

# LENAPE VALLEY SOFTBALL UMPIRE MECHANICS MANUAL (2018)

The art of umpiring consists of two (2) parts, *mechanics* and *rules*. *Rules* govern how the game is played. The rules cover all of the participants in the game, with the underlying principal of keeping the competition fair. *Mechanics* are the actions and techniques the umpire uses to effectively enforce the rules.

*Rules* differ significantly between softball and baseball. *Mechanics* apply equally to softball and baseball and differ only based on the size of the field; there are 60-foot diamond (softball/Little League) and 70/90-foot (baseball) mechanics.

This clinic demonstrates rules and mechanics as they apply to the LVGS U13 and U10 divisions only. These are the only leagues for which LVGS assigns in-house umpires (at the U18/U14 "senior" divisions, umpires are assigned by VIGS; at the U6 and U8 divisions, coaches umpire games).

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## D) MECHANICS:

### A) Mechanics Fundamentals:

- 1) Timing: Proper timing is *the most* important concept in umpiring. 90% of umpire mistakes are a direct result of poor timing. Poor timing almost always comes in the "too early" version. WAIT on making calls. Don't make a call too quickly and don't turn away from a play too quickly. If you "know" you missed a pitch or play, then it was probably because of poor timing. If it was because you misjudged the pitch or play, you wouldn't "know" it was wrong (you would think you got it right).
- 2) The Ready Position: The ready position for an umpire is with the feet slightly more than shoulder width apart, knees bent slightly, and hands on the knees. The BU should assume this position at the start of each play, as soon as the pitcher's hands come together. The PU assumes a modified ready position behind the plate (see plate mechanics). IMPORTANT: *Both* umpires must come to a complete stop and assume the ready position every time you *observe* a play before making a call.
- 3) Hustle and Confidence: Hustle is important, because both umpires have a lot of ground to cover. Stay mobile (if you are not moving, you are not umpiring!). One of the best ways to avoid minor arguments, barbs, and chirping by players and coaches is to hustle to a good angle to view the play, and then hustle again right back to your position for the next play.
- 4) Angle before Distance: The most important aspect of seeing the play is being at the proper angle. Distance from the play is secondary (and often irrelevant).
  - a) The proper technique is "bust to your angle" as quickly as possible. As much ground as you can cover before setting up for the play is all you ever need (no matter how far it is). Be careful not to get too close. This can physically involve yourself in the play, can result in the play exploding in your face, and makes it far too easy to get blocked out (when you are too close, the fielder simply turning might be enough for you to lose sight of the ball).
  - b) The proper angle for a play is facing straight at the expected play, at a 90 degree angle to the thrower. Your body should be squarely facing the base (or location where the runner will be tagged), and the thrower should be in line with one of your shoulders. You should be looking over your shoulder to pick up the ball, turn your head to follow the ball, then "lock" your head in place (in the ready position) just before the play occurs.
  - c) For force plays, concentrate your vision on the base while you listen for the ball to hit the glove. It is necessary to also see the ball arrive in your peripheral vision as a backup to listening for the ball (since the girls don't throw the ball as hard, don't stretch as tightly to catch the ball, and there are other similar noises which may occur).
  - d) For tag plays, concentrate your vision on the ball entering the glove and follow the glove to the tag of the runner. For a swipe tag on a runner sliding to the base, use your peripheral vision to see the runner's foot hit the base.
  - e) When going out for trouble fly balls (except those near the foul line), do not move directly towards the fielder. Take an angle slightly away from the fielder, so you have a side angle view (so you are able to see the bounce of a ball if it is trapped or dropped).
  - f) For fly balls near a foul line, the fair/foul call is the priority (trapped balls are secondary). Move as close to the play as practical and straddle the foul line to make this call.
- 5) Eye on the Ball: Keep your eye always on the ball. Nothing in softball happens without the ball. Make the ball your primary concern at all times. Take quick glances at the runners touching bases (when, by reading the play, it is safe to take your eye off the ball) then pick the ball up again right away. When a call is not imminent, you can often back up from the ball to "open the play up",

concentrating on the vicinity of the ball and using your peripheral vision to see runners. The ball is the primary concern; runners touching base are secondary.

- 6) **Basic Signals:** Refer to the chart of standard signals. All umpires need to know the basic signals: Out/Strike, Safe, and Time/Foul.

- B) **Plate Mechanics:** *Plate mechanics* deal with calls the umpires make on the *batter* and *pitcher* (not just balls and strikes). Plate mechanics involve primarily the plate umpire, but there are certain cases when the base umpire assists. Plate mechanics are the same regardless of field size (60-foot or 90 foot) or of the game played (softball or baseball) and regardless of the number of base umpires.
- 1) **PU Positioning:** There are 4 positions used by umpires behind the plate. The *slot* is by far the most common, most frequently taught, and is the most forgiving to use
- a) **Slot (sometimes called "box"):** This is considered the "standard" position. The space between the catcher and batter is called the "slot" (on the left side of the catcher for right-handed batters and on the right side for lefties). Stand square to the pitcher, behind and to the side of the catcher (on the same side as the batter). Stand with feet slightly more than shoulder width apart in a "heel-to-toe" alignment. Your outside toe should line up with the catcher's heels. Your inside toe should line up with your outside heel. This stance is generally the easiest and puts less physical stress on the body. It allows free movement in any direction.
  - b) **Scissors:** Set up in the "slot", with about the same body position (with respect to the catcher) as above for the slot position. Step forward with your outside foot and place your inside foot well behind you, bending knees as necessary to bring you to the desired height. Although it offers more protection, this stance is the most physically stressful and tiring. It can also be difficult to assume consistently.
  - c) **Knee:** Set up in the "slot", with about the same body position (with respect to the catcher) as above for the slot position. Kneel down on one knee, with your outside knee up and in front of you and with your inside knee on the ground. This offers the steadiest platform for calling pitches, but hampers movement. Also, older, larger catchers can obstruct the view of the plate and your unprotected inside thigh can take a beating.
  - d) **Box (the "true" box position):** Stand square to the pitcher, directly behind the catcher. You must stand fairly upright behind the catcher in order to see over the catcher's head (unlike other positions, the bottom of your mask will end up well above the catcher's head). Feet slightly more than shoulder width apart. This position offers the best protection and causes the least physical stress, but results in a view of home plate that is high or can be partially obstructed.
  - e) **Position Between Innings:** Midway along the foul line, on the same side of the field as the team leaving the field. This location minimizes the chance for a confrontation between innings.
- 2) **PU Mechanics:**
- a) **Stance:** *The following are typical, whichever position you use:*
    - i) **Before the Pitch:** Before assuming the stance, stand comfortably upright with your feet placed properly according to the position you are using. Maintain this position until the moment the pitcher starts the delivery. Dropping into your stance too soon can be tiring over the course of the game (and tiring and fatigue lead to inconsistency, save your energy!).
    - ii) **Upon Delivery:** Bend at the knees, not at the waist, as if sitting on a stool. Place your weight slightly forward. Stay relaxed. Keep your hands and arms loose, so they can "give" if hit by a ball. The bottom of your mask should be approximately even with the top of the catcher's head (except that with small catchers, it is important that your head never be below the top of the strike zone; never look up at a pitch). Keep your head facing nearly square to the pitcher, but turned slightly to the 2nd baseman's position for right-handed batters or the shortstop position for lefties (make sure your eyes can follow the ball all the way from the pitcher's

