

Volume 13

Number 5 *Micro-Symposium: Infield Fly Rule Is in Effect: The History and Strategy of Baseball's Most (In)Famous Rule*

---

Article 9

Spring 2019

# The Enfield Fly Rule

Rob Nelson

*A former pitcher for the Portland Mavericks and the founder Big League Chew Bubble Gum.*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ecollections.law.fiu.edu/lawreview>

Part of the [Other Law Commons](#)

---

Online ISSN: 2643-7759

## Recommended Citation

Rob Nelson, *The Enfield Fly Rule*, 13 FIU L. Rev. 947 (2019).

Available at: <https://ecollections.law.fiu.edu/lawreview/vol13/iss5/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eCollections @ FIU Law Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in FIU Law Review by an authorized editor of eCollections @ FIU Law Library. For more information, please contact [lisdavis@fiu.edu](mailto:lisdavis@fiu.edu).

## THE ENFIELD FLY RULE

Rob Nelson\*

Here is a proposal to change the current Infield Fly Rule to the new Enfield Fly Rule (so named after the famed Enfield Spartans, the 1991 and 1994 British National League Champions).

The Infield Fly Rule was put into the rulebook for just one reason: to prevent the team on the field from pulling off a duplicitous double (or even triple) play when there were runners on first and second (or bases loaded) and less than two outs. Before the Infield Fly Rule became an official rule, an infielder could subtly (but purposefully) not catch a routine fly so he could then quickly pick up the ball after it hit the ground and throw it to a teammate at third base who stepped on third and then fired the ball to second base, where the teammate there caught the ball and stepped on second base, completing the tainted double play. *Pre-Infield-Fly-Rule, the runners, who did not run when a routine fly was lofted into the air, were stuck between a rock and a hard place.*

The current Infield Fly Rule can create chaos in many ways, as was the case on Opening Day at Yankee Stadium earlier this month (I think it is still available on the MLB Network). This confusion can be eliminated by implementing the Enfield Fly Rule, which works this way:

With runners on first and second (or with the bases loaded) and with nobody out (or with one out) any easily catchable ball shall be called an Enfield Fly by any umpire. This means:

1. If the pop fly is caught, the batter is out. Runners can tag up if they want to (to try advance one base) but it's probably not a good idea.
2. If the pop fly is not caught and it lands in foul territory, it is simply a foul ball.
3. If the pop fly is not caught and it lands in fair territory, it is a **dead ball**. The runners and the batter return to where they were before the Enfield Fly was hit. It is a basic "do-over." The batter has the same count he had before the Enfield Fly was hit. Likewise, the runners return to where they were before the pop-up was hit.

---

\*Rob "Nellie" Nelson is a former pitcher for the Portland Mavericks and the founder Big League Chew Bubble Gum.

4. The fielder who failed to make the catch is charged with an error (even if the ball lands in foul territory) if the Official Scorer believes an error has been made.

The Enfield Fly Rule simplifies things. There is no gray area. Catch the ball, the batter is out. Fail to catch the ball, the defense gets punished: the batter gets a do-over. It's not fair to the pitcher, of course, but an Enfield Fly almost always gets caught. My view is that the trade-off is acceptable. Sure, one pitcher every month or two has to deal with an unsuccessful attempt to make a routine catch by a usually steady teammate, but baseball has many such moments. This is just one more rare occurrence. It's not that big a deal, considering how much simpler baseball will be when the Enfield Fly Rule is implemented.

Six points to consider:

- if you are a coach, virtually no time at all is required to teach this new rule to your players;
- no chicanery of any kind takes place during the play;
- no player is embarrassed for not fully understanding the rule;
- no umpire takes any heat for making a late Enfield Fly Rule call;
- there will be no arguments between umpires and coaches and/or managers; and
- fans will understand right away what is going on down on the field.

It is true that the Enfield Fly Rule will add a run or two once in a great while, but my guess is that Professor Wasserman will agree that this number will likely be very small. The Enfield Fly Rule is a kinder, gentler rule than the Infield Fly Rule. It will speed up play, and it will make us all feel a little bit smarter. That's a good thing.