



# ***“What just happened?”***

A Parents' *Brief* Guide to Softball

by

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Director of Marketing and Communications

IGSA

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Dear Parents,

This guide is for the sole purpose to help explain common misunderstandings I have seen and heard between coaches and parents during my time in IGSA as a parent in the stands, and as a coach.

I too, have shared the same questions and confused moments when my daughters started playing softball. It is a fun, fast-paced game that has many similarities to baseball, but a number of different rules as well.

My intention is to explain and hopefully entertain you with some of the more common situations I have seen. Feel free to get mad, hopefully laugh, and but most importantly, please understand.

If you do not like or agree with a softball situation, that's okay. But, please ask. Ask a coach, an IGSA board member, but ask.

Here we go, and please drop me an email. I appreciate the feedback.

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## Drop 3rd Strike (D3S) “Drop what?”

“My daughter was at bat with 2 strikes, on the 3rd strike, the catcher dropped the pitch, and the coach yelled ‘Run’ !”.

### WHY?

The coach wanted the batter to advance due to the D3S rule.

This rule gives the batter a chance to get on base if the catcher drops the pitched 3rd strike.

Whether the batter swings or the pitch is a strike, if the catcher drops the ball, the batter runs.

If the pitch is a ball, the batter does not need to run to 1B.

### When does this rule apply?

Less than 2 outs, no runner on 1B or 2 outs, runner on 1B.

### Purpose of this rule?

D3S gives the runner a chance to advance, and also prevents the defense from creating a double/triple play.



## Infield Fly:

“Why was my kid out when she hit a pop fly, and the fielder dropped the ball? The ump called Infield Fly!”

The batter is out when a “catchable” ball is caught or dropped (around the infield/outfield area) by an infielder (and sometimes an outfielder).

A “catchable” ball is a ball that can be caught with “ordinary effort” by the fielder.

This is at the discretion of the umpire. Judgement is based on fielder effort, not location.

### Are you kidding?

No, like D3S, this rule is to prevent the defense from creating a double play.

Without this rule, a fielder could deliberately drop a fly ball, and create a double or triple play.

This rule benefits the offense.

### Any thing else?

Yes, runners may advance after the ball is caught and they have tagged the base they came from.

Also, runners can advance without tagging the base they came from if the ball is not caught.

