was on or off the pitching plate (8-3-3d).

Play 4: F1 attempts to pick off R1 from a set position by (a) backing off the pitching plate with his pivot foot, or (b) throwing while in contact with the pitching plate. The ball gets by F3 and bounces over the fence. **Ruling 4:** In (a), since he stepped off the pitching plate before throwing wildly, F1 became an infielder. R1 goes to third with a two-base award. In (b), because F1's action from the pitching plate was as a pitcher, R1 goes to second with a one-base award.

If a thrown ball is deflected or kicked out of play, it is a two-base award from the time of the deflection/kick (8.3.3J). There is a distinction between a ball that goes off a fielder and a fielder consciously acting.

Play 5: B1 grounds to F5, who boots the ball. He recovers and throws before

B1 has crossed first base. The ball hits the fence and rolls back toward F3. F3 intentionally slaps the ball with his glove. The ball goes into the dugout. **Ruling 5:** Since F3 actions caused the ball to go out of play, the award is made from the time of the deflection and B1 is awarded third.

Batted balls

Awards on batted balls that leave the field of play are almost always made from the time of the pitch; other runners advance to the bases they are forced (8-3-3c).

If a fair ball in flight is deflected by a fielder and leaves the playing field in flight, it is a home run (8-3-3a).

If a fielder kicks or deflects a batted ball out of play, it's a two-base award. When a fielder consciously acts to direct the ball out of play, the award is from the time the ball was kicked or deflected (8.3.3J).

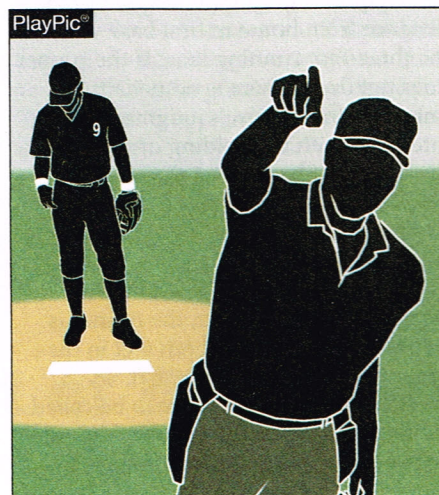
Play 6: With the bases loaded, two outs and a full count, B8 hits a ball toward the left-field line. F7 dives for the ball, but it hits off his glove and bounces through a hole in the fence into dead-ball territory. All runners, since they were running at the time of the pitch, had advanced one base at the time of the deflection. **Ruling 6:** The award is two bases from the time of the pitch. F7 did not consciously act to send the ball out of play. R1 and R2 score; R3 is awarded third and B8 is awarded second. □

Warmup Pitches Rule Clarified

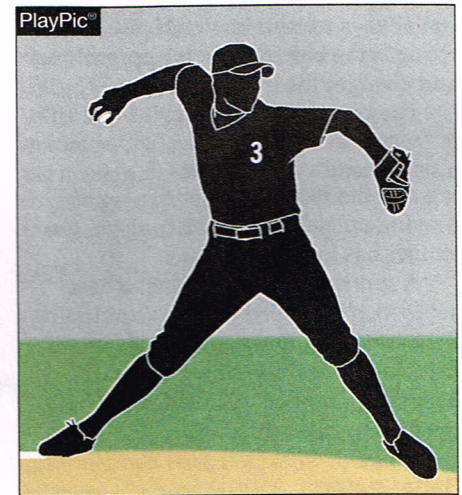
The rules committee added an addition exception to when pitchers may be afforded extra warmup pitches between innings (6-2-2c exception).

The rule now permits a pitcher to have extra warmup pitches when he replaces a pitcher who was ejected. Previously, the rule only included exceptions for a replacement due to injury or inclement weather.

Play: Pitcher F1 is upset with the strike zone and gets ejected with two



outs in the fourth inning. **Ruling:** The new pitcher, whether he is a substitute or is brought in from another position,



will be afforded a reasonable amount of time to get ready. He is not limited to eight warmup throws. □

When It's Foul

The score was tied and the home team had runners on second and third with two outs. The batter hits a screaming line drive down the third-base line. The third baseman, playing behind the bag and standing entirely in fair territory reached to backhand the ball, but it glanced off his glove and rolled to the left-field corner. The plate umpire, who had moved to straddle the line, immediately raised his hands and screamed, "Foul!" The fans reacted immediately with a chorus of boos and cat calls. The inning ended with a pop up on the next pitch.

