

Is the amateur umpire safe or out in NCAA baseball postseason?

Let's face facts; there are more umpires with professional baseball backgrounds umpiring in college baseball today than ever before! Why? Simple answer.....money! The compensation, travel and accommodations in the major D1 conferences are pretty good and getting better every year. But where does this infusion of professionally trained umpires leave college umpires that do not have the same background? What does the umpire without a professional background do to compete? How does the professionally trained umpire adapt to the college game? What can we all do?

Before addressing the questions above I think it is fair to share the following: What is the biggest difference between these two umpires? The answer is repetition and experience. Before I started umpiring at the D1 level I had umpired 2,000 or so games in professional baseball. It would take the average college umpire 40 seasons to achieve the same number. That repetition and experience is invaluable. Additionally, the habits I formed were hard to break when I entered the college game.....but more on that later.

I don't have a pro background. How does this affect me? How do I compete?

- First and foremost, a Pro background does not equal postseason. My experience tells me that not everyone is cut out for college baseball. I have seen many umpires come in to the college game and not be able to make the transition.
- Have a positive effect on this working situation.
- You are the tenured official
- You are the professional at this level
- Lead by example
- Share your knowledge and insight
- Learn everything you can
- Work hard at your craft

You need look no further than post season assignments over the past years to see many outstanding umpires across the country that don't have a pro background that have been selected to work conference tournaments, Regionals, Super Regionals and CWS. People that I would choose to be on the field with in any situation.

How does the former professional transition to the college game?

- Don't be like me!
- Accept the fact that the college game is very different from the game you came from
- Understand that you are not here to change the way the college game is played, coached, administered or umpired
- Depend on and listen to your partners to help you acclimate to the college game
- Umpires interaction with coaches and players are very different
 - o As a rule of thumb, the pro way of interaction does not work at the college level
 - o Understand that in most cases any interaction is a one way street

- No one cares about your background!

What can we all do?

- Learn from each other
- Share best practices that benefit all
- Support each other

The influx of umpires in to the college game with professional backgrounds benefits everyone. First and foremost, it benefits the game. Additionally, and most important to me, it benefits all umpires. We can all learn from each other and it is our obligation to share that knowledge and experience no matter your background!

I wish you all the best in the 2018 season!