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MESSAGE FROM: Greg Schmidt, CCSUA Chairman, SUP Regional Advisor

Hello Everyone,

The 2013 conference season is rapidly approaching. We made it through fall ball, meetings, camps and tournaments.

I believe I was most impressed by our umpires coming prepared to work this year and not just using these opportunities as a warm up. This says a lot about the character of the people we have working the games. We are not in it just to show up; but rather we are building a real desire to service the game, student athletes and institutions that we work for.

CCSUA has a tremendous staff of trainers, observers and mentors to help umpires become better officials. To them I say thank you for your diligent, hard work. It takes many people dedicated to the game to make us one of the best training opportunities in the country for new and veteran officials.

For the first time this summer CCSUA will be observing at an ASA tournament. Thanks to Chris Drumm for helping to make this possible. We will be looking for officials who would like to join the college ranks while still continuing their ASA careers. These are exciting times.

It has been a busy pre-season and will be an exciting conference and post season. Good luck to everyone, stay healthy and remember **EVERY PITCH, EVERY TIME.**

Greg

FOCUS AND PREPARTION

Are you having fun, Yet!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We are heading into our second month of games and it seems like it went too fast! A lot of changes of availability due to rainouts, as well as feedback from assignors, coaches and observers have taken place over the last month. Although many changes have taken place, some things should never change regarding being focused and prepared for each game.

If you have a pre-game routine, such as working-out, eating certain foods, leaving in ample time to arrive at your game, etc., continued to follow your routine, as these major and minor details will also keep you calm and focus to work your game. When things change out of the ordinary on game day, it may also distract you when you get to the game-site and cause you to be unfocused at the beginning or throughout your game.

In the March issue of *Referee Magazine* under Softball “Quick Tip” it talks about establishing a pre-game routine that includes both physical and mental items, such as “wearing the same socks or putting on your equipment in the same order before every game, as it helps to bring the game into focus from the beginning. Once you take the field, make routine a part of your game. Get **set the same way, at the same time for every pitch. Work with the same timing every pitch.**”

When you are out of sync mentally it does affect you physically and will be apparent to your partners, observers, coaches, players and fans once you arrive at the game-site and/or begin your game.

If you don't have a routine, set one for yourself before, arriving and during your game, and see what an advantage this will be in helping you remain focused and prepared throughout the season.

IMPORTANT ASSIGNORS INFORMATION REMINDER!!

From Joanne, Jim and Rich:

A “NEW” updated bat list was issued on February, 21, 2013. Please make sure that when you send your pre-email to the coaches you informed them that they must have the “NEW” updated list.

CHECKING BATS

Prior to each game, you must check the bat list. That means prior **TO THE SECOND GAME OF A DOUBLEHEADER**, you must check the bat list.

Why?

The bat list is a legal document, which will be used in a court of law regarding liability and negligent issues if a player, coach, team personnel or fan is injured. In order to protect

ourselves and our families from being found liable and negligent the NCAA has provided us with a valuable tool called the “**APPROVED BAT LIST**.” If we follow the proper protocols for checking the bats prior to **EACH** game we umpire, which includes the second game of a double header, it will be hard for any juror or judge to hold an umpire(s) financially liable for “Neglecting their Duty.”

CLUTTERED BAT LISTS

Please send us (Assignors) an email letting us know when a bat list has been used too many times and is cluttered. We will notify the Commissioner of the Conference.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT CORNER

When you think no one is watching “you” umpire, know that EVERYONE is watching, including someone of importance.

KUDOS!

We would like to acknowledge Joe Campanella and Ronnie Strange for doing a great job at the D-II Leadoff Classic in Tuscon, AZ. Nice job gentlemen!

REALITY vs. PERCEPTION

Perception is reality.

“As officials you are being judged on everything you do. And those judgments will often not be based on fact, but on what is perceived.

If you are overweight, it’s predetermined that you are out of shape and won’t be able to be in position for a play. Therefore, when there is a close play that requires you to move quickly, you can expect disagreement because there is no way that ‘fat’ official could have been in position to see it correctly.

Opinions are formed about you from the time you arrive at the game until the time you leave. Most of those opinions will have no basis in fact as they relate to your actual officiating. People will make judgments about you whether you are old or young, short or tall, thin or fat, etc. There is nothing you can do to overcome those perceptions on that day because what the people who are judging you see is their “reality.”

What you have to do is make changes so that they change their perception. Lose weight, get a haircut, have a pressed uniform. If possible, change whatever it is that you feel is

causing you to be received in a negative light. Give people a reason to form a positive perception and be happy to see you walking on to their field.

The above-mentioned statement is another principle from the Referee Magazine article regarding REALITY vs. PERCEPTION. It is amazing how people perceive you according to a multitude of things due to their own beliefs and prejudice. It is not your job to try and find out what you can do to appease a coach. However, it is your job to be professional and courteous during your check-in and pre-game meeting with coaches, so that they feel comfortable in knowing that their game will be officiated with the utmost respect and integrity.

RULES CORNER

The answer to last month's rule question regarding the difference in the Effects between a Fair Batted Blocked Ball contacting loose offense equipment vs. contacting loose equipment belonging to the defense can be found on page 94, Rule 9.9.1 and 9.9.2

This month rule's trivia question is: Do you know what constitutes an illegal player? And what is the "one" effect/penalty for any rule situation regarding an illegal player in the game?

The answer will be noted in our April Newsletter.

