

NYSSO MECHANICS UPDATE – MAY 5, 2024

NYSSO continues to field questions and receive feedback from other umpires, coaches and sectional reps from throughout the state. The following information must be sent directly to your umpires, without alteration, with NYSSO CC'ed at NYSSOemail@gmail.com on the correspondence, as NYSSO is also informed that several chapters are not forwarding information to their membership.

SINGLE UMPIRE GAMES

Umpires are PROHIBITED from working behind the pitcher in single umpire games and are REQUIRED to be behind home plate. At least one chapter is providing blatantly false information on this topic. Even during COVID, NYSSO and the NYSPHSAA Softball Committee came out with a statement stating that umpires may not elect to work behind the pitcher. It is outright dishonest to say that NYSSO said this was okay, when NYSSO in fact said the exact opposite. Any chapter directing, authorizing or permitting an umpire in a single umpire game to work anywhere other than the standard position behind home plate will be subjected to immediate disciplinary action.

PACE OF PLAY

NYSSO sent an email regarding “pace of play” a few weeks ago. Little, if any, progress has been seen regarding this issue. On average, 40 seconds passes before the pitcher throws a single warm-up pitch. The plate umpire is then letting the pitcher throw 3-5 warm up pitches, which quite obviously cannot be accomplished in the remaining 20 seconds. Then there is the throw-down, the huddle at the circle, etc. This needs to end and it needs to end now. Find a way to enforce the rule rather than ignore it.

ON-DECK BATTERS

Every year NYSSO gives a handout at the state meeting which each chapter is required to distribute to its members. At the start of the game and each half-inning, ONE batter may be outside THEIR dugout warming up. Their dugout means in front of their team’s bench until the batter is in the batter’s box and then the on deck batter may go to the open side. ONE is ONE. One is NOT two. Umpires who properly enforce this rule are taking heat because the rest of the umpires are failing to do their job. We were supposed to be in this together, not selling one another out. Enforce the rule or find another hobby.

COVERING 3RD BASE

By and large, plate umpires do a terrible job covering 3rd base. They are camped out behind home plate or move into the “umpire coffin” at best. They leave their base umpire out there to die, making every call on the bases, including those at 3rd base when the plate umpire is responsible for the call. Umpires need to “see in all areas, call in your own.” Base umpires, STOP making calls at 3rd base that aren’t your calls. Plate umpires, start doing better than strolling ten feet up (at best) the 3rd base line. If getting reamed out for not making the call at 3rd or blowing the call at 3rd is what it takes to get plate umpire’s to do their job, so be it.

Generally speaking, all second throws in the infield that go to 3rd base are the plate umpire's call unless the plate umpire is required to remain home for a potential and likely play there. The following plays are just a few that are the PLATE UMPIRE'S call at 3rd base.

- R1 on 1st base attempts to advance to 3rd base on a hit. The play at 3rd base on R1 is the plate umpire's call.
- R1 on 1st base is flying around the bases on a gapper. R1 rounds 3rd base, puts on the brakes and goes back to 3rd base. Defense throws behind R1 going back into 3rd base. This is the plate umpire's call. Plate umpires need to learn how to read the plate and use the "pull me, push me" philosophy with aggressive runners.
- R2 on 2nd base. Fly ball to the outfield. R2 tags. The play on R2 going into 3rd base is the plate umpire's call.
- R2 on second base. Low liner to left field that causes R2 to hesitate before coming to 3rd base. Play at 3rd base on R2. This is the plate umpire's call.
- R2 on 2nd base. Grounder to short. R2 holds, then takes off for 3rd base on the release to 1st. Defense then fires to 3rd. The play on R2 going into 3rd is the plate umpire's call.

TIMING PLAY SIGNAL

NYSSO has sent out memos regarding the use of the "timing play" signal. With two outs, whenever there is a runner on FIRST or SECOND at the time of the pitch, the plate umpire will initiate "umpire-to-umpire" communication by placing the index and middle finger of the right hand over the top of the wrist (watch area) of the left hand. THEN, the base umpire(s) will return the signal. You cannot return something you haven't received. The purpose of this is to give a heightened sense of alertness of a play on the BR going into 2nd base and the scoring of another runner. In other words, did R1 or R2 score prior to BR getting thrown out at 2nd base trying to extend a single into a double? The timing play signal is NOT to be used with a single runner at THIRD base at the time of the pitch. If R3, leading off on the pitch, can't score from 60 feet before BR makes it 120 feet to 2nd base, you have bigger things to worry about in your game than a timing play.

DUGOUTS / TEAM AREA

The only time umpires are permitted in the dugout / team area is when they are passing through at the start or end of the game. Even then, whenever possible, if there is an alternative to get on and off the field, use it. If you bring a water bottle or towel to the field, keep it out of the team area and out of any area where you need to go through the team area to get it. Avoid placing any items on the ground in live ball territory. If you choose to hang a water bottle or towel on the fence, they simply become "part of the fence" should they be struck. Remember, for high school purposes, you are working one, maybe two games. You are umpiring, not going camping, so leave your coolers in the car.