



Hello and welcome to this Special Edition of Blues News On-Line

Following a review of reports from umpires returning from International competitions and our own inconsistencies across the country in relation to mechanics, the following special edition of Blues News On-Line contains a memo/training paper and various Mechanic Bulletins that will dictate how mechanics are to be used across the country.

The following documents are the latest outcomes from discussions with Softball Australia Limited (SAL) ISF umpires and Level 6 umpires, including trials at the 2009 Open Championships and the National Umpiring Program (NUP) meeting held at the SAL offices over the weekend of the 25 - 27th September 2009.

Some of the content and philosophies in this document are already in practice, however with a view to creating a consistent system across the National Umpiring Program they are reiterated in this document. Please discuss and seek guidance on any items contained in these bulletins with your trainer or mentor.

These items should be practiced and taught immediately and will form part of new training manuals that are being produced. A transitional time for implementation for examinations has also been allowed for this season on the new Mechanics.

Under the new communication distributions systems, SAL_TB for rule changes and clarifications, or SAL_MB NUP Mechanics bulletins for Mechanic changes will follow and/or will be [published on line](#).

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Some items will simply form part of new training manuals in the future.

There has also been a note added to version 1.0 of SAL TB_2009-1 with further clarification to the ISF interpretation of interference by a runner with the vision of the fielder on a batted ball. The latest version is on line and was published in the October BNOL. The note is published in this edition.

Regards

Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief - Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

email: leighevans@westnet.com.au



MECHANICS BULLETIN

Changes to Technical Bulletin
November 2004

Date: 29/09/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-1 Umpires use of Vocals

All umpires and trainers are to continue to encourage vocal communication between umpires on the diamond. Umpires should use all means of communication necessary including the use of the umpires' names.

Care should be taken not to use words that players use between themselves such as "I've got third".

There are times where one word vocals are of advantage and gives umpires a presence and a sense of strength such as on check swing requests and base umpires responses, trapped balls and requesting help.

E.g. On a checked swing, umpires should step out from behind the plate and catcher and pause, take their mask off, get the base umpires attention by using his name like "KEVIN" (wait for a visual response) then pointing toward him ask, "Did he swing" the base umpire should reply with a strong "YES! or NO!" with the appropriate signal.

A one word ask of "Swing" is also permitted as long the base umpire is aware.

On a trapped fly ball situation, umpires can use words such as "No, or Safe" with the safe signal, or the words "No Catch." In these situations one word questions or statements portray a strong presence.

Note: all umpires can verbal and signal a no catch situation on trapped balls. Base umpires close to the play should call and signal no catch situations.

Leigh Evans
Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove
Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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MECHANICS BULLETIN

Changes to Technical Bulletin
November 2004

Date: 29/09/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-2 Count Signal

When giving the count; the count is to be verbalised, balls first, strikes second and signalled to the pitcher and then with the hands rotated 90-180 degrees slow enough or clear enough to enable the count to be seen by all players and coaches.

The count should be given after the following:

- Three pitches or when the pitch will create a play, i.e. three balls.
- Two strikes, after a check swing, or after an illegal pitch.
- Placing the ball into play after time out or a delay in play.
- When a runner advances to the next base either by stealing or after a passed ball.

In all these cases the plate umpire should give the count again.

Note: Do not do this while the catcher is standing. There should be time to do this as the catcher starts to go down and prior to the catcher giving the signal to the pitcher while squatting.

Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove

Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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Date: 29/09/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-3 Plate Work

The following plate stance (see diagram below) regarding positioning of the umpire's body behind the catcher is to be taught and used at all levels.

An angle of the hips and shoulders approximately 15 degrees to the pitcher – with the navel (belly button) pointing between the centre of the front of home plate and no further than outside front corner of the plate should be used, and the feet should follow the body's natural stance.

This way the correct heel and toe theory is still maintained by just using the above practice.

The plate umpire should track the pitch with the eyes and the nose slightly to the flight of the ball and all the way to the catcher's glove, especially on low or outside pitches.

The plate umpire should have their body weight slightly on the balls of their feet. This helps to see trapped balls and check swings.

The plate umpire should have a distance from the catcher enough to allow the catcher to move without contacting the plate umpire's knees, or interfering with the catcher taking the pitch, however not too far back, to ensure the vision of the outside front corner of the plate is not affected.

