

In baseball, where disagreements over calls are bound to occur, how those disagreements are handled can determine whether the situation cools down or blows up. Vic Maldonado of El Paso, Texas.

NOT-SO-CRAZY TALK

Five Maxims to Prevent Communication 'Blow-Ups'

By Peter Jaskulski

Umpiring a baseball game poses many challenges. In a single game, hundreds of decisions are made involving balls and strikes, fair, foul and out and safe calls. The stress level can be high.

Add in the probability that you will be recorded on someone's camera. You don't want to do or say "bad" things on video. You want to look good.

It's highly unlikely that everyone is going to agree with all of your calls. Therefore conflict rears its ugly head.

It's inevitable that conflict will occur. You can't avoid it, but you can effectively manage it so the game can continue and you can look good.

We lose too many motivated umpires who become discouraged by the amount of conflict that occurs during a game. They aren't prepared to handle the conflict effectively, which can lead to negative outcomes for them. So they quit. We need to train umpires in effective conflict management skills so we can retain these motivated umpires.

Every human being values being treated with dignity. Baseball coaches, players and umpires are no different. How do we accomplish that? We accomplish it by showing each other respect. Consider this statement: "Can we agree to treat each other with dignity by showing each other respect, even though

we may disagree?" Umpires are not always treated with respect by players and coaches. We can't focus on that disrespectful behavior and let it affect how we treat others. Umpires have to remain professional in their response to being treated disrespectfully.

There are five "Maxims of Communication" that form the foundation of conflict management for umpires. These maxims demonstrate your respect for the coaches and players.

1. Listen to the players/coaches with all of your senses.

2. When appropriate, ask; don't tell players/coaches to do something.

VICTOR CALZADA

3. When appropriate, explain and set the context for your calls/decisions.

4. Give players/coaches options rather than threats.

5. When appropriate give players/coaches a second chance.

Listening to players and coaches with all of your senses means that you hear and interpret accurately what is being said to you and others during the game (not just during the conflict). The opposite of talking should be listening, but for some umpires the opposite of talking is waiting to interrupt the player and/or coach to give them our explanation.

Listening conveys empathy, which is an effective tool in generating a positive relationship during conflict. Listening is not just hearing. Observe the interactions between teams. Pay attention to everything around you. By observing you get a sense of how the game is progressing. Are coaches frustrated with their players, the other team or maybe the umpires? Listening allows you to gather intelligence which allows you to prepare to handle any conflict that may occur. You don't want to be surprised and have it "blow up in your face." You want to have a well-planned response to the conflict.

The next four "maxims" are conditional. The condition is that the players and/or coaches are behaving in a manner that allows you to talk with them in a rational manner. If their behavior requires a bench restriction or ejection, then you have to take action.

Step into the role of a baseball or softball coach. There's a close call on the bases and your bench moans and groans about the call. The umpire says this to you: "Keep your bench quiet." Is that a request or an order? It's an order. Giving orders can create conflict and escalate the situation.

We should be asking people rather than telling them to do things (when it is appropriate). You can simply ask this of the coach: "Coach, can you help me out here and keep your bench quiet?" This is non-

confrontational and demonstrates respect for the coach.

An umpire should always be prepared to answer this question: "Why?" We don't have to explain every call but there are times when umpires have to explain why we made a particular call or why we are asking someone to do something. The explanation may be why you awarded bases on an obstruction or why you called a runner out on an interference play. An explanation helps to promote decisiveness and authority in a respectful manner. It demonstrates your knowledge and competency as an umpire.

Not all explanations satisfy a coach or player. They may continue to dispute your call or decision. You've already explained why you have made the call. Now it's time to continue to play the game. What do you do next? Is it time to eject? They haven't said or done anything that warrants an ejection, so what should you do?

You should offer the coach options, not threats (maxim no. 4). Here's an example. "Coach, I've explained the call. This is a good game. Let's get back to the dugout so we can continue." You can then follow up with a negative option such as, "If you don't go back to the dugout I will have to eject you." He now has a decision to make. It becomes his choice.

The final maxim is to "give players and coaches a second chance" (when you can). Baseball is a sport full of emotion. Not everyone will agree with your calls, which leads to spontaneous outbursts. As long as the behavior doesn't reach a level that is unsportsmanlike, give them a second chance. Address the behavior respectfully and professionally.

