

JJMUNC II

MLB

Tim Parker Griffin Wallick

Co-Chair: griffin wallick

Co-Chair: Tim Parker

MLB Owners Meeting

The history of baseball has a unique beginning. It remains unclear who founded the game, as some insist that it was the creation of Abner Doubleday, a Civil War general, who invented the game in Cooperstown, New York. Though, others suggest that modern baseball was founded by a man named Alexander Cartwright, who was part of one of the founding teams, the New York Knickerbockers, as he wrote down the rules which were the basis to how the game is played today. The first ruling body of baseball was formed in 1858, under the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), which was made up of clubs within New York City, and grew rapidly after the Civil War to include about three hundred clubs by 1867. The first ballpark was the Brooklyn's Union Grounds, which gave way to baseball becoming a professional sport rather than an amateur league, as soon owners could charge admission to the stadium, allowing teams to be able to pay for professional players. By 1871, a new association was founded, entitled the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players (NAPBBP) or National Association (NA). The NA supported thirteen teams in 1875, but due to the increased presence and involvement of gamblers attending and betting on the games, the NA dissolved, and the National League was founded. The National League soon did not allow the owners to control the operations of the game, but instead the businessmen in charge of the league, setting prices, contracts, and other policies. Seeing the success of the National League, the American Association soon formed, competing financially by setting lower ticket prices and forming new teams. Soon, an

agreement was formed between the leagues, stating that each league would recognize the other league's players' contracts, and teams would be able to use a limited amount of reserve clauses, which, in essence, would prevent a player from signing with another team. Players started to form their own leagues in response to this agreement, but many of these leagues failed, due to lack of capital and revenue. After the collapse of the American Association, the American League was formed, bringing even more competition to the National League. Through the legal system, both leagues started to work together, and with the creation of more leagues, and more legal proceedings, baseball was declared exempt from the anti-trust laws.

Overtime, baseball has developed into the league it is today. Many of the issues in the game today are due to improvements in medicine and technology, allowing for quicker treatment from injuries, better clarity in making the correct call during gameplay, but also allowing for an increase in cheating and unfair practices which may hurt the sport. The most obvious of an increase in cheating as a result of improving medicine, is the use of steroids.

Drug Testing Policy

Over the past several decades, Major League Baseball has experienced a major increase in the number of players using steroids and other banned drugs to improve their performance. Most notably, the use of steroids has helped players increase their power, allowing for more and longer home runs. During the 1990's, most recognizably the 1998, a home-run chase developed, with players breaking home run records, including the long-standing single-season home run record, previously held by Roger Maris, when both Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire broke it the same season, and with McGwire surpassing it by nine home runs, finishing with a season total of seventy. Many argue that players who have been proven or admitted to taking steroids should not be allowed in the record books, or an asterisk put next to their

name. Performance enhancing drugs (PED's) have interfered with records, as from 1987-1996, only one player joined the "five hundred home run club," but from 1998-2010, ten players joined the club, including, Mark McGwire, Alex Rodriguez, Manny Ramirez, and Barry Bonds. Baseball and law enforcement took action in 2003, with the investigation of a firm, the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative (BALCO). The firm was suspected of supplying players with steroids, and players including Barry Bonds, Jason Giambi, and Gary Sheffield, were subpoenaed and gave testimony in front of a grand jury. While some players admitted to using PED's, others did not, but none of the players that testified were charge with any crime, except Barry Bonds in a different case relating to the BALCO investigation for obstruction of justice. Though, Major League Baseball took little action against the players involved, since none had ever tested positive for any banned drug in the MLB, and PED testing began league-wide in 2003. Though, the agreement between the MLB and MLB players union (MLBPA) was that no player could be suspended that season, and testing would end if fewer than 2.5 percent of the players tested positive two seasons in a row or mandatory testing and punishments would be set if more than five percent of the players tested positive. More than five percent of the players did test positive, and mandatory testing began along with set punishments in 2004. In 2006, Senator George Mitchell headed an investigation into steroid use within Major League Baseball. He stated that eighty-nine players from 2002 until the conclusion of the investigation may be connected to the use of the steroids, though almost all of the players did not fully cooperate with the investigation. The MLB started to set and increase punishments and awareness of steroid use after the Mitchell report, from a first offense as a suspension of ten games, until what the policy is now—eighty games for a first offense, one hundred sixty-two for a second, and a lifetime ban from the MLB for a third offense. A minimum of two urine tests per player will be conducted through the course of a season and a random blood test during spring training, among other testing.

