

2008
FASTPITCH
SOFTBALL
UMPIRES' MANUAL



**PONY FASTPITCH SOFTBALL
UMPIRE MANUAL
CREATED BY:**

LARRY DESPAIN –EAST ZONE UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF

MIKE HOPKINS –EAST ZONE DEPUTY UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF

CINDI ARNOLD – CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF

RICH VARGAS – TIDEWATER, VIRGINIA UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF

BRAD WHITE – NEW YORK STATE UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF

GAME PROCEDURES

PRE-GAME CONFERENCE WITH PARTNER

Probably the most overlooked “mechanic” we have is the pre-game conference, which should take place between the umpire crew before every game. Most of the time it is because one or both umpires show up just before a game is to start and are lucky to get on the field to start the game on time. Other times, umpires are calling back-to-back games and are too busy taking gear off or putting it on. Who has the responsibility to be in charge and what should be discussed?

How many times does that “less experienced” umpire try to have a pre-game only to have her “experienced” partner say, “I know the book says this, but this is the way I am going to do it so don’t bother me?” The plate umpire or crew chief is in charge. She should run the pre-game conference. Is it a dictatorship? No, but she will make final decisions if there is not an agreement among the crew.

All umpires must arrive to the park at least 30 minutes prior to game time. If you have a UIC, make sure you check in with her. If your partner has not arrived within 20 minutes of game time, begin preparing to work the plate.

Few things look worse than an umpire crew that does not work together. A good pre-game can go a long way to make sure the umpire crew members work well together.

Umpires should cover the following items in their pre-game conference:

- Fly ball responsibilities
- Run downs
- Checked swings
- Foul balls on the line with no one on base
- Signals
- Ground rules
- Rules
- Help (e.g., pulled foot, swiped tag, etc.)
- What to do if the base ump goes out on fly or trapped balls
- Equipment Check: 3 man crew’s base umpires will check each dugout together.
- Dead ball situations
- Illegal pitches
- Leaving base early

COACHES’ PRE-GAME MEETING

- For single games, both umpires shall walk around the field to check the ground conditions, fences, etc. seven minutes before game time. For tournaments, the site umpire-in-chief shall inspect the fields and discuss any conditions with the umpire s.
- Equipment Check
 - Both umpires enter each team’s dugout together - One can check bats, the other helmets.
 - You needn’t run each bat through the bat ring; only ring the bats that are dented. Check the bats to see if there is bare metal on the handle.
 - Make sure the helmets and face guards have a NOCSAE label, the helmets are not cracked, and they have a chin strap.
- Five minutes prior to start time make sure any players still warming up return to the dugout.
 - Ask for the coach, captains (no more than two) and line-up cards.
 - The plate umpire introduces himself; then the base umpire introduces herself.

- Make sure the players' last names and first initials, along with their numbers and defensive positions are listed on the line-up cards. Confirm DP/Flex. Have substitutes and their numbers listed at the bottom. Have coaches verify the line-up, which becomes official when you take it back.
 - Notify the teams that all substitutions, DP/Flex changes and courtesy runners must be reported to the plate umpire.
- Establish dead ball boundaries around the field, including any gaps or holes in fences and any obstacles on the field (e.g. holes or overhanging branches). Do not instruct players to raise their hands if the ball "goes out of play." Any ball that bounces over, through, or under a fence is dead; any ball that crosses the dead ball line is dead. Players should continue to play until an umpire declares a dead ball.
- Establish an official scorer.
 - This is usually the home team's scorer, but consider the competency of the scorer – child v. adult.
- Confirm with the coaches that all equipment is legal and safe and that all players are legally and properly equipped.
- Ask your partner if she has anything (relevant) to add.
- Ask the coaches if they have any questions concerning the ground rules only. Do not hold a clinic.
- Do a coin flip to determine home team. Designate one team "heads" and one team "tails."
 - Do not ask who had a farther trip to establish who's going to call it – Designate & Flip!
- If there is a time limit, it begins when the coaches' pre-game meeting ends.
 - Notify the official score keeper that the clock is running, reminding him that the umpire has the official time.
- If the coaches' pre-game meeting takes more than 2 minutes, the umpires aren't doing it correctly.

PRIOR TO THE FIRST PITCH

- Start the clock as soon as the coaches' pre-game meeting ends.
- Make sure there is no equipment left on the field, including buckets.
- Make sure you have enough game balls to keep the game moving.
- It is recommended that the plate umpire set up behind home plate in proper position and watch warm up pitches. Set up for right-handed and left-handed batters. Don't forget to put your mask on. Repeat this in the bottom of the 1st inning.
 - Get a feeling for the backstop – Will a pass ball die at the backstop or ricochet all the way back to the plate?
- Base umpire should make sure that spectators have not crossed the dead ball line.
- Make sure there is only one on-deck batter and she is in her own on-deck circle. Only one is permitted to swing, even to start the inning.

AFTER THE GAME

- Leave through the less hostile side (usually the winning team).
 - If there was any controversy in the game, leave immediately. Do not go out of your way to grab the game balls, take your towel from the fence, pick up your water bottle, etc. Get off of the field and worry about those items after the teams have left the area.
- Always leave with your partner.
- Do not field questions about the game.
- Do not comment on any plays/calls.
- Do not try to sugar-coat any game controversy.

GAME MANAGEMENT

GENERAL

- The control/management of the game is the umpires' responsibility once they step onto the field.
- The umpires are responsible for making sure that the game runs as smoothly as possible.
- Keep the teams hustling on and off the field and prevent unnecessary delays.
- Do not allow teams to perform unsportsmanlike cheers.
- Do not allow anyone in the dugout to scream at the umpires.
 - The first time that happens, stop the game and speak with the head coach.
 - Inform the head coach that the behavior will not be allowed and it is her responsibility to halt it.
 - If the inappropriate behavior continues, someone must be ejected.

COACHES

- A coach must be present at coaches' pre-game conference. While the coach present need not be the head coach, the plate umpire must state that the head coach is the only person who will be allowed to take part in any discussion that involves the game.
- It is the head coach's responsibility to control the people that in attendance in her team's favor.
 - These people include players, assistant coaches, scorekeepers and spectators.
- Generally speaking, only the head coach has the right to carry on discussions with an umpire.
 - Assistant coaches do not have the right to come on the field to argue a call. If the assistant coach already on the field as a base coach, she still does not have the right to argue a call.
 - However, keep in mind that the assistant coach may be the one in position to see a particular element of a play.
 - For example, the assistant coach who is coaching 1st base is in a better position to see a pulled foot at 1st base.
 - Provided the assistant coach is respectful and reasonable, umpires should not unreasonably refuse to speak with her.
 - However, once the conversation with the assistant coach starts to get heated, the umpire must end the conversation with her and inform her that he will now only speak with the head coach.
 - If at any time an assistant coach comes at you or argues with you about a call or play, that coach should be asked to leave the game. This is not negotiable. Eject the assistant coach.
- Under no circumstances is an umpire permitted to discuss the play/call with one or more coach at the same time.
 - The "off" umpire is responsible for keep other coaches, players, etc. away from the conversation.
 - The "off" umpire should not participate in the conversation either.
 - The "off" umpire is responsible for ensuring that any ejected person leaves the game without further disruption of the game.
- At no time should an umpire discuss a call that was not his call.

- The head coach has the right to go to an umpire and question her call, provided he does so respectfully and reasonably.
 - It is best for the umpire to meet the coach somewhere near the foul line. Preventing the coach from walking/running out onto the field has several advantages, such as:
 - It helps prevent the coach from getting even more heated.
 - Walking over toward the coach shows the coach that you are willing to speak with her.
 - It allows the umpire additional time to review the play and prepare for the discussion.
 - It is easier for the umpire to return to his position without being followed by the coach.
 - If the call is a judgment call (e.g., safe or out), remind the coach that such calls are not subject to discussion.
 - If the coach asks you to get help from your partner because he thinks there was a pulled foot or perhaps the player dropped the ball, then you can go to your partner. Do you have to? No. But, sometimes by doing so, you can keep things from escalating into something bigger.
 - However, do not make a habit of doing this. Coaches are not interested in getting the call correct, they are interested in getting the call in their favor. Otherwise coaches would argue calls that are missed in their favor. Coaches have their job to do, umpires have their job to do.
 - If the question is about a rules interpretation, go to your partner to confirm the rule.
 - If the coach still disagrees then she has the right to protest.
 - Umpires do not have the right to deny a protest. The UIC or protest committee must be used to resolve the issue.
 - Remember to listen to what the coach is asking you and answer only what she asked.
 - Do not volunteer anything that does not answer her question.

APPEALS

- An appeal play is a play on which an umpire may not make a decision until requested by a manager, coach or player.
 - Examples of appeal plays are batting out of order, a runner missing a base, and a runner failing to tag up on a caught fly ball.
- An appeal can be made during either a live ball or dead ball situation.
- The umpire responsible for making the call should ask "leading questions."
- If the appeal is made to you and you are not responsible for the call, relay the appeal to the appropriate umpire.
 - For example, if the defensive coach appeals to the plate umpire that the runner on first did not tag up, say, "Base umpire, they are appealing that the runner at 1st did not tag up."
 - The base umpire would then make the call.
- Do not allow the coach or player(s) to turn an appeal into a guessing game.
- If the appeal involves a timing play or batting out of order go to your partner and between the two of you go over the entire play step by step to ensure that you get the appeal correct.
- A coach questioning a runner leaving prior to the release of the pitch is not an appeal play.

TIMED GAMES

- It is recommended that the umpire has control of the clock and should be the official timer. But each Zone has the right to use whomever they wish as the official timer.
- Time begins to run as soon as the coaches' meeting ends.
- It is strongly recommended that all timed games be kept on a timer and that the timer be displayed where both coaches can see how much time is left during a game.
- If the score board is equipped with a clock, then use the clock that is provided on the scoreboard.
- Do not stop the clock for injuries unless the injury is one that will take time to handle.
 - As soon as the injury occurs, the umpire responsible for the clock must note the time of the injury.
 - As a rule of thumb, if the injured player cannot be moved then stop the clock. If the player can be moved then the clock continues to run. Umpires should use good judgment on if and when the clock should be stopped.(again each Zone has the right to stop the clock when they deem it necessary)
 - If the clock is stopped then it is started at the time it was stopped. Do not add time back to the clock
- Normally the clock does not stop for a protest.
- Each Zone decides who will handle protests. If those that are to handle the protest are not near then the clock will be stopped until they arrive. Upon their arrival the clock will restart.
 - However, if you believe that the winning coach is protesting the game deliberately to waste time and that team loses the protest, the time wasted during the protest should be added back to the clock.
- Generally speaking, if time expires during the inning, finish the inning.
 - If home team is ahead when time expires, then the home team will not bat.
 - If the home team is ahead and is batting when time expires, end the game prior to the next pitch.
 - If the home team is coming to bat and they are ahead with less than 1 minute to play, the umpires may call the game.
- If the game requires a winner and the score is tied when time expires or after 7 innings (10 and under – 6 innings) have been completed before time expires, then the international tie breaker will be used to start the next new inning and for every inning thereafter until a winner is declared.
- By rule, a new inning starts when the third out of the inning is made.
 - If there is any time remaining on the clock when the third out is made, a new inning must be started.
- Do not allow a team to rush you into starting a new inning or starting that inning before both teams are ready.
 - There is no "hurry-up" offense or defense in softball.
 - By rule, both the offensive and defensive teams are entitled to 1 minute before being required to play.
 - Umpires cannot make either team start before that minute has expired.
 - However, if both teams are willing to start before the minute expires, begin play.
 - Each Zone has the right to stop the clock when they deem it necessary.

