

INTERFERENCE CALLS REFERENCE

I believe interference is the toughest call an umpire has to make. It is a call based solely on the umpire's judgment. To make a good judgment as to whether or not interference occurred, the umpire must understand the definition as stated in the rules so it can be recognized when it occurs. After interference is called, the proper rule must be applied.

The definition as stated in Rule 2.00 is:

"(a) Offensive interference is an act by the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play. If the umpire declares the batter, batter-runner, or a runner out for interference, all other runners shall return to the last base that was in the judgment of the umpire, legally touched at the time of the interference, unless otherwise provided by these rules.

In the event the batter-runner has not reached first base, all runners shall return to the base last occupied at the time of the pitch.

(b) Defensive interference is an act by a fielder which hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch."

It should be noted that (b) above is the only defensive interference. Hindering the runner by the defense is OBSTRUCTION.

How do we interpret this rule? The key, is to focus on the phrase "**interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses.**" Those words cover a lot of actions. The umpire, after witnessing an act by the offense must ask himself the following question; "Did the offense interfere with, obstruct, impede, hinder or confuse the fielder attempting to make the play?" If the answer is yes, interference should be called. The call must be made as soon as possible. When interference is called the ball is immediately dead and no runners may advance beyond the base they held at the time of the interference. The umpire must be aware of where all runners are at the time of the call. When the interference occurs the umpire immediately calls it. You do not wait to see the outcome of the play.

Some interference calls are easy.

Example: If a runner is hit by a batted ball he is out and no judgment of intent is required unless he is hit by a deflected ball, or the ball has passed on infielder, in which case the umpire must decide if he intended to be hit to interfere, obstruct, impede, hinder or confuse the defense or if another fielder had a play on the ball. Rule 5.09(f) and 7.08(f).

Example: A runner **must** avoid a fielder attempting to field a **BATTED BALL**. If he does not he is guilty. This is a fairly easy call. Rule 7.09(L) and 7.08(b).

The fielder's protection begins the moment the ball is hit. That protection continues as he completes his initial play. His protection ends if he misplayed the batted ball and has to move to recover it. Contact with the fielder is not necessary for interference to be called.

When a ball is hit, you have to judge which fielder has the best chance to field the ball. That fielder is then "protected" meaning; must not be interfered with, from the time the ball leaves the bat, up through the gloving of the ball and the act of throwing. The fielder is protected even if he started to field the ball from outside the basepath and then moved into it to field the ball. The runner must avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.

Rule 7.09(L). He must avoid the fielder and not interfere with him during the entire time that the fielder is in protected status and in all areas including the basepath.

Continued

Interference is the act of hindering or obstructing a fielder attempting to make a play. A "Play" is the act of throwing, or attempting a tag of a runner or a base, or an attempt to catch a throw.

Difficult calls are the ones involving thrown balls. Interference with a **thrown ball** must be judged as an **intentional act**. Rule 7.08(b), 7.09(L). If a runner is hit by a thrown ball while running the bases, he is not out unless the umpire judges that the runner **intentionally** interfered, obstructed, hindered or confused the defense attempting to make a play.

Some examples of interference are:

- Yelling at a fielder as he attempts a catch or play (Note that the rule states "the team at bat..") This includes coaches and players on the bench.

- Waving his arms to distract the fielder

- Making contact with the fielder as he attempts a throw

- Making contact or otherwise interfering with the fielder as he attempts to catch a batted ball

- Making **INTENTIONAL** contact with a fielder as he attempts to catch a thrown ball. The runner has a right to the base path except when a fielder is attempting to field a BATTED ball

- Making **INTENTIONAL** contact with a thrown ball

- Stopping directly in front of a fielder attempting to field a ground ball

See also [Interference](#)

Submitted by: Jim Booth

BATTER INTERFERENCE REFERENCE

Many people believe the batter's box is a safety zone for the batter. It is not. The batter MAY be called out for interference although he is within the box. The key words, impede, hinder, confuse or obstruct apply to this situation.

