



MID-AMERICA UMPIRES

Policies & Procedures
Manual

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POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL

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MID-AMERICA UMPIRES

POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Mid-America Umpires Policy and Procedures Guide has been prepared to complement and support the National Federation rule book and mechanics manuals.

As a member of the Mid-America Umpires, umpires should be aware of its content and committed to the Association goal of assisting self-improvement and upgrading the quality of umpiring for all the baseball programs we service.

SECTION 2 – EXPECTATIONS & INSTRUCTIONS TO UMPIRES

APPEARANCE AND CONDUCT: Mid-America Umpires members are reminded that they are in the public eye. Each umpire should be reminded that he/she is an official representative of the Association, both on and off the field. An umpire should dress in a manner becoming his/her profession.

Going to or coming from a game, umpires are not allowed to wear any cap, shirt, jacket, or pants that identify themselves as an umpire or have a High School institutions logo, whether they are a school we service or not. An umpire's behavior should always be within legal limits and in conformity with all rules that govern National Federation, and MSHSAA standards.

Under no circumstances should a member consume an alcoholic beverage anytime prior to participating as an official of any ball game. Violations of this policy will be dealt with directly by the Executive Board. Such occurrences may result in the loss

of the remainder of an umpire's assignments and suspension or dismissal from the Association.

All umpires should take pride in being an umpire for the Association. Uniform slacks and shirts should be neat and pressed, caps should be clean, and shoes shined. Your other uniform items should be neatly kept. Hair length and facial hair should be in a manner consistent with your profession.

RULE BOOK: You should read some portion of your rulebook each day. Good umpiring requires knowledge of the rules, application of good common sense, and constant review of National Federation baseball rules and interpretations. Referring to the National Federation and MSHSAA web sites will help all umpires stay up to date in this regard.

ASSIGNMENTS: The Executive Board, in accordance with the approved process of the Association makes all Association assignments. The rotations are set by the Executive Board and are not to be changed except in the event of any injury or rare emergency. Crews are not allowed to randomly change assignments or rotations. Crew chiefs are to notify the Executive Board of any changes deemed necessary for any reason. These changes are subject to review by the Executive Board.

ILLNESS OR INJURY: Each umpire is required to contact the Executive Director or his/her assistant to inform him/her of illness or injury as soon as it occurs. The Executive Board shall assign a replacement. Any cancellation for an unacceptable reason will be reviewed by the Executive Board.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS: The use of all tobacco products by umpires is prohibited at all times in the locker room and on the playing field. Violations of this rule will be dealt with directly by the Executive Board of the Association. In addition, umpires will be directly responsible for enforcing the National Federation prohibitions of tobacco use by participants before and during the game. All tobacco violations should be penalized immediately without warning. Reports of failure to enforce the tobacco policy will result in penalty(s) the Executive Board deems necessary. Consult your NFHS rule book for applications and penalties.

SECTION 3 – PRIOR TO GAME

INCLEMENT WEATHER: If there is any chance of a cancellation or delay due to weather, it is the responsibility of each umpire to contact the home institution's athletic office or head coach before traveling to the game site. If you are unable to confirm a cancellation from a designated official, you are to travel to the game site.

The head coach of the home school is responsible for the starting game time and it is his/her right to delay that start time due to inclement weather or the threat of inclement weather.

ARRIVAL AT GAME SITE: Mid-America Umpires members should arrive no later than thirty minutes before the scheduled game time. It is preferred members arrive one hour before the scheduled game time.

Upon arrival at the game site, the crew chief should notify the home team's head coach that the umpires have arrived in accordance with the Crew Chief Responsibilities section of this manual.

UMPIRES LOCKER ROOM (IF AVAILABLE): All umpires are required to use the dressing room whenever it is made available by the home team. Failing to use these accommodations when made available will not be tolerated. The locker room is for the exclusive use of the umpiring crew. Visitors are allowed for a brief period of time and only after the crew chief has approved any visitors. The only visitors that are allowed in the locker room for the pre-game meeting are authorized Association members. The crew chief will obtain the locker room keys if available.

It is recommended that valuables not be left in the locker room, as the institutions cannot be held responsible for valuables that could have been left elsewhere or taken with you. Always be respectful of the school's facilities, keep the locker room clean and in good order. Be respectful of your partners. There is no tobacco allowed in the locker room.