PLATE MECHANICS

PLATE STANCE

We talk about working the slot all the time. But what is the slot and what is the correct way to work it? The slot is the space between the catcher and batter that the plate umpire uses to set up to call balls and strikes. It is also part of the set up for the plate umpire. Let's break all of it step by step.

• Initial Set Up

- The heel-toe stance refers to the umpire's left heel and right toe being placed on the same imaginary line. The heel of the foot closest to the batter and the toe of the foot behind the catcher should be on this imaginary line. (See "Slot – Top View").
- The umpire's feet must be at least shoulder width apart, but should be as far apart as you can put them while maintaining your balance and your ability to pivot out of the way if necessary. (See "Slot – Front View")
- The umpire's inside ear must be lined up with the inside corner of the plate. This allows the umpire to see the outside pitch. Another way to set this up would be to have your belt buckle even with the inside line of the batters box. (See "Slot – Top View").
- Get as close as you can to the catcher without interfering. (See "Slot – Top View").
 - The maximum distance between your inside knee and the catcher's back shall be 12 inches.
 - To do this you will probably have to turn the inside foot out to allow your knee to be as close as possible and parallel to the catchers back.
 - Too many umpires stand too far back and are blocked out from seeing the corners of the plate.
- *NOTE:* For left handed batters, do the exact mirror image.

• Dropping to the Down-Set Position

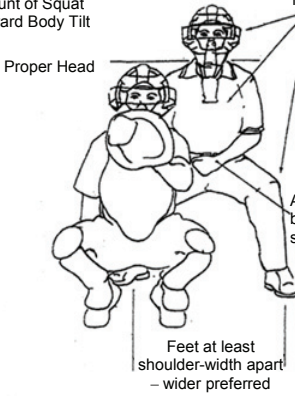
- To go to the set position, bend at the knees until your eyes are at the top of the strike zone. Do not bend forward at the waist. Instead think of lowering yourself onto a low seat, in which case you would need to keep your back straight.
- Place your hands somewhere at the top of your thigh. Do not put them behind you or hang them down by your side
- Once you have called a ball or strike, stand when the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher and take a step backward. By doing this you are giving yourself a second to relax. When the pitcher steps back on the pitching rubber you repeat the process of setting up for the pitch.

THE SLOT

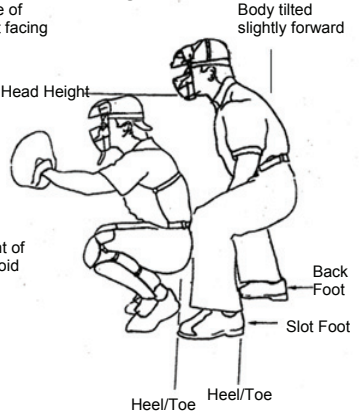
FRONT VIEW

Proper Head Position is Controlled By:

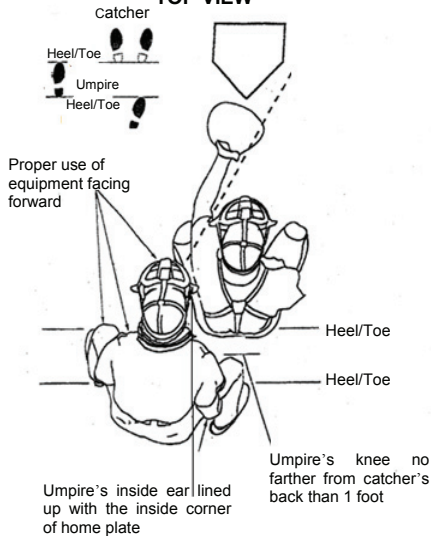
1. Width of Stance
2. Amount of Squat
3. Forward Body Tilt



SIDE



TOP VIEW



TIMING & TRACKING THE PITCH

Proper timing is important on all plays/calls. Before making any call, the umpire must quickly pause, read the play, then react with the proper call/no call. This allows the umpire to digest what has happened and make the correct call.

Timing is as important when calling balls and strikes as it is safes and outs. When working the plate our timing has to do with setting up to call the pitch and calling the pitch.

- Drop to the set position when the pitcher separates her hands. Why the hands? The pitch cannot start until the hands separate, so our timing would be tied to this part of the pitch. Dropping to the set position earlier than that may cause you to hold the position much longer than necessary, causing more fatigue. Each pitcher is different and it is up to you to get in sync with the pitcher so that you and the pitcher are moving as one.
- Once the pitch crosses the plate, hesitate 1 or 2 seconds before you call the pitch. Your credibility/judgment might be questioned if you call the pitch too quickly or wait too long to call it. In other words, do not call the pitch before it reaches the catcher or after the catcher throws it back to the pitcher.
- The last part in timing is for you to step back after you have called the pitch and give yourself a second or two to relax before the next pitch is thrown. Move with the pitcher to your set position as they step on the rubber to start the next pitch. Then repeat the process.

Tracking the ball is the act of following ball from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's glove. The umpire does this by moving her head slightly while watching the ball hit the glove. The umpire literally follows the ball from the time of the pitch until the ball hits the catcher's mitt. By tracking the ball, the umpire is able to see the pitch better and allow her to make the correct call.

CALLING BALLS & STRIKES

• Balls

- In the set position, say "ball" loud enough for the batter and catcher to hear.
 - Do not motion with your hands or lean with your body to indicate where the pitch missed the strike zone.
- On ball four, simply say "ball" or "ball four."
- Do not say, "take your base."
 - Do not point towards 1st base.

• Strikes

- There are two aspects to calling strikes: The verbal call and the visual signal.
 - The umpire makes the verbal call in the down/set position by saying "strike."
 - The umpire makes the visual signal by bringing his left arm across his belt, close to the body, while raising his right arm higher than his head, slightly in front of his body, with his arm in a locked hammer position. His hand must be in a closed fist.
 - The feet must remain in the set position when making the visual signal.
- Swinging Strikes
 - If the batter swings and misses the pitch, simply make a visual signal.
 - Do not verbalize "strike."
- Called Strikes
 - If the pitch is a called strike, verbalize "strike" from the down/set position.
 - Then rise to the upright position and give the visual signal.

- Called Third Strike
 - A verbal call for the third strike is necessary.
 - The signal for the called third strike must differ from the ordinary “hammer.”
 - Umpires may use some creativity in designing their strike three signal.
 - The umpire’s head must remain focused on the home plate area while giving the signal.
 - Umpires must keep in mind that while they must “sell” the call, they must not oversell it and risk embarrassing the players.

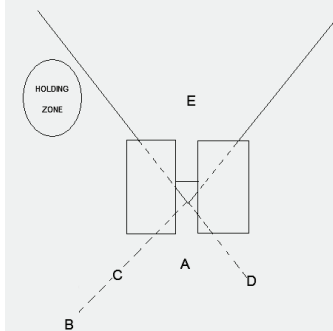
GIVING THE COUNT

- Balls are shown with the left hand.
- Strikes are shown with the right hand.
- When giving the count, say “x balls, y strike”,
 - For example, say, “2 balls, 1 strike.”
 - Do not say, “21” or “2 and 1.”
- When showing the count, your hands should be above your shoulders and at least shoulder width.
- Fingers are held up in order (i.e., no long-horns).
- For a full count, say, “3 balls, 2 strikes.”
 - Do not show a fist on both hands and say “full count.”
- Give the count when asked for it or when there are either 2 strikes or 3 balls.
 - You can also give it when there is an abnormally lengthy delay.
- Wait until the catcher returns the ball to the pitcher before giving the count.
 - Giving the count sooner could be distracting and people tend not to hear it then.

PLATE MECHANICS ON HITS

- **No runners on or a runner on first only – Ball hit in infield**
 - Follow the batter for the first 15 feet up first base line
 - Stop and watch for a pulled foot or swiped tag
 - Watch for three foot lane violation.
 - Note: if base umpire is trapped at first base, the plate umpire takes the batter-runner to second and third base. The base umpire rotates to home for a possible play at the plate. Once play has ended, the base umpire will call “time” to allow the umpires to return to their proper positions.
- **No runners on or a runner on first only - Base hit to the outfield**
 - Come out and move toward the pitcher’s rubber
 - Move toward third base for a possible play at 3rd
 - Position yourself 10 feet from third base for a possible call
 - Responsible for plays at home
 - Retreat home in fair ground and make the call from Position “E,” as noted below.
- **Runner on Second Base - Base hit to infield or outfield**
 - Come out and move directly up the third base line in foul ground for a possible play at 3rd base
 - Retreat towards home and be prepared for a play at the plate if the runner attempts to score
- **Runner on Third Base – Ball hit to infield or outfield**
 - Move from behind plate and go to holding zone for a possible play at home.
 - If the throw goes to 1st base, be prepared to go to third for a possible play at third or retreat back home if necessary

CALLING POSITIONS FOR PLAYS AT THE PLATE



Surprisingly and unfortunately, a higher percentage of calls are missed at home plate than any other base. The primary reason for these missed calls is poor umpire positioning. There are 4 basic positions for making calls at the plate. The play/throw will dictate which of calling positions B–E the umpire uses.

