

Volume 10 (Week 5/4 - 5/9/20) Case Plays

Volume 10 Case Plays deal with Balks

- **Case Play 1:** B2, Baker, is batting with a count of 3 balls and 2 strikes, with a runner, R3, on third base. The pitcher, F1, balks, but immediately delivers his pitch. The pitch is over the catcher's head and goes to the backstop. B2 (a) swings at the pitch, misses, and runs to first base, (b) does not swing at the pitch. In both cases R3 runs safely to home on the miss. ... **Make your Ruling –**
Hint: there is a difference between the two sets of rules, NFHS & pro OBR. Make your Ruling for each –

Ruling 1: Under **pro rules (MLB/OBR)** the ball remains live even if an umpire yells “balk”, as long as the umpire does not also yell “Time”. R3's run counts as long as the batter B2 reaches first base safely (and R3 advances on the play to home). When the batter runner reaches 1B safely, and all other runners advance at least one base on the play, then the balk is ignored. (**OBR 6.02 a PENALTY**). However, in **NFHS**, the umpire yelling “balk” automatically kills the play creating an immediate dead ball even if the umpire forgets to also yell “Time”. B2, Baker, remains at bat with the count still remaining at 3 balls and 2 strikes. R3 is awarded home on the balk. (**NFHS 6-2-4, 6-2-5 PENALTY**)

- **Case Play 2:** The same scenario as in Case Play 1, except R3 (a) gets into a “pickle” rundown between third and home, and during the rundown he returns safely to third base. The batter runs safely to first base. (b) Same scenario as (a), but the batter is thrown out trying to reach second base during R3's rundown. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 2: Under **pro rules (MLB/OBR)** the ball remains live even if an umpire yells “balk”, as long as the umpire does not also yell “Time”. In both (a) and (b) once the plays have ended, since R3 did not advance, the balk is awarded and R3 is awarded home. B2 will remain at bat with the count 3 balls and 2 strikes. (**pro/OBR Minor League Baseball Umpire Manual, aka, PBUC manual sections 8.9, 8.10**). As a side note: If R3 had scored on the play, then in (b) the batter, B2's out trying to reach second would count as an out. However, in **NFHS**, similar to Case Play 1, the ball is immediately dead and the balk is awarded, the same as it was in Case Play 1.

- **Case Play 3:** With R3 on third base, the pitcher, F1, takes his sign in the (a) windup position, or, (b) the set position. R3 attempts to steal home. F1 steps forward off the pitcher's plate and throws to his catcher, F2, who tags out R3. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 3: This is a balk in both (a) and (b) under both rule codes, **pro/OBR**, and **NFHS**. After assuming a windup or set position stance on the pitcher's plate, the pitcher must step clearly backwards off the plate with his pivot foot in order to make a play on R3 at home plate. (**NFHS 6-1-2, 6-1-3**)

Volume 11 (Week 5/11 - 5/16/20) Case Plays

Volume 11 Case Plays, similar to last week, deal with Balks

- **Case Play 1:** B2, Baker, is batting with a count of 1 ball and 1 strike, with a runner, R2, on second base. The pitcher, F1, balks, but immediately delivers his pitch. The batter swings and misses at the pitch but the catcher interferes with the batter's swing. ... **Make your Ruling – Hint: there is a difference between the two sets of rules, NFHS & pro OBR. Make your Ruling for each –**

Ruling 1: Under pro rules (MLB/OBR) the ball remains live even if an umpire yells "balk", as long as the umpire does not also yell "Time". The penalty for catcher's interference would award the batter first base and award the runner R2 to third base because he was stealing on the pitch when the catcher interfered. Since both the batter and the runner advanced one base after the enforcement of the interference penalty, the balk is ignored. (pro/OBR *Minor League Baseball Umpire Manual*, aka, *PBUC manual sections 8.10-9, Play 1*). As a side note: if the runner R2 was not stealing on the pitch, the balk penalty would have to be enforced (and the interference would be ignored) since the runner would not be awarded third on the interference. However, in NFHS, the umpire yelling "balk" automatically kills the play creating an immediate dead ball even if the umpire forgets to also yell "Time". B2, Baker, remains at bat with the count still remaining at 1 ball and 1 strike. R2 is awarded third on the balk. (NFHS 6-2-4, 6-2-5 PENALTY)