### So when does this rule apply?

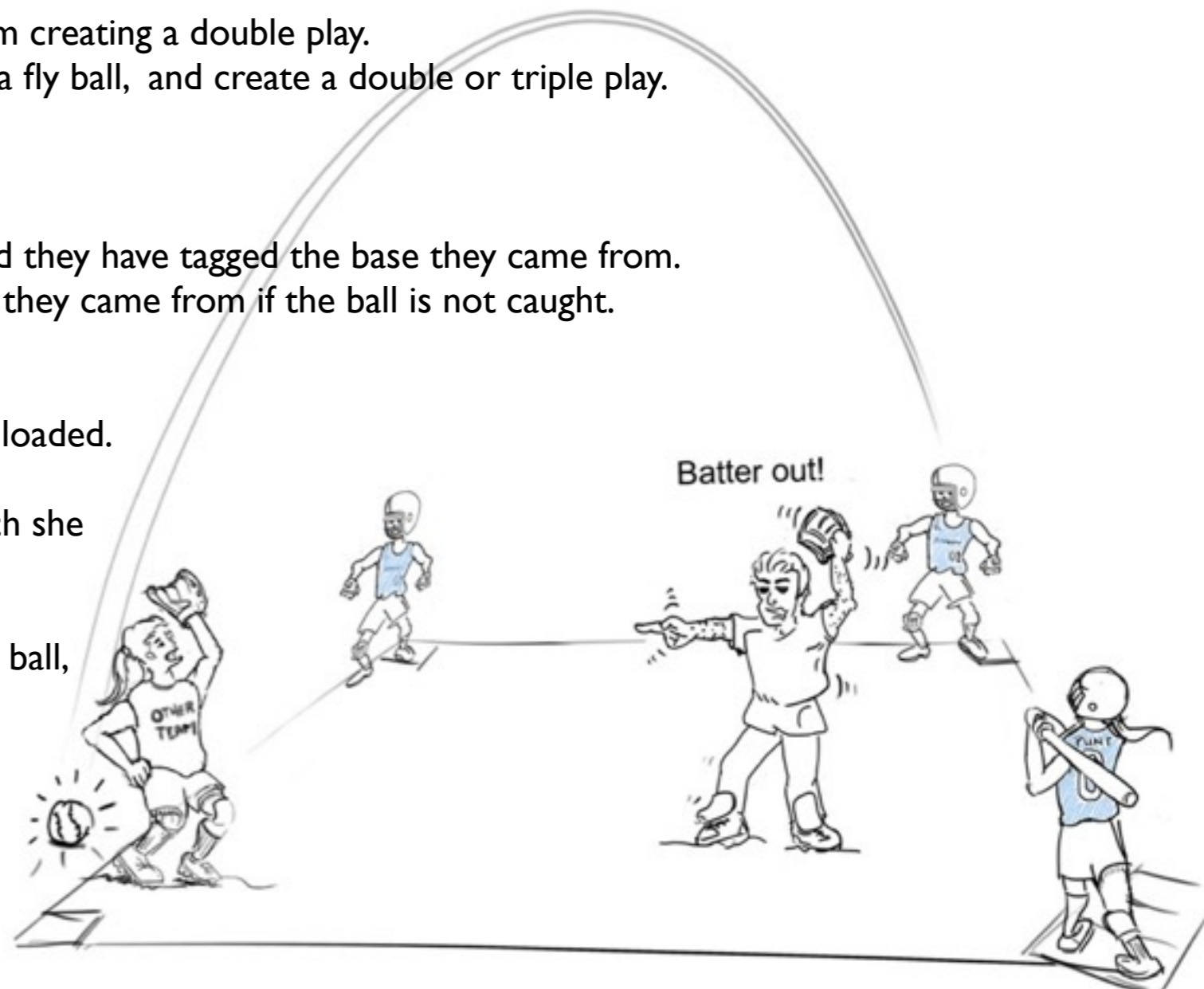
Less than 2 outs: Runners on 1B & 2B, or bases loaded.

A double play can result if:

1. The runner decides to tag the base from which she came from and advances, then is tagged out.

OR

2. She advances at her own risk after a dropped ball, then is tagged out.



## Hesitation:

“My daughter was in-between bases. When the catcher threw the ball back to the pitcher, she was called out. The ump called, “Hesitation!”  
“What’s up with that?”

In 10U and up, once the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the runner has a fraction of a second to advance or return to a base. That fraction of time (up to a second) is at the discretion of the umpire.

The same rule applies in 8U except the ball only has to pass through the pitcher’s circle (not be caught) for the runner to decide.

**BUT...** If the pitcher raises her arm to attempt a play (whether actually throwing the ball or not), hesitation is no longer in effect and the runner is free to continue on or go back.



