

# Two-Umpire System

## ◆ BRIEF

Although it is still being used in some areas and by some conferences, the two-umpire system is not recommended for working college softball. The three-umpire system is used for all NCAA postseason play. The purpose of this manual is to provide umpires with the information necessary to be considered for postseason selection. Proficiency of the two-umpire system is not sufficient for consideration for postseason selection. Umpires must show a mastery of the three-umpire system.

## ◆ ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

- Work ahead of the play
- Keep the elements of the play in front
- Adjust to individual play
- Efficient movement
- Prepitch preparation
- Wait — Interpret — Choose

All concepts and philosophies —

Angle • Distance • Primary Positions • Calling Positions • Secondary Positions • Parallel Movement • Efficient Movement • Professionalism • Commitment to the Play • Body Language • Signals • Crewness • Handling Conflict • Game Management • Comportment • And More — apply equally to any umpire system.

## ◆ CORE PHILOSOPHY

This manual, while providing extensive coverage of three-umpire mechanics and lesser coverage of two-umpire mechanics, is not really about any particular umpire system. It is about umpiring.

In order to umpire any game the best possible way possible, regardless of the number of umpires, umpires must know where they would like to be on any given play, regardless of whether they can actually achieve the position. To know this, umpires must understand the reason why one position is more desirable than another. They must also recognize that the optimal position to judge the play may not be the best choice of positioning because of potential continuing or subsequent action. Every possible play that can present itself to an umpire has both similarities and differences from all other plays. Umpires empower themselves to make the most suitable choice for every play by canny and apt implementation of the essential concepts of mechanics. Of equal importance with identifying where to be, is discerning the most fitting and efficient path to getting there. Sagacious choices, evolving from knowledge and understanding, maximize the odds of having good judgment.

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## Starting Positions

There are three starting positions:

A. No one on:

Plate: at the plate

Base: Option 1

18 to 20 feet down the first base line, completely in foul territory, in an upright standing position and walking with the pitch.

Base: Option 2

Between first and second base, behind the second baseperson, no closer to first base than 15 feet, no farther from first than the midpoint (30 feet) between first and second base and in a set position.

B. Runner on first only:

Plate: at the plate

Base: Between first and second base, behind the second

baseperson, no closer to first base than 15 feet, no farther from first than the midpoint (30 feet) between first and second base and in a set position.

C. Runners on second only, third only, first and second, first and third, second and third, or bases loaded:

Plate: at the plate

Base: Between second and third base, behind the shortstop, no closer than 15 feet to second or third base, and in a set position.