Possible Solutions

While it may seem that Major League Baseball has been taking action against steroid use, it is important to realize that players still take part in using banned substances. As recent as 2013, a major steroid scandal, the Biogenesis Clinic, has greatly affected baseball. As a result of the scandal, thirteen players were suspended, most notably, Alex Rodriguez, who was suspended for an entire season. Though, other factors come into play with suspending players, including financial aspects and contracts, as Rodriguez has argued that he should be awarded the six million dollar bonus in his contract because he tied Willie Mays' home run mark, 660, while the Yankees maintain the position that he is no longer marketable, based on the wording of the contract. Owners must be aware of the consequences of possible solutions presented. If the number of games for each offense is increased, some of baseball's stars may bring even worse publicity to the sport, and stars may lose their marketing purposes. If players, who are proven to have taken steroids, are allowed to have their numbers stand without interference in the record books, would there be a way to distinguish between those who used no PED's versus those who did? Though, is it fair if a player used PED's for a portion of his career, and all of his statistics were marked or "erased" due to PED use, or should be a way to separate the statistics that would fall under PED use and without the use of PED's? If there was an increase in testing, would this just lead to an increase in undetectable substances, but if there was a reduction in testing, would it lead to a league-wide use of PED's similar to the 1980's and 1990's seasons. Some may argue that the testing policy should remain the same as it is now, though, it has been seen that players still use PED's under the current testing policy. Should the MLB have an independent source investigate every few years for steroid use within the league, or would the financial costs be too much, and could it lead to further bad publicity for the league? Also, should steroids be allowed in the league, as it may lead to more offense, and greater fan attendance? It is important for owners to understand why steroid and substance use within the MLB is prevalent, including the financial reasons for taking steroids, along with the financial aspects of testing, hiring independent sources, and hiring arbitration and lawyers for each appeal.

There are many possible solutions for the ongoing drug testing and surrounding issues, and owners are encouraged to formulate the best possible solution for the MLB and their team, along with deciding the fate of MLB policy surrounding the issue, and hall of fame and record opportunities for players associated with steroid and substance use, including Barry Bonds, Jose Canseco, Alex Rodriguez, and others.

Speed of the Game

The 2014 season was one of the slowest seasons ever—the average time per game was three hours and two minutes. The average time per game has grown consistently over the past several years, to over three hours, a large difference from the 1981, reported by ESPN, for a game to be an average of two hours thirty-three minutes. Many factors have contributed to the reduction in game speed, including different strategy in the game than before, using pitchers for specific situations, national television purposes, and longer time between pitches. The average number of pitches thrown per at-bat has increased over the last few years and time between pitches has increased from 21.5 seconds from 2008-2011, to about twenty-three seconds in 2014. Though, Major League Baseball has taken action, implementing new rules before the 2015 season; having managers stay in the dugout during replay challenges, batters keeping a foot within the batter's box during an at-bat, limited commercials between innings, and pitching changes will be timed. MLB has experimented with a pitching clock, though it is currently not used in the MLB. Fines are to be given if a player or coach is considered a “flagrant violator,” and fines can be issued up to five hundred dollars. Early indication has shown that the new pace-of-play rules have made an impact and games are a little shorter than 2014 this season.

