



**Essentials of Observation/Evaluation
for the
Division II Umpire**

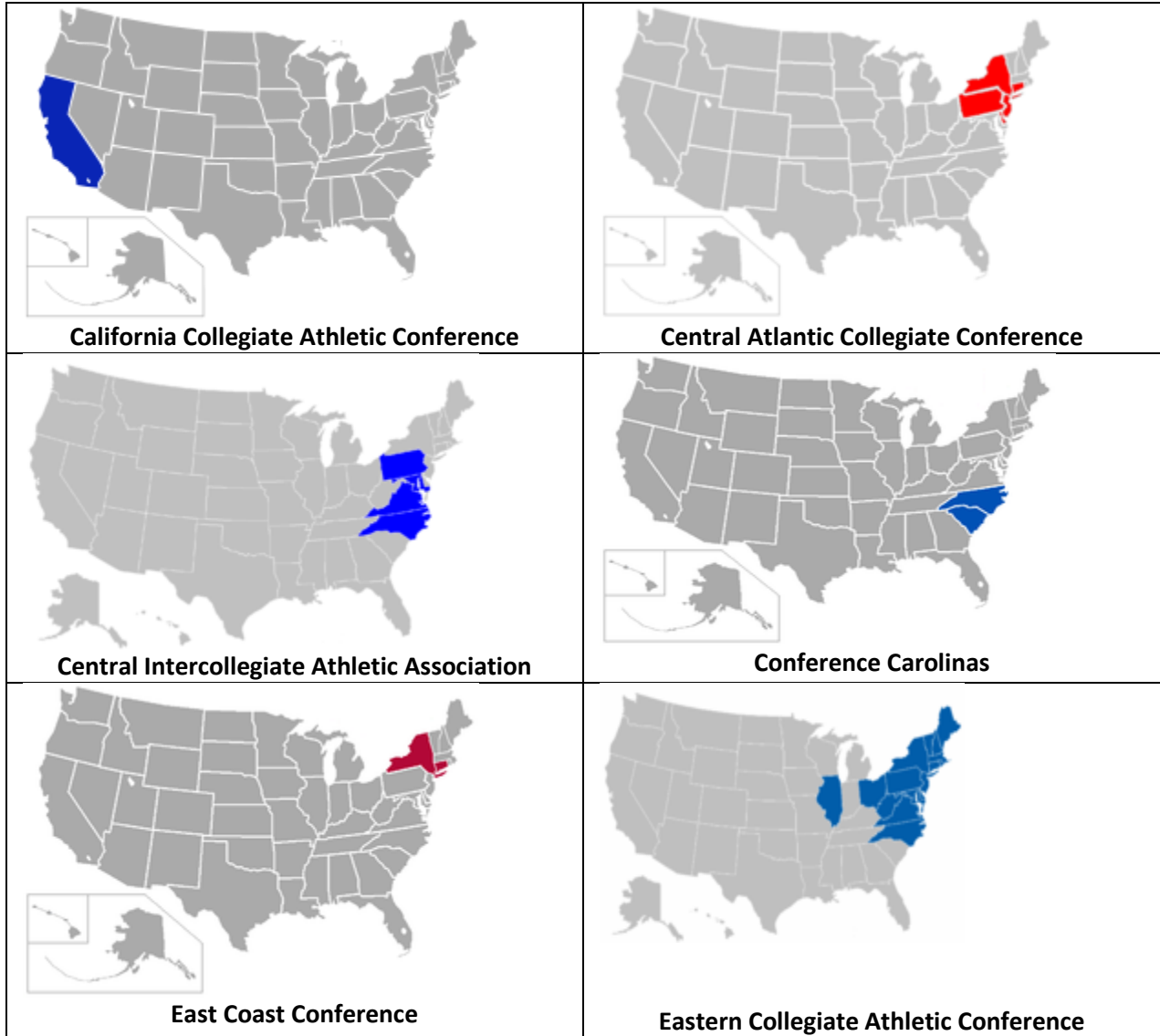


Division II Regional Advisors and Observer/Evaluators

<p>Dave Alstadt 1431 Sandwich Dr. Sandwich, Illinois 60548 815-370-9885 (Cellular) dalstadt@comcast.net ECAC, GLIAC, GLVC, Northern Sun</p>	<p>Azim Jessa 6184 Stargaze Night Court Las Vegas, NV 89148 702-569-9353 (Cellular) azimjessa@hotmail.com GNAC, PacWest</p>
<p>Keith Bailey 2046 So. Salida St. Aurora, CO 80013 303-709-3940 (cellular) kbailey15@comcast.net RMAC</p>	<p>Bob Jones 5017 George Kansas City, MO 64133 816-830-0495 (Cellular) bj-official@att.net GLIAC, Heartland, MAIAA, NSIA</p>
<p>Mark Beller 1330 Liberty Street El Cerrito, CA 94530-23 925-858-4917 (Cellular) bigleaguebeller@sbcglobal.net CCAC, GNAC</p>	<p>Kirk Knowles 310 Country Club Park Grand Junction, CO 81507 970-260-3377 (Cellular) kirk@ywsss.com RMAC, PacWest</p>
<p>Jeff Cluff 3202 South Aurora Lane Washington, UT 84780 435-619-7524 (Cellular) cluff@dixie.edu PacWest, RMAC</p>	<p>Justin Lucas 805 SW Rocky Bayou Terrace Port St. Lucie, Florida 34986 772-607-3414 (Cellular) Lucasjj1970@aol.com GSC, PBC, SSC</p>
<p>Clarence Coleman 11906 Rock Spring Drive Louisville, Kentucky 40245 502-553-6410 (Cellular) Choo27@aol.com GSC, SAC, SIAC</p>	<p>Walt Neuser 1204 Shalom Dr. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina 29588 843-340-0555 (Cellular) waltneuser@hotmail.com CIAC, CC, PBC, SAC</p>
<p>Brent Cunningham 723 SE 18th St Troutdale, OR 97060 503-860-8410 (Home) 503-674-5662 (Work) brent_cunningham@gbssd.gresham.k12.or.us GNAC,</p>	<p>Rich Padilla 942 S. Groveton Ave Glendora, CA 91740 818-731-8154 (Cellular) richpadilla27@gmail.com PacWest, CCAC, GNAC</p>
<p>Mark Denzin 4505 Oxbow Dr. McKinney, TX 75070 469-247-7134 (Cellular) Work mdenz19@yahoo.com Heartland, LSC</p>	<p>Jim Schaefer 501 Mohawk Circle North Platte, Nebraska 69101 arlaandjim@charter.net 308-534-0555 (home) Heartland, Northern Sun, RMAC</p>
<p>Andrew Higgins 15-4425 Nicurity Drive Regina, Saskatchewan S4X0E6 306-530-6308 (Cellular) ahiggins@evrazplace.com Northern Sun, GLIAC, GLVC</p>	<p>Ron A. Whiting 300 White Ave Fairmont, WV 26554 304.694.9381 304.657.9392 wsport23@aol.com CACC, ECAC, Northeast 10, PSAC, WVIC</p>



Division II Conferences in America





Great Lake Athletic Intercollegiate Conference



Great Lakes Valley Conference



Great Northwest Athletic Conference



Gulf South Conference



Heartland Conference



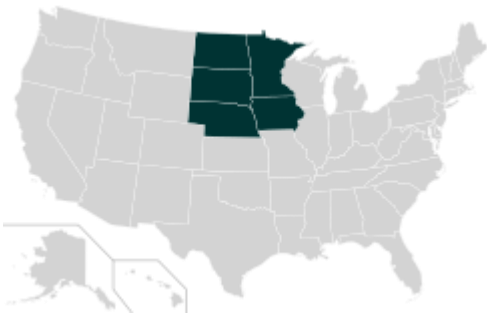
Lone Star Conference



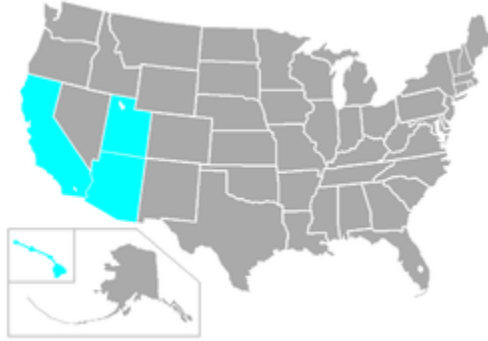
Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association



Northeast 10 Conference



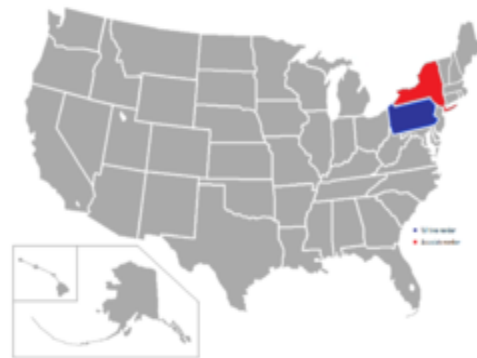
Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference



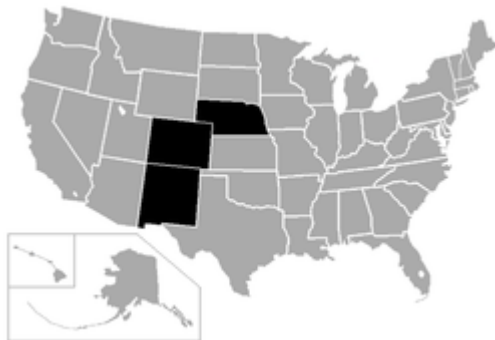
Pacific West Conference



Peach Belt Conference



Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference



Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference



South Atlantic Conference



Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference



Sunshine State Conference

The Observation/Evaluation Process: An Introduction

The Division II National Umpire Coordinator has fourteen duties and requirements to which he is held responsible. The third listed area of responsibility is as follows:

Develop and coordinate a regional advisors program, maintaining continuous contact with each regional advisor for in-season evaluation of officials.

a. With the regional advisors, develop recommendations to the NCAA Division II Baseball Committee for the selection and assignment of umpires for the Division II Baseball Championship, and serve as a resource for other championship umpiring matters.

To meet this specific task, the D-II National Coordinator will develop an observation/evaluation program which can be used by members of the regional advisory staff as they perform their mandated NCAA function as an independent observer/evaluator cadre. The observation/evaluation document they will use in their duties will also be made available to Division II Conference Umpire Coordinators as a professional courtesy to enable them to begin to evaluate their conference umpires from the same perspective as the regional advisory staff as well as use the form as a guideline for mechanics education and review.

Duty/Requirement number eight also speaks to observation/evaluation and reads as follows:

During the Division II championship, participate in pre-tournament meetings with umpires and coaches; make umpire assignment recommendations to the baseball committee, and; evaluate the on-field performance of all umpires.

Clearly, the National Coordinator is also tasked with evaluating on-field performance of the umpire staff at the Division II Championship Tournament in Cary, North Carolina. Rest assured, the standards found in the document being prepared by the National Coordinator, and introduced in this section, will be used in evaluating those umpires who have been selected by their individual conference coordinators to work the championship series. Recommendations to the Division II baseball committee will be made based upon adherence to the standards found in the final document which will be distributed to all Division II Conference Coordinators, Division II Regional Advisors who serve as part of the independent observation/evaluation team, and the pertinent documents will also be published on the Division II NCAA Central Hub found in The Arbiter program.



One document will be this Observation/Evaluation Manual which will serve as complementary curriculum explaining the principles behind the observation/evaluation standards or “Essential Behaviors” which are expected to be employed by all umpires who wish to take part in the Division II National Umpire Development and Selection Program. It is the mission of the development program to give a clear path toward umpire development and to help umpires to prepare themselves for participating in the evaluation and selection process.

The process of evaluation is based on three principles:

- Alignment with Curriculum**
- Identifiable, Measurable, and Attainable Standards**
- Interrelated Reliability of Observer/Evaluators**

An observation/evaluation program is far different than what is explained and diagrammed in a mechanics manual. These manuals do an excellent job of outlining on-field responsibilities for umpires with their individual areas of responsibility explained and diagrammed. An observation/evaluation program goes beyond mechanics and sets standards of performance for each umpire describing in detail specific and “Essential Behaviors” which can be identified by observer/evaluators as they watch the action on the field. The observation/evaluation process is designed with two purposes in mind; to help umpires identify and adopt “best practices” which will help them develop into exceptional officials, and help observers/evaluators to identify umpires who have achieved mastery and can be recommended for post-season assignment without exception.

An example of a best practice from the Situation Management “Essential Behavior” standard reads as follows:

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD
<p>When handling a confrontation, the umpire will control his personal demeanor and remain calm. The umpire will respond without aggressive movement or gesticulation which may cause the situation to escalate. The umpire may unnecessarily prolong the situation, not employing the techniques at his disposal to withdraw himself and end the discussion. Eventually, he will take it upon himself to end the discussion and get the game restarted.</p>	<p>When handling a confrontation, the umpire will demonstrate the behaviors listed (left) along with the following. The umpire’s responses will lead to an identifiable lessening of situational tension. He will follow the protocol established for dealing with potentially volatile situations by employing the following techniques: extending his right hand (stop sign) indicating the discussion must end, issuing a clear verbal and written warning, and physically removing himself from the situation allowing partner(s) to diffuse the situation.</p>



Observation and evaluation will focus on identifying the use of proper game management technique as umpires handle confrontational situations. Post-game review will evaluate an umpire's situational awareness and how the standards of performance were employed and if the observed behavior either met or exceeded the standards as written. Observer/evaluator feedback is meant to help the umpire ultimately exceed the standard of performance set forth. There is no place at the collegiate level for umpires who do not meet or exceed these clearly written and identifiable behavioral standards.

PART 1-ALIGNMENT WITH CURRICULUM

There are three parts to an observation program and each part is essential to the overall success of the program. Verbal and written Instruction in the classroom/private study/conference umpire meeting is best be broken down into three phases. Good instructors know the drill: "I am going to tell you what I am going to teach you. Then, I am going to teach you. Finally, I am going to tell you what I just taught you." This method of introduction, presentation of subject matter, and review is an accepted vehicle for delivering instruction. However, the critical element in assessing learning is a final evaluation which measures growth.

All good evaluation is linked to instruction and is aligned with the curriculum presented. Logically, observation and evaluation must assess only items which have been introduced, presented, and reviewed. This instruction can be done either in the meeting setting or through the use of textbook and discussion. Instruction pertinent to the Division II Umpire Development can also be delivered in the clinic setting. Hence, Duty/Requirement number one for the National Coordinator requires the following:

Assist with coordination of regional officiating clinics for college baseball umpires, serving as the clinician as needed.

Experience has shown that officials who only study rules and have only their knowledge of rules evaluated may score well on rules or mechanics tests but often do not perform well under game pressure simply because rules and mechanics knowledge can be delivered through classroom lecture and personal study. The skills needed to respond in game situations can only be taught through experience combined with observation and evaluation. Therefore, the National Coordinator will announce a series of regional umpire clinics which will be listed at advancedumpiringschools.com or at Arbitersports.com on the NCAA Central Hub-Division II.



The manual entitled Essentials of Observation/Evaluation for the Division II Umpire with its specific explanations of identifiable “Essential Behaviors” can be used as a text to complement classroom instruction/personal study as well as on-field drill and repetition in the clinic setting. However, for this manual and its corresponding observation/evaluation element to be fully implemented two steps must be taken.

The first step is to develop the manual itself; creating a standard operating procedure; a “how to” curriculum which goes beyond, but without contradicting, accepted on-field practices of umpires found in existing literature. The second step is to align on-field observation and evaluation with the instruction given in the manual or at regional clinics. The Division II Regional Advisory Staff must familiarize themselves with this curriculum and, as observer/evaluators, must be trained to identify both acceptable practices of competent umpires who meet the standards as well as those who exceed the standard employing the techniques of exceptional umpires of virtuosity . Plainly speaking, the evaluation itself must be easily administered by evaluator/observers who have the ability to identify “Essential Behaviors” rated either “standard” or “exceed standard” when they are being demonstrated. Both levels of “essential behavior” standards must be attainable.

Here is an observation/evaluation essential behavior standard clearly explains the comparative behavioral hallmark of the exceptional field umpire.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD
<p>When taking plays at first base moves into the infield and establishes the proper 90 degree angle established by direction of throw from infielder. Once properly set does not always readjust position to get vision on pulled foot or swipe tag. Does not use secondary signals to indicate unusual play circumstances. Does not verbalize unusual situations.</p>	<p>When taking plays at first base quickly moves into the infield and establishes the proper 90 degree angle established by direction of throw from infielder. Is set when throw leaves fielder’s hand. May readjust position as needed to get vision on pulled foot or swipe tag. Uses voice and secondary signals to indicate swipe tag or pulled foot. Verbalizes unusual play situations to enhance believability.</p>



When curriculum is aligned with instruction, only what has been introduced, presented, and reviewed should be evaluated. Further, the important elements of the mechanics curriculum, those items which will have been identified as “Essential Behaviors” should be the target of the most intense review.

Instruction should be focused on helping officials develop habits which will help them develop exceptional ability. Therefore, curriculum must be written recognizing and promoting the importance of secondary field umpire signals and their use as well as identifying the proper situation during which they can be employed.

In the final analysis, all on-field mechanics observation/evaluation must be aligned with clearly written curriculum in both the observer/evaluator user manual, Essentials of Observation/Evaluation for the Division II Umpire, and the corresponding observer/evaluation form. This curriculum will be used by the Division II Regional Advisors, The National Coordinator when functioning as an observer/evaluator, and those Division II Conference Coordinators of Umpires who wish to participate in the Division II Umpire Development Program.

PART 2-IDENTIFIABLE, MEASUREABLE, AND ATTAINABLE STANDARDS

For observation/evaluation to function successfully; which is, to positively and effectively change the on-field performance of umpires, it must describe critical standards of performance or “Essential Behaviors” which are based on three underlying principles. Standards must be identifiable, measureable, and attainable. Identifiable standards based on “Essential Behaviors” can be achieved by the majority of officials through proper instruction, feedback, and self-awareness. These behaviors must be described in detail on the evaluator/observer form, but must also have been presented previously, via video-tape or other visual delivery system in the classroom setting to both the official and observer/evaluator. These acceptable behaviors must not only be easily performed and identified, but they should all be attainable.

It’s very easy for an official to achieve an “Exceeds Standard” rating before ever taking the field:

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD
<p style="text-align: center;">Shoes Shined</p> <p>Trousers are not of the proper shade of charcoal gray and do not match crewmates. They are clean, and pressed.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Shoes appear to be new or near-new.</p> <p>Trousers are of the proper shade of charcoal gray and match crewmates. They are clean, and pressed. They give the appearance of finely tailored dress slacks with proper length.</p>



Collegiate-level umpires are expected to have the personal desire to look their best on the field. However, there should also be a category of standards which identify the exceptional umpires who spend the extra money to insure their appearance is ultra-professional. The exceptional standards may be adhered to by only a minority of officials who have taken the extra time and expense to reach these very attainable standards. Again, these exemplary standards can be adopted by others, but often go beyond the desire or of the standard, but acceptable, collegiate-level umpire. The exceptional standard is an acknowledgment of exceptional dedication. It is not beyond logic to predict that an umpire who shows exceptional dedication in this easy to attain standard will also demonstrate the desire to attain the exceptional level in other standards as well. Recognizing the attainment of exceptional desire or ability creates motivation.

Meets Standard vs. Exceeds Standard

The discussion on developing “Essential Behaviors” in all officials should not be limited to standard behaviors which lead to the development of habits that will raise on-field performance to an acceptable collegiate level. Meeting the set standard for a college-level umpire is very satisfactory, and being able to meet, and consistently demonstrate, standard and acceptable “Essential Behaviors” guarantees the job will be done well. Realistically speaking, The Division II Umpire Development Observation/Evaluation program is geared toward developing aspiring collegiate-level umpires to attain total competency; a performance level where acceptable standards are met and game administration is smooth. It is an identifying mission objective of this umpire development program to combine instruction with proper observation and evaluation to help the majority of umpires meet acceptable standards of performance.

