



October 2020 Plays and Clarifications

From the Director of Umpires

We made it and it was a success. I am speaking about 2020. Our National Championships are complete, our Invitationals are over, and our special events were a success. Yes, we lost many of our Championship but those that were held were a huge success. They succeeded in both being a great event but also the umpires that did attend did a great job. For this we say thank you.

During this year we had umpires that had to drop out and others stepped up. Not only stepped up to go to an event but stepped up to be a better umpire. I was able to attend several of our events and saw umpires who may not have been on the field all year because of the Pandemic, get back to their basics and put forth the effort needed to make our events a huge success.

I have said this before/ to many groups of umpires but will say it again. I could not be prouder of our umpire program than I am now. Our umpires stepped up and did multiple events due to others not being able to attend. We had umpires go to back to back events for us to put some of our best on the field when we needed them. We had umpires travel on their own dime to attend special events when the funds were not there to pay for travel. We had umpires and Umpires-in-Chief travel knowing when they get home, they would have to quarantine for two weeks before going back to work or going out into public or seeing their family. All this so we, USA Softball, could have a successful year, a year we the umpire program helped make a success.

I have always been proud to lead this group known as USA Softball Umpires. This year because of being a crazier year than ever, I am especially proud, and Thank You does not seem like enough. However, thank you is what I say to you as a USA Softball Umpire.

Fast Pitch Pitching Circle

Last month the question came up, in USA Softball, when is the pitcher out of the circle. More directly is the pitcher out of the circle if only part of one foot is out of the circle. USA Softball looks at the line of the pitching circle like the line of the batter's box. When is a batter out for hitting a ball while out of the batter's box and when is a batter out when hit by a batted ball out of the batter's box? In both cases the batter's foot must be completely out of the box. The Pitching Circle should be treated the same way. In order for the pitcher to be out of the circle, one foot must be entirely out of the circle on the ground, for a player to leave a base and not be called out for the look back rules. So, when judging the foot to be out of the circle be sure the complete foot is out of the circle on the ground before enforcing the Look Back Rule if it is in effect.

Video Breakdown in Transition

The link below has a play that we see more and more in the Junior Olympic world of Fast Pitch Softball. The video is amply named, Breakdown in Transition. When you watch the video, you can see a very good transition from the 3-umpire system to the 2-umpire system on a batted ball. You can see good hustle by the umpires to return to their starting position with, now a runner on 1B. Then we see a breakdown due to the pitcher leaving the circle and a runner taking off to surprise the defensive team. We then see the U1 move to cover 2B while U3 approaches 2B to their new starting position. We then see U3 make a call since they are closest 2B. The video ends with three questions and a statement, never stop umpiring. Our interpretations to these questions are:

- **Who is responsible for a Look Back Rule Violation during transition?** The answer would be all umpires. The plate umpire would have the best view by being in the holding zone. U3 would also, in this case have a good view based on their movement toward 2B. U1 has the hardest views as they will have their back to the play for a period of time and would be in the worst spot.
- **Who is responsible for the call at 2B in this situation? (What if this was two umps)?** In this case the umpires had gone to a 2-umpire system and U1 has responsibility for 2B. Because of the movement and the delay in the play happening this could be a good time for a deviation by U3 communicating to U1 they have 2B.
- **What if anything could have been done better by the umpire team?** This is a great video that shows and supports why we try and teach our umpires when an umpire has gone out or needs to rotate back to a starting position or another base, call time. We can use time for our benefit also. None of what you see in the video could have happened if we had called time when the ball came back to the pitcher, in this case in the circle and the runner was back on 1B. Lesson learned, when we are out of position due to chasing a fly ball and / or rotations, like rotating from 2B to 3B call time. This allows you as an umpire to start the pre-pitch process without worrying about anything happening that may put you out of position.