4 UMPIRE MECHANICS FOR THE 70 & 90 FOOT DIAMONDS

Little League

2024 EDITION

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GENERAL PRINCIPLES

PHILOSOPHY

Our version of the 4-Umpire System for the 70 & 90 Foot Diamond is based upon the following philosophies:

1. Front load umpires ahead of the runners / plays whenever possible utilizing rotations.
2. Assign responsibilities and rotations to cover the plays with the highest probability in order of priority.
3. When assigned multiple base coverages, the umpire must let the ball take them to the play. The umpire must remember not to overcompensate their position should they be required to make a call on a subsequent play at another assigned base.
4. Prioritize freedom of movement for fielders and runners so that umpires do not hinder any play as a result of their positioning or rotations. When assigned single base coverage, this will likely require U1 and/or U3 to move into foul territory to observe playing action and adjust their position should a play (ball and runner coming together) develop.
5. Umpire communication is imperative to insure proper coverage and rotations. Communication shall occur early and continuously throughout the development of the play. Communication should be audible and visual as the situation dictates.

TERMS & DEFINITIONS

- **PU:** Plate Umpire
- **U1, U2, U3:** Base Umpire Designations
- **BR: Batter-Runner**
- **R1, R2, R3:** Base Runners at the Time of Pitch
- **NRO:** No Runners On
- **F1 through F9:** Standard Scorekeeping Notation for Fielders
- **HP:** Home Plate, **1B:** First Base, **2B:** Second Base, **3B:** Third Base
- **AOR:** Area of Responsibility
- **CtB:** Chest to Ball
- **C/NC:** Catch / No-Catch
- **F/F:** Fair / Foul
- **Re-Touch:** Tag-Up Attempt
- **NRiSP:** No Runners in Scoring Position
- **RiSP:** Runners in Scoring Position
- **ISP:** Initial Starting Position
- **WA:** Working Area
- **PoP:** Point of Plate – 5 to 7 feet from the fielder receiving the throw directly behind the apex of the plate.
- **Po1:** Point of First Base – 5 to 7 feet from the fielder receiving the throw, allowing U1 to remain CtB, set up for any play back into 1B, and allowing U1 to afford freedom of movement for all runners and fielders.
- **Po3:** Point of Third Base - 5 to 7 feet from the fielder receiving the throw, allowing U3 to remain CtB, set up for any play back into 3B, and allowing U3 to afford freedom of movement for all runners and fielders.

FUNDAMENTALS

1. Umpires must always remain Chest to Ball (CtB).

2. Umpires must always execute Proper Use of Eyes to observe all necessary elements of a play to determine their most appropriate course of action and then make a decision. Proper timing is only possible as a product of Proper Use of Eyes.

3. On balls hit to the infield or base hits not requiring a rotation, each umpire will be responsible for all calls at their assigned base.

4. U2 will have the option to, when not in rotation, either pivot into the working area or use the fundamentals of wedge positioning to position for any developing tag play at 2B. U2 is not required to move inside the traditional working area but must work to achieve appropriate positioning for any developing tag play at 2B. U2 is encouraged to remain on the outside when not in rotation to use the fundamentals of wedge positioning for any developing tag plat at 2B.

5. There are three positions in the course of each play:
    a. **Initial Starting Position (ISP)** – an umpire's position prior to the pitch.
    b. **Reacting** – an umpire's initial movement based on reading the ball, fielders/partners, and the need to adjust positioning.
    c. **Adjusted** – an umpire's follow-on movement, after the reacting position is achieved, that is required to attain the best position for a call.

6. With No Runners on or R3 Only:
    a. U1 will cover F9 for fly balls requiring F9 to move towards the 1B Line.
    b. U2's AOR extends from F7 to F9, including fly balls requiring F7 or F9 to move straight in or back.
    c. U3 will cover F7 for fly balls requiring F7 to move towards the 3B Line.

7. With R1, R2, R1+R2, R1+R3, R2+R3, or Bases Full:
    a. U1's AOR extends from F8, straight in and straight back, all the way to the RF Line.
    b. U2 is not responsible for fly-balls to the outfield.
    c. U3 will cover any fly-ball requiring F8 moving towards the 3B Line or F7 moving in any direction.

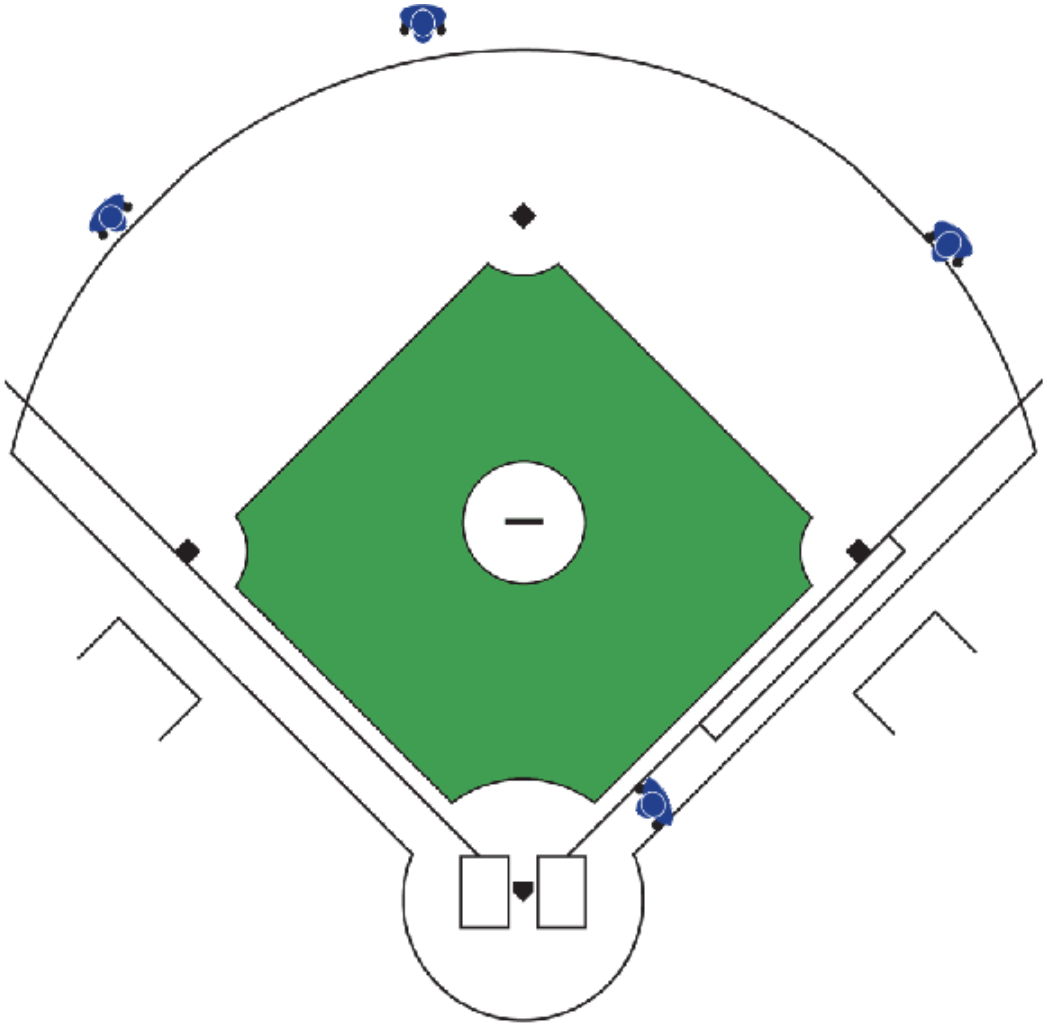
8. U1, U2, or U3 will go out on every flyball to the outfield within their appropriate AOR, especially those that do the following (The 3 Fs):
    a. Threatened the Boundary (Fence)
    b. Threaten Fair / Foul (Fair / Foul)
    c. Result in Converging Fielders (Fielders Converging)

9. If two umpires initially go out on the same fly-ball:
    a. The crew will defer to U2 with NRO or R3 only. The other umpire will recover and/or rotate appropriately.
    b. The crew will defer to U1 with R1 Only or any time with RiSP so that umpires remain positioned ahead of the runners. The other umpire (U3) will recover and/or rotate appropriately.

10. When one umpire commits to go out to cover a fly-ball to the outfield:
    a. That umpire should "go out and stay out."
    b. The other umpires must read "vacate" and "fill." That is, when one umpire vacates to cover a fly-ball to the outfield, the appropriate umpire must "fill" the vacated position.

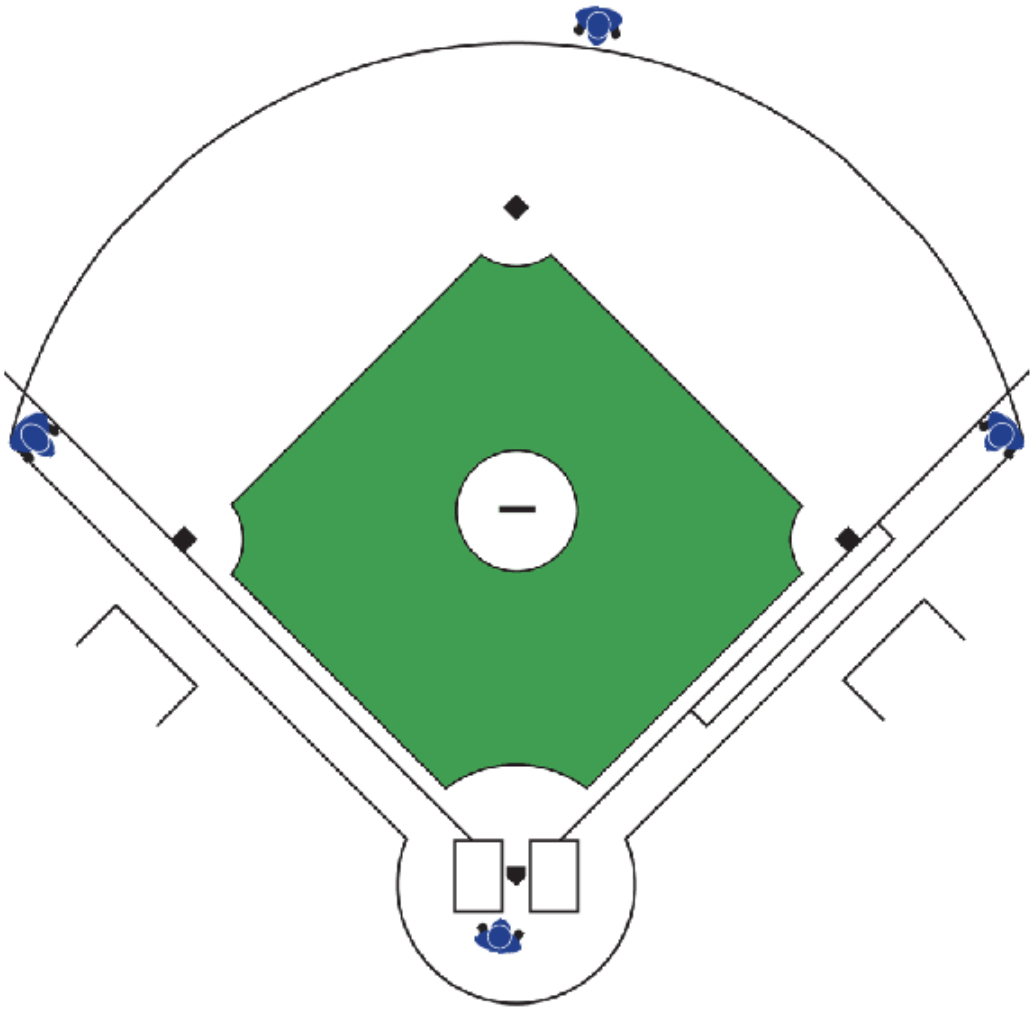
11. Umpires must always Pause, Read, and Respond. Doing so effectively requires umpires to always remain Chest to Ball and execute Proper Use of Eyes.

NEUTRAL POSITIONS BETWEEN INNINGS	Between Innings



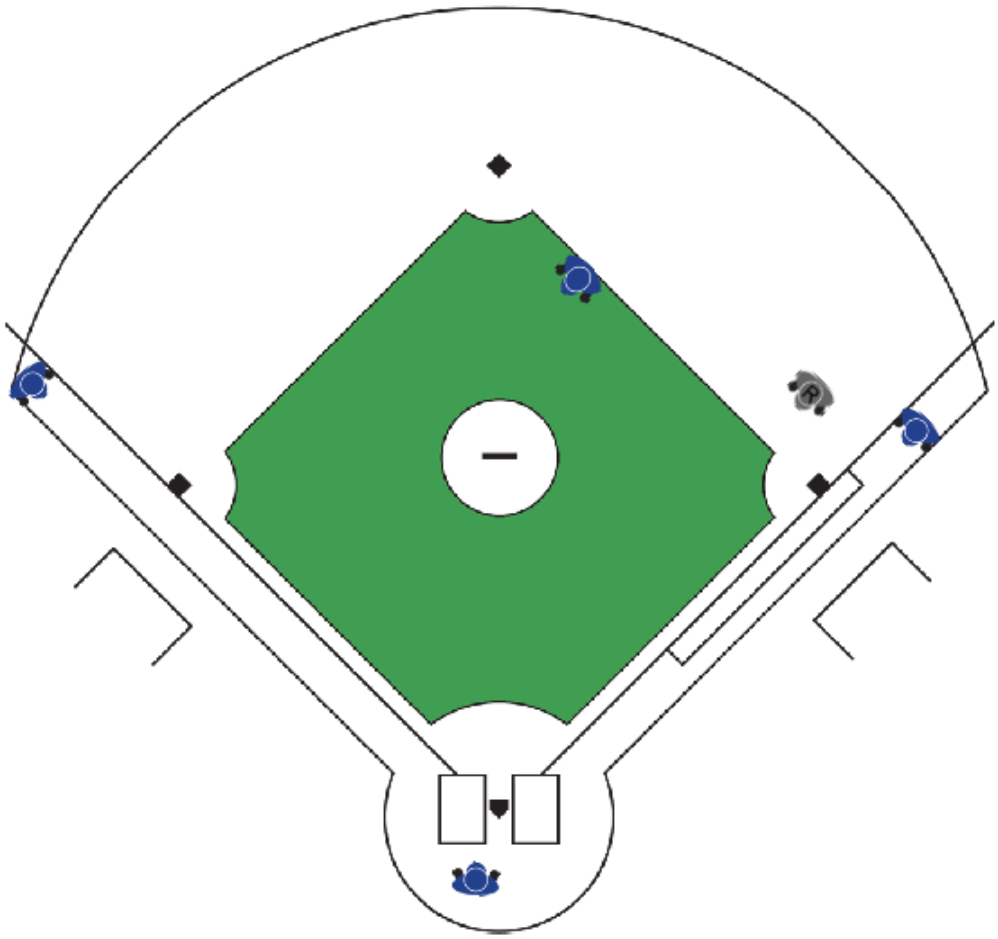
Neutral Positions between Innings			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Defensive side of the field in foul territory near the foul line. • Keep an eye on the offensive team for the on-deck batter and his/her placement in the on-deck circle. • Count Pitches / View the TOC (“Red Hat”). • Alert the pitcher, catcher, and lead-off hitter in the on-deck circle when 2-pitches remain. • Warm-up pitches not to exceed 1-Minute.	• Shallow Right Field. • Avoid players warming up. • When ball is thrown down to 2B move to starting position.	• Shallow Center Field. • Avoid players warming up. • When ball is thrown down to 2B move to stating position.	• Shallow Left Field. • Avoid players warming up. • When ball is thrown down to 2B move to starting position.

INITIAL STARTING POSITION & DEPTH (ISP)	No Runners



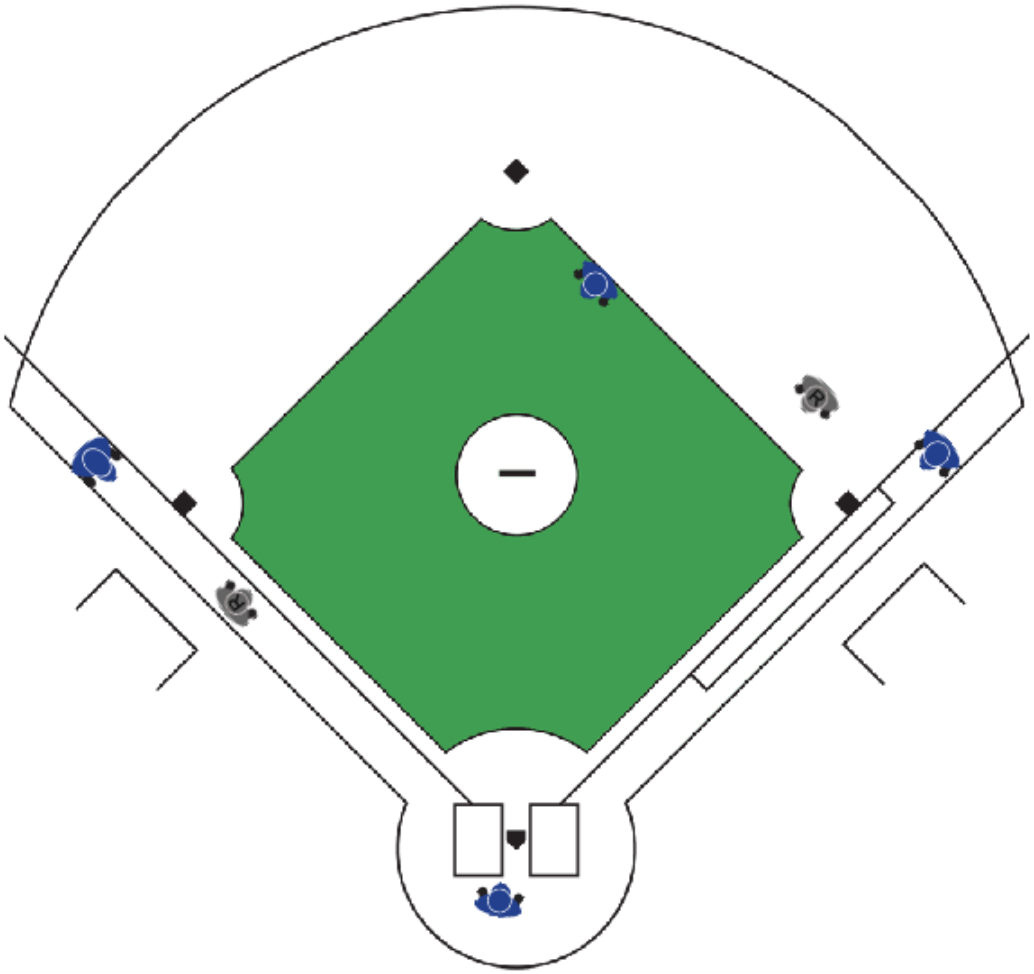
NO RUNNERS ON – INITIAL STARTING POSTIONS & DEPTH		
U1	U2	U3
"A" Position • Set up square to the plate, in foul territory, with the right foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U1 will always be positioned behind the first base bag. • U1 will not position too far/deep from 1B or F3. • U1 will always be positioned behind the first base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F3 while still being able to see F3's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F3. • This will require U1 to move up or back with F3 as F3 adjusts his/her position, but U1 must always maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F3.	"B/C" Position • U2 will be on the outside of the diamond, no more than 1-2 steps into the outfield grass or with heels on the grass/dirt arc of the infield. • U2 may elect to position on either the 1B side or 3B side of 2B, whichever is more comfortable. • No further toward 1B/3B than an imaginary line from the point of HP through the outer edge of the pitcher's mound cutout. • U2 must remain out of the batter's direct line of sight, meaning that U2 will not position in straight-away CF. • U2 must be square to the plate. • U2 must afford freedom of movement for F4 and F6, providing a 2-3 step "halo" around each fielder while still being able to see the shoe tops of both F4 and F6.	"D" Position • Set up square to the plate, in foul territory, with the left foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag. • U3 will not position too far/deep from 3B or F5. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F5 while still being able to see F5's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F5. • This will require U3 to move up or back with F5 as F5 adjusts his/her position, but U3 must always maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F5.