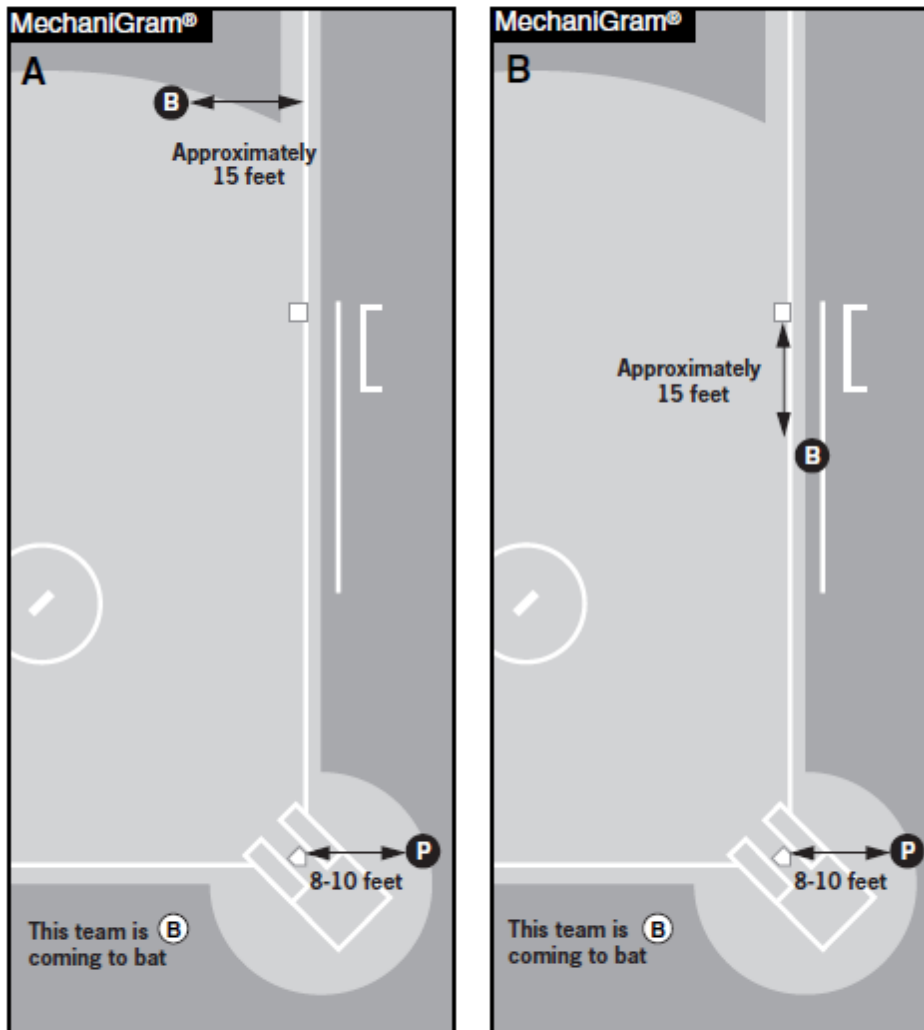
To do justice to both the umpire and to either of the optional starting positions with no one on base, it may be best to use one or the other mechanic for an entire game. However, it is acceptable to use both mechanics during the course of a single game. An umpire might actually need to do that to obtain a better look at a pitcher's feet. That option affords the umpire the ability to position himself in the best position for the action at hand.

With more and more umpires learning to work appropriately outside the diamond, that optional mechanic provides many advantages and is a definite step-saver. With balls hit to the left side of the infield, the umpire will simply close down his distance and tweak his angle as needed for the play at first base. With balls hit to the right side of the infield, the umpire will move as necessary to his left or, if F4 is moving hard to her left, the umpire can move forward toward the baseline. With balls hit up the middle or to left field, the umpire can remain outside the diamond and move in behind the runner if she will advance to third base. With balls hit to right field, the umpire can move or pivot inside the diamond to a position for a play at first base from right field or to see the runner touch first and be ready to go with her to second base. For bunts or balls being thrown from an area around the plate, the umpire can move forward toward the baseline and in closer to first base as the play dictates.

## 2 Between Inning Positions

**Plate:** facing the team that is coming to bat. About 8-10 feet from the line on a perpendicular line from where the foul line meets the plate.

**Base:** facing the plate no more than about 15 feet off the foul line at approximately where the grass starts in front of the outfielders.



**Alternative Position: (MechaniGram B)** If teams are warming up in the area of your position, try requesting that they allow some space where you need to be. If this is ineffective, you are having to make the request every other half inning, or you feel unsafe, then move into the diamond no more than 15 feet from first base. Face the infield. You may be off the line slightly. Do not move to deeper in the outfield or behind the players warming up.

