



UMPIREGRAM



APRIL, 2010 PRIDE, HONOR, RESPECT, LOVE OF THE GAME, CAMARADERIE—THE MEN & WOMEN IN BLUE

NEW BAT REGULATION

As many of you are aware, the International Board of Directors of Babe Ruth League, Inc. approved a new bat regulation for the 13-15 Division beginning with the 2010 season. This regulation limits the diameter of the bat barrel to 2 5/8".

There is no length to weight ration requirement (i.e. no drop). High School Baseball organizations have already implemented the 2 5/8"-3 rule, and this is the direction most amateur baseball programs are taking.

As we realize the costs involved in participating in youth sports and how much

of a challenge it is to outfit participants with the best equipment possible, we have decided to allow the use of bats with a 2 3/4" barrel size for 13-15 **local league play only** for the 2010 local league season. Bats with a 2 5/8" dimension will be the only approved bat for use during 13-15 District, State and Regional Tournaments, as well as during the World Series.

If you have any questions, please contact Babe Ruth Headquarters.

DRIVE TOWARDS

INCREASING MEMBERSHIP

Help the NUA grow to new heights. Recommend to your friends or fellow umpires.

To apply for membership, please visit www.baberruthleague.org and click on the National Umpires Association.

Scroll down to the bottom and select "Apply for Babe Ruth Baseball or Babe Ruth Softball National Umpires Association."

Also on this web page, new and renewed members may fill out a World Series application online to be considered to work a 2010 Babe Ruth World Series.

PLAY BALL—'TIS THE SEASON

Take time to reflect upon your performance last season. Listed below are some tips to make you a better umpire:

- Being an umpire, the league's only official representative on the field, is often a trying position that requires the exercise of much patience and good judgment. Don't ever forget the first essential in working out of a bad situation—keep your own temper and self-control. Do not allow criticism to keep you from studying out a bad situation that may lead to a protested game.
- The umpire enforces the rules, maintains his/her dignity, compels respect and gives the fullest satisfaction to both teams and the

spectators. Under no circumstances shall any umpire criticize or interfere with a decision unless asked to do so by his/her fellow umpire. Should the umpires make different decisions on one play, the Umpire-in-Chief shall call on all of the umpires into consultation with no managers or coaches. After the consultation, the Umpire-in-Chief shall determine which decision shall prevail based on which umpire was in the best position and which decision was most likely correct. Play shall proceed as if only the final decision has been made.

- Carry your rulebook! It is better to consult the rules

and hold up the game to decide a knotty problem than to have the outcome of a game affected by a protested call because you didn't know the rule.

- When working the plate, do not call your pitches too quickly. The pitch is nothing until you make the call. Do not anticipate.
- Do not call your plays while on the run. It is best to be further away from the play and call it in a still position.
- Dress the part. Be on time for your assignment. Act professionally. Know the rules. Hustle. Control the game. Be fair.

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BEFORE THE GAME



Before the game, both the plate and base umpires should be present for the manager's meeting at least five minutes prior to the start of the game with the manager of each team.

Introduce yourself to the managers and confirm they are the only ones who can approach the umpires with challenges to calls.

Accept each team's line-up and check to ensure that no names or fielding positions are duplicated.

Make sure the copy matches the original and give the copy to the opposing manager.

Discuss the ground rules.

INTERPRETING THE BALK

The following are excellent guidelines to use for interpreting the balk (Official Baseball Rule 8.05):

