

Oregon School Activities Association

Baseball SRI Bulletin – #4

April 28, 2016

Mechanically Sound

This bulletin will focus on being in the proper position and being mechanically sound. As we enter the final home stretch of the season, it is especially critical to maintain focus on every pitch and every play. You have heard the phrases below before, and you will certainly hear them again.

“See what you call - call what you see.”

“Anticipate the play, not the call.”

“Get the big one right.”

All those maxims assume one basic element: *That you are in the right position in the first place.* Without being in proper position, and having the best angle, you are making an educated guess as to the correct call. And while you may get it right some of the time, or even most of the time, you will not get it right all of the time. More than likely, the umpire gods will see to it that the one you guess wrong on is one of the most important ones. So how do you prevent problems?

Spend a few hours with the Oregon Baseball Umpires Manual before the season and then review it several times during the season. Although you may not agree with all of the information in your manual, it lays out the best practices that have been developed over many years. If you have disagreements with what is presented, discuss your issues in a positive way with veterans in your local association and/or email the State SRI for clarification.

The game changes, resulting in mechanics changes. Things that worked five years ago may not fit with the speed of today's game. Players are bigger and faster, as well as better educated about the game. Studying mechanics is just as important as studying rules.

Have you ever been assigned a big game with the umpire whose mechanics are firmly stuck in the 1970's? Do you find yourself not only observing action in your area, but having to glance outside of your coverage area as well? This sets both of you up for failure. Things will go from bad to worse when you miss something you should have been watching all along.

One way poor positioning manifests itself is in two umpires winding up in close proximity to one another. For instance, PU bolts toward third base in anticipation of a secondary play on the infield, leaving U1 with no help on swipe tag/pulled foot and not in position to rule on running lane interference and/or an overthrow threatening dead ball territory. Although the plate umpire is trying to do the right thing, the failure of that umpire to execute proper mechanics has put the entire crew at risk.

Fans, coaches and players have convinced themselves that umpires need to be “right on top the play”. While that can be true, it is not an absolute. Remember, moving toward a play after making the call makes you appear closer than you actually were. Reducing the distance satisfies those who feel you must be on top of

every call. Make sure you are set for your call and then move toward the call, repeating the signal, if appropriate. Your overall success on the diamond requires good strong mechanics.

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