



# UMPIREGRAM

Official Newsletter of  
Babe Ruth Baseball & Softball National Umpires Associations  
P. O. Box 5000, Trenton NJ 08638 -- (609) 695-1434



## MARCH 2008

Are you “*on deck*” for 2008? All NUA memberships expired on December 31, 2007. Renewing *now* will allow your applications to be processed in a timely manner. If you need a renewal application, please contact your Headquarters Service Representative at 609-695-1434.



**Time is Running Out!** – The height of every umpire’s career is to umpire in a Babe Ruth World Series. Babe Ruth’s finest are selected from among our National Umpire Association. In order to be considered to umpire a 2008 Babe Ruth World Series, your completed World Series application, along with a photo of yourself (headshot in umpire attire) must be submitted to Babe Ruth Headquarters by April.

*Drive Towards Increasing Membership* – Help the NUA grow to new heights. Recommend it to your friends or fellow umpires. To apply for membership, visit [www.baberuthleague.org](http://www.baberuthleague.org) and click on National Umpires Association. Scroll down to the bottom of the screen to apply online or download an application. Also on this web page, new and renewed members may fill out a World Series application online to be considered to work a 2008 World Series.

## Advice for the Amateur Umpire

- Integrity, fairness and impartiality are all necessary. Feelings must be kept under control at all times.
- Treat others as you would have them treat you.
- Show respect, but let them know that you’re in charge.
- Act professionally – watch your tone of voice – don’t be the aggressor.
- Hustle at all times. Run from position to position. Never walk. Look sharp!
- On the field, work as a team with your partner. Communicate with each other. Use the umpire-to-umpire signals to keep track of the counts, number of outs, infield fly situations, etc.
- Between innings, the plate umpire should stand on the 1<sup>st</sup> base or 3<sup>rd</sup> base side in foul territory. From this position, you can best keep the game moving and hustle the players on and off the field.
- After 3 outs, do not catch or handle the ball. You may be handling a live ball, or denying a team the opportunity to make a play or an appeal. If the ball is thrown to you, just re-direct it to the pitcher’s area.
- When a game ends, hustle off the diamond with your partner. Reserve any discussion until you are away from the diamond and any potential listeners.
- Always support your fellow umpires. If you are at a game, do not criticize other umpires. Keep your comments to yourself. If someone asks you for an interpretation on a play that happened in a game, tell them you are not at liberty to comment, and that the inquiry should be directed to the umpire-in-chief.
- Always remember, you’re in charge of the game.



**Anaconda – The Place to Shop for Umpire Apparel.** Image is everything! Your uniform speaks volumes about you. If your shoes are shined, your shirt crisp, you have your belt, and you are well groomed, you will immediately be accepted as a professional. Anaconda Sports offers the best deals in umpire equipment and apparel. There are many items available with the NUA emblem. To obtain a catalog, simply call Babe Ruth Headquarters. To place an order, or for questions, contact Rick Wohlrab at Anaconda Sports – 1-800-327-0074, extension 191.



## Food for Thought

**What is proper timing?** Timing is the proper use of the eyes. Call the pitch as fast as you can...*after you see it*. Umpires talk about those who call pitches before they have even reached the glove (like the called strike three that goes for a home run!). We watch batters get half way to first before the umpire calls a strike, or watch both catcher and batter turn and look at the umpire waiting for an announcement of his decision. We see the scoreboard being reset after the "ball" becomes a "strike". On the rubber...get set...see it...call it!

**The Automatic Call.** Why do some umpires automatically call "strike" on a pitch made at a count of three balls and no strikes? Why do some umpires call "ball" on a pitch made at a count of no balls and two strikes? Does the pitcher suddenly get worse or better? Don't do it! Don't do it! Call the pitch exactly where it was placed, exactly as you would in every situation without regard to the count or game situation.

**Don't Make It Hard!** Every pitch is a strike until it convinces you it's a ball! Baseball and softball are simple games - don't make them hard!



**Before the Game...** Both the plate and base umpires should be present for the manager's meeting at least five minutes prior to the start of the game with the manager of each team.

- Introduce yourself to the managers and confirm they are the only ones who can approach the umpires with challenges to calls.
- Accept each team's line-up and check to ensure that no names or fielding positions are duplicated.
- Make sure the copy matches the original and give the copy to the opposing manager.
- Discuss the ground rules.

**NUA Emblems Show Pride!** Each NUA member is required to display the official Babe Ruth Baseball or Softball NUA emblem on their shirt. This emblem shows the players and coaches that you are trained in their program and their sport. It allows you to identify with them, and them with you. It is a source of pride for both you and the teams. The patch should be worn on the left sleeve or the left side of the chest above the pocket.



One patch is included with your annual NUA membership. To order additional patches, contact Babe Ruth Headquarters.



## Did You Know...

...*There is* no such reference in any official rulebook that addresses that a left-handed pitcher has some imaginary 45-degree mound line that establishes some kind of “no balk zone” with reference to where and how he or she steps when throwing over to 1<sup>st</sup> base during a pick-off attempt. Official Baseball Rule 8.05(c) states “...it is a balk when the pitcher, while touching his plate, fails to step directly toward the base before throwing to that base.” That’s the official rule in its entirety.

