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WOOD

Sphex Club

How Did You Get Into This? A Case of Arrested Development - Booth Made Me Do It!

I am often asked "how did you get into this?" My wife, Mina's, reply "it's a case of arrested development."

Tonight I am going to give a paper about my severe case of arrested development; my football officiating, and I am doing this because "Booth made me do it." I have tried, without success, to reconcile a paper on football officiating with the Sphex Club mantra: science, philosophy, history, education, and the unknown. Some of my friends have said that I do not know what I am doing on the football field. So this paper may be classified under the unknown. However, I do not have any other excuse except Booth is so persistent, persuasive, and old -I had to defer to our second oldest member. For those of you who could care less about football, much less football officiating, you may be excused now. My feelings will not be hurt.

So, how did I get into this? The apparent answer: I lost my mind one day and never recovered (or arrested development). The true answer, however, goes back to my early adolescent years: the late 1940's and 1950's. Like most young boys, a stuffed or inflated object of any shape or size intrigued me. The Lynchburg Recreation Department held an annual summer youth football clinic at City Stadium to which I made annual pilgrimages. These clinics were conducted by Lynchburg's two most respected and venerated coaches, Vince Bradford and Jimmie Bryan. Their influence on me and many young men in the community cannot be adequately measured. They led by example; they were, and are, men of integrity: true role models. Coach Bradford and Coach Bryan's character traits made them successful both on and off the playing field: strong work ethic, discipline, conditioning (no tobacco or alcohol), loyalty,

and fair play: there was no nonsense when you ran onto the playing field with Coach Bradford or Coach Bryan at the helm. Their leadership shaped the ethics and morals of the young men of my generation.

In the sixth grade at the age of 12, I became a manager for the E. C. Glass football team. My boyhood friend, Bill Riley, put in a good word for me with Coach Bradford. Boy, was I excited. I was like the proverbial kid in the candy shop. I imbibed the sounds on the field, the yelling and the grunting, and the odors of the locker room: the sweaty uniforms (there were no washing machines), the analgesic balms, the mustiness of the training room and showers. I saw the action up close. The give and take of practice sessions, the stern discipline of Coach Bradford overseeing his troops in preparation for Friday night's challenge; and sometimes Coach Bryan's more gentle suggestions when Coach Bradford would get a bit agitated, for whatever reason. Some of you might recognize the names of the players, they were like gods to me: Jimmy Wade, Bobby Wade, the Tucker brothers, the Brooks brothers, Dave Ebert, Preston Wade, Harold Riley, the Hubbard boys, the Glasses.

Another, coach who had an influence in my journey to football officiating: Happy Lee. Happy ruled Miller Park, it seemed to me, forever. I played three sports for Happy from the time I was eight until I entered junior high school. Happy was actually pretty grumpy. He had so many kids playing for him; he couldn't remember their names. He called all his boys "whatchamacallit," until you had been playing three sports for him for at least three years. When Happy finally learned my name, I knew that I had arrived. Happy's teams were always pretty good, you learned that when you lined up to play a game, you expected to win. It was not a win at any costs, but I think competing, and having expectations of winning, is generally good in the

development of a young person. (This may be debatable, but I'll defend this issue later if anyone wishes to discuss this in the question period).

As many of you remember, Happy Lee's Mighty-Mights won a national championship in the late 40's Happy was posthumously inducted into the Lynchburg Sports Hall of Fame.

Fall Friday night and Glass football were synonymous before the age of television. It was not unusual to have 15,000 fans turn out at City Stadium for a Glass football game. On occasions, there were as many as 20,000 fans for an extra special game, such as the archenemy, Jefferson Senior of Roanoke, or the State powerhouse, undefeated Norview.

So when I entered E. C. Glass in 1954 as an eighth-grader, my goal was to make the high school football team. I weighed about 100 pounds, could not run very fast, but I liked football, and I wanted to play for Coach Bradford.

Each summer I toiled in the deadening heat, ninety degree weather, no water allowed during practices (this is totally contrary to all current medical practices). In the summer of '56, I made varsity, weighed 140 pounds, and was busting with enthusiasm, with little fear of what might happen to my scrawny body. Too slow to run the ball, not strong enough to pass or kick it, I became a blocking back in the single wing. My usual assignment was to sneak up or behind an unsuspecting defensive tackle or end and clip him. This is legal so long as it is done on the line of scrimmage.