- **Case Play 2:** Runners R2 and R3 on second and third, with 2 balls and 2 strikes on the batter, and no outs. The pitcher balks but delivers the pitch. As the batter swings at the pitch, the catcher interferes with the swing. The batter still hits a fly ball to the outfield which is caught. Both runners tag up and safely advance one base. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 2: Under pro rules (MLB/OBR) the umpire must first address the catcher's interference before considering enforcing the balk penalty. On this play, the batter-runner did not advance one base which would normally cause the plate umpire to enforce the interference penalty and award the batter-runner first base and return both runners to their previously occupied bases because the runners would not be forced to advance with the interference penalty. However, this would not satisfy the requirements for the balk to be ignored. Therefore, the balk must be enforced which would score runner R3 from third, advance runner R2 from second to third and return the batter back to bat with the count remaining at 2 balls and 2 strikes and no outs. (pro/OBR *Minor League Baseball Umpire Manual*, aka, *PBUC manual sections 8.10-9, Play 2*). However, in NFHS, similar to Case Play 1, the ball is immediately dead and the balk is awarded, with the balk penalty enforced the same as just described for the pro rules.

Volume 12 (Week 5/18 - 5/23/20) had No Case Plays

Volume 13 (2 Weeks 6/1 - 6/13/20) had No Case Plays

Volume 14 (2 Weeks 6/15 - 6/27/20) Case Plays

Volume 14 Case Plays deal with Obstruction & Interference

- **Case Play 1:** With a runner (R1) on first, batter B1 takes a pitch. B1 is standing in the batter's box with his bat on his shoulder as catcher F2 tries to pick off R1. F2's throw hits the bat and deflects into the dugout ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 1: Since there was no intent to interfere, the ball remains live upon impact with the bat and the succeeding play stands. That is, a thrown ball that enters a dead-ball area (the dugout) entitles the runner to a two-base award. The umpire will call Time when the ball goes out of play and award R1 to third base. (NFHS 8-3-3 c2; pro OBR 5.06 b4G)

- **Case Play 2:** With a runner (R1) on first, batter B1 hits a ground ball back toward the pitcher F1. The ball deflects off F1's leg in the vicinity of second baseman F4, who is attempting to field the ball. Runner R1, who is advancing to second base, unintentionally bumps into F4, who is in his base path, and the ball gets by the fielder F4 and rolls into the outfield. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 2: Interference should be called on the runner. The runner must avoid the fielder when the fielder is attempting to field the ball off a deflection, UNLESS the fielder has to chase **his own** deflection; in which case, the fielder is in jeopardy of obstructing the runner. (NFHS 8-2-4g; pro OBR 5.06 c6, 6.01 a10)

- **Case Play 3:** With a runner R2 on second base, R2 breaks towards third on the pitch as batter B1 hits a grounder to shortstop F6. The third base coach, or players on the offensive team's bench yell, "Third, Third". F6 is confused and throws to third, where R2 is safe. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 3: If either umpire judges F6's confusion and reaction resulted from the offensive team's comments, it is verbal interference and the ball is immediately dead. R2 is now called out and B1 is awarded first. (NFHS 2-21-1a; pro OBR Interference Definition a)

- **Case Play 4:** With runner R3 on third, catcher F2 interferes with batter B1's attempt to bunt. Despite the interference, B1 bunts a fair ball. R3 is ... a) moving on the pitch for a suicide squeeze, or, b) holding until he sees the bunt is down for a safety squeeze. In either case, B1 is thrown out at first base as R3 scores. ... **Make your Ruling for a) and b) –**

Ruling 4: In **a)** there are no options: R3 scores and B1 is awarded first. The call is Interference on catcher F2, and pitcher F1 is charged with a balk per pro OBR rules. The NFHS call is Obstruction on the catcher. The result is the same as OBR, R3 scores and B1 is awarded 1st. In **b)** the offensive coach must decide which option he wants: he may have runners at the corners (1st & 3rd) with a catcher's Interference call per OBR (catcher's Obstruction call per NFHS), or take the result of the play and have R3's run scored and B1 out at first. (NFHS 8-1-1e; pro OBR 6.01c)

