

# 7th Inning Stretch

Remember...If it isn't fun...it isn't Little League!!!

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Volume 3, Number 3



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## Calling All Players and Volunteers

Hello again, and welcome to the new edition of The Stretch.

This month I am asking for player and volunteer profiles to be sent in to me for inclusion in upcoming issues. Tell us about your star ball player in your family, or kids, send me a story about yourself...maybe a home run you hit, or a great play you made...anything you want. If you'd like to add a picture of your child, that's fine as well.

How about you volunteers...let us know about you...or if you know a great volunteer...let us know about them. Do you have a funny story about something that happened at the ball park? Send it in...we'll include it in upcoming issues. Remember...this newsletter is about you...I enjoy getting stories from people, and I'm sure others would like to read about your Leagues as well.

This month I have started dedicating 2 pages to the Tournament season as I did last season. All the dates of the Canadian Tournaments as well as the Provincial Tournaments are listed as I have them right now. So if you have any info to help me fill in the dates or hosting District or even a link to the website being used to promote the tournaments, please feel free to forward it to me.

Just a note for all who may not realize it...**ALL** links or web page references in this and every issue of the newsletter are clickable from within the newsletter, and will take you to the web page or to your email client directly. If you find any links that don't work, let me know so I can fix them for future issues.

I hope you all enjoyed the baseball puzzle last month...the answers are in this issue, as promised...There is a new quiz to test you again.

Until next month...

Thanks for taking the time to read this and every issue.

Bob Taunton, Editor, The 7th Inning Stretch

**Play Ball!**

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## TIPS FOR BEING A SUCCESSFUL UMPIRE

Hello again. As the season starts up, it is important to prepare yourselves as umpires now, before it is too late.

Now, the single most important thing to understand as umpires is that you are salespeople. You need to sell yourself, and you need to sell your call.

Here are some pointers that will allow you to be more successful.

- 1 -Appearance. Your appearance is critical. You need to look like an umpire every time you go on the field. That means the proper shirt, hat, pants, and shoes. The pants should not be baggy legs with the crotch down at the knees. Shirts MUST be tucked in. Your hat must be on facing the front. If you are working the plate, your shin pads shall be worn UNDER your pants. The inside chest protector must be worn under the shirt. Looking like an umpire is half the battle. I have gone onto fields and hear comments like "wow, we have REAL umpires tonight." Those people have not seen me making a call. But I sure do look like an umpire.
- 2 -Decorum. How you conduct yourself both on and off of the field is also important. If the game is scheduled to start at 6:00 PM. Make sure that the first pitch is at 6:00 PM. Not 6:05 PM. Not 6:15 PM. Go on the field with your partner as a crew. During the game, remember that you are not better than players, coaches, or even your partner. If a coach approaches you, be respectful. They are volunteers as well. If you show respect, you should get respect. Even though you are in charge of what happens on the diamond during a game, there are good and bad ways of communicating. Yelling and screaming is probably not the right way.
- 3 -Game management. As I stated above, start the game on time. In between innings is not a social time as umpires. You still have responsibilities. Do not meet with your partner. I have seen games where every half inning took 5 minutes. The pitcher is allowed 8 pitches or one minute of time. If you allow just one extra minute every half inning, you are adding almost 15 minutes of doing nothing. Keep the teams hustling on and off of the field. If you are not into the game at all times, the game will become boring, and you will make mistakes.
- 4 -Attitude. If you have a bad attitude on the diamond, you will undoubtedly have problems during the game. It is important that you treat a Minor division house league game the same as the championship game of the Major division Canadian Championships. If you have that type of attitude, you will find yourself umpiring better, you will find the players even playing better. I can't stand hearing from umpires "well, it doesn't matter. It is only house league." Sometimes people forget that for most house league players, that is the only level of baseball they will ever see. By having that bad attitude, you are taking the experience that those players deserve away from them.
- 5 -Be loud. The biggest complaint that I hear about house league officials is that no one can hear what the umpire is calling. If you are not crisp and clear with your calls and signals, you are not going to come across as really knowing the rule. Even though you got it right, if you can't sell that call, people will question it. I have many times sold a call that was wrong, and no one came out to discuss. If a situation arises that you need to stop the play. Throw those hands up and loudly and clearly yell "TIME". Stop that play. If you need to award bases, do so in a manner that is clear for all.

