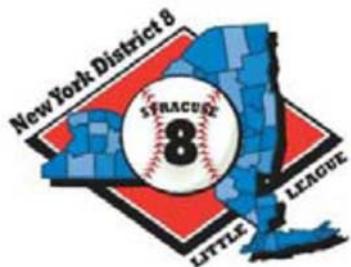


# District 8 Little League

## Senior Umpire Review



## **Introduction**

The intent and hope is that this manual will prove to a useful tool for you, as the umpire. Does this manual contain every bit of information that you need to be successful as an umpire? Absolutely not! This manual is only meant to augment any training you might take and game-time experience.

Consider this manual to be a work-in-progress much as your ‘career’ as an umpire is a work-in-progress. As I come across more information that I think might be of some benefit to others I will add that information to the manual. Should anyone come across something they feel might be beneficial to other umpires, by all means forward it along and I will see about including that as well.

Basically this manual is in three parts for first of which deals with umpiring basics such as priorities and definitions as they apply to mechanics. The second part deals with rule topics that cause some confusion and are easily misinterpreted and thus, misapplied. The final part pretty much deals with how an umpire needs to be in control and what to do when things start going south.

Some of you are more dedicated to umpiring Little League games than others and take the ‘job’ a bit more seriously. This manual wasn’t written to benefit only those who are serious about umpiring nor was it written solely for those less serious. It was written for benefit of all but those who have more training and take umpiring more seriously may find this manual to be somewhat mundane. Hopefully that’s not the case and you do find it useful.

Play Ball!

Jack Kaplan, District 8 Junior Umpire Coordinator and Umpire in Chief

## **Look, Act and Talk Like an Umpire**

Here are a few tips that the most skilled of umpires follow, but are easy to adopt by even a novice official.

- Obvious calls don't need to be made. For instance, when the batter swings and misses you don't vocalize the call; simply use your strike mechanic. Everyone saw the play; vocalizing the call does nothing more put the batter in a spotlight they'd rather not be in. If it's for strike three, an almost nonchalant strike three gesture as the batter heads back to the dugout is all that's needed.
- Don't grant every defensive player's request for time. If a defensive player wants time simply to ensure his/her return throw to the pitcher cannot result in runners advancing, you are within your rights not to grant time. The same holds true for the offense. There is no reason to grant time to the batter after each and every pitch. Make them stay in the box and keep the game moving. The rules say the pitch can't be delivered until the batter is set; anything else and you have a quick pitch. Also, remember not to call time until you're sure playing action has ceased. Too many umpires have granted time only to turn around and see a runner streaking for the next base. You'll have a hard time explaining to a manager why his/her runner's advance has been nullified because the shortstop needed time to tie his/her shoe.
- Take off your mask only when necessary. If you peel off your mask, follow the flight of every foul ball, wait for it to hit the ground, then give the catcher a new ball and put your mask back on, you'll find yourself working a lot of long games. If the ball is so obviously foul that the catcher doesn't even come out of his/her crouch, keep your mask on, give him/her a baseball/softball and get play moving again.

If you look, act and talk like you belong there; you'll have a better chance of being accepted by the managers and coaches.

## **Umpire Priorities**

Always keep the following priorities in mind; you should never sacrifice a greater priority for a lesser one.

FAIR/FOUL  
CATCH/NO CATCH  
TAGS – (IF RUNNERS ARE TAGGING)  
PLAYS AT THE PLATE  
PLAYS AT THE BASES  
TOUCHES OF BASES

## **Communicating**

Communication is a key to success whether it's in business, in a social setting or in personal relationships. Communication also is the key to successful umpiring.

There may be times where you have to 'sell a call' on a close play. In situations such as this, proper communication and crisp signals are a must. If you look lazy, that's how you will be perceived and no matter how right your call may have been very few will accept your decisions. That's the nature of this game.

Properly communicating during game action and on your calls, combined with good crisp signals, goes a long ways towards coaches, players, fans and your fellow umpires believing that you know what you're doing. That is the image you should be striving to present and maintain during each game, all game long.

