

# MECHANICS FOR THE FOUR-UMPIRE SYSTEM - NYSBUA

## 9.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

One of the key concepts in understanding four-umpire mechanics concerns the position of the second base umpire and the coverage of fly balls/line drives to the outfield when runners are on base. An umpire goes out only when the play is going to be difficult (for example, a shoestring catch, home run, ball off the outfield wall, three fielders converging on the ball, a catch made at the wall or warning track, a fly ball down the foul line, etc.). If in doubt, go out!

Whenever a runner is on first or second the second base umpire will position himself on the inside of second base. With no runners on base or a runner on third base only, the second base umpire will position himself behind second base. The basic idea here is that whenever a steal, pick off or double play is in order, the second base umpire is to be on the inside at second base.

If the first base umpire is not in a reverse rotation, he will walk the first base line to watch the B/R touch first, and then prepare to drop to the plate if in a normal rotation.

Initial set up for first and third base umpires with no runners on base, typically just a bit on the outfield grass in foul territory. With runners on base, be able to get in position to make a call, including a stolen base or pick off.

Check swings go to the wing umpires, only when asked by the plate umpire.

If you stay at your base, you are responsible for touches and tag ups. If you go out, plate umpire will pick up touches at first and third. In addition the second base umpire should watch touches at bases if another umpire goes out.

Fair/foul calls are made by the plate umpire up to the base. At the base and beyond the base umpire will make the call. See each other so that no double calls are made.

Have good visual contact with your partners so that coverages can be done correctly. Be ready to take another umpires spot if necessary. Talk about blown coverages after they happen, not during action! Be prepared to scramble. Foul pops require umpires to be aware of coverages and to scramble. Communicate!

With no runners on or runner on third only (2nd base umpire outside), if the 2nd or 3rd base umpire goes out, the plate umpire rotates to third on a triple or HR. Rotations occur when the 3rd base umpire goes out in certain situations. They occur on a base hit when runners start on first or first and third; and in a tag up situation with runners on first and second. When the plate umpire rotates to third, the first base umpire rotates to the plate. When the runner commits to third, the first base umpire commits to the plate, mirroring the runner's progress toward third base.

The plate umpire follows the batter/runner to first whenever the first base umpire goes out with no runners on.

After each batter or new situation make a mental check of responsibilities for:

- 1) Rotations
- 2) Fly ball coverage
- 3) Check swing
- 4) Pitcher's stop

## 9.2 NO RUNNERS ON BASE

With no runners on base the second base umpire will position himself behind second base, several feet onto the outfield grass. He may position himself shaded toward the first base or third base side behind second base.

The second base umpire has responsibility for all fly balls and line drives from the left fielder straight in (or straight back) all the way to the right fielder straight in (or straight back). The first base umpire would then be responsible for all balls to the outfield where the right fielder moves any distance to his left, and the third base umpire would take all balls to the outfield where the left fielder moves any distance to his right. The second base umpire has priority on going out.

If an umpire chooses not to go out on a fly ball, he must realize that he still has responsibility for the catch/no catch.

1BU out: HPU trail to first . 2BU inside at 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd.  
2BU out: 1BU stay outside, then drop to the plate on triple or HR. 3BU comes inside to 2nd, HPU to third.  
3BU out: 1BU stay outside, then drop to the plate on triple or HR. 3BU comes inside to 2nd, HPU to third.

## 9.3 RUNNER ON FIRST BASE ONLY

With a runner on first base only, the second base umpire will position himself on the inside at second base. He may position himself on either the shortstop or first base side of the bag - whichever side he is more comfortable working. He should set up with his feet on the edge of the infield grass a few feet down from the edge of the cutout at second base. He may set up with his feet parallel to grass line OR he may square himself with home plate.

See Section 9.4 regarding coverage of balls hit to the outfield in this situation.

If the first base umpire goes out with a runner on first base only, the second base umpire will slide down to cover at first base. If the third base umpire goes out, the crew will rotate, the plate umpire will cover at third base.

1BU out: 2BU has plays at 2nd and slides down for plays at 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd.  
2BU out: Never  
3BU out: 1BU stay outside, then drop to the plate. 2BU comes inside to 2nd, HPU to third.

## 9.4 COVERING BALLS TO THE OUTFIELD WHEN SECOND BASE UMPIRE IS POSITIONED INSIDE

An umpire goes out only whenever the play is going to be anything other than routine. For example, a shoestring catch, home run, ball off the outfield wall, three fielders converging on the ball, a catch made at the wall or warning track, a fly ball down the foul line, etc. If in doubt, go out!

The first and third base umpires take all balls to the outfield. The third base umpire takes from the center fielder straight in (or straight back) all the way to the left field line. The first base umpire would then take everything from the center fielder moving any distance to his left all the way to the right field line. Note: the third base umpire has priority over the first base umpire in determining who goes out!

## 9.5 RUNNER ON SECOND BASE ONLY

With a runner on second base only, the second base umpire will position himself on the inside at second base as described in Section 9.3.