My two years on the Glass football team playing for Coach Bradford and Coach Bryan (there were only two coaches) was a dream come true: I was elected captain my senior year. I learned team play, intense preparation, a desire to get better and improve yourself, and a will to win. When I finished football my senior year, I knew I wanted to play in college, but no big

college wanted me. My dad had gone to Washington & Lee; W&L was no longer giving scholarships. Washington & Lee had a new coach, Lee McLaughlin, and he actually recruited me, came to my house, which massaged my ego. My dad had often taken me to Lexington, and I had seen many Washington & Lee football games in the glory years (the Gil Bocetti and Walt Michaels era, the Gator Bowl), including W&L's finest hour: W&L slaughtered Virginia 42-14 in Lexington, the only blemish on Stuart Harris' 1951 UVA team that I am told turned down a bid to the Cotton Bowl, because Colgate Darden thought it would be too disruptive of the players' academic schedule. My, how times have changed!

Four years of football at Washington & Lee was a defining experience for me. Lee McLaughlin, our new coach, had come to Washington & Lee from Episcopal High School where he had been a very successful coach and leader. Lee had captained a UVA football team in the early 40's and had played pro football with the Green Bay Packers. He brought a winning attitude and a high level of energy to W&L's floundering football program that was sorely in need of both. After W&L had desubsidized football in 1954 (a result of a cheating scandal), it had tried to reintroduce football on an "amateur level." Bill Chipley from Lynchburg was the first coach to try to reintroduce football to W&L. He was not very successful; Lee McLaughlin was hired to see if Washington & Lee could win on a non-subsidized basis.

My first two years at W&L was a new experience for me . . . "losing", and most of the older players did not care. You can get used to losing when it happens every weekend, but Lee McLaughlin taught us to see the "silver lining" in a loss; he built a team around my freshman class, there were about 40 of us who stuck it out. My last two years at Washington & Lee, we did not lose a game. In 1961, we were voted by the Washington Touchdown Club as the best

small college team in the nation. I do not know if we were the best small college football team in the nation, because there were no playoffs then, but we have a trophy that says we were. It is prominently displayed in Washington & Lee's trophy case in the gym along with two pictures of our teams. Next time you are in Lexington, I am sure you will want to drop by to take a view.

This is my background. Football had been an important part of my life since early childhood, but when I played my last game at Washington & Lee, I thought it was over. My love affair with football had ended. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending upon one's viewpoint, particularly from my wife's perspective, or maybe from some football coaches' perspectives, it was just getting started.

In the summer of 1962, I was preparing to move to Charlottesville, to attend law school. In late summer, I received a call from one of my best friends in college, Courtney Mauzy, a fraternity brother and teammate for four years, who was already in Charlottesville attending the graduate school of business. He told me he was officiating football, making about 50 to 60 bucks a week, having a fun time, and wanted to know if I was interested. I said "sure." Little did I realize that as I stand here tonight, I am donning the black and white shirt and the white knickers for my 37th consecutive year.

I officiated football for three years during my tenure at the Virginia Law School. I also officiated basketball and baseball. The money was good for a law student, I made a lot of friends, and entered the football officiating network. Officiating, like everything else, includes networking . . . who do you know and when do you know them. The Charlottesville High School Association was a spawning ground for ACC football officials. Richmond was the

spawning ground for southern conference officials. So I started swimming in the right spawning ground for officials. (The ACC has trumped the S.C.) I made friends and officiated with people who later would support me when I wanted to move into college officiating. Some names you may recognize, Dick Carrington, Carl Dean, a longtime ACC referee, Bob Sandell, a wonderful friend who has officiated over 300 college games, and Gene Corrigan, who at the time was an unknown and lonely soccer coach for the UVA soccer team. I asked Gene recently if it was true that the first soccer game he coached at UVA was the first soccer game he saw. He acknowledged it was the truth. Again, how times have changed.

