



Plays of the Day

It is amazing to me how often this play (or one very similar) happens in a season. It is like a bad penny. It reminds me of another of Yogi's famous sayings: "It's like deja-vu all over again."

This play brings us all to the realization of the importance of mechanics and understanding all of the play. When we choose to talk with our partner and, with better information, change a call, many times there are huge implications we must work through. I am always glad we get an important play right in the end, but sometimes there is a large cost that accompanies it.

PLAY: Bottom of the 7th with the visiting team winning by a run. Runner on 2nd (the tying run) with two outs. Ball is hit to the third basemen and he throws to first, but the throw pulls the first basemen off the ball a bit. The umpire in the C position can not see the pulled foot and calls the batter out (for the third out; ball game). The runner on 2nd rounds third and just starts to head to the plate to score the tying run. The first basemen sees the runner rounding 3rd and heading home, but does not throw to the plate because he thinks the game is over; the runner would have been an easy out. The first base coach screams that the first basemen was not on the bag and appeals to the base umpire. At this point, both umpires press the remote engine start button on their car. The base umpire confers with the plate umpire and they agree that the first basemen pulled his foot; the batter is safe and the runner from 2nd scores. The defensive coach now claims that time should have been called and the runner should be put back at third base due to the confusion at first base (the first basemen did not know the batter was safe and would have thrown to the plate to get the runner, again an easy out). Our ruling was time was not called and the runner from 2nd scores; the first basemen should not assume the game is over. Also, there is no guarantee that the runner would have been thrown out. The defensive coach was hot.

In this play, the umpires rightly changed an out call to a safe call. I am proud of them as in the end they go it right. But the question that looms over us as officials is what do we do when we change a call and it puts another team at a huge disadvantage. Here, with the original call, the game was headed to the eighth inning. Now, with the call changed, the home team might win due to the reversal. Which door has the lion or princess behind it? Part of the duties of the umpire-in-chief is to rectify any situation in which an umpire's decision that was reversed places either team at a disadvantage. This play certainly fills that requirement. In this play, we cannot change the call and let the home team score the winning run when the defense, because of our declaration of the third out, makes no attempt at home plate. So, we must return the runner to third base and leave the batter on first, and continue play with two outs (and hope the sirens in the distance are for our safety and not our arrest). No one will be happy with us, but we will have done it right and, in a decade or so, laugh about it.

The play to think about for the weekend is this:

With a runner on first and second base, one out, the batter hits a ground ball to the shortstop. The shortstop fields the ball, steps on second for a force of the runner advancing from first base, and then throws wildly to the first baseman. The first baseman intentionally thows his glove into the air, hitting the ball and preventing advancement. At the time of the throw, the runner from second had not yet scored, and the batter was inches away from stepping on first base. At the time the ball was knocked down by the glove, the runner from second was steps away from home and the batter was on first base. An argument quickly arose. Some said the ball was dead and the play should end with two outs and runners on third and first. Others said we should have a run scored, two outs, and the batter on second. The umpires simply wanted ear plugs.

Until next time, have a good one.

Kyle