

This article will discuss umpire coverage responsibilities at third base in the NYSSO two umpire system. For whatever reason, it seems as if this bit of field coverage produces more problems than any other coverage area. The base umpire provides coverage in certain circumstances, while the plate umpire provides coverage in other circumstances.

#### Initial and Second Play

When the ball is hit in the infield the initial play at any base (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>) is always covered by the base umpire. Example: runners R1 at 1<sup>st</sup> base and R3 at 3<sup>rd</sup> base. Ground ball to the second baseman. The base umpire is responsible for the initial play, no matter if the second baseman chooses to throw to 1<sup>st</sup>, to 2<sup>nd</sup>, or to 3<sup>rd</sup>.

If, in the above scenario, if R1 proceeds to 3<sup>rd</sup>, it becomes the plate umpire's responsibility to cover 3<sup>rd</sup>:

The plate umpire moves up the third base line (in anticipation of a possible play at 3<sup>rd</sup>). If there is no play then no call. But, if there is a play, the plate umpire should move into fair territory, let his partner know he is there, get into good calling position (at the action edge at 3<sup>rd</sup>), and make the call. (If the plate umpire does not get up to 3<sup>rd</sup>, it will be the base umpire's call, however this should be very rare indeed.)

When there are runners R1 on 1<sup>st</sup> and R2 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, coverage is very similar. When the initial throw goes to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> it is the base umpire's call. If the initial throw goes to 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, the second play (at 3<sup>rd</sup>) is the plate umpire's responsibility.

#### Base Hit

When there is a base hit, the base umpire generally covers 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> while the plate umpire generally covers 3<sup>rd</sup> and Home. However, if the plate umpire is stuck at home the base umpire may have to cover 3<sup>rd</sup>. Why would the plate umpire be stuck at Home? Because (1) there is a play at the plate, or (2) to judge a fair/foul on the first base line or near Home on the third base line. Of course, the base umpire still takes the batter-runner to 3<sup>rd</sup>.

#### Stealing and Passed Ball/Wild Pitch

When there is only a runner on 1<sup>st</sup> and she attempts to steal 2<sup>nd</sup>, the base umpire moves from the B position (moving parallel to the unmarked base line between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>) to a good calling position at the action edge of 2<sup>nd</sup> base. If the ball gets away from the covering fielder and the runner proceeds to 3<sup>rd</sup>, it is the plate umpire's responsibility to cover 3<sup>rd</sup>. (The base umpire cannot get into a good calling position at 3<sup>rd</sup>, chasing the runner from behind.) However, if there is a passed ball or wild pitch, the plate umpire stays at home and the base umpire covers 3<sup>rd</sup> (for two reasons: pitch going into dead ball territory and so a throw from the catcher does not hit the plate umpire going to cover 3<sup>rd</sup>).

#### Wheel Play

With R3 at 3<sup>rd</sup> only, if the batter walks and proceeds to 2<sup>nd</sup>, the plate umpire has calls on R3 at 3<sup>rd</sup> (and Home).

#### Exceptions

If the base umpire goes out to observe a catch/no-catch (from the A position) or is forced to foul territory to avoid becoming involved in a play, the plate umpire takes the batter-runner all the way to 3<sup>rd</sup> (and Home).

If the batter-runner gets a clear double and stops at 2<sup>nd</sup> base, and then the defense throws the ball away, the plate umpire has the call on the batter-runner at 3<sup>rd</sup>.

#### Tag Ups

With more than one runner on base, the plate umpire has tag-up responsibility for the lead runner (who may be at 3<sup>rd</sup> base).

#### Missing a Base

The plate umpire has responsibility for a runner (other than the batter-runner) missing 3<sup>rd</sup>. If the plate umpire is taking the batter-runner to 3<sup>rd</sup>, then they also have responsibility for the batter-runner missing 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Of course, all of the above assumes “typical” plays with both umpires doing their jobs per the NYSSO Umpire Manual. If there is an unusual circumstance, both the plate and base umpires must remain aware and must work hard to ensure the best possible coverage of the entire field.