**3****Plate Umpire Responsibilities**

- All plays at home plate
- Seeing runners touch home plate
- With multiple runners, all plays on the lead runner at third base except if the first play on the batted ball is by an infielder at third.
- With multiple runners, seeing the lead runner touch third base
- All fair or foul calls except on the first base line when the base umpire chases a fly ball behind him
- All catch/no-catch on fly balls unless the base umpire chases the ball
- The first play in the infield at any base when the base umpire has chased
- Seeing all runners touch all bases when the base umpire has chased

**4****Base Umpire Responsibilities**

- All plays at first and second base
- Seeing runners touch first and second base
- The first play in the infield by an infielder at first, second, or third base
- Plays on the batter-runner at third base
- Seeing the batter-runner touch third base
- All steal plays
- All pick-off attempts
- All runners leaving before the pitch is released

**5****Tag Up Responsibilities**

If the base umpire does NOT chase:

Plate: All tag-ups at third

Base: All tag-ups at first and second

If the base umpire DOES chase:

Plate: All tag-ups at first, second, and third

Base: No tag-ups

Chase any fly ball in your area that could be a difficult call for the plate umpire. It does not matter how many outs there are or how many runners are on base. From B or C starting positions, do not chase fly balls between the right fielder and the dead ball line or between the left fielder and the dead ball line. These might involve a fair/foul judgment that cannot be made accurately when starting from positions B or C.

When chasing with runners on base, you should return to the infield as outlined below.

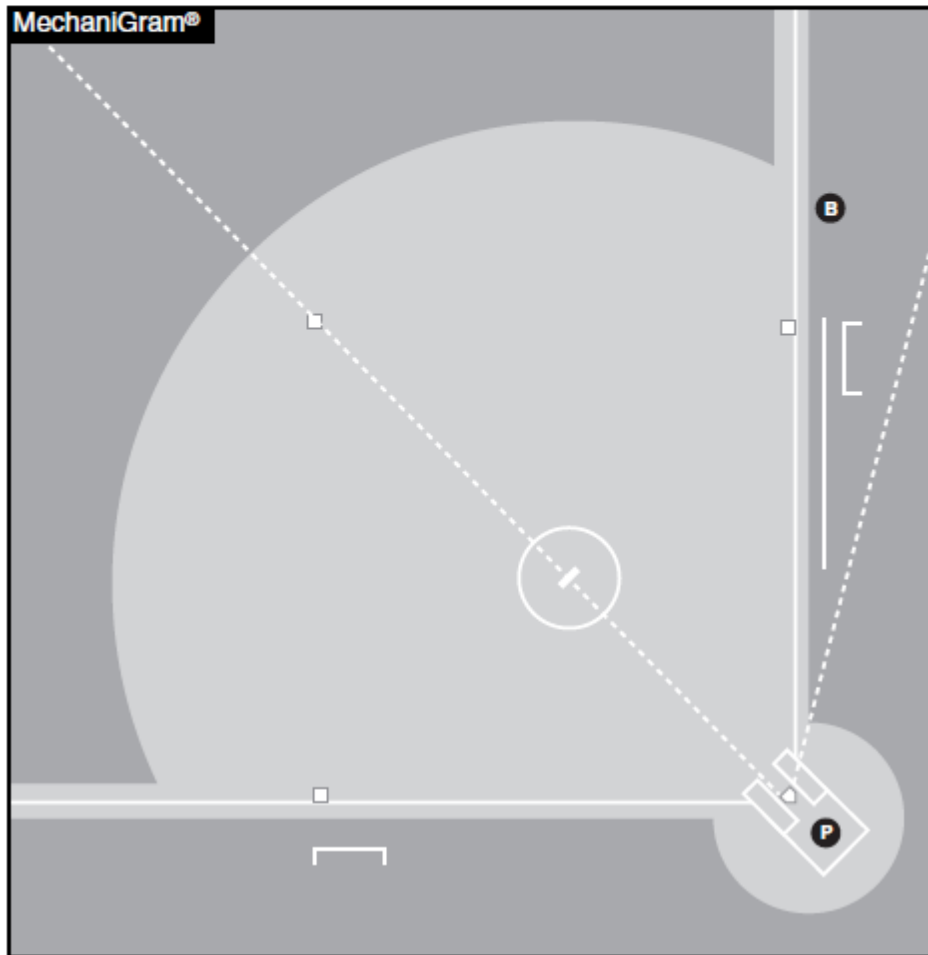
- Never return for the initial play (for example, you chase with a runner on first and the right fielder tries to throw out the batter-runner at first)
- Most usually return for a play at second base when the plate umpire has a play at the plate.
- Let the plate umpire know where you are.
- Do not return to home plate.
- You do not have to return to the infield, nor should you always, but you must always be prepared to do so.

## 6 Chasing Fly Balls

### GENERAL AREA OF CHASE RESPONSIBILITIES FROM STARTING POSITION A — OPTION 1

Plate umpire has from the center fielder to the left field dead-ball line. If the base umpire does not chase, the plate umpire is responsible for all fly balls and all fair or foul decisions.

Base umpire has from the center fielder to the right field dead-ball line.

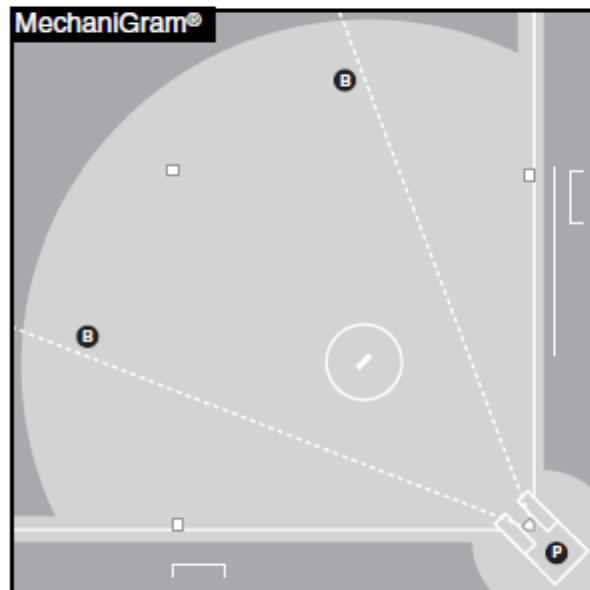




## GENERAL AREA OF CHASE RESPONSIBILITIES FROM STARTING POSITIONS A — OPTION 2, B AND C

Plate umpire has from the right fielder to the right field dead-ball line, from the left fielder to the left field dead-ball line, and all fair or foul calls. If the base umpire does not chase, the plate umpire is responsible for all fly balls.

Base umpire has from the right fielder to the left fielder (the "V").

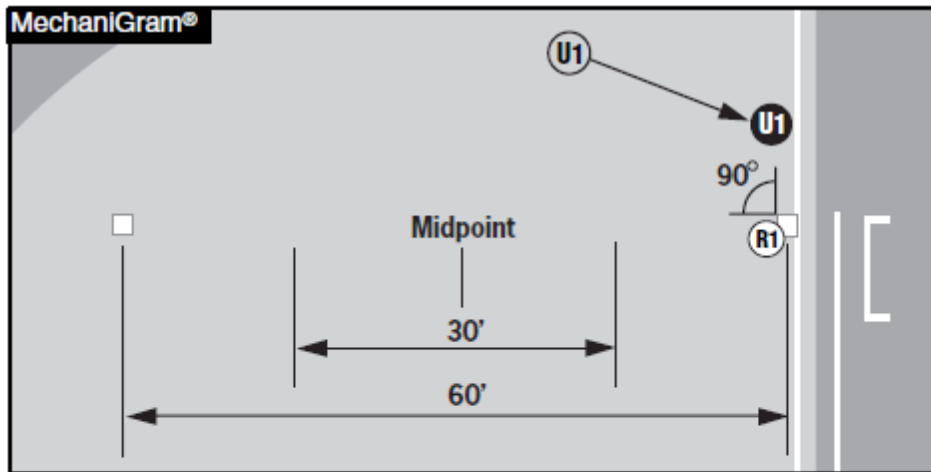


### TIP:

It is sometimes helpful to base umpires when working the two-umpire system to pretend that they are working the three-umpire system and their partner has always chased. With no runners on (position A) or with a runner on first base only (position B), pretend that the third-base umpire has chased. From position C, pretend that the first-base umpire has chased.

