

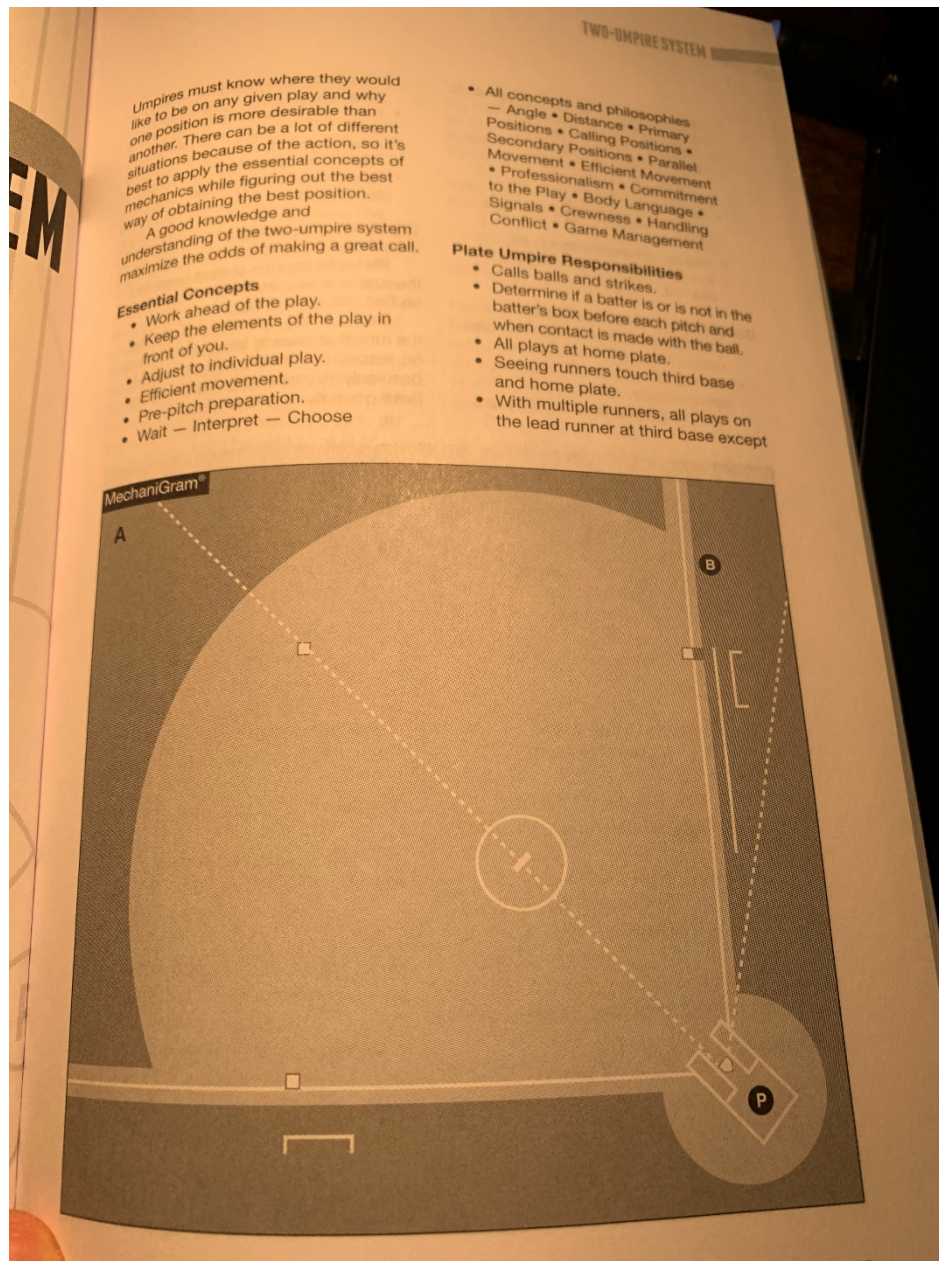
SOFTBALL TWO-UMPIRE MECHANICS

Without a state meeting or our traditional local meeting series this season, never mind all the youth and spring league high school games to shake off the rust, we have to rely on printed and online materials and video to prepare for what we still hope is a full 2020 summer high school season. The first material to present is about mechanics specific to the two-umpire system. Much of what you'll see in this review is from the latest "Softball Umpiring Mechanics Illustrated" from "Referee" magazine. It is difficult to show much of this in print or on a screen and not review in-person, but we will do our best to provide this information in a way that still makes sense for all levels of umpires.