Possible Solutions

While Major League Baseball has taken action to fix the ongoing pace-of-play issue, other solutions can be enacted to further fix the issue. Some may argue that a pitch clock should be used between pitches, while others maintain that a pitch clock would destroy the traditional aspect of

baseball not having any clock to regulate the game, especially since there is already a rule stating a pitcher has twelve seconds to throw after receiving the ball if no runners are on base. But, if a pitch clock is introduced, how much time should be given in between pitches? Another idea to consider is setting a minimum number of batters a pitcher must throw to before he can be taken out of the game. Others may argue to retract the newly implemented rules and let the players and coaches govern their own pace-of-play, allowing for the most comfortable feel of throwing and hitting pitchers and batters are accustomed to, possibly leading to higher performance. While there are many different routes owners can take in addressing the issue, it is important to remember that a major factor in lack of attendance to the games and decrease in viewership on television is due to the increased length of games over the past several seasons.

Differences between the American League and National League

The major difference between the American League and National



League revolves around the use of a designated hitter (DH). The American League has allowed the use of a DH since the 1970's, while the National League maintains that the pitcher must hit. This debate has been

present since the late 1800's, when the co-owner of the Pirates brought up the idea for a player to hit for the pitcher, and, though the idea was rejected in by the National League, the debate continued. In 2014, designated hitters in the American League hit a .249 average, just two points less than the average for National League second basemen. Meanwhile, pitchers in the National League hit a .124 average. Another issue regarding the DH

surrounds around the possibility of injury while hitting or running for a pitcher. In 2008, a rising pitcher for the New York Yankees, Chien-Ming Wang, was injured running around the bases during an inter-league game in Houston. This infuriated the Steinbrenner's and worried front offices within the American League when their teams played interleague games in National League parks.

Possible Solutions

The new commissioner, Rob Manfred, has expressed his concern with the lack of scoring and periods of little action during games. The installment of a designated hitter in the National League would bring uniformity to both leagues and may help solve these problems, and therefore, increase fan opinion of the game. Though, baseball traditionalists argue that the pitcher has always hit since the beginning of baseball in the National League, and there is no reason to change. With the pitcher hitting, managers must act in strategic ways, having to account for when, or if, a pitcher should be pinch-hit for based on his hitting performance and also the upcoming hitters for the opposing team, during a certain situation in the game. Also, the sacrifice bunt is more prevalent among pitchers hitting, as forty two percent of all sacrifice bunts in the MLB in 2014 were by pitchers. This strategy revolves around the "small game" strategy—smart base running, stealing bases, and moving runners over—while the American League has traditionally focused on using power to score runs with the DH in the lineup. Owners have the ability to determine if the designated hitter should be used in both leagues, removed altogether, or kept the way as the rules stand now.

Replay System

The replay system was introduced in 2008 in order to save time and to make sure calls are correct. A challenge by a manager to review a call may lead to the call being upheld or overturned. Though, each manager is allowed one challenge per game, except during the All-Star Game and postseason, and if his challenge results in the call being overturned, the

manager is able to keep his challenge to use again, until a call is upheld, which then results in the manager losing the privilege to challenge a call. The crew chief is always allowed to use the replay review on home run calls during a game or any reviewable call after the seventh inning. But, not all plays are reviewable, only possible home run calls, fair or foul balls in past the umpire, force and/or tag plays made by fielders, if a fielder made a catch in the outfield, calls regarding base running, if a batter was hit by a pitch, collisions between a base runner and a catcher, and tag ups. Under many of these reviewable calls are sub-sections stating the umpire has discretion to initiate replay review or in certain situations, replay review is not allowed. By September 7th of 2014, forty-seven percent of all reviewed calls resulted in the play being overturned, and a majority of the challenges were initiated by managers rather than the umpires. By near the end of the 2014 season, the average reviewed play took one minute and forty-eight seconds.