A great umpire is one who can talk a player or coach out of being ejected while still maintaining control of the game.

Pete Jaskulski, Franklin, Wis., is a high school and college baseball umpire and a training consultant on Verbal Defense and Influence for Sports Officials for Vistelar. □

QUICKTIP

While pro and NCAA rules do not allow courtesy runners, NFHS rules allow their use by state adoption. The suggested NFHS rules allow the team at bat to use a courtesy runner for the pitcher and/or catcher, **but the same individual runner may not be used as a courtesy runner for both positions during the game.** Players who have participated in the game in any other capacity may not serve as a courtesy runner.

THEY SAID IT

"You have three responsibilities. Your first is to the game of baseball, but that doesn't necessarily mean the commissioner's office. Your second is to your profession, but that doesn't necessarily mean the union, it means the profession. And the third responsibility is to do in your heart what you know is honest, moral and correct. And if you keep 'em in that order, nothing that you do will be wrong."

— MLB umpire Joe West

SOURCE: NEW YORK TIMES

SIDELINE

Chalk Check

Lightning, rain, bus breakdown, traffic — those are common reasons why a high school baseball game gets delayed. But the April 11 game between Excelsior (Victorville) and Academy for Academic Excellence (Apple Valley) in California was delayed because of chalk. Specifically, the lack of it. School officials managed to get the batter's boxes and third-base line drawn before running out. More chalk was found quickly and the delay only pushed the start time back by approximately 20 minutes.



SOURCE: DAILY (VICTORVILLE) PRESS

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. R3 is on third, F5 holds the ball to attempt the hidden-ball trick. The catcher, not realizing what is going on, is granted time by the plate umpire. After the conference at the mound ends, the pitcher stands immediately behind the rubber as if in a pitching position but F5 still has the ball.
 - a. A balk is called.
 - b. A balk is called if and when F1 touches the rubber.
 - c. F5 should be told to give the ball back to F1.
 - d. A balk is called when the plate umpire puts the ball in play.
 - e. The base umpire can tell the plate umpire not to make the ball live because F1 does not have the ball.

2. With R1 on first and R3 on third, F1 balks but delivers immediately and hits B1 with the pitch.
 - a. B1 remains at bat.
 - b. B1 goes to first.
 - c. R1 remains at first.
 - d. R1 goes to second.
 - e. R3 remains at third.
 - f. R3 scores.

3. With no runners on base and one out, B1 with a 1-2 count swings and misses at a low pitch. The ball bounces off the dirt, hits the catcher's chest protector and rolls down the first-base line. In his haste to get to first, B1 kicks the ball into the dugout.
 - a. B1 is awarded first.
 - b. B1 is awarded first only if the umpire judges he would have made it safely had the ball not gone into the dugout.
 - c. B1 is out.
 - d. B1 is out only if the umpire judges the kick was intentional.

4. Which of the following are true?
 - a. The DH may bat only for the pitcher.
 - b. The DH is never allowed to play defense.
 - c. If the DH is batting for the pitcher, the pitcher may pinch hit for another defensive player.
 - d. The pitcher may pinch run, but only for the DH.
 - e. If the DH plays defense, the pitcher must leave the game.

Eyes Have It

By Stephen Wanamaker

To give yourself the best chance of getting a call correct, the most important factors are: 1) Get the best angle possible, 2) Be set for the critical action, and 3) Practice proper timing. Proper timing is one of the most difficult things for umpires to master, and even the best among us is bound to make a call too quickly from time to time. So how do we practice proper timing so that when we get a whacker that may decide the outcome of the game, we are calm, cool and collected?

You may not realize it, but you have literally thousands of opportunities every season to practice "proper use of eyes," which is the key component of good timing. As the base umpire standing in short right field between innings, do you watch the infielders' warmup throws as if you were calling a play each time? If you are not, then you are foregoing the opportunity to build the muscle memory necessary to have proper timing. From your position, watch the infielder throw the ball to F3. Judge the throw out of his hand (is it a true throw, or off-line), snap your head to the first-base bag and listen for the pop of the mitt. Then, and this is the critical part, allow your head and eyes (the bill of your cap should physically move up) to travel up to F3's mitt to judge secure possession and voluntary release. Then, and only then, should you mentally make your call. This is proper use of eyes and if you do this on every call, whether the runner is out by 10 feet, or on a real banger, then it's almost impossible to make your call too fast.

