

Fairport Little League - Umpire Orientation



Introduction

- Role of the Umpire:
 - Think of it from the perspective of the parents and players - they want fairness, effort, consistency, concentration, knowledge of the rules.
 - Being invisible means you did a good job!
- Scope:
 - Girls Softball 9 through 12
 - Bronco, International, Mustang
- Umpire Uniform:
 - Umpire shirts - will be provided by FLL
 - Pants (dark color preferred)
 - Hat (optional)
 - Cup (required for all)
 - Ball/Strike/Out indicator (clicker)
 - Brush (plate umpires)
 - Rule book
 - Gear in the Equipment Shed:
 - Bubble Protector, Shin guards, Mask

Logistics

- Game Assignments:
 - There is an umpire scheduler.
 - You will be contacted via email for availability (2 week cycles).
 - Games are assigned based on experience.
 - There is a "Bronco plate list" - once you feel ready to be added, let us know and we'll get you in a game with an experienced partner to help teach you (if we feel you are ready).
 - If you can't make a game, find a substitute; do not call the scheduler. Note: YOU are responsible for finding a substitute, not the scheduler!
 - You will get a list of all registered umpires (with phone numbers and email addresses) via email.
 - Phone calls work better than email for finding subs!
 - Let the Umpire scheduler know your conflicts (via email), or if you have siblings in FLL. Note: You cannot umpire a game with a sibling playing in the game!
- Prior to the game:
 - Arrive 15 minutes before scheduled start
 - Meet at grey Equipment shed (by Field #5); plate umpires grab umpire gear.
 - Assignments to games may be realigned if there is a shortage of umpires. All 11-12 yr old games must be fully staffed first, plate & base (Bronco, International, Girl's Major).
 - An extra umpire will be scheduled for every umpire shift; you will be paid \$2 if you do not get a game.

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- If you are the extra umpire and you are there 15 minutes prior to game time and an assigned umpire is not, you get the game and get paid the umpire rate for the game.
- Make sure fields are playable – dry, no lightning

NOTE: If you don't show for a scheduled game and don't call, you may be taken off the scheduled list and not be assigned any more games!

- Start of the game:
 - Check visible equipment in both dugouts:
 - Catcher's equipment is legal (all masks must have danglers)
 - Bats are legal (no oversized bats, composite bats are Little League approved – see Bat Moratorium Policy located at the FLL website under the Hey Coach! tab).
 - No jewelry; unless medically necessary.
 - Meeting with managers - Introduce yourselves, review ground rules:
 - Strike zone (bigger strike zone for Mustang & Girl's Minors).
 - Who covers which bases, ball out of play
 - Stealing rules for each league
 - Get game balls from managers

Umpiring the game (more details on next pages)

- Training:
 - Required for all –
 - April 16th, 1:00-3:00: videos & specific situations
 - April 16th, 3:00-5:00: on-field training @ Lyndon
- You make 3 decisions: out/safe; fair/foul; ball/strike
 - Hustle into position so you can be still while seeing the play, watch the ball and fielder's feet.
 - See the call, make the call
 - BE LOUD WHEN MAKING A CALL, if they can't hear you in the dugout you're not loud enough!
- Handling disagreements with your calls
 - Read the Good Sportsmanship Policy (on our website)
 - Rule interpretations - can be discussed between innings
 - Judgment calls (e.g. balls and strikes) - umpires can't be criticized; don't let managers/coaches dictate your strike zone.
- Disagreements with a partner's call - discuss quietly and privately, avoid over-ruling each other's calls.
- Making mistakes is part of the game - try to get the calls right; if you discover you made a mistake call TIME and talk it over with your partner (before the next play starts).
- League specific rules are in notebook in the Concession stand.
- Rain - confer with managers; issue is injuries due to slipping on field.
- Lightning – stop the game immediately and send people to their cars.
- Darkness - set a time when you plan to stop the game - e.g. at the start of an inning you might say "in 10 minutes we are done". No innings start after 8:30 pm under any circumstances.

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- Key rules to understand:
 - Dead ball - know what it means
 - Infield Fly - know when it applies
 - Stealing rules - different in different leagues
 - No on deck circle
 - No donuts on bats
 - Sliding vs. avoiding contact
 - Rule book - key sections to read are Definitions, Start of Game, Batter, Runner
 - NOTE: There will be other handouts in the package for this portion

After the game

- Vouchers – do before last inning
- Feedback forms

Pay scale

- Sliding pay scale based on league & years of experience.
 - For Mustang & Girls Minors games:
 - 1st and 2nd year - \$12 (plate)/\$8 (base)
 - 3rd and 4th year - \$15 (plate)/\$10 (base)
 - 5 or more years - \$18 (plate)/\$12 (base)
 - For Bronco, International, & Girls Majors games:
 - 1st and 2nd year - \$15 (plate)/\$10 (base)
 - 3rd and 4th year - \$18 (plate)/\$12 (base)
 - 5 or more years - \$21 (plate)/\$14 (base)

Controlling coach and parent behavior

- Read Good Sportsmanship Policy (on web site)
- Umpires deal with Managers
- Managers deal with coaches and parents
- Talk with both umpires and both managers together
- Umpires' role is more to identify problems than to solve them
- If you are uncomfortable with what is happening, stop the game, get help from director on site as needed. Pay attention to how you are feeling - if the game is making you tense, that is a sign that something is wrong and needs to be addressed.
- Don't be intimidated by managers, if a manager is behaving unsportsmanlike take action according to Good Sportsmanship Policy; issue a warning or eject from game.
- Get the Director on Duty if things get out of hand!
- Call Umpire or League Director after game if you had problems.