- The pitcher shall be charged with a balk if he throws to the first baseman who is either in front of or behind first base and obviously not making an attempt at retiring the runner.
- A right- or left-handed pitcher shall be committed to pitch or throw to second base when he swings his entire free foot completely behind the back edge of the rubber.
- The pitcher shall be charged with a balk if he stands on or astride the pitcher's plate without the ball. (He may be on the dirt without the ball.)
- A ball which slips out of a pitcher's hand and crosses the foul line shall be called a ball; otherwise it will be called no pitch. If the ball does not cross the foul line, this would be a balk with men on base.
- The pitcher, while touching his plate, must step directly toward a base before throwing to that base. If a pitcher turns or spins off of his free foot without actually stepping or if he turns his body and throws before stepping, it is a balk.
- If a pitcher, while touching his plate, jumps into the air with both feet simultaneously and his non-pivot foot lands in a step towards first base before he throws to that base, he has made a legal move.
- If a pitcher places the resin bag in his glove with, in the umpire's judgment, the intent of deceiving the runner, it is a balk.
- If the pitcher steps off of the rubber with his non-pivot foot when pitching from the windup position, the pitcher shall be charged with a balk.
- It is legal for a right-handed pitcher to begin a pick-off move to first base by first moving his pivot foot in the direction of third base provided that he makes a legal step towards first base with his non-pivot foot before throwing there and provided that the move is continuous and without interruption. A pitcher who makes such a pick-off move is considered to be in contact with the rubber when he makes his throw to first base.
- It is a balk if the pitcher, after coming to a legal pitching position, removes one hand from the ball other than in an actual pitch or in throwing to a base.
- Prior to assuming a legal pitching position (windup or set position) it is permissible for the pitcher to momentarily adjust the ball in his glove. In order for this to be allowed, the movement must be momentary in nature. If the pitcher has his hands together long enough that, in the judgment of the umpire, it appears that he has actually come to a set position or has actually assumed the wind-up position, then should the pitcher separate his hands, a balk shall be called.
- There is no violation if a pitcher attempts a pick off at second base and seeing no fielder covering the bag, throws to the shortstop or second baseman, neither of whom is in the vicinity of the bag nor is making an actual attempt to return the runner.
- A pitcher who assumes his windup position with the heel of his non-pivot foot off the ground is to be charged with a balk if in stepping off the rubber he drops the heel of his non-pivot foot before disengaging the rubber with his pivot foot.

KEEPING GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

According to many professional umpires, too many umpires focus on the idea of having an argument rather than pursuing the avenue toward a professional discussion and defusing the situation.

Four Types of Arguments:

Legitimate—in which both sides have a point. While engaged in a legitimate discussion, you should be more understanding. Keep your voice level and calm.

Intimidation—in which one

party is using the argument only to force his/her will. When intimidation is the main factor, you must exude extreme confidence. Keep responses very short.

Situational—in which the argument is only valid within the context of a particular situation. Exude extreme confidence and keep your responses very short.

Personality—in which the argument is driven more by the clash between the individuals arguing than by the incident being argued.

The Neutral Dispassionate Approach:

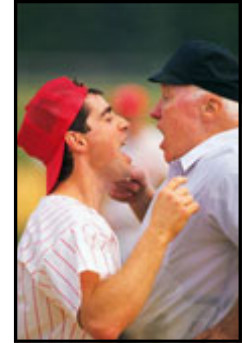
Personality arguments call for your skills in adapting and adjusting to the person's style of communication. Let him or her wind down.

The Proactive Down to Business Approach:

Disarm him or her immediately. I.e., "Coach, calm down if you want to discuss this with me." "If you can't be civil, there will be no discussion." "Coach, I'm trying my best to keep you in

this game, so dial it down."

Umpires looking to advance should be able to identify each situation and apply the correct *professional* formula.



QUICK REFRESHERS

PROTESTED GAMES

Whenever a manager protests a game because of an alleged misapplication of the rules, the protest will not be recognized unless the umpires are notified at the time the play and the protest occurs and before the next pitch is made or a runner retired.



TRIPS TO THE MOUND

Every year, the most

frequently asked question is what constitutes a trip to the mound.



When a coach makes a pitching change from the dugout without going onto the field, is that a trip to the mound? Keep in mind the primary purpose of Official Baseball Rule 8.06 and Babe Ruth Rule 8.12 is to prevent delay of the game. The game was

delayed by changing the pitcher, and is thus considered a trip to the mound whether or not the manager physically visited on the mound.

BATTING OUT OF ORDER

The umpire shall not direct the attention of any person to the presence in the batter's box of an improper batter. When a batting



out of order occurs, there are two fundamentals to keep in mind. When a player bats out of turn, the proper batter is the player called out. If an improper batter bats and reaches base or is out and no appeal is made before a pitch to the next batter or before any play or attempted play, that improper batter is considered to have batted in order and establishes the order that is to follow.

WHEN YOUR CHILD PLAYS

First it's easy. Watching your children play at the youngest levels and having each parent take turns calling.

