



The infield fly is one situation that impacts force plays. Since the batter is out, the force is removed and the runners may remain at their bases or advance at their own risk. Ramon Armendariz, Los Angeles (left), and Kendall Snyder, Azalea, Ore.

TOUR DE FORCE

How to Navigate Force-Play Intricacies

By George Demetriou

Force plays are a crucial part of baseball. Whether or not a third out is a force play can determine whether or not a run scores. It also determines how a runner may be put out. If a runner is forced, he or she is forced to advance to the base to which he is advancing may be tagged. In all other situations, the runner must be tagged for an out to occur. The method of putting out a runner is never a factor in determining whether or not an out is a force out. Unless otherwise noted, the material applies equally to NFHS, NCAA and pro rules.

Here is an elementary example.

Play 1: With R1 on first, B1 hits the ball hard to F3, who steps on first and fires the ball to F6 at second. **Ruling 1:**

B1 is out and R1 must be tagged.

A force play occurs when a runner loses his right to the base he occupies because the batter becomes a batter-runner (NFHS 2-29-3; NCAA 2-33; pro-Definition of Force Play). A force can subsequently be removed and umpires must recognize that when it happens.

Here is an actual play where the force out negated a run.

Play 2: With the bases loaded and two out, B1 hits the ball toward third. F5 muffs the ball, which remains at his feet. R2 sees F5 in his path and decides to retreat. F5 recovers the ball, chases down R2 and tags him. R3 touches the plate before R2 is tagged. **Ruling 2:** The run does not score. R2's out is a force out.

The tag out does not change the fact that R2 was forced to advance

to third because B1 became a batter-runner when he hit a fair ball. There is no requirement for F5 to run to third and touch it for the play to be a force play. Also, it would not matter if R2 were declared out for leaving the baseline or for interfering with F5. As long as R2 is retired before legally touching third, the run cannot score. A run cannot be scored if any runner is forced out for the third out (NFHS 9-1-1 Exc. b; NCAA 5-6c Exc. 2, 8-5j AR 1; pro 5.08a Exc. 2/4.09a2).

A force is removed when a runner reaches the base to which he is forced to advance. When a runner is forced out, the force is also removed on any preceding runners, but not on following runners. If the batter-runner is retired, force plays on all runners are removed.

Play 3: With one out and R1 on first, B1 hits a sharp one-hopper to F3. R1 does not react and remains at first. F3 (a) tags R1 and then the base, or (b) tags the base and then R1. **Ruling 3:** The tag sequence is important and makes the difference between one or two outs.

When B1 hit a fair ball, a force on R1 was created. Thus in (a) R1 is out. The fact he was still on first is irrelevant — he was forced to advance. When the base was subsequently tagged, a double play occurred. In (b), the base was tagged first retiring B1, but that also removed the force on R1 who then became entitled to remain at first. The subsequent tag on R1 meant nothing. If R1 had attempted to advance in (b), he would have to be tagged to be put out. Merely getting the ball to second before R1 got there would not be sufficient as the force play no longer existed.

Here is another example where the force is removed on a preceding runner.

Play 4: With one out and runners on first and second, B1 hits a grounder to F4. The flip to F6 at second retires R1. F6 then notices that R2 slipped and fell on his way to third, so he throws to F5 at third. **Ruling 4:** The force out on R1 removed the force on R2 who was a preceding runner, so R2 must be tagged to be retired.

Here is a play where the codes treat a force play differently.

Play 5: With the bases loaded and no one out, B1 hits into a 6-4-3 double play. R2, who ran on the pitch, scores but misses third. On appeal, R2 is called out for missing third. **Ruling 5:** In NFHS and pro, the run counts because the missed base occurred after the out at second removed the force. In NCAA, the run does not count. For purposes of running infractions, a force that exists at the time of the pitch remains in effect throughout the play.

Infield fly. The removal of a force play is the primary reason the infield fly rule exists. Without that rule, a fielder could allow the fly ball to drop and create a force on two runners making a cheap double play possible.

Play 6: With one out and runners on first and second, B1 hits a high pop up behind the mound. The umpires call an infield fly. F1 first calls for the ball, then F4, followed by F6. In the confusion, the ball falls on the back of the mound and rolls away. R2 takes off for third. F4 picks up the ball and throws to F5 who hurries to third.

Ruling 6: The declaration of an infield fly removed all force plays. R2 must be tagged before reaching third to be declared out.

George Demetriou, Colorado Springs, Colo., is the current NFHS rule interpreter for the state of Colorado. □

Stand Out on the Field for the Right Reasons

By Jon Bible

In 2014, MLB umpire Vic Carapazza stood out during an NL Division Series game between the San Francisco Giants and Washington Nationals.

In the bottom of the 10th inning, Carapazza called a strike on Asdrubal Cabrera of the Nationals in the upper-most part of the zone. Cabrera expressed displeasure with the call but got back in the box, only to take a third strike in the exact same spot.

Cabrera threw a tantrum and Carapazza ejected him. Manager Matt Williams came out and ended up ejected as well. Intrigued, I closely observed the next few innings of what turned out to be an 18-inning, 6:23 marathon that the Giants won. Among other things, I wanted to see if there were more fireworks and if Carapazza would maintain his composure. After all, he was a fourth-year major league umpire working his first playoff series, and most would tell you that it takes about five years,

BY THE NUMBERS

Reelin' in the Years:

The following apply to the 2016 MLB umpire crews (see page 79 for the 2016 roster):

38

Years of MLB experience for the most-tenured crew chief, Joe West

17

Years of MLB experience for the least-tenured crew chief, Bill Miller

59

Average years of MLB experience for all crews

76

Years of MLB experience for the most-tenured crew: West (38), Kerwin Danley (19), Andy Fletcher (16.5), Mark Ripperger (2.5)

46.5

Years of MLB experience for the least-tenured crew: Miller (17), Tony Randazzo (16.5), Brian Knight (7), Todd Tichenor (6)

QUICKTIP

Don't be afraid to yell to your partner that you are on the line or that the fly ball is in your coverage area. Normally umpire-to-umpire signals should be discrete and happen before play is ready to resume, but when the ball is in play, communication remains vital. Umpires cannot take their eye off the ball to see where a partner is, so verbal communication becomes key.

THEY SAID IT

"Whenever you have a tight situation and there's a close pitch, the umpire gets a squawk no matter how he calls it."

— Red Barber, sportscaster from 1939-66.



SOURCE: TOPFAMOUSQUOTES.COM

TEST YOURSELF

In each of the following, you are given a situation and at least two possible answers. You are to decide which answer or answers are correct for NFHS, NCAA or pro rules, which might vary. **Solutions: p. 81.**

1. With R1 on first, R3 on third and one out. B4 hits a ground ball to the shortstop who gets R3 into a rundown between third and home. As the catcher chases R3 back to third, he dives and makes a tag on R3, falls to the ground and the ball pops out of his mitt when he hits the ground.

- a. R3 is out.
- b. R3 is safe.

2. With the bases loaded and two out, B8 singles. R3 scores, but just before he crosses the plate, his helmet comes off and lands in fair territory. F7 attempts to throw home to retire R2, but the throw hits R3's helmet and deflects away. R1 reaches third and B8 reaches second before F2 retrieves the ball.

- a. R3 is out because his helmet came off.
- b. R3 can be called out if the helmet was intentionally removed.
- c. R2 is out because of the "interference."
- d. Play on.

3. Leading off an inning, B6 bunts the ball to the first-base side of the pitcher's mound. F1 misplays the ball and deflects it into the baseline. B6 kicks the ball and it goes into the dugout.

- a. B6 is out for being hit by a batted ball.
- b. B6 is always out for kicking the ball.
- c. B6 is out only if he intentionally kicked the ball.
- d. If it is ruled B6 did not intentionally kick the ball, B6 is awarded first base.
- e. If it is ruled B6 did not intentionally kick the ball, B6 is awarded second base.

4. With R1 on first, B4 hits a line drive to left-center field. As R1 slides into third base, he dislodges the base from its anchor. The base moves several feet into foul territory. The throw from F8 hits R1 and deflects back into left field. R1 gets up and attempts to score and B4 attempts to advance as well.

- a. R1 is out for interference.
- b. B4 must touch the bag, wherever it is.
- c. B4 need only touch the area where third base should be.
- d. The ball is immediately dead when the base becomes dislodged.

at a minimum, for an umpire to establish himself in the major leagues and gain the participants' respect.

I think that is especially true now, when, for various reasons including the replay system, there are so many new faces in the major league umpire ranks. I was curious to see if they would settle down and just play ball with a young guy behind the plate.

