



# Blue Signals

Keeping Baseball Ontario's Umpires Connected



SPRING 2011

## 2011 SUPERCLINICS

Hard to believe it's almost that time, just about one month left until the 2011 SuperClinics begin! Our first SuperClinic will take place in Whitby on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and they will conclude in Cambridge this year on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Registration fees will remain the same as 2008:

- Early bird until March 7<sup>th</sup> - \$45
- March 7<sup>th</sup>, until 1 week prior to your SuperClinic - \$60
- Week of your SuperClinic including walk-ups - \$75

All of the locations have been set and we have worked hard to book facilities suitable for all umpires based on the feedback we received from everyone in 2008. As



announced back in November, there will be no exam component this year. We are also excited to be introducing a second gymnasium session this year. The other four classroom sessions will follow the format of 2008 with an Offence, Defence, Game Management, and Positioning session.

Each SuperClinic will follow the same schedule with registration beginning at 8:00am, introductions starting at 8:30am and each SuperClinic ending at around 4:30pm for those making arrangements for pickups.



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All umpires should bring with them a hat and a mask for the gymnasium sessions.

Lastly, all umpires attending this year's SuperClinic will be receiving a student gift package at registration, what you ask; you'll just have to attend one to find out! We look forward to seeing you at your local SuperClinic soon!

1. R2. R2 was stealing on the pitch. The batter hits a line drive which deflects off the 3rd baseman's glove, hits R2 and is caught by the shortstop before touching the ground. The umpire rules R2 out for interference and declares the batter out on the shortstop's catch. True or False?

2. R3, 1 out. 0-2 Count on the batter. R3 attempts to steal home on the pitch, which the batter swings at and misses. While swinging, the pitch hits the batter in the knee and deflects back towards the backstop allowing R3 to score easily. The run counts. True or False?

3. R1. The pitcher delivers and the ball deflects off the catcher's glove and rolls towards the 1st base dugout. The ball stops and the catcher slides and accidentally knocks the ball into the dugout. R1 had advanced and was standing on 2nd when the catcher knocked the ball into the dugout. The umpire awards R1 3rd base. True or False?

## BLUE TRIVIA



## **A LOOK AT LIFE AS A PRO UMPIRE**

Most young umpires who watch Major League Baseball have found themselves watching the umpires either wondering what it would be like to umpire professionally, or maybe just hoping to see something they like and trying to simulate it on the diamond the next night.

What most people don't realise is how difficult it is to become a professional umpire. The sacrifices people make to not only get the chance to become one, but the sacrifices they make over several years for an opportunity in which the odds are stacked against them.

Over the last 10 years, Ontario has had several umpires work as professional umpires in the Minor League system; currently there is one active umpire still working. At one point or another, each of those umpires has been asked, "How do you become a professional umpire?" or "What's it like being a professional umpire?" In this two part series I will break it down and answer those two most commonly asked questions. Whether or not you aspire to try it yourself, maybe it will provide insight or motivation for younger umpires here in

Ontario.

"How do you become a professional umpire" is actually a complicated process. Umpires are required to attend one of two professional umpire schools located in Florida each year during January. The schools themselves last approximately 5 weeks and run 6 days a week, lasting up to 10 hours a day. Those 5 weeks are filled with learning the rules, proper mechanics of the two-umpire system, plate mechanics, and simulated games. Umpires attending those schools range in skills from having never umpired a game in their lives, to those who have spent a summer or two working in Independent professional leagues across the United States, as well as umpires from across the world. During that 5 week period, the instructors at each of the two schools continually evaluate the umpires and in the end, umpires are ranked. The top 25 students from each of the two schools return to Florida a few weeks later to an evaluation camp hosted and run by Professional Baseball Umpire Corporation (PBUS). During those two weeks, umpires are assigned to umpire one or two games

a day and are evaluated by all of the Minor League Umpire Supervisors. After those two weeks, the 50 umpires are ranked from 1 to 50 with contracts being given to the number of umpires for which there are openings. Openings are based on the number of umpires released from the program the previous year, as well as those who decide it's no longer for them and pack it in. Contracts that year are usually offered to umpires at the Rookie Ball level. As a Canadian umpire working in the United States, PBUS applies for and obtains a working visa for all international umpires.

Since 2001, all international umpires selected to work for PBUS in the Minor Leagues have to wait a year while their visa is applied for and granted.

Therefore, an umpire going to umpire school in 2011 and selected through the process, will not begin working in the Minor Leagues until the summer of 2012.

Hope that answers the how part, in the next edition of Blue Signals we'll take a look at the second most often asked question, "What's it like being a professional umpire?"

## **UMPIRE IN FOCUS: ZACH HARMER**

**Name:** Zachary Harmer  
**Hometown:** Stratford Ontario  
**Local Association:** St. Marys  
**Current Level:** 2.2  
**Years Umpiring:** 4  
**Hobbies / Interests:** I love to watch and learn more about baseball, I like to play a few

relaxing round of golf a week. I like to hang out with friends and play cards.  
**School:** I am a 5th year student at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford. I work at Foodland in St. Marys and at the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame during the summer.

### **U m p i r e Highlights/ Achievements:**

Umpiring my first game which was my brother's team. Umpiring a inter-team game



and having to bat with all of my equipment on. I hit a hard line drive to the short stop. Not bad with full equipment. My final highlight is umpiring a game with my dad, then with my brother. They are awesome people to work with and is a great time. Winning the 2010 Junior Umpire of the Year.



**UMPIRE IN FOCUS:  
 NIKKI ROSS**

**Name:** Nikki M. Ross  
**Hometown:** Mississauga  
**Local Association:** Mississauga North  
**Current Level:** 3 **Years Umpiring:** 16  
**Course Conductor:** Junior Course Conductor  
**Hobbies/Interests:** Baseball, local politics, and working with kids.  
**School/Employment:** Contract work – mostly in Human Resources  
**Umpiring Highlights/Achievements:** I was very fortunate to have been assigned

to umpire across the country, as well as the Rogers Centre in the girls/women's divisions, representing Ontario umpires. My mentors Don Gilbert, Lisa Turbitt and Ed Quinlan have been very generous with their time and encouragement – helping to light the "fire in my belly" for the love of the game. For the past 13 years I have run a 20 hour clinic (either 8 weeks out of night school, or over weekends) around southern Ontario. I am proud to be a part of the True North

Umpires' Academy.  
**Umpiring Goals:** I would love to see more affiliates embrace the 8 week/20 hour umpiring program. I believe it is the best way to arm our umpires with the knowledge they need to handle the pressures and stresses of the game. This advanced, comprehensive course is an opportunity for umpires to benefit from an extended learning experience and carry that knowledge onto the field to better serve our the game.



**BLUE TRIVIA - ANSWERS**

Do you have a story idea or picture for Blue Signals? Email us at [bluesignals@baseballontario.com](mailto:bluesignals@baseballontario.com)!

1. Answer: FALSE - 7.09(m), 6.08(c), 5.09(f), 2.00 catch  
 Explanation: Once the batted ball is deflected, the runner can no longer interfere unless he or she intentionally interferes with the batted ball. Secondly, once the deflected ball strikes the runner it is no longer considered in flight for the purpose of a catch.
2. Answer: FALSE - 6.08(b) Approved Ruling  
 Explanation: Once the pitched ball strikes the batter it is considered dead. In this case, since the batter swung, strike three would be called and the runner would return to 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
3. Answer: TRUE - Baseball Canada Interpretation 7.05(h) Approved Ruling  
 Explanation: This is a Baseball Canada interpretation and in this case the penalty would be two bases from the "Time of Pitch", not from the moment the catcher deflects the pitched ball. If the catcher intentionally deflected the ball in to the dugout then the penalty would be two bases from the time it was deflected.

**UMPIRE IN FOCUS:  
 JIM MCMILLAN**

**Name:** Jim McMillan  
**Hometown:** Peterborough  
**Local Association:** Kawartha  
**Current Level:**5 **Years Umpiring:** 21  
**Course Conductor:** Master  
**Hobbies/Interests:** Coaching Football and

Hockey  
 Play Hockey, Golf  
 Spending time with wife Jillian and sons Nathan and Hugh  
**School/Employment:** Teacher/Head of Special Education - Norwood District High

School – Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board  
 Umpiring  
**Highlights/Achievements:**

Umpired at 5 National Championships  
 Supervised at 1 National Championship  
 Supervised at Ontario Summer Games  
 Member of ICBL Umpire Supervisory Committee



## RULE CHANGES SINCE '09



Since the start of the 2009 season, there have been significant rule changes to the Official Rules of Baseball; Baseball Ontario and Baseball Canada have since adopted those rule changes. In this edition of Blue Notes, we'll review some of the more significant rule changes.

### **Pitcher going to his/her mouth while on the mound**

Under rule 8.02(a)(1) a pitcher is now allowed to touch his / her mouth or lips while on the mound, so long as he / she is not in contact with the pitcher's plate when doing so, and so long as he / she clearly wipes the fingers of his / her pitching hand dry before touching the pitcher's plate. If the pitcher goes to his / her mouth while on the pitcher's plate, the penalty is still a ball. An umpire based on the weather conditions, may still allow pitchers to blow on his / her hand while on the pitcher's plate.

### **Pitcher changing to a defensive position during an inning**

Rule 3.03 has been updated to allow for a pitcher to change to another position only once during an inning. In other words, a pitcher who starts the inning pitching, would be allowed to switch to play an infield position and then return after one batter only once during an inning. No longer can teams flip flop pitchers and fielders. Remember, after returning to assume the pitching position, the pitcher is entitled to 8 warm up pitches.

### **Ambidextrous pitchers**

Rule 8.01(f) has been created to address ambidextrous pitchers. A pitcher must indicate visually to the umpire which hand he / she intends to pitch with and must pitch with that hand until the batter is out, reaches base, the inning ends, a substitution is made for the batter, or the pitcher sustains an

injury. In the case of an injury, the pitcher may switch hands but will not be permitted to pitch with the injured hand the remainder of the game. There are no warm up pitches given if the pitcher simply switches hands.

### **Players and positions listed on the line-up card**

Rule 4.01(c) has had significant changes made to it with regards to line-up cards. The only person in the batting order who specifically needs to be listed is the designated hitter. All other fielding positions listed for players on the line-up are simply a courtesy. Also as a courtesy now, potential substitute players should be listed but failure to list a potential substitute player shall not make them ineligible to enter the game later on.



### **Batted ball striking the batter while in the batter's box**

Rule 6.05(g) addresses a batter being struck by a fair batted ball while he / she is standing in a legal position within the batter's box. This has been commonly interpreted as a foul ball and now the rule defines it as one. However, this does not allow the batter to intentionally interfere otherwise he / she would be called out.

### **Plate umpire interfering with a catcher's throw**

Rule 5.09(b) has been updated to include a catcher's throw attempting to prevent a stolen base or retire a runner on a pick-off play. The comment also includes a throw by the catcher back to the pitcher.

### **Detached equipment touching a pitched ball**

Rule 7.04(e) was created to address a pitched ball being touched by detached equipment including a mask, cap, helmet, or uniform detached from its proper place on his / her person. The ball remains in play and the award is made from the position of the runners at the time the ball was touched.