- hand to the catcher's glove without your nose getting in the way; for the *box* position, face your head squarely at the pitcher). Do not turn your head too far, this leaves the back of your head unprotected. You may need to adjust your stance and position slightly to suit the catcher's position. If the catcher sets up too far away or inconsistently, you need to be careful to maintain consistency in your position.
- b) Keep your head STILL:
- i) Follow the pitch with your eyes only (not your head).
  - ii) Follow the pitch *all the way* from pitcher's hand to catcher's glove. Avoid *tunnel vision*: never concentrate on the strike zone while waiting for the ball to pass through. Avoid *zoning* the pitch: don't give up on the ball once it passes through the strike zone.
  - iii) Consistency: Set up the same way every time for every pitch. Be careful when you need to adjust to suit the catcher's position. If the catcher sets up too far away or inconsistently, *move* the catcher to a proper position (consistency in umpiring is far more critical than catching, do what you need to do).
  - iv) CONCENTRATE on the pitch the whole way from the pitcher's hand to catcher's glove. Any distractions can cause you to miss a pitch.
  - v) Wear the proper protective equipment. Wearing protective equipment takes the fear of being hit by the ball out of the picture. When you wear the proper equipment, you can just stand there like a statue and take the hit. Flinching and moving out of the way of the ball means your head will be moving and directly results in an inconsistent strike zone. The importance of protective equipment cannot be overstated.
- c) Timing: Remember *the most* important concept in umpiring? 90% of mistakes come from poor timing (and poor PU timing is always "too early"):
- i) Wait at least 1 second before signaling your call.
  - ii) There are several methods used to get good timing. Use the one which works best for you:
    - > Use your "after vision" to make the call.
    - > "Instant Replay" the pitch in your mind.
    - > "Trace" the path of the ball in your mind (like drawing the path on a chalkboard or like the path of a tracer bullet).
  - iii) Always say "ball" on all ball calls (even if only loud enough for the batter and catcher to hear). This is critical in developing timing.
  - iv) Some umpires find it helpful to verbally call "strike" while in the down position, then getting up and signaling strike (instead of the conventional way of calling and signaling simultaneously on the way up).
  - v) Be mindful of your timing at all times. There is tendency to speed-up your timing over the course of a game, consciously try to avoid this.
  - vi) At all costs, avoid calling obvious pitches faster than close calls. This destroys proper timing, and tips coaches off to calls you may not be sure of.
- d) Comments:
- i) On pop-ups, wild pitches, and passed balls clear the catcher; key on the catcher's shoulders and "open the gate".
  - ii) The PU must be very methodical in calling "time" and "play". It is critical that this be done clearly and "like clockwork" every time the ball becomes dead and live.
  - iii) Say "strike 3" only (not "your out", it can be embarrassing and they already know they are out; batter may not even be out [dropped 3rd strike]).
  - iv) Say "ball 4" only (not "take your base", and don't wave or point to 1st base [this could be misinterpreted as a strike call or a check-swing appeal])

### 3) BU Calls on the Batter:

- a) The BU sometimes has a better view on certain situations than the PU (tipped ball striking the ground and ball touching the batter still in the box), do not hesitate to make these calls immediately when they come up.
- b) The BU should always watch the batter and be prepared in the event of an appeal from the PU on a checked swing. The procedure for a check-swing appeal is as follows: A check-swing can only be appealed if the PU has called a "ball" (a "strike" call can never be appealed). The coach or catcher then asks the PU to appeal the call to the BU (the coach or players are *not* permitted to ask the BU for an appeal, any appeal *must* come through the PU). The PU then has the *option* of asking the BU for help, or may deny the request. If the PU does ask for help, the BU should rule on the pitch according to what he saw, signaling "safe" (for a ball, saying "No, He didn't go!") or signaling "out" (for a strike, "Yes, he went!"). In the event of uncertainty by the BU, a "ball" should be called.
- c) Both the PU and BU may call illegal pitches.

C) **2-Umpire Base Mechanics:** *Base mechanics* deal with calls the umpire makes on base runners. Base mechanics involve both the plate and base umpires. The following simplified base mechanics apply to the introductory level for the 2-umpire system on a 60-foot diamond. *Advanced level mechanics and mechanics for the 90-foot diamond do not apply to LVGS games and are not covered in this clinic.* **The use of two (2) umpires is strongly recommended, even if it means recruiting a base umpire from the stands on-the-spot. Even working with an inexperienced first-time base umpire is better than working 1-umpire mechanics.**

1) PU Positioning:

- a) Ball in the Infield: If there is a play at the plate, stay home (on the 1st base line extended). If there is no play at the plate, clear the catcher and follow the runner straddling the 1st base line.
- b) Ball in the Outfield: To left or center field, move into the infield in the direction of the ball. To right field, back up to "open up" your view of the play. Glance at the runner at 3rd (tag-ups and touches). If there will be a play at the plate, hustle back home (after calling fly ball).
- c) Pop-Up at Home: Key on the catcher's shoulders and "open the gate". For a possible fair/foul call, straddle the line. If near the backstop, back up to open up the play. Follow the fielder to the ball, then pick up the ball and watch the play (do not try to look for the ball in the sky).
- d) 1st-to-3rd Play: If there is not a play at home, move towards 3rd base. If there is also a play at home, say "Staying home, Mike!" which signals that the BU is now responsible for 3rd base. Where there are possible plays at 3rd and home, watch to see which play develops before committing one way or the other.

2) BU Positioning Angles and Movement:

- a) The "In-You're-Out, Our-You're-In" Principal: On all balls fielded in the *infield*, the BU stays out and makes calls from the *outside* the diamond. When a batted ball goes to the *outfield*, the BU comes in and makes calls from *inside* the diamond.
- b) The A Position (optional) and the pivot at 1st base: With no runners on base, the BU has the option of standing *completely* in foul territory 10 to 12 feet behind the first baseman.
  - i) For balls in the infield, simply rotate into fair territory to get your angle.
  - ii) For balls in the outfield, "pivot" to get inside the diamond. Moving in a semi-circle, rotate all the way into the inside of the diamond. Once at this point, pivot by turning your body counter-clockwise as you watch the batter-runner touch 1st base. If the runner continues toward 2nd (or 3rd) base, follow the runner by running parallel to the runner inside the diamond.
- c) The B Position: With a runner on 1st base only (R1), with runners at the corners (R1+R3), or with no runners (if not using the optional A position), the BU stands near the rim of the outfield grass slightly behind and 1 or 2 steps closer to 2nd base than the *second baseman*.

- d) The C Position: With a runner on 2nd base (R1+R2, R2+R3, bases loaded), the BU stands near the rim of the outfield grass slightly behind and 1 or 2 steps closer to 2nd base than the *shortstop*.
- e) Position Between Innings: Between 1st and 2nd base, on the edge of the outfield grass. This avoids confrontation, and prevents the BU from being hit by a warm-up throw. NOTE: The BU is normally responsible for counting warm-up pitches between innings (the PU may be busy with substitutions or other matters).

3) Plate Umpire (PU) Coverage

- a) Catch/no-catch: PU makes all calls on fly balls: Make calls loudly and clearly for the benefit of the BU and runners. On trouble balls go as far out as possible (whenever 2 or more fielders are converging, for a likely running, sliding, diving catch, fly balls close to a foul line or dead-ball area, potential ground rule doubles, if running fielders turn their backs to the infield, etc.).
- b) Fair and Foul: PU makes all fair/foul calls.
- c) Running lane violations: PU watches the batter-runner for interfering by stepping out of the 3 foot lane the last half distance to 1st base. With no runners on base, follow the runner up the 1st base line. Otherwise, watch from near home plate.
- d) Calls on Runners, 1st to 3rd Responsibility: PU is responsible for "1st-to-3rd" coverage (calls at 3rd base on a runner who started the play on 1st base). An exception for "1st-to-3rd" coverage is if he PU has to make a call on fly balls to right field or balls down the right field foul line; in this case, the PU should call out, "I'm on the line, Bill!" to let the BU know that the BU needs to take any calls at 3rd base).