You have to pay your dues in officiating. You do not step right into a high school varsity game unless you really know somebody. Fortunately, I happen to know, and was a neighbor of, Bill Moseley, who was for 40 years the Lynchburg supervisor of high school officials. When I decided to venture into officiating in 1962, I called Bill. Even though I lived in Charlottesville, he immediately gave me a high school varsity game. So my first game that I ever officiated was a high school varsity game in Altavista, Virginia. I was told to stand behind the defensive line, don't throw any flags, and don't say anything. I followed the instructions; it was good advice for any official just starting out. In fact, it is good advice for an experienced official; don't be so ready to throw a flag and avoid a discussion with a coach.

When I was graduated from Virginia Law School, Mina and I decided to move to Richmond. I didn't want to continue basketball or baseball, but I really loved officiating football; it was my sport, and I wanted to continue to officiate. However, Mina and I were having our first child, moving to a new city, and starting a new job at a Richmond firm. I made a pact with Mina: I said "Mina, I don't hunt, I don't fish, I don't play golf. If you give me 10 weeks in the

fall, I will be home the other 42 weeks of the year." Mina took the bait and said O.K. Now she says "you lied, you lied."

As I said, Richmond was the den of southern conference football officiates. It was an extremely well-organized, well-run association headed by a man named George Gaser. Gaser was the dean of southern conference football officials and there were probably ten officials in the association who were working college games.

I told George that I wanted to be a referee, the white hat job. He said fine. But I had to pay my dues. So every Friday night for two years I went to places like Northumberland, Lancaster, Middlesex, King George, Prince George, Montross, and I saw it all. I was paying my dues, and it was fun.

Mina and I decided to move back to Lynchburg in 1967. Again, I called Bill Moseley and told him I wanted to continue my officiating. He welcomed me back home and immediately gave me a full high school schedule, including games at City Stadium with Coach Bradford still at the helm of the Hill Toppers. I had come full-circle . . . from a manager for Coach Bradford, to a player, and now an official. I think Coach Bradford liked me a lot more as a player than he did as an official. And I won't elaborate. I'll just say I got "balled" from Glass games for a year or two.

In the Lynchburg area, in the late 60's, early 70's, the high school coaches were respected community leaders, as well as experienced football coaches. They knew how to work a young referee. At Glass, Coach Bradford still reigned; in the Brookville area, there was Bunker Hill; in Appomattox there was Gordon Bragg; in Amherst there was Tom Berry; and in Rustburg there was Hugh Pendleton; Bedford's head coach was Sherrill Coleman. In my judgment, all of these

men were respected community leaders; they shared many of the same characteristics . . . knowledge and respect for the game, discipline, a strong moral code, and loyalty, but not all of these coaches were particularly enamored of football officials. One of my favorite stories reflects my view. John Alford, whom all of you know, and I were officiating a game at Appomattox. Now, it just so happened that Gordon Bragg's daughter was John Alford's secretary. The game was against Amherst, an arch rival; and the game became very heated towards the end. Near the end of the game, John made a call with which Gordon took exception; John incurred Gordon's wrath; he couldn't contain himself, "Alford," he yelled, "you might be a good lawyer, but you will never make a judge, you'll never make a judge".

It is 1970; I had eight years of officiating experience, I was 30 years old and I wanted to get into college football officiating. I called upon my network, Carl Dean in Charlottesville, George Gaser in Richmond, and several other officials in Charlottesville and Richmond, and yes, Gene Corrigan. I mailed an application to the ACC, and within several weeks, I was a member of the Atlantic Coast Conference Freshman Officiating staff. Fortunately for me, at this time freshman were not eligible to participate in varsity sports, so there were opportunities to officiate freshman football games in college stadiums. I thought I had hit the big time.

I will never forget my first college game. It was a Virginia alumni game. Bill Dudley was the kicker. The alumni were not in shape, and didn't care the least about being in shape. They had what they needed; plenty of beer and unlimited time-outs. In the fourth quarter, the alumni called a time-out after every play. I thought the game was never going to end, but I had a college game under my belt, and I was pumped.

