

TEAM 3

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We have often heard it stated that there are three teams involved in every baseball/softball game.

- TEAM 1, The Home team
- TEAM 2, The Visiting team
- **TEAM 3, The Umpire team**

When we look at the definition of the word TEAM, we find: *"a group of people who work together"*. Hence when umpires take the field, it must be done as a team. Umpires must always be working together, as teamwork is an essential component of a well umpired game. When watching a game, it is easy to see within the first couple of innings whether there is a team of umpires or individuals umpiring.

Teamwork means more than wearing the same color shirt and entering the field together. Real teamwork begins long before the umpires arrive at the field. All umpires assigned to a game should make contact with one another whenever possible prior to the day of the game. This initial contact is to remind one another of the upcoming game assignment, game time, and game location. This is also a good time to talk about where you will meet, locker room or parking lot, and what uniform will be worn. Making contact early avoids the chance that your partner has forgotten about the game, has inaccurately listed the time or has the wrong location. The team is not starting off on the right foot when you make your first contact 30 minutes or less prior to game time.

Successful teams always have a game plan. For umpires, this game plan is reviewed during the pre-game conference. It's just as critical if it's the first time you've worked with an umpire or if this is a partner you have worked with multiple times. Your pregame must thoroughly outline all responsibilities for fair/foul, catch/no-catch, fly ball/line drive coverage, third base coverage, tag-ups/touches, and signals that will be used for Team 3 communication. Don't assume that your partner knows what you will do. Every game is different and every game requires preparation.

Having communicated with you partner and completed a good pre-game conference; you should now start to feel like a team. So, as a team, you will go to the field and start by performing equipment checks. As a team, go to each dugout and thoroughly check all equipment to insure compliance with Little League Baseball/Softball standards. With this completed, you are now ready to head to the plate for the Plate Conference just minutes before game time.

During the game communication between Team 3 teammates is critical. This doesn't always mean verbal communication since hand signals are used extensively as a way to insure proper field coverage. Remember the use of hand signals is intended only for the umpires and should always be subtle. For example, reminding your teammate about possible 1st base to 3rd base coverage might be a quick point toward 3rd base by the plate umpire. An infield fly possibility might be signaled with a tap on the bill of your cap or a timing play might be indicated by a simple point to the wrist. It is important that all team members stay alert, so that the signals are quick and only indicated once. If a comprehensive pregame was performed, signals can be kept to a minimum.

Individuals may do some things well, but for individuals to become a team member, they must trust their fellow umpire. Teams rise to a higher level when teammates trust each other to properly cover responsibilities on plays, to be in the proper position to make the correct calls, and to hustle on every play. Without this trust it is impossible to function as a team. By the same token, each umpire must prove they are trustworthy. If I say I'm going to cover third I need to be there. If in our pre-game conference I agree that I am going to have touches and tags at a base, I need to make sure I watch all of them.

If a mistake happens during a game, for example someone misses coverage; the team is not doing their best to cover the play. Standing there and saying "that is their call, not mine" is not acceptable. Remember you and your crew are the third TEAM on the field and you must always be a good teammate. At no time should you allow your partner to take all the responsibility for a mistake, no matter who made the error, the team must take the responsibility.

One of the most important principles to being a good teammate is not just knowing your responsibility, but also knowing the responsibilities of your partners. If you are knowledgeable of all responsibilities, you may have the ability to cover your partner's missed responsibility and make your team look good. You can discuss the missed assignment after the game during the post-game conference; which brings us to another point. Remember, for Team 3 the game doesn't end when the last out is recorded. Every game should be followed by a positive post-game conference. This is a teaching and learning opportunity to help improve yourself, your partners, and your TEAM.

When you begin to work your games more as a team and less as an individual, you will find the games to be much more fun for you and your teammates.



SOUTHEASTERN REGION UMPIRES

Little League – Intermediate – Junior League – Senior League – Challenger Division



Key Terminology - Umpires

1. Batter - Check swing

“Yes he did”

Plate Umpire: Pointing at batter w/ hand closest to batter – Call Strike, with hand signal – Then give count

“Did he go?”

