

Follow the Bouncing Ball

The ballgame is proceeding with no problems. The pitcher winds up and throws a 44 foot pitch (or a 58 foot pitch on the 90 foot diamond.), the ball bouncing in front of the catcher. Lots of things can happen then, and lots of people have different ideas of the implications.

The Little League rule book says:

1. The batter swings and misses the bouncing ball. Ball is alive, umpire calls a strike. Rule 2.00, "Ball", "In Flight."
2. The batter does not swing at the bouncing ball, but it goes through the strike zone on the bounce. Ball is alive, umpire calls a ball. Rule 2.00, "Ball", "In Flight."
3. The batter does not swing at the bouncing ball, and it does not go through the strike zone. Ball is alive, umpire calls a ball. Rule 2.00, "Ball."
4. The pitch bounces and hits the batter. The ball is dead, and the umpire awards the batter first base. Rule 2.00, "Ball," "In Flight," 5.09 (a).
5. The batter swings and hits the bouncing ball. Ball is alive, play it as if it didn't bounce. Rule 2.00, "In Flight."
6. The Junior, Senior or Big League division batter swings and misses, strike three with first base empty or with two outs. The catcher catches the bounced pitch, but the batter can STILL attempt to reach first base on the "dropped" third strike. See Rule 2.00, "Ball," "In Flight" "(Because the pitch hit the ground, it is no longer "in flight" and therefore, no longer a "catch.")"
7. The pitcher accidentally throws the ball straight down; it hits the ground and dribbles to a stop BEFORE crossing the foul line. The umpire calls "time" and on the 60 ft., calls Illegal pitch (or on the 90 foot diamond with runners on, Balk). See Rule 8.01(d).
8. The pitcher accidentally throws the ball straight down; it hits the ground and dribbles to a stop AFTER crossing the foul line. Ball is alive, umpire calls a ball. See rule 8.01(d).

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Infield Fly? Easy!

If any rule will cause problems, it's the Infield Fly Rule. There are so many wrong interpretations, misunderstandings, etc. with this rule. In the first place, the only place to check the definition of the rule is in the Little League Rule book. Chat rooms, Wikipedia,

etc. can all be crazy with their interpretations. OK, here we go.....

If there are runners on first and second, or first, second and third with less than two out, there is an infield fly possibility.

If the batter then hits a fair fly ball (not a line drive or bunt) that COULD be caught by a defensive player stationed in the infield with ORDINARY EFFORT, an Infield Fly should be called. Keep in mind, "ordinary effort" can be very different between a 9-year-old and an 18-year-old. One way to think of it is, "Is the fielder comfortable under the ball?" If so, you've got ordinary effort. (Jim Evans gets the credit for that one!)

The umpire must watch the ball and the fielders, and decide if the batted ball qualifies as an infield fly. If so, when the ball reaches the apex of its flight, in other words, its highest point, the umpire should point at the ball, and holler, "Infield fly, the batter's out!" If the ball is close to the foul line, say "Infield fly, if fair!" (Either/any umpire can call it.) The umpires have to watch the ball, watch the reaction of the fielders, back and forth until the ball is at the apex, then make a decision.

As soon as the umpire says "Infield fly", the batter is out AND THE FORCE IS REMOVED FROM THE RUNNERS. Of course, that's the purpose of the rule, to keep the defense from getting a cheap double play. THE RUNNERS DO NOT HAVE TO RUN if the umpire says "Infield fly, the batter's out!"

Now, the call of "Infield fly" only affects the batter-runner....the batter-runner is immediately out which removes the force, REGARDLESS of whether the ball is caught or not. The other runners are subject to the rules regarding tagging up just as if the ball had been hit into the outfield. If it's caught, they must tag up before they advance. But if it's not caught, they do not have to tag.

Don't think of the "Infield fly" call as a "catch" because it's not. The ball has just been ruled an Infield Fly which makes the batter-runner out instantly, but the ball may or may not be caught. Whether it's caught or not does NOT affect the Infield Fly call. Check Rule 2.00, Catch definition. This applies to an infield fly situation, too.

