

## The Collision Rule

The following note has been prepared in order to clear some level of confusion in the Association about the **Collision Rule**. It is my opinion that different interpretations exist and players and officials have different interpretations of the Rule.

The reason for the additional detail behind this clarification goes back to 1994 when during a Pacific Coast Baseball League game two players collided near 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The fielder was injured and needed surgery to remove his spleen. The injured player subsequently sued the opposition player and the PCBL. The case went to court in 1998. The comments made by Ian Francis, President of the PCBL in 1997 and 1998, about the incident are based on briefings that were received from the Solicitors and Barristers who defended the case for the PCBL. He also read the transcript of the case and the decision and have received regular (monthly) updates on the case including the appeals.

The first point the Judge made was that Baseball is a contact sport. This shocked many people. To support his decision the Judge referred to several rules of baseball. These included tagging a player out (contact has to be made). The rules on Interference and Obstruction infer that contact is made between fielders and base runners.

Whilst Baseball is a Contact sport it **is not a Collision sport** (hence the name of the rule). Rugby League is considered a collision sport. The players deliberately run at each other and collide with each other.

**Players need to try and understand the difference between contact (touching another player) and collision (where you deliberately run into another player).**

**You can not deliberately run through or barge a player in an attempt to knock the ball out of his hands. This is a collision. Similarly, as a fielder, you can not deliberately stand in front of or jump in front of a base runner to block his path to the bag.**

The rules of Interference (when a base runner is penalised for interfering with a fielder chance to field the ball) and Obstruction (**when a fielder is penalised for obstructing the running path of the base runner to the next base**) are very important.

The Judge also made comment that these Rules were given equal importance and there was as much a chance of a runner interfering with a fielder as there was a fielder obstructing a runner. So do not be mistaken in the belief that as a fielder you are always in the right and it is up to the runner to avoid the collision. **Both players have equal responsibility to avoid a collision.**

When the Courts decision was first handed down, some Associations introduced a 'You must slide rule'. This was subsequently amended to a 'both players must try and avoid a collision' rule. Some Leagues still interpret the rule as 'You must slide'. The problem with this is that a check of the reported injury records shows that most injuries occur when players slide into bases. This is particularly so in the lower Grades. This is mainly because some players have only recently taken up the sport and have never been taught how to slide properly. In many cases with older players, the mind might be willing but the body is not able.

**The main point of this note is to advise players that you CAN NOT BARGE or TAKE OUT other players, under any circumstances. This is irrespective if in your believe the opposing player is doing something illegal.**

**You also need to understand the difference between CONTACT and COLLISION.**

Another reality part of the game is that a strong contact may occur. A bad throw which drags the fielder into the path of the runner, runner incorrectly running in the flight path of the ball, tags which take place when the runner and ball arrive at the same time, run down plays, etc, etc. In each of these cases it is important to appreciate that if a strong contact is to be made, then this must be made in the most safe possible way, that is, without raising elbows, dropping shoulders, raising feet, etc. It must be clearly evident that both players have ready themselves to smooth out any detrimental impact of a hard contact situation.

Lastly, it must be fully understood that much of plays in baseball involves a situation where contact is avoidable, players must recognise this and do not persist with a play which sole intention is to create or force an error by inflicting unnecessary contact with an opposing player. The best mental approach to take is the recognition and respect of a good play rather than believing your performance is wrong or even worse that your opposition has contributed to your demise. Each play involves a victor and a loser, learn to praise victors and mature with defeat.

At the end of the day we are supposed to be having fun playing Baseball on the weekend. We should all expect to be fit enough to attend work on Monday to earn a Dollar to feed our families and be ready to have another day to enjoy the sport we care so much about - BASEBALL.

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