INITIAL STARTING POSITION & DEPTH (ISP)	R1 Only



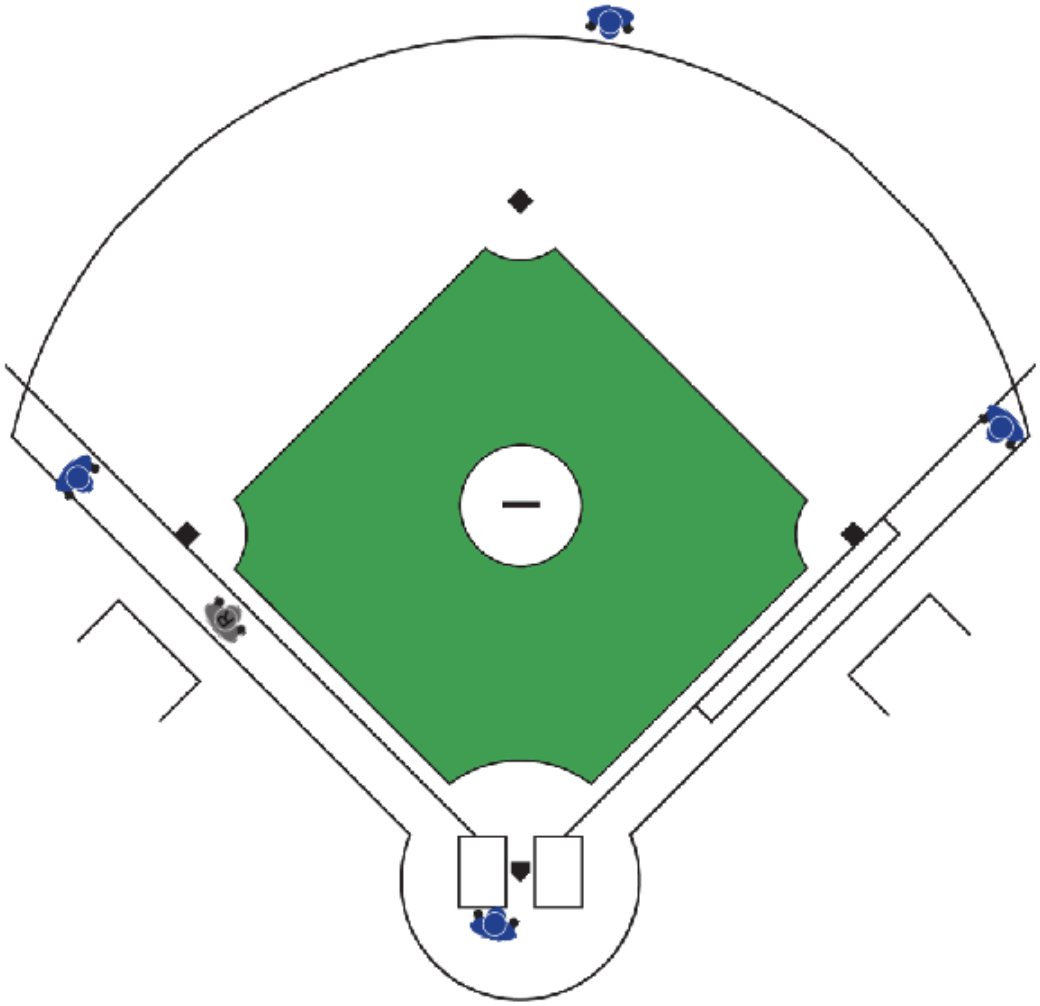
R1 ONLY – INITIAL STARTING POSTIONS & DEPTH		
U1	U2	U3
"A" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • U1 may initially position at an angle for a pick-off at 1B, but by the time the pitch is delivered, U1 will set up square to the plate, in foul territory, with the right foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U1 will need to shorten up to use wedge position for a pick-off or any play on R1 back into 1B. • U1 will always be positioned behind the first base bag but not too far/deep from 1B or F3. • U1 will always be positioned behind the first base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F3 while still being able to see F3's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F3. • U1 will move up or back with F3 as F3 adjusts his/her position, but U1 must always maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F3.	"B" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • U2 will position on the inside of the diamond. • It is recommended that U2 use the "B" position only as diagramed in the graphic above. However, U2 may use the "B" or "C" position on the inside based on personal preference. • This IS NOT the same as in the 2-Umpire System. • U2 should position in the "B" position on the inside of the diamond, on a line tangent from the apex of home plate through the cutout of the pitcher's mound. • Using inside "B," U2 should be square to the 3B foul line. • In "B," U2's heels or toes should be on the grass/dirt line between 1B and 2B.	"D" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • Set up square to the plate, in foul territory, with the left foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U3 should shorten up, if possible, to ensure he/she can rotate on time as required. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag. • U3 will not position too far/deep from 3B or F5. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F5 while still being able to see F5's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F5. • This will require U3 to move up or back with F5 as F5 adjusts his/her position, but U3 must always maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F5.

INITIAL STARTING POSITION & DEPTH (ISP)	Runners in Scoring Position (RiSP)



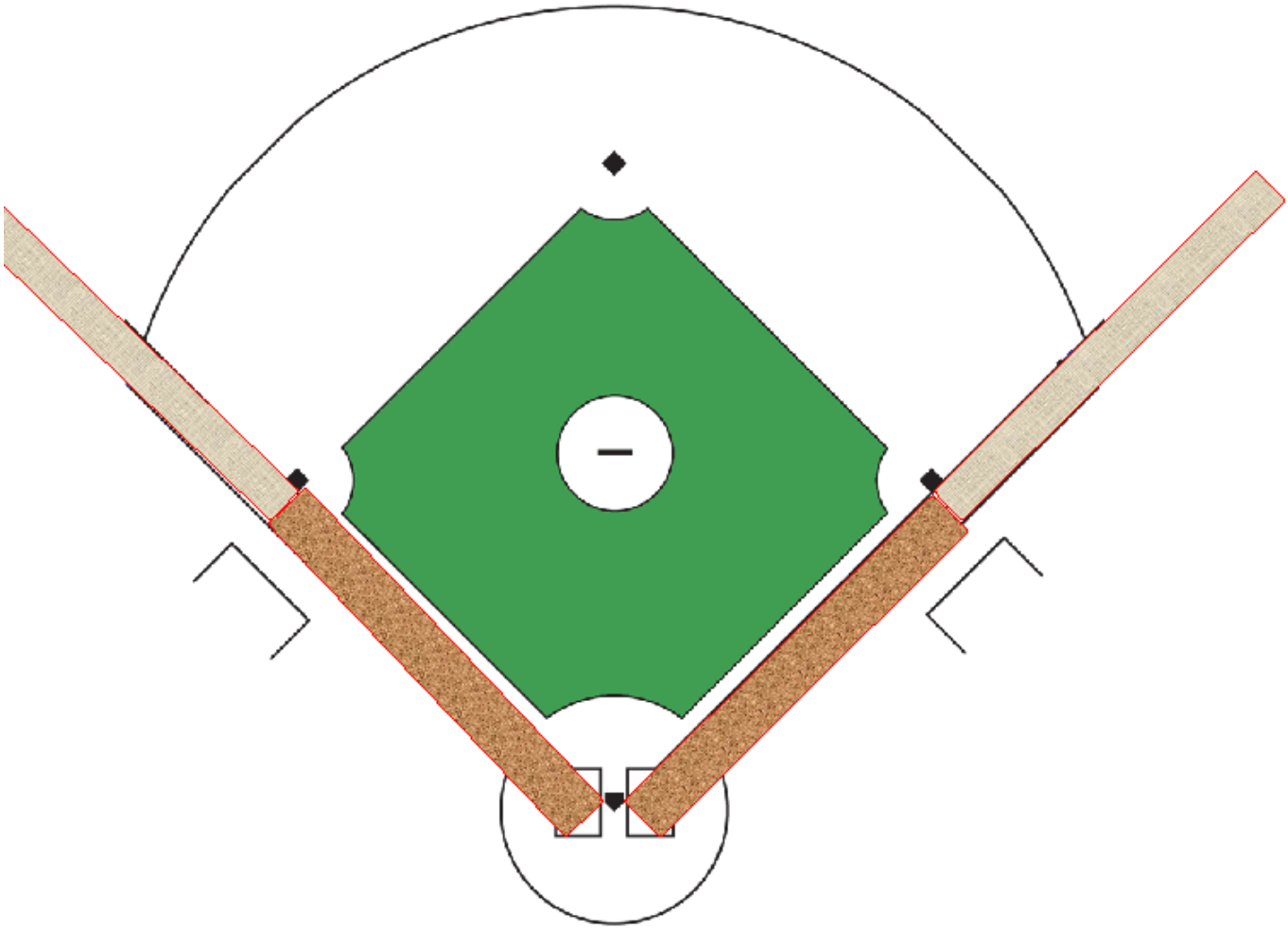
RiSP – R2, R3, R1+R3, R2+R3, or Bases Full		
U1	U2	U3
"A" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • U1 may initially position at an angle for a pick-off at 1B, but by the time the pitch is delivered, U1 will set up square to the plate, in foul territory, with the right foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U1 will need to shorten up to use wedge position for a pick-off or any play on R1 back into 1B. • U1 will always be positioned behind the first base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F3 while still being able to see F3's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F3. • This will require U1 to move up or back with F3 as F3 adjusts his/her position, but U1 must maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F3.	"B" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • U2 will position on the inside of the diamond. • It is recommended that U2 use the "B" position only as diagramed in the graphic above. However, U2 may use the "B" or "C" position on the inside based on personal preference. • This IS NOT the same as in the 2-Umpire System. • U2 should position in the "B" position on the inside of the diamond, on a line tangent from the apex of home plate through the cutout of the pitcher's mound. • Using inside "B," U2 should be square to the 3B foul line. • In "B," U2's heels or toes should be on the grass/dirt line between 1B and 2B.	"D" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • Set up square to the plate by the time the pitch is delivered, in foul territory, with the left foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U3 will need to shorten up to use wedge position for any play at 3B. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag. • U3 will not position too far/deep from 3B or F5. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F5 while still being able to see F5's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F5. • This will require U3 to move up or back with F5 as F5 adjusts his/her position, but U3 must always maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F5.

INITIAL STARTING POSITION & DEPTH (ISP)	R3 Only



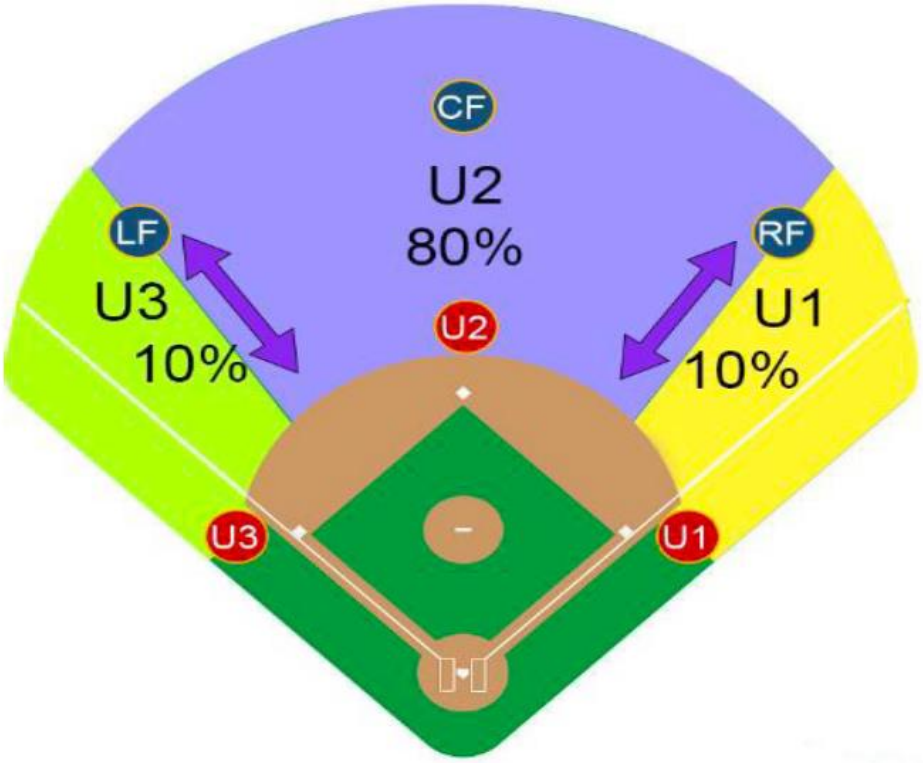
R3 ONLY – INITIAL STARTING POSTIONS & DEPTH		
U1	U2	U3
"A" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • Set up square to the plate by the time the pitch is delivered, in foul territory, with the right foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U1 should shorten up, if possible, to ensure he/she can rotate on time as required. • U1 will always be positioned behind the first base bag. • U1 will not position too far/deep from 1B or F3. • U1 will always be positioned behind the first base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F3 while still being able to see F3's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F3. • This will require U1 to move up or back with F3 as F3 adjusts his/her position, but U1 must maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F3.	"B" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • U2 will be on the outside of the diamond, no more than 1-2 steps into the outfield grass or with heels on the grass/dirt arc of the infield. • U2 may elect to position on either the 1B side or 3B side of 2B, whichever is more comfortable. • No further toward 1B/3B than an imaginary line from the point of HP through the outer edge of the pitcher's mound cutout. • U2 must remain out of the batter's direct line of sight, meaning that U2 will not position in straight-away CF. • U2 must be square to the plate. • U2 must afford freedom of movement for F4 and F6, providing a 2-3 step "halo" around each fielder while still being able to see the shoe tops of both F4 and F6.	"D" Position *From hands-on-knees set* • Set up square to the plate by the time the pitch is delivered, in foul territory, with the left foot adjacent to but not touching the foul line. • U3 will need to shorten up to use wedge position for a pick-off or any play on R3 back into 1B. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag. • U3 will not position too far/deep from 3B or F5. • U3 will always be positioned behind the third base bag and provide a 2-3 step "halo" around F5 while still being able to see F5's shoe tops. This will afford freedom of movement for F5. • This will require U3 to move up or back with F5 as F5 adjusts his/her position, but U3 must maintain the 2-3 step "halo" around F5.

FAIR & FOUL RESPONSIBITIES	4-Umpire Mechanics



FAIR & FOUL RESPONSIBILITIES		
PU	U1	U3
• PU has the call on both lines up to but not including the front edge of the base. • This includes any batted ball that stops short of or fielded in front of either 1B or 3B. • PU will assume the entire foul line when U1 or U3 abandon the line.	• U1 has the call from the front edge of first base and beyond. • This includes any batted ball that is bounding in the air, or on the ground, or is fielded even with the front edge or beyond first base. • If U1 abandons the line, U1 will never come back to make a F/F decision. • When U1 abandons the line, U1 will not have F/F responsibility.	• U3 has the call from the front edge of third base and beyond. • This includes any batted ball that is bounding in the air, or on the ground, or is fielded even with the front edge or beyond third base. • If U3 abandons the line, U3 will never come back to make a F/F decision. • When U3 abandons the line, U3 will not have F/F responsibility.
When to Name Fair / Foul: A batted ball that becomes FAIR or FOUL between the coach's box and the cutout in the area of the infield or becomes FAIR or FOUL within 20 feet of the foul line in the outfield.		
When NOT to Name Fair / Foul: • Before the ball is touched or settles prior to reaching first or third base. • Before a fly ball hit to the outfield is touched by a fielder or touches the ground. • Any obvious foul ball (banging off the backstop, is hit out of play, is farther into foul territory than 20 feet of the foul line.		
All Base Umpires: • If you are 100% certain you saw a batted ball touch the batter and PU does not call "FOUL" or "TIME," then stop all action by aggressively calling, "TIME!" • Remember to give PU a chance to make the call first. • Once time has been called, you can decide if the ball touched the batter in the box (foul) or out of the box on or over fair territory (Batter-Runner = out).		

CATCH / NO-CATCH – Area of Responsibility (AOR)	**NRO or R3 Only**



AOR – NRO or R3 Only			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• All routine C/NC in the infield.	• U1 is responsible for any fly ball requiring F9 to move towards the RF foul line.	• U2 is responsible for any fly ball from F7 to F9, including fly balls requiring F7 or F9 to move straight in or straight back. • The crew will defer to U2 if two umpires chase the same fly-ball.	• U3 is responsible for any fly ball requiring F7 to move towards the LF foul line.

General Guidelines for Going Out on Fly-Balls for Catch / No-Catch:

- Once an umpire goes out, he/she stays out.
- The umpire should run parallel to the fielder attempting to catch the ball and get stopped and set prior to the attempted catch.
- The umpire should run as far as the play allows him/her until needing to get stopped and set for the catch.
- Umpires will go out on every flyball to the outfield within their AOR, especially the "3 Fs:"
  - Fair / Foul – any batted ball in flight that threatens the foul line.
  - Fence – any batted ball that threatens the boundary (Homerun or Ground Rule Double).
  - Fielders Converging – any batted ball requiring fielders to converge to make a catch.
  - NOTE: U1 / U2 / U3 will go out on any fly-ball to the outfield that is in their AOR.