However, as is the case with human nature, there are always those individuals who demonstrate advanced competencies or have the desire and work ethic to advance beyond others. These individuals are usually more driven for success and are often more competitive by nature. For those umpires, and those who have the ability and desire to reach the exceptional level, the observation/evaluation program includes “Essential Behaviors” and descriptors which allow for identification and evaluation of these individuals as well. These are the individuals who, when given a standard to meet, will often “Exceed Standard.” It is these individuals who will be targeted for advancement as specified in the Division II National Coordinator Duty/Requirement objectives:

...develop recommendations to the NCAA Division II Baseball Committee for the selection and assignment of umpires for the Division II Baseball Championship,



Here is an example of an “Exceeds Standard” Crew Mechanics observation/evaluation which identifies “Essential Behaviors” indicative of an exceptional umpire:

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD
<p>In crew rotation situations, the umpire will signal the required movement required of him to his partners. When rotation movement takes place, he initiates the desired movement without hesitation.</p>	<p>In crew rotation situations, the umpire will signal the required movement required of him to his partners. When rotation movement takes place, he initiates the desired movement without hesitation and communicates verbally with his partner(s). In situations where his partner(s) may show hesitation, this umpire will, by his voice and purposeful movement, help his partners to complete required movement.</p>

Having an “Exceed Standard” level in/an observation/evaluation program does two things: First, as previously stated, it does help identify top performing officials. Secondly, it answers the question most often asked by new officials, “What do I need to do to get better?” When properly administered, observation/evaluation feedback combined with well-written “Exceeds Standard” descriptors of exceptional behaviors will eliminate some of the expected resentment which occurs during post-season selection time. The profile of exceptional umpires should be readily identified by observers/evaluators and as well as the other umpires who are participating in the development program. Of those evaluated, it is often said, “It’s hard to hide a good one and hard to hide a bad one.” Properly trained observer/evaluators will come to agree with this statement, as will other umpires who engage in honest self-assessment.

PART 3-INTERRELATED REALIABILITY OF OBSERVERS/EVALUATORS

The Achilles heel of any evaluative program comes down to interrelated reliability. Are the evaluations and subsequent ratings of the officials in the group consistent from one evaluator to the next? With a properly designed umpire development program, complete with both written exemplars (standards) and video examples, and accompanying observer/evaluation delivery system, the interrelated reliability factor between observer/evaluators should not be more than 20 percent. This means that for an exceptional “Exceeds Standard” level umpire to be proven, eight out of ten evaluations made on this individual, perhaps by several different observer/evaluators, should grade out at an average of 80 percent of observed “Essential Behaviors” rated in the “Exceeds Standard” category.

An example to accommodate percentage ratings on the numerical scale would be as follows:

Level 1	50 percent of all “Essential Behavior” standards are rated at the MEETS level
Level 2	60-70 percent of all “Essential Behavior” standards are rated at the MEETS level
Level 3	80-100 percent of all “Essential Behavior” standards are rated at the MEETS level
Level 4	50 percent of “Essential Behavior” standards rated EXCEEDS and 50 percent rated at MEETS
Level 5	60-70 percent of “Essential Behavior” standards rated at the EXCEEDS level



With proper observation/evaluation descriptors (Essential Behavior Standards) and instructional exemplars (Clearly written descriptors and complementary video examples), the process should maintain a high degree of objectivity and interrelated reliability. First, the observer/evaluators must be competently trained. They must undergo the same classroom presentation and video-feedback process as the umpires participating in the program. They must have a full understanding of the different standards pertaining to “Essential Behaviors” which are the foundation of the evaluation standards found on the observation/evaluation form. They must have had sufficient exemplars presented to them in their training allowing them to easily identify the “Essential Behaviors” and best practices of acceptable and exceptional umpires when they are demonstrated.

It is much easier to present video-taped examples of essential behavior standards and demonstrated best practices of umpires who have attained them in a classroom/video tape setting before evaluating an umpire’s on-field performance. Videotape feedback combined with written evaluation is the best vehicle for creating the needed motivation within the umpire being evaluated to improve. While written evaluation can be questioned and argued, visual evidence speaks for itself. Videotape visually reinforces the positive habits of exceptional umpires to others as well as providing motivation for those who wish to become exceptional by providing proof positive that the “Exceed Standard” (“Essential Behaviors”) of exceptional umpires can be attained.

Finally, observer/evaluators must get out of their own way and ignore their personal feelings. For instance, if the observer/evaluation form does not rate officials on physique or athleticism, the observer has to accept the fact that an official who might not be as visually pleasing from the stands can still achieve a top evaluation if that official meets the “Exceeds Standard” descriptors required. Another official, perhaps better-liked on a personal level, may be rated lower simply because there is a decided lack of “Exceeds Standards” met on this individual’s observation/evaluation form. There is no place for personal biases or preferences in the evaluative process.

The biggest piece of the evaluation puzzle centers on exactly how the different descriptors of the evaluative categories are developed. This is the beauty of the evaluation curriculum which makes it a living document easily changed and updated allowing for additional concentration on new areas of concern developed by the Regional Advisory staff and National Coordinator. Essential behavior descriptors can change on a yearly basis to reflect areas of emphasis placed on best practices and behaviors which need to be modified or adopted. Hence, the observation/evaluation program is an on-going and up-to-date reflection of important “Essential Behaviors” and current trends in umpiring





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Section 1: Plate work

Section 1.1- Stability of Head and Body Position

Observation and evaluation of plate mechanics cannot be properly completed by just observing the home plate umpire from a position directly behind home plate. The observer/evaluator must get at least two different perspectives of the plate umpire as he works the game. The following is a guide to those observation positions and the rationale behind each.

a. Elevated-Directly Behind Home Plate

From this position, it is easy to observe the plate umpire's body location behind the catcher. The plate umpire must work "in the slot" which is the area between the batter and the catcher. Sometimes this position is referred to as being "two-thirds exposed and one third protected." In the proper slot position, the plate umpire should have unrestricted vision on the pitch from the time it leaves the pitcher's hand until the catcher gloves the ball. Viewed from behind, a greater portion of the corresponding width of the umpire's body will be exposed; meaning the umpire is not positioned behind the catcher. Besides the 2/3-1/3 fundamental, it is also easy to view the position of the umpire's feet. One foot, the "anchor foot" should be located more between the catcher's feet as he sets to receive the pitch while the umpire's other foot, the "slot foot," is clearly located in the free space between the catcher and the batter. When the umpire's feet are in this position, he is properly positioned in the slot. The exceptional umpire will consistently be located "in the slot" and will also adjust his set-up positioning to allow for the catcher to reset before receiving the pitch. Catchers often flash pitch signals from one position and then reset to receive the ball. The exceptional umpire allows for this final positioning by the catcher before assuming his final position in the slot.

b. From the Side-Looking Through the Vacant Batter's Box

From this position, it is easy to observe the plate umpire's head location and stability. An umpire properly positioned in the slot should be able to clearly see the pitch from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's glove. To allow for clear vision, the umpire's head should be at a level above the catcher's head, opening up the home plate umpire's visual angle to the catcher's glove. With proper head height and angle, there should be no head movement on the part of the umpire as the ball is gloved by the catcher. The ball should be tracked into the catcher's glove by the umpire's eyes only. A properly "locked in" umpire stance will insure that the head is stable.



Often, it can be observed that there is a slight dipping of the umpire's chin on pitches at the knee and below, or the umpire will appear at high pitches directly at his head. An umpire with a stable head position will not move on pitches that are at the extreme locations in the zone, either high or low, inner third or outer-third or corner pitches.

Section 1.2- Timing

Proper timing directly relates to proper use of eyes by the home plate umpire. Timing is developed by allowing for "lag time" between the reception of the pitch by the catcher and the actual physical signal (strike) or voice (ball) performed by the umpire. This lag time allows for the umpire to fully evaluate the pitch. An underlying principal of ball/strike reaction by the umpire is this: the call is mental, and the signal is physical. Proper lag time allows the umpire to make his "call" and then perform his signal. With proper use of the eyes, the required lag time will be consistently employed as no reaction by the umpire should happen until the catcher's glove stops moving.

When observing and evaluating timing, there should be a consistent amount of "lag time" between the reception of the pitch and the umpire's response to it. Observer/evaluators should be aware when strike calls and their corresponding signals are performed too quickly-usually on a "down the middle" fastball. Ball calls verbalized too quickly, more often than not, may be a reaction to a missed pitch as umpires are prone to make a quick ball call on pitches that surprise them.

In summary, the "lag time" between when a catcher gloves the pitch and the plate umpire verbalizes "strike" with corresponding signal, or when the catcher gloves the pitch and the umpire verbalizes "ball," should be performed after a like amount of time has passed after the pitch has been received. This interval of time must remain consistent. Coaches, players, and spectators become accustomed to the timing and rhythm of the plate umpire as he calls balls and strikes. Any deviation from this rhythm may call into question the consistency of the umpire and affect his believability. It is better to have slow timing, indicating deliberateness and concentration, than to be too quick, indicating surprise and misjudgment.

Section 1.3-Proper positioning for plays

The plate umpire is responsible for ruling on play situations which occur at home, at third base, and balls off the bat. The observer/evaluator can see these plays from an elevated position behind home plate. This section will break down these three situations and explain the behaviors the home plate umpire must perform in each.



a. Play Situations at Home

The home plate umpire rules on plays being made on runners attempting to score. These plays usually involve a slide/tag combination. The home plate umpire must anticipate the play situation and be in position to correctly rule on the action at home. To begin, when there is a runner in scoring position, more often than not, the home plate umpire will remain at home letting the action come to him. The proper “read” position for the home plate umpire in scoring situations, when he stays home, is located approximately 10-12 feet directly behind the Point of the Plate. This distance can be judged by the observing the back half of the batter’s box (from the location of the baseline cutouts of home plate) to a location behind the end line of the six-foot catcher’s box on a properly lined field. From this position, the home plate umpire will adjust his position as he anticipates the type of play which will occur on the runner attempting to score. The first play which can occur is the “Collision.” The prime viewing location for the umpire is the initial Point-of-Plate position. Here, the umpire does not move from his “read” position as mentioned above. The throw is usually quick and direct (from third base, shortstop, or left field) and the runner’s slide and catcher’s tag will happen on the third-base facing edge of home plate. There will be contact between the runner and the catcher. The umpire must be in a position to have his vision on the catcher’s glove as the tag is being applied. The Point-of-Plate position gives the plate umpire an unobstructed view of the catcher’s glove. Of course, the umpire, moving in an arc consistent with the curved cutout of the home plate dirt circle, may make slight adjustments in his position as the play demands, and the exceptional umpire may make a complete reposition after the tag has been applied to insure that the ball was not dislodged by the sliding runner. Any repositioning on the part of the exceptional umpire to insure the ball was not dislodged by the runner before the call is made enhances umpire believability after the signal is performed.

The second play which can occur is the “swipe tag.” Following standard procedure, the home plate umpire will assume his “read” position at the Point of the Plate. As the throw comes in to the catcher, (usually from the outfield or first/second base) the runner will slide to the outside of the plate attempting a “slide-by” trying to tag the Point of the Plate with his hand. This causes the catcher to glove the throw and swipe at the runner. The home plate umpire, moving in an arc from the point of the plate to the third base line extended, will have an unobstructed view of the catcher’s glove tagging the runner if needed. The exceptional umpire will readjust his position after the tag is applied, continuing to move in an arc (more toward first base) which will open up a secondary visual angle on the catcher’s glove and tag. This secondary movement is very critical in the “back tag” situation where the runner has slid by the catcher and the catcher must now “chase” the runner attempting to tag the runner’s back. In response, the exceptional umpire will work in his arc moving to improve his unobstructed vision on the catcher’s glove.

b. Play Situations at Third Base

When the home plate umpire is responsible for plays on the base runner attempting third base in rotation situations, the umpire will engage in the standard pause/read/react procedure before moving to third base and assuming responsibility for a play on an advancing runner. When working a two-man system, the home plate umpire will rotate fully to third base when movement of the ball and runner requires a full rotation to third. When working a three-man, the home plate umpire will rotate fully to third base when movement of either the ball or runner requires full rotation. In the three-man system, the home plate umpire is free to complete a full rotation to third base because the first base umpire (who has not left the diamond) will rotate to home and assume responsibility for potential plays on the advancing runner there. In two-man rotation situations, the home plate umpire must be sure a full rotation is needed as he is also responsible for continuing action on any runner if there is an attempted advance to home. This situation also applies when an umpire leaves the diamond (three-man) and causes the crew to revert to two-man mechanics.

In a three-man situation with all umpires present in the diamond, the observer/evaluator should be able to see a complete rotation to third base by the home plate umpire when it is needed. This rotation will take the home plate umpire to a position outside the third base foul line placing third base between him and the incoming throw. If there is a play on the runner at third, the exceptional umpire will react properly to the location of the throw and subsequent movement of the catch and tag. Again, working in an arc, the home plate umpire will read the incoming throw and assume a position opposite to the direction (either arcing toward left-field or toward home plate) attempting to gain an unobstructed view of the glove as the tag is applied.

c. Play Situations Involving the Batter/runner

With no runners on, in either two-man or three-man mechanics, the home plate umpire is responsible for situations at first base which involve complications related to the overthrows by infielders attempting to retire the batter/runner. Proper positioning in this regard demands that the home plate umpire move from his position and trail the batter/runner to first base. There are several situations where the home plate umpire must either make a call regarding batter/runner interference, or a potential swipe/tag or pulled foot by the first baseman due to an errant throw. If an over throw occurs, the home plate umpire must also be in a position to rule on the throw threatening or entering dead ball territory. In the case of a two-man complication, the over throw and subsequent movement of the batter/runner to second base may trap the first base umpire into a position where he cannot get ahead of the batter/runner into second base.

In this situation, the exceptional umpire will read his partner's dilemma and take responsibility for the batter/runner into second base obtaining the proper position to rule on any potential plays made at second base. On ground balls to the infield, with no runners, the observer/evaluator should be able to observe the home plate umpire moving up the first-base line behind the batter/runner. The home plate umpire will maintain vision on the first base foul line by moving directly up the line and will be stopped and set before the throw is caught allowing proper vision on the players involved. Ideally, the home plate umpire should stop at the 45-foot runner's box to observe all plays at first base. However, there will be certain situations involving close-in throws to first base (pitcher/first, catcher/first) where movement up the line will cease far short of the 45-foot lane. In these situations, the home plate umpire should move up the first-base foul line as far as the play will allow with enough time to assume a stopped and set position before as the throw is gloved by the first baseman or the infielder covering first base. In the case of an overthrow with the ball threatening to enter dead ball territory, the exceptional umpire will verbally call off the first base umpire letting him know that he has vision on the overthrow. Also, the exceptional umpire will leave the foul line adjusting his position to gain an unobstructed view of the potential dead ball situation. As a matter of standard routine, the observer/evaluator should see the home plate umpire initiating some sort of movement every time the ball is hit whether it be taking a Point of the Plate position due to a runner attempting to score; or with no runners, following the batter/runner advancing up the first base line, or watching the touch of the batter/runner at first if the first base umpire leaves the infield to rule on a trouble ball in the outfield. The exceptional umpire is able to read situations and obtain positioning to minimize his "trouble" situations.

Section 1.4- Style and Mechanics of Calls

The body position assumed by the home plate umpire as he rules on balls and strikes has much to do with the style and mechanics of his calls. Proper use of eyes dictates that an umpire will be slow and deliberate employing good "lag time" in his judgment of pitches. Voice and signal, delivered from an upright stance, is the preferred style for strike calls. The signal for strike is crisp and easily observed. It is "big" enough for participants and spectators to see. The accompanying voice level is loud enough to be heard by the infielders, both dugouts, and spectators. Ball calls are made from the crouching position. There is no movement to an upright stance until the call is verbalized, and the upward movement is slower and more relaxed than the strike call. The umpire's voice is loud enough to be heard by both dugouts and the infielders. The exceptional umpire will anticipate the potential movement of a runner from first to second on a 3-2 count and overly-verbalize "ball four" so his partner will not call out the runner forced to second on ball four if the catcher makes an attempt to retire runner.



Observer/evaluators should see a noticeable difference in body language employed by the home plate umpire as he rules on balls and strikes. The exceptional umpire will use his voice to indicate, or “sell,” a ball call which is close. Some umpires will go as far as “spot” the location of these close pitches saying, “BALL-That’s Out.” or otherwise give the location of the pitch. This techniques, again, is successfully used by some umpires but is not required. In the opinion of the Division II National Coordinator, when used correctly and sparingly, it does enhance believability.

The called strike-three signal is a signature move all umpires have developed. It should not be overdone or performed to “show up” the batter, but rather a signal indicating the finality of the pitching series. A good strike-three mechanic enhances believability when properly employed. In the performance of this signal, the umpire maintains his composure and gives the impression, as should be assumed of all signals performed by the umpire, “that he has been there/done that before.” The exceptional umpire will have a strike-three signal that is smooth and visually pleasing and does not draw unnecessary attention to him as his voice level and crispness of signal for strike-three is very similar to that of the other called strike signals he has performed. Most strike three mechanics are performed as if the umpire is throwing punches into a heavy bag-hence the term, “The Punch-out” which is used by announcers across America. Some umpires may employ a variation of the “pulling the chain” technique which got its name from the elevated, gravity box flush toilets where a chain was pulled releasing water from an overhead storage cistern. Umpires should develop their own style for a third strike but must guard against making themselves the center of attention.

Section 1.5-Judgment, Interpretation, Consistency of Strike Zone

This area is the most difficult of all areas to observe and evaluate with objectivity without the modern-age technology employed by major league baseball. However, there are some secondary clues which can be used to help the observer/evaluator get a feel for an umpire’s Judgment, interpretation, and consistency of strike zone

Does the home plate umpire call strikes which are hit-able pitches? That is, pitches which are in the strike zone as defined by the NCAA baseball rules. In actuality, the test of an umpire’s judgment is closely aligned with his timing and proper use of eyes. Pitches in the strike zone are, for the most part, easily gloved by the catcher with minimal movement of both glove and body. Pitchers are taught to “throw to the glove” and umpires are taught to “see the ball into the glove.” Hence, a logical conclusion concerning judgment of pitch quality is that the catcher’s ease at receiving a pitch figures in to the judgment an umpire has of that pitch. Umpires must take into account the fact that most strikes are thrown either to the glove or in close proximity to the glove allowing an ease of reception on the catcher’s part. Pitches which are out of the zone, for the most part, are harder to receive causing extreme movement of the catcher’s glove.



Observer/evaluators can easily see these suspect pitches from an elevated view in the stands which offers an inside/outside perspective, or a side perspective which offers a high/low perspective. In either situation, the extreme movement of the glove in an ungainly or overly-extended fashion is a secondary indicator of a pitch outside the strike zone. Of course, there are exceptions, but in most cases, a hit-able pitch is within the parameters of the strike zone as published and gloved easily by the catcher.

Umpire interpretation of the strike zone largely comes into play when evaluating strikes which are frequently called balls because they pass through the strike zone at the periphery. The high strike at the mid-point between the top of the pants and the armpit or the low strike at the hollow beneath the knee cap are trouble pitches because when receiving these pitches, there is more glove and body movement by the catcher than usual. However, being properly positioned (slot and head height) will help umpire interpretation of these pitches.

Understanding the coaching principle instructing batters “not to swing at pitches above their hands” helps understand the upper level of the zone. In fact, a close examination of the strike zone as drawn in the NCAA Baseball Rules Book shows the upper level of the strike zone beneath the nearest elbow of the batter as he faces the pitcher—clearly beneath his hands. If the head height of the home plate umpire allows him to place his eyes at the top of the zone, clearly any pitch which requires him to raise the level of his eyes is out of the zone.

The low strike, the pitch at the hollow beneath the kneecap, presents another challenge for the proper use of eyes by the home plate umpire. Ironically, the higher an umpire’s head, the easier it is to clearly see how the low strike is received. When the umpire’s head is in the proper position, the view of the strike zone and the reception of the pitch at the hollow beneath the kneecap is unobstructed. The pitch can be seen; ball into glove, and the glove remains in the visual window. Even though there may be more movement of the catcher’s glove, it is an acceptable reaction to the reception of the pitch. The glove remains visible allowing the umpire to clearly see glove movement and orientation.

Umpires are trained in proper use of eyes; to wait until all glove movement has ceased before making any judgment of a pitch. This principle is no more important than when it comes to the pitch at the hollow beneath the kneecap. If the umpire can see the glove after the pitch is received, there’s a strong possibility that pitch is a strike. Catchers are taught to catch with “their thumb beneath the ball.” Umpires want catchers to “catch the ball with the palm and fingers up.” Either way, if the umpire can maintain vision on the glove, it is probably a good pitch.



Umpires need to judge if the movement of the catcher's glove was a result of receiving the pitch, or if the movement was needed to receive a ball out of the strike zone. Good timing due to proper use of eyes is essential in getting this pitch right.

Observer/evaluators can see glove movement in relation to the low pitch from the side angle. The exceptional umpire will call the first pitch thrown at the hollow below the kneecap a strike and will be consistent on this pitch. There will be glove movement on this pitch, and when called a strike there may be some adverse reaction from players and coaches. However, the exceptional umpire will consistently call this pitch a strike and through that consistency, participants will make the adjustment. However, it cannot be stated strongly enough that the first pitch thrown to the hollow beneath the kneecap location must be called a strike and then continually called a strike throughout the game.

Consistent judgment of pitches located on the inner-third and outer-third of the plate is also a function of slot position and head height. When properly positioned in the slot, the umpire's eyes should be in line with the inside edge of the plate. In this position, there is an unobstructed view of the pitch at the inner-third and its reception by the catcher. If the catcher shifts into the visual window of the umpire to receive the inner-third pitch, the exceptional umpire will adjust his head height upward allowing for an unobstructed view of the corner of the plate and the Ball-to-Glove. Umpires must also have a visual reference on the outer corner as well. The pitch on the outer-third must be received with ease as well. The umpire must be aware of glove movement and reach in this situation. A catcher reaching outside the frame of his body to receive this pitch is one indicator that this pitch may be outside the strike zone.

