

The Rice Baseball “Pine Tar” Incident
By 4-Year Rice Baseball Letterman **Carl Mikeska** (1982-83-84-85)
October 30, 2014

It was in Arkansas my junior year, so it would have been 1984.

Last game of the series – my swing felt slow so I switched to a lighter bat used by Kent Koppa, who was known for loading his bat every once in a while with tennis balls in practice. In those days, the bats had caps on the end and when the glue came loose, the caps could come off and show the hollow core of the bat. A couple of guys would experiment with ‘loading’ their bats in practice to see if it would give them more pop in their bat.

We were already ahead in the game when I came to bat. Not sure what the score was, but I hit a home run that put us further ahead. When I rounded the bases and got to home plate, I noticed the catcher was holding my bat. I went to grab it and he pulled it away. I thought, “Whatever” and went back to the dugout. Their coach came out and began to have a discussion with the umpire about the bat. I am watching this and thinking, “Uh-oh, what did Koppa do to that bat?” The umpire summons Coach Hall out to the plate and has a discussion as well. After quite awhile, the umpire raises his right hand, clenches his fist and calls me out. Sorry, no George Brett reaction followed as we really didn’t know the exact reason why I was called out.

Little did we know that prior to that year, the NCAA passed a new rule that required every bat to have a line that showed how far pine tar could go up the bat. Because the bat did not have the mark, it was an illegal bat. The funniest thing about that was that the bat didn’t have any pine tar on the bat at all. Arkansas had waited the entire series to use it when they felt that it would be to their advantage. I was out and the home run was taken away. We had to then take athletic tape and mark each bat for the rest of the series.

So, my “pine tar” incident really had no pine tar involved at all.