

PROPOSED RULE CHANGES FOR 2024

The Board is recommending that the rules be changed to allow runners *returning* to a base to overrun that base and to run wide of the base if necessary to avoid a collision with a fielder. The current rules only permit runners to over-run a base when *advancing* to a base. This change is recommended to ensure the safety of both the fielder and the runner, and to make the rules applicable to runners returning to a base consistent with those applicable to runners advancing to a base.

The Board is also recommending that the rules be changed so that a runner who has advanced more than halfway between first and second, or between second and third, is required to continue toward the next base, and may not return to the previous base. The purpose of this rule change is to hopefully eliminate the so-called “pickle” situation and to clarify the responsibility and liability of the runner when he is between bases. However, an exception to this new rule permits a runner to return to a base if he has advanced beyond the commitment line when anticipating that a flyball may not be caught.

The Board is further recommending that the rules be changed to make specific what necessarily follows from the above change: that except for plays at the plate, a fielder may tag a runner or force him out, but a tag is never necessary. The proposed rule change promotes the safety of fielders and runners by eliminating the necessity of tagging runners who are returning to a base. The Board also recommends specific language governing the runner who runs wide of a base, to conform with the umpires’ current practice.

The Board is finally recommending that the rules be changed to specifically provide that multiple fielders should not converge on a base for the purpose of making a play on a runner if by doing so they impede the progress of the runner. The umpires have told us that this is sometimes the source of confusion and that a change may be necessary to promote the safety of runners and fielders by ensuring that runners have a path to the base.

Here is the specific language which implements these changes. Existing language is in black, and revised language is in red.

3. PLAYING FIELD

B. Commitment lines. There is a “batter’s commitment line” 30 feet from home plate on the first base line, and there ~~is a~~ **are “runner’s commitment lines” halfway between first base and second base, halfway between second base and third base, and** 30 feet from third base on the third base line. See Rules **8(B)**, 8(G) and 9(B) regarding these lines.

8. FIELDERS and RUNNERS

B. Sliding and baserunning ~~over running a base~~. A runner is not permitted to slide feet-first. However, a runner may slide head-first to return to a base. A runner who falls down when advancing or returning to a base may crawl or lunge to that base. When a play is being made or will potentially be made on a runner, he is permitted to over-run **or run wide of** a base **if necessary to avoid a collision with a fielder** ~~to which he is advancing without being put out. A runner may not over run a base to which he is returning.~~ **Runners who have touched or crossed a “runner’s commitment line” must continue to the next base, except that a runner who has done so in anticipation of a fielder failing to catch a flyball may return to his previous base. Except when forced to advance by another runner, a runner who rounds a**

bag without touching or crossing the “runner’s commitment line” may be tagged or forced out at the base last reached.

C. Tags and force-outs. Except at home plate, see G below, ~~to put a runner out,~~ a fielder may either tag or force out a runner ~~to put that runner out attempting to advance to a base, but must tag a runner attempting to return to a base.~~ A runner is forced out when a fielder possessing the ball touches the base before the runner reaches it. A runner who runs wide of the base is deemed to have reached that base if his foot touches the ground at or beyond the imaginary line extending from the front of the base.

E. Obstruction. A fielder may not obstruct a baserunner by being in the basepath or near a base unless the fielder is fielding a thrown or batted ball or he reasonably expects to make a play on the runner. ~~Multiple fielders must refrain from converging on a base to make a play on a runner if by doing so they impede the progress of the runner.~~ When attempting to field an errant throw, a fielder must attempt to avoid a collision with a runner. Fake tags are considered obstruction. The umpire will award an obstructed runner the base or bases he would have safely reached without the obstruction.

G. Plays at home. A runner who touches or crosses the “runner’s commitment line” ~~on the third base line,~~ see Rule 3(B), must continue toward the “runner’s plate,” see Rule 3(A), and cannot return to third base. To score a run, a runner must touch the runner’s plate and will be called out if he touches home plate. To put out a runner who has touched or crossed the commitment line ~~on the third base line, or who is forced by another runner to advance to the plate,~~ a fielder must touch home plate or the mat while in possession of the ball. ~~A tag is not permitted.~~