

## **SECTION 8 – Interference & Obstruction**

### **Interference (Offensive)**

Interference is an act that denies a defensive player a reasonable opportunity to make a play (field/throw) anywhere on the playing field. The act may be intentional or unintentional, and the ball must have been playable. Interference may be caused by individual offensive players (batter, on-deck batter, batter-runner, runner), coaches, umpires, non-game personnel or spectators as well as by the offensive team as a whole or by loose equipment that belongs to them.

As a general rule, when batter, batter-runner, on-deck batter, runner or coach interference occurs: (1) the ball becomes dead, (2) someone is called out, and (3) each runner must return to the last base which, in the umpire's judgment, was legally touched at the time of the interference, except when forced to go to the next base because the batter became a batter-runner. If the batter-runner has not touched first base at the time of the interference, each runner shall return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch. When a runner(s) is called out for interference on a batted ball that's in fair territory, the batter-runner is awarded first base and credited with a base hit.

### **Batter Interference — SECTION 8.1.**

Batter interference occurs while the batter is at bat and before the batter completes their turn at bat.

- a. The batter shall not step from one batter's box, directly in front of the catcher, to the other batter's box once the pitcher has started her delivery.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

- b. The batter shall not hinder the catcher from catching or throwing the ball by stepping out of the batter's box or intentionally hinder the catcher (e.g., on a steal/pick-off throw or a play at the plate) while standing within the batter's box.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the last base that, in the umpire's judgment, was legally touched at the time of the interference.**

#### **Exceptions:**

1. If a runner is advancing to home plate and there are fewer than two outs, the batter is out. The ball is dead, and runner(s) return to the last base that, in the umpire's judgment, was legally touched at the time of the interference.
2. If the batter strikes out and interferes with the catcher's attempt to throw out a runner, the runner also is out. The ball is dead.

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*Note: The batter's box is not a sanctuary for the batter when a play is being made at the plate.*

- c. The batter may not swing and miss a pitched ball and then intentionally hit it on a second swing or after it bounces off the catcher or their glove/mitt.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

*Note: If the batter swings and misses the pitched ball but accidentally hits it on the follow through, it is not interference, but the ball is dead, and all runners must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.*

- d. The batter may not release the bat in such a manner that it hits the catcher and prevents the catcher from making a play.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

*Note: If the batter merely drops her bat and the catcher trips over it, there is no interference.*

### **Batter-Runner Interference — SECTION 8.2.**

- a. The batter may not, after hitting/bunting/slapping a fair ball, contact the ball with the bat a second time in fair territory. For example:

- 1) The batter may not contact the ball a second time if the batter is out of the batter's box and the bat is still in their hand(s).

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of her pitch.**

- 2) The batter may not drop or throw the bat such that it hits (lands on) the ball in fair territory.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

#### **Exceptions:**

1. If the bat is out of the batter's hands (on the ground), the ball rolls against the bat, and in the umpire's judgment there was no intent to interfere with the course of the ball, the ball is live, no one is out for interference, and base runner(s) may advance with liability to be put out.
  - a) If the ball rolls against the bat in fair territory, it remains live. If it stops or is touched in fair territory, it is a fair ball.
  - b) If the ball touches the bat in fair territory and then rolls to foul ground and stops it is a foul ball. If the ball rolls against the bat in foul territory, it is a foul ball.

If the batter, after hitting/slapping/bunting a fair ball, is still holding the bat

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**in their hand(s) and is still in the batter's box when they contact the ball a second time in fair territory, a foul ball is ruled; the ball is dead; and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

3. The batter may not throw the whole bat into fair territory, whether intentionally or not, and interfere with a defensive player attempting to make a play.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch. If, in the umpire's judgment, interference prevented a possible double play, two outs may be declared.**

*Notes:*

1. *If the bat breaks and a part of it is hit by the batted ball in fair territory or a part of it hits a runner or fielder, the ball remains live, and there is no interference.*

2. *If a part of the bat is touched by the batted ball in foul territory, it is a foul ball.*

3. *If the batter simply drops her bat and the catcher trips over it, no interference is called.*

b. The batter-runner shall not interfere with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball. For example:

1) The batter-runner may not make contact with a fair batted ball before reaching first base.

2) The batter may not, after hitting/bunting/slapping a foul ball, intentionally deflect the course of the ball in any manner while running to first.

c. The batter-runner may not interfere with the catcher's attempt to field a third strike.

d. When the batter-runner runs outside the three-foot lane, and, in the judgment of the umpire, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base; however, the batter-runner may run outside the three-foot lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball. When the defensive player uses the orange portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory when the throw is coming from the foul side of first base. And if hit by the thrown ball, it would not be interference. If intentional interference is ruled, the runner would be out.