Fly ball coverage would be the same as with a runner on first base. If the first or third base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to cover possible plays depending on which wing umpire went out.

- 1BU out: HPU stays at plate. 2BU slides toward 1st and has calls at 1st and 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd.
- 2BU out: Never
- 3BU out: 1BU pivots inside and takes B/R to 2nd. 2BU slides toward 3rd and calls at 3rd and initial plays at 2nd except for B/R. HPU stays at plate. This is a “reverse rotation.”

## 9.6 RUNNER ON THIRD BASE ONLY

With a runner on third base only, the second base umpire will position himself behind the SS. He will not position himself as deeply in the outfield as with no runners on base since he may be required to cover plays at first or third base should one of the wing umpires go out. Fly ball and line drive coverage would be the same as with no runners on base. If the third base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over for any potential play back into third. The plate umpire takes the tag-up at third base if the third base umpire goes out. If the first base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to take any play at first or second. These are tough coverages and require quick movements.

- 1BU out: HPU stays at plate. 2BU has calls at 1st and 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd.
- 2BU out: 1BU stays outside. 3BU comes inside for plays at 2B. HPU rotates for plays at 3rd.
- 3BU out: On tag up, 2BU gets inside toward 3rd and has calls at 3rd and 2nd, HPU stays at plate. On base hit, 1BU stay outside, then drop to the plate. 3BU comes inside to 2nd, HPU to third.

## 9.7 RUNNERS ON FIRST AND SECOND

With runners on first and second, the second base umpire would position himself on the inside of second base. Fly balls and line drives to the outfield are covered using the techniques described in Section 9.4.

If the first base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to cover any plays at first base.

If the third base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to cover any plays at third and initial plays at second base, except the B/R. The first base umpire would rotate inside to take plays at second base on the B/R or any secondary plays at second base. This is a “reverse rotation.”

If the third base umpire goes out and runners tag up, the HP umpire will rotate to third and the 1BU would rotate down to the plate. The second base umpire would then be responsible for plays at both second and first bases.

1BU out: HPU stays at plate. 2BU has calls at 1st and 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd.

2BU out: Never

3BU out: On tag up, 1BU comes inside and then drops to plate. 2BU watches tag at 2nd and has plays at 2nd. HPU rotates to 3rd. On base hit, 2BU has plays at 3rd and initial plays at 2nd (except B/R). 1BU has secondary plays at 2nd and B/R at 2nd, HPU stays at plate.

## 9.8 RUNNERS ON FIRST AND THIRD

With runners on first and third, the second base umpire would position himself on the inside of second base.

Fly ball and line drive coverage would be the same as described in Section 9.4. If the first base umpire goes out, the second base umpire must slide over to take any plays at first or second. If the third base umpire goes out the crew would rotate on a base hit.

1BU out: HPU stays at plate. 2BU slides toward 1st and has calls at 1st and 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd, watching tag up and has plays at third.

2BU out: Never

3BU out: On tag up, 1BU comes inside, has tag at 1st, secondary plays at 2nd and B/R at 2nd. 2BU has plays at 3rd and 2nd. HPU watches tag at 3rd and stays at plate. On base hit, 1BU stay outside, then drop to the plate. 2BU has plays at 2nd, HPU to third.

## 9.9 RUNNERS ON SECOND AND THIRD

With a runners on second and third, the second base umpire will position himself on the inside at second base as described in Section 9.3. Fly ball coverage would be the same as with a runner on first base (i.e., the wing umpires go out).

If the first base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to cover any plays at first base.

If the third base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to cover any plays at third and initial plays at second base, except the B/R. The first base umpire would pivot inside to take plays at second base on the B/R or any secondary plays at second base.

1BU out: HPU stays at plate. 2BU has calls at 1st and 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd.

2BU out: Never

3BU out: 2BU has plays at 3rd and initial plays at 2nd. 1BU has secondary plays at 2nd and B/R at 2nd, HPU stays at plate.

## 9.10 BASES LOADED

With bases loaded, the second base umpire would position himself on the inside of second base. Fly balls and line drives to the outfield are covered using the techniques described in Section 9.4 (i.e., the wing umpires go out).

If the first base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to cover any plays at first base.

If the third base umpire goes out, the second base umpire would slide over to cover any initial plays at third and second bases, except the B/R. The first base umpire would pivot inside to take plays at second base on the B/R or any secondary plays at second base. This is a “reverse rotation.”

1BU out: HPU stays at plate. 2BU has calls at 1st and 2nd. 3BU stays outside at 3rd.

2BU out: Never

3BU out: 2BU has plays at 3rd and initial plays at 2nd. 1BU has secondary plays at 2nd and B/R at 2nd, HPU stays at plate.

After each batter or new situation make a mental check of responsibilities for:

- |                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1) Rotations   | 2) Fly ball coverage |
| 3) Check swing | 4) Pitcher's stop    |

NOTES: