

**I Wish I'd Known THAT Rule!**

Ever wonder what's going on out there on the field? Unsure of what some of the rules are? Then read on. We will try to explain some of the ones that you may wonder about, and others that you just knew and were surprised when a ruling went against your team.

**So - in no particular order (Bold italics are used to indicate emphasis added to quoted rules):**

1) A pitch bounces, then hits the batter - is he awarded first? YES. And, there are two places to look in the rule book

- A. In the definition of **Ball** in Rule 2.00. *"A **BALL** is a pitch which does not enter the strike zone in flight and is not struck at by the batter. (NOTE: If the pitch touches the ground and bounces through the strike zone it is a **ball**. If such pitch touches the batter, the batter shall be awarded first base. If the batter swings at such a pitch and misses, it is a strike. If the batter hits such a pitch, the ensuing action shall be the same as if the batter hit the ball in flight.)"*
- B. In the definition of "In Flight" in Rule 2.00. *"IN FLIGHT describes a batted, thrown, or pitched ball which has not yet touched the ground or some object other than a fielder. If the pitch touches the ground and bounces through the strike zone, without being struck at by the batter, it is a "ball." If such a pitch touches the batter, that batter shall be awarded first base. If the batter hits such a pitch, the ensuing action shall be the same as if the ball was hit in flight."*

2) Question 1) B also answers "Can the batter hit a bounced pitch?" - yes he can and it is in play.

3) Is the hand part of the bat? The number one rule myth. The common sense answer is to look at a bat, then look at a player - which one has the hands attached? The rule that applies is the definition of "Person"

Rule 2.00. *"The **PERSON** of a player or umpire is **any part** of the body, clothing, or equipment."*

The hand is part of the player. This comes into play on a hit-by-pitch situation.

As the Little League case book "The Right Call" says: "The hands ARE NOT part of the bat. The hands ARE part of the arm. Just look in any anatomy book." (Emphasis theirs)

4) What is a Strike,? The rule is the definition of Strike in Rule 2.00.

*"A **STRIKE** is a legal pitch which meets any of these conditions -*  
*(a) is struck at by the batter and missed;*  
*(b) is not struck at, if **any part of the ball passes through any part of the strike zone**;*  
*(c) is fouled by the batter when there is less than two strikes;*  
*(d) is bunted foul (batter is out and ball is dead if batter bunts foul on third strike);*  
*(e) touches a batter's person **as the batter strikes at it** (dead ball);*  
*(f) touches the batter **in flight in the strike zone**; or*  
*(g) becomes a foul tip (ball is alive and in play)."*

5) Why didn't Joey get to go to first when he was hit with the pitch?

First, see Question 4), then Rule 6.08(b) *"The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out when the batter is touched by a pitched ball which the batter **is not attempting to hit unless (1) the ball is in the strike zone** when it touches the batter, **or (2) the batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched.** APPROVED RULING: When the batter is touched by a pitched ball which does not entitle that batter to first base, the ball is dead and no runner may advance."* (Of course we recognize that in Little League many players "freeze" when the pitch is coming at them and generally award first when situation 2) arises.)

And to clarify the dead ball situation Rule 5.09 (a) "The ball becomes dead and runners advance one base or return to their bases without liability to be put out when a pitched ball touches a batter, or the batters clothing, while in a legal batting position; runners, if forced, advance."

Bottom line, if a batter is hit by a pitch it is always a dead ball – time is immediately called. The batter may not get to go to first if he was attempting to hit the ball, or was struck while the pitch was in the strike zone. In these cases it is merely a strike. If such a pitch was strike three – he's out.

6) Did someone mention Foul Tip? The definition of foul tip in Rule 2.00:

*"A FOUL TIP is a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught. It is not a foul tip unless caught and any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and **the ball is in play**. It is not a catch if it is a rebound unless the ball has first touched the catcher's glove or hand."*

It is NOT a foul ball, and the umpires should NOT declare "foul" when a foul tip is hit. If the batter fouls the ball straight back and it is not caught but hits the umpire or goes to the backstop or whatever, it is NOT a foul tip - it is a foul ball.

