

Softball 3-Person Mechanics Overview

MHSAA · Officials Department

1 Basic Rules of Coverage

1. An umpire is always ahead of the lead runner.
2. Rotation is always clockwise.
3. Once a field umpire goes out, make the call, stay out but continue to observe any play in case help is needed.
4. If a field umpire goes out, revert to a two-umpire system.
5. If the 1st base umpire is counter-rotated (on the field between 1st and 2nd bases), there is no rotation on base hits.
6. A difference between a two-umpire system and a three-umpire system is that the plate umpire does not go to the holding zone.

2 Fly Ball Coverage

- Remember priorities: fair/foul, then catch or no catch.
- **No runners on base:** Split the field up the middle. Same coverage with a single runner on 3rd base only.
- **Runner on 1st base only:** Rotated 3rd base umpire will have coverage from the left fielder to the right fielder. The 1st base umpire will have coverage from the right fielder to the right field out-of-play area. The plate umpire will have coverage from the left fielder to the left field out-of-play area.
- **Runner on 2nd base only or any multiple-runner situations:** Counter-rotated 1st base umpire will have coverage from the left fielder to the right fielder. The 3rd base umpire will have coverage from the left fielder to the left field out-of-play area. The plate umpire will have coverage from the right fielder to the right field out-of-play area.

3 Fly Ball Tag-Up Responsibilities

- Remember, if a field umpire goes out on a fly ball, revert to two-umpire mechanics.
- In the few situations where the plate umpire is responsible for the catch of a fly ball (no umpire on that line at the start of the play), the base umpires are responsible for all tagging runners.
- In the above possibility, the 3rd base umpire will get the tag by the lead runner in a multiple-runner situation and the 1st base umpire will get the tag of any remaining runners.

4 Basic Softball Theories to Good Umpire Coverage

1. Communicate. If you deviate, communicate on the play. See and hear your partners.
2. Inside-outside theory.
3. Force plays: 18 to 21 feet from the play and a right angle.
4. Tag plays: 8 to 12 feet from the play. 90 degrees from the path of the runner, just short of the base they are trying to reach.
5. Proper angle on fly ball coverage.
6. Parallel movement on double plays creates a proper angle.
7. Base umpires, shade your lead runner whenever possible.