They did. After that little eruption, as far as I could tell, not a peep was said. Carapazza kept his composure and his zone right where it had been, and no one gave him any more grief. After awhile, the hometown fans even got off his back. Everyone just moved on. All of that impressed me all the more.

Sure, he is a major league umpire, but they are human and humans sometimes falter — and newer umpires tend to get more grief from players and managers than veterans. It is fairly rare, in my book, for a young umpire like Carapazza to command the kind of respect that he obviously does.

The way he handled himself that night really impressed me — and there's a lesson there for anyone looking to move up the ranks.

As a college supervisor for 22 years, I was often asked by young umpires what I paid attention to when evaluating umpires. I would tell them that in addition to the usual stuff, like

physical appearance, communication skills, handling situations, judgment, rules knowledge, solid game management, and the like, I wanted to see how they reacted when things got tough.

If they had a goofy situation or their strike zone seemed to temporarily go south — and especially if they made a call that caused a controversy and perhaps led to an ejection — could they recover and stay on an even keel? If not, I chalked them up as not ready for prime time. If they could, they had my attention.

Just as some players have the "it" factor, some umpires do, and it strikes me that Carapazza may be one of them. I thought he did everything right that night. First, he looked the part — not an ounce of body fat — and he had a decisive strike call and motion. Both go a long way toward earning respect. He was calling the outermost limits of the zone, making the batters swing the bat, but not cheating them by calling pitches two or three inches off the plate. Rule number one of calling pitches is to call strikes whenever possible. In particular, he was calling the high strike, which some umpires continue to be reluctant to do despite several years of being urged to do so by the powers-that-be.

Second, having called a borderline



Umpire Vic Carapazza of Palm Harbor, Fla., calmly listens to then-Washington Nationals manager Matt Williams following the ejection of Asdrubal Cabrera during game two of the 2014 NLDS playoffs at Nationals Park. Williams was eventually ejected, too, and Carapazza's handling of the situation showed why he was selected for the playoffs.

BRAD MILLS/USA TODAY SPORTSNEWS.COM

strike against Cabrera, and having gotten some heat for doing so, he came right back and rang up the same pitch for strike three. He knew he was likely to get challenged, and he was, but he made the call.

When Cabrera exploded on him, Carapazza never got excited or demonstrative, but instead just stood there and listened, looked Cabrera right in the eye and never wavered. And when Cabrera crossed the line and deserved to go, Carapazza did not go crazy with his signal. It was matter of fact. When Williams came out, Carapazza calmly listened and said a few things in a composed manner — until hearing the “magic words,” when he ejected Williams, but again in a low-key way. He did what needed to be done in a calm way.

What’s the lesson in all of this? There are so many good umpires at the college and high school level

today. Competition to advance is fierce, and umpires with ambition at any level must do something to separate themselves from the multitude of other umpires and attract the attention of the powers-that-be. Attending camps and clinics is one thing, as are networking, staying in top physical shape, honing one’s communication, people and game management skills, hustling on the field all of the time and keeping one’s nose clean.

But in the end, a large component of selling ourselves is handling things like Carapazza did. Don’t get flustered. Keep your focus. Have the guts to do what you have to do, but in a low-key way. Look people in the eyes when they’re confronting you, but don’t get overly worked up. Don’t let yourself be intimidated. And after an ejection, keep your zone exactly where it was before. Look like it is no

big deal and it isn’t your first rodeo, even if it is.

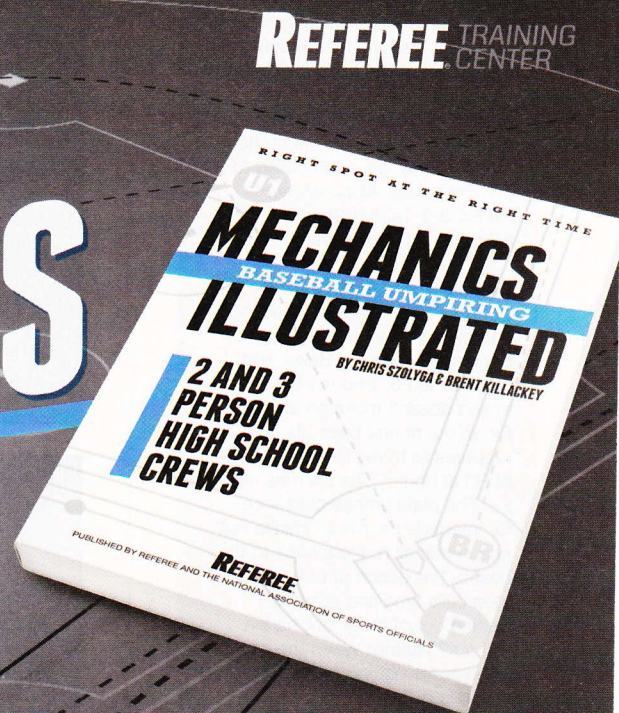
Obviously those sorts of things put Carapazza in a position where he was chosen for a Division Series after a relatively brief time in the big leagues. And, just as obviously, they have resulted in his commanding the type of respect, at a relatively early stage in his career, where, after having to eject two participants in the bottom of the 10th inning in an important game before an animated home crowd, he could just move on down the road without further ado.

