



OPINION

NCAA REFS SHOULD GET PENALIZED

By Ahmed Basheir

Over the past couple of weekends in college football, there have been calls by the officials that were honestly mind-boggling. The worst is happening in Iowa City, but I will get to that in a minute. It is time that refs be held accountable!

In the Pitt vs Wake Forest game, Pitt's quarterback Christian Veilleux was clearly able to get past the first down marker using his feet; but because he started his slide a half yard before the first down marker, he was ruled down. What was a threatening spot where Pitt could have scored, Pitt had to punt the ball and eventually lost by way of a game winning-touchdown to Wake Forest. It also didn't help Pitt fans that a couple of hours later, the Florida State quarterback, Jordan Travis, clearly started his slide about two yards before the first down marker, but they ended up giving him the first down. On the same day, late in the fourth quarter of the Arizona State game, the Sun Devils went on to lose due to a questionable pass interference call.

While all three of those calls were definitely poor, the worst call by far happened right here, in Iowa City. Going into the Iowa vs Minnesota game, Iowa was ranked 24th in the country holding a record of 6-1. With five very winnable games, the Hawkeyes were projected to finish the year off 11-1, winning the Big Ten West, which would have sent them to the Big Ten Championship, and would have definitely set them up for a chance in the College Football playoffs.

As the Hawkeyes were down 12-10, with just over a minute to go in the game, they would get one more chance to win. When the Hawkeyes needed a big play, Cooper DeJean delivered on a punt return with the most electric play of his entire

career, taking the ball back for a touchdown, which for the moment seemed like Iowa was going to win the game. The referees ended up going back to review if he had stepped out of bounds on the return, but came to the conclusion that Cooper had an invalid fair catch.

"Apparently the fair catch was so unbelievably obvious that the refs on the field didn't point it out, and the replay crew in the studio decided to point it out," Iowa Head Coach Kirk Ferentz said when asked about the call after the game.

While there are definitely plays that need to be reviewed, play reviews have gotten way out of hand. If it wasn't clear to the ref, who was standing a few feet away, that the flagged play was illegal, then it's too nitpicky, and the play doesn't need to be challenged.

I don't know what side of the table fans fall on, but I think that it is ridiculous how inconsistent the calls on the field are, especially in crucial moments that could define a team's whole season. And at some point, could it be justified that refs who unfairly flag these plays should be held accountable and receive some sort of fine or punishment? What should happen is that the NCAA should develop a system similar to the NBA, which would allow every single ref to get scored. This score would result in the importance of a game that the ref would be able to be a part of. For example a ref with a bad average grade shouldn't have any business being a ref in a big game with stakes for the rest of the season.

Art by Isabella Young

