

# North Penn Valley Umpires Pre-Game Outline

## General

- Call your partner the day before (pre-game starts here, verify parking area)
- Arrive 30 minutes before game time; notify the coach that you are there; check the status of both teams' pre-game warm-ups
- Double check that you have all equipment (mask, indicators, bags, cup, etc.)
- CRITICALLY: Umpires must be on the same page!

## Pre-Game with Partner

### DIVISION OF COVERAGE

- Fair/Foul and dead-ball coverage
- Fly Balls to the Outfield
- Fly Balls and Line Drives in the Infield
- Ground Ball Double Play
- Swipe tags and running-lane violations
- Tag-Ups and Touching Bases
- Coverage at Third (including First-to-Third)
- Balks
- Run downs

### GAME MANAGEMENT

- Signal to indicate "I have information you might need or use"
- Batted ball hitting batter in the box
- Dropped or held signal (foul tip and dropped third strike)
- Infield Fly – signal and call
- Check count – signal
- Checked swings – Did he go? Yes/No
- Time – don't call unless necessary – keep the game moving
- Weather – lightning, rain, darkness
- Trouble and dealing with coaches - how you help your partner
- Base awards - cooperate, talk to your partner if not sure or disagree
- Verbal communications
- Counting/signaling pitcher's warmup throws and coaching trips to mound

## Arrival on Field (within the confines)

- Approach the field with "purpose"
- Check field conditions and equipment inspection (stay out of dugouts), on-field jurisdiction starts

## Plate Meeting with Coaches and Captains

- Stand in the proper positions
- Greet both coaches equally and introduce self and partner
- Exchange and check lineup cards (home team first), verify DH
- Home team announces ground rules - umps formulate if teams don't agree
- **Read the PIAA Sportsmanship Message**
- Coaches verify team properly equipped (NOT a warning!)
- Identify each scorekeeper (designate 1 as official)
- Ask for help in chasing foul balls to speed up game
- Keep players and equipment in dugouts and beyond the out-of-play line
- Must announce courtesy runners (ask for time, encourage coach to ask before using CR)
- OPPONENT is responsible for monitoring unannounced substitutes (not umpire)
- Encourage hustle
- Address any time limits
- Any loose ends?

## Post-Game

- Leave the field together, on-field jurisdiction ends
- Discuss and self-evaluate
- File any reports - ejections, injuries, evaluations, etc.

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# North Penn Valley Umpires Pre-Game Comments

## General

- Call your partner the day before (pre-game starts here, verify parking area)
  - Discuss arrival time - Be on Time!
  - Park away from main area – give yourself an “out”
  - Dress alike
- Arrive 30 minutes before game time; notify the coach that you are there; check the status of both teams' pre-game warm-ups
  - T-minus-60 minutes: Preferred arrival at game site (Pro manual). Find field, find partner, use restroom, get dressed, be seen by coaches, inspect field, check teams' warmup status.
  - T-minus-35 minutes: Home team begins infield practice (15 minutes, PIAA District 1 regulation)
  - T-minus-30 minutes: Required arrival at game site (PIAA manual).
  - T-minus-20 minutes: Visiting team begins infield practice (15 minutes, PIAA District 1 regulation)
  - T-minus-15 minutes: Completely dressed and ready. Umpire pre-game & walk to field.
  - T-minus-5 minutes: Home plate meeting.
  - T-minus-0 minutes: First pitch as close as possible to scheduled start time (On Time!).
  - Umpires should NEVER be the reason for a delayed start.
  - Be proactive in identifying delays due to teams or field preparation. If the home team is not taking infield 35 minutes before start time, now is the time to address the situation with both coaches (to get them to both equally speed-up infield or to delay the game's start time). This avoids unnecessary friction for the umpire before the game if teams are not ready due to a delay. This is an issue for the AD's and not the umpires (but we always seem to end up being the "bad guy").
- Double check that you have all equipment (mask, indicators, bags, cup, etc.)
- CRITICALLY: Umpires must be on the same page!
  - There are several different schools or "books" of mechanics out there (Pro/PBUC, NCAA, CCA, NFHS, PIAA modifications, etc.) and the number of umpires may vary (2-, 3-, 4-, and even 6-man mechanics).
  - The most important point of this handout is that it DOES NOT matter *which* mechanics a crew uses, but all umpires MUST be *on the same page*. The whole crew must either use the same mechanics or compatible mechanics (making the necessary adjustments so everything is covered). This handout does not attempt to summarize or outline any school or book mechanic (which is impossible to do in just a few pages).
  - Please note that the specific mechanics referenced below are for comparison, and include those commonly used in this chapter. They are not a complete listing, and can be modified as required. But, just make sure you...
  - HAVE A GOOD PRE-GAME AND BE ON THE SAME PAGE!!
  - Pre-game is part of PIAA ump evaluations, conduct your pre-game like your assigner is watching!

