

# A New System of Baseball Records

## *The Alleged Indifference of Baseball Players*

By A. C. HENDRICK

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I WISH to apologize to the readers of Baseball Magazine for side-tracking my regular stuff, but I could not resist the temptation to answer the critical attack on baseball and the players by the well-known scribe, Mr. Hugh Fullerton.

In the New York American of Monday, July 23rd, there appeared an article by Hugh Fullerton in which he claims that two ball games were tossed away because the managers had elected to allow a base on balls to the batsmen who might bring in the tying runs—and then further on, he argues that ball players are listless; that they think more of summer garden parties and auto rides than they do of baseball, etc.—and finally he ends up by sticking to his choice of the Chicago White Sox to win the American League pennant.

Why does Fullerton criticise the managers for walking the tying run? Why cannot managers be credited for trying a new stunt; in 98 games they may do the same old thing over and over again but in 2 games two managers elected to try something new; that they failed will convince these managers that the idea is no good, but then we will hear of this same play being pulled again and probably work out successfully—that's baseball.

Baseball is only 1/3 mechanical and 2/3 human. One third automatic the other two thirds of baseball is guided by human influence and the desire of the human element to try something new—to experiment.

Baseball is not played on a mechanical device, it is played on a green turf by human instruments—not a magnetic ball coerced to move along a given groove according to a method of attack and defense previously worked out by some baseball strategists for the amusement and entertainment of drawing-room fans; and there are no two games ever played alike.

Fullerton's accusation that the players are listless is based on very petty grounds, because a good many games have the same mechanical features and last about the same length of time but the other two-third features are absolutely and positively different every time. Some players hit the ball in the same general direction, but not always exactly in the same place—some change their pace, place and position every time at bat. Some batsmen will knock a certain pitchers' slants in one

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MR. HENDRICK, an expert statistician of many years' experience, has endeavored to analyze baseball records just as a life insurance company would analyze death risks. In short, by applying the intricate methods of the mathematician he has evolved a novel system of baseball statistics which several experts have pronounced the best ever. Mr. Hendrick will explain and illustrate his system in coming issues of the **BASEBALL MAGAZINE.**

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direction and another pitchers' offering in the opposite. Even the best automatic arrangement can be relied on to deliver the first years production standard for only a few successive years and then it goes to pieces and needs replacement; and then the standards are constantly being changed because of the human element in control of the automaton.

Two of the largest concerns in the world, one manufacturing razors and the other motorcycles, have tried and almost succeeded in making the manufacture of their product entirely automatic thereby to eliminate the human element and consequent human hazard—They are wonderful plants from a mechanical engineer's point of view, but from the insurance engineers point of view only near perfect, accidents still happen, the human element could not be changed with the machine and in the complete mechanical change that was registered at these plants, the nature of the accidents changed and are still what insurance engineers call inherent to the industry. This is the same in baseball a change of tactics may change results and because all the results do not come out as one figured they should, is no good or sufficient reason to call ball players listless.

Statistics well assembled, properly digested and comprehensively analyzed are only the history of past performance, but the only available aid and reliable means

whereon to base future promises of performance—Therefore the keener the experience and the more astute the common sense used in the application of this history the better the future expectations. This goes for insurance, racing and baseball because backing a ball club—a racing stable and a liability risk are analogous and it requires brains to juggle the law of averages so as to have it break better than fifty-fifty in one's favor. I say it is wrong to abuse your favorite or home ball club if they do not live up to last year's statistical performance—If the same personnel always met the same makeup in every game—same nine men confronting one another in the various series of games—same pitchers—same umpires—same spectators, then we might expect to have our baseball dope break 100% in our favor but not otherwise. Even the same spectators must be included here because they constitute a foreign but nevertheless a potent element in the game. Hey there; Daubie; some spectator bellows out, don't let that guy steal second; a foreign element is hereby injected and maybe, maybe not some heed was given to the spectators injected caution; the spectator saw the play from another angle, different from the player's angle; this constitutes still another element. The results cannot be the same—we don't want them to be the same, we want something new sprung on us, we want baseball. So why get excited if one man's dope is incorrect.

Ball players act, talk and think bass ball when on the field—after the game—supper, cabaret and a cool motor ride, this is human. So what's the use to get angry and call the ball players names, they, like us, do the best they can when they are at the game, and at other times they do the same as we do, find other diversions to strengthen and freshen their bodies and minds for tomorrow's grind. A player who plays ball from 7 A. M. to 7 P. M. is only a beginner and after he knows how and breaks into the big tent he sticks to the regular union hours, just as a baseball writer or a dock laborer.