Much of what you'll see in this handout is really a very high level overview of the responsibilities of each umpire in a two-umpire system. Many traits that are called "essential concepts" are listed. Each can be handled in its own separate presentation, but be aware that all of these traits together comprise many of the areas an umpiring crew is responsible for game in, and game out. Some of the basic elements of officiating in any sport can be used to sum many of these areas up:

- Keep the play in front of you at all times.
- Treat each pitch as its own entity. Don't let what happened before it, or what might happen after it, affect your ability to call the pitch and any subsequent play.
- Anticipate the play, not the call.
- Remember to talk with coaches and players, not at them.
- It is more important to have the best angle at a play, not necessarily to be as close as possible. You may be 50 feet away from a play, whereas your partner may be 10 feet away, yet you have the best angle. Recognize that fact, and work together as a team to make the correct call.
- Hustle - You have to hustle to get in position to make the best possible call.
- Timing - SPC - See the play, Process the play, Make the Call. Don't be in a hurry to make the call, or make a call before the play happens.

RESPONSIBILITIES & BASICS



POSITIONING

The diagram to the left details basic positioning in the two-umpire system with no runners on base. The plate umpire (A) is behind the plate, with the base umpire (B) behind the first base bag just in foul territory.

The area that includes where the base umpire (B) is standing indicates the area where that umpire has primary responsibility on batted balls. The area that includes where the plate umpire (A) is standing indicates the area where that umpire has primary responsibility on batted balls.

if the first play on the batted ball is by an infielder is at third.

- All fair or foul calls except on the first base line when the base umpire chases a fly ball behind him or her.
- All catch/no-catch on fly balls unless the base umpire chases the ball.
- Seeing all runners touch all bases when the base umpire has chased.

Base Umpire Responsibilities

- All plays at first and second base, unless he or she has chased.
- Seeing runners touch first and second base.
- The first play in the infield by an

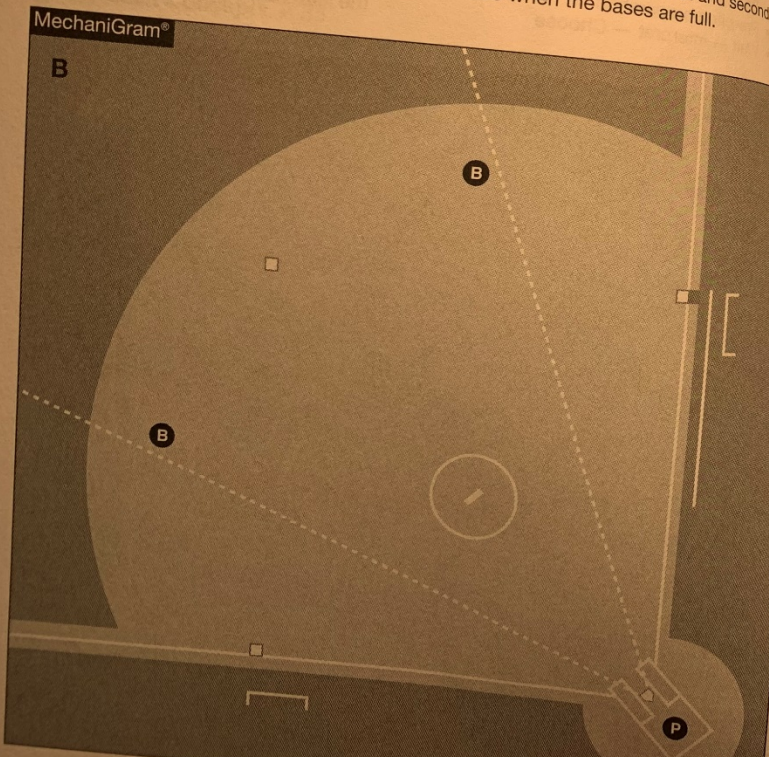
infielder at first, second, or third base.

