



The e-newsletter of the Amateur Baseball Umpires' Association

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Record-Setting ABUA Membership Drive

The ABUA's membership drive is in full swing and closing in on the goal of 2005 members in 2005. To date, 1,762 umpires have joined the association this year, 243 shy of our goal. Please spread the word about ABUA to your umpire peers who have not joined so we can eclipse the 2000-member mark for the first time!

Click [here](#) for a membership registration form.



ABUA Umpires Working the NCAA Division I Baseball Championship

Congratulations to the following ABUA members who were selected to work the 2005 NCAA Division I Baseball Championship:

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David Wiley

Super Regional

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Dave Buck
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Jeff Henrichs
Jim Jackson
John Kleis
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Daniel Collins
Bryan Donnelly
Mike Droll
Nelson Graham
Harry Greer
Scott Inman
John Johnston
Mark Lewis
Steve Ricciarini
Mike Rust
Ron Sebastian
Doug Williams

Regional Alternate

Rick Darby
Tom Kovacich



Request for Handling Situations tips

ABUA is requesting tips from all of its members as it relates to Handling Situations. ABUA vice president Doug Ricciardi of South Dennis, MA, will compile all the tips by the end of this summer and compile the very best tips into a guide for all ABUA members.

Please e-mail your favorite Handling Situations tip to Doug no later than August 31, 2005. His e-mail address is nyyank@comcast.net.



High School Baseball Rules Exam and Answer Key

1. With the game tied 4-4 in the top of the sixth, the game is suspended because of darkness. Four days later, the suspended game is resumed. The new set of umpires meet the coaches at home plate and receive the line-up cards from the suspended game. As they review the substitutions and conferences, the home coach objects to the visiting team having players on the bench who were not present four days earlier when the game was suspended. As the new plate umpire, you:
 - A. Tell the coaches to work it out since you weren't there the first time.
 - B. Tell the visiting coach the players cannot play since they were not entered on the original line-up card.
 - C. Tell the home coach the players may play since there is no rule prohibiting a player who is not listed from playing.
 - D. Tell both coaches to pick a number between one and 10 and whoever is the closest to the number you are thinking gets his way.

[Click here for the entire exam](#)

[Click here for the answer key](#)



ABUA Spring Column

HIGH SCHOOL RULES CHANGES – 2005

By Kyle McNeely, Cincinnati, OH
ABUA First Vice-President

Well, for many of us, either the High School season is in full swing, or just about to have “the first pitch.” I find this time of the year so exciting. I haven’t missed a pitch yet!!

While I know the new rules changes for High School have been presented, digested, argued and in some cases defiled, it may serve some benefit to review them once again, no matter where you are in your season. As in past years, there are not many changes, but a few have some real implications for all of us. In addition to the rules changes, there are also some “Approved Rulings” that have major impact, as well.

As it has seemed in the past few years, bats continue to receive committee attention, and with good reason. Our bat manufacturers are great businessmen and are very good at what they do. Can’t blame them; they want to make money. Yet we must keep some parameters around the performance of the product for many reasons important to the game of baseball.

The only real change with the bats this year is the addition to the rule book that provides rule backing for a wood bat being $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches or less in diameter. Remember, a few years ago, the committee reduced the bat diameter of a non-wood bat to $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches or less in an effort to provide more “wood bat” performance. Wood bats are legal for use in high school and need not be discouraged, but they are, for the most part, only made in $2\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameters. As a result, the rulebook needed to be amended to allow for their use.

A couple of bat reminders might also be in order. One, there are only two kinds of bats, wood and nonwood. Composite bats are not, despite some claims, wood bats. They are nonwood bats, and hence are subject to the same rule provisions such as $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches or less in diameter, a minus 3 weight to length differential and a BESR certification. There are some bats that only state on the barrel “Meets High School Standards.” If that is all they have; i.e., do not have the BESR on it, they are not legal for use in high school.

The maximum length of any bat, wood or nonwood, is 36 inches. The minus three-weight differential does not apply to wood bats; they have no weight requirement. Also, this is the last year that the BESR “sticker” on the bat will be allowed. Next season, the bats must have the BESR certification permanently on the bat.

