

We have the best view of the game.

From our first week, holy smoke have we been "**busy**" (??)

Here a NUMBER of thoughts to make it even better? Hopefully this helps -- please check it **all** out:

BATTER'S BOX

USA Softball, Rule 7, Section 3

A. Prior to the pitch, the batter must have both feet completely within the lines of the batter's box. The batter may touch the lines, but no part of the foot may be outside the lines prior to the pitch.

USA Softball, Rule 7, Section 6 "Batter is Out"

F. When an entire foot is touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box at the time the ball makes contact with the bat.

G. When any part of a foot is touching home plate at the time the ball makes contact with the bat.

Once the lines are obscured, the issue becomes "umpire's judgement" -- which, as you know, is ALWAYS CORRECT (ya saw what I did there, right?).

Personally, I'm not going to pick a fight unless someone is obnoxious.

BATTED BALL HITTING THE PITCHER'S SCREEN

In one at-bat:

first is *Dead Ball*, no change in the count

subsequent is a *Strike* (not a Foul, as some played indoors)

FOUL TIP vs FOUL FLY BALL

Great question from one of our newer umpires:

1. He cited an "ISA Senior Softball" Rule.

I was able to redirect him to "USA Softball" Rulebook that we use (which you know is linked in my Signature Block, below, right?)

2. It **IS** about the HEIGHT, but not the way he thought:

A.

His question: "foul tipped ball has to go above head height" ???

Nope: USASoftball Rules Supplement 22 -- "since 2006 height of batter's head" is cancelled.

B.

(1) "ball moves from the bat "sharply" and "directly...to the catcher's glove / mitt" = **Foul**

Tip = Dead Ball/Strike/Out if 3d strike

(USA 7.4.E: Page 83).

(2) versus "a ball that has a perceptible arc and / or if the catcher moves their glove / mitt to catch the ball" = **Foul Ball** = Out/Live Ball
(USASoftball Rules Supplement 22, Page 134)

MISBEHAVIN'

You all saw President Brown's "Code of Conduct Zero Tolerance Policy" email message. To be quite clear:

For something like a little screamin' and yellin' -- "a minor verbal violation" -- yes, "Umpires will issue a written warning".

-- Inform the Player. In front of the Manager.

But for something like cussin' loud enough for fans to hear, touching an umpire, or exchanging swats with another player (like last year), that's immediate Ejection.

-- I suggest informing the Manager, let him handle removing the Player from the ballpark.

-- Only then restart the game.

-- Followed by a written report to Umpire-In-Chief.

PITCH HEIGHT LIMIT

It's still 12 feet.

With the new SEVEN-foot high screens in Div 1, that *looks* different. But it's still "12 feet", right? We need to enforce the rule.

A friend suggested "Hey, 13 feet or so, why not give a guy the room." I replied "Because once I ignore/bend/break a rule, there's chaos."

The video from the Ump Clinic resonates: "It's a *guess*. We don't *know* '12 feet' from '12 feet six inches'. It's just a *guess!* But we need to make it. And stick with it." Being consistent.

INFIELD FLY

USA says "could be caught with reasonable effort"

So, in that split second that the ball approaches the top of its arc, I need to ask myself whether there's an infielder who could get there "with reasonable effort". Yes, I call it. Maybe not, then I don't.

In my mind, that decision is appropriately influenced by *which Division* we're working in: can one of THESE guys get there?
Something to think about.

DIVISION 3 -- "FOUL" GROUND ON FIELD 5

There's some question, although there needn't (and maybe *shouldn't*) be. USA Softball clearly defines "the Field".

But let's address the specifics of Field 5's swamp. That area off the 1st Base line, about half way from the end of the infield fence to the outfield fence, out of play to the right, that's low and often remains

mushy for days after a good rain.

"Out of Play" on Field 5:

-- Right Field: outside a line extending the right field fence to the flagpole.

-- Left Field: outside a line extending the left field fence to the yellow pole that you really can see but ya gotta look for it way out on field SIX!

Effect:

Any fly ball traveling out of play is, first, "foul". And (watch what I do here!) "out of play". So it can't be caught, well it *can*, but it doesn't *count*.

Any ground ball, passing the base "fair" and then rolling into foul ground that CONTINUES INTO O.O.P. GROUND will be declared "dead", a "ground rule double", and two bases awarded to the Batter-Runner and Runners.

Any fly/ground ball rolling in Fair Ground and passing the outfield fence will be "dead" and two bases awarded the Batter-Runner and Runners.

So consider the practice to be:

On Field 5, Batter-Runner and Runners are awarded two bases for:

- a ball passing beyond the outfield fence between that fence and the Out Of Play line,
- a fair ball rolling Out Of Play before reaching the outfield fence.

DIVISION 3 NON-RUNNER BATTER

Had a NRB come to plate, NOT declare, took a pitch, then say "Oh, I'm NRB". I said "Not for the rest of this at-bat! You gotta run."

Next at-bat, he declared, we signaled, all was well.

Recommend: in your pre-game conference with Managers, remind them to remind their NRB: "Announce each time up".

AND IN CLOSING

a thought from Chief Instructor Michael Blades:

Working together:

Remember you are partners out there – you should think of it as a 9-inning marriage – you support each other completely. If you think he made a mistake or missed a call, keep that thought in your head – it does not show on your face or escape your lips.

Communication is key. Newer umpires: don't be afraid to ask more experienced umpires – they will always want to help you.

Finally know: none of this is life or death – it is serious enough, but if you can relax enough you will see that you can do this job well and still have fun. When I work a good game or play a good game, the feeling is the same. I am usually smiling when they are over.

With respect and appreciation, Peter

Huff-N-Puffers Umpire-In-Chief

peter.e.toomey@gmail.com

440-669-0750

Video of the 2024 Clinics, Schedules, Rules, Umpire Information, and the Umpire Guide are *always* at www.huff-n-puffers.com/Rules-and-Regulations.html

The USA Softball rulebook can be downloaded as a PDF from www.usasoftball.com/official-rulebook/ and the USA Umpire Manual at https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0144/3128/2023_Umpire_Manual.pdf

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail -- but if it makes you a better umpire ...