The home coach who had been in the third-base coaching box stopped off at the plate on the way to his dugout, "It's too bad my fans don't know the rule. I couldn't see if it was fair or foul, but you called it right away. That's all I can ask."

The rule the coach referred to is that a fly ball is judged fair or foul according to the relative position of the ball and the plane of the foul line and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time the ball is touched (2.16.1C).

Fair territory is that part of the playing field within, and including the first and third baselines (foul lines), from home plate to the bottom of the outfield fence and perpendicularly upwards. Anything else is foul territory.

An uncaught foul results in a dead ball. If it is caught, the ball remains live and play continues to include runners advancing by tagging up.

A ground ball is foul if it either settles on foul territory between home and first base or home and third base; or is on or over foul territory when it bounds past first or third base.

A fly ball is foul if it first falls on foul territory beyond first or third base. The back edge of the base is used to make that determination (2-16-1).

Any batted ball (fly or ground) is foul if while on or over foul territory, it touches an umpire or player or any object foreign to the natural ground including an inadvertently thrown batting helmet or bat (2-16-1d).

Play 1: B1 swings at a pitch and the batted ball hits the pitcher's plate and untouched by a fielder rebounds into foul territory between home and



Jeremy Hall, Fayetteville, N.C., indicates the ball is dead. An umpire should always use the proper mechanic to indicate the ball is dead and then put the ball back in play at the right time.

first base or home and third base.

Ruling 1: Foul ball; the pitcher's plate is considered part of the playing field and not an "object foreign to the natural ground."

A batted ball is also foul if it hits the batter while he is still in his batter's box or it hits the bat a second time while the batter is still in his batter's box.

Play 2: B1 swings at a pitch and the batted ball hits: (a) B1 on the top of his foot; or (b) the ground in front of B1 and spins back into his leg while he is still in the batter's box. **Ruling 2:** Foul ball in both (a) and (b).

A ball which first falls on fair territory on or beyond first or third base and subsequently rolls into foul territory in front of first or third base, is a fair ball. The rules also include an imaginary line between first and third to make that determination (2-5-1b).

Foul tips

It's important to be able to distinguish between foul balls and foul tips. A foul tip is "a batted ball which goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught." Such a ball is (almost always) treated as if the bat never struck the ball and is a strike. The ball remains live and a base can be stolen or a runner caught stealing on the pitch. If a foul tip occurs with two strikes on the batter, he is out.

In order to be legally caught, the ball after touching the bat, must first strike the catcher's hand or glove. A ball which hits the umpire and is caught on the rebound or a ball smothered against the catcher's body or protector which did not first strike the catcher's hand or glove is not a legal catch and thus, a foul ball. If the "tipped" ball is not legally caught, it is simply a foul ball. □

Flashback: Bat Checks Bounced

The elimination of the pregame bat and helmet inspection by umpires was significant rule change umpires and coaches dealt with for the 2012 NFHS. Here is a look back at the previous year's rule changes, which all still remain in effect for the 2013 season.

Bat, helmet check removed(4-1-3b)

Along with asking coaches if their players are properly and legally equipped, umpires will now verify with coaches that all of their equipment (bats, batting helmets and catcher's helmets) is legal.

The specific language in the rule reads "equipped with bats that are unaltered from the original manufacturer's design and production and helmets that meet NFHS and NOCSAE standards and are free of cracks or damage."

The result of that rule change means that umpires will no longer be required to do pregame equipment checks.

Umpires have long been frustrated with the pregame check because there was no way to verify that the team was presenting all of its bats and helmets to the umpires for inspection. However, coaches can still ask the umpires at the pregame conference to do an equipment check.

The penalty for using an illegal bat now also affects the coaches, since they have certified the legality of their equipment at the pregame meeting.

Along with the batter being called out for using an illegal bat (7-4-1a), the head coach is restricted to the dugout when his team uses an illegal bat the first time during a game. For a second violation in the same game — whether it is the same bat or a different one — the batter is out and the head coach is ejected. Subsequent violations result in the batter being called out and the newly designated head coach being ejected.

"The committee is placing a great importance on increased coach responsibility," said Elliot Hopkins, the NFHS baseball rules editor. "It is one of our top priorities."