## Pre-Game with Partner

### DIVISION OF COVERAGE

- Fair/Foul and dead-ball coverage
  - PU has 3<sup>rd</sup> base line always
  - With no one on PU has to the front of 1<sup>st</sup> base bag; BU has from front of bag to pole
  - With runners on PU has all fair/foul
  - Discuss if partial or no lines drawn on field.
- Fly Balls to the Outfield
  - With no one on PU has all balls from center to left field
  - With no one on PU has all balls from center to right field unless BU goes out on trouble ball (Pause, Read, React). If BU goes out PU has batter runner to at least 3<sup>rd</sup>. BU after

determining the ball remains in play should get back to cover the plate if possible.

Note: An alternative is for BU to “go out” on all balls in this zone.

- o With runner(s) on (BU in B or C) the “V” is utilized. All balls in the “V” belong to BU. Balls when the Right or Left fielder turns to the fair/foul line belong to PU.
- Fly Balls and Line Drives in the Infield
  - o With no one on PU has left side of infield and BU has right side except if the 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman dives or turns to his right and BU is blocked
  - o With runner(s) on with BU in the B or C use the “V”
- Ground Ball Double Play
  - o PU responsible for clean up at 2<sup>nd</sup> (PIAA/NFHS force play slide rule)
  - o PU be available for pulled foot or swipe tag at 1<sup>st</sup>. NOTE: On pulled foot, if PU can't help, the call is out because BU had determined the ball beat the runner. On a swiped tag, if PU can't help, the call is safe because BU did not have a tag.
- Swipe tags and running-lane violations
  - o PU responsible, even if covering 3B
- Tag-Ups and Touching Bases
  - o Pro: PU has 3<sup>rd</sup> and home; BU has 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> (plus batter-runner touching 3rd).
  - o PIAA: BU has all at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, except PU has lead runner if multiple runners.  
Alternative: Whoever does not have ball coverage has runner tagging at 1<sup>st</sup> /2<sup>nd</sup>.  
Alternative: If PU has ball coverage on right field line – BU has tag at 2<sup>nd</sup> and PU has tag at 1<sup>st</sup>. (see coverage at 3<sup>rd</sup> also)
- Coverage at 3<sup>rd</sup> (including First-to-Third)
  - o BU
    - First play in the infield
    - Steal of 3<sup>rd</sup>
    - Pick off at 2<sup>nd</sup> with over throw & runner advances to 3<sup>rd</sup>
    - Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> steals (or wild pitch or bunt) and there is over throw at 2<sup>nd</sup>
    - On single base hit to the outfield with runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>
    - ## Runner from 2<sup>nd</sup> after play at 1<sup>st</sup> on batter runner (“delayed” advance, also routine double play with runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>)
    - ## Runner from 1<sup>st</sup> advances to 3<sup>rd</sup> on sacrifice bunt
    - ## Note: these two plays are difficult even if PU covers 3<sup>rd</sup>. If PU covers there is no help on pulled foot or swipe tag at 1<sup>st</sup>. **Critical to DISCUSS!** Various mechanics deal with this differently, and in several the PU should not go to 3rd at all in these situations.
  - o PU
    - With runner(s) on 1<sup>st</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, runner from 1<sup>st</sup> into 3<sup>rd</sup>. (PU must watch runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> touch plate in both situations)
    - With runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in tag up situation, the play at 3<sup>rd</sup>. **DISCUSS possible switch if PU has trouble ball on right field line.**
- Balks
  - o PU usually has better view of: Coming to a complete stop (when pitcher facing away from BU), gaining ground to 1<sup>st</sup> (LHP step or RHP jump-turn); LHP: Slide step to plate; RHP: Step to plate on 3<sup>rd</sup> -to-1<sup>st</sup> move, starting arm motion before stepping off (in windup position with runner on).
  - o BU usually has better view of: Coming to a complete stop (when pitcher facing towards BU); LHP: step to plate vs. 1<sup>st</sup> (45-foot line); RHP: breaking knees before jump-turn.
  - o Discuss covering the “classic lefty move”
  - o Equal jurisdiction on everything else (including RHP stepping toward 45-foot line, etc. and pitcher going to mouth; on cold days, pitchers being allowed to blow in their hand should be discussed at plate meeting with coaches).
- Run downs – front/back/diagonal; call generally goes to the direction of play
  - o PU has 3<sup>rd</sup> to home; BU has 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - o Only help your partner if there are no other runners.