My first real game was at a school called Potomac State in Keyser, West Virginia. I had never heard of either Keyser or Potomac State, but I was told that it would be an adventure. Before we journeyed to Keyser, I was told "to hitch-up your gun belt."

I left Lynchburg at 5:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning, picked up several other officials along the way and arrived at Keyser at about 11:00 a.m. It was hot and steamy and nobody was around except some locals who liked to bait officials and yell obscenities.

The first half went smooth. I thought at half-time, "boy, there is nothing to this, it is a piece of cake!"

I spoke too quickly . . . the second half opened with what I would call a quadruple foul. After the second half kick-off, there were four flags on the play; the umpire had tackled a player and was holding him to the ground, while another player was trying to extricate himself from the arms of another player who was intent on restraining him. I really didn't know what to do, so I decided to rekick it. Well, the next 40 minutes was pure hell. There were more flags and more fouls in that one quarter than I had had in four years. What a way to start. I got home about 3:00 in the morning; I had a big check for \$35.00, and I was smiling. Mina was not impressed; you know "arrested development."

I toiled on the freshman staff for the next four years. I worked high school games on Friday nights, small college game or junior college games on Saturday afternoons, and sometimes college freshman games on a Thursday or Friday. Mina continued to be patient. My boys were getting old enough to go to games and so I did some babysitting as often as I could.

A quick story about my babysitting on Saturday afternoon.

I had a game at East Carolina when I first started doing varsity games. Pat Dye was the coach, and EC was playing Southern Illinois in Greenville, North Carolina. Gayle Sayers was athletic director at Southern Illinois, and I persuaded my son Bunny to go because I said I would introduce him to Gayle Sayers . . . a little bit of an exaggeration, or white lie, whatever you want to call it. There was no game security at East Carolina, and I walked on the field with Bunny and told him to stand on the sideline. He was about 9 or 10 years old. After the opening kick, I looked up and there was Pat Dye, a big, robust assistant, and Bunny, all standing together. Two plays later I looked back, and Bunny was gone. I said "oh my God, somebody has kidnapped my child! - Mina will kill me." After the game, Bunny came running out of the stands; I asked him why he had left the sidelines. He said "Dad, they started yelling at you so loud, I was afraid and hid in the stands." And the worst yet, Gayle Sayers did not make an appearance at the game, Bunny did not meet Gayle Sayers. (I am not sure he was ever present in Greenville, NC.)

In 1974, the NCAA expanded officiating crews from five to six officials. This meant there would be six or seven freshman officials would move up to the varsity staff. I fully expected to move up, but I was not called, and boy was I very dejected! That spring, I had worked in Blacksburg, and Bill Jamerson, who was an experienced varsity official, was the observer. The observer evaluates the officials and sends a report to the ACC supervisor of officials. Most of you know Bill; he tells it straight.

The supervisor at this time was a man named Norville Neeve. He was a mercurial and mysterious guy. He did things like suspend you for not wearing your knickers long enough. I was the victim of the peculiarity. Jamerson wrote a nice report about me after the Virginia Tech spring game and said I was ready to move up to the varsity. Neeve didn't agree with Jamerson.

He wrote on Jamerson's report, "Wood is not as good as he thinks he is." Mr. Neeve sent me a copy of it. My inflated ego was deflated. I was to remain on the freshman staff for another year; I was really down.

I told Mina about my disappointments; she thought Neeve's evaluation of my talents was very accurate. Your wife knows your shortcomings better than anyone else. Right? I said that if I didn't get on the varsity staff after the end of the 1974 season, I was going to hang it up. She said "fine."

Spring 1975, I had to make my push to get promoted to varsity. Again, I called the network, and in particular, Gene Corrigan, now athletic director at the University of Virginia. He worked some magic; I was notified in the spring of 1975 that I had been promoted to the varsity staff, and not as a field judge, but as a referee. I think I was the first official to come into the ACC at the position of referee. I was thrilled and I had Gene Corrigan to thank for paving the way for me; I was now an ACC football official and real proud of it.