- **POSITION “A”**
 - This is the umpire’s original position at the time of the pitch.
 - As a general rule, if the ball is put in play and the plate umpire remains in Position “A,” the umpire is in the wrong position!
- **POSITION “B”**
 - This is for force plays at the plate.
 - The position is about 15 ft from home plate, along the 1st base line extended.
- **POSITION “C”**
 - This is for non-force plays when the throw home is on-line.
 - The position is about 8 ft from home plate, along the 1st base line extended.
- **POSITION “D”**
 - This is for non-force plays when the throw home is up the 3rd base line.
 - The position is about 8 ft from home plate along the 3rd base line extended.
 - This position allows the umpire to clearly see the catcher attempt to make a sweep tag, determine if it is made, and determine if it is made before the runner reaches the plate.
 - This position also allows the umpire to determine if the catcher has the ball in her glove when the tag is applied.
- **POSITION “E”**
 - This is for when the plate umpire enters fair ground for a call at 3rd base and then must retreat because the runner attempts to score.
 - This is the only time this position may be used for a call at the plate.
 - The position is approximately 8 ft from home plate, in a direct line between home and 2nd base.
 - This position is the best compromise for the umpire to see a play right at the plate or a swipe tag by the catcher.
- **CALLING DISTANCES**
 - On all force plays stay outside the diamond, 10-15 from the base you are going to make the call.
 - Make sure you are at an angle that allows you to see the entire play, including a pulled foot and the runner’s foot hitting the base.
 - On all tag plays get 6 to 8 feet from the bag from where the throw is coming. Make sure that the calling angle is 90 degrees.

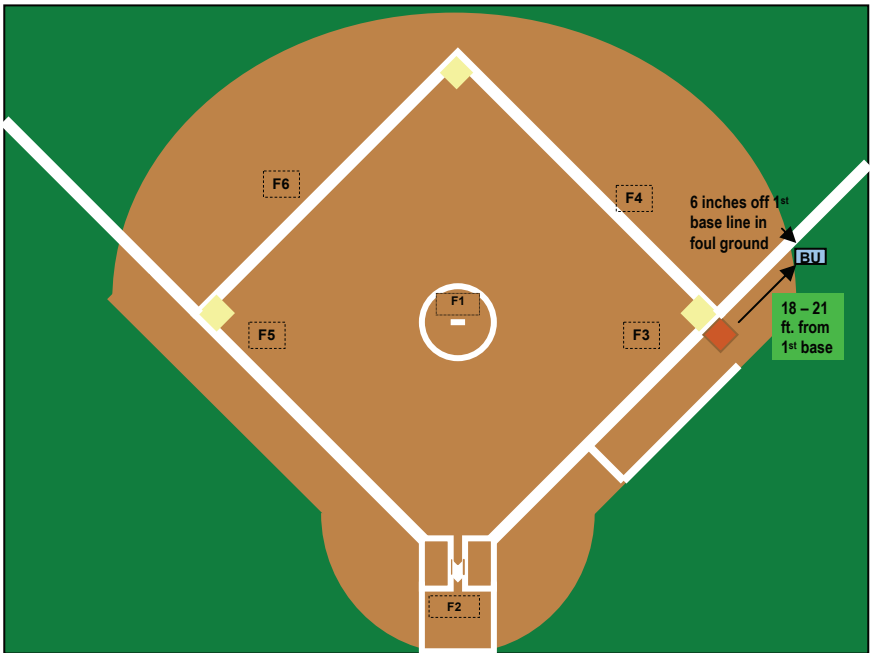
BASE MECHANICS

GENERAL

- The base umpire's (BU) feet and body must be square to home plate.
- Do not cheat – It is your responsibility both to start in the correct position and move to the correct position.
- Do not take a play for granted – get into position for ALL calls.
- Watch the ball!

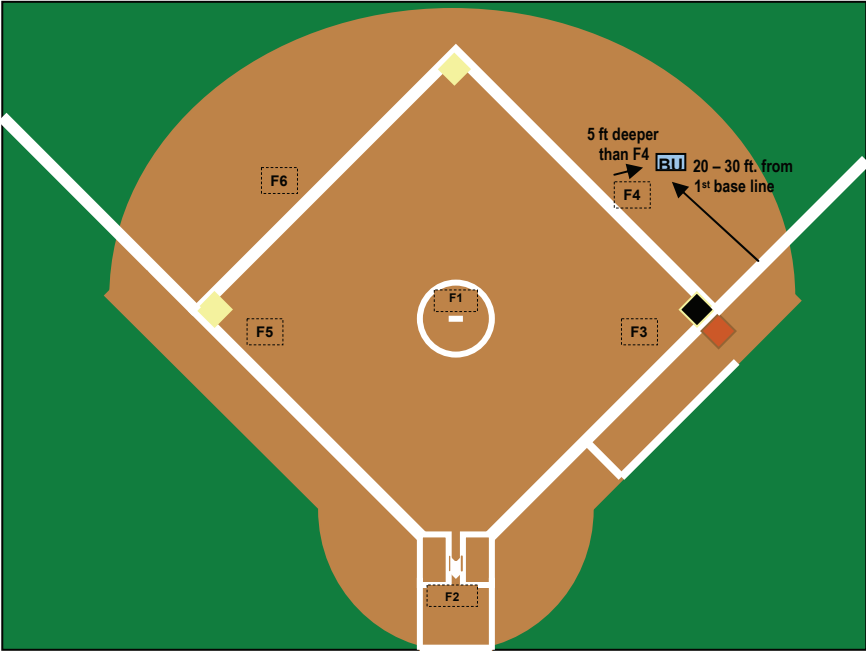
STARTING POSITIONS

“A” POSITION - No Runners on Base



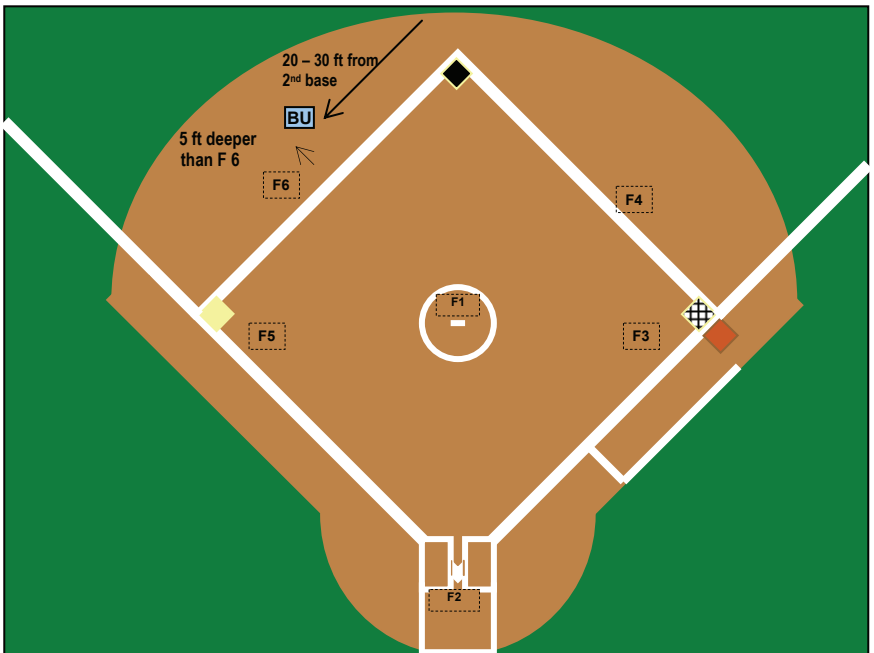
- **Walking the Line**
 - If you walk the line, start 21 ft. behind 1st base.
 - When the pitcher starts her motion, take two small steps towards home plate.
 - Your push off foot should hit the ground the same time the ball arrives at the plate.
- **Drop-Set Position**
 - If you use a drop-set position, start 18 ft. behind 1st base.
 - When the pitcher begins her motion, move to the drop-set position.

“B” POSITION – Runner on 1st Base Only



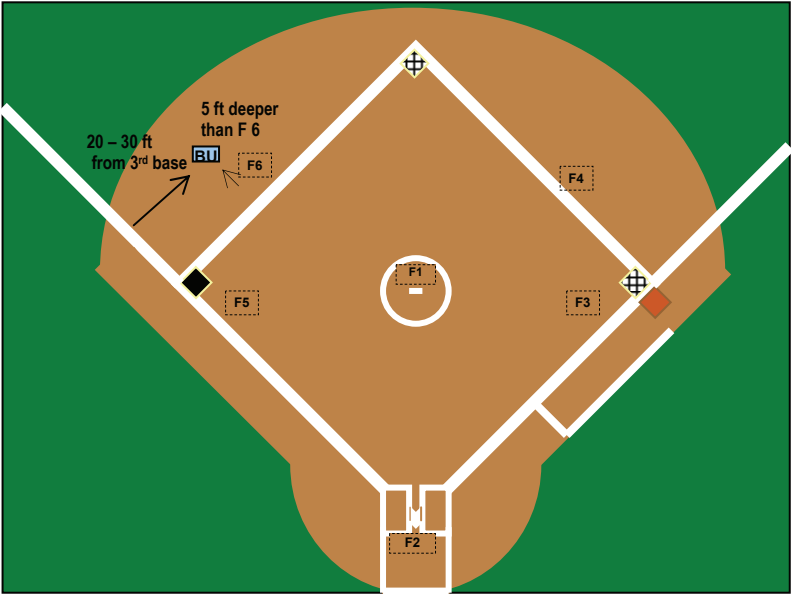
- Start 20 – 30 ft. from the first base line and no deeper than 2 steps behind F4.
- BU should not be closer to 2nd base than 1st base at the time of the pitch.
 - If you are much more than your body height behind F4, move in!
- When the pitcher begins her motion, move to the drop-set position.

“C” POSITION – Runner on 2nd Base Only or Runners on 1st & 2nd Base



- Start 20 – 30 ft. from 2nd base and no deeper than 2 steps behind F6.
 - BU should not be closer to 3rd base than 2nd base at the time of the pitch.
 - If you are much more than your body height behind F6, move in!
- When the pitcher begins her motion, move to the drop-set position.

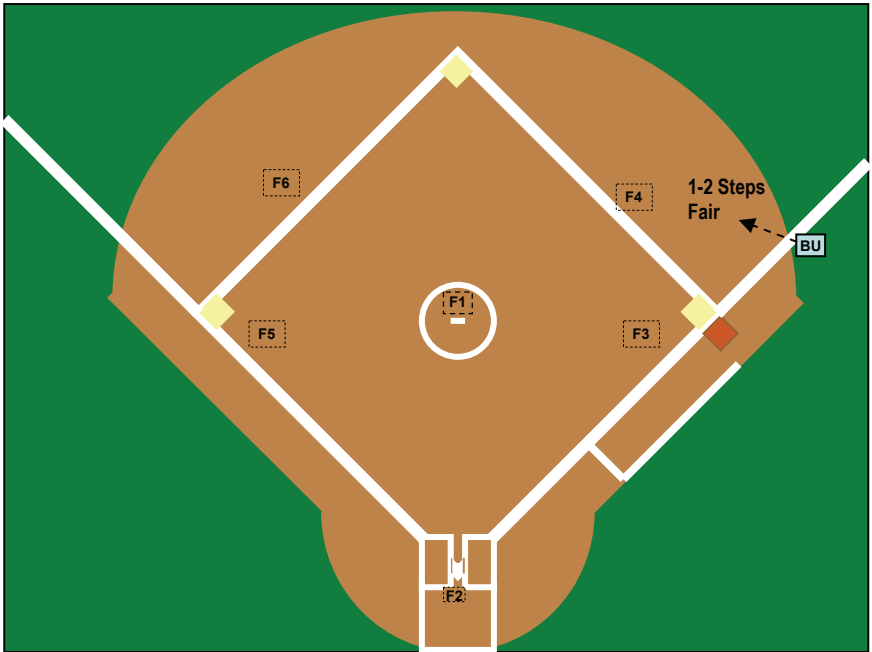
“D” POSITION – Anytime There is a Runner on 3rd Base



- Start 20 – 30 ft. from the 3rd base and no deeper than 2 steps behind F6.
- BU should not be closer to 2nd base than 3rd base at the time of the pitch.
 - If you are much more than your body height behind F6, move in!
- When the pitcher begins her motion, move to the drop-set position.