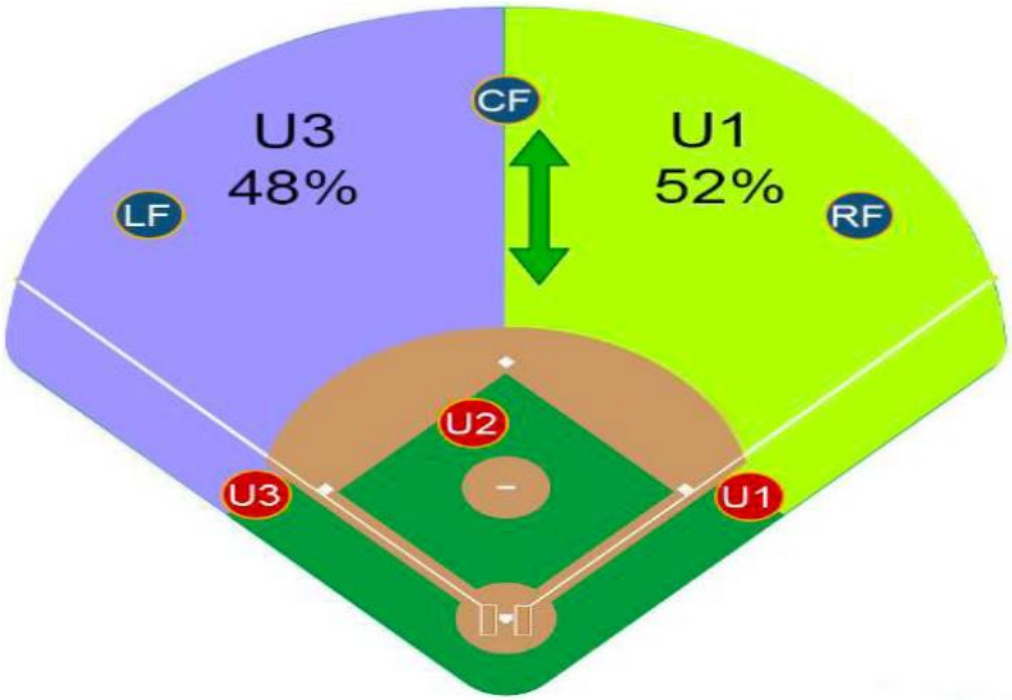
Fly-Balls in the Infield

The PU will be responsible for C/NC on routine fly-balls in the infield with NRO or R3 Only.

Line-Drives in the Infield

- Umpires will be guided by the "*OPEN GLOVE THEORY*" for line-drives in the infield.
- The "Open Glove Theory" dictates that any fly-ball or line drive to which a fielder must open his glove in the direction of the batted ball to attempt to make a play on the ball shall belong to the umpire closest to the open glove.
- U1, U2, and U3 must ensure they can see the shoe tops of the fielder in front of them from their ISP so that they may render a C/NC decision on any line drive fielded below the waist of the fielder.

CATCH / NO-CATCH: Area of Responsibility (AOR)	**R1, R2, R1+R2, R1+R3, R2+R3, and Bases Full**



AOR – R1, R2, R1+R2, R1+R3, R2+R3, and Bases Full			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• The Open Glove Theory for line drives in the infield will dictate PU's responsibilities for C/NC.	• U1 is responsible for any fly ball from F8, straight in or straight ack, all the way to the RF Line. • The crew will defer to U1 if two umpires chase the same fly-ball.	• U2 will take all routine C/NC in the infield. • U2 IS NOT responsible for any fly balls to the outfield.	• U3 is responsible for any fly ball requiring F8 or F7 to moving towards the LF Line.

General Guidelines for Going Out on Fly-Balls for Catch / No-Catch:

- Once an umpire goes out, he/she stays out.
- The umpire should run parallel to the fielder attempting to catch the ball and get stopped and set prior to the attempted catch.
- The umpire should run as far as the play allows him/her until needing to get stopped and set for the catch.
- Umpires will go out on every flyball to the outfield within their AOR, especially the "3 Fs:"
  - Fair / Foul – any batted ball in flight that threatens the foul line.
  - Fence – any batted ball that threatens the boundary (Homerun or Ground Rule Double).
  - Fielders Converging – any batted ball requiring fielders to converge to make a catch.
  - NOTE: U1 / U3 will go out on any fly-ball to the outfield within their AOR.

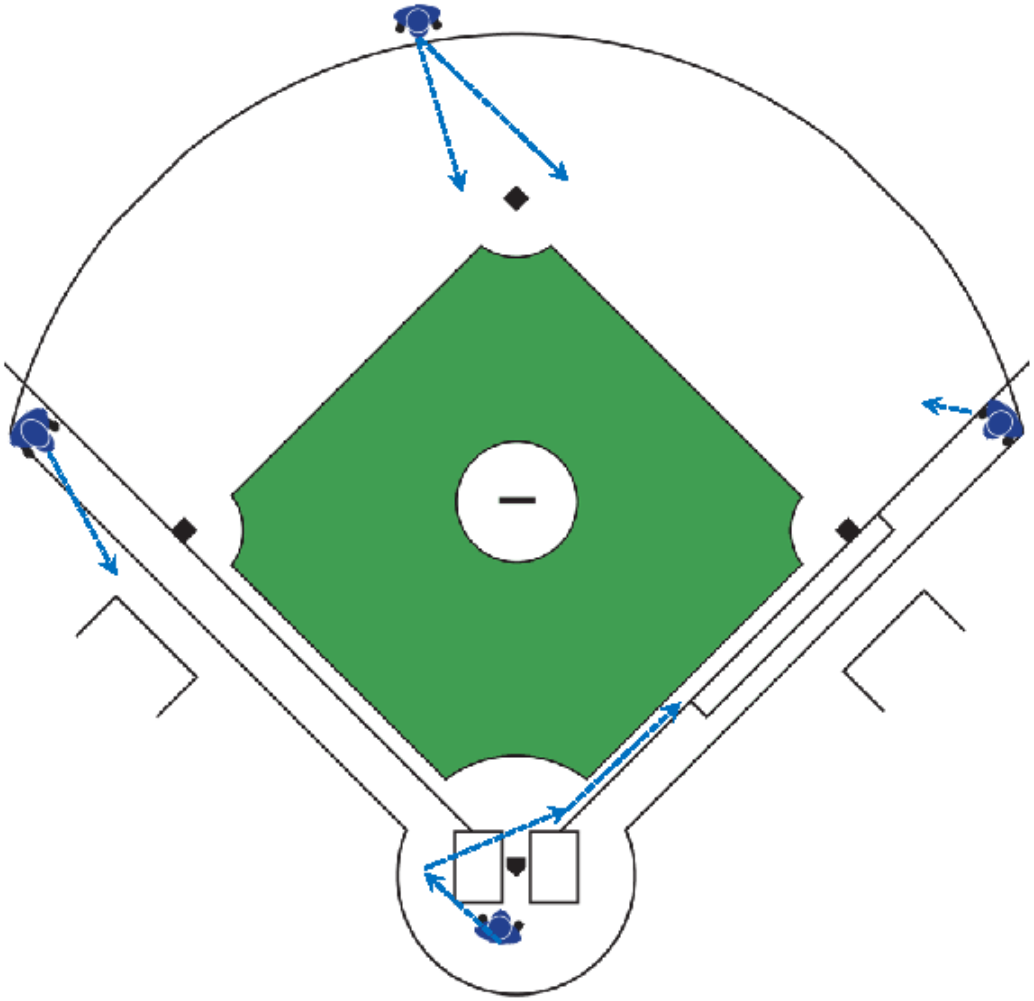
Fly-Balls in the Infield

U2 will be responsible for C/NC on routine fly-balls in the infield.

Line-Drives in the Infield

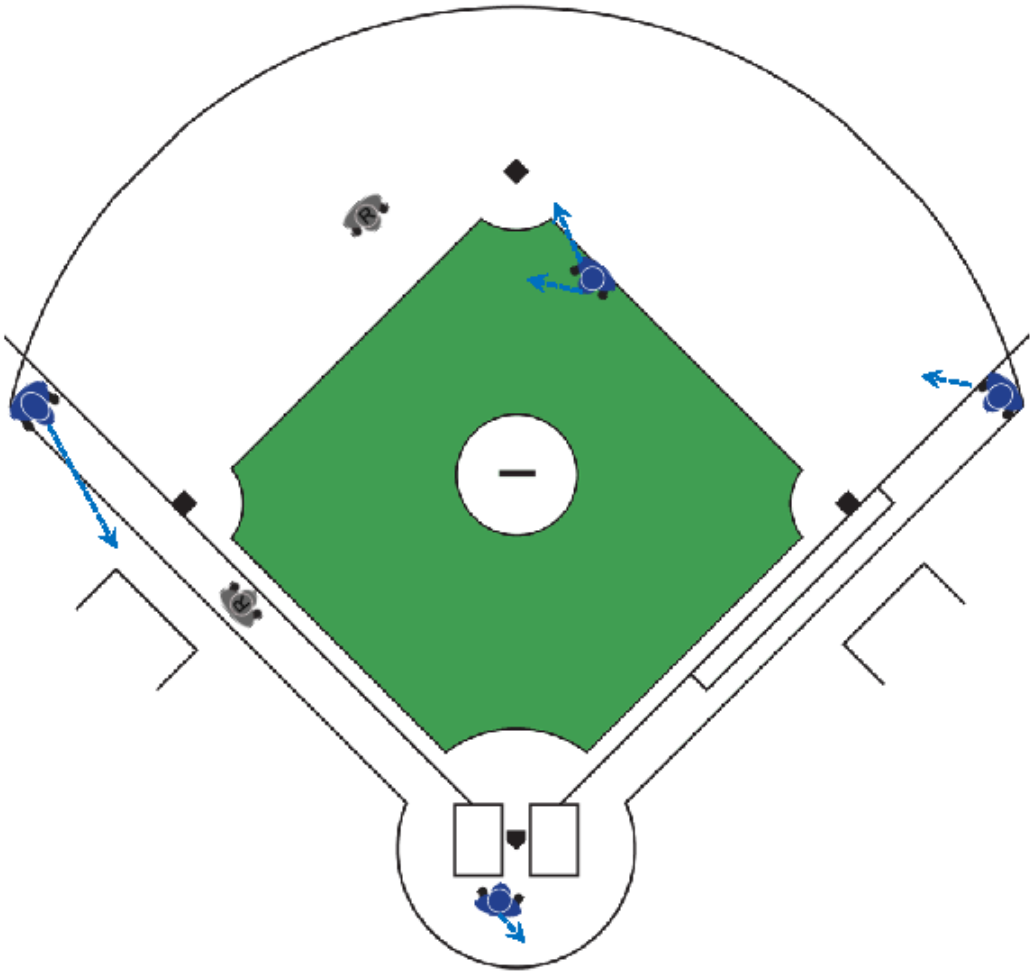
- Umpires will be guided by the "*OPEN GLOVE THEORY*" for line-drives in the infield.
- The "Open Glove Theory" dictates that any fly-ball or line drive to which a fielder must open his glove in the direction of the batted ball to attempt to make a play on the ball shall belong to the umpire closest to the open glove.
- U1, U2, and U3 must ensure they can see the shoe tops of the fielder in front of them from their ISP so that they may render a C/NC decision on any line drive fielded below the waist of the fielder.

ROUTINE PLAY: Balls Hit or Fielded in the Infield	NRO or R3 Only



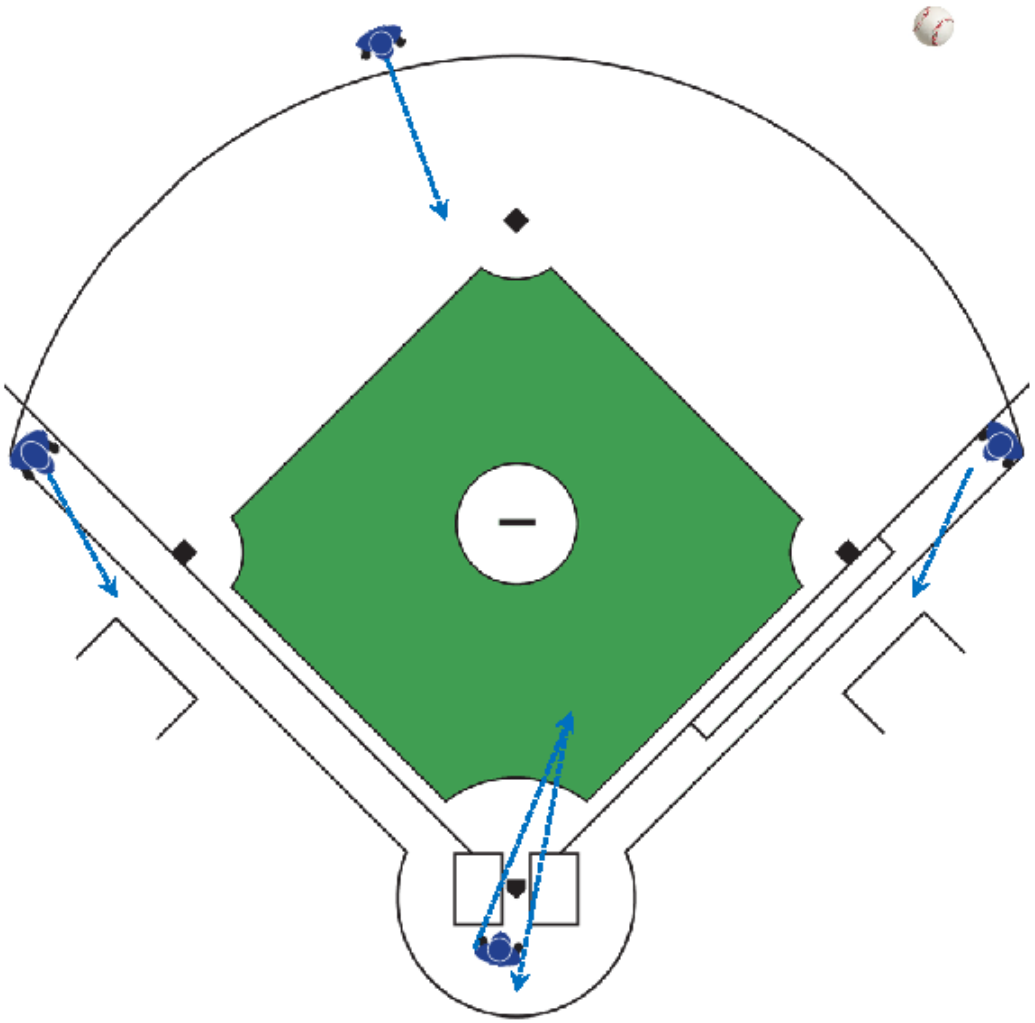
NO RUNNERS ON			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears F2 to the left and trails the BR (TBR). • Observes the play at 1B. • Provides information to U1, if requested. • Returns to PoP with CtB and adjusts from PoP for potential plays at HP. • **NOTE:** With R3 Only, PU will remain at PoP and will not trail the BR. **Responsible for:** F/F, C/NC, and all touches/plays at HP.	• Reads the ball and moves to establish angle for potential play(s) at 1B. • For force plays, U1's "set" position should be approximately 90-120 degrees from the origination of the throw. • For tag plays, U1 should adjust position to find the window. **Responsible for:** F/F, and all touches/plays at 1B.	• Reads the ball and moves to Po2 to get runner sliding at U2 on the outside of the diamond. • Reads the fielder receiving the throw to apply wedge positioning for all tag plays at 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches/plays at 2B.	• Reads the ball and moves to Po3 while remaining CtB in foul territory. • Reads the fielder receiving the throw to apply wedge positioning for all tag plays at 3B. **Responsible for:** F/F and all touches/plays at 3B.

ROUTINE PLAY: Balls Hit or Fielded in the Infield	RUNNER(S) ON BASE (Except for R3 Only)



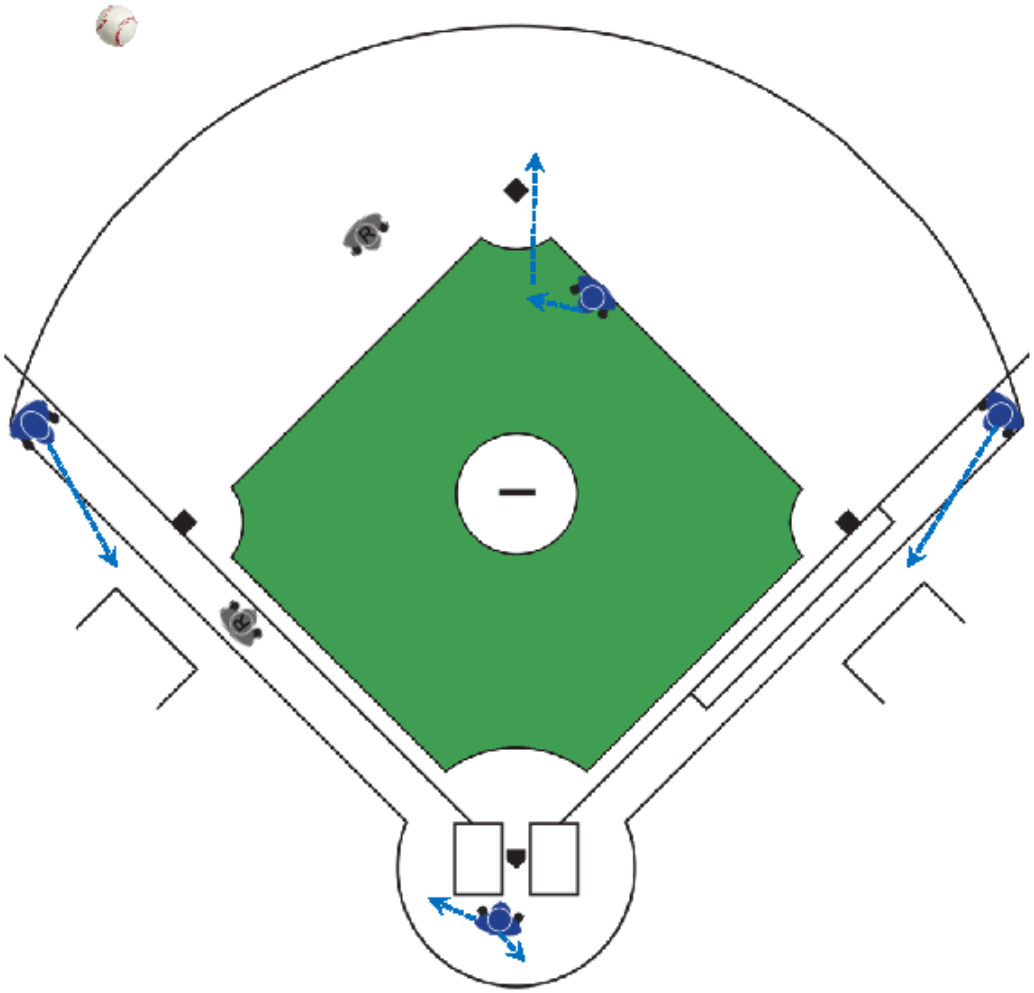
RUNNER(S) ON BASE (Except for R3 Only)			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears F2 to the left and remains PoP to observe the play at 1B. • Provides information to U1, if requested. • PU must remain at PoP and adjusts from PoP for potential plays at HP. **Responsible for:** F/F, C/NC, and all touches/plays at HP.	• Reads the ball and moves to establish angle for potential play(s) at 1B. • For force plays, U1's "set" position should be approximately 90-120 degrees from the origination of the throw. • For tag plays, U1 should adjust position to find the window. **Responsible for:** F/F, Re-touch of R1, all touches/plays at 1B.	• Reads the ball and moves to Po2 (if the play allows) to get runner sliding at U2 on the outside of the diamond. • Establishes angle for potential play(s) at 2B. • For force plays at 2B, U2 should drift towards the midline near the cutout to see the exchange. **Responsible for:** all touches/plays at 2B, including the re-touch of R2.	• Reads the ball and moves to Po3 while remaining CtB in foul territory. • Adjusts position for potential play(s) at 3B. **Responsible for:** F/F and all touches/plays at 3B, including the re-touch of R3.

