

Working the Big Diamond in a Two Umpire Crew

Starting Positions

There are four start positions on the big diamond, labeled **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D**. For now, just ignore **D** because it does not come into play in the two-man system.

Notice that there are two **B** positions – one outside the bases and the other inside. We'll talk more about this below, but in brief, you occupy the **B** position **outside** the base path with no runners on base. Of course, you can only be in the **B** position with no runners on base if you are working a four-man crew, so it will not come into play in two-man mechanics.

Responsibilities of the Base Umpire (U1)

The base umpire (**U1**) has a vastly more varied set of responsibilities than does the plate umpire. He has three different **start positions** (in two-man system) and the responsibilities vary somewhat depending on his position at the time of the pitch. Let's start with responsibilities regardless of start position.

From ALL positions

- **Checked swing.** Be honest and give the **PU** what you see. From **A** it's pretty easy to see. If you are in **B** this is rather difficult, and from **C** nearly impossible, so if you couldn't see it, don't call it. You can't call what you don't see.
- **Batter hit by pitch.** The **PU** will normally get this call, but sometimes he can't see it. If you see the ball hit the batter or graze his clothing, pause for a moment (giving your **PU** a chance to make the call), and if he doesn't then call it.
- **Pick-off plays.** You must remain alert and vigilant for snap throws and pick-off moves.
- **Balks and illegal pitches.** The **PU** is also watching for balks.
- **Base touches.** This is very important and frequently overlooked by inexperienced umpires. With runners on base, the **PU** has touches at 3rd base. You have the rest.
- **Tag-ups.** With runners on base, the **PU** has tag-ups at third base. You have everything else.
- **Interference and obstruction.** You must become familiar with the gamut of base-running and fielding infractions where the offense and defense illegally impede one another. We cover these in detail in our articles on **Offensive Interference** and **Obstruction**.

From the A position – 10-15' feet behind the first baseman unless he is up, then 15' from 1B

In addition to the items listed above, when you're in **A** you have the following additional items. Remember you are in this position you have no runners on base.

- **Fair/foul on right field line.** You have fair/foul on the right field line from the *bag and beyond*. The **PU** owns the call up to the leading edge of first base; from the bag and beyond, however, you own the call. On a bounding ball close to the line, this means squaring up, seeing the ball, then signaling fair or calling foul. On a fly ball, this means **going out**.
- **Batter-runner.** You have the batter-runner all the way to 3rd. The exception is if you go out, in which case the **PU** has the batter-runner.

From the B position – midway between mound and 2B, on line from home plate off mound.

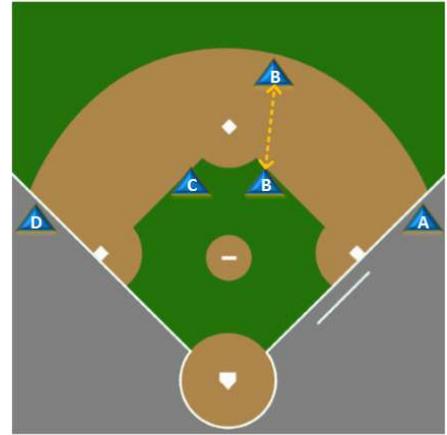
In the **B** position you have a runner on 1st (R1), or runners on 1st and 3rd (R1, R3).. On the big diamond, you're inside in a position midway between back edge of mound and 2B cutout, on imaginary line from edge of mound to point of Home Plate on 1B side.

- **Plays on all runners at all bases.** On a batted ball to the infield, you have all runners at all bases. Slide in the working area, stay chest-to-ball, and let the ball take you to plays on runners. Be alert for the double play.
- **Illegal slide into 2nd base.** On an attempted double play, watch for the illegal slide at 2nd. Of course, once you turn to pick up the play at 1st base you can no longer see the action of **R1** into 2nd; the **PU** should have an eye on that.
- **First-to-Third.** Remember that you're in a first-to-third situation, so on balls to the **outfield** (if not caught), the **PU** has **R1** into third base, if he goes.
- **Catch/No-Catch.** On a fly ball to the outfield, you have catch/no-catch responsibility in the Vee. Fly balls in the infield typically belong to the **PU** – unless it's right in your face.
- **Base touches.** Don't forget to watch base touches.

From the C position - midway between mound and 2B, on line from home plate off mound

In the **C** position you have a runner on 2nd, or a runner at 3rd only. All of the other bases may or may not be occupied, but if you have a runner on second you're in **C**, regardless of all else – that is, R1, R1 / R2, R3 / R2 only, and bases loaded. On the big diamond, you're inside in a position midway between back edge of mound and 2B cutout, on imaginary line from edge of mound to point of Home Plate on 3B side.

- **Plays on all runners at all bases.** With a runner (or runners) in scoring position, the **PU** is "staying home," so you have all runners at all bases. Slide in the working area, stay chest-to-ball, and let the ball take you to plays on runners.
- **Catch/No-Catch.** On a fly ball to the outfield, you have catch/no-catch responsibility in the Vee. Fly balls in the infield typically belong to the **PU** – unless it's right in your face.
- **Base touches.** Can't emphasize this enough.
- **Interference and obstruction.** Repeating this because with multiple runners there are many opportunities for interference or obstruction to occur.