This is achieved by having the umpire's slot foot (foot between the batter and the home plate) in line with an imaginary line extended from the catcher's heels. This maintains the correct distance for the heel and toe.

The plate umpire should have his back as straight as comfortable. Do not bend forward from the lower back as it is important to be able to see the area above the strike zone, and once in position the plate umpire should be able to look up and lift the chin.

The eyes should be just above the top of the zone and on in the inside edge of the plate between the plate and the batter.

This position should be mirrored on both sides of the plate.

Note 1: As the umpire's eyes are at the top and inside edges of the zone there is no need to move the head to track these pitches.

Note 2: Care should be taken that the side of the umpire's body or the inside of the umpire's foot/leg is not exposed to the pitch or foul ball.

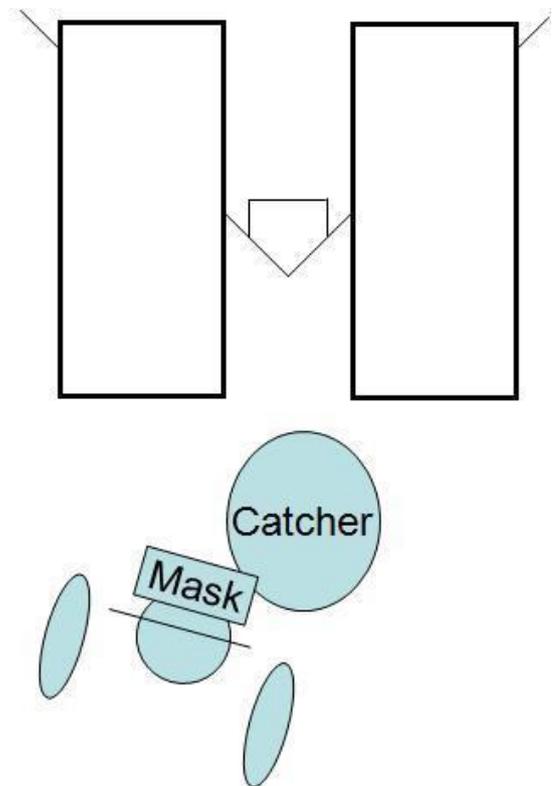
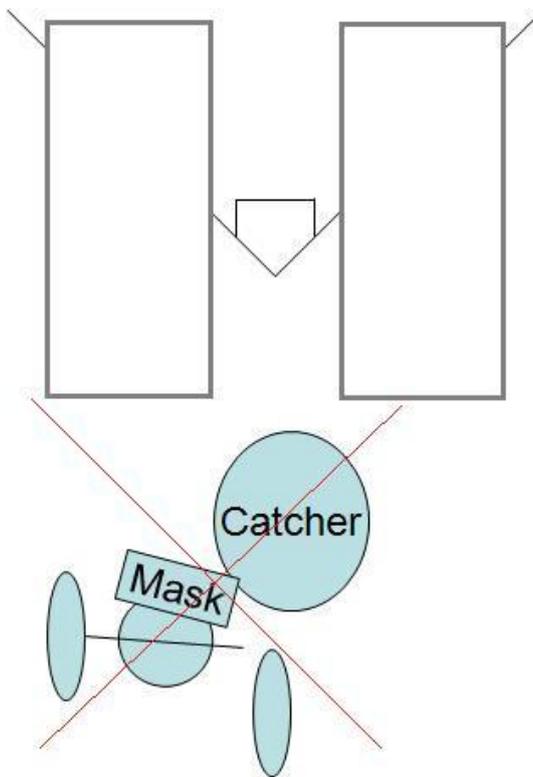
The verbal strike or ball call should be made while in the squat stance. The plate umpire should not bring his/her feet together or step back prior to the signal, rather they should call, stand and signal from the same stance.

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The timing of the strike or ball call during plate work is decided long before the mechanic, so the plate umpire always needs to track the ball to the catcher's glove by taking his nose to the flight of the ball before making any decisions. Then the umpire can make his first movement.

