



Softball Europe Three umpire system

The three-umpire system, when properly employed, is not only the most enjoyable system of umpiring, it ensures the undivided attention of one umpire on every play and at each base.

There are basic rules governing the coverage of the Softball Europe three umpire system:

1. The plate umpire always judges batted balls, foul or fair, and fly balls.
2. Rotation for the three umpire system is always clockwise.
3. The in/out theory for the base umpires is to be followed.

The hereafter mentioned positions of the umpires are all desired positions. These are guidelines, but not rigid rules. Situations arise whereby your position will have to vary from play to play. Umpires should select the best position which will permit them to cover the play, yet not to interfere with the play. Your calling might not be limited to one call per play, always be prepared to make additional calls on either the same play or another play (assist your fellow umpires when needed).

REMEMBER: THE PROPER ANGLE TOWARDS A PLAY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PROPER DISTANCE: ON A FORCE PLAY 6 METERS, ON A TAG PLAY 4 METERS TO THAT PLAY.

Mechanics fundamentals

Ready Position

The ready position is the body position a base umpire takes immediately prior to the pitcher bringing the hands together for the pause and up until the pitch is released.

As the pitcher assumes the pause position, (hands together), the umpire should take the ready position by placing the feet at a comfortable distance apart, (normally shoulder width) staying relaxed but still. As the pitcher releases the pitch, soften the knees (slightly bend), adjust body weight to the balls of the feet and draw the hands in, close to the body at belt level.

If the ball is hit, push off the ball of the outer foot and move to the appropriate position for a possible play. If the ball is not hit, relax until the start of the next pitch but always be aware of pick off plays, passed balls, etc. that may cause the umpire to move to a position to call a play.

Set Position

This is the position an umpire should take, prior to making a call on a play. The set position mimics the ready position in that the feet are spread apart, normally shoulder width, knees are softened and slightly bent with the hands drawn towards the body at belt level.

On a force play, the umpire moves to a proper position to see the play; 6 meters back, 90 degrees to the throw; on plays at 1st base, do not go beyond 45 degrees to the base.

Once at this position the umpire should stop, set, see the play and then make the call.

On a tag play, the umpire moves to a proper position to see the play, 4 meters back and not in line with the throw, 90 degrees to the runner's base path and just short of the leading edge of the base or home plate.

Once at this position the umpire should stop, set, see the play and then make the call.

Making the Call

While in the set position, the umpire should pick the ball up with the eyes and track the ball by turning the head with the ball. On force plays, just prior to the thrown ball reaching the fielder, change your focus to the ball, fielder (, base) and runner, watching the three (four) come together. Once you have made your decision on the play, rise from the set position and signal and verbalize your call, using appropriate emphasis and voice. On tag plays, watch the thrown ball into the fielder's glove and follow the ball and glove to the area of the tag, picking up the runner in your field of vision as the fielder begins to move towards the area where the tag will happen. With the Four Essential Elements in front of you judge whether the tag was made prior to the runner touching the base. Rise and make the signal and verbal call, using the appropriate emphasis and voice. If required you may adjust your position to best see all the Four Essential Elements.

In/Out Theory

On hit balls to the infield, base umpires should stay on the outside of the base paths and either stay at their starting position or move to the correct calling position. On balls to the outfield, base umpires should rotate into the inside of the diamond. Base umpires with starting positions in fair territory may stay outside if the ball is in leftfield. Staying outside keeps all four Elements in front of the umpire, this will also keep the base umpire out of a possible throwing lane.

Once the ball returns to the infield, the base umpires having rotated to their proper coverages may move back out beyond the base path when it is clear that there will no play at an umpire's area of coverage and there is time to move out while keeping all the Four Essential Elements in front.

If runners are moving and there is a possibility of a play in an umpire's area of coverage, open up to the ball, staying out of any possible throwing lane and move to the proper angle and distance for a possible play and call.

On hits to right field or right-center field, U3, if not rotating to 2nd base, may come down the line in foul territory, to a point even with the bag and allow the Four Essential Elements dictate whether U3 should rotate inside or go back out beyond the base line. If there is a possibility of a play at 3rd base on the throw back, rotate inside. If the throw is to home with no immediate play at 3rd base, move back out beyond the base line in fair territory.

Rotations

Umpire infield rotations shall be clockwise. Exception: if required to backfill, trail a runner or return from a holding position.

