



BCBUA 2-Umpire System Manual

Modified for Return to Play 2020



Please note that this manual is intended solely for use while it is impractical to use a traditional home plate umpire. After a return to normal, the current Baseball Canada 2-umpire system should be observed.

This document will explain the modifications from the existing Baseball Canada 2-Umpire System to be used while Social Distancing requirements are in place.

Foreword:

This 2-umpire system has been specifically developed to handle demand for a 2-person umpiring crew without the use of a traditional home plate umpire. It is intended for an environment where simply playing baseball is the primary concern.

If competitive games, such as tournaments or championships are played and the participants greatly care about outcome, BCBUA **strongly** recommends adopting a 3-umpire system to address the majority of these concerns.

BCBUA does not recommend using a 1-umpire system as a potential alternative as it's not reasonable for 1 umpire in the middle of the infield to properly judge fair/foul decisions or plays at home plate from that position. These plays happen frequently during games and will inevitably result in conflict in a 1-umpire system.

Philosophy:

In an effort to be consistent with existing 2-umpire mechanics, this document assumes officials have a basic working knowledge of the approved Baseball Canada 2-umpire system.

Acronyms:

BSU: Ball/Strike Umpire	R1: Runner who started the play at 1 st base
PU: Plate Umpire	R2: Runner who started the play at 2 nd base
BR: Batter-Runner	R3: Runner who started the play at 3 rd base

Disclaimer:

A long internal debate was had on whether we would adopt a 2-umpire system with an umpire in the middle of the infield in Position 3/4 and an umpire at 1st base in Position 2, or use the system described in this document.

This system was chosen because of the minimal adaptations required vs the already approved 2-umpire system. There are benefits to using the alternate system, however in our view these benefits only exist in certain situations, and would only be attainable if umpires execute a completely new 2-umpire system properly as a crew, including advanced concepts such as "reverse-rotations" and "rimming" in certain situations.

Introducing these umpiring concepts to a large audience, when we will likely revert to the existing system in the future, would add far more difficulty for officials, especially newer ones.

BCBUA asks that umpires use the system outlined in this document to ensure consistency.

Basic Positions:

Ball/Strike Umpire:

BSU should take a position in the infield, using a guide line from the edge of home plate past the edge of the 18' pitching circle, and midway between the back edge of the 18' pitching circle and the 2nd base cut-out area, on the pitcher's arm side.

For a left-handed pitcher, this is located on the 1st base side of the mound and is referred to as **P3**.

For a right-handed pitcher, this is located on the 3rd base side of the mound and is referred to as **P4**.

Rationale: Pitchers tend to "fall off" to their glove side after delivering a pitch, especially at younger age groups where the fields have smaller angles; potentially affecting BSU's vision of the strike zone, hence the recommended positioning. BSU will assume a hands-on-knees set position as the pitcher begins his delivery to ensure he is set for each pitch.

Plate Umpire:

PU should be positioned 10 to 12' behind the batter's back hip, ideally on the edge of the dirt circle. PU will assume a set position as the pitcher begins his delivery to ensure he is set for each pitch. **This position is referred to as P1.**