Good communications with your partner are critical and are one area we can all improve on. Keep in mind that the perception others have of us as umpires can at times be critical to our success. If people see that we are hustling, are communicating and staying tuned into the game, the calls we make will be accepted without much argument.

### **Know the, Rules and How to Use Them**

Study the rules and become as expert as you can on them. Some umpires study the rulebook and then look for ways to put their new found knowledge to use. They are looking for trouble, a blend of commonsense and rules knowledge makes for a good umpire.

#### **Pre-Game:**

Umpires should arrive no later 30 minutes prior to game time. Umpires should dress in a professional manner and ensure you have all required equipment. Pre-game meetings can set the tone for the game at hand as it helps each member of the crew mentally focus on his/her responsibilities and ensures that each crew member understand exactly what they are expected to do during the game. While every duty/responsibility could be discussed during the pre-game, it is not realistic to think that will be the case. If crew members cooperate during the pre-game, they are more likely to work well during the game. 10-15 minutes prior to the game, umpires should walk onto the field. Introduce yourself to the coaches. Check each team's equipment and check the field to ensure it is safe for play

#### **Ground Rules:**

Starting the meeting Five minutes before the game start time, be on time

Positioning Plate umpire stands behind the plate Base umpire is infield

Introductions Introduce yourselves to the Coaches

Ensure line up cards have been exchanged between teams.

Game Balls Make sure that you have sufficient supply for the game

Playing Field If you do not know the field ask the home team if there any issues with the field

Brief coaches on judgement calls, time out procedures, questions, safety rules and resolve all issues before finishing the plate meeting -go over any ground rules -make a ruling on any disputed ground rules.

Finish the meeting

#### **During Game:**

Clear, clean, concise communication during each play is the only reliable method that will eliminate coverage errors and ensure that at least one umpire is watching everything that happens on the field. Simple

things, such as signaling each other when the infield fly rule is in effect, first-to-third rotations, timing plays, etc. let's you know your partner and you are both aware of the situation and operating on the same wavelength.

Imagine you're doing the plate and there is a timing play; R2 and two outs. Your partner who is in the C position is apparently oblivious to the situation as are you. The BR strokes a base hit to the outfield and R2 is off on contact. Your partner does come into the working area as he should and picks up the BR who has rounded first and is now heading for second. The throw to the plate is cut off and the ball is then thrown to second in an attempt to get the BR there. The play is close but because there was no communication between you and your partner signaling a timing play, the base umpire takes his time in making the out call. R2 crosses the plate but now the question is was that before or after the BR was put out at second for the third out! Had you both communicated before that pitch the potential for a timing play, your partner would have made the out call promptly thus allowing you to judge whether or not the run scored before or after the out. Communication, don't leave home without it!

## Taking Control of the Game

As umpires we have a duty to keep things under control during a game. No game should ever be allowed to get out of hand due to coaches, players or parents berating the umpires or anyone else. It is your responsibility to ensure that the game is played by the rules and that the rules are enforced. There can be no exceptions to this whatsoever. Following are some guidelines to keep in mind.

When meeting with the managers prior to the start of the game it would be a good idea to lay out **your** ground rules. Those rules being that you will not tolerate any behavior, verbal or otherwise, which is inappropriate or in violation of the rules, nor will you tolerate any "chirping" about judgment calls.

Coaches have a right to disagree with a call you might make but there are limits. They may question the call but once you tell them, "In my judgment..." that's the end of discussion, period. If the coach continues to argue or "chirp" about your call, if you haven't already done so in your pre-game meeting, you give them one warning and one warning only and then walk away. The next time they start to spout off they should be ejected. The umpire should not use the major league ejection – simply tell the coach he/she needs to leave the field.

