



May Plays and Clarifications

2021 Fast Pitch Camp:

Reminder to all Local Associations, we have a Fast Pitch Camp scheduled for October 7-10 in Lufkin, Texas. The coordinator is Michal Germany and can be reached by email at mgermany72@yahoo.com or phone at (936) 671 - 2288. The instructors will be Dave Chandler, Jim Craig, Geri Magwire, Steve Nelson, Bryan Smith and Randy Sprouse. Reach out to the coordinator and sign up now, attendance is limited to 60 umpires.

Umpire Mechanics:

There has been a lot of questions about USA Softball's mechanic on tag plays, specifically on the play at home plate. We teach that our position on a possible tag play is 90 degrees to the path of the runner just short of the base they are trying to reach and move if needed to get an unobstructed view of the play. As the four elements come closer and the play develops, move if needed, to get an unobstructed view of the play. We believe moving to the starting position first puts you in the best position to see the four elements of the play. Then as the four elements come closer, you can better judge if / when to move to get an unobstructed view of the tag while keeping all the elements of the play in front of you. From this position the play can and will dictate if we should move to our left or our right. The theory is do not discount moving to your left and always move right. You will find, dependent on the play, you can get the same angle and view moving left as you can moving right.

There also has been discussion on what the term "move to get an unobstructed view of the play" means. As mentioned above this statement means once we get to the calling position of 90 degrees to the path of the runner just short of the base they are trying to reach, we now read the play.

Reading the play means:

- Read the defense fielding and throwing the ball. If we as umpires read the player's / fielder throwing the ball hips and shoulders, it will tell us where or the direction they are going to throw the ball.
- Read how and where the defense is setting up in relation to the base. The distance between the fielder and the runner's path may also be a variable of how the four elements will come together.
- Read the speed and path of the runner toward the base.
- Read the speed of the ball on a throw compared to the runner. It is important to gauge, is the ball closer than the runner or is the ball further from the runner. When the ball arrives compared to when the runner arrives, will be a variable on how a fielder may apply the tag.

With the above variables, read and move based on all the elements. This should help you move to the best angle and distance for a swipe tag and at the same time stay out of the way of a possible throw for a subsequent play.

Bottom line, all the verbiage of "move to get an unobstructed view of the play" means is just umpire. Read everything that is happening and make sure to move, if needed, so you can see the interaction of all four elements coming together.

Question on Umpire Manual 5-A-6: Watching the Ball — Watching the ball aids a base umpire in reading where the play is likely to develop. The umpire must watch the ball as it is fielded on the infield while moving to the proper position for their primary call. Let the ball turn your head into the play as the four elements of the play come together; stop, read the play and make the call.

Example: With no runners on, while the Shortstop is fielding a routine ground ball, the BU is moving into position to make the call at 1B. We should be getting set to make the call while the fielder is throwing the ball. Once the SS throws the ball to 1B, do we Watch the ball travel in flight from SS to 1B? OR... After the ball is thrown, do we immediately turn our focus toward 1B where we have the other three elements in sight while we wait to see and hear the ball arrive in the glove.

Answer: While moving into position, we watch the ball being fielded. We then need to watch the ball being released and once we have a good indication that the ball is on target, turn and focus on the four elements as they come together. It is very difficult for the human eye to totally focus on the ball all the way to the glove then engage to see all four elements. So, there should be a point and time that the eyes leave the ball and concentrate on the area of the four elements coming together.

Play: R1 on 1B and 1 out. B3 hits a ball in the gap. As R1 rounds 3B they trip over the defensive face mask that F5 has taken off and discarded. R1 is thrown out on a close play at home plate. The umpire rule her out.

Ruling: this ruling is incorrect. Once R1 tripped on the discarded mask from F5 the umpires should have called and signaled obstruction. Once R1 was tagged out at home plate the umpires should have called “dead ball” and awarded R1 the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction. **Rule 1, Definition of Obstruction, Rule 8, Section 5B**

Play: R1 on 3B and R2 on 2B, and two outs. F5 gets a base hit. R1 while coming home stops short of home plate and returns to the 3B dugout but does not go in it. R2 scores and returns to the dugout but does not go inside. The Defense appeals R1 should be out for abandoning their base. The umpires agree and call R1 out for the 3rd out and no runs score. The offense protests a wrong application of the playing rules. What is the correct ruling?

Ruling: On this play R1 never reached the plate so we cannot count their run. R1 veered off their base path and the defense was not making a play on them, so they reestablished their base path (Rule 8, Section 7A, Rule 8, Section 8B). In reestablishing a base path, the next runner (R2) passed them as they eclipsed the point where R1 reached, and R2 is declared out (Rule 8, Section 7D). Three outs no runs scored.