Responsibilities of the Plate Umpire (PU)

Responsibilities of the plate umpire (PU) are much less variable than for the base umpire; the other side of the coin, of course, is that the PU has a greater number of highly visible and important tasks.

In ALL situations

- **Rule on balls and strikes.** This includes ruling on foul tips, checked swings, and batter hit by pitch. You may consult with your partner; further, the defense can request an appeal on checked swings that are not called a strike.
- **Fair/foul rulings on both base lines to the bag.** You own all fair/foul calls on the first and third base lines and on the foul lines extended. The only exception is when U1 is in the A position; in that case, PU has fair/foul on the first base line up to (but not including) the first base bag while U1 has the call from the bag and beyond.
- **Balks and illegal pitches.** Your partner is also watching for pitching infractions. Some are best seen by the PU, others by the U1.
- **Interference/obstruction and malicious contact at home.** Watch for the catcher blocking the plate without the ball (**obstruction**), **defensive interference** ("catcher's interference"), as well as for intentional malicious contact by a runner attempting to score.
- **Running lane violation.** You must watch for the **running lane violation** on all batted balls fielded in the vicinity of the plate.
- **Overthrows out of play.** While your partner has the runners, you have the call on a ball overthrown out of play. This most commonly happens on the throw to first on an infield batted ball (often into the dugout or beyond the out-of-play lines) and you must call an immediate dead ball.
- **Batted ball hits batter.** With the batter still in the batter's box and a batted ball touching the batter (either directly, or indirectly bouncing off the plate), you have a foul ball/dead ball.
- **Infield fly.** The **infield fly** is technically the PU's call, but convention has it that any umpire can call the infield fly.
- **All plays at home plate.** You own home plate.
- **Putting the ball in play.** Either umpire can call Time. But only the PU puts the ball back in play.

With no runners on

- **Fair/Foul.** With no runners on, your partner is in A, so you have the fair/foul call all the way on the 3rd base side, and you have it up to (but not including) the bag on the 1st base side.
- **Catch/no-catch.** You have all **catch/no-catch** responsibility *unless* your partner goes out from A. *If your partner goes out, you have the batter-runner all the way.* Except for that case, you have all catch/no-catch. Move quickly into the infield to get a good position to see the catch.
- **Swipe tag/pulled foot.** On a batted ball to the infield, trail the batter-runner up the 1st base line. Stop before the BR reaches 1st and watch for a pulled foot or swipe tag.
- **Plays at the plate.** You have the play at the plate should one develop.

With runners on first or first and third

With R1 or R1, R3 you're in a first-to-third situation, which means that you have plays on R1 at 3rd base if he advances that far. **Exception:** with a fly ball down the right field line you will have the fair/foul and catch/no-catch on that ball, so you call to your partner "I'm on the line," which tells him you will not be covering R1 into 3rd base.

- **Fair/foul and Catch/no-catch on the lines.** Any batted ball to the outfield that brings the right or left fielders toward their respective lines belongs to you. Move out from behind the plate and quickly get position on the appropriate foul line so you can rule on the fair/foul, then the catch/no-catch if necessary.
- **Take R1 into third base.** On any batted ball to the outfield, following the fair/foul or catch/no-catch rulings (if any), move up the third base line to get any play on R1 at third base. The exception, of course, is if you have a fair/foul call in right field. For more on that, see first-to-third situation.
- **All plays at the plate.** You own all plays at the plate, of course. This means that on a batted ball to the outfield with runners on both 1st and 3rd, you must see R3's base touch at home before moving all the way to third base to get R1, if he comes. The proper technique is to take a few steps toward third base, then stop to see R3 touch home, then turn and hustle up to third.
- **Batted ball to the infield.** On a batted ball to the infield you have three main responsibilities:
 - **Illegal slide at second base.** Clear the catcher and find a position for a clear view of second base and back up you partner by watching R1's slide into second. If an illegal slide, call it.
 - **Pulled foot and swipe tag at first base.** If no illegal slide, turn and step immediately to watch the batter-runner into first base, looking for pulled foot or swipe tag.
 - **R1 at third if all hell breaks loose.** In the unlikely event of errors or overthrows that lead R1 to advance beyond second, hustle up to third to cover any play on R1 at third base.
- **Touches and tags at third base.** With multiple runners you tag-ups and base touches by all runners at third base.

With runners in scoring position

Runners in scoring position means (a) a runner on second, (b) runners on second and third, (c) runners on first and second, or (d) bases loaded. Additionally, in configurations (c) and (d) (and fewer than two outs) you're also in an **infield fly situation**. On all batted balls you are "staying home," meaning that U1 has all runners at all bases and you have everything at home.

- **Infield fly.** Technically, the PU owns calling the **infield fly**, but in practice either umpire can call it.
- **All plays at home.** You have all plays on all runners at home plate.
- **Fair/foul on both lines.** Your partner is in C, so you have fair/foul on both lines all the way to the foul pole.
- **Touches and tags at third base.** With multiple runners you have all tag-ups and base touches at third base.
- **Plays at 3B on R2 when he tagged up on fly ball to outfield with R1 and R2, less than 2 outs.** If you covered in your Pregame, if U1 has catch/no catch on a fly ball to the outfield with less than 2 outs, the PU may rotate to 3B to take play on R2.