

Baseball History may be ever Changing but some things never Change!

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By Paul Mrocza

Baseball history, like all history, certainly is ever changing, but some aspects of the game have

remained unchanged for well over a half-century. There are a few reasons for this – over time the basic rules of the game have for the most part remained unaltered; the development of essential skills continues to involve an investment of time and personnel by ball clubs; and fans have always flocked to see money players and exciting teams.

In 1976, Major League Baseball (MLB) was changed forever with the birth of free agency. Since its inception, the owners had held power over all players. They could trade anyone at anytime and control, with relative ease, what individuals would be paid. Great players, like Babe Ruth, usually commanded solid salaries but with free agency players were able to negotiate their contracts and to go to a team willing to pay their price.

Still, as it had always been, players had to have the skills a team needed to get their price. The one major difference was that players were now able to sign guaranteed contracts, which stated that they would be paid their salary no matter how they performed and even if they were injured.

Seventy-three years before free agency, professional baseball underwent a change that would influence the way in which the Majors conducted business and found players. In 1903 the National Association of Professional Base Ball Leagues, better known as the Minor Leagues, was formed in order to create some order in which Major League teams acquired players from small market clubs. In the 1930s the great Branch Rickey developed the structure for what we know today as the "Minor Leagues." Rickey's formalization of the "Minors," which became dedicated to developing players who could perform in the Majors, was jokingly called the "farm system" because small town clubs were raising young players "like corn" down on the farm.

Since the 1930s, MLB has relied upon affiliate farm teams to develop players for the big leagues to supply promising prospects for trades, or to simply provide adequate replacements when necessary. Today, the Minor League system is highly developed, bringing players up through A, AA, and AAA ball. When a team is looking to make a trade for a solid Major Leaguer, one way they can sweeten the deal is by including prospects from the minors. Additionally, one way for owners to keep costs down is to

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bring up players from the "farm team" when they're ready. By doing this a MLB team can save millions of dollars.

Bringing up an adequate second baseman from the minors and paying him the minimum \$327,000 for the season can prove to have more value than paying a veteran infielder 2.5 million dollars. Using a certain number of non-veterans allows a team to spend more money on other positions, especially pitching, which is always at a premium and comes at a high price.

The Minor Leagues have always been a cost-saving venture for clubs but with today's exorbitant salaries, the strength of the players union, and most clubs carrying payrolls of under one-hundred million dollars, the strategic use of Minor League players can make the difference in both turning a profit and winning the World Series.

Using players from the farm club actually gives owners more power, since those team members who

have been brought up are not eligible for salary arbitration until they have three years in the Majors and cannot become free agents until they've accumulated six or more years in the big leagues. Today, for a brief part of a player's career, National and American League owners have the power they used to possess over every player prior to 1976.

Teams looking to win a championship and attract as much revenue as possible have often invested money in key players. Throughout baseball's history, there have been owners willing to pay more than others. In 1919, some of the Chicago White Sox, which was owned by Charles Comiskey, decided to throw the World Series to their National League counterparts, the Cincinnati Reds.

The White Sox players felt they were both underpaid and under-appreciated by their boss and figured if they bet on the underdog Reds and insured that the National Leaguers would win, they'd make a tidy profit. They did just that, but they also got caught. It became known as the Black Sox Scandal of 1919, and it's a constant reminder to owners of how a man like Comiskey, who had a whole lot of money, could be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

Of course, spending a lot of money does not insure a team will win the World Series or even the League Championship. Since the New York Yankees payroll exceeded one hundred millions dollars five years ago, they've been unable to win it all. The last few years Steinbrenner and company have been handing over two hundred million in team pay. Last year's champs, the Chicago White Sox, paid out a little over seventy-five million to their players. It was ironic, because they had not won the Series since 1917, prior to the big scandal.

Most analysts agree that a MLB club needs to wisely spend about seventy million to be competitive. That's why some pundits believe that the Toronto Blue Jays, who reached that magic salary mark this season by adding quality players and about thirty million to their pay roll, are a club to watch.

The basic idea at work regarding salary prior to free agency is that a happy player – one who feels he's being treated and paid fairly – can equal a happy owner with a winning team. After free agency, the thought became that in order to compete a team had to pay a player what the market dictated and

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owners, to a degree, had the ability to control that market. These are, in essence, two sides of the same coin.

If we could resurrect Cy Young, Shoeless Joe Jackson, and Home Run Baker and bring them out to the ballpark, they'd certainly still understand the game, even though it has changed. Since their time, there has been the development of specialty pitchers, creation of artificial turf, and the addition of the designated hitter in the American League. The mound, strike zone, and scoreboards are all different too.

Player skills are still fundamentally the same, except more advanced. They would get the idea that a better player should command more money than a player with less skill. But the overall economics of the game would probably baffle those great players. That has added a new type of off-field strategy that owners who want to win must master. Since the turn of the 19th century, it's been the greatest change MLB has seen.

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Important Aspects Of A Baseball Coach

By Sintilia Miecevole

Being a baseball coach can be very rewarding. It is a big responsibility, though. You are basically the 'leader' of your team, and how you act will directly affect how the assistant coaches and the players act. There are some tips you can follow to make yourself a better baseball coach. These tips are:

1. Give everyone on your baseball team a responsibility. Make each and every person on the team feel if they don't do something, it won't get done! Any accomplishments made by a member of the team are shared by the whole team. (It is important to give recognition to individuals, though.)
2. Help everyone on your baseball team make good, informed decisions. As the baseball coach, you need to guide and teach the players to make the good decisions you want them to make. Don't bully the baseball team to do what you want them to do, just encourage them to do what is best.
3. Always treat your baseball team like they are winners! If your baseball players feel like winners, they will be more likely to win.

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4. Let everyone on your baseball team know you care. Be interested in every individual baseball player. Encourage them and show them your support. Look at your behavior around your baseball team and evaluate it carefully.
5. Help your baseball team understand the meaning of playing with good sportsmanship! Good sportsmanship is just as important as winning. Make sure your baseball players understand the meaning of fair play from the moment you become their baseball coach.
6. Make sure you motivate and reward your baseball team players. Just knowing the basic skills and strategies of baseball won't necessarily make you a very good baseball coach. Being a baseball coach is truly more than just teaching these things. A really good coach can motivate a baseball team to do its best! Good baseball coaches understand and can empathize with the players' feelings of joy, anger, anxiety, frustration, and pride.
7. Don't make your baseball practices boring or repetitious. Shake up practices by playing games and teaching new techniques and plays. Since only 9 players can play at a time, make sure to keep the rest of the baseball team feeling useful by having them keep score or charting pitching and offence. Make sure to keep each baseball player feeling they have an important role in winning.
8. Make sure you have a plan for your baseball team. Just like a teacher needs to plan for the school year, a baseball coach needs a plan for the season. Having no plan is a sure road to failure.
9. Give your baseball team enough time to review things they have learned. Whether at the end of a practice or the end of a game, give your players time to review what has been learned and what could be improved upon. Keep the review as positive in tone as possible.
10. Make sure you communicate with your baseball team. If you cannot get across to your baseball team what you want, how will they know what to do?

Sintilia Miecevole, host of

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