Under no circumstance is a coach to be allowed to raise their voice at an umpire in disagreement with any call. Under no circumstance can you allow a coach to curse at you, your partner, a player or anyone else in attendance. Rule 4.06 makes this very clear: "No manager, coach or player, shall at any time, whether from the bench or the playing field or elsewhere - 1) incite, or try to incite, by word or sign, a demonstration by spectators; 2) use language which will in any manner refer to or reflect upon opposing players, manager, coach, an umpire, or spectators. The rule goes on to say, "The umpire may first warn the player, coach and/or manager. If continued, remove the player, coach and/or manager from the game or bench."

This rule is very clear in its meaning and you have a responsibility to the players, the league and your fellow umpires to enforce this rule. If a coach starts yelling at you, etc. this will only lead to some of the less educated spectators to assume it is open season on the umpires and join in. Stop this immediately with swift and sure action. Note that the last part of 4.06 says "may warn", not "must warn". Eject the offending coach or player immediately.

Spectators do not have license to direct derogatory remarks at umpires. Understand that you need to do your best to ignore many of the comments. However, even this has its limits. When the spectators begin to get out of line or out of hand with their comments and/or actions just what can an umpire do? Nothing in the rules allows an umpire to 'eject' a spectator however; there are certain things that can be done. The league and its representatives, have a responsibility to the players to do everything within its power to provide a safe

environment for the kids to play in. You, the umpire, are a representative of the league and do have an obligation to maintain order. So just what can you do?

If the situation has gotten to such a point that something has to be done, you should call "time" and ask both managers to tell their parents to cease their disorderly behavior. You should also inform them that if the conduct continues, you will have no choice but to suspend the game until order is restored. If they (managers or parents) refuse, then you should order all players to their respective benches and suspend the game. If the game resumes but the problem continues, you really have only one choice at this time: suspend the game until a later date.

It is strongly suggested reading Rule 9.01 in its entirety and re-read if necessary until you fully understand it. Pay particular attention to 9.01 b, c, d & f, especially b & f. Below for your benefit is 9.01(f):

**(f) Umpires may order both teams into their dugouts and suspend play until such time as League Officials deal with unruly spectators. Failure of League Officials to adequately handle an unruly spectator can result in the game remaining suspended until a later date.**

The league is behind our umpires 100% but we as umpires have a responsibility in this as well. The rules make it very clear that we are responsible for maintaining the integrity and order of the game. For those of you who are new to this or have only been at it a few years at best, this can be a very difficult task for you. Learning in a hostile environment is not easy and really is no way to learn. If we are to have any expectations whatsoever of coaches, players and parents treating us with the respect we deserve, we must show them that we are in control of the game.

I have the highest respect for those individuals who take time out of their lives and volunteer for these kids. That includes each and every one of you who are umpires and includes the coaches and other volunteers as well. I have no, or very little, respect for those who criticize every decision made and who do absolutely nothing but sit there doing nothing. While they have the right to be there watching their kid play, they have no right to criticize any umpire (or other volunteer) who is trying their best, for their kid.

Bottom line: take control and do not tolerate any coach, player or parent to abuse you or your fellow umpire. If problems start to happen, put an end to them immediately by ejection or suspending the game.

If you should have to eject a coach or player, you need to file a report with League Umpire-in-Chief and Umpire Coordinator within 24 hours so that we may then pass it along to the League President.

## On The Ball

**Signaling the Count:** Signaling the count after each pitch is not necessary. Verbalize the count after each pitch is a good idea though because it cements the count in your mind, thus preventing the embarrassment of an enthusiastic third-strike call when in fact the pitch was strike two. As a best practice, verbalize the count on jeopardy pitches – 0-2, 1-2, 3-0, 3-1, 3-2.

Regardless of the count, strikes are always indicated on the right hand, and balls are indicated on the left hand. A full count should be indicated by extending three fingers on the left hand and two on the right. When using the hands to signal the count, give it verbally too. The batter and catcher can't see your hands and need to know the count as well. Called strike three call can be verbalized with a sense of flair – everyone has their own style.