ROUTINE PLAY: Clean Base Hits to the Outfield	NRO or R3 ONLY



NO RUNNERS ON or R3 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• If necessary and no one goes out, PU will rule on C/NC. • If not, PU clears F2 and remains at PoP to observe all action on a clean base hit. • PU must remain at PoP and adjusts from PoP for potential plays at HP. • **NOTE:** With R3 Only, PU will remain at PoP and will not trail the BR. **Responsible for:** C/NC, and all touches/plays at HP.	• Reads the ball as routine and moves to Po1 while remaining CtB in foul territory. • Observes the BR's touch of 1B. • Reads the runners and fielders, ready to adjust position to use wedge positioning for tag play(s) at 1B. **Responsible for:** All touches/plays at 1B.	• Reads the ball and moves to Po2 opposite the throw, remaining on the outside of the diamond. • Reads the fielder receiving the throw to apply wedge positioning for all tag plays at 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches/plays at 2B.	• Reads the ball and moves to Po3 while remaining CtB in foul territory. • Reads the fielder receiving the throw to apply wedge positioning for all tag plays at 3B. **Responsible for:** F/F and all touches/plays at 3B.

ROUTINE PLAY: Base Hits to the Outfield	RUNNER(S) ON BASE (Except for R3 Only)



RUNNER(S) ON BASE (Except for R3 Only)			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears F2 to the left and remains at PoP to observe all action of the play. • If necessary and no one goes out, PU will rule on C/NC. • PU must remain at PoP and adjusts from PoP for potential plays at HP. **Responsible for:** C/NC, and all touches/plays at HP.	• Reads the ball as routine and moves to Po1 while remaining CtB in foul territory. • Observes re-touch of R1 and BR touch of 1B. • Reads the runners and fielders, ready to adjust position to use wedge positioning for tag play(s) at 1B. **Responsible for:** Re-touch of R1 and all touches/plays at 1B.	• Reads the ball and remains CtB. • U2 should begin to move towards the grass/dirt line nearest the cutout of 2B. • U2 must prioritize freedom of movement for all runners and fielders. • Once the throw clears U2 on the way into the infield, U2 may slip outside to get the runner sliding at U2, prioritizing freedom of movement for all before doing so. **Responsible for:** the re-touch by R2, all touches, and plays at 2B.	• Reads the ball and moves to Po3 while remaining CtB in foul territory. • Reads the fielder receiving the throw to apply wedge positioning for all tag plays at 3B. **Responsible for:** F/F and the re-touch by R3, all touches, and plays at 3B.

TYPES OF ROTATIONS

In our 4-Umpire System for the big diamonds, the following is a list of rotations to be used. In general, there are three main rotations that will be most frequently utilized in this system:

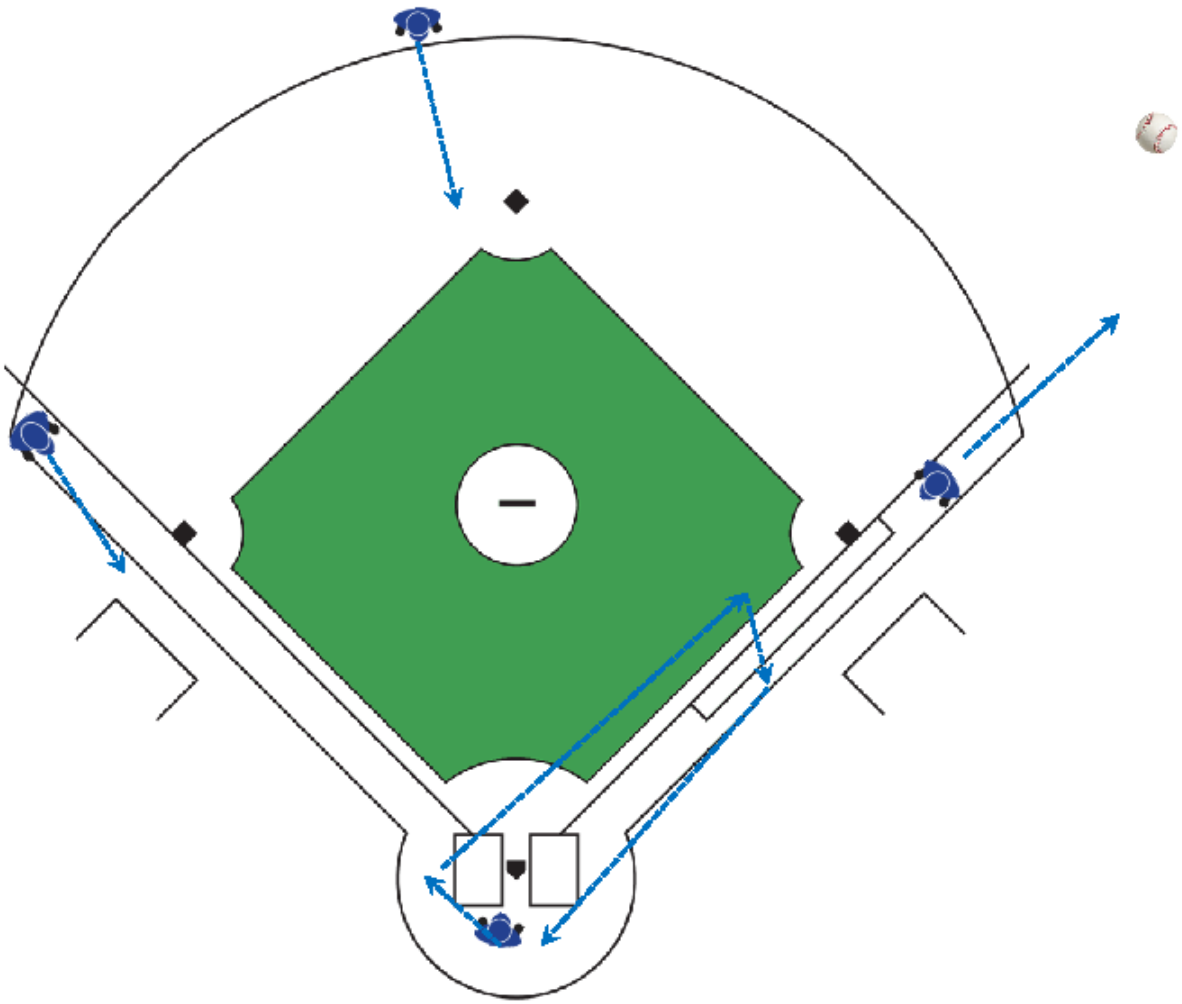
- Full Rotation – used with NRiSP.
- Reverse Rotation – used with RiSP when U3 leaves to cover C/NC.
- U2 Drift:
    - Used in situations requiring U1 to leave with any time a runner(s) are on base.
    - In this rotation, U2 drifts to the right side of the infield to get depth in the working area with CtB. U2 will be responsible for plays at 1B and 2B on all runners.

While these are the three major rotations of this system, there is one additional rotation to be used when U1 goes out to cover C/NC with NRO:

- PU Trail – used with NRO and R1 Only when U1 leaves to cover C/NC. In this rotation, PU will be responsible for all plays and touches by the Batter-Runner (and R1) at 1B.

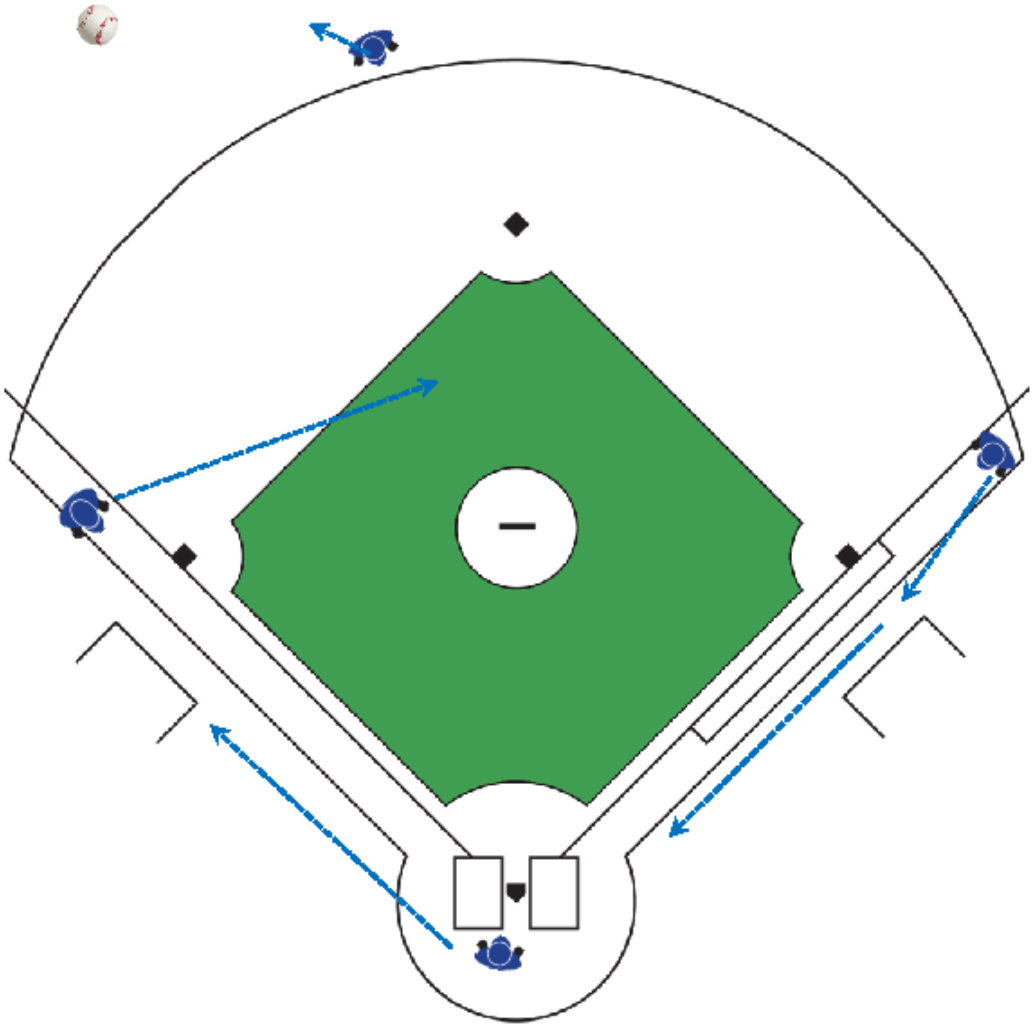
ROTATION	SITUATION	BASIC MOVEMENTS
Full Rotation	NRO, R1 Only -or- R1+R2 and R2 tags with U3 Out and less than 2 outs	**Movements: *Results when U2 / U3 leaves for C/NC:*** • PU: Moves to Cover 3B in foul territory and remains in foul territory to apply wedge positioning for tag plays at 3B. • U1: Observes the Batter-Runner's Touch and then releases to cover HP at PoP with U3 picking up the BR back into 1B. • U2: Leaves to cover Catch/No-Catch **OR** moves to Po2 opposite the throw to position for tag plays at 2B. ○ NOTE: U2 will not leave with R1. • U3: Varies pivot (either to the working area or Po2 opposite the throw, ready to pick up the BR back into 1B after U1 releases home), CtB, to cover 2B **OR** leaves to cover C/NC.
Reverse Rotation	RiSP	**Movements: *Results when U3 leaves to cover C/NC:*** • PU: Stays Home • U1: Pivot with R1/BR into the working area. U1 will be responsible for all tags, touches, and plays on R1 and BR at 1B and all plays on both R1 and BR into 2B. • U2: Slide with R2 and move with R2 into 3B. U2 Will be responsible for all tags and plays on R2 back into 2B and in advance to 3B. • U3: Leaves to cover Catch/No-Catch
U2 Drift	Runner(s) on Base	**Movements: *Results when U1 leaves to cover C/NC:*** • PU: Clears the catcher and moves to PoP for all touches and plays at HP. • U1: Leaves to cover C/NC. • U2: drifts to the right side of the infield in the working area and is responsible for all plays at 1B and 2B. • U3: Moves to Po3 to position for tag plays at 3B.
PU Trail	NRO	**Movements: *Results when U1 leaves to cover C/NC:*** • PU: Trails the Batter-Runner and is responsible for all plays on the Batter-Runer at 1B. PU will release to home as the BR touches 2B. • U1: Leaves to cover C/NC. • U2: Moves to Po2 opposite the throw to position for tag plays at 2B. • U3: Moves to Po3 to position for tag plays at 3B.

SITUATION: NO RUNNERS, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** PU TRAILS



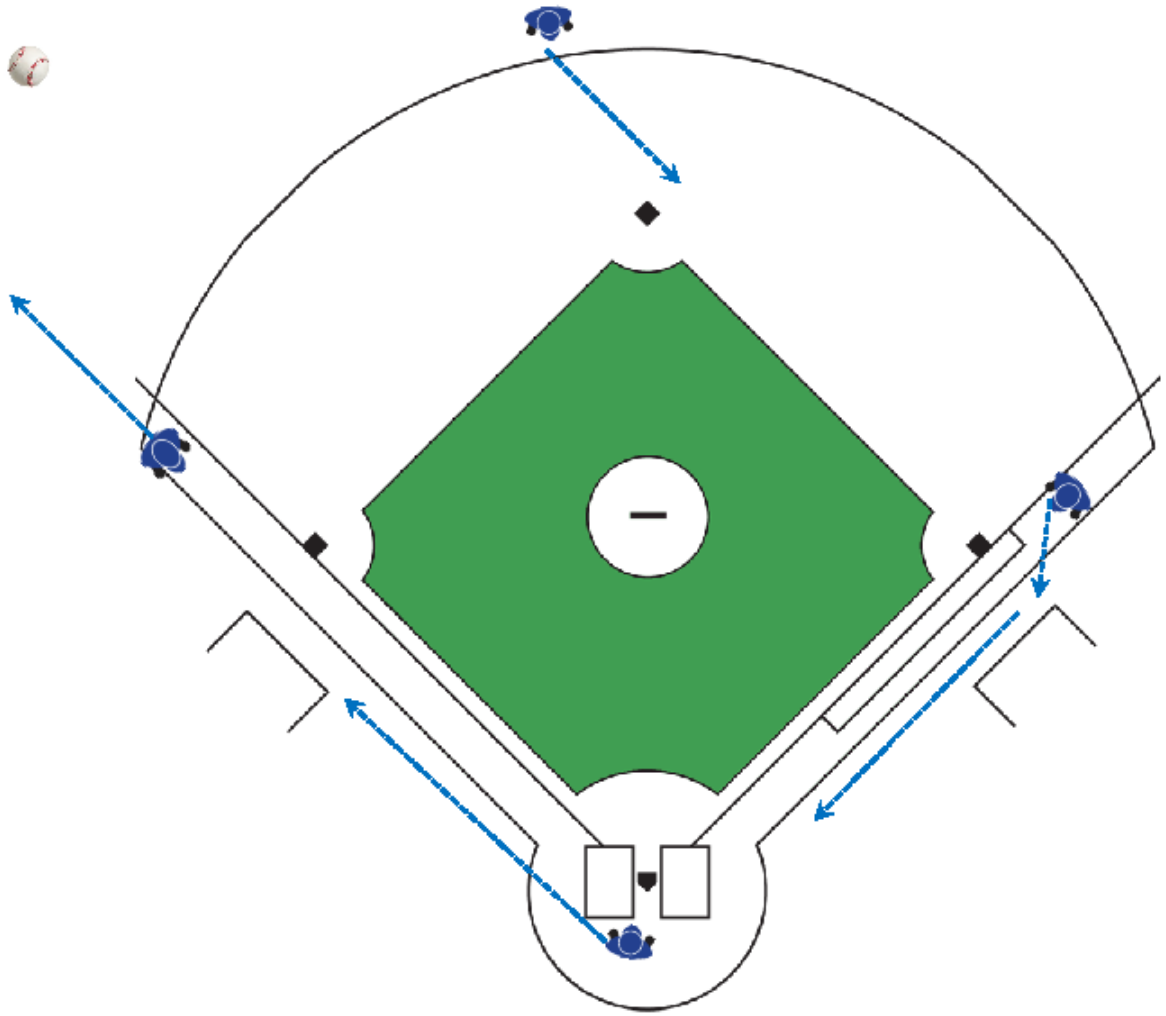
NRO			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Trails the BR to 1B. • Once the BR has reached 2B, PU will return aggressively to PoP for a possible play on the BR at HP and remain CtB. **Responsible for:** the BR's touch at 1B and all plays on the BR at 1B.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and remains out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Moves to Po2 opposite the throw, remaining CtB, to position for a play on the BR at 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 2B.	• Moves to Po3, remaining CtB, for any possible play on the BR at 3B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: NO RUNNERS, U2 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** FULL