*Note: The batter-runner is considered outside the runner's lane if either foot is completely outside either line and in contact with the ground.*

e. The batter-runner may not intentionally interfere with a thrown ball while out of the batter's box.

*Note: A batter-runner being hit with a thrown ball does not necessarily con-*

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*stitute interference.*

**PENALTY (b)(e) – The ball is dead, the batter-runner is out, and each runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

**If the interference, in the umpire's judgment, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play, the runner closest to home plate shall also be called out.**

- f. The batter-runner may not interfere with a play at home plate in an attempt to prevent an obvious out at home plate.

**PENALTY – The ball is dead. The batter-runner is out, and all runners must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

**Coach Interference – SECTION 8.3.**

- a. A coach may not interfere with a fielder who has a reasonable opportunity to make a play on a foul fly ball.

**PENALTY – The ball is dead, the batter is out, and each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

- b. With a runner in scoring position, the coach near third base shall not run in the direction of home plate (on or near the baseline) while a fielder is attempting to make a play, thereby, drawing a throw to home plate.
- c. A coach, while in or out of the coach's box, shall not intentionally interfere with a thrown ball, or interfere with the defensive team's opportunity to make a play on another runner.

**PENALTY (b)(c) – The ball is dead, the runner closest to home plate shall be declared out, and each other runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference. *Exception:* If a thrown ball accidentally touches a coach in foul territory, the ball is live. It is unintentional (accidental) interference if the individual tries to evade the ball or is not aware that the ball is coming.**

- d. A coach (or anyone other than another runner) may not physically assist (e.g., touch, hold, push) a base runner while the ball is in play.

**PENALTY – The ball is live, the assisted runner is out, and each other runner may advance with liability to be put out.**

*Note: The coach's box is not a sanctuary.*

**Non-game Authorized Personnel Interference – SECTION 8.4.**

If a live batted or thrown ball accidentally hits non-game personnel (e.g., media, field attendants), the ball remains live. It is unintentional (accidental) interference if the individual tries to evade the ball or is not

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aware that the ball is coming. However, no non-game personnel may intentionally interfere with a live batted or thrown ball (i.e., kick or push the ball).

**EFFECT — The umpire shall award the offended team the appropriate compensation (e.g., extra bases, an out) that, in his/her opinion, would have resulted had interference not taken place.**

*Note: Authorized media may be in foul territory but must be ready to move quickly to avoid being hit by a batted or overthrown ball. All photographic equipment must be carried. No equipment may be left on the ground. Photographers may use a monopod, but tripods are not allowed.*

### **On-Deck Batter Interference — SECTION 8.5.**

The on-deck batter may not interfere with the defensive player's reasonable opportunity to make a play.

**PENALTY — If the interference is with a defensive player fielding a fly ball, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and each other runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

**If the interference involves a base runner, the ball is dead. The runner closest to home plate at the time of the interference shall be declared out, and each other runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference, unless forced to advance.**

### **Runner Interference — SECTION 8.6.**

- a. The base runner may not interfere with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.
  - 1) A base runner may not contact a fair-batted ball, while off base before it touches a fielder or before it passes an infielder (other than the pitcher), who has a reasonable chance to make an out.
  - 2) The base runner may not contact a fair-batted ball after it passes an infielder if another infielder has a chance to make an out.
  - 3) The base runner may not intentionally kick a ball that an infielder has missed.
  - 4) Any physical contact by the base runner with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball, whether intentional or unintentional, shall be interference, provided the fielder had a reasonable chance to make an out.
- a) If the defensive player, while watching the flight of a ball, bumps a runner who is standing on a base and fails to make a catch on a catchable ball, the runner shall not be called out unless the hindrance is intentional. A runner must vacate any space needed by a fielder to make a play on a batted ball, unless the runner has contact with a legally occupied base when the hindrance occurs. This is an exception to the rule

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that defensive players must be given the opportunity to field the ball anywhere on the playing field without being hindered.