From an elevated position behind home plate, the observer/evaluator can see the glove profile of a pitch received inner-third or outer-third. Again, there will be little movement of the glove-to-ball, and the pitch will not take the glove out of the strike zone. A catcher at the collegiate level should be able to catch inner and outer-third pitches with a firm hand and arm, a technique commonly referred to as "sticking" the pitch. For the observer/evaluator viewing the action from behind, the catcher's glove will not be noticeable either outside or inside the catcher's frame due to the over-extension needed to catch pitches inside or outside the accepted 17-21 inch width of the strike zone.

In the final analysis, the exceptional umpire, once the strike zone parameters have been established, will show little deviation in pitch identification. Once the limits of allowable glove movement have been established, the observer/evaluator should be able to judge umpire consistency and interpretation.

Section 1.6-Crew Mechanics and Communication

When working both the two-man and three-man system, communication should be evident between the plate umpire and other umpires on the crew. There are three basic situations when communication must be established. First, in rotation situations, the plate umpire must initiate the signals alerting the crew of required rotation movement before the batter assumes his position in the batter's box. Second, when moving into a new position during a rotation, the plate umpire must combine signal and voice to alert crewmates of his movement. Finally, the plate umpire must also communicate to crewmates verbally on overthrow coverage situations to insure that vision is maintained on both the ball and the runner(s). In summary, the home plate umpire is responsible for the smooth movement of his crew in rotation situations because he has vision on the entire field and must be able to adapt to and overcome situations which may hinder this movement.

In rotation situations (with runners on base) communication originates with the home plate umpire. Before the batter takes his position in the batter's box, the plate umpire should have already signaled the field umpire where his rotation responsibilities will take him. With no runners on base, the acceptable form of communication is that the umpire will point to third base, indicating he will rotate to that base if needed. The umpire positioned in the field will then respond by pointing where the rotation will take him. In three-man rotation situations, the field umpire will point to first base as his responsibility will be for the batter/runner at first and second base. The first base umpire will point to home plate indicating his rotation will take him to the plate to assume coverage there. In a two-man system, the field umpire will use some form of non-verbal feedback to acknowledge the rotation situation and that he has responsibility for plays at first and second base. This is usually done by a nod of the head, or a clap of the hands. The observer/evaluator should see the home plate umpire initiating rotation signals and other umpires responding to each other non-verbally before crew rotation is required.

There should be verbal communication between umpires when rotation movement begins. In this situation, verbal communication used to insure that each umpire is looking to his area of responsibility; that is, someone is watching the ball and someone is watching the runner. The umpires do not have to look at each other when they are moving. Verbal communication also alerts the crew that rotation is being initiated and everyone needs to be ready to move. This verbal communication may be heard from the stands, but the initial signaling of rotation movement should be seen in all situations.



The home plate umpire must signal his initial intent to rotate to third base in a rotation situation. The exceptional umpire will continually signal his partner until he gets a response. In a three-man situation, the plate umpire will not only receive a return signal from the third-base umpire, but he will also look to the first-base umpire as well insuring that all umpires are ready for the rotation. When rotating, the home plate umpire must also verbalize, "I've Got Third" as he moves up the line. The exceptional umpire will also assume rotation responsibility for his entire crew and, when needed, will verbally alert a reluctant first-base umpire that he must rotate home. The exceptional plate umpire will use his voice to initiate and enhance total crew rotation.

There are secondary situations where the plate umpire must communicate rotation movement to his crew. As soon as a runner reaches scoring position (second base) the plate umpire will signal that he is staying home and will not rotate. With runners on first and second, the plate umpire will signal that he will cover third base in a tag-up situation where the runner from second advances to third base on a caught fly ball. Again, when he initiates movement, he will verbally alert his crewmates. With two outs and a runner in scoring position, or with one out and runners in scoring position, the home plate umpire will signal that a timing play is possible and that he will stay home. The acceptable signal is for the home plate umpire to point to his wrist and then to the ground; or he may indicate two outs and point to the ground. The exceptional umpire will recognize time play situations and alert the crew accordingly.

Finally, there are times when the plate umpire will move toward first base, not in rotation situations but rather functioning in a support role. With no runners on, the plate umpire will follow the batter/runner up the first base line being alert for interference, swipe tag or pulled foot situations. He is also responsible for overthrows and any stoppage of play situation caused by the throw entering into dead ball areas. The umpire can also verbalize to his partner, "I've Got The Ball" allowing his partner to continue to focus on the runner and any subsequent movement the runner makes to second base or back to first base if his movements past first base have placed him in jeopardy of being put out. In situations where there are runners in scoring position but no umpire on the first or third- base line (positions A or D), the home plate umpire must assume responsibility for fair/foul-catch/no catch. In these situations, the home plate umpire will verbalize "I'm On The Line" allowing crewmates to focus on tagging runners rather than the legality of the catch.

The exceptional plate umpire will take responsibility for crew rotation through the use of hand signals and voice. The exceptional umpire will alert his crewmates when he is moving to a new position in the rotation situation. The exceptional umpire will also take responsibility to insure that bases are covered by adapting to situations where standard rotations are missed.



In a two-man situation, the home plate umpire, when properly positioned following the batter/runner up the first-base line, should be able to adapt to a partner who has not rotated ahead of the batter/runner to second base. The exceptional umpire may take it upon himself to cover for his partner and adapt and improvise within the rotation situation and assume responsibility for plays on the batter/runner at second base after giving verbal assurance and clear hand signals to his partner.

In a three-man situation the exceptional plate umpire will be aware when a crewmate has failed to rotate to home and will assume responsibility for plays on the lead runner both at third base and at home if the situation dictates he do so.

The exceptional home plate umpire realizes that crew mechanics are largely comprised of a series of compromises and will improvise and adapt his movements in rotation situations to overcome obstacles which may interrupt the smooth movement of his crewmates.

Section 2: Base work

2.1-Proper Positioning of Calls

Observation and evaluation of base mechanics is best accomplished from an elevated position in the grandstands which allows for complete field vision. The observer/evaluator must be able to observe rotation movement as well as individual calls at each base as they arise. The following is a guide to those observation positions and the rationale behind each.

The general impression which must be engendered by the crew is that of controlled hustle. When the ball is hit, each member of the crew should be moving with a purpose. Umpire hustle on the baseball field is not done to showboat. Rather hustle on the umpire baseball field can best be described as "cruise control" where umpires hustle so they don't have to hurry. Umpires should move well enough to put themselves in the most advantageous position to rule on plays presented to them before rendering a decision and resulting signal. They should be well positioned and stopped, enhancing believability. Exceptional umpires give the appearance of staying ahead of the play, being set and letting the play come to them instead of being on the move when the tag is applied which gives the appearance of slow-footedness and uncertainty.

Proper positioning on the bases is achieved when the calling umpire can place the base between himself and the throw. This allows the umpire to read the direction of the throw, make the proper adjustment to read the tag when it is applied, and get the call correct. However, there are times when the umpire cannot achieve this relationship to the throw and must work to build a 90-degree angle to the throw choosing angle over distance.



This 90 degree angle must be achieved when calling plays at first base. A rule of thumb to achieve the proper position is for the first base umpire, positioned 10-12 feet from first base, is to enter the diamond moving from his starting location in a direct line to the infielder who is making the throw. The base umpire should be stopped and set (hands on knees is preferable) with eyes on the fielder as he releases the throw. The movement of the umpire into the diamond, when done with quickly, should bring the umpire far enough into the diamond to establish the proper distance and angle to the throw. Observer/evaluators can easily see that for longer throws, from third base or shortstop, the first base umpire will take a position which is deeper into the infield (over angle) than when taking throws from second base, the pitcher, or the catcher. The exceptional first base umpire will also recognize instances when throws coming from second base, complicated by the extreme angle of the throw (pressure), will require him to position himself outside the diamond eliminating abrupt head movement when pulling vision ahead of the throw to first base.

Observer/evaluators can also see if the umpire is completely stopped, set, and has given himself enough time to read the throw to the first baseman. Umpires who do not completely stop and set have a difficult time reading off-line throws and making the necessary adjustments to rule on a swipe tag or pulled foot. This secondary adjustment may require the umpire to take a quick step back toward the first-base foul line. If he has not stopped his initial momentum as he moves into the diamond setting himself to receive the throw, he will not be able to move quickly enough in the opposite direction to rule on these two eventualities.

On rotation situations where the first base umpire must move into the infield (runner on second or second and third), he will take his initial position in the base line, in line with second base, in the slot between the bag and the second baseman. From this position (deep B) he will have an unobstructed view of the tag as a pickoff is attempted. Even though the umpire cannot place the bag between himself and the throw, he is in a position where the action is coming toward him-he has placed himself ahead of the runner as he dives back into second base.

The exceptional umpire will be able to readjust his position as needed to rule on situations where the throw has taken the first baseman away from the bag. The exceptional umpire will be completely stopped and set before the fielder releases the ball. The exceptional umpire will place himself in a position where the action is coming to him.

At second base, there are two situations where the umpire will make critical calls. The first is when a runner attempts to steal second base. The second is the force play which begins the double play. Both require different techniques.

For a two-man crew, the field umpire will assume a position in location B (between the bag and the second baseman), splitting the difference between the dirt circle of the mound and the grass cutout at second base. As the catcher's throw to second is made, the umpire will take a read step toward the catcher and turn ahead of the throw to second. By stepping toward the mound, the umpire is building an unobstructed visual angle to the side of second base where the tag will be applied. It is important that the umpire be able to follow the glove as the tag is attempted. In three-man mechanics, the umpire may take a deeper position, either in position B or C (between second base and the shortstop). However, the same step up-turn with the throw-return to set procedure should be evident. The proper visual angle must be built. The umpire must be stopped before the call is made and the signal performed. The exceptional umpire will make use of the 3-step procedure (step up toward the catcher-turn with the throw-return to set) to put himself in the proper position to rule on tag plays involving a steal of second. The exceptional umpire will move to any secondary position needed to increase his visual angle on the tag when circumstances (secondary tag/runner over slide) demand.

On the force play which initiates a double play, the base umpire techniques of two-man and three-man are also different. In two-man, the calling umpire is also responsible for ruling on the second part of the double play at first base. This requires that he position himself in the initial B location, or move quickly to that location from the C position (runners on third and first) before making the call at second. This call is made while the umpire is set (remember: the call is a mental process) but the signal must be performed as the umpire is initiating lateral drift toward first. Here he must build an oblique angle to first base (more toward the 45 foot runner's box) working to get an unobstructed view of a potential swipe tag or pulled foot after coming to a complete stop and assuming a standing set position. This two-step lateral movement (or as much as the play will allow) requires quickness and a strong voice. In the event the runner at second is safe, the umpire may have to come back to second base, after the continuing action at first has ceased, and repeat his safe call for clarity and believability as the previous signal was performed quickly and the umpire with the umpire turning away from second base to focus on the action at first base. In three-man, the calling base umpire also has to move. If his initial location is position B, and the throw is coming from the second baseman to the shortstop covering, he must move laterally to his left placing second base between himself and the throw. If he is in position C and the throw is coming from the shortstop to the second baseman covering, he must move laterally to his right (to position B). The underlying principle of base positioning holds consistent. The exceptional umpire will move to a position to placing the base between him and the throw allowing the action to come to him. The exceptional umpire also demonstrates an understanding of the concept of lateral drift.

In a three-man system, the third base umpire is referred to as “the rabbit” simply because he must do all the long-distance running. From his position behind third base, with no runners on, every time there is a ground ball to an infielder, the third base umpire must run to get into position to rule on plays at second base where the batter/runner may advance due to an overthrow of first base. The third base umpire must also be in position to rule on plays where the batter/runner stretches a single into a double. But, the monotony of this constant in and out mechanic leads to certain lethargy on the part of the third base umpire due to the fact that there are very few overthrows with an advancing batter/runner or situations where the batter/runner tries for second base. However, this umpire must guard against complacency and move with a purpose so he will be in proper position to rule on a play at second base should there be an overthrow/advance or attempted double.

When the over throw/advance situation occurs, the third base umpire should be able to assume a position placing second base between himself and the throw. Again, the technique of moving opposite the direction of the throw and gaining an unobstructed view the attempted tag is the technique exceptional umpires will use. This position, looking from the “outside-in,” is an advanced mechanic which offers the best view of a potential swipe tag on a runner sliding away from the fielder attempting the tag. When the batter/runner attempts a double, again the umpire should take a position on the infield grass lining up the throw to second from the outfield. The correct technique, placing the base between the umpire and the throw, can be achieved by the umpire positioning himself for the standard “inside-out” look.

In any case, the exceptional umpire will be completely stopped and set before the runner begins his slide. As stated before, there can be no positive adjustment for unobstructed vision if the umpire is not first stopped at his initial position before making a secondary adjustment. Without being stopped before making this adjustment, the umpire gives the impression that he is “on the move” trying to keep up with the speed of the play. This does not engender believability when he makes his call.

The third base umpire must constantly read the play in front of him and be prepared for any eventuality which may occur. He also has concurrent vision on the batter/runner touching first base on his way to second when the first base umpire has left the diamond to rule on a trouble ball. With a runner on third only (less than 2 outs), the exceptional third base umpire when moving inside the diamond to position B or C, will also assume responsibility for an outfield throw back to first base attempting to retire the batter/runner if the first base umpire has left the infield to rule on a “trouble” ball which turns into a base hit. All of these secondary responsibilities require that the third base umpire moves quickly and with a purpose at all times.

2.2-Style and Mechanics of Calls

There are as many styles of signaling as there are umpires. True, some signals are more pleasing to the eye than others, but the bottom line in any situation should not be the style of the signal but rather the correctness of the call. This being said, this section will explain the proper style of calls by base umpires and the proper mechanics involved when performing them. As always, when it comes to any potential for showboating, an umpire should perform as if he has “made that call before.” There is no room for over exaggeration which focuses more attention on the calling umpire than the player accomplishing a spectacular feat on the diamond. However, there are close calls which need to be “sold” by the umpire to aid in believability.

Umpires should wait until all playing action has ceased before performing any signal. This is especially true at first base. On a routine play, the out signal need not be anything more than the same one given by the plate umpire on a swinging strike. However, playing action does not cease until the runner has either crossed the bag or abandoned his right to run the bases. Therefore, the routine out call, as a professional courtesy, should be withheld until the runner has completed his part of the play. On closer plays, but ones where the runner is clearly out, the signal may be performed with more emphasis and crispness combined with voice, “He’s Out” verbalized as the signal is given. It is good practice for the umpire to verbalize whenever a signal is given as both batter/runner and base coach are involved with continuing action and should not have to look at the umpire during a developing situation which may prove to be a tense and exciting at its conclusion.

There are close plays which require the umpire to make a more forceful signal than usual, either safe or out. When performing the “out” signal in this situation, the umpire arm movement appears to be more like that of a boxer. The umpire literally “punches” the imaginary heavy bag in front of him and gives extra verbal emphasis on his call, HE’S OUT!!” with the word out being announced as the punch is thrown. In baseball, this flair for the dramatic on the part of the umpire has come to be known as “The Punch-out.” This is a reserved only for plays demonstrating extreme ability and should be used sparingly.

There are other situations where a strong “out” signal (not the punch out) must be performed to remove doubt. For instance, when the check swing is appealed, if it is strike three, a convincing “out” signal should be performed. With a runner on second, when the line drive to the second baseman was caught and the throw to second for the force was in completed, a strong “out” signal on the initial catch of the line drive removes an argument after the throw to second to completes the twin killing.

The “safe” signal is performed many times in extreme situations as well. The “safe” signal, performed like the umpire is literally clearing off a table at shoulder level with both hands, is every bit as dramatic as the “out” signal. As the hands are brought up to shoulder level arms are fully extended to the side in a sweeping motion, the umpire should verbalize, “He’s Safe.” The signal should be held briefly allowing for visibility. Occasionally, a runner may have passed first base when the signal is performed and will need time to look back over his shoulder at the umpire, as will the base coach who has focused his attention on the runner as well. There are other times when a tag is applied to a runner who is clearly safe. In this situation, the safe call can be performed in a relaxed fashion. Whenever a tag attempt is made, there should be a corresponding “safe or out” call and signal from the umpire.

The exceptional umpire will have an awareness of when a call should be performed with intensity and when it should not. The exceptional umpire will also understand when to use the appropriate hand signals to enhance believability. When moving to the outfield on a fly ball, the exceptional umpire only uses the safe or out signals only when the validity of the catch is in question. In the infield, the umpire will use the “safe” signal to remove questions which arise in situations where the batted ball did not touch the runner and there was no interference, or the line drive to the short stop was trapped and a throw to first base must be made to retire the runner. Secondary signals to indicate a pulled foot or a juggled catch will also be used by the exceptional umpire.

2.3- Timing and Judgment Calls

As stated previously, good timing and good judgment go together. Ask any umpire why he missed a call and the likely answer will be, “I got too fast.” For an umpire, speed kills. The use of proper timing allows for “lag time,” the interval between when the play happens and when the actual signal is made, giving an umpire the opportunity to reconsider before making a decision. Good timing allows the mental process to complete itself free from the pressure of having to act immediately. Good judgment is found in this extra, mental “replay.” The question is this-what visual clues can the umpire recognize which will help him anticipate when his timing and judgment should come together-when he has a “whacker” when everything seems to happen at once right on top of the bag?



A guiding fundamental from years ago was the theory of rewarding excellence. In other words, on any given play, which player performed better? On a “whacker” at first base did the shortstop make a great play on the ball followed by a strong throw to first base or did he get to the ball late and short hop the first baseman? Did the third baseman make a great stop moving to his right followed by an accurate throw to the second baseman covering the bag getting the force out on a runner who didn’t bother to slide? Did the hard hit grounder up the third-base line, which got by the third baseman before he could react to it, pass over the bag fair and then hook foul or hook foul before the bag? In these situations, there has clearly been excellence demonstrated. In a tough judgment situation, the umpire can choose to reward the player who has demonstrated that excellence.

Another theory, one with a bit more science behind it also explains how to handle a “whacker.” Newton’s Third Law of Motion suggests that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In baseball, the action of catching the ball has an equal and opposite reaction; the popping of the glove as a result of the catch. At first base when the batter/runner’s foot and the popping of the glove happen simultaneously, Newton’s theory would suggest that the ball had already been received before the foot touched the bag and the ball popped the glove. Explaining how Newton’s Laws called the batter/runner out in the middle of a baseball game would be a hard sell, however the NCAA Rules clearly state that the runner is out when “the ball is securely held in the hand or glove of a fielder while the runner is not touching the base.” Newton’s application suggests this: the ball was received before the runner touched the base. The ball beat the runner; the runner is out. In any case, the importance of an umpire taking the necessary time to make a clear and correct decision is important no matter what philosophy he chooses to adopt to help him render a decision as a result of a “bang-bang” play.

At first base, the exceptional umpire will employ a two-step approach to making safe-out decisions. The first step will be to watch for the batter/runner’s foot on the bag and listen for the pop of the glove after the ball has been received. The second step, and a most important one, will require the umpire to refocus back to the glove to make sure the fielder demonstrates “complete control of the ball and that the release of the ball is voluntary and intentional.” Only after both parts of the process have taken place should the umpire make a final decision and corresponding signal. The observer/evaluator should be able to see this shift in focus as the first base umpire makes calls at first base. Again, this is another situation where proper use of eyes leads to good timing and a correct decision. On tag plays, it is up to the umpire to put himself into a position where he has an unobstructed view of the glove. There will be times when the umpire has a proper view of the glove and tag, but the action of the runner covers up the glove and there is a question whether the fielder has maintained “complete control” of the ball. In these situations, the exceptional umpire will use good timing, hesitating and perhaps readjusting his positioning, to insure that the ball has been securely held. If the ball has been dropped, the umpire can signal safe immediately, perhaps employing a secondary signal-pointing to the

ball on the ground and announcing, "Safe! The Ball Is On The Ground!" In another situation, if control of the ball has been maintained, even after an unaccustomed lapse of time, and the first baseman's foot has not come off the bag, the umpire after pointing forcefully to the bag and announcing "HE'S ON THE BAG," can call and signal "He's Out!" with the intensity the situation allows.

In summation, an umpire must move purposefully and quickly on the bases to gain the proper position to maximize his use of eyes in any given situation. Once stopped and set, allowing the play to come to him, he can use "lag time" to replay the situation before him, make any secondary adjustment to needed to gain unobstructed vision, make the call, and perform the corresponding signal. An umpire who is slow getting into position may still be moving, then stopping, and finally getting set during the "lag time" interval where he should be preparing (both mentally and physically) to rule on the play. An umpire who is slow to the spot is usually quick to the call, and a quick call can be disastrous. The observer/evaluator who is aware of this maxim and will be able to identify the exceptional umpire who combines proper positioning, "lag time," and proper use of eyes to render a correct and believable decision.