CREW CHIEF RESPONSIBILITIES: The crew chief is responsible for the final resolution of any conflict during a game and he/she has the final judgment in postponing or suspending a game as well as removing the players from the playing

field for rain or other conditions. In no way does this relieve the other crew members of the responsibility to provide clear and adequate information and opinions before a decision is made.

As a crew chief for the Association, you will have certain responsibilities to insure that the internal operations of the Association umpire program run smoothly. Communication is vital to our professional handling of the schedule. Professional handling means that there are no mistakes or missed assignments.

Each umpire will receive a schedule for the season through the Arbiter. This schedule can and may change frequently so if there is ever any questions in your mind call the Executive Board and your assigned partners to reconfirm. The crew chief will be held responsible for making certain that the duties below are performed. If you are confused as to who has been assigned as crew chief, assume the plate man is the crew chief and start the communication process.

1. The crew chief should contact the home team's point of contact no later than 24 hours prior to the scheduled game time. At this time the crew chief should confirm game time(s), number of games, number of innings of each game, verify if there is a dressing room, and discuss any inclement weather concerns.
2. The crew chief should contact his/her assigned partner no later than 24 hours prior to the scheduled game time. At this time the crew chief should confirm assignment(s) and agree where and at what time to meet at the ballpark if they are not riding together. Any problems or confusion that surfaces during this process should be immediately reported to the Executive Board for clarification.
3. Upon arrival at the game site, the crew chief will notify the home team's head coach of the umpires arrival, confirm game time(s), number of games, number of innings of each game, find out if there are any special events (first pitch, color guard, etc.), discuss any inclement weather concerns, and pick up checks (if available).
4. Insure general appearance and conduct of the crew. Maintain compliance

with Association policy.

5. Conduct the pre-game conference.
6. Insure that the umpire ejecting a participant has filed a written report with the MSHSAA and the Executive Director has been notified.
7. Handle with dignity and courtesy any matters with institution officials or press.
8. When partner(s) are late, get on the phone immediately and contact the Executive Board. A replacement may be needed. If a replacement cannot be located quickly, let the coaches make the decision to do the following: use or start with one umpire, use players to assist, wait for a replacement, or postpone the game. This is a rare emergency situation. Remain calm, be positive, and make the best of a bad experience.

PRE-GAME MEETING: Prior to the start of the first game, the crew chief will conduct the pre-game conference in accordance with the pre-game section of this manual. This is a mandatory process. The Executive Board will review anyone not adhering to this policy. Disciplinary action may be taken. The Association will use the CCA mechanics manual for its basis. Any umpires not scheduled to work are to remain silent and observe while the crew chief conducts this meeting.

Items to be discussed for Pre-Game:

1. Fair and Foul coverage up to the base will be covered by the plate umpire. The base umpire will call any batted ball from the front of the base on when he/she is on the line. Only the umpire making the call will signal.
2. Discuss line drives and trap catches to all infielders, including the pitcher. Know who will call them for each possible position the base umpire may be in.
3. Discuss the infield fly signal, infield flies, and who will call them when they are near the line or not near the line.
4. Discuss check swings. Give an honest answer, expect to receive an honest answer.
5. Discuss foul tip third strikes that may not be caught by the catcher. Know which

mechanics you will use. Know how to wait for the foul tip signal on this play.

6. Discuss coverage of overthrows and foul fly balls near dead ball territory and dugouts.
7. Discuss any unusual ground rules.
8. Discuss the rotation and coverage when the base umpires goes out to cover a trap/catch or line drive.
9. Discuss the plate umpire's responsibilities on covering third base and covering plays back into home. On rotations know who is responsible for which plays into and back into bases.
10. Discuss outfield coverage when there are no runners on base.
11. Discuss the slide rule at any base on a force play.
12. Discuss appeal plays and who is responsible for watching the touching of bases and tag ups.
13. Discuss the designated hitter and the P/DH rule. Always carry a DH card on the field.
14. Discuss the rule concerning the number of trips to a pitcher and offensive conferences.
15. Discuss how arguments, ejections, and warnings will be handled.
16. Discuss balks responsibilities.
17. Discuss signals and verbal commands.
18. Discuss bench jockeying.
19. Take a few minutes after the game to discuss any unusual situations that may have occurred.