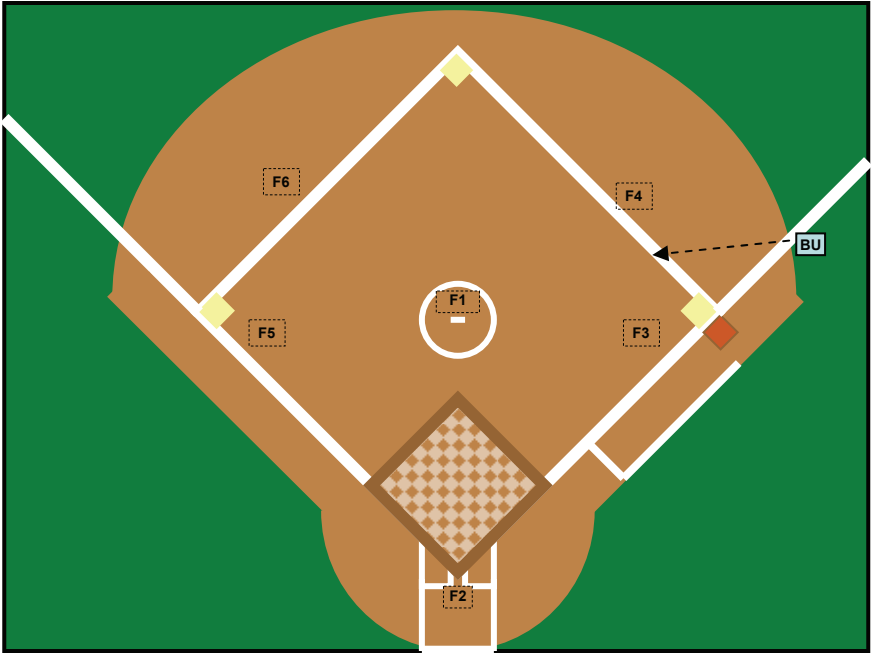
BALL PUT IN PLAY

“A” POSITION - Routine Hit to an Infielder



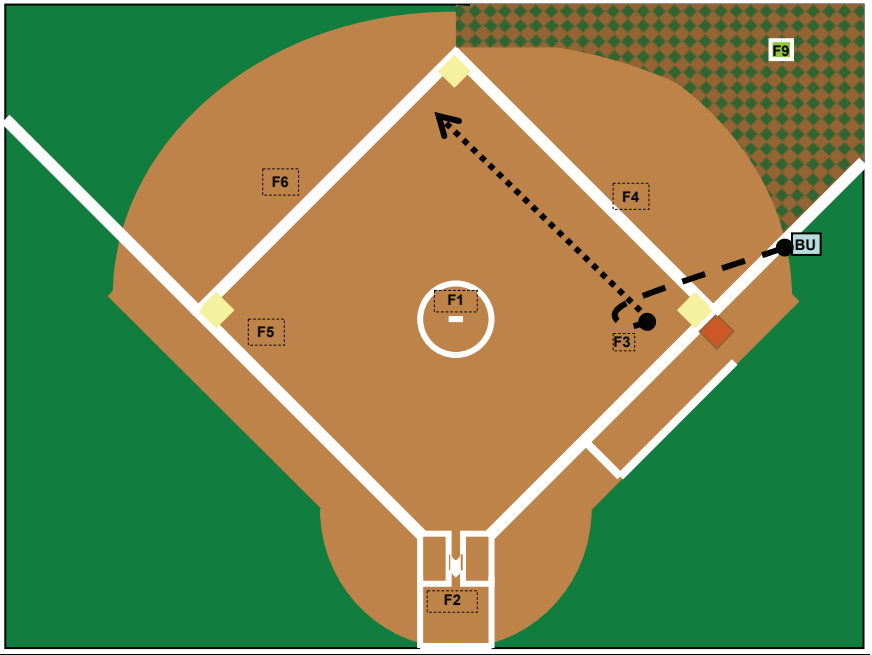
- On a routine hit to an infielder, take 1 or 2 steps into fair ground.
- The calling distance for a force play at 1st base is approximately 15 from 1st base.
- Watch the infielder field and throw the ball to 1st base, allowing the ball to turn your head toward the base.
- BU must be set before the ball arrives. BU's body must be square to 1st base.
- If there is an overthrow, be prepared to take the runner to 2nd base by running parallel and outside the 1st-2nd base line.
- If there is an overthrow at 2nd base, come inside the diamond and take the runner to 3rd base.

“A” POSITION – Bunt or Soft Hit in Front of Plate – “Diamond within the Diamond”



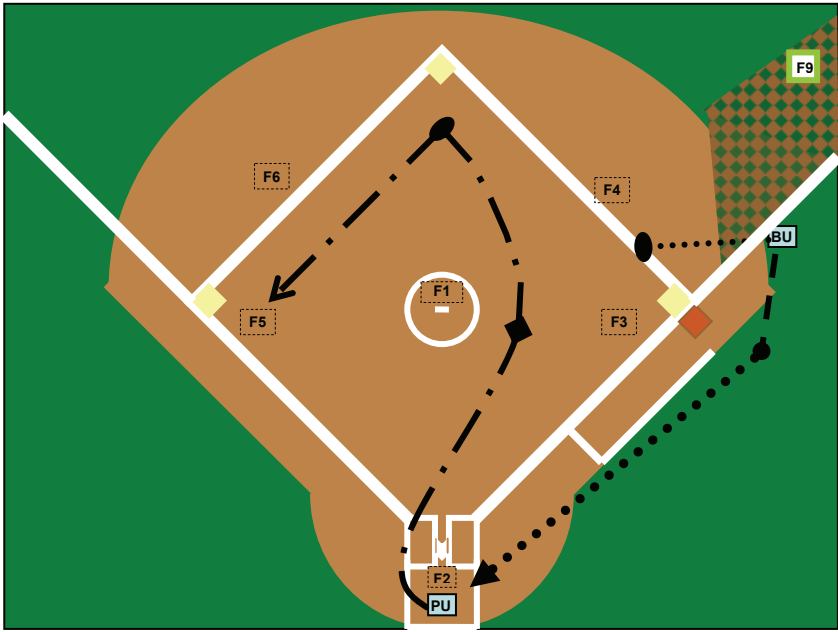
- This position is used when the ball is hit in the shaded area (approximately 20 ft. up each baseline and 20 ft. toward the pitcher's plate).
- It most often occurs on bunts and soft hits.
- When the ball is fielded in the shaded area, move 15 ft. from 1st base on a direct line on the 1st-2nd base line.
- There are two benefits to using this position when the ball is hit in the shaded area.
 - First, the defender covering 1st base is more likely to have her foot on the edge of 1st base closest to home, so the umpire will be able to see a pulled foot.
 - Second, there are more wild throws from this area, so the umpire will be able to quickly move inside the diamond if the runner goes to 2nd base.

“A” POSITION – Ball Hit Toward Straightaway Center Field or Right of Center Field - “The Buttonhook”



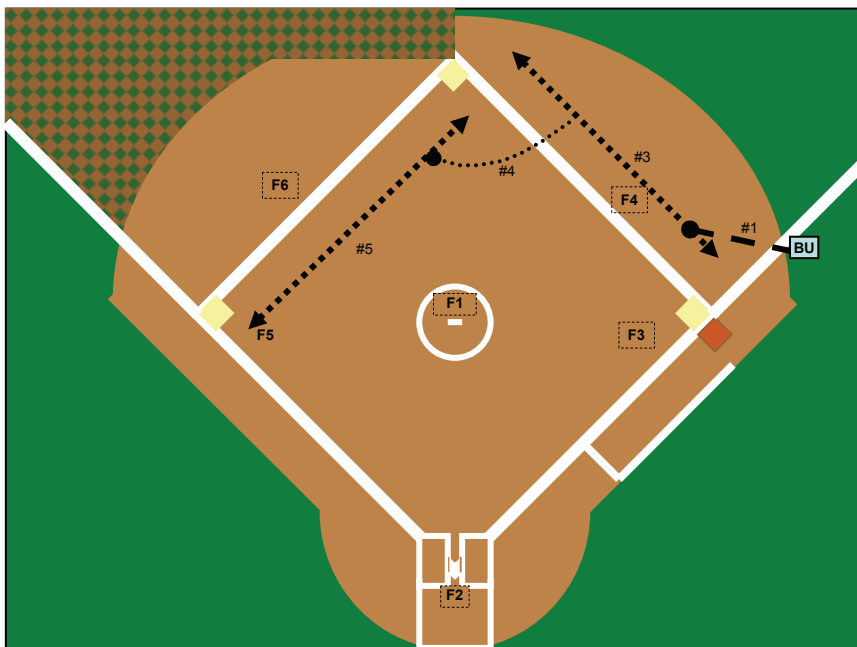
- These mechanics are referred to as the “buttonhook.”
 - The buttonhook is used when the ball is hit toward center field or right of center field (shaded area) when there is no possible force out at 1st base.
 - Run to a point 8 ft. from the 1st base line and 8 ft. from the 1st-2nd base line.
 - To buttonhook, turn counter-clockwise.
 - The buttonhook must be tight and you should not have to back pedal in order to do it.
 - The buttonhook must be completed before BR hits 1st base.
 - Watch for the runner to hit 1st base and for obstruction.
 - Watch for the ball being thrown into the infield.
- Move with the runner!
 - BU should move in a smooth manner along with BR.
 - If she rounds 1st base, move with her, but do not just run to 2nd base.
 - Instead, make sure she is actually going to 2nd base first.
 - Any throw-back to 1st base is your responsibility.
 - If the runner returns to 1st base, move back with her.