**Finding the Ball:** Slide plays often produce a great deal of dust, obscuring your view of the ball. In those

cases, you must find it before making a call. If the runner has beaten the tag, it doesn't matter whether or not the defensive player has the ball and the runner should be called safe. If, however, you're certain the tag was made first but the ball cannot be seen, point to the defensive player and say, "Show me the ball!"

If the defensive player has the ball in his/her possession, sell the out with an enthusiastic pump of the arm and a loud "OUT!" call. If, as the dirt clears or the defensive player shows you an empty mitt, a confident and demonstrative safe call is appropriate. Do not ask the defensive player to see the ball if you're already sure the runner is safe. That conveys lack of confidence in your decision. You should only ask to see the ball if the tag was properly applied but you cannot see it in the defensive player's glove.

## Infield Fly

Most everyone understands when the infield fly is in effect (less than 2 outs, force on third, caught with ordinary effort and the ball must reach its apex) (line drive, bunted ball into the air, lazy line drive or a blooper are not infield flies)

The trouble comes when the umpire must judge one thing: is the fly ball one that an infilder may catch with ordinary effort?

"Ordinary effort" is judged differently at the different levels; ordinary effort for AAA Majors shortstop may not be ordinary effort to an AA Minors shortstop, and just about any popup on the infield of an A Minors game is beyond ordinary!

An umpire may judge that a ball hit to short left field warrants an Infield Fly call, whereas a ball hit behind second base (shortstop and second baseman must run hard to get to it) does not. Also, if an outfielder catches the ball but the umpire judges an infilder could have made the catch with ordinary effort, an Infield Fly call is valid. It is entirely up to the umpire to judge "ordinary effort".

If the umpires fail to call Infield Fly when it was obvious they should have and the defense fails to catch the ball and subsequently turns a cheap double play the umpires shall retroactively enforce the infield fly rule and place the runners back.

The ball is live during an infield fly. Once the ball is touched or hits the ground the runners may advance at their own risk.

**Infield Fly strikes runner on base:** If a runner is touching his/her base when touched by an Infield Fly, he/she is not out; although the batter is out if the ball is fair. And, if the Infield Fly touches a runner while on base in fair territory before touching or passing an infilder, the ball is dead and no runner may advance. See rule 7.08(f).

**Infield Fly strikes runner not on base:** If a runner is touched by an Infield Fly while not touching a base (provided the ball has not touched or passed through an infilder), both runner and batter are out, and the ball is dead. See rule 7.08(f)

Example: Infield Fly is declared. Runner from first unintentionally interferes with second baseman, who is attempting to catch the fly ball.

Ruling: On an Infield Fly, the ball is alive and in play. Therefore the runner is out for interference and the batter-runner is out under the Infield Fly. Other runners return to the base occupied at the time of interference.

**Runner interferes while in contact with base:** If a runner has contact with a legally occupied base when he/she hinders a fielder attempting to make a play on a batted ball, the runner shall not be called out unless, in the umpire's judgment, such hindrance, whether it occurs on fair or foul territory, is intentional. If the umpire declares the hindrance intentional, the following penalty shall apply: With less than two out, the umpire shall declare both the runner and batter out. With two out, the umpire shall declare the batter out. See rule 7.08(b).

## Leaving the base early (7.13)

### The Basics Behind the Rule

What constitutes leaving early is important to understand before one can begin applying the rule. There are basically four parts to this rule BEFORE the runner(s) is in violation of this rule:

1. The pitcher must be in contact with the pitcher's plate and
2. the pitcher must be in possession of the ball and
3. the catcher must be in the catchers box ready to receive and
4. the ball must reach the batter before the runner(s) may leave the base.

Many become confused about what 'ready to receive' and 'reach the batter' mean.

Ready to receive means the catcher must have his/her equipment on (including the helmet) and be in the catcher's box facing the pitcher. The rule does not say the catcher must be squatting nor does it say the batter must be in the batter's box. If the batter is not in the box, there is no requirement for the catcher to be squatting.