AT HOME PLATE BEFORE A GAME: All umpires are to enter the field together and proceed to home plate for the pre-game meeting 10 minutes prior to the start of the game. In the event that a doubleheader is played, the crew will begin the home plate conference 5 minutes prior to the start of the second game.

Head coaches prefer to be called by their first name or "coach". If they offer to shake hands, do so politely. Take the home team line-up first and check it. Then take the visitor's line-up and check it. Fix any line-up problems before the game. The home team is responsible for the ground rules. Do not contradict the ground rules unless the visiting coach doesn't accept them. Keep your conversation to a minimum. Be professional and treat everyone politely.

GROUND RULES: Be very sure that you are familiar with the ground rules before the game is started. Crews working a park for the first time should survey the park in ample time prior to the game to acquaint themselves with all peculiarities of the park. Do not hesitate to ask questions in the pre-game conference if you have any doubts or do not understand one of them. Remember, no ground rule may supersede or be in direct conflict with an official rule.

NATIONAL ANTHEM: During the national anthem, the umpires will stand together at attention at home plate with their cap in right hand over the heart. In the event of a color guard, remain at attention until the color guard leaves the field.

SECTION 4 – DURING THE COURSE OF THE GAME

BASEBALLS: Baseballs are the single most costly item of playing equipment for a team. Every effort should be made to get as much use of a baseball as possible before discarding it as unfit.

BETWEEN INNINGS: Between innings during the game, base umpire is to go to the shallow outfield between 1st & 2nd base. The plate umpire is to go to the line of the team that is in the field, unless there has been a particular problem with the other team. Always be sure to stand. Resting on a knee is not permitted. Never go into the dugout unless you need to use the restroom or are ill. Entering the dugout for water is not acceptable or professional. It has been the policy of most institutions to provide liquids at regular intervals. If you should desire liquids, summon the dugout to bring it out to you. If it is an extremely hot and humid day, you should arrange, prior to the game for the home team to provide liquids at scheduled intervals. Never go to the stands to converse with spectators.

FRATERNIZATION: Umpires are not to carry on idle conversations with coaches or players during the progress of the game or with other umpires, unless the proper officiating of the game requires it.

HUSTLE: Hustle should be maintained on every play. An umpire should never be out of position because of poor hustle.

SUBSTITUTIONS: When an offensive or defensive substitution is made, you need only write down the proper substitution and then point to the official scorer. Do not go to each dugout to give substitutions. If a head coach has a question, he/she will come to you. This should go a long way in avoiding problems and speeding up the game.

PITCHING CHANGES: If the coach goes to the mound and does not make a pitching change, you should always stand on the opposite foul line that he/she will cross. If he/she asks how many trips he/she has, tell him/her from there. Always umpire ahead of the game. Avoid simple errors that can lead to major problems or ejections.

You are not there to make friends, only to umpire the game to the best of your ability. When a coach makes a pitching change, it is not necessary or proper for an umpire to go to the mound to obtain the pitcher's name. If you are not certain, point the player in the game and then ask the catcher or wait for the announcement. If you still do not get his/her name, use his/her number instead until you can obtain his/her name.

You are not to go to the mound to inform the pitcher of the counts or outs. You may simply inform the catcher if the new pitcher inherits a count or you can signal the count and outs. This will go a long way in avoiding trouble and speeding up the game. After the completion of an inning, if a player tosses you the ball, you are to check the ball for damage and then immediately roll the ball towards the mound. You are not to wait and throw the ball to the pitcher or another player, unless the ground is extremely wet or it is raining.

RAIN SITUATIONS: After the plate umpire has received the home team's lineup cards, the umpires are in charge of the game. Use extreme caution when dealing

with rain. If you remove the players from the field because of heavy rain the recommended waiting time before postponing a game is 30 minutes. Lightning in the area is immediate cause for delaying a game. Remember: It is the crew's responsibility to make every effort to complete a game. Never make a decision prematurely or discuss your plans with players or coaches. By rule, the crew chief is the only person that may remove players from the field, postpone, or suspend the game. However, the crew chief should always seek input from the crew before making a decision. Do not try to predict the weather. Get in touch with the weather service radar or the airport before making a final decision to postpone or suspend a game.

OFFICIAL WATCH: The crew chief will carry the official watch if he/she is not working the plate, in the event the crew chief is working the plate, one of the other crew members will carry the official watch. Remember; once the umpires are in control the recommended waiting time before canceling a game is 30 minutes.