- Plays on the batter-runner at third base.
- Steal plays at first, second or third.
- All pick-off attempts.
- All runners leaving before the pitch is released.

Tag-Up Responsibilities

If the base umpire does not chase: the runner at second base with runners on first and second base.

Base: All tag-ups at first base and the runner at second base with runners on second and third bases or second base only. Runners at first and second base when the bases are full.



If the base umpire chases:

Plate: All tag-ups at first, second, and third

Base: No tag-ups.

Chase Responsibilities

The plate umpire has from the center fielder to the left field dead-ball line. If the base umpire does not chase, the plate umpire is responsible for all fly balls and all fair or foul decisions.

In MechaniGram A on pg. 35, the base umpire has from the center fielder to the right field dead-ball line. B should chase any fly ball in his or her area that could be a difficult call for the plate umpire, no matter how many outs there are or how many runners are on base. From the B or C starting positions (see MechaniGram B on previous page), do not chase fly balls between the right fielder and the dead ball line or between the left fielder and the dead ball line. Those might involve a fair/foul judgment that cannot be made accurately when starting from positions B or C.

When chasing with runners on base, the base umpire should return to the infield.

- Never return for the initial play (for example, you chase with a runner on first and the right fielder tries to throw out the batter-runner at first).
- Return for a play at second base when the plate umpire has a play at the plate.
- Let the plate umpire know where you are.
- Do not return to home plate.
- Do not return to the infield, but be prepared to do so.

Base umpire basics: Basic position is 18 to 21 feet behind first base, walking the line, square to the plate.

Responsible for batter-runner to third base.

In order of importance, be prepared for the following situations:

3. A "trouble ball" in your area of the outfield — beginning with any ball hit directly to F8 and extending through right field to dead-ball territory outside the right-field line.

4. A ground ball in the infield: You have the play on B1 at first base and any play at first, second and third.

5. A batted or bunted ball with F3, F1 and B1 converging at the base.

6. A clean hit, or any batted ball to UIC's area of the outfield.

Plate umpire basics: As the pitcher begins her delivery, come set in your stance. Your initial responsibility is always the pitch - judge if it is a strike or a ball. Respond to the batted ball and the action as it develops.

On routine fly balls, not down either line, move to the center of the infield in the direction of the batted ball.