Reached the batter means just that and is relevant to where the batter is positioned in the batter's box. The ball will reach the batter at different times depending on whether the batter is in the front or back of the box. The most common misinterpretation is this means when the pitch crosses the plate. Not true, reaches the batter and crosses the plate have very distinctly different meanings.

Another thing to keep in mind is many times in LL you will see a fast runner who has just been awarded first on base-on-balls hustle down the line and continue on to second if the defense is asleep at the wheel. Many coaches wrongly believe they can stop this merely by having their catcher quickly return the ball to the pitcher who is standing on the pitcher's plate. WRONG! Approved rulings from LL state you may not stop a runner who is already advancing and continuing prior to the pitcher and catcher being in position. If the runner stops or has already stopped and the pitcher steps on the rubber with the ball, that runner must return to base. The runner is in jeopardy of being put out while off the base and if he/she attempts to advance after stopping while the pitcher is on the rubber, the runner shall be sent back.

Something else to keep in mind; as an umpire you should never grant a time out to the defense while the runner is advancing. All play must be stopped before a time out is granted by the umpire.

This rule is unique to LL, and may cause the umpire a lot of headaches. The bottom line: if any base runner leaves a base before the pitch reaches a batter, all runners are guilty, and depending on the subsequent action, runners must return to any unoccupied bases.

There are four basic keys to help simply the rule when a base hit occurs:

1. If one runner is guilty, they are all guilty.
2. You must move the BR back to where you judge the ‘value’ of the clean hit. Advances after the clean hit are nullified.
3. Return all runners to their original base whenever possible. Runners must be placed as close as possible to the BR after placing the BR at the base judged to be the clean hit.
4. If any base(s) become empty because a runner or the BR was put out, runners must be returned to those bases.

The Rule Book has a number of examples that are pretty straightforward. Some that are less understood:

**If the batter is subsequently thrown out on a play, ALL RUNNERS return.**

**Example:** a batter hits a double with the bases loaded, but gets gunned down trying to stretch it into a triple. Since his out left all the bases open, no runs score and all runners must return. If his out was the third out of the inning, no runs score and the inning is over! Expect the offensive manager to be very peeved by this.

**The runners can only advance to the bases they would have achieved based on the umpire's judgment of the base value of the hit, regardless of any subsequent errors.**

**Example:** the batter hits a sharp grounder to the centerfielder with the bases loaded and the ball goes under the centerfielder's legs all the way to the fence. After the play is over, the umpire may judge the value of the hit was a single. If so, the umpire would put the batter on first, and put the other runners on second and third (only one run scores).

**Example:** with the bases loaded BR reaches 1<sup>st</sup> on a batted ball that doesn't leave the infield, no runs score. This is explained in Example 15 in the Rule Book. What is not explained is if the ball is hit in the infield and then goes through because of an error on the fielder. Here the umpire should rule that the value of the hit is only one base, so everyone only gets one base and one run scores.

**If a runner leaves early, he cannot correct his mistake by returning to touch the base.**

**Example:** runner on second leaves early then sees the ball is flied to right. He tags up and tries for third, and ends up scoring on a wild throw. He must return to second because he left early, regardless of the fact he subsequently tagged it. There is no “fixing” a 7.13 violation.

An out can NEVER be called for violation of 7.13. You may have a play where the runner on 1<sup>st</sup> leaves early and beats the force at 2<sup>nd</sup> and the BR reaches 1<sup>st</sup> safely; they get away with this one as there is no penalty in this instance. This isn't a wise thing for a coach to do as it could come to haunt and hurt. For instance:

R1 leaves early on a single hit to right. F9 misses the ball through his legs. R1 continues and scores on the error with the batter advancing to 3<sup>rd</sup>. Well guess what, because the runner left early and ‘clean’ hit was only a single, the BR is placed at 1<sup>st</sup> and R1 is now at 2<sup>nd</sup>, no run scores.

## Interference

Remember: The offense interferes, the defense obstructs.

