



Central Maine Board of Approved Baseball Umpires

Ratings

Why do I need to do ratings?

The most important aspect of the field rating is for each umpire to have the opportunity to give feedback and help fellow umpires in each aspect of the profession that we see as important.

Completing ratings are the responsibility of each umpire and must be done with an open mind and thoughtfulness.

Ratings Categories:

There are five separate areas in which we rate our partners for each game: The categories are:

1. Professionalism,
2. Appearance,
3. Mechanics,
4. Rules
5. Game Administration.

Rating rationale:

When completing your rating, you must remember to have some rationale behind what you are doing. Because you are working with your best friend or with someone who you have been told by others is very good or ... should not sway your judgment.

Use your judgment, not others', when rating your game partner.
Rate each partner you work with from a fresh perspective every time you work with them.

What to look for.....

For starters, look for nothing.....

A partner's strengths or shortfalls should show up without looking for them. You will know when something doesn't look, feel or seem right! Or, you will know when you look at your partner and say, "Wow that was smooth and looked very good."

Going into a game looking for things to critique a partner on will make your judgment biased and distract you from doing your job. Now to the ratings in order of ease.....

Appearance

This should be the easiest category to rate.

Does your partner look like a professional when they are walking onto the field?

Are they wearing the appropriate clothing? i.e. Navy or Light Blue shirt w/ SMUA Patch on left chest and number on right sleeve, Navy jacket or plate coat w/ SMUA Patch on left chest and number on right sleeve, Charcoal Gray Pants, a CM logo hat, Black or Navy Blue belt, black shoes (polished), Gray or Navy Blue undershirt, Black or Navy Blue socks, Black or Navy Blue Gloves and Navy Blue, Black or Gray Ball Bags.

(Note: Do not rate apprentices down for not having patches, numbers, or a CM hat. This is not within their control. Also, allow some time early in the season for first year members to get their hats, numbers and patches taken care of.)

Do they look put together? i.e. Is their shirt tucked in? Are their pants worn appropriately? Is their clothing not wrinkled? Is all of their clothing, including their hat, not faded or looking ratty? Are they not wearing excessive jewelry? Does your partner look well groomed? i.e. Have they shaved or do they have a heavy scruff going? Is their hair, head (if they have any) and facial, well groomed? Are they clean?

General Rule: If this person walked in off the street would you respect them for their appearance? Remember, you only have one chance at a first impression. Everyone has total control over this category and it should be taken very seriously.

Professionalism

Once again a fairly straight forward category to rate.

Professionalism can be broken down into 3 categories:

- A. Before the game.
- B. During the game (jurisdiction).
- C. Post-Game

Before the Game:

Professionalism starts well before the game ever does.

First, does the Home Plate Umpire contact the Base Umpire prior to game day to discuss a meeting time and place and also to confirm who has the plate and bases? Note: If the Plate umpire does not make this connection the Base Umpire should do so.

Second, does the umpire show up at the site at the scheduled time, generally 30-45 minutes prior to the first pitch?

Third, does the plate umpire run a complete yet effective pre-game conference with their partner? Does the Base Umpire pay attention during this pre-game conference and only speak when a clarification needs to be made? Lastly, is the umpire cordial? Or are they bringing all kinds of issues with them to the game and unloading them on their partner during game preparation time?

During the game (jurisdiction):

When umpires arrive on the field are they approachable by game personnel/coaches?

Will they answer some brief questions and discuss any potential situations/issues that may arise that day without getting into an all-out debate or lesson about the rules?

Does the umpire carry themselves in a courteous/business-like manner?

Is a level of emotional consistency held throughout the game? i.e. Don't be joking around before the game if you do not want the game to be a joke. Don't be a task master if you are going to "allow" some stuff "to go" and vice-versa.

Does the umpire handle and manage the game with maximum efficiency? i.e. If situations arise that need special attention are they dealt with in a reasonable and appropriate fashion?

After the Game:

Does your partner walk off the field with you regardless of any situations which may have occurred during the game?

Does your partner wait for you to get changed up or do they run off and leave you alone?

Lastly, do you have a conversation and discuss any situations that arose during that game? This should be the time for immediate feedback. Each umpire should get into the habit of asking their partner, "Did you see anything that stood out?" Or, "Did you see anything I need to work or focus on more?"

An umpire's refusal to discuss game situations at the game site should be considered unprofessional. Getting a rating with negative comments should not be a surprise to an umpire. These things should have been discussed immediately after the game. Do you remain a team until you leave the parking lot and beyond?

Mechanics

Does the umpire use all prescribed mechanics (NCAA) discussed annually at our meetings and taught to our apprentice umpires? i.e. Did your partner make up their own mechanics because they work better for them? Remember, when it comes to mechanics, opinions do not matter. There is a right way to do things and all others are wrong. Decisions to change mechanics are made by the SMUA or the CMBABU, not individuals.

- Does the umpire communicate clearly by using all prescribed hand signals as well as verbalizing appropriately when needed?
- Does the umpire have an accurate and consistent strike zone throughout the game?
- Is the umpire in the appropriate position to make calls?
- Does the umpire appropriately anticipate plays but not anticipate calls?

Note: Learn the proper mechanics!!! Each year I see comments on people's ratings explaining mechanical deficiencies when the rater themselves are in fact the incorrect party. Do not rate people down on mechanics if you do not fully understand them yourself.

Rules Application

Sometimes this becomes a confusing category to rate. Often times people feel that if nothing came up during the game a rating for rules can not be made. This is not true. Every game, every play and every pitch has several rules applications. These rules may not always be noticeably enforced but can be assumed by a level of proper play that they are being enforced.

Obviously, rule interpretations on what we may consider major or unusual situations are the ones that stand out in our minds but an evaluation of the entire game should be made.

- Does the umpire follow all Federation Rules or applicable rules for summer or men's baseball?
- Does the umpire demonstrate a realistic philosophy for rules interpretation in game situations? i.e. Sometimes controversial but should be discussed before the game. This is generally an issue for sub-varsity games. At no time should rules be stretched or interpreted differently for Varsity or upper level games. And at no time should any safety rule be ignored or philosophically adjusted.
- Does the umpire demonstrate common sense in handling unusual situations?
A little preventative umpiring can be of great help before rules have to be enforced. Remember most coaches and players do not understand many of the more intricate rules which could hold a very serious consequence. For example: Player A is wearing jewelry. The umpire makes the player remove the jewelry and lets the Coach know of the infraction and issues a team warning. This is the umpire's duty. It makes complete sense to also tell the coach if another player is caught with jewelry on they will have to be ejected. Give the coach a chance to address his team about this matter. Also, make sure your partner knows that you have made the ruling and that the warning has been issued.

Game Administration and Control

- Does the umpire run an appropriate, courteous, business like pre-game conference?
 - Does the umpire keep control of the game? Examples: Does the umpire keep the game moving?
 - Does the umpire address small things in an appropriate manner before they become large issues?
 - Does the umpire deal with coaches and players in an authoritative but respectful manner?
 - Does the umpire make firm decisions? (IE: Is there a wishy-washy feeling when calls or rulings are made? Is there an appearance of confidence, with the absence of arrogance?)
 - Does the umpire avoid “unnecessary” socializing with coaches, players or spectators?
 - Does the umpire adjust well to game situations? (IE: Did the umpire allow a confrontation to compromise his ability to effectively umpire the remainder of the game or were they able to put the situation behind them?)
 - Does the umpire handle situations such as weather or other unforeseen delays in a calm professional manner?
 - Does the umpire use “good common sense” throughout the entire pre-game, game and post-game?
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Now, the numbers...

The most difficult part of the rating system is taking all of the information you have gathered during a game and assigning them a number value.

Although the post-game comments and comments on the rating should be paramount, the numbers are what most umpires focus on.

Members of our board rate and are rated over a very broad spectrum.

The latter, how people are rated, should vary seeing we all have different strengths and weaknesses.

However, the way we rate should be fairly consistent.

Ratings Received

Umpires on our board were rated with a low average rating of 7.00 to the highest average rating of 9.53. The mean of all ratings was an 8.57.

This indicates the majority of umpires are rated in the upper part of the field ratings.

The top 9 umpires on the board are all above a 9.00.

Out of the top twenty umpires, 8.67 is the lowest field rating. Six of the top twenty umpires have above a 9.00 rating.

Ratings Given

This is where the issue is...

Raters ranged from a low average of 6.73 to an average high of 9.86.

Assuming umpires are working with a cross section of the board (which may vary from umpire to umpire) these numbers should not be separated by 3.13.

Umpire Rationale

The argument which has been heard in the past is that an umpire who works more varsity games presumably works with better umpires and the ratings they give should be higher. Those working mostly sub-varsity games would be rating partners lower because they may be working with less experienced umpires. This simply does not work out.....

Six (6) out of the seven (7) "hardest" raters on the board are predominantly varsity level umpires. While at the same time seven (7) of the ten (10) most lenient umpires are predominantly varsity level umpires. We need to make the standards for these scores more consistent.

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Rating Standards

I know everyone has an opinion on where they base their rating. The opinion part is what needs to be addressed. We need to have a solid basis for determining a rating.

My suggestions:

- Remember when looking at these criteria each of the five categories are separate.
- The umpire with the best overall appearance on the board may not be mechanically sound or vice-versa.
- The rater must be thinking about each category individually.

A rating of 10: Excellent - The umpire proves to be a standard bearer for what all umpires should be attempting to achieve. An umpire to emulate.

A rating of 9: Very Good - The umpire does everything to an excellent level but may have a few very minor issues during the game. For example, a missed mechanic but not on a consistent basis and does not have a major impact on the game.

A rating of 8: Good - The umpire meets the standard for being a varsity caliber umpire. Only has occasional minor issues which do not seriously impact the game.

A rating of 7: Satisfactory - A solid umpire who meets the standards of the board. This umpire is capable of working sub-varsity and lower level summer games with an occasional upper level assignment when needed. This umpire needs minor work which can generally be corrected through more training and more experience.

A rating of 6: Below Standards - The umpire exhibits deficiencies that can be addressed by the umpire themselves. Possibly having bad habits that impact their ability to effectively umpire the game.

A rating of 5: Serious Issues - The umpire lacks a basic understanding of what is expected of them. Does not understand or intentionally chooses to ignore the standards the board has set forth. The umpire repeatedly shows this misunderstanding. The umpire needs to have these issues addressed.

A rating of 1-4: Egregious Issues - The umpire has serious issues which warrant a conversation with either the Executive Board, Ethics Committee or Interpreter depending on the category with an issue.

Conversation

Let's try to do what we can to make this system work better for everyone. We need to come up with a consistent standard we can all live with and be willing to abide by.