The Chase Philosophy – chase any fly ball in your area that you judge could be a difficult call for the plate umpire - is the same in the two umpire system as in the three umpire. However when chasing in the three-umpire system there is still a remaining base umpire. When chasing in the two-umpire system it leaves the plate umpire as sole remaining umpire in the infield. Therefore, base umpires in the two-umpire system should be more judicious when deciding whether to chase. In addition to deciding whether the catch/no-catch in the outfield might be difficult for the plate umpire, the base umpire should also consider whether the act of chasing might create even greater difficulty for the plate umpire by leaving him to work a one-umpire system.

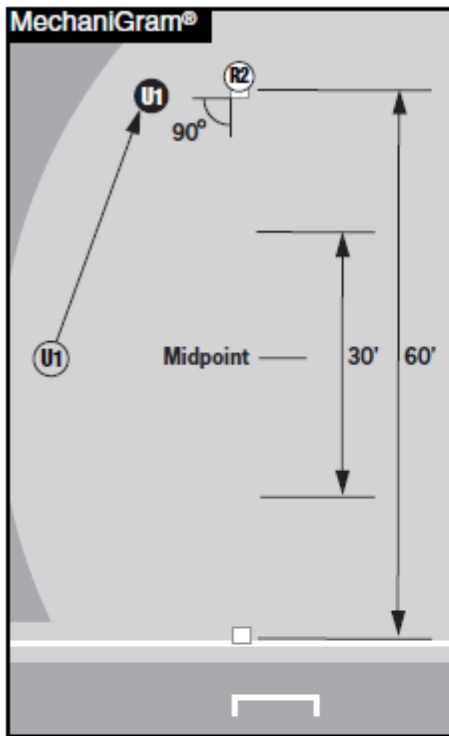
## 7 Working Between Pitches



### 2 umpire system: Runner on first

Suggested starting position:

- No closer than 15 feet to first base
- No farther from first base than the midpoint (30 feet) between first and second base
- Starting depth may vary. Try to be close to tag play depth. Movement should be parallel to the baseline, or slightly diagonal depending on the starting position, toward the primary position at first base.



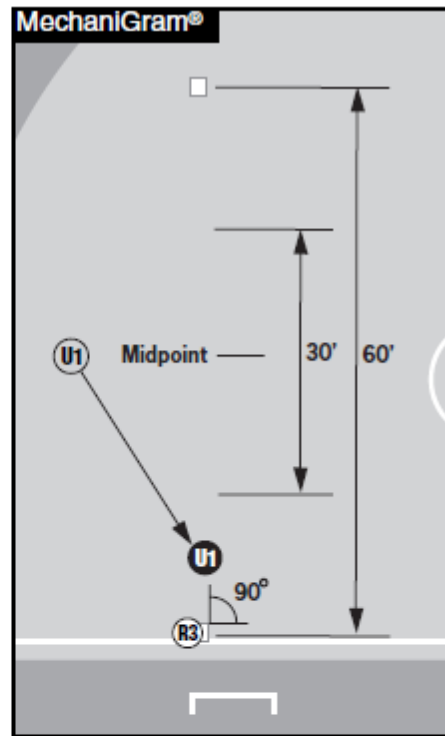
## 2 umpire system:

### Runner on second

Suggested starting position:

- No closer than 15 feet to second or third base
- Somewhere in the middle 30 feet between second and third — probably close to the midpoint
- Starting depth may vary. Try to be close to tag play depth.

Movement should be parallel to the baseline, or slightly diagonal depending on the starting depth, toward the primary position at second base.