## Obstruction (Against the Defense):

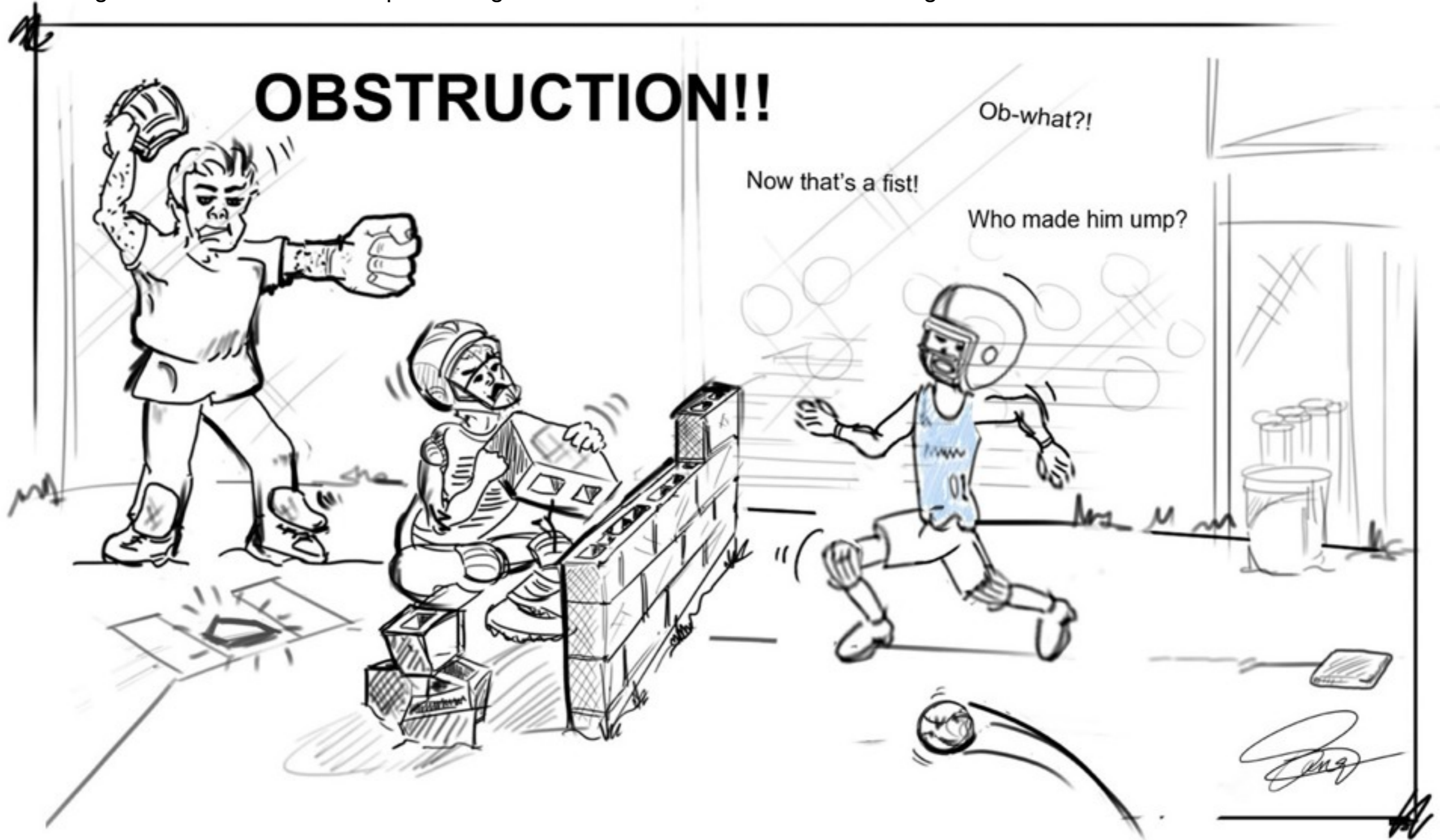
“My daughter did what?”

Obstruction is a call on the defense.

This is most common when a fielder does not have the ball and impedes the runner from advancing to any base.

There are a number of Obstruction situations.

