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A New Game: The 1990s Hitting Barrage

The purpose of this paper is to explain the hitting barrage of the late 1990s and perhaps examine other issues, such as the construction of “retroparks”, that indicate the coming into existence of a “new game”.

We begin by statistically verifying that there was a hitting barrage. Findings to date indicate that the strike-shortened 1994 season was a turning point. For the 1994-1999 seasons, there has been a decidedly larger quantity of runs per game, total bases per game, home runs per game, and home runs per at bat than in the preceding six seasons. We also examine variables that may explain the hitting barrage. These include, for example, the effects of the expansion of franchises and hence an alleged dilution of talent, the changing dimensions of ball parks, the influence of elevation on the number of home runs, technological and technical changes, and umpires’ putative reduction of the strike zone

Demonstrating that there was a hitting barrage in the late 1990s and accounting for it would mean that we have established an important body of evidence in support of the conclusion that a “new game” came into existence in the 1990s.