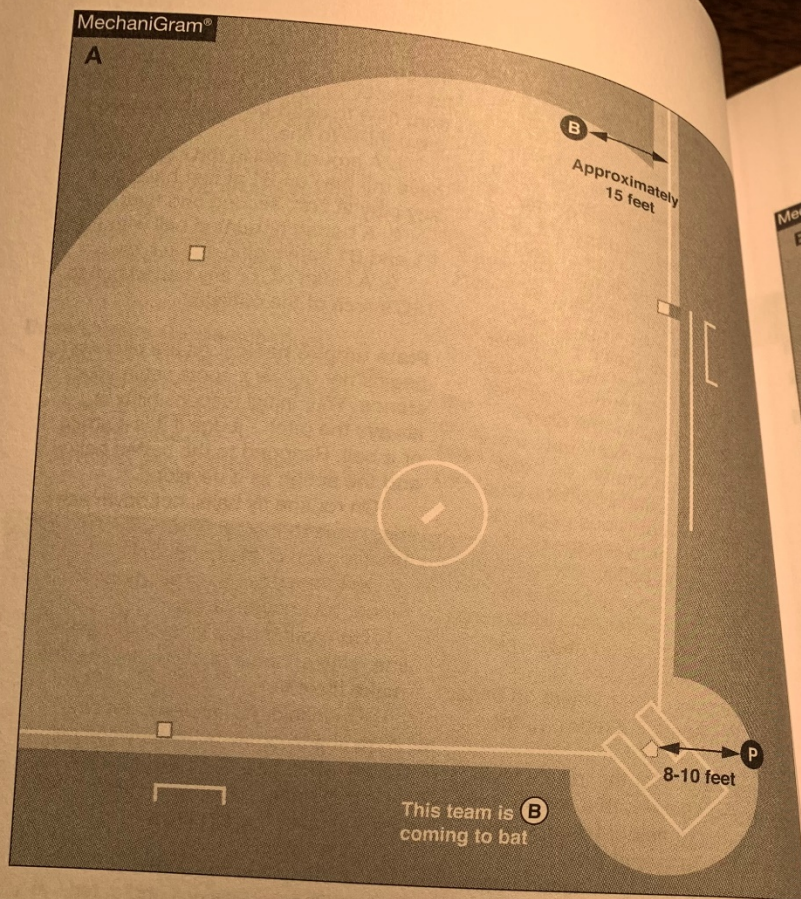
Help the base umpire on batter-runner touching first base.

On ground balls hit close to the foul line, stay at home plate on the line and make the call.

On infield hits, move up the first-base line to observe the play and be prepared to help the base umpire.

In order of importance, be prepared for the following situations:

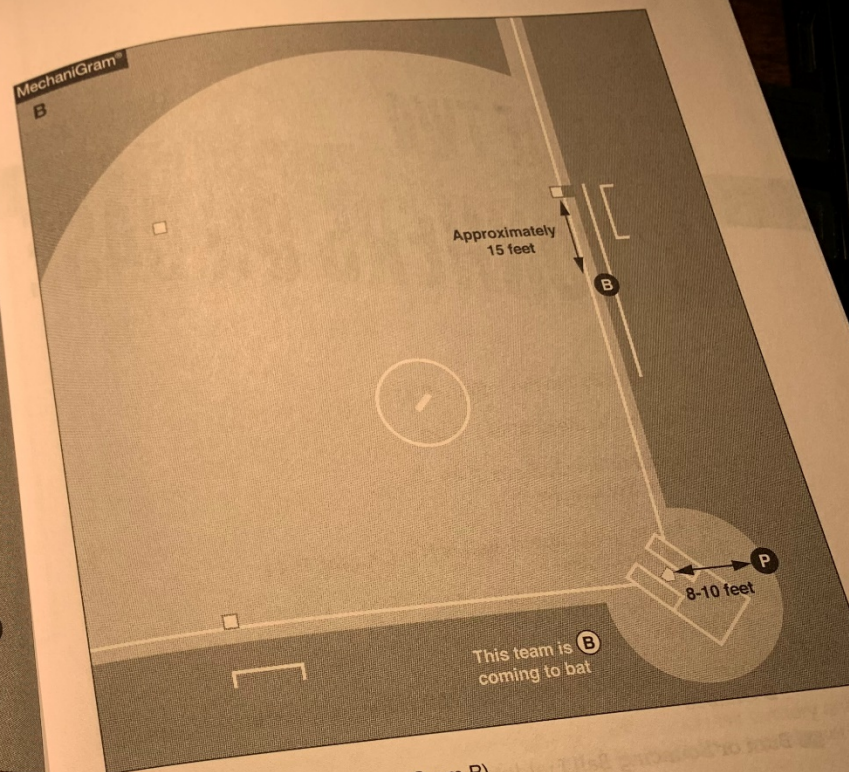
1. An illegal pitch.
2. The pitch: ball or strike.
3. Checked-swings and defensive appeals.
4. Slow-rolling ball down either base line: fair/foul from home plate to either bag.
5. A fair/foul call down the third-base or first-base line.
6. A "trouble" ball in the the outfield.
7. A bunted ball when opponents converge — interference/obstruction.