“A” POSITION – Ball Hit Toward Right Field with Possible Play at 1st Base – Alternative Mechanics



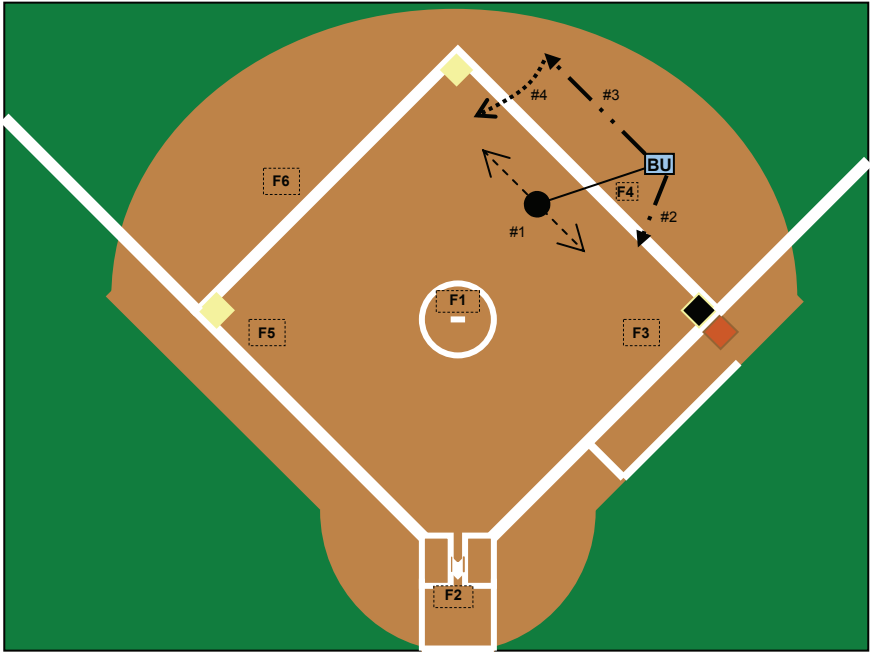
- When the ball is hit into the shaded area, BU must determine whether it is better to move into fair ground or foul ground for the play at 1st base. Most importantly, BU must avoid being hit by the batted ball and avoid distracting the fielders. BU must consider the position of the fielders, how close to the line the ball is hit, how hard the ball is hit and BU's physical capabilities.
- #1 Whenever possible, it is better to move into fair ground for the play at 1st base.
 - Move 15 ft. from 1st base on a direct line on the 1st-2nd baseline.
- #2 If BU doesn't have time to get a proper angle in fair ground (#1), BU must take several steps further into foul ground, lining up with the 1st-2nd baseline.
 - Getting into this proper foul ground position has several benefits.
 - BU will avoid interfering with the play getting hit by the throw.
 - BU will be able to see if F4 pulls her foot.
 - BU will be far enough from BR's path to avoid a collision with her.
- If the ball gets by F9, BU is responsible for judging if the ball enters dead ball territory - This is because PU is off the line taking BR to 2nd and 3rd base.
 - If the ball stays in play and BR continues to run, BU must wait for BR to hit 2nd base. Then BU must immediately move home in case BR attempts to score.

“A” POSITION – Ball Hit to the Left of Center Field – “The Rim”



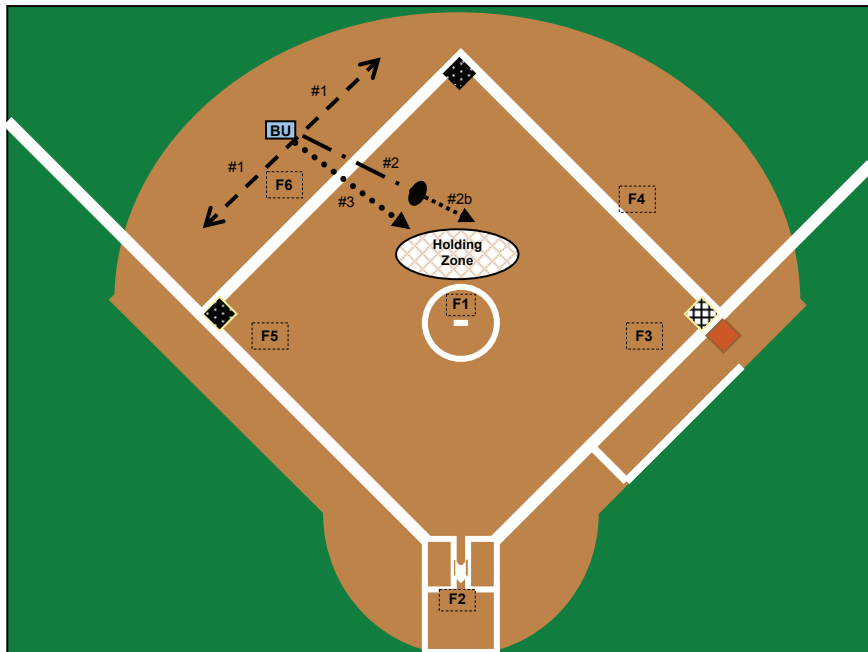
- These mechanics are referred to as “working the rim.”
 - They are used when the ball is hit to the left of center field (shaded area).
- #1 When the ball is hit, move 15 feet into fair ground. Read the runner’s motion.
- #2 If the ball is returned to the infield and the runner returns to 1st base, move back toward 1st base with the runner, while keeping an eye on the ball.
- #3 If the runner goes to 2nd base, run parallel with the base line.
- #4 If the runner rounds 2nd base, cut into the infield, moving no farther from 2nd base then 15 ft.
- #5 If the runner goes to 3rd base, run parallel with the base line.

“B” POSITION – All Movements



- **Ball Hit in Infield**
 - Hold your position, then let the throw move you a few steps to the play.
 - Double Play Attempt
 - Take a few steps toward 2nd base.
 - Signal the play at 2nd.
 - Then take a step or two when the ball is thrown.
 - Get set for the call at 1st base.
- **Ball Hit to Right or Center - No Possible Play on Either BR or R1**
 - #1 Move 5 ft. inside the baseline and cheat toward 2nd base.
 - BU is responsible for a throwback to either base, obstruction and missed bases.
- **Ball Hit to Right – Possible Force Play at 1st**
 - #2 Take a few steps toward 1st base and move just inside the baseline
- **Ball Hit to Center – Possible Force Play at 2nd Base**
 - #3 Stay outside the base line and move as close to the leading edge of 2nd base without interfering. Do not attempt to get inside the baseline for the call.
- **Ball Hit to Left of Center Field**
 - #4 Stay outside the baseline and move toward 2nd base. If R1 rounds 2nd, cut inside the baseline. Do not follow R1 to 3rd base. R1 is the PU's responsibility. Only take BR to 3rd base.

“C” or “D” POSITION – All Movements



• Ball Hit in Infield

- #1 If the first play is to 2nd or 3rd base, take a few steps toward the base.
- #2a If the first play is to 1st base, move into the infield, avoiding any runners.
 - Just before the ball arrives at 1st base, stop moving.
 - On more obvious plays, simply make the call.
- #2b On closer plays, after verbalizing the call, take 2 or 3 steps toward 1st base while giving the visual signal.
 - This gives the impression that the umpire was even closer to the play when making the call.

• Ball Hit to Outfield

- #3 Move inside the diamond to the holding zone.
 - Watch for obstruction and missed bases.
 - BU is responsible for all force plays at 1st and 2nd base, and also 3rd base if bases are loaded.
 - BU will take BR to 3rd base on a triple.
 - All other calls at 3rd are PU's responsibility unless PU is held up at the plate for a possible play there.
 - Know your base runner tag up responsibilities.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BASE UMPIRES

- First play in the infield on any ball that is hit to an infielder.
- The base umpire only make four calls at third on a ball put in play:
 - All force plays.
 - If the first throw is by an infielder to 3rd base.
 - Batter-runner going to 3rd base (for a triple).
 - If the plate umpire is caught with a play at home.
 - Look to make sure that your partner is not in a position to make the call before you do. Remember that you still have all calls at 1st and 2nd and that you will only make the extra call at 3rd if your partner gets caught at home. The plate umpire should say, "I've got 3rd!" If you, as the base umpire, don't hear the plate umpire say this, be prepared to make the call at 3rd.
- Any and all trail runners.
- Checked swings.
- All runners leaving base early.
 - Exception: Either umpire can call a runner at 2nd base out for leaving early.
- Tag up responsibilities:
 - All runners at 1st base
 - Runner at 2nd base when there are runners at 2nd and 3rd or 2nd only.
 - Runners at 1st base and 2nd base when the bases are loaded.
- All illegal pitches pertaining to the pitcher's feet (except for stepping outside the 24 inch pitcher's plate).
- All steals at all bases.
 - However, with just a runner on 1st base, if the runner steals 2nd base and continues to 3rd base, the call at 3rd base is the plate umpire's responsibility. If you, as the base umpire, don't hear the plate umpire say this, be prepared to make the call at 3rd.
- All pick-off attempts at all bases.

PLATE & BASE UMPIRE COMBINED RESPONSIBILITIES

TAG UP RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Two Umpire**
 - Plate Umpire
 - Responsible for the runner on 2nd base when runners are on 1st and 2nd base.
 - Responsible for all runners on 3rd base.
 - Base Umpire
 - Responsible for all trail runners.
 - Responsible for single runner on 2nd base and single runner on 1st base.
- **Three Umpire**
 - When a base umpire goes out on a fly ball, the plate umpire and remaining base umpire assume the same responsibilities as those in the two-umpire system.

THE RUNDOWN

A rundown is the act of multiple defensive players at two bases making more than 1 throw in an attempt to retire the same runner. Getting the call right on a rundown requires the "off" umpire to notice the potential for a rundown immediately.

- **Generally**
 - The key to any rundown is hustle and communication.
 - Get in position as quickly as possible.
 - The "helping umpire" should say "I've got (base)."
- **Positioning**
 - Each umpire should be no further than 15 feet from the base for which he is responsible.
 - Each umpire should be no closer to the base line than 6 feet.
 - The umpires should be on the opposite side of the base line.
 - However, in the 3-umpire system, if the 3rd base umpire is inside the diamond, then both the 3rd base umpire and the plate umpire will be on the inside of the diamond.
 - Each umpire should hold his position and avoid running back and forth with the runner.
- **Calling**
 - Ordinarily, the umpire responsible for making the call is the umpire to whom the runner is running. However, if a runner is tagged in the back, the trail umpire is responsible for the call.
 - When the umpire sees a tag, the umpire points toward the tag with left arm and say, "tag," then continue with the appropriate call.
 - Each umpire should be watchful for obstruction, and possibly interference.