TARP RULE:

More and more schools have tarps located in the live-ball playing area. Familiarize yourselves with the Tarp Rule, Section 2.24 on page 34 of our Rules book. Basically a fielder can use any part of her body on any portion of the tarp to make a catch, except a **FOOT!** If she places a **FOOT** on any part of the tarp in attempt to make a catch the play is dead and there is no catch.

If after a catch has been made and the player somehow contacts the tarp with a foot, the out will remain, as this contact had no bearing on the catch. The rule uses the words "...attempting to catch a fly ball..." If this situation occurs, the play also remains live, as the tarp is located in live-ball territory.

VISUAL OBSTRUCTION:

We are seeing an increase, with a runner on first base, of coaches arguing that the first baseperson is blocking the runner's view of seeing the release of the pitch. Is this visual obstruction? Here is an outline of the issue and how to handle it.

The Rule

- 9.4.2.7 – A fielder shall not position herself in the base runner's line of vision to **INTENTIONALLY** distract her or **INTENTIONALLY** prohibit her from seeing the release of the pitch.

- This has the same penalty as obstruction for rounding or returning – warn once, then award a base.

When the offensive coach complains about F3 blocking R1's view

- Watch F3 to identify the complaint - is it:
 - ❖ R1 cannot see the coach's signals

Or

- ❖ R1 cannot see the release of the pitch
- Initially F3 may look back to the base in order to know where to position herself.
- If F3, after initially positioning herself, looks back at R1 one or two times, there is a good chance she is intentionally positioning herself in that spot on the field to block R1's view.
- If it happens more than once and the coach is complaining, then consider applying the rule by first using preventive umpiring:
 - ❖ Tell the defensive player (F3) to "pick your spot on the field, so you don't block the runner."
 - ❖ If she continues to do it, and you have decided that it is intentional – apply the rule and issue the warning. If it continues after the warning then the runner will receive the next base, by rule.

According to Dee Abrahamson.....

- ❖ The defensive player has a right to establish her defensive position
- ❖ If she re-adjusts, looking back at R1 or 1B, then it could be intentional.

When the defensive coach complains that this is their first baseman's normal position

In addressing visual obstruction to the player be prepared to also discuss the issue with the coach, as he/she will defend their player's positioning on the field by saying something to the effect of, "My player has a 'right to establish her defensive position anywhere on the field, which is exactly what she is doing."

Here is a suggested response:

"Yes, coach, you are correct - unless she is judged to be intentionally blocking the vision of the runner seeing the release of the pitch. By her actions of looking back at the runner on 1st base, I have judged she is doing this

intentionally. All she has to do is move a few feet from that spot."

In dealing with visual obstruction always be prepared to address this issue with the defensive coach, if he/she calls time to discuss their concerns about your "judgment." Handle this situation in the most respectful and expedient manner by using the "VERBIAGE of the rule inserting "in my judgment..... This rule is seldom enforced so expect the defensive coaches to question your judgment on applying it.

MECHANICS

Umpire-to-Umpire Signals

A college umpire prides himself or herself in being professional. Part of that professionalism includes adhering to the CCA Manual with respect to the established signals on the field. Although it may seem to be a small thing to some experienced umpires, giving the proper umpire-to-umpire signals at the appropriate time is an important item which creates efficient and standard behavior and leads to better Crewness.

When to give them

- CCA Manual, pages 292 and 294 - "...initiated by the plate umpire **prior to establishing a stance behind the catcher and/or the batter stepping into the batter's box.**"
- Just before stepping behind the catcher in preparation for the first pitch to the new batter.
- Give them only once. Position yourself so your partner(s) can see you.
 - a) Not when you are behind the catcher or batter.
 - b) Not when a coach is jogging back to the coach's box after checking an injured player at 2b.
 - c) Not when partners are running to their next position.
 - d) Not when you are away from the plate area-up 3b line in the holding zone area.

How to give them

- When the Infield Fly Situation is "On" use this signal:
 - a) Right hand, palm open (no closed fist!) on the left-side of your chest.
 - b) The OUTS should NOT be indicated as part of the signal - no index finger raised.
- When the Infield Fly Situation is "Off" use this signal:
 - a) Right hand in a wiping motion on the left forearm from the elbow to the wrist.
 - b) It is acceptable to use the "two out indicator" when there are two outs.
- When using the "Two-out" Indicator signal note the following:

- a) It is given before **every** batter when there are 2-outs; not just when runners are on base.
- b) Tap the wrist of the left arm with the first two fingers of the right hand in front of the body:
 - Not one finger on the wrist and the other in the air.
 - Not with the arm bent at the elbow with the forearm raised.
 - Not with wrists crossed and two fingers pointed outward like an “X” signal.

GAME MANAGEMENT

On the main page of the SUP Central Hub our National Coordinator, Donna Vavrinec, posted the below statement:

New Game Management Protocol:

The game has changed drastically with specialized position coaches. During the game when a question arises from a coach the umpire will answer the coaches’ question regardless if they are the head, co-head or assistant coach. If one of the assistant coaches is discussing the call and the head coach joins the conversation then a second umpire is needed to monitor the discussion. At this point the umpires should only engage the head coach regarding the play. If the second coach elects to stay to understand the ruling they should be allowed to listen to the explanation. Whenever there are two coaches engaged in a discussion there should be two umpires. If you are working three-umpire system, the third umpire will continue to monitor the teams and view the discussion by the umpires.

PHOTO CORNER



Thanks to Joanne Venditto and John Bennett for contributing to this month’s newsletter!

Knowledge is Power and Experience is the best teacher.