Personal development

- Learn the rules – read the rulebook (especially sections noted above) and umpire guide. Re-read them frequently to improve your understanding, discuss with your colleagues. Also, there is an umpire section on the Williamsport web site with additional information, difficult situations, etc.

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- Umpire "Tips of the Week" (on FLL website)
- Selection of umpires for playoff games and tournaments determined by experience/knowledge.

Contacts for Umpiring

Umpire Director:

Jim Nashburn
370-5924 (cell)
425-3428 (home)
James.Nashburn@xerox.com

Umpire Scheduler:

Alexander Hoffarth
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Umpire Trainer:

John Mattia
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Good Umpiring - Some Additional Hints

- Perception is Reality – being well dressed will improve others' perception of your performance - players should have shirts tucked in, neat looking uniforms - so should umpires!
- Hustle – players are working hard, you need to also, e.g. plate umpire covering 3rd, base umpire moving to 2nd

Umpire mechanics

- Get into proper position to make the call - run to correct spot, then stop, watch the ball and player's feet.
- Wait until the play is over to make the call.
- Make the call – be decisive, loud enough to be heard.
- Be a professional and show confidence.
- If you make a mistake that is correctable, correct it.
- Remain calm, don't yell, and stay in control.
- Choose your words carefully.
- Be a witness, not a judge – report what you see, let the players decide the game.
- Let noise from the fans bounce off you, unless it gets out of hand.
- Be attentive to the game, but stay detached from the emotions.
- Stay objective; don't influence the outcome of the game, no makeup calls.
- Don't let coaches talk you into calls.
- Be loyal to your partner.
- Connect with your partner between innings (stand off to side of 1st base line).
- Support the decisions of your partner.
- If you are not sure of a play or call, talk with your partner first.
- If you have suggestions, share them quietly, constructively, and privately.
- If partner asks for help, give it.
- Leave the field together.
- Keep the game moving.
- Limit time between innings, warm-up pitches (rule is 8).
- You control the game – if you need to confer with your partner to address something, do it
- Remember, Director on Duty is available to handle really difficult situations.

Have FUN!!!



Umpire Positioning and Making Calls

(This will be covered during training)

Plate Umpire

- Position yourself behind the plate – work the slot (batter's side of plate).
- Put your eyes at the top of the batter's strike zone.
- Stay behind the catcher – don't stand or flinch, stay still, keep your head up - your front is protected.
- Establish a consistent strike zone.
- Make the call after the ball pops in the catcher's glove – decisive & loud
- No makeup calls!
- Call strikes not swung at; use hand signal for missed swings, don't verbalize unless 3rd strike "batter's out".
- Don't "punch out" batters on called 3rd strikes.
- Plate umpire makes all fair/foul calls – call fouls, only signal fair balls – wait until ball is touched if slowly rolling down the line!
- Ask for help on checked swings.
- Keep track of the pitch count and outs; reset for each batter. For 1st time umpires, it's easy to lose track of the pitch count when there is a lot of action going on.
- Validate pitch count with partner if unsure (use a hand signal that you have agreed on to indicate you need the pitch count).
- Verbalize and signal the count about every other pitch.
- Keep the plate clean.
- Try to watch batter's feet – must be in batter's box with both feet.
- Infield fly situations – signal your partner before each batter comes up, call it (loud) if ball is hit that can be caught by an infielder with reasonable effort.
- Runner on 2nd – be ready to hustle to 3rd for a call.
- Balls that curve - watch for pitches where the ball snaps, and where it is not happening on every pitch. Some pitchers throw pitches that drift on every pitch - this may be normal for them. Don't overreact, talk with both managers. If it continues, call balls and yell why - "illegal pitch - ball!". Changeups drop too, but they are legal.

Base Umpire

- Position A if no runners on base, no outs (behind first, slightly foul)
- Move into position to make the call; 90 degree angle from where ball is coming from.
- Position B if runner(s) on base (between 1st and 2nd, behind base line)
- Remember the rule "Ball stays in, I stay out; ball goes out, I go in!"
- If ball is hit into the outfield, cross into the infield before runner rounds first, pivot, face the outfield, follow the runner.
- Concentrate – watch the ball, then the runner's foot; also listen
- Make the call after the play
- Watch for runners leaving the bases early – know the rules

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- Watch runners to make sure they tag each base
- Watch for obstruction by fielders
- Watch for checked swings, help only if asked
- Infield fly situations – signal your partner before each batter comes up
- Keep track of the count and outs