Play 1: In the top of the second

inning, B5 doubles. The defensive team asks the plate umpire to check the bat. The umpire notes the bat does not meet the current rules for bat certification.

Ruling 1: B5 is called out and his head coach is restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game.

Play 2: Two batters later, B7 comes to the plate. Before the first pitch, the umpire notices the bat is completely flat on one side. **Ruling 2:** B7 is called out and the head coach is ejected from the game.

Play 3: Two innings later, B3 uses a 34-inch, 30-ounce bat and hits a home run. Before B4 steps into the box, the defensive team appeals. **Ruling 3:** The bat is illegal, so B3 is called out. The newly designated head coach is ejected. Since his team had two prior violations, he does not get restricted. Once B4 has taken a pitch, no appeal on B3 is permitted.

The rule change brings baseball in line with football and other sports in which the coach verifies the legality of his team's equipment to the officials.

There is no penalty for the use of a cracked or damaged helmet. The batter must replace the helmet.

While the pregame check has been eliminated, umpires should remain vigilant in looking for damaged or altered equipment as batters come to the plate. The defensive team is not required to make an appeal in order for the penalties to be enforced.

BBCOR bat standard (1-3-2 d-g)

One thing that made the elimination of the pregame equipment check possible was the adoption of the new bat standard.

Any bat that is not a single piece of wood must meet the BBCOR standard and must be properly marked with the BBCOR logo. The BBCOR logo must be one-inch square and be placed on the barrel of the bat.

While BBCOR bats were permitted in 2011, they were not mandatory.

No non-wood bat without the BBCOR logo is legal beginning Jan. 1, 2012.

Play 4: Upon appeal, the umpires check a bat for legality. It has both the BESR and BBCOR logos. **Ruling 4:** Since the bat meets the BBCOR standard, it is a legal bat. If it had only the BESR logo, it would not be a legal bat.

Bat warmers illegal (1-3-5)

Any artificial or intentional method of controlling the temperature of a bat is now illegal. That includes placing a bat in a sleeve designed to keep a bat warm or cool. It also includes intentionally placing a bat next to a heater. Bats may be placed in protective sleeves that do not include means of warming or cooling the bat.

Disability accommodations (1-5-8)

Each state association may, in keeping with applicable laws, authorize exceptions to NFHS playing rules to provide reasonable accommodations to individual participants with disabilities and/or special needs, as well as those individuals with unique and extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, allow an otherwise illegal piece of equipment, create risk to the athlete/others or place opponents at a disadvantage.

Blood on the uniform (3-1-6)

The rule governing when a uniform must be switched out because of blood was changed. Now, any blood on a player's uniform means that a player must change out of that uniform in order to continue to participate. Changing the word "any" from "excessive" removes the subjectivity of how much blood is considered excessive.

Fight rule (3-3-1q)

Another area in which subjectivity has been removed is the fight rule. If a player leaves his position on the field or the bench area during a fight, he is ejected. Previously, he had to be considered leaving for the purpose of fighting, meaning coaches could argue that the player was going out to break

► up a fight, not actually participate in a fight. Now, only the team's coaching staff is permitted to leave the team's dugout when a fight occurs.

Postgame confrontations (3-3-1g7)

It is now a penalty for coaches to confront or direct unsportsmanlike conduct to the umpires after the game has concluded and until the umpires have departed the game site.

Previously, there was no rule or penalty since the umpires' jurisdiction ended when the umpires left the field.

While there is no set penalty, the state association shall determine an appropriate penalty when a violation is reported.

Relief pitcher warmups (6-2-2c Exception)

While it has been standard that a pitcher has one minute to complete his warmup throws to start an inning, there was no time limit in the book for when a reliever came in during

an inning. That loophole has been closed. Relievers now have one minute — timed from the first throw — to complete their warmups.

At the beginning of each subsequent inning, a pitcher who has already been in the game has one minute — timed from the third out of the previous half inning — to complete five warmup throws.

Clerical authority (10-1-2)

Except for postgame confrontations, the jurisdiction of umpires to observe penalties ends when the umpires leave the field. However, if something happens that requires the umpires to enforce penalties after they have left the field, that is now permitted.

Play 5: A fight breaks out between two teams and the umpires declare the game to be over. The umpires have not informed the coaches of any ejections before leaving the field. Once at their cars, the umpires go over the details of the fight and determine who

should be ejected. **Ruling 5:** That is the correct procedure. The umpires are not required to remain on the field or to delay declaring the game over in order to determine who has been ejected.

