

Observer Plays of Interest – Week 5 - October 6, 2019

Play #1

In our first play, the Umpire is watching the scrum and sees a personal foul. But when he throws the flag, he uses an underhanded toss like the one we would use on a dead ball foul. Because of the wind, the flag goes over the Umpire's shoulder and it ended up ahead of where the foul was that he was flagging. Instead of being on about the 34-yard line where the foul occurred, the flag ends up on the 29-yard line. He brought the flag back to the 30 as the enforcement spot when the penalty should have been marked off from near the 34. When the foul is a spot foul as we have here, you should get your flag as close to that spot as possible, especially the yard line. If off target, relocate the flag as soon as possible after the play by picking it up and placing it at the correct spot. Throwing the flag properly would have prevented the error in this clip. (See MI page 34)

Play #2

The second play clip is of a quarter change. Everything starts out well as the crew comes together to write down the information needed (down, distance, yard line, and clip line). For this play, the clip was on the A-45. Both the Line Judge and the Back Judge go to the huddles on their sideline. The umpire picks up the ball and, with the Referee, jogs to the new spot. Note that the trailing chain is on the A-44 making the line to gain the B-46.

The Umpire arrives at the new spot, squares out to the hash, moves down about 3-4 yards, squares back in again for a few yards and spots the ball. We are not sure why the square out and back in were done since the distance from the hash was not precisely noted before the crew left the end of quarter spot. Meanwhile Head Linesman is having some difficulty with the chains and the chain crew members are seen walking on the field to try to get into the proper position.

We see the Umpire spotting the ball without waiting for the Head Linesman to confirm the location. The Umpire then picks it backup while the Back Judge attempts to assist the Head Linesman with the chains. After the chains are on the right side of the 50-yard line, the Umpire again spots the ball without confirming with the Head Linesman.

But notice where the chains are now. The before picture has the trailing chain on the A-44 which puts the line to gain on the B-46 making it 3rd down and 24 yards to go. The after picture shows the chains with the line to gain on the 50-yard line making it now 3rd down and 19 yards to go.

We have all had our bad days with the chains on quarter changes. The problem here isn't that the chains were set wrong so much as it is that no one on the crew caught the mistake. Everyone wrote down the information but obviously no one checked to see that everything was correct after the quarter change mechanic was completed.

Play #3

This clip shows a crew doing a great job on their post-play dead ball mechanics. Everyone accords in and the Back Judge sees the two opposing players in close contact, so he comes in even further to let them know that he is there. Well done by this crew.