

INTERPRETATIONS

Fourth Out On Appeal (posted 5/5/04)

Situation: One out, runners at first and third bases. The batter hits a fly ball that is caught by the right fielder. The runners tag and the right fielder's throw is to home plate. It is a bad throw, but does not go out of play. The runner from third base touches home plate and the runner that started at first base goes to third base. Time is called by the base umpire, at the request of the third base coach. The ball is then put in play and a proper appeal of the initial runner leaving early from third base at the time of the put-out in right field, is attempted by the defense. The new runner at third base, on command from the third base coach, breaks for home plate as the pitcher steps off the rubber to begin the appeal. The pitcher, seeing this, makes a play on the runner at home and puts him out. The defense then attempts to appeal the fourth out (the initial runner at third leaving too soon, prior to the outfielder touching the ball in making the catch).

Question: Is the fourth out appeal in force in this situation:

Ruling: Rule 8-6-b-(4), p. 86-87: In this situation, the defense is allowed to appeal the runner leaving too soon at third base. This is one of the few instances that the fourth out appeal is allowed. The defense is allowed their opportunity to appeal after a play that has been initiated by the offense, has been completed. If the defense has initiated an intervening play, they would have lost their opportunity for this appeal. If the appeal is completed properly and is successful, the fourth out is recorded and the run is not allowed.

Injured Pitcher – Blister or Wound On Pitching Hand (posted 5/5/04)

Situation: A pitcher has a blister on his throwing hand that begins to bleed during play. Is it permissible to put a bandage on the pitcher's hand?

Ruling: No. Rule 3-9. The team has 10 minutes from the time play is stopped to control the bleeding by means other than a bandage. According to Rule 9-2-e, A.R. 1, the pitcher is not allowed to use a bandage on the pitching hand or fingers. A bandage, provided it is not distracting to a hitter, is allowed on the non-pitching hand.

Balks (posted 5/3/04)

Situation: Runners are on first and third with a right-handed pitcher. The pitcher fakes a pick-off to third base but does not break contact with the rubber. Is this a balk?

Ruling: Rule 9-3-b, (1), (2), (3), pg 96, this is not a balk unless the pitcher completes the third-to-first move without breaking contact with the pitching rubber.

Situation: With a runner on second base and a full count on the batter, the pitcher balks during his delivery to home. The runner on second is going on the pitch and the pitch is called a ball. There is no attempt to make a play on the runner at third base.

Ruling: Rule 9-3-m (1); p. 97-98. If a balk is immediately followed by a pitch that permits the batter and each runner to advance a minimum of one base, the balk is ignored and the ball remains alive.

The batter walked on ball four and the runner stole third. The runners advanced a minimum of one base. The runner may remain at third base. However, if the runner had been thrown out at third base, call time and enforce the balk.

Bench-Clearing Situations (posted 5/3/04)

Question: When a team is involved in a bench-clearing altercation that requires all members of the team to be suspended for three games, does the school forfeit their next three games or is there a procedure that can be followed to stagger the suspensions?

Ruling:

1. The situation is one which the conference and institutional administrators must be involved with together.
2. The conference should determine which players and when suspensions will be served so as not to penalize the future teams on your schedule (if it is determined that the suspensions are to be staggered).
3. The school's administrators then must monitor the suspensions and make sure they are carried out to the satisfaction of the conference office.
4. Forfeit the team's next three games.

Note: The Rules Committee believes staggering suspensions is the best option here.

Charged Defensive Conferences (posted 5/3/04)

Situation: Runner on third, no outs. Pitching coach goes to the mound. He makes a change, bringing in a new pitcher. The coach converses with the new pitcher for a moment and then walks off the mound, crosses the foul line and goes into the dugout. The umpire signals to the press box informing them of the new pitcher. The umpire turns to watch the pitcher warm-up and notices that the third basemen and shortstop are talking with another defensive coach in foul territory, behind the third base coach who is talking to his runner. Should this action be considered a defensive conference?

Ruling: Rule 9-4-d, pg. 99 and 9-4-a, A.R. 1, pg. 98. A pitching conference and change is concluded when the coach crosses the foul line.

The conference held by another defensive coach with the third baseman and the shortstop does constitute another charged conference unless it occurs at the same time of the pitching change.

Umpires should check with partners if unsure when this conference began.

If this conference began after the pitching coach or manager crossed the foul line, then the new relief pitcher must pitch until he retires the first batter he faces and the team has charged conference.