Holding Position

A position in foul territory, halfway between home plate and 3rd base or home plate and 1st base, 4-5 meters off the foul line or to an area where the umpire can observe all four essential elements and be ready to move to their next position. Umpires use the holding position, while watching the play develop to determine which base they are required to cover. U1 shall use the holding position before rotating to home plate. If no immediate play at home and with U3 abandoning their position, move to home plate and push the PU up to 3rd base.

Backfilling

This is when the play requires an umpire to counter-rotate to cover a position they left due to another umpire being required to cover a play situation elsewhere. An umpire must be ready to move to cover off a play when the responsible umpire cannot get in position to make the call.

Four Essential Element Theory (FEET)

The four Essential Elements are;

1. The BALL
2. The Defensive player
3. The Offensive players
4. The base or the area of the play

The umpire positions and rotations shown in the following diagrams for Live Ball plays from the Infield and Outfield, and Fly-Ball Coverage are Softball Europe's best practice for the large majority of primary plays. It is acknowledged that as some plays develop (this is particularly so for secondary plays) umpires will be required to adjust their position to better see the Four Essential Elements.

Tag-up responsibilities

The responsibilities are determined by the starting positions of the base umpires:

With both base umpires in on the lines or with U3 starting behind 2nd base:

P has tag-ups at 3rd base, U3 has tag-ups at 2nd base and U1 has tag ups at 1st base

With U1 starting in fair territory:

P has the tag ups at 1st base, U1 has the tag ups at 2nd base and U3 has the tag ups on 3rd base.

Starting positions base umpires

Terminology

P	Plate Umpire	R1	is the lead-runner	F1–F9	Fielders by position
U1	1st Base Umpire	R2	is the trailing runner		
U3	3rd Base Umpire	R3	is the runner starting on 1st base with bases loaded		

Starting positions

With no runners on, U1 and U3's preliminary starting position should be 6 meters behind the base, 15–30 cm off the line in foul territory (measured from the outside of the foot closest to the foul line).

With a runner on 1st base only, U3 moves to a position 5 meters back, on the 1st base side of 2nd base, just short of the leading edge. U1 should take a position 5 meters behind 1st base in foul territory. All umpires shall have an unobstructed view of the pitcher, runner and home plate, so they are able to make calls on dead ball situations and judgements on check swings, enabling him to assist the plate umpire when requested.

With any runner on 2nd base, or 1st and 3rd base, U1 moves to a position 5 meters back no closer than halfway but not more than 2/3^{rds} from 1st base, between 1st and 2nd base. In both these cases, U1 should adjust his position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations, and the infielder's positions. U1 must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.

With any runner on 3rd base U3 should be 5 meters behind 3rd base in foul territory so the umpire's view of the pitcher, runner and home plate is not obstructed by the runner leaving 3rd base on the release of the pitch and the base umpire is able to make calls on dead ball situations and judgements on check swings, enabling him to assist the plate umpire when requested. With a runner on 3rd base only, U1 moves back to the original starting position.

On a ball to the outfield U3 rotates inside for any call at 2nd base.

On a pick-off at 1st base when U1's starting position is off the foul line, U1 moves forward from the starting position keeping all Four Essential Elements in front. Depending on the umpires reading of the play, U1 should move to a position 4 meters back from the play by stepping inside to fair territory or by moving forward in foul territory provided the umpire does not move beyond a 45-degree line through 1st base.

On a pick off (throw back) at 3rd base, U3 moves forward from the starting position to a position, 4 meters (10-12 feet) back keeping all Four Essential Elements in front by moving forward towards 3rd base or to a position closer to the foul line. The umpire should not move down in foul territory beyond a 45-degree line through 3rd base.

Run-downs

When a runner is caught in a rundown, it is important that the covering umpire move to get the best perspective both ends of the play. Usually the umpire will be a minimum of 4 meters from the runner and move parallel to the base line, unless you are covering the play alone, and it is not necessary to run back and forth with the runner. The umpire must follow the ball and when the actual tag is attempted, move quickly toward or around the play to get the best angle. Be alert for obstruction. Most rundowns are covered by one umpire because they happen quickly.