I hope that these few tips will help you be better umpires. Remember, be proud of who you are on the field. Show that you are proud by your appearance, your conduct, and your attitude. You will see an improvement in yourself as umpires, as well as the play during the game.

See you on the diamond.

### The Little League Pledge:

I trust in God  
I love my country  
And will respect it's laws  
I will play fair  
And strive to win  
But win or lose  
I will always  
Do my best

## Rule Interpretation...Rule 4.04

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Rule 4.04 gives leagues an opportunity to get the players more at-bats and more playing time with the continuous batting order (CBO). There are some questions that have come up as a result of more leagues using the (CBO).

1. League uses the continuous batting order and a player gets hurt while at-bat. What do we do now? Answer: The next batter in the order takes his/her place and assumes the count and the game continues. If that injured player is unable to continue in the game the next time he/she is scheduled to bat merely skip over him/her and continue the game.

2. League is using the CBO and a player is at bat, hits the ball and is hurt while running the bases. Who takes his place on the base? It is recommended that the last out of the previous inning is the player who is substituted to run for the injured player. Or you can even use the last out of that offensive inning. What you need to watch out for is getting in a situation where the offensive team needs a run and all of a sudden they need a runner and "they" select the team's fastest runner. Make it clean and in writing so there will never be any questions.

3. League is using the CBO at the Junior/Senior/Big League level and wants to take its pitcher off the mound put him/her in the dugout for a rest and bring him/her back later because he/she is still in the line up. Can they do that? No, not really. While admittedly the player is still in the batting order, however, when they took the pitcher off the mound and moved him/her to the dugout they lost their chance to bring the pitcher back. The rule was written to keep the pitcher in the lineup both offensively and defensively.

Hope these help.

### The Little League Parent / Volunteer Pledge:

I will teach all children  
to play fair and do  
their best

I will positively support  
all managers, coaches  
and players

I will respect the  
decisions of the  
umpires

I will praise a good  
effort despite the  
outcome of the game

## Baseball Rule Book Correction...Rule 8.04

**Rule 8.04** specifically spells out erroneously that you can only use the announced Intentional Walk for Juniors, Seniors and Big Leaguers. As spelled out in Regulation VI any division of baseball may announce their intent to walk a batter without delivering a pitch. Regulation VI takes precedence over rule 8.04.

## Little League Volunteer Umpire Tip Of The Month

On the Little League 60-foot field, the base umpire has a tough job. The ump must be able to watch the ball, watch the runner(s), and be in the right position to handle his/her responsibilities. The best way to make all that happen is to remember the saying:

**"Ball goes out, I go in. If the ball stays in, I stay out."**

Because of the small size of the Little League field, the base umpire must start from **behind** all the infielders, at the edge of the outfield grass, whether in Position A, B or C. But few of us have extra eyes in the back of our heads, so watching the hit to the outfield and watching the runner (s) at the same time is very tough if we STAY in the outfield.

It is imperative for the base umpire to hustle into the infield if the ball is hit to the outfield, get turned around in the working area (that space behind the pitcher's mound) and keep his/her head on a swivel, glancing at the runners touching their bases and still watch the ball. The umpire must keep his/her eyes "everlastingly on the ball" in order to know where to go to make a call if necessary. We must let the ball take us to the play and be stopped, settled in, and in position to make a call. Remember that getting the best angle is much more important than distance from the play.

## The Importance Of The Power Position Phase

By Michele Smith, Olympic Gold Medal Pitcher



In fastpitch softball, the power position is one of the most talked about parts of the pitching motion. It is also one of the most misunderstood. The body moves in natural, basic patterns. Getting into, and out of, those patterns properly will enable you to use your body more efficiently. Efficiency can loosely be defined as putting the least amount of energy in and getting the most amount of performance—or power—out. Getting into the proper power position will help you to minimize the amount of energy needed to produce the most powerful—or fastest—pitch. Your goal should be to pitch as efficiently as possible. You do not need to over tax your body to be a good pitcher. Good pitchers understand the importance of the power position and know that it will help them to efficiently transfer power to the ball.

Let's go over getting into that power position and the correct movements from that position to release:

To get into a proper power position (sometimes referred to as an "X" position), you will need to begin with a good 'load' in your pre-motion, followed by an aggressive 'explosion' off the rubber. Your stride leg should land on the 'power line' or 'straight line of force' at a 45-degree angle. Your glove arm should be extended toward the target and your throwing arm should be fully extended in the opposite direction (a slight bend in the elbow is acceptable). At this point, you should resemble an "X." This is your power position.

It is very important that you explode off the rubber so that you can create what I call 'a hard opposite side.' As the stride leg lands, you want to build a wall with that side of your body. This hard opposite side, or 'firm right side' for lefties and 'firm left side' for right-handers is often referred to as 'blocking.' Blocking is a movement pattern used in many sports. It is defined as "using opposite sides of your body to create energy."



It is commonly seen in throwing sports, but a good example of blocking in a non-throwing sport is a high jumper who blocks on one side of her body to create force that will propel her up and over the bar. The block in fastpitch creates a lot of force, as well. But, instead of blocking to create force that will propel us up and over a bar, we want to create force that will be transferred to the ball in the form of speed.

During this motion, it is important that you keep your head over your belly button or 'center of gravity.' This will naturally put your weight slightly back which will help you to create a good 'block' or build a good wall with the front half of your body. If your weight is too far forward, you will not be able to create that 'hard opposite side' and you will lose a great amount of power.

Now that you are in your power position, you want to start driving all of your extended body parts back together. As you do this, that driving force will be transferred to the ball, creating a powerful release. Your glove arm should pull straight down and to the side of your body. Be careful not to let your glove arm and glove get too far away from your body. If your arm pulls away from your body, it will close your shoulders. If your shoulders begin to close, your hips will follow and this will result in problems at release.

Your throwing arm should also move down and into your body. As you pull your hand down and close to your body, you will have a slight bend in your arm. That is normal. It is very important that you keep your throwing arm

loose and relaxed. The more relaxed you keep your throwing arm, the faster it will move. And, the faster you are able to move your arm, the more velocity you will be able to create at release.

At this point, the back leg—or throwing-arm leg—should be driving into the front—or gloveside—leg that is firmly planted on the ground as a result of the hard opposite side you created after striding off the rubber. As your back leg 'pinches' into your front leg, it should remain in contact with the ground the entire way. To accomplish this, you should drag the inner part of your big toe on the ground. If done properly, this pinching action will put your legs in a 'figure 4' position at release. This will keep you balanced and in the proper position into the release phase.

Now that you have all of your extended limbs driving back into your body, your hips should be 'sliding' forward—NOT ROTATING. Improper hip movement is one of the most common mistakes that pitchers make. It is very important that you keep your hips at a 45-52-degree angle. If your hips rotate beyond this point, they will be 'closing' (like a door). Not only is that very harmful for your shoulder, but you will also lose the ability to whip the ball with the greatest amount of velocity through the release zone.

Along with your hips, your belly button should also be at a 45-52-degree angle. If your belly button is facing the catcher at release, your hips are over rotated and you are in danger of injuring your shoulder. Young, flexible pitchers may not realize their hips are over rotated and in a bad position, but after years of pitching incorrectly, they will almost certainly have damaged their shoulder joints. (The picture of me shows the proper form at release. Notice the angle of my hips, the direction of my belly button and the drive of my back leg.)

Your release, or snap, should whip your arm in front of your hips (with the hips remaining at a 45-52 degree angle) and only after release should you rotate around to get into a good defensive position. To get a good feel of how your shoulder joint naturally works, stand with your hips in the proper position and rotate your arm around and around. You will see that as long as you are not over rotated, you can twirl your arm around for as long as you want and not cause any harmful stress on your shoulder joint. The moment you get slightly over rotated, you will be able to feel an impingement in your shoulder. Be very aware of this and be very careful to not let your hips become over rotated (or closed).

Keep in mind that your upper body is also very important when moving from the power position into the release phase. If your shoulders are over rotated, you will have a tendency to pull your hips closed. The shoulders and hips follow each other. Let's face it, none of us walk down the street with our hips facing forward and our shoulders facing to the right or left! So, be careful not to muscle the pitch and pull your shoulders closed. This will only result in your hips becoming closed as well and getting in the way at the release point. By keeping your shoulders and hips open, your arm will be able to enter into the release zone in a whipping movement. It is that whipping snap that will create a great deal of velocity.

You can't just begin and end your pitch correctly. Using your body correctly in the middle of your pitch is just as important. Start with a good 'power position' and remember, the body moves in natural patterns and only when you use those patterns efficiently will you become the best pitcher possible. Good Luck!

For more information, visit Michele Smith's website at <http://www.michelesmith.com>.

## Baseball Coaching Tips by Marc Shoenfelt

### The Fundamentals Of Fielding

One of the more underrated and overlooked skills in baseball is fielding a ground ball. As much as a hitter needs to swing the bat 100 times a day to perfect a swing, a fielder needs to "throw the leather" just as frequently to become a skilled infielder. There are basic fundamentals that every infielder should perfect to become a defensive specialist.

Before the ball is delivered to the plate by the pitcher, we teach infielders "prep steps". A prep step is a creeping forward by the fielder as the ball is about to reach home plate. We want fielders to start about four steps further back than they normally do. As the ball is being delivered, the player creeps forward with bent knees and on the balls of the feet.

As the ball arrives, players should always work through the baseball. Too many players stop their feet and wait for the baseball to arrive. Fielders need to come get the baseball, and work through it. After fielding the baseball, the player should keep the feet moving and gain ground toward first base (or the desired base). The only exception would be for a double play or snap throw to a base on a close play. Working through the baseball will eliminate letting the ball play you, and will also produce a stronger throw.

When actually fielding a ground ball, there are a couple of things a fielder needs to do to become more successful. First, I tell players we want to see the bead on their cap. Most kids don't keep their eyes down and watch the ball into the glove. Second, I want the fielder to glove the baseball out in front of their body. Too many kids let the ball travel back between their legs when fielding. The player should get the arms extended and field the ball in front of their body. Lastly, players should lower their tailgate and bend their knees with their weight on their toes. I always teach, "nose over toes". If the player keeps the nose over his or her toes, the weight will always be distributed properly.

The last thing, but certainly not the least, is fielding with two hands. After fielding the baseball, most infielders want to get rid of it quickly to make a play. It is imperative that fielders use two hands when fielding. I use the term, "alligator" when teaching young kids to field with two hands. The glove should be on the ground like a ramp for the ball to go up, and the throwing hand should be on top ready to cover it up. It looks like the bottom jaw of an alligator (glove), and the top teeth (throwing hand) clamping down to eat the baseball. Using two hands to field the ball is required, not a choice. It will make you a faster and more efficient infielder.

Becoming a good fielder isn't something you are born with. It takes practice, practice, and more practice to become a quality infielder. The serious infielder will show up early and stay late taking extra ground balls. Hitting may get all of the glamour, but good defense wins you baseball games.

Marc Shoenfelt is the founder and President of B2B Baseball, an instructional baseball business that conducts youth coaching clinics. Marc has also written the book "Baseball's Forgotten Basics", an instructional book with a DVD companion.

The book can be seen and purchased at [www.baseballsforgottenbasics.com](http://www.baseballsforgottenbasics.com),

or for an autographed copy or to book Marc for a coaching clinic, contact him at [info@B2Bbaseball.com](mailto:info@B2Bbaseball.com).

"GETTING BIG THINGS from little swings"



## Little League Canada Provincial And National Championships

Here is a current list of all the Provincial and Canadian Little League Championship sites and dates. I will add this info and update it every month until the tournaments are completed. [Click on the highlighted links to see the official web pages.](#)

### Little League (Major) Division:

**World Series:** August 17 to 26, 2007 Williamsport, Pennsylvania

**Canadian Championships:** Regina, Saskatchewan, August 4-11, 2007

#### **Provincial Championships:**

**Atlantic Division:** Nova Scotia

**Quebec Division:** Montreal

**Ontario Division:** Toronto (Erindale), Ontario District 1

**Prairie Division:** Fort McMurray

**B.C. Division:** Vancouver

### Junior Division:

**World Series:** August 12 to 18, 2007 Taylor, Michigan

**Canadian Championships:** Windsor, Ontario, District 5, August 3-10, 2007

#### **Provincial Championships:**

**Atlantic Division:** Nova Scotia

**Quebec Division:** Montreal

**Ontario Division:** Thunder Bay, District 3

**Prairie Division:** Calgary

**B.C. Division:** Vancouver

### Senior Division:

**World Series:** August 12 to 18, 2007 Bangor, Maine

**Canadian Championships:** August 2 to 9, 2007 Vancouver, BC

#### **Provincial Championships:**

**Atlantic Division:** Nova Scotia

**Quebec Division:** Montreal

**Ontario Division:** Ottawa, District 6

**Prairie Division:** Edmonton

**B.C. Division:** Prince George

### Big League Division:

**World Series:** July 28 to August 4, 2007 Easley, South Carolina

**Canadian Championships:** July 14 to 18, 2007 Calgary, Alberta, District 3

**Provincial Championships:**

**Atlantic Division:** Nova Scotia

**Quebec Division:** Montreal

**Ontario Division:** Ottawa, District 2

**Prairie Division:** Edmonton

**B.C. Division:** Prince George

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**Little League (Major) Softball Division:**

**World Series:** August 9 to 16, 2007 Portland, Oregon

**Canadian Championships:** Victoria, BC, Date TBD

**Junior Softball Division:**

**World Series:** August 12 to 18, 2007 Kirkland, Washington

**Senior Softball Division:**

**World Series:** August 5 to 11, 2007 Lower Sussex, Delaware

**Big League Softball Division:**

**World Series:** August 13 to 18, 2007 Kalamazoo, Michigan

**Canadian Championships for Junior, Senior and Big League:** Not Confirmed

## Brain Teasers

**# 1:** Runner on first base, two strikes on batter, who swings at the pitch which hits him/her. **Is the batter out?**

**# 2:** Runner going from second to third base falls over the shortstop that was standing in the base line fielding a batted ball. The third baseman tags the runner with the ball. **Is the runner out?**

**# 3:** With two strikes on batter, batter fouls a pitch which strikes catcher's chest protector. Catcher grabs the rebound, before the ball falls to the ground. **Is the batter out?**



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The Little League Canada Foundation's goal is "to ensure that all children in Canada have the chance to participate in Little League regardless of their abilities, either physical or financial". For an annual membership of \$10.00 or three year membership of \$25.00, as an Alumni member you will have the opportunity to have input into the growth and direction of Little League and its programs.

For a membership application form, please contact Little League Canada at [Canada@littleleague.org](mailto:Canada@littleleague.org).

### Baseball Puzzle

Here are the answers to last months Baseball quiz...

1- The batter to win a batting title in three different decades: **b, George Brett 1976, 1980, 1990**

2- The only pitcher to win a world series game in three different decades: **a, Baltimore Oriole Jim Palmer 1966, 1970, 1971, 1983**

Here's a couple for this month:

1- Who is the only player to hit a home run in his first two major league at-bats?

- Bert Campaneris
- Charlie Jamieson
- Bob Nieman
- Andy Pafko
- Wally Post

2- What pitcher was on the mound when Joe DiMaggio's 56 game hitting streak came to an end?

- Bob Feller
- Jim Bagby
- Al Smith
- Hal Newhouser
- Mel Harder

**The answers will be revealed in next months issue...thanks for playing**

## Answers to Brain Teasers

**# 1: Yes** – Rule 2.00-STRIKE (e) & 6.05(e). The old myth comes back to haunt you if you got this one wrong. The hands are NOT part of the bat. We do not know of a manufacturer that makes bats with hands on them. Swinging strike three, ball is dead and runner on first stays on first.

**# 2: Yes** – Rule 7.08(b) & 7.09(1). The base runner must give ground to a defensive player who is making a play on a batted ball. The runner is out whether it is deemed intentional or not intentional.

**# 3: No** – Rule 2.00 – FOUL TIP. Sharp and direct from the bat to the catchers hand or mitt and anything else is a foul ball.

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