This is also an opportunity to practice read-steps. When you snap your head and eyes to the bag, read F3 and how he is striding to make the catch. Is he reaching toward the plate? Toward the right-field line? Straight at you? Use the throws to practice reading F3 and making a mental read-step in the proper



Tim O'Reilly of Noblesville, Ind., adjusts his hat while standing in shallow right field between innings — a period of time that offers an opportunity for base umpires to practice their timing.

direction to get the best angle. This is a more advanced drill and I recommend that you only move on to read-steps after you have built your muscle memory on your head and eyes traveling to the mitt to where it's automatic in live-game action.

Doing these drills between innings is an excellent opportunity to perfect timing. Use the time wisely and you'll vastly improve one of the most important aspects of being a great umpire.

Stephen Wanamaker, Laguna Niguel, Calif., umpires high school and college baseball. □

JIM WHITE

LIFE LESSONS FROM JIM JOYCE

BY RICK WOELFEL

Jim Joyce has spent two thirds of his summers on a ballfield. Now, however, he is beginning a new chapter in his life. The 61-year-old Joyce retired in January, bringing down the curtain on an umpiring career that spanned 40 seasons, including 29 in MLB.

Joyce was regarded as one of the best in his profession and his resume featured a long list of postseason assignments. He spoke with *Referee* and offered a unique perspective on his life and career, insights from which any official, at any level, might benefit.

ON HIS MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENT: I think the first accomplishment is getting out of the minor leagues and being selected to go to the major leagues. I think that was probably my very first satisfying experience that happened in my career because it doesn't happen that often, you know, you've got to be at the right place at the right time.

ON BEING CONSISTENT: I tried to be consistent every single day. And that not only meant applying the umpiring part of the game, but also the demeanor, the personality and putting everything together and trying to be consistent pretty much every single day. I think that was probably the most satisfying part (of my career) all the way through my 29 years. That goes along with your ability, your judgment, applying your experience, applying what you strive for every time you walk out there.

ON MAINTAINING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE: I kind of prided myself on trying to walk on the field every day with maybe a smile. I tried never to walk on the field looking like I was upset, or other things were bothering me or whatever, because you're going to work. And if you walk out and you don't look like you enjoy what you're doing, I think that's one of the things to overcome right away. (It's important), being able to walk out there and show people that you actually enjoy what you do.

ON HIS RETIREMENT: You start out and you think it's going to be forever and then all of a sudden you've been around 29 years and you just say, "Man, where did that go?" It went so fast I cannot believe it.

Mentally, I still feel like I'm a kid, but physically it's a very demanding job and that played a lot into my decision to retire.

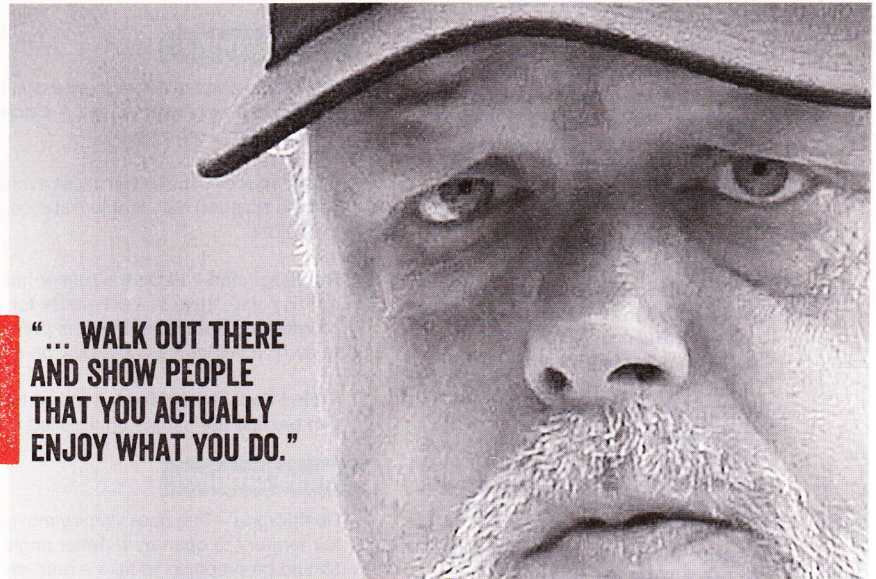
ON NOT WANTING TO STAY TOO LONG: I didn't want to be out there and have players and managers and

fans sit there and say, "Joyce was a pretty good umpire at one time, but now he's gotten to the point where things are starting to fail and he might be overstaying his welcome."

