

2025



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**USA SOFTBALL UMPIRES:
LEADING BY EXAMPLE**

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House Keeping

- **Restrooms – Out the door and to the right on this floor**
- **Please Mute/Silent Your Phones**
- **Please keep your questions until the end of our presentation.**



Our Take On Mechanics



- **Some Umpiring Philosophies**
- **Commonly Missed Mechanics**
- **Deviations – What that means...**



Why We Do it Our Way...



USA Softball has established tried-and-true softball umpiring mechanics drawing on decades of experience from many of the world's greatest softball umpires.

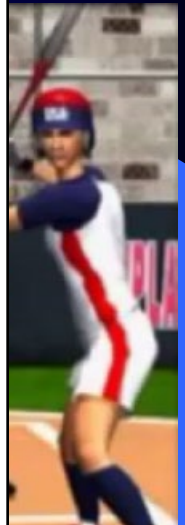
We believe our foundation of mechanics teach umpires to be in the best position before a play and enables the umpire to move as the play develops.



Why We Do it Our Way... - Plate Mechanics



Q: Why do we work the slot versus 'over the top' of the catcher in fastpitch?



Why We Do it Our Way... - Plate Mechanics



Q: Why do we work the slot versus ‘over the top’ of the catcher in fastpitch?

Batter’s Hands

Batter’s Knees

Umpire’s Eyes

Umpire Safety



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Plate Mechanics



Q: Since the SP strike zone seems to be hard to grasp, is there were a way to incorporate how best to judge while using GPA and tracking with the nose?



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Plate Mechanics



- Being in the slot gives you a better look at the ball going through the strike zone.
- Try tracking the pitch with just your nose – limited head movement.
- If more head movement is required to see the height of a pitch – it's likely “Illegal”
- Imagine a basketball goal and realize 10” is not that high.
- Or pick out an object in the horizon you judge to be 10’.



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Plate Mechanics



Q: In SP, why do we only point for a fair ball, and we verbalize for a foul ball.



DEAD BALL. TIME OUT. NO PITCH OR FOUL BALL

- 1) Stand up-right facing square to the play with the feet shoulder-width apart and eyes on the ball.
- 2) Raise both hands high above the head with palms facing out as you verbalize "Dead Ball", "Time Out", "No Pitch" or "Foul Ball."



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Plate Mechanics



Q: In SP, when is appropriate to use the Dead ball - Out of Play - Time Signal?

- The manual spells this out well. Page 69 shares the importance of calling time when the ball is returned, or stays in the infield, once all playing action has ceased. It was designed because we did not want Slow Pitch players to play games on the bases to draw throws etc.



Why We Do it Our Way... - Plate Umpire Movement



Q: Where is the holding zone and when should it be used?



Why We Do it Our Way... - Plate Umpire Movement



Q: Why does USA Softball teach that the plate umpire moves to 3B in “Fair Territory”?

When exiting the catcher and trailing, or with a play that develops at 3B, move up the foul line in fair territory to a minimum of 10 - 12 feet from the base, obtaining a 90-degree angle to the path of the runner as they approach the base.

In Slow Pitch, the PU has the responsibility for a runner attempting to steal 3B. Move toward 3B in foul ground, or in fair territory, staying out of the throwing line and let the ball take you to the play as you obtain the best angle and distance.



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Base Mechanics



Q: Why doesn't USA Softball use the “Rimming” mechanic when it's seemingly been successful with other programs?

- Remember, our mechanics are used in all facets of the game (FP/MP/SP) using the 1U, 2U, & 3U System, and at all levels of play. Consistency with movements help build good habits and ensures umpires position themselves in a timely fashion allowing our partner(s) a chance to confirm the plays are covered.
- The **Inside/Outside Theory** enables umpires to keep the four elements in front of them and allows umpires to move more freely inside the diamond to get to the best angle/distance prior to the play happening. (Rimming usually requires several more steps to get the angle, and often the four elements are not in sight until the last second)



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Base Mechanics



Q: Does Rimming set ourselves up for the potential secondary play?

- **Maybe ~ But, often the umpire arrives at the best angle after the play has happened.**
- **Secondary plays happen more frequently than a person may think.**
- **Like it was mentioned earlier, if an umpire moves inside the diamond to keep the four elements in front of them, it takes less time/steps to maneuver to the best angle for the play.**