The idea fostered by certain fains and writers of—"I'll bet you \$10.00 that Kalamazoo wins the pennant"—is all wrong when based on a statistical analysis  
(Continued on Page 530)

## A NEW SYSTEM OF BASEBALL RECORDS

*(Continued from Page 518)*

of last year's results because, the elements of chance are against it. I can see why an owner would back his ball club in any event whether it is a good, bad or indifferent aggregation of ball players, but I'd rather make and back a 125% book on the pennant outcome—collect the bets in the spring and the profits in the fall—a horse race is short—of less than 2 minutes in duration—a ball season is too long, the rainstorms and heat waves are too many to worry about the welfare of a bet on one of many teams subject to human recklessness and restlessness and change.

Racehorses think of the nearest way home to the feed box—a rank outsider probably wants it sooner than the rest of the bunch because he smelled a carrot in his feed before leaving the stall and if the boy on his back is alert to guide him successfully through the various openings he is going to make a short cut for home; this unknown may beat the bunch and incidentally a swell futurity candidate on whom a bunch of money was bet by the "wise ones" this is racing. Horses break a track record one day and stall off the next time out. Ball players do some phenomenal stunts on Wednesday and fail to produce before the Saturday crowd; the safest arranged munition plant blows up and the backwoods fire works shack does not feel a tremor when hit by lightning; this is just how things happen and it is the job of a statistician to figure and draw the line of the law of average over the given result and not to go crazy over the outcome or misapplication of his dope. If your curve is well defined and your deductions good, then you can figure the odds for or against a recurrence of the same event and in baseball every chance "against" is generally offset by some chance "for." If one overbalances the other than your equilibrium of 50/50 becomes lopsided and leans over. So why get excited and call players listless, they are ball players and we are spectators and the same divine element controls us all and

LA84  
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gives to some virtues and to others faults and then with a divine will alternates them just for the pleasure of mixing us up to make for divergence and to kill dullness and sameness.

A concert master gives us a "bum" performance because the oboe, flute and cornet failed to deliver—some rival put pebbles in their instruments and they couldn't give a wheeze to help the harmony, why should we be grouchy and call the players listless on account of some trick beyond their control. Douglas Fairbanks usually slides on his broncho as if he were lifted up by the seat of his breeches, at other times by way of diversion, he jumps into the saddle from a mountain top; who can tell what he will do next. Burglars will pass an unguarded mint to poison a dog and break into a house further up the street and find only a set of agate cook pots, foolish ball players—I mean burglars. A brand new fly wheel explodes in a carefully guarded plant and some old contraption held together with copper wire and condemned by the liability inspector will keep on at high speed and defy the law of centrifugals. A boiler explodes in a backwoods saw-mill and wipes a town off the map, another boiler lets go in a crowded section of a big city and passersby look around to see whose auto tire "busted." This is all the effect it has on their sensibilities. At the battlefield in Europe (another ballfield) one of the belligerents will suddenly launch an artillery attack that has been months and months in the planning and when it is all over the military observers figure out that 25% of the shells didn't hit their objective and another 25% didn't explode, the crack artillerists could not hit the biggest barn on the landscape, the shells were not calibrated straight that day, but a greenhorn war correspondent from the Calabash County Bugle who got permission to pull a string (so as to sense the smell of powder) gets a decoration for shooting into headquarters and knocking a piece of pumpnickel out of Hindenburg's hand. So why should we get "all let up" if one of our great ball machines goes to pieces when knocked to pieces by some permanently or temporarily better human machine.

In baseball, a manager may bench, sell or trade two or three of his supposedly worst players and find out too late that the whole machine is falling to pieces because he picked the wrong ones, which just goes to show, as is aptly stated on one of our pet wall mottoes—"Life (and baseball) is one damn thing after another". And the thicker it comes the more delighted is the analyst because he likes diversion and wants to get away from that same old sameness. It is the statistician's job to compile the figures but it is an analyst's job to dope out "the how" analyze "the Why" and figure the frequency or possible recurrence of peculiarities.

A baseball machine or a game goes to pieces for the simple but decisive reason that the human individuals—the elements who play the game and are part and parcel of the scheme, cannot play together efficiently forever; even the Lajoies and the Wagners are not young all the time and the time is coming when the Cobbs—the Speakers—the Chases, the McGraws and the Cravaths will go to pieces. Another reason for sudden slumps is the sudden injuries and the sudden collapses of good players and the necessary tedious delays to educate a man to fill a good player's shoes; so let's have a heart and be human—statisticians should even be human, analysts are.

The only thing in this life that remains the same are the mathematical symbols lent, their values and the contributing elements are ever changing. So Mr. Fullerton, don't pick on the ball players—it is hot this summer and was wetter this spring than last year. None of us can keep our youth and the only thing that dame tradition allows a ball player to take into retirement with him is an old ball, old glove, old bat, loving cups, a fishing outfit and a reputation, and the better the statistical analysis of the player's achievements the better the reputation of his prowess. So what's the use of kicking when, "the best laid plans of mice and men often go on a spree."

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