

Umpire West goes rogue on replay in Phillies-Marlins game

Written by David Brown

Monday, 05 September 2011 12:46



Joe West in an undated AP photo.

Umpire Joe West, who likes to be called "Cowboy" in part because he performs country songs when he's not umpiring, took a hot branding iron to the Philadelphia Phillies-Florida Marlins game Sunday afternoon.

West and his crew used video replay in an unprecedented way after a pair of knucklehead Phillies fans interfered with Marlins outfielder Bryan Petersen as he tried to catch a fly ball hit by

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Hunter Pence in the sixth inning.

On the field, umpires ruled Pence's hit a double — putting runners at second and third with no outs.

But Marlins manager Jack McKeon complained and West, after reviewing the play on video with the other umps, called Pence out.

The Phillies didn't score and many, many innings later, the Marlins won 5-4.

Phillies manager Charlie Manuel argued, saying that umpires are only supposed to use video replay when a home run is at stake.

After lodging an official protest, Manuel also said West assumed that Petersen would have caught the ball after banging into the outfield fence — which would be quite an assumption.

A home run wasn't at stake this time — so use of replay in this case would seem to be outside the allowed parameters.

For those who want replay expanded to include more than disputed home runs this could be a great moment of judicial activism.

But it's probably just a case of West overstepping his bounds that won't stand up to appeal.

When reporters sought his comment after the game, West tried to leave Sun Life Stadium before talking, which prompted perhaps the tweet of the year, by Ryan Lawrence of the *Delco Times* :

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Joe west is running out of the stadium

Well, go get him!

Reporters, including Matt Gelb of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, caught up to West — whose statement appeared to have some contradictions in it.

"I got two managers on the field," West said.

"One was arguing he wanted an out. The other was arguing he wanted a home run."

But Manuel said he never requested a review.

And he stood on the third base line, far away from West, who engaged McKeon before heading to the video screens.

Manuel questioned the true motivation for review.

West claimed because the Phillies argued it was a home run, it was reviewable.

"Now we've got a decision as to whether the spectator inference happened over the fence or before the fence," West said.

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"...I didn't assume anything. We went to look at the replays because there was a possibility it could have been a home run. Once we look at the home run, we have to take into account all the evidence. That's my statement."

And it's full of holes. Even McKeon wasn't sure why the umpires did it that way.

"I'm not the judge," McKeon said.

"But I would think, isn't what we want from the umpires is to get it right? Did they get it right? Yes. Did they make a mistake on how they went about getting it right? Yes."

West umpires games his own way — quite visibly.

Anybody who has watched him on major league fields these 35 years or so recognizes it.

Of course, it could be argued that umpires with lower profiles also make for better umpires, but Joe does it his way and Major League Baseball keeps putting him out there.

A protest hasn't been upheld in 25 years, so there's little reason to expect the commissioner's office to overturn the umpires and make the teams replay the game from the point of Pence's hit.

But if the Phillies do have to return to Sun Life, perhaps the TV in the visiting manager's office will be fixed by then.

It's the second time since Major League Baseball instituted replay in 2008 that a batter has been called out because of fan interference.

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In that instance, in 2009, Melvin Mora had a home run wiped out in Baltimore because fans interfered with Endy Chavez's attempt to catch it.