

Part Two of Three: Fundamentals of Umpiring:

The second fundamental of umpiring is timing. Having worked a long time and asked numerous umpires to define timing, the answers I get vary widely. Webster's Dictionary defines timing as: *the ability to select the precise moment for doing something for optimum effect.* This is a great place to start.

Timing is three things. It is clearly understanding what you are supposed to be watching, mentally confirming what you have just seen and deciding how to convey or express that information in a way that makes you look calm and in control. Knowing before the play happens what you are supposed to be watching is critical. An example of this would be, as a play develops at the plate you may have to be watching for several things, tag of a runner, tag of a base by that runner, running out of the baseline, collision, obstruction, etc. So, as a play develops you need to narrow down exactly what you are watching. The first part of timing can be summed up by saying, you must be watching something with a purpose. You must know what your eyes are looking at and why. Becoming great at step 1 will make step 2 much easier.

Step 2 is mentally confirming what you have just seen. However, if you are not watching with a purpose, trying to sort out what you have just seen becomes more difficult. After a play concludes, take a second and confirm what you saw. Make sure if you saw a runner tagged before he reached a base that the fielder is in possession of the ball. As a play develops, if there was a question of an illegal slide, did the runner slide legally? Once you have confirmed what you have seen you're ready for the last step.

Now it is time to make the call. Once you have gone through the first two steps the last one is where you shine. This is the one most people call, "Great timing." You knew exactly what to look for, you confirmed what you saw and now you are going to choose how to convey it in a way that makes you look calm and in control. For example, was it a close play in a close game? Was the game lopsided and out of reach? Whatever the call could be, if you have gone through the process above you will have great timing and look strong on the field.

While it is easy to help an umpire by telling him to "slow down" or saying "you are too quick on your calls," there is something much deeper occurring. One would be better off helping a partner start back at step 1 and re-work the process listed above. During pre/post game conversations with the crew, spend the time needed to break down timing because the outcome or result we all strive for is; *the ability to select the precise moment for doing something for optimum effect.*