

Iowa High School Baseball Thoughts & Tips

- *by Ira Blue*

Gosh darn running lane. I've heard that line a few times while talking to my umpire buddies. It isn't easy with a batted ball rolling down the first base line, catcher and batter-runner blocking your view, you got a possible fair/foul call, **and** the batter-runner goes out of the lane. Crap. The running lane was created in 1882. Old Ira was not umping then but he's closer to that year than any of you. Rule 8-4-2-g is our starting point but through years of official interpretations and case book plays here's some fundamentals to remember:

- 1) Running lane is 3 feet wide in foul territory last 45 feet to first base
- 2) Batter-runner is in the lane if **any** part of his foot is touching the lane lines
- 3) The intent of the rule is to keep the batter-runner from screening the fielder behind him from the first baseman in front of him
- 4) The fielder must throw the ball
- 5) The throw must be from **behind** the batter-runner
- 6) It's OK to be outside the lane, just worry about where he was at the time of the alleged interference
- 7) If we call it, **kill** the baseball, call the batter-runner out and return other runners to the bases occupied at the time of the pitch
- 8) We'd like to see a quality throw to rule interference but we also don't have to hit the batter-runner to call it, like when the fielder lolly pops the throw into right field fearing he'd injure the batter-runner out of the lane

A Carl Childress 2013 book has 16 pages of rulings, history, plays and official interpretations on the running lane in all 3 codes!! It isn't easy, and these fundamentals have some gray areas, but hopefully they will help you.

A popular test question is the batter hits a grounder to the right side of the infield. The first baseman moves to field the ball while the pitcher begins his usual "banana route" to cover the bag. The batter runner is completely outside the running lane the last 45 feet and as their paths converge 10 feet from the bag their feet get tangled and down they both go. Old Ira jumped on that one: running lane interference! Nope...it's obstruction because the pitcher is not fielding a baseball and we know running lane interference is for throws from behind the batter-runner to first. Old Ira missed that question. **Gosh darn running lane.**

Have a good one guys !