Situation: At the end of a half-inning, the first base coach for the team taking the field stops by the mound to converse with his pitcher. It isn't a long conversation, but it does delay the pitcher's warm-up pitches. Would this be a charged trip to the defensive team?

Ruling: Rule 9-4-a, A.R. 1: "If a coach holds a defensive conference with a defensive player, it shall be considered a trip whether the player goes to the mound or not."

The new half-inning begins when the last out is made in the previous half-inning. Therefore, the team is now on defense. A pitcher has one minute or five pitches to complete his warm-up.

Mechanically, an umpire should intercept the coach and remind him that the pitcher needs to complete his warm-up throws in a timely fashion. If the coach wishes to stop the give advice and it delays the pitcher's warm-up, you will need to charge him with a trip.

If the conversation is brief and is only in passing then it should not be considered a conference. If it delays, as the question indicates, then it could be interpreted as a conference.

Charged Trip to the Mound During an Offensive Conference (posted 5/3/04)

Question: Can a defensive coach go to the mound and talk with his pitcher during a charged offensive conference and not be charged with a trip to the mound? The defensive coach does not delay leaving the mound when the offensive conference concludes.

Ruling: Rule 9-4-a, A.R. 1, pg. 98. A trip is charged if a defensive coach goes to the mound to talk with his pitcher or holds a defensive conference with a defensive player during an offensive charged conference.

Exception: Rule 9-4-a, A.R. 4, pg. 98. "If the offensive team has prolonged injury timeout, the pitcher may leave the mound and confer with the coach, or the coach may go to the mound to talk with the pitcher without being charged with a defensive trip. If the defensive conference further delays play, a trip shall be charged to the defensive team."

Designated Hitter Rule (posted 5/3/04)

Situation: Smith is the P/DH (nine-layer line-up) to start the game. In the 6th inning, the coach decides to remove Smith from the mound but keep him in the line up as the DH (now a 10-player lineup). In the 9th inning the coach says he wants to now place Smith defensively at first base and bat the pitcher in the first baseman's slot in the batting order.

Ruling: Rule 7-2-b-(5), pg. 71. When Smith was replaced as the pitcher in the 6th inning, the coach must, at that time, place Smith in a defensive position. If he doesn't place Smith in a defensive position at the time of the substitution as pitcher, Smith is only eligible to continue as the DH. This is also true of any subsequent DH, a new DH for Smith may not come into the game in any other capacity other than DH (pitcher, defensive position player, pinch runner).

Field Conditions and Umpire Jurisdiction (posted 5/3/04)

Question: Who has jurisdiction regarding field conditions at the start of the second game of a double header?

Ruling: Rule 4-2-c, pg. 44. “The Umpire-In Chief of the first game shall be the sole judge as to whether playing conditions permit the start of a second game of a doubleheader.”

Question: When does an umpire’s jurisdiction end?

Ruling: Rule 5-16-b (Penalty 4-2). An umpire’s jurisdiction ends the same as it ends for fighting: “An umpire has jurisdiction to impose penalties (including penalties for fighting) from the beginning of the game until the umpires have left the playing area (stadium) after the final game of the day.”

Force-Play Slide Rule Interference (posted 5/3/04)

Question: Is contact required for the force-play rule to be enforced?

Ruling: No. Rule 8-4-c (1) on pg. 84. Contact is not necessary for an umpire to enforce the force-play slide rule. As a reminder, this rule is in place for the safety of both the runner and fielder and must be enforced properly.

Injured Pitcher (posted 5/3/04)

Question: A pitcher is injured while on the mound. When must the coach designate the substitute for the injured pitcher? Where must the substitute player begin warming up?

Ruling: In the case when the injury is to a pitcher who will not be able to continue, the substitute player must be designated immediately by the head coach. The player designated to replace the injured pitcher must take his warm-up throws on the game mound. Umpires will allow the substitute player adequate time to warm-up.

If the injured pitcher is being attended to by the training staff and may continue in the game, the head coach must begin warming up a replacement immediately in the bullpen. When the decision is made regarding the pitcher currently in the game (no more than 10 minutes), the head coach must immediately designate the replacement pitcher and bring him to the game mound.

Rationale: Rule 2/Definitions, pg. 29. “Bullpen: The area in foul or dead-ball territory, generally between the dugout and outfield fence, where substitute pitchers, catchers and other players warm-up....”. Once the player has been designated by the coach, he no longer is a substitute and must report to the game mound to begin his warm-up. Again, it should be noted, the substitute will be given adequate time to warm-up because of the sudden injury.

