

2019 MROS Plate & Base Umpire Mechanics Changes

Mechanics Implementation Summary

The MROS Training Committee members performed a study of existing plate and field mechanics. With much input, review, and debate, the following umpire mechanics changes have been recommended for both plate and field umpires using a 2 Umpire System. The changes are highlighted in specific scenarios below.

These changes represent the intent of aligning MROS umpire mechanics with the umpire mechanics that are considered standard across the country, documented in the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Umpires Manual. Other umpiring associations across the state, as highlighted on the last page, were inquired to align MROS further with both NFHS and VHSL as a whole.

These changes highlighted below ensure that MROS mechanics are now completely aligned with the NFHS Softball Umpires Manual. The one mechanic exception to this is MROS will not button hook.

2 Umpire System Mechanic Rule of Thumb

- Base Umpire has all "first plays" from the infield at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd base.
- Plate Umpire has any subsequent (2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.) plays from the infield at 3rd base and all plays from the outfield at 3rd base on all base runners (except the batter-runner), as well as the plate on all runners.
- Base Umpire is responsible for all calls on the batter-runner at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd base, as well as all other base runners at 1st and 2nd unless the umpire has chased a fly ball to the outfield.

2 Umpire System Mechanic Changes

Scenario: Routine Base Hit to the Outfield

(Ref Page 39 & 41 of NFHS Softball Umpires Manual)

From A Position (No Runners On):

- No button hooking - stay outside the base path as much as possible.
- Base Umpire should move parallel with the runner, mirroring their movement to 2nd base or back to 1st base. Do NOT immediately run toward 2nd base or run ahead of the runner. Run parallel with the runner's movement.
- When mirroring the batter-runner's movement to 2nd base, cut inside the diamond behind the batter-runner to get an inside path on the batter-runner going to 3rd base, or to make a call on the batter-runner rounding and retreating back to 2nd base, or to make a call on the runner

sliding into 2nd base if the throw is coming from right field to keep both the ball and runner in view and stay out of the throwing lane.

- Base Umpire will be responsible for the batter-runner from 1st base (including obstruction, throwbacks to 1st, etc.) all the way around to 3rd base.
- Plate Umpire will only be responsible for plays on the batter-runner at the plate.
- Plate Umpire can assist the Base Umpire at 3rd base and make the call if the Base Umpire gets trapped or can't get into position in time.
- This mechanic now aligns MROS with the NFHS Softball Umpires Manual.

From B or C Position (Runners on Base):

- Pivot inside the diamond ONLY on fly ball hits over the head to the outfield to keep the ball and runners all in view and see tag-ups. Otherwise, open up body position to see both the ball in the outfield and the runner(s) that the umpire is responsible for.

Scenario: Routine Infield Play to 1st

(Ref Page 41 of NFHS Softball Umpires Manual)

From A Position (No Runners On):

- On overthrows at 1st base, the Base Umpire will be responsible for the batter-runner and make all calls (including obstruction) at 1st base, 2nd base, and 3rd base on the batter-runner.
- Responsibility for the overthrown ball will primarily lie with the Plate Umpire, but the Base Umpire will be able to take an initial look as well since most overthrows into dead ball territory happen immediately after the ball passes over the 1st baseman. If the overthrown ball is not immediately dead and the runner takes off for 2nd base, the Base Umpire will retain responsibility for the runner and mirror her advancement to 2nd base and 3rd base.
- Once the overthrown ball is clear of any possible blocked ball or dead ball possibility, the Plate Umpire should move to a position to assist on any calls at 3rd base (if needed) or, if a play at home is imminent, move to a calling position at the plate.
- This mechanic allows uniformity amongst all overthrow scenarios, regardless of where the Base Umpire's starting position is (A, B, or C Position... we would never expect a Base Umpire in C Position to "stay with the ball" on an overthrown ball at 1st base and have the Plate Umpire take the batter-runner to 2nd base). If we trust the umpires' ability to make the "dead ball" call when the Base Umpire is in C Position and is not "staying with the ball," we can also trust them when the Base Umpire is in A Position and taking the runner to 2nd. Remember: both umpires should **always** know **ball status** (location, loose ball/in a fielder's possession, and live/dead ball) by taking quick looks at the ball to ensure they are avoiding throwing lanes. By knowing ball status, neither umpire should miss a dead ball on an overthrow.
- This mechanic now aligns MROS with the NFHS Softball Umpires Manual.