7) "Hey ump! The batter is out of the box – he's out!" Well, maybe or maybe not.

*Rule 6.06: "A batter is out for illegal action when -  
(a) hitting the ball with one or both feet on the ground **entirely** outside the batter's box;  
(b) stepping from one batter's box to the other while the pitcher is in position **ready to pitch.**"*

NOTE: Pitcher's "positions" are Wind-up and Set, and are defined in 8.01.

The (b) section means that a batter can change batter's boxes at any time, with any count, UNLESS the pitcher is in position ready to pitch.

8) "TAG HIM, HE TURNED THE WRONG WAY!" Oops -

Rule 7.08(j) "A runner is out when failing to return at once to first base after overrunning or oversliding that base. If attempting to run to second the runner is out when tagged." NO direction is mentioned, only that there be no attempt to advance, so if no attempt is made to go to second, he cannot be tagged out.

9) Billy's only 10, why do you say he's 11?

Little League defines the league age of a player as the age acquired prior to September 1<sup>st</sup>. Billy may be 10 now, but if he turns 11 prior to September 1<sup>st</sup> he's considered 11.

For ASA Softball, a player's age is the age they were on December 31<sup>st</sup> of the prior year, so if Sally turns 13 on January 1<sup>st</sup>, she's considered to be 12.

10) Who can pitch, and, by the way, what is a pitch?

A pitch is a ball delivered by the pitcher to the batter (see Rule 2.00 "Pitch"). Thus, when counting pitches, warm up throws prior to the game or at the start of an inning do not count as pitches.

A pitcher removed from pitching may not pitch again in the same game. Note that if the game is suspended and resumed at a later date, it is still the same game.

Please see the "LL Pitch Count Regulation" for important additional information.

11) How much playing time is required?

A player **MUST** play a minimum of six defensive outs AND bat once in each game. If he fails to do so, he **MUST** start the next game, play the remaining requirements of the last game PLUS the complete requirements for the current game before being removed. To qualify for an at bat, the player must start with a 0-0 count and complete the at bat by becoming a runner or being put out.

12) What's an infield fly?

First, the infield fly rule is there to prevent the defense from obtaining a sure double play.

Rule 2.00 – "An **INFIELD FLY** is a **fair fly ball (not including a line drive or attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort**, when first and second, or first, second, and third bases are occupied before two are out. The pitcher, catcher, and any outfielder stationed in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule. When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare 'infield fly' for the benefit of the runners. If the ball is near the baseline, the umpire shall declare 'infield fly if fair.' The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of that ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball."

You will notice that there is no requirement that the ball be within the infield, only that the ball can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort. If an infielder is settled under the

ball, but an outfielder calls him off and catches it, it is still an infield fly because the infielder could have caught it with ordinary effort.

If the umpire fails to call an infield fly when the conditions were met, the umpires instructions and case books say that, if the defense got a double or triple play, to cancel the action and declare the batter out, but if less than two outs were achieved, to let the play stand.

### 13) Fair? Foul?

- 1) A fair or foul ball is always judged by the position of the ball, not the position of the fielder.
- 2) A ball that first touches the ground/fielder/fence BEYOND first/third base is adjudged fair or foul based on the ball's position at the moment the touch happens.
- 3) A ball that first touches the ground or a fielder BEFORE it reaches first/third is adjudged based on
  - a. If it stops moving, the position of the ball when it stops.
  - b. if touched by or touches a fielder, where the ball was when touched,
  - c. if it bounces past first/third, where the ball was when over (or even with) the base bag, not where it touched beyond the bag.
  - d. if, while on or over foul territory it touches an object 'foreign to the natural ground'. (e.g. fence, bat, coach, helmet, umpire, roof, speaker, etc.) it is a foul ball.
  - e. A batted ball that touches first or third base is fair.
  - f. Note that it does not matter where it first touched the ground.
- 4) The chalk lines, home plate, and bases are all in fair territory. The foul poles are in the equivalent of fair territory beyond the fence. A ball striking the foul pole in flight is a home run no matter where it goes after it hits the pole. A fair ball striking the foul pole after hitting the ground is an automatic two base advance by all runners (commonly called a ground rule double.)
- 5) A batted ball that strikes a batter while he is still in the batters box is a foul ball.
- 6) A batted ball which hits the ground and immediately comes up and strikes the bat a second time while the batter is still in the batter's box is a foul ball.