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Base Mechanics

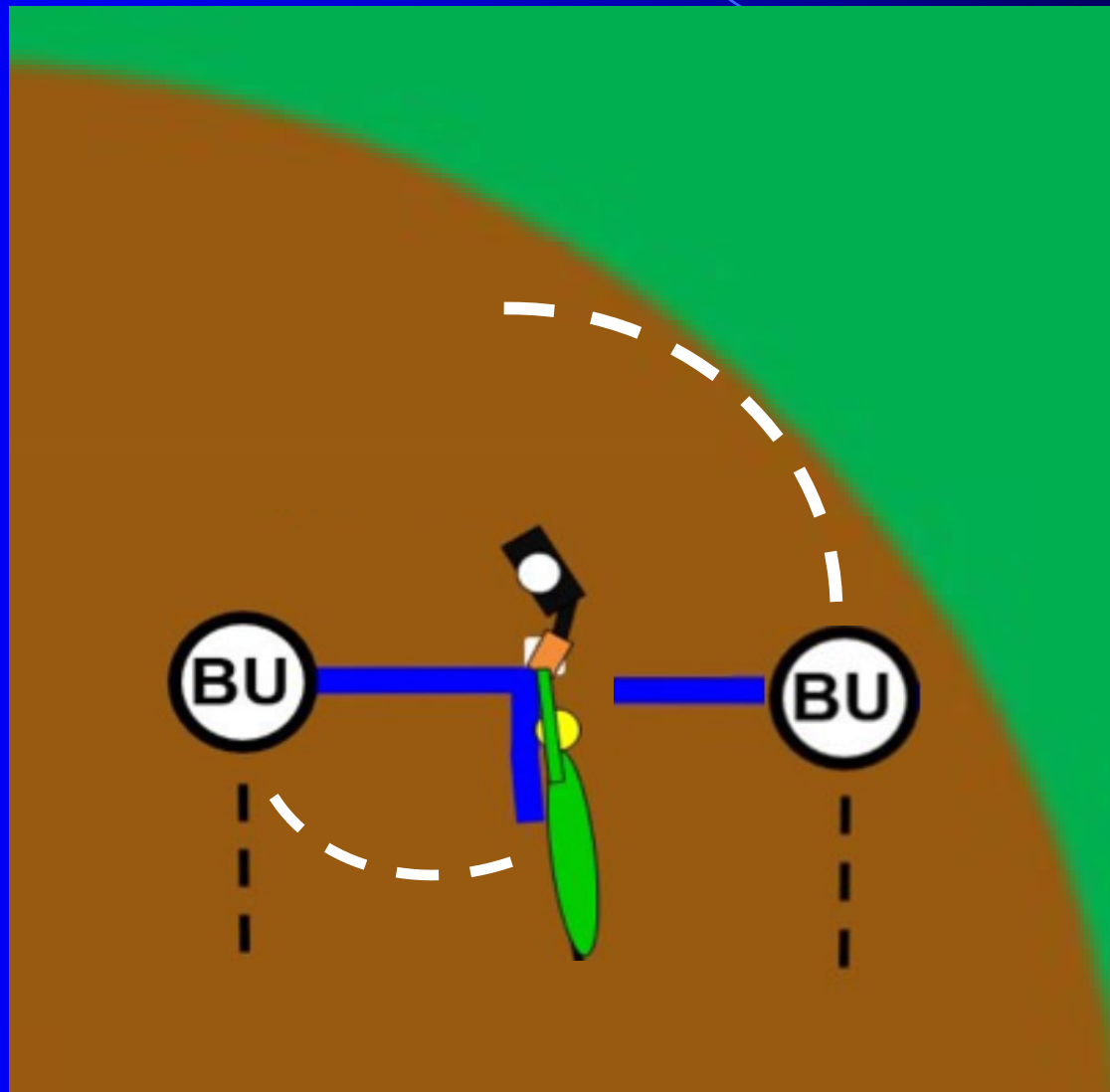


Q: Does Rimming set ourselves up for the potential secondary play? (Cont.)

Or - we see a lot of runners going into a base with an umpire who has rimmed or stayed outside, and they are making the call from behind the play.



Why We Do it Our Way... I/O Theory vs. Rimming



Why We Do it Our Way...

- Plate/Base Mechanics



Q: Our home run mechanic positions the



Why We Do it Our Way... - The 2U System



Big Picture: It takes both umpires working together, an understanding of USA Softball mechanics, and communication, to best cover multiple runners.

Both umpires working on the same page, using the same guidelines (mechanics/positioning/theories).

Both umpires implementing the teachings of the USA Softball Manual. They need to either be taught from the manual or read it themselves to learn and use the information.

Both umpires need to communicate (verbally/visually) in order to be successful.



*What Do You Think Are The
Most Commonly Missed Mechanics at
USA Softball National Championships?*





What do you think are the most c

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*Commonly Missed Mechanics at
USA Softball National Championships.*



Plate Mechanics



What should be taught from the manual ?

Stance:

**Feet Position (H/T / Shoulder Width)
Distance From Catcher**

Set Position:



Plate Movement



What does the manual teach?

Trailing the batter runner to first base



Notice: Near the line vs the middle of the diamond.*

*Multiple Runners or Runner Positions

– This may change PU's movement.



Plate Movement



Movement to 3B

(Inside vs. Outside the Diamond)

Many plate umpires are not getting inside the diamond when there is a play or potential play at 3B.



Base Mechanics – Starting Positions



Distances:

- Often umpires do not adjust based on the runner configuration.
- We see umpires that are too deep when working between the bases
- We see umpires that are too close to 2B when working between the bases.



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Inside/Outside Theory:

- Many umpires fail to use the theory or disregard the importance of practicing/using the concepts.
- U1, in the 3U System, often should have a tighter button-hook at 1B when U3 is moving to cover 2B.
- U3, when U1 is Counter Rotated; coming inside (I/O theory) on base hit and all umpires are “All In.”



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Inside/Outside Theory:



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Inside/Outside Theory:



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Inside/Outside Theory:



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Inside/Outside Theory:



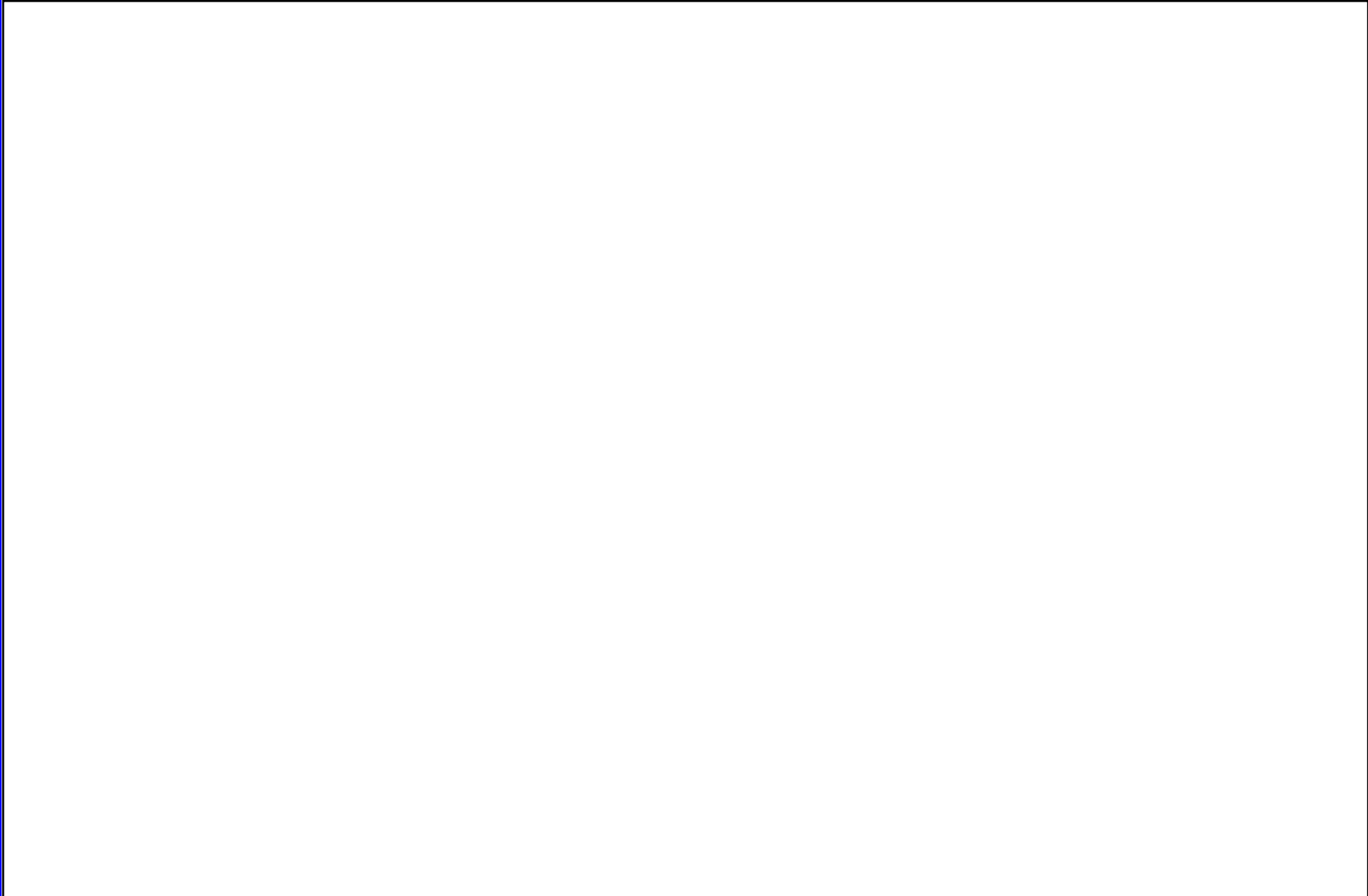
Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Parallel Movement (outside or inside):



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Parallel Movement (outside or inside):



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



Parallel Movement (outside or inside):



Base Mechanics – Umpire Movement



No Runner's On: U1 - Rotates Home



PU/BU - Umpire Movement



R1B: Base Hit, - Crew Rotates:



Additional Situations Where We See Plays Uncovered...



No R's, or R3 only – U3 Chases

U1 doesn't read U3 chasing on the hit and rotates home leaving no umpires in the infield.

Fly Ball Coverage: Base Umpires need to make eye contact on a fly ball to the outfield. Only one umpire should chase!

Both umpires should read the play, keep their head on a swivel, and remember, one look at your partner is never enough.



Additional Situations Where We See Plays Uncovered...



- R3 only - U1 chase - U3 doesn't read U1 chasing and button hooks at 3B.
- What should happen?
- U3 needs to quickly get inside the diamond, all the way to the other side of the circle, between 1B/2B.



All Umpires

- Finishing 90's And Backside 90's



*Do you **CONSISTENTLY** evaluate and reinforce USA Softball Mechanics In Your Local Association?*





Do you **CONSISTENTLY** evaluate a

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USA SOFTBALL UMPIRES:
LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Deviations – Are they okay?



What's our philosophy?



We believe our foundation of mechanics teach umpires to be in the best positions before and as the play develops.

However, as all plays are dynamic and unpredictable, we acknowledge there are times when umpires may need to deviate for the betterment of the game. Let's dive into the unknown and determine when it's necessary to deviate from the established mechanics of USA Softball Umpiring.



What's our philosophy?



Let's be CLEAR

– USA Softball does NOT teach Deviations!

Why? Difficult to teach the unknown!

Deviations are caused by “UNUSUAL” situations.

Either by the teams or by umpires.

Deviations occur as a result of a breakdown in a play or situation. They are UNPREDICTABLE.



Is It OK To Deviate?



Most Definitely!

Warning: When needed to save the crew, or for the betterment of the game.



What does the manual say?



1st) Page 17:

- Under “What is the proper initial positioning on the bases in Slow Pitch in the 2U System?”
- “Deviation” - Only time it’s mentioned... “With the number of defensive alignments and positioning, possible deviations have to be made.”
- This refers to different starting positions of base umpires based on defensive alignments. In other words, there is not an X to position oneself, but rather make adjustments based on the defensive alignment. This really isn’t what we’re talking about.



What does the manual say?



2nd) Page 45:

Under “PRE-GAME WITH PARTNERS”

“Deviate” - Only time it’s mentioned...

“Do not use this conference to deviate from mechanics in this manual.”

That’s it!




Deviations

– Things to consider...



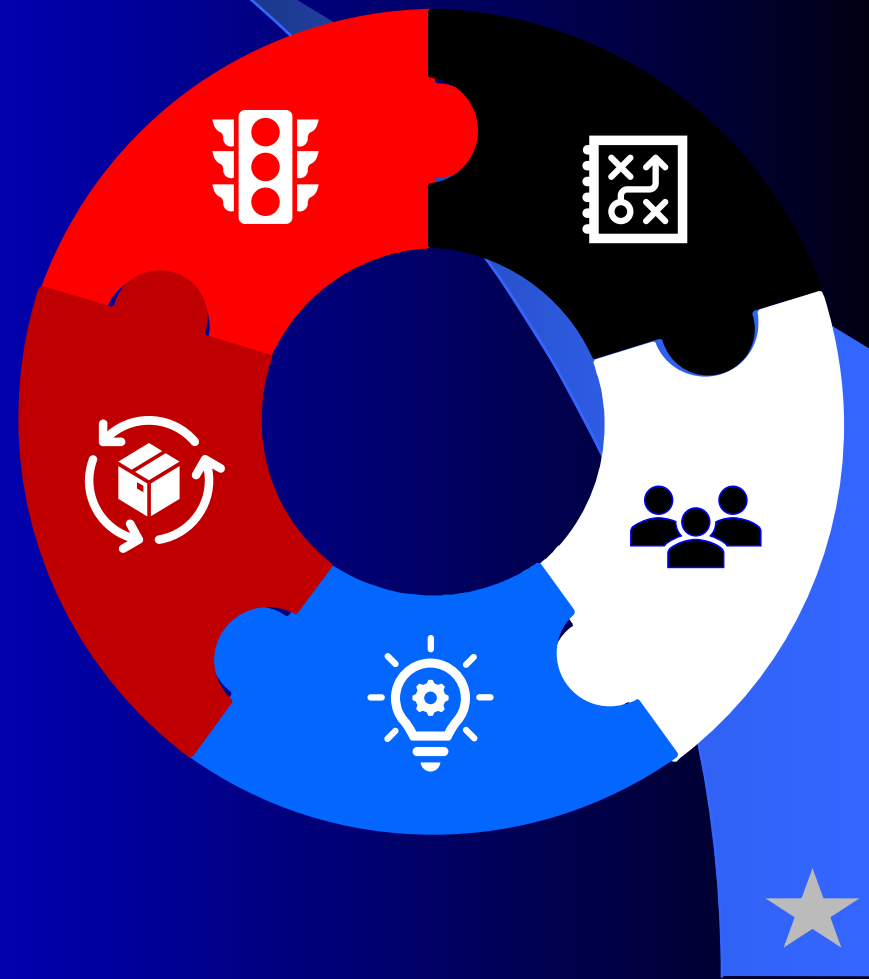
 Refrain from Deviations whenever possible, but there is a time.

 Complexity of play, or how it develops.

 Player's Error(s), or Exceptional Ability

 Experience Level of Umpire(s) – Crew

 Combination of the Above



Deviations

– Things to consider...