#### GAME MANAGEMENT

- Signal to indicate “I have information you might need or use”
- Batted ball hitting batter in the box

- Dropped or held signal (foul tip and dropped third strike)
  - For example: closed fist if held, point to ground if dropped. For dropped tip (foul ball) BU should also verbally sell the "foul" call.
- Infield Fly – signal and call
- Check count – signal
- Checked swings – Did he go? Yes/No
- Time – don't call unless necessary – keep the game moving
- Weather – lightning, rain, darkness
- Trouble and dealing with coaches - how you help your partner
  - Once your partner ejects someone, he should try to break off the conversation. Then if the coach does not leave the field, you step in and ask him to leave: "Don't shoot the messenger".
- Base awards - cooperate, talk to your partner if not sure or disagree
- Verbal communications
- Counting/signaling pitcher's warmup throws and offensive and defensive conferences
  - It is common that the PU alone monitors conferences. However, let's take a lesson from football: Whenever a team takes a time-out in football, ALL officials on the field write it down in their notes.

### **Arrival on Field (within the confines)**

- Approach the field with "purpose"
- Check field conditions and equipment inspection, on-field jurisdiction starts
  - Inspect field before or while walking in
  - Cover any peculiar conditions or safety issues at coaches meeting
  - Check visible equipment on the field and which you can see in the dugout (don't enter the dugout)

### **Plate Meeting with Coaches and Captains**

- Stand in the proper positions
  - PU at the point of home plate facing outfield, BU in front of plate with back towards the mound
  - Coaches and captains approach from their own side's batter's box
  - The rest of the teams in the dugouts or bullpen
- Greet both coaches equally and introduce self and partner
  - Head coach is mandatory, if available on site
  - Captains ("if available" per NFHS, mandatory per PIAA Manual)
- Exchange and check lineup cards (home team first), verify DH
  - Take home team's first, then visiting team's, then inspect both, then hand copies to opponent. By rule, this MUST be done first (immediately after introductions).
  - Check designated hitter (DH) position on card - verbally confirm
  - There are numerous ways in which a coach can write down the DH and player he is batting for: don't insist that it be written properly but DO verbally confirm so everyone is on the same page
- Home team announces ground rules - umps formulate if teams don't agree
- **Read the PIAA Sportsmanship Message**
- Coaches verify team properly equipped (NOT a warning!)
  - A few years ago, PIAA ruled that the coach verifying took the place of specific warnings called for in the rules. This has changed, and the coach verifying proper equipment during the plate meeting does NOT count as a warning when it comes to proper equipment.
- Ask for help in chasing foul balls to speed up game
- Keep players and equipment in dugouts and beyond the out-of-play line
  - No chairs or buckets in live ball territory
  - Your discretion on allowing coaches at entrance to dugouts (NEVER players)
- Must announce courtesy runners (encourage coach to ask before using CR)
- OPPONENT is responsible for monitoring unannounced substitutes (not umpire)
- Encourage hustle
- Address any time limits

- Any loose ends?

## **Post-Game**

- Leave the field together, on-field jurisdiction ends
  - Do not hang around to congratulate players, talk to coaches, etc. Get off the field!
- Discuss and self-evaluate
  - What went well and what didn't...
  - Discuss any controversies, miscommunications, coverage gaps or overlaps, etc.
  - Strive to IMPROVE each game.
- File any reports - ejections, injuries, evaluations, etc.