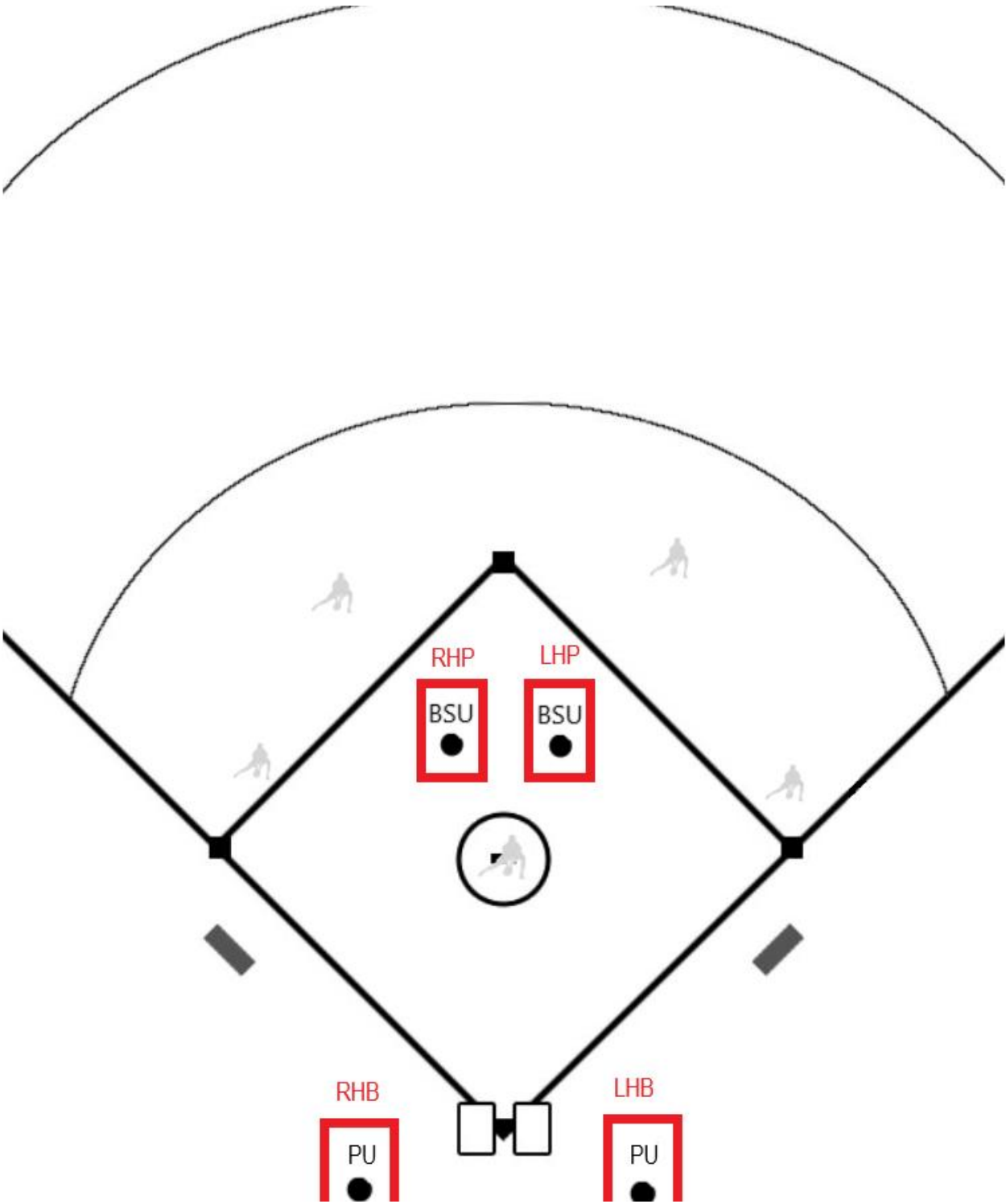
Rationale: It is not practical to place the plate umpire further away directly behind their normal position as this would greatly increase risk of injury for the plate umpire, and severely impede PU's view of the strike zone. PU's primary purpose for being in this position is to judge all fair/foul decisions, calls at home plate, and to make HBP & Check-Swing decisions, for which BSU is in a poor position to judge.

Notes:

Only the pitcher's handedness determines whether the BSU uses P3 or P4. The ability for BSU to accurately judge balls/strikes is more important than BSU's starting position relative to potential plays at 1st or 2nd base. Umpires should also gain additional consistency seeing pitches from one location per pitcher rather than consistently switching locations.

IMPORTANT: There is no longer any provision for mechanics where umpires start "behind" the infield, which was in place for 60' baseball (11U and below). All umpires of all levels will use the described positioning in this document.

Basic Positions:



General Responsibilities (variances from existing 2-umpire system in yellow):

Ball/Strike Umpire:

BSU is primarily responsible for the following:

- Decisions on balls/strikes for all pitched balls.
- All touches & plays at 1st base & 2nd base on all runners in all situations.
- All plays at 3rd base on all runners except for calls on R1 when the pre-pitch situation is R1 only or R1 & R3 only
 - See: “Base Hit or Extra Base Hit to the Outfield with R1 only or R1 & R3”
- Fly Balls & Line Drives as described in “Fly Ball & Line Drive Coverage Areas”

Plate Umpire:

PU is primarily responsible for the following:

- Fair/foul decisions in all circumstances
- Foul tip decisions
- All touches & plays at home plate
- All plays at 3rd base on R1 when the pre-pitch situation is R1 only or R1 & R3 only
 - See: “Base Hit or Extra Base Hit to the Outfield with R1 only or R1 & R3”
- Fly Balls & Line Drives as described in “Fly Ball & Line Drive Coverage Areas”
- All Hit-By-Pitch decisions
 - Note that the altered positioning may make it more difficult for PU to judge the batter’s intent to avoid the pitch in some situations, and if there is doubt PU is encouraged to seek BSU’s opinion as to the batter’s intent
- Lead-off violations (Important for 13U and below levels)

Check-Swings:

For check-swing decisions, BSU will make the initial call, especially if the decision is obvious.

PU is encouraged to “volunteer” a swing when he/she determines a swing has occurred without being asked for an appeal, as PU will have the better angle in all instances.

BSU’s check-swing call can be appealed to PU. However PU’s decision on check-swings is considered the “appeal” and **cannot be appealed back to BSU.**

Note: Aside from Ball/Strike Decisions, Check-Swings, and Lead-off Violations, the umpires’ responsibilities remain consistent with the existing 2-umpire system.