Aspiring umpires at any level of the amateur ranks can take a lesson from what Carapazza did and didn’t do — and if they do, they may find themselves moving up the ladder at a far more rapid pace than otherwise.

Jon Bible, Austin, Texas, is a veteran umpire who has worked six NCAA Division I College World Series. □

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CASEPLAYS

Fielder Collides With Umpire

Play: R1 is on first base when B3 bunts the ball between the mound and first base. F1 converges on the ball as F4 moves to cover first base, but F1 runs into the base umpire and is unable to throw to F4. B3 is safe at first while R1 goes to second. **Ruling:** The play stands. The fielder is responsible for avoiding the umpire (NFHS 2-21-2; NCAA 2-51; pro 2.00 interference).

Winning Run Assist?

Play: The game is tied, with one out in the bottom of the final inning, and team A has the bases loaded. B7 hits a fly ball to right field. F9 catches the ball and immediately throws home. The off-target throw is not in time, but R3 misses the plate. Team A begins to celebrate, as teammates pile on R3 behind the plate area. Meanwhile the first-base coach, realizing the umpire hasn't made a call, screams at his runner to retouch. F2 is trying to tag R3. **Ruling:** The umpire should call time when members of the offensive team leave the dugout, as that is a violation. R3 cannot be permitted to retouch the plate during the dead ball. As long as the defense doesn't leave the field, the defense can appeal R3's missed base. Additionally, R1 and R2 can be called out for abandonment the moment they leave the bases to join the pileup. All codes agree (NFHS 3-3-1a, 8-4-2p; NCAA 5-2c, 8-5c; pro 2.00-interference, 5.06).

Batting Out of Order

Play: With runners on second and third and no outs, Charles erroneously bats for Baker and grounds to F3, who is playing in and doesn't make an attempt for an out at first base. As F3 prepares to throw to F2 for a tag of R3 at home, Charles runs into F3. The plate umpire calls time for interference, rules Charles out and sends all runners back to their bases. The coach of the defense then calls time and appeals batting out of order. Is Charles still out? **Ruling:** When the coach appeals for batting out of order, Baker is declared out for failing to bat in proper order and the new proper batter is Charles with runners on second and third and one out (NFHS 7-1-1 Pen.; NCAA 7-11a; pro 6.07).

Sell, Sell, Sell!

A routine play on the bases doesn't need anything more than a routine signal and verbal declaration.

There are some plays, however, that don't fall in the routine category. One example is when the batter-runner and ball arrive almost simultaneously at first base.

In those cases, umpires can add to their credibility with a little something extra in both voice and body language — a technique that's commonly called "selling" the call.

As shown in PlayPic A, if the batter barely beats the throw, the umpire can step toward the base with one foot, thrust out his or her arms and loudly announce, "Safe!"