### 14) THAT'S INTERFERENCE!!! (offense interferes, defense obstructs)

Somewhat complicated but:

1) A runner must avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball – but the runner is also entitled to run to the next base. Merely crossing in front of a fielder is not interference. Jumping over the ball in the normal course of running the bases is not interference. Stopping to let the ball go by is not interference. If the runner touches the fielder, it is interference. If the runner does an unnatural act (arm waving, yelling, deliberately stopping in the path of the ball, etc. – that's interference.

2) Interference with a thrown ball must be judged as intentional before interference is called.

3) A batter cannot be expected to vaporize. Because there isn't enough time to react, a batter who is in the batter's box, and who makes no unnatural movements, is NOT guilty of interfering with a catcher's throw to stop a steal.

4) Interference for not being in the running lane (last half of the distance to first) has requirements a) there must be a throw; b) it must be a throw that could have retired the runner; c) the interference must be with the fielder taking the throw, not the fielder making the throw; d) the throw can be from anywhere on the field.

#### 15) THAT'S OBSTRUCTION!! (We don't call it enough)

A defender may not obstruct or hinder the runner (Contact is NOT necessary) unless he has the ball in his possession, or if it is necessary to move into the runner's path to catch the ball. The fielder may not set up in the baseline. A runner is NOT obstructed unless he has to alter his path and/or movements to avoid the fielder.

If obstruction is determined.

a) If a play was being made on the obstructed runner, the ball is immediately dead and the umpire will award the runner at least one base past the one last touched.

b) If the play is on another runner, the umpire will determine a "protected to" base, the play shall continue until the action has ceased, at which time the umpire will award such penalties as he deems necessary to nullify the act of obstruction (which means to the "protected to" base for the obstructed runner and whatever other advances the umpire deems appropriate). Important: if the runner is tagged out BEYOND the protected-to base, the out stands.

#### 16) Sometimes it's just a "Train Wreck"

Not all contact is interference or obstruction. Sometimes it's just a natural, unavoidable occurrence between two players doing what's expected. An example is in this quote from the Official Baseball Rules: *"When a catcher and batter runner going to first base have contact when the catcher is fielding the ball, there is generally no violation and nothing should be called."* Another example would be having a pitcher covering first collide with the runner going to first when they arrive at the bag at about the same time.

Sometimes "stuff" happens.

#### 17) Base Awards – Rule 7.05 - The number two baseball myth is "1+1" for base awards.

If a ball is thrown out of play, the following apply:

- 1) If it was a pitch, or a pickoff attempted while the pitcher was in contact with the pitcher's plate, each runner gets one base from the base he occupied at the time the pitcher started his motion (or pickoff attempt).
- 2) If it was a throw on the first play by an infielder, or if the pitcher steps off the rubber before making a pickoff throw, each runner gets two bases from the base occupied at the time the pitcher started his motion (or pickoff attempt). Note that it isn't the first throw, it is a throw on the first play. If a fielder catches a ball, then tags, or attempts to tag a base or runner, then throws the ball, this is no longer a throw on the first play. The first play was the tag or tag attempt.

- 3) On any other throw that goes out of play, each runner gets two bases from the place (that's place, not base) he occupied at the time the fielder released the ball. It matters not a whit which direction he was running. He gets two bases from where he was. Example: In a rundown, the runner is headed back to, but has not touched first base when the throw to first base goes over the fence. The runner is awarded third base.

