

Video Review: A Win-Win for Umpires and College Baseball

Video Review has become an integral part of College Baseball. Video Review will uphold, confirm, or correct our decision. Either way, based on video evidence, the correct ruling will be the result. The last thing we want as an Umpire is to have a direct effect on the outcome of a game due to making an incorrect decision. Our job is not getting easier, it is more difficult. Accountability is soaring, as well as, exposure and transparency. With the evolution of Video Review, we can no longer just say we got the call right with no accountability. Due to the increased media coverage, we are being held more and more accountable for our decisions. Even though we strive to be perfect, unfortunately, we will ALL make an incorrect decision and have a "call" overturned. How we respond to this adversity is extremely important. Therefore, it's more important than ever before for us to learn from our mistakes and develop strategies to get our plays right "initially". As Technology is changing our game, we can learn a lot from Video. If we begin to see a pattern of decisions overturned, we should go back to the fundamentals: distance/angle from play, being set, head/shoulders square to the play and timing.

With the implementation of Video Review, coaches and players are much more relaxed concerning our decisions on the field. When a close play occurs, a player will typically motion toward his Head Coach to "challenge" the call. Head Coaches have been very calm when requesting a challenge and understand that the "process" is new and takes time to complete. Head Coaches are able to challenge most of our decisions, however, balls and strikes cannot be reviewed. Therefore, the "consistency" of our zone will be scrutinized more than ever before. Coaches like having the opportunity to challenge crucial calls during a game. However, coaches do not want to waste a challenge on an egregious call. Technology demands us to look in the mirror, check our egos, identify our weaknesses, make the necessary adjustments to improve and become a better all-around Umpire.

Our game is changing and changing for the better! Conferences and AD's are moving in a direction to do whatever it takes to improve our game. They are making a monetary investment to put the best product on the field. They are also investing in technology to make our imperfect game as perfect as possible. Good officiating makes College Baseball better!

It is imperative that all Crew members become familiar with and comprehend Appendix E, Getting the Call Right with the use of Video Review (NCAA Rule Book, pg. 110-111). We need to be absolutely sure if/when a play is reviewable; the number of challenges per nine innings and how many additional challenges a team receives in extra innings; when do reviewable plays require a "coaches challenge" or Video Review can be initiated by the Crew Chief; if a call is overturned in Review, can the Team adversely affected by a Crew Chief decision use a Head Coach's Challenge or request that a Crew Chief review another reviewable call in the same play. It is incumbent upon us to know the answer to these scenarios. Take a laminated card with you on the field. Write down all pertinent information that will help you determine which plays are reviewable, as well as, protocol if a call is overturned. The "process" of using Video Review is not easy. Each Crew member has a responsibility once a call goes to Video Review. After Review, potentially, there could be many variables involved in communicating the outcome. Our communication needs to be as clear and concise as possible. We need everyone, coaches, players, fans, media, etc. to understand exactly what the outcome/result of Video Review. In the future, Video Review could evolve to the point where we are "Mic'd" and use the stadium's PA system to announce the outcome.

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Annually, the number of games being televised by Conferences and member institutions are increasing. Years ago, televised games were random. Today, televised games are the norm. Our game is evolving due to technology and we will see more and more Conferences implement Video Review. In fact, the use of "Pitch Track" for example, could be another element used in those games as more and more accountability is placed on officials.

In 2017, Conferences and institutions were able to challenge 6 reviewable plays (a-f). In 2018, the number of reviewable plays expanded to 12 (a-f and g-l). In 2019, Video Review in the NCAA Post-Season has expanded to include 12 reviewable plays (a-l) which can be challenged by a team's Head Coach. The reviewable plays used in the NCAA Post-Season through the 2018 season merely scratched the surface of Video Review. The expansion of reviewable plays (a-f and g-l) in this year's post-season will greatly affect our game. This expansion is a game changer! The expanded plays (g-l) will significantly increase the number of plays going to Video Review.

Below is an idea of how Video Review evolved between 2017 and 2018:

- **Increase in number of plays going to Video Review: 475%**
- **77% of all plays going to Video Review were Expanded Reviewable Plays (g-l)**
- **83% of Expanded Reviewable Plays (g-l) were Force/Tag Plays (safe/out at 1st/ 2nd and steal plays)**
- **63% of all reviewable plays occurred at 1st or 2nd base**

THE DATA ABOVE DOES NOT INCLUDE VIDEO REVIEW FROM THE NCAA POST-SEASON.

Video Review can be humbling yet can also be inspiring. This experience provides a new perspective and will make us more conscious of our on-field decisions. Technology gives us data and analytics to ultimately improve our efficiency and chances of getting a call right. Technology provides an ever-increasing number of channels to develop tools and training for umpires to embrace and raise performance.

Make no mistake about it, Umpiring is a business! Head Coaches are the CEOs of their teams and Umpires are the CEOs of themselves. Do you have what it takes for a Conference Coordinator and the NCAA to invest in your business?

2019 is going to be an exciting year for our Game!