4) Base Umpire (BU) Coverage

- a) Stolen Bases: BU is responsible for all stolen bases (except home plate) and all pick-off attempts. For calls at 1st and 3rd base, head for the midpoint of the foul line between the base and home plate. For calls at 2nd base, simply let the ball turn you to the play.
- b) Double Plays: For double plays at 1st, 2nd, and/or 3rd, the BU is responsible for calling both ends of the play (i.e. both outs). The BU should be "set" to call the first out and should stay set until the pivot girl actually throws the ball (to make sure the base was tagged and that the ball is not dropped). As the throw is made, start moving towards first base (make the out (or safe) call and signal *while moving*). The BU must be set again just before the ball arrives at 1st base to watch the play conclude (Hint: After watching the play end, start moving towards 1st base again and make the second out (or safe) call on the move).
- c) Runners Leaving Early: The BU is responsible for runners leaving early at all bases. If a runner leaves contact with the base before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand, call "time" immediately (the ball is dead, there is "no pitch", no runners may advance) and call the runner out. In the event of uncertainty, give the runner the benefit of the doubt (remember, watching the ball (and illegal pitches, check-swings, etc.) comes first and runners leaving early is the lowest priority). The B- and C-positions (see above) allow the BU to watch runners with peripheral vision.

5) Shared Coverage

	<u>Plate Umpire</u>	<u>Base Umpire</u>
a) <u>Tag-ups (retouches):</u>	3rd base	1st and 2nd bases
b) <u>Runners touching base:</u>	3rd base and home plate	1st and 2nd bases
c) <u>Calls on Runners:</u>	Home plate	1st, 2nd, and 3rd bases (except when PU has 1st to 3rd responsibility)
d) <u>Run-Downs:</u>	Between 3rd and home	Between 1st & 2nd and between 2nd & 3rd
e) <u>Calling Time and Play:</u>	Time and play	Time only

Note: Both the PU and BU may call "time" to stop the game. However, only the PU can resume the game by calling "play".

D) **1-Umpire Base Mechanics (NOT RECOMMENDED):** *These 1-umpire mechanics are intended to be used as a last resort.* These mechanics are greatly simplified and do not come close to providing sufficient coverage of plays which will occur. The umpire working alone will be at an undesirable position for the majority of plays, cannot properly cover the field, and *will* miss numerous calls during the course of the game. During the pre-game conference, it is important to point out to the coaches that you are working alone (and apologize for the inevitable missed calls ahead of time!). Coaches generally understand when you explain how it will be impossible to get the proper angles and to see things which happen away from the ball, and that you have no one to ask for a second opinion. Just tell them you will do your best and they need to live with whatever you call. **Working a game alone is strongly discouraged.** **Always try to use a base umpire, even if it means recruiting one from the stands on-the-spot. Even working with an inexperienced first-time base umpire is better than working 1-umpire mechanics.** 1-umpire mechanics start the umpire at such a disadvantage that mistakes and missed calls are inevitable. These inevitable mistakes (no matter how well explained to coaches beforehand and how much the umpire hustles) reflect poorly on both the umpire individually and the league's entire pool of umpires in general.

- 1) Concepts: Many of the concepts reviewed above for 2-umpire mechanics apply to a single umpire. Study and thoroughly understand the 2-umpire mechanics above before reading about 1-umpire mechanics below and before working alone. *Inexperienced umpires not already familiar with basic 2-umpire mechanics should never attempt to work alone.*
- 2) Positioning:
  - a) The Basic Working Position: The basic working position for a single umpire is inside the diamond just in front of the pitching circle. This position gives a fair angle to the bases. Clear the batter and catcher by rotating around the 3rd base side of home plate and try to move as far as you can into position.
  - b) Extra Base Hit with No Runners on Base: Use the basic working position above. Once the ball falls in for a hit and it becomes apparent that the batter-runner will advance beyond 1st base, it is possible to "lead" the runner around the bases (always stay ahead of the runner). Stay close to the outside of the pitching circle. In this case, there is only 1 offensive player you need to worry about, so you can afford to move around more.
  - c) Runner on 3rd: Any time there is a possible play at the plate, stay home (never cross the foul lines, stay behind home plate within the "triangle" formed by the 1st and 3rd base lines extended). Make calls at all bases from this position. The runner trying to score is most important, and if you cross a foul line to move inside the diamond, you could collide with the runner from 3rd or could end up with your back to the ball (not only won't you be able to see the ball, but you are risk of being hit by it).
  - d) Steals and Pick-Offs: These plays happen so fast that there is not much you can do. Simply clear the batter and catcher for a clear view. Forget about angles.
- 3) Coverage: Quite simply, in a 1-umpire system, the umpire is responsible for everything. Of course, it is impossible and unrealistic to do this. In a 1-umpire system do not worry about responsibilities and coverage, but concern yourself with *priorities*.
  - a) Ball/Strike: Calls on the pitch and batter take the highest priority. Never leave your position behind home plate until *after* you have completed your plate mechanic responsibilities (even if this means completely missing a call on a stolen base).
  - b) Fair/Foul: This is the next priority. On any balls hit near a foul line, you need to stay on the line until *after* you have ruled fair/foul (even if it means a bad angle for a call at 1st base because you stayed on the 3rd base foul line).
  - c) Catch/no-catch: For balls near a foul line, this is part of the fair/foul call. For clear fair balls, this takes precedence over any calls on runners.

- d) Safe/Out: Do the best you can with calls on runners. The closer a runner is to home plate, the more important they are (except that with 2 outs, your top priority is the batter-runner reaching 1st base, since a force out means no runs score).
- e) Appeals and runners: When it comes to runners missing bases, staying in the running lane to 1st base, and anything that happens away from the ball do not even worry about trying to make a call. If you see it, call it, but otherwise this is the lowest priority. Always watch the ball!

## E) Game Management:

- 1) Meeting Before the Game (umpire-to-umpire): Preferably meet your partner before entering the field (but if needed, after the meeting at the plate, while pitcher is warming) to discuss the following:
  - a) Introductions, names (write them down if you have to)
  - b) Discuss coverage: fair/foul, tag-ups/touches, fly balls, 1st-to-3rd, etc.
  - c) Dropped 3rd strike, ball hitting batter in the box
  - d) Check-swing appeal
  - e) Signals and communication
  
- 2) Meeting at Home Plate (umpires and coaches):
  - a) Inspect equipment in both dugouts prior to the meeting.
  - b) Meet at home plate 5 minutes before the game start time. Clear the field of both teams (who should be in their dugouts). Only the 2 umpires and 2 coaches should be on the field, all at home plate (players who are team "captains" [1 or maximum 2 per team] are also allowed [and encouraged!] to accompany the coaches). Do not allow other players or assistant coaches to leave the dugout until the meeting concludes.
  - c) Introductions, names (write them down if you have to, on line-ups).
  - d) Exchange and confirm line-ups (if not formally exchanged, ensure that each team's scorekeepers have exchanged batting orders; the home team's book is official unless rules provide otherwise).
  - e) Discuss ground rules and delineate dead-ball areas.
  - f) Discuss expectations for coach/player conduct and sportsmanship.
  
- 3) Communications
  - a) Infield Fly Rule: There are 2 signals for infield fly, when in effect and when implemented.
    - i) Whenever there are less than 2 outs and runners on 1st and 2nd bases (or bases loaded), the infield fly rule is in effect (Hint: There must be a force at 3rd base). Before the play (as the batter comes to the plate) both umpires should signal each other that the infield fly rule is in effect (return each other's signal). Coordinate the signal you will use with your partner during the pre-game meeting.
    - ii) Both umpires use the infield fly signal (refer to the chart of standard signals) when an infield fly is hit. If you partner calls "infield fly" you must also repeat the call.
  - b) Appeals: During the pre-game meeting, work out signals so when an appeal occurs, you can signal who is going to make the call before either of you make a call.
  - c) Don't use secret signals. Other than the above, all communication should be clear and verbal. Remember, this is for the benefit of the umpires (its OK if players and coaches hear).
  - d) Use your partner's and the coaches' first names. Write it on the batting order if you have to. Work together, cooperate, and help each other. During a game the umpires form their own team (no one else is on your side).
  