2.4-Crew Mechanics and Communication

Communication between the field umpires (3-man mechanics) comes in two forms. First, when the home plate umpire signals rotation movement (runners on), the field umpires also signal that movement they will initiate when the ball is hit. This communication begins with the home plate umpire who signals the appropriate field umpire. The field umpire (usually U3) then signals his partner (U1) to complete the communication protocol. Communication between the umpire crew should be seen whenever a new batter steps into the batter's box, or when the rotation situation changes due to runners changing their positions on the bases. In the two-man system, communication is plate umpire to field umpire and it will be initiated when a new runner comes to bat or when the previous rotation situation on the bases changes due to runner movement.

The exceptional umpire will insure that all crewmates have received rotation signals and have responded with some sort of physical acknowledgement. The exceptional umpire will communicate rotation movement in a non-verbal fashion before every new batter. During play action, when moving to another position is required, verbal communication will be used. Due to this exceptional crew communication, the only thing left for the observer/evaluator to see is the well-coordinated movement of umpires when the ball is hit.

When the ball is hit, with no runners on, the communication is between field umpires almost exclusively. As part of the pause/read/react protocol, when a base umpire reads a trouble ball (an outfielder attempting a catch below the waist, converging outfielders, an outfielder moving to the warning track or possible home run, an outfielder moving toward the foul line and a possible fair/foul ruling needed) the appropriate infield umpire will move to the outfield to rule as needed. In this situation, as part of the pause/read protocol, both umpires should read the situation to determine the location of the ball and which umpire will leave the diamond. The umpire who leaves the diamond will signal his partner by raising his hand and verbalizing, "I'm Out!" The umpire remaining in the infield (to assume batter/runner responsibilities) should already have a visual read on his partner as part of the pause/read/react protocol which requires him to read his partner if the ball in flight is not in his area of responsibility. If the pause/read/react protocol is followed, there should never be two umpires in the outfield covering the same fly ball.

In this situation, the observer/evaluator will see the proper pause (from hands on knees to a standing set position), read (decision on coverage responsibility/field umpire eye contact), and react (umpire eye contact continuing as calling umpire signals and moves to outfield). The exceptional field umpire will establish a visual connection with his partner before initiating movement. On situations where there are runners on base, again it is expected that the field umpires communicate their anticipated movement to one another when the ball is hit. This movement is broken down into two main protocols. First, with a runner on first, the umpires must communicate the direction their rotational movement will take them (clockwise). Second, with runners in scoring position (first and second) the rotation direction will be counter clockwise.

With a runner at first base, clockwise rotation is the standard rotation when the home plate umpire must assume responsibility for the lead runner (R1) into third. Here, the rotation calls for the first base umpire (U1) to initiate his rotation to home plate as it is vacated by the plate umpire's movement to third base. However, the first base umpire must not give up responsibilities on the batter/runner until there is movement by R1, who has already moved from first to second, and is now attempting third base. When R1 breaks for third, the first base umpire must initiate full rotation to home plate. He will stop only after he reaches the Point of the Plate. The exceptional umpire will move purposefully and quickly to the Point of the Plate when the rotation calls demands he assume responsibility for plays at the plate. He will verbally alert his partner (U3) that he is changing location as he moves toward home plate. This verbal alert is critical as it will also signal his partner that he must assume responsibility for the batter/runner at first base.

As the first base umpire rotates to home plate, the second base umpire (U3) must initiate lateral drift toward first base. He is now responsible for any throw back to first or continuing action at second base if the batter/runner attempts to gain that base. While moving toward first base, U3 must build his angle toward first base moving obliquely toward the runner's lane box, allowing for unobstructed vision if there should be a throw back and tag situation. This movement can be a trying situation for U3 as umpires are used to moving with runners as they advance around the bases. In this situation, U3 must move against the flow of the runners. Strong verbal communication from the exceptional home plate umpire (he is also changing location) will keep U3 from following the lead runner into third base.

The exceptional umpire (U3) in the clockwise rotation will initiate lateral drift while building an angle back into first base. Using quickness and an exceptional anticipatory read, he will be stopped and set if a play should be attempted at either first base or second base. There will be no hesitation as he initiates his part of the crew rotation. Because of his exceptional positioning, if there is a play at either second or first base, he will demonstrate the proper use of "lag time" to call the play (mental process) and perform the corresponding signal (physical process). He does not shorten the "lag time" interval being late in getting stopped and set thereby causing his call mental and physical processes to be hurried.

With runners in scoring position (runners on first and second), counter clockwise base umpire movement requires extreme coordination between umpires as the second base umpire (U3) must split the difference between second and third base assuming responsibility for potential plays at both bases. The exceptional first base umpire (U1) must assume responsibility for the movement of the batter/runner after the ball has been put in play. He must move quickly with the batter/runner into second if the batter/runner advances. In this situation, as the batter/runner advances to second, R1 will advance to third and R2 will advance home. U3 will have moved into position at third base, reading R1 and ball (but not partner). This "blind" rotation requires U1 to verbally alert U3 that he is entering the infield assuming responsibility for plays on the batter/runner at second base. Exceptional base umpires who have practiced good communication (both pre-pitch non-verbal and verbal-announcing position movement) will move quickly and with coordination covering their assigned bases.

The observer/evaluator will see very little hesitation in the counter clockwise rotation between umpires. Exceptional umpire(s) will move quickly and purposefully staying ahead or abreast of the runners as they move around the bases. Exceptional umpire(s) will verbally communicate in a forceful fashion when moving into the diamond in this blind rotation situation. Because of good communication, the exceptional umpire will have no hesitation during this blind rotation. The coordinated movement of umpires in this most difficult rotational situation is a result of a good pregame discussion and exceptional pre-pitch communication.

In situations where the field umpire, stationed inside the diamond, must cross the dirt and move to the outfield, there may be little chance for physical and verbal communication. However, if the proper pause/read/react protocol is used by the umpire on the foul line, he should be able to read his partner and move into the diamond necessitating immediate adoption of 2-man mechanics. Movement without much time for communication requires that the exceptional umpire read his partner and the ball, but be very aware of the situation as it requires almost instantaneous reaction and intuition. In fact, the exceptional umpire may begin his movement into the diamond physically while verbally compelling his partner to cross the dirt and rule on a trouble ball.

The observer/evaluator will see the quick reaction on the part of the exceptional umpire in situations where he must cross the dirt to rule on a trouble ball. The exceptional umpire will also take it upon himself to encourage movement of his partner across the infield dirt to the outfield grass by anticipating a trouble ball as he engages in the pause/read/react protocol from his position outside the foul line. The exceptional umpire will take it upon himself to initiate proper crew rotation when there may be hesitation on the part of his crewmate.

In the two-man system (with no runner on), the base umpire must alert the home plate umpire whenever he leaves the infield to rule on a fly ball in his area of responsibility. Communication through voice ("I'm Out!") and signal (raised arm) insures that the message is received. At that time, the home plate umpire (who should already be moving from behind the catcher) will assume responsibility for the batter/runner's touch of first base and any subsequent plays on the batter/runner on the bases. The field umpire, if possible, will return to the diamond and assume play responsibility at home plate.

The observer/evaluator will see the exceptional umpire (two-man mechanics) move with quickness and purpose to the outfield to rule on fly balls in his area of responsibility. He will get a good read on the situation using the pause/read/react protocol only moving to the outfield when required (an outfielder attempting a catch below the waist, converging outfielders, an outfielder moving to the warning track or possible home run, or an outfielder moving toward the foul line and a possible fair/foul ruling needed). He does not stretch the crew by leaving the infield on routine fly balls. When he does leave, his signal is both physical and verbal leaving no doubt that the home plate umpire must assume added responsibilities and his verbal communication encouraging him to do so.

2.5-Reaction to Development of Plays

When routine plays are made with ease, it is hard to see an umpire react to play situations which require him to adapt basic mechanics to a situation where improvisation is needed because the play has unfolded in an unexpected manner. These unexpected developments- an off-line throw-, a swipe tag or pulled foot at first base, a runner over sliding the bag at second and a subsequent secondary tag being applied, a runner missing home plate on a slide and then a scramble to touch the plate before the catcher scrambles to apply the tag-these are all situations where the umpire must deviate from standard positioning, fight to get a readjusted and unobstructed visual angle on the play, and sometimes, use secondary signals to enhance believability. These situations have already been discussed in this manual. However, there are other demanding situations which occur during a game requiring the umpire to adapt expected ““Essential Behaviors”” to meet the demands of what can be extremely complicated situations.

a. Runners failing to Touch Bases

This situation requires umpires to communicate with each other concerning who will make the call if there is an appeal of a missed base. The observer/evaluator should be able to see the calling umpire make some sort of gesture to his partners that he will make the call in this situation. Any resulting objections will have to be handled in accordance with suggested situation management techniques outlined in the next section of this manual.

b. Multiple Runners Occupying the Same Base

Most participants do not know the rules pertaining to rightful base occupancy, therefore an umpire must be very deliberate with his signaling and use of voice to insure that this runners involved in this situation understand who is in jeopardy of being put out an who has a right to occupy the base in question. Coaches will probably instruct their fielders to tag both players in this situation. The observer/evaluator should see the calling umpire deliberately point toward the runner who has legal right to the base and announce while pointing, “He’s Safe.” The next signal should be directed at the runner who does not have legal right to the base, “He’s Out.” It is vital to deal with the call following this protocol to insure that the runners and the coach know who may remain on the base. It is also suggested that if there is extreme situational confusion the calling umpire call and signal “Time.” Freezing the runners in place allows time for the calling umpire to announce and signal who is safe and who is out; preventing a possible “cheap” double-play when both runners, unsure of the right to occupy, step off the base and are tagged.

c. Runner Passes Another Runner

This situation is best handled by the plate umpire as he has vision of all players. However, an umpire properly positioned in the infield will have panoramic view of the playing surface and can also rule in this instance. This situation usually occurs on long fly balls to the outfield where the runner at first must hold his position and read the situation determining if a catch has been made. The batter/runner, believing he has a multi-base hit, rounds first base and heads toward second, not aware that the runner on first has stopped in between first and second base. Other times, the outfielder after appearing he has made the catch, will drop the ball. The base runner, believing a catch has been made heads back to first base. However, the batter/runner, having a good read on the outfield situation, advances to second base. The batter/runner passes the base runner who is mistakenly returning to first base.

d. Interference/Obstruction

There is no single situation which can cause more trouble for the base umpire than incorrectly ruling on interference/obstruction. To begin with, interference is committed by runners against fielders in the act of fielding a batted ball. Interference places the defense at an immediate disadvantage in playing on the batted ball. Interference hinders a fielder's ability not only to field batted balls, but also make a primary throw to retire the batter/runner at first base, or a secondary throw to retire runners at other bases. In interference situations, the umpire must call "Time" and announce, "That's Interference." The calling of time stops all runner movement on the bases and allows "lag time" on the umpire's part to determine the proper adjudication of the penalty.

In an interference situation, the observer/evaluator should see the umpire point at the infraction, signal and call "Time-That's Interference!" in the appropriate fashion, and then very deliberately rule on players who must be called out due to the act interference. The calling umpire must then deal with player(s) who are secondary parties placed in jeopardy due to the act (i.e. batter/runner) and must be called out because of an act of interference which prevents a double play, and move other runners (those starting at third or second base) back to the bases in their possession at the time of the interference as required. This final step, returning runners to previously occupied bases, is most critical in a double play situation with a runner at third base who appears to score during a double play situation where interference is ruled on the runner moving to second. Taking a "perceived" run off the scoreboard must be done with self-confidence and strength of deportment. The exceptional umpire will take this final step with confidence.

The observer/evaluator must see a very deliberate four-step approach taken by the exceptional umpire when calling interference or obstruction. First, the calling umpire should point toward and announce the infraction. Second, the calling umpire should call and signal “Time” after announcing the infraction. Next, appropriate runners must be called out. Finally, all other runners must be returned to bases they had in their possession at the time of the infraction (interference) or advanced as the situation dictates (obstruction).

When runners are obstructed, their right to move unfettered around the bases has been taken away by members of the defensive team either blocking their movement to obtain bases or forcing them to deviate from their established path to the next base or break stride. In this situation, in most cases, the play is allowed to progress. The umpire, once again, points to the situation and announces the infraction, “That’s Obstruction.” However, play is allowed to continue allowing runners to overcome the obstruction and reach bases they would have obtained had there been no obstruction. The umpire must make awards to nullify the act. At the conclusion of action, the umpire will call time and award bases as necessary to nullify the obstruction.

The observer/evaluator should be able to see the calling umpire point to the infraction, and announce the infraction: “That’s Obstruction.” At the conclusion of the action the umpire will make necessary awards to place runners. “Time! You -Second Base!” The umpire will then point to the runner being adjusted and then point to the base he will be awarded. This action should be seen and heard clearly by the observer/evaluator.

Also, there are times when the runner in question will be obstructed as a play to retire him is being made. At this point, the umpire will again announce the infraction and point: “That’s Obstruction!” However, in this situation the ball will become dead and the play must be stopped and other runners must be returned to the bases they occupied at the time of obstruction. The observer/evaluator will see a four-step protocol. “That’s Obstruction! Time! You- Second Base. You- Back To Third Base!” The act will be announced. The play will be stopped. The appropriate award will be made on the obstructed runner who is guaranteed a one-base award from the base he had in his possession when he was obstructed. Finally, any runners attempting to advance will be returned as required by rule, unless forced by umpire’s base award to the obstructed runner. This protocol will be performed deliberately and with self-confidence. The calling of time is important, stopping movement of the base runners and allowing for “lag time” before the umpire correctly places runners.

e. Pause, Read, React

The process of determining when a field umpire should leave his initial position on the infield and move to the outfield to rule on catch/no-catch situations is a function of the pause, read, react protocol. Even though this concept has been touched upon in another section, it is included here in greater detail to aid the observer/evaluator in recognizing it when it is employed by the base umpire.

With no runners on, umpires will divide up the outfield into two equal quadrants. The action of the centerfielder in his initial movement to make a play on a fly ball will determine which umpire has jurisdiction. If the center fielder opens toward his right (toward third base,) the third base umpire will assume jurisdiction. If the center fielder opens toward his left (toward first base,) the first base umpire will assume jurisdiction. Jurisdiction in this instance is determined by which base umpire can establish an unobstructed view of Ball-to-Glove. For balls which require the centerfielder to move straight in or straight back, the first base umpire assumes all jurisdiction as the third base umpire must move into the diamond ahead of the batter/runner should a two-base hit situation arise.

To establish the “pause” position, the umpire need not move at all. In fact, if the umpire is in the proper pre-pitch position with hands on knees, all the umpire has to do is stand up. Next, the “read” process is two-fold. First, the base umpires must decide which man has jurisdiction on the catch/not catch. Second, before either umpire leaves the infield, there must be a visual connection made to insure that both umpires are not moving to the outfield.

Finally, there is the proper reaction. If the umpire with jurisdiction decides to move to the outfield, he signals by raising his hand and vocally alerting his crewmates that he is leaving his position: “I’m Out!” If umpires decide not to leave positions for the outfield, they must move to their secondary locations. The first-base umpire moves toward first base (in foul territory) placing the first base bag between himself and the possible throw-back. The third base umpire moves into the diamond and positions himself at second ahead of any possible play on the batter/runner should a two-base hit be attempted.

The observer/evaluator should be able to see the pause, read, and react movements performed distinctly. When the ball is hit, base umpires should come to a standing set. Next, they must read the location of the fly ball and movement of the fielders to it, and then read each other while still erect and motionless. Finally, there comes the reaction to the demands of the situation and required movement. In the two-man system, the base umpire should follow this exact protocol, but will communicate with the home plate umpire before he moves to the outfield.

The exceptional umpire will make correct reads of fly ball situations and will move to the outfield only when the following situations seem at hand:

1. An outfielder attempting a catch below the waist
2. Outfielders converging on one another or with an infielder
3. An outfielder moving to the warning track to make a catch or possible home run
4. An outfielder moving toward the foul line and a possible fair/foul ruling needed

The exceptional umpire will not “stretch the crew” by going out on routine fly balls or misreading batted balls which fall for base hits. When the exceptional umpire moves to the outfield, he will be stopped and set when the ball is about to be caught. The exceptional umpire will only employ the appropriate signal (out or safe) in situations where the validity of the catch is in doubt or some participants will not have clear view of Ball-to-Glove. When going out, the exceptional umpire will build an angle on the play which will allow him to have a clear and unobstructed view of Ball-to-Glove.

When umpires are stationed within the diamond and a trouble fly ball is hit, they will both engage in the pause, read, and react protocol as outlined previously. However, if the umpire inside the diamond determines he must leave the diamond and cross the infield dirt to the outfield, his partner will have gained visual assurance of his movement and will move into the diamond to replace him as he exits. The crew will then revert to two-man mechanics. The exceptional umpire will predict the movement of his partner and will move purposefully with confidence and coordination into the diamond.

The observer/evaluator will see a well coordinated movement on the part of the umpire leaving the diamond and his counterpart entering it. In fact, the umpire on the baseline (entering) will have read the situation and anticipated the movements of his partner (exiting). The exceptional umpire may encourage his partner to leave the infield by moving toward him physically and verbally encouraging his decision to move across the infield dirt to rule on trouble balls in his outfield jurisdiction.

Section 3: Game Situation and Management

3.1 NCAA Policies, Procedures and Points of Emphasis

All umpires are expected to follow the guidelines as written in the NCAA Game Officials Manual outlined in sections 10 and 11, plus the following points of emphasis.



a. Getting the Call Correct

NCAA policies dictate that an umpire will engage in certain “Essential Behaviors” on the field which will be in keeping with written NCAA policies and procedures pertaining to the conduct of the game. These policies are largely adopted to insure the safety of participants or correctness of umpire decisions and have been written into the NCAA Baseball Rules book.

First and foremost is the written policy “Getting the Call Right” found in the appendix section of the NCAA Baseball Rules book. It reads as follows:

It is the philosophy of the NCAA that umpires always seek to get the call right. This may involve the reversal of a previously rendered decision. Subsection B urges an umpire “to seek help when his view is blocked or positioning prevents him from seeing crucial elements of a play. An umpire is also encouraged to seek help in instances when he has any doubt and a partner has additional information that could lead to the proper ruling.”

NCAA Division II umpires are expected to adhere closely to this policy. When an umpire has made a decision which brings the coach out of the dugout, many times an argument does not indicate an umpire is wrong. However, if a crewmate may have information which has a bearing on the final outcome of the play and may lead to the changing of the call, he should approach his partner in such a way as to gain eye contact, or some other previously discussed signal (during the locker room pregame), which will alert his partner to request help from his crewmate. Further, if an umpire feels his previously rendered decision was in error, he can immediately request help from the appropriate crewmate who would have added information. More often than not, it is the home plate umpire who should be relied upon to provide help either to confirm the previous call was correct, or help the calling umpire change the previous incorrect call to the correct call. While it is not required that the calling umpire request the help of his crewmates if he feels his judgment is 100 per cent correct, if the situation becomes volatile, umpires should acknowledge this extreme reaction of participants and fans as an indicator that an umpire conference is in order. In this case, the calling umpire can choose the “Avenue of Least Resistance” and can ask, “Coach, would you like me to get some help?”

The observer/evaluator should see umpires huddle when requested by the calling umpire in the situation described previously. The exceptional umpire will take decisive action (when the situation dictates) and request an umpire conference before a situation becomes heated and argumentative. Also, the exceptional umpire will make his presence known in situation when he may have additional information to help the calling umpire arrive at a correct decision. In this situation, the exceptional umpire will not only offer additional information, but he will also handle any subsequent discussion with the coach who questions the final decision rendered due to his information. There are other situations when a coach may request that umpires confer to insure that the decision of the calling umpire was correct. The situations when a coach may request an umpire conference are as follows:

1. **Deciding if a home run is fair or foul**
2. **Deciding whether a batted ball has left the playing field for a home run or a ground-rule double**
3. **Cases in which a foul tip is dropped or caught by the catcher**
4. **Cases in which a foul fly ball is caught or not caught**
5. **Cases when an umpire clearly errs in judgment because he did not see a ball dropped or juggled after a fielder makes a tag or force**
6. **Spectator interference plays**
7. **Balks called by an umpire who clearly did not realize the pitcher's foot was off the rubber**

Although the NCAA Protocol is for the calling umpire to ask the opinion of any crewmate who has been in the best position to have an unobstructed view of the play, it is recommended that all umpires come together in these situations. Since it is the required duty of the crew chief to bring all umpires together when necessary, the crew chief should also help explain the circumstances which changed the call to the affected coach.

b. Batter's Box Rule

In 2004, the problem with batters continually leaving the batter's box was addressed. The current rule, found in Rule 7/section 1-c reads as follows:

The batter must keep at least one foot in the batter's box throughout the time at bat. The batter may leave the batter's box but not the dirt area surrounding home plate when

- a. **The batter swings at a pitch**
- b. **The batter is forced out of the box by the pitch**
- c. **A member of either team requests and is granted time out**
- d. **A defensive player attempts a play on a runner at any base**
- e. **A batter feints a bunt**
- f. **A wild pitch or passed ball occurs**
- g. **The pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound after receiving the ball**
- h. **The catcher leaves his position to give defensive signals**



The rule also allows the home plate umpire to award a strike if the batter intentionally leaves the batter's box and delays play. This extreme measure is generally used when a batter steps out of the box to "show up" the home plate umpire demonstrating his disagreement with the plate umpire's decision on a previous pitch. It is a widely accepted and recommended practice for the home plate umpire to verbally reinforce the batter's box rule with hitters who have developed a habit of stepping out of the box between pitches as a matter of course. Along with the verbal request to return to the box, the umpire should "point" to the batter's box further indicating that he has made a request.