Rule 3-9, A.R. pg. 42. A substitute player must begin warming up immediately when play is stopped because of this injury. (Blood Rule) Treat the injured pitcher the same as that of a player who has a blood injury.

Rule 9-4, A.R. 2, pg. 99. The relief pitcher, when called from the bull pen by the umpire, must proceed immediately to the mound. The umpire will call the relief pitcher to the mound immediately after the coach has designated the player that will replace the injured pitcher.

Obstruction By Fielder (posted 5/3/04)

Question: A fielder has his foot in front of a base, somewhat blocking the base. There is room for the runner to come back on the outer part of the base, because the entire base is not blocked. Is the allowed?

Ruling: Rule 8-3-e (2) The fielder may not block the base without possession of the ball. If the runner is prevented from reaching the base because of the actions by the fielder, who does not have the ball, obstruction shall be called.

Question: If R1 is obstructed going back into first base by the first basemen who does not have the ball when the obstruction occurs, is R1 awarded second base?

Ruling: Rule 8-3-e, Pen. (2), pg. 81. The umpire shall let the play continue until all play has ceased, call time and award any bases that are justified in Rule 2. The obstructed runner is awarded at least one base beyond the base last legally touched before the obstruction. In this case, award R1 second base.

Radar Guns (posted 5/3/04)

Question: Are the use of radar guns to keep track of a pitcher's speed legal? When does the use of a radar gun become illegal?

Ruling: Rule 5-2-f, pg. 48. Non-uniform team personnel may sit in the stands for the purpose of charting pitches or videotaping a contest. Games and individuals shall not be videotaped from the team's dugout. Any scouting information involving current opponents shall not be transmitted to the playing field or to team personnel.

Baserunner Retouching Bases

Question: R1 is running with the pitch that is hit to the outfield but is caught. In the process of throwing the ball back in to the infield, the relay is thrown into dead ball territory. The runner at first base left early and was between second and third base when the ball went into dead ball territory.

Ruling: Rule 8-6-a, A.R. 2 and A.R. 3, pg. 88. If the runner realizes his mistake of leaving early and is attempting to return to first base, allow him to return to first and retouch and his award is from his original base. If the runner doesn't acknowledge his mistake of leaving early and is not attempting to return to first base, award him home and let the defense dictate what happens next. If they appeal, allow the first base umpire to make his determination.

Checked Swing Appeal

Question: No one on base, 2-2 count. Pitch is in the dirt, batter attempts to check his swing. The ball gets away from the catcher, going to the backstop. The batter, who has touched first base, is walking back to home plate. The defensive coach wants a "check swing" appeal.

Ruling: Rule 3-6-e, pg. 40. When asked by a coach or player, the plate umpire must seek a decision from the appropriate base umpire regarding the checked swing. Such appeal ONLY may be made when the plate umpire has called the pitch a ball.

Recommended mechanic: Anytime there is a potential checked swing third strike the home plate umpire should grant the appeal. Additionally, the first-base umpire should verbalize his appeal call immediately to avoid confusion and putting the batter-runner in undue jeopardy of being tagged out.

Force Play Slide Rule

Question: A double play ball is hit to F4, F4 flips to F6 who is standing in front of or on top of the second base. The slide by R1 is legal and contact is made with F6. The slide knocks F6 to the ground behind the bag. The initial contact was in front of or on top of the bag.

Ruling: Rule 8-4-b-(2), (3), pg. 84. “The intent of the Force Play Slide rule is safety; however, the contact with a fielder is legal and interference shall not be called....

(2) if the runner is on the ground in a legal slide at the time of contact and the fielder moves directly down the line between 1st and 2nd bases or:

(3) if the runner makes a legal slide and makes contact with a defensive player who is on or over, but not beyond the base.”

The fielder, in this situation, is not protected by the Force Play Slide Rule.

Interference by a Batter-Runner at Home Plate

Question: Runner on third base, 3-0 count on the batter, no outs. The next pitch is a wild pitch and R3 attempts to score. The batter, who is now the runner because of ball four, stands in the box and unintentionally interferes with the play at home.

Ruling: Rule 8-5-h, pg. 86. If one or more members of the offensive team stand at or around a base the runner is trying to obtain, thereby confusing the defensive team, the base runner shall be declared out. The action by the batter-runner would create this interference. Call the runner out and send the batter to first base because of ball four.

If the batter-runner interferes intentionally or unintentionally with a batted ball or the fielder fielding it, with a double play likely, the batter-runner and the runner closes to home plate are out, regardless of where the double-play attempt may have taken place.