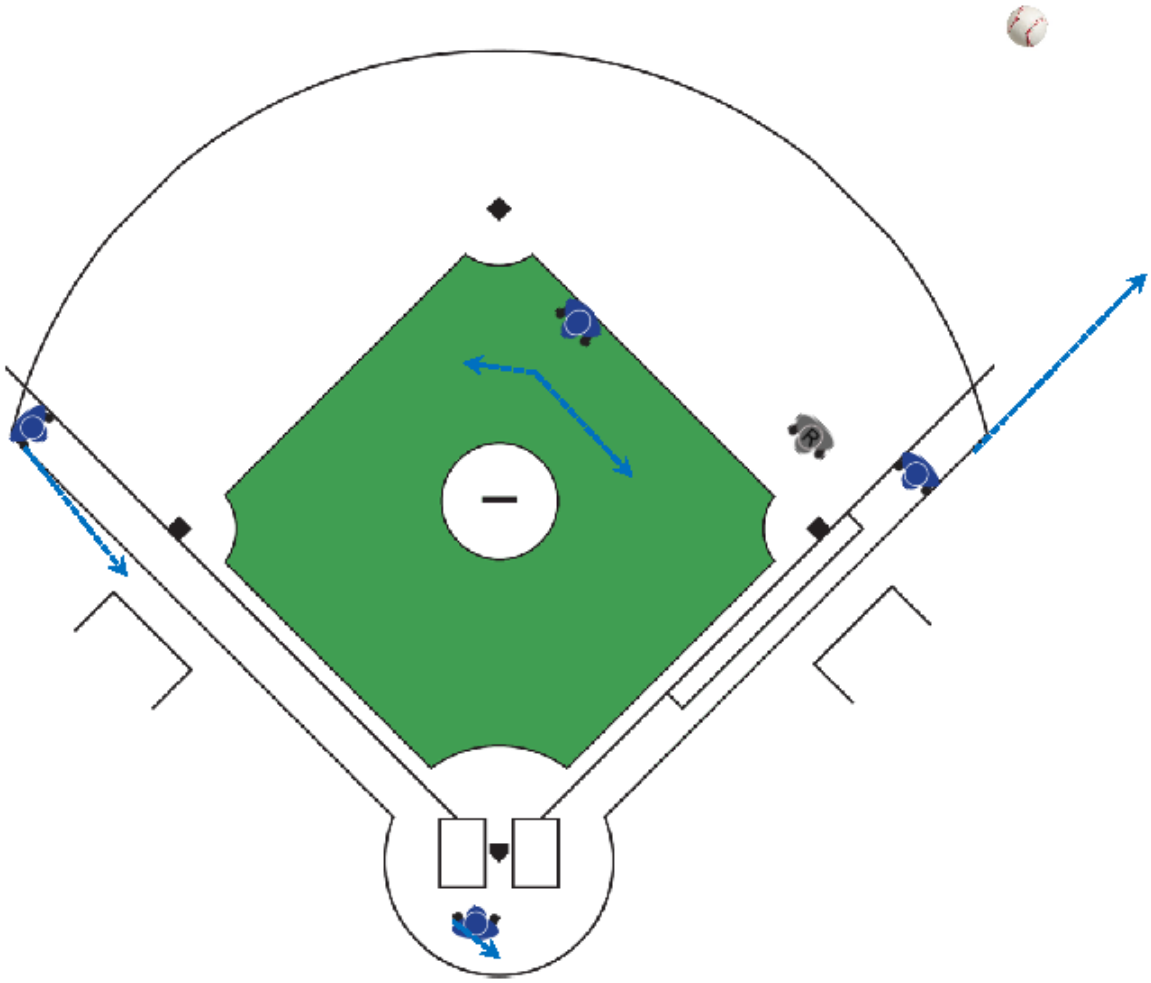
NRO			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Plate umpire moves in the direction of 3B in foul territory, remaining CtB. • If the BR advances to 2B, PU continues to 3B for a play as the BR reaches 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 3B.	• Moves to Po1 to observe BR's touch and position for any play on the BR at 1B. • Stays at Po1 until the lead runner reaches 2B and then releases in foul territory to PoP. **Responsible for:** any plays back into 1B or at HP.	• Goes out to cover catch/no-catch and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** C/NC.	• Moves toward 2B for a possible play on the BR at 2B. • May either come into the infield near the cutout at 2B to adjust positioning for plays at 2B or to Po2 opposite the throw, remaining CtB to adjust positioning for plays at 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 2B, and plays at 1B once PU has released to HP.

SITUATION: NO RUNNERS, U3 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** FULL



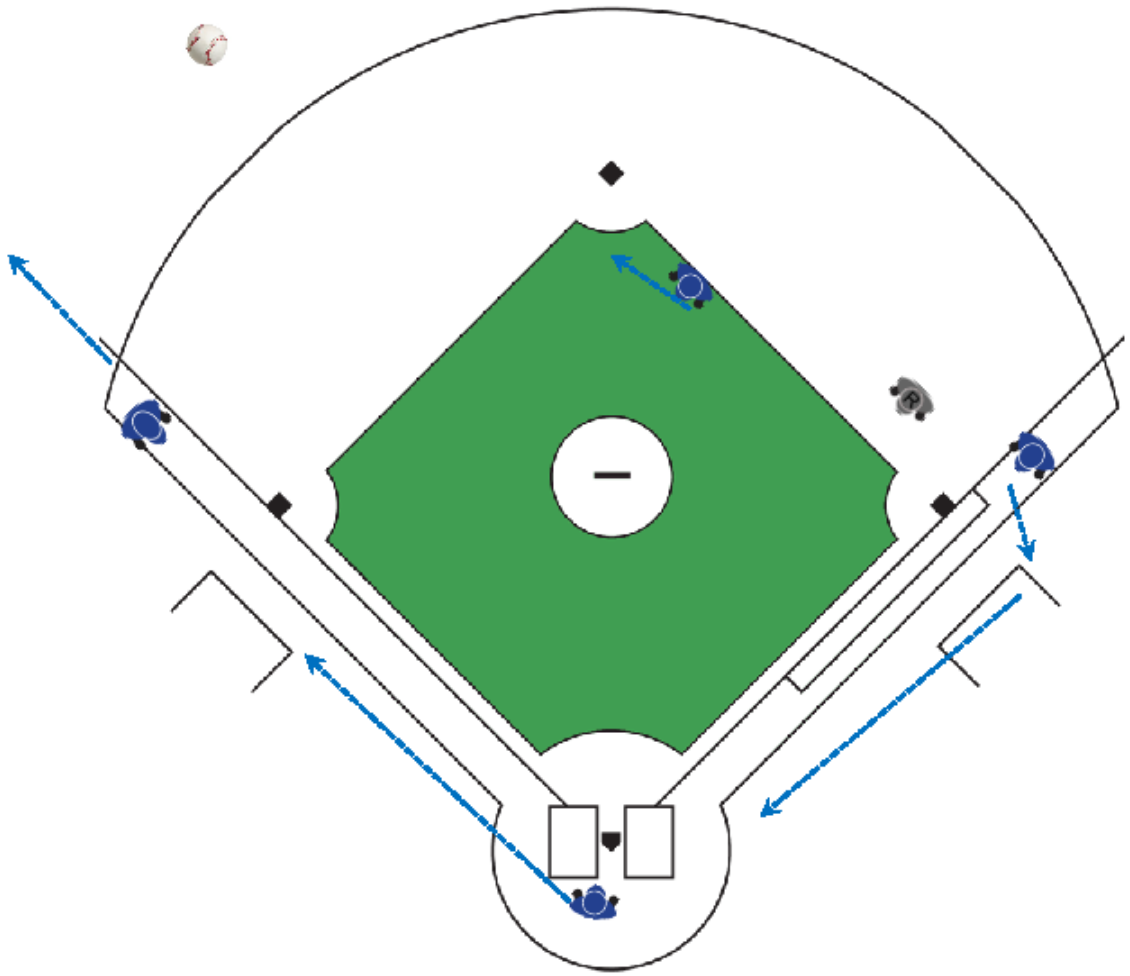
NRO			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Moves in the direction of 3B in foul territory, CtB. • If the BR advances to 2B, PU continues to 3B for a play as the BR reaches 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 3B	• Moves to Po1 to observe BR's touch and position for any play on the BR at 1B. • Stays at Po1 until the lead runner reaches 2B and then releases in foul territory to PoP. **Responsible for:** all plays and touches at 1B until releasing for HP; all touches and plays at HP.	• Moves toward 2B for a possible play on the BR at 2B. • Moves to Po2 opposite the throw, remaining CtB to adjust positioning for plays at 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 2B and covering 1B once U1 releases for HP.	• Goes out to cover catch/no-catch and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 1B, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** U2 DRIFT



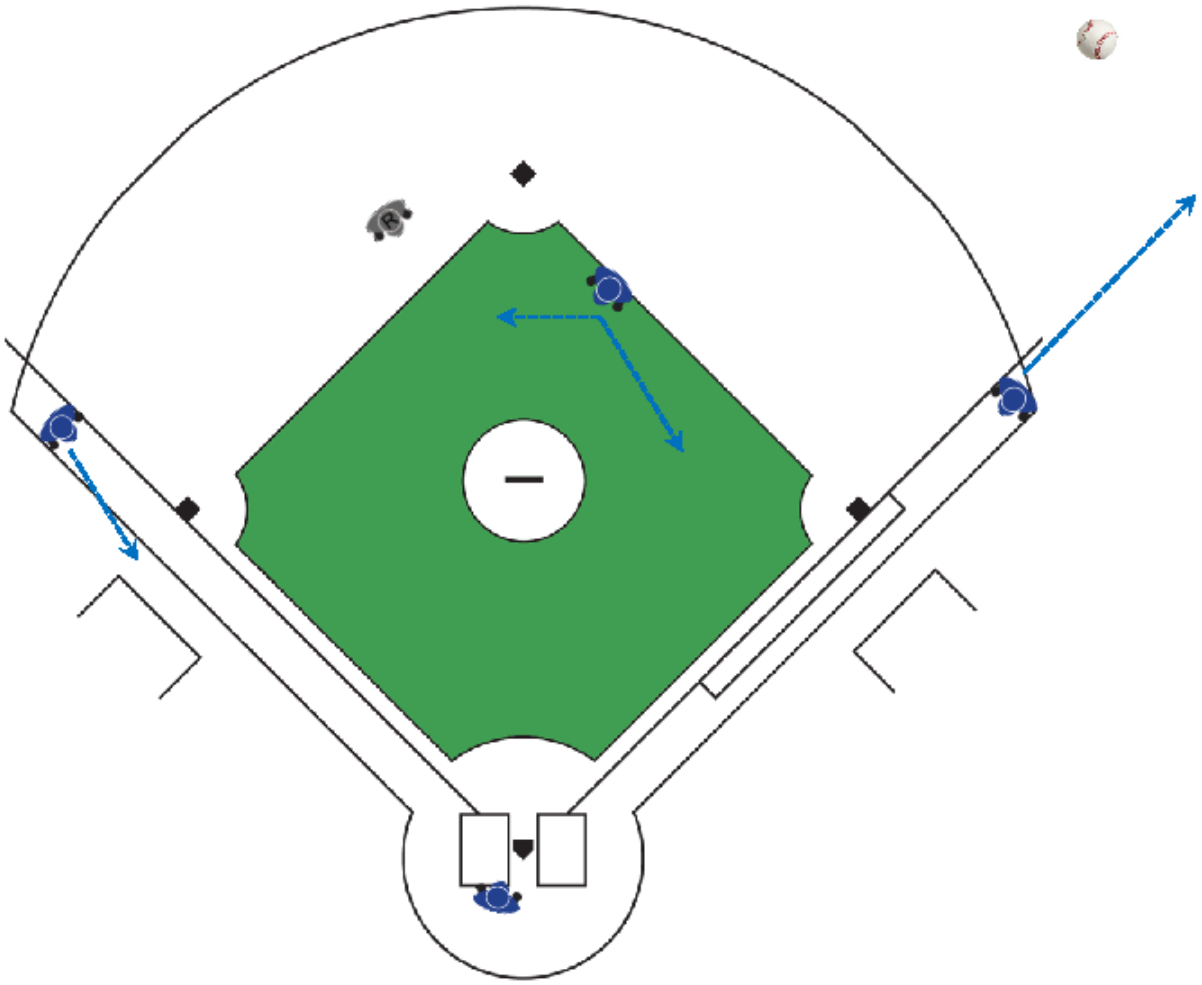
R1 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP to observe the play and position for any play at HP. **Responsible for:** All touches and plays at HP.	• Goes out to cover catch/no-catch and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Drops into the WA between 1B and 2B, remaining CtB, to lineup R1's tag-up. • Remains CtB and allows the ball to take him/her to the play. **Responsible for:** R1's retouch and all touches and plays at 1B and 2B.	• Moves to Po3, remaining CtB, for any possible play on all runners at 3B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 1B, U3 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** FULL



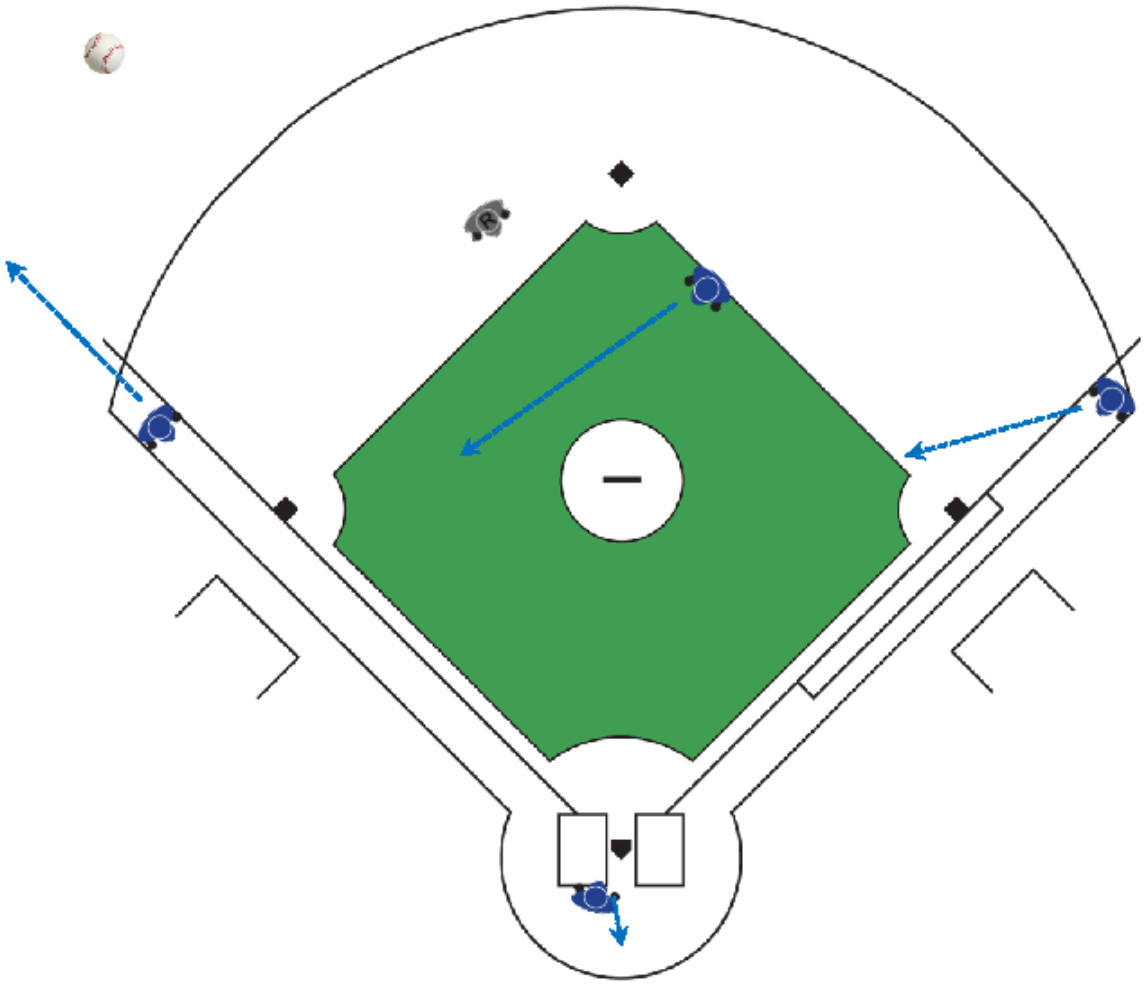
R1 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Plate umpire moves in the direction of 3B in foul territory, CtB. • If the BR advances to 2B, PU continues to 3B for a play as the R1 reaches 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 3B.	• Moves to Po1 to observe BR's touch and position for any play on the BR at 1B. • Stays at Po1 until the lead runner reaches 2B and then releases in foul territory to PoP while communicating to U2, "I'm going home." **Responsible for:** R1's re-touch and any plays into or back into 1B until releasing for HP, and all touches and plays at HP.	• Moves toward 2B for a possible play on the BR at 2B. • Moves to Po2 opposite the throw, remaining CtB to adjust positioning for plays at 2B. • Once U1 releases to cover HP, U2 will use the WA to position effectively, remaining CtB, and allowing the ball to take U2 to the play at 1B or 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 2B and at 1B once U1 releases to cover HP.	• Goes out to cover catch/no-catch and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 2B, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** U2 DRIFT



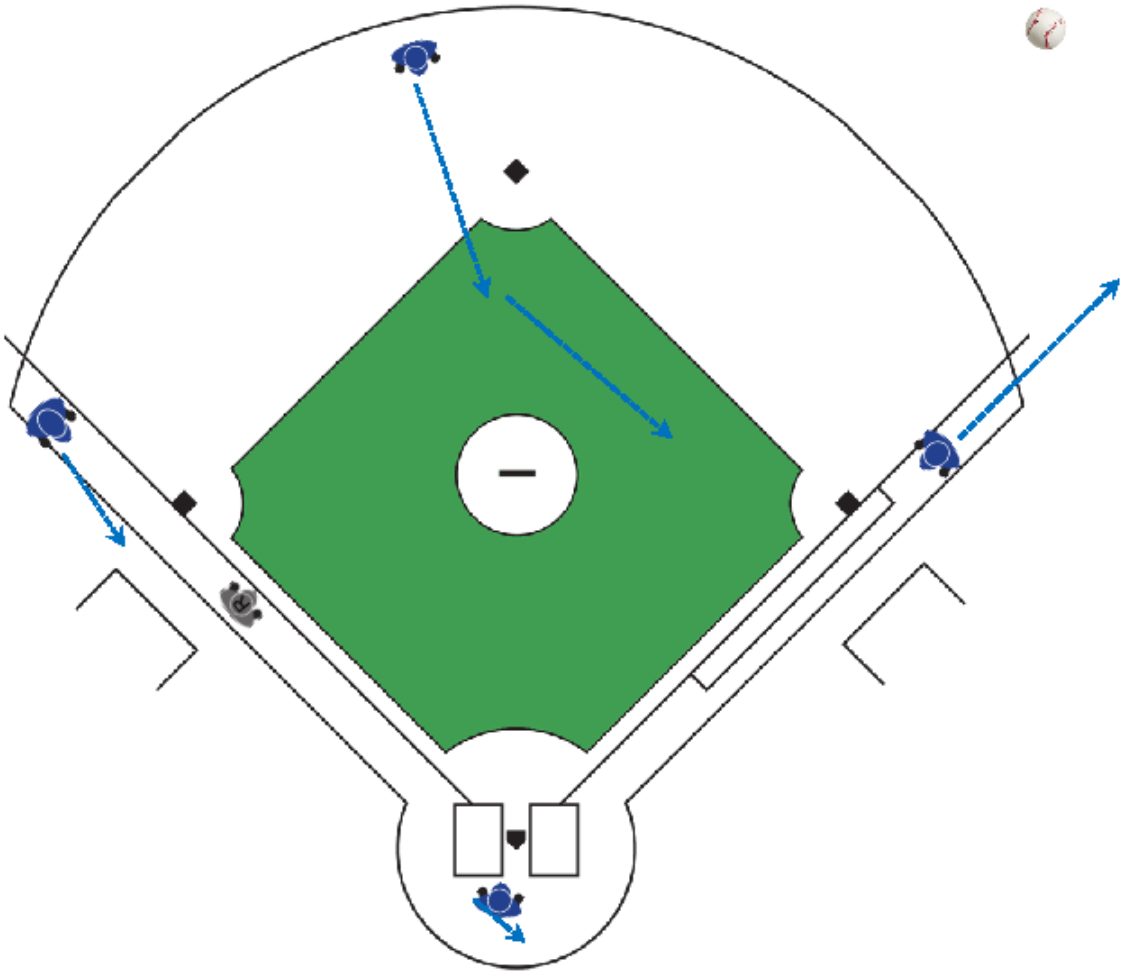
R2 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Drifts into the WA in the infield between 1B and 2B. **Responsible for:** R2's re-touch and all touches and plays at 1B and 2B.	• Moves to Po3, remaining CtB, for any possible play at 3B. **Responsible for:** for all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 2B, U3 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** REVERSE



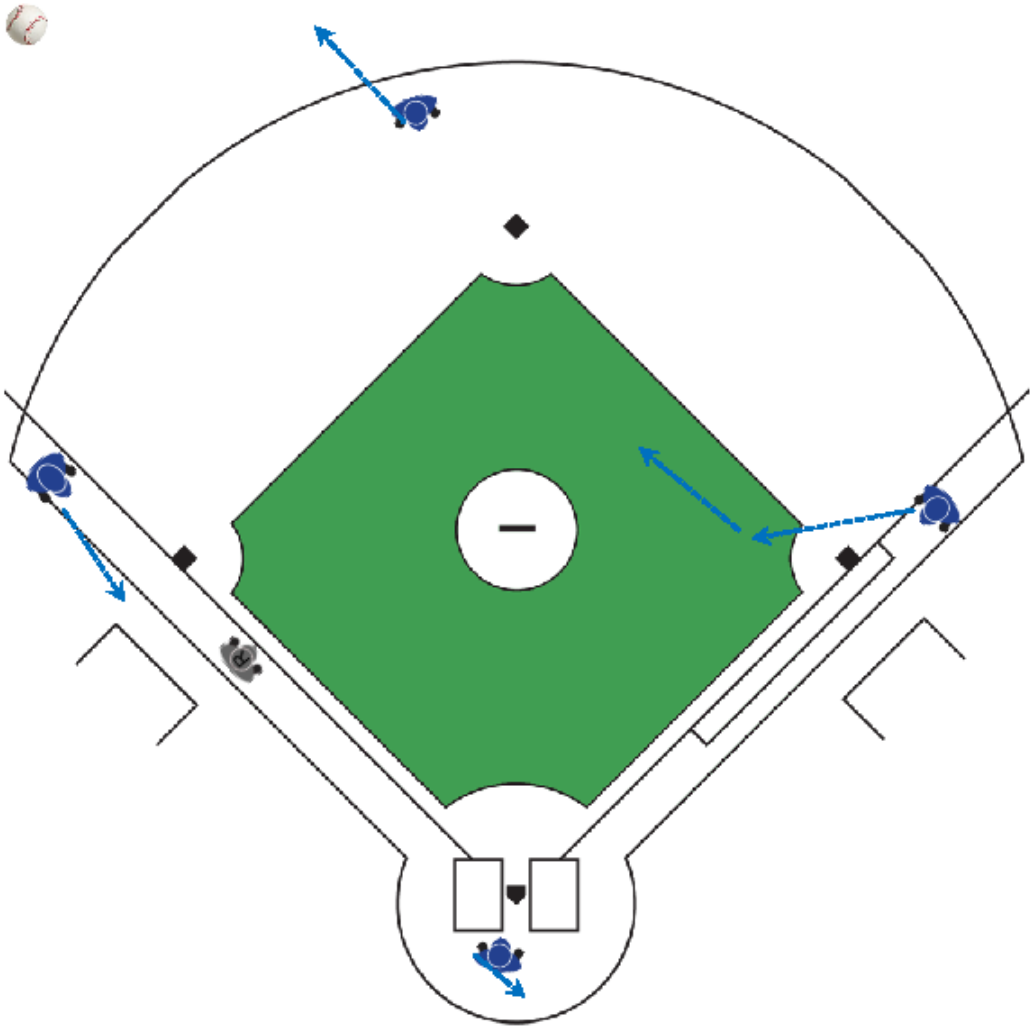
R2 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Pivots into the infield between 1B and 2B so as to see the touch by the BR at 1B. **Responsible for:** All touches and plays at 1B and the BR at 2B.	• Drops toward the mound between 2B and 3B and is responsible for R2's tag-up at 2B. • Slides with R2. Once R2 commits to 3B, U2 will remain at 3B for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** R2's re-touch at 2B, R2 back into 2B, R2 into 3B, and the BR into 3B.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 3B, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** U2 DRIFT



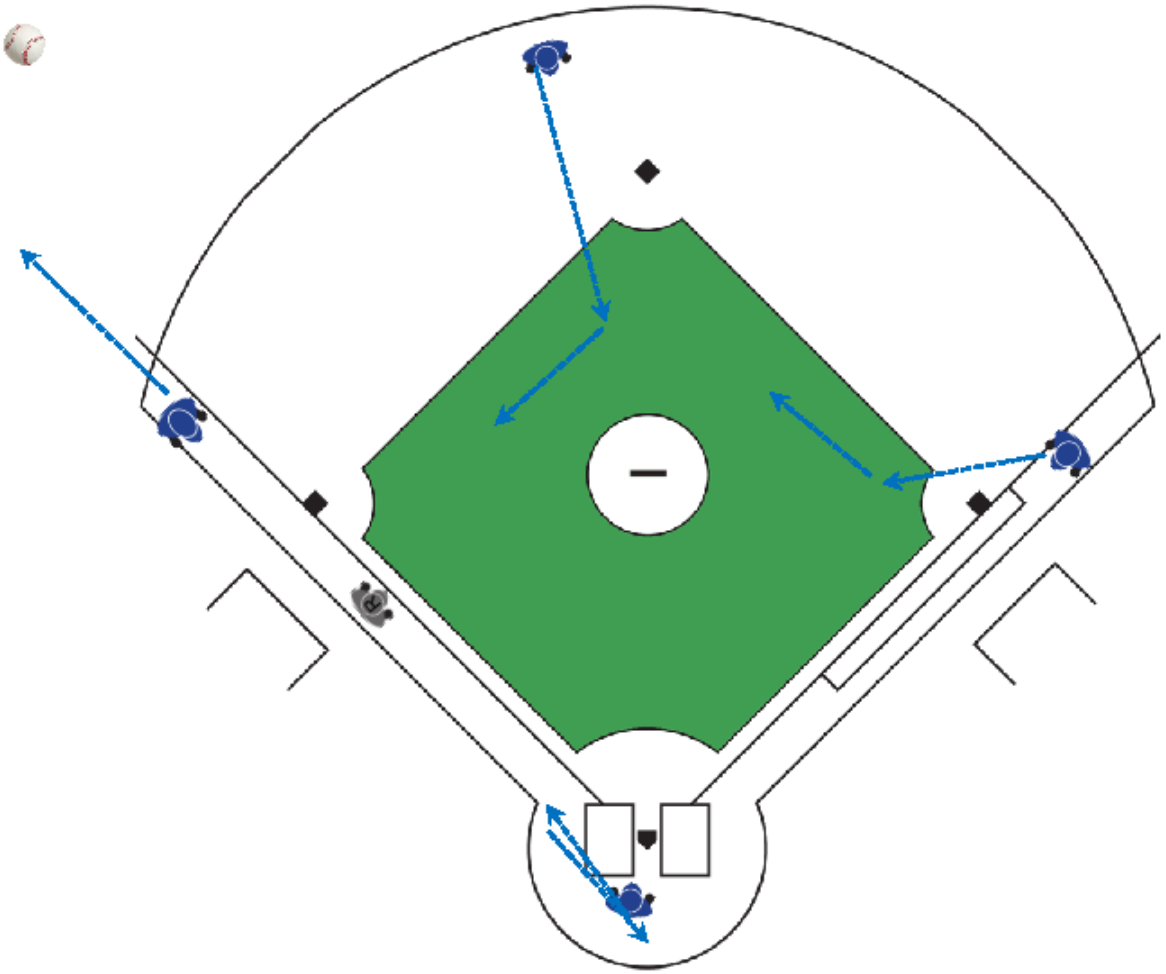
R3 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Set up behind 2B, usually on the SS side, and shorten up to rotate efficiently. • Moves toward 1B and for all plays on the BR at 1B or 2B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 1B and 2B.	• Moves to Po3, remaining CtB, for any possible play at 3B. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch and all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 3B, U2 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** REVERSE



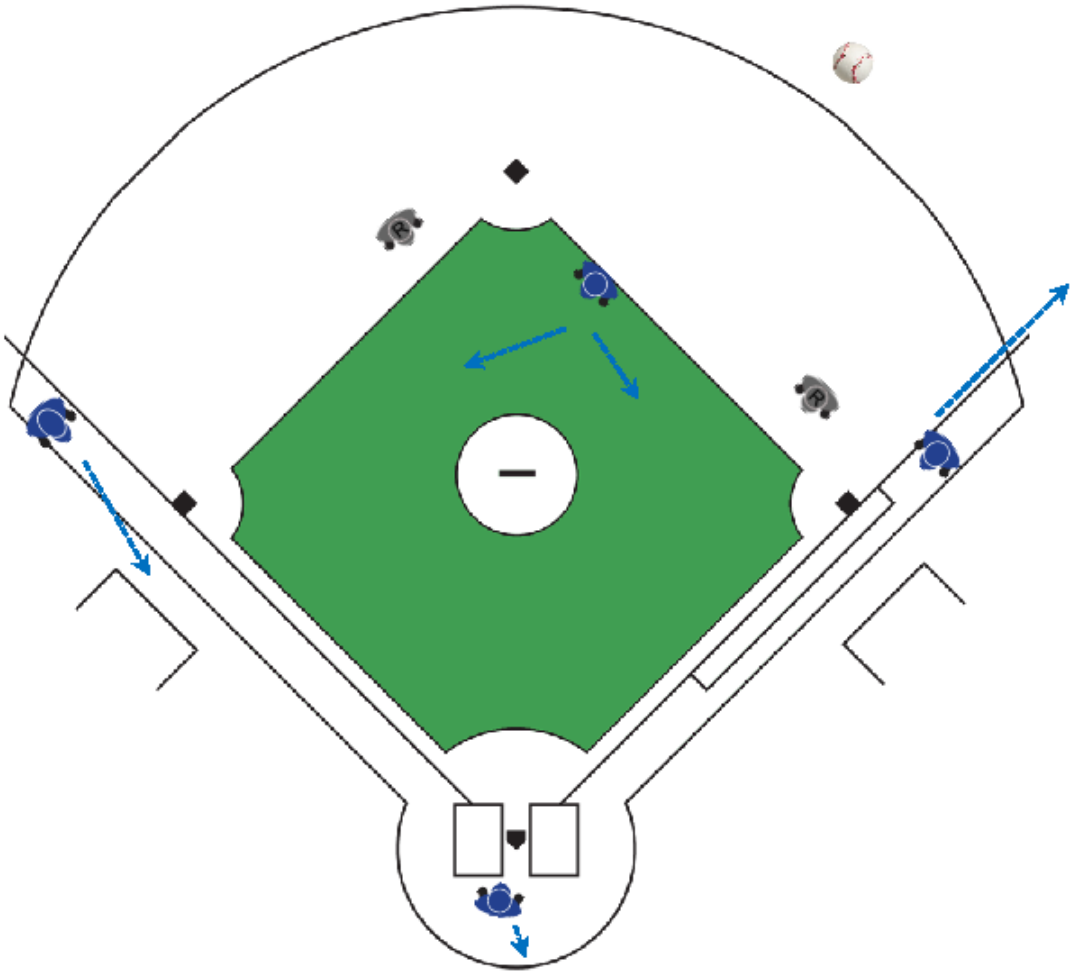
R3 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Pivots into the infield to the WA between 1B and 2B so as to see the touch of the BR at 1B. . **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 1B and 2B.	• Sets up behind 2B, usually on the SS side, and shorten up to allow U2 to rotate efficiently. **Responsible for:** C/NC. .	• Moves to Po3, remaining CtB, for any possible play at 3B. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch and all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 3B, U3 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** REVERSE



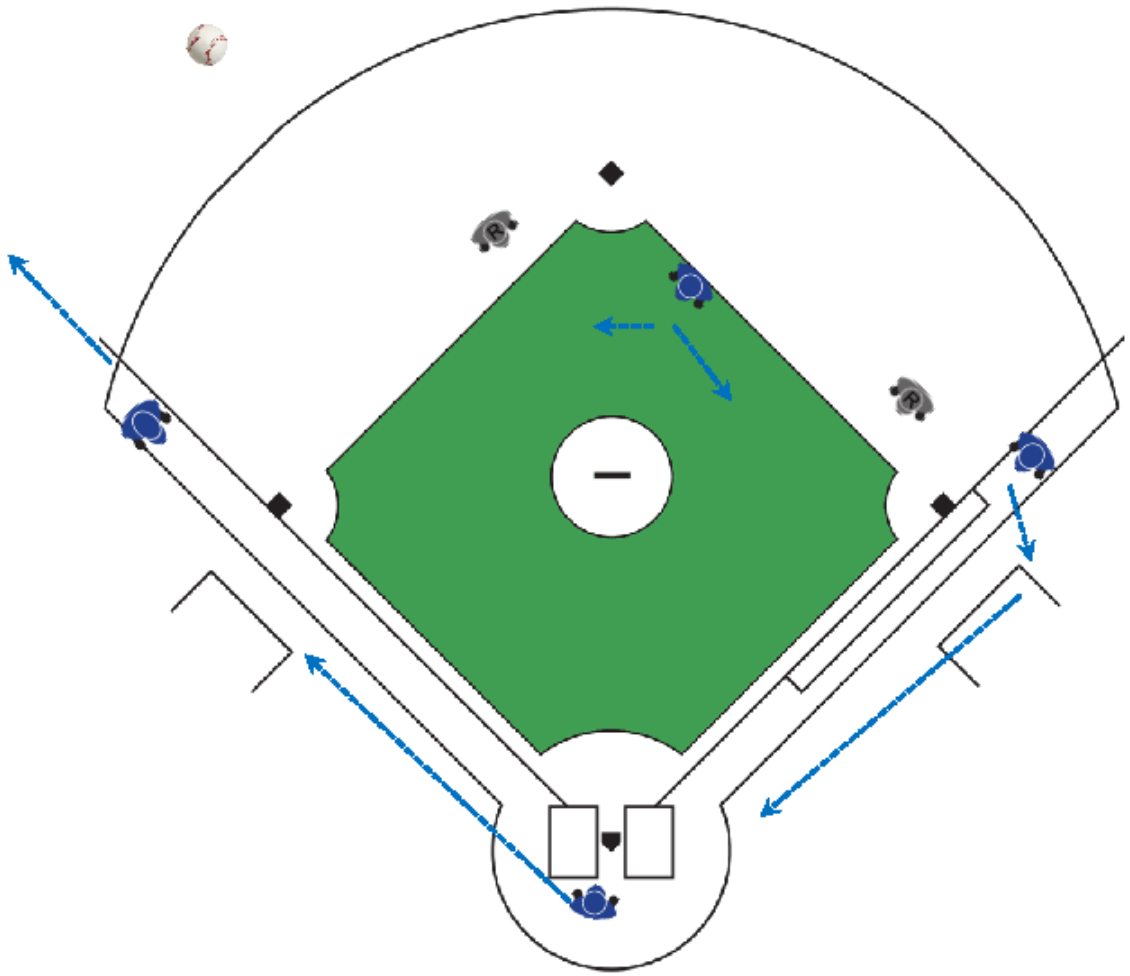
R3 ONLY			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher to lineup R3's tag-up attempt at 3B and then returns aggressively to PoP. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch and all touches and plays at HP.	• Moves into the infield to the working area between 1B and 2B so as to see the touch by the BR at 1B. **Responsible for:** all plays and touches at 1B and 2B.	• Sets up behind 2B, usually on the SS side, and shorten up to allow U2 to rotate efficiently. • Uses the WA to move toward 3B. **Responsible for:** R3 back into 3B and the BR at 3B.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: RUNNER AT 1B + 2B, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** U2 DRIFT



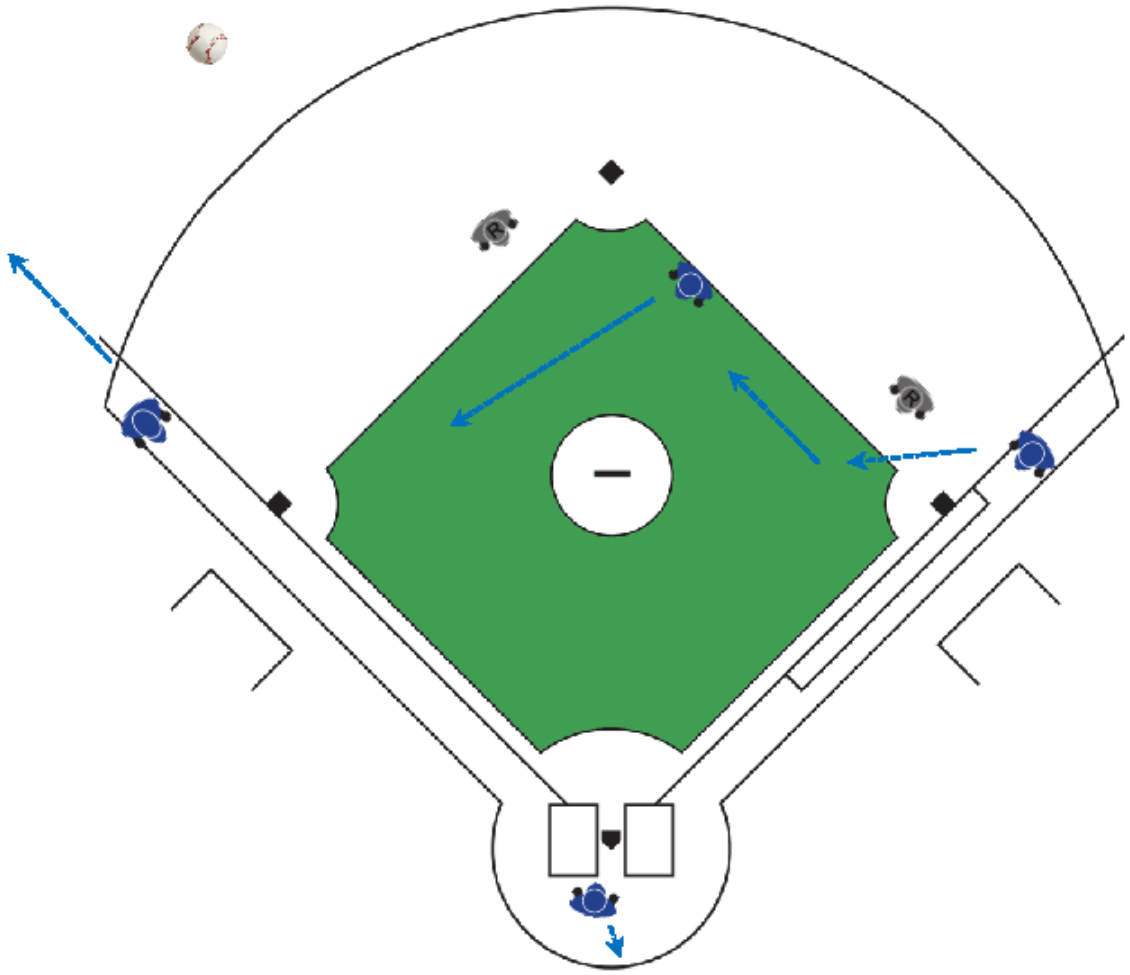
R1+R2			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Drifts into the infield between 1B and 2B. • Remains CtB and lets the ball take him/her to the play. **Responsible for:** all re-touches at 1B and 2B as well as all touches and plays at 1B and 2B.	• U3 moves to Po3, remaining CtB, for any possible play at 3B. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: RUNNERS AT 1B + 2B, U3 GOES OUT WITH LESS THAN 2 OUTS & BALL IS CAUGHT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** FULL