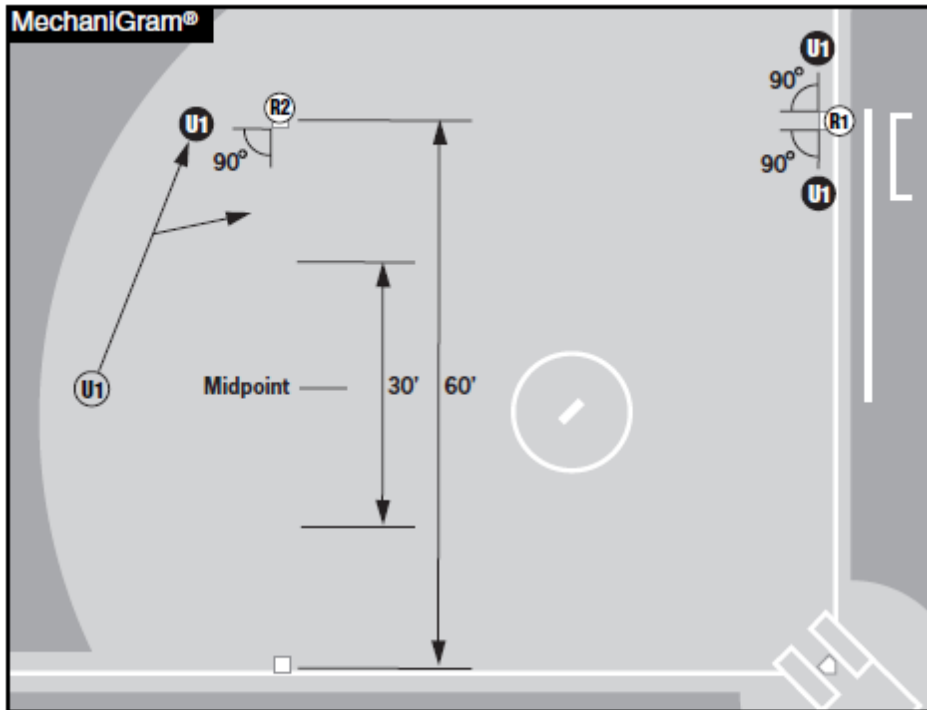


## 2 umpire system: Runner on third

Suggested starting position:

- No closer than 15 feet to second or third base
- Somewhere in the middle 30 feet between second and third — probably close to the midpoint
- Starting depth may vary. Try to be close to tag play depth.

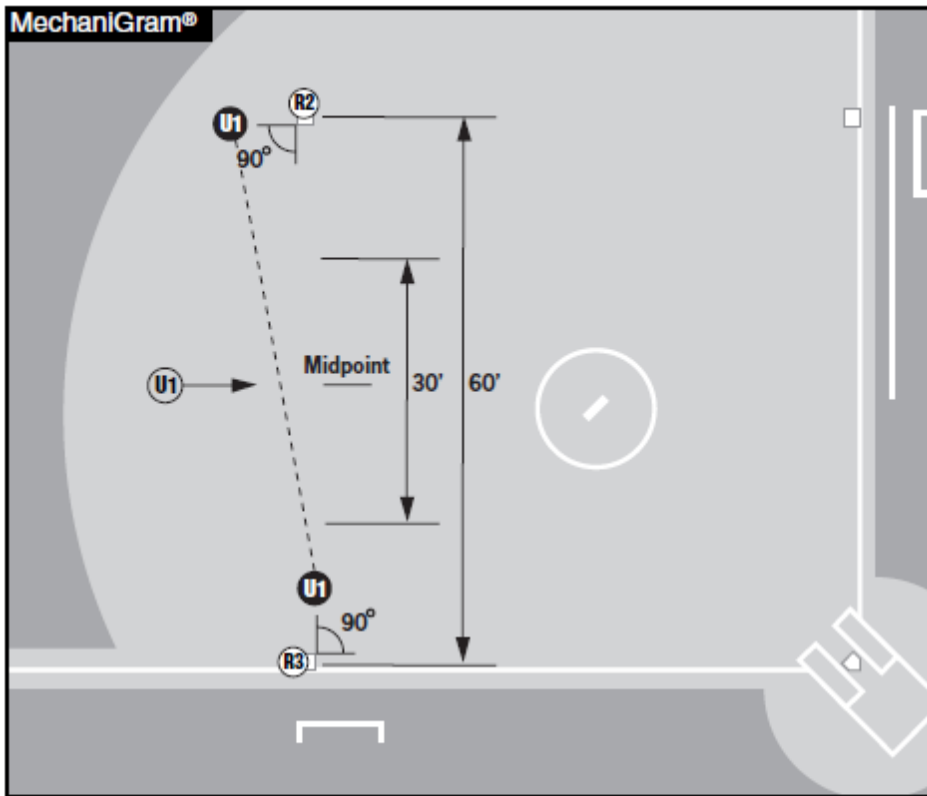
Movement should be parallel to the third/home baseline, or slightly diagonal depending on the starting position in the middle 30 feet, toward the primary position at third base.