- 4) Interpretation and Correcting Errors: Getting the call right is more important than umpire pride.
  - a) When Calls Can be Reversed: Calls can *only* be reversed under the following cases:
    - i) Rule misinterpretation
    - ii) Check-swing appeals (but only on a "ball" call, strikes cannot be appealed)

- iii) Umpire blocked out (on a swipe tag, foot pulled off the base, dropped ball, etc.)
  - iv) Umpires make opposite calls on the same play.
  - b) How to Correct Errors:
    - i) By rule: no umpire can reverse, set aside, question, or criticize another umpire's decision *unless* asked to do so by the umpire who made the original call.
    - ii) The *only* exception to the above is if a partner is certain they have critical information unknown to the umpire making the call that, if known, would affect the call. Do not withhold crucial call-changing information on a play which was clearly missed. In this case the mechanic is to notify you partner of the *critical missed information only*. Do not make or change the call yourself, because the ultimate decision whether or not to change the call rest with *the umpire who made the call*.
    - iii) When discussing corrections with your partner, do it away from all coaches and players.
    - iv) See "Arguments" below for the proper procedure for reversing (or not reversing) a call.
  - c) Asking for Help (missed plays or information, blocked out, different calls, confusing plays): If you believe that you may benefit from additional information you partner may have, act as quickly as possible, preferably before you even make a call. Ask *specifically* for the information you are missing only ("Tom, did she make the tag?"). Do not wait until after a coach argues.
  - d) When *Not* to Ask for Help: Never ask for help on *judgment* calls (whether or not a ball beat the runner, whether the ball fell foul or fair, etc.), even if you are unsure. If unsure, just make a call and stick with it (remember, judgment calls, by rule, cannot be argued).
  - e) Protests: Protests are to be avoided at *all* costs.
    - i) If after an argument, the coach still feels that the umpires have made an illegal call (a ruling contrary to the rules) or have misinterpreted a rule, the proper course of action is to play the game under protest. A game can *never* be protested over a judgment call.
    - ii) A coach *must* announce the intent to protest (and the exact detailed reason for protest) to the umpire before the next pitch, play, or attempted play (see rules for exceptions for illegal/ineligible players), before all infielders leave fair territory (on half-inning-ending plays), or before the umpires leave the field (on game-ending plays). If not protested in time, the protest is not valid and will not be considered.
    - iii) Once a coach expresses intent to protest a game, *immediately* get together with your partner and do *everything* you can to come to a proper decision on the call (see the argument procedure below). It is far better to delay the game to check the rules than to protest a game.
    - iv) If, after making the proper decision, a coach still disagrees, the coach may protest the game.
    - v) "Publicly" announce to both teams that the game is being played under protest. Get together with the scorer(s). All parties (umpires and both teams) must note the *exact* game situation at the moment of protest (inning, score, outs, runners on base, batter, batter's count, current lineups, first defensive player up next, and the exact detailed circumstances of the protest).
    - vi) Continue the game to its conclusion.
    - vii) If the protesting team wins the game, the coach shall withdraw the protest at that time.
    - viii) If the protesting team loses the game (or the game is tied), the plate umpire shall forward all information noted above in writing to the league within 24 hours.
    - ix) The league may consider the protest. If the league *denies* the protest, the game results stand.
    - x) If the league *upholds* the protest, the game must be re-played from the exact point of protest. Games can never be forfeited or awarded to a team as a result of protest of rule interpretation (except that a protest upheld due to an ineligible player is an automatic forfeit).
- 5) Arguments: Arguing is legal, *provided* it is done according to the rules.
- a) All arguments must be handled through the head coaches only. Avoid arguing with base coaches. NEVER argue with players. Do not allow players to argue. If a player or base coach argues, simply walk away. This normally stops the arguing. If a player persists in arguing, call the head coach out (the coach will probably already be on the way out) and deal with the coach.

- b) NEVER address, let alone argue with, spectators. Should you need to deal with any spectator or their actions, address your concerns to the coach. The coach can then deal with spectators.
  - c) NEVER start an argument and never argue back at a coach. Stay cool and retain your composure. LISTEN to the coach (let them have their say) and then, once they are done, calmly reply. NEVER act in a way for which you would eject a coach for acting the same towards you.
  - d) As soon as a coach starts walking away, let the coach walk away. Don't insist on the last word.
  - e) Be mindful that many (most) questions from a coach are actually veiled arguments/complaints.
  - f) Finally, don't go looking for trouble (it will have no problem finding you!).
  - g) Procedure: When a call is reversed (or when a requested reversal is denied) the affected coach is entitled to an explanation:
    - i) Only deal with 1 coach at a time (even if a situation requires you to deal with both coaches).
    - ii) After listening to the coach asking for a decision, speak privately with your partner and come to a decision together. If you need to, consult the rule book (avoid protests at all costs).
    - iii) If the decision is *not* to reverse the call, go to the coach who raised the question to privately inform that the request is denied. Do not go into detail on why the request is denied (giving details opens an avenue for another argument). There is no need to "publicly" announce the decision (because the original call stands, there is no new call to be made).
    - iv) If the decision is to *reverse* the call, go to the coach of the *opposing* team (not the coach who raised the question) to privately inform that the call will be reversed. In this case, a full explanation is in order (but do not allow an argument once the ultimate correct call has been determined). The umpire *who made the original call* should "publicly" announce the new reversed call out loud to everyone. There is no need to explain anything to the coach who originally questioned the call.
- 6) Ejection (and restricting to the dugout):
- a) Coaches, players, and spectators may be ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct, for willfully and persistently violating the rules, and for certain specific rules violations.
  - b) Obviously, ejection is a last resort. Be firm, but fair. Tactfulness and professionalism can get you out of most situations. However, there are times when someone "just has to go".  
REMEMBER: Umpires are a necessary and mandatory part of each softball game, and without an umpire there is no game. Coaches are *not* mandatory, and there are always parents in the stands who can take over coaching responsibilities if needed. If things ever get so bad that you are questioning yourself and are ready to "just walk away", remember that you *cannot* leave the game (by rule), and it is time for the *coach* to leave (EJECT THE COACH)!
  - c) Other than personal attacks against an umpire, profanity, and physical altercations (these are automatic ejections, no questions asked), avoid ejecting someone without first giving some kind of warning. One warning is all that is needed, avoid repeated warnings. Never say, "Not one more word or your gone!" (one more word might be "OK" as he returns to the dugout).
  - d) Ejection Mechanics: Once an ejection is issued, the umpire who issued the ejection should have no further dealings with the ejected individual. The other umpire on the field becomes responsible and must step up to get the ejected individual off the field and away from the playing area. The umpire who ejected the individual should only address the coach (or acting coach) of the ejected individual (an explanation of the ejection is always in order).
  - e) Reporting: All ejections *must* be reported to the league in writing (e-mail is acceptable). All ejections are reviewed by the league (who may or may not decide to assess additional penalties). Identify the name of the person ejected, date, location, both teams, and a detailed account of the reasons for ejection.
  - f) Restricting to the Dugout: For minor infractions, the umpire has the *option (at the umpire's sole discretion)* of restricting coaches to the dugout (pinning them to the bench).
    - i) Restriction to the dugout is not required to be reported to the league, so this penalty should never be used for any infraction where additional league-assessed penalties might be in order.

- This restriction serves as a warning, so any coach already restricted to the bench is ejected for further misconduct. A coach restricted to the bench may continue to coach, but may not leave the dugout for any reason for the remainder of the game (*EXCEPTION: To attend to an injured player, ONLY if an umpire grants permission and asks a coach to leave the dugout.*). A restricted coach may participate in a charged conference with player(s), but the conference must occur at the dugout (coach cannot leave the dugout).
- ii) Players may also be subject to restriction to the bench, although once a player is restricted to the bench they are removed from participating for the remainder of the game. *Therefore, at LVGS U10 and U13 levels, this penalty is not to be used for players, if a player's actions are such to warrant their removal from the game, it must be reported to the league and handled as an ejection.* Of course, restriction to the dugout is not applicable to spectators (who don't belong in the dugout in the first place).