Volume 15 (2 Weeks 6/29 - 7/11/20) Case Plays

Volume 15 Case Plays deal with the Infield Fly Rule

- **Case Play 1:** With a runner (R1) on first and R2 on second base and one out, batter B4 hits a popup to first baseman F3. The umpires properly declare the Infield Fly Rule. As R1 retreats to first base he bumps into F3, who is unable to make the catch. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 1: Both batter B4 and runner R1 are out. B4 is out due to the Infield Fly Rule. R1 is out for interfering with the fielder. The fact that F3 did not have to catch the ball for B4 to be out is not a factor. (NFHS 2-19, 8-4-2g; pro OBR Definitions-Infield Fly, 6.01a10)

- **Case Play 2:** With a runner (R1) on first and R2 on second base and one out, batter B4 hits a high popup behind the mound. The umpires properly declare the Infield Fly Rule. Pitcher F1 first calls for the ball, then second baseman F4 calls for it, followed by shortstop F6 calling for the ball. In the confusion, the ball falls onto the back of the mound and rolls away. Runner R2 takes off for third base. F4 picks up the ball and throws to third baseman F5 who is standing on third base just before R2 arrives at third. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 2: The declaration of the Infield Fly removed all force plays. R2 must be tagged before reaching third to be declared out. (The same ruling in NFHS and in pro OBR)

- **Case Play 3:** With a runner (R1) on first and R2 on second base and one out, batter B4 hits an infield popup with fielder F4 in position for a routine catch. Both umpires are sleeping on the play and incorrectly do not call out "infield fly". F4 stumbles and falls and does not make the catch. After the ball falls to the ground B4 reaches first and both runners R1 & R2 try to advance. R2 reaches safely to third, but R1 is thrown out at second base with F4 throwing to F6 who is standing on second base. The base umpire (U1) declares R1 out on a force out. There was no tag. The offensive coach calls "Time" and approaches U1 claiming that R1 must be tagged because the "infield Fly Rule" should have been in effect, thus removing a force play. The defensive coach approaches the plate umpire (PU) claiming that since the umpires never called "Infield Fly" R1 should be out on a force out. ... **Make your Ruling –**

Ruling 3: You won't find any answer to this difficult question in any Rule book. But there ARE official interpretations that cover this.

Per NFHS: The official interpretation is ... If the umpire fails to call an Infield Fly on a batted ball that should have been - the runners (and fielders) are expected to know that it *is* an Infield Fly and treat it accordingly. The umpire can retroactively rule the hit as an Infield Fly although he may not have said anything while the play was in progress. **NFHS Case Book (10.2.3 Situations G)** states that players and teams are responsible for knowing when an infield fly situation exists, even when the umpire erroneously forgets to call "infield fly" or calls it at an inappropriate time ("both teams have the responsibility to know when conditions exist for an infield fly").

The problem with this particular official NFHS interpretation is that it ignores an "Infield Fly" that isn't so clear cut. What about a high pop-up that forces an infielder to back-peddle? Is this an Infield Fly? Does the catch require an "ordinary effort"? Some umpire may think the catch is routine and call it as such - another umpire might think differently. The players are relying on the umpire's ruling to determine HOW to proceed. How is the runner supposed to know what to do when the ball is dropped if the

umpire had not ruled it an Infield Fly? Is he forced to run? ... Something to think about – because you might find the coach using this same argument.

Official Baseball Rules (pro OBR) has a completely different official interpretation for this situation.

If the umpire fails to call an Infield Fly and it ***should*** have been, the play will proceed as if it is not an Infield Fly ***UNLESS***, as a result, the defense gains an undeserved double play as a result of the umpire's failure to rule it an Infield Fly.

If the defense does not gain a double play ... then the ball is ruled as NOT being an Infield Fly. After all, the whole point of the Infield Fly Rule is to preclude the defense using a dropped ball as a way of gaining an extra out. If the defense doesn't gain an extra out, then it really doesn't matter that the umpire improperly ruled the hit as NOT being an Infield Fly.

If the defense DOES gain a double play ... then the umpire can retroactively rule the hit as an Infield Fly and rectify the situation.

Here are two more examples that will help clarify.

