

Big Eight Official: Good Guy—Bad Guy

Do Pitched Balls Curve? Controversy Discussed

By George Kaufman
NU School of Journalism

It's convenient that Big Eight officials' shirts are both white and black. For, during a hectic conference game, these men-in-the-middle can easily turn from good guy to bad guy and back again many times in the minds of the fans.

And it often seems that the only difference between a good and bad call is whether or not it favors the home team. In fact, during the down-to-the-wire Big Eight title races in basketball of the past few seasons, much has been said of the so-called "home-court advantage" in the Big Eight.

Several inter-school rivalries have been blown out of proportion during pressure-packed games between championship contenders, and numerous incidents involving fans, referees and players have tended to taint some schools' reputations.

The Universities of Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska field houses, because these three teams have had to fight it out for the crown recently, have become known as "pits" into which any visiting team is thrown at the merciless abuse of the fans, seldom to emerge with a victory.

Pennies Thrown

During a Colorado-Nebraska game at the NU Coliseum, pennies were thrown on the playing floor repeatedly whenever the officials made a call against the Huskers. At a tense Kansas-Kansas State contest, ice from cold drinks was splattered on the floor, and the fans had to be warned several times of a technical foul.

One irate fan rushed onto the floor and attacked Colorado guard Pat Frink at Kansas University's Allen Fieldhouse.

At Colorado, fans hounded NU players with angry chants of N-I-T, N-I-T, in reference to the National Invitational Tournament bid the Huskers drew, despite the fact that Colorado and Nebraska wound up in a tie for second spot in the Big Eight.

It has been charged that under this sort of crowd pressure officials would be coerced into leaning toward the home team, thus widening the home court advantage for bad crowds and penalizing disciplined crowds for being good.

But the statistics show that, although there definitely is such a thing as a home-court advantage, it varies considerably from year to year, and is evidently not determined in any way by the officials.

The difference in the

Museum Displays Photos

The world's largest display of photographs taken from space is on display in the University of Nebraska State Museum.

Sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the 500-square-foot exhibit includes photographs taken during the early Mercury manned flights.

Project Gemini is represented with photographs taken during the "walk in space," the history-making rendezvous between Gemini VI and VII, and the docking of the Gemini VIII spacecraft with the Agena vehicle. The highly detailed photographs of cloud cover taken by the weather satellites also are shown.