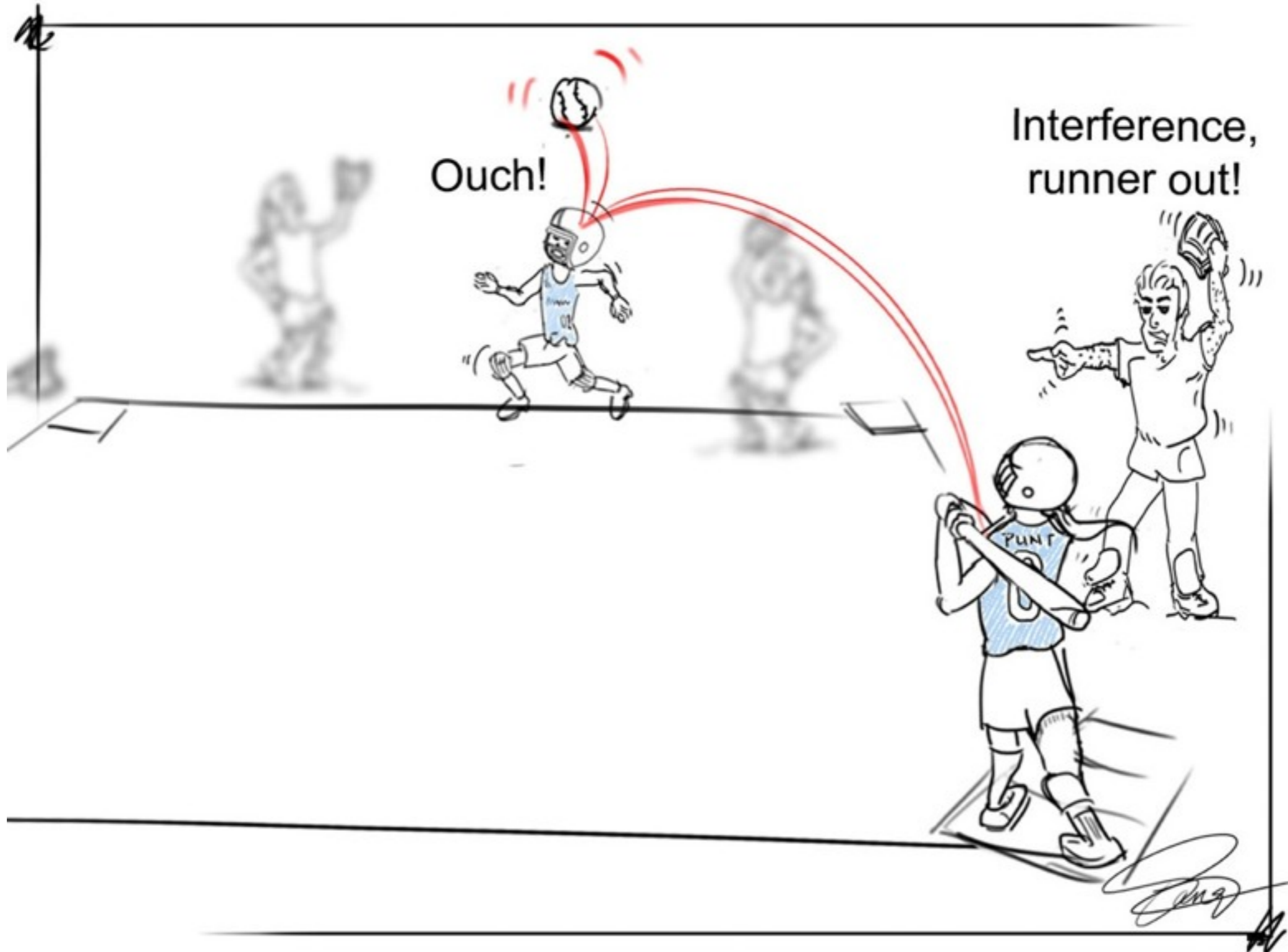
The signal for obstruction is the umpire holding his/her arm out with a clenched fist. This signal is silent.



## Interference (Against the Offense):

“My daughter is out for what?”

Interference is a call on the offense. This is most common when a runner blocks the fielder from catching a batted ball or is hit by a batted ball. There are a number of interference situations. Player to player contact is not necessary for interference to be called.



## AT BAT:

“My daughter was about to hit a home run, when a rule got in the way!”

“My daughter was at bat: 2 strikes, she bunted, and it was a foul ball. She was called out. Is this correct?”

Yes, this is correct. If she were to swing and hit the ball, and foul ball was called, she would get another swing. If the result of a bunt attempt with 2 strikes is ruled a foul ball, the batter is out.

The batter turned to bunt, the pitch was a ball, and the umpire still called “ball”.

Why wasn't the pitch called a strike, she had her bat out there?

Even if the batter positions the bat for a bunt, the batter must make a physical motion to bunt the ball for it to be called a strike.

My daughter was hit by a pitch, but was not walked. Why?

A batter must make an effort to avoid being hit by a pitch in order to be awarded first base.

Her “effort” is at the discretion of the umpire. The umpire may also take in to consideration pitch speed and location of the pitch when determining if the batter made an effort to get out of the way.

My daughter was at bat and the ball hit her hand, but she was not awarded first base. Why?