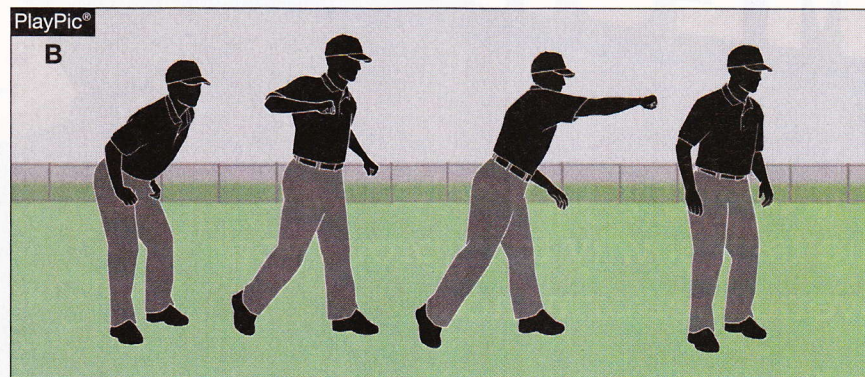
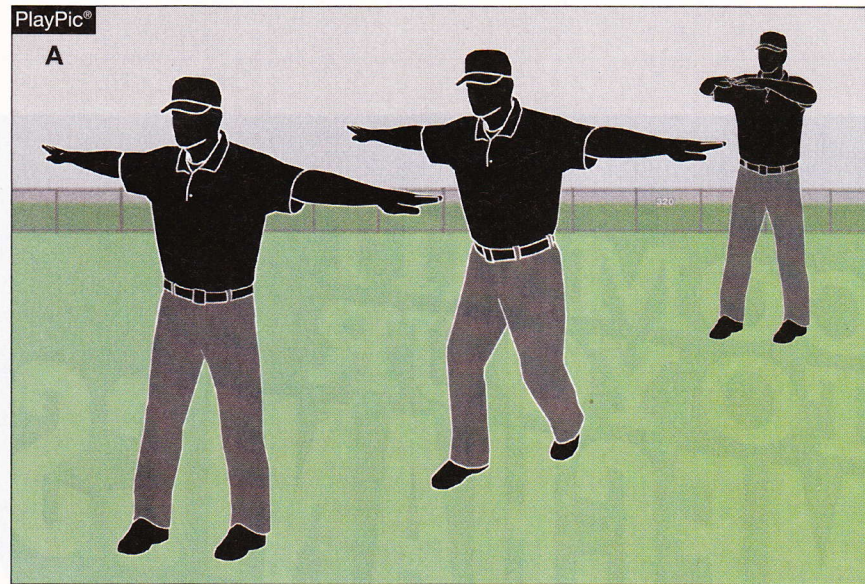
Where the ball barely beats the

runner, the umpire can be equally demonstrative with what's called the "punch out," also shown in PlayPic B. The umpire can step to the base with one foot, bring his or her arm back as if preparing to throw a punch and following through while shouting, "Out!"

In either case, the movement should remain crisp and controlled, and the vocalization strong. The idea is to exude confidence, not over-excitement. If an umpire looks out of control, judgment could be called into question.

There are also cases where the umpire can add an additional signal and verbalization to emphasize they have seen certain elements of

See "Sell" p.18 ▶



5 MINUTES WITH JIM PARONTO

Exit interview with former NCAA secretary-rules editor.

REFEREE: What was it like being secretary-rules editor for 12 years?

PARONTO: It was a rewarding time. It got hectic right before and during the season, and then it would slow down a little bit in the summertime, and then it would start back up. Actually, I really enjoyed being the secretary-rules editor, and being a part of baseball, being able to help coaches, being able to help players with questions. I really enjoyed it.

REFEREE: In your 12 years, what do you feel was the most significant rule change to college baseball?

PARONTO: I think the rules committee's insight into the slide rule helped protect student-athletes. I think any of the rules that were enacted that dealt with safety have to be looked at as positive changes.

REFEREE: How do you explain the P/DH rule to a new umpire?

PARONTO: If a coach comes up and says, "I'm going to do this," I figure he knows the rule. But if he comes up and says, "Can I do this?" I figure he doesn't know the rule so I'm going to tell him no. It is a complicated rule, and I think we all have to really be on our toes and play some scenarios before the season starts. What can they do? What can they not do?

REFEREE: If you were still going to be the secretary-rules editor the next four years, what changes would you like to see implemented in baseball?

PARONTO: I think one is to get rid of the third-to-first move. It's time consuming, not effective. I know it's there to control the running game, but it may work once in a season at some level. That would be one that I think we should consider, and make another shot at the instant replay for the regular season as well as during the postseason. I know it's different because not every facility has the video capabilities that we could go to instant replay like they do in the postseason. That's important. I wouldn't say those are major, but I think they would streamline the game a little bit.

REFEREE: What does the future hold for you now?