The observer/evaluator will be able to recognize the "pointing" of the batter back into the batter's box by the exceptional home plate umpire. Further, the observer/evaluator should see an immediate reaction on the part of the batter as the request is made. Eventually, the instances of subsequent batters unintentionally delaying the game with out-of-the-box behavior will decrease due to the plate umpire's continued insistence that batters remain in the box as required by rule.

c. Pitcher's Set Position

In 2008, an NCAA Baseball point of emphasis dealt with the problem of pitchers not adhering to the rules pertaining to the set position. Baseball Rule 9/section 3/subsection j clearly calls for a "balk" to be called in the following situation:

"The pitcher delivers the pitch from the set position without coming to a complete and discernable stop..."

While the wording of this rule may be the subject of individual interpretation, on the field it is fairly easy to spot when it is violated. With a runner on first base, a pitcher will not attempt to speed up the length of his "complete and discernable" stop until he is two to three pitches into the count. Exceptional base umpires should be aware of any attempt by the pitcher to substantially shorten his set time when an attempted steal of second is anticipated. If the pitcher noticeably shortens his set when compared to the "complete and discernable" stop he exhibited during the first one or two pitches, a balk could be called for violation of this rule.

The observer/evaluator should be able to see any alteration of the pitcher's early-count "complete and discernable" stop. The exceptional field umpire will be prepared for this eventuality from the first inning and will call a "balk" on the pitcher on his initial violation and subsequent violations. Further, other umpires on the crew will work to call future violations when they occur throughout the game. Once a "balk" call is made, the exceptional non-calling umpire will echo the call as well. The exceptional umpire, when calling the balk, will do so immediately by extending his arm and pointing toward the pitcher and verbalize, "That's a Balk!" His voice will be easily heard and signal will be forthright and confident.



The exceptional umpire will only call "Time" when it is evident that the batter/runner and all runners on base will not advance. The penalty will not be enforced if the ball is hit and the batter obtains first and all other runners advance one base. Also, "Time" will not be called or the balk penalty enforced if there is a hit batsman or ball four which subsequently forcing runners to move one base along with the first base award to the batter.

In the case of a balk followed by a pick-off attempt, the exceptional umpire will follow a three-step protocol. First, he will call "Time." Second, he will announce, "That's a Balk!" Finally, he will award runners bases, "You- Second Base." He will point runner(s) toward their awarded base(s) to insure proper enforcement of the rule.

d. Orchestrated Dugout Activity

The wording below is taken directly from the 2010 NCAA Rules Video which was played at all NCAA Regional Umpire Meetings as well as the meeting of the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA).

This issue has been addressed by the rules committee and included in the category of bench jockeying or unsportsmanlike conduct. Enthusiasm, verbal encouragement for one's own team, and some rally activities are a major part of the college game. When that activity is designed or planned to distract or intimidate the opposing pitcher or team then it has crossed the line of good sportsmanship. Activities such as abusive verbal comments, towel waving, banging of noise makers, or other orchestrated team activities, especially those which coincide with an opposing pitcher's delivery can only be interpreted by umpires as poor sportsmanship, not enthusiasm. Coaches and players are asked to conduct themselves in the spirit of the rule and umpires are asked not to allow any tolerance for activities which cross the line. Warnings and other penalties are in place in the rules if necessary.

A new twist has been added to the decorum expectation and that pertains to "orchestrated team activities." This illegal behavior usually shows up in the form of cheering which is done at a predetermined time where nothing has happened on the field which would elicit such reaction from the dugout. Teams also take off their hats and shake them, sometimes indicating that their teammate is in danger of striking out a third consecutive time, but in recent years has also been employed to indicate that an opposing batter has done the same. Of Course, the excuse, "We're cheering for our teammate" will be used, but umpires should enforce this bench decorum directive to the letter of the law.



Observer/Evaluators should be able to see and hear unruly bench conduct. The exceptional umpire will react immediately to bench jockeying and orchestrated team demonstrations. If need be, a warning will be issued for further violation of the bench decorum rule ending in ejection for failure to heed an umpire's directive. Exceptional umpires do not hesitate to put themselves in trying situations which may occur when they are following NCAA mandated directives.

e. Dugout Personnel

The wording below is taken directly from the 2010 NCAA Rules Video which was played at all NCAA Regional Umpire Meetings as well as the meeting of the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA).

Rule 5-2c, Rule 5-2d, Rule 5-4d Dugout Personnel

The rules require team personnel to remain in the dugout, bullpen, or dead ball areas. Typically, this has been interpreted as during all live balls. Recently there have been more and more situations where team members leave the dugout to celebrate or congratulate teammates while the ball is still alive. Since there is always a risk of interference with a fielder or interference with a live ball, team personnel should be instructed to stay in the dugout during these live ball situations and umpires should enforce the rule with a warning for the first offense followed by ejection of one of the offending players for subsequent offenses.

Coaches are also asked to instruct and umpires are to enforce rule 5-2d following a home run. No offensive team members other than base coaches should touch the batter-runner before home plate has been touched and no team personnel other than preceding base runners should enter the dirt area. Umpires should aid enforcement by their communication, positioning, and warnings or ejections as necessary.

The exceptional base umpire will work in concert with the home plate umpire to help control the flow of team members from their dugout to home plate to "congratulate a teammate" who has scored or hit a home run. The observer/evaluator should see the appropriate base umpire dealing with players who may be ignoring the warning given to them by the plate umpire. Also, the exceptional umpire will also be aware of any taunting which may ensue or the pitcher leaving the proximity of the mound area making any movement toward home plate which could be misinterpreted as aggressive. The exceptional umpire will issue warnings followed by ejections if the situation continues after warnings have been issued.

3.2 NCAA Playing Rules

There are rules which umpires tend to ignore or enforce less forcefully than they should simply because their enforcements may result in negative reactions from participants. However, exceptional umpires should be able to sort out important situations where rules must be enforced as written and should not hesitate to make unpopular decisions. This section will outline several instances where umpires must not waver in their duties.

a. Force-Play Slide Rule

Rule 8/section 4 reads in part, "The intent of the force-play-slide rule is to ensure the safety of all players...On any force play, the runner (when sliding) must slide on the ground before the base and in a direct line between the two bases..."Directly into a base" means the runner's entire body, (feet, legs, trunk, and arms) must stay in a straight line between the bases."

The runner may do the following:

- a. May need not slide directly into a base as long as the runner slides **or runs** in a direction away from the fielder to avoid making contact
- b. May come into contact with a fielder without interference being called if the runner makes a legal slide directly to the base and in the baseline extended

The runner may not do the following:

- a. Slide **or run** out of the base line in the direction of the fielder and alter the play of a fielder (with or without contact)
- b. May not use a rolling or cross-body block slide and make contact with or alter the play of the fielder
- c. May not raise his leg and make contact higher than the fielders knee when in a standing position
- d. May not slash or kick the fielder with either leg
- e. May not illegally slide toward or contact the fielder even if the fielder makes no attempt to throw to complete a play

It is important to note that the rules allow for a player who is forced to stay on his feet and "run through" the base or "peel off" in an opposite direction than the player attempting to engage or complete the action of a secondary act to complete the double play.

The exceptional umpire will enforce this safety rule without exception. This rule must be covered in the umpire's locker room pregame discussion so umpires are prepared to enforce it the first time it happens. The exceptional umpire will enforce this rule on its first occurrence to insure there will be no retaliation because a team will feel "victimized" and attempt to "get even."



b. Pitcher's Set Position

This rule is repeated here for emphasis.

In 2008, an NCAA Baseball point of emphasis dealt with the problem of pitchers not adhering to the rules pertaining to the set position. Baseball Rule 9/section 3/subsection j clearly calls for a "balk" to be called in the following situation:

"The pitcher delivers the pitch from the set position without coming to a complete and discernable stop..."

While the wording of this rule may be the subject of individual interpretation, on the field it is fairly easy to spot when it is violated. With a runner on first base, a pitcher will not attempt to speed up the length of his "complete and discernable" stop until he is two or three pitches into the count. Field umpires should be aware of any attempt by the pitcher to substantially shorten his set time when an attempted steal of second is anticipated.

If the pitcher noticeably shortens his set when compared to the "complete and discernable" stop exhibited during the first one or two pitches, a balk could be called for violation of this rule.

The observer/evaluator should be able to see any alteration of the pitcher's early-count "complete and discernable" stop. The exceptional field umpire will be prepared for this eventuality from the first inning and will call a "Balk" on the pitcher on his initial violation and subsequent violations. Further, other umpires on the crew will work to call future violations when they occur throughout the game. Once a "Balk" call is made, the exceptional non-calling umpire will echo the call as well. The exceptional umpire, when calling the balk, will do so immediately by extending his arm and pointing toward the pitcher and verbalize, "That's A Balk!" His voice will be easily heard and signal will be forthright and confident.

c. PITCH/BETWEEN INNINGS CLOCK PROTOCOL

The following is the final version – September 20, 2010. Umpires are expected to adhere to this protocol which is employed when there are no runners on base.

TIMING DEVICES

To be in compliance with this rule and to implement this protocol, conferences may choose to instruct on-field umpires to use a timing device (e.g., stopwatch). To be clear, the intent of the rules committee is not to mandate a visible clock.



20-SECOND PITCH CLOCK LIMIT

1. The 20-second time limit (or clock) starts when the pitcher receives the ball on the mound and stops when the pitcher begins his pitching motion. The time limit (or clock) is used only when the bases are unoccupied. If a pitcher violates the 20-second rule he shall be warned by the umpire. After a pitcher is warned, if he continues to violate the rule a ball will be awarded for each violation. There is one warning per pitcher.
2. A pitcher stepping off the rubber does not stop the time limit (or clock) unless the umpire grants the pitcher time.
3. The time (or clock) is paused for the pitcher to reach the mound area if the pitcher is out of the 18-foot circle for the purpose of making or backing up a play. The time (or clock) is paused if a player is returning to his position (a runner returning to a base after a foul ball or a fielder returning after attempting to field a foul ball). If the catcher holds the ball and does not throw it back IMMEDIATELY to the pitcher, the time (or clock) will start. If a batter runs on a foul ball, the time (or clock) will not start until he returns to the dirt area of the plate, unless he delays his return. Common sense delays, such as but not limited to, when a player asks for time to tie his shoes, clean his glasses, etc., the time (or clock) should restart as soon as the player finishes, not when the umpire signals "play." The player in question does not get a reset of the full 20-seconds.
4. A strike results if the batter is not in the box ready to take the pitch with five seconds or less showing on the clock and time expires. When there is a timing or clock violation, no pitch will result and either a ball or strike is called depending on the violation and any ensuing play is nullified. If a coach, student-Athlete, Manager or any other non playing personnel argues any penalty or timing procedure they are subject to an immediate ejection without warning. The head coach is allowed to bring a clock malfunction or misapplication of protocol to the umpire's attention. Coaches, student-athletes and umpires are to adhere to Rule 7-1c as written related to the Batter's Box Rule.

A.R. —Umpires are to enforce this rule as written. If the line(s) of the batter's box (have) been erased, the umpire shall require that upon the batter's initial stance, both feet are to be no closer than six (6) inches from the inside edge of home plate.

A penalty is not automatic when the batter is not in the batter's box with five seconds or less showing, as long as play continues without a visible signal or there is no violation.

5. The time (or clock) is reset if the batter is granted time by the umpire with five or more seconds showing on the clock. The request for time by the batter must be for legitimate reasons and is not to be granted if the request, in the opinion of the umpire, is to delay the game. Time will not be granted to the batter with less than five seconds remaining (unless unusual circumstances warrant it in the mind of the umpire).

Note: If the pitcher and batter are in position when the time (or clock) reaches zero, the umpire will call "TIME" before awarding the ball or strike.

In judging guilt, if neither the pitcher nor batter is ready, the pitcher is responsible. A batter does not have to be ready to hit when the pitcher is off the rubber. A batter must not be allowed to get ready to hit just before the five-second limit, and then request time. He may be granted time if the pitcher holds him too long in his batting position.

6. If the time limit expires at the same time the pitcher begins his windup, there is no penalty and any signal is ignored

7. The 20-second time limit is in effect for the entire game (extra innings included).

It is the plate umpires' job to administer the clock and any penalties when there is a visible clock in the outfield. If there is no visible clock in the outfield the clock is kept by the base umpire.

8. When restarting the time or clock is necessary, the plate umpire will signal with a hand held high above the head and rotated in a horizontal arc.

BETWEEN INNINGS FOR THE 90-108-SECOND TIME LIMIT (OR CLOCK)

1. The time (clock) starts with the last out in the inning and stops when the pitcher begins his windup for the first pitch to the first batter of the inning. If the offensive team is not ready within the 90-second or 108-second time limit, the umpire shall call a strike. If the defense is not ready, a ball shall be awarded to the batter.

2. For non-televised games (Internet streaming does not qualify), teams have 90-seconds to be ready to pitch and to have a batter ready to step into the batter's box after the end of each half-inning. The clock will start when the starting pitcher and any subsequent relief pitcher begin their first pitch; however, by rule they are entitled to eight pitches without penalty. Should the clock expire, they will be allowed to complete their eight warm up pitches.

3. For televised games the time shall be 108 seconds between each half-inning unless specified by NCAA or Conference contract provisions. The home institution will notify the visiting team and umpires if there will be an extension to the 108-second provision.

4. With 30-seconds left, the base umpire will visually cue the plate umpire who will then signal to the pitcher, "Two more pitches" and summon the lead-off batter to the plate.

5. Continuing pitchers shall have the 90- to 108-second time limit to complete their five warm-up pitches. Should the defensive team not be ready in the allotted time, a ball will be granted to the next batter.

6. The plate umpire will notify the catcher with 30-seconds remaining, "two more pitches" and then notify the leadoff hitter. If the field umpire is responsible for the time limit he should alert the plate umpire at 30-seconds.

7. If the catcher is the 3rd out or on base when the 3rd out is made, the offensive team should have someone ready to warm-up the pitcher. Umpires will not grant additional warm-ups if the 90- or 108-second time limit expires. In the event that the catcher was on base or the last to bat: if the catcher is not out at the two-pitch reminder, (another player is warming up the catcher) then umpires are to hold the pitcher up with one pitch left and wait on the game catcher to arrive. This will allow the game catcher to throw the ball down.

8. On television games approved by the NCAA or Conference offices, the 90-second rule will be extended to 108-seconds. Play will resume at the expiration of the time between innings.
9. If a Coach, Student-Athlete, Manager or any non-playing personnel argues any penalty or timing procedure, they are subject to immediate ejection without warning. The head coach is allowed to bring a clock malfunction or misapplication of the protocol to the umpire's attention.

LOCATION OF THE CLOCK

Each Conference will determine if a visible clock will be used for all games or conference games only and if the time clock will be kept by the umpire crew on the field. If a conference determines to use a visible clock, the clock shall be positioned on the outfield scoreboard or atop the outfield fence either in left or right centerfield. The clock should be readily visible to the batter, catcher and home plate umpire.

Individual schools within a conference are not to determine if they will install a visible clock. If a conference does not approve that a visible clock will be used for all games or conference games only, the time limits are to be kept by the umpires on the field.

PERSONNEL TO OPERATE THE CLOCK

Each Conference is responsible for developing guidelines for training qualified individuals to operate the clock during games.

NO VISIBLE CLOCK AVAILABLE OR MALFUNCTION OF THE CLOCK

If the time clock malfunctions, time will be kept on the field by the 2nd base umpire in a four-man or six-man crew; 3rd base umpire in a three-man crew; and the base umpire in a two-man crew.

The following is a "shorthand" version for easy reference by observer/evaluators.

20 Second Rule

Clock starts to prevent players from engaging in stalling tactics.

- a. Pitcher has ball in 18-ft. circle
- b. Pitcher has ball outside 18-ft. circle and DELAYS ENTRY
- c. Catcher holds ball to demonstrate pitch location to umpire
- d. B/R delays return to dirt circle after running out (foul) batted ball
- e. 3b or catcher delays returning ball to pitcher during throw-around
- f. Infielders or catcher engage in between-pitch conferences
- g. Hitter leaves box in violation of batter's box rule

Clock stops when legitimate game action begins.

- a. Pitcher begins pitching motion
- b. Batter runs out (foul) batted ball and returns without delay (stalling)
- c. Pitcher delays while coach sets defensive set (20-second count start delayed also)



20-second rule violated by:

- a. Pitcher
 1. One warning per pitcher
 2. Ball added to count subsequent violations
- b. Batter (delays entry into box after 15 seconds)
 1. Strike added to count
- c. Batter/Pitcher both delay
 1. Pitcher is penalized

20-second reset (TO FULL 20) when:

- a. Legitimate game action causes delay
 1. Pitcher leaves 18-foot circle to participate in play
 2. Runner forced to return to base by game action
 3. Fielder returns to position after making play (FOUL BALL)
 4. Umpire grants time to enhance game administration or player safety including:
 - a. Pitcher requests new ball
 - b. Pitcher grooms mound
 - c. Pitcher clears mud from spikes

20-second paused/restarted (WITH TIME REMAINING) when:

- a. Player delays (engages in stalling tactics)
- b. Batter asks for and is granted time for inconsequential purposes:
 1. Personal equipment adjustment
 2. Receiving signals from 3rd base coach

90-108 Second Clock

90 seconds between from last out of previous inning to first warm-up pitch of succeeding inning.

108 seconds between from last out of previous inning to first warm-up pitch of succeeding inning FOR TELEVISED GAMES.

90-108-second violated by defense: BALL AWARDED BATTER

90-108-second violated by offense: STRIKE AWARDED TO PITCHER

90-108-second suspended without penalty when:

- a. Pitcher has not completed eight warm-up pitches when allowed by rule.
- b. Catcher of P/DH causes delay because he was left-on-base or third out

note: allow catcher to throw down last pitch-SUSPEND 90-SECOND COUNT

- c. Pitcher requests new baseball
- d. Coach confers with umpire
- e. Between inning ceremony or special event

Protocol for 90-108 Second Clock

1. 30-second warning-given by designated umpire
 - a. PU will give two-pitch left notification to catcher
 - b. PU will give two-pitch left notification to on-deck hitter
2. 90-108 clock is not suspended if team delays for non-consequential events such as:
 - a. Hitter is late to the plate because of hitter/coach conference, misplaced equipment, waiting for walk-up music, PA announcement.
 - b. Infielder or catcher conference with pitcher before first pitch causes expiration of clock.
 - c. Catcher or infielder throws ball away during pre-pitch throw around.

The 20-second pitch clock and 90-108 second between inning clock is expected to be implemented by all umpires working NCAA baseball without exception. These timing restrictions will be enforced at all post-season tournaments in Division I and Division II baseball. The exceptional umpire (working both field and plate) will enforce the timing restrictions without reservation and will become familiar with, or keep a copy of, the timing regulation shorthand with him on the field to insure correct application.

The observer/evaluator should see a field umpire (U3 for three-man system) with stopwatch visible between innings and when no runner is on base. The umpire responsible for the timing protocol will alert the plate umpire when there is 5-seconds left on the (20-second) pitch clock and 30 seconds left on the (90-108) between innings clock.

3.3 Situation Management / Ejections / Warnings

In the past, an umpire was expected to “hold his own” in confrontational situations with coaches and players. Years ago, the philosophy of “Call it quick; and Walk Away Tough” was a widely accepted premise for handling the job of umpiring on the baseball diamond. In today’s world, there is little tolerance for on-field confrontations between umpires and participants. The following is taken directly from “Points of Emphasis” for the year 2011 in the NCAA Baseball Rules Book.

The committee reviewed several proposals that dealt with communication between coaches and umpires. While this relationship has generally improved in recent seasons, the committee continues to be concerned with some negative incidents that could hurt the image of the game. The committee believes responsibility for improving this relationship lies with coaches, umpires and administrators equally. For the sport to continue to thrive as it has, coaches and umpires need to continue to engage in healthy discussion and explanation of the rules without creating unneeded delays in the game and unsporting conduct. Extended arguments, vulgar language and disrespectful conduct by coaches or umpires must not be tolerated. Coaches are particularly reminded that the Code of Ethics includes a statement that forbids arguing judgment calls by the umpire.

