



THE UMPIRE WEEKLY

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HIT-A-THON

Don't forget to save the date!

The 1st Annual Battle Ground Little League Hit-a-Thon is Saturday, May 19th right here at our fields.

It's going to be a fun family day at the ball park with games, food and fun!

Remember, this isn't something that you have to fund yourselves... Grandma Jean in Florida or Grandpa Joe in Arizona can sponsor your player online.

So, another week of games behind us and we're headed into what looks like a week of great baseball and softball weather. Let's take a look at a couple of situations.

OBSTRUCTION

The first situation that I want to talk about was covered previously. Just by way of a refresher, the definition of obstruction in Rule 2.00 says, "Obstruction is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball, impedes the progress of any runner. A fake tag is considered obstruction. (Note: Obstruction shall be called on a defensive player who blocks off a base, base line or home plate from a base runner while not in possession of the ball.)"

The Note is where I want to focus this week. This was clarified by the Umpire-in-Chief of Little League International during live webinars for members of the Little League Umpire Registry. The point he made was that it reads that obstruction SHALL be called if, while not in possession of the ball, a defensive player blocks a base, base line or home plate.

We've all see the play where the catcher is waiting for the throw at home, but he or she is standing in the base line. There doesn't have to be a collision for it to be obstruction. If the defensive player is in the base line without the ball, it is obstruction and it shall be called.

The confusion comes when there is a collision. Who was at fault? Should the runner try to avoid the collision? If he doesn't is he out? The bottom line is, if the defensive player does not have the ball, and he or she is blocking the base, base line or home plate, it's obstruction. No, the runner does not have to try to avoid the collision. The fielder without the ball has to avoid the collision.

There is another rule that this may be mixed up in this. This is Rule 7.08(a)(3). This rule says, "Any runner is out when – the runner does not slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag. (A.R. – There is no "must slide rule.")"

Notice the difference, though. The runner must slide or attempt to get around the defender only if said defender has the ball. This rule is in place to avoid a Buster Posey vs Scott Cousins situation where the runner tries to barrel through the defensive player in hopes that he will drop the ball. We certainly don't want this type of collision; however, if the defender is simply in the way of the runner, it is the defender's responsibility to avoid impeding the runner.



PITCH COUNT AND REST DAYS

The next situation I'd like to cover briefly is pitch count and rest days. I witnessed this during a game that none of our boys were in, but it was a good learning experience, or at least should have been, for all involved.

The situation was this: Minors Baseball. The manager makes a pitching change and brings up a young man that we will call Teddy. Teddy takes the mound and starts warming up. Teddy's mother becomes concerned because Teddy pitched three days ago and in his last outing he pitched 66 pitches. Mom was adamant that he needed one more day of rest. She brought it to the attention of the manager and the umpire, claiming him as an ineligible pitcher. The manager and umpire consult and determine that he only required three days of rest and that he is eligible. Why?

This situation is governed by Regulation VI – Pitchers. Reg VI says that if a pitcher that is league age 10 may throw 75 pitches in a game. If he throws Reg VI(d) outlines the days of rest for us. It says that a player that is league age 14 and younger who throws 66 or more pitches in a game must observe four calendar days of rest. So, Teddy's mother was correct, right? Not necessarily.

There is an exception in the regulation that says, "If a pitcher reaches a day(s) of rest threshold while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until any one of the following conditions occurs: (1) that batter reaches base; (2) that batter is retired; (3) the third out is made to complete the half-inning or the game. The pitcher will only be required to observe the calendar day(s) of rest for the threshold he/she reached during that at-bat, provided that pitcher is removed, or the game is completed before delivering a pitch to another batter."

So, what does that mean? It means that because Teddy reached the 65-pitch threshold during an at-bat, he was allowed to complete that at-bat without clicking him over to the next rest requirement. For example, Teddy reaches throws pitch number 65 for strike two. Should he get pulled so he doesn't throw one more pitch and thus require an extra day of rest? No, the exception allows him to throw the next pitch, number 66 for strike three, but only be held to the days of rest for the threshold he reached which was 65 pitches.

Thus, Teddy only required three days of rest, not the four that his mother believed based on the 66 pitches. She was just concerned about the safety of her son, but she was apparently not aware of the exception to this rule. As parents, coaches, managers and umpires, it is our duty and responsibility to know and be familiar with these rules. The manager and the umpire to it right.

As always, thank you for reading and...

PLAY BALL!

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