



“that’s what she said”

a ford & harrison blog about the popular television series “the office”

The Pack(er) is Back!

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Litigation Value: At the end of the day, shockingly little, given that it was a Packer-based episode.

So who has two thumbs and thinks Sabre/Dunder-Mifflin dodged a bullet after Todd Packer returned to The Office? This guy!

Tonight’s episode finds Michael’s BFF Packer looking to come in from the road and reclaim “his” desk (which has been Dwight’s desk for the past 10 years). We’ve seen Packer’s sophomoric antics before, and they have been fertile ground for potential employment liability. True to form, Packer pretends to hump Michael and Dwight as they crawl under Dwight’s desk, refers to his own daughter as a “bitch,” and makes jokes about Kevin’s weight and intelligence (certainly not the first Office dweller to do that). Things get so bad that Holly, who initially supported Packer’s reentry to the office, is forced to tell Michael what a jerk Packer is.

Packer is a throwback to the less enlightened days when cruel and insensitive jokes were more commonly accepted than they are today. If given the opportunity, I am certain that he would have kept Holly busy with complaints and investigations. Fortunately for her, Packer ends up leaving the office before things get out of hand

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(though I wonder what is going to happen when he gets to Tallahassee and finds out he doesn't have a job at corporate).

Ironically, Packer himself almost had several viable claims in this episode. If Dwight had succeeded in his efforts to give Packer a laxative-laced hot chocolate, Packer could have raised claims such as battery and infliction of emotional distress, even workers' comp (and who knows if Pennsylvania recognizes a right of action for victims of food adulteration). Moreover, because Dwight is a managerial employee, Packer could argue that his actions should be attributed to the company as well. Luckily for Dunder Mifflin, Packer refused to take the bait and Jim was able to redirect Dwight toward a less physically damaging course of action.

One thing I found interesting is how reasonable and mature Michael, of all people, was throughout most of this episode. Michael tries to quell the dispute brewing in the office by having Packer apologize to Kevin and urging the others to consider what they had in common with Packer. And at the end of the day, Michael is able to recognize Packer for the immature jerk he is. Juxtaposing Michael with Packer in this fashion shows just how far Michael has come over the years. Our baby bird is ready to spread his wings and fly.