Possible Solutions

Owners may decide that the current system has worked effectively in the MLB and no revisions should be made. Though, others may state that additional plays should be reviewable, including called balls and strikes. This would ensure that every call is correct on the field, and no team could blame the umpires for a “blown call,” which may result in loss. Maintaining replay in the game would also keep baseball similar to other major sports that allow replay, such as football and hockey. But, some traditionalists may argue to withdraw replay review altogether, and allow calls made by the umpires to be the final decision. This may also bring back managers arguing with the umpires, gaining greater interest among the fans, to see managers stand loyal to their teams and players, even though it may result in their own ejection. Owners must decide if replay should be allowed, and if it is allowed, what is reviewable, and how managers and officials should challenge calls made on the field.

Salary Cap

Three of the four major sports leagues in the United States have some form of a salary cap. The only league that does not is Major League Baseball. The MLB has in place a luxury tax, for if any team exceeds a payroll of one hundred



eighty-nine million dollars for both 2015 and 2016, the team would have to pay an additional tax. The current luxury tax system for the MLB began in 2003, and is in place to deter teams from excessive spending that may lead to an unfair advantage. Though, by the end of 2013, only the Boston Red Sox, New York Yankees, Detroit Tigers, Anaheim Angels, and Los Angeles Dodgers have ever exceeded the threshold. Though, no team more than the Yankees have exceeded the threshold, as the Yankees have paid a tax every year since it began. For every year a team exceeds the one hundred eighty-nine million dollar threshold, the tax increases. Since the Yankees have continuously spent above that amount each year, they are paying a fifty percent tax on the exceeding amount. Though, if a team exceeds it one year, and then is under the threshold the next season, the tax rate is restarted for the team, and if they were to exceed the threshold the following year, they would only pay the base 17.5 percent tax rate. Other major sports leagues, such as the NFL, have a hard cap, meaning that no team can exceed a certain payroll. The NBA has a soft cap on payroll, which allows certain exceptions to go over a certain amount, but a hard cap on player salaries.

Possible Solutions

Many fans and owners are pushing for some type of salary cap to be put in place in the MLB. Owners can decide if they want to follow a similar

format to that of the NFL, enacting a hard cap put on payrolls for all teams, or a format similar to that of the NBA, with a soft cap on payrolls, which allow some exceptions. Though, other owners may want to keep the system as is, as they may point out that the luxury tax has worked effectively, maintaining a balance within the league. In fact, teams with some of the lowest salaries in all of the MLB, the Oakland Athletics and the Kansas City Royals, have recently been in playoff and World Series contention, while teams with some of the highest payrolls, such as the New York Yankees, have not made the playoffs. Since 2003, seven different teams have won the World Series, indicating a balance of play with the luxury tax. Another possibility for owners is to abolish the luxury tax and to let the free market rule free agency and player salaries. Owners must decide what is best for their team and for the league as a whole.