With a single runner in a RUNDOWN, two umpires should 'bracket' the play as follows:

- Between first and second – the plate umpire should take the trail position closest to first base, inside the diamond and the base umpire should take the lead position closest to second base on the outfield side of the diamond.
- Between second and third – the plate umpire should take the lead position closest to third base, inside the diamond, and the base umpire should take the trail position, closest to second base on the outfield side.
- Between third and home – the plate umpire will take the lead position nearest home plate outside the diamond, while the base umpire takes the trail position nearest third base, inside the diamond.

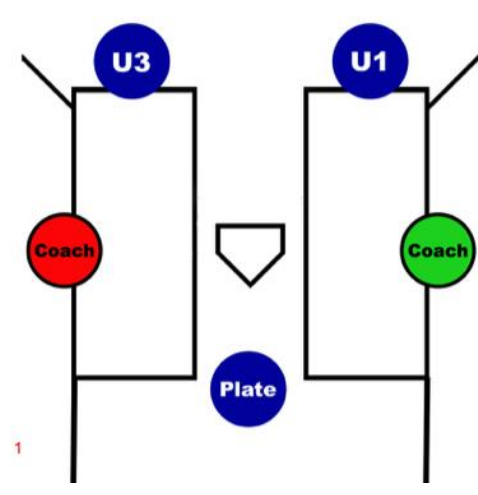
In all cases, the umpire should communicate, "I've got the lead", "I've got this end", etc. This communication is critical to being able to team on the call, rather than making a possible double call. When two umpires are covering a rundown, the direction in which this runner is moving at the time of the tag will dictate which umpire will make the call. Two umpires should not make the call, even if the calls are the same.

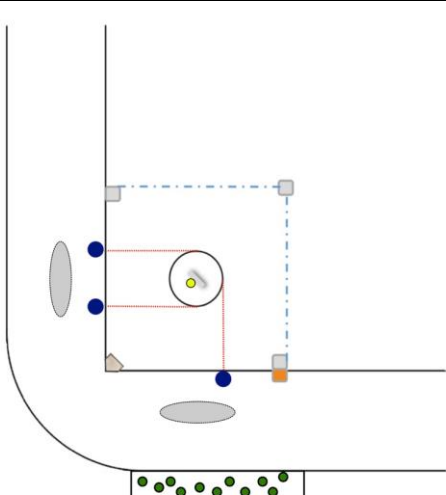
Check Swings

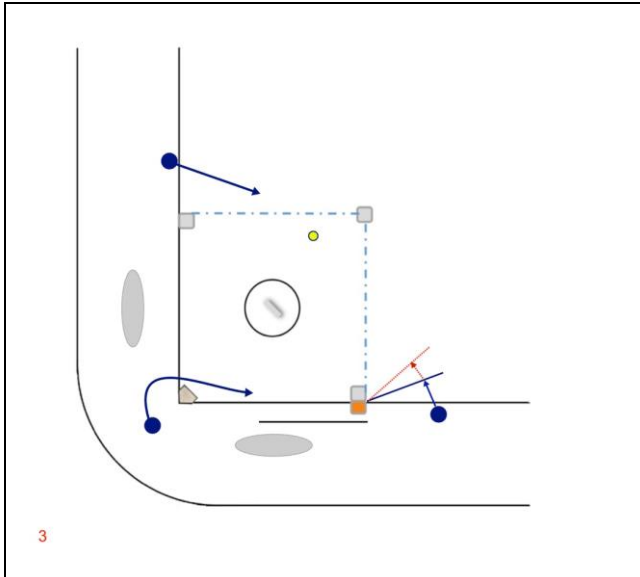
On check swings, it is alright to check if asked by the defense as it will build a rapport but do not let them ask every time the batter flinches.

The question shall be given to the umpire that the batters front side is facing to (U1 for a righthanded batter, U3 for a lefthanded batter) wherever the umpire is positioned in the field.

Some umpires are reluctant to ask for help, however, the bottom line is being correct, so do not hesitate to check with your partner if requested to do so. And only go for help if you called the pitch a 'ball.' Once you have called the pitch a strike, you must never check with your partner. You called it, so you have to live with it.

