



## BASIC PLATE MECHANICS

2-Man System  
PU-Plate Umpire

- 1) **Fair/foul responsibility.**  
When partner is in 'A' – right field line between home and first. Partner has 1<sup>st</sup> base and beyond unless he moves inside – if he comes inside you have entire line. You always have entire left field line. When partner is inside – you both foul lines.
- 2) **Partner in 'A' – pop-up FOUL between home & first.** PU makes call near plate area where he can get in front of or side of fielder. All other pop-ups between 1st and home, box in with partner and the official the fielder is facing makes the call.
- 3) **Partner in 'A' and goes out on trouble ball,** Take B/R (batter-runner) around bases, ruling on any play on the B/R; including appeals of touches at all bases.
- 4) Touches and tag-ups at third are primarily yours. (Base ump has touch of B/R on triple or home run on all bases.)
- 5) **None on. Ball stays in infield.** Follow B/R down first base line watching for:
  - Running lane violation
  - Pulled foot/swipe tag (partner may ask for help)
  - Overthrow\* (go with ball to watch if it goes to dead ball area; if lands near fence, dugout or trouble area, give safe signal showing the ball is still in play)**\*Exception:** See # 8
- 6) **Tag play & obstruction/interference of B/R** is your responsibility up to the running lane. Beyond that is the base man's call.
- 7) **Fly ball responsibility.**  
When partner is in 'A' you have the ball; all fly balls and fair/foul situations if he comes inside. When partner is in 'B' or 'C' you have both lines; take F7 & F9 moving distinctively toward respective lines and any infielder toward lines.
- 8) **All overthrows are yours with one rare exception.**  
(see #3 under Base Mechanics)  
When your partner in 'A' and is forced to foul territory as a play develops at 1<sup>st</sup> and there is an overthrow, he would take the overthrow since he's outside and you take B/R around the bases. You have any appeals on touches at all bases in this situation. This would be a rare situation.
- 9) **Rotation to 3<sup>rd</sup>.** The plate umpire in certain situations has calls at 3<sup>rd</sup>. When the plate umpire goes to 3<sup>rd</sup> to make a call it is called a 'rotation'.

## **Rotation to 3<sup>rd</sup> for first play there.**

3 situations; 3 criteria to bring plate umpire to 3<sup>rd</sup>

### **Situations for possible rotation**

1) R @ 1<sup>st</sup>

2) R's @ 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>

As you move toward 3<sup>rd</sup> base line (in foul territory) and runner from 3<sup>rd</sup> passes you, turn to watch him touch home plate then proceed with rotation if needed on runner from 1<sup>st</sup> coming into 3<sup>rd</sup>.

3) R's @ 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> with less than 2 outs, tag-up situation-runner from 2<sup>nd</sup> advancing to 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Fly ball to the outfield, caught - runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> advancing to 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Your partner has runner from 1<sup>st</sup> going into 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **BASE UMPIRE IS RESPONSIBLE WATCHING BOTH RUNNERS TAG-UP.**

**NOTE: If you have a fair/foul situation down right field line, let partner know you're on the line (i.e. you will not rotate and base umpire has all plays on the bases)**

### **Criteria requiring possible rotation. IMPORTANT to read the play and not over commit.**

1) Base hit or fly ball caught and tag-up (ball must go out of the infield or no rotation). (If ball stays in the infield your partner has all plays on the bases).

2) Lead runner coming into 3<sup>rd</sup>

3) The ball coming into 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Once you read a possible first play situation at 3<sup>rd</sup>, begin to move toward 3<sup>rd</sup> staying in foul territory. If you read a play is going to happen at 3<sup>rd</sup>, as you near the cut-out area move **INSIDE** to make the call.

Communicate to partner: "Going to 3<sup>rd</sup>" as you are moving down the line then "At 3<sup>rd</sup>!" once you are there.

10) **Line drives in the infield.** *You always have the pitcher.*

When partner is in 'A' – You have F5 & F6 and F4 if moving toward 2<sup>nd</sup>, his back toward base umpire.

