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Handicapping Baseball Totals

By Ron Dyer

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Betting on baseball totals provides outstanding value and opportunities to profit from for a variety of reasons:

Home plate umpires have tendencies that can be exploited. In baseball, more so than any other sport, the home plate umpire has a tremendous impact on the game because of the size of his strike zone. Each umpire has a different strike zone, some are wider, others are tighter. Umpires with a wider strike zone favors the pitchers while umpires with a smaller strike zone will favor the batters.

Baseball totals streaks are not as noted by the Public or the media providing excellent line value for the astute handicapper. Nothing drives away line value quicker than the Public's backing. For the first part of the 2004 baseball season, lefty – lefty matchups of starting pitchers were ringing up unders at an alarming rate. Unfortunately for the Public, it appears that they jumped on the bandwagon too late as the trend is reversing to Overs in these matchups (as all trends do with time). Unfortunately, the Public has driven up the line on Unders in these matchups, so they're losses are more than they should be do to the inflated lines and lack of value.

Sportsbooks don't have as much room to adjust their totals. Baseball totals typically range from a low of 6.5 and a high of 12 (except for Coors Field which produces an abundance of high scoring affairs). When two hot hitting teams face off against one another against average starting pitching, the total will not go above 12 (-145) in most instances. Likewise, when two cold hitting teams play against two dominant starters, the total will not drop below 6.5 while laying no more than (-145). However, if a Top 10 pitcher on a winning team faces a struggling team and pitcher you may have to lay -300 to win \$100.

Capping totals involves many components:

1) We start by reviewing who the home plate umpire will be. If this is the first game of a series, this information will usually not be available until an hour before game time. The umpires follow a rotation with the first base umpire behind the plate the next night. Pay attention to the umpires over/under

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record in their games called and the percentage of strikes that they call. Once again, a higher percentage of strikes will more than likely produce Unders as the wider strike zone favors the pitchers. A lower percentage of called strikes will favor the batters as they will more than likely be facing hitters counts where the pitcher will have to throw a strike.

2) Look at each teams over/under record in their last 10 games. Also note any current streaks. Ideally, you want to jump on a team at the beginning of a streak. A solid hitting team like the Yankees, if their bats have been quiet the last few games, a break out is more than likely looming. Conversely, a light hitting team like the Expos recent string of overs might be nearing an end. When looking at each teams over/under streak, note if it is solid hitting or shaky pitching producing overs or weak hitting and excellent pitching ringing up Unders. Also look at how each teams batting average and runs scored fares against lefties or righties depending on the starting pitcher.

3) Review each teams starting pitchers combined over/under record on the season and in their last 3 games. Pay attention to the combined pitchers WHIP (walks and hits per 9 innings). Note any trends such as an average pitcher with a propensity towards overs that has been pitching better of late as noted by his recent string of unders and drop in WHIP.

4) Look at the bullpens. Have they seen extensive action over the last few days? Are they over or under performing in recent games as compared to their season history? Are any pitchers in the pen unavailable from too much work the previous night?

When you combine the following factors, it should be fairly obvious which way to go with the Over/Under. Do not force action. Only play those games that have the highest probability of going Over or Under the total based on your researched facts.

Baseball totals, while often over looked by the average handicapper, can be very profitable and swing the value in the handicappers favor. By tracking a teams recent hitting and pitching performances, while also factoring in the home plate umpire tendencies, solid total betting values can be found to swing the advantage to the Capper!

Good Luck!

Ron is the founder of Dyer's Sportsline. Ron takes a three pronged approach to sports handicapping by analyzing games on a fundamental, situational and line movement (smart money) basis. With his strong aptitude in statistics, analysis of team strengths and weaknesses, his knowledge of human psychology, coupled with years of experience, he has developed a system of delivering consistent winners with his solid game analysis and observations.

September American League Trends

By Sebastien Veilleux

Whether you have never bet on MLB baseball or have done so casually, this article will help further

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your knowledge. For those that don't already know, the MLB season takes up just over half of the calendar year. Each team plays 162 games per season. Multiple that by the number of teams in MLB baseball and you have thousands of betting opportunities each season.

The MLB baseball betting line has three main components.

1. The money line. 2. The run line. 3. The totals line.

The money line is where you bet on a team to win or lose. There are no spreads or other factors to worry about. If your team wins the game, you win your wager. An example of an MLB baseball betting money line would be something like this:

Kansas City Royals +190 New York Yankees -220

In the above example, the Royals are on the road and an underdog (+190). The +190 means that if you bet the Royals and they win, you will be paid \$1.90 for every \$1.00 you wagered. Conversely, if you wager on the Yankees and they win, you will get back \$1.00 for every \$2.20 you wager. Here's an easy way to remember this. If you see a plus sign (+), that's the amount you win for each \$1 you wager. If you see a minus sign (-), that's the amount you need to wager to win \$1.

The run line incorporates what is called a spread. The spread on the run line is 1.5 runs. If you wager on the underdog, you get 1.5 runs, which means the favorite must beat your team by 2 runs or more. Conversely, if you bet on the favorite, they must win by at least two runs for you to win your wager. Here's the important fact about the run line. It changes the money line. Let's see what the run line could hypothetically do to our above example.

Kansas City Royals +1.5 -115 New York Yankees -1.5 -105

By taking these teams on the run line, the money you have to lay down changes as well. In the above example, you just need to lay \$1.05 per \$1.00 you wish to win on the Yankees, because you need them to win by two runs.

The totals line is very simple. It's the combined number of runs both teams score. If, for example, the total line for the above game was 9, you could bet under or over 9 runs. Bet the over and you need over 9 runs to win. Bet the under and you need under 9 runs to win. A tie is a "push", so your money will be returned.

Once you get the hang of it, the MLB baseball lines will be second nature. Just remember, a plus sign means the number is what you get for each \$1 wagered and a minus sign is what you must bet to win \$1. Good luck!

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