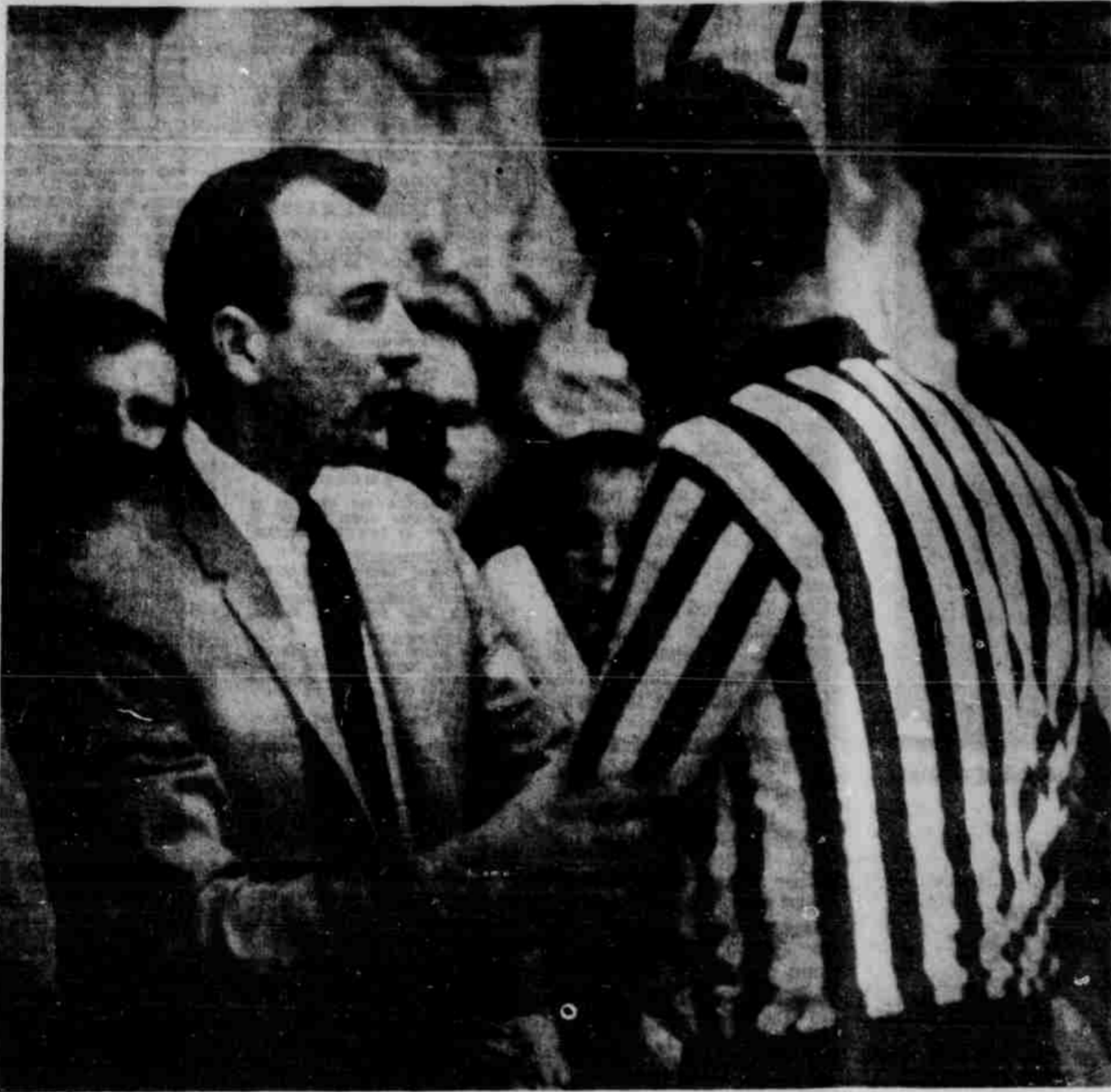
The area of space-science investigation is depicted with the photographs taken of the moon by the Ranger probes and of Mars by the Mariner spacecraft.

The Museum hours: Sunday 1:30 to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; holidays, 1:30 to 5 p.m.

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Coach Joe Cipriano grabs an official's arm during a tense moment in a basketball game last season.

number of fouls called on the home and visiting teams during an average conference game has not been over three the past three years, and during the 1965-66 season the average was against the home team.

Smallest Advantage

"While I have no way of comparing the home court advantage," stated John D. Waldorf, supervisor of officials in the Big Eight, "I would presume to venture, from conversations with people in other conferences, that we have the smallest (home court advantage) of any major conference in the country."

"The individual school home court advantages (conference games only) varies from year to year, but it is interesting to note that some of our schools play better on the road than they do at home."

But there has been a decided margin in the number of games the home team wins over the visiting team over the past three years.

In 1964-65 home teams won 36 to the visitors' 20; in 1965-66 it was somewhat smaller at 31-25; and in the past season, 1966-67, it was 35-21.

These statistics also silence angry fans who accuse the ref of favoring the visiting team because of harassment by the home-team crowd.

So the famous home-court advantage seems to be physical—the home players knowing their own court, being used to playing on it—and psychological—the home team being "up" before their vociferous fans—rather than being caused by discrimination on the part of referees.

Fans Help

"There definitely is a home court advantage," affirms Husker star guard Stuart Lantz. But the All-Big Eight player doesn't

throw it at the feet of the officials: "When you're on the road, it's hard to get up for a game, but at home you've got all those people yelling your name, and you can get jelled."

But even here statistics seem to flatten all arguments. Over the past three seasons conference teams have scored only about three more points at home than on the road. And the home team's winning margin has gone from 7 points in 1964-65 to 2.4 points during the past season.