***Note the line drawn through the hips and the position of the feet.**



Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove

Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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MECHANICS BULLETIN

Date: 29/09/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-4 Check Swing

In determining a check swing the plate umpire should watch the batter's bat and decide if the batter was offering a swing at the pitch.

If the batter has taken the bat past the front of the body or broken the wrists it is always a strike. The difficult one to judge is the check swing, generally if he is still taking the bat to the pitch it is a strike.

On a bunt situation if the batter merely holds the bat flat in the zone it is not a strike unless the pitch enters the zone. However, if the batter takes the stationary bat to the flight of the pitch it is a strike. Base umpires can use the same rationale when asked for assistance.

(a) On a check swing plate umpires should step out from behind the plate and catcher and pause, take the mask off, ask with words like, "KEVIN" (wait for a visual response) then pointing toward the base umpire ask. "Did he swing" the base umpire should reply with "YES! or NO!" with the appropriate signal. A one word ask of "Swing" is also allowed as long the base umpire is aware.

(b) If the plate umpire considers the batter did swing on a check swing, he/she should point to the batter (down the slot) with the left hand for a right handed batter and the right hand for a left handed batter and state "Yes" or "yes, you went" or "strike". On obvious swings the umpire should just call and signal strike.

In all cases if the plate umpire is not sure they should request help from the base umpire immediately. When requested by the catcher, the plate umpire should seek help from the base umpire.

When the base umpire is at second base care should be taken. The Plate Umpire should still request help, however, if giving an affirmative answer the second base umpire should be sure the batter swung.

Note: When the plate umpire is unsure after a checked swing on a possible dropped third strike and after the ball goes to the back net, he should ask the base umpire without hesitation.

If the plate umpire has not asked the base umpire immediately, he should not seek help after the catcher has returned with the ball. If you wait to seek help on the swing after the catcher comes back with the ball, we are giving an advantage to the defensive team while penalising the offensive team.

Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove

Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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MECHANICS BULLETIN

Date: 29/09/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-5 Outfield movement corrections 3-umpire system

In a situation in the 3-umpire system when two umpires are undecided as to who should go to the outfield on fly balls and subsequently both umpires go out, we need to be systematic when it comes to correcting our movements.

Scenarios

1. R2 at 2nd base, Fly ball hit between left and centre fielder, both U1 and U3 break for the outfield. U3 should come back, it is far easier for U3 to make a correction and come inside for a possible play at the base.
2. R2 at 1st base, Fly ball hit to the right fielder and both U1 and U3 break for the outfield, U3 should correct.
3. R2 at 1st base, Fly ball hit between centre and right fielder, both U1 and U3 break for the outfield. U3 and U1 are running directly away from the diamond, U3 should correct, U3 is the only umpire that can correct and still be in front of the runner.

In most cases U3 will normally be in the best position to correct and should do so.

Leigh Evans
Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove
Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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MECHANICS BULLETIN

Date: 29/09/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-6 Mechanics on the third strike/possible trapped ball

When a third strike pitch or a third strike foul tip is fielded close to the ground by the catcher, plate umpires must judge if the ball was taken cleanly.

The plate umpire should always verbal strike three and use the strike mechanic.

If the ball is caught, verbally call the batter out and hold the out mechanic momentarily or immediately give the out mechanic again.

The verbal "out" call should be loud enough for the Batter Runner and Catcher to hear it.

The mechanic should signal to all players, coaches and umpires that the pitch was fielded cleanly and the batter is out.

If the pitch has obviously bounced the umpire should only call and signal strike, the batter should only be called out if tagged or played out at first base.

The base umpire should take in all inputs before making a decision if the catcher throws to first and the B/R outruns the throw.

Note: The strike call and out call or two different calls.

It is strike three when the pitch is swung at or the pitch enters the zone. It is not out until caught. You should always momentarily pause after the strike call.

Remembering this will help with timing and getting the call right

Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove

Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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Date: 29/09/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-7 Positioning for calls made to First Base on infield plays

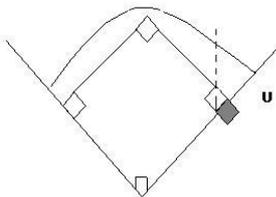
Whenever the base umpire is making a call at the base on an infield play, the umpire is to move to a position in outfield fair territory, and stand at a 90 degree angle to the throw, 4-5 metres from the play.