Also remember a few other things:

The ball stays alive during an Infield Fly play. It's not dead, so runners off base may be tagged, etc.

An infield fly is a fair fly ball which CAN be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort. That doesn't mean it HAS to be caught by an infielder. Imagine a shortstop playing deep, backing up into the outfield grass to catch a fly with, in the ump's judgment, ordinary effort. The umpire points up and calls "Infield fly, the batter is out!" But the left fielder charges in, and calls him off and catches the ball.....or doesn't catch it, either way. That is **STILL** an infield fly, by definition.

If the umpire calls "Infield fly, the batter's out!", or "Infield fly, if fair!" and the ball drops **untouched and rolls foul**; it is NOT an infield fly....just a foul ball. If it lands **untouched foul**, and **rolls fair**, it's an infield fly.

Last but not least, don't get confused with Rule 6.05k, the intentional drop. If you read that rule, you will see the differences between it and an infield fly. The infield fly rule always takes precedence. (Besides, you'll almost never see these kids intentionally drop a fly ball, they have a hard enough time catching them!!)

Good luck!

Rule 4.04

Rule 4.04 gives leagues an opportunity to get the players more at-bats and more playing time with the continuous batting order (CBO). There are some questions that have come up as a result of more leagues using the (CBO).

1. League uses the continuous batting order and a player gets hurt while at-bat. What do we do now? Answer: The next batter in the order takes his/her place and assumes the count and the game continues. If that injured player is unable to continue in the game the next time he/she is scheduled to bat merely skip over him/her and continue the game.
2. League is using the CBO and a player is at bat, hits the ball and is hurt while running the bases. Who takes his place on the base? It is recommended that the last out of the previous inning is the player who is substituted to run for the injured player. Or you can even use the last out of that offensive inning. What you need to watch out for is getting in a situation where the offensive team needs a run and all of a sudden they need a runner and "they" select the team's fastest runner. Make it clean and in writing so there will never be any questions.
3. League is using the CBO at the Junior/Senior/Big League level and wants to take its pitcher off the mound put him/her in the dugout for a rest and bring him/her back later because he/she is still in the line up. Can they do that? No, not really. While admittedly the player is still in the batting order, however, when they took the pitcher off the mound and moved him/her to the dugout they lost their chance to bring the pitcher back. The rule was written to keep the pitcher in the lineup both offensively and defensively.

Hope these help.

Rule 7.09

Rule 7.09 - It is interference by a batter or runner when - (i) in the judgment of the umpire, the base coach at third base, or first base, by touching or holding the runner,

physically assists that runner in returning to or leaving third base or first base.

Play - Batter crushes a belt high fast ball and clears the centerfield fence for a home run. While circling the bases the 3rd base coach gives the home run hitter a congratulatory high five. Should the umpire call the runner out for touching the 3rd base coach?

Answer: As you can see by the wording above, it is NOT assisting the runner leaving third or returning to third, it is a happy moment and nothing should be done and certainly don't call the runner out.

Play - Runner on 3rd base with less than two outs; the batter skies one to deep left field, the base coach puts his/her hand on the runners back and gives a little push to the runner when the ball is touched. You are the umpire, what do you do now?

Answer: Call the runner out for the interference by the base coach.

Play – Runners on 1st and 3rd less than two outs and there is a base hit to the outfield. The runner on 3rd scores easily, but the runner coming from 1st is going to be a dead duck at home. The base coach at 3rd steps in front of the runner rounding 3rd to hold him/her at 3rd base. The throw comes into 2nd base in attempt to get the batter-runner who is trying for a double. You are the umpire and you see all this happening, what do you do now?

Answer: The old delayed dead ball. You have seen the interference at 3rd base and you have that runner out, but you want to delay your call until you see if the defense is able to get an additional out at 2nd base. When all play has ended, call time and signal that the runner now at 3rd base is out and tell the world why he/she is out.