 <p>1</p>	<p>Plate conference position</p> <p>P: Stands behind home plate in between the end of the batter's boxes, facing the pitcher's plate.</p> <p>U1: Stands at the end of the left-handed batter's box, facing the plate umpire. Back toward the pitcher's plate.</p> <p>U3: Stands at the end of the right-handed batter's box, facing the plate umpire. Back toward the pitcher's plate.</p> <p>This positioning means that the base umpires have eye-contact with the plate umpire while both coaches are positioned to the sides.</p>
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 <p>2</p>	<p>In between innings</p> <p>P: Stands in front of the dugout of the offence.</p> <p>U1/U3: The umpire closest to the last play cleans the pitcher's plate. Both umpires then take their position about 3-4 metres off their base (see diagram). The base umpires hustle the teams in between innings and watch that only one batter is in the batter's circle. Also they watch the warm-up pitches when the plate umpire is busy with substitutions or other responsibilities.</p>
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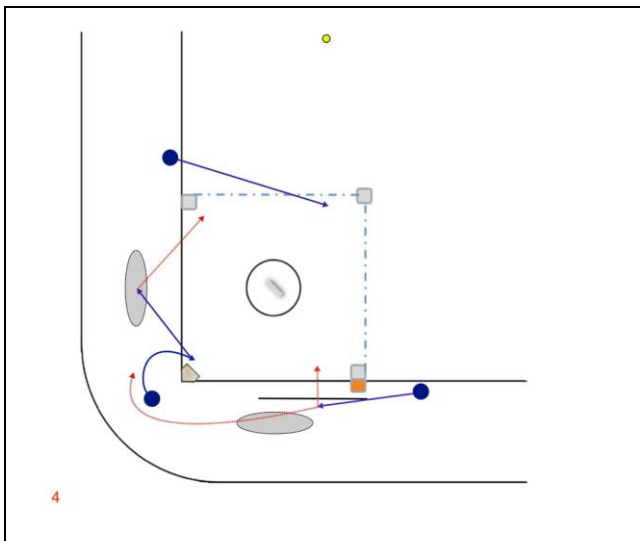


No runners on base, ball in the infield

P: Trail batter-runner halfway towards 1st base for swipe tag, interference by batter-runner or assist at 1st base if required. Responsible for fair/foul call. Move to holding position when batter-runner reaches 1st base.

U1: Come into fair territory no further than a line at 45 degrees through first base for any call at 1st base. If batter-runner advances safely to 2nd base, move to holding position and be prepared to move to home for possible call.

U3: Rotate inside towards 2nd base. Make any call at 2nd base if batter-runner advances to 2nd base.

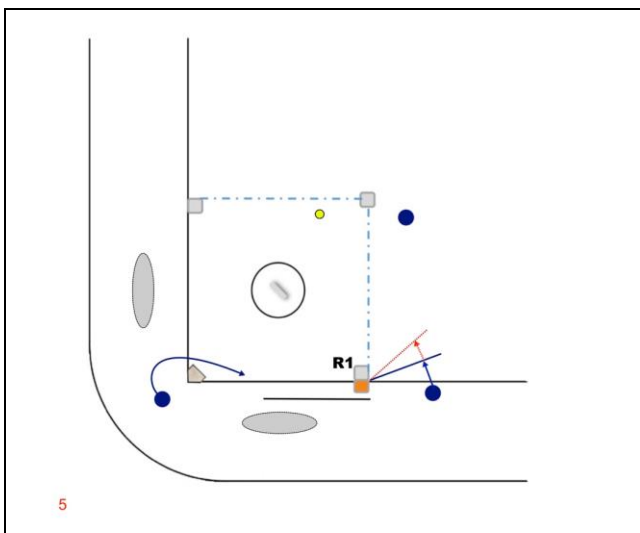


No runners on base, ball in the outfield

P: Judge the fly ball. Go to the holding position. Overlook the play at 1st base, assisting U1 if necessary and be prepared to bounce inside for a call at 3rd base on the batter-runner.

U1: Move down the foul line, be prepared to bounce inside to make any call at 1st base. Release the batter-runner. Rotate to the plate only if batter-runner progresses from 2nd to 3rd base, for any play at home plate. (Be positioned on the right hand batter's box side of home plate)

U3: Rotate inside the infield to make any call at 2nd base.