**Common Mistakes:** *Three* things to consider – *First*, assuming that there really is a 45-degree angle rule. *Second*, assuming that left-handed pitchers should be treated differently than right-handers when it comes to applying 8.05(c). *Third*, failure to interpret and enforce 8.05(c) exactly as written.

**Solution:** Interpret and enforce Rule 8.05(c) exactly as written, with special emphasis on the “*directly toward the base...*”

...*The batter* has until he goes into the dugout (or any other dead ball area) to run to 1<sup>st</sup> base when the 3<sup>rd</sup> strike is dropped by the catcher. (Assuming that 1<sup>st</sup> is not occupied with less than two outs. Batter may acquire 1<sup>st</sup> if it is occupied when there are 2 outs). Official Baseball Rule 6.09(b) states, “The batter becomes a runner when (b) The third strike called by the umpire is not caught, providing (1) first base is unoccupied, or (2) first base is occupied with two out.” **Casebook Interpretation:** “When a batter becomes a runner on a third strike not caught by the catcher and starts for the dugout, or his position, and then realizes his situation and attempts then to reach first base, he is not out unless he or first base is tagged before he reaches first base. If, however, he actually reaches the dugout or dugout steps, he may not then attempt to go to first base and shall be out.”

**Common Mistakes:** Too many umpires are under the impression that if a batter has given up any obvious attempt to acquire 1<sup>st</sup> base on a dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike that he has in fact given up his right to do so. When the umpire has made this determination that the player is out, there is usually no attempt made on the batter’s part to run to 1<sup>st</sup> base. And if the batter decides to run to 1<sup>st</sup> base despite the umpire’s call and acquires it safely, only to be removed from the base by the umpire, the offensive manager would have a valid protest if he decides to file one.



**Solution:** Know the rule. Pass it on to other umpires. Don’t declare an out until the batter goes into the dugout or into any other dead ball area.

...*That because* a batter simply squares around to bunt a pitched ball and subsequently leaves the bat in that position does not automatically result as an attempted swing. Per Official Baseball Rule 2.00, A STRIKE is a legal pitch when so called by the umpire, which – “(a) is struck at by the batter and is missed.”

**Shouldn’t Make Any Mistakes or Need a Solution! Pretty direct and to the point!**

TO PREPARE FOR THE 2008 SEASON, TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ON THE FOLLOWING BRAIN TEASERS:



*(Answers appear following the last question)*

1. In an effort to distract the batter, the 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman stands behind the pitcher and waves his arm while jumping up and down. Is this act legal?

2. The base runner slides hard into 3<sup>rd</sup> base and the loose bag slides away from him. The fielder applies a tag. Is the runner out?

3. Numbers 5, 6, 7 and 8 in the batting order are due to bat in the sixth inning. Number 7 bats out of turn, leads off and doubles. Number 6 sacrifices him to 3<sup>rd</sup> base. Number 5 then comes to the plate and takes one pitch before the defense appeals. What is the ruling?

4. The batter, after receiving a walk, trots a few feet towards 1<sup>st</sup> base. When the batter runner requests time and heads for the dugout, a pinch runner takes his place and goes to 1<sup>st</sup> base. After stepping on the rubber, the pitcher throws to 1<sup>st</sup> base and claims the batter runner is out because he never touched 1<sup>st</sup> base. How would you rule?

5. A delivery by the pitcher hits the ground in front of the plate and the umpire calls out "Ball", but the pitch crosses over the plate and the batter slams it over the centerfield fence. What would be your ruling?

6. The batter bunts, drops his bat and runs toward 1<sup>st</sup> base. As he runs, the ball spins back toward the plate and strikes his bat in fair territory deflecting the ball down the 1<sup>st</sup> base line and preventing the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman from making a play on it. Is the batter out?



**ANSWERS TO BRAIN TEASERS:**

1. No. This is definitely unsportsmanlike conduct as indicated in Official Baseball Rule 4.06(b). The 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman shall be removed from the game.

2. The runner is safe. No play can be made on a runner at that base if the bag becomes dislodged after he has reached it safely. If there is further action on the play, any succeeding runner need only occupy or touch the space formerly occupied by the base. See Official Baseball Rule 7.08(c) - Approved Rulings 1 and 2.

3. The first pitch to number 6 legalized number 7's double. The pitch to number 5 legalized the sacrifice. Number 7 is the proper batter at the point of appeal, but since he is on 3<sup>rd</sup> base, his turn is passed over and number 8 becomes the proper batter. Refer to Official Baseball Rule 6.07(c) and 6.07 - Approved Rulings - Play 6.

4. The umpire should not grant such a request for "Time" until the batter runner reaches 1<sup>st</sup> base. If the umpire does err, halts the game and allows the substitution, it must be considered legal because the change was made while the ball was dead. Refer to Official Baseball Rule 3.03.

5. The umpire erred in calling the pitch too soon. The batter may hit a pitch even though it first touches the ground. Therefore, the proper ruling is the umpire must rule a homerun. Refer to Official Baseball Rules 5.03, 7.05(a) and 2.00 - Definition of Ball.

6. No. Normally when a moving bat strikes a fair-pitched ball, the batter is out for hitting the ball twice. But if the ball rolls against an idle bat and in the umpire's judgment there was no intent to interfere by the batter, the ball remains alive and in play. Refer to Official Baseball Rule 6.05(h).