Play 6: Following what appeared to be a normal game, the umpires leave the field. While the teams are shaking hands, a fight breaks out between the two teams. **Ruling 6:** The umpires have no jurisdiction over the fight. While they can submit a report to the state association office, they cannot eject anyone for participating in the fight since they had left the field and their jurisdiction had officially ended.

Double first base

The rule regarding the double first base has been revised to permit the defensive team to use the colored base to record an out only on a dropped third strike. Previously, the rule was unclear as to when the defense could use the colored base. □

The Rules about Projected Substitutions

Substitutions can be made anytime the ball is dead. It wasn't always that way. The original rules of 1876 prohibited substitutes after the third inning. A year later the rule was made stricter and no subs could enter after the first inning.

While present day rules allow free substitution, projected subs are not allowed. In order to understand that restriction, one must first understand when a substitute is actually in the game.

A substitute is a player who is not listed in the starting lineup and who is eligible to enter the game. If the ball is not already dead, time must be called for a substitute to enter. The umpire-in-chief must be immediately notified.

The rules address situations where a substitute enters the game without being announced. As long as the substitute is legal, there is no penalty when that occurs. The substitute is considered to have entered the game when a batter takes his place in the batter's box, a runner takes the base of the runner he has replaced, a

pitcher takes his place on the rubber, or a fielder reaches the position usually occupied by the fielder he has replaced and play commences. The ball must become live in order for the unannounced sub to be legally in the game (3-1-1).

Play 1: Jones is listed in the starting lineup as the second batter. In the top of first Smith, who is not in the lineup, bats in the second spot and no notification is made to the umpire.

Ruling 1: Smith is not a pinch hitter until the ball becomes live.

Any substitute pitcher must pitch to the batter then at bat or any substitute until that batter completes his at bat or the third out is made (3-1-2).

Projected substitutions are not allowed. Offensive substitutions (batters and runners) can only be made while a team is at bat. Defensive substitutions (pitchers and fielders) can only be made while the team is in the field.

The reason for that rule is illustrated by the following play.

Play 2: Green, the pitcher for the visiting team, is batting sixth. In the top of the second, Jones is sent in to pinch hit for Green. Jones singles and Smith is sent in to pinch run. **Ruling 2:** A legal substitution. Since the visitors were at bat, neither Jones nor Smith are/were pitchers. If Jones were designated as a pitcher by virtue of batting for the current pitcher, then Smith would not have been able to pinch run because Jones had not faced one batter.

In NFHS, the prohibition on projected substitutions also impacts courtesy runners. A courtesy runner is a player who runs for another player without officially entering the game. Courtesy runners are only allowed by state association adoption as a speed-up rule (2-33-1).

Play 3: In the top of the seventh Brown is sent in to pinch hit for the catcher and walks. The coach sends in a courtesy runner for Brown. **Ruling 3:** Not allowed; Brown is not the catcher and cannot be the catcher until his team goes on defense. □

Going Solo: Guidelines for One Umpire

A four-umpire system is used in AMLB because it offers the best opportunity of getting plays right.

Thus, you can imagine where that leaves umpires working by themselves, which is happening a lot more often, especially in lower-level games.

That doesn't exempt the umpire from doing what is necessary to properly manage the game. Some things to remember and watch for when working solo include:

Stay off the knee. Although the mechanic of calling balls and strikes on one knee is rapidly becoming passé, working solo is one time in which it is highly discouraged. An umpire working solo will be constantly moving from behind the plate. Calling balls and strikes from one knee will quite likely be a hindrance.

Find the ball. The first thing an umpire working alone must realize is that he or she can't possibly cover everything. Therefore, knowing where the ball is at all times is of critical importance. If it is possible to glance at the runners and still not lose the location of the ball, fine.

Set rules for making the ball dead. At the pregame meeting, tell coaches that whenever you are in the middle of the infield, the ball is in the infield and play has stopped, the ball is considered dead. There are a couple of reasons for that. First, it will keep the game moving because the umpire can hustle back to the plate once the ball is back in the infield, rather than wait until the ball is tossed to the pitcher. Second, it relieves the umpire of having to backpedal toward the plate while watching the ball.

