

A dark, semi-transparent overlay on a baseball game scene. In the background, a batter in a white uniform with "WRIGHT" and "18" on the back is swinging a bat. A catcher in full gear is crouching behind home plate. An umpire in a dark uniform is positioned behind the catcher. A runner in a blue uniform is sliding into home plate. The stadium lights and a large crowd of spectators are visible in the background.

WBSC

OBSTRUCTION

UMPIRE INSTRUCTION

Definition of Terms:

OBSTRUCTION is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of any runner.

6.01 (h) (7.06) When Type A obstruction occurs, the umpire shall call or signal “Obstruction.”

Rule 6.01 (h) (Obstruction) Comment: If a fielder is about to receive a thrown ball and if the ball is in flight directly toward and near enough to the fielder so he must occupy his position to receive the ball he may be considered “in the act of fielding a ball.” It is entirely up to the judgment of the umpire as to whether a fielder is in the act of fielding a ball. After a fielder has made an attempt to field a ball and missed, he can no longer be in the “act of fielding” the ball. For example: an infielder dives at a ground ball and the ball passes him and he continues to lie on the ground and delays the progress of the runner, he very likely has obstructed the runner.

There are two types of obstruction. These types are commonly referred to as Type A Obstruction and Type B Obstruction.

Type A Obstruction occurs when the defense is making a play on the runner who was obstructed *OR* when the batter-runner is obstructed before first base.

That is the rule definition of obstruction. However, to better understand the rule we have to know what is meant by "not in possession of the ball" and "in the act of fielding the ball".

What is the definition of "in the act of fielding the ball"? The umpire must know what is a legal attempt at fielding the ball. The definition is a legitimate effort by a fielder to retire a runner. What is a legitimate effort? Reasonable and ordinary effort. For example if a fielder mishandles a ground ball but it is within a step and a reach then he is still considered to be making a play.

Some common example of Type A Obstruction are:

- **The batter-runner is obstructed before reaching first base on a ground ball to an infielder,**
- **A runner is obstructed while in a rundown,**
- **A runner is obstructed as a fielder is throwing to a base in an attempt to retire that runner (including a pickoff attempt or a stolen base attempt).**

a) If a play is being made on the obstructed runner, or if the batter-runner is obstructed before he touches first base, the ball is dead and all runners shall advance, without liability to be put out, to the bases they would have reached, in the umpire's judgment, if there had been no obstruction. The obstructed runner shall be awarded at least one base beyond the base he had last legally touched before the obstruction. Any preceding runners, forced to advance by the award of bases as the penalty for obstruction, shall advance without liability to be put out.

EXCEPTION: If the batter-runner is obstructed before first base (a form of Type A Obstruction) after he has hit a fly ball, and that fly ball is legally caught by a fielder, the play shall proceed with no reference to the obstruction. In this situation, the obstruction on the batter-runner has no impact on the batter-runner's ability to advance on the bases because the batted ball was caught.

Rule 6.01(h) Comment: When a play is being made on an obstructed runner, the umpire shall signal obstruction in the same manner that he calls “Time,” with both hands overhead. The ball is immediately dead when this signal is given; however, should a thrown ball be in flight before the obstruction is called by the umpire, the runners are to be awarded such bases on wild throws as they would have been awarded had not obstruction occurred. On a play where a runner was trapped between second and third and obstructed by the third baseman going into third base while the throw is in flight from the shortstop, if such throw goes into the dugout the obstructed runner is to be awarded home base. Any other runners on base in this situation would also be awarded two bases from the base they last legally touched before obstruction was called.

SIGNALS/VOICE/MECHANICS: When Type A Obstruction occurs, the umpire shall immediately call “Time” (both hands above your head) and then point with the right hand at the location of the offense and vocalize loudly “That’s Obstruction.”

The second type of obstruction (commonly referred to as Type B) is when the runner is obstructed while NO PLAY is being made on that runner.

Some common types of Type B Obstruction are:

- The batter-runner is obstructed (usually by the 1st baseman, but it could be another fielder) after rounding 1st base on a hit to the outfield.**
- A runner is held or pushed by a fielder after a missed or wild throw gets past that fielder,**
- A runner is forced to change course or direction because a fielder (while not in possession of the ball or in the act of making a play) is standing in his way.**
- The batter-runner is obstructed before first base on a base hit to the outfield.**

6.01(h) When Type B Obstruction occurs, the umpire should point at the offense and vocalize “That’s Obstruction.” The play shall proceed until no further action is possible.

If a subsequent play is made on a previously obstructed runner and that runner is tagged out before he has reached the base that he would have reached had the obstruction not occurred, the umpire shall call “Time” at the moment that the obstructed runner is tagged out. The umpire will impose any penalties that will nullify the obstruction, awarding the obstructed runner the base that he would have reached had the obstruction not occurred.

The umpire may consider many factors in determining where to place an obstructed runner...the position of the ball when the obstruction occurred, the position of the runner when the obstruction occurred, the speed of the runner at the time of the obstruction and after the obstruction occurred. Also, if the base coach is holding the runner. The umpiring crew may consult with one another to reasonably determine where runners should be placed in order to nullify the obstruction.

Rule 6.01 (h)(2) Comment: Under (7.06(b)Comment) when the ball is not dead on obstruction and an obstructed runner advances beyond the base which, in the umpire's judgment, he would have been awarded because of being obstructed, he does so at his own peril and may be tagged out. This is a judgment call.

NOTE: The catcher, without the ball in his possession, has no right to block the pathway of the runner attempting to score. The base line belongs to the runner and the catcher should be there only when he is fielding a ball or when he already has the ball in his hand.

SIGNALS/VOICE/MECHANICS: When Type B Obstruction occurs, the umpire should point at the location of the offense and vocalize "That's Obstruction." When an obstructed runner is tagged out before reaching the base that he would have reached had the obstruction not occurred, the umpire shall call "Time" at the time that the runner is tagged out. The umpire will then make any base awards that would nullify the obstruction.

You can also have obstruction by a fielder blocking a base without the ball. Such as a first baseman blocking the base on a pick off attempt or a middle infielder blocking the base on a steal play.

You can also have obstruction when a runner steals second base and the throw is wild, while the runner is trying to get up the infielder obstructs him in trying to get up and go for the next base. Here the umpire would call obstruction and wait until all play has stopped before any awards are made.

We also need to know that obstruction can be called on a fielder trying to make a play on a ball if he commits a flagrant act such as tripping a runner when he is making a play.

Video:

