

Joe  
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# Even Torre asks Valley man for advice on rulebook

ANSONIA

It is July 31, 2005. Rich Marazzi is sitting in the living room of his Ansonia home watching the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim play the New York Yankees. It is the eighth inning. The phone rings. It is Yankees general manager Brian Cashman. Cashman says that Joe Torre has a question.

Cashman patches the call into the Yankees dugout. Yankees trainer Gene Monahan answers the phone. Marazzi tells Monahan, "Tell Torre he can bring Mariano Rivera into the game to start the ninth inning."

Why is the manager of the New York Yankees placing a person-to-person phone call in the middle of a baseball game to guy in Ansonia? Because no one, not the players, not the manager, not even the general manager, truly understands the confusing little book of no more than 100 pages called the "Official Rules of Baseball."

What confused Torre? He brought in Felix Rodriguez to pitch in the eighth inning with the Yankees trailing, 6-2. His pitcher threw two balls, then a runner was tossed out stealing for the third out. Torre wondered if Rodriguez had to come back out in the ninth and face at least one batter before Rivera could be brought into the game.



## The Expert

There may not be a man around who knows more about baseball rules than Ansonia's Rich Marazzi, who conducts seminars for major league teams.

**Inside:** So, you think you know the rules? Take a quick quiz that will confound even diehard fans.

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Nope, you can bring in Rivera right now, Marazzi said, per rule 3.05 (b) of the rule book. Torre said thanks. The Yankees tie the game in the ninth and win in 11. Rivera gets the victory. Marazzi's contribution isn't noted in the sports pages, but the Ansonia man played a key role in a Yankees victory.

Fast forward to Sept. 14. Boston's Tony Graffanino hits a two run homer against the Toronto Blue Jays. The runner in front of him, Gabe Kapler, collapses from an Achilles' tendon injury. Graffanino stops in his tracks, aware of a little known rule that says an injured player is allowed a replacement runner. Graffanino holds his place while the injured player is treated. Both runs score after Kapler is replaced by Alejandro Machado. The Sox win the game, 5-3, because Graffanino knew rule number 5.10 (c) (1).

This time, Marazzi makes the papers. He should. He conducted a two-day rule book seminar for the Red Sox during spring training. Even though Graffanino wasn't a member of the team at the time, Marazzi's materials and lessons, which he calls Rule Ball, a

# RULES: Even managers need help

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164-page book and three CDs, stayed behind for team officials to use all season. Chalk up another win for Marazzi during a pennant race.

So who is this baseball rules consultant to the stars? The 61-year-old Marazzi, Ansonia born and bred and a retired teacher at Emmett O'Brien Tech, is the first of his kind in baseball history: a rules expert who counsels Major League teams on how a better understanding of the rule book translates into victories.

"(Boston Red Sox general manager) Theo Epstein said that today's professional player knows only 20 percent of the rule book," Marazzi said last week in his Ansonia home. "He's right. I don't think most major leaguers have ever read the rule book. It might be the most important document in America next to the Bill of Rights."

Marazzi doesn't blame anyone for not leafing through the rule book. It is "confusing and ambiguous," he said. "It hasn't been updated since 1950. Players are trained from the neck down. Managers know more about the strategies and the inner workings of the game than I will ever know, but they don't know the rules."

For example: When a batter becomes a runner and touches all bases legally he shall score one run for his team. A run legally scored cannot be nullified by subsequent action of the runner, such as but not limited to an effort to return to third base in the belief that he had left the base before a caught fly ball.

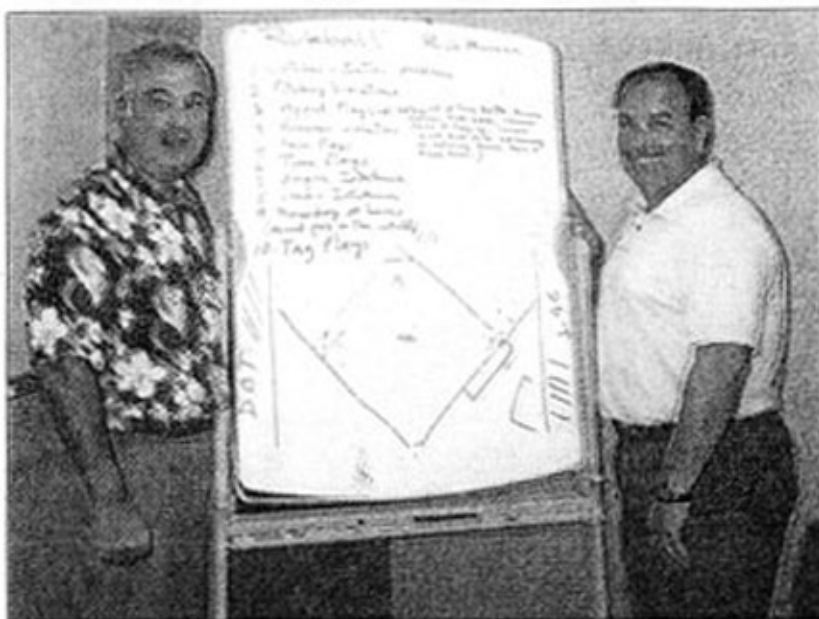
That's rule 5.06. No one will blame you if you never proceed to rule 5.07.

