

AN ANALYSIS OF THE HOW'S AND WHY'S
OF OFFENSIVE BASEBALL

by 682

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B. S., Kansas State University, 1969

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Physical Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author of this report wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Mr. Ray Wauthier, Assistant Professor of the Department of Physical Education and Mr. T. M. Evans, Chairman of the Department of Physical Education of Kansas State University. Appreciation is also expressed to Dr. Bradley Rothermel. The assistance given by these men has been invaluable in the writing of this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

Even today, it appears that experts in the field of baseball are in disagreement on theories of offensive baseball. In particular they disagree on what makes a player a good or bad hitter. Attempts to analyze the various aspects of sports skills are numerous, some of which need to be expanded upon rather than disregarded, and others more closely examined for any inherent value. Also, quite prevalent in many teachings or coaching situations, is the adherence to traditional and sometimes antiquated methods of teaching a sport skill. This statement is not intended to imply that many coaches are uninformed or utilizing faulty teaching methods. The point to be emphasized is that in recent years, experience and research have made many contributions to sports by the offering of new teaching possibilities that no coach or player can afford to disregard. A coach not only needs to teach the How of offensive baseball, but up and coming baseball talent needs to know Why he is performing the skills. The need is great, as evidenced by controversies over offensive baseball theories, for more established guides or teaching principles developed through a scientific understanding of the various offensive skills. The result of such findings, can formulate certain philosophies or theories which may then be incorporated into teaching techniques and methods which should help any baseball program.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this investigation was to analyze the various How's and Why's of offensive baseball in order to possibly ascertain or derive from the study some implications toward the establishment of a more scientific approach to the development of principles in offensive baseball. The study may not only

help others who read it, but it will also provide one a greater understanding for the game, something which coaches and players are always trying to improve.

METHOD OF STUDY

The emphasis of this paper is in analyzing the How's and Why's of offensive baseball, utilizing information from various related fields or schools of thought. One such source was from textbooks written by famous baseball men, and many of the authors ideas and empirical evaluations were somewhat the same and credit was given to all authors quoted or not quoted directly in the study. Also used in the study were articles from the Research Quarterly, Theses, and as mentioned before articles by coaches and teachers, who over years of experience have conducted some limited studies and have developed certain workable and valid theories regarding the offensive mechanisms of baseball.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

It would appear that no one offensive baseball theory or theories can be truly developed, but the implications from this analysis should make great strides in that direction. More important to note is a need for more research in this area, which in the writer's opinion hasn't been tapped or explored to the fullest. In the final evaluation, a proper execution of the various movements or mechanics examined here should fulfill the main objective of the swing and will do so with grace and efficiency.

BASE RUNNING

The fastest player is not necessarily the best base runner. In many situations speed is the sole factor, but in the majority of cases judgment in relation to speed determines the value of a base runner.¹

The first rule for good base runners is, touch or tag every base; never miss a base. Every player should know thoroughly the rules which pertain to base runners.

The average baseball player finds it difficult to steal a base or advance an extra base on a hit to the outfield. Base running should not be slighted by any player, for it is a real qualification in the make up of a student of the game. Good base runners do not have to be fast on their feet, although speed is always a great asset; a greater test of ability is to keep the eyes open and the head up. A fumble, a hesitation, or play that puts an outfielder in a non-throwing position gives the runner a chance to advance an extra base, and he must always be ready to seize such an opportunity.

Base running is not a simple part of the game. It requires much observation and study, especially of the opposing battery men and outfielders. Heady, alert base running wins many a ball game, and stupid, indifferent base running loses just as many.

One of the greatest errors of judgment a base runner can make is to let himself be picked off a "scoring position" base after reaching it safely. Such a misfortune means that the base runner either is not thinking or is over-anxious.²

¹Ethan Allen, Baseball Play and Strategy, p. 211.

²Danny Litwhiler, Baseball, p. 120.