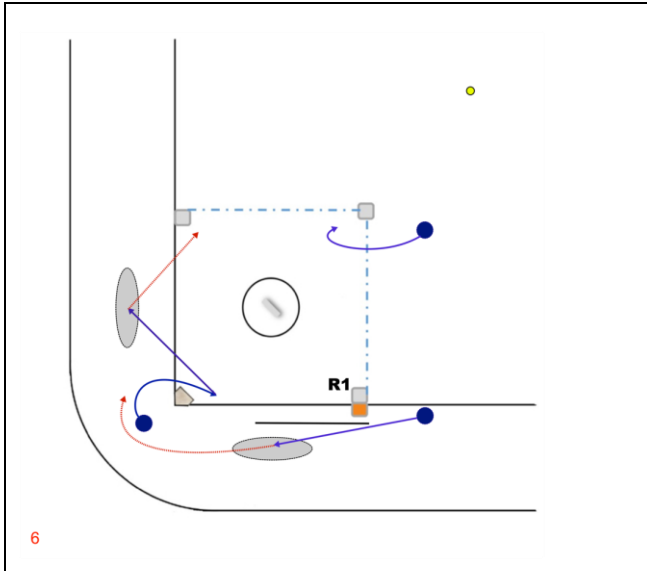


Runner at 1st base, ball in the infield

P: Trail batter-runner towards 1st base, release and move to the holding position, be prepared to bounce inside for a possible call at 3rd base.

U1: Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Come into the field for any call at 1st base.

U3: Make any call at 2nd base.

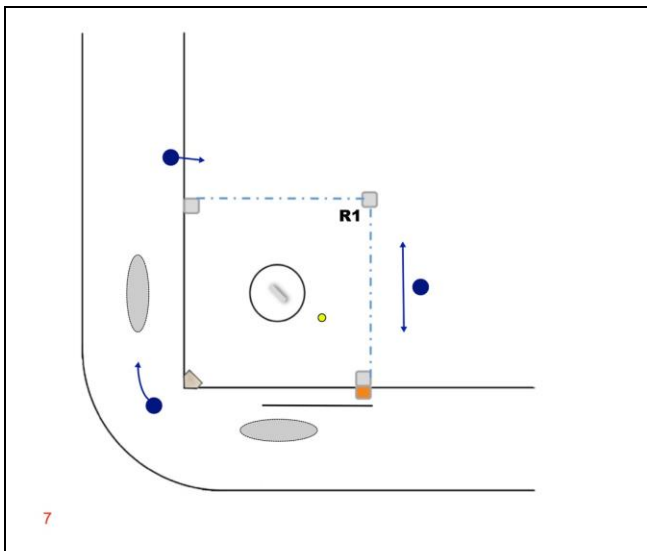


Runner at 1st base, ball in the outfield

P: Judge the fly ball. Go to the holding position. Glance to home to make sure U1 is there for a possible call. Overlook the play and be prepared to bounce inside for a possible call at 3rd base.

U1: Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Move down the foul line and watch the batter-runner touch 1st base, move to holding position. Rotate to the plate, only if the Lead Runner progresses from 2nd to 3rd base, for a possible call at Home.

U3: Come inside the infield to make any call at 2nd base. Responsible for the Batter-Runner at 1st and 2nd base after the release by U1.

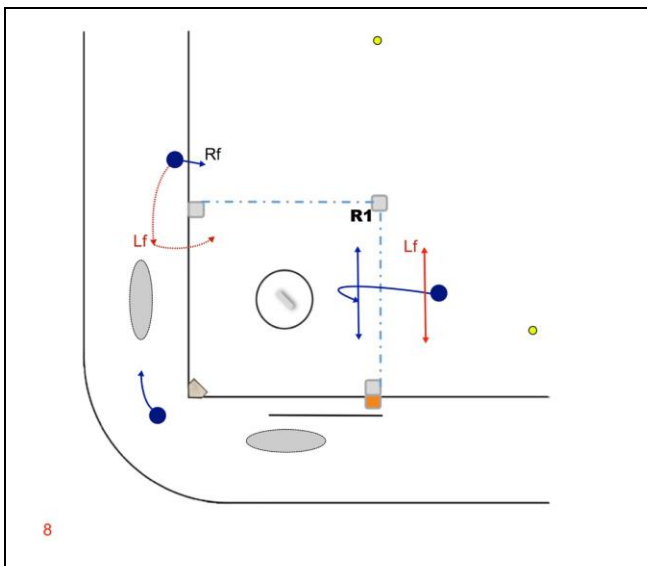


Runner at 2nd base, ball in the infield
No rotation when U1 is positioned behind 2nd base player

P: Move out from behind the home plate and get into position for any call at home plate.

