

Anticipate the time play.

Umpires are taught to anticipate the play, but not the call. Perhaps the ultimate anticipation play for umpires to be aware of is the time play. Many circumstances can force the plate umpire to determine if a runner scored before the third out was made on the bases. One of the most common situations is a two out base hit with at least one runner in scoring position. However, with runners on 2nd and 3rd, a ground ball to the shortstop in the hole may cause him to choose to go to third for the fielder's choice. That decision can also create a very tight time play at home that can catch some umpires by surprise.

Some umpires overlook the possibility of time play situations that can happen with only one out. One such situation can occur with runners at second and third, first and third, or the bases loaded. When a fair or foul fly ball is hit to a spot where the runners may attempt to advance after tagging up, PU has to anticipate the possibility of the runner from third scoring as the third out is made at one of the bases.

There is another scenario where PU can be caught off guard by a time play. This one can happen with one out and runners at first and third. A ground ball that is hit at the first baseman who steps on the bag before throwing to second, takes the force off R1. The ensuing play at second base will likely be a tag at about the time the runner is scoring.

Anticipating these plays is easier when a plate umpire is programmed to signal such possible time plays to his partners in these situations. Talking about those time play possibilities, and the hand signals used as a reminder should be an important part of your pre-game. Make it a point to ask your partners to help you remember by giving the time play signal when the situation arises.

Anticipating a close time play at the plate will require the home plate umpire to be in great position to see both the runner scoring and the third out being made on the bases. It

will also oblige PU to sell the heck out of whatever call he makes. If the run scores, PU should wave at the press box and point emphatically at the plate indicating that the run counts. If not, a signal similar to a basketball official's signal waiving off a goal is in order. Either way, the signal should be directed to the official scorer.