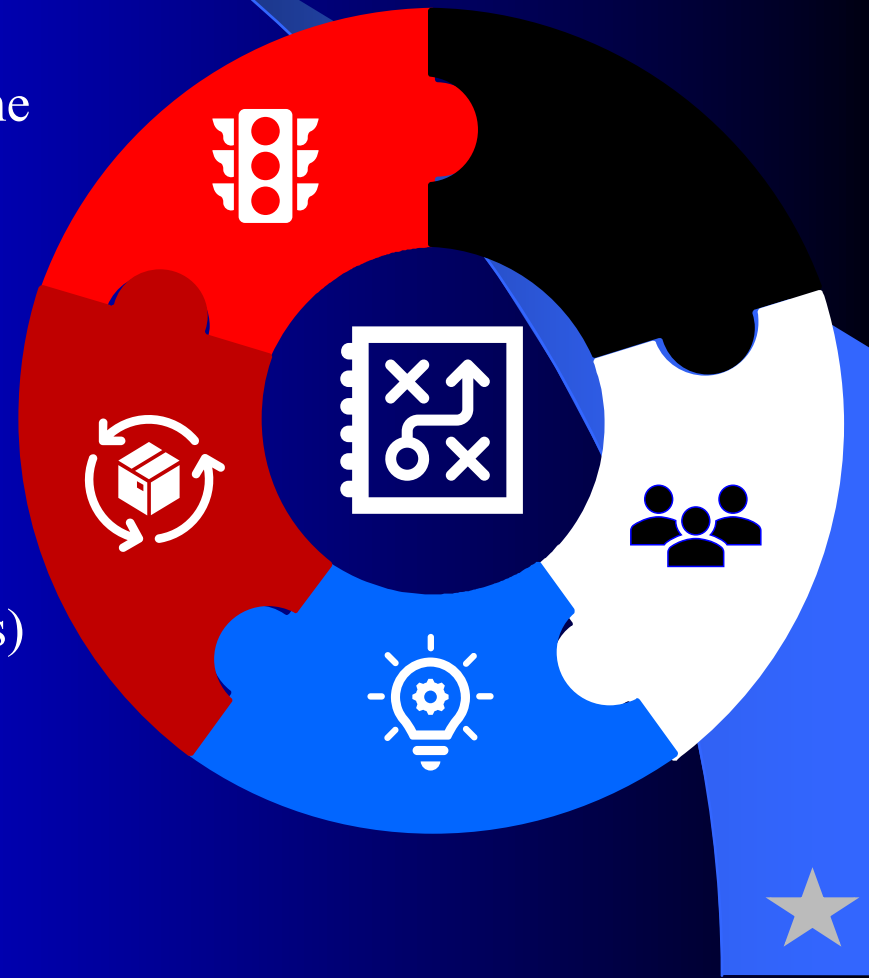
 Complexity of play, or how it develops.

May happen during a high intensity part of the game.

Runner's stealing

Hit-&-run / Bunt-&-run situations.

Multiple runners on base, tied score, runner(s) in scoring position.



Deviations

– Things to consider...



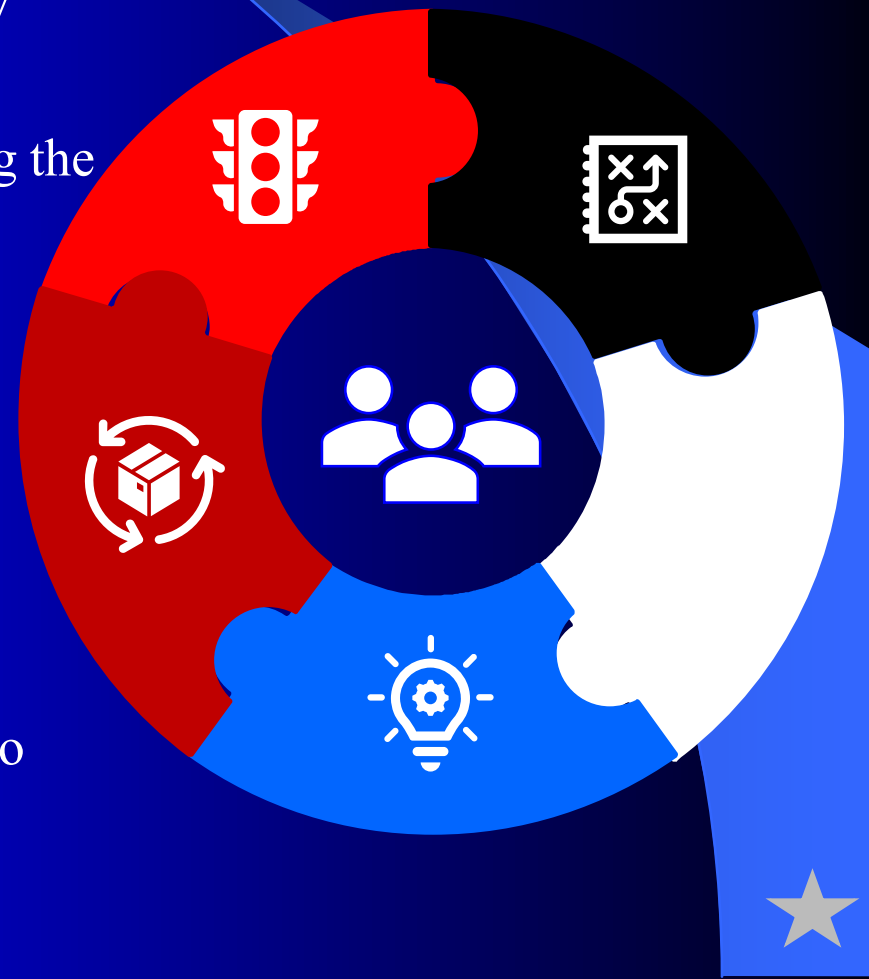
Player's Error(s), or Exceptional Ability