U1: Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Be prepared to take any call at 1st and/or 2nd base.

U3: Come into the field to make any call at third base.

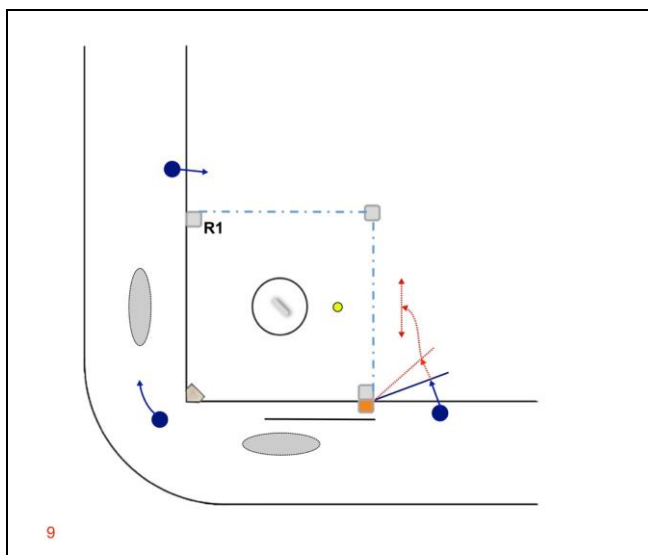


Runner at 2nd base, ball in the outfield
No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player

P: Judge the fly ball and get into position for any call at home plate.

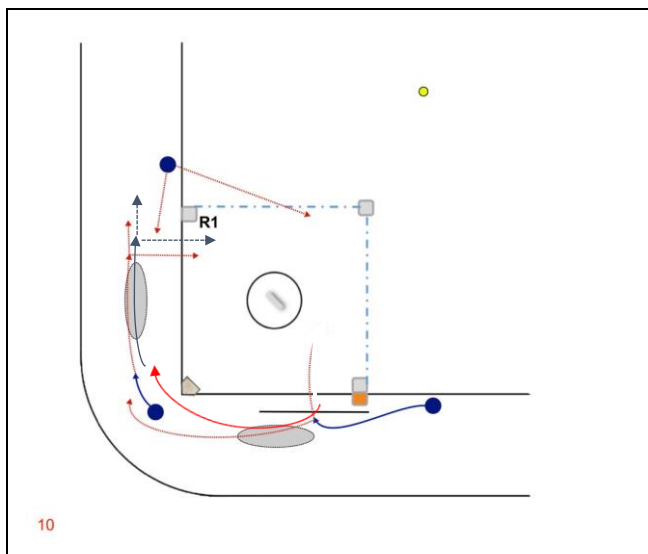
U1: Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Come inside the infield. Be prepared to take any call at 1st and 2nd base. Note: If the ball is in left field, stay outside the base path to stay out of the way of a throw and to keep all 4 essential elements in front of you.

U3: Come inside the infield for any possible call at 3rd base. Note: If the ball is in left/center field move down the foul line. If the ball is in right field move inside behind 3rd base. Be prepared for any call at 3rd base.



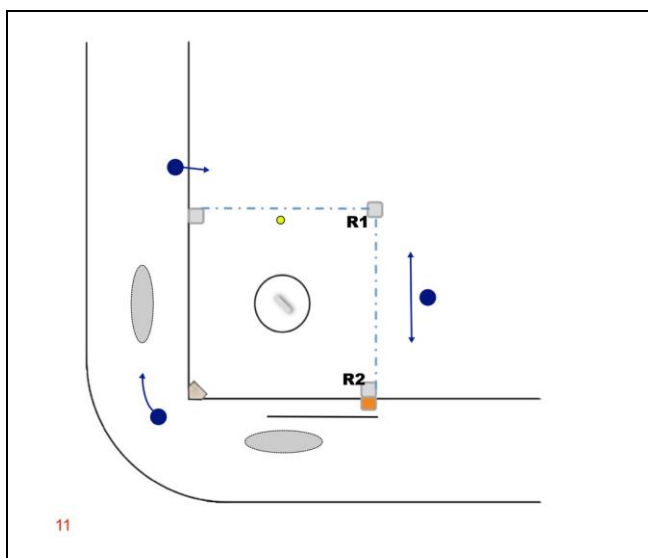
Runner at 3rd base, ball in the infield

- P:** Move out from behind home plate and get into position for any call at home plate.
- U1:** Come into the field and be prepared to take any call at 1st and 2nd base.
- U3:** Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Come into the field for any possible call at 3rd base.