Guaranteed Contracts

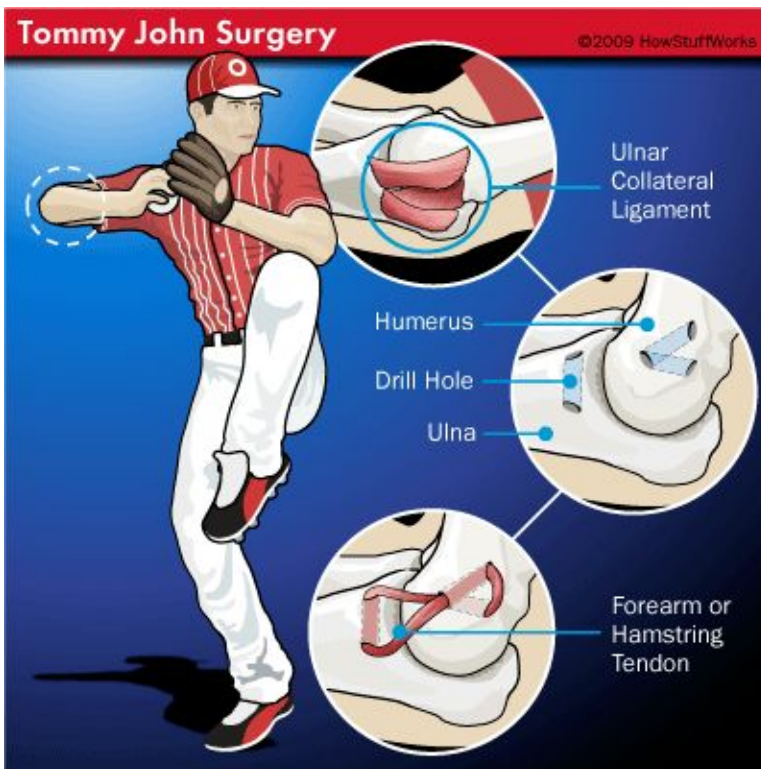
The MLB along with the NBA a players contract is fully guaranteed for its entire duration. It has been debated if this is the way that the MLB should continue or if they should change it to a system similar to the NFL's. This is because players are still paid the full amount if they are injured or if the team drops them. Section C in guarantee language there is a conversion to a non-guaranteed contract clause that originated in the 1980s. This was during the cocaine heyday as an out for teams. Three that have been used are the Colorado Rockies with Denny Neagle after a second DUI arrest. Another time that it was used was when the Mets tried to do the same with Francisco Rodriguez after he tore a ligament while trying to punch his girlfriend's father. All of these cases were settled for about 90 cents to each dollar owed.

This would benefit all teams in major league baseball. It would make teams more likely to sign players to long-term contracts. This can be seen with the Detroit Tigers when Justin Verlander signed a 180 million dollar contract from 2013-2019. Since then Verlander has 27 wins and an ERA of 4.72. This is the largest contract by a pitcher. This could be changed to be similar to the NFL in which players have a guaranteed amount and other money is

based off of bonuses. This allows the guaranteed part of a players contract be smaller so if a team cuts the player then they don't have to pay that player the full amount.

Health Concerns

Baseball players can face many serious injuries such as torn ligaments,



<http://health.howstuffworks.com/medicine/modern-technology/surgery-change-baseball1.htm>

broken bones, and injuries to the shoulder and elbow. The topic of Tommy John surgery has become more important because more players need to have the surgery. This is mostly seen in pitchers. This occurs when pitchers are over used. Tommy John surgery is a surgical graft procedure in which the ulnar collateral ligament in the medial elbow is replaced with a tendon from elsewhere in the body. Sometimes the tendon will be taken from the non-pitching arm. The surgery

has an 85-92% success rate. The surgery has been used on many pitchers including Mat Harvey, Adam Wainwright, and Hall of Fame inductee John Smoltz. But the surgery is becoming more common in younger pitchers and there are even misconceptions that when pitchers come back they can throw harder. This has parents asking doctors to perform the surgery on their un-injured sons hoping that it would increase their performance. In 2013 25 pitchers, in 2014 there were 29 surgeries, and in 2015 there has already been

18 surgeries in less than half a year of baseball. Teams with younger pitchers would want a rule in which pitchers have a pitch limit in the year or even a pitch limit in a game. A pitch limit in a game could be 120 pitches for starting pitchers but be less for relief pitchers. This would help teams with young rotation because they already have pitch limits their pitchers so a pitch limit on the other team would make it fair for all teams and it would keep pitchers healthy.

Other issues that have occurred are players running over catchers or catchers blocking the plate. Both of these have been banned but it can be changed. Baseball is a low contact sport and this was the only collision that occurred. Players would try to run over catchers so that the catchers would drop the ball so they would not be out. But new rules prevent this from happening. Even though home plate collisions were unlikely and injuries were rare. A change would benefit fans and due to the lack of injuries it would not greatly affect players but teams with good catchers would not want to change the rule.