I think that most officials remember their first game; I certainly do. It was Navy at Virginia, fall 1975. Navy was coached by George Welch, even a curmudgeon before he came to Virginia. Virginia was coached by the infamous Sonny Randall. Randall had announced before the season that if he didn't win eight games, he would quit or should be fired. Virginia had an all-american quarterback named Scott Gardner. Needless to say, I was a bit anxious. My linesman, Bill Jamerson, drove with me to the game, his experience, imposing physical presence, and confidence eased the normal apprehensions that surface when an official approaches his first game before many enthusiastic, some may say, raging fear. In addition, Randall had a reputation as an unrelenting official baiter; I did not want to do anything to incur his wrath.

It was a beautiful September afternoon, the temperature was in the 70's; I thought I was ready, but no amount of preparation could have spared me from the goofy plays of Virginia football under Coach Randall.

Navy scored a quick touchdown and kicked off to Virginia. This kick off was one of the strangest plays I have ever witnessed as an official anytime, anywhere, even to the present time. The ball was about to roll out of bounds; out of no where the Virginia receiver, like a basketball player, while inbounds, jumped toward the sideline and batted the ball back into field of play. All hell broke loose. A live ball was tumbling and bouncing towards the Virginia end zone with players of each team frantically trying to recover it. I was thinking "Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, what is going on; what is happening to me - How did I get myself into this?" The ball rolled into the end zone, there was a pile of players around and over the ball. If Navy recovered, it was a touchdown. I separated the players, sure enough Navy had the ball, I signaled a touchdown. I was seething with a feeling of panic. I thought Randall would be at the goal line screaming at me. I looked up and Randall was nowhere to be seen. I said a quick prayer of thanks.

So Navy lead 14-0 in a game that Virginia was favored. I thought that I had survived the worst possible play; I was wrong.

In the second half, Virginia made a comeback. It was 14-14, Virginia was driving for a touchdown. Virginia had the ball on the Navy 20 yard line; Gardner was hot, Gardner made a quick pitchout backwards, it hit off the outstretched hands of the Virginia half-back and the ball struck me in flight in the forehead before I could react. Navy fell on the ball; it destroyed Virginia's momentum, and Navy went on to win 42-14. As you may recall, Virginia proceeded to lose 9 or 10 games that year, Randall was fired, and some of my Virginia friends said if I had

gotten my fat head out of the way, Virginia would have won the Navy game, Randall's year would have been a success, but George Welch may still be the Navy coach.

One of the duties of a referee is to meet with the head coach before the game to go over a checklist of fairly routine matters about the game. It provides the referee with a special opportunity to meet personally with the head coach under non-game conditions. At the time I entered the ACC, Lou Holtz was at NC State, Bill Dooley was at North Carolina, Frank Howard was still hanging around Clemson, Jerry Claiborne was at Maryland.

In the early 80's, I was assigned Penn State @ N.C. State. I was going to meet, face to face, Lou Paterno. I was excited and expectant, but my visit with Lou Paterno in the Penn State dressing room far exceeded anything I had anticipated. It was a beautiful fall afternoon in Raleigh. Temperatures well above normal. I couldn't wait to get to the dressing room. Paterno was everything I could have anticipated and more. I walked into the dressing room, extended my hand and said "Coach Paterno, I'm Robin Wood, I'm your referee today." Paterno extended his hand to me and said with a broad grin, "Robin, isn't this a beautiful afternoon for these young men to play football?" Somewhat taken back I stuttered "yes sir, yes sir, it sure is!" It was a very cordial meeting, and it confirmed my perception that Paterno was a gracious, engaging football coach who was concerned with people and players, not just winning.

The game turned out to be fantastic, and it was voted by a panel of sport's writers as one of the top ten games of the decade of the 80's. It was a defensive struggle. Penn State lead 6-0 on two field goals until late in the fourth quarter. NC State scored a touchdown with a little under two minutes remaining, kicked the extra point and went ahead 7-6. The Wolfpack fans were going crazy.

Penn State made one first down taking the ball to about State's 35-yard line. After three downs, NC State had held, it was fourth and 20 for Penn State with 8 seconds remaining. Everybody thought NC State had won the game, including me.

The Penn State quarterback dropped back and threw a desperation pass, it was caught by a Penn State receiver who went out of bounds on about the NC State 39 yard line. I looked up, there was one second left. Now, keeping the clock is not an exact science and if the clock operator had let the clock expire, there was no way I was going to put a second back on the clock, no way.