Moreover the home court advantage, computed over the year as a conference average, went from 6.93 points three years ago to 4.59 points in 1966-67.

The home court edge can be as fickle as the fans themselves. During the 1964-65 campaign, Kansas' home court advantage was only .43 points. For 1966-67 it was 10.9 points. For Kansas State it was 11.57 points three seasons ago. This last season it plummeted to a minus 6.6 points.

Supervisor Waldorf defends his officials against charges of biased refereeing: "In our selection of officials, we are always on the lookout for capable men, who have played, coached and have an excellent officiating background and who are leaders in community activities in their home communities. These men are screened very thorough-

ly before they are admitted to conference officiating."

Program

Big Eight basketball officials are chosen by use of what Waldorf calls the four-point program:

—Prospect must have recommendation by coaches, directors, the supervisor and others concerned.

—The record of the prospective official is checked back through the high school and college commissioners in the state in which he resides.

—The ability of the official is checked out with Big Eight officials who have worked with him in his own state.

—Before coming into conference varsity officiating, he is assigned to freshmen games where the supervisor and other competent observers can watch his work.

"We feel that this program gives us an excellent background on the abilities of the prospective official and that through this program we secure the best officials possible in our six-state area," said the supervisor.

And here too, statistics are for the officials.

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GOLD'S



By Charlie Green
NU School of Journalism

Can a human being actually make a baseball curve? Igor Sikorsky, internationally famous expert on aerodynamics, has seemingly ended the century-old dispute with a positive answer.

In the early 1870's, two major controversies stormed in the world of sports. It was California's Gov. Leland Stanford who, in 1878, collected a \$50,000 bet by proving that all four feet of a galloping horse are off the ground at the same time. The other controversy over the curve ball still rages today after nearly a century of scientific debate.

Two of the most recent tests of the curve ball dispute were made by two national picture magazines. Each of them used an elaborate photographic technique and the conclusions of both were regarded as authoritative.

Life, in May, 1964, claimed that its studies "raised once more the possibility that this standby of baseball is after all only an optical illusion." The other, Look, in the same month, insisted "that a curve ball actually does curve."

Ernest Lowry, an outspoken scientist of the optical illusion school, said in Sports Illustrated, "The great injustice of the much publicized curve pitch is that of the manner in which millions of American boys have been misled on the question. They have been forced to delude themselves into thinking that their pitches actually do curve."

Different Pitch

Eddie Sawyer, former manager of the Philadelphia Phillies, said in Sport magazine in 1960, "I am not

positive whether a ball curves or not, but there is a pitch in baseball much different from the fast ball that separates the men from the boys. If this pitch does not curve it would be well to notify a lot of baseball players who were forced to quit the game they loved because of this pitch, and may now be reached at numerous gas stations, river docks, and mental institutions across the country."

Ex-Cincinnati pilot Lake Sewell asked a Life reporter in 1964 a pertinent question: "Isn't it strange that the optical illusion only happens when someone tries to throw a curve ball?"

Bob Feller, former pitcher for the Cleveland Indians, said in his book on "How to Pitch":

"Periodically somebody pops up with the old argument that a baseball really doesn't curve—that it is an optical illusion. If this is so, I have struck out a great number of hitters with optical illusions."

Earl Mack, former manager of the Athletics said, when asked about the curve by a Look reporter, "Are these scientific crack-pots

crediting pitchers with the power of turning on optical illusions at will?"

Scientific Proof

Thus the opinions ranged on but without scientific proof. Sikorsky knew about the game of baseball but he made up for it in scientific knowledge. He realized that a pitched ball traveling in a curved path is an example of aerodynamic action in everyday life. He realized too that the force which caused a ball to move in flight is the same force known to engineers as the Magnus effect.

Professor G. Magnus of Berlin started research in this field but his subject wasn't baseballs—it was cannon balls. He was trying to find out why German artillery couldn't throw more strikes.

Sikorsky's first problem was to determine how much "stuff" or spin a pitcher can put on the ball in the regulation 60-foot, six-inch distance from the mound to the plate.

Careful studies were made in New York of rapid-fire flash photographs showing the progress of a

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