Then you make the transition to umpire. Life gets complicated. There are two difference opinions. According to the National Association of Sports Officials Code of Ethics, "Sports officials must be free of obligation to an interest other than the impartial and fair judging of sports competitions. Without equivocation, game decisions which are slanted by personal bias are dishonest and unacceptable. Sports officials recognize that anything which may lead to a conflict of interest, either real apparent, must be avoided."

We can certainly understand umpires being free from personal bias. But on the other hand, a lot of amateur umpires have kids that play baseball and softball. Umpires that work league games over and over again come to know the players' parents, and other family members—usually on a first name basis.

Seasons come and go. One person's policy is not the same as the next. What it comes down to is that any umpire/parent must be prepared to carry forth the highest of ethics, conduct and personal responsibility. You need to be fair and impartial and need to call strike, ball, and safe or out the same for every player and for every team.



PARTNERS, COACHES, PLAYERS AND FANS

There is no greater pleasure in umpiring than working with good partners. Yet an often overlooked concept (as basic to umpiring as balls and strikes) is working with and supporting your partners. You will never be a top notch umpire until you show that you are loyal to your partners. Never do anything that will make your partner look bad. Your experiences may not be equal, but your responsibilities are. Personal feelings must never affect the way you umpire. Umpires must strengthen and reinforce one another. Umpires must treat other umpires with dignity, courtesy and respect. Never criticize another umpire publicly, nor offer an opinion on an umpire's call. Do not think you can make yourself look better at the expense of your partner. Coaches notice dissention in a crew. If you criticize your partner, far from respecting you more, they may use it against you. If a coach is able to drive a wedge between umpires on the crew, he/she has gained control of the game, and you have lost it. If you and your partners support and respect one another, it shows you respect yourself.

An umpire's relationship with a coach should be businesslike and professional. Coaches and umpires each have a job to do and both are necessary to the proper progression of the game. Respect the job they do and allow them to do that job. A coach will respect you more if you direct your energies to performing your job to the best of your ability. This is a business relationship—treat it as such. Every coach deserves your respect and consistent treatment. Always maintain your dignity and seek out ways to help coaches maintain theirs. There are only two times when an umpire needs to talk to a coach. One is the pregame and the other is when taking changes to the lineup. Do not initiate any other conversations with a coach. Let the coach be the initiator. If the conversation is pertinent to the game, politely answer or explain. If it is not, respectfully extricate yourself. Your job is to manage and control the game. To this end: do not warn coaches at the pregame; do not allow a coach to come out repeatedly; do not allow a coach to criticize your strike zone; do not allow a coach out to argue; do not invite a coach out to argue; and do not let your partners take abuse from a coach they have ejected.



Like umpires and coaches, the game must have players. Players have their own specific job to do. Unlike coaches, an umpire never really needs to have dealings with a player. Do not start conversations with a player, unless it is pertinent to doing your job and never engage in idle chat. If a player speaks to you, respond politely and courteously while maintaining a businesslike atmosphere. Most coaches do not want their players talking to umpires. When you need to address a player—whether to solve an issue, give a warning, or facilitate a concern—plan in advance what you will say, how you will say it, and what response you need. During dead ball situations such as conferences, injuries or substitutions, remove yourself physically from the proximity of players. This makes casual conversations more difficult and less likely to occur.

Like umpires, coaches and players, fans are a part of the game. They aren't a necessary part, but they are a desired part. In many ways, they contribute to the excitement of the game, even for the umpires. Remember, umpires are not the object of the devotion of the fans. Actually, the umpire is usually perceived as the villain. Fans are usually biased and usually less informed on the rules. Except for spectator interference, the rules do not provide an umpire with control over fans. An umpire must not allow them to be a distraction of any kind and must be able to turn comments, boos, heckles, or cheers from the fans into simple background noise.

Occasionally fans step outside the bounds. When this happens to the extent the game is being adversely affected, then something must be done. First you must be able to recognize the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Offering adverse opinions of your calls, using profanity directly personally at you or a player, threatening or throwing things on the field is not acceptable behavior.

Locate or have one of your partners locate an administrator, board member, league official. Advise them of the situation and allow them to handle it. This way you professionally control a volatile situation without interrupting the game, drawing attention to yourself, or rewarding the fan's obnoxious behavior by giving them his/her spotlight.

Avoid mingling with fans before or after a game. If it is necessary that you pass through an area of spectators, go as a crew if possible and don't stop or engage in conversation.

Be polite, professional and businesslike.