Plate Umpire: Clear catcher toward partner - Left hand pointing to partner – Do Not remove mask

“Yes he did” or “No he didn’t”

Base Umpire: Both with hand signal; if the call was “Yes he/she did”

“Then it’s a strike, the count is...”

Plate Umpire: Indicate Strike with hand signal - Give the new count and resume the game

2. Ball down the right field line

“I’m going out”

Base Umpire: (1) Trouble ball (2) Fair/Foul (3) Catch/No Catch

“I’ve got the plate” “I’m at home”

Base Umpire: Goes out and comes back to cover home (90’ Only)

3. Infield Fly

“Infield Fly, the batter is Out”

Either Umpire: Point straight up and give out signal – Echo by all

“Infield Fly if Fair”

Plate Umpire or Umpire on Line: Make sure runners hear you, point straight up

4. Rundowns

“I’ve got it all”

Plate Umpire: Rundown between third and home with multiple runners

“I’ve got this half”

Plate Umpire: In cut out at 1st or 3rd base with rundowns between 1st and 2nd, and 2nd and 3rd

5. Runner 1st to 3rd

“I’ve got third if he comes”

Plate Umpire: Watch R1 as he turns second...stay in foul territory

“I’ve got third”

Plate Umpire: As play develops at third move into the cut out – Play requires runner and ball

“I’m going home”

Plate Umpire: No play develops at third – Drop step and return toward home

“I’ve got the ball”

Plate Umpire: Going down third base line on fly ball

“I’m on the line”

Plate Umpire: Going down first base line on fly ball and he will not be at third base should runner try to advance

6. Runners 1st and 2nd fly ball to outfield with less than two outs:

“I’ve got 3rd if he tags”

Plate Umpire: Ball not caught...not your play at 3rd

“Going home”

Plate Umpire: As soon as ball drops in play

Key Terminology Umpires (cont'd)

7. Time Plays When the Run Scores or Not:

"Score That Run", "Score That Run", "That Run Scores"

Plate Umpire: While pointing at home plate - Let scorekeeper know

"No Run, No Run, No run Scores"

Wave off with hands above head - Not a safe signal - Let scorekeeper know

8. Close Plays On Fly Balls:

"No catch, No catch"

Either Umpire: On close play - Give safe signal

"That's a Catch"

Either Umpire: On a close play - Really sell it - Give out signal

9. Miscellaneous:

"That's A Balk"

Base Umpire: Stand - Point at pitcher - Back to hands on knees set

Plate Umpire: Hold position - Do not stand up

"On The Tag, He's Out"

Base Umpire: Swipe tag at first - Will not use this mechanic anywhere else

"Safe, Off the bag, SAFE!"

Base Umpire: Call - Explain - reinforce by selling the call - Two separate mechanics

"Foul"

Either Umpire: Hands forward slightly above shoulder and palms forward, and fingers together -
Then point in direction of foul territory - Two separate mechanics - Foul call will
always be made with "Chalk Between Your Feet"

"Play"

Plate Umpire - Right hand pointing to pitcher - Point is always with index finger

"Time"

Either Umpire: Any time the ball is out of play or time is requested - The call is not "Dead Ball" or
"Out Of Play"

"Broken Plays at First"

Base Umpire: "On The Tag! He's Out" or "Safe, balls on the ground."

10. Obstruction/Interference:

"Time, that's Obstruction"

Either Umpire: Runner being played on. 7.06(a)

"That's Obstruction"

Either Umpire: Runner not being played on. 7.06(b)

"That's Interference"

Either Umpire: Batter/Catcher/Umpire/Coach

"Time, that's Interference"

Either Umpire: Base Runner/Spectator

"It's What You Learn - After You Know It All - That Counts"



Umpire Conferences

Communication is vital! There are three conferences that an umpire must have for each game.

- **Pre-game Conference (Umpire to Umpire)**
- **Plate Conference (Umpire and Managers)**
- **Post-game Conference (Umpire to Umpire)**

PRE-GAME CONFERENCE

The umpire-to-umpire pre-game conference is very important and can prevent many mishaps during the course of the game.

