



New York State
Softball Officials

Organization, Inc.

Game Management – Changing Calls
By: Jay Miner

Play 1: I was the plate umpire in a two-umpire system on a tournament game played under ASA rules. R1 is on first base with no outs as Speedy B1 bats. R1 breaks with the pitch and B1 hits a ground ball between F4 and second base in the baseline. As F4 backhands the ball, R1 contacts F4 and the ball deflects into center field. The base umpire made no call. R1 advances to third base. Coach Bolts of the defensive team comes to me (the plate umpire) and wants me to call interference on R1. I believed Coach Bolts had a strong argument for an interference call so I declared R1 out. Then Coach Anthrax of the offensive team charged out on the field and asked how I could simply overrule the base umpire's no call. Could I have better managed that situation? **Ruling 1:** Yes. In amateur games a coach will often go to the plate umpire to overrule a base umpire's call. That practice stems from the days when the plate umpire was often the experienced umpire and the base umpire was a neophyte or a pickup umpire. In professional baseball, most managers are conditioned to go out and speak to the umpire who made the call.

In your situation, the proper procedure is to direct the coach to the umpire responsible for making the call. Let the base umpire make the decision whether to ask your opinion on the play. If the base umpire is 100% sure he made the correct call, he or she need not ask for your help. If the base umpire is unsure about his decision an umpire conference should be held.

However, from your description of the play, it is obvious that the base umpire should ask for your help. Since you felt Coach Bolts had a strong argument for interference, you should get the base umpire's attention so you can indicate you'd like to assist your partner.

If you are 100% sure you have meaningful information to offer, have a conference with your partner. In a multiple umpire system when there is a crew conference regarding a play, have the questioning coach return to the dugout or coach's box. That is not always as practical in a two-umpire system but at the very least hold your conference privately and away from earshot of any game participants. If the coach tries to listen, you can direct him to return to the dugout or coach's box while you conference.

Hopefully, your partner will take your information and make the correct call of calling R1 out, and award B1 first base. In the play R1 was not attempting to prevent a double play, so only R1 is declared out. The call still belongs to the original calling umpire so he or she will announce the proper decision. Your partner cannot, under any circumstances allow anyone to criticize you in any way. Too many partners 'throw their partners under the bus,' and stand aside unscathed after you answered your partner's call for help.

Do not permit any further discussion of the play.

Violation or No Call?

Play 2: Fast Pitch. I saw this interesting play at an 18U Girl's Fast Pitch game in Latham, New York a few years ago, and I still don't know if the umpire made the correct call. The call did go in my team's favor. Shannon McLoughlin occupied second base for the Latham Lassies when lefty hitter Kim Brust singled sharply to right. The East Greenbush right fielder's rocket throw to the plate was caught five feet up the third base line by catcher Carrie Zurlow as the fleet McLoughlin streaked home. Seeing she was going to be out, the acrobatic runner leapt completely over Zurlow who was crouched and bracing herself for a tag. McLaughlin cleared Zurlow and the runner's rear foot landed on the far end of home plate. Plate umpire Jim Maybo ruled McLaughlin safe much to the dissent of the visiting team and their fans. Every East Greenbush fan and follower agreed that the surprised Zurlow never tagged McLaughlin but the act of hurdling by the runner had to be illegal. What you say? John Brockley. **Ruling 2:** In ASA and NCAA, McLaughlin's leaping act is legal. In NFHS and USSSA FP, leaping over a fielder is legal only if the fielder is on the ground. Hurdling is illegal if the fielder is standing, stooping or crouched. (ASA R/S #13; NFHS 8-6-10 Note; 12.13.2 Effect; USSSA FP 8.18C Note).