

## Plays and Clarifications

April 2025

As we start through April, we need to remember that April showers bring May flowers! As the weather starts to warm up around the country many more areas are starting to get their USA Softball seasons underway. Hopefully the weather will continue to get warmer and the showers will dry up enough to allow us to get back to playing softball!

A quick reminder that the USA Softball UIC Clinic is October 23-25 in Oklahoma City. We are really excited for this year's clinic and to announce our guest speaker, Patty Gasso, coach of the Oklahoma Sooners and the USA Women's National Team. Presentation teams have been designated and there are a lot of activities underway on developing the breakout topics. As always, there will be a lot of interesting information provided at this biennial event. Come and join us for this informative event and meet or reunite with friends from across the country that share your passion for umpiring softball. Further information is available at the links below:

Link to the flyer:

<https://www.usasoftball.com/umpires/uic-clinic/>

Link below is now active to register for this event:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-uic-clinic-tickets-1146178353309?aff=oddtcreator>

**Play:** In a fast pitch game during elimination play, Team A is using the DP/FLEX in their lineup with the DP #3 batting third and the FLEX #10 playing first base (F3). In the third inning the DP comes in the game defensively to pitch and #4 batting fourth in the lineup is no longer playing defense. In the fourth inning the DP bats and gets on base and the coach from Team A tells the umpire "#10 is going to courtesy run for my pitcher". The umpire does not notice that #10 is the FLEX player and allows the player to run for the DP. After two pitches Team B's coach asks for time and questions the umpire that #10 cannot be a courtesy runner as they are the FLEX and are in the game. The umpire rules that Team B is correct and rules that the FLEX is an unreported substitute as they can legally run for the DP, but it is a substitution as the DP is leaving the game.

**Ruling:** Correct ruling. When the DP plays defense as the pitcher or catcher, they are eligible for a courtesy runner. However, in elimination play a player who is currently in the game or has participated in the game in any playing capacity are not eligible to serve as a courtesy runner. The FLEX is allowed to play offense for the DP so there was no illegal action when the FLEX ran for the DP, but this is a substitute and was not properly reported to the plate umpire. The FLEX is officially in the game playing offense and any advancement of runners is legal. With the FLEX entering to play offense for the DP, the DP has left the game and has one reentry. **Rule 4, Section 3D, Rule 4, Section 6C [6], Rule 8, Section 10C**

There is a play circulating around that has led to some great discussion. It really brings into focus the theory of using the rulebook as an entire book of rules and applying those rules to a play instead of expecting the rulebook to cover every play exactly as they happen.

**Play:** With R1 on 3B and R2 on 1B and no outs, B3 bunts the ball on an apparent squeeze play. The bunt pops up and F5 dives in an attempt to catch the ball. R1 was off with the pitch and slides into home plate appearing to touch home plate.

The plate umpire, in a position to see catch no catch, signals a strong safe or no catch signal to indicate that the ball was not caught. The runner who scored does not realize that the ball was not caught and is trying to return to 3B to touch a base they think they left too soon. F5 turns and throws to 3B either to play on R1 for not tagging up or in an attempt to play on R2 that has rounded 2B and is moving toward 3B. F5's throw is off target and gets away from F6 at 3B. At the end of the play R1 is back on 3B, R2 is on 2B and B3 is on 1B.

Is this legal?

**Ruling:** Yes. In USA Softball, NFHS Softball and WBSC the rules allow for this. Even though the runner is not required to return if they are unsure, they may return to ensure they have not violated a rule by leaving early on a caught fly ball. We treat all four bases the same with the exception of when a batter-runner retreats toward home plate to avoid or delay a tag. In all other cases, with the exceptions listed below, a runner can return to a base left too soon or missed:

Rule 8, Section 3 – Touching bases in legal order:

G: No runner may return to touch a base missed or one left too soon after a trailing runner has scored or once they leave live ball territory

Rule 8, Section 8 – The runner is not out:

P: When a runner legally returns to a base left too soon or missed, prior to an appeal being made or is returning to a base during a dead ball.

Yes, these rules both apply to cases where the runner missed a base or left it too soon. Even if they actually touched the base, if a runner thinks they missed 2B and has already touched 3B they can still return to touch 2B to make sure. During this live ball action, they are liable to be put out, but they are allowed to attempt to retouch 2B. If we treat all bases the same, we would then allow a runner who has touched the plate, but feels they left too soon or missed 3B, to return and touch that base with liability to be put out while doing so. The only time they could not do so is if a runner scored after them or they left live ball territory.

Again, this is a great play that highlights how we must apply the whole book of rules to one play.