#### 18) Force Plays

A force play is a play in which a runner already on base loses his right to occupy a base because the batter became a runner. So far so good, right? To get a "force out" on a force play, one need tag either the runner or the base the runner needs to touch. Just because you touch the runner instead of the base does not change the fact that this was a force play. A runner is not required to advance, he just loses his right to the base and may be tagged out even if touching it. If a trailing runner is put out, the force is removed and the runner then legally occupy the base.

#### 19) Appeal plays

An appeal is required to get a runner out in the following situations

- 1) He missed a base, including first base.
- 2) He failed to retouch his base after a fly ball or line drive was first touched. The base or the runner must be tagged before he retouches the base. This is NOT a force play.

#### 20) Does The Run Count?

So why talk about what's a force play and what's an appeal play? Because no run can score if the third out was made on a force play or by the batter before he reaches first base. If the third out is made on a non-force appeal play, the timing matters. The runs that scored before the appeal was made count. This time concept also holds for a third out that is neither a force or an appeal.

Example 1: One out. Runners on first and third. Batter hits a fly ball to right field, which is caught. Two out. Runner from third tags and heads for home. Runner on first is heading back to first. Throw from RF comes to first base. If the runner from third touches home before a fielder tags first or the runner coming back, the run counts because this is NOT a force. If the runner returning to first is out before the runner from third touched home, the run does not count.

Example 2: Two out. Runners on first and third. Batter singles to right. Runner from third scores. Runner from first misses second base and goes to third. Defense appeals that the runner missed second. Umpire calls runner out. In this case the run does NOT count because the third out, even on the appeal, was a result of a force play.

Example 3: Bases loaded, two out. Batter hits safely into the gap. The following sequence happens: Runner from third scores, Runner from second scores, batter out at second, runner from first touches home. In this case, two runs score because they scored before the third out, but the runner from first does not score because he touched home after the third out was made.

- 21) We use breakaway bases. So what happens if the base breaks away? From rule 7.08(c):

*APPROVED RULING: (1) If the impact of a runner breaks a base loose from its position, no play can be made on that runner at that base if the runner had reached the base safely.*

*APPROVED RULING: (2) If a base is dislodged from its position during a play, any following runner on the same play shall be considered as touching or occupying the base if, in the umpire's judgment, that runner touches or occupies the dislodged bag, or the point marked by the original location of the dislodged bag.*

- 22) What is a catch?

The definition is in Rule 2.00. A **CATCH** is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in the hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it before it touches the ground providing such fielder does not use cap, protector, pocket or any other part of the uniform in getting possession. It is not a catch, however, if simultaneously or immediately following contact with the ball, the fielder collides with a player, or with a wall, or if that fielder falls down, and as a result of such collision or falling, drops the ball. It is not a catch if a fielder touches a fly ball which then hits a member of the offensive team or an umpire and then is caught by another defensive player. If the fielder has made the catch and drops the ball while in the act of making a throw following the catch, the ball shall be adjudged to have been caught. In establishing the validity of the catch, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove complete control of the ball and that release of the ball is voluntary and intentional. A catch is legal if the ball is finally held by any fielder, even though juggled, or held by another fielder before it touches the ground. Runners may leave their bases the instant the first fielder touches the ball.

You also need to know what "in flight" means. This is also in Rule 2.00. **IN FLIGHT** describes a batted, thrown, or pitched ball which has not yet touched the ground or some object other than a fielder.

The accepted interpretation of "simultaneously or immediately" is that the fielder must have control of his body. In other words, if he catches the ball and stumbles around and drops it, it is not a catch.

- 23) Oh yeah - what IS the Little League strike zone? The LL strike zone is armpits to knees, over the plate. The over the plate part is important because it matters not where in the box the batter is standing, it's where the ball is when it's over the plate that counts. It is a strike if any part of the ball touches any part of the strike zone.

Feel free to discuss any of these with Rich Ives.