

Oregon School Activities Association

Baseball SRI Bulletin – #2

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WHAT BOTHERS COACHES MOST

An informal poll of coaches was conducted to discern the things umpires do that especially get under their skin. The usual suspects... inconsistency, attitude, etc.got their fair share of attention. But by far the top two vote-getters were umpires being late for the start of games, and what they do between innings.

Many of us have job constraints that make it hard to get off work and to game sites until there is little time for even a condensed pre-game with your partner. Barring an emergency, however, there is no excuse for getting to the ballpark so late that the start of the game has to be delayed while you get your gear on. It's not fair to the participants or fans. Moreover, it doesn't cause them to be disposed to think too well of your performance during the game. Not a good start. If you are going to have to push the envelope so much that you won't be able to start on time, don't take the assignment in the first place. This is also extremely hard on your partner.

Secondary to that is arriving so late the coaches don't know if the game will start on time. Letting them know you are there starts the clock. Starting pitchers have a routine that, among other things, involves beginning to warm up a set amount of time before the game time. When the coaches don't know if you are there on site, they can get antsy and indecisive about when to get their pitchers going. That in turn can make them sour when the game begins. Not a good start.

With a little awareness and a little planning, getting to the ballpark at least 30 minutes before the game falls into that category. You and your partner can have a good pre-game and get focused. When you arrive, it's a good idea for one of you to go let the home coach know you are there; it's one less thing for the coach to worry about.

As far as in between innings activity goes, although you may not be aware of it, others pay a lot of attention to what you do between innings. When you get together and laugh, wave your arms and almost roll on the turf, you send a very negative message that the game is all a big joke and you don't care. Worse is when the catcher has thrown the ball to second and everyone is ready to go and you have to sprint to get into position.

The next-to-worst thing that umpires can do between innings is go to the fence and start shooting the bull with fans or players. This is unacceptable, and shows a lack of professionalism. This is not to imply that umpires can never get together, talk, have some fun, etc., and that you have to act like robots throughout the game. Umpires need to be cognizant of the fact that in many, if not all cases, your between-innings activity is being observed, and the wrong moves can hurt you. It's fine to get together a couple of time a game; just be

careful not to do it at the wrong time, don't get too carried away in terms of movements and body language and be in position when it's time to start the next inning.

TAD'S TIP....

The single greatest thing you can do to improve your umpiring is gain a better understanding of the game itself. Anticipation is critical in umpiring. You give yourself a much better chance of getting in proper position and making the correct call if you anticipate what is going to happen. That doesn't mean anticipate the call; that is a major error. It means knowing what's likely to happen and adjusting accordingly. The only way you can get better at anticipating is by becoming a student of the game.

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