

Independent Umpire's Association, Inc.

2nd Year Mechanics Class

The 2nd year mechanics class consists of 6 days at 6 hours a day for a total of 36 hours training. The class is headed by Joe Johnson, Sr. with the assistance from his son Joe Johnson, Jr. as Field Director. Johnson, Jr. has been a minor league umpire for 4 years and a graduate of Jim Evans' Academy for Professional Umpiring. Johnson, Jr. is also assisted by 5 other instructors –two of which (Len Luciano and Steve Eckman) are also graduates of Jim Evans' Academy of Professional Umpiring.



2007 Mechanic Class #1: (Top row left to right) Instructors Alan Zeidler, Steve Eckman, Mike Walsh, Bob Mitchell, Sr., Joe Johnson, Sr., Len Luciano, Andy Tomaszewski, Joe Johnson, Jr; (Bottom row left to right) 2nd Year Umpires Anthony Wilcox, Charlie Fredericksdorf, Don Licorish, Anthony Buono, William Toole, Rick Fletcher, Eric Bassler

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The Cage Drill

The Class covers proper plate mechanics. It focuses on the slot position and several factors that are needed in order to develop a consistent strike zone. Special equipment used during this drill is the matrix (seen in the background of the photograph above), a VHS camera and microphone (so students can review the recordings once at home), rag balls, and a tracking and timing stick. The drill is referred to as the “cage drill” and has a specific rotation to it. What’s unique about the drill is that it builds up proper mechanics progressively, and students can compare their initial stances to their final ones at graduation via the VHS tapes. The video tapes also serve as memorabilia as well as a reminder of proper basic plate mechanics should the student need to review at a later date in their careers



Anthony Buono is checked for proper heel to toe (left). Charlie Fredericksdorf is checked for proper slot position and squared shoulders (right). Notice Charlie’s shoulders are parallel with the matrix grid.

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Eric Bassler is checked for proper head height (left). Don Licorish is checked for proper tracking and timing (right). Notice the tracking and timing stick with the baseball attached. It is used to simulate a live pitch during initial timing and tracking training. This photo shows live pitching.



Charlie Fredericksdorf: a check swing appeal mechanic (left). Anthony Wilcox calls a strike (right).

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The Concentration Drill

The class also covers proper base umpire mechanics. It focuses on proper angles and distances for a base umpire to obtain prior to calling a play. It also focuses on proper timing – seeing the play, making the call, and executing a crisp clean looking mechanic as well as a secondary mechanic if needed. Special equipment used in the drills include three 6 feet by 2 feet mirrors. The mirrors are also equipped with markings to simulate a base and the area in which the ball is caught. As the umpire looks at the aforementioned markings on the mirror, he/she can also observe his/her reflection and develop a crisp, clean mechanic. The drill is referred to as “the concentration drill”. Since proper timing should be used by every umpire, the umpires are put into lines. Every umpire is to make the appropriate call at the same time being that the play simulated is the same for each umpire.



Instructors Joe Johnson, Jr., Alan Zeidler, and Len Luciano set up the concentration drill (left).

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2nd Year umpires Eric Bassler, Rick Fletcher, Anthony Buono (rear right), Don Licorish, Anthony Wilcox, and Charlie Fredericksdorf (front right) execute the concentration drill correctly during a simulated “out” play at first base.



This photograph depicts the same as above; however, the simulated play is a “safe” play at first base.

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Rules Mechanics

The class covers some rules and the corresponding mechanic that is used when a violation of a certain rule is observed. The photographs below show rule violations and the proper mechanic in reference to batter's interference. It should be noted that the aforementioned rule violations occur during semi-live drills in which instructors use "vox" equipped walkie talkies to call in plays. The use of walkie talkies allow instructors to communicate amongst themselves without giving the 2nd year umpire a "heads-up" to what may or may not be coming next. The drills enacted when covering rule violation observations and enforcement are referred to as "rules mechanics".



Eric Bassler initiates a batter's interference call after observing a "safe" call at 2nd base on a steal from first base. Notice the time mechanic along with his movement toward the inside of the diamond. He then points to the batter which later is followed by an out mechanic and communication telling the batter "batter, he's out for the interference".

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Anthony Buono ends his enforcement of a batter's interference play by returning the runner who stole second back to first base.

During the class, several rule violations are covered. Since the drill is semi-live play, umpires who call a rules violation (backed by a mechanic) are then asked for an explanation. The explanation provided is taught to be accurate and to the point. Umpires who do not initiate a rules violation mechanic and indicate that there is no foul on the play are also asked for an explanation. Each play that is called in over walkie talkie is semi-live, and umpires are forced to hone in on their judgement skills

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Field Drills/Live Scenarios

The class also covers live scenarios. After all inside drills are conducted, the class is taken outside to a ninety foot diamond. Two umpires are asked to umpire a game. The remaining instructors and 2nd year umpires take up positions in the field (batters, runners, infielders, and outfielders). Instructors wear red vests and communicate via walkie talkies. Instruction is also periodically given via a 600 yard megaphone. Live scenarios called over the walkie talkies force umpires to react to a wide range of game situations. It is also done to ensure that umpires know their responsibilities and coverage when the ball is put into play. This drill is referred to as "field drills / live scenarios". After the two man umpiring team finishes, two new umpires take over. The drill is continued until all umpires have taken part.



Rick Fletcher executes proper double play mechanics with a runner on first base and a ground ball hit to the second baseman. Notice that he has stepped up, turned, and faced the ball (left); that he has dropped with his left foot turning square to the second base bag (the shortstop instructor in position to retrieve the throw from the second base instructor – photo right).

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With the shortstop retrieving the throw, Fletcher begins his movement toward the play at first base (left). Notice that as he is on the move, he has not taken his head and eyes off the play occurring at second base (right). As the shortstop goes into his glove and begins making a throw to first base, the ball slips out of his hand. In this photograph, Fletcher has begun to initiate his out mechanic. After the play is over, he will return to the second base bag area and make a secondary call using the mechanic "he's out", "he's out", "he's pulling it out". If you look closely, you can see the walkie talkie on the right hip of the instructor shortstop.



Alan Zeidler - catcher, Mike Walsh - batter, Joe Johnson Jr. - umpire

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The 2nd year mechanics class is an intense program that deals with both softball and baseball mechanics. The mechanics taught are the same as the professional 2-man mechanic system. There is no cost to attend the mechanics class. All students receive a certificate of completion, a t-shirt, and a class picture along with a video recording of some of the class drills. It is a program offered by the IUA that is taught by professional umpires. Any questions about joining the IUA can be directed to Allan Zeidler or Mike Walsh – see cadette class link. **Anyone** visiting this site as well as any current members who have questions about any mechanic, please contact Al Zeidler at aezeidler@msn.com. A special thanks to Instructor Andy Tomaszewski for taking and processing all of the photographs in this presentation.