## 2 umpire system: Runners on first and second

Suggested starting position:

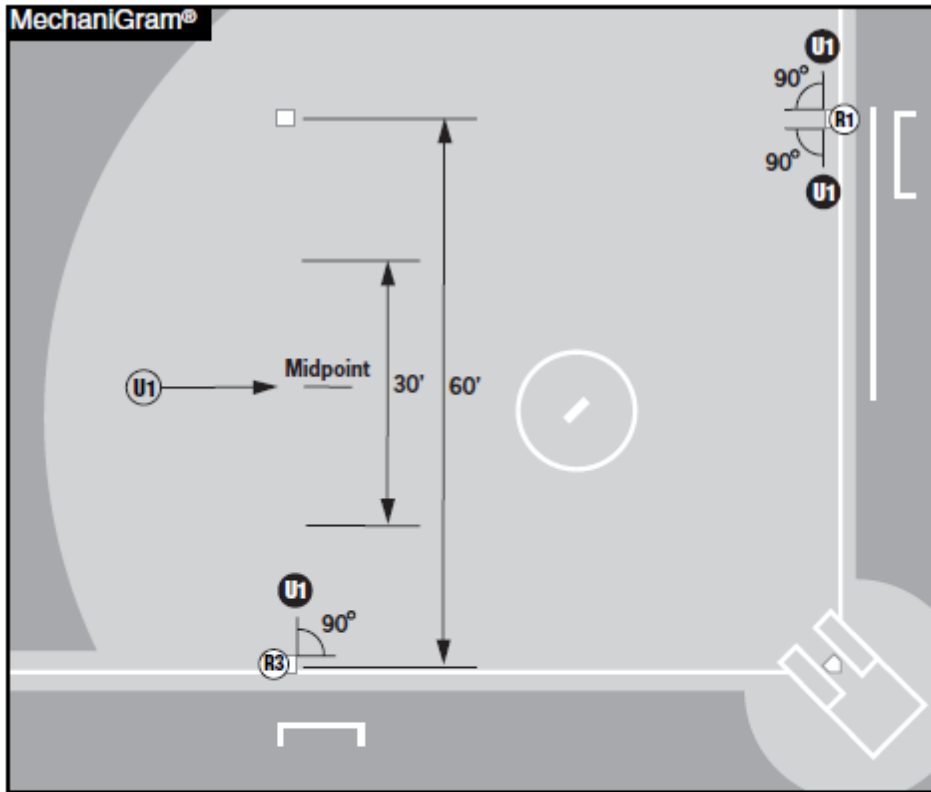
- No closer than 15 feet to second or third base
- Somewhere in the middle 30 feet between second and third — probably close to the midpoint
- Starting depth may vary. Try to be close to tag play depth. Movement should be parallel to the second/third baseline, or slightly diagonal depending on the starting depth, toward but not completely to, the primary position at second base. Neither primary position at first base is achievable. If the play goes to first base, turn and try to move toward first base.



