

## **PRIORITIES**

by David Uyl

In umpiring, we constantly prioritize. For example, we often sacrifice distance in order to get the best possible angle on a play. The angle has priority over distance. On a batted ball deep down a foul line, one must first be set and not moving in order to rule on the initial decision, fair or foul. Rulings such as catch/no-catch and safe/out are equally important, but neither of these calls factor into the equation before the first decision of fair/foul is made.

What are your priorities right now in regards to the upcoming season? Besides rules and mechanics review and preparing yourself physically for the upcoming season, take care of administrative tasks now. Make sure that you're registered for an NCAA meeting and that you've fulfilled all obligations with your assigners and associations. If needed, book hotel rooms, rental cars and flights now so that you don't have to worry about it next spring. Lastly, make the most of the time spent with family. Once the season gets here, family time is often sacrificed so that we can all pursue this great avocation.

Once the season is upon us, what should be the priority of the crew before a game or series? Hopefully, we've all experienced "good" pregames where we feel ready and confident to walk onto the field. Conversely, I'm sure we've all left the locker room wondering what the next three hours will bring. A crew's primary focus during the pregame should be on what is most likely to happen during the game, especially when working with unfamiliar partners. Too many times, basic rotations and coverages are not properly executed because the majority of the pregame conversation was concerned with what to do when a batted ball hits the bald eagle who is flying too close to the ground. I'm not saying that unique situations shouldn't be discussed, but make sure that everyone on the crew is on the same page in regards to the basics. With the expansion of some conferences working the four-umpire system, it's imperative to know the rotations and responsibilities of the position you're working. Also, an umpire could very well work a two-umpire system one day and a three-umpire system a few days later. Know the proper mechanics and discuss them during the pregame.

As college baseball continues to prosper, umpire visibility (and accountability) is at an all-time high. We need to realize that we're under a microscope, constantly being scrutinized by coaches, players and administrators. There are many things that are out of our control, both on and off the field, but walking on the field prepared to the best of our abilities is something that we must make a priority.