If at all possible know who your partner or partners are prior to the day of the game.

All umpires should arrive at least half hour before the scheduled starting time to go through the preliminaries of how you will umpire the game with the major objective of calling PLAY at the scheduled starting time.

If a partner is late, attempt to reach them. If you are running late, call your partner. If one umpire does not show on time, a three man crew can adjust, but a two man crew cannot. You may decide to 1) use one umpire, 2) wait for the replacement or, 3) postpone the game.

If you decide to ask a parent from the stands to help umpire the game, you still need to conduct a pre-game (Umpire to Umpire) conference.

It's important that the crew discuss about how you will umpire the game. It's just as important if it's the first time you've worked with an umpire or the tenth time. Don't think that your fellow umpire knows what you're going to do. There could have been four or five games between when you worked with them last.

Three primary areas for discussion are:

- Umpire Coverage/Responsibility
- Game Situations
- Pre-Game Responsibilities

The following listing provides the primary areas for discussion. Remember some coverage and responsibilities will change depending on the number of umpires in the crew and whether the game is on a 60' or 70'/90' field.

Umpire Coverage/Responsibility	
Fair/Foul – Responsibilities on lines, plate to bases, bases to foul poles	Fly Balls –responsibility for balls to outfield and infield, balls near lines, and trouble balls
Line Drives	Tag-Ups/Touches
Signals/Communications	Positions/Rotations
3rd Base Coverage- Plate Umpire	Dropped 3 rd Strike
Check Swings	Batted Ball Hits Batter
Double plays	Obstruction
Interference	Sacrifice Situations

Umpire Conferences

Game Situations	
Putting Ball In Play	Calling Time
Foul Tip/Foul Ball	Infield Fly Rule
Awarding Bases	Pickoffs/Steals
Balks	Rundowns
Inclement Weather	Ejections

Pre-Game Responsibilities	
Inspect Field For Playing Conditions	Inspect Playing Equipment For Both Teams

PLATE CONFERENCE, LL Rule 4.01

Meet with the manager from both teams at home plate at least five minutes before game start time. Keep it short and to the point. This should be a two or three minute conference. DON'T be a joker! Wrong place, wrong time. Be professional!

NOTE: No players should be on the field, swinging bats or throwing the baseball/softball, during the plate conference. Keep them in the dugout.

Plate Conference Coverage	
Introductions (First Names)	Exchange Line-Up Cards (Home Team First)
Verify Players/Subs	Verify Pitcher, Catcher, & Dh (If Applicable)
Cover Any Ground Rules	Verify That Players Are Properly Equipped

POST-GAME CONFERENCE

It is important for you and your partner to have a post-game critique. Always be honest with your partner and make sure he/she knows you want the truth from him/her. Learn from each other. Conduct your post-game conference in the dressing room or parking lot, but, after you are out of earshot of those involved in the game, including fans. If working with a new umpire, don't overload them with information on their mistakes. Give them 2-3 things to work on before their next game. Always end with something positive!

Post-Game Conference	
Honest open discussion with partner(s)	Don't get personal – Don't take it personal
Review game activities/problem areas	Always look for areas to improve
Don't overwhelm new umpires (1-2 things)	



