

BETTOR UP! IT'S BASEBALL SEASON!

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By Paul Mrocza

Are you ready for some baseball? Some baseball, you said! It's a 7-month, 162-game season, which means there's plenty of opportunity to place your wagers. In fact, from April 4th through October there's rarely a day on the calendar that doesn't have at least a few MLB games.

Along with the large volume of games, there comes a variety of betting choices. Basic bets include the money line, run line and over/under, while numerous propositions are also offered. As with any other type of sportsbook wagering, many of these bets can be parlayed in an attempt to increase your return.

MONEY LINE:

The most common baseball wager is the money line. A typical money line for baseball would look like this:

Florida Marlins D. Willis +120
New York Mets T. Glavine -130

The top team is the away team. Next to each team the scheduled starting pitcher is listed. The plus symbol in front of the number indicates this team is the underdog, while the minus symbol denotes the favorite. The home team in a wager is always listed below or last, unless otherwise noted.

With the money line above, for every \$10 you wager on the Marlins, if they win, you'd get \$12 plus your original wager of \$10 for a total return of \$22. In putting money on the Mets, you would have to wager \$13 to win \$10 for a total return of \$23. In wagering on baseball, for the bet to have action the starting pitchers listed must start the game, otherwise all bets are off and returned.

RUN LINE:

The run line combines the money line with a point spread, which is usually set at 1 ½ runs. Point spreads are used to even the playing field and to make wagering just a bit trickier. The run line also

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incorporates the money line, which means the payoff varies according to the line. The money line has changed due to the point spread, but the point spread is what counts here, making the Mets the favored club. A typical run line for the game between Florida and NY would be:

Florida Marlins +1 ½ -190
New York Mets -1 ½ +165

This means if you put money on Florida, they can lose by a run and you still win. The bookmaker has spotted Florida one-and-a-half runs. If you place a wager on the Mets, they'll have to win by 2 runs in order for you to collect. If the final score is Florida 3, New York 4, those who placed cash on the Marlins win. Mets' bettors are left needing another run for their team to win and to get a return on their investment.

However, note how the point spread changes the money line. With the run line you must wager \$19 to win \$10 and get a total return of \$29 on Florida. In betting the Mets, a \$10 bet will yield \$16 and a return of \$26. By favoring one team over the other with the point spread, you now have to wager more to get a return on the underdog and less to receive money on the favorite.

OVER/UNDER:

The over/under bet is based on the number of runs both teams will score in one game. The over/under on the Marlins and Mets might be listed as 7 ½. If you bet the over on this contest that means you're putting cash on the chance that more than seven runs will be scored by both teams. Placing money on the under will only result in a payoff if the total runs scored totals less than 7. The payoff is indicated by yet another money line. Along with analyzing each team's offense, bookmakers consider the pitchers involved. With Dontrelle Willis (LHP) on the mound for the Marlins and Tom Glavine (LHP) taking the ball for the Mets, the over might be -110 and the under +120. In this scenario, the expected result is under 6 runs. Winning on the under with a \$12 bet will increase your cash by \$10 for a total return of \$22, while hitting on the over with a \$10 wager, you'll win \$11 for a return of \$21.

Usually with any baseball wager the following rules apply:

- * The starting pitchers who are listed must start the game or there is no action.
- * The game must go nine innings (or 8 ½ if the home team is ahead) or there is no action.

When putting together all the online betting options on this game, you'll usually see something like this:

6:05 pm Pitchers RunLine Total MoneyLn
959 Florida Marlins D. Willis -R -190 -120 +120
960 New York Mets T. Glavine -R -1½ +165 7 ½+110 -130

PARLAY:

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A parlay bet involves combining the outcomes of two or more bets in a single wager. One type of parlay might string together the outcomes of three different games in one \$20 wager. For the parlay to payoff, you must win all of your bets. If you're wrong on even one of your choices, you lose. You may parlay within one game, amongst various contests or amongst various sports, combining baseball, basketball, and NASCAR wagers.

People like to parlay their bets because the payoffs are much higher than on individual wagers. Your return is larger due to the fact that with a parlay you are automatically reinvesting your winnings. A \$10 wager may have a \$16 payoff, but using that same \$10 bet in a parlay that includes 3 wagers would result in a payoff of approximately \$120. Although the risk is certainly greater, many bettors feel the chance of garnering a greater return is worth it.