Joyce found himself the subject of unwanted attention on June 2, 2010, when he missed a call at first base that cost the Detroit Tigers' Armando Galarraga a perfect game. Nearly seven years later, he still thinks about that game.

ON WORKING THE PLATE THE NEXT DAY: Working the plate the next day was the best thing for me. If I had to stand on the field at another base, I would have stood there and just thought about it all day.

ON BEING ABLE TO DO HIS JOB IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE INCIDENT: It was really, really tough. The rest of that season after June 2 was probably the toughest season I ever put in in baseball overall. And then with the help of a lot of support, from my wife, my kids, my family, and just actually going back out there again and doing it again, slowly but surely, almost every day, things seemed to get easier to handle. I guess that's the best way to put it.



"... WALK OUT THERE AND SHOW PEOPLE THAT YOU ACTUALLY ENJOY WHAT YOU DO."

ON HOW HE THINKS ABOUT THE INCIDENT EVEN TODAY: It never strays very far from me. I know it's always going to be there but just the fact of how everything transpired from a negative to a positive and the support that I got from people I obviously don't even know and from people that I do know. I'm not going to say it was easier to handle because I don't think that's a fair term, but it was manageable. The adage is, "Time heals all wounds." To a certain degree that's true, but even to the day I retired and even afterward, I still think about it and you know, it's therapeutic to talk about it.

And I'm OK with the way things eventually turned out and I truly believe the whole situation turned into a big positive for a lot of people, me included. Obviously, it is what it is and basically I handled it the best way I possibly could have. □

CASEPLAYS

Run Scores?

Play: With runners on first and second and one out, B3 singles. R2 scores, but R1 is thrown out at the plate. B3 misses first and advances to second. The defense properly appeals the missed base.

Ruling: No runs score. A run cannot score when the third out is made by the batter-runner before he reaches first base safely (NFHS 9-1-1 Exc. a; NCAA 5-6c Exc. 1; pro 5.08a Exc. 1).

Valid Ejection?

Play: F1 makes a non-profane comment to F2 about calling for a pitchout on a 2-1 count. The plate umpire misinterprets the comment as having been directed toward the umpire's call of the pitch and ejects F1. F1 continues to protest and is ejected a second time.

Ruling: There are no provisions in any major baseball code for a "double ejection." If a player refuses to leave the field promptly after an ejection, the umpire may submit a report to the governing authority for follow-up discipline. Once a player is ejected, there is no provision for any appeal or retraction. The umpire may note any extenuating circumstances in the ejection report (NFHS 10-1-6; NCAA 3-6d; pro 8.01d).

Appeal Canceled?

Play: If a pitcher throws a ball into dead-ball territory while making an appeal, is the appeal allowed? **Ruling:** Under NFHS rules, an appeal may be made while the ball is dead; therefore there is no reason to make a live-ball appeal. If, however, such an appeal were made, a throw into dead-ball territory would not cancel the appeal. In NCAA and pro ball, a throw into dead-ball territory cancels the appeal (NFHS 8-2-6c; NCAA 8-6b-5; pro 5.09c).

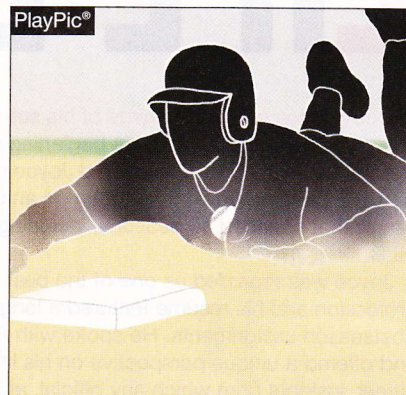
Switcharoo

Play: F2 twists his knee running the bases and is limping slightly. The coach wants to keep F2 in the lineup, so he tells him to switch positions with F5. They do so, but the plate umpire is not informed. What is the penalty? **Ruling:** There is no penalty. Even if there had been a substitution, there would not be a penalty as non-pitcher substitutes are legally in the game when play commences (NFHS 3-1-1; NCAA 5-5g AR; pro 5.10j).