Between-Inning Mechanics

Plate: Facing the team that is coming to bat. About 8-10 feet from the line on a perpendicular line from where the foul line meets the plate.

Base: Facing the plate no more than about 15 feet off the foul line at approximately where the grass starts in front of the outfielders.

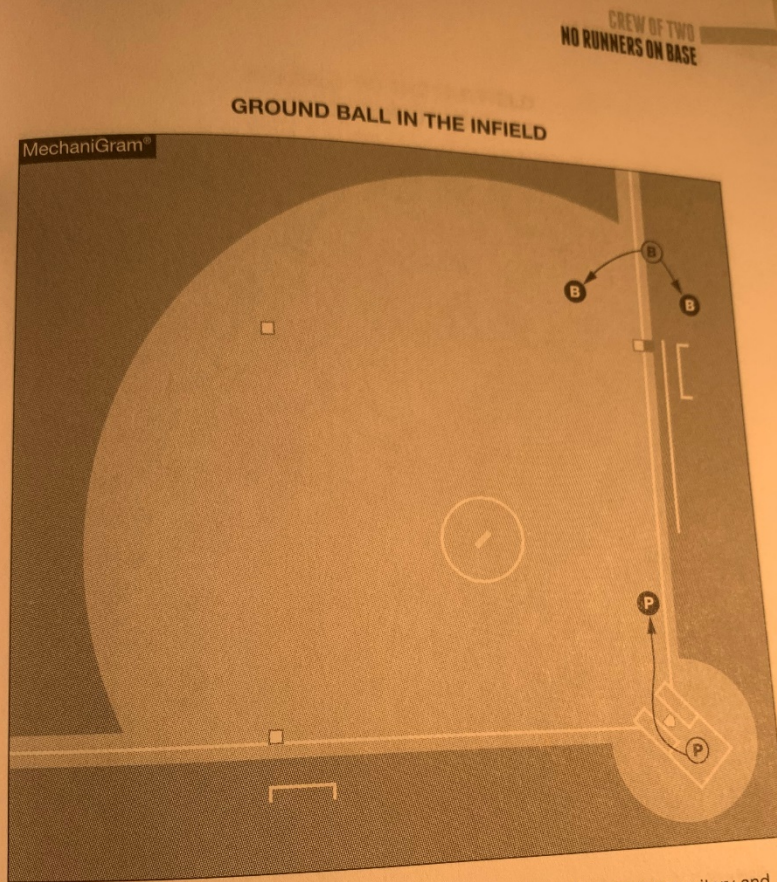


Alternative Position: (MechaniGram B)
If teams are warming up in the area of your position, try requesting that they allow some space where you need to be. If this is ineffective, you are having to make the request every other half inning, or you feel unsafe, then move into the diamond no more than 15 feet from first base. Face the infield. You may be off the line slightly. Do not move to deeper in the outfield or behind the players warming up.

