
Law 32

32-A Catching the ball vis-à-vis completing the catch

There appears to be a contradiction in Law 32.4 (and in Law 19.4, where the same words are used). How is it possible for a fielder to catch the ball but **subsequently** touch the boundary etc. while carrying the ball but **before** completing the catch?

A fielder catches the ball when he takes it in the air from a stroke of the bat. He does not complete the catch until he has established both forms of complete control

(i) over the ball

and (ii) over his own movement

For a fielder liable to run over the boundary, control over his own movement does not imply that he has to stop running. He has to convince the umpire that he could stop running, or run in any direction that he chose.

For the catch to be valid, he has to establish both these controls within the field of play.

Laws 19.4 and 32.4 refer to the fielder touching the boundary in the period between the first catching and the final control.

[Law reference: 32.4, 19.4]

32-B Ball hit by striker lodges between two stumps at the other end

A ball that is not a No ball is hit back to the non-striker's end. Without touching the ground it lodges between two stumps. A fielder takes it out and holds it. There is an appeal.

Lodging between the stumps is not one of the reasons listed in Law 23 for the ball becoming dead. In the list of Definitions in Appendix D, the stumps are listed as implements of the game, so cannot possibly be agreed as a boundary in the way that an obstacle could be.

Hence the ball has not become dead. The fielder on taking and holding the ball has complete control over the ball and over his own movement. The ball was not grounded from the time it left the bat until the fielder handled it and obtained control over it. A fair catch is therefore possible.

The fielder would have to retrieve the ball, i.e. make and complete the catch, within a reasonable time before both sides and most importantly the umpire have ceased to regard the ball as in play.

Providing this was all satisfied, the umpire would be justified in giving the striker out Caught, in answer to the appeal

[Law reference: 32.1, 23]

32-C Catch from pad-ground-bat strike

If the ball first hits the pad, then the ground and then the bat, can the striker be out Caught?

Law 32.3(d) states that it is a fair catch "if a fielder catches the ball after it has been lawfully struck more than once, but only if the ball has not touched the ground since being first struck". An inadvertent second stroke is to be considered lawful. Because of the grounding, a catch is not possible even if the second strike is wilful. If it was wilful then, unless it was in defence of his wicket, the striker would be out Hit the ball twice. The question of preventing a catch by a wilful second strike cannot arise because the ground contact means no catch is possible.

[Law reference: 32.3]

32-D Allowance if fielder 'carries the ball over' after a call of No ball

A fielder takes a ball not grounded since contact with the striker's bat. Law 32.4 stipulates that if subsequently the fielder, still holding the ball but before completing the catch, comes into contact with the boundary (or is grounded beyond it) then 6 runs will be scored, even if an allowance of fewer than 6 has been agreed for that section of boundary. What is the situation if the delivery is a No ball, so that a catch could not be completed in any case?

If the fielder touches or is grounded beyond the boundary in the situation described, the ball will immediately become dead under Law 19.3(a)(ii), so that there can be no completion of a catch in any circumstances. It is therefore not relevant that a catch was not in fact possible. The 6 run award will apply even in the case of a No ball, which of course will mean that there is additionally a 1 run penalty for the No ball

[Law reference: 32.4]

32-E Ball hits striker's dropped bat

In receiving the ball, the striker lets go of his bat. If the ball touches the bat, and the delivery is not a No ball, could he be out Caught? If he is not out, could runs be scored and if so would they be credited to the striker?

In this situation the umpire would have to judge whether the act of dropping the bat was accidental or deliberate.

Take first the accidental case. Law 6.3(a) stipulates that reference to the bat is to imply that the bat is held by the batsman. Law 28.1(a)(ii) sets this aside for the situation of the wicket being put down by the striker's bat. Apart from this single specifically stated exception, Law 6.3 (a) is to apply throughout the Laws. In particular, it will apply in Law 32.1. Unless the striker's hand is in contact with the bat when it is touched by the ball, the contact will not count as the ball touching the bat. The first requirement for a catch will not be satisfied. The striker will not be out Caught.

No unfair act has been committed, so there is no reason in Law for runs not to be scored. However, as explained above, the ball has not officially touched the bat. Unless the ball touches the striker's person such runs can only be Byes. If the ball does touch the striker's person, dropping his bat accidentally cannot be counted as an attempt by him to play the ball or to avoid being hit by the ball. Leg byes would not be allowed, so no runs would accrue.

If, however, in the opinion of either umpire, the striker let go of his bat deliberately, two points arise. Firstly, any deflection of the ball by the bat would have to be regarded as wilful, on exactly the same basis as the ball hitting a deliberately discarded helmet is deemed to be fielding the ball illegally. If there was an appeal serious consideration would have to be given to dismissing the striker Obstructing the field. Secondly, the umpires would be justified in regarding this wilful act as an attempt to avoid being caught. This is unfair and against the Spirit of the Game. The umpire would call and signal Dead ball under Law 42.4 and both umpires take action under Law 42.18, of reporting the batsman and his captain. The call of Dead ball would of course prohibit the scoring of any runs.

[Law reference: 32.1, 6.3, 26.2, 42.4, 42.18]
