

CLARIFICATION ON THE OWATONNA PROFANITY RULE

An "Adoption on what the State of Texas uses". Below is a clarification:

At pregame instruction, managers are instructed, and warning is already in effect. Let's say a team has the bases loaded and the batter pops up to the infield. Immediately he lets out a profanity (fill in your favorite). Once the play is over, the casual profanity rule is in effect and an out is declared.

This time the bases are empty when the batter pops up. He utters his profanity in frustration as he heads to first. Then the fielder drops the ball and the batter winds up safe on first. No, not this time. Because the casual profanity rule is in effect, the batter is called "out" due to his remark. That's how the team is penalized.

What do you do if the fielder catches the ball? You can't call the batter "out" because he already is. Therefore, we call the next batter "out". That's where we enforce the penalty.

Why is this such a great rule"? Mainly because the players police themselves. Can you imagine what the on-deck batter is doing as soon as that pop fly heads toward the sky? They are screaming at their buddy not to say a word. I even had an on-deck batter run to the batter like he was going to cover his mouth. If the batter is put out for the third out of the inning, then the penalty for profanity is enforced on the first batter of the next inning. That takes care of the offense.

Here's how we handle the defense. If a defensive player "boots" the ball and curses. the defense is penalized by having the first batter called out when they come to bat. This is the only aspect of the rule, along with carry-over of the third out enforcement on the offensive team, where you'll have to remember to enforce the rule at a later time. But you have little worry, because the other team will always remind you if you forget.

There are a couple more clarifications to our casual profanity rule. Profanity directed at others, especially umpires, will still result in ejection. If a player is called out on a bang-bang play at first and he utters a word under his breath because of his poor hit as he is thrown out at first, I don't enforce the casual profanity rule. That's because no one but me, and maybe the first baseman, has heard him.

(I too, hate to think a Texan came up with this great idea before we did but, as I said earlier, I am not opposed to stealing any good idea and I believe this rule would be great for the game of softball not only in Cincinnati, but everywhere).

By Ron Jeffers, a ASA Regional Umpire-in-Chief for the Midwest Area and a 30 year veteran umpire.