Uniformly Lodged

In NFHS play, when the ball becomes lodged in an offensive player's uniform, as seen in the PlayPic, each runner is awarded one beyond his last legally acquired base if, in the umpire's judgment, the runner was attempting to advance at the time (8-3-3f).

Play 1. The batter hits a single to right and gets caught in a rundown between first and second. During the rundown, the ball becomes lodged in the batter-runner's shirt while he is (a) headed toward first, or (b) headed toward second. **Ruling 1.** The ball is immediately dead in both cases. In (a), the batter-runner is placed on first and in (b) the batter-runner is awarded second. If there



were other runners on base, they would move up if forced to advance because of the award to the batter-runner.

Plate umpire:

Fair/Foul – First order of business is determining the ball's location when it's touched or comes to rest. A catcher coming up the line risks blocking the plate umpire's view.

Interference – The runner must avoid the fielder who is in the act of fielding a batted ball. In this instance, he does not appear to interfere with the fielder.

Running Lane – While the runner has both feet within the three-foot running lane, there is a possibility for a running-lane violation as the play progresses. Note: The runner is permitted to go outside the running lane to avoid a fielder making a play on a batted ball.

Pulled Foot/Swipe Tag – If asked by the base umpire, the plate umpire can provide assistance on a pulled foot or swipe tag at first base.

Base umpire:

Positioning – The base umpire moved from position A aggressively into fair territory to open up a better angle on the throw. The base umpire should be prepared to take a read-step or otherwise adjust if the throw is bad.

Listen/Watch – Listen for the ball hitting the first baseman's glove and observe the batter's foot hitting the bag; then, make sure the first baseman has secure possession of the ball before ruling an out.

Pulled Foot/Swipe Tag – While going for help before making a call is accepted at some levels, the base umpire usually has enough information to make an initial call. Worst case, umpires can confer after the play.

Bad Throw – On an overthrow (which will usually end up in right field when the throw originates from along the first-base line), the base umpire will rotate into the infield and take the runner into second.

Plate umpire Brent Cunningham, Troutville, Ore., and base umpire Craig Compton, Lakeview, Ore.



If the lodged ball occurred during a play when the batter-runner was attempting to reach first base, the batter-runner will be awarded first and the runners advance one base if they are forced by the batter-runner going to first base.

Play 2. R1 on first and R3 on third, the batter hits toward F6. The throw from F6 lodges in the batter-runner's shirt prior to the batter-runner touching first base. **Ruling 2.** The ball is dead immediately. The batter-runner is awarded first base. R1 moves up to second because he was forced to advance because the batter-runner was awarded first. R3 is returned to third because he was not forced to advance and has to return to the last based occupied at the time of the infraction.

In NCAA, when the batted or

thrown ball lodges in the player's uniform, the ball is dead and the umpires award bases at their discretion (8-31).

In pro, a lodged ball in a player's uniform is not covered in the rulebook. The MiLB Umpire Manual outlines the following: If a batted ball inadvertently goes into a player's uniform, the ball is dead and the umpire will place all the runners in such a manner that will nullify the action of the ball going out of play. Any outs recorded prior to the ball going into the player's uniform will stand.

If a fair-batted ball or thrown ball (other than on a pitch) lodges in an umpire's equipment or uniform, the ball is immediately dead and the umpire awards each runner two bases. It is the same for all levels. □



BUSY BASELINE

With no runners on base and a bunt or soft grounder down the first-base line, there's a lot for both the plate umpire and base umpire to observe.

DALE GARNER



"#1 on my list!"

- Ronald Eason ★★★★★



"Huge selection of high quality products."

- Brad Woof ★★★★★

"Ordering online is so easy."

- Matt Bratcher ★★★★★

"Amazingly fast shipping!"

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