7) Preparation:

- a) Read the rule book: Often!! Don't just read what a rule says, think about what it means, how you are going to implement it, and why it was put in the rule book in the first place. This leads to an understanding of the rules and is more valuable than the ability to recite specific rules. Common sense of the concept of fair play points you in the right direction with most rules.
- b) Arrive Early and Ready: Arriving at least 30 minutes before game time is preferred.
- c) Look the Part: People have more respect umpires who "look" neat and professional. This does not mean you need a true umpire's uniform, a pullover shirt (preferable blue or black) and pair of khakis (preferable gray or blue) goes a long way.
- d) Stretch before the game: Umpiring can be physically demanding.
- e) Education: The best umpires are always learning. There are plenty of educational resources for umpires on the internet. Clinics and training are also available via membership in local umpire associations/chapters (PIAA, ASA, etc.). Critique from fellow umpires (especially your partner) is a valuable resource. Make sure you ask for critique before a game (most umpires will not volunteer criticism on their own, let your partner know you want to hear it to improve yourself).

8) Protective Equipment

- a) One of the most important pieces of equipment is a *water bottle*. Drink plenty of fluids between innings. Even mild dehydration adversely affects operation of the brain.
- b) As an absolute minimum, wear a *mask*, *leg guards*, and *outside type (balloon/raft) chest protector*. These are available from the league, stored in the storage box at each field. A properly fitting mask is just loose enough so when you lean over with your head facing straight to the ground, the bottom of the mask should hang 1/2" to 1" free of your chin. Unless your stance allows the chest protector to fully protect you, male umpires also need a *protective cup*.
- c) At least the PU must use an *indicator* (clicker) to keep count of balls, strikes, and outs. The BU should also use an indicator, as a check-and-balance to the PU. Indicator(s) are available, stored in the storage box at each field.
- d) Umpires also have the option of using inside style chest protector (allows much easier movement and keeps hands free), plate shoes, ball bag, plate brush, sunglasses, sunscreen, pencil and any other protective and working equipment they may desire. The league does not provide this equipment. Male umpires using inside style chest protectors also need to wear a protective cup.
- e) Using the proper protective equipment is imperative and is one of the biggest (and easiest) steps towards calling pitches consistently.
- f) Part of looking the part is wearing a hat when umpiring. Never wear your hat backwards. The bill of most baseball hats will fit under most masks. Using "plate" (1" to 1.5" bill) and "combo" (2" bill) hats made specifically for umpires ensures that your mask can be easily removed without displacing the hat (standard baseball hats with longer bills tend to stick in the mask). A hat is not normally worn with hockey style masks.

- g) Have a copy of the rules (ASA and LVGS) available, at least in your vehicle or equipment bag (it is considered unprofessional to actually carry the rules on your person during a game).
- 9) Miscellaneous:
- a) Don't anticipate the play or take anything for granted. It is far better to wait and allow the ball to take you to the play (at what might be an inferior angle) than to hurry to get to a great angle for the play at 3rd base ... only to have the throw go to 1st!
  - b) *Never* give "time" to the defense, until the pitcher has the ball (don't give them a "free throw" back to the pitcher). Don't give time to runners until all other activity stops (wait until all other runners have reached base and stopped; this includes waiting until the batter-runner reaches 1st base after a walk). However, calling time for you or your partner to get back in position is another story, use your judgment.
  - c) Thing outs, think strikes, think fair-ball! These things get the game over (and the umpire out of the line of fire!) sooner. But don't make up outs for this purpose.
  - d) Remember, regardless of what you think is going through coaches heads during the game, you are always going to be your own worst critic. Do not get hung up on it. Let the little things and little mistakes just slide. You will be the first to know when you make a wrong call, and you will know every time you make a mistake (remember what we said about timing !!...). Most of the little mistakes coaches see they will forget about by the end of the game. And most of the mistakes you know about, the coaches won't even know or see.

## II) RULES

- A) ASA Rules: Rule numbers in this section are from the ASA Rule Book. Following is not a complete listing of the rules (read the rule book!), but a summary rules commonly misinterpreted.
- 1) LVGS adheres to the latest edition (year) of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Rules for Women's Junior Olympic (JO, i.e. "girls") Fast Pitch Softball, modified and supplemented by LVGS-specific rules for the U13 (referred to as "U12" [ages 12-and-under] in the ASA rules, applies to LVGS "U13") and U10 (referred to as "U10" [ages 10-and-under] in the ASA rules) leagues.
  - 2) Definitions (Rule 1): Reading the definitions gives a good summary of the rules. This is the best place to start when reading the rules.
  - 3) Dead Ball: See the Dead ball Table
    - a) Immediate Dead Ball: By rule, the ball is dead as soon as the infraction occurs. No further play can take place after the ball becomes dead. No runners may advance or be put out when the ball is (except base awards or penalties imposed by the umpire based on what happened before the ball became dead).
    - b) Delayed Dead Ball: In these cases, the umpire allows play to continue until no further action is possible. The umpire then calls time and enforces penalties or awards. For delayed dead balls, play must be allowed to continue because the coach may have the choice between taking the penalty vs. the result of the play; or the natural advance of runners may nullify the infraction.
    - c) By definition, an "overthrow" is a thrown ball which goes out of play (into a dead ball area). If a ball is thrown past a fielder but remains in play, it is not an overthrow (ball is live).
  - 4) Foul Tip vs. Foul Ball (Rule 1 [definitions]): A *foul tip* is a ball that goes directly from the bat to the catcher's hands or glove and is subsequently caught by the catcher (a foul tip *must* be caught, otherwise it is a *foul ball*). If the ball touches anything else (other than hands/glove) first, it is an ordinary foul ball. If the ball touches the ground, it is an ordinary foul ball. A foul tip is a strike (the batter can strike out on a foul tip) and the ball is live and in play (runners can steal on a foul tip).

- 5) Interference and Obstruction:
  - a) Interference (various parts of Rules 7 and 8): Interference is an act by the offense or spectators which hinders the defense in making a play. The ball is immediately dead on any interference.
  - b) Umpire Interference (Rule 8-1-E and 8-7-F): Umpire interference occurs when a batted ball strikes an umpire in the infield before touching a fielder or passing an infielder other than the pitcher (if the BU is in A, B, or C positions, this should never happen). Umpires interference also occurs when the PU hinders a throw by the catcher. Any other physical involvement of umpires in the play is nothing (incidental contact, the ball remains in play).
  - c) Obstruction (Rules 8-1-D and 8-5-B): Obstruction is an act by the defense which hinders a runner or the batter. Any obstruction is a *delayed* dead ball.
  
- 6) Infield Fly (Rule 1 [definition]) and Intentionally Dropped Fly (Rule 8-2-J):
  - a) See LVGS Rule 5.3 for summary of infield fly rule.
  - b) If a fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball with a runner on 1st base (including when runners are also on any other base) the ball is immediately dead and the batter is out. This does not apply to a trapped ball, to a ball intentionally allowed to fall untouched to the ground, or to an infield fly.
  
- 7) Equipment (Rule 3): See rule for details.
  - a) Bats (must have an ASA certification mark)
  - b) Batting and Catcher's Helmets (with face masks, check for damage and missing screws)
  - c) Gloves
  - d) Jewelry (not allowed, except medical alert [tape where visible] or religious [tape so not visible])
  
- 8) Batting Order, Line-Up, and Batting Out of Order (Rules 4 and 7-2):
  - a) LVGS uses a continuous batting order. Everyone who shows up at a game bats in order. This greatly simplifies the umpire's job because we don't need to worry about managing 9-player line-ups, substitution, re-entry, DP/EP/FLEX players, and some of the most complex ASA rules related to these things. Add late players at the end of the order. Skip missing players, an automatic out if playing with less than 9 players.
  - b) Batting out of order. The important thing is that when an improper batter completes an at-bat in place of the proper batter, the *proper* batter is out. The batting order resumes from the next name after the *proper* batter in the batting order. Only the 2 teams can "discover" batting out of order. The official scorer and umpires are not to bring attention to an improper batter in the batter's box:
    - i) If discovered *before* the time at bat is completed: No penalty. The proper batter replaces the improper batter and continues with the same ball and strike count.
    - ii) If discovered *after* the time at bat is completed and before the next pitch or play: The proper batter is called out. All advance by runners is nullified (send all runners back to where they were at the time of pitch). Any other outs on the play stand. Please note that there may be circumstances when the defense intentionally does not appeal a batter batting out of order.
    - iii) If discovered *after* the time at bat is completed and after the next pitch or play: No penalty. The defense has lost their opportunity to appeal. The improper batter is "legalized" and becomes the proper batter.
    - iv) A "time at bat" is "completed" when the batter is called out or reaches base for any reason.
  