PARONTO: I'm still coordinating the umpiring for the Mountain West Conference and for the Scenic West Athletic Conference, junior college conference in the west, and I have, with the passing of Ross Barlow, taken

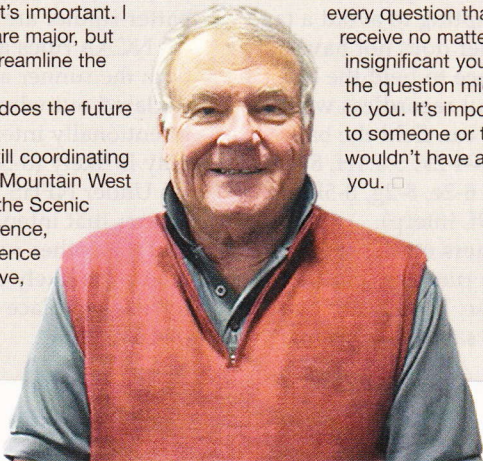
Resides: Grand Junction, Colo.

Experience: Former NCAA secretary-rules editor. More than 40 years experience in baseball umpiring. Has worked the National Junior College World Series 15 times. Has also been assigned the Mountain West, Western Athletic and Pac-10 (now Pac-12) conference tournaments. Selected to work the Division I Regionals in 1999.

over the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference and the Rocky Mountains. I'm involved in the training. I assist in the summertime with the Wounded Warrior Umpire Academy for our wounded warriors who are coming back from deployment that want to find something else that they can do that they enjoy once they get out of the service completely. I still help the Connie Mack and the Connie Mack World Series in Farmington, N.M. I help select and assign the umpires for the Junior College World Series in Grand Junction, Colo. I umpired for 15 years in the Junior College World Series over the last 25. It's a great tournament. Great teams, over a nine-day period. It's super, a lot of fun.

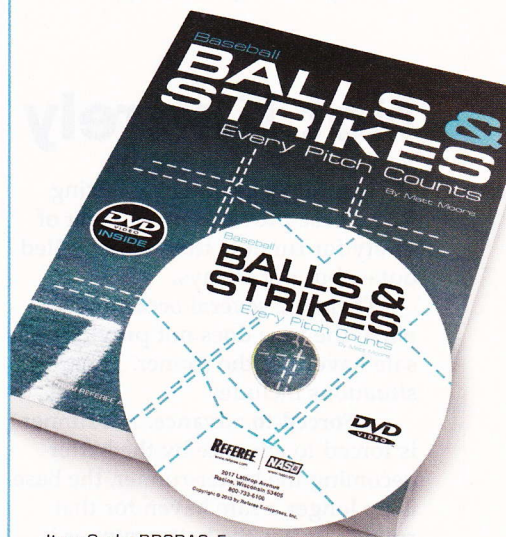
REFEREE: What advice would you give Randy Bruns as the new secretary-rules editor?

PARONTO: Stay the course. But there's no question that is too insignificant. Try to get back and answer or offer a response to every question that gets submitted. Yes, I know, sometimes it gets to be very trying, and you work your real job all day and come home at night and the family says, "How come you're on the computer four or five hours every evening?" I believe that if they ask a question, they deserve that answer as quickly as possible so they can get on with their coaching or their playing, whatever it may be. Stay the course, and respond to every question that you receive no matter how insignificant you feel the question might be to you. It's important to someone or they wouldn't have asked you. □

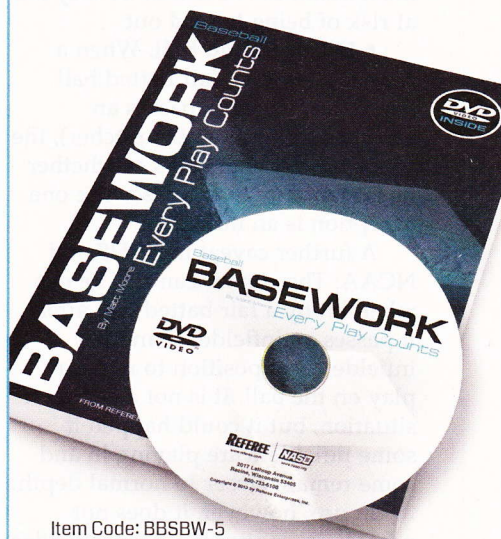


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► **Sell**
continued from p.16

a play. That can be accomplished by pointing to the action and verbalizing what is seen based on the circumstances of the play. For example, on a play at first where the first baseman is pulled off the bag to catch the throw and he regains contact just prior to the runner arriving, the umpires can point to

the base and verbalize, “Yes, he had the bag.” That would be followed by a strong out call.