High School Softball passed a rule that goes into effect next year requiring the use of a helmet with a face mask/guard attached for all batters and runners. High School Baseball entertained the same rule proposal, but did not adopt it for some valid reasons. The injury incident rate in softball for accidents to the face is significantly higher than for baseball. And that makes sense. Softball has shorter dimensions, mound to plate, and their strategy calls for more bunting with more opportunity for the ball to go back into the face of the batter.

While baseball will not mandate the use of helmets with face mask/guards, they are certainly legal if they meet the NOCSAE standard. Many players may have expensive orthodontia and would like to have the extra protection. This is definitely legal as long as the NOCSAE certification is on the helmet and face guard. While in most cases, this face mask/guard would be attached at the time of manufacturing, it is possible to add it at a later time, provided the procedure is approved by the manufacturer and it meets the NOCSAE standard.

It would be important to insure that, if a player is using a face mask/guard, it is the one sized for baseball. Softball models likely would allow for the passage of a baseball between the bars of the mask. Also, as of now, face shields are not legal for use attached to a helmet. They have not been submitted to NOCSAE for testing and we have no idea how they would stand up to an impact from a pitch or a foul ball. Would they crack, crumble, turn into slivers or stand the blow? It simply is not known at the moment.

Last year, the committee changed the penalty for the use of an illegal player. When that rule came into the rule book several years ago, the feeling was that, in most instances, the use of an illegal player would be premeditated and intentional. Hence, the severe penalty of an ejection. But as time has passed, it has become apparent that 1) the actual occurrence of an illegal player is rare, and 2) when it does happen, it most often is the result of a miscommunication between player or coach or a lack of knowledge of the rules. In these cases, ejection is a very severe penalty for an unintended act, especially in those states that stipulate a next game or two suspension for an

ejection. As a result, the penalty was changed to restrict the player to the bench for the remainder of that game. No real change in the game in question, but a needed change for the next game's eligibility.

But let's take a minute and recap this rule; since it somewhat seldom occurs, it is easy to forget the correct application. First, unlike other rules, anyone, offense/defense/umpire, may make this discovery. Whenever it happens, or how it is discovered, the umpire must handle it. Obviously, if a pitch had been thrown prior to discovery, what happened before the last pitch would stand, but the illegal player is still illegal and would be subject to the appropriate penalty.

For an illegal player on defense, upon discovery, that player is restricted to the bench and shall be replaced immediately. If he were involved in the play (prior to the first pitch to the next batter of EITHER team), the offense has the option to let the play stand or allow the batter to bat again. If the illegal player was the second baseman and watched the shortstop handle an unassisted double play, all that would happen upon discovery of the second baseman is that he would be replaced and on the bench for the balance of the game. If he were to have been a part of the 6-4-3 double play, then the offense would have the option mentioned above. The real rub of this rule is the part of the "first pitch to the next batter of either team." Let's say the ending double play, completed in part to the action of the illegal second baseman, was not discovered until the two teams had switched places on the field. Then the coach of the now defensive team makes note of the occurrence, you as the umpire, will undo the play (if that is what the team wants) put the now defense back at bat and the now offense back into the field. The batter gets to bat again with the previous count. If you are like me, you will have cleared your indicator and have no memory of the last 5 seconds, much less the count before the pitch of the play in question. Good luck. I am sure the person keeping the scorebook has it accurately recorded!

If the illegal substitute is at bat and on the bases when discovered, or prior to the next pitch after coming into the dugout, that player will be called out, restricted to the bench and we will undo advancement, run score, etc. caused by the illegal player's play. Any outs made on the play would stand and other runners would return to bases occupied at the time of the pitch.

In game ending situations, the discovery must be made before all infielders have left the infield (crossed the foul lines). If a player previously restricted to the bench for illegal substitution re-enters later in the game, the same penalties apply, but now eject him. If they get it wrong twice in the same game, maybe he does need to sit out a few games to read the rule book.