- 9) Scoring Runs (Rule 5-5): If the 3rd out is a force play or the batter is the 3rd out before reaching 1st base, no runs score on the play. No run can score if a preceding runner is called out (on appeal) for 3rd out. Otherwise, no runner can score after the 3rd out is made (time play).

- 10) Illegal Pitch (Rule 6, Fast Pitch): The penalty for an illegal pitch is a ball to the batter and all base runners are awarded 1 base. With no runners, the penalty is a ball to the batter. If the batter and all runners advance at least 1 base on the play, the illegal pitch is ignored. There are no "balks" in softball.
- 11) Batter's Box (Rules 7-3 and 7-6 and Point of Emphasis #7):
- Staying in the box: Do not allow the pitcher to pitch until the batter has both feet completely within or touching (but not over) the lines of the box.
  - Hitting outside the box: If the batter hits the ball (fair or foul) with one (or both) foot on the ground completely outside the lines of the box or touching home plate, she is out. If the batter leaves the box during the pitch (one foot entirely on the ground outside of the box) then re-enters the box and hits the ball, she is out. A foot touching the line is legal. A foot completely in the air (over the box or not) is legal. If the ball and bat do not make contact, there is no penalty.
  - Batted ball striking runner in the box: If a batted ball strikes the batter (or the bat) in foul territory or when any part of her body is in or over the batters box, it is a foul ball. Give the batter the benefit of the doubt.
  - The batter's box and interference: When to leave the box: The box is not a safe haven. If the batter has a reasonable opportunity (in the umpire's judgment, give the batter the benefit of doubt) to get out of the box to avoid a play, she is subject to the interference rule. If the batter is off balance from a swing or has not had the reasonable opportunity above, she is protected. A batter who does leave the box to avoid the play may not interfere with the play (intentionally or unintentionally; if she decides to leave the box, she is responsible for her actions). Obviously, intentional interference is illegal, in or out of the box.
- 12) Hit by Pitch (Rule 8-1-F): A batter hit by a pitch is entitled to first base unless the pitch is in the strike zone or the batter swings at the pitch (in which cases, it is a dead ball strike) or if the batter makes no attempt to avoid the ball (dead ball, ball or strike as the case may be). This applies even if the ball bounces or is rolling on the ground before hitting the batter and even if the ball hits the batter's hands.
- 13) Appeal Plays (Rules 8-7-F to I):
- Leaving base too soon on a caught fly ball and missing bases (advancing and returning) are appeal plays.
  - When one or more appeals result in an apparent 4th out (or more) to end an inning, the defense may take the out(s) which give them the advantage.
- 14) Pitching Circle Rule ("Look Back" Rule 8-7-T): See LVGS Rule 7.12 for summary of pitching circle rule.
- 15) Multiple Infractions and Offsetting Penalties: There is exactly ONE (1) offsetting penalty in softball (if the batter steps out of the box without receiving time from the umpire and the pitcher subsequently or simultaneously commits an illegal pitch, the penalties offset and both the batter and pitcher start over "from scratch"). In all other cases, infractions are dealt with one at a time in the order in which they occurred during the play (remembering that an immediate dead ball "kills" everything else that occurs afterwards, *except* unsportsmanlike conduct).
- 16) Charged Conferences (Rule 5-7 and POE #9): See LVGS Rules 6.1 (defensive) and 6.5 (offensive) for summary of the charged conference rule. Once a pitcher is removed as a result of excessive charged conferences, that pitcher may not return to pitch again in the game (but may play another position), regardless of number of innings pitched.

17) Strike Zone: In softball, the strike zone is the three-dimensional space over home plate (not necessarily where the batter is standing) between the top of the batters knees and the batter's arm pits (this is slightly higher than a baseball strike zone). A pitch which touches home plate or touches the ground in front of home plate is, by definition, called a ball (unless the batter swings). If the batter swings at a pitch which touches the ground/plate, it is considered a *dropped 3rd strike*, even if the catcher catches it cleanly after the bounce.

B) LVGS-Specific Rules:

- 1) Refer to the Rules for LVGS U13 League and U10 League for details.
- 2) Most LVGS rules simply amplify the corresponding ASA rules.
- 3) The following LVGS rules differ (some only slightly) from ASA: 3.1, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.9, 4.11, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.9, 5.10, 6.2, 7.4, 7.5, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 7.11, 7.12, 7.13, 8, 9, 10.2, 10.4, 10.5, 10.9, and 11.

C) Rules for Inter-League Play: LVGS umpires may be assigned to some games played with teams from other nearby leagues. These games may be played under LVGS rules, or may be played under the opposing team's home league rules (details of inter-league play may not be finalized until the start of inter-league play). It is CRITICAL for umpires to discuss the rules being used at the pre-game meeting with the coaches and to review any rules differences or special rules which may apply.

### III) ASSIGNING

- A) A minimum of one (1) umpire will be assigned to work the plate in all regular season games. For games when only one (1) umpire is assigned, the home team is responsible for providing a competent base umpire, but the assigned umpire has the authority to waive this "home team" responsibility (this does NOT apply where two (2) umpires are assigned to a game). When available, "off duty" umpires registered with the league (i.e. who may be at the game to watch their daughter play but are not assigned to work) are preferable and should be used whenever possible. Part of signing up to umpire is that we expect umpires not working to step up and volunteer to work the bases. Using competent base umpires (i.e. one who has attended this clinic or has equivalent experience) is the intent and the priority. If both teams have competent base umpires available, the home team should be given preference (or use both of the available base umpires and practice 3-umpire mechanics!).
- B) The league greatly appreciates you volunteering to umpire. We will do our best to assign games around your schedule (but there will be times when we may need to beg!). We aim to be as "umpire friendly" as possible. The more information (the more details the better!) you can give the assigner (on when you are and are not available and games or situations which you would or would not prefer to umpire), the better we will be able to accommodate you.
- C) Playoffs will generally be handled the same way, with slightly higher preference given to volunteer umpires (who are not also coaches). Coaches will not be assigned to umpire playoff games in their own division until after their team has been eliminated. Where practical, umpires with girl(s) playing in playoff games should be avoided (exceptions may be necessary in early playoff rounds to staff games). For championship games (and possibly other high level playoff games) two (2) umpires will be assigned.
- D) The preferred method of communications between league officials, umpires, and coaches is via e-mail. This allows messages to be readily forwarded. This is especially useful for rules and interpretations questions, to allow distributing answers to all of the umpires and coaches (if you have a rules question

and wish to remain anonymous, just say so when you e-mail the question). Any last-minute communications (cancellations, postponements, etc.) should use cell phone numbers first.

- E) Rescheduling: Each umpire is *responsible* for the games they are assigned. Technically, you do not have to actually umpire games you are assigned to, but you are *responsible* for ensuring that *someone* umpires the game. If you are unable to fulfill your assignment, you are responsible for finding your own replacement. This applies to all games, including games rescheduled, suspended, or postponed for any reason (weather, school activities, inability to field 8-players, etc.). If you are unable to find a replacement, please notify the assigner as soon as possible.
- F) Umpire Quality Control: It is desirable for the league to maintain the highest standards of performance by umpires. It is also desirable for each umpire (regardless of their experience and skill level) to try to improve over the course of the season. At this time umpires are not formally evaluated within the league. The only feed back comes sporadically from coaches during the season (and little of this information is useful, since it often comes in the form of a complaint tainted by the game's outcome). Any suggestions on improving umpire quality control are welcomed.

