

# Umpires Resource Center

*The information center for amateur baseball umpires*

## **Fake Umps Phenomenon Hits Nationals Park to Great Delight of Fans**

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WASHINGTON -- If you've tuned into a Blue Jays game at the Rogers Centre this year, chances are you've seen Tim Williams and Joe Farrell. If those two names aren't ringing a bell -- and there's really no reason they should -- how about a description.

Williams and Farrell, both Jays season-ticket holders, often take their seats in the first row behind home plate dressed from head to toe as umpires. Their impersonation of the men in blue doesn't end there. For the entire game, Williams and Farrell mimic the calls of the umpires, raising their arms and bellowing out strike calls, sticking up their fingers to let fans behind them know the count and brushing one hand over the other emphatically to signal foul tips.

"There are 7 billion people on the planet. Do you know how many of them travel to another city to fake umpire a game? You're looking at 'em," Williams tells FanHouse Friday night at Nationals Park.

For the first time this weekend Williams and Farrell, who have a bit of a cult following in Toronto, took their show onto American soil, traveling to Washington for a three-game series between their hometown Blue Jays and the Nationals.

If the fans at Nationals Park -- even the stuffy ones sitting in the \$325-a-game President's Club seats -- are any indication, that cult following could grow quickly.

During Friday night's game, a 2-1 Nationals win in extra innings, Washington team president [Stan Kasten](#) approaches Williams and Farrell to shake their hands and compliment their work. Scores of fans rush up during every half-inning to get their picture taken with the faux men in blue, while others take delight in either cheering or heckling their calls.

"We were out in the tent (a beer garden just across the street from the ballpark) having beers before the game, and we took 38 pictures with people," the pair explains. "They thought we were the real guys going to get juiced up before the game. We were like 'No, no, we're not gonna be on the field tonight, we're just fans.'"

Their appeal is undeniable.

"We love baseball, we love umpires, we love the Blue Jays and we like having fun. That's it." Williams says.

But the act doesn't pass muster solely because of their enthusiasm for their fake job. Williams and Farrell have authentic umpire uniforms. They have the short-brimmed hats, the official major league umpire shirts with numbers stitched on the sleeves, gray slacks, masks (which they only don when the Jays are

pitching), clickers to track the count, brushes, pictured right, to clear dirt off of home plate and ball bags saddled to their right hips. Every time the actual umpire behind home plate throws a new ball to the pitcher, they dig into their bags, pull out a baseball and follow suit.

"We're the real deal," they say, explaining that there are 14 different ways for a pitcher to balk in the rulebook. (There are 16 different ways, [according to Wikipedia](#).) I ask them to reel off all the ways and, fittingly, they balk at the task. Even more fittingly, Nationals relief pitcher [Jesus Colome](#) actually commits a balk moments later, moving Toronto shortstop [Marco Scutaro](#) up from second to third base.

Williams and Farrell, both traders at the [Toronto Stock Exchange](#), got their equipment after a chance meeting with a few umpires (they neglect to name which ones) at a local steakhouse.

"You can't buy these anywhere," they boast. (Who knows? Perhaps their following will grow, compelling Major League Baseball to sell umpiring gear online?)

Funny enough, the enthusiasm, authenticity and commitment to their act seems to actually be paying dividends. The umpiring crew always notices them.

"Oh yeah, yeah, [the real umpires] laugh." Farrell says. "Did you see [C.B. Bucknor](#) over at second base? Can't even control himself! He went into a canipion when he saw us."

They were planning to visit with Blue Jays players in the clubhouse Saturday in Washington. And next month, when the Jays head to New York for a series with the Yankees July 3-5, Williams and Farrell will be in their customary seats in the first row behind home plate at new Yankee Stadium. Ordinarily those seats, located in the Legends section, would cost more than \$1,000, but they were such a hit on a YES Network broadcast last month that the Yankees arranged to have them fake ump the July series.

The game in question, [a May 13 broadcast](#), got them into the network's The Weekly Dish segment, a roundup of the top five sports clips hosted by Teddy Spicer. (They finished second behind musician John Tesh, but seemed plenty content to "beat the Brazilian guy calling a goal for 10 minutes.")

And they also amused and befuddled YES color man, and ex-major leaguer, [Ken Singleton](#).

"[Singleton] couldn't even put a sentence together," Farrell says. "When we rung up Alex Rodriguez in [the fourth] inning, he goes 'multiple umpires ring up A-Rod,' and Ken Singleton's a pretty serious stiff, eh."

"He's a very strait-laced guy and he couldn't even put a sentence together," Williams confirms happily.

"While that game was going on, I had a best friend in a bar in New York, and he's watching the Yankees," Farrell continues. "Even before he told them he knew us, there were 500 people in the bar who loved us. They were going ballistic. And he goes, 'I can get 'em to wave,' and [someone in the bar] goes 'What's that guy's name?' Our friend says 'Farrell,' and he had 500 people in the bar going 'Farrell!'"

The Williams and Farrell world tour is only beginning. In addition to the New York and D.C. trips, they are planning to be in Oakland for a series that will span the end of July and the beginning of August. And there's plenty more to come.

"We're just going to sporadically pop up," promises Farrell.

"Randomly, randomly," Williams says. "Dude, you'll be watching a Cincinnati Reds game one night and you'll go 'those guys!'"

Even if their antics don't leave you rolling on the ground, you have to give Williams and Farrell this. Their motioning and gesticulating is orders of magnitude more interesting than someone waving and talking into their mobile phone.