You may even have a better look if F1 is moving in toward home when partner is in 'A', especially if a shoestring catch. Discuss in your pre-game how borderline calls will be handled; eye contact and/or verbal communication is important. **DOUBLE CALLS are a big negative when officiating.**

When partner is inside. – You have F3 & F5 moving toward their respective lines.

11) **On a forced double play.** You have primary responsibility for an interference call on the front half of the play. This could be at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> or home. The most common is when R1 is forced to 2<sup>nd</sup>. Stay with the play on the front half watching for interference. Don't turn away too quickly being sure to get a good look for an illegal slide or other infraction (i.e. malicious contact by fielder or runner)

12) **Run-downs.**

**Between 3<sup>rd</sup> & home.** Split the difference with partner if no other

runners on. With a back runner(s) your partner may stay in the working area not helping in case defense makes a play at another base or a possible 2<sup>nd</sup> rundown occurs.

Discuss in pre-game if partner will help or not if there is a back runner(s). Crew preference.

**Rundown between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>** with no other runners on, get down and help on play back into 1<sup>st</sup>, generally from the cut-out to the bag would be your call.

**Rundown between 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>** get down and help on play back into 3<sup>rd</sup>, generally from the cut-out to the bag would be your call. Communication is important if gray area.

13) **Between innings** stand on the foul line facing the field about 15' from home plate. Brief comments to a coach (unless he's giving you a lineup change) or a player is acceptable, but do not get in the habit of prolonged conversations. You should never talk to a spectator.

14) **Communication** with your partner using voice and/or signals is essential. Eye contact is important, i.e. rundowns, line drives in the infield.  
**THERE IS NO HURRY TO MAKE THE CALL! TIMING!**

## BASIC SIGNALS/COMMUNICATION between Partners

Communication between partners is essential. There are times when verbal communication is necessary. The large majority of communication is done through hand signals. #3 under Base Umpire and #8 under Plate Mechanics is a good example of an unusual play. Umpires must be able to adapt to such plays.

At the start of the game the plate umpire will point to his partner in 'A' position, partner will acknowledge by pointing back; meaning "ready". This is the only time this is done. At the start of each subsequent ½ inning, the plate umpire only visually checks that his partner is in 'A' and ready for play. It is acceptable to visually check at the start of the game also; not pointing.

Plate umpire is to initiate all signals before each new batter, WHEN RUNNERS ARE ON. Base umpire acknowledges by mirroring his partner or nodding his head. When NO RUNNERS, there is no signal.

Two man system - (3 times to rotate) **Two are:** With a runner at 1st or runners at 1st & 3rd - the plate umpire will point to 3rd with both arms and give the number of outs with both hands. This is done simultaneously with the right arm across the front of stomach and left arm pointing straight out - toward 3rd, fist for 'no outs', pointer finger for 'one out' and two fingers if 'two outs'. (Many officials commonly use only the right arm across the front of stomach, which is acceptable.)

**Third rotation:** With runners at 1st and 2nd and less than two outs. This is also an infield fly situation. The mechanic is: plate umpire gives infield fly signal (right hand to side of hat or directly out and away from hat, with number of outs - '0' or '1'). He then brings his fists together down in front of stomach, one on top of another and the fist on top has the pointer finger pointing toward third. In doing this he's stating 'Infield fly; on a tag-up I will take lead runner into 3rd. Base umpire acknowledges by giving same signal back. Base umpire has both tag-ups and plays at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. (If an overthrow happens at 3<sup>rd</sup> when plate umpire is there and he then must retreat back to home, base umpire now has plays at 3<sup>rd</sup> also).

Whenever there is a runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> and there are two outs, (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> only, bases loaded) plate umpire uses two fingers of his right hand and taps the top of his left wrist; meaning 'timing play'. He then points to home plate area, meaning he is staying at home on any plays. Base umpire acknowledges by mirroring the same signal.