The next rule change impacts what a coach may wear while coaching in a game. In the past, the rule only required a coach to be in the uniform of his team while occupying a coach's box. In some parts of the country, out-of-uniform coaches still could be involved in a conference at the mound, etc. Some coaches were beginning to dress in shorts or sweats, etc., and for the sake of tradition, the rules committee wanted to be clear on expectations. Now, a coach who is not in the uniform of his team shall be restricted to the bench/dugout for the game. Once restricted, he will remain restricted even if the missing piece of the uniform appears. As always, the restricted coach may leave the bench/dugout to attend to an injured or ill player.

The committee, for good reasons, did not want to stipulate what constitutes the "uniform of the team" requirement. That was left up to each individual state association to make that definition.

The last rule change for this year involves pitching and is one that many have been pushing for years, and that is allowing the pitcher in the set position to turn his shoulders. To be clear, I think the new rule change will be okay once we all get used to it. I also had no issue with the old rule. The reason I say that is that in summer ball, when a pitcher could turn his shoulders, if he did, you would hear a chorus of "Balk, Balk, Balk" from the dugouts and stands. The old rule was such as it is very difficult in rules writing to write a rule allowing one movement but not others that is similar. In different levels of baseball those differences can be understood without always being in print, but at the high school level, we need to be clear on what is permissible and what is not. Anyway, the rule is now changed and we will apply it as written.

The new rule allows for a pitcher, in the set position while in contact with the pitcher's plate, to turn his shoulder to check runners prior to bringing his hands together. If he turns his shoulder after bringing his hands together, during or after the stretch, it would be a balk. A pitcher, in the wind-up position, still cannot turn his shoulders, if he were to do so, it also would be a balk.

Prior to bringing his hands together, how he turns his shoulders (or which shoulder he turns) is not important. He may do it slowly; he may do it fast. The committee may have to revisit this if it happens in a manner that resembles a feint,

but we will let a season play out and see what needs to be adjusted. The pitcher, while in the process of becoming set, may turn his shoulders if he does so prior to bringing his hands together. That is it. Simple in concept, but perhaps more difficult in real-game situations. I have faith it will be fine in the long run.

Now we need to talk about some approved rulings that have major impact. An approved ruling is a reaffirmation of a current rule and what is intended with the rule with regard to application. The first approved ruling surrounds the speed-up rules.

Now, I like speed-up rules. I am not sure they move the game along any faster, but they do allow for more participation by more players in a game, and that is good for the game at the high school level. In the past, a catcher or pitcher had to be the one to have earned their way on base for the use of a courtesy runner to be employed. Now, the following situation is legal: The catcher from the last half-inning is due to bat. The coach pinch-hits for him; this is a straight substitution. The pinch-hitter gets on base and now the coach wants to re-enter the catcher. This is permissible from a substitution standpoint provided this is the catcher's first re-entry back to the game. Now, with the catcher on first base, the coach may now utilize a courtesy runner for him.

The next approved ruling has created some uproar in a few parts of the country about the implications and purpose behind the new approved ruling on the declaration of a "Foul Ball." Prior to the rule change last year, if an umpire were to err and declare a ball foul on a hit that actually was fair, or hit that old rock in the field and then became fair, by rule we were to decide what to do with that runner. We could call him out or put him on first. You can well imagine, when someone did what they were supposed to do with this rule, how unpleasant that became. What most of us did on those rare occasions we erroneously called "Foul" was to treat it like a foul. Coaches may not have liked it but they understood the mistake and the correction, even if it was not correct by rule.

Last year's rule change stated that the ball was immediately dead when an umpire verbally said, "Foul." And we now had to do what we did all along – treat it like a foul ball. This year's approved ruling makes no differentiation between calling in error, a foul ball on a grounded hit or on a caught fly ball. In either case, when we say, "Foul," it is dead and treated as a foul ball. The uproar has come over the caught fly ball situation. All I ask of you is to recall when this last happened to you or when you last saw it happen. When I ask this I get a room of blank stares. Someone told me they remembered it happening in one game that Casey Stengel was managing. While I am sure that was not the last occurrence, but if that is the best we can remember, I don't think we have too much of an issue. And if it does, and it will be very rare, what a great learning opportunity for the umpire. Proper mechanics and timing will preclude this from happening anyway. This really is baseball's answer to the inadvertent whistle. In other sports when one blows the whistle in error, play stops. The official doesn't say, "Aw, he would have made 10 more yards, so he gets it," or "He was about to shoot so we will let him." We eat the mistake, learn and the game moves on. So it will in baseball. One additional item on this. If we initially rule and verbalize "Foul" on a possible home run, but soon thereafter decide we missed the home run call and it indeed left the field as a home run, we may change that call. Two reasons; one, the play killed the ball when the ball left the field over the fence, not the umpires; and, two, no following play was changed due to the call. Yes, runs or no runs were awarded, but calling "Foul" did not prevent other play that otherwise would have happened.