Fly Ball & Line Drive Coverage Areas:

Ball/Strike Umpire:

Infield:

BSU is responsible for all fly balls and line drives to all infielders, except those which take the 1st baseman or 3rd baseman towards the foul line.

Outfield:

BSU is responsible for all fly balls hit directly at the left fielder, to directly at the right fielder. BSU will **not** leave the infield for any reason to judge on a fly ball, and should get as close to the fly ball as possible to judge a difficult catch/no catch decision, without crossing the dirt/grass line.

Plate Umpire:

Infield:

PU is responsible for all fly balls and line drives hit to the pitcher, as well as any fly balls and line drives which take the 1st baseman or 3rd baseman towards the foul line.

Outfield:

PU is responsible for all fly balls which take the left fielder towards the foul line, or which take the right fielder towards the foul line.

PU is responsible for all fair/foul decisions in all circumstances, and any fly balls hit in foul territory at any time.

Notes:

In a situation with R1 & R2 and less than 2 outs & a fly ball is in BSU's coverage zone which is likely to be caught, PU should rotate to 3rd base to judge on a possible tag-up from R2 to 3rd base. This situation is known as a "double tag" and PU taking this responsibility allows BSU to focus fully on the fly ball decision, and a potential play on R1 at 1st or 2nd base, without having to "chase" R2 down on a tag-up play.

This system is **identical** to fly ball coverage in the existing 2-umpire system when there are runners on base.

Base Hit or Extra Base Hit to the Outfield (with R1 only or R1 & R3):

Ball/Strike Umpire:

BSU will **Step Up, Turn & Face** the ball with his chest and move into the working area. BSU must hold his/her position in the working area and let the play determine where he/she needs to move.

Once BSU reads where a play will occur, he/she will gain distance towards the play and come to a set position to make the call.

BSU is primarily responsible for all calls at 1st and 2nd base, and any calls at 3rd base on BR in this situation. If PU returns/stays home, BSU must be aware that he/she is now responsible for all plays at 3rd base on R1.

Plate Umpire:

PU must first determine if there is a fair/foul decision required and get in a position to make the fair/foul determination first. Once that decision is resolved, PU will exit left & behind the catcher, and immediately head towards 3rd base in foul territory approximately 3' to 6' off the foul line to a $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way towards 3rd base. PU will communicate **"I've got 3rd if he comes!"**

If PU reads that there will be a play (ball and runner) he will head in to the cut-out area communicating **"I've got 3rd!"** PU would remain on the infield grass and is also responsible for plays at home plate.

If PU reads that there will not be a play, he will immediately return home in foul territory communicating to BU **"I'm staying home!"** and prepare for any possible plays at home plate.

PU is responsible for all plays on all runners at home plate, and any calls on R1 at 3rd base in this situation.

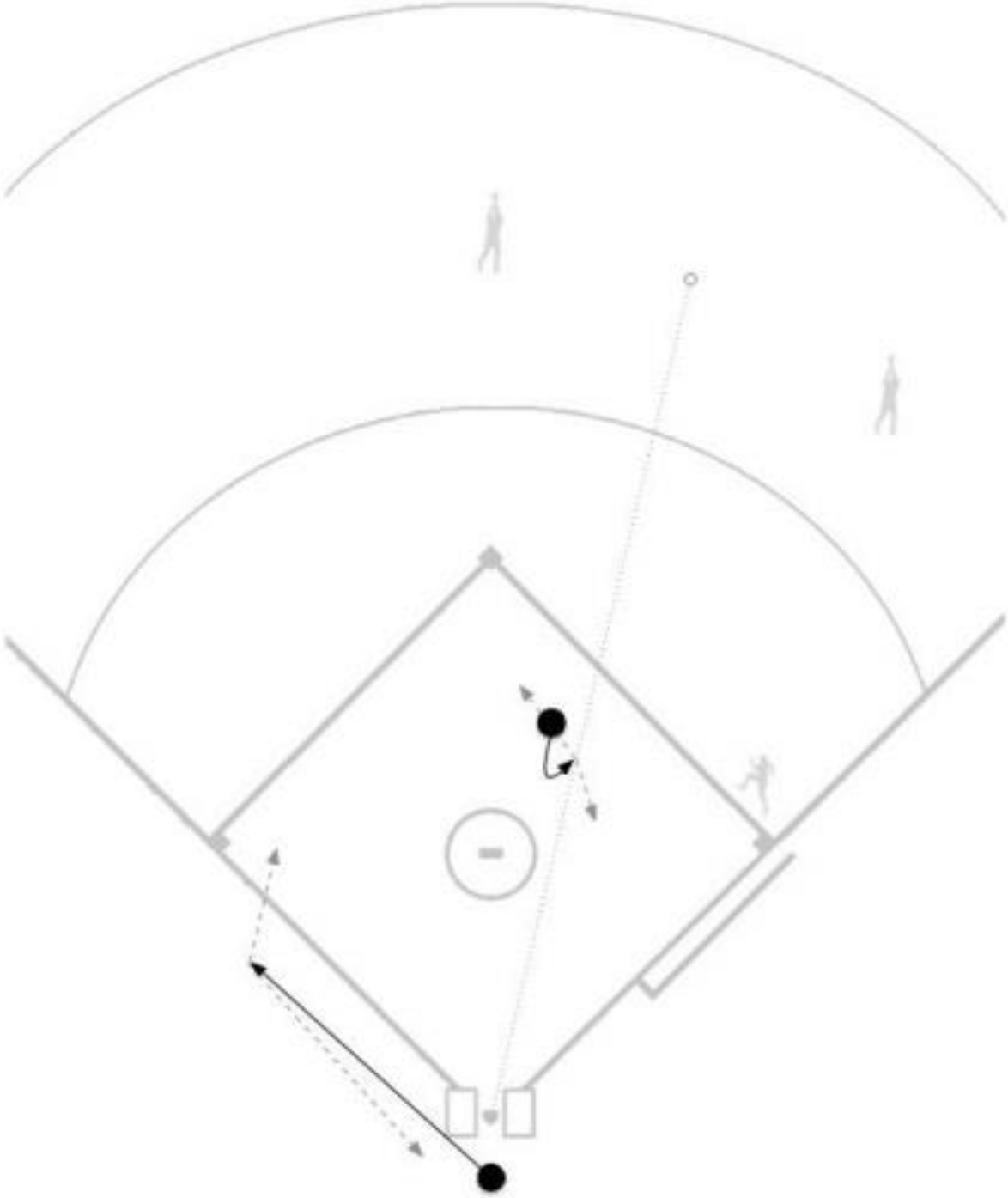
Notes:

Responsibility for a play at 3rd base on R1 initially belongs to PU, but if PU is not at 3rd base, BSU is responsible for this call. It is important that BSU confirms PU is at 3rd base and does NOT assume that PU has made it to 3rd base.

It is extremely important for PU to communicate his/her intent to either go to 3rd or stay at home so that BSU can release their responsibility for R1 at the appropriate time, as there may be a play made on BR, which BSU is responsible for.

This system is **identical** to the coverage & responsibilities in the existing 2-umpire system.

Base Hit or Extra Base Hit to the Outfield (with R1 only or R1 & R3):



Base Hit or Extra Base Hit to the Outfield (all other situations):

Ball/Strike Umpire:

BSU will **Step Up, Turn & Face** the ball with his chest and move into the working area. BSU must hold his/her position in the working area and let the play determine where he/she needs to move.

Once BSU reads where a play will occur, he/she will gain distance towards the play and come to a set position to make the call.

If there is no play, he/she should be in a position splitting the distance between the runners, and if there is only one runner remaining he/she should get to a position close to that runner for any possible plays.

BSU is responsible for all plays at 1st, 2nd and 3rd base on all runners.

Plate Umpire:

PU must first determine if there is a fair/foul decision required and get in a position to make the fair/foul determination first. Once that decision is resolved, PU will move to a position approximately 15' directly behind the point of home plate, and is responsible for watching all runners touch 3rd base, and any possible obstructions in the area of 3rd base.

If PU reads that there will be a play at the plate, he/she should maintain a distance of approximately 10' to 12' off the catcher's inside hip pocket and let the catcher's movement dictate whether the play at home will be a "swipe-tag" or "block" play.

This movement places PU in a good position to see through the "window" created between the catcher's body, the runner's body, and home plate, to make a ruling on the play.

It is preferred if PU is set prior to making a call, although plays at home are not always straightforward and adjustments from PU may sometimes be necessary to properly rule on the play.

Notes:

This system is **identical** to the coverage & responsibilities in the existing 2-umpire system.

Summary:

In summary, BCBUA's approved 2-umpire system is built upon the principle of keeping as much consistency between the traditional 2-umpire system that is taught at clinics, and that experienced umpires are familiar with, while keeping in line with Social Distancing requirements.

The change of shifting ball/strike responsibility to the base umpire does mean that we are asking more of the base umpire; however it is the only viable option with the safety restrictions currently in place.

As a reminder, umpires are NOT RESPONSIBLE for the enforcement of local COVID-19 rules such as mask usage, sanitization requirements, or distance requirements for participants. This responsibility falls to the teams to police themselves on these items. If teams are uncooperative in this area, umpires are instructed to abandon the game and report the incident to their local Umpire-In-Chief and to BCBUA using the [BCBUA Incident Report Form](#)

BCBUA encourages you to ask any questions pertaining to the mechanics described above to Phil Bourgeois by e-mail at philisdaman@hotmail.com