TURNING ON LIGHTS: The crew chief, at the request of the crew, or on his/her judgment, shall order the playing field lights turned on whenever in his/her opinion darkness makes further play hazardous. After a game has been started, the crew chief is to be the sole judge as to when field lights are to be turned on. In the event that the crew chief is not the plate umpire and if the plate umpire so needs the lights turned on to avoid hazardous play, he/she may do so. Turning on the lights should be done before the beginning of a full inning unless some extraordinary condition or abnormally long inning prompts otherwise. Umpires are instructed to use good judgment when asking for the lights.

INJURY TO UMPIRE: If an umpire working a game or series is injured or becomes ill and is unable to continue, the remaining umpire will complete the game from the best position available.

The crew chief should immediately seek the assistance of the head coach of the hosting institution to notify the Executive Board of the injury and inquirer of the possibility of providing a replacement.

SECTION 5 – HANDLING SITUATIONS

OVERVIEW: Handling situations on the field presents one of the most challenging aspects of the job. Almost anyone can learn to call balls and strikes and use good judgment on plays on the bases. How you handle situations can make you stand out in the profession or make you an umpire that both teams and other umpires do not want to work with.

Umpires should keep the game under control and not make situations worse. Do not “throw fuel on the fire.” Every situation is unique and discretion is a very important element of the job. However, the following guidelines provide a basis which you can rely on while handling situations on the field.

- Remain calm, confident and non-confrontational, always maintaining an appearance of fairness and impartiality.
- Be a steadying influence on the game. Umpires must be able to sort out complex and important situations and should not hesitate to make unpopular decisions.
- Do not ignore occurrences on the field that, in their judgment, require their attention to maintain control and order. However, not every comment on the field deserves acknowledgment. When difficult situations arise, stay “above the fray” and do not adopt the emotional level of a particular player or manager. Use common sense and knowledge of the rules at all times.
- Attempt to listen to players and managers if their comments and demeanor are reasonable. Never initiate an argument, always avoid profanity and do not insist on the “last word” or follow someone who is walking away. However, do command respect and do not tolerate abuse.
- Do not use language that, if used by a player or manager toward an umpire, would result in discipline.
- Do not initiate physical contact. Avoid finger pointing or aggressive gestures during an argument.
- Keep control of the game and attempt to defuse any potential confrontation between representatives of opposing teams. If a fight does develop, stay

clear and let coaches break up the fight. Identify offenders and take action as necessary after things have calmed down.

ARGUMENTS: Each umpire will handle his/her own discussions and arguments. It is recommended that the partner stay within hearing distance. Umpires should keep conversations one on one, stay calm, keep your comments to a minimum, and refrain from making hand gestures (example: illustrating a balk). The uninvolved partner should see to it that all others are escorted from the area and do not, under any circumstances, get involved in a conversation with any other participant. Stay focused on the umpire involved in the argument and be ready to assist if necessary.

ARGUING JUDGMENT CALLS: The NFHS prohibits coaches and players from leaving their position on the field, coaches box, or dugout to argue judgment calls, including but not limited to checked swings, balls and strikes, and balks. If after warning by the umpire a coach or player persists in arguing such calls they will be ejected.

FIGHTS: Try to stop the initial charge. Never grab anyone from behind. If the fight continues, back up, find your partners, and get help from game management. Take numbers and identify individuals involved in order to properly in force ejections and suspensions.

EJECTIONS: The responsibility of ejection is not one to be taken lightly. Consider the following principles when deciding whether to eject someone from a game.

- Use of profanity specifically directed at an umpire or vulgar personal insults of an umpire.
- Physical contact.
- Refusal to stop arguing, and further delaying a game after the umpire has given adequate opportunity to make a point. Warn the player or manager that he has been heard and should return to his position or be ejected.
- If a player, manager or coach leaves his position to argue balls and strikes (including half swings), he should be warned to immediately return or he will be automatically ejected.
- Use of histrionic gestures (jumping up and down, violently waving arms or

demonstrations) while arguing or stepping out of the dugout and making gestures toward an umpire. Throwing anything out of a dugout (towels, cups, equipment, etc.) is an automatic ejection.