The next approved ruling is a reaffirmation of a current rule. Rule Six requires that a pitcher, while in the stretch position and prior to becoming set, must have his pitching hand at his side or behind his back. This rule is in place so that the offense may see the hand and know when the pitcher is either moving to become set or beginning a pick-off move. If the hand were hidden, it would provide a distinct disadvantage to a runner on base. It has become more common in the past years for the pitcher in the stretch to use the "gorilla" stance. That stance means he is on the rubber with his pitching hand down in front of his body, basically hidden from a runner. Sometimes, the hand is even moving like a pendulum as the pitcher looks in for the sign from the catcher.

The approved ruling simply reaffirms the current rule. The gorilla stance is in violation of the pitching requirements from the set position, and hence if used, it is a balk. Nothing really new, but some players may use this stance now without being aware they are doing it.

Now for another approved ruling that has also created some stir. The committee reaffirmed the rule book portion of 8-3-3-c, where a two-base award is made if a batted or thrown ball becomes lodged in a defensive player's equipment. While this play is not common, it is not by any means rare, either. The ruling is this, say the batter hits a hard ground ball back to the pitcher and he makes a great stab at the ball. He has it in his glove but is unable to easily pull it out. As the batter-runner makes for first, he panics some, runs toward first and tosses his glove, with the ball in it, to the first baseman to retire the out. NFHS had an approved ruling in 1987 that provided for that play to be legal. But to be in more concert with Rule 8, the new approved ruling would cause the result of that play now to be a dead ball and a

two-base award vs. an out. Let's be certain we do this correctly. Only if the player tosses/throws/shovels/etc. his glove (equipment) with the ball in it to another player for the out, would we kill the play and award two bases. If he has trouble, but is able to pull the ball from the glove, we will let the play continue with no interruption or base awards.

The last approved ruling of consequence simply re-states what is required by rule for a pitcher's glove. Glove manufacturers have every right, like their bat counterparts, to provide various gloves for sale and profit. And they make some great gloves now, but they still need to be legal. For fielders, about the only thing that makes a glove illegal is it being too big in size (which is rare, most likely the player grabbed his dad's softball glove), or using a substance that would "tackify" the glove. For pitchers, though, those two conditions also would make a glove illegal, but we also require the glove used by the pitcher to be neither white nor gray nor multi-colored. That requirement is in place so that a pitcher cannot hide or conceal the pitch due to the color of his glove from the batter (or the umpire) and gain a visual advantage.

The best thing here to do is if the glove has white or gray on it, it is not legal for the pitcher to use. Previous rulings have stated that two tones of the same color are acceptable, like brown and tan. But two tones of two colors, such as brown and black are not. What is the big deal you ask if a pitcher is using such a glove? Good question. If he were to sneak one in and you then see it, it is distracting and he would be required to obtain a legal glove; that's all. No balk, no ejection, just get a legal glove. But what if he uses that illegal glove to catch a screaming line drive? Now we have a three-base award for a batted ball being touched by an illegal glove. Very unpleasant for all concerned. Especially the umpires. Some have suggested that when you do your bat and helmet checks before the game, ask to see the starting pitcher's glove. I think that is a very workable process. It won't take care of any relief pitcher, but the coach knows now you will be paying attention. And, if you have a glove not acceptable for the pitcher by rule, you can have the conversation prior to the game rather than during the game (always a better situation!).