It depends. Hands are not part of the bat. If the ball hits the hand, and she did not swing, she is awarded 1B, but if she did swing, it is a dead ball strike.

My daughter was bunting. She was outside the batter's box, was hit by a pitch, and called out. Why?

This call has nothing to do with bunting. Because she was outside the batter's box, if a player is hit by the ball, this is considered interference.



## Illegal Pitch: Presenting the Ball

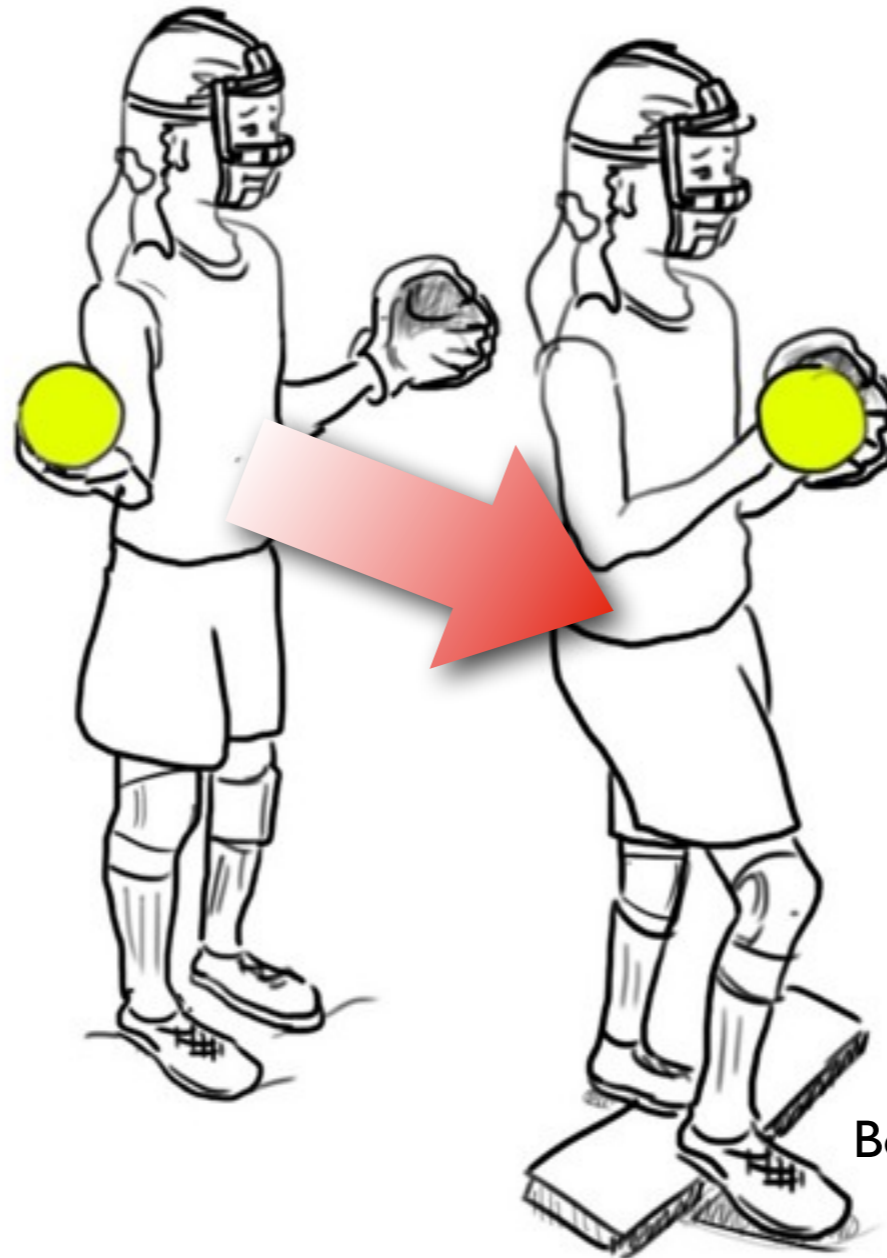
Our pitcher threw a strike but the umpire called “illegal pitch”, something about presenting. What is that?