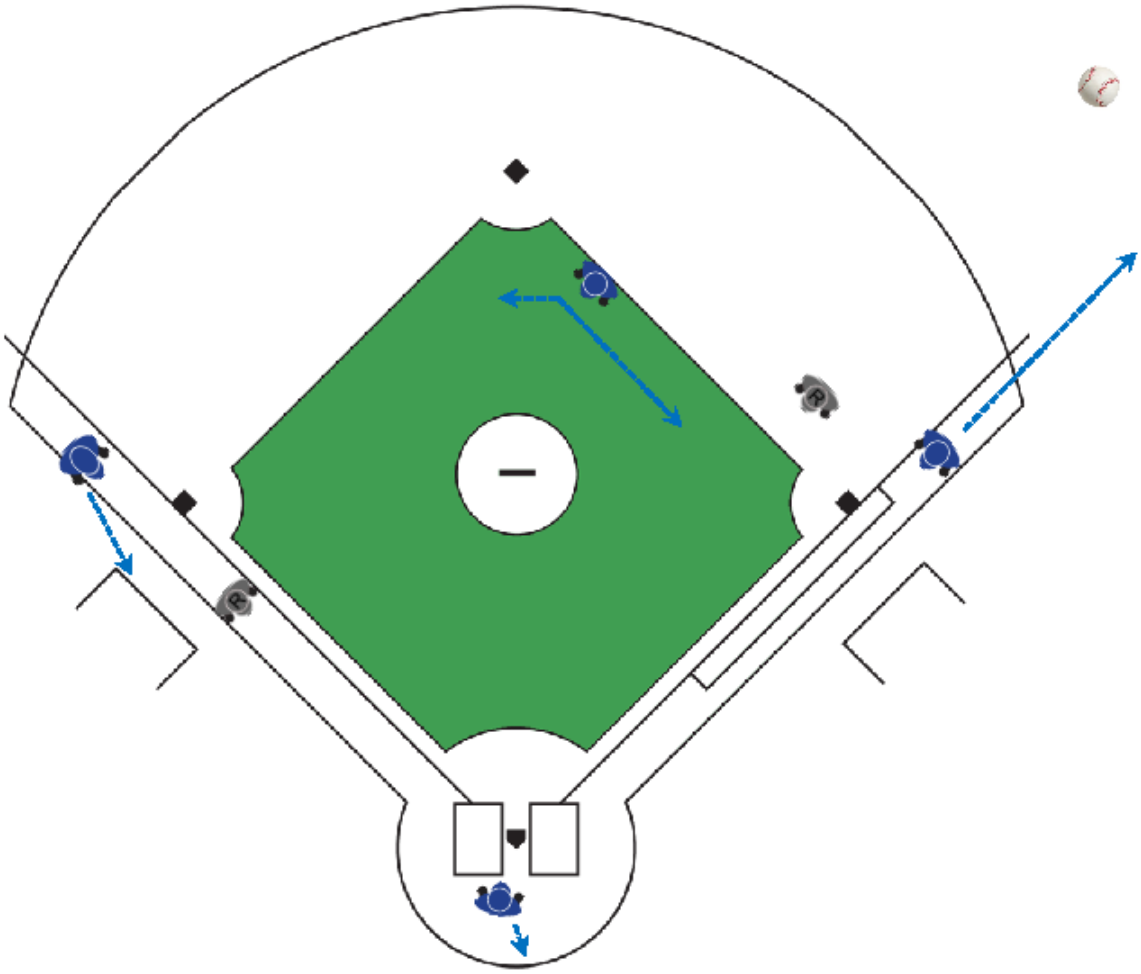
R1+R2			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• With less than 2 outs and the ball is caught, PU will read R2 and move, in foul territory, to Po3 for all touches and plays at 3B. • This will allow U2 to take R2's tag-up and remain in the infield for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at 3B.	• Moves to Po1 to observe R1's tag-up. • If R2 tags and advances to 3B, U1 rotates to HP for all touches and plays at HP. • When releasing to HP, U1 will move in foul territory to PoP while communicating to U2, "I'm going home." **Responsible for:** R1's re-touch and all touches and plays at HP.	• Drops into the WA to observe R2's tag-up and has all plays at 2B. • If R2 commits to 3B, U2 assumes responsibility for R1 moving toward 2B (or back into 1B if U1 has released to HP). **Responsible for:** R2's retouch at 2B, all touches and plays at 2B, and R1 at 1B once U1 releases to HP.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: RUNNERS AT 1B + 2B, U3 GOES OUT WITH 2 OUTS OR BALL IS NOT CAUGHT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** REVERSE



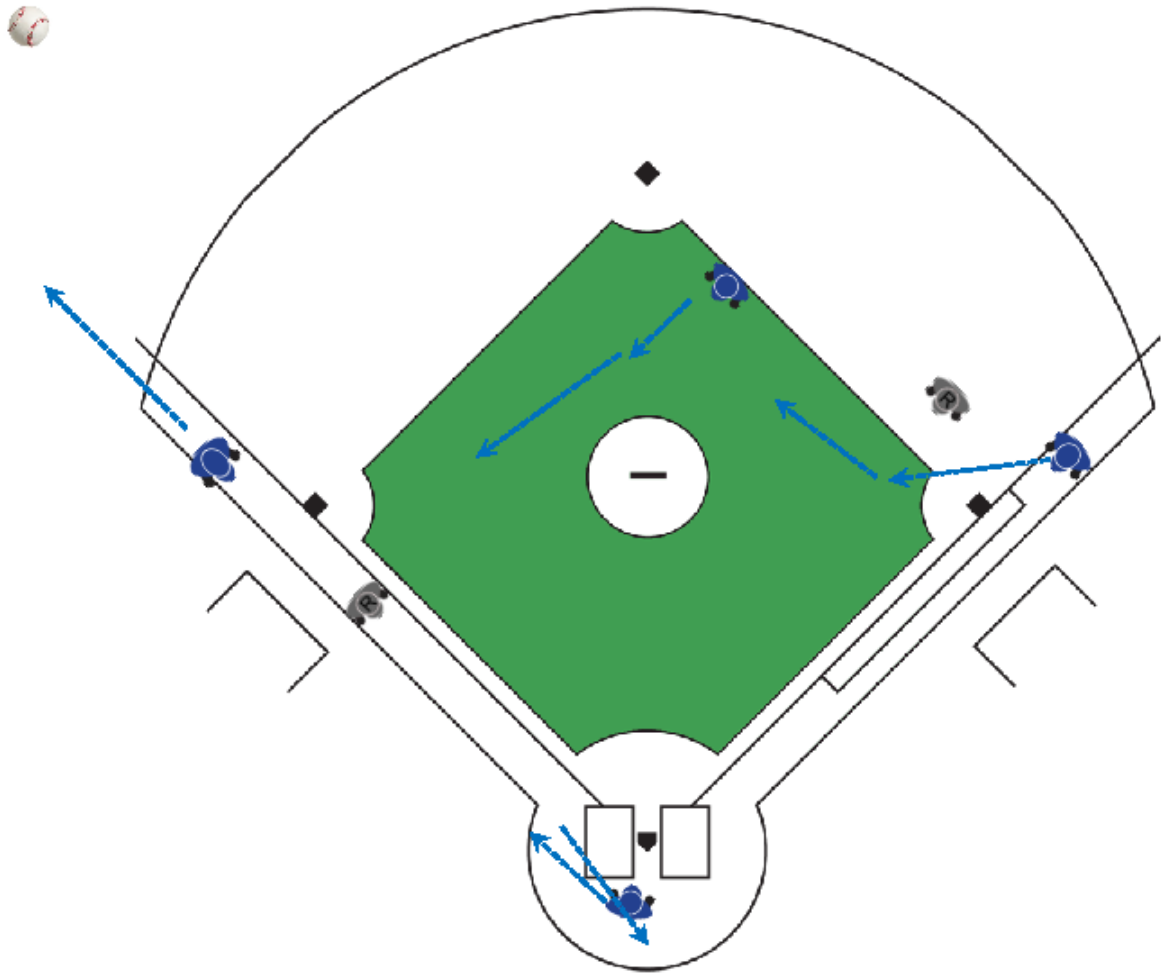
R1+R2			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Pivots into the infield between 1B and 2B so as to see the BR's touch of 1B. • Slides with the BR to 2B. **Responsible for:** R1 back into 1B, the BR at 1B, the BR back into 1B, and the BR at 2B.	• Drops toward the mound between 2B and 3B. • Slides with R1. Once R1 commits to 3B, U2 will remain at 3B. **Responsible for:** R2 back into 2B, R1 into 2B, R2 into 3B, R1 into 3B, and the BR at 3B.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: RUNNERS AT 1B + 3B, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** U2 DRIFT



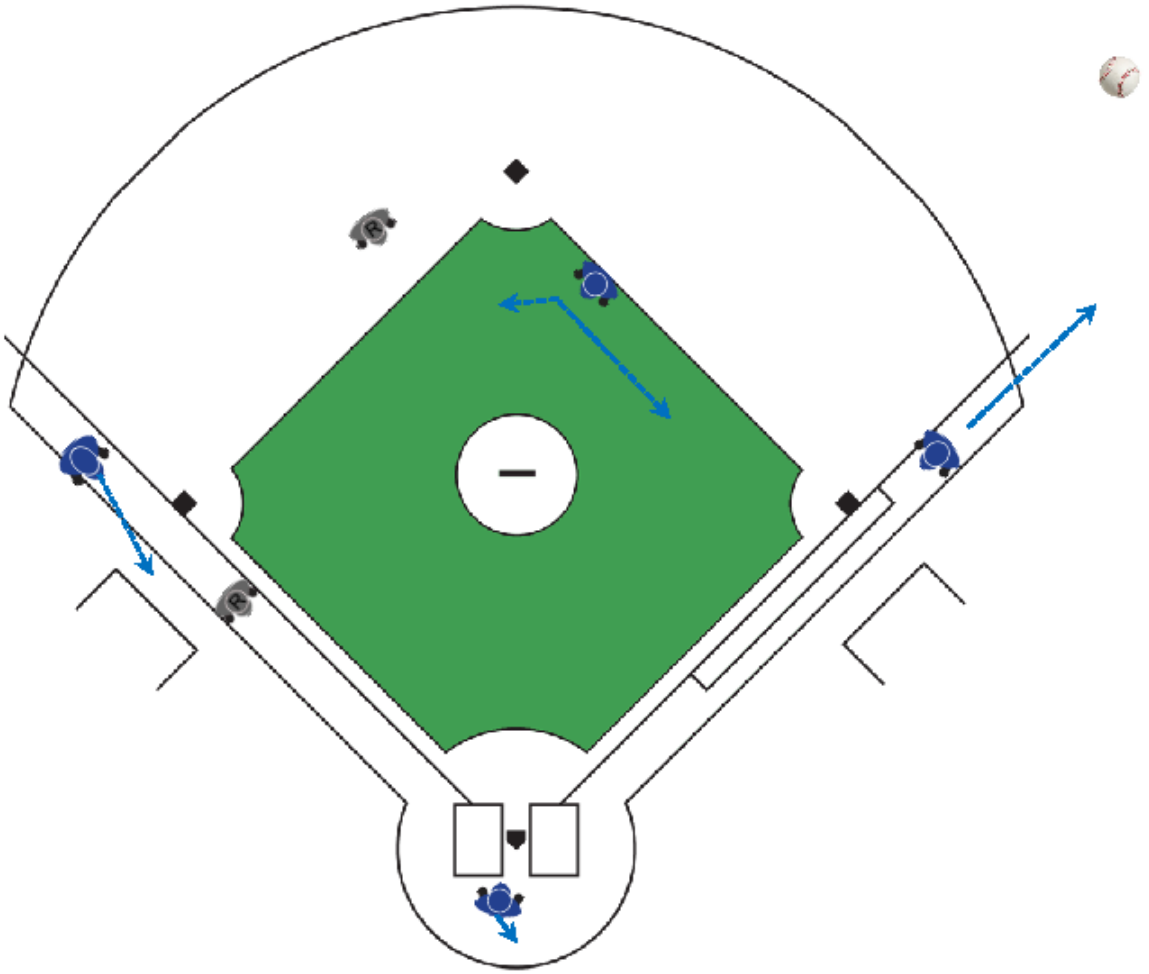
R1+R3			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Drifts into the infield between 1B and 2B, remaining CtB, and will let the ball take him/her to the play. **Responsible for:** R1's retouch at 1B and all touches and plays at 1B or 2B.	• Moves to Po3, remaining CtB, for any possible play at 3B. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch and all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: RUNNERS AT 1B + 3B, U3 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** REVERSE



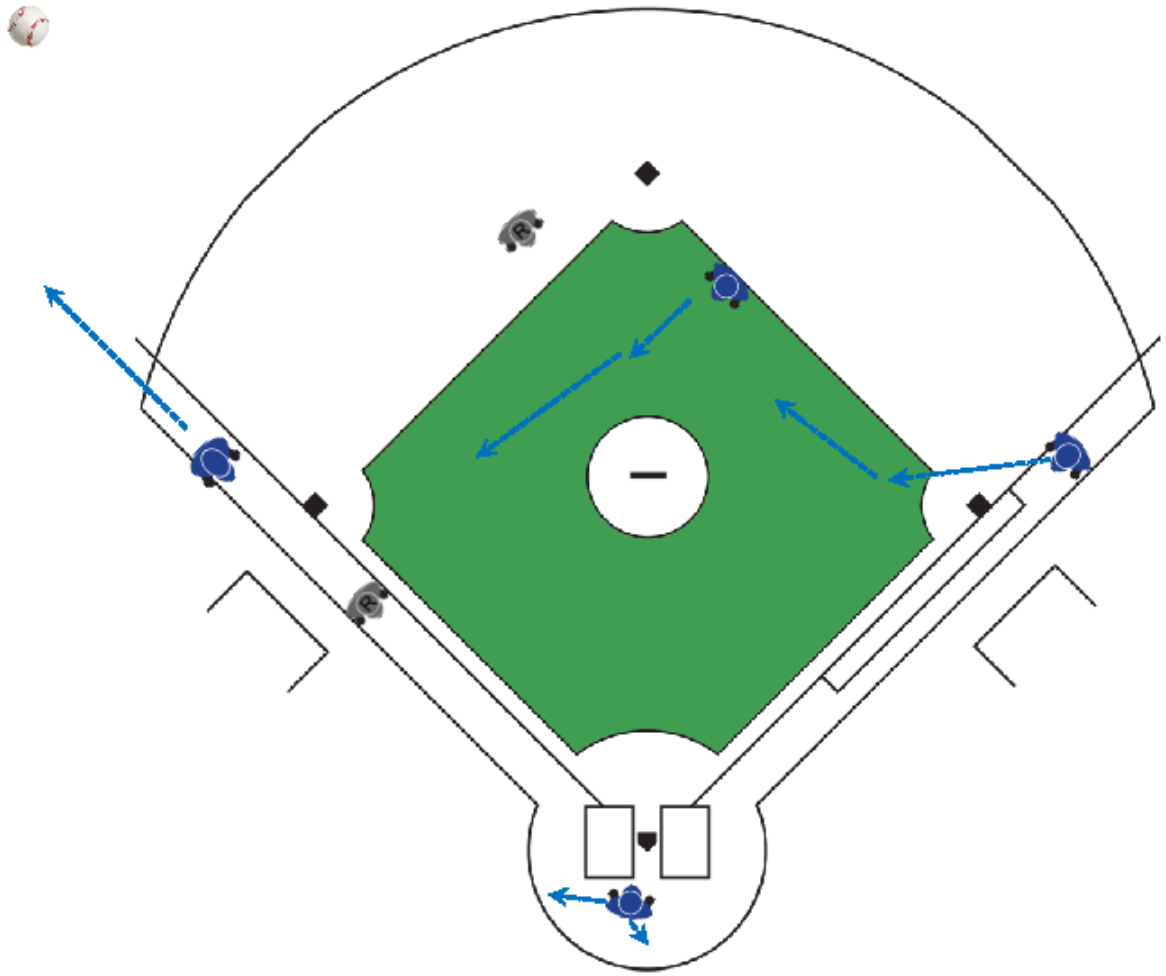
R1+R3			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher to line-up R3's tag-up at 3B and then returns aggressively to PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch and all touches and plays at HP.	• Pivots into the infield between 1B and 2B so as to see the BR's touch of 1B. • Slides with the BR to 2B. **Responsible for:** R1's re-touch, R1 back into 1B, the BR at 1B, and the BR at 2B.	• Drops toward the mound between 2B and 3B and remains CtB to let the ball take him/her to the play. • Slides with R1. Once R1 commits to 3B, U2 will remain at 3B for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** R3 back into 3B, R1 into 2B, R1 at 3B, and the BR at 3B.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: RUNNERS AT 2B + 3B, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** U2 DRIFT



