

How to improve baseball. . .
by Prez Ro

MATTESON - When you think of baseball, you immediately think of warm weather, apple pie, statistics and tradition. Now those are the favorable thoughts that come to mind... on the other side of the plate, many people think of stubbornness, lack of parity, egoistic, vain, and boring. For as much progress as there has been in sports, there are still some old practices and notions that ought to be reexamined in Major League Baseball (MLB).

A major reason for the perception of this sport begins with consistency. Right now with almost 30 games into the season, you know the Yankees are going to be around for a playoff run, so will Boston in the American league. In the National league, Cardinals, Braves and maybe the Dodgers. But in short, many teams don't have a prayer, such as Royals, Nationals, Orioles, and even the beloved Cubs, to name a few, going down the stretch this fall. Needless to say some type of balanced payroll structure is required for starters.

Another situation that has been brewing for years is lack of marketing. The NFL and NBA have done a far better job in marketing their product. Both leagues have become more popular with youth as a result. Sometimes MLB almost seems to be against its fans - as in allowing games to be blacked out in markets hundreds of miles away from home team even when someone buys the "MLB Extra Innings" package.

Plus, the inability to arrive at games early to tailgate and/or to shag balls during batting practice is prohibited. This one seems like a no brainer. At most ballparks, the gates open for fans just in time for them to see the home team walk off the field after batting practice. Forget the extra cost of having ushers hang out for another hour or two. Let fans into the ballpark early enough to watch the home team taking batting practice. This leads right into a grass root issue when the MLB shuts organizations out by putting sanctions on recreation teams (i.e., Little Leagues) from using their likeness in tournament play... For instance, kids can not wear a Cubs hat or uniform nor can they be called that name during tournament play - [click here for more details on this...](#) Why? Kids do not understand merchandising or licensing, so why can't they imitate their favorite team and players? Go figure!

From these distractions, and arrogant practices, you have a trickledown effect on the sport of baseball where an entire generation will lose interest. The best example of this is when you don't see kids playing baseball (softball) in parks as they use to... I can clearly remember playing all types of baseball activities from sun up to sun down as a kid... from strike out to running bases to long-ball catch to collecting baseball cards.

Another key issue is the pace of the game which does not entertain this generation of multi-taskers. Today's youth seem to need constant entertainment, and the leisurely pace of baseball, with no time clock, or

maximum number of foul balls, does not fit the bill.

And finally, two words: Bud Selig! Perhaps the most short-sighted and worst commissioner baseball has ever had. He has single handily knocked baseball from its perched with no repercussion. Here are a few examples:

- * Congress during anti-trust exemption hearings in 2001 before being verbally body-slammed by Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura.*
- * Montreal is "the last residue of contraction"*
- * Declaring the All Star game a tie; subsequently awarding the winner home field advantage in the World Series.*
- * Claimed he wasn't aware of rampant steroid use in baseball; before BALCO.*
- * Claimed he wasn't aware of rampant steroid use in baseball; after BALCO*
- * Continues to refer to current state of baseball as "A Renaissance"; World Series TV ratings hit a record low*

So Mr. Selig, we (Amateur Sports) prepared several questions we hope you can answer for us in order to improve your beloved sport:

Why is there a DH for the American League and not for the National League? Why not incorporate both?

Let me start by saying that I don't like seeing pitchers hit all that much either. We found that both leagues experimented with the rule in 1969, but only the American League decided to keep it. But again, why? Why not both sides? I understand the position that pitching wins games, but offense sells tickets; so if this is the case, why incorporate a DH for both leagues? Or, an additional thought, if the National League believes it's more in the spirit of the game for all players to play both in the field and at the plate then allow 10 players to bat, adding the DH plus the pitcher. And finally, I think it is important to note that there's no real evidence that the DH really increased overall offense. Only one DH has ever won the home run title and that was Jim Rice and only one DH has ever won the batting title (Edgar Martinez.).

Why do pitchers have to bat ninth?

Traditionally, in the National League, pitchers are recognized as the worst batters in the lineup... so managers put them at the bottom of the lineup.... I remember St. Louis Cardinals manager Tony LaRussa placed a pitcher in the eighth slot to see how he could improve his lineup. This roster maneuver never took off but many professional statisticians weighed in favor of this move because it could give a team something on the order of extra runs over the course of a season. This roster adjustment positions could come in handy late in the game when you are near the bottom of the lineup and you have a select of the eighth-ninth and first batter coming up, when in fact at the eighth spot you have a not so strong batter coming up first, forcing team to re-think strategy of getting the first batter out... See, the eighth spot is actually an ideal spot for a pitcher because it's more important to setup the top of the order with a bad hitter than a horrible one. Overall, I can see how allowing a pitcher to bat eighth outweighs the other way around.

In the All-star game, why not let position players pitch?

This is a good suggestion especially when you run out of pitchers in an all-star game full of your fans; why not let a left-fielder pitch to finish the game? You know fans would have lost their minds if during an all-star game, Derek Jeter takes the mound... come on, think a little outside of the box. Go back to the days of this particular event being about the fans and not about the extra check the players would receive as well as post-season home field advantage. Put the fans first at least once a season.

Why do managers wear uniforms?

According to baseball's rule (1.11(a)), all members of a team must wear a uniform. As straight-forward as this seems, it's actually created a philosophical divide. On one side are the managers who like wearing the same uniform as the players. On the other are a handful of managers who flout the rules and the growing number of comedians who find the tradition hilarious.

Research from the Hall of Fame, they believe that the last manager to wear a suit was Burt Shotton of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who last managed a game in 1950.

No other sport has this convention. Can you imagine if NBA coaches were forced to put on the long shorts and muscle shirts, exposing their bleach-white legs and spindly arms? What about NHL coaches put on cheap suits instead of donning the team's gear and doing pirouettes at center ice.

Along the lines of managers, why are coaches called managers?

We couldn't find an answer to this one.

Why not play all Saturday games during the day?

Here's something for purists, a step back in time to when baseball was played under the sun. It would be a great way to sell kids on the game as well as families...

Why not start playoff games earlier?

This is a no-brainer. It's nothing new, either, but baseball doesn't seem to care. A whole generation of kids hasn't been watching the playoffs and/or the World Series because the games aren't over until 1 a.m. especially on the east coast. So why would those kids be interested in baseball when they grow up if they don't get a chance to see a game in its entirety?

Why are baseball fields' different sizes?

When NBA teams visit, say, the United Center here in Chicago, they don't have to adjust to a hard court that is the width of 3 bowling lanes or slicked with Vaseline. Boxing matches aren't occasionally staged in an isosceles triangle ring. You don't see a hockey rink where boards behind a net are replaced by exposed brick and clematis vines. Decorate the stadium as you see fit but why are the dimensions different across the board?

Mr. Commissioner, these are some random thoughts we came up with but we believe they are essential to the forward performance of your organization moving forward. We look forward to your response.

In the meantime, do you have any additional thoughts on this topic? Please share them with us by on our facebook fan page - facebook.com/ASNN365.