Lastly, let's talk about the points of emphasis. Every year, the committee writes some points for all that are involved in the game – coaches, players, umpires and state associations – to pay particular attention to. The first one is Field Conduct. This is the third year it has made the Points of Emphasis list, and if there are more problems, it may become a rule vs. just an emphasis. This is frankly with regard to players coming out of the dugout to congratulate a player having scored a run. We all know this is not permissible by rule if the ball is still in play, but it has become a problem following a dead ball.

Our rules now allow, following a home run, for the player's teammates to gather around the plate and congratulate him on his feat. In most cases this is great and good for the game. But in some rare instances, some players have seized the opportunity to make a few suggestions or comments to the pitcher or catcher, and those statements were not well received. Very ugly fights and bench-clearing brawls have resulted, and this runs so counter to everything high school activities are about. So, plate umpires, on a home run, hang around the plate and stop any comments or actions before they get going. And, it is a good idea to not give the new ball to the pitcher until the players on offense have returned to their bench/dugout. I am afraid, if we have many more issues nationally, we will have a rule prohibiting players from coming out of their dugouts period.

As in college baseball, high school is beginning to have some issues with batters seeking to be hit by pitched balls. We all know that high school, for safety reasons, does not allow a batter to "take one for the team." This new emphasis is really focused on the practice of a batter moving such that he now does get hit where he might not have previously. We all need to be aware of this action and not allow it when it happens.

Another point of emphasis surrounds game management, specifically marking the field properly and sizing the mound by rule. We all know, that in some places, such as public parks, teams have no ability to prepare the field properly. When that happens, we will do the best we can and play the game if all are agreeable.

Umpire's professionalism is also a point of emphasis this year. But this one is focused a little differently than in year's past. Specifically, this point is ensuring we understand as umpires, that we do not have the latitude to pick and choose the rules to be used in that day's game. We must enforce the rules as intended regardless of our personal acceptance. To do otherwise is unfair to the players and provides an ever changing, un-level playing field for all concerned.

Lastly, good sporting behavior is a point of emphasis again. And it will always be. We should never tolerate anything less in any activity at the high school level especially. With this year's much discussed basketball game between the Pacers and Pistons, it becomes even more in focus. Within weeks of that sad affair, high school basketball experienced some situations very analogous to the one in the Pros. That we cannot tolerate.

Hope this helps and mostly reinforces what already has been discussed. I do trust and hope that this season will be the best ever for you and for all with whom you work. Until next time, have a good one.



Honig's May/June Promotion for ABUA Members Only



NIKE PRO-VENT CREW. Short sleeve or long sleeve loose fitting performance base layer top that's lightweight and cool to the touch. Tubular seamless construction of Nike's Dri-FIT fabric with knit-in mesh panels under arms and at back makes this the perfect compliment to our micromesh umpire shirts. Sizes Medium – 3XL. Short sleeve (#NKE1) available in Black, Navy or White. Retail price \$35.00 **ABUA MEMBER PRICE \$29.95.** Long sleeve (#NKE2) available in Black or Navy. Retail price \$39.00, **ABUA MEMBER PRICE \$33.95**

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Getting the Perfect Evaluation Part 2 - The Intangibles I

By Greg Howard

Greg Howard is a veteran umpire who has worked all levels of baseball up to small colleges. In 2002, he received a Gerry Davis Golden Mask Award at the Harry Wendelstedt School for Umpires. He recruits and trains recreational and high school umpires and serves on the Training Committee of the Bay Area Officials Association in Panama City, Florida.

This article is part of a continuing series with the goal of helping umpires receive the highest possible evaluation scores. If you are properly evaluated, the following will occur:

1. You probably will not know you were being evaluated until the game is over. This way the evaluator can determine how you normally work a game. Working hard when you don't know you are being evaluated is the surest sign that you are a quality umpire for your level of experience and abilities.
2. You will receive a thorough, written report of your work, with complete grades and comments for nearly all of the areas covered by this series of articles. Keep this copy in your records, and study it from time to time.
3. An honest and frank discussion will follow, with suggestions for improvement and a chance to ask questions of your evaluator for clarification and learning.
4. Your evaluation will be kept on file with your association or conference so that your progress can be tracked.

Take everything you hear or read in your evaluation to heart, and resolve to make yourself stronger as an umpire. Go back over your old evaluations and check your own progress.