GROUND BALLS

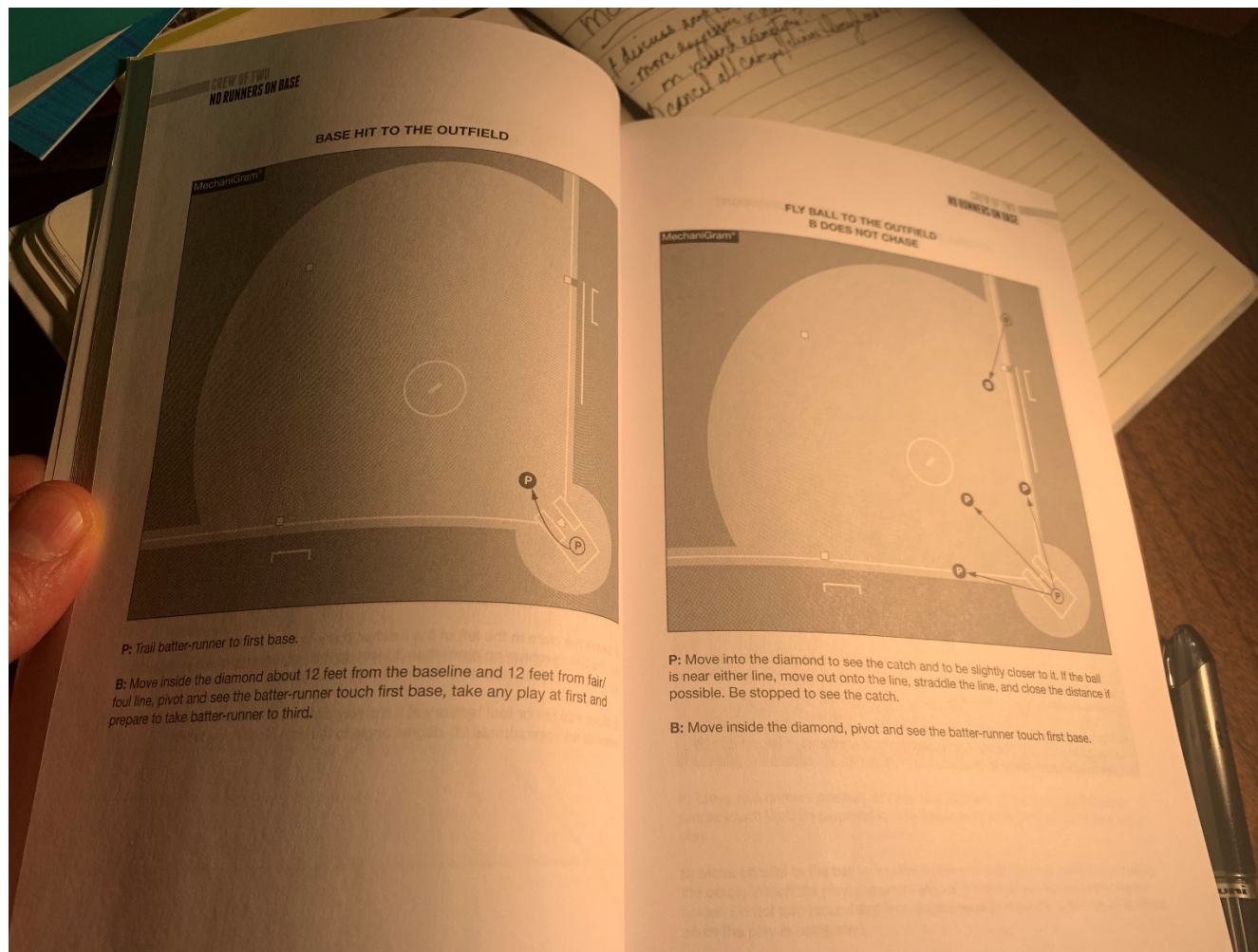
Here are some points to consider regarding ground balls and plays at first with no runners on base:

- The plate umpire shouldn't be stationary at home. Get out of the box and follow the play to first. By moving out of the box, you are able to help your partner on a pulled first baseman's foot, a batter/runner running outside of the runner's lane, white/orange bag usage, etc.
- The base umpire will move into fair territory approximately 95 percent of the time. The only time the base umpire should move into foul territory to make a call at first is when a diving play is made either ahead of or behind the first base bag, and another infielder moves to first base for a potential play.



P: Leave the plate to the left of the catcher, come to the foul line in fair territory and trail the batter-runner no more than 30 feet up the line. Be stopped in a ready-set to see the play at first, and be prepared to help your partner.