PROPOSITIONS:

Propositions or "props" are bets that focus on one specific aspect of the game or an entire season. Prop bets include two or more outcomes and are not related to the final score of a game. Wagers on who will win the batting crown, whether or not anyone will hit .400 or better, and how many pitchers will win 20 or more games this year are all examples of props. Other propositions include putting money on whether or not Mark McGwire will be elected to the Hall of Fame in 2007, whether or not Barry Bonds

will break Hank Aarons' homerun record, and who will get more Hall of Fame votes in 2007 – Cal Ripken or Tony Gwynn?

These wagers may carry a money line and if you hit one, it can be very lucrative. Betting \$10 on Derrick Jeter (+2500) having the highest batting average in the majors would result in a \$250 payday. Basic odds or multipliers may also be used to calculate a payoff. Whatever method is used, it will be stated clearly with the proposition.

There are also props you can play each day, which usually pit the totals of one player against another player or one team against another club. The odds for propositions based on a seasonal outcome will change throughout the season. Your payoff odds are the ones you were given when you placed your wager. It's rare that you'll be allowed to parlay a prop bet (props that can be combined are called "exotics.")

These are some of the more popular wagers you can place on a ball game. Some are certainly riskier than others, but all of these different bets can be researched prior to putting your money down. Before wagering, take some time to check out the landscape, understand the risks and potential payoffs, and study the teams or individuals on which you're placing your cash. There are no guarantees, but an educated bettor with a solid long-term plan has more of a chance of winning than someone who acts on emotion and in a scattershot manner.

Have fun and play ball!

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MLB Exhibition Baseball Betting

By Jason A. Martin

So it's the start of MLB exhibition season and you are all excited, because the season opener is a few weeks away. How exactly do you bet on MLB exhibition anyway? A closer look at MLB exhibition baseball betting reveals how much of a coin toss it really is. Let's look at some of the fundamentals affecting exhibition games you might want to bet on.

If you are at least a semi-decent sports bettor, the first thing (or one of the first things) you do is check to see if any players are injured or missing. Having a missing star from a team can impact the outcome of a game. In fact, if a major player is out, you might skip the play altogether. Enter exhibition baseball and it's cloudy playing picture. In an exhibition game, you don't know who will play until the game is being played. Last I checked no sports book would let you bet on the action after it occurs. If you locate one, let me know.

Looking at the box scores of MLB exhibition games, it becomes obvious that "stars" are played sparingly. For example, a starting pitcher who already has a spot on the team might see up to 2 innings of work. It's hit and miss with position players. They might play a whole game or simply one at bat. Also, it's the exhibition so players who have jobs cemented are more likely to test out new pitches, new swings and work on mechanics. The game becomes a roller coaster.

The second issue that affects exhibition baseball betting is what I like to call Hooks. A hook is basically a set point when you, as a manager, make a change. In the regular season, for example, if a relief pitcher comes in and has a rough time, he will most likely be replaced quickly. However, in exhibition baseball, there's no worry about losing since the games don't matter. Teams, up by say a run or two, have no problem letting a pitcher give up many runs in one inning. Your team could be cruising along and up comes Mr. Poor Pitcher to the mound. In just one inning of work, since the hooks are non-existent, he could throw away the game.

For these reasons, most MLB exhibition games are setup where the favorite is normally only slightly valued—normally -1.10 to -1.30 . You will find that the "home" team is favored always unless the visitor is perceived to be a better team in the regular season. For example, if the home team was the Detroit Tigers and the visitor team was the NY Yankees, the Yankees would most likely be the favorite. These games become multiple hour coin flips. A quick scan of action on one randomly selected exhibition

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baseball day revealed that of the 10 exhibition games, 6 of the favorites and 4 of the underdogs won. It is pretty even.

A better use for the MLB exhibition season would be to monitor talent and prepare to bet in the regular season. However, if you must throw down action, good luck to you. Some people do better in exhibition betting, because there's not too much to think about. Many sports bettors simply pick a favorite and bet them.

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