- b) It is still interference if a batted ball is misplayed and remains in front of a fielder such that the fielder still has an opportunity to obtain an out, and the runner contacts the fielder. **Exception:** If the misplayed ball bounds away or past the fielder and then contact occurs as the fielder and runner collide, this may be considered inadvertent contact.
- c) If two fielders try to field a batted ball and the runner contacts one or both, the umpire shall decide which one is entitled to field the ball, and that fielder only is entitled to protection.
- d) If a ball ricochets off one defensive player and another player has the opportunity to make an out, the runner will only be ruled out if the act is intentional.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead. The batter-runner is awarded first base and credited with a base hit. The offending runner is out. If forced, each other runner advances one base without liability to be put out. If unforced, each runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

**Exceptions:**

- 1. **If the interference, in the umpire's judgment, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play and occurs before the runner is put out, the immediate runner also shall be called out.**
- 2. **If the interference prevents the fielder from catching a routine fly ball, the batter is also out.**
- b. The base runner may not interfere with a fielder attempting to throw the ball.
- c. The base runner may not intentionally interfere with a thrown ball.

*Note: A runner being hit with a thrown ball does not necessarily constitute interference.*

**PENALTY (b)-(c) — The ball is dead. The offending runner is out. If forced, each other runner advances one base without liability to be put out. If unforced, each runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference. Exception:** If the interference, in the umpire's judgment, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play and occurs before the runner is put out, the immediate trailing runner also shall be called out.

- d. A runner, who is not yet out, may not intentionally interfere, in the umpire's judgment, with a fielder who is attempting to catch a thrown ball or to throw a ball in an attempt to complete the play.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, the batter-runner and runner are out, and each**

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**other runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

- e. A base runner, after being declared out or after scoring, may not interfere with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play on another runner.

**PENALTY – The ball is dead, and the runner closest to home plate at the time of the interference shall be declared out. Each base runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

- f. A base runner may not remain on their feet, and with great force, crash into a defensive player (holding the ball, or about to receive a thrown ball, and waiting to apply a tag).

**PENALTY – The ball is dead, and the batter-runner/runner shall be declared out even if the defensive player loses possession of the ball. Each other base runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

**Exceptions:**

- 1. If the runner deliberately crashes into a defensive player holding the ball before she (the runner) is put out and, in the judgment of the umpire, it is an attempt to break up an obvious double play, the immediate trailing runner also shall be declared out.**
- 2. If the deliberate crash occurs after the runner is called out, the runner closest to home plate also shall be declared out.**

If, in the umpire's judgment, the collision is flagrant the runner shall be declared out and also ejected from the contest. The ball is dead, and each other base runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.

**Notes:**

- 1. In order to prevent a deliberate crash ruling, the runner can slide, jump over or go around (within three feet) a defender holding the ball in an upright or kneeling position, or return to the previous base touched.*
  - 2. Should an act of interference (offensive) occur following any obstruction (defensive), enforcement of the interference penalty would take precedence. For example, if an obstructed runner deliberately crashes into a fielder holding the ball, the obstruction call will be ignored, and the runner will be called out for offensive interference.*
- g. It is not interference, and the runner is not out:
- 1) When more than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball and the runner comes into contact with the one who, in the judgment of the umpire, could not have made a play.

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- 2) When the runner is hit with a fair, untouched batted ball that has passed an infielder (other than the pitcher) and, in the umpire's judgment, no other infielder had a reasonable chance to make a play. If said ball contacts the runner while still in flight, thereafter, it shall be considered a ground ball; it cannot be caught as a fly ball.
- 3) When the runner is hit by a fair batted ball after it touches, or is touched by, any fielder (including the pitcher) and they could not avoid contact with the ball.
- 4) When a batted ball is misplayed, the ball bounds away or past the fielder, and then the fielder and runner collide. This is considered inadvertent contact.
- 5) If the bat breaks and a part of it is hit by the batted ball in fair territory or a part of it hits a runner or a fielder.
- 6) When the runner is hit with a fair untouched batted ball (that has not touched or passed a base) while standing in foul territory and no infielder has a reasonable chance to make a play.

**EFFECT (1)-(6) – The ball is live, and all runners (including the batter-runner) may advance with liability to be put out.**

- 7) When the runner is hit by a fair-batted ball while in contact with a base, unless she intentionally interferes with the ball or a fielder making a play.

**EFFECT – The ball is live or dead depending on the position of the fielder closest to the base:**

**The ball is live if the closest defensive player is in front of the base. All runners (including the batter-runner) may advance with liability to be put out.**

**The ball is dead if the closest defensive player is behind the base. The batter-runner is awarded first base and credited with a base hit. If forced, each runner advances one base with no liability to be put out. If not forced, each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

**Spectator Interference – SECTION 8.7.**

No spectator(s) shall reach out of the stands or enter the field and interfere with a play. Exception: It is not interference if the fielder reaches into the stands or over a fence. The field belongs to the fielder, and the stands belong to the spectator.

