# Analytics: Reshaping Major League Baseball one pitch at a time



During the 2021 season, Major League Baseball has recorded the lowest hit per game total (8.11) since 1907 (8.04), as well as the lowest league wide batting average (.243) in the history of the game.

Since its inception in 1839, Major League Baseball has suffered through many dark periods. Gruesome labour strikes, cheating scandals, and who could forget the infamous steroid era?

However, none of those has damaged the game more than one of the sport's worst enemies: data analytics.

The first recorded use of analytics in an MLB season came in 2009, when then Tampa Bay Rays manager - Joe Maddon - shifted his infielders based on formulas that would determine where a batter was most likely to hit the ball.

Sounds complicated, right?

Fast forward to the 2021 season where analytics are used in every single game, in every single inning, on every single pitch.

The broad reference to analytics encompasses innumerable equations and calculations designed to predict the outcome of specific situations, ultimately removing the most exciting part of sport: unpredictability.

Whether it be pitcher versus batter matchups, pitch counts, or what players hit better during a day game as opposed to a night game, the numbers are taking more than just the fun out of the sport.

Throughout the 2021 season, analytics have stood out for all the wrong reasons. The league wide batting average has reached a historical low of .243, while the total at-bats per game between both teams (33.34) is the worst it's been since 1917 (32.87).

Former New York Yankee, and Hall of Fame pitcher Goose Gossage feels strongly about the impact that analytics have in today's game.

"We could sit here and talk all day about the way the game has been changed, and not in a good way," Gossage told Bleacher Report. "I try to watch a baseball game, and I find it very difficult to be able to watch today. It just breaks my heart to see the changes that have been made."

This may seem like an old school player bringing an old school approach to the game that is designed to attract a new generation of fans. However, when hits per game in 2021 (8.11) reached their lowest point since 1907 (8.04), it caught the attention of current players.

With all but 13 of his 260 at-bats this season having been countered with a shift, it's safe to say that Los Angeles Dodgers slugger - Albert Pujols - is not a fan of the analytic approach.

"If you can put the ball in play, you can help your team start a rally," Pujols told Bleacher Report. "The point of baseball is to get on base. I don't think that will ever change. But it's taking some knocks now and hurting the game."

There's no coincidence that the lack of on-field entertainment caused by the numbers nerds has led to a drop-in attendance league wide.

In 2019, the league's average attendance was 28,203. That number is the result of a constant decline since 2012 (30,806). In 2020, fans were prohibited from attending games due to COVID-19, while in 2021, with stadiums back to full capacity, the league has still seen fewer and fewer, averaging only 18,090 per game.

Is it really that shocking that no one wants to pay to watch team personnel with calculators and laptops make decisions for world class talent on the field?

When asked about the impact that analytics have on America's favorite pastime, league commissioner - Rob Manfred - told New York Newsday, "It's a changing world out there. We need to work really hard on making that live product, which is a different product than turning on the TV, as appealing as possible."

Talk about a total swing and a miss.

Let's face it… the game is most entertaining when runs are scored, and fans are in the stands. Many who love the game would implore you to close your data software programs, shut your computer off, and get rid of analytics in baseball before it's too late!