Penn State had a kicker by the name of Barr, I don't know if it was Matt or Chris, but anyway, he was quite a kicker. With one second left, he kicked a 50-yard field goal, Penn State wins 9-7.

Several years later the same clock operator was in our dressing room; I told him "you have got to be the most honest person in Raleigh." He laughed and said "Yeah, I went to church the next day and every member of my church just gave me hell."

Another locker room meeting; I had George Allen's first college game after he retired from the Redskins. The media was all over the dressing room. George loved it, but so did I!

Little incidents along the way serve as a reminder that while an official's wife and children might love you (at least, I hope so), there are fans who think you are a contemptible villain who has no morals or soul. One of my wife's favorite stories concerns Stuart Harris. I had a game at Virginia, and Mina was sitting by Stuart. Some UVA fans were giving me hell and Mina was cringing in her seat. Stuart looked at her and said "Mina, think about all the times you have been so mad at him, and now you have 40,000 people agreeing with you." This put

Mina's suffering in a broader perspective and I don't think Mina has ever quite felt the same about fan abuse of me.

Eric and his two boys, Rick and Bo, accompanied me and two of my sons, Sackett and Bunny, to a game at Duke. I believe Duke was playing Georgia Tech. Eric tells the story. It was late in the fourth quarter, the game had been decided, and our four young boys were not sitting still, and obviously had become a nuisance, and were annoying everyone. One irritated Duke fan turned to Eric and inquired "are all four of these boys your children?" Eric said, "Oh no," disavowing that he could possibly be responsible for all four of them, and said "two of them are the children of my friend, he is the referee." The fan looked at Eric in dismay and said, "I didn't know officials had any friends."

My first Bowl game pitted Boston College against Auburn in what is now known as the Citrus Bowl in Orlando, Florida. It was the early 80's. Before the game, one of the Auburn coaches came up to me as said, "we got the best running back in the United States." I said "Oh yeah, who is he?" The coach said, "Bo Jackson, watch him." The Boston College quarterback was Doug Flutie. Late in the game, Auburn lead Boston College by about 9 points with Boston College driving. With a 9-point lead, Boston College could not win the game. On the last play of the game, Flutie scored a touchdown making it a 3-point game. Even a two-point conversion would not win the game. So I told the teams that the game was over and there would be no try for the extra point and proceeded off the field. Flutie protested to one official, I believe Bill Jamerson, and said Boston College wanted to run the extra point, the only problem was four out of the six officials had left the field. I was climbing into the van, the radio was on and I heard the announcer say, "and Boston College is lining up for the extra point..." I said oh my God,

Boston College is going to run the extra point without all the officials. I tried to get back on the field, but it was too late; Boston College ran the extra point, made it, with only two officials on the field, Bill Jamerson and Dr. James I. Bud Robertson. You might recognize the name James I. Bud Robertson, he is the famous civil war historian who has been a speaker at one of our annual meetings.

Coaches can display humor during the midst of impending disaster. John Robinson was coaching Southern California against Texas A&M in a bowl game. Texas A&M had a back, I don't remember his name, who was running wild. It was reported to me by one of the officials, who was working on Robinson's sideline, that Robinson yelled after a long touchdown run by this back, "hey ref, we're gonna kill that sonofabitch." And the official said "oh, yeah?" and Robinson said, "yeah, we're gonna let him run himself to death."

Sometimes the officials can even get in a jab at the coaches, even though it is not a particularly good idea to talk back to a coach when he is foaming at the mouth. My good friend, Courtney Mauzy, (remember he got me into this) was working a Wake Forest game; the Wake coach vigorously disagreed with a call made by Courtney. He yelled at Courtney a phrase that many officials have heard many times, "Ref, that is the worst call I have ever heard." Courtney, without hesitating, turned to him and said, "coach, you're lucky because it's not the worst call I've ever made."