If it is not a double play, call the runner out nearest home plate and award the batter first base.

Obstruction Interpretations

Correction: Some language was not changed from last season’s book regarding obstruction.

Rule 8-8-b, pg. 90. “If the defensive player blocks the base (plate) or base line clearly without possession of the ball, obstruction shall be called. The runner is safe and an immediate dead ball shall be called.” This is incorrect.

The sentence should read: “The runner is safe and a delayed dead ball shall be called.” Please note this change in your rules book. As a reminder, all obstruction is now a delayed dead ball.

Obstruction or Interference on Errant Throws

Question: A fielder makes contact with a base runner, in the baseline, while going after an errant throw (play is being made on that runner). This situation could happen in many different ways, but we will focus on three common situations:

1. A pickoff attempt at first base and the throw is to the right side of the base.

Interpretation: In this situation, the fielder is doing what he is supposed to do, catch the ball and complete the play. The base runner is doing what he is supposed to do by returning to the base. The umpire most likely has a “gangle, untangle” situation. As long as the contact was not intentional, there should be no obstruction. Ball remains live and in play, no penalty.

The Rules Committee is trying to address blocking the baseline without the ball, particularly on pickoff plays. Pay special attention to a first baseman that uses his leg to force a runner away from the base. Also pay special attention to a base runner that, trying to draw an obstruction call, returns to the base and contacts the fielder intentionally, they are not trying to keep defensive players from making plays. Don’t read something into the rule that was not intended.

2. An errant throw to second base while a possible double play is in progress.

Interpretation: More than likely, an umpire will look to enforce the force play-slide rule rather than the obstruction rule when warranted. But, if the slide is legal and contact ensues, the umpire should not bail out the defense because they made a bad throw. Conversely, the offense should not be rewarded if both the offense and the defense are doing what they have the right to do (play their positions.). Contact would likely be incidental here.

However, if a wide throw by the second baseman takes the shortstop across the bag and into a runner who did not slide and is standing up, and contact ensues prior to the shortstop catching the ball, interference should be called because the runner did not slide.

3. The catcher, fielding an errant throw up the third base line, contact the base runner.

Interpretation: Again, refer back to situation No. 1. If both the runner and the catcher are legally playing their positions, play should continue. In the scenario at the start of this section, this is not an attempt to block the base path by the catcher. However, if the catcher’s contact knocks the runner down, then receives the throw and tags the runner out, you would have a case for obstruction.

Obstruction Between Bases on a Batted Ball that is Deflected by a Fielder

Question: R2 on second base outs irrelevant. Batted ball between F6 & F5. F5 gets his glove on the ball but deflects the ball towards the shortstop, who is coming over behind the third baseman. R2 is attempting to avoid F5 by going behind the third baseman and is contacted by F6 who does not have possession of the ball.

Ruling: Rules 8-5-k, 6-2-e and 2, Interference, A.R. 4: A runner is not expected to be able to dodge a deflection. Once F5 had a chance to field the ball and deflected the ball, the ball is live

– play on. There is a definite possibility that obstruction would be in order since the shortstop, without the ball, made contact with and impeded the progress of the base runner. The umpire should call “That obstruction,” and let the play continue to its completion and then, in this situation, award the R2 third base since the SS did not have the ball at the time of contact.

Wind-Up Position

In the windup position, the continuous motion of the pitcher is joining his hands in front of his body does not constitute the start of the pitching motion. If the pitcher moves any other part of the body (feet, legs, upper body) as he joins his hands, he shall be deemed to have started his pitching motion and is committed to pitch.

A.R. 1—While contacting the rubber in the windup position, but before addressing the batter and taking his sign from the catcher, the pitcher may reach into his glove and adjust the ball and then remove his hand from the glove, without this being construed as the start of his pitching motion.

A.R. 2—While addressing the batter and taking his sign from the catcher, the pitcher may join his hands in front of his body and adjust the ball, without this movement being construed as the start of his pitching motion. From this position, he may pitch, step and throw to a base or disengage the rubber. He may not, however, remove his hand from his glove except to pitch or throw to a base.

Correction on Rule 6-4-e, Obstruction (posted 2/9/04)

With the change to the obstruction rule, all obstruction is now a delayed dead ball.

During production of the rules book, a section was overlooked and inadvertently, it reads that there is an immediate dead ball. This is incorrect. Please make a note of it in your rules book.

The correction needs to be made on page 66 of the book, Rules 6-4-e.

Just keep in mind that ALL obstruction is now a delayed dead ball.