ILLEGAL PITCHES

- **Mechanic**
 - The umpire calling an illegal pitch shall extend her left arm shoulder high with a closed fist and say "illegal" loud enough for the closest player to hear.
- **Plate Umpire**
 - Calls all illegal pitches that pertain to the hands.
 - Calls all illegal pitch for stepping outside the 24 inch width of the pitcher's plate.
 - Calls illegal pitches for foreign substance.
- **Base Umpire**
 - Calls all illegal pitches for foot violations.
 - Calls illegal pitches for foreign substance.

FAIR/FOUL BALL COVERAGE

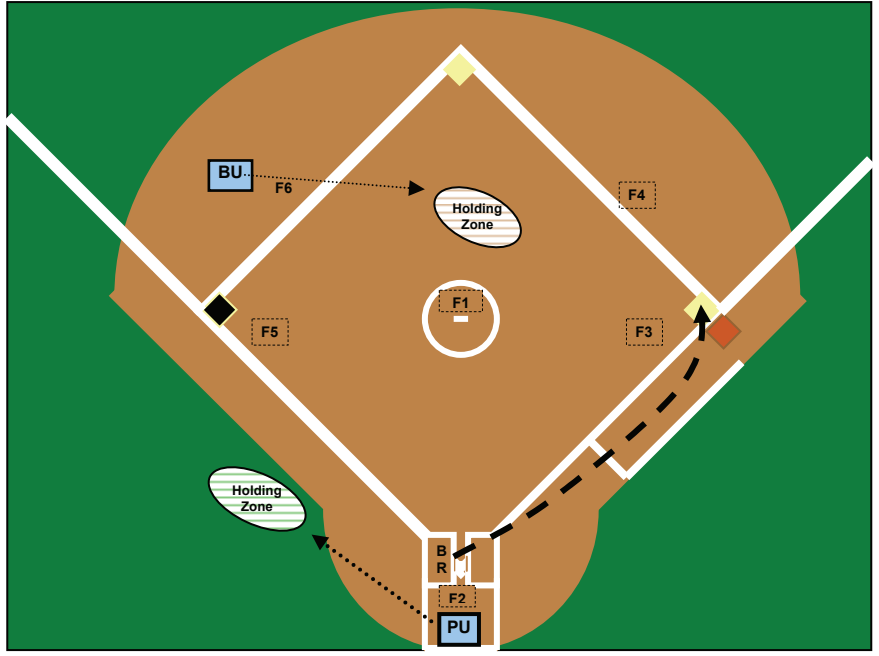
- There is a close correlation between closeness to the play and correctness of the call. For this reason, fair/foul responsibility is shared by the plate and base umpires in certain situations.
- In the 2-umpire system, the plate umpire has all fair/foul calls down the 3rd base line.
- With a runner(s) on base, the plate umpire has all fair/foul calls down the 1st base line.
- With no runners on base, the base umpire has fair/foul calls beyond 1st base when the ball first hits the ground after 1st base.
 - Exception: If the base umpire needs to move off the line to avoid interfering with a fly ball near his position, the plate umpire has fair/foul calls. In addition to avoiding interfering with the players, the players often have their back to the base umpire, which makes determining fair/foul difficult.
- With no runners on base, it is important for the 1st base umpire to "go out" on fly balls down the 1st base line.

- With no runners on base, when there is a potential catch/trap down the 1st base line, the base umpire should take a few steps towards the outfield, then drop to the set position.
 - If the ball *hits* the ground in *fair territory*, signal “safe” and verbalize “no catch.”
 - If the ball *hits* the ground in *foul territory*, signal and verbalize “foul.”
 - If the ball *contacts* any part of a *player* (including her glove) before it hits the ground, the umpire must immediately point whether the ball was fair or foul.
 - If the ball is caught, the base umpire signals and verbalizes “out.”
 - If the ball is not caught and is foul, the base umpire must signal and verbalize “foul.”
 - If the ball is not caught and is fair, the base umpire must signal “safe” and verbalize “no catch.”
- Pointing fair or foul when the ball contacts the player before touching the ground is important. It allows the umpire an additional second or two before making the call. Most importantly, it forces the umpire to determine fair/foul *before* the ball is dropped. Amazingly, when everything happens so quickly, umpires frequently forget whether the ball was fair or foul when the fielder first touched it.
- When pointing, extend the appropriate arm fully, pointing with only your index finger. If you feel it is necessary, you may re-pump the signal once. Do not do a rapid-fire pump. One or two quick, crisp pumps looks best and notifies everyone.
- The 3rd base umpire in a 3-umpire system should use these same techniques. Far too often the 3rd base umpire takes off for 2nd base, abandoning highly important play in her area. The priority ought to be getting the initial call correct. The 1st base umpire can take batter-runner to 2nd base should the ball fall in fair down the line.
- The plate umpire should take her mask off before determining fair/foul. However, if taking your mask off would interfere with your ability to determine fair/foul or catch/no catch, you may leave your mask on. With that said, do not get in the habit of always leaving it on, which is the exception to the rule, and not the norm.

CHECKED SWING

- We know that in a two-umpire system the base umpire is not always in the best position to help on checked swings. However, the plate umpire must go for help when asked. This is not optional.
- **Plate Umpire**
 - When going for help, take off your mask, step away from the batter, point to your partner with your left hand and ask, “Did she go?” or “Did she swing?”
 - *Note:* If time is of the essence (e.g, a potential dropped third strike situation), do not wait for the defense to ask for you to go for help. Go immediately!
- **Base Umpire**
 - Swing
 - If asked, “Did she go?” respond by saying “yes” and give the strike signal
 - No Swing
 - If asked, “Did she go?” respond by saying “no” and giving the signal safe.

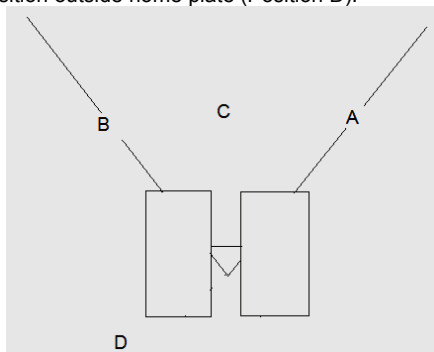
WHEEL PLAY



- The “Wheel Play” is in effect when there is a runner on 3rd base at the time of the pitch and the batter walks.
 - Proper positioning during this play is extremely important because the potential calls involve a runner in scoring position and the enforcement of rules without there even being a play.
 - Therefore, in order for the umpire’s call to have any credibility, the umpire must be in the proper position.
- **Base Umpire Responsibilities**
 - BU is responsible for a pickoff attempt if F2 immediately throws down to 3rd base.
 - If F2 does not attempt such a pickoff, BU must move into the holding zone.
 - BU has all circle rule (look-back rule) violations committed by BR.
 - BU has all calls on plays made on BR.
- **Plate Umpire Responsibilities**
 - PU must immediately move into the holding zone.
 - The closer R3 is to 3rd base, the farther up the holding zone PU must move.
 - Watch BR hit 1st base.
 - PU has all circle rule (look-back rule) violations committed by R3.
 - PU has all calls on plays made on R3.

INFIELD FLY

- When there is a possible infield fly, both umpires must “put it on” by placing their right hand over the left portion of their chest. Then, the umpire signals how many outs there are by indicating zero outs with a closed fist or extending the index finger for one out.
- When there is no longer a possible infield fly, the umpire shall “take it off” by moving his right hand down from his left forearm to his left hand.
- Both umpires may call infield.
- Say “Infield Fly – Batter’s Out” If the fly is near the line you add “if fair”
- As the verbal call is made make a out signal
- Make the call loud enough for everyone to hear you.
- Note: If you forget to call infield fly it is still in effect.
- Plate movements for infield fly
 - If the infield fly is on or near the 1st base line and no runner is on 3rd base, the plate umpire will move up the 1st base line 10 to 15 feet (Position A).
 - If the infield fly is on or near the 3rd base line, the plate ump will come up 10 to 15 feet up the 3rd base line (Position B).
 - If the infield fly is more than 10 feet off of either line and there is no runner on 3rd base, the plate umpire will move 10 to 15 feet in front of home plate to make the call (Position C).
 - With bases loaded and the infield fly is called the plate ump will move to the holding position outside home plate (Position D).



BETWEEN INNING MECHANICS

- **Plate Umpire**
 - Move to the side that is going on defense.
 - Position yourself 10 to 15 feet to the side of home plate.
- **Base Umpire**
 - Clean pitching rubber when needed after 3rd out of inning.
 - Clean bases only if you cannot see them.
 - Move to edge of the grass in right field, 10 to 15 feet from the foul line.

AFTER ALL PLAYS END

- **Base Umpire**
 - Wait for the defense to return the ball to the pitcher in the pitcher’s circle.
 - Hustle back into position.
 - Once the base umpire is back in position, all circle violations are the base umpire’s responsibility.

- The plate umpire should never have to “hold the pitcher up” because the base umpire did not get back into position quickly enough.
- **Plate Umpire**
 - Wait for the defense to return the ball to the pitcher in the pitcher’s circle.
 - Wait for the base umpire to get back into position.
 - Until the base umpire is back in position, all circle violations are the plate umpire’s responsibility.
 - Hustle back behind the plate, remembering to put your mask on before setting up behind the catcher.

RUNNER LEAVING EARLY

- Base umpire will call loudly and clearly “NO PITCH” and signal dead ball while stepping toward the infield. Point at the runner who left the base early with your left hand and declare “Runner’s out for leaving early.”

HIT BATTER

- When a batter is hit by a pitched ball, the plate umpire makes a strong verbal “DEAD BALL” The plate umpires will immediately move out in front of the plate in between the batter-runner and pitcher and continue to walk the batter-runner towards first base.
- When the plate umpire fails to call a batter hit-by-pitch or by a batted ball, the base umpire will immediately call a dead ball.
 - However, if the base umpires is not positive that the ball hit the batter, he should not make the call.

DROPPED THIRD STRIKE

- **When the Dropped Third Strike Is Not In Effect**
 - Plate umpire signals strike.
 - Plate umpire verbalizes, “the batter is out.”
- **When The Dropped Third Strike Is In Effect**
 - Plate umpire signals strike.
 - If the catcher makes a clean catch, the base umpire shows a closed fist waist high with his right arm.
 - If the catcher does not make a clean catch, the base umpire points to the ground with his index finger with his right arm.
 - The arm should be extended from the body so that it can clearly be seen by the plate umpire.
 - The base umpire must move into a calling position for a possible play at first.

THREE FOOT LANE VIOLATION

- Plate umpire will call loudly and clearly, “Dead Ball” and signal dead ball while stepping toward the point of interference. Point at the batter with your left hand, then signal and verbalize “Out!”

