Don't freak out, but a computer ump called a game. Yes, it happened in an Independent Professional League Game in July of 2015. The game was held in San Rafael, California when the San Rafael Pacifies hosted the Vallejo Admirals of the Pacific Association League. The game was officiated by a two man crew (plate and base umpire), but when the first pitch was thrown, the plate umpire remained silent. Eric Byrnes, an ex-major league player, was watching on a television feed directly behind home plate and leaning forward he let out a loud "HYAHHH" into a microphone. Is there a future in this type of MAJOR change to the game as we know it?

In this game, the league used PITCHf/x, a three-camera tracking system designed by Sportvision. This program has been used in major league parks to collect data on pitch location, speed, and movement. This is the same company that has provided a revolutionary concept that is presently being used in football telecasts giving the television viewer the "yellow line" that indicates the approximate location for a team to secure a first down.

How realistic is this idea? Some pro technology proponents believe it is in the future. The Sabermetric community would like to move forward, but "old time" baseball realists are concerned with taking the human aspect out of the game. Technology has begun to play an important role in the development of the game with the increased use of Instant Replay on specific plays and situations. By removing the involvement of a plate umpire and his/her judgment, most say that this would take the "human" aspect out of the game.

How do we, as the amateur community, defend this from occurring? Are we prepared to keep working on our craft in order to keep the college game moving in a positive direction? The fundamental attitude of needing to continually improve is strong with amateur umpires as we are working to unify our practices, policies, and procedures. The question we must ask ourselves as we move forward is "are we improving enough to stay ahead of the barometer of perfection that is technology?" Taking a look at the metrics of baseball it is innately a game that does not lend itself to perfection, quite the contrary when you look at batting averages for instance. We love this game because of its nuances and subtleties that the average fan cannot understand. The unfortunate reality however is the "average fan" sometimes makes decisions to push for changes such as technology. It is truly the right time to "quiet" any pro-technology changes to the game itself in regards to substituting technology for human control of the strike zone and ultimately baseball. Our continued hard work and dedication is our best tool to make that happen.

Baseball umpiring at the collegiate level has made major strides to perfect all aspects of the game and it was on display in the last College World Series. College baseball is in very good shape due to the continued hard work of all the umpires who worked Division l, 2, and 3 games last year. Technology is being used nationally, but it is this writer's belief that the hard work and desire to "be the best that one can be" radiates throughout college baseball.