## 2 umpire system: Runners on second and third

Suggested starting position:

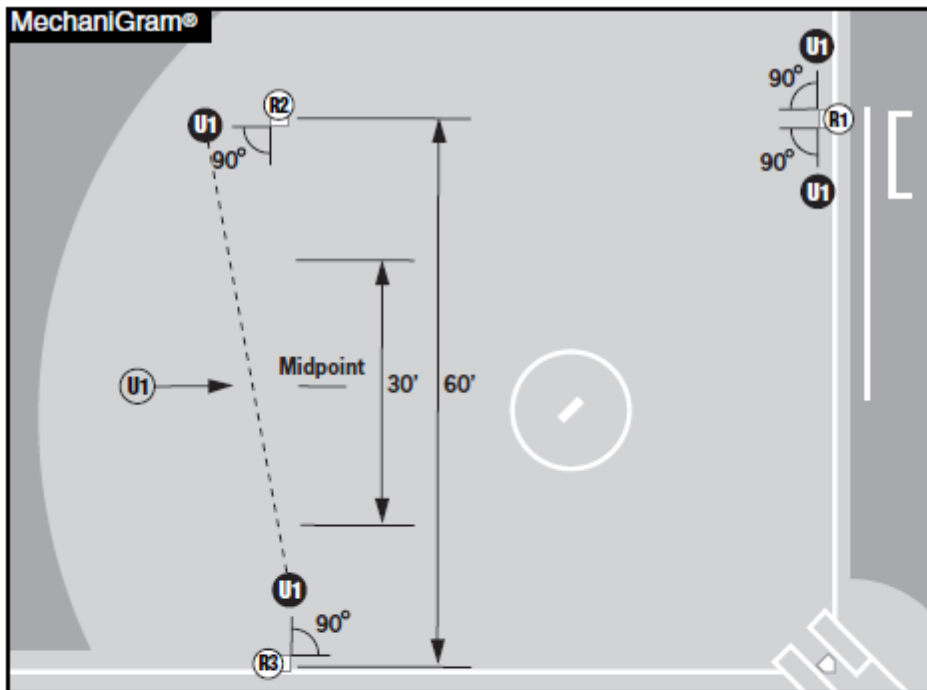
- No closer than 15 feet to second or third base
- Somewhere in the middle 30 feet between second and third — probably close to the midpoint
- Starting depth may vary. Try to be close to tag play depth. From wherever the umpire chooses to start in the middle 30 feet between second and third base, the umpire should come out of the set position and begin movement forward in the direction of the imaginary intersection with the imaginary line between the primary positions at second and third base. It is not necessary that the umpire actually reach this imaginary intersection.



## 2 umpire system: Runners on first and third

Suggested starting position:

- No closer than 15 feet to second or third base
- Somewhere in the middle 30 feet between second and third — probably close to the midpoint
- Starting depth may vary. Try to be close to tag play depth. Movement should be forward toward the second/third baseline to achieve the angle, though not the distance, for the runner returning to third base. Neither primary position at first base is achievable. If the play goes to first base, continue forward and try to get closer to first base.



## 2 umpire system: Bases loaded

Suggested starting position:

- No closer than 15 feet to second or third base
- Somewhere in the middle 30 feet between second and third — probably close to the midpoint
- Starting depth may vary. Try to be close to tag play depth. From wherever the umpire chooses to start in the middle 30 feet between second and third base, the umpire should come out of the set position and begin movement forward in the direction of the imaginary intersection with the imaginary line between the primary positions at second and third base. It is not necessary that the umpire actually reach this imaginary intersection. Neither primary position at first is achievable. If the play goes to first base, continue forward and try to get closer to first base.