

# HEY BLUE...

Babe Ruth League, Inc.

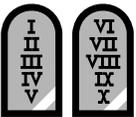


Diamond Digs

Excellence in Umpiring

May 8, 2008

## TEN COMMANDMENTS OF UMPIRING:



- I - A congenial attitude and professional appearance are essential.
- II - Never be confrontational.
- III - Be courteous, but not too friendly.
- IV - Answer questions about judgment plays or rule interpretations in a calm and professional manner.
- V - Never argue with players or parents. Confer with coaches and managers only.
- VI - Don't take abuse from anyone.
- VII - Know all the rules of your game and accept full responsibility for your interpretation of the rules.
- VIII - Don't go looking for trouble...you are going to find it.
- IX - Be patient with lesser experienced players.
- X - Read the rulebook often. Then, read it again and again and again. Visualize a play where each rule would apply as you read them.

## THE SKILL OF MENTAL FOCUS:

Umpiring is an activity that is 25% physical and 75% **mental**. Umpiring is a task that demands you occupy the proper head space in order to attain the best results. Focus is the ability to concentrate on relevant cues and to maintain that attention for the entire game. Relevant cues are often learned through game experience. Distracting cues, such as noises from the fans, must be blocked out. This way, you can attend to the key cues of the game.

Focus must be maintained from the beginning to the end of the game. This means that all external factors, such as interruptions, delays, weather conditions, altercations, length of the game or physical fatigue must be overcome to maintain focus.

Common problems umpires encounter in maintaining focus may include:

- Thinking about past game events, such as a blown call.
- Thinking about the future and what could happen.
- Thinking of too many cues at one time.
- Thinking of problems in your personal life off the diamond.

Needless to say, it is a challenge to maintain focus from the beginning to the end of the game. It is the skill that has the most to do with the development of consistency, that ability that distinguishes the excellent umpire from the good umpire.

## **RULE TIPS:**

- In establishing the validity of a catch, the fielder must hold the ball long enough to prove he has complete control of the ball and that his release of the ball is voluntary and intentional.
- The infield fly is in no sense to be considered an appeal play. The umpire's judgment must govern, and the decision should be made immediately.
- It is common practice for a coach, who has a play at his base, to leave the coach's box to signal the player to slide, advance or return to the base. This may be allowed provided the coach does not interfere with the play in any manner.
- If no play is being made on an obstructed runner, the play shall proceed until no further action is possible. The umpire shall then call time and impose such penalties, if any, which in his judgment will nullify the act of obstruction.
- A base runner who is adjudged to have hindered a fielder who was attempting to make a play on a batted ball shall be declared out whether it was intentional or not.
- If a runner touches an unoccupied base and then thinks the ball was caught or is decoyed into returning to the base he last touched, he may be put out running back to that base. But, if he reaches the previously occupied base safely, he cannot be put out while in contact with that base.
- The lines marking the three-foot lane are a part of that lane. The interpretation of this rule is that the runner is required to have both feet within the three-foot lane or on the lines marking the lane.
- The manager or catcher may request the plate umpire to ask his partner for help on a half-swing when the plate umpire calls the pitch a ball, but not when the pitch is called a strike. The manager may not complain that the umpire made the improper call but only that he did not ask his partner for help.
- The ball is in play on an appeal on a half-swing.
- If a batter or runner continues to advance after he has been put out, he shall not, by that act alone, be considered as hindering or impeding the fielders.

## **KNOWING THE GAME:**

Often, the plays in baseball and softball that confuse an umpire are the ones he or she least expects. They include all sorts of gimmicks the managers employ to get an advantage. The reason they are so difficult to anticipate is the very reason they are done in the first place - to surprise the other team. However, in most instances, the umpire is surprised as well. What hope can an umpire possibly have in situations like these? The answer is found in experience, but not just as an umpire. The best way to deal with these situations is to be a student of the game. This way, an umpire will develop a feel for the various situations that arise when he or she is on the field or behind the plate. Running through them in your head will help develop a course of action before a difficult situation occurs. This means an umpire must have his or her head in the game. Alertness in recognizing situations and knowledge of what could happen in those situations are some of what an umpire must have to avoid looking incompetent. You must understand the game and those who take part in it. In general, the best tool an umpire can have is a thorough understanding of the game, its concepts, its strategy, and most importantly, its rules.

