



Plays of the Day

The temptation is so great at times. I believe most nearly all of us officials have faced that decision. We know a rule has been violated; we know the enforcement; and no one else on the field is aware of the situation. We could so easily ignore the situation, let the game play on, and leave the field to a chorus of "Good Game!" and "See you soon, I hope." Or, we can do what we were hired to do and leave the field to the tunes of "You will never work here again," and "Don't leave your day job." We just hope the police escort don't have a player on the field. I am glad that the vast majority of officials do have the fortitude to do their job.

PLAY: With a runner on first base and two outs, the first baseman catches a very routine, easy foul fly for the third out. He removes the ball from his mitt and tosses it to the base umpire as he heads for the dugout. The base umpire quickly realizes something is amiss as he has trouble getting the ball out of hand. A sticky residue is on the ball. What happens next? Do we open the proverbial "can of worms" or do we just toss the ball out and get a new one?

There are a couple of ways in which a glove becomes illegal. One is the glove does not meet the size specifications in the rule book. This is extremely rare as the rule on glove size has not changed in many decades and the glove manufacturers know them well. The other way a glove becomes illegal is when it has been altered to create an adhesive, sticky, and/or tacky surface. This is what has happened in this play. The glove has become sticky or tacky and thus is illegal. No one else knows, but we do. The umpire stepped up and declared the glove illegal. Of course this created about 30 mini rules clinics in the stands, dugouts and on the field. The defensive coach argued that the "stickiness" did not contribute to the catch, and the out should stand. He did promise to take the glove out of play. The offensive coach demanded the out be nullified, the batter placed at first, and the first baseman be ejected for making a travesty of the game. Both coaches played their respective parts well. The glare from their eyes and the sternness of their tone certainly portrayed their deep beliefs.

The use of an illegal glove carries the same penalty as detached player equipment. The coach of the team at bat also has the choice of taking the result of the play or having the penalty enforced. In this play, the coach will certainly take the award. The award for a batted ball being touched by an illegal glove (or detached player equipment) is three bases from their position at the time the ball was touched by the glove. So, in this play, it is about to go from bad to worse for the defense. The out will be nullified, the batter will be awarded third base, and the run will score. Play will continue with a new, legal glove for the first baseman. Unless there is more to the story, he is not ejected. One team is ecstatic. The other team wants to know the officials' names. Such is baseball.

For tomorrow, contemplate this play: With a runner on first and second, the first baseman is playing back off first base. The right fielder sneaks around behind the runner and takes the throw from the pitcher (who makes a legal pick off move) while entirely in foul ground and tags the runner for the out. The stands howl; one side in glee and the other is protest.

Until tomorrow, have a good one.

Kyle