### Interference - Rule 2.00 and 7.09

The umpire must judge that someone on the offense "interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses" a defensive player who is trying to make a play on the ball. Some interference calls are easy, such as a runner being struck by a batted ball, or a runner colliding with a fielder trying to field a batted ball. The troublesome ones are when the umpire must judge the intent of the runner, such as:

A runner makes contact with a thrown ball. The umpire must be convinced that the runner intentionally interfered with the throw (raised arms, timed it so ball hits him, etc.)

A runner makes contact with or gets in the way of a fielder trying to field a thrown ball. INTENT is required here. If a runner just runs into a fielder while that fielder is waiting for a throw, it's not interference unless the umpire judges the runner intentionally ran into him.

A runner doesn't contact a fielder fielding a batted ball, but causes him to miss it by some other action. Contact is not needed for interference. So if a runner: yells at a fielder as he runs behind him; waves his arms at the fielder; runs at the fielder and stops at the last second, stops in front of the fielder and jumps over the ball, etc., AND the umpire judges that this act caused the fielder to miss the batted ball, it's interference.

A base coach or someone from the bench gets in the way or yells "DROP IT". The rule says any member of the team at bat, not just the batter or runner, can cause interference.

### Batter's Interference – Rule 6.06(c)

There are things a batter does (or fails to do) that are interference and other things he does (or fails to do) that do not. Confused? First off, the batter's box is NOT a safety zone for the batter. If he's in the box, he's usually OK in these situations:

The ball gets by the catcher and the catcher knocks over the batter trying to get to the ball (no penalty, live ball)

The catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher or to a base to retire a base stealer and the ball hits the batter or his bat (no penalty, live ball UNLESS the batter PURPOSELY moves into the catcher or the path of the ball)

The batter swings so hard that he hits the catcher's glove on the follow-through, knocking the ball away from the catcher (dead ball, runners return)

However, if the batter had time to get out of the box but stays in and gets in the way, then he's guilty of interference. This usually happens in lower levels when the ball gets by the catcher, a runner tries to score and the batter stays in the box and affects the play at the plate. If the batter gets in the way of a play while OUT OF THE BOX, he will almost certainly be guilty of interference, even if it's unintentional.

The interference rule came into play recently in the Major League Baseball playoffs. So now is a good time to talk about a type of interference you don't see very often. It's when a base coach reaches out to physically assist the runner. The rule is: Rule 7.09 – It is interference by a batter or runner when, in the judgment of the umpire, the base coach at third base or first base, by touching or holding the runner, physically assists that runner in returning to or leaving third base or first base; Question: How can a base coach at third base or

first base physically assist the runner at that base?

Answer: A base coach at first or third base could grab a runner to stop them from running past the base; a base coach at first or third base could place his/her hand on the back of a base runner and give a push when a fly ball is caught to get the runner started in a tag up and advance attempt; a base coach at first or third base could step in front of a runner to get them to stop. These are just a few of the ways coaches could physically assist runners.

Penalty: The runner that is assisted is called out immediately and the ball is dead if there is a play being made on that runner. Otherwise, the runner that is assisted is called out and the ball is dead after all other action is completed (delayed dead ball). However, “high-fiving” a runner during a home run trot, for example, would not be interference.

## Obstruction

Obstruction – Rule 2.00 and 7.06

Like interference, this is a tough call when there is no contact. If a runner has to slow down or stop because of a fielder's action OTHER THAN fielding a batted ball, you have obstruction. Here are some examples of obstruction that are not so obvious:

A fielder boots the initial play, and then gets in the runner's way as he goes after the ball. No interference here on the runner because the fielder booted the ball. The fielder is only “protected” on the initial play, not a subsequent play after his error.

A batter-runner has to slow down on his way to first because the first baseman is standing on the base. This happens a lot in the lower divisions.

A fielder stands in the baseline or puts his leg down and blocks the base or plate well before he has the ball. A fielder cannot block the base while he is waiting for the throw to come in.