**When base umpire is in 'A' position and goes out on a trouble ball** he may raise his left arm straight up as he moves toward the outfield and verbally say "going!" The plate umpire then is responsible for the B/R at all bases. *Once the base umpire's responsibilities are complete and the ball is thrown back to the infield, he comes back to home plate for possible play there. (In the park home run attempt.)* Plate umpire is responsible for a play at home if the base umpire does not get there. Most importantly, once the base umpire turns and shows his back, the plate umpire is to assume responsibility on the B/R whether base umpire does verbal and/or signal.

With runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> only, plate umpire simply gives the number of outs.

Rundowns between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Plate umpire verbally announces to base umpire once he is in position to help and takes all plays from the cutout to the bag.

Rundown between 3<sup>rd</sup> and home, plate umpire announces he has 'this half' meaning from 45' to home.

# BASIC BASE MECHANICS

2-Man System  
BU-Base Umpire

1) **Fair/foul responsibility.**

In 'A' position - You have fair/foul responsibility from the front of the bag and beyond. (Use an imaginary line across the front edge of first base, from second base toward the dugout; any ball crossing this imaginary line is BU's responsibility if 'fair' or 'foul').

2) **Trouble balls: when you're in 'A' – Pause, read and react.** These skills are essential in determining when to go out. Going out unnecessarily puts extra work on your plate person.

**GO OUT IF YOU READ THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS within your outfield coverage area:**

- \* Fair/foul situation down right field line or catch near dead ball area
- \* Fielders converging
- \* Diving catch or any catch below the waist
- \* Possible home run or to the fence (Outfielder running towards outfield wall with his back to infield)

After going out, be alert to move to cover home if runner advances there.

*(Note: Don't look to come home **until the ball is thrown back** to the infield...stay with your responsibilities...like a ball rolling toward dead ball area or fielder throws there, etc. Next, if an extra-base hit, move quickly toward home plate and communicate with PU to let him know when you are there. PU needs to be prepared to cover home if partner doesn't get there.)*



**Outfield coverage area:** Centerfielder in, back & toward RF line.

3) BU taking an overthrow at 1<sup>st</sup>. **This is one of those plays that rarely happen but is a good example of umpires reacting to an unusual situation.**

When you're in 'A' and a play pushes you to foul territory and there is an overthrow, you take the overthrow and your partner should take the B/R around the bases. Your partner then has any appeals on touches at all bases. (This is the only time you should take an overthrow; however, you should be cognizant of overthrows and position of runners when possible if decision has to be made in awarding bases.)

4) **Tag play, obstruction & interference of B/R** is your responsibility once he goes beyond the 45' lane. Running lane violation is primarily the plate umpire's call.

5) **Fly ball responsibility.** When you're in 'A' and you don't go out on a trouble ball, your partner has all fly ball responsibilities. When you're inside you have what is commonly known as the 'V' or the 'U'.

NOTE: The 'V' is the area on the field with point starting in front of the pitcher's mound and extending out to F7 and F9.

6) Take a glance at 3<sup>rd</sup> when a rotation is in effect. The ultimate responsibility of a play at 3<sup>rd</sup> is yours if your partner does not make it.

