Questions I've received and the answers provided.

Q:

Mark,

Need help with a rule interpretation.

In Chapter, 6 Pitchers, section (k) Note (3) - it talks about suspended games resumed on another day. Example 3 talks about the scenario where a pitcher delivers his max during the first game and resumes well past the required rest and is allowed to continue in the resumed game for a full slate of pitches. The example seems clear, but want to clarify this rule would apply to the following situation. Pitcher A starts the game and pitches 2 innings say 45 pitches, game is suspended in the third inning with pitcher B. The game is resumed a week later (well after any max rest). Pitcher A can reenter the game at pitcher for innings 4-6 with a full slate of eligible pitches. Is this correct?

A follow up e-mail before I got a chance to respond:

Ok, I think I found my answer - I skipped (b) which says in divisions below Junior once a pitcher is removed during a game he can not return. So even though the game is resumed the only pitcher that can get this pitch count reset is the pitcher who was on the mound during the time of the suspension.

Can you confirm that is correct?

A:

Remember that pitch and catcher thresholds apply to a day, not a game.

So, yes, assuming the pitcher of record at time of suspension has met his rest requirements, he may continue pitching with the count reset.

The continued game is otherwise treated as if played the same day. So someone who has pitched previously in the game is not eligible to return as pitcher.

Q:

Mark,

I have a question that came up in last night's game.

Situation: There were no runners on base. Pitcher began his pitching motion, lifted free foot and began arm throwing motion, but then put the foot back down and did not deliver the pitch.

Our umpire in the game paused the game and indicated that it was an illegal pitch. He granted a warning only and said that the next time it happens a Ball would be given to the batter.

Question: Rule 8.05 states, "With a runner or runners on base, it is an illegal pitch…" and subsection (a) "the pitcher, while touching the plate, makes any motion naturally associated with the pitch and fails to make such delivery" and I believe this was the rule the umpire intended to invoke. However, with no runner(s) on base this rule would not apply. I cannot find anywhere else where it states similar illegal pitch language when the bases are empty. Does that mean that this incomplete pitching motion is not an illegal pitch?

A:

Without runners on base, a failure to deliver the pitch is a "no pitch" and no penalty is assessed, nor is the pitch count incremented. The proper terminology for the umpire is "Time! No pitch. Pitcher, reset".

With runners on it would be an "illegal pitch", a ball awarded to the batter, and a pitch assessed to the pitcher. If ball 4, the batter walks and runners advance if forced.

A quick return pitch, though, is an "illegal pitch" regardless of runners being on base (8.05 (e)). A fake pitch (8.05 (g)) is applied similarly.

So in short, the umpire did the right thing for the wrong reason, despite his "next time" threat. I'll take it as a win.

Q:

We had a situation in our game today where a runner on first left early and the batter hit a home run. Both runs scored. The umpire told the runner from first that he had to go back to first and he scored the batter's run, but left the original runner on first. I think we all later agreed that was a mistake. The umpire told the manager that the only recourse was to protest the game. The final score was 8-1 and it should have been 8-2. Questions:

1) Can the opposing manager protest the game?
2) If the protest is upheld, what would the result be? Would we add another run to the final score (making it 8-2)? Is the game somehow restarted at the point of the protest???

A:

The protest must be lodged before the next play. It's too late to protest at the end of the game.

If it had been properly protested, and the protest upheld, it would have restarted at the point of protest, assuming the protesting team had lost.

Q:

1. Fair or foul?
Weak pop fly up the first base line. 1B first touches the ball and then drops the ball while the ball is over foul territory and both of 1Bs feet are in fair territory. The ball was in foul territory when touched.

Now, that one I felt very good about enforcing when questioned by the manager. :)

2. Not sure of best setup so I'll just say the punchline : Someone in the dugout is loudly declaring "SAFE!" or "OUT!" as plays are happening and ahead of the umpire ruling. (To his credit the manager fessed up when I asked who was doing that and told him to stop it.)

A:

The ball is judged fair or foul by the relationship of the ball to the foul line and not by the location of the player. If a fly ball is touched while the *ball* is over foul territory, it is a foul ball, regardless of where the feet are. This is opposite of how it works in basketball and football.

On the second one, you often see the base coach signaling safe (but never out…) on close plays. In both situations, inform the coach/manger the you'll make the calls and really don't need their assistance. Repeated violations can result in an unsportsmanlike conduct ejection.

Q:

This was not so much a question but something that happened to me in a Juniors game recently.
No runners on, an uncaught 3rd strike hits the catcher's arm and enters his chest protector. He pops up, spinning around to find the ball, the BR running to first. After I realized the ball was stuck inside his chest protector, I called "time!" and awarded the BR first base (to some very confused managers, coaches, and fans). Did I do the right thing (I do have self-doubt some times)?