#### IV) LVGS INSTRUCTIONS TO UMPIRES:

- A) These instructions to umpires address points of emphasis which the league believes require special attention, without involving a formal rules change. These are official interpretations of LVGS rules.
- B) Hit Batter: Whether or not the ball actually touched the batter, and whether or not the batter attempted to avoid being hit, are both 100% *judgment calls by the umpire*. It is not something which coaches can appeal and the rules specifically prohibit arguing judgment calls (after warning, the penalty is ejection). It is NEVER an "option" play (there is no option on whether or not to accept the award). Whatever the umpire calls stands! A common reaction to a batter knowing she is going to be hit by the ball is to freeze and brace for the contact. This is considered an attempt to avoid being hit. Umpires are instructed that, when in doubt or unsure, give the batter the benefit of the doubt. Unless the batter stands like a statue and makes no reaction at all, or obviously allows the ball to hit her, award her 1st base. Of course, if she leans in to the path of the ball she is not going to be awarded any base.
- C) Following Official Rules: LVGS local rules are determined by the LVGS Board of Directors prior to each season. Coaches, commissioners, and umpires do not have authority to change rules at any level (except with formal Board approval) and do not have authority to "agree" to use special rules or to modify any rules. If special circumstances warrant an "emergency" rule change during the season, the umpires will be notified by e-mail, and the appropriate rule change will be posted on the website. If coaches agree to or request any special rules or enforcement at any game, umpires are to ignore the request and notify the coach that the game will be played according to the official ASA and LVGS rules without exception. Following the game, the umpire should also notify the umpire-in-chief.
- D) Sportsmanship Expectations: Unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated. All ejections, and other reports of misconduct at games, will be reviewed by the league's "protest board" (president, umpire-in-chief, independent "board member at large", and the appropriate division commissioner). The protest board has authority to punish offenders (including automatic 1 game suspension for ejection by an umpire, multiple-game, full-season, and/or lifetime suspensions for repeat offenses, and the ability to investigate reports of misconduct and issue suspensions even if there was no ejection by an umpire). On the field, the umpire's best tool is EJECTION, since ejection involves mandatory reporting to the league. An ejection gives the league the best and strongest tool to enforce and follow up on good sportsmanship.

- E) When a runner is "dancing" off third base and the catcher is "staring down" the runner at third, the umpire should let play continue only as long as the actions are reasonable and legitimate (umpire's judgment). Once the situation becomes a stalemate or "Mexican standoff" and delays play, the umpire should call "time" to kill the play. This would not apply to a legitimate pick-off attempt or a reasonable lead off base in a legitimate attempt to advance home on a throw back to the pitcher. This applies at the U13 level (when runners can steal) as well as at the U10 level (when catchers can pick-off runners, but runners cannot steal).
- F) Umpires should be thoroughly familiar with the infield fly rule. The rule is in effect at the U13 level. Although not in effect at the U10 level, umpires need to be familiar with the rule because a modified rule is used at U10 to protect runners.
- G) At the U10 level, advancing on a pitched ball (steal, wild pitch, or passed ball) is not allowed, however, the catcher or pitcher may attempt to pick runners off. The runner may try to avoid the pick-off by reaching the next base. If they safely reach the next base, they are not out, but must return to the original base once the ball is dead (if tagged out, the out stands). This does *not* apply to pick-offs following batted-ball plays (before the pitcher takes her position on the rubber), runners may advance (and score) on such pick-offs since they are a continuation of the previous play (this is not in conflict with the look-back rule or "major league mindset", since the defense initiated the pick-off attempt).
- H) At the U10 level, coaches are encouraged to use the "major league mind-set" when sending runners. This boils down to the idea that, during plays, coaches should only send runners where coaches in Major League Baseball would send runners in similar situations. For example, on routine plays in the infield, LVGS coaches should not send a runner from second base home (i.e. gambling that an inexperienced first baseman or catcher might have trouble with a relay throw to the plate) since an MLB runner would not attempt to advance home on such a play. Although this is generally not under the control of the umpires (it is a guideline for *coaches* to follow), the umpires need to be aware since they are the ones who need to settle any disputes (and this situation has resulted in numerous disputes in the past). In resolving disputes, use common sense and rule on what, in umpire's judgment, is most fair for both teams. This expectation has been emphasized *very clearly* to coaches (so whenever there is any doubt and for "borderline" cases, do not hesitate to send runners back!). This rule should not be construed as preventing any runner from advancing 1 base during any play (EXCEPT if a defensive player "looks" an un-forced runner back before throwing to another base and the runner comes to a complete stop or starts back towards the previous base, she should not be allowed to advance).
- I) At the U10 level, it has become common (at fields with deep backstops) to use a parent behind home plate to retrieve balls which get past the catcher to keep the game moving (see LVGS Rule 5.10). It is desirable to minimize this practice (having an additional non-player on the playing field raises safety and ground rule concerns), while still avoiding delay as the catcher retrieves the ball. Wherever possible, umpire(s) should have a spare ball available, and as soon as the ball get past the catcher, the umpire should give the spare ball to the pitcher (the catcher can then retrieve the loose ball, and simply hand it to the umpire). It is preferred that the plate umpire use a ball bag for this purpose. If a ball bag is not available, the base umpire can hold onto the spare ball (with no ball bag, when the plate umpire receives the ball from the catcher, the plate umpire should hold onto this ball (which becomes the spare ball) until after the next pitch/play, then throw the new spare ball to the base umpire).

## LENAPE VALLEY SOFTBALL UMPIRE LINKS

### **Lenape Valley Girls Softball:**

<http://www.lvsoftball.org/>

(see LVGS website for additional links and contacts!)

**Contacts:** Any questions or concerns can be addressed to the UIC, President, or respective league commissioner (each of whom will circulate the question/concern to the others as needed)

Alicia Williams, Umpire-In-Chief: [roz1823@gmail.com](mailto:roz1823@gmail.com)

Chris Michiels, President: [catch22cm@verizon.net](mailto:catch22cm@verizon.net)

Bill Marsland, U10 Commissioner: [bmars1231@comcast.net](mailto:bmars1231@comcast.net)

Adam Lieberman U12/13 Commissioner: [allynx18@aol.com](mailto:allynx18@aol.com)

Norman Moore, Umpire Consultant: [cubpack133@comcast.net](mailto:cubpack133@comcast.net) Cell: 215-651-4872

### **Softball Organizations (most have links to umpire and/or rules information):**

Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA) and USA Softball

<http://www.softball.org/>

ASA of Pennsylvania, District 15; NOTE: ASA umpire registration is available through the local district, please refer to the website for information.