Marazzi's baseball knowledge is built upon 23 years as an umpire and a lifetime of research into baseball's quirky codes. He compiled stories of rare rulings from back issues of "The Sporting News" and he matched them to rule book interpretations. Long before it ever occurred to Marazzi to market this information, he had created a voluminous collection of rules and their applications to real baseball situations.

That led to the publication of his first book in 1980, "The Rules and Lore in Baseball". In 1988 he began writing a monthly column in "Baseball Digest" on the rule book. He picked up press credentials to Yankees games because of radio work, and that's when he first met Cashman and discovered that the Yankees GM was a long time fan of Marazzi's "Baseball Digest" column.

But there were two plays that catapulted Marazzi from armchair expert to a rules consultant for the Red Sox, Yankees, Astros and Diamondbacks, and note that three of his four teams were in the postseason.

First, during a regular season game, Yankees third baseman Enrique Wilson made a sensational catch of a foul pop. He snared the ball on the field but his lunge carried him into the seats. All runners were allowed to advance one base because



Ansonia's Rich Marazzi, left, with former Arizona Diamondbacks general manager Joe Garagiola Jr. during a seminar Marazzi gave with the team during spring training.

## CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS?

Getting a phone call from the Yankees dugout in the middle of a game may be an extreme, but when you hire Rich Marazzi as a consultant, that's what you pay for. During the 2005 season, Marazzi also received a call from the Red Sox, who phoned prior to the start of a Red Sox-Angels game on the west coast.

They had a problem with the lineup card. The Angels mistakenly listed a player

twice, once in the starting lineup and once on the right hand side of the card where they list the reserves. That means that one player was accidentally left off the game-day roster. They wanted to know what happens if the Angels try and use that missing player. You can try anything you want, I told them, but the players on that right side of the line-up card are listed as a courtesy. It isn't a rule violation."

Wilson took the ball out of play. Marazzi asked Torre if Wilson knew that rule. Torre said he didn't think so. Marazzi wondered: Shouldn't he? What if a game-winning run had scored?

Next case: 2003 postseason, Athletics-Red Sox, Game 3. Red Sox third baseman Bill Mueller interferes with Miguel Tejada as he rounds third base. The umpire calls obstruction. Tejada, thinking he receives an extra base, casually strolls toward home. But rule 7.06 (b) only awards Tejada third. Any advance beyond that base is at the runner's peril. Tejada is tagged out between third and home, the game goes extra innings, the Red Sox win in 11, rally to beat the Athletics three straight and win the series 3-2.

Marazzi was flabbergasted by the gaffe. Doesn't anybody here know how to play this game? The next day he learns that Torre held a meeting with his coaches to discuss that base-running blunder. Marazzi suddenly realizes he has knowledge that baseball players and coaches need to have.

He called Cashman and made his pitch: I can teach your guys the rules. Cashman loved the idea. So did Torre. Soon the Sox, Stros and D-Backs hired him to do the same.

There was resistance at first. Marazzi noted that Red Sox coaches didn't greet him with open arms, especially manager Terry Francona,

who was a bench coach with the Athletics during that postseason of 2003. He wasn't pleased to relive the Tejada moment in a classroom. He got over it.

Marazzi presented a two-day seminar for coaches during spring training of 2005. How they then disseminate that information to the players is the team's business. Each month he sends his teams updates and rules interpretations culled from devouring newspapers and baseball publications, and by watching ESPN's Baseball Tonight, where anything unusual is bound to turn up — without the proper commentary.

"You really don't know what you think you know," Marazzi said. "Players don't know the rules. Broadcasters don't know the rules at all. I can't believe the things I hear announcers say on TV. Why aren't there workshops and seminars for broadcasters and media people?"

Why not indeed. Marazzi will try and market Rule Ball to all 30 Major League teams next season, with a special version for broadcasters, and maybe even college and high school programs in the future.

The future of Rule Ball seems limitless because wherever the great American pastime is played be assured that nobody knows the rules.

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