A point and appropriate verbalizations can also be deployed on an awkward tag play or where the tag was barely applied.

The idea behind the point and verbalization is for the umpire to leave no doubt that he or she saw the play and rendered an accurate judgment — reducing the likelihood

of a coach coming out to challenge the call.

Ultimately, the “sell” is used so that coaches, players and fans “buy” into an umpire’s ability to correctly judge the play.

It is also important that umpires reserve the “sell” for plays that truly deserve it.

Overuse makes it a less effective tool for the umpire and can harm an umpire’s credibility. □

Not Entirely Safe While on the Base

Generally speaking, achieving a base provides an element of safety for runners from being called out — but not always.

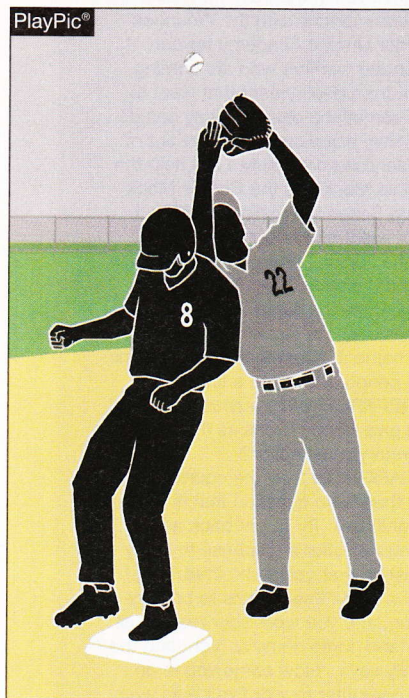
There are several occasions when the base does not provide safe haven for the runner. Those situations include:

- **Forced to advance.** If a runner is forced to advance by the batter becoming the batter-runner, the base is no longer a safe haven for that runner, unless the batter-runner is retired first. In those cases, runners must attain the next base or they are at risk of being tagged out.

- **Hit by batted ball.** When a runner is hit by a fair batted ball before it touches or passes an infielder (other than the pitcher), the runner is out regardless of whether he is standing on the base. The one exception is an infield fly.

A further caveat in NFHS and NCAA: The runner can still be out when hit by a fair batted ball after it passes an infielder if another infielder is in position to make a play on the ball. It is not a common situation, but it could happen if some infielders are playing in and some remain closer to normal depth.

In pro, however, it does not necessarily matter if a deeper fielder could have made a play. The key is whether the first (shallower) fielder had a chance to field it. If so, and he chose not to, the runner would not be out. Whether the fielder had a legitimate chance to field the ball is a judgment call. The guideline



for “a chance to field it” is if the ball passes within an arm’s reach of the fielder. The “step-and-a-reach” guideline applies only when a runner is attempting to avoid a tag. If the first fielder does not have a legitimate chance to field the ball, the runner is out regardless whether another fielder can field the ball (NFHS 5-1-1f, 8-4-2k, 5.1.1H, 8.4.2I, 8.4.2 K; NCAA 6-2e, 8-2g, 8-5k, interp; pro 5.09f, interp).

- **Two runners on the same base.** Only one runner is entitled to occupy a base. If there are two runners on the same base, a smart

catcher will tag them both, just to be safe. That also gives umpires an extra moment to make sure they are calling out the right runner. Unless forced to advance by the batter becoming the batter-runner, a runner does not lose the right to occupy a base. In those cases, the preceding runner is out. If forced to advance by the batter becoming a batter-runner, the runner that is forced to advance is out.

- **Intentional acts.** A runner does not have to vacate his base to permit a fielder to catch a fly ball in the infield, as shown in the PlayPic, but they may not interfere. Regardless of whether a runner legally occupies a base, doing anything deliberately to impede the fielder making a play on the ball — even a thrown ball in the case of an intentional act — will result in an interference call (NFHS 8-2-8).

In pro, if the umpire judges that the runner “willfully and deliberately” interferes with the “obvious intent to break up a double play,” both the runner and the batter-runner are called out (6.01).

NCAA rules are similar, with both the runner and batter-runner declared out when a runner intentionally interferes and a double play is likely (8-5d).

Under NFHS rules, both the runner that intentionally interferes and the “other runner involved” — where the likely double play could have taken place — are called out (8-4-2g). □