**EFFECT – The ball is dead. The umpire shall award the offended team the appropriate compensation (e.g., extra bases, an out) that, in his/her opinion, would have resulted had interference not taken place.**

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If the act clearly prevented a fielder from catching a fly ball in the field of play, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and the umpire shall award the offended team the appropriate compensation (e.g., extra bases, an out) that, in his/her opinion, would have resulted had interference not taken place.

### **Team (Offensive) Interference — SECTION 8.8.**

- a. No offensive team personnel (players not at bat, on-deck or on base; coaches not in the coaches' boxes; managers; trainers; scorekeepers; and bat persons) shall stand or collect around a base to which a runner is advancing, thereby confusing the fielders and adding to the difficulty of making the play.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, and the runner is out. Each other runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

- b. Offensive team personnel shall not interfere with a defensive player attempting to field a fly ball.

**PENALTY — The ball is dead, and the batter is out. Each runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.**

- c. Offensive team personnel, other than base coaches shall not touch a batter who has hit an out-of-the-park home run until they have contacted home plate.

**PENALTY — For a first offensive in a game, the umpire shall issue a warning to the offending team. For a second offense, the ball is dead, and the batter is out and credited with the last base legally touched at the time of the interference. Each other base runner must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.**

### **Umpire Interference — SECTION 8.9.**

Umpire interference occurs:

- a. When a fair, untouched batted ball strikes the person, attached equipment or clothing of an umpire before passing a fielder (other than the pitcher), or after passing an infielder (including the pitcher) but another fielder had a reasonable chance to make a play.
- b. When a fair untouched batted ball strikes the person, attached equipment, or clothing of an umpire before touching a fielder (including the pitcher).

**EFFECT (a)-(b) — The ball is dead. The batter-runner is awarded first base and credited with a base hit. If forced, each base runner advances one base with no liability to be put out. If not forced, each base runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch. *Exception:* It is**

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**not interference, the ball remains in play, and the runner is not out, if the ball: (1) hits the umpire after passing a fielder, other than the pitcher, and no other infielder has a reasonable chance to make a play; or (2) hits the umpire after touching a fielder (including the pitcher).**

*Note: If said ball touches the umpire while still in flight, thereafter, it shall be considered a ground ball. It cannot be caught as fly ball.*

c. When the plate umpire or his/her clothing interferes with the catcher's attempt to throw out a runner on a pick-off or steal attempt.

**EFFECT – Delayed dead ball. If the runner is not out, they must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch. If the runner is ruled out, the ball remains live, and there is no interference.**

*Note: It is not interference if a pitched or thrown ball strikes an umpire. The ball is live, and each base runner is entitled to advance with liability to be put out.*

### **Obstruction (Defensive)**

#### **Obstruction – SECTION 8.10.**

Obstruction is the act of a defensive team member that hinders or impedes a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitched ball, or that impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running bases, unless the fielder is in possession of the ball, or in the act of fielding a batted ball. Rule c. Exception 2 on page 70.

*Notes:*

- a. The defensive player must have possession of the ball. When a play is imminent, a defensive player may not block a base or the base line without possession of the ball. If the defensive player has the ball, it is the runner's responsibility to avoid the fielder. If the defensive player does not have the ball, it is the responsibility of the fielder to avoid and not impede the runner's progress.
  - 1) The act may be intentional or unintentional.
- b. Whenever obstruction occurs, whether a play is being made on a runner or not, the umpire will declare obstruction and signal a delayed dead ball. The ball remains live until the conclusion of the play at which time the umpire will notify the offensive head coach of his/her options, if any.

*Note: If other runners are advancing and an umpire inadvertently calls "Time/Timeout" following a play on an obstructed runner, a rule of thumb for placement of the other runners is: If they have not reached half way to*

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*the next base, they must return to the previous base. However, if they have advanced over half way, they are allowed to advance to the next base.*

- c. Obstructed runners are still required to touch all bases in proper order, or they could be called out on a proper appeal by the defensive team.
- d. An obstructed runner may not be called out between the two bases where they was obstructed unless properly appealed for missing a base, leaving a base before a fly ball was first touched, for an act of interference or when another violation is being played upon (e.g., a runner leaving second base too soon on a fly ball is returning after the ball is caught and is obstructed between second base and third base. If the runner had not made it back to second base prior to the throw arriving, she would remain out).
- e. If an obstructed runner is awarded a base they would have made had there been no obstruction and a preceding runner is on that base, the obstructed runner will be awarded that base, and the preceding runner shall be entitled to the next base without liability to be put out.
- f. If the obstructed runner attempts to advance past the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction, or past the base they would have been awarded for the obstruction, they are running with liability to be put out. The ball remains live.
- g. Should an act of interference (offensive) occur following any obstruction (defensive), enforcement of the interference penalty takes precedence.