Defensive players may start errantly throwing the ball around the field.

Speed is an advantage that causes havoc.

Elite athletes make amazing plays that many umpires do not get to see on a regular basis.

Inexperienced players may not know where to make a play and could do all sorts of things.



Deviations

– Things to consider...



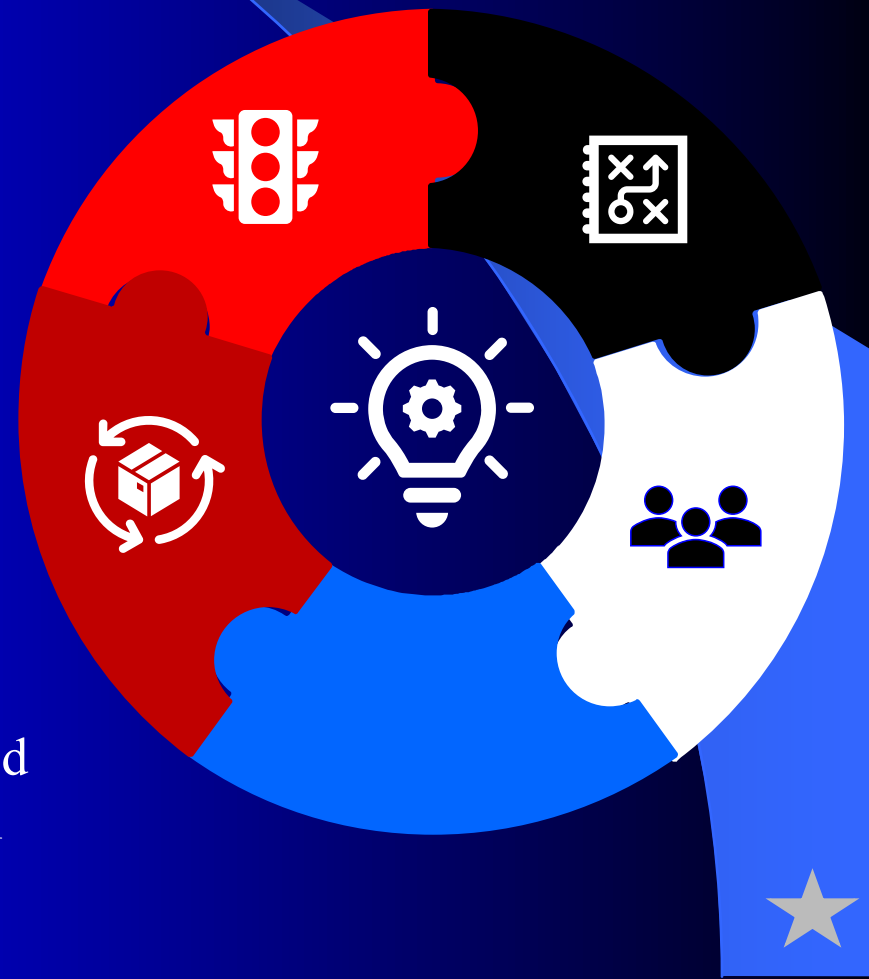
 Experience Level of Umpire(s) – Crew

Is there a member of the crew that is not experienced in this level of play?

Is there a member of the crew that is not proficient using the umpire system? 2U/3U

Is there a member of the crew that chooses to use other mechanics, or does not PPP?

Is there a member of the crew who has limited mobility and is unable to perform to the level needed for that game?



Deviations

– Things to consider...