An umpire must use good judgment. The batter cannot be expected to immediately disappear. If he has a chance to avoid interference after he has had time to react to the situation and does not, he is guilty. If he just swung at a pitch, or had to duck a pitch and is off-balance, he can't reasonably be expected to then avoid a play at the plate. The batter should always be called out when he makes contact and is outside the box.

Submitted by: Jim Booth

OBSTRUCTION REFERENCE

Obstruction is called when the defense hinders the runners ability to run the bases. There are two different applications of the rule. One causes an immediate dead ball and the other is delayed dead. If a play is being made on a runner who is obstructed, the ball is immediately dead. If no play is being made the ball is delayed dead. A **play** for purposes of this rule is when the ball is in-flight heading toward the base the runner is heading, an attempted tag, or when the runner is caught in a run-down. The rule book definition is:

"OBSTRUCTION is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of any runner.

If a fielder is about to receive a thrown ball and if the ball is in flight directly toward and near enough to the fielder so he must occupy his position to receive the ball he may be considered "in the act of fielding a ball." It is entirely up to the judgment of the umpire as to whether a fielder is in the act of fielding a ball. After a fielder has made an attempt to field a ball and missed, he can no longer be in the "act of fielding" the ball. For example: an infielder dives at a ground ball and the ball passes him and he continues to lie on the ground and delays the progress of the runner, he very likely has obstructed the runner."

A fake tag is considered obstruction.

The fielder may stand in the base path without the ball, **IF**, the throw is almost to him and he needs to be there to catch the ball. "Almost to him" is a judgment by the umpire. Some say that when a throw is over the infield grass and heading toward the fielder; the fielder is "in the act of fielding" and may stand where he needs to, to catch the ball. However, **he may not actually block the base until he has possession of the ball.** Until he has possession of the ball he must give the runner some way to get to the base. Obstruction can NEVER be called on a fielder for blocking a base; when he has possession of the ball.

As with interference, obstruction is also a tough judgment call. Contact between the runner and fielder is not necessary to meet the definition. If a runner must slow down or alter his path to avoid a fielder who is not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding, he has been obstructed.

If no play is being made on the runner at the time he is obstructed, the play continues. The tough part comes when the play stops. The umpire will award the runner the base to which the umpire believes he would have reached had he not been obstructed. For example: the batter hits a ball in the gap for what looks like an easy double. No play is being made on him. As he rounds first the fielder is in his path and they collide. The batter stops at first. The umpire will award the runner second base if he believes the runner would have made it there had he not been obstructed.

It does not matter where the obstruction occurs. If a runner is obstructed at first base and the umpire believes he could have made it to third base, he will be awarded third. The umpire must be the judge. If, in the umpire's judgment, a runner is slowed down by one step at first and then is thrown out by five steps at third, the out should stand.

An immediate dead ball obstruction is called when obstruction occurs while a play is being made on the runner. For example: a runner on first is attempting to reach third on a hit. He is obstructed by a fielder between second and third as the throw from the outfield is heading toward third. This is a play on the runner. The umpire should call "time" when the obstruction occurs and award the runner third base. Another example is a run-down play. It does not matter which way the runner is heading. If he is obstructed while being played upon in a run-down, he is awarded at least one base beyond the last base he held. If a runner is obstructed attempting to get back to first on a pick-off play, the ball is dead and he is awarded second.

If a runner is awarded bases due to obstruction; runners ahead of him are forced to the next base. However, trailing runners are not always given another base when obstruction awards a lead runner another base.

Rule 7.06 covers obstruction. 7.06(a) is when a play is being made and 7.06(b) is when there is no play being made.

Submitted by: Jim Booth

AWARD OF BASES REFERENCE

Much confusion exists regarding the proper award of bases after a ball enters dead ball territory. The most common myth is the statement "he gets 1 plus 1." This is **not correct**. Rule 7.05 covers award of bases and an umpire must know all the details of this rule. Rule 7.05(g) is the focus of this document.

