

To: CIF Umpires
From: Ken Allan
Date: April 23, 2007
Re: 2007 Memo #2

It appears the season is going well with no major problems. However, in the past few weeks I have noticed or had the following brought to my attention:

1) BATTER'S BOX RULE

In some games, batters have walked to the edge of the home plate circle between pitches. This should be prohibited as there is no rule provision to allow it.

By rule, 7-3-1 (a-h), there are eight reasons a batter may leave the box without penalty. Please note that in the penalty section of this rule, if a batter leaves the batter's box, and DELAYS the game, a strike shall be called on the batter. The interpretation is that if a batter takes a step or two out of the box, and DOES NOT delay the game, his actions are within the framework of the rule. Please use good judgment in the enforcement of this rule.

2) GROUND RULES

Remember that ground rules may not supercede playing rules. Thus, for example, there is no provision for a ground rule triple. The ball is either in play or it is to be ruled a ground rule double if it goes out of play, such as under a fence. My recommendation is that if the obstruction is so far away that a coach is considering a triple, the ball (unless for safety reasons) should remain in play. There are no ground rule triples in high school baseball.

3) TIMING

Be sure the entire play is over before rendering a call. Many things can happen such as a dropped ball, a fielder missing the first tag but successfully making the second tag, etc. A good rule of thumb: No play is routine until it is over. Even if the play is called correctly, good timing will at least give the appearance you took the time to consider what you just saw.

4) PROFESSIONALISM

There is no place in umpiring at any level for arrogance, or stubbornness. As umpires, we need to understand that a coach may come out to get an explanation of a call (judgment or interpretation), to protect a player, to show his team he is backing them up, or for a variety of other reasons. If a coach comes out in a professional manner, it is our duty to listen and provide an explanation of a call or ruling. Our body language and eye contact should indicate that we are listening with interest as the coach presents his side of the issue. This does not provide that a coach may come out on every close judgment call. Whether a coach is abusing this is strictly umpire judgment.

Despite some isolated incidents, it appears that CIF umpires understand their role in being a patient listener. As the season nears its end, and teams are battling for playoff positions, umpires need to be much more aware of their role as a steadying influence on the game.

5) THE "GORILLA MOVE"

By NFHS rule, 6-1-3, the pitcher, while in a set position, must have his pitching hand down at his side or behind his back. A pitcher may not dangle his pitching arm in front of his body. This is a balk.