Get to the mound. Anytime the ball is hit in fair territory, the umpire must get out toward the pitcher's mound to be in position to observe various play situations. The only exception would be on a ball hit down a line. If it is determined the ball is fair, the umpire should correctly signal then move toward the middle of the infield.

Being in that position means that the umpire will be required to call



When working by himself, Kevin Mackelburg, Simi Valley, Calif., must be ready to move from behind the plate for all calls.

plays at the plate from the inside of the infield — a trade off in working a one-umpire game.

Occasionally, a fly ball will be hit and you will have no idea where it is. A good technique is to take a quick look at the outfielders. Stay with whomever is moving. If you see either the right or left fielder moving toward a foul line, focus your eyes on the foul line. The ball will come into view and you should be able to make the call. If you try to find the ball while it is in the air, chances are it will be on the ground before you locate it. If you don't get a good look at where the ball landed, you are left with your best guess. That is a definite drawback in a one-umpire game.

Additional reminders. Other general rules in working one-umpire games include waiting a little longer to be absolutely sure a ball is out of play. Once you kill the play, there is no going back. On long-distance calls, the general guideline is that if the ball is down and the tag is down, call the runner out. Since you will be farther away from the play than normal, it is vitally important that you know

where the ball is before making an out call. Take plenty of time on tag plays.

On an attempted steal of second, the best you can do is move away from the plate and make the call. Moving to your left will give you a slightly better angle.

If you have a rules interpretation issue, you are, of course, on your own. However, there is nothing stopping you from conferring with the rulebook or the other coach in order to get the rule correct. Obviously you shouldn't solicit help on judgment calls. While most states don't allow formal protests, you should do what is necessary to get the rule correct.

Finally, don't allow much complaining from the coaches and players about positioning, as long as you are hustling. The best response to a complaining coach or player is to just say, "Coach, I am working as hard as I can for you." Then walk away.

One-umpire games are not easy. However, by applying the above principles and constantly working hard and hustling to get in the best position possible, it can be done. □

Two Umpires: Fly to Center, R2 Tags Up

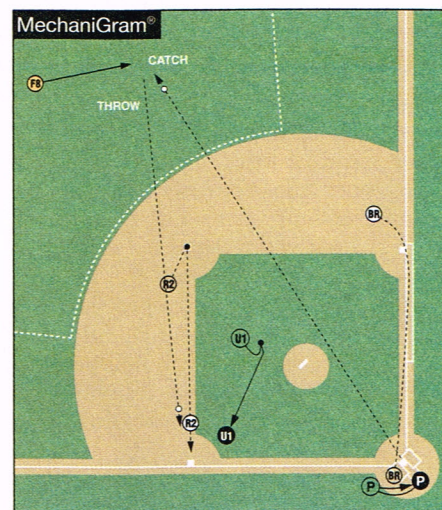
With the two-umpire system, sometimes there is a lot going on at the same time for an umpire to judge.

One of those times is with a runner on second and less than two outs. If the batter hits a fly ball toward center field, U2 has responsibility for everything that is about to happen.

U2 must first get the catch/no-catch call correct, then know whether R1 properly tagged up and last, rule on the play on R1 at third base or back into second.

If the fly ball is routine, U2 can remain in the area behind the mound and line up the tag, as shown in the MechaniGram.

However, if the fly ball is deep or is a trouble catch, U2 must move toward the catch and give up the angle on the tag-up. U2 must know whether the ball is caught or not before worrying about the tag and other plays. On a deep fly ball, U2 likely will not have to make a call on R1 at third, since he will most likely advance easily. □



It's Not Over ...

Baseball is a game that lasts seven innings. But when is a game over? The rules on various game-ending situations can be tricky.

Since states are permitted to create their own game-ending procedures, umpires must know the rules and policies for the state(s) in which they work.

Normally, the game ends when the last inning is completed if the visiting team is ahead or the visiting team completes its half of that inning with the home team ahead. The game also ends when the home team scores the go-ahead run in the bottom half of the last or later inning after a tie (4-2-2).

If the score is tied after the last inning is complete, the game continues until the visiting team has scored more runs than the home team at the end of a completed inning, or the home team scores the winning run (4-2-2).

If a game must be shortened, the last inning must at least be the fifth inning. That will be referred to as an official or a regulation game. A game may be stopped because of darkness, including situations in which a law prevents the lights from being turned on, light failure or malfunction of a mechanical field device under control

of the home club or a curfew imposed by law. In the case of inclement weather, a reasonable amount of time (not less than 30 minutes) must elapse before the game is called (4-2-3).

