

Iowa High School Baseball Thoughts & Tips

– by Ira Blue

There are 3 codes of baseball rules we umpires live by: NFHS (high school) – NCAA (college) – OBR (pro). If you officiate at different levels, it isn't easy keeping things straight. The college season is over, so let's discuss a few of the rule differences between high school and pros. The stevetheump.com website lists 90 differences. Iowa high school coaches are OK at knowing some of these, which makes up for their fans, who don't know hardly any of them! We play 7 innings instead of 9 so we'll sample only 7 of the 90:

- 1) MLB fake tag is legal, for us it is obstruction and minimum award of one base.
- 2) A declaration of a balk is delayed dead in MLB so if the pitcher goes ahead and throws, the batter could possibly hit a homer and we ignore the balk. Thankfully in high school we just kill it.
- 3) MLB let's their runners jump & dive like they are on the Olympic gymnastics team. In high school jumping, hurdling, and leaping over a fielder is legal IF the fielder is lying on the ground, otherwise the ball is dead and you're out. Diving (meaning headfirst) over any fielder in any position you are out, **period**.
- 4) Dropped third strike in MLB you lose your right to run to first when you leave the dirt circle. In high school you don't erase that option until you enter the dugout, or the half inning ends by all the infielders leaving the diamond.
- 5) MLB appeals on missed bases or runner leaving base too soon on a catch are **only** live ball events where the pitcher throws to the fielder to tag the offending runner or the base. We have that in high school too, but we also have dead ball appeals which can be made by coach or player. Some Old Ira advice for you coaches: just ask us for time, we'll kill the baseball, and you just verbally announce what you are appealing. Faster, simpler, and way more efficient than the probable snowball fight your players will start if they live ball appeal.
- 6) MLB batters are out by hitting a baseball with foot or knee touching the ground **entirely** outside the batter's box. High school agrees but includes touching home plate. With only 6 inches from batter's box line to white of plate (some of you are chalking that way closer than 6 inches!). You could still have some of your foot in the box and be out for touching home plate in high school but OK in pros since they don't include the home plate touch as a no-no. Go figure.
- 7) MLB gets 3 defensive conferences like high school but if they have a second one in the same inning the pitcher must be replaced. High school we can use all 3 in same inning if we want with no forced pitching change.

Have a good one, guys!