### **Types of Obstruction – SECTION 8.11.**

Obstruction includes:

- a. **Flagrant Player Obstruction:** The fielder shall not at any time flagrantly (with deliberate unsportsmanlike intent) impede the batter, batter-runner or runner.

**PENALTY – Delayed dead ball.**

**In addition to the appropriate obstruction penalty, the offender shall be ejected without warning.**

- b. **Catcher Obstruction**

- 1) The catcher shall not obstruct, hinder or prevent the batter's attempt to make contact with a pitched ball.

**PENALTY – Delayed dead ball.**

**If the batter contacts the ball and reaches first base safely and each other runner has advanced at least one base on the batted ball, catcher obstruction is canceled. All action as a result of the batted ball stands, and no option is given. Once a runner has passed a base, the runner considered to have reached that base even if they missed it. No option is given.**

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If the batter does not reach first base or if one of the other runners does not advance at least once base, the coach of the offensive team has the option of taking the result of the play. If the coach does not take the result of the play:

- a) The batter is awarded first base.
- b) If forced each base runner advances one base with no liability to be put out. If not forced, each base runner returns to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch. *Exception.* If the catcher steps on or in front of home plate or touches the batter or their bat while a pitched ball is on the way to the plate and there is a runner on third attempting to score on a squeeze play, each base runner advances one base without liability to be put out whether forced or not.

*Note: If a batter, during preliminary loosening-up swings, hits the catcher or the catcher's glove/mitt during the back swing, the umpire should immediately call "Time/Timeout" and not obstruction. Catcher's obstruction on a batter should be called only on the batter's attempt to make contact with the pitch. The pitch or swing should not be allowed, however, since the batter's concentration or rhythm could be affected.*

- c) **Fielder Obstruction:** A fielder who is not in possession of the ball, not in the act of fielding a batted ball, may not impede the batter, batter-runner or runner. In addition, a fielder may not fake a tag (a tag without the ball) on a runner advancing or returning to a base

**PENALTY – Delayed dead ball.**

If the obstructed batter, batter-runner or runner is put out before reaching the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction, the obstructed player shall be awarded the base they would have reached, in the umpire's judgment, had there not been obstruction. Subsequent violation by the same individual may result in a one base award to the obstructed player, and each other runner forced to advance.

**Exceptions:**

1. A fielder shall not at any time obstruct a runner rounding or returning to a base. A fielder who is waiting to receive a throw may not impede the progress or return of a runner if there is no immediate play or the throw is not made.
2. A fielder shall not take a position in the runner's line of vision to intentionally distract the runner or intentionally prohibit them from seeing the release of the pitch.

**Exception (1)-(2) – Delayed dead ball.** First violation: The umpire shall issue a warning to the offending individual and notify her coach. Subsequent

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violation by the same individual shall result in a one base award to the obstructed runner, and each other runner forced to advance.

3. A fielder shall not at any time obstruct a runner from the base path during a rundown and prohibit them from advancing or returning to a base.

**PENALTY – Delayed dead ball.**

The runner shall be awarded the lead base. If the ball is overthrown after the obstruction, the runner is entitled to the lead base but may advance farther with liability to be put out

4. A fielder shall not take a position in the batter's line of vision or act in a manner to distract the batter.

**PENALTY – Delayed dead ball.**

5. **Illegal Pitch:**

d. **Equipment Obstruction:** A fielder shall not intentionally contact or catch a fair batted or thrown ball with her cap, helmet, mask, chest protector glove, or any part of her uniform that is detached from its proper place on her person.

**PENALTY – Delayed dead ball.**

If a batted ball is interfered with, the batter-runner and each runner is awarded three bases from the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch but may advance farther with liability to be put out.

If the illegal catch or touch is made on a fair hit ball that, in the judgment of the umpire, would have cleared the home run fence in flight, the batter-runner is entitled to a home run, and each base runner is awarded home plate. The ball may have been prevented from going over the fence by a spectator or by detached player equipment, which is thrown, tossed, kicked or held by a fielder.

If a thrown ball is interfered with, the batter-runner and each runner is awarded two bases from the last base legally touched at the time of the throw but may advance farther with liability to be put out.