If a game is called before it is "official," it is referred to as no game. If replayed, it is replayed in its entirety unless there are other provisions. State associations may adopt their own game-ending procedures (4-2-4). That may be to treat a non-official game as a suspended game. Many states use such a rule for playoff games. In states in which the season is short and re-scheduling games is extremely difficult, the rule may apply to all games.

If the special game-ending procedures do not apply and a game becomes official and is called at a point in which the teams have not had an equal number of at bats, it's possible for a winner or a tie game to be declared or for the game to be suspended. It's also possible for the score to revert to the last completed inning. Here is an example of a tie game:

Play 1: The score in a night game is 3-3 after (a) six full, or (b) nine full innings and there is a power failure.

The game is called. **Ruling 1:** The game goes into the books as a tie.

If the home team is ahead even though the innings are not equal, it would be declared the winner.

Play 2: At the end of six innings, the home team is leading, 4-3. In the seventh inning, the home team scores another run. The home team is still batting when rain ends the game.

Ruling 2: The home team wins, 5-3.

The following situations result in the score reverting to the last completed inning and are bound to make the visitors unhappy. A specific game-ending procedure could preclude the reversion from happening (4-2-3).

Play 3: The visiting team is leading, 1-0, after six complete innings. The visitors score two more in the top of the seventh inning. After two are out, it starts to rain and the game is called. **Ruling 3:** The final score is 1-0.

Play 4: At the end of five innings, the home team is leading, 2-0. In the sixth, the visitors score three runs. The home team, not having scored, is batting in the sixth when rain washes out further play. **Ruling 4:** The home team wins, 2-0. □

The Force is No Longer With You

When a runner is forced to advance, he can be put out if either he or the base to which he is forced is tagged. A force play occurs when a runner loses his right to the base he occupies because the batter becomes a batter-runner (2-29-3). A force created when the at bat ends can subsequently be removed.

The removal of a force play is the primary reason the infield fly rule exists. Without that rule, a fielder could allow the fly ball to drop and create a force on two runners, making a cheap double play possible.

A force play on a particular runner is also removed when a runner reaches the base to which he is forced to advance. When a runner is forced out, the force is also removed on any preceding runners, but not on following runners. If the batter-runner is retired, force plays on all runners are removed. Here are several examples:

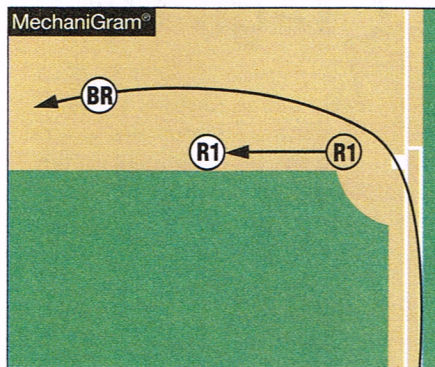
Play 1: With the bases loaded and no outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, B8 hits a ball that rolls in front of the plate. The plate umpire points the ball fair. F2 picks up the ball, steps on the plate and immediately tags B8. **Ruling 1:** That is a double play. When F2 touched the plate, that forced out R1. He then tagged B8. Had he tagged B8 first, the force on all runners would have been removed and F2 would have had to tag R1 in order to get the double play.

More importantly, none of the runners would have had to advance and could have remained at their base, making the double play less likely.

Here is a different way of removing the force.

Play 2: In the top of the fourth inning, the home team has R1 on first base. B7 hits a line drive to right field that the base umpire rules was trapped (not caught). R1 however thought the ball was caught and heads back to first base. In the process, B7 rounds first and passes R1. Finally realizing the ball was indeed trapped, R1 then attempts to advance to second base.

Ruling 2: A lot going on, but when broken down, this play becomes a lot clearer. The moment B7 passed R1, who was unobstructed, B7 is out. Once



R1 hesitated to advance because he didn't know if the ball was caught or not. When the batter-runner (BR) passes R1, BR is called out. That removes the force play on R1 at second base.

the batter is ruled out, all potential force plays are removed. R1 then had the opportunity to return to first base. Instead, he attempted to advance to second. The defense must then tag R1 in order for him to be out. The act of touching the base is not enough since the force has been removed. If the defense tagged R1, he is out.

