

# Oregon School Activities Association

## Baseball SRI Bulletin – #4

April 3, 2013

### UMPIRING 101

This bulletin will focus on the “*Meat and Potatoes*” of umpiring baseball. The fundamentals that follow are critical in your development and continued success as an umpire.

- **Angle & Distance**

There is a perfect umpire position for every play. To gain this we need to establish proper angle to the play. The angle allows us to see all the necessary elements of the play. Next, proper distance to the play should be established. As a general rule, for force plays you want to keep some distance from the play (at minimum 12-15 feet). This is because you need to see the receiving side of the glove and the runner touching the bag.

- **As Far as the Play Will Allow**

Umpiring is a function of time. Time dictates the positioning you are able to get for a play. For example, if the plate umpire goes so far up the first base line to rule on fair/ foul-catch/no catch down the right field line that they are unable to get back into proper position for a play at the plate on the tagging R3, that umpire moved farther than the play allowed.

- **Clearing the Bat**

Before clearing the bat the plate umpire should evaluate the situation: is it necessary to move the bat to keep it from interfering? Is it available? You must ask yourself, is the bat near enough that I could get it? The final element to evaluate, is it possible? Can you get the bat and get back into position for the ensuing play at the plate? If the answer is yes, then clear the bat. When clearing the bat the plate umpire must keep his eyes on the runner rounding third base to see the touch and any possible obstruction or interference. The umpire should grab the bat by one end and slide it along the ground. Never try to throw the bat or hand it off to an incoming runner crossing the plate. This may be convenient, but only risks injury.

- **Proper Use of Eyes**

Proper timing is accomplished by proper use of the eyes. In regards to calling the pitches, this means tracking the pitch all the way from the release point to the catcher’s glove with independent eye movement in order to make your decision. On force plays, this means going from the bag up to the glove to confirm firm and secure possession and/or voluntary release. On tag plays and catch attempts, this means staying with the play long enough to confirm firm and secure possession and/or voluntary release.

- **Quality of the Throw**

The quality of the throw is a read the umpire must make after establishing the proper angle to the play based on the origin of the throw. We do not go hands on knees set until we read a true throw. If it is a poor throw, the umpire needs to remain in a standing set position in order to make an adjustment to the broken play. Too often umpires get into a habit of running to a spot, hand on knees set, and end up with a poor angle due to an improper read of the throw.

- **Swipe Tags**

It is important for umpires to recognize swipe tag situations in order to make the proper adjustment in position to see the legal tag attempt. Proper use of the eyes is extremely important in these situations, as dropped balls can be common.

- **Step Up, Turn, and Face the Ball**

In two man umpiring, there are often times when the base umpire will be responsible for multiple runners. This technique enables the umpire to keep the proper distance from a play and stay chest to ball. If the ball is hit to the base umpire's right, they will step forward with their right foot first, then turn and face the ball so the that they are chest to ball. This concept is the same if the ball is hit to the umpire's left -- left foot forward, turn and face the ball. Practice is the key to this movement becoming automatic.

- **Trouble Fly Balls**

In reference to fly balls, the umpires must read whether or not it is a trouble ball.

There are four definitions of trouble:

1. Possible fair/foul
2. Possible home run or ground rule double
3. Converging fielders
4. A catch being made below the waist

For the base umpire, if they read a trouble ball in their coverage area they must go out. From the line, this means moving into the outfield and developing the best possible position for the play. From the infield, this means moving to the grass/dirt line to establish the best possible angle available on the play. The grass/ dirt line is all the distance gained in the two man system when the base umpire's starting position is in the middle of the infield.

## **TAD'S TIP.....**

Any time a batter is hit, take a ball out of your ball bag and move quickly in front of the plate, then get the pitcher's attention with the new ball. This habit will place you in a buffer zone between the batter and pitcher in case tempers flare.

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