

Working the Plate/Plate Stance

David Savage

“What is the best plate stance, and which do you suggest I use?”

First and foremost, you must have a stance that you can repeat all game long, from the first pitch to the last pitch. Your head height should stay the same for the entire game. This will help you have the most consistent zone possible. If your plate stance is the box, make sure you have a lock-in mechanic that allows you to repeat itself all game long. If your plate stance is the scissors, the same logic applies. This is very important because each game is different and some games last longer than others. *I was involved in a 16-inning, 6-hour super regional plate job last year. I saw 579 pitches. As you can imagine, the intensity level was very high with a trip to Omaha on the line for both teams.* Using my lock-in mechanic allowed me to keep my head height consistent throughout the entire game.

Secondly, you need to **work in the area that is called the slot**. This is the area over the inside corner between the catcher and hitter. When the catcher sets up down the middle or on the outside third of the plate, this is easy to do. When the catcher shifts inside for a pitch on the inside corner, it can be difficult. In this situation, you need to back away from the catcher and work over the top of the catcher’s head. If you can find a window to see underneath the batter’s hands, try to look through it. We, as umpires, need to really work at this and not use the excuse that “the catcher moved late” or “the catcher blocked us out.” We need to get the best look we can at the pitch and call it as we see it.

Lastly, and I believe, **most importantly**, you need to **be your own toughest critic**. *When you ask your partners about your zone, listen to them, and learn from your mistakes. If you get a copy of your plate job, look for **consistency** in your zone. Do you have trouble with any part of the strike zone? How is your **timing**? Are you **tracking** the pitch all the way to the catcher’s glove? Is your head height staying the same for the entire game?* **These are just a few of the questions you need to ask yourself.**