A HIGER CALLING—VETERAN TEEN UMPIRE SETS SIGHTS ON BIG LEAGUES



Tyler Vosteen

Most children participating in youth baseball have a tendency to dream big. They want to be decorated with the highest honors. They often envision themselves being involved in the game's decisive play. But above all, they hope to ascend to the highest level.

Sixteen-year-old Tyler Vosteen of Keene, New Hampshire hopes to experience all of these moments, but he hopes to be behind the plate when they take place.

Growing up, Vosteen spent a majority of his time around the diamond. His playing career began at 7, and he routinely watched a lot of the games his father, Dave, was umpiring. As both a player and spectator, Vosteen acquired a vast knowledge of the rules.

"Tyler would have a rulebook in his bag and if there was a play on the field that wasn't right they (the volunteer coaches) would say, 'Vosteen!' And he'd get out his book and tell the coach what the right call was," said Tyler's mother, Patti.

As his playing career excelled, his familiarity and interest in umpiring peaked. Finally, four years ago, Tyler was ready to add a new uniform to his wardrobe. "I

always played baseball my whole life, and then to see it from a different angle, I thought it was so cool and empowering," Vosteen said with enjoyment. "I fell in love with it."

He may have been a rookie, but he wasn't taking baby steps. Vosteen's unforeseen natural ability was his strong suit. It was the mentoring and fortunate opportunities given to him by his dad and his family of local umpires that helped his career take flight.

"They each let him work a game with them, and they were teaching him as they went along," said Dave, a veteran umpire of 20 years.

At 12 years old, without any official training, Vosteen got his first umpiring gig in a 8-year-old Coach's Pitch league. As his on-the-field training progressed, so did his body of work. Moving up the junior umpire ladder, he later added JV high school and Senior Babe Ruth to his resume.

His most rewarding and career altering opportunity came at 14. Umpire-in-Chief Ed Gillogly awarded him an umpiring position as part of a three-man team in the men's circuit. Three man teams are just as uncommon as someone his age joining the men's league. However, Gillogly knew he was making the right call with the promotion.

"He is a student of the rulebook, always trying to get the correct interpretation of the rule," said Gillogly, one of Keen's 10-year veteran

umpires. "As Tyler got older and more comfortable, he showed me the maturity at a young age to handle the pressure. He's unlike any young umpires in the game."

As Vosteen became acclimated and he rose to the occasion, he continued to mold himself into one of New Hampshire's naturals. "It's (the men's league) been a good learning experience, and has taught me a lot," said Vosteen. "I think that's probably the best way to learn, and why I've gotten to the point I am."

Vosteen also discovered that having a professional appearance and solid communication skills was just as vital as being keen with his eyes. "It's amazing how far a uniform and professional good attitude can get you. I've definitely become more outgoing and I learned how to deal with coaches," said Vosteen.

"We try to remind him he's still a kid," said Dave. "You still have to be in charge out there, but remember they're still adults."

Vosteen's appearance also worked to his advantage and freed him from unneeded criticism. His 6 foot, 230 pound frame along with a substantial amount of facial hair masked his age through his rookie and sophomore years. However, as a master of his craft, there was really never a reason to hide anything.

"No one has questioned my ability, I just hate it when people judge stuff by age," said Vosteen. "You can't do Districts, States or Regionals until you're 18. I would really love to do all of

those, but I can't because I'm only 16."

In addition to working eight games a week for the next four months, Vosteen is a starter on the varsity football team, participates in marching and jazz band, and manages to remain on the honor role.

With all Vosteen has achieved, there is still one more peak to climb. After attaining his college degree, he wants to continue his journey to his dream job in the Major Leagues. According to MLB.com, umpires are treated like Major League Baseball players. They must work their way through the ranks of the minor leagues to get the experience and training they need to make it to the big leagues.

Vosteen has a leg up on his competition with his established work history, but he's also getting a chance to meet one of the best in the game.

Tyler and his dad Dave are getting the rare opportunity to sit down for lunch with MLB umpire Hunter Wendelstedt who runs the Wendelstedt School of Umpiring. All umpires are required to attend one of two Major League Umpire Schools, before breaking into the majors.

"All I have dreamed about since I started umpiring was a step on a Major League field as an MLB umpire. My dad always said dream big, and I am hoping my dreams come true."