Runner at 3rd base, ball in the outfield

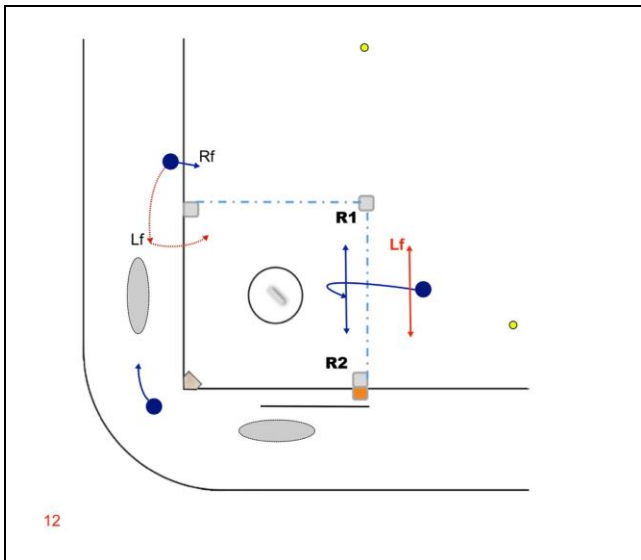
- P:** Judge the fly ball and move to the holding position; bounce inside for a possible play-back call at 3rd base or be prepared to move back to the plate only for the call at home on the Lead Runner
- U1:** Move down the foul line, watch the Batter-Runner touch 1st base; rotate to the plate only when the plate umpire moves to 3rd base, for a possible call at Home.
- U3:** Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Rotate inside for any call at 2nd base; responsible for the Batter-Runner at 1st base after the release by U1.



Runners at 1st and 2nd base, ball in the infield

No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player

- P:** Move out from behind home plate and get into position for any play at home plate.
- U1:** Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Be prepared to make any call at 1st and 2nd base.
- U3:** Watch R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Come into the field for any call at 3rd base.

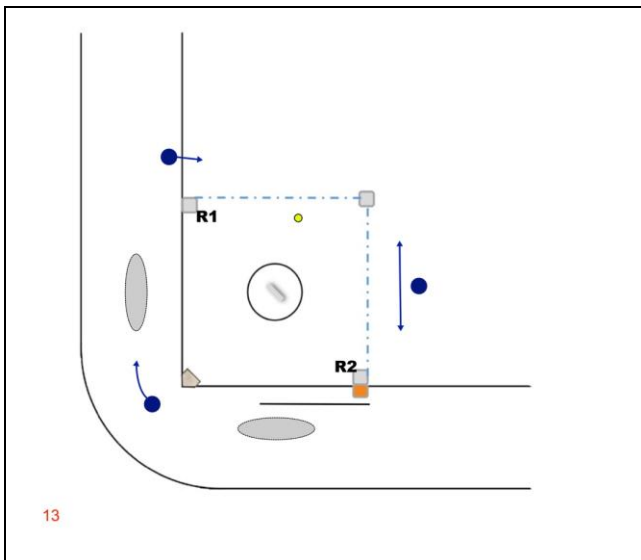


Runners at 1st and 2nd base, ball in the outfield
No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player

P: Judge the fly ball and get into position for any call at home plate.

U1: Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Come inside the infield. Be prepared to take any call at 1st and/or 2nd base.
 Note: If the ball is in left field, stay outside the base path to stay out of the way of a throw and to keep all 4 essential elements in front of you.

U3: Watch R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Come inside the infield. Note: If the ball is in left/center field move down the foul line. If the ball is in right field move inside behind 3rd base.
 Be prepared for any call at 3rd base.