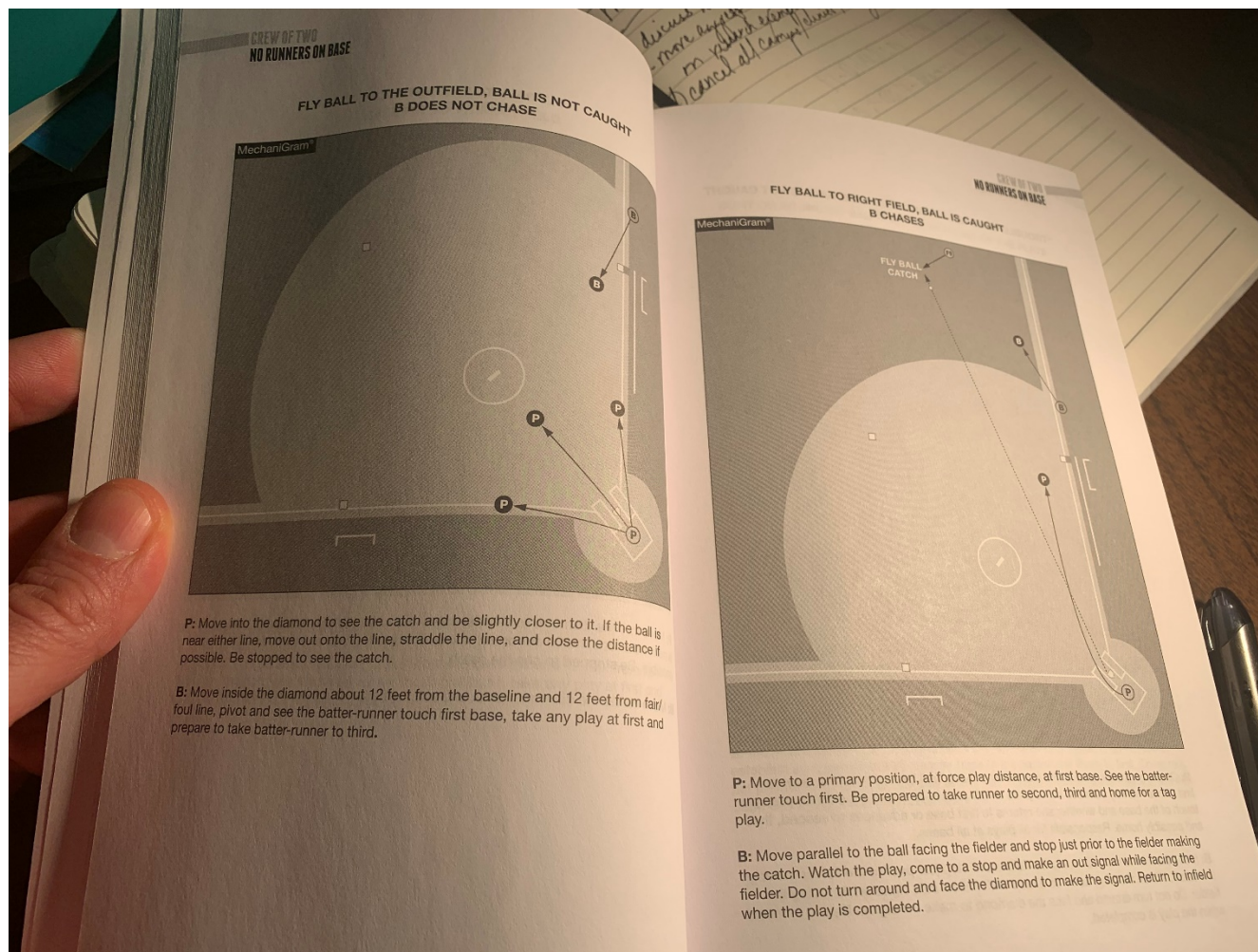
B: Move into fair or foul territory at force play distance of no closer than 18 feet to establish an approximate 90-degree angle to the path of the throw to first.



HIT BALL TO OUTFIELD

On a clean base hit to the outfield, or on a routine fly ball where the base umpire does not chase, the plate umpire will come out and either rule with a safe signal if the ball drops, or with an out signal if the ball is caught (a verbal "out" command can be foregone if the catch is an obvious one).

The base umpire will move inside the base path between first and second, and make "the pivot" in order to watch the batter/runner touch first, and either attempt to advance, or remain at first. Remain inside the diamond until the play ends, and then move outside to your next position.



