

## **Before the Game**

By Chris Marco ([www.hbua.com](http://www.hbua.com))

For some of our newer umpires, we are going to take a look at a few game preliminaries to demonstrate how each game starts. For more seasoned umpires, do not underestimate the importance of good appearance during these times.

### **The Plate Meeting**

Prior to each game, the umpires shall enter the field no fewer than five minutes prior to the scheduled starting time and proceed directly to home plate to exchange line ups and cover the park ground rules. For fields with complicated ground rules, five minutes is not enough time and umpires are advised to arrive at the plate earlier so the game may start on time.

Once at home plate, the plate umpire will stand directly behind home plate, with the base umpire(s) opposite, facing each other. It is not necessary for the plate umpire to call "coaches and captains" upon arrival at the plate; each team's manager should be aware that once the umpires have arrived, it is time for the plate meeting. Should there be an excessive delay by one of both teams, it would then be appropriate to ask the managers to come to the plate for the plate meeting. Upon the arrival, the managers (and any additional guests) shall stand in their respective batter's boxes.

Umpires should introduce themselves by name to each manager, making it a point to learn the name of each manager as well. If a coach should introduce themselves by last name, be sure to ascertain their first name in a polite and professional way. While a coach can direct his team to address them in any manner they so choose, they do have this authority over umpires and it is extremely unprofessional and an intimidation tactic when directed to younger umpires, for a coach to expect an umpire to address them in this manner.

The discussion of ground rules should not be taken lightly. Every year in baseball, protests occur because of situations that occur, which may have been prevented by a thorough review of the ground rules prior to each game. Plate umpires, regardless of crew seniority, should take charge and be the one to deliver the ground rules. The discussion of ground rules should begin with any features behind home plate and proceed round the diamond. Do not discuss any playing rules while going over the ground rules however, if the game is to be played under any kind of time limit, it would be appropriate to inform the attendees of the plate meeting of those curfew times as well as which umpire has the official watch.

Once the discussion of ground rules and curfew, if applicable, has been completed, take a moment to ensure neither manager has any questions. If there are not questions, it is time to conclude the plate meeting.

(This is an excerpt from the article written by Chris Marco from the HBUA website)

### Curfew

- All games have a two hour curfew from *scheduled* start time (6pm). Therefore, no new inning can begin after 8pm.

### 2 Out Catcher Rule

- To speed up the flow of the game, if the upcoming catcher is on base with two outs, please have them come off the field to dress for the next inning. The runner must be replaced with the last out of the inning.

### Rookie

- The person feeding the pitching machine must wear a helmet with double ear flaps.

### Wm. McCulloch Park Ground Rules

- Dead ball territory both sides of the field line shall be defined by a straight line from the end of the fence in foul territory to the last post of the outfield fence
- A fair batted ball that rolls across the out-of-play line shall result in a two-base award, per the Official Rules
- A fielder may not cross the out-of-play line to make a catch
- A fielder who touches a ball in play and carries it out of play may “complete” the catch in dead ball territory however, all runners would be awarded one base, per the Official Rules
- A fielder who carries a fair ball into dead ball territory and subsequently drops the ball shall result in a two-base award to the batter and all runners, as per the Official Rules.

### Olympic Park Ground Rules

- As above with the following additions:
  - Take note of the gaps in fencing
  - Drainage sewer location in the center field of the south diamond