



HEY BLUE



The Heart of Umpiring at the Amateur Level

March 2013

ARE YOU READY FOR 2013?

With the season officially starting, many umpires are getting ready to call “balls and strikes.” When umpiring the game, you must envision yourself as knowing the interpretation of all rules. Rules can be studied, discussed and reviewed, but actual enforcement on the field requires special skills. Let’s get you ready for 2013 with the following quiz. (Answers appear at the end of the column.)

1. A runner is on first when the batter singles to left. As the runner rounds second, he is hit on the head by the throw from the outfield and is knocked unconscious. The batter-runner, the next batter and the coaches ask the umpire to call time, but he refuses. Is this correct?
2. A lefthander is listed as the starting pitcher on the official lineup cards. But, as the game is about to begin, a right-hander goes to the mound and warms up. The opposing team protests that the lefthander must start. Are they right?
3. After beating out a grounder, the batter overruns first base by about 20 feet. He comes to a stop in fair territory, turns in the direction of second base and leisurely returns to first base. Is he liable to be put out?
4. While the batter is ducking away from a high inside pitch, the ball accidentally hits his bat. The result is an easy tap down the first base line. The first baseman fields the ball and tags the bag. The batter, who makes no attempt to reach first base, argues that he’s not out because he didn’t actually swing at the ball. Does he have a legitimate beef?
5. With three men on base, the batter hits a sharp liner to left-center. The ball bounces past the left fielder but hits the glove of the centerfielder and caroms into the bleachers. What is the ruling?
6. With the bases empty and two out in the bottom of the 7th, the #8 batter is due up. His manager feels the batter has little chance to hit safely and, with no more pinch hitters available, decides it would be better to open the 8th with his leadoff man. Therefore, he tells the #8 hitter to stay put and sends out #9, the pitcher, who pops out to end the inning. No appeal is made, the teams change sides and the 8th inning starts. Who is the proper batter when the home team comes to bat again?
7. The leadoff man walks. After ball four, the catcher returns the ball to the pitcher who starts walking around the mound in disgust. Meanwhile the runner reaches first and, walking off the base a few steps, bends to pull up his socks. The pitcher then fires to the first baseman who tags the runner. Is the runner out?

8. A high pop fly comes down near the first base dugout. The first baseman catches the ball, then steps down into the dugout. The runner on second tags up and heads toward third and the first sacker, slightly off balance, fires the ball into left field and the runner continues home. Does the run count?
9. With nobody out and a runner leading off third, a batted ball strikes third base, bounces up and strikes the runner standing in foul territory. What is the ruling?
10. In a prearranged surprise play, the pitcher, from the set position, tosses to the third baseman. Third is unoccupied, but the third sacker quickly fires to second, retiring a runner there. Is there anything wrong?

COMMON MYTHS - DID YOU KNOW...

...There is no such reference in any official rulebook that a left-handed pitcher has some imaginary 45-degree mound line that establishes some kind of "no balk zone" with reference to where, and how he steps when throwing over to 1st base during a pick-off attempt.

...A pitcher who steps onto the mound without possession of the ball should not be balked for doing so unless he stands on or astride the rubber or makes any motion associated with pitching the ball.

...There is no such rule that states a "tie" goes in favor of a runner.

...If a runner fails to retouch his base on a caught fly ball and is subsequently called out on appeal that the out is **NOT** recorded as a "force" out. He is simply called out on appeal for failure to re-tag. Why does this matter? Because if the appeal results in the 3rd out of the inning, then all runners who had legally scored before the appeal was made **are allowed** to score - as opposed to the fact that no run may score if the 3rd out is the result of a "force" out.

...That just because a batter simply "squares around" to bunt a pitched ball and subsequently leaves the bat in that position does not automatically result as an attempted swing.

A LITTLE BIT OF HUMOR:

The manager approached the umpire with the complaint that the opposing pitcher had thrown an illegal pitch.

"It wasn't an illegal pitch," the umpire told him.

"Well," pleaded the manager, "That pitch is at least half illegal."

"I'll buy that," said the ump, "and I'll send your runner halfway to second base."

The manager returned to the dugout without saying another word.

Answers to the Quiz

1. Yes. Despite the injury, the defensive team has the right to tag the runner before time is called. Umpires cannot rule the ball dead until all action on the play has ended. (5.10h)
2. Yes. The pitcher named on the lineup card must pitch until the first batter reaches base or is retired, unless, in the umpire's judgment, the pitcher is incapacitated. Should the change go unnoticed by the umpire or the opposition, the pitcher who took the mound becomes the proper hurler and any action which results while he is pitching is legal. (3.05a-c)
3. No. The runner can turn either way, in fair territory or foul, to return to first base. However, this right to immunity is immediately forfeited upon any act which, in the umpire's judgment, indicates the batter-runner will try for second base. (7.08j)
4. No. Even though the pitcher might have hit the batter, had he not ducked the unintentional hit is a legally batted ball and the batter is out. (6.05j)
5. Any time a bounding fair ball is deflected by a fielder into the stands, the batter and all runners are awarded two bases. The hitter, then, gets a double, the runner on first goes to third and two runs score. (6.09g)
6. When an improper batter makes the final out of an inning, the opposing team must appeal before a pitch is made to its first batter of the following half-inning. If this is not done, the actions of the improper batter are legalized and the leadoff man is the first batter in the next inning. (6.07c, 6.07d-2)
7. Yes. On a base on balls, the batter is entitled to first base without liability to be put out. However, the ball remains in play and the moment he steps off the base he can be put out. (6.08a, 7.08c)
8. Yes. If a fielder steps - rather than falls - into a dugout after making a catch, the ball remains in play. Therefore, the runner scored legally. (5.10f)
9. The ball remains in play. It is a fair ball because it struck the bag and the runner is not out because the batted ball struck him in foul, not fair, territory. (2.00-Fair Ball, 7.08f)
10. Yes. A pitcher is not permitted to throw to an unoccupied base from either the windup or set positions unless there is a play at that base. A balk should be called. (8.05d)