This story was written by Babe Ruth Intern Jonathan Pino.

With thanks from Kyle Vosteen to: Mike Lussier, UIC for Keene BRL; Steve Corey, President of Connecticut Valley BRL; Bellows Falls High School; Ed Gillogly, UIC of Connecticut Valley Men's League and especially to Mom and Dad.

KNOWING THE RULES

There is no substitute for complete knowledge of the rules. You should make it a point to study the rulebook regularly. Understand the intent of each rule. You are a Babe Ruth League NUA professional; make sure you can apply the rules of our program accurately.

We welcome you to take the following quiz of true and false questions to test your knowledge:

1. Batter hits a homerun out of the ballpark and misses first base. He may return to first base to correct his mistake before he touches second base. However, if he touches second base, he may not return to first, and if the defensive team appeals, the umpire is correct in declaring him out.
2. It is not interference if the batter-runner intentionally defects the course of a foul ball.
3. If two runners are touched by the same fair ball, the umpire shall declare both runners out.
4. A hot grounder nicks the outside corner of first base and bounces into foul territory. The umpire is correct in ruling a fair ball.
5. If a runner standing on second base hinders the shortstop from fielding a ground ball, he can only be called out if the interference is intentional.
6. When the ball is not dead on obstruction and an obstructed runner advances beyond the base which, in the umpire's judgment he would have been awarded because of being obstructed, he may be tagged out.
7. If the batter-runner who received a base on balls fails to touch first base and attempts to advance beyond that base, he may be put out by tagging him or tagging the base.
8. If after the pitcher starts his wind-up or comes to a "set position" with a runner on, he does not go through with his pitch because the batter has stepped out of the batter's box, it shall be called a balk.
9. If on an infield fly rule the fielder

intentionally drops a fair ball, the ball remains in play despite the provisions of rule 6.05(L).

10. If a fielder attempting a catch at the edge of the dugout is "held up" and kept from an apparent fall by a player of either team and the catch is made, it shall be allowed and the batter declared out.

- | | |
|-----|----------------------------|
| 10. | Rule 2.00-A Catch—True |
| 9. | Rule 2.00—Infield Fly—True |
| 8. | Rule 6.02(b) - False |
| 7. | Rule 6.08(a) - True |
| 6. | Rule 7.06(b) - True |
| 5. | Rule 7.08(b) - True |
| 4. | Rule 2.00—Fair Ball—True |
| 3. | Rule 7.08(f) - False |
| 2. | Rule 7.09(b) - False |
| 1. | Rule 7.10(b) - True |

ANSWERS TO QUIZ



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What is Proper Timing? Timing is the proper use of the eyes. Call the pitch as fast as you can...after you see it. Umpires talk about those who call pitches before they have even reached the glove (like the called strike three that goes for home run!). We watch batters get half way to first before the umpire calls a strike, or watch both catcher and batter turn and look at an umpire waiting for an announcement of his/her decision. We see the scoreboard being reset after the "ball" becomes a "strike". On the rubber...get set...see it...call it!

The Automatic Call. Why do

some umpires automatically call a strike on a pitch made at a count of three balls and no strikes? Why do some umpires call "ball" on a pitch made at a count of no balls and two strikes? Does the pitcher suddenly get worse or better? Don't do it! Call the pitch exactly where it was placed, exactly as you would in every situation without regard to the count or game situation.

Don't Make it Hard! Every pitch is a strike until it convinces you it's a ball! Baseball and softball are simple games—don't make them hard!

The Game is Yours! When you walk on to the field, that games

is yours. You are in control. Keep things moving! If you let things drag on, there will be more errors and more arguments for no reason. Keep things fresh and moving and the play of the game will be much sharper.

Don't Look for Praise! Some umpires crave to be recognized as being an excellent official. Once you start looking for praise, you will need it and it will own you. Don't look for praise. You know in your head if you've done a good job or not.

WORDS TO LIVE BY

Listed below are a few quotes from two of most respected and well-liked umpires in the history of the game—Call Hubbard and Bill Klem:



"Boys, I'm one of those umpires that misses'em every once in a while, so if it's close, you'd better hit it." - **Cal Hubbard**

"Fix your eye on the ball from the moment the pitcher holds it in his glove. Follow it as he throws to the plate and stay with it until the play is completed. Action takes place only where the ball goes." - **Bill Klem**