A:

5.09 - The ball becomes dead and runners advance one base, or return to their bases, without liability to be put out, when -
> (g) A pitched ball lodges in the catcher's or umpire's mask or paraphernalia; runners advance;
> A.R. - If a pitched ball lodges in the umpire's or catcher's mask or paraphernalia, and remains a dead ball, on the third strike [Majors/Intermediate (50/70) Division/Junior/Senior League] or fourth ball, then the batter is entitled to first base and all runners advance one base. If the count on the batter is less than three balls, runners advance one base.

Sometimes we get lucky.

Q:

While on the subject of uncaught thirds, this happened to me last year in a Majors game in Los Gatos:
Uncaught third bounces, hits the catcher in the shin guard, and roles up the first base line. BR takes off for first and steps on the ball. The catcher throws him out so I didn't need to make a ruling on it, but the defensive manager saw what happened and asked me if I saw it, and what would I have done if they didn't throw him out.

A:

The greenbook doesn't directly address uncaught third interference. 6.05 a batter is out when (f) a fair ball touches said batter before touching a fielder; (h) after hitting or bunting a ball foul, the BR **intentionally** deflects the course of the ball… Neither of those cases apply (It was not a hit fair or foul ball). I think we can all agree if (s)he intentionally kicks the ball to the fence we'd call him/her out for interference. In addition, if a ball deflects off a fielder and strikes a runner the ball is alive and in play (which sort of applies). I couldn't find anything definitive on the subject, but the "2015 MLB Official Rules" rule 6.01 states "it is interference by a batter or runner when: (1) After a third strike he clearly hinders the catcher in his attempt to field the ball. Such batter-runner is out, the ball is dead, and all other runners return to the bases they occupied at the time of the pitch; Rule 6.01(a)(1) Comment: If the pitched ball deflects off the catcher or umpire and subsequently touches the batter-runner, it is not considered interference unless, in the judgement of the umpire, the batter-runner clearly hindres the catcher in his attempt to field the ball."

So I'm going with intent. In my case, the BR did not intentionally step on the ball, so I've got nothing on the play, and the correct mechanic would be the safe sign and vocalizing "that's nothing" as soon as he stepped on the ball.

Q:

(paraphrased from a phone conversation) I had a game last night where I was the base umpire. The runner left early. I sent him back and gave him a warning. I've heard that after a few warnings you can call him out. How do we deal with runners leaving early?

A:

There are a lot of myths and confusion over runners leaving early. This is covered under **rule 7.13**. It's a good read. In short, the BU is responsible for noting runners leaving early. Drop a flag, or your hat if you don't have a flag, let the play develop, and if the

runner is thrown out, pick up your hat or flag with no reference to the infraction. If, on the other hand, the runner advances safely beyond the base he/she is entitled (on a hit), call "Time!" after play has stopped and put the runner back, as far as you can, to the original base he or she occupied. If the BR singled, and the runner reached third, put him/her back at second. If the BR tripled or homered, there is nothing you can do; the run counts. The value of the hit dictates where to place the runner, and with third occupied (on a triple) or a home run, there is no place to put the offending runner(s).

Please note that if any runner left early, all runners left early. On a single with runners on first and second, R1 left early, R1 can be allowed to advance only to second, R2 to third.

Also note the runner must remain engaged with the base until the ball "reaches the batter" (not plate, not catcher). If the batter is at the front of the box, the runner can leave sooner. Most infractions occur at second base where the runner is straight-lined to the plate, but the umpire, in the C position, can see the angle.

This is somewhat simplified from the rulebook. I suggest you read rule 7.13 (a,b,c) and the examples provided for some of the subtle nuances of the rule.

At no time do we call a runner out for merely leaving early.

Q:

Mark,

Reading through the ground rules on our website and saw "9.01(d): Stealing Signs. ALL has not adopted the option to eject any player, manager, or coach for stealing/relaying signs to alert the batter of pitch selection and/or location as unsportsmanlike at the discretion of the umpire."

Does that mean we condone it? If not, what's the middle ground of not declaring it unsportsmanlike but don't want it to happen?

A:

Little League survived 75 years without any mention of stealing signs in the rule book. 9.01(d) was added just a few years ago as rule to be optionally adopted by local leagues. If I recall correctly, it was added after an incident in the LLWS.

Sometimes we just need to umpire. If you see it, or it's called to your attention, tell them to knock it off. Tell the offended team to change their signs.

Q:

Hi Mark,

Happy Monday, I have a Quick question,

yesterday at practice. we were doing some base running drills.
An interesting play came up, and I was curious what the real ruling would be. the 3 coaches had different takes on the situation.

players on 1,2,and 3.
ball hit to the outfield waiting to tag up. ball dropped, 3rd heads towards home (hesitates). 1 takes 2 and 2 runs fast and is now occupying 3rd. The player that was on 3rd is now between home and 3rd. catcher has the ball. would be a normal pickle if 3rd was not occupied.

1) can the catcher just touch home to get the out? or does he have to tag him? (force or not at this point)
2) can the player that was on second (now on third go back to 2nd if it was not occupied? I was under the impression if you advanced and took the next base you could not retreat to the prior base to occupy it. but that does not seem right with a missed base touch, you could go back to tag up correct? someone said it was only the case of touching home that you could not return to tag up like missed 3rd. i know if the runner gets home and is in the dugout he can not return to tag up.