The basic thing to remember is: When the **pitcher** throws the ball into dead ball territory while he is in contact with the rubber, the runners are awarded one base. If he is not in contact with the rubber he is a fielder. **When any fielder throws the ball into dead ball territory, the runners are awarded two bases.**

The complicated part of this rule is deciding from what position the two bases are awarded. There are several exceptions that can affect the award. I will try to simplify making the decision. If the throw was the **first play by an infielder**, the award is two bases from where the runners were at the **time the pitch was thrown** in 99% of the plays. There is an exception that will be described later. Time of pitch is when the pitcher began his motion to the plate. "Where the runners were" means from the last legally held base. The direction they were running or how far between bases they were has nothing to do with the award. They get 2 bases closer to home plate from wherever they were positioned.

If the throw was the second play by an infielder, or any play by an outfielder, the award is two bases from the time the throw left the fielder's hand. The moment when the ball enters dead ball territory has no effect on the determination of the placement of the runners. The placement is from where the runners were at the **time of the pitch** or the **time the throw left the thrower's hand** depending on whether the play was the first play by an infielder or some other play.

A key thought to remember is: **"first play by an infielder = time of pitch. Second play or outfielder = time of release."** The award is always two bases. The only decision is; from where?

EXCEPTIONS: If **ALL** runners **including** the batter runner have advanced one base **before** the first play by an infielder, the award is from time of release. The key word is **ALL**. Example: Runner on second. A high pop-up is hit to the shortstop. The runner holds. The shortstop drops the ball, then throws to first attempting to get the batter who has already rounded the base before the release of the throw, and the ball enters dead ball territory. This was the first play by an infielder which means the award is from time of pitch. The exception states that **ALL** runners must advance a base before the time of release award is used. Because the runner at second held his base, the award is from time of pitch.

A **play** for purposes of this rule is a legitimate attempt to retire a runner. A throw to a base, an attempted tag or attempting to touch a base for a force out are plays. A fake throw or fielding a batted ball are not.

PLAY: Runner on first. Ground ball to SS. The throw to second is too late and R1 is safe. The second baseman throws to first and the ball goes into dead ball area. R1 is awarded home and the batter is awarded second. This was the second play so time of release applies. R1 was at second when the throw was made. The batter was not at first at the time of the release.

An infielder is always an infielder for purposes of this rule even if he has gone into the outfield. Anytime the infielder's throw is the second throw after the batted ball has been fielded, the time of throw will apply in determining the award.

The catcher is an infielder for purposes of this rule. If he throws a batted ball out of play as the first play, the award is from time of pitch. If he throws away a ball on a second play or one in which the batter has not become a runner, the award is from time of throw.

THE APPEAL REFERENCE

APPEAL is an act of a fielder in claiming violation of the rules by the offensive team.

Appeals must be made while the ball is in play. (Alive). When the ball is dead, it becomes in play when the pitcher has the ball and is on the rubber and the umpire says "play."

When the ball is alive an appeal may be made by the defense in any of the following ways;

1. by touching the runner whom they believe committed a base running infraction;
2. or by touching the base they believe was missed while the runner was advancing;
3. or by touching the **original** base that a runner left before a fly ball was caught.

In all cases, the defense must make a verbal appeal to the umpire or complete an act that is unmistakably an appeal. Accidentally touching a base that was missed is not an appeal. A throw to a base to catch a runner who had not retouched is unmistakably an appeal.

Appeals must be made before the next pitch or play. If the defense makes an appeal after "time" has been called, the umpire should say "put the ball in play and appeal again." Since no runner may advance or be put out while the ball is dead, this is not a play and the defense has not lost their right to appeal after the ball is put in play.

The appeal itself is not a play. A fake throw to hold a runner is not a play. It is a play when a balk is committed during an appeal. Plays that occur during "continuous action" after an infraction do not cancel the defense's right to appeal.

The defense loses their right to appeal when any of the following actions occur:

1. When the throw made in an appeal attempt goes into dead ball territory. When this occurs no more appeals may be made at any base. This is an "err" on an appeal and is interpreted to be the same as a play.
2. A balk is committed before or as part of an appeal attempt.
3. A pitch is made to the batter.
4. A play is made that is **not** part of continuous action.

