Proper Signals - September 2006

Here are some tips every umpire should know on the proper signals.

Ball: On a pitch that is a ball, stay in your stance and verbalize, “Ball!” There is no signal for a pitch that is a ball. Verbalize a ball so that your voice can be heard in both dugouts.

Strike: As umpire-in-chief, stand up from your stance and step back away from the catcher. Continue watching the ball, normally in the catcher’s possession; bring your right arm up, arm extended and parallel to the ground. Bend the elbow 90-degrees; close your fingers into a fist, thumb tucked along the front of the curled fingers and facing you. Motion your right forearm forward and then back, as if pounding a nail. Declare loudly, “Strike!” as you pound the nail. Then, relax as you prepare for the next pitch. Verbalize a strike so that your voice can be heard in the outfield.

Dead Ball: Extend both arms out in front of your body, slightly higher than your shoulders and slightly wider than shoulder width. Extend your hands out, fingers together and pointed up, palms forward as if trying to stop something with your hands. Declare, “Time!” Remember, in any dead ball situation, the ball must be put back into play before play can begin again.

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Play, or Play Ball: Point with either hand directly at the pitcher. Call forcefully, “Play ball!”

Infield fly: Begin in a set position; when the ball is hit, pause, read and react; step up, turn and face the fielder(s) and the play. When the ball is descending and you are convinced the batted ball is an infield fly, point straight up with your right hand and declare, “Infield fly! The batter is out!” If the batted ball is near foul territory, the verbal call is, “Infield fly! The batter is out, if fair!” If the batted ball is fair but uncaught, signal an out and declare, “He’s out! He’s out! The batter is still out!” If the batted ball becomes an uncaught foul ball, signal and declare a foul ball.

Infield fly possible: On a regional basis, there are a number of signals used by crews to remind partners that the infield fly situation exists. The most popular signal is still an open right hand placed across the chest; or a simple touch of the bill of the cap, using a closed fist to simultaneously indicate no outs or an extended forefinger to indicate one out; a few areas still have umpires pat the top of their heads. Which “infield fly possible”

signal is used is not important; the fact that one is used and recognized is very important. It’s a good idea for the umpires in every crew to know what signal is being used.