The ball and glove must be separate when stepping up to the pitcher plate, then bring ball and glove together, and pitch. Any variation of this is grounds for the umpire to call “illegal pitch”.

This is the **CORRECT** way to present the pitch.

Hands separate.

Ball can be in glove OR opposite hand.



Step on pitching plate, pause. Hands together when ready to pitch.

Once pitching motions starts, you must finish.

Both feet contact plate

## Illegal Pitch: Vaulting

Our pitcher threw a strike but the umpire called “illegal pitch”, something about vaulting. What is that?

Vaulting is when the pitcher’s rear or “drag” foot is not in contact with the ground.

One foot must always be in contact with the ground throughout the pitch.



**INCORRECT**

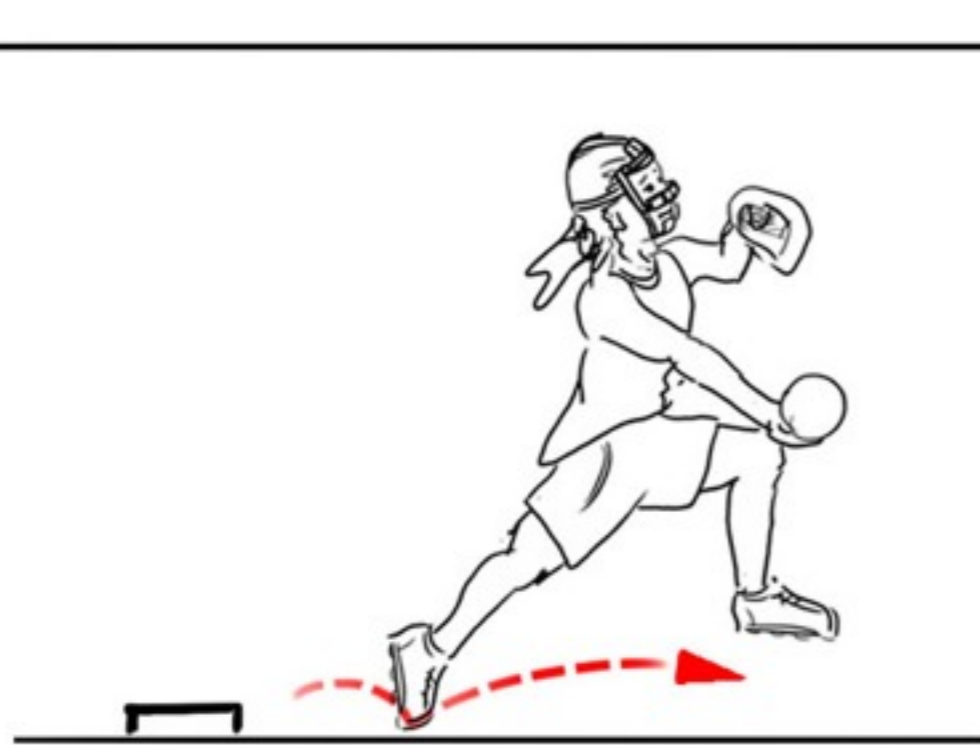


**CORRECT**

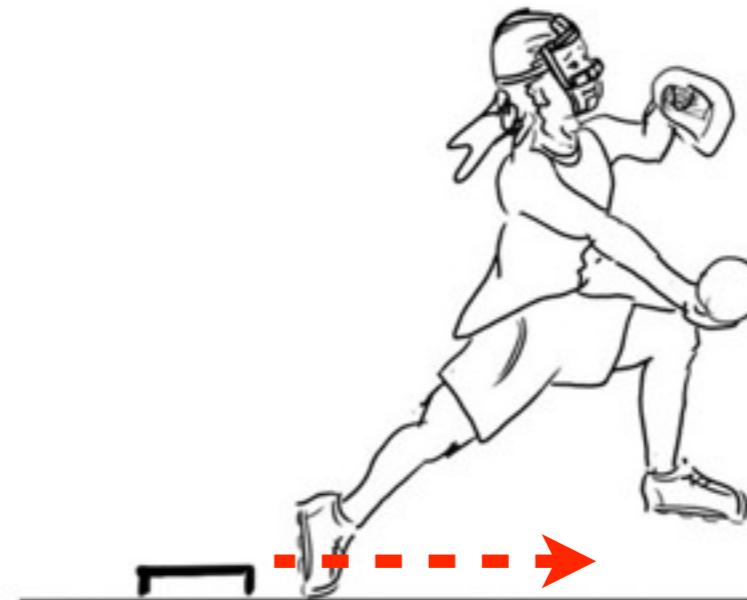
### Illegal Pitch: Crow Hop

What is that?

