

The Zone He Called Twice

Facilitator note: The skill is precommitment - being fair in advance, because the moment of decision is exactly when pressure, sympathy, and family are loudest. Keep the frame on craft, not heroism: Azriel is not tempted by dishonesty, only by the makeup call, which the story names as the one wrong call that FEELS virtuous. The coordinator and both coaches are reasonable throughout; the losing coach's "what did you see?" is earned by a season of predictable calls, not by anyone being a saint. Do not let this become "never reconsider a call" (the story's rule is the zone is announced and consistent - a genuinely blown call is a different case, and the card itself says "ask for help if I am screened") or "fairness means no relationships" (the brother conversation ends with the brotherhood intact - "I don't trade the one for the other"). Students are not asked to disclose real experiences; Activity 7 is a fictional case.

Teacher answer key

1. In the moment, the honest person is deciding under pressure - a groaning lot, a brother on the bench, the pull of peace - so the decision measures the pressure, not the pitch. Deciding in advance moves the choice to a quiet hour when nothing is at stake, so that on Sunday there is no decision left, only an application: "the card does not know which dugout is batting."
2. Knees to the letters; the outside corner is generous - one ball-width off is a strike; high inside is a ball even when it looks pretty; checked swing - ask for help if screened; and the line about being fair in advance. Each must come first because the announcement is what makes the calls legitimate: both coaches heard the zone before anyone was winning, so "you discuss the zone, not my eyesight."
3. b, c, a, d, e. The card and announcement (b) must precede everything or the calls have no ground; the expensive call against his brother's team (c) sets the zone's price; the mirror pitch (a) proves the zone is real by costing the other side the same; the brother conversation (d) repairs the relationship on the truth, not on a makeup; and the reverse test (e) shows the system protecting him when a call favors a neighbor.
4. (a) $6 \times 10 = 60$ borderline calls settled in advance by the announced zone. (b) $4 \times 10 = 40$ calls per season become negotiations - and each one teaches the first dugout their strike was an error to be sorry about, and the second dugout that the zone changes with the mood, so every later pitch is re-argued. Steps shown.
5. A wrong call does not erase a wrong call - it multiplies the damage, because now the zone is proven negotiable. The first team learns their legitimate strike was an "error"; the second team learns pressure works; and every pitch after that is a fresh negotiation instead of an application of something announced, so the umpire has traded the whole afternoon for one comfortable half-inning.

6. The drawing should show: the card with "knees to letters, the outside corner generous"; the checked-swing note; the line "you cannot be fair in the moment... you can only be fair in advance"; and (next season's card) "the makeup call is the only wrong call that feels virtuous." Strong captions quote "predictable is the only fair an umpire has" or "the card does not know which dugout is batting." Any honest rendering counts.

7. Sample: Card - "Refoel writes his summer card: the fence is out, one bounce is fair, ties go to the runner, no rulings changed after the next play starts." Sentence - "He tells his brother: 'Out there I'm on the rules' side, not yours or theirs - the rules were the same before your at-bat and they'll be the same after.'" Temptation - "When the little ones groan at a hard out call, he refuses to even it up with a soft call the next inning, because two wrong rulings compound." All three parts, with names; wording may vary. (Case name Refoel is fictional.)

8. STRIKE row 1 columns 1-6; UMPIRE row 2 columns 1-6; ZONE row 3 columns 1-4; CORNER row 4 columns 1-6; INNING row 5 columns 1-6; SIGNAL row 6 columns 1-6; LINEUP row 7 columns 1-6; FAIR row 8 columns 1-4. What the card defines in advance is the ZONE; the only fair an umpire has is FAIR - the predictable kind (accept FAIR).