



THE UMPIRE WEEKLY

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CLOSING CEREMONIES

Don't forget to save the date!

The Closing Ceremonies this season will be on Saturday, June 9th at 10am.

This is a very important event when we will announce the winners of the Hit-a-Thon, award prizes and announce the All-Star teams.

ALL-STARS

Contact a member of the board if you are able to help with the All-Star Tournament.

I hope you are enjoying your holiday weekend. I hope you've had chance to, in whatever way is right for you, to honor those that gave the ultimate sacrifice so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we have. Also, to all of our active duty service members and veterans, thank you! Alright, it was interesting week in both baseball and softball. There are just a couple of situations that I want to touch on this week, so let's jump right into it.

CIRCLE VIOLATIONS

We've mentioned softball circle violations a time or two before. The subject comes up often because it is an often overlooked and/or misunderstood situation. The situation is this: There were several instances in a game that should have been called circle violations, but at the Minors level, this is often a concept the girls are still learning; thus, I'm typically lenient and try to allow the coaches to coach.

The first part of this situation is when runners leave the base early. Again, I try to be very lenient on this, especially early in the game. The rule at the Minors level is that the pitched ball must "reach the batter" before the runner can leave the base. It is often difficult to tell exactly when the ball reached the batter and have your eye on the runners as well. With only one field umpire and three runners on base, it becomes even more difficult. Thus, it must be obvious that the runner left early for me to call it. Ultimately, it's a judgment call. Often, the coaches will notice their own runners leaving early and start reminding them to wait. Again, I like to let the coaches coach. When the girls aren't listening, when the violations persist without correction or when it is obvious that she left early, then it gets called. This first part is governed by Rule 7.08(a)5(b), which says, "Any runner is out when the runner fails to keep in contact with the base which that runner is entitled until the ball has been batted or reaches the batter."

Part two is when a runner fails to keep contact with the base while the pitcher is in circle. Slightly different. The situation: the batter-runner took ball four. With a runner on third, and without stopping or hesitating, the batter-runner continued to second base. This is completely legal whether the pitcher has the ball in the circle or not, as long as she does not stop and then start again, without a play being attempted on her.

Once all play was over, the pitcher was in the circle, the first base coach quietly called the runner on second base back to first base. At the time, I noticed the runner going back and was a bit confused about why she was returning. Play



continued. After the game it was brought up by a spectator... and yep... we missed it. As umpires we should have called that runner out for a circle violation.

This is governed by Rule 7.01 which states, “If a runner legally acquires title to a base, and the pitcher has control of the ball within the eight (8) foot radius circle and is not making a play, the runner may not return to a previously occupied base.”

CROW HOPPING OR LEAPING

Another scenario that comes up often is the illegal pitch. In this case, I want to touch on the illegal pitch in softball commonly referred to as a crow hop or leaping. There is a common misunderstanding that these two are the same. They're not. A crow hop is defined as “...the act of a pitcher who steps, drags, or hops off the front of the pitcher's plate, replants the pivot foot, establishing a second starting point, pushes off from the newly established starting point, and completes the delivery.” The key here is that the pitcher replants and pushes off from a new point. Leaping is defined as “...an act by the pitcher when both feet become airborne on the initial move and push from the pitcher's plate.”

So, while there is a slight difference between the two, I want to talk briefly about leaping, which is what we see most often. At the Minors level, as an umpire, I will usually mention it to the coaches but don't call it, especially if it is not giving the pitcher any advantage (she's throwing balls). Typically, the act of leaping at this level is simply due to inexperience and is not giving the pitcher any advantage. At the Majors level, as an umpire I must decide if the leap is giving her an advantage. If she is leaping and throwing strikes, then I would have to give the coach a warning between innings and if it persists, then call the penalty; however, just to be clear, no warning is required, and you may get some grief from the offense if you do give a warning.

THANK YOU

I just want to say that I have been very happy with our umpiring this year. Not only the quality of umpiring, but the willingness to get out there and do it. The quality is good. We're all learning and we're all getting better. We look professional on the field. We call the game by the rules... the correct rules. And we don't make a mockery of the game. In fact, the District 6 Umpire-in-Chief came out and did a brief check-up on us. He told me that we're doing a great job here in Battle Ground. I was pleased with that. Beyond that, the willingness is impressive. I even had more than one person tell me that the more they umpire, the more comfortable they get and it's even getting fun. To my knowledge there have been exactly zero 'no shows' meaning that everyone is fulfilling their duty. So, thank you to all of you who have umpired. It's not as scary and intimidating as it seems. If you haven't already, go out and give it a try!

As always, thank you for reading and...

Contact Us

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PLAY BALL!