Umpires have been given suggested strategies in dealing with coaches to help diffuse potential volatile situations. By following the principles of the following strategies, umpires can learn to handle these trying situations. More and more, umpires are expected to not only control their actions and reactions in these situations, but also use interpersonal communication strategies to help an unruly coach or player control his behavior as well. In situations where individuals react with hostility toward one another, there may be little control on either side of the discussion. By employing tactics designed to help umpires respond instead of react, trying situations can be handled effectively and professionally.

Umpires should attempt to listen to coaches and players if their comments and demeanor are reasonable. Umpires should not initiate an argument, should avoid using profanity, and should not insist on the “last word” or follow a player or coach who is walking away. However, umpires must command respect during difficult situations and never tolerate personal abuse. (Joe Burlison)

The following are two strategies designed to help umpires respond with intelligence.

**The Four-Step Ladder of Response
(Taken from “They Only Need Us Five Percent of the Time”)**

These steps will allow you to maintain control of the game but, most importantly, control of yourself. In the critical five percent of game situations like these it’s important to take a five-step approach.

1. **Ignore-** Your mama was right. Remember when she said to ignore that kid in the third row when he is trying to get you to talk in Sister Mary Anne Cunningham’s class? The same thing applies to that kid in the dugout who is trying to do the same thing. Sometimes the silent treatment works, and that coach will go back to the business at hand which is coaching his players, not questioning you on every close pitch.
2. **Acknowledge-** It’s human nature to get angry when you’re being ignored. It’s no different for the coach. A simple look to the dugout, while you are still behind the catcher, might be all you need. A response like, “I hear you, coach” might do the trick. The key is to be as non-aggressive as possible. Keep your mask on and don’t take any threatening steps toward the dugout. An extended hand, “the stop sign” is all that is needed as you speak. Your voice doesn’t have to be loud, because the hand says it all. You don’t need to have the last say because you have the final word.
3. **Warn-**The situation is escalating and now it’s time for a stronger, but limited, response. This might be hard for you to do because it requires that the game be stopped and for you to become visible and focus everyone’s attention on the dugout. The hand didn’t work, the second-guessing is continuing and now you must give an official warning-both verbal and written. “Coach, this is your warning. If you continue to argue balls and strikes you leave me no option but to eject you” is all that is needed. By this time you have stepped out from behind the catcher.

You have taken your lineup card out of your pocket and have recorded that the warning has been given. You're a soccer referee issuing a yellow card. Now, the coach has a decision to make. He can either shut it down, or say a few things out of the dugout which might require you to reinforce your position. Or he might come out of the dugout to confront you. When handling confrontations, it's time to employ a little "Verbal Judo."

4. **Eject-** You have now done everything possible to control the situation. At this point, the firmest stance of all must be taken. A reiteration of the previous warning is appropriate. "Coach, if you do not immediately go back to the dugout, (or stop complaining from the dugout) you leave me no option but to eject you." Once this is said, there is no turning back. It's time to eject the coach and stand behind your words. In your ejection report you can write that after repeated and recorded written warnings the coach was ejected. You must use every possible approach allowed to you before the ejection. If you do, your ejection should be easily defended by your conference coordinator and conference commissioner, and ultimately, the NCAA Division II National Coordinator.

Realistically, after a clear and visible warning has been given, with the umpire literally stopping the game, issuing the verbal warning, writing when the warning was given on his line-up card, the situation should diffuse itself. However, if an ejection does take place it is of paramount importance that the umpire issues a warning whenever possible before ejecting.

The book [Verbal Judo](#) by George Thompson is still available from on-line booksellers. Umpires interested in reading more about this technique can purchase the book on-line.

Verbal Judo

Verbal Judo was developed by Dr. George J. Thomson who holds a black belt in both judo and tae kwon do karate; a Ph.D. in English literature; and who, at age 35, worked as a police officer. He is now the director of The Verbal Judo Institute and has trained individuals from school teachers to business executives in this technique originally developed for use by law enforcement personnel. Among the many principles Verbal Judo teaches are the following:

How to look at conflict creatively

How to remain under emotional control during disagreements

How to achieve cooperation and break through uncertainty, confusion, anger, and mistrust

Verbal Judo offers solutions that work when people are under pressure. It provides techniques that have been tested on the street by men and women responding in life-or-death situations. Verbal Judo teaches how to respond-not react-to situations being able to speak without causing or escalating conflict. Verbal Judo training helps you develop credibility and power-to become a contact professional.



Among the more interesting chapters of the book Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion by George Thompson and Jerry Jenkins are the following:

Chapter 4: “Taking Crap with Dignity and Style

The ability to remain calm is a valuable art. If you become upset, you have lost. Even if you score an immediate “victory” by telling off your opponent, you may lose when your encounter is evaluated later. Verbal Judo teaches how to talk with people to save face on both sides of the conflict. You will learn words that immediately establish your credibility. The most dangerous weapon you carry is a cocked tongue. It can fire off a sentence that will stall or even ruin your career. The good news is that you can learn to take crap with dignity and style.

Chapter 9: “The Greatest Speech You’ll Ever Live to Regret”

“When we employ words that most naturally come to our lips, we run the risk of giving the greatest speech we’ll ever live to regret.” If it feels good-it’s no good.

The technique of impartiality and disinterest go hand-in-hand. Strip phrases help disarm your critic. These phrases are part of the “springboard focus technique” which deemphasizes the criticism and focuses on attaining voluntary compliance. It’s not enough to be good, you have to sound good-or it’s not good. When we say insulting things, we lose power and create enemies. We lose our professional face and use language irresponsibly. We become part of the problem.

Chapter 12: “The Five-Step Hard Style”

If someone wants to ruin your credibility and get the advantage over you, all he has to do is make you angry enough to misuse words. Ninety percent of your success will lie in your delivery style. The five-step hard style is based on the following steps:

1. Ask (Ethical Appeal)
2. Set Context (Tell them why)
3. Present options (Personal appeal to the person’s best interests)
4. Confirm (practical appeal to see if cooperation is forthcoming)
5. Take Action (Eject)

“The Five-Step Hard Style” is particularly useful when dealing with coaches when there is a personal, face-to-face confrontation on the field. At this point, It is obvious that issuing a warning after following the “The Four-Step Ladder of Response” has not sufficiently diffused the situation. Even though an ejection may be in order, umpires should look to this face-to-face exchange as a challenge to be contained, controlled and diffused rather than a situation where the only option left is ejection. In this chapter, Thompson offers some strategies to employ in these situations.

Step one requires that the controlling party ask for voluntary compliance. “Coach, we’ve talked about this long enough. Please go back into the dugout so we can get this game moving.” The word “please” is a magic word in many instances. When making an ethical appeal for compliance instead of an emotional one, there is a greater opportunity for voluntary compliance.

Step two is basically a repeat of step one, with an explanation of why compliance must be gained. “Coach, we’ve talked about this enough. Please go back into the dugout so I can get the game going. The NCAA is very concerned fact that extended arguments create needless delays in the game.”



Step three is a new tactic. It appears the confrontation will not end quickly. At this point, the umpire presents the options to which this situation is leading. "Coach, I'm running out of options. The best option at this time is for you to go back into the dugout and for me to get back to work. I've already issued a warning. The only option I have left is to eject you from the game."

By presenting the best option first, the situation may begin to move in a positive direction.

Step four is an appeal to gain voluntary cooperation. It doesn't hurt to review all steps taken with the coach. "Coach, I asked you to go back into the dugout and I've told you why we need to get going. I've told you what my options are at this point. Is there anything I can say at this point to get you to go back to the dugout? **I would like to think there is.**"

By this point, the coach has had ample time to state his case. The umpire, instead of thinking of witty and clever comebacks, should be concentrating on how to move his responses to the next step. By concentrating on the content and quality of responses only, the umpire will not risk saying something that he will regret.

"If it feels good-it's no good"-this is the time to stick to the verbal judo strategy.

Never insist on the last word. If you are in an argument and the guy turns to walk away, stop talking- even if you are in mid-sentence with your brilliant explanation- stop talking. If a coach or player is every brought back by an umpire, this should reflect poorly on the umpire. (Jeremy Sparling)

Of course, if the situation warrants, and there is no voluntary cooperation, it may be time to take the situation to level five and eject the coach. However, bear in mind that the goal of the umpire is to achieve voluntary cooperation. Once the coach begins to move away, he may say something as he is leaving-and it is up to the umpire to determine if what is said warrants and ejection. However, if the coach is walking away, grumbling (as is human nature), the umpire has achieved his objective. He has successfully controlled and diffused the situation. This is the beauty of using the Verbal Judo strategy. The coach may feel he has achieved his objective and has really gotten his point across. But, the umpire has achieved his as well. The conflict was resolved without a loss of respect on either side.

Successful umpires do not ignore occurrences on the field that, in their judgment, require their attention to maintain control and order. However, when difficult situations arise, it is essential that umpires stay "above the fray" and not adopt the emotional level of a particular player or coach. (Joe Burtleson)

The observer/evaluator should see exceptional umpires use elements of the Four-Step Ladder of Response when dealing with the dugout. Performed properly, the exceptional umpire will not react to dugout objections and criticisms in the same fashion they are given. By using the strategy in proper sequence the exceptional umpire may look to the dugout (acknowledge) and perhaps say something in return. All this is done from behind the plate or from a position on the field without appearing aggressive or reactionary. The umpire should have his mask on.

Prolonged complaints may result in the umpire raising his hand to the complainant in the “stop-sign” signal fashion. This can be done behind the plate or from a position a few steps toward the dugout. Again, this response should be measured and controlled. Finally, the umpire will issue a warning by following the three steps as follows.

1. Call “TIME!” and walk toward the dugout and remove the mask.
2. Verbalize the accepted warning passage as determined by conference recommendation. “Coach, this is your warning. If you continue you leave me no option but to eject you.”
3. Having issued the verbal warning, the umpire should turn away from the situation and begin a written record on his line-up card the particulars of the incident. If the warning is given from the field, the plate umpire should also write down the particulars of his partner’s warning as well.

At this point, the coach may approach the umpire. By walking away to record the warning, the umpire has created distance between himself and the coach allowing for his partner(s) to move toward the situation and, if needed, assist in helping the coach return to the dugout. The exceptional partner will move to help control and resolve the situation by redirecting the approaching coach’s attention to themselves instead of the target of the coach’s ire.

When the situation arises where a coach and an umpire engage in a face-to-face discussion, the evaluator will observe the exceptional umpire demonstrating the behaviors listed above along with the following: He will follow the protocol established for dealing with potentially volatile situations by employing the following techniques: extending his right hand (stop sign) indicating the discussion must end, issuing a clear verbal and written warning, and physically removing himself from the situation allowing partner(s) to diffuse the situation. The umpire’s deportment and responses to the coach should lead to an identifiable lessening of situational tension. However, there will be instances when an ejection is the proper option.

a. Ejections

When engaged in a situation which can only be resolved by an ejection, the ejecting umpire must not appear to be the aggressor. It is a virtual certainty that the question will be asked:

“How was the umpire perceived from the stands? (Ray Leible)

Appearing overly aggressive, or saying something inappropriate during the umpire-coach discussion will only put the umpire into a situation where his behavior will become the focal point and not the situation leading up to the ejection. By following the strategies outlined in this section, the umpire will appear to have shown tolerance and control.



When signaling the ejection itself, the exceptional umpire should not use an overly demonstrative signal, but rather one that further reinforces that the umpire is in control of himself and has responded out of reason rather than emotion. After an ejection, the exceptional umpire should remove himself from the immediate vicinity of the situation. He should turn his back and walk away allowing an opportunity for his exceptional partner(s) to control the scene and help the ejected participant find a way off the field. By staying close to the ejected participant, the ejecting umpire will only create a situation where added verbal attacks from the exiting participant and inappropriate reactions or comments from the ejecting umpire will only makes matters worse. The exceptional umpire will remain in control of himself and recognize that the most volatile and potentially (professionally) damaging time is not during the ejection itself, but rather the interval when the ejected participant is leaving the field.

Section 4: Effort and Professionalism

4.1 Focus and Hustle

Focus and hustle are items which should be expected of every umpire as he conducts his on-field business. Being focused on the task at hand begins well before the actual game starts. Umpires are expected to exhibit a high degree of professionalism when dealing with requests placed on them by their conferences or the NCAA. For instance, can the umpire be relied on to meet the demands on his time that working college baseball exacts from him? Does he handle his conference paperwork in a timely fashion and meet all deadlines placed on documents which must be returned to his conference commissioner or requested by his conference coordinator of umpires? Further, when contacted by the D-II National Umpire Coordinator does the umpire return phone calls and forward requested information back to the D-II National Umpire Coordinator's office? When selected for post-season assignments has the umpire kept his personal contact information up-to-date and is he easy to contact? When at the post-season game site does the umpire accept the added responsibility placed on him to keep a punctual schedule and follow the directives of the crew chief when timetables are set? Is he professional in his personal habits off the field as well as in his habits on the field? These are questions which the exceptional umpire can answer in the affirmative without reservation.

The personal requirements of the focused and professional umpire begin before his arrival to the baseball park. Professional college umpires are expected to communicate well with their crew chiefs and coordinate travel arrangements as he directs. The exceptional umpire is seldom late to designated transportation rendezvous sites. He has is prepared for crew pregame meetings and always has a up-to-date copy of the NCAA Baseball Rules and the Baseball Umpires Manual as published by the Collegiate Commissioners Association. He participates actively in the locker room pregame meeting and is ready to umpire when he hits the field.



The exceptional umpire will respond immediately to game situations making proper calls on rules infractions the first time they occur.

On-field body language reinforces the fact that the exceptional umpire is ready to work. The exceptional umpire moves with a purpose on the field, with head high and confident stride. Umpires are expected to hustle at all times but the exceptional umpire moves “in cruise control,” hustling but not hurrying and staying ahead of game situations on the field where he must render a decision. When changing locations on the field, during game situations, the exceptional umpire seldom walks and if he does, it is during an interval where all action has ceased and his attention to the game situation has been reduced. A good rule of thumb to judge opportunity to hustle is this: If the players involved in the situation are hustling, the umpire should be hustling as well. The exceptional umpire never gives the impression that he cannot keep up with the players or the demands of the game.

The exceptional umpire concentrates consistently on the crucial elements throughout the game. This is shown by attention to detail as it applies to the enforcement of NCAA playing rules and the comportment of game participants. The exceptional umpire is aware of rules which must be reinforced to guarantee the safety of game participants. Players and coaches who are not in their designated areas when game action ensues are dealt with efficiently. Equipment is handled safely and stored as required under the direction of the exceptional umpire.

Before and during game action the exceptional umpire is prepared for every pitch, play, and development. Each umpire has an established pre-pitch routine, from the plate umpire’s set up behind the catcher, to the pre-pitch set by umpires on the bases. Once the ball is put in play, all focused umpires are moving to their positions as directed by the CCA Baseball Umpires Manual. In rotation situations there is a fluidity and coordination of movement demonstrating umpire competency while building confidence in the crew from those participating and watching.

The focused umpire is aware of all that is going on within a game including dugout situations and inter-team developments. This awareness begins by insuring there is only one on-deck batter and that there is only one on-deck batter at all times, including before the game starts and during the opposing pitcher’s warm-ups or when relief pitchers are warming up. Equipment (including hats, gloves, and bats) is kept inside the dugout as required. The protective dugout fencing is not used as a convenient equipment storage shelf. Players are completely inside the dugout and are not resting in live-ball territory.



Players, when warming up, are not allowed to do so in live-ball territory in front of the dugouts but are requested by the appropriate umpire to move to the bullpen area. All of these items, seemingly insignificant, are handled appropriately by the well-focused umpire.

In cases where confrontational situations between teams may arise due to an incident on the field, the exceptional umpire will take the initiative to keep their appropriate dugouts in check. In situations where a batter has been hit, or a player involved in a collision with an opponent, the focused umpire will be aware of future manifestations of these incidents later in the game or the series. The exceptional umpire will be aware of incidents where players engage in actions to “show up” their opponents and will take immediate steps to end these illegal activities. Again, the exceptional umpire will have the courage to place himself in situations which may be uncomfortable for him, but is willing to “take care of business.”

It has been my observation that there are those umpires who simply won't call a balk, a bastard check swing, or put coaches in the box, simply to avoid any type of conflict. If this is observed, it should be noted. (Ray Leible)

While umpires should not over-hustle or draw attention to themselves through the overly-officious dispatch of routine situations, the exceptional umpire has no problem functioning in the often harsh spotlight focused on him when he is taking care of little items which can turn into big problems when left to their own devices.

4.2-Appearance and Demeanor

a. Proper Display of Uniform and Fit / Athletic Appearance within the Uniform

Participants and spectators notice the umpiring crew when they first take the field. This first impression is a lasting one and umpires should strive to look their best. Working a ballgame is a difficult task and umpires will be put into situations where they will receive criticism from participants and spectators alike. Their presentation on the field should not immediately lend itself to this criticism because of a sloppy uniform. There are several items of uniform clothing which need to be seen to every year. The essential principle pertaining to appearance is this: The umpire is going to work-not to play. His style of dress should reflect the seriousness with which he takes his job.

1. Length of Trousers and Fit-

Trousers should be tailored in length with a “full break” meaning they are just slightly longer than usual. This extra length insures that when umpires are in their “hands on knees” ready position or the plate umpire is in his stance the trousers do not ride up the shin to a ridiculous and noticeable height. Pants should be well creased and somewhat loose along the leg, especially the home plate umpire who should not have a visible outline of his shin guards showing.

2. Hat

The umpire hat takes a beating over the course of the season. Sunlight and sweat tend to make the color fade. A new hat is recommended every year, especially the plate hat which is particularly susceptible to wear. The hat itself should be squared to the head with a neatly creased crown giving it a military “squared-away” look.

3. Shirts and Jackets

Both of these items will fade with use over time. Umpires should insure that the black color is true and not faded to an off-black or gray. If the umpire is portly or corpulent in build, the shirt should not be work skin tight. The shirt should be tucked into the pants in such a way that it will not blouse out at the waistline. This smooth look is achieved when the shirt is tucked into the compression tights or another device is used to secure the shirt. Jackets, when worn, can either be worn on the outside of the trousers or tucked. Base umpires should wear their jackets in like fashion.

4. Shoes

Shoes should be shined and clean-always. Great care should be given to the condition of the shoes as well as worn shoes which may look good when shined lack the necessary support umpires need. Base shoes should be new every two years to insure proper support.

5. Proper Demeanor

Demeanor comes down to this: Does the umpire look like he wants to be on the field? The behavior of the umpire answers this question for everyone who sees him. First, does he hustle when moving into position? Again, if the players are hustling, the umpire should be hustling. He should not be walking when others are running. Second, does he respond in a pleasant way to coaches and players if he is greeted by them on the field? An umpire who avoids eye contact with participants and coaches does not appear approachable. When engaged in discussion with coaches, does the umpire keep his emotional reactions to a minimum? That is-is his body language less aggressive than that of



the coach or player when a discussion is taking place or does the umpire over-react and appear overly stern and domineering? An umpire with the proper demeanor will respond with body language which is appropriate and relative to the intensity of the situation as it presents itself.

Observer/evaluators can immediately see the umpire who has not seen to his on-field appearance. His lack of attention to detail is obvious. His pants are shorter and tighter than his crewmates. His shirt is tighter. The color of his black shirt is noticeable faded when compared to his crewmates. His trousers may be faded as well. In short, he looks like he is wearing someone else's old and faded uniform.

Observer/evaluators can also judge the demeanor of the umpire as he goes about his business on the field. A good umpire has been described as "the friendly cop on his beat" and this description is appropriate to a point. An umpire should not attempt to insert himself into situations where his presence is not needed. Just like a "cop on the beat" the umpire should only show up when the situation requires he step outside of his "cop on the beat" demeanor and become a symbol of law enforcement applying appropriate forcefulness as the situation dictates. When these momentary situations dissipate, the umpire should resume his previously relaxed demeanor allowing the game to progress at its natural pace.

b. Displays a Conscientious and Earnest Desire to Carry out On-field Duties

There are a series of "housekeeping" duties that an umpire must see to during the course of the game. The conscientious and earnest desire to assume these responsibilities is displayed by the umpire's desire to continually see to these duties as they arise. For instance, player equipment left outside dugouts is an on-going problem during a game. The umpire must continually remind players and ask coaches to get all equipment into the dugout as the situation dictates. This is one of the many duties an umpire must assume and not threaten players with ejection to enforce. Another one of these "nuisance" duties which must be continually enforced (without threat of ejection) is when players position themselves outside of the dugout during live-ball play. The conscientious umpire will accept that some players will continually push the limits of the dugout rule, but will not react in an extreme fashion to this minor, yet irritating, violation.

c. Exhibits Posture that Reflects Interest in the Game

Just as the home plate umpire exhibits a "locked in" posture to receive a pitch and make a call, the base umpires should also assume a "locked in" posture as they may also have to render a decision when the ball is hit. The pre-pitch posture on the bases can either be a standing set; "walking into" the pitch, or the "hands on knees" set which is more preferable as it lends itself to the pause/read/react protocol once the ball is hit. Umpires should avoid assuming postures which are associated with boredom, such as standing with hands on hip, hands in pockets or arms folded. When the ball is live and in-play,



umpires should have their vision focused intently on the field. Looking away, or dropping the head, suggests boredom as well.