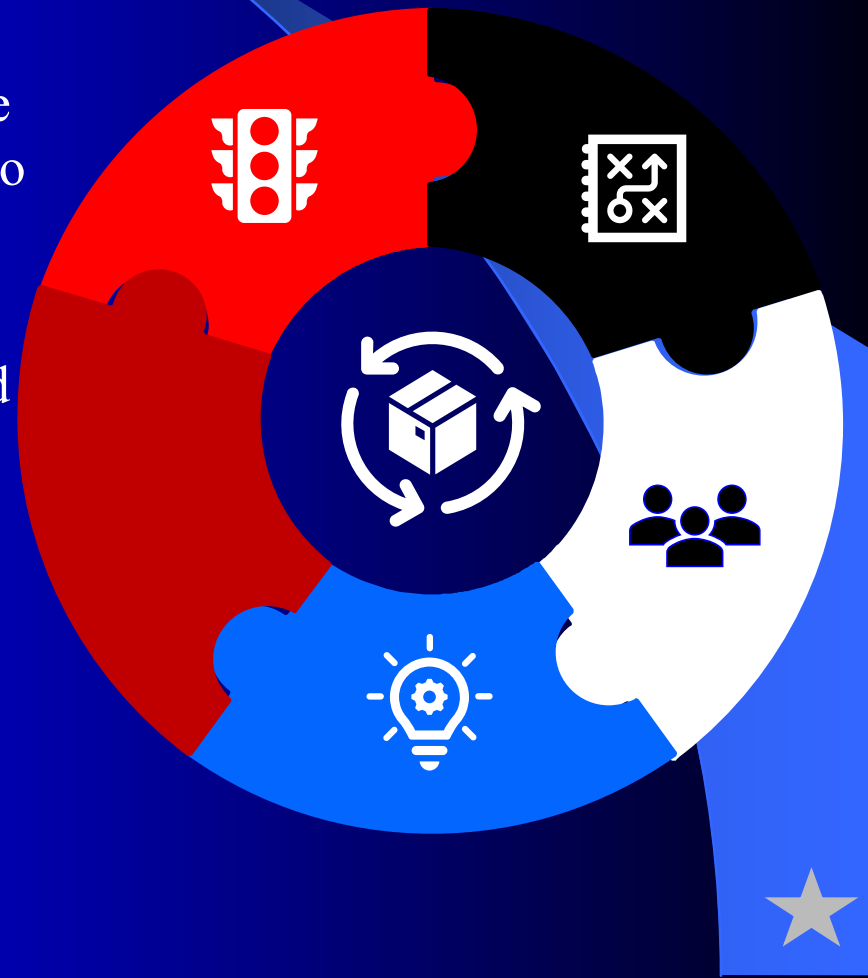


Combination of the Above

Oftentimes it is a combination of one or more of these events that cause umpires to decide to deviate from the taught mechanics.

If umpires are knowledgeable, proficient, and implement our mechanics as a whole crew, then there may not be a need to deviate.

That said, whenever it is necessary, either to save the crew, or for the betterment of the GAME, communicate and deviate to get the call correct.



Deviation ~ Examples



When an umpire recognizes their partner(s) is unable to cover a play that should ordinarily be covered using our mechanics, and they communicate they will take the play.

After verifying your partner is NOT where they are supposed to be and another umpire moves to cover, if needed. Communicate to your crewmate that you will take the call.



Deviation ~ Examples



When an umpire realizes they will be blocked by players from seeing the play, or they realize they are unable to get where they need to be to get an unobstructed view of the play.

The umpire responsible for making the call should communicate the need for help. Could be as simple as calling a partner's name, and/or pointing to the area.



Deviation ~ Examples



When forced to move to a different position, either to avoid a player or prevent interference, and an umpire is unable to get to the desired position.

The umpire responsible for making the call should communicate the need for help. Could be as simple as calling a partner's name, and/or pointing to the area.





Deviations

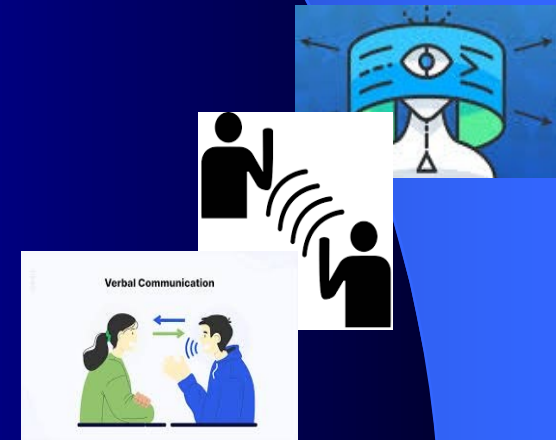
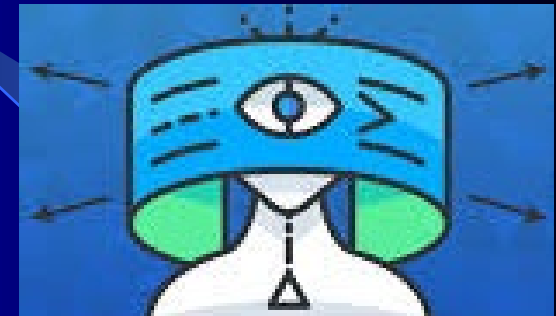
– How should they be done?

Verbal
Communication



Deviations

– How should they be done?





Deviations

– How should they be done?