<http://usasoftballpa.org/>

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

<http://www.nfhs.org/>

Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA)

<http://www.piaa.org/>

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA):

<http://www.ncaa.org/>

### **General Umpire Information:**

Major League Baseball (MLB)

[http://mlb.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/mlb/official\\_info/umpires/index.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/mlb/official_info/umpires/index.jsp)

American Federation of Umpires

<http://www.americanfederationofumpires.com/>

Amateur Baseball Umpire's Association

<http://www.umpire.org>

Referee Magazine:

<http://www.referee.com/>

### **Umpire Equipment:**

All Sports Officials (**local**)

24 North State Street (Rear Entrance), Newtown PA 18940

215-860-3571, 877-776-7870

<http://www.allsportsofficials.com>

ASA Properties

<http://www.officialgear.com/>

Officially Sports (official PIAA vendor)

<https://officiallysports.com/>

Gerry Davis Sports

<http://www.gerrydavis.com/>

Honigs Whistle Stop

<http://www.honigs.com/>

**DEAD BALL TABLE**

<b>BALL DEAD IMMEDIATELY</b>			
Activity	Rule Reference	Awards or Penalties	From Time of
Uncaught foul	8-6-A	Runners return	Pitch
Pitch touches batter	8-1-F, 8-6-D, E	Award batter 1st except when no effort to avoid pitch or pitch is struck	Pitch
Fair ball touches umpire before it touches fielder or passes infielder other than pitcher	8-1-E-4	Award batter 1st & credit with a hit, other runners return unless forced	Infraction
Fair ball touches runner before it touches fielder or passes infielder other than pitcher if other fielder has played	8-1-E-3, 8-7-K	Award batter 1st & credit with a hit, other runners return unless forced, hit runner is out	Infraction
Batted ball hits runner while touching base	8-1-E	Award batter 1st, runners return unless forced	Pitch
Runner leaves base before pitcher releases pitch	8-7-S	No pitch is declared, runner is out, other runners return	Pitch
Reverse run to confuse or make travesty of the game	8-3-D	Runner is out, runners return	Infraction
Batter runner moves backward toward home plate	8-2-H	Batter is out, runners return	Infraction
Illegally batted ball	7-6-D, 8-6-B	Batter is out, runners return	Pitch
For ball hitting loose (not detached) equipment on field of team at bat	8-5-G	Runner being played on is out (if applicable), other runners return	Infraction
Ball intentionally hit twice in fair & sometimes foul territory	7-6-K	Batter is out, runners return	Pitch
Infielder intentionally drops fair fly, line drive or bunt in flight with at least 1st base occupied & less than 2 out	8-2-J, 8-6-H	Batter is out, runners return (except infield fly)	Pitch
Members of offensive team gather around base to hinder/confuse defense	8-6-C, 8-7-N	Affected runner is out, other runners return	Infraction
Interference by batter when attempted putout is by the catcher	8-2-G	Batter is out, runner attempting to score is out, other runners return	Infraction
Interference by runner to prevent double play	8-2-K, 8-6-C	Interferer is out, batter is out, other runners return	Infraction
Interference by runner	8-2-E, F, M-7, 8-6-C, 8-7-J	Interferer is out, other runners return	Infraction
Interference by runner (foul fly)	8-6-C, 8-7-J-2	Interferer is out, other runners return, batter credited with foul ball	Pitch
Interference by retired runner	8-6-C, 8-7-P	Runner closest to home is out if prevented double play anywhere, other runners return	Infraction
Intentional interference by coach with batted or thrown ball or defense making a play	8-6-C, 8-7-O	Runner closest to home is out, other runners return	Infraction
Flagrant interference	8-7-Q	Runner is out & ejected, other runners return	Infraction
Spectator interference	8-2-N, 8-5-L	Award bases or impose penalty to nullify interference according to umpire judgment	Infraction
Illegal pitch not released, or released to a base	6-1 to 8 Effect, 8-5-E	Award all runners 1 base, batter remains at bat & is awarded a base	Infraction
Offensive team personnel call "time" or command/act trying to cause pitcher to violate the pitching rule	6-10-E (FP)	No runners can advance, team warning for 1st offense, subsequent offenders ejected	Pitch
Fielder loses possession & ball enters dead area	8-5-G	Award all runners 1 base	Ball leaving play
A pitched ball that goes out of play	8-5-C	Award all runners 1 base	Pitch
Fair or foul ball is caught by fielder, who then leaves the field of play	8-5-J	Award all runners 1 base	Fielder leaving play
Fair ball touches spectator or bounces over, through, or lodges in a fence	8-2-N, 8-5-I	Award all runners 2 bases	Pitch
A thrown ball, not a pitch, which goes out of play	8-5-G	Award all runners 2 bases	Release of throw
Fielder intentionally carries ball into dead-ball area	8-5-K	Award all runners 2 bases	Fielder leaving play
Fielder intentionally throws ball into dead-ball area	8-5-K	Award all runners 2 bases	Release of throw
Fair ball over fence in flight prevented by spectator or detached player equipment	8-5-F, H	Award all runners home plate	Pitch
Ball lodged in umpire or offensive player clothing	8-5-M	Award bases according to umpire judgment	Infraction

<b>DELAYED DEAD BALL</b>			
Activity	Rule Reference	Awards or Penalties	From Time of
Illegal pitch released	6-1 to 8 Effect, 8-5-E	Pitch is a ball & runners are awarded 1 base if the ball is not hit or batter becomes runner. Otherwise, offense has choice of accepting play or penalty; no penalty if all runners & batter advance at least 1 base.	Pitch
Interference with catcher by umpire	8-6-F	If runner is not put out, runners return	Pitch
Obstruction	8-5-B	If obstructed runner & all other runners hindered do not reach bases they otherwise would have reached, award runner or runners such bases (award obstructed runner at least 1 base)	Infraction
Obstruction of batter by catcher or fielder	8-1-D	If batter & all runners advance at least 1 base, obstruction is ignored. Otherwise, offense has choice of accepting play or penalty (batter awarded 1st, other runners return unless forced)	Pitch
Obstruction of batter by catcher if runner on 3rd trying to score by steal or squeeze	8-1-D-4	If batter & all runners advance at least 1 base, obstruction is ignored. Otherwise, offense has choice of accepting play or penalty (batter awarded 1st & lead runner awarded home, other runners return unless forced)	Infraction
Intentionally touching pitched ball with detached player equipment	8-5-F	Award batter & runners 1 base if not made (if strike 3, batter awarded 1st base)	Infraction
Intentionally touching thrown ball with detached player equipment	8-5-F	Award batter & runners 2 bases if not made	Infraction
Intentionally touching batted ball with detached player equipment	8-5-F	Award batter & runners 3 bases if not made	Infraction
Make any play with illegal glove or mit	8-8-O	Offense has choice of accepting play or having the penalty imposed	Infraction

Note: If on a delayed dead ball, any runner advances beyond the base they would have been awarded, they do so at their own risk and may be put out.

Note: When runners advance or return, it is from/to the last base legally occupied (touched) from the time indicated in the table above.

# Official NFHS Softball Signals

**A. DO NOT PITCH**



Signal toward pitcher

**B. PLAY BALL**



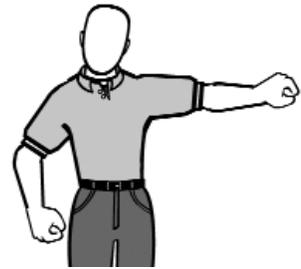
Verbally calls "Play ball"

**C. TIME OUT/FOULBALL/DEAD BALL**



Verbally calls "Time," "Foul ball" or "Dead ball"

**D. DELAYED DEAD BALL**



Extend left arm out, fist with palm down (or out)

**E. STRIKE/OUT**



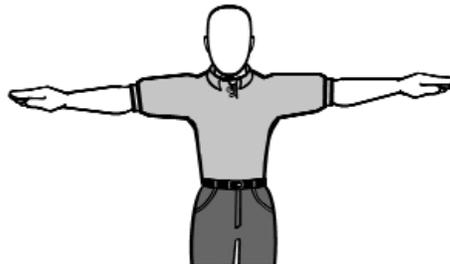
Fist to hammer at 90 degrees

**F. INFIELD FLY**



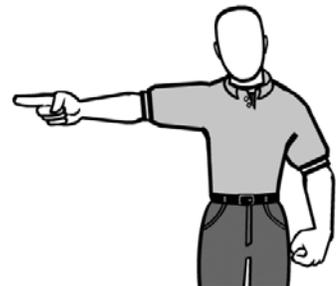
Verbally call "Infield fly"

**G. SAFE**



Verbally call "Safe"

**H. FAIR BALL**



Point to fair territory with hand closest to infield. No verbal call.

**I. FOUL TIP**



Fingers touch together, chest high, followed by strike call.

**J. COUNT**



Left hand indicates balls, followed by strikes on the right hand. Verbally give count.

**K. HOME RUN**



Right fist in the air, rotate counterclockwise

**L. DOUBLE**



First two fingers in the air