

PAUSE, READ, AND REACT USING THREE UMPIRES

by Perry Costello

What does it take to become good at knowing when to go out on fly balls? Part mental and part physical. It takes MENTAL DISCIPLINE to run through the possibilities that could happen before each pitch or play. First, determine if the fly ball is your responsibility. If so, read the fielder or fielders, NOT the ball. THEY will determine if you need to go out. If you decide to go out, you must make your intention clear, as it affects the entire crew. If ball is not your responsibility, read the UMPIRE who does have responsibility. Read him while moving as if he is going out until he stops you. Responsibilities change from one play to the next. If an improper decision is made, be ready to cover when needed. The game needs an umpire in position to make a call at any base. Never allow your partners to be the reason you end up out of position, or a base goes uncovered. Know all of the moving parts. All umpires must read each fly ball. Mental preparation is just one part, MOBILITY is another. Mobility allows an umpire to pause, read, and react accordingly. The more you have, the longer you can pause, and the longer you can pause, the better you can read. However, when its time for you to react, react fast. Being stopped and set with the optimum angle when rotating, greatly improves your chance of making the correct call. You only have a few moments, that's why you run through all the possibilities BEFORE each pitch. The first movement of the CF determines who is responsible. U1 is responsible when CF moves straight in. Slightly angled routes to the RF or LF side of a diving CF can be difficult to read. Pre-pitch possibility? Think ahead. R3 less than 2 outs is another example when to KNOW IN ADVANCE what you need to do. Other factors that can help are the position of the outfielders and wind conditions. Is the park symmetric, can bullpen, spectators, tarps, ball girls come into play? Going out from INSIDE the diamond requires the ball to be generally inside the so-called "V," high, deep and fence bound or possible collision. When INSIDE don't go out on a low possible short hop fly ball due to the limited time to gain the distance necessary to actually help you with your call, and this will also place your partners in a difficult rotation. GOING OUT also pertains to pop ups near fences and dugouts. When any umpire vacates his original position, revert to the two man system. When a fly ball is short hopped, near a line or fence, try to be stopped and have the optimum angle possible. Umpires make decisions all game without a call on the bases, but have a LARGE effect on how the crew is perceived at the end of the day.

TWO MAN

NO RUNNERS ON BASE IS THE ONLY CHANCE TO PAUSE, READ AND REACT. EMBRACE THESE OPPORTUNITIES. BUT, DO NOT GO OUT UNLESS IT IS TRULY A "TROUBLE" FLY BALL.

FOUR MAN

SOMEONE GOES OUT ON EVERY FLY BALL TO THE OUTFIELD WITH NO RUNNERS ON BASE. WHEN U2 IS INSIDE, REVERT TO PAUSE, READ AND REACT.