Another one of my favorite retorts by an official to Coach came from the mouth of the biggest mouth ever to officiate: Lou Belle. Some of you might remember him as a basketball official, but he was also a football official. It was late in a game at Clemson with the colorful Frank Howard at the helm. Clemson was getting beat, and Howard had had enough of Bello -

a showboat official. After the opponents had scored, Howard snorted at Bellow as he walked by the Clemson bench, taking the ball to the 40 yard line for the kickout; "Bello take that ball and stick it up your ass." Without blinking, in a rapid reply, Bellow asked Howard, "Coach, do you mind if I deflate it first."

Speaking of Wake Forest. Dr. Bill Cook, Wake's most loyal devoted fan, has never failed to exude fervent enthusiasm, maybe at times outrageous, in support of his demon deacon. An example: I had worked a Wake game with Auburn in Winston-Salem. Wake was behind 36-10 at half, but won the game 42-39. The fans were manic, utter hysteria. Paul and Libby Fitzgerald, with Mina, had come to the game and I was to meet them in the parking lot after the game. When I caught up with them after the game they were tailgating with Bill. Bill saw me coming; I could have avoided a Mac truck easier than I could have avoided Bill. "Robin" he gushed, "won't this the greatest game you have ever officiated." I said, "Bill, it was a great game." Bill continued, "Robin, isn't this the greatest team you have ever seen." "Bill, you have a good team, played really great." "Robin, don't we have the best coach." "Yes, Bill, your coach did a good job." "Robin, isn't this the best stadium in the ACC." Well, Wake has the smallest stadium in the ACC, but I responded "Bill, you have a nice stadium." Bill continued, still absolutely unable to contain himself. "Robin, don't we have the best parking lot in the ACC. I had now heard it all. Best game, team, stadium, coach, but Bill's unbridled enthusiasm for all of these and the parking lot too. It's got to be a first.

I am often asked about the players. It is very difficult for me to evaluate any player, other than a quarterback, a back, or a defensive end. During a game, a referee stays focused on the quarterback throughout the play. I should never see a pass completed or I never follow a

runner after he breaks through the line of scrimmage. I do see defensive ends whose main job is to harass and/or devastate a quarterback.

I have seen many good quarterbacks: Dan Marino, Flutie, Ben Bennett at Duke, but I think the best was Vinnie Testaverti who played at Miami under Jimmy Johnson. The game was Miami versus Maryland. It was a real grudge match; and the game was played in Baltimore County Stadium. You might remember the game the year before. Maryland, under Bobby Ross, was 30 points down at half-time to Miami, and came back to win the game by three points. Miami was out for blood. In my opinion, Jimmy Johnson's coaching methods encourage intimidation. At the coin toss to start the game, I said, "Gentlemen, shake hands." Miami's players looked the Maryland captains straight in the eye, did not extend their hands and said, "We're going to get you sonofabitches." I thought to myself, oh my God, what am I in for?

In any event, Testaverti had a magnificent game; he could throw long; he could throw short with touch, and he was big and strong. He has turned out to be a good pro-quarterback, but has never gained the star qualities that it seemed to me he had because of his physical talents.

By far, the best defensive player I ever saw on the field was Lawrence Taylor. He brutalized offensive linemen who tried to block him and murdered quarterbacks. The game I remember the best was NC State at Carolina during Carolina's winning years under Coach Crum. Play after play, Taylor chased, harassed, and demolished a little scatback type quarterback for NC State. State's problem was, while its quarterback was fast and quick, Lawrence Taylor, at 6'5", 250, was quicker and faster. It was no contest. Taylor dominated the State's quarterback, and UNC easily won the game.

After my game last Thursday, Clemson - Virginia Tech, I must add Corey Moore to my list. He is not big, but he is fast, really quick, and has great instincts for where to find the quarterback and/or the ball. In my judgment, he was personally responsible for Virginia Tech holding on to beat Clemson.

Before this season, my list of great running backs would include Famous Amos of UNC, Mike Rozier of Nebraska, Kelvin Bryant of UNC, Tiki Barbor of UVA. I will add Thomas Jones of UVA. He has all the moves and speed. Not great size, but plenty of strength and agility.