A:

Interesting practice.

The ball was dropped, so R3 no longer has the right to occupy third and can be forced at home, because you have BR at first, R1 at second, and R2 at third.

R2, now on third, has no title to second (now legally occupied by R1), so (s)he may not retreat. If (s)he does, though, (s)he can be put out by way of force at third. 7.08(e) Once (s)he starts their retreat towards the previously occupied bag, (s)he has put the force at third back into effect.

But if 2nd was unoccupied, yes, R2 could retreat to second after occupying third (7.02), but must retouch third if they had advanced beyond third before returning to second.

7.02 If R3 fails to tag up and crosses home, and discovers that the ball is caught, may return to tag up at third (assuming (s)he had not gone into any dead ball area like the dugout), but must retouch home before returning to third. There is nothing special about home that would prevent them from returning to the previously occupied base. Similarly for a runner that missed third and crossed home — they may return to third by way of retouching home.

Clear now?

Q (follow up):

Got it, wonder where I got the idea you could not return. To a base after touching the next base.

Ok another scenario. Simpler. Just runner at third and second. Grounder gets hit. Third and second advance. Second is faster and gets to 3rd before 3 gets home. Ball thrown to catcher. Is it a force if runner between occupied third and home?

A:

No. A force is created by virtue of the batter becoming a runner. R2 and R3 were not forced to advance (first was unoccupied). R3 is not forced to advance merely because R2 was pushing him. Similarly, it would still NOT be a force if the BR doubled. Runners are advancing merely at their own peril and must be tagged.

Q (via phone call during a game):

The defensive manager is leaving his dugout and standing behind the foul fence where the spectators would be. The opposing team is complaining. I he allowed to do that?

A:

Local ground rules: 17. The defensive team may station one manager/coach on the field, directly in front of and within one arms length of his/her dugout opening, for the purpose of instructing his/her team.

If he is anywhere else, I'd say he is in violation

Q:

Mark,
I found myself being asked for time out by the third base coach who said right after I called his runner safe at third,
"my runner needs time out!"
I granted it but
I took a small issue and said "next time the runner needs to ask for time out himself. "
He replied "what? I can't ask for time out? "
To which I replied "yes you can but only if YOU have a reason for time out.
If the runner wants one, HE needs to ask me."
He said "fair enough"

Today it seems like I may have been splitting hairs.
Did I just make this up or is this the rule?

A:

You made that up.

Anyone can ask for time, but we try to be stingy with it. If a player needs to tie a shoe, or the base is dislodged, then there's no issue. If the player just wants to dust off after sliding, or a fielder is holding the ball against a runner (hoping (s)he'll disengage from the base), the we generally don't. Tell the fielder to throw the ball back to the pitcher. Keep the game alive. We can't get outs when time is out, and it slows the game down.

Before granting time, though, make SURE the play has completed, all runners have stopped forward motion, and there's a natural lull. A savvy defense will, with an R3, ask for time on a walk to prevent the BR from advancing to second. Tell the manager, coach, or fielder to wait, show them your palm, and only call time when the play is completed.

Of course, you can call time on your own for safety reasons. Ball on the field, lightning, kid writhing in pain with exposed bone, blow to the head — call time immediately. Safety is our first job.

Q: (paraphrased from a conversation on the field)

We attempted to use a uniformed player as a warmup catcher between innings while our catcher was getting geared up. The umpire informed us we cannot use a catcher not in full gear to warm up the pitcher? Is this correct? We're just trying to move the game along.

A:

No, that is incorrect. Any uniformed player may warm up the pitcher provided s(he) is properly protected and equipped -- the warmup catcher must wear a catcher's mask with throat dangler, a catcher's mitt (not fielder's glove), and a cup. Lacking any of these, any uniformed player may receive throws from the pitcher if NOT in the squatting catcher's position. The mask, mitt, and cup are there to protect the player from unpredictable short-hop bounce throws by the pitcher.

Regulation XIV (f) and Rule 3.09: At NO time may an manager or coach warm up a pitcher on the field or in the bullpen for the same safety reasons. It must be a properly equipped uniformed player.

Q:

(paraphrased for context) Just curious, if a regulation game is 4 innings, why are we continuing our suspended game when the opponent's player was injured and unable to continue? We are up by 5 in the 5th and they couldn't field an entire team.

A:

That's a fair question.

Rule 4.17 - If during a game either team is unable to place nine (9) players on the field due to injury or ejection, the opposing manager shall select a player to re-enter the line-up. A player ejected from the game is not eligible for re-entry. If no players are available for reentry, or if a team refuses to place nine (9) players on the field, this shall not be grounds for automatic forfeiture but shall be referred to the Board of Directors for a decision. NOTE: A game may not be continued with less than nine (9) players on each team.

The board took a vote (the manager of your team, a board member, was excluded from the vote) and decided to continue the game.

Had the heavens opened and a monsoon appeared, instead of the injury, it would have been considered a regulation game by act of God.