



April Plays and Clarifications

Mechanic Issues:

During a recent Regional Local Association Conference call, there were several questions about mechanics that they thought had possibly been changed. Because of these questions, we felt it would be appropriate to review these mechanics with everyone since we have umpires that think some of our mechanics have been changed. One of the questions was directly referenced due to a picture we have on the web. The question was asked if we would update the ASA/USA Softball Umpire Manual with any new mechanic changes. Let us assure everyone that we will not change any ASA/USA Softball Umpire mechanics without proper research and ample discussion. If changes are made, we will *always* update the Umpire Mechanics Manual. Some of the questions asked are as follows:

Are we now required to verbalize strike three when making a strike three call in Fast Pitch?

The ASA/USA Softball Umpire Manual on page 34 states:

- 1) In Slow Pitch on a called third strike, a 90 degree hammer is used with a louder verbal call. For further emphasis, verbalize the words "strike three."
- 2) In Fast Pitch on a called third strike, both a strong verbal call and signal should be given. For further emphasis, verbalize the words "strike three."

Have we said verbalizing a called third strike is a necessity? No, but what we have taught and should all be teaching is we have some sound and movement with our strike three signal. This is to prevent a loud verbal strike call, a hesitation and then a signal. As we all know a lot of umpires that do not even verbalize "strike" when they call the pitch, so whatever the emphasis is that is OK.

Do we no longer allow the base umpire to go to a 90 degree angle from the foul line at 1B on a bunt?

Since we are talking about a bunt, we can presume the question is for the game of Fast Pitch only, however the mechanics are the same if it is a bunt in Fast Pitch or a slow roller in front of home plate in Slow Pitch. In two or three umpire mechanics (pg. 54 and pg. 62 of the ASA/USA Softball Umpire Manual respectively), we teach the base umpire to obtain a 90 degree angle to the path of the throw, no more than a 45 degree angle from the foul line and let the ball take you to the play, as shown [here](#). As can be seen [here](#), a bunt is within the red triangle where the umpire at 1B will not be 90 degrees to the throw, but will stop without going past the 45 degrees from the foul line. This positioning allows the umpire to keep all four elements in front of them for the play at 1B while also allowing them the best opportunity to transition to a secondary position if a bad throw to 1B pulls the defender off the bag resulting in a tag play near the 1B line.

Is the catcher allowed to be behind the umpire in ASA/USA Softball mechanics?

The answer is NO by ASA/USA Softball Umpire mechanics. The question came from a picture posted on the ASA/USA Softball website and was taken at the Border Battle. We allow some leeway on the rules and mechanics at

this event. Softball Canada allows the catcher to be deeper than the umpire and when a Softball Canada umpire is calling the game we allow them to set according to the mechanics of their Association. We also tell our ASA/USA Softball umpires that when they are calling a game with the Canadian team, do not be surprised if the catcher gets behind you. It is allowed in Canada and we should allow them to set up the way they play all year. The picture shows that the U.S. is at bat and they are playing Canada. That is the reason we do not see the catcher in front of the umpire.

When does an umpire adjust to their secondary position?

The answer to this question in a lot of situations is to read the play and if you feel the play dictates that movement is needed, then we move to the secondary position. It is NOT an automatic movement in any case but especially when the runner rounds the base. Our mechanics are designed to try and keep an umpire in front of the runner at all times. We know, especially in the Two Umpire System, this is not always possible. However when we move to the secondary position automatically we can put ourselves behind the runner when we do not have a play. Umpires should read the play, if we need to move to the secondary position do so and if there is no play or there is not going to be a play, save some steps and stay put.

Slow Pitch Starting Position at 1B in the Two Umpire System with no runner on base:?

We have had a lot of discussion on whether we should put the umpire back on the line as a starting position in Slow Pitch with no one on base. We have asked many umpires both in surveys by email and at the 2015 Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) Clinic. The numbers are split almost down the middle. We will continue to evaluate this change but remember the current mechanic, unless we change, in which we still start off the line in Slow Pitch in the Two Umpire System with no runners on 1B.

Plays and Rulings:

Play: R1 is on 2B and speedy R2 is on 1B with no outs when B3 hit a fair batted ball in front of the plate. F2's throw to 1B hits B3 in the back while they are out of the three-foot-lane. The plate umpire calls dead ball and rules interference on B3 and calls them out. At the time of the interference R1 had not yet reached 3B but speedy R2 from 1B clearly reached 2B at the time of the interference. Where do we place R1 and R2?

Ruling: In this unique play, we would judge where to place the runners based on where the lead runner is at the time of the interference. Since R1 had not reached 3B, then 2B would be the last base touched at the time of interference. Even though R2 had reached 2B we rule based on the position of the lead runner, R1 would be put back on 2B and R2 on 1B.

Play: B1 is up to bat with no outs. B1 squares to bunt and moves the bat back to be a slap hitter either 1) before the pitch has started or 2) after the pitch has started. In both circumstances B1 makes contact with F2's glove on the back swing. What is the ruling?

Ruling: Rule 8, Section 1D[1&2] states: When the catcher obstructs a batter's attempt to hit a pitched ball.

Effect: *Delayed dead ball.*

1 If the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely or has passed that base and is considered to have reached it, and all other runners have advanced at least one base.

Effect:

a Obstruction is canceled.

b All action as a result of the batted ball stands.

c No option is given.

2 If all runners, including the batter runner, do not advance at least one base.

Effect:

a The manager has the option of taking the result of the play, or

b Enforcing obstruction by awarding the batter first base.

c Runners are advanced one base if forced.

In each case we could by rule have Catcher's Obstruction. Good game management teaches us whenever possible to use preventive umpiring before there is an issue.

In 1) when the pitch has not started because the hands have not separated, we should, with a verbal, call time and step out from behind the catcher. Then step back in, ask if both are good to go and begin the sequence again by putting the ball back in play.

In 2) it gets a little trickier. If possible, even though the pitch has started you might be able to call time before the pitcher continues their motion and reset as in scenario 1. If you are unable to call time in a manner that allows the pitcher to stop, then you would let the pitch continue and call Catcher's Obstruction by giving the delayed dead ball signal and applying the rule from Rule 8, Section 1D.