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(SFX) 7th inning stretch music

Narrator: The Perspective of an Umpire, by John Michael Schaffner. I started umpiring with the Los Altos- Mountain View Pony League Baseball when I was 14 years old. I remember a sign-up booth for the job at the tryouts for the Pony division (**music stops**), which is the second highest division you could play in for the league. I thought about signing up for the job when I first saw the booth and during my tryout, I decided to sign up for the job. When I got there, they weren't decisive about a particular person; they just wanted volunteers. As I was waiting in line, I saw a few of my friends talking about how they are going to be the best umpire in the league because they knew exactly what was happening on the field.

(SFX different music starts)

I started to imagine the same thing, making everyone happy with my calls and having an impact on the little kids playing on the field. Little did I know, I was just thinking of the impossible goals for any umpire. Achieving perfection and gratification from everyone playing, watching or conducting the game is just impossible. In this job, your call will make half of the crowd rise up and be happy and the other sit down and just think how horrible of an umpire you are. It's not that easy.

(Pause, music keeps playing, starts to fade out)

About two weeks later, I started in an 8-week class that was lead by my boss, Andy Palay. (**music stops**) We basically talked about the rules of the game, where an umpire needed to be before and after a ball has been hit, what to do with troubled players, coaches and parents and other things relevant to that. In one of the classes, he basically told and showed us to be loud. He would remind us this every week. I never really understood why. It got to a point that it really bugged me. After five years of being in this occupation I finally asked why he would remind us.

Andy Palay: New umpires make calls and you often can barely hear them. When plays are close, they have a very hard time acting, like I said before, but they know what is going on. So, it's one of the hardest things to get used to.

(SFX Crowd cheering after a baseball has been hit, music plays)

Narrator: When I started umpiring, I was assigned games through the phone by my boss. (**music and crowd stops**) I remember the first time he actually called to talk about games and whether I was going to be behind the plate or out on the field, I was very excited. I barely could have contained myself. In fact, for every game he

offered me for my first year, I pretty much said “yes.” I wanted to show him, and pretty much the rest of the league, I’m no ordinary umpire. I can pretty much handle thing myself actually. But it was difficult to prove since there are other umpires with much better knowledge than I had in my first year and also with a lot more experience. That’s pretty much the mindset of every single rookie umpire. I mean, when I talked to my colleague, Brian Huwe, about this, he had a little bit different concern about his first year.

Brian Huwe: Well, I must admit that in my early years as an umpire it was very difficult because I was probably about 5’2” with an incredibly high voice, resulting in lots of coaches to think that I wasn’t as experienced as they were in umpiring. But, as I grew older, it’s just getting easier and easier for me with lots of experience. Now, it’s become rather routine and easy for me.

Narrator: Like I said before, this is the mindset for every single umpire. When your first season is over, you feel like a lot more experience comes up and you have a much better shot at getting a very high division game.

(Music starts, crowd cheers in the background, music stops)

One of the reasons why I decided to umpire was to see the kids play. It’s actually pretty amazing. Sometimes it is more entertaining than any type of minor or major league game; it’s actually pretty fun. For example, I was umpiring this one game in Mustang 2, which is a division reserved for kids between the ages of 8 and 10. It was in the 5th inning, with two teams the Pirates and the Cubs. The Pirates leading the Cubs by nine runs, which is one less short than it would be for an automatic forfeit. The Cubs, in the very next inning, inning 6th, which, in this league, would be the very last inning, came out with a whole different face. They pretty much believe in their skills now. (crowd in background starts to cheer) They mounted a huge comeback; lets just say that. They had the most brilliant plays on the field, all of them acting like they were golden glove recipients. With the bats, they would be knocking them out of the park. When it came to the final out, that’s pretty much where I said I love this job. There was a runner on the first. The batter hits the ball straight to the center fielder, and he bobbles it. The runner from first is rounding third with his eyes set on home plate. The center fielder finally passes the ball to the cut-off man and he threw it to the catcher. With no sign of obstruction, I pretty much said that the runner was safe.

(kids cheering, parent comments, end of SFX)

That’s basically my main reason why I wanted to umpire. The reasons for other umpires are pretty much different. Some want to get a quick way of getting cash. Others want to umpire for the love of the, like Brian.

Brian: Well, when I was younger, starting my Pony year of baseball, there were sign ups for umpires, and I figured I liked baseball, or at the time I really loved baseball, and I figured I might as well be an umpire

Narrator: And even my boss had a reason why he wanted to umpire. His son, actually, got him into umpiring and he basically loved working with his son as an equal.

Andy: I've told people that because I've tried to convince other parents, other fathers who umpire that umpiring with my kid was probably the most rewarding part of this experience; because I got to deal with my son as an equal, because we were both umpires out there. The other thing with my son, which will always stick in my head, was my son has a much better dramatic flare than I do. I would make a call and I would look at him and he would end up shaking his head. It turned out he wasn't shaking his head as a result of thinking I missed the call. He would shake his head because it was basically him telling me, "Dad, you have no style." Over years, he helped me refine the way I made calls because he would shame me to changing.

(Music starts)

Narrator: Hope that others see why teenagers like me take on this stressful job. I hope that other people compliment us not good they are, but the reasons why they pretty much signed up.

(Music stops THE END)