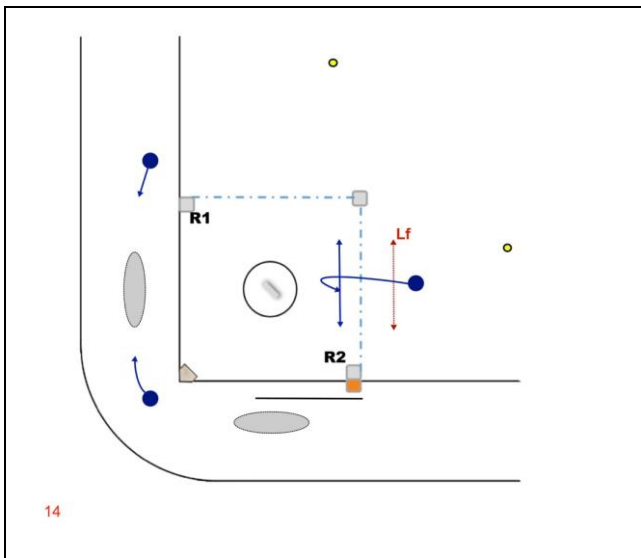


Runners at 1st and 3rd base, ball in the infield
No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player

P: Move out from behind home plate and get into position for any play at home plate.

U1: Be prepared to make any call at 1st and/or 2nd base.

U3: Watch R1 and R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Come into the field for any call at 3rd base.



Runners at 1st and 3rd base, ball in the outfield
No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player

P: Judge the fly ball and get into position for any call at home plate.

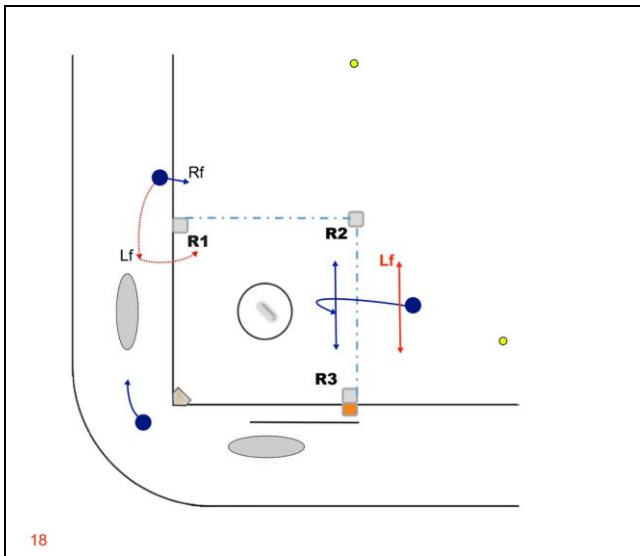
U1: Come inside the infield. Be prepared to take any call at first and/or second base.
 Note: If the ball is in left field, stay outside the base path to stay out of the way of a throw and to keep all 4 essential elements in front of you.

U3: Watch R1 and R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Be prepared for any possible call at third base.

	<p>Runners at 2nd and 3rd base, ball in the infield <i>No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player</i></p> <p>P: Move out from behind home plate and get into position for any play at home plate.</p> <p>U1: Watch R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Be prepared to make any call at 1st and/or 2nd base.</p> <p>U3: Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Come into the field for any call at third base.</p>
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	<p>Runners at 2nd and 3rd base, ball in the outfield <i>No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player</i></p> <p>P: Judge the fly ball and get into position for any call at home plate.</p> <p>U1: Watch R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Come inside the infield. Be prepared to take any call at 1st and/or 2nd base. Note: If the ball is in left field, stay outside the base path to stay out of the way of a throw and to keep all 4 essential elements in front of you.</p> <p>U3: Watch R1 for an early leave on the pitch. Be prepared for any possible call at 3rd base.</p>
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	<p>Bases full, ball in the infield <i>No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player</i></p> <p>P: Move out from behind home plate and get into position for any play at home plate.</p> <p>U1: Watch R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Be prepared to make any call at 1st and/or 2nd base.</p> <p>U3: Watch R1 and R3 for an early leave on the pitch. Come into the field for any call at 3rd base.</p>
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Bases full, ball in the outfield

No rotation when U1 positioned behind second base player

P: Judge the fly ball and get into position for any call at home plate.

U1: Watch R2 for an early leave on the pitch. Come inside the infield. Be prepared to take any call at 1st and/or 2nd base. Note: If the ball is in left field, stay outside the base path to stay out of the way of a throw and to keep all 4 essential elements in front of you.

U3: Watch R1 and R3 for an early leave on the pitch. Note: If the ball is in left/center field move down the foul line. If the ball is in right field move inside behind 3rd base. Be prepared for any call at 3rd base.