

TAKING TAG PLAYS AT THE PLATE (THROW COMING FROM THE FIELD OF PLAY)

Over the years, I've witnessed several different perspectives in taking tag plays at home plate with the ball coming from the field of play. I've found that if you are properly prepared, the likelihood of making a correct call is greatly enhanced.

Being prepared is key to every aspect of umpiring. That fact holds true particularly for plays at the plate. When you are prepared for what might happen, you will seldom be caught off guard. Here are a few thoughts to consider when preparing yourself for plays at the plate.

- Know the situation and anticipate what the players are likely to do.
- Where are the runners prior to the play?
- Understand what you will be looking for in each possible scenario, regardless of where the ball is hit. Visualize your reaction to each scenario.
- Prepare for possible obstruction and/or malicious contact.
- Is it a force play or tag situation?
- Is a time play likely?

Once you are adequately prepared for the various possibilities, a few points to remember will help you get the call right.

- Use the point of plate approximately 6 feet back as your starting point when applicable.
- Verbally clear all the runners that may have scored and the on deck batter from the dirt area so you may make the call. Sometimes you may need to do this forcefully, but always do it professionally.
- Know where the ball is coming from.
- Know the status of the runner headed home when the baseball is released for the play at the plate. In other words, know the vicinity of the runner in comparison to the baseball. This will assist you in determining the position/angle to take to ensure you see the entire play.
- Be ready to see a swipe tag. This may entail taking a couple of read steps at the last second to keep from being blocked or straight lined.
- Always be set at the time of the actual play (tag or attempt of a tag of the runner, the touch of plate by the catcher, etc)

- Slow your timing down and make sure you see the entire play before making a decision on the play.

These are only a few perspectives on understanding how to properly take plays at home plate with the ball coming from the field of play. Remember, you still have other responsibilities such as fair/foul, batter running to first, etc. However, if you are prepared and ready to make a call from the best perspective, you won't be caught off guard. Good Luck!