My most infamous game, some of you may have seen it on television, involved Maryland at Clemson. Maryland, coached by Bobby Ross, a fierce competitor, was in first place in the Atlantic Coast Conference standings coming into the last game of the year. All Maryland had to do to clench the conference championship was tie Clemson at Clemson, coached by one of my favorite coaches, Danny Ford. Clemson played inspired ball, urged on by their 80,000 screaming fans, the orange globs. There was a fight in the second quarter where we ejected a player from Maryland and a player from Clemson. You may not realize it, but this is very unusual in today's climate. The coaches do a very good job at disciplining their players because it is too costly to a team for a player to be disqualified for fighting. Under present rules, two disqualifications and a player is disqualified for the remainder of the season.

Clemson led the whole game; it appeared they were going to upset Maryland. With four minutes to go, Clemson led by 7 points. Maryland started a drive in its own territory, and with under 2 minutes remaining, Maryland was at the Clemson 2 yard line. Maryland was late getting out of the huddle, and I thought to myself, my gosh, Maryland is not going to get the play off in 25 seconds. However, the field judge, who has responsibility for the 25-second clock, let the

play go. It was "very close" to delay the game. The Maryland back threw the ball into the end zone; a big end by the name of Ferrell Edmunds, a native of Danville, who later went on to play with the Miami Dolphins, caught the ball with one foot in the end zone and as his other foot came up, his knee hit the ball and the ball popped out of his hands into the air and fell to the ground. I looked up and my good buddies, Bill Jamerson and Bud Robertson, had both signaled touchdown. Maryland was within one point of Clemson; the orange blob got nasty. Debris rained down from the stands to the stadium grass. But the worst was yet to come. The score, Clemson 28-Maryland 27. There was no question what Maryland would do, all they needed was one point and Maryland had the conference championship. They kicked the extra point, 28-28, and the game apparently was a tie. Two sisters had kissed. (I wished).

Clemson had one last shot to win the game, but with no passing attack, they did not make a first down and had to punt to Maryland with about 30 seconds to go. Maryland got the ball with under 30 seconds to go. They ran a couple of plays and then on third down, the Maryland quarterback heaved a long pass down field and Edmunds caught it inside the Clemson 10-yard line with under 10 seconds remaining. Clemson ran one play and called time-out. Maryland kicked a field goal to go ahead 31-28. Unfortunately, there was still a couple of seconds left on the clock. At that time all of the officials huddled at the goal line after a score. We were sitting ducks for Danny Ford. I looked up and there was Danny, up in my face, screaming . . . out of control, raising hell. I said, "Danny, it's been a tough game, get off the field." That was like pouring extra fuel on the fire. My side official, a man named Jimmy Knight, many of you may recall Jimmy was the official who had a heart attack on the field at the Virginia-Clemson game, escorted Danny off the side lines. We penalized Clemson 15 yards, but we had to have one more

play, a kick-off. Maryland kicked-off, a Clemson back caught the ball and was run out of bounds on the Clemson sideline. With time expired, the benches emptied from both sides and all hell broke loose. My first thought was to try to break up the melee, but I soon realized that there was no way I was going to break up a free-for-all. The Maryland players had poured over to the Clemson side, the Clemson players and Maryland players were swinging helmets, shoving, swinging, and swearing, I realized then that my poor, scrawny body was in jeopardy. The fans streamed down on the field, mad as hell. They weren't going to take it any more. Clemson security came to our rescue. They cordoned us off, took us to the dressing room, waited for us to dress, escorted us to the police station, where we stayed approximately one hour, and then escorted us out of town. My wife later told me that when she saw me disappear in a sea of humanity, she wasn't sure whether she would ever see me again. I said, "Oh, don't worry, the ACC would have a memorial plaque for me in the Clemson Stadium if they had killed me."

So, maybe it is a case of arrested development, but over the last 37 years it has been a great experience, lots of challenges, and I have made a lot friends. We have shared a lot of experiences. We care for each other, not just on the football field, but in life's experiences. I have gotten to meet many fine football coaches and athletic directors.

It is said that officiating is the only occupation where you must be perfect to start your career and then show steady improvement. So, after 37 years, after officiating over 500 games on all levels, I'm still striving to show steady improvement. After all, it is the only thing you can do to overcome a case of arrested development.