BASE UMPIRE CHASING

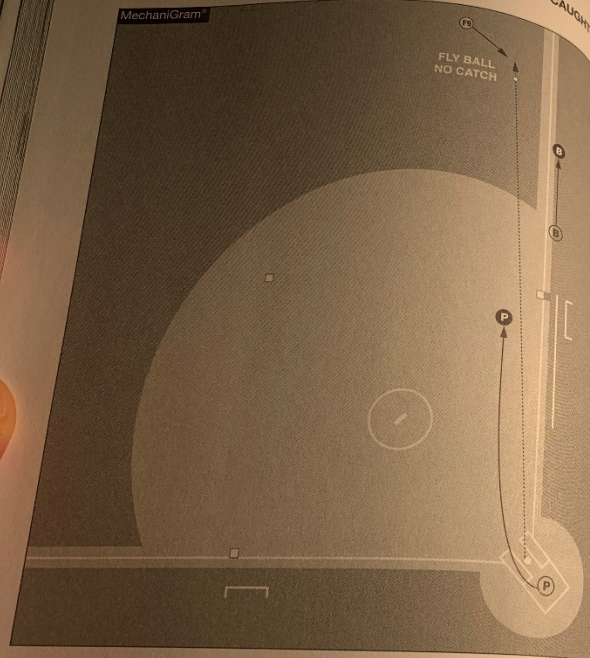
On a fly ball that will be uncertain as to whether it can be caught from the center fielder to the right field dead ball limit, the base umpire can move away from the infield and "chase" the play in order to better gain an angle in correctly calling the action.

If the base umpire does move to "chase" the play, the plate umpire has responsibility for the batter/runner all around the bases.

In this situation, the base umpire should stay out of the infield until the play ends, and then return to the infield.

CREW OF TWO
NO RUNNERS ON BASE

"TROUBLE" BALL NEAR RIGHT-FIELD LINE, BALL IS NOT CAUGHT
B CHASES

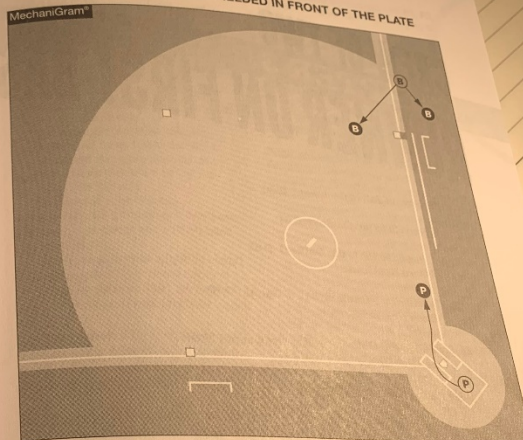


P: Clear the catcher, read B and the ball and react. Trail the batter-runner toward first. Move midway between home plate and first base to observe the batter-runner's touch of the base and whether she returns to first base or advances to second, third and possibly home. Responsible for all plays at all bases.

B: Move parallel to the ball facing the fielder and stop just prior to the fielder making the catch. Watch the play, come to a stop and make a safe signal while facing the fielder. Do not turn around and face the diamond to make the signal. Return to infield when the play is completed.

CREW OF TWO
NO RUNNERS ON BASE

BUNT OR BOUNCING BALL FIELDER IN FRONT OF THE PLATE



P: Rule the ball fair or foul as necessary. If the ball is fair, clear the catcher and move out to the left. Trail the batter-runner toward first. Prepare for a swipe tag, pulled foot or an overthrow. Offer an opinion of a swipe tag or pulled foot only if B requests help. Be alert for running-lane interference by the batter-runner and rule immediately if interference occurs.

B: Move into fair or foul territory at force play distance of no closer than 18 feet to establish an approximate 90-degree angle to the path of the throw to first. Come to a set position and focus on the play at first base. See the batter-runner's foot touch first base and the first baseman catch the ball.