

## BATTING OUT OF TURN

By Bob Romero

Question 1: When is it appropriate to inform the umpire that a batter is batting out of turn?

Answer 1: never, Never, NEVER, N-E-V-E-R. Oh, and NEVER.

This is one of those aspects of the game that Managers and Coaches must track. You should not even respond to a common question from the dugout, "Who made the last out"? (I've asked it myself!) It does not matter if you are the Official Scorekeeper keeping the official scorebook or the team scorekeeper using the team's book. Because it could result in an out on an appeal by the defensive team, it gives an unfair advantage to the offensive team if someone other than the Manager or Coach reports it on behalf of the team. As hard as it might be at times, you must bite your lip and say nothing. What if, in an honest, innocent mistake, the lineup handed to the Official Scorekeeper was copied incorrectly from the team's scorebook, so the lineups don't match. What should you do? (See Question 1.) The Official lineup received from the team and as recorded in the Official scorebook is, well, Official. Any mistake is the responsibility of the Manager, not the scorekeeper.

Ok, so you notice that the wrong batter is at the plate. What now? Here's what you should do:

1) Keep track of the actual batter at the plate, not the correct batter. If Johnny should be the batter but Billy is up at bat, track balls and strikes in Billy's scorebox, not Johnny's.

2) While Billy is at bat, if the Offensive team (Billy's team) notices the error, they can remove Billy and put Johnny up to bat. This is the only time a Scorekeeper is allowed to use an eraser: You must transfer all balls and strikes called on Billy into Johnny's box and erase them in Billy's box. Suppose Billy has a count of 3-2 (three balls and two strikes) plus he fouled off another 3 pitches. Then his Manager realizes Johnny should be at bat. He calls time, sends Johnny up to bat, and calls Billy back to the dugout. You record three balls and two strikes in Johnny's box and erase the chicken scratchings in Billy's scorebox. (REMEMBER - also transfer any foul balls to account for all of the pitches the pitcher has thrown as well.) Johnny now has a 3-2 count. The game continues without penalty. Nothing more for you to do. No harm, no foul as they say.

3) Suppose Billy gets on base. If the other team (defense) catches the mistake and appeals BEFORE THE NEXT PITCH, the umpire will call "out" the correct batter. Mark in that batter's score box an out. Billy then becomes the correct batter and what is recorded for him stands. CAUTION - Confusion coming up next: The umpire will move every baserunner backwards because no runner is allowed to advance on Billy's hit. For example, there is a runner on first base and a runner on second base and Billy hits a single. Both runners score and Billy is on first base. The defense appeals batting out-of-turn. The umpire calls Johnny "out". Billy is allowed to stay on first base, becomes the proper batter, and the umpire puts the runners back on second base and third base.

4) Suppose Billy either strikes out or is put out running to first base. If the defense appeals before the next pitch, the umpire can call "out" the proper batter (Johnny) and also Billy has made an out. Record two outs. (Obviously, if Billy makes the 3rd out in the inning then the defensive team would not need to appeal.)

5) Lastly, if no one catches the out-of-turn error, and the pitcher throws the next pitch to the batter AFTER Billy, then Billy's at-bat is legitimized, whatever the outcome. No harm no foul once again.

More often than not, once a batter has batted out-of-turn, the good-hearted Manager will try to put Johnny up to bat so he doesn't miss his chance. Guess what. Absolutely. Out-of-turn.

Should you inform the Manager that this would be the incorrect thing to do?

See Question 1.