

PLATE UMPIRE MECHANICS

SET POSITION

The plate umpire stands comfortably in the slot position waiting for the pitcher to begin the pitch. During the windup and before the pitch is released, the plate umpire must get into the 'SET' position. To do this:

- ❖ Bend at the knees to lower the body.
- ❖ Keep the back as straight as possible.
- ❖ The umpire's eyes need to be as low as the top of the strike zone.
- ❖ Without moving any part of the body follow the pitched ball from the pitcher's hand into the catcher's glove. Use the nose to follow the ball through the strike zone.

CALLING BALLS AND STRIKES

While still down in the set position make the verbal 'ball' or 'strike' call before making any movement. After making the call, then you stand. If it was a 'strike' call give a good, crisp strike signal after you have stood up. Make all calls, balls and strikes, in a loud voice. When verbalizing the call, do not give the ball/strike number except for the last one.

- ❖ Ball... ball... ball... ball four
- ❖ Strike... strike... strike three

Do not verbalize a swinging strike.

You should not say, "Ball four, batter take your base" nor "Strike three, batter is out". Simply make your ball four or strike three call. However, with very young batters you may still have to direct them if they do not move.

GIVING THE COUNT

If you give the count often enough you will not be asked for it constantly by players and coaches. Always give the count after a delay in the game; e.g., after an injury or time-out. Give the count when the count reaches ball three and/or strike two. When you announce the count use a loud and clear voice giving the ball count first followed by the strike count. At the same time give the signal using the left hand to show the ball count and the right hand to show strike.

NEVER SAY 'FULL COUNT' - IT IS 'BALL THREE, STRIKE TWO'

MOVEMENT ON HITS

The plate umpire is not glued to a position behind the catcher. When the pitch is hit into fair territory there is virtually always somewhere that the plate umpire must move to.

- ❖ Remove your mask with the left hand.
- ❖ Leave from the left side of home plate.
- ❖ At this time we cannot go into every possible situation and where the plate umpire should go. But here are a few. Once the ball is hit:
 - On an infield hit with no other runners, or a runner on first only, follow the batter-runner towards first along the first base foul line.
 - On a fly ball to the outfield move at an angle toward the play.
 - On a ground ball to the outfield at least move along the third base foul line part way to third. Observe the play and be ready to react.
 - On balls hit near the foul line, align your body so that you are straddling the line to get the proper perspective as the ball bounds past a base or it first touches the ground beyond the base.
 - Be ready to assist your partner by covering third base.
- ❖ In all situations, come to a full stop before you make a call.

OTHER

The home plate umpire in a two-umpire system:

- Makes all fair/foul calls
- Makes the infield fly call (if it is being used)
- Makes all catch/no catch calls