We've already discussed appearance and hustle in Part 1. Now, let's move to some of those intangible areas of your work. Some of this will overlap back into areas already covered and areas to be covered. *Everything feeds into the complete picture.*

Field Presence

Everyone has a certain presence to them. You have probably seen someone who seemed out of place in their particular setting. Perhaps their clothing didn't match the activity, or their body language and speech just didn't seem to fit. There is just something you feel in your gut about this person that says, "He's just not comfortable in his own skin." All of the intangibles of umpiring can be simply summed up as field presence.

In umpiring, we have all seen officials who just didn't seem to belong on the field for their particular game. If appearance and hustle don't seem to be the problem, the issue may be a lack of field presence. Good field presence tells everyone that you are competent to officiate that level of play.

What exactly constitutes good field presence? This is one I've been working for years to completely understand. I've even drawn upon psychology courses and countless books on human interaction. The only thing of which I'm really completely sure is that human interaction is probably the most complex subject to be studied. I can, however, share some conclusions I have been able to draw.

First Impression

The first thing we know is that we all make a first impression on others. Once this impression is drawn by the other person, it can be very difficult to erase. Everything about you is sized up in just a matter of a few brief seconds and registered as the standard against which everything else you do will be measured.

We are assuming your appearance is outstanding and that you are hustling. You have made a favorable impression about yourself in these areas. Let's move on to how your *actions* play into your first impression.

You will probably be moving the first time you are seen by a coach, as they catch sight of you coming toward them. Your posture and body movement will be noted immediately. Are you walking erect and striding quickly with purpose? Or, are you casually sauntering? Do you look tired and not up to the competition about to follow? Are you dangling your mask by the straps or bars, or are you carrying it tucked up under your arm? You may even be in "civilian" attire and meeting the coach just to check in. Are you dressed to portray a professional image? Or, are you wearing sandals, gym shorts, and T-shirt advertising an adult beverage? These are just some examples of what is noticed the first time the coach sees you. If necessary, get someone to videotape you, including your entry to the field. You will note that much of this ties back into appearance.

Eye contact is critical during an introduction. Averting your eyes will make you look submissive. This is an old instinct in nature, and we have retained this hard-wiring in this area. We all immediately try to seek out our place in the natural pecking order. Dominance is first tested with the eyes. Making direct eye contact and holding it while you introduce yourself sends a strong subliminal message to the person you are meeting that you are strong and on at least equal footing, one with the other. Learn to make eye contact each and every time you speak with another person. It is so important that we will address more about this from time to time.

Actions to Avoid

Everyone has their own style; this is exactly what makes human interaction so complex. The key is to look like you are comfortable and secure in yourself and abilities. Here are some actions which should be avoided, together with the rationale behind each item. They are in no particular order since each is a major area for concentration and improvement. I like to call these the "Cardinal Sins of Field Presence."

1. Hands in pockets. Many people just have a hard time doing something with their hands when the hands are idle and almost instinctively want to just make them disappear. When you have nothing to do with your hands, learn to just put them down at your side and let them be relaxed.
2. Hands behind back. This is a submissive posture and should be eliminated completely.
3. Hands on hips during conversation. This is an overly dominant posture. Parties communicate most effectively when they believe themselves to be on equal footing. Try to keep your hands at your side when talking to others.
4. Folding arms across chest. This sends different signals. It is both authoritative and represents closure to new ideas in conversation.
5. Letting go of your mask at any time. Never throw, toss, drop or set the mask on the ground or give it to anyone else, ever. Keep it in your left hand. If you need both hands for working with lineup cards, tuck the mask into your left armpit and hold it with your upper arm. Never place it between your knees. It just plain looks bad.
6. Walking. There are valid times to walk while on the field, but you should move at an athletic, natural jogging pace whenever possible. The sets the example to all other participants. Games where everyone is hustling move more quickly and are more entertaining to everyone.
7. Running out of control. Stay within yourself and your natural athletic level. Running out of control makes it nearly impossible to stop or change direction properly. Also, it just plain looks bad, although not as bad as not running at all.
8. Rubber-necking the stands. As far as you are concerned, the fans do not exist at all. Also, far too many umpires have gotten themselves into problems by saying something about a particular fan, only to find it is someone's family or girlfriend. This ties in closely with the next behavior to avoid.
9. Unnecessary conversation. The most dangerous muscle in your body is your tongue. Remember that and

