

SNZ would like to acknowledge and thank Merle Butler for allowing this article to be reprinted. Line-up Cards can differ between areas and also are often different to the ones we use at Nationals. If you travel overseas to umpire you again will be confronted with different Line-up Cards. However one thing is common in all cases, an accurate and neatly marked-up card is an important part of your game. Remember you may not always have a competent scorer to help you out. Merle's words of advice will help you understand your responsibilities.

## LINE-UP CARDS

On a typical August evening, somewhere around 9.30 local time, there are literally thousands of umpires across the country who have already wrapped up at least one (often two) rec-league game. They're trying to get that last game of the night started on time, hoping to get home early enough to shower and hit the sheets before midnight. Most of them are not the least bit interested in getting, let alone checking carefully, each team's lineup card.

I don't really know why lineup cards have virtually disappeared from **"regular seasons"** games. Maybe it's because softball's popularity has exploded, or because there is such a hurry-up attitude when so many games are played on a field each evening, or because those **"recreational"** leagues have established some kind of informal honour system. Perhaps the cards are just considered too much of a bother. But I do know a lot of umpires are working a lot of games without ever seeing a lineup card.

If you're working without cards, I hope you're also working under some kind of recognized agreement. The teams and the leagues had better understand that by not bothering with lineup cards, they are jeopardizing the umpires' rules. But, as long as no one objects to an opponent's eligibility, as long as there's no question about batting out of order, and as long as everyone understands that those complaints are almost impossible to address, I guess there's no need to hold lineup cards.

Of course, no matter how well **"everyone"** understands the arrangement, once in a while someone will contend that the other team is batting out of order or is using an ineligible player. Unless there is a written league policy that says you have no responsibility in those areas, as the umpire you'll have to do your best to check the complaint.

**Two problems.** Eligibility should create only a short interruption in play. If one team complains about an opposing player, about all you can do is ask that person his name, note it and report the situation to the league. The league administrators will have to determine whether the player gave you his right name and whether he is on the team's roster.

Batting out of order is a bit more complex. Let's cover the three keys, and then consider how the lineup card affects a batting-out-of-order complaint. Those keys are the times when the complaint is made, too early, too late or at the right moment.

If the defense tells you that the guy in the batter's box is batting out of order, they've made their appeal too early. That's because even if the defense is right the only **"penalty"** for the offence is to have the proper batter step into the box and complete the at bat.

Next consider a typical situation. The guy in the batter's box has a 2-1 count and the defensive manager asks for time. **"Hey, Blue,"** says the skipper. **"That guy on first. He singled a moment ago, but he was batting out of order"**.

As we know, even if the manager is right there is no penalty. Once a pitch is delivered to the following batter, whoever hit last is-by rule-legal. The defense made their appeal too late.

It's more complicated when the defense appeals at the right moment, when an improper batter has competed the at bat and before anything else happens. That's when you have to figure out who just hit **and** who hit just before that hitter. Unless you have a photographic memory (or you know a lot of the

players in the game), you're going to need help from the official scorer. If there is no official scorer, you'll need help from anyone keeping a book for either team.

Under **"normal"** circumstances (when you are holding lineup cards) you would determine which two players were the last to actually come to bat for the offence, then check their names and uniform numbers against your card. Without cards, you still have to identify the last two hitters, but you also have to find out whether both team's scorebooks agree on the proper batting order.

Next you have to check the scorebooks and try to figure out who was supposed to hit, who did hit and whether the books agree that there was a violation.

Remember, without lineup cards (even if one of the books is **"official"**) and unless there is a clear league policy, you'll want to be cautious about declaring a batting-out-of-order out unless what has happened is clear to both teams.

**Basic training.** One unfortunate result of working lots of games without lineup cards: Many umpires do not know what to do with the cards when they have them. Working a big tournament or moving to a new league - and receiving unexpected lineup cards at home plate - can lead to some embarrassing moments. But there is a simple pattern to follow and a few repetitions will make it seem routine.

The first thing to do is count the number of names on the card. For discussion, let's consider a fast-pitch game. If you have a lineup with nine names, the next step is to confirm with the team's manager that he is not using a DP. **"Sure we are!"** he might say. Well, since you've discovered the problem before completing the lineup-card exchange, he's free to correct his card on the spot, no penalty.

If they do list 10 players, I like to confirm the pitcher's name, the catcher's name, the DP and his spot in the batting order. Next I remind the manager that his DEFO is listed tenth, but will not bat.

Some umpires carefully check each name on the card to see whether the manager listed one player twice. Others will be very careful to ensure that every defensive position is listed one time. That's fine, but it's not my habit. Instead, I look over the card, count the number of names, review the DP, and then hand the card back to that same manager. **"Check your own card now,"** I like to say. **"This is your final chance, because when you give it to me gain it's too late to make changes."**

As soon as he gives the card back to me, it's official. Until then I'll allow a change without penalty in case an outfielder is sick or the shortstop pulled a muscle while warming up, that kind of thing. When team's lineups are official, I hand a copy of each card to the opposing manager and I keep the official copy. That's a duty of the plate umpire.

Of course, the real purpose for lineup cards is to accurately record substitutions. Again, it's a simple process.

When I'm informed of an entering substitute, I draw a single line through the name of the player who is leaving the game. Then, depending on the size of the card, I write the entering sub's name or number either next to or below the original player. The substitutes number is enough if the subs are listed on the card because I use an **"X"** to cross that name off the list of subs. If the benchwarmers are not listed, I'm careful to write the entering player's last name into the lineup, along with an initial if necessary.

Any time a substitute enters the game and later leaves, I **"X"** through his name. Remember, I draw a single line through a replaced starter's name. An **"X"** always indicates that player is done for the duration. Meanwhile, if a starter re-enters the game, I circle his name and **"X"** the departing sub. Finally, if a starter leaves, re-enters and again goes out of the game, his name gets crossed off with the big **"X"**.

**Always** deal with substitutions when they happen. Yes, it interrupts the game for a moment, but that

short break in the action is much better than a long, difficult discussion about who really left the contest, something that is likely to occur if you wait until the half inning is over before making the proper notations.

**Now, a final thought.** Never allow a substitution that you know violate a rule. This is not an opportunity to test the other team's knowledge of the rules or powers of observation; it's a simple exercise in preventive umpiring. That guy who pinch-ran in the third is about to play left field in the sixth? **"Sorry coach, you can't do that. Illegal re-entry, you know."**

That's not coaching the team, it's administering the rules and you'll do it the same for both teams.