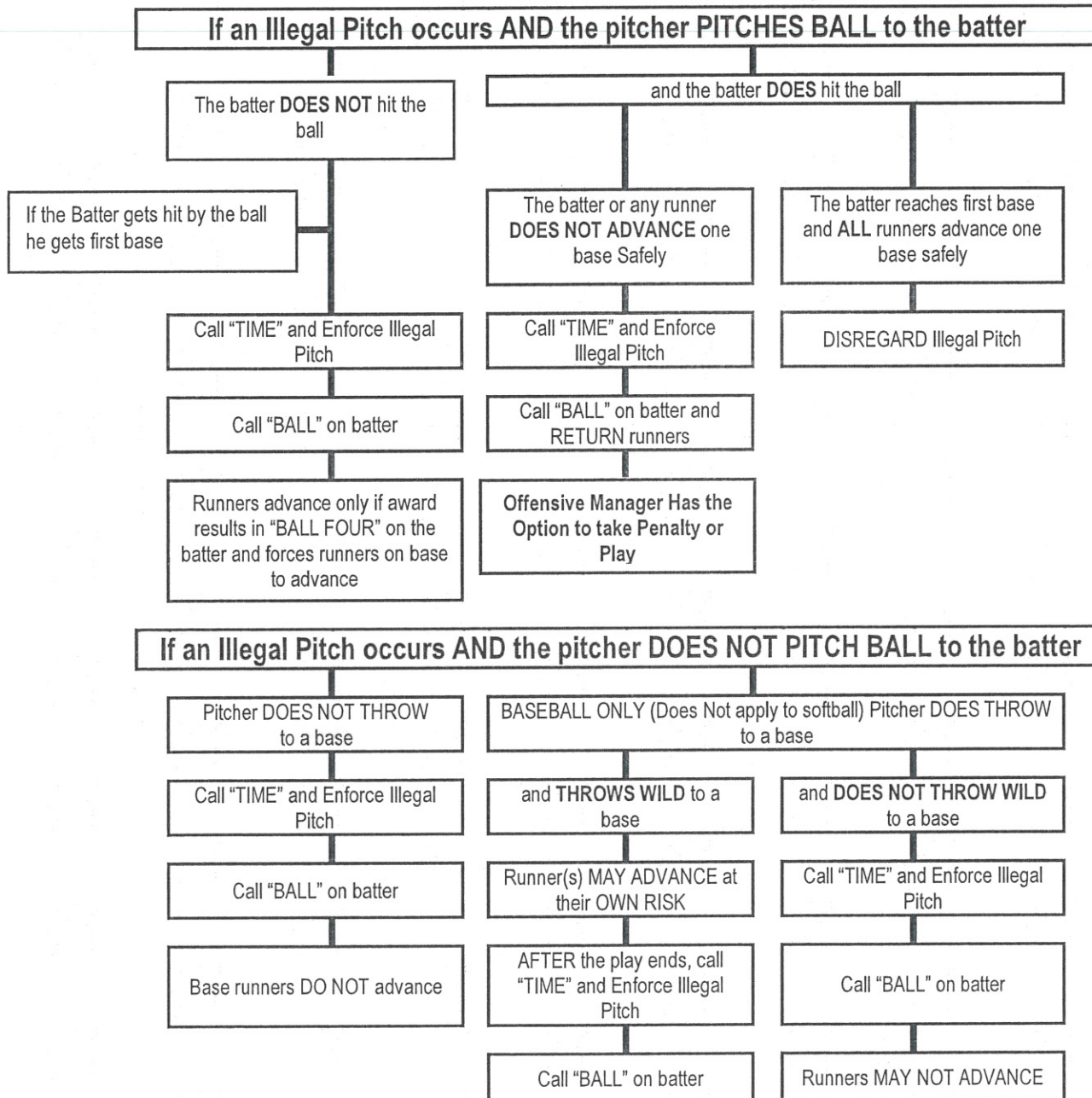
Illegal Pitch Chart

Baseball (8.05 a-k) – Major Division and below only

THERE MUST BE RUNNERS ON BASE FOR THE PENALTY TO BE ENFORCED

Softball (8.01 a-c and 8.01 e-p) – All Divisions of play

NO RUNNERS REQUIRED ON BASE FOR THE PENALTY TO BE ENFORCED



"It's What You Learn After You Know It All That Counts."



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Fair/Foul

One of the most common things we do as umpires while calling either the plate or the bases is to make decisions regarding whether a batted ball is Fair or Foul. Yet, many times the entire process of being in position, making our decision, and then using good mechanics to indicate our decision is not performed properly. To examine this process closely we will break things down into 4 categories: (1) Definitions, (2) Responsibilities, (3) Positioning, and (4) Mechanics.

Definitions

Using the Rule Book definitions makes it easy for us to differentiate between a Fair Ball and a Foul Ball. In doing so we must keep in mind that the decision on a “Touched” ball is always made relative to the position of the ball when it is touched and never the position of an umpire or player.

