



Plays of the Day

Baseball can be a very confusing game. As an example, a foul line and a foul pole are actually fair. So when is a batted ball fair? What makes it foul? Today's play is an example.

The batter hits a high pop fly near the first base line. He drops his bat and in so doing it makes contact with his foot and goes into fair ground and lies there. The ball comes down untouched and lands on the bat bouncing off of the bat into foul ground and eventually into a dugout. The offense argues that it is a fair ball and a ground rule double since it hit an object on fair ground. The defense argues the player needs to be declared out and ejected.

A batted ball becomes fair when it settles on fair territory between home and third or first base; when it contacts fair ground on or beyond an imaginary line between first and third base; when it is on or over fair ground when bounding to the outfield past first or third; when it first falls on fair ground beyond first or third; when it touches a base; and while on or over fair ground, touches the person of an umpire or player, their clothing. So, when the ball hit the bat lying on fair ground, we don't yet know if the batted ball will be fair or foul. It has not yet settled; it hasn't touched an umpire or a player over fair ground; it hasn't gone past a base.

A foul batted ball is one which settles on foul territory between home and first or third; bounds past first or third on or over foul territory; first falls on foul ground beyond first or third; and while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire or a player or any object foreign to the natural ground. Rocks are not foreign to the natural ground; bats are.

So, if the bat had been lying in foul ground when the batted ball contacted it, we have a foul ball. When the ball contacted the bat lying in fair territory, something else has to happen to ultimately determine if it is fair or foul. A batted ball contacting a bat lying on the ground in foul becomes foul; contacting a bat in fair territory doesn't make it fair or foul by itself.

When the batted ball caroms off the bat into foul ground and eventually into the dugout, all we now have is a foul ball. No ground rule double, no travesty of the game. Just a foul ball. Of course, this is all dependent upon the fact the batter did not place the bat where he did intentionally. That would be another kettle of fish, as my grandmother would say.

For tomorrow, we have a play that demonstrates there is no limit to the confusion we can have in baseball.

PLAY: With a runner on first base and one out, the batter has a 2-1 count. On the next pitch, the runner from first is off, attempting to steal second base. As the batter swings and misses the pitch, the catcher's throw goes into the outfield and the runner successfully continues to third base. There is no batter interference on the play. The next pitch is declared to be a ball, after which the plate umpire gives the proper signal for a full count on the batter. The third base coach asks for "time," questioning the count; he thinks it should be 1-0.

The home plate umpire soon discovers that during the steal and ensuing action, the first batter thought he had struck out and went to the dugout, and the next batter came to bat, taking the first pitch to him for a ball. The defense immediately wants an out as the batter "gave up and went into the dugout." Wondering what he did in a previous life to deserve this game, the plate umpire turns to look into the heavens.

Until tomorrow, have a good one.

Kyle