



Plays of the Day

The offensive coach didn't hesitate. "Balk, Balk," he screamed and his stands quickly took up the chorus. The umpires looked at each other and decided the play just didn't look right. So, they agreed, nullified the out, and awarded the runners one base. The defensive coach quickly moved to disagree. He had thought up the play over the off season and his team had worked on it every day for the past week. His pride in seeing the play work so well beamed from his face, until he heard the umpires' declaration of the balk. His face soon beamed another type of red. It was all he could do not to cross the line that allowed him a bus seat.

The 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 umpires were really not sure what the rule said about this, but they knew that all fielders had to be in fair ground at the time of the pitch. So, they decided this had to be a balk. Made good sense to them and to one of the dugouts.

Unfortunately, the rules only require that all defensive players be in fair territory at the time of the pitch (the catcher must be in his catching box). A fielder is considered to be in fair territory when he has at least one foot in fair ground. The rule is designed primarily to keep outfielders from camping out in foul ground on batters who tend to be late on their swings. A violation of this rule, if at the time of the pitch a fielder is in foul ground with both feet, is indeed a balk. But the rules do not address where fielders must be on a pick off play. Since the pitcher had not committed to deliver a pitch, the play was legal. The out should have counted and the defensive coach should have been able to beam with satisfaction on his good strategy.

For our next play: With bases loaded and one out, the batter hits a bases clearing triple. Unfortunately, he misses first base while the runner from first misses second. After playing action is over, the head coach requests and is granted "time" and first appeals the batter runner missing first and then appeals the runner at first missing second. His booster club is applauding how well he is handling the game. What do you rule?

Until tomorrow, have a good one.

Kyle