Fair Ball – A batted ball that settles on fair ground between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that is on or over fair territory when bounding to the outfield past first or third base, or that touches first, second or third base, or that first falls on fair territory on or beyond first base or third base, or that while on or over fair territory touches the person of an umpire or player, or that, while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight.

Foul Ball - A batted ball that settles on foul territory between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory, or that first falls on foul territory beyond first base or third base, or that while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire or player, or any object foreign to the natural ground.

Responsibilities

For the purposes of this discussion we will relate Fair/Foul responsibilities with that of a Two-Umpire Crew.

Plate Umpire – Responsible for all Fair/Foul decisions from the plate down the Third Base/Left Field foul line all the way to the Foul Pole. Responsible for all Fair/Foul decisions from the plate down the First Base foul line up to, but not including, first base.

Base Umpire – When in the “A” Position, responsible for all Fair/Foul decisions from the front edge of First Base, down the Right Field foul line all the way to the Foul Pole. This includes any ball that reaches or passes First Base untouched, even though the ball may have been in foul territory prior to reaching First Base.

When in the “B” or “C” Position the Base Umpire will have no Fair/Foul responsibility.

Positioning

To be in the proper position for making any Fair/Foul decision; the umpire must always be straddled the foul line or extended foul line. On hard hit balls the plate umpire must hustle to get into the proper position.

If a call is to be made on a ball that is between two umpires or a ball in the immediate vicinity of first base, always make eye contact with your partner to make certain who will take the call. If

Fair/Foul

this technique is properly covered in the pregame and properly practiced on the field you will minimize the possibility of a “Double Call”.

If the umpire(s) vacates the foul line to cover a Pop-Up in foul territory that has no obvious chance of becoming “Fair”; the Fair/Foul decision has already been made and the call now becomes a Catch/no-Catch.

If the base umpire vacates the foul line because of a hard hit ball coming directly at him/her; the responsibility for the Fair/Foul decision reverts to the plate umpire. One major concern is when umpires vacate the line too quickly. In most situations, if you just hold your ground and let the ball pass; you will still be in good position to see the ball and make the call. If you feel you must vacate the line, it is always best to move into fair territory. A batted ball down the right field line off the end of the bat of a right handed hitter or pulled by a left handed hitter will tend to move toward foul territory. If you do vacate the line, don't come back to the line to make the call. Move on to your next responsibility. Remember that if the ball is “Fair”, you have responsibility for the Batter Runner.

Mechanics

When to Call - A batted ball should be declared Fair or Foul when, on the infield, it is within the area between the inside edge of the coach's box and the second base side of the (1st or 3rd) base cut out. If a Fair/Foul decision must be made on a batted ball in the outfield it should be named if it is initially touched or falls untouched to the ground within approximately 20 feet on either side of the foul line. “Obvious Fouls” (i.e. banging off back stop, over fence into stands, etc...) should not be called.

Now let's talk about the basic mechanics.

Fair – No verbal signal!! While straddling the foul line, point in the direction of Fair Territory. The point should be made with the hand closest to fair territory. The hand should be closed except that the index finger is extended and pointing with the thumb tucked. Recognizing that when the plate umpire is on the first base line he/she will be pointing with the mask in the left hand.

Foul – Remember the proper “Foul” call uses two separate and distinct mechanics. (1) While straddling the foul line/extended foul line; raise both hands slightly above the shoulders and slightly forward of the body while verbally declaring “Foul” or “Foul Ball”. The hands should be about shoulder width apart with the palms facing forward and the fingers together. After dropping the hands back to your side; (2) raise your arm and point in the direction of foul territory. The point should be made with the hand closest to foul territory. The hand should be closed except that the index finger is extended and pointing with the thumb tucked. Recognizing that when the plate umpire is on the third base line he/she will be pointing with the mask in the left hand.

With the base umpire in “A” position, when a decision must be made on a ball in flight down the right field line, the umpire will use the “Drop Step and Turn” technique. To perform this technique; simply drop the right foot back and bring the left foot around into fair territory while pivoting on the ball of the right foot. This will position the umpire straddling the foul line and facing the right field foul pole. Depending on how hard/high the ball is hit; you may or may not