

***Tips from the Athletic Trainer and Rod Walters Inc.***

**Working the Slot**

Research has shown that when umpires are working the plate the best place to set-up to see the zone and decrease the severity of a possible head injury is to work in the slot. Research has also shown that sometimes it is not the severity of a single blow, but the frequency of glance blows that attributes to Mild Traumatic Brain Injury.

Your plate stance can be challenging when asked to see and track pitches that span the 17" inch surface.

An illustration of what has been researched and confirmed is shown below which speaks to the safety aspect of your plate stance. Be cognizant of stance behind the home plate in addition to head height. Proper stance can help prevent major head blows.

\*Reverse the order for a left-handed batter.



Beginning from the outside "blue zone" or "flopping to other side" you will not have any protection working in concert with the catcher. You chance grave injury in this position.

**NEVER** work in the blue zone.

Working our way into the batter, the next zone "red" or "over catcher" represents the next area of potential injury, primarily to the head. You are in an area that should a foul tip occur- the ball will accelerate off the barrel of the bat up and into you. Another possibility is if the catcher is wearing a "hockey style" mask a ball may deflect up into you.

**NEVER** work in the red zone.

The next zone, "yellow" is less likely to cause you harm as the bat barrel is less thick, so the ball will not have the ability to accelerate as much as in the red zone if a foul tip were to occur.

While is it not recommended to work in the "yellow" zone, even the best of the best umpire wanders into that area occasionally to track a pitch.

**OCCASIONAL** work in yellow area, caution, may lead to hard and soft tissue injury.

The last and safest of all plate areas is the "green" or "slot" zone. On a swing the bat handle's thinness will tip the ball more often down on a foul tip not up into you.

**SUGGESTED** work in the green area but beware you may still suffer head or soft tissue injury.

There are varying opinions on where the umpire head height should be with regards to the catchers' set- up position. Without jeopardizing your ability to call the pitch correctly, give yourself enough height for proper sight lines while allowing for as much protection from a blow.

Your style of plate stance should allow for ample sight and tracking lines while providing you with safety.

Source: *NCAA Baseball Central Hub*