- keep it under control. We get in trouble most for what we say. Say only what has to be said, and leave it at that.
10. Averting eyes. Don't stare down a coach, but don't overly avert your eyes. Did you know where you point your eyes may even hint at your thoughts? Breaking eye contact and looking to your right is usually a signal you are trying to recall something. Breaking eye contact and looking to your left while speaking usually means deception or concealment. This is a very fine point in human behavior which most people don't even consciously realize, but they can somehow sense it.
 11. Yelling to talk with someone. Yes, you should use a loud voice to make calls, especially on close plays. However, never yell across the field to a head coach. If he wants to discuss something, ask him to come over and talk with you. If he is yelling at you when you are talking close together, ask him to calm down and not yell. Do not yell back to be heard over him.
 12. Too much conversation with your partner. Under normal circumstances, you should be able to go the entire game without any conversation with your partner between innings. Never go to your partner in the half inning break right after a controversy. Wait an inning or two for everything to die down if you really have to talk about something. Each time you have to speak with your partner during a game, it gives the participants and fans the opportunity to speculate as to what you might be saying or planning. You might be talking about something as innocent as how the heat is kicking your tail, but that isn't how it looks to mom whose son was just called out on strikes to end the inning.
 13. Showboating. There are times to sell a call and use extra voice. One of these is not the third strike down the middle with the batter already making a U-turn for the dugout. Learn to use your voice and mechanics to indicate the closeness of a play and adjust them accordingly. We have strict unwritten rules that don't allow participants to show us up, and neither should we ever show up a participant.
 14. Don't be thin skinned. Don't even think about turning around to see who said something, unless what is said is a rules violation by one of the *participants* (i.e., profanity by a participant in high school or recreational ball). If it came from the stands, ignore it. If you can't take someone's disagreement with your calls, you most definitely don't belong in an umpire uniform.

Areas to Emphasize

Having dealt with some of the behaviors to avoid, and I'm sure many could be added to the list, let's look at some areas which feed into good field presence and general impression. Again, these are in no particular order, as they are all important.

1. Athleticism. Do your best to make all movements on the field natural and athletic.
2. Calm demeanor. No matter what happens, keep your cool! "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Remain in charge of yourself so that you may remain in charge of the game and its participants.
3. Neutral body language. Hanging your head or showing any kind of frustration after a close play or a pitch will tear down others confidence in you. No matter what happens, don't show any visible sign that it meant anything to you personally. Learn to keep your body language neutral.
4. Crisp mechanics. Whenever you give a visible signal, make it authoritative and strong. This doesn't mean over-selling routine plays. We'll deal more with this in the section on style of mechanics.
5. Maintain good eye contact while in conversation. I know this is being repeated, but it cannot be emphasized enough.
6. Be approachable. Sometimes the coach just wants an explanation of what you were thinking when you made a rule interpretation. Be willing to listen and respond courteously. In the words of Larry Vanover, "Any reasonable question deserves a reasonable response." Be willing to let the head coach have the last word.
7. Work hard, no matter what the other participants are doing. If you are really trying to do your best, it will be credited to your account by any fair-minded observer.
8. Work with your partners. The other umpires on the field are your only friends once the game begins. There are such things as "crew calls." The most common of these is a checked swing with an ask for help from one of the base umpires. Crew calls are one of the times that we truly get to shine if we are all in the game, working it to the best of our ability.
9. Relax. We can all tell when someone is tense. This is obvious to even the most uninformed fan. Without being casual, look like you feel at home out there.
10. Be decisive. Any sign of uncertainty on a play or pitch will feed into the impression that you are not sure of yourself. Take your time to make the proper call, but when you make it, convey that you know exactly what you are doing.

Again, much could be added to this list, and very much will be added in the succeeding articles in this series.

Remember, your work will be judged as much on general impression as it will be on specific plays and rulings. Strong

field presence without being overbearing or officious will carry you a long way to being perceived as a quality umpire.

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