

“Little things make the BIG Difference”

When it comes to picking out the crème of the umpire crop, I allow for big differences in style, presence, and personality. I look less to a list of objective criteria when I evaluate umpires, and more to an umpire’s presence on the field and apparent feel for the game. I start out thinking that just about everybody can call balls and strikes, but not everybody would make it in the “big leagues.” With me, umpires tend to eliminate themselves from getting top assignments by picking up “demerits.” There are several points that will cause me to strike an umpire, or at a minimum, cause me pause in moving that umpire up in the ranks. I give mental demerits whenever I see the following:

An umpire with too casual an attitude on the field

An umpire who is carrying on a conversation with the catcher...or the 1st baseman...or the assistant coach...or a spectator....

An umpire who doesn’t adhere to the fundamentals of officiating, i.e. in the slot (can he SEE the pitch?), timing, solid signals and mechanics

An umpire who looks like a slob

An umpire who would rather explain and talk than to let the coach vent and move on

An umpire who decides there will be no play, so there’s no need to get into position over there

An umpire who fails to support his partner

An umpire who looks lazy because of a lack of hustle or sloppy signals

An umpire with rabbit ears

An umpire who lets the teams control the game flow

An umpire who has to go for help on every checked swing

An umpire who doesn’t have the guts to make the tough, unpopular call

An umpire who is more concerned about getting the next, more prestigious assignment than working the best game possible here and now

An umpire who shows up unprepared, i.e. weak rule knowledge, and tries to fake it

An umpire who is constantly apologizing for missing the call

An umpire who seems to think that he is who everyone came to see perform

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