PREVENTATIVE UMPIRING

- When a situation occurs and it appears that there could be a rule violation but there was not in fact a violation, it is an accepted and recommended mechanic to signal safe. This lets everyone know that the umpire saw the situation but there was no violation.
 - Examples: (1) The batted ball did not hit a runner; (2) A runner did not contact a defensive player attempting to field a ball; (3) The bat did not contact the ball a second time over fair ground; (4) The ball did not contact unauthorized equipment on the field; and (5) The ball did not get stuck in the fence.

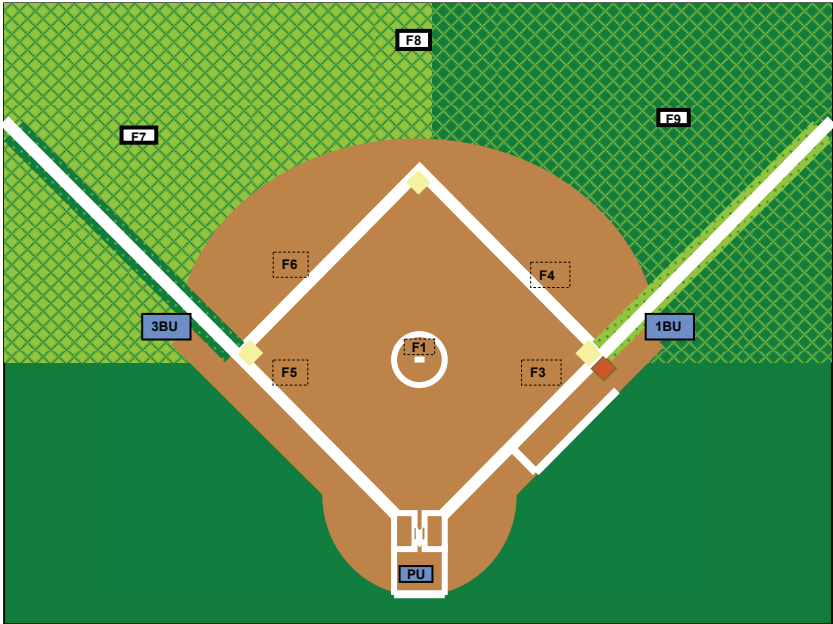
THREE UMPIRE MECHANICS

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- 1BU refers to the umpire assigned to work 1st base; 3BU refers to the umpire assigned to work 3rd base.
- Umpires are in rotation mode whenever 1BU is on the 1st base line (i.e., he is in the A position).
 - When in rotation mode, the umpires rotate clockwise.
- Umpires are in a counter-rotation mode whenever 1BU is off the 1st base line (i.e., he is in the B position).
- **Fly Ball Coverage**
 - It is not necessary for one of the base umpires to go out on every fly ball. A base umpire should only go out when the play might require umpire judgment.
 - Examples of when to go out include when the ball is hit near the line, when a player may dive or attempt a shoestring catch, two outfielders may converge on the ball or the ball is hit near the fence or other dead ball markers.
 - When an umpire goes out on a fly ball, the remaining base umpire and plate umpire revert to 2-umpire mechanics.
 - When a base umpire goes out, he must stay out.
 - In this case, the “clockwise rotation rule” does not apply.
- Base umpires must not neglect their primary responsibility in order to “get to the next base.”
- **Communication**
 - The 3-umpire system requires even more communication than the 2-umpire system.
 - For example, 3BU should use a phrase such as “I’ve got 2nd” so that 1BU knows he does not have to take BR to 2nd base and he can rotate home.
 - Umpires also need to recognize what the other umpires are doing.
 - For example, 1BU must notice that 3BU is going out for a fly ball and that the umpires are now in a 2-umpire system. 1BU would then be responsible for taking BR to 2nd and 3rd base.
 - Likewise, if 3BU stays on the line to determine fair/foul, he may be unable to get to 2nd base. In this case, 1BU must take BR to 2nd base. However, since 3BU did not actually go out on the ball, 3BU will be able to make calls at 3rd base. The plate umpire must also recognize so as to prevent a double call at 3rd base. 3BU could prevent the plate umpire from coming up the line by holding his hand up to the plate umpire.
- Base umpires are still square to home plate, regardless of whether there are runners on base.
- **Checked Swings**
 - The plate umpires should ask 3BU for help on left-handed batters and 1BU on right-handed batters.
 - Exception: With only a runner on 1st base, if that runner attempts to steal 2nd base, the plate umpire should ask 1BU for help.

STARTING POSITIONS

NO RUNNERS ON BASE



- **STARTING POSITION**

- **PU:** Behind F2
- **1BU:** 18-21 ft. behind 1st base
- **3BU:** 18-21 ft. behind 3rd base

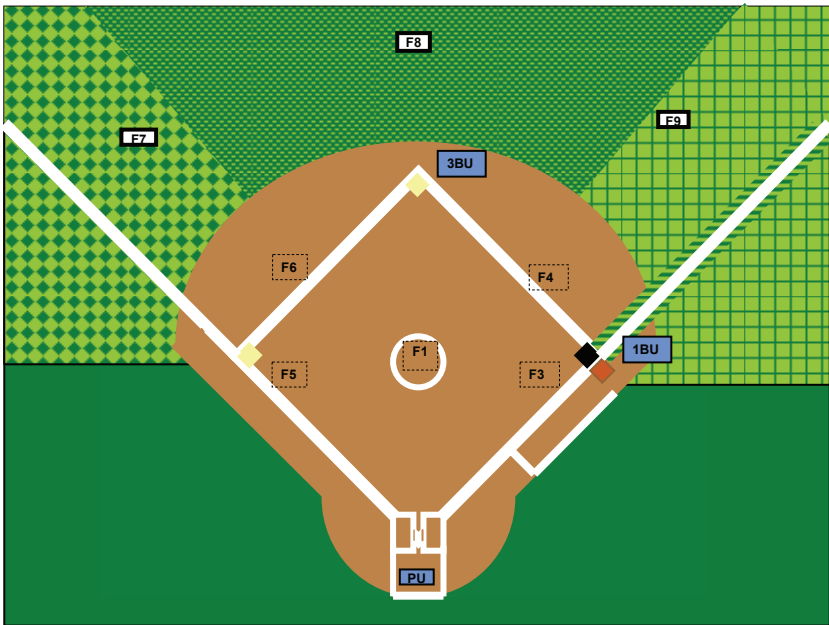
- **FAIR/FOUL COVERAGE**

- **PU:** Home plate through 1st and 3rd base
- **1BU:** Beyond 1st base to the foul pole
- **3BU:** Beyond 3rd base to the foul pole

- **FLY BALL COVERAGE**

- **PU:** No responsibility
- **1BU:** From center field to the right field fence
- **3BU:** From center field to the left field fence
- *Note:* When in doubt, 3BU is responsible for the fly ball hit toward center field. 1BU must key off of 3BU.

RUNNER ON 1ST BASE ONLY



• STARTING POSITION

- **PU:** Behind F2
- **1BU:** 8-10 ft. behind 1st base in foul ground square to the plate
- **3BU:** 8-10 ft. behind 2nd base square to the plate and on a direct line from 2nd to 3rd base

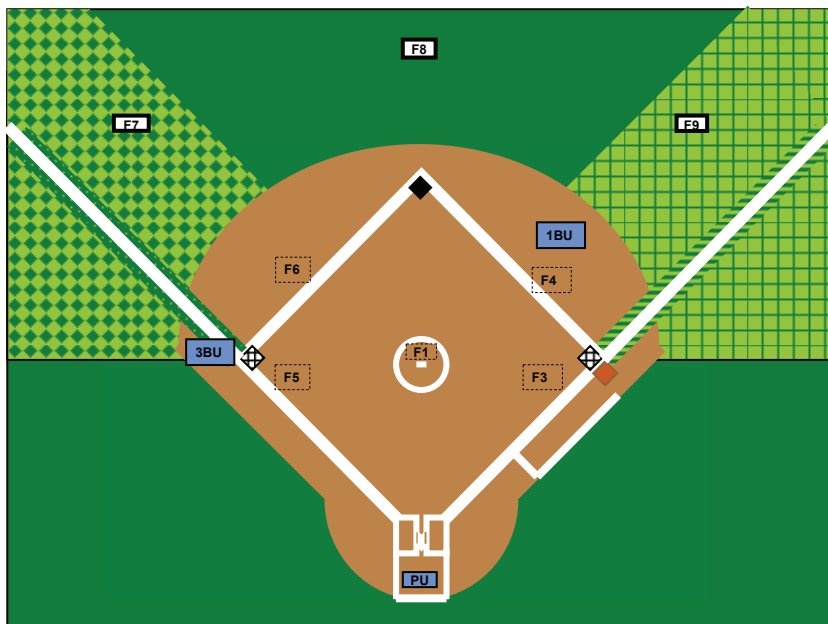
• FAIR/FOUL COVERAGE

- **PU:** Home Plate Through 1st & Entire 3rd Base line
- **1BU:** Past 1st Base to Foul Pole
- **3BU:** No Responsibility

• FLY BALL COVERAGE

- **PU:** Direct Hit to the Left Fielder to the Left Field Fence
- **1BU:** Direct Hit to the Right Fielder to the Right Field Fence
- **3BU:** From the Right Fielder to the Left Fielder
- *Note:* When in doubt, 3BU is responsible for the fly ball. 1BU must key off of 3BU on fly balls to right field.

