

Pre-Game and Warm-ups between Innings

Umpires have several on-field pregame duties: The field must be checked, equipment inspected, and a meeting with coaches and captains needs to occur. But, there are things to be done even before the on-field pregame!

Prior to arriving on site, it is very good to confirm the game with your partner. At certain fields there is only one parking lot, at other there may be several. Confirm with your partner where you will meet (you might be able to ride to the game together). Both umpires should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled starting time of the game, earlier if the location is unfamiliar or you have a long distance drive (to allow some extra time for traffic or location questions).

Once you and your partner arrive, you should conduct a pregame with your partner. Talk about the field (is there typically a muddy area in deep left field and how will you handle it), the teams (Team A is very aggressive on the base paths), how you want to work coverage (confirm certain aspects of coverage with your partner), rules (recent changes or interpretations), strange plays you have seen recently, etc. The biggest thing about the pregame is to have the officiating team on the same page. If you have worked with your partner dozens of times your pregame will be quite different as compared to the first time you work together.

The officiating crew then goes onto the field together. You inspect the field, noting any issues. If anything is dangerous ensure it is corrected (by home management) prior to playing the game. We cannot play a game, for example, if there is no doubled first base.

You introduce yourselves to the coaches and check equipment; all equipment must be placed outside the dugout for inspection. If any bats or helmets are not as intended by the manufacturer, they cannot be used until the problem is corrected. Umpires should work together checking equipment, first one team's then the other's.

Next comes the pregame meeting with captains and coaches. It occurs after all the teams' pregame warm-ups are completed (we don't need balls flying around while we are talking). Introduce yourselves. Give the captains and coaches time to greet each other. Talk about sportsmanship. Talk about jewelry. Talk about any field issues. If necessary, talk about the weather (Where do we go in case of Thunder/Lightning?). Specifically ask the coaches about whether their teams are properly and legally equipped. (Without an affirmative answer, we cannot play the game.) Answer any questions, but do not give a clinic. Get line up cards from the coaches. Look at the line up cards. Make sure the players names, numbers, and positions are clear. Confirm with the coach. The line up is now official. Keep it short. Keep it simple. Be professional. The entire meeting should take two to three minutes.

After the meeting, the base umpire moves out to their between inning position (typically shallow right field or some other safe location). This is a good opportunity for the plate umpire to see the home pitcher throw. Let the catcher know you are behind her.

Play Ball!

Between innings the team on defense gets one minute or five pitches (whichever comes first) to warm up. The base umpire should be in shallow right field or some other safe location. The plate umpire should be in foul territory nearer the defensive dugout (so as not to get hit by the on deck batter warming up). If there has been a pitching change, this is also a good opportunity to see the new pitcher. Let the catcher know you are behind her. When the catcher throws down make sure the plate is clean.

Ensure the field has been cleared of warm up equipment (no loose bats or balls sitting in foul territory?)
Make sure coaches are wearing appropriate helmets. Make sure your partner is ready. Let's play.