

Pitcher Protection Rule

*There are only three (3) very simple components to the “PPR.”
Two of them are factual matters and the third is an umpire’s
potential judgment call. The confusion on the part of
Tournament/Field Directors, Umpires and Managers/Players
is the result of over-complication of the rule interpretation.*

Factual Matters

**The umpire shall automatically apply the PPR
and the resultant ‘Dead Ball Out’ ruling
in the following factual circumstances:**

—The PPR is applied only **WHEN a batted ball actually strikes the pitcher (except on the arms - see ‘Judgment Call’ below)**. Near misses, balls batted sharply through the pitcher’s box or in the vicinity of the pitcher, without striking the pitcher do NOT result in the automatic application of the PPR. It is NOT our intent to remove the pitcher from the game defensively. The previous requirement that the batted ball be a line drive has been removed. Short hops striking the pitcher are now encompassed by the PPR. Example: The PPR is automatically applied when a sharply batted ball strikes the pitcher’s head, neck, torso or legs. Think of the “sheriff’s pistol range” armless silhouette target as the visual illustration.

—**The pitcher MUST be in the pitcher’s box when struck by a batted ball** as described above. The pitcher’s box is a 2’ by 6’ rectangle with the front being the front edge of the pitching rubber (50’ from the home plate) and extending 6’ back there from toward 2nd base. Being in the pitcher’s box is defined as ANY part of the body being in contact with the pitcher’s box or the lines of the defining the box. Example: A pitcher leaning outside the box to deliver a pitch, with a foot down on or inside the lines of the pitcher’s box IS protected by the PPR (Lines are in!). Conversely, a pitcher who delivers a pitch, then loses contact with the pitcher’s box by stepping to the side to assume a fielding position is NOT covered by the PPR. The same result applies when a pitcher delivers a pitch, then retreats behind the pitcher’s box, or to any other position on the field of play, for purposes of making a defensive play. The pitcher’s box is the only ‘safe haven’ for application of the PPR.

Judgment Call

The umpire shall make a judgment call as to the application of the PPR when any batted ball strikes the pitcher in the arms, including the glove.

—When a batted ball strikes the pitcher in the arm (including the glove), while the pitcher is, in the umpire’s judgment, in the process of making a reasonable defensive play on the ball, the PPR does NOT apply. This is a ‘play on’ situation. Example: Pitcher is in the pitcher’s box and reaches out (or jumps up) in an attempt to field a batted ball, which strikes the pitcher on the forearm. This is a live ball and the result of the play stands.

—When a batted ball strikes the pitcher in the arm (including the glove), whether or not the ball ultimately strikes any other part of the pitcher’s body, **AND in the umpire’s judgment, the pitcher had NO opportunity to make a reasonable defensive play on the ball, the PPR applies and a resultant “Dead Ball Out” ruling shall be made.** Example: Pitcher is struck in the arm(s) while reacting to protect himself or avoid being harmed by the batted ball. Pitcher makes a personal defensive reflex move and is struck by the batted ball on the arm and/or other part of the body.

Summary

—Only two factual criteria determine the automatic application (or non-application) of the PPR. An umpire’s judgment call, not subject to protest or appeal, is required when a batted ball strikes a pitcher on the arms, whether or not it then strikes another part(s) of the pitcher’s body.