The umpire should face the play, place his/her feet a comfortable distance apart (at least shoulder width) stay relaxed but still.

Before the play adopt the 'ready' position by unlocking the knees slightly, weight resting lightly on the balls of the feet and the hands drawn in close to the belt line in front of the body, or with relaxed open hands and arms bent at the elbows approximately 45 degrees and stay completely still in this "ready" position until the conclusion of the play.

As opposed to the current set position (hands on the knees), the ready position allows the umpire to be nimble and react to the play, especially after errors and overthrows.

Umpires should only use the area from the fair/foul line to a position 45 degree off the base line for all plays on the batter runner on infield hits (see diagram). In this position be aware of the batter runner rounding the base.



Exception: On a bunted ball with the throw coming from the home plate area, the umpire can use the area all the way to the base line between 1st and 2nd and be 90 degree to the throw.

Note: On all force plays the umpire should see the batted ball fielded and see the throw from the fielder to the base is on target.

The umpire should then switch his vision to the batter runner (B/R) and the umpire should watch the feet of both the B/R and the fielder, he should then peripherally see the ball go into the glove or listen for the catch, especially if the throw is off target and the fielder jumps off the base, before making the call.

Leigh Evans
Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove
Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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MECHANICS BULLETIN

Date: 07/10/09

Subject: SAL MB 2009-8 Inside/outside theory exceptions in the 3-umpire system

The inside/outside theory states that if the ball is in the outfield the umpire should be in the infield and visa versa.

There are some exceptions to this.

By coming inside the diamond you always take the chance of interfering with the runner, button hooking during the play, or interfering with a thrown ball by being in the throwing lanes from the outfield to home or infielder.

I.E. The use of foul territory by U1 with no runners on base on hits through the infield is to keep the umpire out of fair territory when not necessary.

Umpires at 2nd base on ground hits to left field can stay outside the base line. As the play develops the umpire can move to the base line from 1st to 2nd getting a good angle on the play and have the ball and runner in front of them. Then if the throw goes home the umpire does not interfere with the play.

Similarly an umpire at third base, on a deep hit to right field with a runner advancing from 2nd to 3rd runs the risk of interfering with a runner if he comes down foul territory or moves inside. The umpire in this instance can stay in foul territory. As a play develops on the runner coming into third they can move into fair territory outside the base line to the leading edge and have all the elements; the ball, runner, fielder and base in front of them. If the runner then rounds the corner they can move to the base line between 2nd and 3rd base and call the play back.

Scenarios

1. R2 on 1st base, with a ground ball hit to left field, U1 will come down foul territory toward home; however U3 can stay in the outfield at 2nd base as he has the play in front of him and he has no other base to run to, he can get a 90 degree position from the throw quite easily.
2. R2 on 2nd base, U3 at third with a ground hit to right field, U3 does not need to go inside. In fact if he does he runs the risk of interfering with R2 or being in the throwing lane, especially with the throw coming from his back. Stay in fair territory behind 3rd base and wait for the play to develop U3 only needs to take 1 step inside in fair territory to pickup the leading edge.

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3. R2 at 3rd base, hit to left field, if U3 umpire comes inside he faces several risks. U3 should come to foul territory using a 45 degree area between the fair/foul line and the base line. Then react to the play. If the runner is not rounding 3rd base move to foul territory between coaches box, and bounce inside or stay in foul territory and get a good angle on the play.
4. R2 at 3rd base, R3 at 2nd, hit to left field, U3 comes down the alley at third base between the coaches' box and the fair foul line as R2 breaks for home. If a play develops at third base on R3 move inside for play and call. Be very careful of R3 if he rounds third base.

Although this position is like a reverse of the alley at first, the runner in this situation is rounding the base at you.

Move to fair territory and let the runner go around, be careful of the throwing lanes to home.

In all cases umpires must be aware of the next position and play, the umpire may need to come inside to be able to take the batter runner to third. Always be careful of the defensive throwing lanes.

Notes:

- The umpire should always have all 4 elements in front of him, the ball, the runner, the base and the fielder.
- On fly balls to the outfield with umpires going out, the remaining umpire will always need to button hook inside as you revert to a two umpire system.
- The contents and theory of this bulletin are to be taught as an advanced step in umpiring and should be discussed with your trainer or mentor.

Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

Debbie Grove

Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia

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MECHANICS BULLETIN

20th Oct 2009

Subject: Training and Mechanics Memo V7.5

1. Fair Foul signal & Touched Signal/Mechanic

On all fair balls, either bounding or fielded close to the line (within one metre in the infield and two metres in the outfield), the umpire responsible for the call shall point or use a pumping motion with the hand closest to the field toward fair territory, as soon as the ball is ruled fair. I.E. is touched, lands in the outfield or hits or bounds over the base.

On foul balls, signal foul with both arms as soon as it is foul.

Touched Signal:

On fly balls caught or touched close to the fair/foul line whether fair or foul, the umpire responsible for the call shall give a touched signal as soon as the ball is first touched, by pointing to either fair or foul territory at shoulder level.

- If the ball is first touched fair the umpire will point toward fair territory.
- If the ball is first touched foul the umpire will point away from the field.

When the ball is caught the umpire will verbal and signal out, or if the ball is not caught, signal either fair again, or foul with both arms and hands in the air while verballing “foul ball”.

This signal is for the players, coaches and spectators, also taking into consideration spectators and fielders view from the other side of the diamond.

It is important to give the signal as soon as the ball is first touched, that way if the fielder juggles the ball all the way to the fence and drops the ball you can convince the other participants of your decision.

By rule the fly ball is either fair or foul when the ball is first touched.

2. Glasses

Sunglasses should be removed during the pre game meeting and during questions from coaches after difficult plays and during warnings or directives.

Glasses whilst not being worn should not be placed on top of the cap. Instead they should be handed to the side line when time permits.

3. Infield Fly Crew Signal

It is deemed appropriate for all levels to use the infield fly crew signal with either an open hand covering the heart and the number of outs indicated on the leg; or to simply indicate the number of outs with the right hand over the heart.

With no outs the umpire should use an open hand just above the left breast (a clenched fist is difficult to distinguish between none and one out in some light conditions with the light blue shirt). One out should be signalled with the pointing finger just above the left breast

Note: There is no need to use the wipe off signal when there are two outs. The two out signal on the thigh covers this signal/rule.

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4. Appeals

When the incorrect umpire is requested to rule on an appeal for bases left early on fly balls, or for a missed base after a rotation or going out on fly balls, the umpire should verbally advise the defensive player or coach that they were covering another position or play and it is not their call.

The umpire should then immediately get the attention of the umpire that was responsible, and then verbally ask the umpire for the decision.

Note 1: It is of utmost importance that all players and coaches know that the umpire is not initiating the appeal and is merely relaying the request.

E.G. Call time if required say words like “John (wait for attention), there is an appeal for the runner missing 3rd base” and let the correct umpire make the call.

This prevents the players making the umpire that is not responsible look undecided and not in control, and allows the call to be made.

Note 2: Umpires can also use this method to advise of their decision after an appeal at a base, when it may not be obvious to all players and umpires that an appeal has taken place.

E.G. To the plate umpire verbally and after attracting his attention, “Kevin there has been an appeal for a missed base on the last runner at third, and the runner is out”

5. Interference by runner with fielders view: SAL TB 2009-1.

In addition to the Tech Bulletin [SAL TB 2009-1](#). In version 1.1 we have added a note: While we do not want to call a runner out for merely running in front of a fielder fielding a batted ball, there is a case where interference could be called even without contact. If in the umpires judgement there was a genuine attempt to field a batted ball and at the precise time the fielder is about to glove the ball, he lifts his head to **avoid collision.**

The point we are trying to clarify in the bulletin is, when a runner simply runs in front of a fielder and causes the fielder to lose sight of the ball and subsequently an error occurs, that is not interference.

There are more mechanics including the 3 and 4 umpire systems, along with rule changes being discussed at the 2009 International Congress forum this year and bulletins will follow as soon as available.

Leigh Evans

Umpire in Chief Technical
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia
email: leighevans@westnet.com.au
Mobile: 0419 304100

Debbie Grove

Umpire in Chief Development
National Umpiring Program
Softball Australia
email: deblus@aapt.net.au

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