The observer/evaluator can see the umpire who continually enforces the “little things” which help the game progress smoothly. Equipment is kept in the dugout when not in use. Players and coaches are kept in the dugouts as required by rule. Players with illegal equipment (i.e.-a pitcher wearing a wristband or “live strong” bracelet or a glove with white lettering) are dealt with immediately in a subdued and unnoticeable fashion. Batters are kept in the box and continually reminded quietly to hold their position (as required by rule) when they don’t.

The observer/evaluator can easily spot an umpire who is interested in the game. He is “locked in” and ready to react to the movement of the ball and players. His vision seldom wavers from the field and participants during lapses in playing action. When action is imminent, he is fully focused and unwavering. He assumes a “parade rest” posture between innings and when play is not forthcoming. His posture suggests total engagement with the game situation.

4.3- Mobility

At the collegiate level, keeping up the speed of the game presents a challenge to all umpires. Clearly, youth has an advantage here, but experience and knowledge of “building angles” favoring proper positioning over distance can be an umpire’s best friend. The technique of building angles has already been discussed as has the idea that once the ball has been hit, umpire should be moving. The question concerning mobility is answered in the umpire’s ability to stay ahead of the action when he must get to a spot which will allow for unobstructed vision of a play. These instances call for the umpire to have the physical ability to move into proper position on field. The following are a few of those instances which require mobility on the baseball field.

First-base Umpire (U1)

1. The first-base umpire must be able to get from his position at first (position A) to his position at second base (position B) on a two-base hit when he has responsibility for the batter/runner. When his partner has left the infield he is also responsible for the batter/runner to third base. In both instances he must arrive ahead or abreast of the runner allowing for time to set and adjust to a potential play at that base before it is being made.

2. In a rotation situation with runners in scoring position (R1,R2), the first-base umpire must be able to move (position A to position B) and assume responsibility for a play at second base when his partner rotates to third base.



3. In a rotation situation, the first base umpire must be able to get to the Point of the Plate, get set, and make any secondary adjustments for vision before a play is made on a runner attempting to score.

4. When in position B, and the first base umpire reads a trouble ball, he must be able to cross the infield dirt and get to the outfield grass allowing enough time to get set, and make any secondary adjustments for vision before a play is made on a fly ball.

5. When In position A, the first base umpire must be able to replace his partner positioned in the infield when his partner crosses the dirt onto the outfield grass to rule on a trouble ball. He must arrive at the designated spot with enough time to line up a runner tagging and then move with runners functioning as needed in the two-man system.

Third-base Umpire (U3)

1. The third-base umpire must be able to get from his initial position (D) outside the third base line and put himself in a position with second base between himself and the direction of the throw (thrown from somewhere in foul territory outside of the first base line) and there is an overthrow situation and the batter/runner attempts second base. He must be set when the initial play on the B/R is made and then able to read the throw and tag adjusting his angle of vision and initial position as needed.

2. The third-base umpire is responsible for all plays on the batter/runner at second base if there is an attempt by the B/R to gain second base on a "stretch-double." U3 must move quickly from position D into the diamond and take an initial position with second base between himself and the throw from the outfield. He must be stopped and set as the tag is attempted with enough time to read the throw and adjust his angle of vision and initial position as needed to obtain an unobstructed view of the glove tagging the runner.

3. With no runners on, and U1 leaves his position to cover a trouble ball, the third -ase umpire (U3) must possess the mobility and adaptability needed to move across the diamond from his initial position (D) and cover the batter/runner at first base should he take a wide turn and place himself in jeopardy of a throw-back from the outfield when the plate umpire fails to assume responsibility for the B/R.

4. When positioned in the infield (positions B or C) the third-base umpire must have the mobility needed to move across the dirt infield and onto the outfield grass to rule on trouble fly balls. He must be mobile enough to build an angle (Ball-to-Glove sightline) and be set as the fielder catches the ball. He then may close down distance as needed to increase the believability of his call/decision if given.

Home Plate Umpire (HP)

1. When the ball is hit, with no runners on, the plate umpire (PU) must have the mobility needed to follow the batter/runner up the first base line as far as the play will allow before coming to a complete stop and standing set allowing him to observe action at first base which may include a pulled foot, swipe tag, or overthrow. On overthrow situations, the PU should readjust his position to get an unobstructed view of the ball as it threatens dead ball territory or if it is interfered with in any way by spectators.

3. The home plate umpire (PU) must also assume responsibility for the Batter/runner's touch at first base and any subsequent throws from the outfield attempting to retire the B/R as his wide turn or indecisiveness has put him in jeopardy.

3. The home-plate umpire assumes secondary responsibility for all balls (catch/no catch) and should be moving from behind home plate to a position which allows him to see Ball-to-Glove on routine catches. When umpires are positioned in the infield, the plate umpire is responsible for all balls (fair/foul-catch/no catch) to the open field depending on umpire positioning. On fly balls into this open area, the home plate umpire must move as far as the play will allow for vision particularly when the path of the fly ball takes the fielder to the foul line or there is a line drive which prevents an infield umpire from leaving his position and moving to the outfield grass.

4. The PU should also assume responsibility for plays at third base on the lead runner with a runner at first (R1) or on tag-and-advance situations with runners at first and second (R1, R2). In both situations, the PU should have the mobility to move up the third base line and assume a position with the third base bag between himself and the potential throw. He should be stopped and set, allowing enough "lag time" to read the throw and adjust his position to allow for unobstructed vision of the tag attempt on the advancing runner if needed.

In all situations involving mobility, the observer/evaluator should see all umpires moving when the ball is hit. Exceptional umpires who may have to rule on a play from their succeeding positions will move with extreme alacrity to assume a stopped and set as the tag is being applied. This “locked in” stance allows “sterile lag time” enabling calling umpires to clearly evaluate the quality of the play from their superior position. Properly positioned umpires give the appearance of “letting the play come to them” and are not attempting to gain ground or come to a complete stop and set as the tag is being applied thereby “infecting” their lag-time with unwanted movement.

4.4 -Fraternization

While umpires are expected to hold themselves “above the fray” in confrontational and emotion-laden situations, there are other times when umpires must return respectful greetings by players and coaches. Sportsmanlike interaction between participants and umpires is acceptable during the pre-game home plate conference and when base coaches introduce themselves to the field umpires. Questions asked by coaches and players, when done so in a respectful and calm fashion should also be answered in like fashion. Fraternization becomes a problem when umpires and participants engage in “friendly” conversation to the extent that it becomes noticeable. No umpire should put himself in a position of being accused of favoritism because he is conversing with the home-team participants more than those of the visiting-team. While umpires may rationalize this “over-fraternization” as an attempt to appear approachable, it can become a problem as an umpire’s concentration will be affected. There are steps an umpire must take to avoid appearing biased or risk losing focus on the game.

If umpires are properly positioned during half-inning intervals, their location will in itself will help to discourage needless banter between umpires and participants. Base umpires should station themselves in the outfield, far enough away from the defensive players to discourage idle conversation. A player must have to make an effort to approach the umpire with a question. With the new time restrictions between half innings, combined with the proper location of base umpires during this interval, it is safe to assume that not much communication will go on. Field umpires should never leave their positions to engage a player in conversation unless it is germane to game administration. And the exceptional umpire should take the initiative to move away from the player ending any brief encounter.

Between half-innings, an improperly positioned plate umpire has put himself in position to be a target of conversation as coaches are moving from their respective dugouts to their coaching boxes on the field. Instead of positioning himself on or near the baseline, it is recommendation of the Division II National Umpire Coordinator that the home plate umpire stand on either the third base-line extended or the first-base line extended, in proximity of the on-deck circle opposite but the team coming to bat. From this position, the exceptional umpire has everything in front of him of which he must be aware. He has vision on the batter and on-deck batter, and can remind, if needed, other players from the team coming to bat that they must not be out of the dugout. Also, from this position, the home plate umpire is out of the line of site and movement of offensive coaches as they take their positions. Finally, the umpire can move unrestricted to the home plate area, gaining eye-contact with both on-deck hitters and opposing pitcher and catcher alerting appropriate members of both teams when two-pitches remain in the five-pitch warm-up allowance.

The observer/evaluator can easily see if the umpiring crew has taken the proper positions as described above during half-inning intervals. Further, the observer/evaluator can judge if any communication is taking place during live-ball sequences between coaches and umpires. The exceptional umpire will take it upon himself to judiciously end conversations with coaches by moving away and putting distance between himself and the coach. The observer/evaluator should note this exceptional technique when observed.

Section 5: Accepting Criticism

This section has been added for the purpose of clearly defining the atmosphere that should exist in post-game debriefing sessions between Division II Regional Advisors (observer/evaluators) and umpires. The text itself is taken from Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion by George J. Thompson and Jerry B. Jenkins.

1. Maintain Eye Contact

Don't roll your eyes as if you are amazed at the stupidity of the person doing the criticizing. And don't cast your eyes down either. That is a sign of resignation or defeat. The person criticizing you probably doesn't want you to wallow in self-pity. Take it like an adult. Look the person in the eye and indicate that you're listening.

2. If You Disagree

If you disagree, hold your tongue for the time being. If you constantly interrupt to correct an inaccuracy or plead your case, you're going to look worse. Maybe you're right and the criticizer is wrong. Still, arguing and appearing defensive will only make the person believe more strongly that he is right. The time may come when it is appropriate to defend yourself, but gather your thoughts first and be prepared to discuss them calmly, just to try to balance the record.

3. Body Language

Nod and show open body language that says you're not only listening, but also that you're hearing and understanding. You're not necessarily agreeing, but you're getting the message.

4. Responses

Use responses that confirm your openness to be corrected such as:
"Uh-huh. Yes. Okay. I hear you. I understand what you're saying. I'm willing. I'll make every effort. I'll work on that. Thanks for pointing that out."

5. When It's Your Turn

When you have the floor, use the opportunity not only to defend yourself but also to reiterate that you welcome such input and want to learn. Insist on a follow-up meeting with a request such as, "Could I check back with you to make sure I'm making progress and doing what you want?"

Being criticized and responding appropriately can be better than never having been noticed at all. Proper demeanor and ability to choose your words carefully make all the difference.

The ability to accept constructive criticism in a positive fashion is important in any profession- and make no mistake about it-even though umpiring at the amateur level is considered an avocation rather than a vocation, many umpires work as hard or harder at developing their exacting skills as an umpire than in their everyday occupations. In fact, umpiring meets many of the requirements of a profession if judged by the standards found in other professional endeavors. Umpires have a body of literature (Rules Books/Mechanics Manuals) pertaining to their profession. Umpires are bound by a code of ethical behavior which they are expected to follow. Umpires must engage in a program of on-going training and professional development. Finally, umpires, just like other professionals, must undergo periodic observation and evaluation.

The observation/evaluation process should be viewed from the standpoint that it is being done to help improve one's skills, not to criticize or demean the person being evaluated. In the post-game review, the observer/evaluator should be aware of the willingness of the umpire being evaluated to accept criticism in a professional and respectful fashion.

This manual, and corresponding evaluation form (Rubric) has been made available to all Division II umpires who wish to participate and prosper in the Division II National Umpire Development Program. The transparency of this document is intentional as the National Coordinator believes the evaluation process should be as fair as possible. With this premise in mind, this manual should be used as a resource for umpires explaining to them the identified techniques and standards against which they will be held accountable.



This manual presents explanations and descriptions of the important techniques and ““Essential Behaviors”” over which all umpires should endeavor to gain mastery. It is written to prepare Division II umpires to achieve a higher degree of expertise and confirm those who perform with exceptional virtuosity having mastered the majority of standards to which they will be held accountable while participating in the Division II National Umpire Development Program.

It is the goal of the Division II National Umpire Development Program and the National Coordinator to continue to develop quality umpires for NCAA baseball working in partnership with the NCAA Division II Baseball Committee to satisfy the stated duties of the National Coordinator as stated below:

-To develop and coordinate a regional advisors program, maintaining continuous contact with each regional advisor for in-season evaluation of officials. With the regional advisor, the National Coordinator will develop recommendations to the NCAA Division II Baseball Committee for the selection and assignment of umpire for the Division II Baseball Championship, and serve as a resource for other championship matters.

-To develop a program to evaluate regular-season umpires (in-person, broadcast, etc); enhance and maintain the NCAA officiating web site, and; produce in-season officiating video bulletins.



Plate work Evaluation Form

Stability of Head and Body Position- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Plate umpire works "in the slot" between the batter and catcher.	Plate umpire "anchor foot" is located more between the catcher's feet as he sets to receive the pitch. "Slot foot" is clearly located in the free space between the catcher and the batter.	
Stays set "in the slot" and seldom moves.	Where appropriate, plate umpire allows for the catcher's final positioning to receive pitch before assuming a fixed "slot" position.	
Plate umpire's head height is usually at a level above the catcher's head. There may be a slight dipping of the head or lateral movement as the umpire "chases" the ball into the glove.	Plate umpire's head height is always at a level above the catcher's head. Head will not move on pitches that are at the extreme locations in the zone.	
Very little adjustment when catcher "squeezes" the inner-third of the zone.	When catcher "squeezes" the inner-third of the zone plate umpire head height is adjusted upward.	
Body language between strike calls and ball calls are somewhat different. May flinch or rock at times indicating indecision.	Distinctive and noticeable difference in body language between strike call (fully erect) and ball call (crouching). Stays solidly in appropriate stance consistently.	

Timing- check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Does not exhibit three-step set up approach when preparing receive pitch.	Exhibits three-step set up approach when preparing for pitch. Has resting position, ready position and set position before pitch is thrown.	
Is sometimes late getting into set position which causes "lag time" timing to change. Is moving to "set" position as pitch is being delivered.	Consistently is in set position and uses consistent "lag time" to see ball from pitcher's hand to catcher's glove.	
May call pitches on the periphery of the zone quickly and before the catcher's glove stops moving. Does not use eyes properly at times.	Proper use of eyes consistently. Calls pitches on the periphery of the strike zone with consistent "lag time." Waits for the catcher's glove to stop moving before reacting.	
"Lag time" cadence may be changed at times either due to sure "cock-shot" strikes (too fast) or periphery pitches (too slow). "Lag time" interval is inconsistent at times. Variation in timing encourages doubt.	"Lag time" cadence is consistent showing confident identification on periphery pitches as well as sure pitches. "Lag time" interval is consistent for balls and strikes. Deliberate timing encourages believability. "	
Voice is not combined with signal.	Voice is combined with signal consistently.	

Proper Positioning for Plays-check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Assumes proper read position for plays at the plate. Is 10-12 feet directly behind the Point-of-the-Plate. May take some plays at the first-base line extended.	Assumes proper read position for plays at the plate. Is 10-12 feet directly behind the Point-of-the-Plate. Will move to third-base line extended position as needed for proper angle.	
May make slight adjustments to initial position as the play demands. May not take the extra "lag time" to insure the ball was not dislodged.	Will make a complete reposition moving in a consistent arc to the right getting an unobstructed view of the tag insuring that the ball was not dislodged. May extend "lag time" to obtain superior positioning.	
May not read the "swipe tag" play at the plate and will not take proper position for unobstructed view of tag.	Will take "swipe tag" plays from third-base line extended. Will readjust position as needed, continuing to move in an arc (more toward first base) to open up a secondary visual angle on catcher's glove and tag.	
In rotation situations to third base, may stop short of the bag when reading situation with no play at third. May have to readjust to unexpected play at third.	Rotates completely to third base before it is needed. Is in proper position to rule on tag play on advancing runner. Allows play to come to him.	
May arrive late with little "lag time" to allow for mental process. Appears to be rushing the call.	Uses entire "lag time" allowance for mental process. Call appears deliberate and unhurried.	
Plate umpire properly trails batter/runner up first-base line when ball has been put into play. May make small adjustment due to overthrow of first-base.	Plate umpire properly trails batter/runner up first-base line when ball has been put into play coming to a complete stop before first baseman catches the throw. Will leave position on foul line to rule on the throw threatening or entering dead-ball territory. In position to cover batter/runner to second if partner is trapped (two-man).	
No communication with partner. There is hesitation due to uncertainty in situation coverage.	Calls off first base umpire letting him know he has vision on the overthrow allowing partner to concentrate on runner.	

Style and Mechanics of Calls-check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Strikes call and signal are combined and performed from an upright stance.	Strike call and signal is combined and performed from an upright stance. Signal is strong and crisp. Voice is loud enough to be heard by participants and spectators.	
Most ball calls are made from the crouching position.	Ball calls are made from the crouching position. There is no movement to an upright stance until the call is made.	
There is no extra volume added to the ball four call. Catcher may mistakenly throw to second base to retire runner who is forced.	There is extra volume added to ball four to insure that the catcher does not throw to second base to retire runner who is forced.	
There is no increase in volume for close ball calls.	Uses a louder voice to "sell" a ball call which is close. May spot the location of the pitch for added emphasis	
Strike-three signal is overdone and when performed looks uncoordinated and awkward.	Strike-three signal is smooth and visually pleasing. Does not draw unnecessary attention to the umpire. Voice level is very similar to that of other called strikes.	
Performance of strike-three mechanic shows little difference from other strike signals.	Strike-three mechanic features the "Punch-out" or "Pulling-the-chain" mechanic giving finality to the series of pitches.	

Judgment, Interpretation, Consistence of Strike Zone-check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
May call some pitches outside of established "lag time" which indicating inconsistency due to improper use of eyes or situational anxiety.	Establishes consistent "lag time" and is slow and deliberate in calling pitches. Employs proper use of eyes, waiting until the catcher's glove stops moving before reacting to pitch.	
May strike some pitches which require extreme movement of the catcher's glove in an overly-extended fashion.	Most called strikes feature an ease of reception on the catcher's part.	
On some called strikes excessive catcher's glove movement is needed to receive a ball out of the strike zone. Glove leaves zone to receive pitch.	When there is movement of the catcher's glove, it is a result and reaction to the reception of the pitch. Reception of strike may take glove out of the zone.	
'Hollow below the kneecap" strike may be inconsistent due to inability to ignore catcher's glove movement or unwillingness to deal with adverse reaction from participants.	Calls the "hollow below the kneecap" strike consistently. Adverse reaction from participants will lessen as adjustment is made to this consistent evaluation of the pitch. Understands technique and glove movement needed to receive this pitch	
Is inconsistent in calling strikes in the upper strike-zone in accordance with NCAA Rules Book.	Consistently calls strikes in the upper strike-zone in accordance with NCAA Rules Book diagram.	
May deviate from established strike-zone parameters.	Shows little deviation from established strike-zone parameters.	

Crew Mechanics and Communication-check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Plate umpire initiates the signals alerting the crew of required rotational movement. May not signal crew with each new batter or situation change.	Plate umpire consistently initiates the signals alerting the crew of required rotational movement while each new batter assumes his position or rotation situation changes due to base runner location.	
May not verbally alert crewmate when changing positions during rotation.	Consistently employs verbal communication when changing positions. Use of voice enhances and encourage total crew rotation.	
Will not visually check that all crewmates are rotating as required.	Will be ready to improvise rotation to overcome first base umpire not rotating home. Will also cover home when needed when rotation is compromised.	
Seldom recognizes time-play situations. Signals time-play situations inconsistently.	Recognizes all time-play situations including two-out (R2) and one-out (R1 and R2). Consistently signals crewmates.	
Trails batter/runner up first-base line alert for obstruction/interference, swipe tag, or pulled foot situations.	Consistently trails batter/runner up first-base line alert for obstruction/interference, swipe tag, or pulled foot situations. Is stopped and set before ball is gloved by first baseman.	
Seldom readjusts position on first-base line to assume responsibility for overthrows threatening dead-ball areas.	Consistently readjusts position on first-base line to assume responsibility for overthrows threatening dead-ball areas.	
Does not communicate consistently with partner in overthrow situations. Lack of communication may hinder coverage on batter/runner.	When covering overthrow situations, consistently uses voice to alert crewmate of his position allowing first-base umpire to assume total responsibility for batter/runner.	
Demonstrates little movement on fly balls to "open" fielders when partners are not stationed on foul lines (position A or D). Movement to cover fair-foul/catch-no-catch situations is slow and uncertain at times. May not use voice to communicate position change.	Demonstrates athletic movement on fly balls to "open" fielders when partners are not stationed on foul lines (position A or D). Movement to cover fair-foul/catch-no/catch situations is quick and decisive. Uses voice to communicate position change.	
Fails to recognize situations where his movement may overcome obstacles which interrupt proper rotation. Make no attempt to compromise rotational mechanics to compensate for a crewmate's mistake.	Is aware when a crewmate has failed to rotate and will assume responsibility to cover extra bases if needed. Understands that mechanics are a series of compromises and will improvise to overcome obstacles interrupting smooth rotational movement.	

