

Taking Force Plays at Second Base

In taking force plays at second base, we have all been too quick at times in making a safe or an out call. The most obvious element of rendering a good decision on any play, of course, is good timing. We have either called the runner safe, only to find that he has slid off of the bag and the fielder has gone back to tag the runner, so now two calls are being made to reach a final decision, when proper timing would have allowed us to wait and make only the one call that was needed. Another common mistake at second base is being too quick to call a runner safe, only to find that he has done something to violate the force play slide rule, so now changing a safe call to an out call for interference is required; thus, causing confusion and creating doubt and uncertainty in the minds of at least one team.

However, the most common mistake on force plays at second base comes when we are too quick in making an out call, only to find the ball on the ground. Quick timing is not the only reason this call is one of the most controversial, and often times, the most missed calls in baseball. Many times we do not have the proper angle to make an accurate ruling as to whether or not the fielder actually reached into the glove and executed a voluntary release of the ball, which is what the college game requires, in order to have an out on the play. There is one thing we can all do, regardless of whether we work in the B or C position, to help us in making an accurate decision. In a force play situation, when we see the ground ball hit, we can move in the direction that the ball was hit; therefore, we will now have a better look at what is going on inside the fielder's glove when he is making the pivot at second base. For example, on a ground ball hit to the shortstop, and with the second base umpire working in B position, just simply move in the direction of the shortstop, gaining as much distance as possible, to create a view inside the second baseman's glove. Getting as much depth as possible, without, of course, getting in the way of the throw from the fielder - will really open this play up for umpires and help in making a correct call.

In taking plays at second base this season, let's slow down and work to get the best view possible of the inside of the pivot man's glove, see the entire play, and make the correct call.

Scott Cline
Nolensville, TN