Remember that there are two types of obstruction: Type A, where the defense is making a play on the obstructed runner (immediate dead ball) and Type B, where the runner is obstructed while play is going on elsewhere (play goes on).

An umpire may have to consider action occurring after obstruction in determining a runner's award or protection (or neither). An obstructed runner's protection or award can be revised each time something happens that would change the award or protection. **Example:** Runner 1 is stealing, and there is a base hit to left-center field. The shortstop obstructs Runner 1 as he/she rounds second. At this point the umpire determines that he/she will protect Runner 1 to third. But then the center fielder misses the ball. The umpire revises his judgment and will now protect Runner 1 home.

If a live ball has been thrown but becomes dead while in flight due to obstruction with a play and such throw is wild and goes out of play, then the overthrow becomes a factor in determining the award given the obstructed runner.

**Example:** After a line drive base hit into right-center field, the batter-runner rounds the base widely and proceeds a considerable distance towards second. The right fielder, seeing the batter-runner's wide turn, wheels and throws to first immediately after grabbing the ball. While scrambling back to first the batter-runner is obstructed by the first baseman who is unaware that the throw is approaching. The umpire determines that “obstruction with a play” has occurred so the ball is dead and the batter-runner must be awarded at least second base. But the errant throw gets by the first base area and bounds into the stands.

This must be taken into consideration, since the throw was en route (live) when the obstruction occurred. The umpire awards the batter-runner third base on the overthrow.

## **Base awards on a bad throw (7.05g)**

There's a myth that the runners get "one plus one" on a throw that goes out of play. Not in LL. The runners always get two bases from the last base legally touched depending on who makes the throw and when the throw is made.

If the throw is the first play by an infielder, the runners get two bases from the time of the pitch.

If the throw is a subsequent play by an infielder, or any throw by an outfielder, the runners get two bases from the time of the throw (the moment the ball leaves the fielder's hand) (not the time the ball goes out of play).

If the throw comes after all runners, including the batter, have reached their next bases, the runners get two bases from the time of the throw.

The umpire must make some judgment calls here. He must first judge whether the throw is the first play by an infielder. For example, if the shortstop steps on second and then throws to first to complete a double play, his throw is a subsequent play, the first play being the out at second. The other judgment the umpire must make is determining where the runners were at the time the throw left the fielder's hand. A runner could be a step away from second when a throw is made and halfway to third when the throw finally goes out of play. Here, the base award would be two bases from first base, the last base legally touched before the throw.

## **Ball Thrown Into Dead Ball Area**

One of the most misunderstood rules is the awarding of bases after the ball has gone into a dead ball area. When awarding bases to runners, there are three principles upon which to base the ruling:

1. When the pitcher is standing on the pitcher's plate and throws the ball into a dead ball area, award each runner one base.
2. When a fielder throws a ball into a dead ball area, award each runner two bases from the position the runners were in at the time the ball was thrown (not at the time it goes into the dead ball area).
3. When such a wild throw is the first play by an infielder, the umpire, in awarding such bases, shall be governed by the position of the runners at the time the ball was pitched. If there is an intervening play before the first throw, such as a tag play, then award two bases from the time of the throw, just as in No. 2 above.

There is one exception to No. 3. If all runners, including the batter-runner, have reached their next base before the infielder throws the ball, then it is again two bases from the time of the throw, just as in No. 2. Remember, there are no cases when the award is given at the time the ball goes into dead ball area. It is either based on the time the ball is released (time of throw) or the time of the pitch.

Here are two examples:

No runners are on base. The batter hits a single to right field and makes the turn toward second base when caught in the rundown. As the runner is trying to return to first, the second baseman throws the ball over the first baseman's head into dead ball area. Ruling: Award the runner third base.

A runner is on first base and there is one out. The batter hits a line drive to the third baseman, which is caught. The third baseman tries to double up the runner from first base who left that base immediately after the ball was hit. The throw is wild and goes into the dugout. Ruling: The runner should be given third base because he/she already had first and must be given two from that point.

Check out the rule in your rulebook at 7.05 (g).