Base work Evaluation Form

Proper Positioning of Calls- check box which applie

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
U1 walks into position not always achieving proper 90 degree angle when taking throws from infielders. May be moving, or coming set during "lag time" before ruling on play.	U1 quickly assumes the proper 90 degree angle when taking throws from infielders. Is set as the throw is made allowing for "sterile lag time" before ruling on play.	
U1 does not adjust to pressure situations but rather fights to stay in fair territory hugging the first-base line on throws from the second baseman risking abrupt head movement.	U1 recognizes pressure throws from second base and takes a position outside the diamond eliminating abrupt head movement.	
U1 does not make secondary adjustments or use secondary signals on plays complicated by off-line throws. Does not use secondary signals when warranted by action.	U1 readjusts position as needed to rule on situations where throw has taken first baseman off bag. Adjusts position as necessary and uses secondary signals for believability.	
U1, U3 takes improper position (B) which requires excessive movement to gain position and angle to rule on steals of second. Does not employ "deep B" positioning.	U1, U3 assumes proper position (B) requiring little movement to gain an unobstructed angle to rule on steals of second. Is positioned properly when working "deep B."	
U1,U3 does not move for unobstructed vision or to build an angle into second base on steal plays.	U1,U3 employs three-step procedure to put himself in proper position and build a visual angle to second base on steal plays.	
U1, U3 seldom moves to secondary position to rule on unexpected circumstances.	U1, U3 moves as needed to rule on unexpected circumstances employing appropriate signals for believability.	
U1, U3 does not exhibit proper "lateral drift" in double-play situations. Signaling technique is incorrect.	U1,U3 exhibits proper "lateral drift" in double-play situations. Signals result of play at second base while moving into set position for concluding play at first. May reconfirm safe call at second at the conclusion of all action.	
U3 makes little movement to position himself ahead of action at second base.	U3 demonstrates understanding of "letting the play come to him" and moves as needed to place bag between himself and throw at second base when double play is attempted.	

Proper Positioning of Calls (con't.)- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
U3 begins to appear lethargic after repeatedly moving from his initial position (D) into the diamond. May begin to shorten his movement as a result.	U3 continually moves with a purpose to gain proper position to rule on plays at second base should there be an overthrow or "stretch-double" situation.	
U3 is "on the move" as fielder gloves throw and attempts tag. Appears to be lagging behind the play. Cannot make secondary movement for unobstructed vision as "lag time" has become shortened or eliminated due to late arrival.	U3 is completely stopped and set after moving into diamond on two-base hit attempts. Uses "sterile lag time" to read throw and tag before responding. Has time to readjust to gain unobstructed vision if needed.	
U3 may appears reluctant or confused on fly balls (R3) where his partner leaves the diamond and he must assume responsibility for batter/runner. Does not read secondary responsibility on batter/runner.	U3 assumes responsibility for batter/runner with runner at third. If partner has left the infield, U3 will have concurrent vision on B/R touch of first base and be in position (B) to rule on any throw-back if B/R has placed himself in jeopardy after turning first base.	

Style and Mechanics of Calls- check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Routine out calls are made without animation but may be performed before there is a voluntary and intentional release of the ball.	Routine out calls are made without animation and after all playing action has ceased. Voluntary and intentional release has been assured by secondary use of eyes.	
There is little recognition of close and dramatic plays. Voice is barely audible. Signal shows little animation.	Out signals on close and dramatic plays are performed forcefully and with animation. Voice is loud and combined with signal.	
Signals performed in response to secondary situation or appeals are performed with little force or animation. Believability comes into question.	Strong signals are performed forcefully when responding to secondary situations or appeals. Believability is heightened by animation of signal.	
Shows little awareness of situations when signals should be performed with intensity. May use "out" signal on routine outfield and infield catches.	Has an awareness of when a call should be performed with intensity. Uses "out" signal on outfield or infield fly balls only when validity of the catch is in question.	
Seldom uses secondary signals to increase believability. Does not use secondary signals to remove doubt in situations pertaining to interference/obstruction.	Uses secondary signals to indicate a pulled foot or a juggled catch. Uses "safe" signal to remove questions pertaining to interference and obstruction.	

Timing and Judgment Calls- check box which applies

Note: Must perform “essential behavior” a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD
May infect “lag time” due to movement in proper position to rule on play situation. Timing may appear rushed as a result damaging believability.	Employs “sterile lag time” and proper use of eyes when making calls. Timing on all calls is deliberate and believable as a result.
May be slow getting into position and still moving when play is made. Because of being slow to the spot, is quick to the call. “lag time” is shortened or non-existent.	Is properly stopped and set, allowing for the play to come to him. Uses “lag time” to replay the situation and making any secondary adjustments to gain unobstructed vision.
Makes some decisions which are occasionally questioned due to misapplication of “Rewarding Excellence” theory.	Understands “Rewarding Excellence” theory and uses it when making close decisions.
Does not gain assurance of control / voluntary release. Calls can appear rushed at times. May have to change a call due to a dropped ball.	Employs two-step approach to making safe-out decisions. Gains assurance that fielder has demonstrated control /voluntary release. Timing and believability is enhanced.
There is little repositioning or hesitation for repositioning to insure the ball has been held in tag/collision situations. A secondary hand signal is seldom employed indicating a dropped ball when appropriate.	Timing may be slowed further because of hesitation due to a repositioning to insure the ball has been securely held in tag/collision situations. A secondary hand signal is usually employed indicating a dropped ball when appropriate.

Crew Mechanics and Communication- check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD
HP umpire signals rotation to U3 who then signals U1.	HP umpire signals rotation to U3 who then signals U1. Rotation movement is communicated before every new hitter and voice communication is used whenever umpires move to different positions.
Base umpires employ the pause/read react protocol before moving to the outfield on “trouble” balls.	Umpires employ the pause/read react protocol before moving to the outfield on “trouble” balls. There is a verbal and physical communication between umpires before leaving the infield.
PU may hesitate when rotating to third base thereby hindering rotation of U1 to home.	PU rotates fully to third base encouraging U1 to rotate completely home when needed.
There is little evidence of verbal communication between umpires when changing locations during rotation.	Umpires verbally communicate to each other whenever changing locations during rotation.



Crew Mechanics and Communication (con't.)- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
With runner at first base, U1 initiates rotation when R1 moves to third base but occasionally may stop short of the Point-of-the Plate.	With runner at first base, U1 initiates rotation when R1 moves to third base and moves completely to the Point-of-the Plate before stopping. Verbally alerts U3 that he is changing position.	
With runner at first base, U3 will stay at second base allowing for batter/runner to dictate further movement. Does not assume a position for throwback employing "lateral drift."	With runner at first base, U3 will initiate "lateral drift" building an angle back to first base to assume responsibility on batter/runner. Is in good position for throwback.	
PU does not communicate verbally to U3 when rotating to third base. U3 may take several steps to third following R1 and abandoning "lateral drift" mechanic as a result.	PU's strong verbal communication as he is rotating to third keeps U3 from chasing R1 and encourages his "lateral drift" mechanic toward first base.	
With runners in scoring position (R1, R2) the first base umpire (U1) will assume responsibility for Batter/Runner to second base but may be late establishing proper position at second.	With runners in scoring position (R1, R2) the first base umpire will assume responsibility for Batter/Runner to second base and will arrive abreast of B/R as he gains second. Will verbally communicate with U3 when changing position.	
With runners in scoring position (R1, R2) the third base umpire (U3) will assume responsibility for R1 to third base. May be hesitant to engage in "blind rotation."	U1's verbal communication allows U3 to properly position himself at third base to assume responsibility for R1. U3 does not hesitate to fully rotate because of verbal communication by U1.	
With runners on base, field umpire stationed inside diamond does not move consistently to the outfield to rule on "trouble" ball. Little verbal communication when eventually moving. Hesitant.	With runners on base, field umpire stationed inside diamond moves consistently to the outfield when dictated by action of players. Communicates his movement to partner. No hesitation.	
Field umpire stationed outside diamond will wait for movement of partner to outfield by before moving into infield. Movement is coordinated and in concert.	Field umpire stationed outside diamond may initiate movement of partner to outfield by anticipating trouble ball and moving into infield while verbally communicating to partner.	

Reaction to Development of Plays- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Little communication between umpires in appeal situations.	Verbal and physical communication between umpires in appeal situations.	
Confusion when multiple occupy the same base. Calling umpire will use secondary signals to eliminate confusion.	Confusion when multiple runners on the same base. Calling umpire will use secondary signals to eliminate confusion and may call "time" before signaling safe/out.	
Does not anticipate situations where runners may pass one another. Situation is handled after some hesitation between umpires involved.	PU or base umpire stationed inside diamond will be in position to rule when runners may have passed one another. Situation is handled without hesitation. Crew may huddle.	
Little evidence of either verbal or physical response to interference/obstruction situations. Secondary signal is not used. There may be confusion when awarding bases or calling runners out.	Four-step approach is taken in interference/obstruction situation. Secondary signal and voice is employed before the calling of "Time." Base awards and/or outs are signaled clearly without confusion.	
On outfield fly balls, there is little evidence of pause/read/react protocol. Umpires may move without verbal or physical signal. Little eye contact.	On outfield fly balls, standing "pause" is evident. Two-fold "read" process is used before movement of umpires. Visual connection and verbal communication established before moving.	
May still be moving when outfield fly balls are caught. May signal even when validity of catch is not in question.	Is stopped and set before outfield fly ball is caught. Builds and angle for visual Ball-to-Glove. Uses signals only when validity catch is in question.	

Game Situation and Management Evaluation Form

NCAA Policies, Procedures, Points of Emphasis; Officials Manual- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
May have tobacco products at hand but out of sight at game site/locker room. Puts himself in position for sanctioning if discovered.	Does not have tobacco products in locker room. Will not render himself or his crew under suspicion of or subject to sanctioning.	
May violate some of the alcohol directives as listed in Division II Game Officials Manual, page 23. Will not violate items 1. May violate item 2.	Follows all directives listed in Division II Game Officials Manual, page 23.	
May choose to "meet up" in the locker room before game time.	Whenever possible, umpires should travel and enter/exit the stadium-locker room together.	

NCAA Policies, Procedures, Points of Emphasis; NCAA Rules- check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Umpires will wait until the calling umpire requests an umpire conference to resolve a decision which is in question.	In situations where a call is disputed, the umpire will assume the initiative to approach his partner, using a predetermined signal, alerting him that he has information which may lead to a changing of the call.	
When conferencing, only the umpires with knowledge will confer with one another.	When conferencing, all umpires on the crew will confer together.	
HP umpire will appear to tolerate the batter stepping out of the batter's box or inconsistently issue a reminder.	PU "points" the batter back into the box. There is zero tolerance of this out of the box behavior. Instances of this infraction may decrease as the game progresses due to umpire vigilance.	
Does not read pitcher's initial "complete and discernable stop" and may be inconsistent and unsure in balk rulings.	Reads when pitcher noticeably shortens "complete and discernable" stop. Balk call is immediate and confident; combined with verbal and physical signal.	

NCAA Policies, Procedures, Points of Emphasis; NCAA Rules (con't.)- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Umpires do not respond immediately to orchestrated team demonstrations and bench jockeying. No written warning issued for repeated violations choosing to ignore or verbally reprimand. Behavior continues.	Umpires react immediately to orchestrated team demonstrations and bench jockeying. Will issue a written warning for repeated violations. Umpires do not hesitate to place themselves into confrontational situations when following NCAA directives. Behavior stops.	
PU may allow players to congratulate scoring runners who come out of the dugout during live-ball sequences despite reprimands.	PU will verbally warn/reprimand players who come out of the dugout during live-ball sequences to congratulate scoring runners. Will issue written warning for repeated violations.	
PU will allow players to congregate in the dirt circle to congratulate teammate who has hit home run despite repeated reprimands. Celebration may be prolonged and inappropriate. The behavior continues unabated.	PU will not allow players to congregate in the dirt circle to congratulate teammate who has hit home run. Verbal reprimand/written warning may be issued for celebrations which may become prolonged and inappropriate. The behavior lessens or ends.	
Field umpires seldom take control or initiate control over dugouts located along their foul line of responsibility.	Field umpires take control or initiate control over dugouts located along their foul line of responsibility. Verbal reprimands and written warnings may be issued by field umpires to achieve compliance.	
Field umpires may enforce the force-play slide rule inconsistently, choosing to ignore enforcement if the double-play is completed. May allow runner to score from third base as a result of selective enforcement.	Field umpires enforce the force-play slide rule consistently. Will enforce interference protocol and freeze runner movement on bases. Will place scoring runner back to third when appropriate.	
May enforce 20-second pitch limit protocol inconsistently.	Enforces 20-second pitch limit protocol consistently.	
May enforce 90/108-second pitch limit protocol inconsistently.	Enforces 90/108-second pitch limit protocol consistently.	



Situation Management/Ejections/Warnings- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Allows continued objections as they are spaced throughout the game. May acknowledge or warn too far into the game to get behavior stopped.	Acknowledges continued objections/complaints with an extended "stop sign" immediately. Behavior is stopped early in the game.	
May issue a warning, but done in such a fashion that there is doubt in the mind of participants and spectators. Warning may not be recorded in writing or done after the fact.	Warning is issued after calling time and reciting verbiage as recommended by conference. Warning is recorded in writing immediately upon issue.	
Will handle confrontation calmly and in control without aggressive movement or gesticulation. Does not take steps to end discussion, however.	Will handle confrontation calmly and in control without aggressive movement or gesticulation. Responses will lead to an identifiable lessening of situational tension. Will physically remove himself from the encounter allowing partners to diffuse situation if needed.	
Behavior leading up to the ejection, and the ejection signal itself, may escalate the intensity of the situation making the umpire appear out of control or overly hostile. Continued discussion may ensue after the ejection.	Umpire remains calm and in control of himself throughout. Recognizes the volatility of the post-ejection interval and removes himself from the vicinity of the situation allowing for crewmates to diffuse situation.	
Base umpires are unsure and tentative as to their roles in confrontation. Will eventually take part in diffusing situation but do nothing to redirect confrontation.	Base umpires move with assurance after ejection. They control and redirect post-ejection volatility and help ejected participant exit the vicinity of the playing field.	

Effort and Professionalism Evaluation Form

Focus and Hustle- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
May be late to transportation and rendezvous site upsetting crew time-line for arrival. Does not have rules book or mechanics manual in possession. Seldom adds comments to pre-game discussion.	Is seldom late to designated transportation rendezvous sites. Has proper study materials in his possession and actively participates in pre-game discussion.	
May tend to drift in certain situations suggesting indecisiveness or uncertainty. At times runs without watching participants as needed. May be on the move during critical elements of play situations (catch and tag).	Moves purposefully on the field. Demonstrates "cruise control;" in hustling but not hurrying when moving. In most situations, appears to stay ahead of the game and is stopped and set before reacting to situations which call for his decision.	
At times, walks when players are hustling either at the half-inning interval or as they move into position to field batted or throw balls. May appear detached at times.	Understands that when players are hustling, umpires should demonstrate hustle as well. Reflects effort displayed by game participants.	
May not be aware of dugouts and participant location at times resulting in inconsistent enforcement of rules pertaining to player comportment.	Is aware of dugout situations, on-deck batters, storage of loose equipment, and player location during the game. Immediately enforces rules pertaining to such.	
May ignore certain situations which may result in adverse reactions from participants and spectators. May appear timid when aggressive, self-assured behavior is in order.	Will enforce rules consistently without regard to resulting adverse reaction from participants and spectators. Will develop an aggressive, self-assured style when necessary in these tense situations.	
Does not predict or prepare for suspected confrontational situations and does not take steps to proactively diffuse subsequent incidents until they begin. Does not use preventative officiating.	Is aware of confrontational situations which may arise later in the game due to previous incidents. Will take steps to diffuse these situations immediately attempting to eliminate future reprisals. Employs preventative officiating techniques.	

Appearance and Demeanor- check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Trousers are not of the proper shade of charcoal gray and do not match crewmates. They are clean, and pressed.	Trousers are of the proper shade of charcoal gray and match crewmates. They are clean, and pressed. They give the appearance of finely tailored dress slacks with proper length.	
Hat appears old and faded. It has lost its crease.	Hat appears new; worn "squared to the head" with a neatly creased crown giving it a military "squared away" look.	

Appearance and Demeanor (con't.)- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
Shirts and jackets are not faded with use. Shirt appears too tight and untucked.	Shirts and jackets have not faded and color is true. Shirt and jacket, when tucked, do not blouse out at waistline.	
Shoes are cleaned and polished.	Shoes are cleaned and polished and appear to be new or near-new.	
Demeanor may appear lazy or overly-relaxed due to lack of hustle when participants are hustling to position or in an attempt to make a play.	Demeanor is athletic and aware. Umpire hustles when participants are hustling either at change of inning intervals covering play action.	
May appear "overly officious" responding with body language and communication which exceeds appropriate conduct in relation to the situation presented.	Body language and communication is appropriate and relative to the intensity of the situation which presents itself.	
At times may assume a posture associated with boredom. Vision may stray from field in live-ball situations.	Assumes a "locked-in" posture either hands-on-knees or standing set. Vision is focused on field during live-ball situations.	

Mobility- check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
U1 has trouble keeping abreast or ahead of the batter/runner on a play when moving from position A to position B on a two-base hit when partner (U3) leaves the infield.	When moving from position A to position B, the first-base umpire (U1) arrives ahead or abreast of the runner allowing for time to set and adjust to a potential play on the batter/runner on a two-base hit when partner (U3) leaves the infield.	
With runners on, from position A, the first base umpire is occasionally late replacing his partner if he leaves the infield to rule on a "trouble" ball.	With runners on, from position A, the first base umpire (U1) can arrive at the designated spot, replacing (U3) if he leaves the infield to rule on a "trouble" ball, with enough time to line up tagging runner (R2) and then move as continuing action dictates.	
U3 is occasionally late arriving at second base for plays on the batter/runner if there is an attempt for a "stretch-double."	U3 arrives at second base ahead or abreast of the batter/runner attempting a "stretch-double." He is stopped and set with enough time to read the throw and adjust angle of vision and initial position if situation dictates.	

Mobility (con't.)- check box which applies

Note: Must perform "essential behavior" a majority of opportunities to gain rating.

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
<p>With runner on third, U3 is occasionally late moving into diamond (position C) to assume responsibility for play on B/R on "stretch-double" or if there is a throw-back to first base if B/R places himself in jeopardy.</p>	<p>With runner on third, U3 quickly moves into diamond (position C) to assume responsibility for play on B/R on "stretch-double." If there is a throw-back to first base if B/R places himself in jeopardy, U3 can easily engage in "lateral drift" and be in position to cover subsequent action at first base.</p>	
<p>With no runners on, PU has mobility to follow batter/runner up the first base line assuming responsibilities as needed. Seldom leaves initial position to rule on overthrows.</p>	<p>With no runners on, PU has mobility to follow batter/runner up the first base line assuming responsibilities as needed. Will leave initial position to obtain unrestricted vision and rule on overthrows.</p>	
<p>With runner on first (R1), the plate umpire will rotate to third base assuming responsibility for plays on R1 should he advance. May arrive late, moving into position as catch and tag is attempted. Tardy arrival does not allow for "lag time" or readjustment.</p>	<p>With runner on first (R1), the plate umpire will rotate to third base assuming responsibility for plays on R1 should he advance. Arrives ahead or abreast of the runner and is stopped and set before catch and tag is attempted allowing for "lag time" and readjustment as needed.</p>	

Fraternization- check box which applies

MEETS STANDARD	EXCEEDS STANDARD	
<p>Returns respectful greetings. Answers questions posed in a respectful fashion by players and coaches. May converse with coach but situation becomes noticeable due to length and frequency.</p>	<p>Returns respectful greetings. Answers questions posed in a respectful fashion by players and coaches. Realizes when conversation is becoming noticeable due to length and frequency and takes steps to end conversation by using distance as a barrier.</p>	
<p>May be positioned in outfield too close to fielders as they change sides and take warm-up throws. Proximity encourages needless conversation.</p>	<p>Stationed in outfield far enough away from defensive players to discourage idle conversation. Players must make the effort to initiate and engage in conversation. Umpire will employ distance as a barrier to end conversation.</p>	
<p>PU positions himself between innings where coaches and players can initiate conversation due to his proximity to their paths as they leave or enter the diamond.</p>	<p>Plate umpire positions himself in proper position nearer on-deck circles opposite upcoming batters during half-inning intervals to discourage conversation with participants as they leave or enter the diamond.</p>	