EXAMPLE #1: R1 and R2, no outs. Pop-up hit to the 3rd baseman. There is no ruling of an Infield Fly. The ball is dropped, the 3rd baseman quickly picks up the ball and steps on the bag for a force out of R2 and then fires across the diamond and still forces out the batter.

NFHS ruling: If the umpires believe they simply forgot to call an Infield Fly on a ball that should have obviously been ruled as such - they will expect the players (both offense and defense) to have played it accordingly. Therefore the batter is out because it was an Infield Fly and R2 is ***not*** out because there was never a force play at 3rd.

Pro OBR ruling: If the umpires believe they simply forgot to call an Infield Fly on a ball that should have obviously been ruled as such - they will allow the play to stand as long as the defense did not gain an undeserved double play. On this particular play the defense ***did*** gain as a result of the dropped ball - the very thing the Infield Fly Rule was designed to prevent. Therefore, an Infield Fly is retroactively called. The batter is out and the runner at 3rd is ***not*** out.

In this case, the two rulings are the same, but for different reasons.

EXAMPLE #2: R1 and R2, no outs. Pop-up hit to the 3rd baseman. The same results as in Example #1 except the 3rd baseman's throw to 1st is too late to retire the batter.

NFHS ruling: Same ruling as in Example #1 above. Batter is out and R2 is not out. It's an Infield Fly.

Pro OBR ruling: Play stands as played since the defense did not gain an unfair extra out. R2 is out on the force at third. Batter is safe at 1st.

The above ruling highlights the major difference between NFHS and OBR.

Here's the argument that will occur **in an NFHS game** as a result of the above play. Let's say, because R2 never heard a ruling of an Infield Fly, he was of the opinion that he was forced to run once the ball was dropped. This is why he attempts to advance to 3rd. But the 3rd baseman stepped on the bag (also thinking it was a force out) before R2 got there. The defense ALSO realizes that an Infield Fly was not called. R2 arrives at 3rd and is allowed to stay once the play is retroactively ruled as an Infield Fly. The fielder needed to TAG the runner because there was no force.

The defense will argue, "But you didn't call it an Infield Fly. We thought there was a force play at 3rd."

Answer, "But you should have KNOWN that it was an Infield Fly and played it accordingly."

Want to make the NFHS play even MORE complicated? Let's say, after the 3rd baseman steps on the bag and R2 hears the umpire rule him out (on a "force" play), R2 walks off the field and enters the dugout? The umpires then call a retroactive Infield Fly and call the batter out as a result. The other runners were allowed to advance at their own risk and R2 is now *NOT* out on the force ... BUT HE'S IN THE DUGOUT!

Here come the fireworks !!!!! ... Now what do you rule ???

- **Case Play 4:** With a runner (R1) on first and R2 on second base and one out, the umpires signal to each other before the pitch that the Infield Fly Rule is in effect. The pitch is then delivered and batter B4 takes the pitch, which is missed by the catcher, and both runners advance, R1 to second and R2 to third. On the next pitch batter B4 hits a routine infield popup to the third baseman. The base umpire (U1) points to the sky and incorrectly declares "Infield Fly batter is out". The third baseman F5 misplays the ball and it drops to the ground in fair territory. **A)** The batter-runner B4 initially does not try to run to first because of U1's call of Infield Fly. But when F5 misplays the ball he starts to run to first, but is thrown out by F5 in a close play just before he arrives at first. The offensive coach calls "Time" and approaches U1 claiming his batter-runner B4 would have easily reached first safely had U1 not incorrectly declared the Infield Fly Rule. Or, **B)** batter-runner B4 makes it to first before F5's throw. The defensive coach calls "Time" and approaches U1 claiming the batter-runner B4 was declared out by U1 when he said "Infield Fly batter is out" which caused his fielder F5 to hesitate and delay his throw to first. ... **Make your Ruling for A) and B) –**

Ruling 4: Per NFHS ... In A) NFHS explicitly requires a batter erroneously declared out to attempt to reach base safely in order to be awarded the base after the play. Thus, the umpire has the option to rule batter B4 is awarded first base because he did indeed attempt to reach base safely IF the umpire judges that B4 would have reached safely at first easily had he not made the incorrect IFR call. Per NFHS ... In B) per **NFHS Case Book 10.2.3 Situation F** - the play stands. **Per pro OBR ...** The play would stand in both **A) and B).**