A recent study examines mortality rate of baseball and football players who played for at least 5 seasons from 1959-1988. Out of 3,088 ex-football players 12.8% have died. While out of 1,494 baseball players the death rate is 15.9%. This is strange because baseball players unlike football players are unlikely to get concussion and suffer from brain trauma. Football players get hit more times in a game and as a result their careers are usually much shorter than that of a baseball player. But the *Journal of the American Association* found that about 0.2% of NFL athletes smoke compared to the MLB where 36% are regular users of chewing tobacco. This results in baseball players having high blood pressure than football players who are half as likely to have high blood pressure even though players in the NFL are much larger in size. The MLB can ban chewing tobacco. They have tried before but it didn't work.

Expansion

There are many different markets for a baseball team in different states and countries. New Jersey and Montreal. New Jersey has different minor league teams and a large TV market. It would also make it so New Jersey natives wouldn't have to go to New York to see a major league baseball



<http://www.impactmontreal.com/en/image/olympic-stadium>

game. But there are problems with indemnity payments to the Mets and the Yankees that would be billions of dollars. Montreal previously had a baseball team but they moved to Washington and became the Nationals. Unfortunately Olympic Stadium where the Montreal Expos used to play is only a temporary site that could be used by a team. There is still about 4 million people in Montreal and has a good TV market.

The two teams with stadium issues that might consider a move is the Oakland Athletics and the Tampa Bay Rays. There is not a large market for the A's in Oakland and they close off the upper deck during home games. There would be more interest for a team in San Jose as they already have two top league sport teams with the San Jose Sharks and the San Francisco 49ers. As for Tampa Bay they have a hideous stadium and could find a larger market in other areas in Florida such as Orlando or Jacksonville.

Restructuring the Season

Major league baseball has 30 teams and 162 games. Because of that teams don't play each other equal amount of times, unlike in soccer where teams play each team twice, once at home and once away. The NFL has it so each team play their own division twice, they then play three teams in their same conference that finished in the same spots in their own division. Teams then play 4 teams from a division in their own conference and a division from the other conference. It would be difficult to restructure the regular season because it is so long so the best option is to leave it as it is.

What can be done is restructuring the playoffs. In basketball and hockey half of the teams in the league makes the playoffs. More teams could be added to the playoffs. Since the wild card game has been introduced half of the teams who have won the game have advanced to at least the Championship series winning the division series. Teams could be added and the wild card game could become a wild card series that would give division winners more time to rest.

Impact of Network Contracts

Many games are played in primetime and teams can make a lot of money for playing in these games. That is why the games should be organized so teams equally have a chance to play in primetime games. This makes it so teams that are not as good still make the same amount of money as the good teams for playing in primetime games. This would also benefit the fans because channels such as ESPN have the right to choose any game for their Sunday Night Baseball. Because of that the time of the games can be changed that day. This anger fans because it can be difficult for fans to attend game so when they have to work the next day and they were planning on the game being at a different time. It could also be discussed if a new deal with cable companies could be made that would make the league more money.

Way to Increase Attendance

The MLB has suffered for a while with attendance at MLB games. The attendance has been lacking and that can be blamed on game speeds, price of tickets, dull fan base and that with no salary cap the gap between the good teams and the bad teams is very large. This season 16 teams average less than 70% of their attendance. And this means tickets sold so there are actually less people actually at the game. While in 2010 Minnesota, Philadelphia, and Boston had attendance over 100%. But there hasn't been a team with an attendance of at least 100% since 2012. Owners need to find a quick and long-term solution that could benefit the league.

Some solutions are Lower all prices because tickets are too expensive, have more stadium giveaways, add more teams to the playoffs, install a salary cap so there's less of a gap between the good and bad teams. Replacing old stadiums will give fans a nicer ballpark experience; give tickets to the less fortunate. This is already in place in some MLB stadiums where tickets are given to an athlete's organization then distributed to people. Also if teams had fan groups like those in European soccer then fans would have a more enjoyable time. And my personal favorite is to add cheerleaders. Cheerleaders have been used in football, basketball, and even hockey in Russia. This would benefit all fans. There would need to be other long term solutions that need to be added to increase attendance.

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