

Playing by the Rules

Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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For years I umpired softball and baseball games. Rules were an important part of the game, as they are still supposed to be today.

One of those rules in slow pitch softball was that the base runner must remain on the base until the pitched ball is either hit or goes past the batter. Players then, as today, always looked for ways around the rules and this one was no exception, though it was written very clearly.

A couple of players, or maybe it was only one, thought the way to get around this rule was to stretch your legs, one in front of the base and one on it. To further confuse the issue, they would then begin to move the foot on the base up and down while berating the pitcher.

I warned one such player not to continue this, because when his back foot was in the air he was not on the base. His vocal response is not printable, and sure enough as the next pitch was being tossed, he resumed his antics. When the pitch was still in mid-air, I stepped from behind the catcher and called the offending runner out at first. He was a little angry and let me know about it, claiming "the rule was stupid and he shouldn't be penalized, etc, etc."

He's probably still claiming he was right, but he was out that night and no other runner questioned my call in the following games.

That is applicable to so many rules in life and in sports. They are there for a reason. Just because you don't like them doesn't mean they aren't valid. As long as they are enforced against all sides.

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Come on summer, start warming up! See you in the bleachers!

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