

Oregon School Activities Association

Baseball SRI Bulletin – #2

March 25, 2015

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

This Bulletin is going to cover the Who, Why, Where, When and How of two man rotations.

When I first started umpiring high school baseball, I worked with an older gentleman who took the assignment of *plate* umpire literally. By the way, he **always** worked the plate. He did not move particularly well and he was not very well trained, which led to this interpretation: “I’ve got the plate.” In turn, this meant you had the bases. All of them-except for the plate, if you were lucky. All the time. No rotations, and no need to rely on him for help. His domain was the plate, and the surrounding dirt circle. No more. Thanks for coming. Tip your waitresses on the way out.

Thankfully most every other partner I have worked with through the years has been familiar with the basic concept of rotations. However, even veterans need to be reminded of the correct times and methods for rotations.

- **Who.** The plate umpire (P) is the one who rotates. With one exception, the base umpire (B) never rotates. The lone time B rotates home is when there is a potential play at home after B goes out on a ball hit to right field. If the ball drops and remains in play, B rotates home if he can get there ahead of the batter runner. If B rotates home, he should run all the way toward home in foul territory, communicating he is on his way and confirming his arrival. P benefits from the rotation by having less field area to cover, particularly on an overthrow to third which may require additional coverage in foul territory.
- **Why.** The reason for rotating is to keep an umpire ahead of an imminent play. In a two umpire system, this can be a challenge. Cover rotational situations and methods of rotations during your pregame with your partner.
- **Where.** P’s rotations are almost always to third base. P should generally not be rotating to other bases, although there are times when P would move towards first base if a single runner is caught in a rundown between first and second. P would also be required to move, with the batter/runner, toward second base on any ball that B “goes out on”.
- **When.** There are three play situations when P will rotate to third: with a runner on first base only, with runners at first and third, and on a possible tag-up situation with first

and second occupied. In the first two instances, the rotation starts with a *clean* hit to the outfield. Do not be caught rotating on a ball that would be scored an error, such as a ball between the shortstop's legs. In the third instance, P must be ready to rotate on a fly ball to the outfield that is caught. **If P has fair/foul or catch/no catch responsibility down the right field line, P should not rotate.** Those responsibilities take priority. P should communicate "*I am on the line*" and stay with the ball. In all three cases, P is rotating to third to take a play on the lead runner at the base. If there is not going to be a play, a complete rotation is not necessary.

- **How.** When a rotation situation exists, pre-pitch rotation signals are given. P should use his right hand and point at chest level towards third, using the left hand to indicate outs. B should echo the signal, confirming a possible rotation and outs. When the ball is hit, and conditions are met, P moves toward third base in foul territory. At the same time, when it becomes clear that a play is likely at third, P should move into the cutout area near third and yell, "I'm here". B is responsible for third until he is certain P is there. B can take a quick glance to be sure P is rotating. **Communication is crucial during the play!** Mistakes and brain lapses happen. P could have forgotten to rotate, or fell down. There is not much worse than a bang- bang at third and no umpires (or *both*) there to make the call. Anything can happen. Be prepared.

Tad's Tip....

Umpires should not be looking to address technical, non-game-related, issues or minor violations of the rules to show people how much they know. Use common sense when applying the rules. Do not get the rap of being a rulebook umpire. Be an official who constantly strives to move out of the black and white and into the grey. Certainly you should know the rules, but, more importantly, you should know how to apply them, and under what circumstances.

See you at the yard!

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