A force that is apparently removed can be reinstated, as the following play demonstrates.

Play 3: In the seventh inning, R1 is on first base when B6 hits a line drive to right field. The ball is trapped by F9. R1 is running on the pitch and rounds second. Believing F9 actually caught the ball, R1 retraces his steps, retouching second and returning to first. Meanwhile, F9 throws the ball to F6 at second base. **Ruling 3:** Once R1 retouched second and ended up between first and second, the force is restored. B6's base hit removes R1's right to first base; he must advance to second. Since F9's throw to F6 occurred before R1 "reached" second base, R1 is out.

When R1 reached second he removed the force on himself, but when he retreated and retouched second, he reinstated the force.

Whether or not the third out is a force determines if a run scores. A run cannot be scored if a runner advances to home during a play on which the

third out is made on a force play (9-1-1 Exception b). Here are several plays that may cause issues for umpires and coaches alike:

Play 4: With the bases loaded and one out, B1 hits into the gap but is thrown out trying for second. On appeal, R2 is called out for missing third. **Ruling 4:** R1's run does not count. The running error occurred at a time when R2 was forced to touch third.

Play 5: With the bases loaded and no one out, B1 hits into a 6-4-3 double play. R2, who ran on the pitch, scores but misses third. On appeal, R2 is called out for missing third. **Ruling 5:** The run counts because the missed base occurred after the out at second removed the force. The order of the outs is important to keep in mind. Even though R2 was "forced" to advance to third, the force was removed once R3 was out at second base.

Play 6: With R1 on third, R2 on second and one out, B8 hits a fly ball to right field as both runners tag. F9 makes the catch for the second out and throws the ball to the infield as both runners advance. The defense then throws the ball to second base, appealing that R2 left early. The umpire agrees and calls R2 out for the third out. **Ruling 6:** Even though it looks like a force play because the runner does not have to be tagged, an appeal is not a force. Since R1 crossed the plate before R2 was out, R1's run counts. □

QUICK TIP

For most umpires, the spring season is about to begin. Now is the best time to do an inventory of all of your equipment. Take the time to not only inspect, but try on your uniforms. The closet monster sometimes makes them shrink when they sit unworn for several months during the holidays and the worst time to find that out is in the parking lot or locker room of your first game. Get your bag packed and be ready for the season's first game.

Plays at the Plate

Plays at the plate have been given an increased focus over the past several years. The rules for plays at the plate vary for both catchers and runners. Here are two different plays at the plate, along with their legal and illegal actions by both the catcher and runner.

1. Catcher's Actions: Legal

The catcher's actions in the above play are legal since he has the ball. Once the catcher has the ball, the rules governing obstruction do not apply. The catcher is permitted to block the plate.

2. Runner's Actions: Illegal

The runner has caused illegal contact (8-4-2b) and has initiated malicious contact (8-4-2e). At the point of malicious contact, the umpire shall call time, declare the runner out, eject the runner and return all other runners to the last base legally touched at the time of malicious contact (8-2-9).