RUNNER ON 2ND BASE (ANYTIME) OR RUNNERS ON BOTH 1ST & 3RD BASE



• STARTING POSITION

- **PU**: Behind F2
- **1BU**: Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ way between 1st & 2nd base and no deeper than 2 steps behind F4
- **3BU**: 8-10 ft. behind 3rd base in foul ground

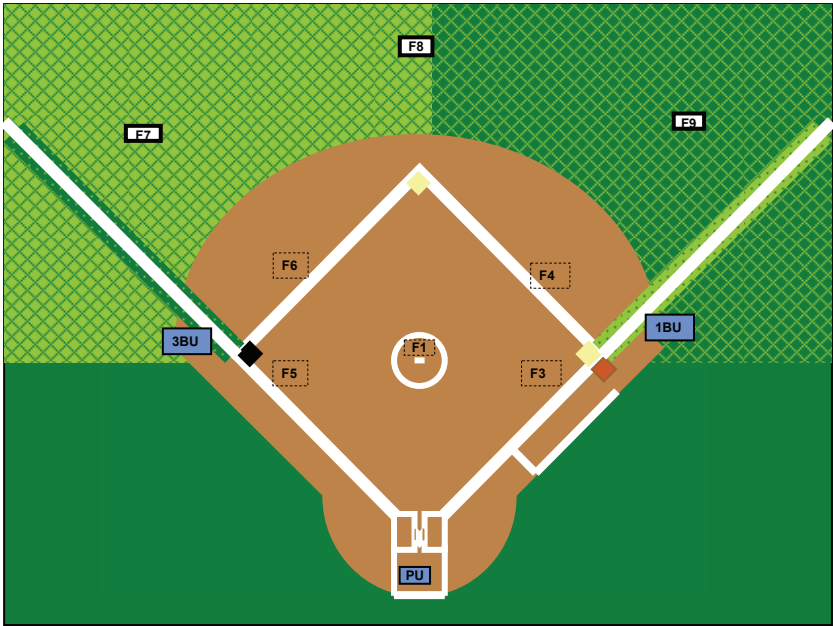
• FAIR/FOUL COVERAGE

- **PU**: Entire 1st Base Line
- **1BU**: No Responsibility
- **3BU**: Past 3rd Base to Foul Pole

• FLY BALL COVERAGE

- **PU**: Direct Hit to the Right Fielder to the Right Field Fence
- **1BU**: From Left Field to Right Field
- **3BU**: From the Left Fielder to the Left Field Fence

RUNNER ON 3RD BASE ONLY



- **STARTING POSITION**

- **PU:** Behind F2
- **1BU:** 18-21 ft. behind 1st base
- **3BU:** 8-10 ft. behind 3rd base in foul ground

- **FAIR/FOUL COVERAGE**

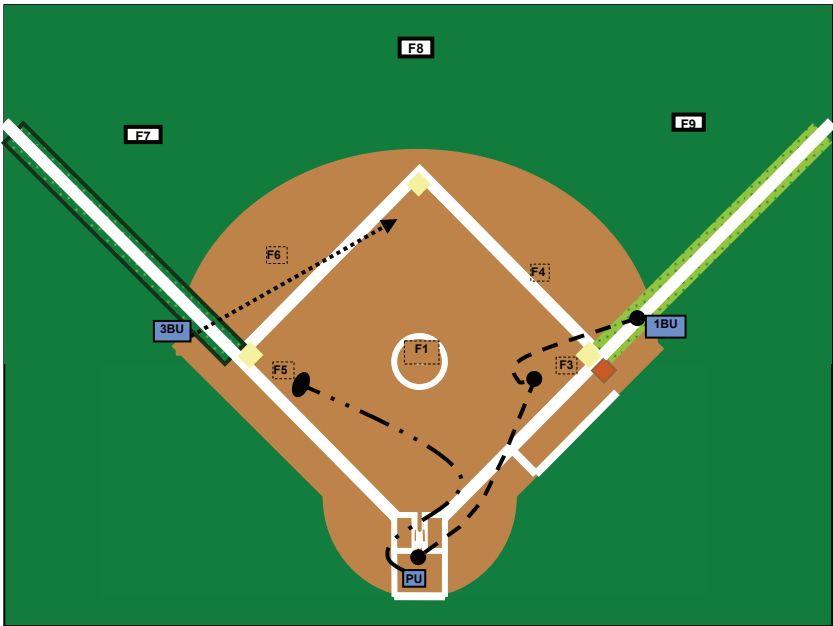
- **PU:** Home Plate Through 1st & 3rd Base
- **1BU:** Past 1st Base to Foul Pole
- **3BU:** Past 3rd Base to Foul Pole

- **FLY BALL COVERAGE**

- **PU:** No Responsibility
- **1BU:** From Center Field to Right Field Fence
- **3BU:** From Center Field to Left Field Fence
- *Note:* When in doubt, 3BU is responsible for the fly ball. 1BU must key off of 3BU on fly balls to center field.

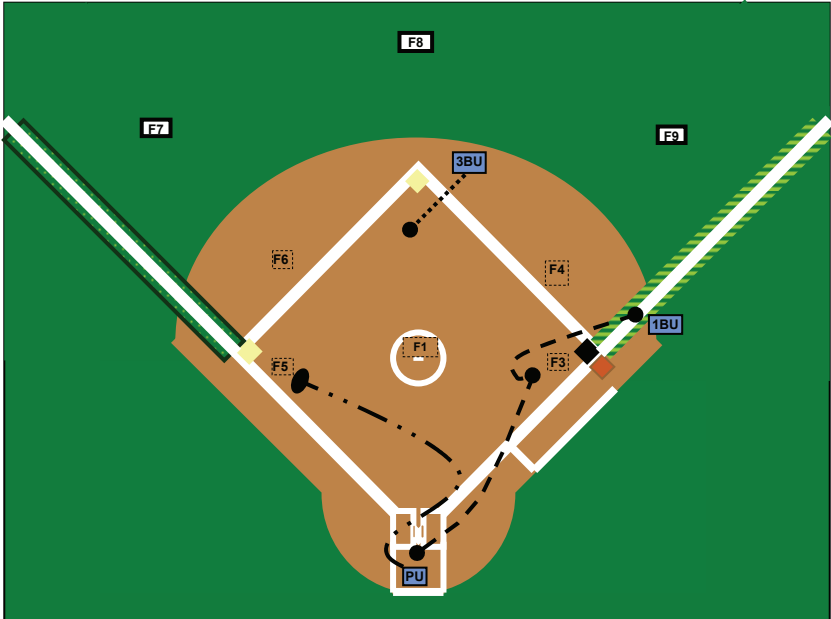
BALL HIT TO OUTFIELD – NEITHER UMPIRE GOES OUT

NO RUNNERS ON BASE



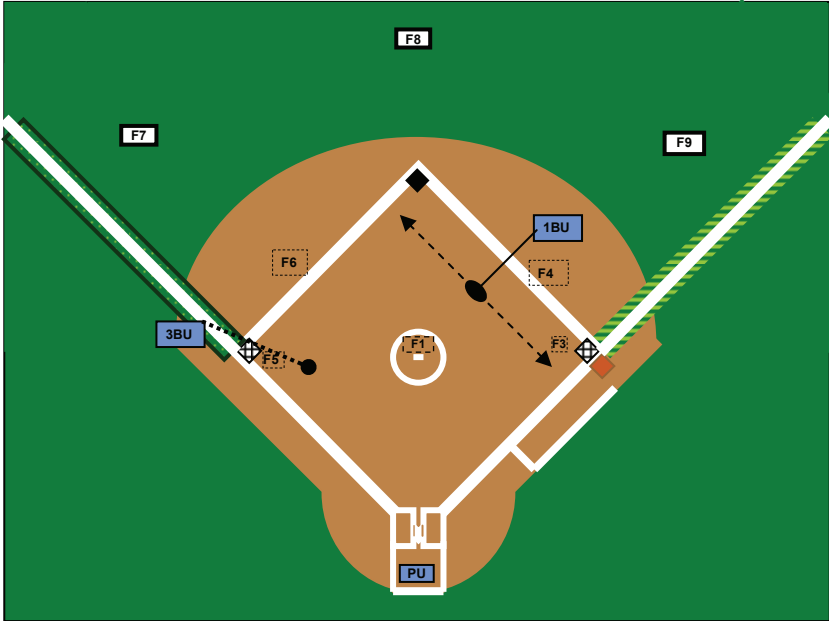
- **PU**
 - Trail BR 15 ft. up the 1st base line.
 - Then move directly to 3rd base for a possible play there.
- **1BU**
 - Buttonhook inside 1st base.
 - Wait for BR to hit 2nd base, then move to home plate.
 - Do not move home until there is no possible play on BR at 1st base.
- **3BU**
 - Move directly to 2nd base inside the base line, 8 ft. from 2nd base.

RUNNER ON 1ST BASE ONLY



- **PU**
 - Trail BR 15 ft. up the 1st base line.
 - Then move directly to 3rd base for a possible play there.
- **1BU**
 - Buttonhook inside 1st base.
 - Make sure there is no immediate play on BR.
 - Then move to home plate.
- **3BU**
 - Move directly inside the diamond.
 - Once 1BU moves home, 3BU is responsible for all plays at 1st base as well as 2nd base.

RUNNER ON 2ND BASE (ANYTIME) OR RUNNERS ON BOTH 1ST & 3RD BASE



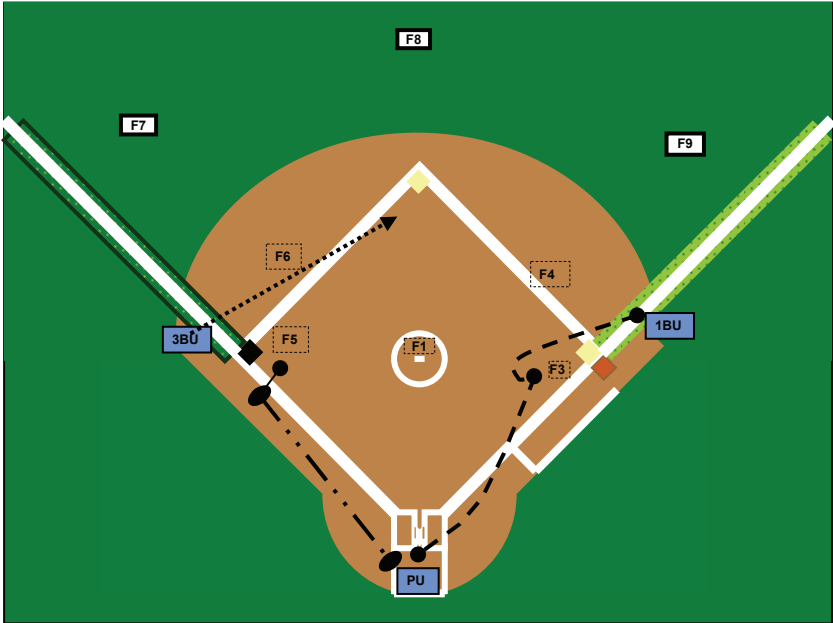
*** **NO ROTATION** ***

- **PU**
 - Responsible for all calls at home plate.
 - Move to holding zone for possible play at the plate.

- **1BU**
 - Responsible for all calls at 1st and 2nd base.
 - Buttonhook inside the diamond and move with the runner.

- **3BU**
 - Responsible for all calls at 3rd base.
 - If there is a possible play on R2 at 3rd base, stay outside the diamond. If the throw is coming from left field, move into foul ground to make the call.
 - If there is no possible play on R2 at 3rd base, buttonhook inside the diamond.

RUNNER ON 3RD BASE ONLY



- **PU**
 - Stay at home and watch R3 hit home.
 - Then move to 3rd base for a possible play there.
- **1BU**
 - Buttonhook inside 1st base.
 - Wait for BR to hit 2nd base, then move to home plate.
 - Do not move home until there is no possible play on BR at 1st base.
- **3BU**
 - Make sure R3 is going home and not coming back to 3rd base.
 - Then move to 2nd base for a possible call on BR attempting a double.