The pitcher's rear or "drag" foot leaves the ground, and then lands back on the ground before the pitch is released.



**INCORRECT**



**CORRECT**

A handwritten signature in the bottom right corner of the diagram area.

# Rules

# Strategy

# Team

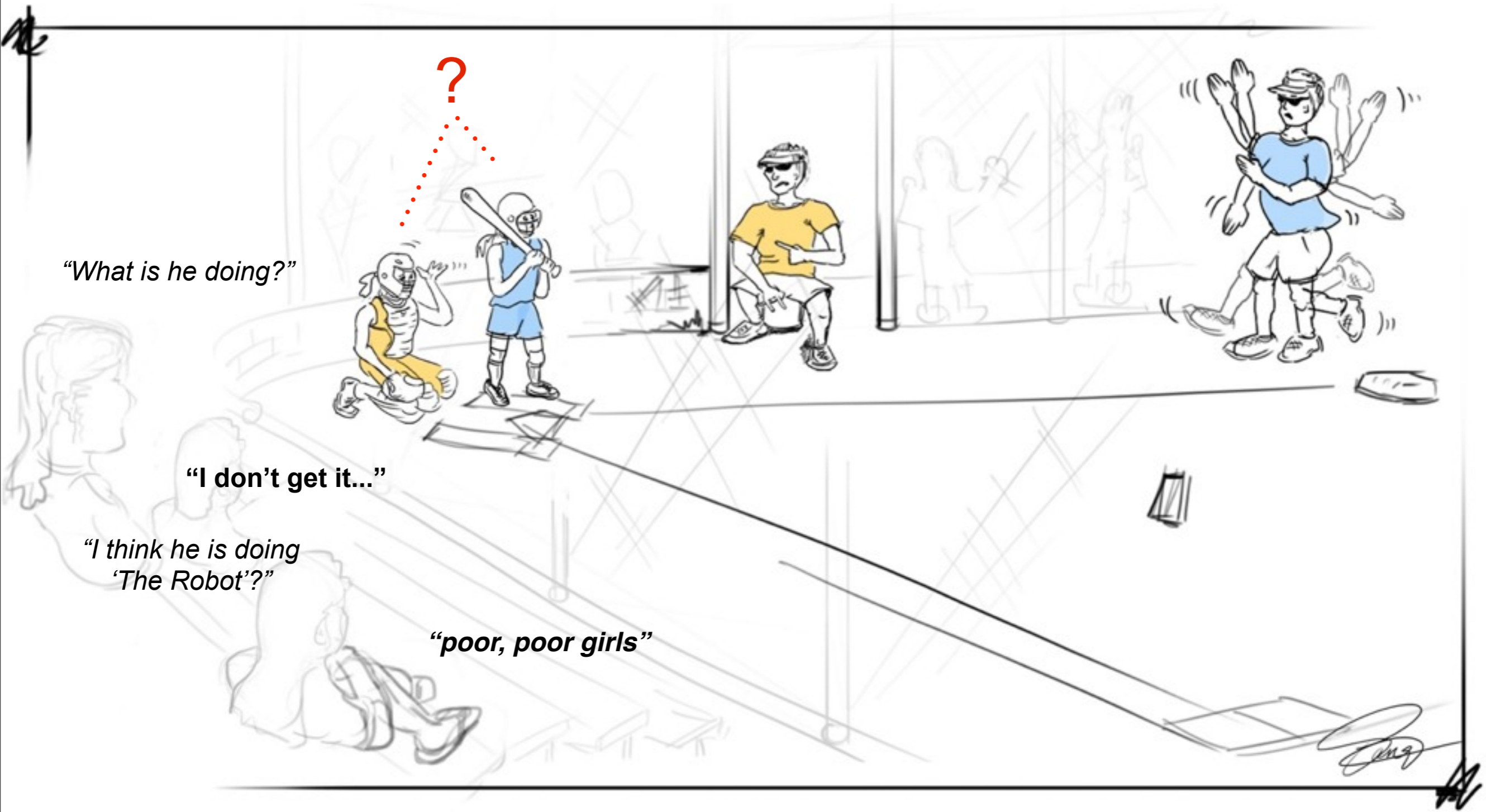
## Signs

**“What is the coach doing with his arms?”**

Coaches will give signals or “signs” to their players on offense and defense.

Signs for the offense tell the runners to steal and tell the batter to bunt, slap hit, swing, or not swing (“take”) on the next pitch.

Signs for the defense tell fielders where to position themselves and also signal what pitch to throw next.



## Strategy

### “Why is my daughter bunting?”

Bunting is a part of softball and often used more frequently than in baseball.

It is a strategic hit to:

- Surprise the infield so a runner can get on base.
- Force an error so runners can advance.
- Sacrifice the batter/runner to advance other runners.
- When and the frequency is dependent on many factors (i.e. fielding and batting skills, runners on base, score, line-up, etc.)

### “What is ‘slap hitting’?”

Slap hitting is when the batter hits the ball from the left side while in forward motion in order to get to first base quicker versus when only swinging or bunting a ball in the conventional batter's stance.

The batter generally tries to hit the ball in between 3B and shortstop.

The batter **MUST** remain in the batter's box while attempting to slap hit.

If the batter makes contact with the ball with any part of the foot outside the batter's box, the batter is out.

Slap hitting is not bunting. If a ball is fouled off with 2 strikes, it is not called out.

### “What is a Courtesy Runner?”

A courtesy runner is a team member who runs in place of a runner already on base. This is often done when a pitcher or catcher gets on base, and the coach wants to rest the pitcher or catcher. Another situation is when the catcher is provided a courtesy runner so she has time to gear up ready for the next inning. This keeps the game moving along and minimizes downtime in-between innings.

## Team

### My daughter's coach is not doing things the way I would. What's up?

- Volunteer coaching is a rewarding challenge. It is teaching, but without formal training, resources, and experience.