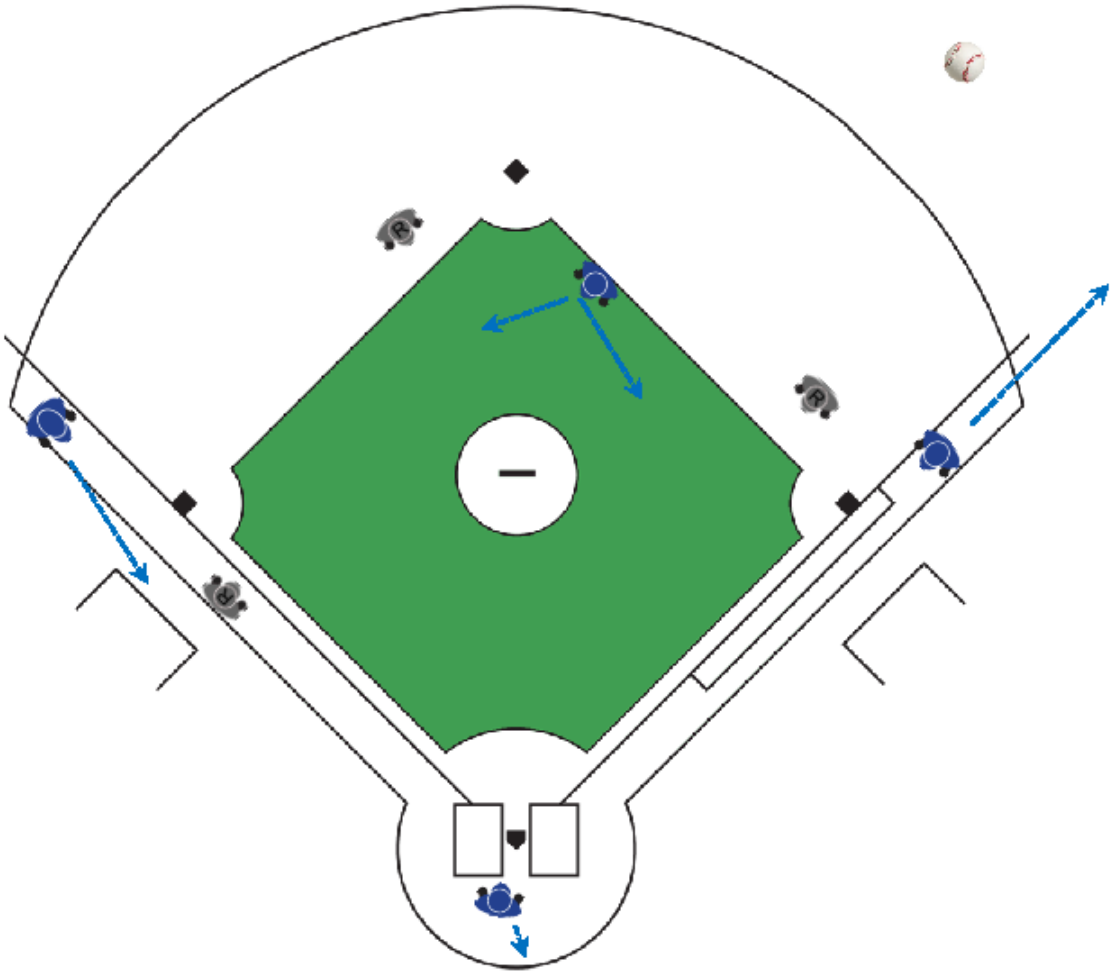
R2+R3			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• Clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** All touches and plays at HP.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Drifts into the infield between 1B and 2B, remaining CtB and allows the ball to take him/her to the play. **Responsible for:** R2's re-touch, R2 back into 2B, and all touches and plays at 1B and 2B.	• U3 moves to Po3, remaining CtB for any possible play at 3B. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch and all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: RUNNERS AT 2B + 3B, U3 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** REVERSE



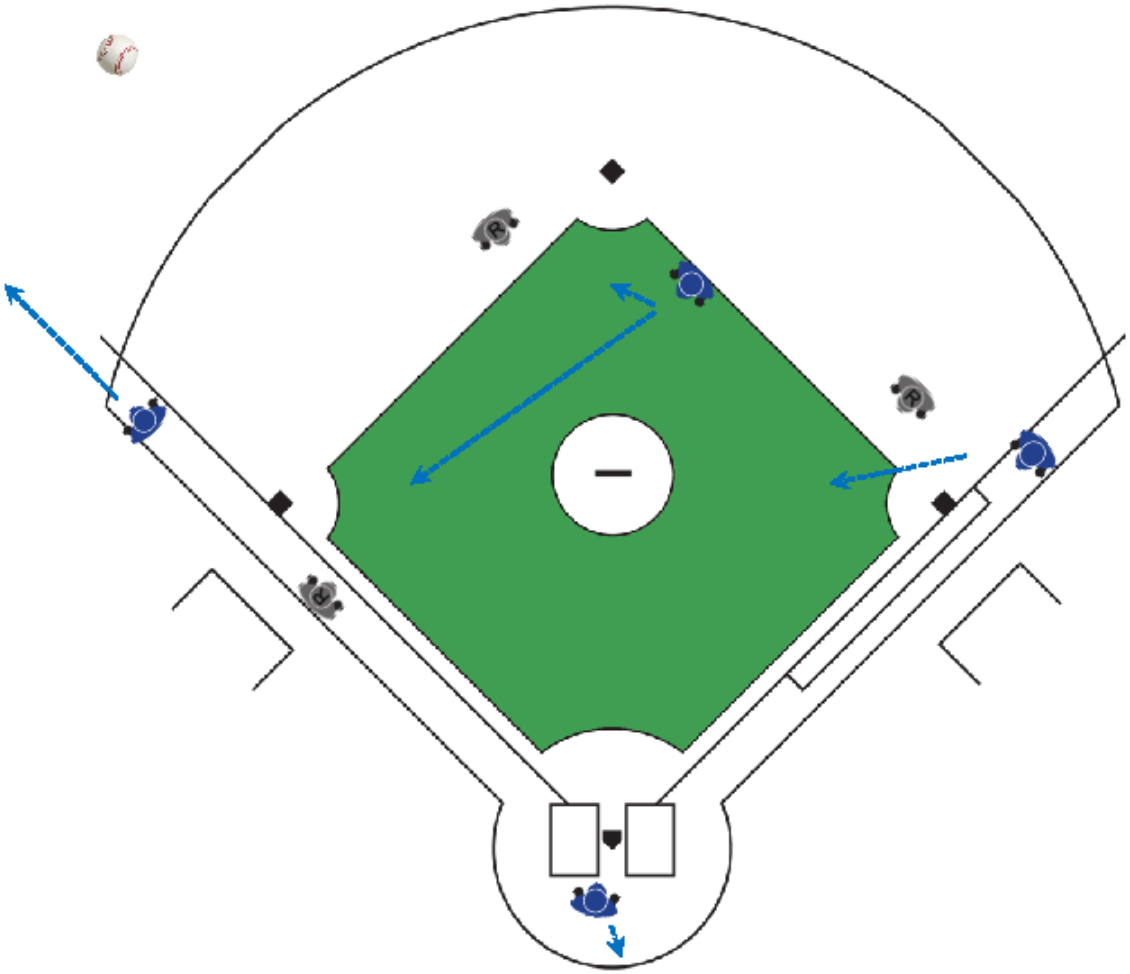
R2+R3			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• PU clears the catcher to line-up R3's tag-up at 3B and then returns aggressively to PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** R3's retouch and all touches and plays at HP.	• Pivots into the infield between 1B and 2B so as to see the BR's touch at 1B. • Slides with the BR to 2B. **Responsible for:** the BR at 1B and 2B.	• Drops toward the mound between 2B and 3B and remains CtB to allow the ball to take him/her to the play. • Slides with R2. Once R2 commits to 3B, U2 will remain at 3B for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** R2's re-touch, R3 back into 3B, R2 back into 2B, R2 at 3B, and the BR at 3B.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

SITUATION: BASES FULL, U1 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** U2 DRIFT



BASES FULL			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• PU clears the catcher and remains at PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** all touches and plays at HP.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.	• Drifts into the infield between 1B and 2B and remains CtB to allow the ball to take him/her to the play. **Responsible for:** Re-touches by R1 at 1B and R2 at 2B as well as all touches and plays on all runners at 1B and 2B.	• Movess to Po3, remaining CtB for any possible play at 3B. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch and all touches and plays at 3B.

SITUATION: BASES FULL, U3 GOES OUT	**TYPE OF ROTATION:** REVERSE



Bases Full			
PU	U1	U2	U3
• PU clears the catcher to line-up R3's tag-up at 3B and then returns aggressively to PoP for all touches and plays at HP. **Responsible for:** R3's re-touch at 3B and all touches and plays at HP.	• Pivots into the infield between 1B and 2B so as to see the BR's touch at 1B. • Slides with the BR to 2B. **Responsible for:** R1's retouch, R1 back into 1B, and the BR at 1B and 2B.	• Drops toward the mound between 2B and 3B and remains CtB to allow the ball to take him/her to the play. • Slides with R1. Once R1 commits to 3B, U2 will remain at 3B for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** R2's re-touch at 2B, R3 back into 3B, R2 back into 2B, R1 into 2B, R2 at 3B, R1 at 3B, and the BR at 3B.	• Goes out to cover C/NC and stays out for the duration of the play. **Responsible for:** F/F and C/NC.

ROTATION IDENTIFICATION MATRIX:

SITUATION	MOVEMENT	TYPE OF ROTATION
NRO	U1 Leaves	PU Trail
	U2 Leaves	Full
	U3 Leaves	Full
R1 Only	U1 Leaves	U2 Drift
	U3 Leaves	Full
R2 Only	U1 Leaves	U2 Drift
	U3 Leaves	Reverse
R3 Only	U1 Leaves	U2 Drift
	U2 Leaves	Reverse *U1 takes BR at 1B and 2B*
	U3 Leaves	Reverse *U1 takes BR at 1B and 2B.* *U2 pivots to WA to cover 3B.*
R1+R2	U1 Leaves	U2 Drift
	U3 Leaves	Reverse or Full if R2 Tags
R1+R3	U1 Leaves	U2 Drift
	U3 Leaves	Reverse
R2+R3	U1 Leaves	U2 Drift
	U3 Leaves	Reverse
Bases Full	U1 Leaves	U2 Drift
	U3 Leaves	Reverse

SUMMARY OF THE 4-UMPIRE SYSTEM FOR BIG DIAMONDS – PRE-GAME CONFERENCE RESOURCE

Basic Responsibilities:

- Fair / Foul:
  - PU has F/F up to but not including the front edge of 1B/3B (balls fielded in front of or stopping short of the bag).
  - U1 / U3 has F/F from the front edge of the bag and beyond (bounding in air or on the ground beyond the front edge of the bag or fielded beyond the front edge of the bag).
- Catch / No-Catch: Determined by the positioning of U2:
  - NRO / R3 Situations:
    - U1 has F9 to the line.
    - U2 has everything between F7 and F9 straight in and straight back.
    - U3 has F7 to the line.
    - NOTE: Crew defers to U2 if 2-Umpires go out with NRO / R3.
  - All other Situations (U2 is inside in the "B" position):
    - U1 has F8 (straight in & back) to the Right Field Foul Line.
    - U3 has F8 to the Left Field Line.
- Catch / No-Catch on the Infield:
  - For line drives in the infield, the Open Glove Theory will be used, requiring the umpire to whom the glove is opening takes the call.
  - PU takes any ball to the pitcher or any ball to an infielder charging in on the infield grass.
  - U1 takes any ball hit directly to F3 and any ball that takes F3 or F4 to his/her left.
  - U2 takes any ball hit directly at F4 or F6, any ball that requires F4 to dive to his/her right, or any ball that requires F6 to dive to his/her left.
  - U3 takes any ball hit directly to F5 and any ball that takes F5 or F6 to his/her right.
  - When U2 is positioned inside the infield, U2 will be responsible for all routine C/NC in the infield.

Basic Rotations by Situation:

- NRO: (Full Rotation)
  - U1 Goes Out – PU trails BR to 1B, U2 to Po2, U3 to Po3
  - U2 Goes Out – PU to 3B, U3 to 2B, U1 to Po1 + PoP
  - U3 Goes Out – PU to 3B, U2 to Po2, U1 to Po1 + PoP
- R1 Only: (Full Rotation)
  - U1 Goes Out – PU to PoP, U2 to WA for 1B and 2B, U3 to Po3
  - U3 Goes Out – PU to 3B, U2 to 2B, U1 to Po1 + PoP once R1 touches 2B.
- R3 Only: (Reverse Rotation / U2 Drift)
  - U1 Goes Out – PU to PoP, U2 to WA for 1B and 2B, U3 to Po3
  - U2 Goes Out – PU to PoP, U1 pivots with BR to 1B and 2B, U3 to Po3
  - U3 Goes Out – PU line-up R3's tag-up + return to PoP, U2 to 3B, U1 pivots with BR to 1B and 2B.
- All Other Situations with RiSP: (Reverse Rotation / U2 Drift / Full Rotation with R1+R2 and R2 Tags)
  - U1 Goes Out – PU to PoP (+R3's tag-up), U2 drift to WA to cover 1B & 2B, U3 to Po3
  - U3 Goes Out – PU to PoP (+R3's tag-up), U2 to slide to 3B, U1 pivots with BR to cover 1B and 2B.

Tag-Up (Re-Touches) Responsibilities: Tag-Up responsibilities will not revert to an umpire behind a given runner.

Touches:

- When not in rotation, each umpire is responsible for all touches (and plays) at their assigned base by moving to PoB and remaining CtB.
- **Full Rotation**:
  - PU – touches and plays by all runners at 3B
  - U1 – touches and plays by the BR at 1B and at HP
  - U2 – all touches and plays at 2B (when U3 goes out)
  - U3 – all touches and plays at 2B (when U2 goes out)
- **Slide (Reverse) Rotation:**
  - PU – touches and plays by all runners at HP
  - U1 – touches and plays by the BR at 1B and at 2B
  - U2 – touches and plays by all lead runners at 2B and the trail runner at 3B (when U3 goes out)
  - U3 – touches and plays by all lead runners at 2B and the trail runner at 3B (when U2 goes out)
- **U2 Drift:** U2 assumes all touches at both 1B and 2B as U1 goes out to cover catch / no-catch.

WEDGE THEORY IN THE 4-UMPIRE SYSTEM

When not in rotation, umpires in the 4-Umpire System are expected to apply the wedge theory to observe all plays at each base. Previous instruction has used the "point of bag" philosophy to help identify acceptable starting positions when finding the wedge. Additionally, the distance range of 5-8 feet from the base has also been used for guidance relative to starting positions. As the wedge concept continues to evolve, guiding philosophies also change as a result of more experience and film analysis to support evolving theories.

Update – Mechanics of the Wedge Theory

Umpires are now instructed to position 5-7 feet *behind the fielder* receiving the throw as the starting position when finding the wedge for tag plays. This evolving mechanic affords for greater vision, quicker and more relative adjustments with the fielder, and fewer steps when maintaining the wedge. Umpires should still follow the basic three fundamental mechanics in finding the wedge on tag plays:

1. **Start Closer! Initial Starting Position:** 5-7 feet behind the fielder receiving the throw, but not so as to impede the fielder's lateral movement (right or left) to receive or adjust with the throw. Umpires will thereby be on a parallel track with the fielder and replicate the fielder's movements as the throw arrives. In assuming this starting position, umpires must stay clear of both the fielder's lateral track to receive the throw as well as refraining from crossing the runner's track into the base.
2. **Move with the Fielder:** Understand that the fielder will take us to the developing play and therefore, if we stay with the fielder, our angles into the play will continue to open as the play develops. Constantly adjusting with the fielder is our only chance to avoid becoming straight-lined on any tag attempt. While staying parallel to the fielder and not impeding his lateral movement, the umpire will move in the exact same direction as the fielder (right, left, forwards, or backwards) while avoiding crossing or standing on the runner's track into the base.
3. **Stay in the Window - Quiet Steps:** Quiet steps are the final 1-3 steps an umpire will take to close in on a play. Ideally, these steps will provide an umpire with a target distance of 2-3 feet from the play, requiring the umpire to move closer to the play more so than to close in laterally. As the fielder reaches to make his/her tag attempt, the umpire should continue to step into the play to achieve the 2-3 feet target distance from the play, keeping the umpire's head and eyes between the tag and the base-side hip of the fielder. In some cases, this will require the umpire to literally "circle" the play to maintain this positioning as the fielder reaches and attempts to tag the runner, who is trying to avoid the tag by the fielder. Remember that our target distance in our quiet steps is now 2-3 feet, allowing us a greater viewing angle with a one-step adjustment.

The central tenet of wedge theory is that the fielders take us to the out rather than the base or the runner. Therefore, umpires shall move more closely to and along with the fielders, allowing the fielder to take us to the out. The following aims to outline and explain the guiding principles and philosophies of wedge theory in application of the 4-Umpire System:

Defining "The Wedge" in the Wedge Theory

The wedge is the area between the fielder's base-side hip and the base-side hip of the incoming runner. To find this area, umpires are required to position closer to the play (5-7 feet) and move with and alongside the fielder as he receives the ball to a target distance of 2-3 feet as the fielder attempts to tag the runner. As the fielder receives the ball and seeks the runner to create a tag attempt to put out the runner, the umpire must move to get his eyes in "the wedge" – between the tag and the runner as both the fielder and the runner come together.

Important to note in using this mechanic is that the base will not take us to the out. The base merely provides umpires with a point of reference; and while the runner is attempting to get to the base safely, we must be more focused on the ball and fielder, for the ball and the fielder will take us to the best position to view the play.

Rationale of the Wedge Theory

One rationale as to why we use the wedge theory is to see all that is required in the play to give us an out or safe declaration – the ball, a fielder, and a runner. Note that our definition of a "play" does not include a mentioning of the base; the base will not take us to the play. Only the ball, fielder, and runner will be able to take the umpire to the play. Therefore, wedge theory dictates umpires move with each of those three variables so that when the three come together, we are in the best possible position to achieve the angle and get the call right.

A second rationale is that using wedge theory is a strategy that aims to reduce the probability of being straight-lined when observing a tag attempt by a fielder on an incoming runner. That is, heading to a pre-determined "spot" (or the base) does not allow for readjustment as the variables involved in the play (ball, fielder, and runner) will change directions as the play develops. And while the play will frequently "end" at the base, moving with the variables (ball, fielder, and runner) in the play and adjusting our viewing angle based upon the movements of these three factors is necessary to avoid an obstructed view of the developing play.

Third, swipe-tags as put-out attempts are increasing in frequency due to the focus on collision rules, concussion prevention, and injury prevention of players in tag-plays. Therefore, to observe the swipe tag, without being potentially obstructed, umpires must readjust and constantly reposition for the developing play to achieve the best possible, least obstructed angle to rule on the play.

Video Examples:

For a visual, video reference, please navigate to the Umpire Registry, login, and then use the links below regarding wedge theory and their evolution and application in Little League Baseball and Softball.

- Wedge Theory for Plays at the Plate: https://www.littleleagueumpire.org/Videos/Watch/20
- Wedge Theory for Plays on the Bases: https://www.littleleagueumpire.org/Videos/Watch/25