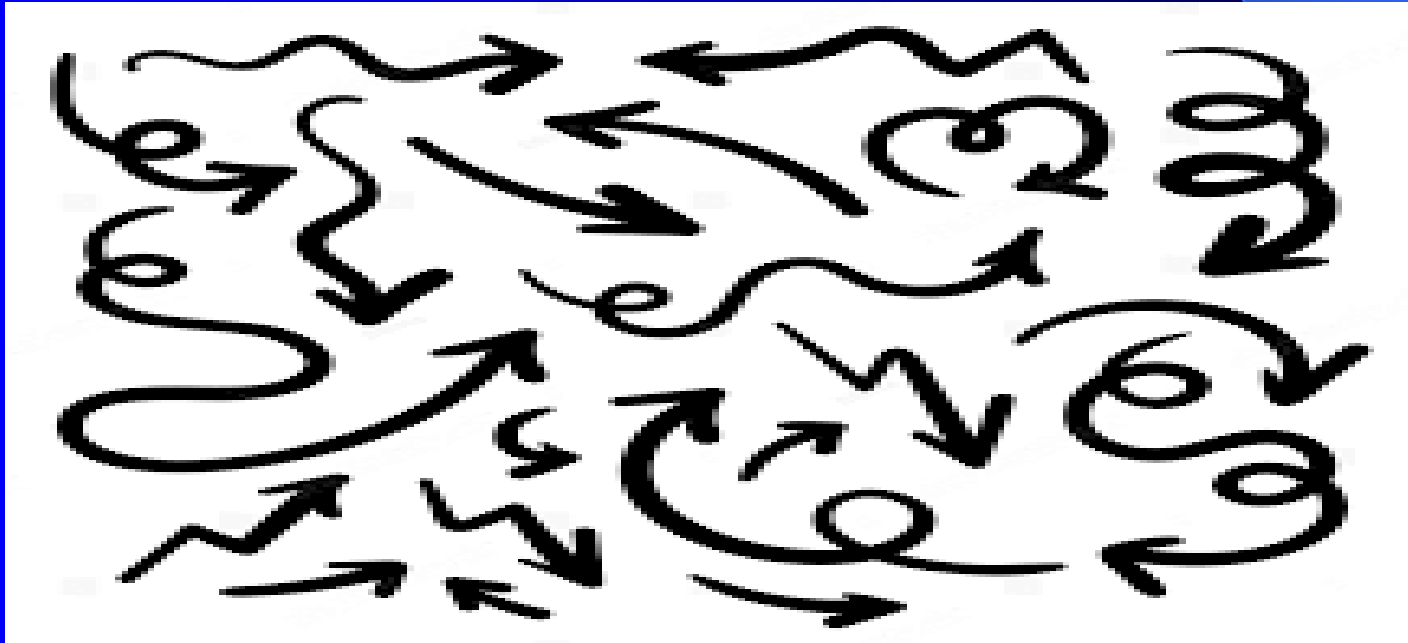
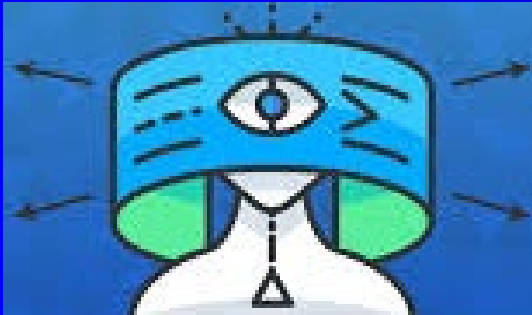


Clear,
Concise,
Direct & Loud!



Deviations

– How should they be done?

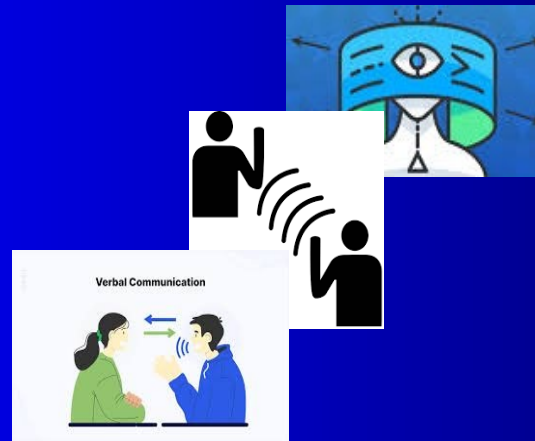


Deviations

How Many Times Have You Seen...



Or This?



Essential to Acknowledge Your Partner's Communication



Deviations

– When should they be done?



The timing of deviation is important.

“Timing is essential for believable umpiring.”



Deviations

– When should they be done?



“Positioning Equal Credibility,” and when a crew member recognizes one of their partner(s) is unable to get into a credible position in time to have an unobstructed view of a play; before they can, then it may be time to communicate with the crew and move to that credible position.

“Sometimes we do the wrong things for the right reasons.”

Kung Fu Panda 3



Summary



Hopefully we...

- **Better Understanding Of Why USA Softball Umpires are taught to use our Umpire Manual when umpiring USA Softball Games.**
- **Covered theories, positioning, movements, and techniques we often see used incorrectly at National Championships.**
- **Expressed the importance of using the teaching of the Umpire Manual, and then ability to deviate from it.**

Questions?



**Thank You For Your
Attention**



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