3. Catcher's Actions: Illegal

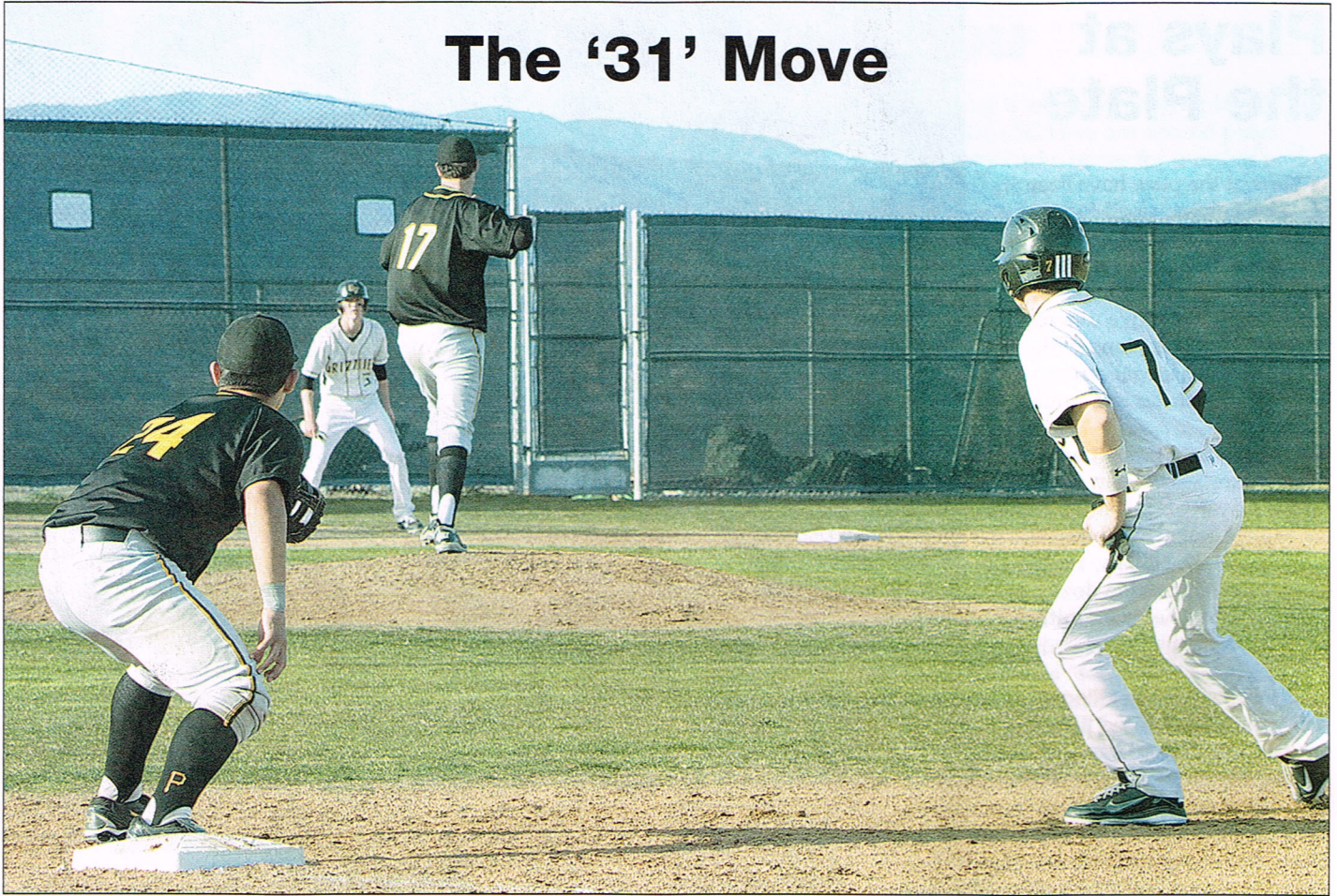
The catcher is not permitted to deny access to the base/plate without possession of the ball (2-22-3). Even though the catcher is about to receive the ball, he does not yet have it and cannot block the plate. Obstruction should be called and the runner awarded home. The ball is delayed-dead.

4. Runner's Actions: Legal

The runner is making a legal attempt to reach the plate by sliding legally. The runner is not required to slide, but if he does, he must do so legally. Even though the catcher has committed obstruction, the runner cannot initiate malicious contact. □



The '31' Move



With runners on first and third base only, a common pickoff move is known as the “31,” in which the pitcher fakes to third base before attempting an actual pickoff at first base. Both umpires in a two-umpire crew have several things to look for in that pickoff move.

Fake to Third

The fake to third is the first part of the move.

- The plate umpire must look at the step to third. Along the same lines as a left-handed pitcher’s step to first base, the step must actually be more toward third base than the plate. That is a balk that is commonly missed.
- If the pitcher doesn’t actually throw to third, he is not required to disengage the pitching plate before throwing to first. However, if he fakes to first, he must step off.

The action of seeing the pitcher come off the rubber belongs to the plate umpire.

- The base umpire, who should be in the C position, should take a step toward the mound.

If the throw actually goes to third base, that step opens the angle and allows the base umpire to better see the tag.

Throw (or Fake) to First

- Once the pitcher has disengaged the pitcher’s plate, there are no more balk possibilities.

With multiple runners, the plate umpire cannot assist on a rundown between first and second. The plate umpire should simply observe the play.

- If the throw goes to first base, the base umpire can take a step or two toward first and be set for the tag there. The key for the base umpire is to watch the ball and not turn away from the mound and the ball until the ball has been thrown to either first or third base.
- With two outs, keep in mind the possibility of a “time play.” The runner from third must score before the runner from first is tagged out in order for the run to count. □