Continuous action example:

Runner on first misses second as he advances to third on a hit. The defense makes a play on him at third and he is safe. The play was part of continuous action after the hit, therefore, the defense may appeal the infraction at second.

An appeal should be clearly intended as an appeal, either by a verbal request by the player or an act that unmistakably indicates to the umpire that it is an appeal.

Rule 7.10 covers appeals.

Submitted by: Jim Booth

THE BALK REFERENCE

This document will not attempt to cover everything regarding balks. It will cover the most frequently asked questions.

First, a bit about the basics of the balk rule. The purpose of the rule is to limit what the pitcher is allowed to do in an attempt to pick off a runner. Basically, it is pretty simple:

He cannot fake one thing and then do another. He cannot fake a pitch and then throw to a base, or fake a throw to a base and then pitch. If he starts either action, he must finish that action without hesitation or alteration. The rule specifies many specific actions, but it is a judgment of the umpire as to whether one action was started and not completed or not.

The pitcher does **not** have to step off the rubber to throw to a base. (You don't want to throw to a base after stepping off. If the throw goes out of play it is a 2 base award. If the throw goes out of play when throw is from the rubber it is a 1 base award.)

The pitcher may throw from the rubber to a base from the windup position. (It must be done before **any** movement that is part of the normal motion that is part of his windup.)

The pitcher may fake a throw to second or third base from the rubber, but not to first base. This may be done from the windup or the set position. (You do **not** have to step off the rubber to fake to 2nd or 3rd. Only if you fake to 1st.)

A jump turn is legal and considered being in contact with the rubber.

The pitcher may place his hands in a different set location before each pitch. He must come to a set before pitching to the batter, but not before throwing to a base. He may not set twice before the pitch.

A stretch move prior to the set is optional.

He must disengage the rubber with his pivot foot first.

He must step in the direction of the throw and prior to the release of the throw.

Once he is on the rubber he may do one of three things:

1. Throw to a base
2. Deliver a pitch
3. Disengage the rubber (pivot foot first)

In (1) and (2) above, the move must be completed without interruption or alteration, except for a fake to 2nd or 3rd.

The ball is not immediately dead if a pitch or throw is completed after the umpire yells "That's a balk."

Example play:

A runner is on second, 2-2 count. The pitcher stretches, but doesn't come to a set before delivering the pitch. The umpire yells "Balk!", but the pitch is thrown and the batter hits a grounder to shortstop. F5 looks the runner back and throws to first too late to get BR. What's the call? Where do you place the runners?

Answer: R2 is awarded third and the batter returns to the plate with the count 2-2.

In Pro rules, and Little League®, the ball is not immediately dead when a balk is called. If the pitch is thrown or a pick-off attempt is made the ball is still live. (Sometimes called delayed dead ball.) The ball becomes dead when all play has ended after the balk call or when the pitch or pick-off throw is caught.

Rule 8.05 - PENALTY: The ball is dead, and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk.

APPROVED RULING: In cases where a pitcher balks and throws wild, either to a base or to home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk.

It took me a long time to understand the wording in this rule. What it means in simpler terms is: When the play ends, the ball is dead. When a balk is committed and a pitch is thrown, if all offensive players advance at least one base on the play; ignore the balk. If ANY runner is put out BEFORE he advances one base or does not advance during the play; put everyone back where they were before the play began and then award all runners one base. If a runner is put out after all runners have advanced one base, the out stands and the balk is ignored.

The ball becomes dead when the catcher catches the pitch. If it is a passed ball or wild pitch, the ball remains alive until all play ends. When the balk is made in a pick-off attempt, the ball is dead when the fielder catches the throw. If the throw is wild, play continues.

Example: Runner on first. The pitcher balks during his throw to first and the ball gets away from the first baseman. The runner attempts to get to third and is thrown out. The out stands. He made the one base he would have been awarded and went beyond it at his own risk. If he had been thrown out at second the out would not count and he would be awarded second because of the balk

Rule 8.05 covers balks.

See also: [Balk details](#)

Submitted by: Jim Booth