



## May 2020 Plays and Clarifications

### From the Director of Umpires

As we move closer to the announcement about our National Championships some states have resumed practices and playing softball. Even though we do not yet know whether we will play or not we must continue to prepare. When an announcement is made, we are or are not playing, if we are, we will have to move quickly with preparations. Therefore, as umpires, we should prepare today and be ready to go when called upon.

What a better time than now to review the rule book and sharpen your rule knowledge. Look back at those tough rules that you have always caused you issues. Reach out, ask questions to gain a better understanding of all the rules especially those that are hard for YOU. We are always asking for rule questions that we can post on this site to help our umpires not only understand the rule but also understand the intent of the difficult rules. We cannot help in providing clarity if you do not ask. Get into the book, read the rules, mark the ones you may have questions on and send us your plays so we can help provide better understanding for all.

Also, this is a great time to study our mechanics. There has never been a better time to dive into the umpire manual. Not only because a lot of us have the time but also our umpire manual has been enhanced over the past few years with an incredible amount of information in it. There are diagrams showing umpire movement as well as links taking you to our DVD showing, describing, and highlighting the correct mechanics for certain plays.

We also have a list of mechanics that have been consistently missed at our National Championships. Some of those are mentioned in the Points of Emphasis and some are not. We hope all of them have been shared with you, but if not reach out to your State or Metro UIC and / or your Regional UIC and ask to see them. The list will not only help you prepare for a National Championship but also help you look back at mechanics you may or may not need a refresher on.

Our mechanics are the backbone of our umpire program. They help us get into the right position for the primary play, have us in a good position for the secondary play, if done properly puts us at a great angle for the call and most importantly allows us to move to get an unobstructed view of the four elements as they come together during the play. If you have questions as to why we do things a certain way, ask. We will give you the philosophy behind them and explain to you why USA Softball feels our mechanics are important to our game. We cannot help and provide clarity and understanding if you do not ask.

**Play:** 3 Umpire System and no runners on base. A fly ball down the right field line and U1 chases the fly ball. U3 rotates to 1B for any call at 1B as the plate umpire trails the Batter-Runner no more than 1/3 to first base. Correct?

**Mechanic:** U3 moves to 1B for the call for several reasons. If the ball is not caught and there is a play at 1B on the Batter-Runner U3 is already at a 45-degree angle for the play and if they hustle, they will be 90 degrees from the throw. If the ball is dropped and the Batter-Runner, now a runner, decides to go to 2B, U3 is already in front of the runner and able to move with them to 2B or move back to 1B if the runner returns.

The question is asked why not let the plate umpire take that call since they are already trailing the Batter-Runner? We feel there are several reasons not to make that a primary call for the plate umpire. One, if the ball is not caught, like a sharp line drive, and the ball is picked up and thrown to 1B the PU now has the Batter-Runner and the player at 1B in front of them. The Plate Umpire now has one of the four elements, the ball, blocked from their view. Can you move to get a better view, absolutely? But can you get the best view based on the principle of never moving past a 45-degree angle on a force play and obtain 90 degrees to the throw? Because of the way this play develop we do not think you can get the best angle to get the best view for this play.

The other item that makes us feel the plate umpire should not take this play is the situation when we have a lone runner on 3B. If we set our mechanic for the plate umpire to take 1B when U1 chases, with the exception of when a lone runner is on 3B we now have made one of our mechanics a situational mechanic. Trying to make mechanics situational and teach each situation when an umpire would change from a basic mechanic is almost impossible to teach 19,000 USA Softball Umpires.

Hopefully, this gives you an example of a question on mechanics we get and try to answer. Our plan is to do this going forward at least once a month in our Plays and Clarifications. If you have a mechanic that you have questions about, send them to us so we can address it and hopefully explain why we do what we do.