- Our league would not exist without our volunteer coaches.
- They are expected to produce results that align with our players and parents expectations.
- IGSA continues to improve the caliber of coaching, and are always open to your feedback.

I appreciate constructive questions. I raise them too often with other coaches, umpires, and parents.

I am confident most coaches would rather discuss a matter rather have an ongoing issue throughout the season.

“Reduce the gossip, just ask the question” (That's a t-shirt).

Last note on this: “The 24-Hour Rule”. Even the calmest of us can get emotionally invested in the game.

Many have saved themselves embarrassment by waiting 24 hours before speaking or writing to the coach about a decision.

Please consider this. Thanks!

### My daughter's coach awards individual players for their performance after practices and games.

### My daughter hasn't been recognized. Should I say something to the coach?

If this is important to your daughter, she should speak with the coach.

It can be difficult for a child to approach an adult for feedback. If the parent is present, even better, but I feel the question needs to come from the player. It will help build the player's confidence to speak for themselves and build player performance.

It is important to approach this constructively. Coaches may have reasons or may have overlooked a player.

Between getting drills done, improving each player, maintaining the team's focus, and making practice fun, details important to the players can unfortunately be overlooked.

Our league goal is to improve our players and coaches.

We provide our coaches with guidelines, but also encourage each to incorporate their own style within reason.

Please provide feedback at the mid and end of season coach evaluations or speak to the Player Agent if a problem continues.

# Rules

# Strategy

# Team

Softball is a sport that requires teammates to work together.  
It is exciting and rewarding when we see our daughter excel.  
Occasionally this enthusiasm turns to frustration towards parents, players and coaches.  
I have found asking, learning, and understanding resolves most matters.

Please help promote this.

*Thank you to all the parents, coaches, and IGSA athletes  
who make IGSA a success!!!*

