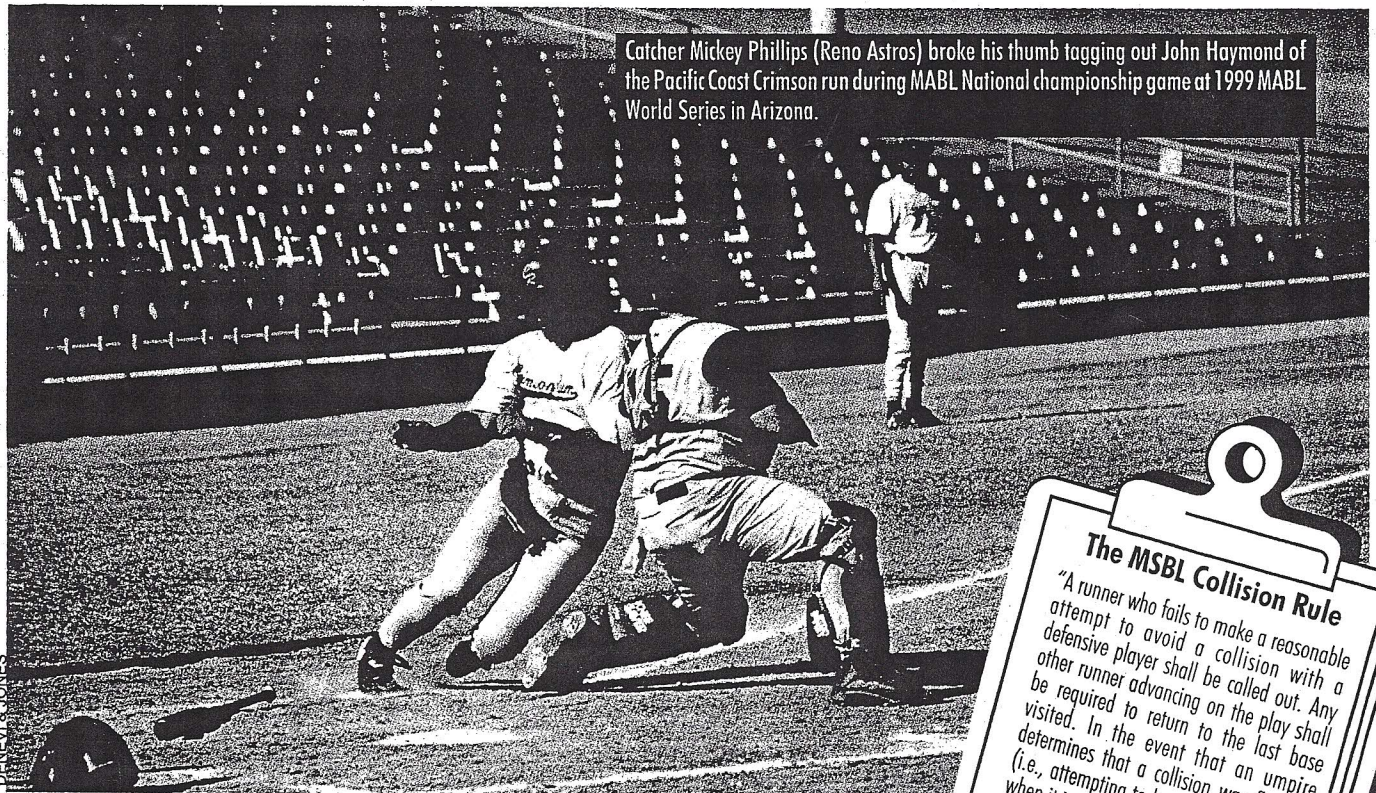


Call 'Em Like You See 'Em

# The Collision Rule: Misunderstood, Misapplied



DENEVI & JONES

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Only professional baseball allows intentional collisions between runners and fielders. At every amateur level, due to an obvious concern for player safety, such contact is forbidden. If an umpire judges a collision flagrant, severe penalties may be imposed.

## The Runner Must Avoid Contact

In the MSBL, the runner must avoid contact, even if the fielder is improperly blocking the basepath. Because the runner can see the path in front of him and the fielder must concentrate on the ball, the runner bears greater responsibility to avoid contact.

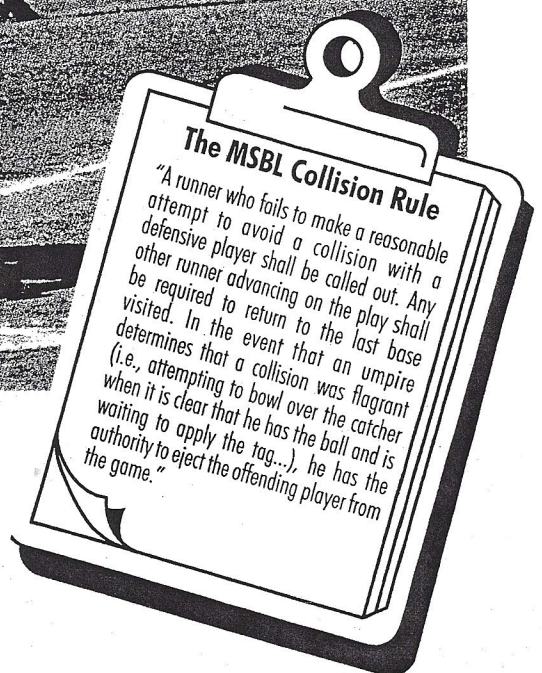
When runners raise their arms or elbows during a tag attempt, they create a difficult judgment call. If the obvious intent is to dislodge the ball, it should be treated as an intentional collision. The basic principle remains: runners must avoid intentional contact.

## The Obstruction Rule

Fielders may not block a base unless they are immediately making a play on a batted or thrown ball in that area. Catchers should station themselves in the cutout in front of the plate, not down the third base line. The runner has the right to the base path, unless a fielder is in the process of making a play. A runner whose path to the base is illegally blocked, shall be awarded that base. A fielder who initiates contact by illegally blocking the basepath or applies an excessively violent tag, may be ejected, just like the runner.

## Umpires: Know and Explain The Rule

To avoid confusion, arguments and injuries, our National Umpires Association needs to train league and tournament umpires regarding the collision rule. Every home plate meeting should include a review of this rule, especially when new umpires are working.



Players and managers should remember that umpires often work for many baseball organizations, that each organization interprets rules in its own way and that umpires' judgments are not protestable. Making sure that every umpire understands the MSBL Collision Rule is a serious concern for league administrators, far outweighing the outcome of a specific play or game.

This column is a regular feature of HardBall Magazine. Umpire-In-Chief Ken Vanderpoel can be contacted by mail at: 915 Reed Road, Smyrna, GA 30082; by phone at (770) 435-7125 or by fax at (770) 438-6469.