- Actions by players specifically intended to ridicule an umpire such as drawing a line in the dirt to indicate the location of a pitch or leaving equipment at the plate after striking out with less than two outs.
- Throwing equipment in disgust over an umpire's call may be grounds for ejection.
- Any player or manager who fails to comply with an order from an umpire to do or refrain from doing anything that affects administering the rules and regulations governing play is subject to ejection in accordance with OBR 9.01. Examples include failure to stay within the lines of the batter's box after a warning or refusal to submit equipment for inspection, etc.

While the above examples may justify ejection, OBR 9.01(d) also grants umpires discretion to eject any participant "for objecting to decisions or for unsportsmanlike conduct or language."

Make sure that you work as a team during an argument, ejection, or fight. Keep coaches and players who are not in the argument away. Do not attempt to physically break up a fight once it has broken out. You will only run the risk of injury and the coaches and players will usually help you restore order.

REPORTING TROUBLE: Anything that is not "routine" should be called in to the Executive Director the night of the incident or early the next morning. Examples include fights, bumping incidents, bean ball incidents, protested games, etc. The identical report should then be submitted to MSHSAA within the time frame established by MSHSAA. Extreme care should be taken in preparing the report.

UMPIRE REPORTS: In writing your reports, remember that they are actually legal documents and that others may be privileged to examine them. Tell precisely what happened and the exact language that was used. Be sure of your facts and confine your report to the facts only. Do not "editorialize." Give facts and the situation will take care of itself.

Take extreme care in writing your reports. Make sure spelling and punctuation are correct. Always proofread the report to make sure it is free of errors and clear to the reader.

Always keep a copy of the report for your own records.

PROTESTS: Get together as a crew and ensure the situation is protestable (rule interpretation), and the rule has been applied correctly. Refer to MSHSAA guidelines for protest procedures.

OFF THE FIELD PROBLEMS: Any problems that occur that are not related to actual game play should be reported to the Executive Director immediately. Do not try to solve problems including but not restricted to: parking, dressing rooms, security, crowd control, game fees, press or media relations, game management personnel, or others. Please share any concerns you might have or have experienced at our meetings.

The Executive Board is committed to addressing any and all concerns on behalf of the entire Association. Your intervention into these problems could cause a lot of confusion and some hard feelings.

SECTION 6 – FOLLOWING THE GAME

AFTER THE GAME: After the completion of the game, the umpires leave the field together as a crew. The plate umpire should return the remaining supply of baseballs to a team representative, preferably not a coach or player. If the hosting institution provides a dressing room facility it is acceptable for the plate umpire to take the remaining baseballs to the dressing room, where they will be left for a team representative to pick up. At no time will the plate umpire stop and return the baseballs to the dugout or toss them across the field.

POST GAME MEETING: Following the game the crew chief should take a few minutes to review any unusual plays or situations that occurred during the game and how they might have been handled differently.

DRESSING ROOM: Umpires should leave the dressing room as they found it if not better. Taking any items from the dressing room is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the Association.

SECTION 7 – UNIFORM STANDARDS

Members are expected to maintain a professional appearance while in uniform and keep in mind that they are representing the Association both on and off the field.

HATS: Umpires are to wear the Association hat (MAU) while working all Association assigned games. The hat has the letters MAU embroidered in white, set at a diagonal, in a serif font. Contact the Executive Director for locations where the hat can be purchased.

UNIFORMS:

Warm Weather

- A. Black jersey, black or white undershirt (crew members dressed alike), gray pants.
- B. Polo Blue jersey with Black collar, black or white undershirt (crew members dressed alike), gray pants.
- C. Navy jersey, red or navy undershirt (crew members dressed alike), gray pants.
- D. Lt. Blue jersey, navy undershirt, gray pants.
- E. Red jersey, navy undershirt, gray pants.
- F. Cream jersey, black or white undershirt (crew members dressed alike), gray pants.
- G. White jersey with navy or black collar, navy or black undershirt (match collar color), gray pants.
- H. Gray jersey, black or white undershirt (crew members dressed alike), gray pants.
- I. Any other jersey color as long as crew members are dressed alike.

Inclement Weather

- A. Plate umpires should wear a plate coat (if available), long sleeved navy or black jersey, or a navy or black jacket. Base umpires should wear a navy or black jacket.

Members are expected to maintain a professional appearance while in uniform and keep in mind that they are representing the Association both on and off the field.

Pants Umpires are to wear gray umpire slacks, neatly pressed.

Belt Black leather belt.

Socks Black socks.

Shoes All black shoes or mostly black shoes with minimal white.