- 7) **Line drives in infield.** In 'A' you have F3 & F4 except F4 going away from you. When you're inside you have everyone but F3 & F5 moving toward their respective lines.
- 8) Help partner if batter is hit with batted ball. Partner could get blocked. Call "time"! **IMPORTANT: Do not say 'foul'!** One mechanic is for you to wait to see whether the plate umpire saw and he makes the call. This is a choice between crews. Other plate officials want their partner to call as soon as they see it. If both partners come up simultaneously, it looks good...the same as when a balk is called at the same time.
- 9) Be prepared to help partner **IF** he comes to you on a 'checked swing'. Use a safe mechanic, verbally stating "no, he didn't!" or use an out mechanic, verbally stating "yes, he did!"
- 10) With a runner at 1<sup>st</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> you should be in 'B' position. Any other situation with runners on, you should be in 'C' position. Feet and shoulders should be square toward home plate when in 'B' & 'C' position. Exception: see **OPTION** on page 6.
- 11) In between innings, stand on the outfield grass out from where 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman plays; at edge of grass line.
- 12) **PULLED FOOT or SWIPE TAG at first base.** Make the call. If either coach comes out because they feel you missed the call due to a pulled foot or swipe tag and you feel your partner has information, go to him and based on that information you can change your call. The opposing coach will probably then come out. **DO NOT ALLOW HIM TO APPROACH YOUR PARTNER.** It is your call and you are the one that should speak with the coach. Simply explain that your partner had a better look and that you are reversing your call – to get the call right.
- 13) **Touch/tag-up responsibility.** You have 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>. You also have touch of 3<sup>rd</sup> of the B/R on a home run. See #3 for touch at 1<sup>st</sup> when is plate umpire's responsibility.
- 14) **Rundowns.**
  - **Between 3<sup>rd</sup> & home.** Split the difference with partner if no other runners are on. With a back runner(s) you should stay in working area in case defense makes a play at another base. This is crew's choice whether base ump will help in rundown between 3<sup>rd</sup> and home.
  - **Rundown between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>** with no other runners on, your partner will get down and help on play back into 1<sup>st</sup>, generally from the cut-out to the bag would be his call.
  - **Rundown between 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>** your partner will come down and help on play back into 3<sup>rd</sup>, generally from the cut-out to the bag would be his call.**COMMUNICATE WITH PARTNER!**

## Working Area:

It is an imaginary rectangle centered with 2<sup>nd</sup> base, starting directly behind edge of mound and then extending out toward 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> bases roughly 10'.

The base umpire uses this area with **multiple runners** when the ball is being thrown back to the infield. From the working area, the umpire will let the ball take him to the play or potential play at any of base. If there is no play, actual or anticipated, BU would stay in the working area. If there is **only one runner on base**, the umpire should always move closer to that runner since this is the base umpire's only responsibility.

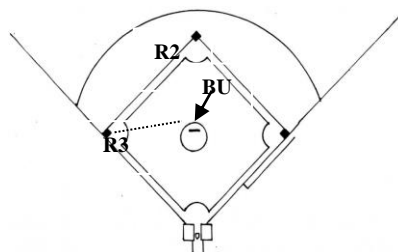
## BASE UMPIRE'S FIELD POSITIONS:

**'A' Position** is about 10-12 feet behind first baseman (see exceptions \*1 & \*2) with both feet in foul territory; right foot next to foul line and square to the plate. (\*1) If F3 is playing deep near the outfield grass line, BU must shorten his distance behind F3 so that he can still get inside on a base hit. (\*2) If F3 is playing in ahead of base line, BU moves up but not closer than 10-12 from 1<sup>st</sup> base. Staying behind the fielder is essential for making decisions at 1<sup>st</sup> base, not getting in the way of F3 if he must dive for the ball or suddenly turn to make a play on a pop-up. BU is in good position for his fair/foul responsibilities. If a pop-up is behind 1st base and clearly in foul territory, BU must 'open' in opposite direction F3 is moving, letting him get to the ball. BU must let the fielder take him to the ball...do not follow the ball. (The same mechanic as when PU moves when the catcher is fielding a pop-up at or near home plate). A pop-up near the line and close to first is considered in the infield and BU should move inside as he would for any other pop-up within the infield and PU takes responsibility for the catch/no catch.

**'B' Position** is approximately halfway between the pitcher's mound and second base, on the 1<sup>st</sup> base side of the infield, more or less on a line extended from the edge of respective side of plate through the edge of the mound, with feet and shoulders positioned facing home plate. This will be the position used with a runner at 1<sup>st</sup> or runners at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**OPTION: With runners at 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> or bases loaded can use 'B' instead of 'C'.**

Must be cognizant of pick-off at 3<sup>rd</sup>; especially back-door pick from catcher. Angle is good by simply moving toward back and middle of mound. Fielders are usually playing back. This keeps umpire out of F6 and R2's view. BU is in better position for likely play at 1<sup>st</sup> when ball stays in the infield.



**'C' Position** is opposite of 'B' position on 3<sup>rd</sup> base side. This position will be used in any situation with runners occupying bases other than 'B' position situations. Exception: **'option'** listed for 'B' position.