Softball 2016 Camp Teaching Points

1. **Plate mechanics: Reference CCA Manual pages 34-39**

   - **Stances/Slot:** The manual and articles on the Central Hub address the necessity for all umpires to set up in the slot when working one of the approved plate stances.
     - Position yourself behind the catcher and slightly inside the corner of home plate.
     - Set your head, so your eyes are at the top of each batter’s strike zone and don’t lower your chin below the catcher’s helmet.
     - You must be set, completely still on the release of the pitch.
     - Track the ball movement slightly with your head and eyes. Watch the ball as it enters over the plate, switch your focus to the batter’s zone and then see the ball into the catcher’s glove.
     - Don’t lean with the pitch location.
     - Make the call once the ball is in the catcher’s glove.

   - **Information concerning concussion data is posted on the Central Hub.**
     - We understand that at times the batter and the catcher may squeeze the slot and you have to work over the top, but again this is a situation, you need to be able to see the entire zone.

2. **Plate Umpire: Movement away from the plate:**

   - **Getting to the line on fair/foul:** Reference CCA manual pages 65....
     - When any ball is hit near the line you must move to the line, straddle the line and watch the ball.
     - Once you are on the line, stand still and view the play.
     - Once the call is made move to your secondary calling position or back to the plate area.

   - **Trailing the batter-runner with no one on base or with a runner on first base.** Reference CCA manual pages 65....
     - With no runner on first, the plate umpires trails the batter runner in fair territory no more than 15 feet.
     - With a runner on first trail 10 feet up the line when the ball is thrown to first base.
     - You need to be able to have a view of the throw, catch, runner and the bag.
     - Move inside to obtain a good angle on the play to help if needed on a pulled foot, swipe tag, overthrow into dead-ball territory, interference, obstruction, collisions or when U1 chases.
o Do not move to a secondary position until you have seen the conclusion of the play.

• Bunt situations in front of home plate with no runners on or runner on first base.
  o Leave the plate area using the most expedient route.
  o Wait until the defender fields and throws the ball to first base.
  o Move up the line to trail the runner.
  o Be prepared to give help if needed.
  o Wait for play to conclude before returning to either the plate area or third base for a possible play.

• Bunt situation with runners at second or third base
  o View the action first base line extended in foul territory.
  o Watch for any play at first base and be prepared to help if needed.
  o If the ball is not thrown to first base, move to the point of plate holding position.
  o Wait for the play to conclude before returning to the plate area.

3. Plate Umpire: Situations at the Plate

• Hit by pitch: Reference CCA manual page 11, Points of emphasis, page 5, NCAA Rulebook and Rule 11.15
  This has been an “In Focus” topic all year and it will continue to be one of the “In Focus” topics again this year. Umpires are better at recognizing the types of plays that warrant the batter to be awarded first base and those when the batter should remain at bat. Continue looking for the batter’s action and the location of the pitch.
  ✓ Keys to look for:
    ✤ Is the batter’s box drawn properly?
    ✤ Is the batter toeing the batter’s box line?
    ✤ Is the batter wearing an arm guard?
    ✤ Did the batter turn into a pitch that is near the plate?
    ✤ Is the pitch in the strike zone?
    ✤ Did the batter swing at the pitch?

• Illegally batted ball: Rule 11.16 umpires must use good judgment when determining whether a batter is in contact with the ball while her foot is in contact with the plate or completely out of the batter box touching the ground. We must not give-up on this call. The slappers using the crossover step are close to being out of the batters box and in contact with the ground or plate. Video plays are confirming that batters are very close to violating this rule. Let's be aware of the possible infraction and make the call when it happens.
Keys to look for:
- Where is the batter starting her attempt at hitting the pitch?
- On bat/ball contact quickly look down to view the location of the batter's feet.
- Is the batter in front of the batter’s box on contact with the ball?
- Is the batter’s box still visible?

• **Point of Plate:** Reference CCA manual page 38.

  *The point of plate is not a calling position it is a deciding position.*
  - Plate umpires should use this area to view the action on the field when they have no responsibilities at third base.
  - As the play is advancing to home, move to a calling position 90 degrees from the throw. Read the play. Remember to keep your depth on calls at the plate.
  - When the catcher moves up the line to receive an errant throw you may have to move to an alternate position to see the tag on the runner.
  - Adjust with the play.

4. **Base umpires:**
- Getting to the line to call fair/foul. Reference CCA manual page 40.
  - Umpires need to quickly get to the line, straddle the line, stand still and watch the ball, the location of the fielder (if in the action) and location of the line.
  - Make sure of the location of the ball in reference to the line and then make the call.
  - Use the correct signal. Reference CCA manual page 46,48.
- Starting position. Reference CCA manual page: 40,42,43
  - Both the first base umpire and the third base umpire should be in a set position when the ball reaches the plate, with your body square to home plate. From this position you are able to see all the action at home plate.
- Runners on second and third, a fly ball is hit to the outfield and a base umpire chases. Reference CCA manual pages 260
  - If U1 chases U3 should be prepared to take R2 to third if a play is made on R3 at home.

**New this year:**
ADD: If U3 chases then U1 should be prepared to take R2 to third if a play is being made on R3 at home.
5. **Areas of concern:**

- **Secondary Plays:** Moving to the next play before the first play is complete and the ball is in the pitching circle. Reference CCA manual pages 42-44
  - Base umpires are too quick to move to the next calling position before the first play is complete. Wait; move only when the play dictates.
  - Then once the ball is in the circle, move with a purpose to the next position.

- **Distances:** Calling distances on force and tag plays. Reference CCA manual page 29
  - Force plays: 15-18 feet
  - Tag plays: 8-12 feet
  - It is better to start at the deepest calling depth. It will allow you to see the whole play as it happens and you will not miss a piece of the play.

- **Pace of the Game:** Reference CCA manual page 23
  - **Keys to keep the game moving:**
    - You set the tone, hustle to the appropriate position for a call.
    - Avoid calling time unnecessarily.
    - When the catcher calls time to talk with the pitcher, allow her a few seconds to talk alone with the pitcher, then hustle out to break up the conversations, bring the catcher back to the plate.
    - Do not let the batter or pitcher delay the game.
    - Meet the coaches when they are giving you a line-up card change.
    - Keep at least two balls in your ball bag, don’t delay the game by getting additional balls if players are ready to go.
    - Establish a good pace throughout the game by communicating with your partners and knowing your responsibilities.
    - Prepare for the unexpected.