Scenario: Foul/Fair Ball Calls Down the Right Field Line

(Ref Page 40 & 41 of NFHS Softball Umpires Manual)

From A Position (No Runners On):

- Plate Umpire has general responsibility for making foul/fair calls down the foul lines.
- As always, if the Base Umpire turns their back and begins chasing the ball to the outfield, they are responsible for making a call. Plate umpire will then assume responsibility for all subsequent calls at all bases. The Base Umpire should try to move down towards home for a potential play at the plate. Communication is essential on this play if the Base Umpire comes back in.
- The “Point-and-Go” mechanic should be utilized by the Base Umpire in A Position in the event that a ball is hit sharply down the right field line. The Base Umpire will turn and straddle the line, make the fair/foul call and, if fair, will point fair and continue on with base responsibilities taking the batter-runner from 1st base to 3rd base. This is designed for hard-hit line drives down the right field line that land well in advance of the batter-runner reaching 1st base, where the Base Umpire has plenty of time to make the fair/foul call and get in position to take the runner around the bases. This allows us to keep 2 umpires on the bases to make calls on the batter-runner, which is always preferable. Note: not all hits down the foul line will allow the use of Point-and-Go. The Base Umpire must use good judgment in determining if the ball is sharply hit enough and will allow them time to use this mechanic.

Scenario: Fly Ball Tag-Up Responsibilities

(Ref Page 40 Table of NFHS Softball Umpires Manual)

Runner on 1st Base Only:

- Plate Umpire has catch responsibility on the fly ball
- Base Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 1st base

Runner on 2nd Base Only:

- Plate Umpire has catch responsibility on the fly ball
- Base Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 2nd base

Runner on 3rd Base Only:

- Plate Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 3rd base
- Base Umpire has responsibility for the batter-runner

Runners on 1st and 2nd Bases:

- Plate Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 2nd base
- Base Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 1st base

Runners on 1st & 3rd Bases:

- Plate Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 3rd base
- Base Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 1st base

Runners on 2nd & 3rd Bases:

- Plate Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 3rd base
- Base Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 2nd base

Bases Loaded:

- Plate Umpire has tag-up responsibility at 3rd base
- Base Umpire has tag-up responsibilities at 1st and 2nd base

Scenario: Use of the Wedge Concept for Tag Plays at the Plate and on the Bases

- Use of the “Wedge” concept will provide umpires with the ability to obtain the best position and view of any potential tag play.
- Plate Umpire should move to the position that will create a view where the umpire can see the space between the runner and the fielder, keying off the fielder’s movement.
- The runner’s base line extended is often the optimal angle for the “Wedge,” but it is flexible depending on where both the fielder and the runner are positioned during the play.
- Recommended to stay behind and just off the left hip of the fielder, rotating as she does.
- Follow the fielder around keying on the movement of her left hip. This enables the umpire to continually see the “Wedge” between the sliding runner and the fielder making the tag.
- Wedge Video Link: www.mros-va.org/training-videos

Organizations and Resources Consulted:

NFHS Softball Umpires Manual – National Federation of State High School Associations

Virginia Beach - Eastern Virginia Officials Association (VHSL)

Northern Virginia - Northern Virginia Softball Umpires Association (VHSL)

Roanoke – Roanoke Valley Softball Umpires Association (VHSL)

Charlottesville - Piedmont Softball Umpires Association (VHSL)

Lynchburg - Colonial Softball Umpires Association (VHSL)

Richmond – Metro Richmond Officiating Service (VHSL)