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BONUS!
Strategy Guide Inside
The Best Baseball Game
WE GUARANTEE IT!
UBS
SAMMY SOSA
HIGH HEAT
Baseball
2001
1 DISC
3DO



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Suffice it to say I am a baseball nut. In fact, it is 2:39 AM as I am now writing this. I will admit to being obsessed by our National Pastime. It's not only a great game; it is a centerpiece of our culture and way of life. In this strategy guide I have tried to share with you many of the things that I have learned over the years. I hope that this guide will increase your knowledge of the game of baseball. If it does that, then it will increase your love for the game as well.

GETTING STARTED

The fun and fast way to learn the ***Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001*** game is to choose SETTINGS from the team menu and set everything to **automatic** except pitching and hitting. Focus on learning to pitch and hit and let the game do the fielding and running. As you get comfortable, you can turn on the other controls one at a time.

To **practice**, start the game in 2 PLAYER MODE even if you are playing by yourself. Control both pitchers and both batters this way. Throw the same pitches again and again until you understand the speeds and trajectories and learn how the umpire is calling the strike zone. Develop your swing timing and practice your check-swing.

If you are playing with **friends**, this practice method is a good way to start. If your friend is not as good as you are, use the SETTINGS to give him a fair handicap. For example, perhaps you have to control everything but he only has to choose his pitches. A friend of mine wouldn't play again after I struck him out 25 times. ☹ Keep your friends in the game! Another good handicap that I use is to tell an opponent that I will throw only fastballs down the middle of the plate until he gets runners in scoring position.

The **best thing** about the ***Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001*** game is that it is so realistic, I can talk to you about what to do in completely realistic baseball terms. This advice is the same if you are playing real baseball or the ***Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001*** game. It's probably not applicable in other baseball video games and board games because none of them work like real baseball.

THE LINEUP

The leadoff hitter should have a high on base average (OBA). The ideal guy draws a lot of walks because a walk is as good as a single when leading off. By contrast, leading off with a base hit is a bit of a waste because there are no runners to advance. It's better to have your "walker" lead off and then be batted around by the hitters with the higher batting averages. Being fast and a good base-stealer is an additional bonus in leading off, so you are more likely to stay out of double play situations and score from second. The second hitter should be skilled at advancing the leadoff man. This can be achieved in many ways: by having a high batting average as a contact-singles hitter; being a good bunter; being a ground-ball hitter; or being good at avoiding strikeouts. Having a good OBA and running well also helps. The goal of the top two hitters is to have a runner in scoring position when the third hitter comes up. Being able to steal second, or to execute a hit and run, is useful because it gets runners off first base and into scoring position when the 3-4-5 spots come up. This not only puts runners in scoring position but it gets them out of double-play situations, which are most likely with the power hitters who do not run as fast.

The best overall hitter should bat 3rd. A good judge of "best" is the sum of OBA and slugging percentage, which is often called Total Average (TA) or On Base Plus Slugging (OPS). This statistic is the single most important measure of hitter or pitcher performance because it has the strongest correlation with runs scored. It doesn't really matter how your 3rd hitter got the highest OPS. He can be a power hitter like Sammy Sosa or hit for average like Sean Casey. The batting average is nice, because if a runner is on second the best way to "plate him" is with a base hit of any kind. Your 2nd best overall hitter, with an emphasis on power, should bat cleanup (4th). He needs to "protect" your best hitter who just batted. You do not want your best hitter to get walked or to make an out swinging at bad pitches. Your opponent will not give good pitches to your 3rd hitter if they are not terrified of walking him and thereby having to face your cleanup guy. But your 3rd hitter is going to often be on first base when the cleanup hitter comes to bat, and the best way to score from first or to drive in multiple runners is with power. The 5th hitter should be your next best overall hitter, so as to protect your cleanup man and to get more RBIs, since your 3rd and 4th hitters will often be on base. The 6th hitter should be the next best overall hitter.

A key strategy regarding your lineup is to avoid leading off an inning with your 9th hitter, who will no doubt make an out and ruin your entire hopes for the inning. Another key strategy is to be in a position where your pitcher or #9 hitter can make a useful sacrifice bunt rather than an out or a double play. To set this up, the 7th hitter should be a good base-stealer and the 8th hitter should be a good bunter and/or your worst hitter. The 9th hitter should be your worst hitter or your pitcher, but hopefully a competent bunter.

Setting up the 7-8-9 this way gives you many useful options. If the 7th man gets on, he can steal. If he is out, the 8th man can get on base and still be sacrificed into scoring position by the pitcher. Then the leadoff man can drive him in. If he makes the steal, the 8th man can drive him in, or you can pinch-hit for him or the 9th spot with a man in scoring position. Even if the 7th man makes the 3rd out on a steal attempt, at least you have avoided leading off the next inning with the pitcher. Or you can use the 8th hitter to bunt the runner to 2nd base, and then pinch-hit for the pitcher to drive him in.

If there are two outs with a runner on 2nd or 3rd, some managers will walk the 8th hitter to get to the pitcher, hoping to get a sure out that ends the inning. There are three flaws in this strategy hence I rarely use it. First, the 8th hitter is probably bad anyway, why give him a free pass? Second, even bad hitting pitchers get hits 10% of the time, and now they will be hitting with 2+ runners on base. Or, the opponent may be able to pinch-hit for the pitcher. Finally, you throw away the opportunity to force the pitcher to lead off the next inning. My typical strategy is to try to get the lousy 8th hitter out and end the inning and force the pitcher to lead off the next inning so you end up getting out of two innings.

When in doubt, bat better hitters (ones with higher OPS) higher. In a typical game if you have 41 plate appearances, only the top 5 hitters will bat 5 times, and the others 4 times. This cutoff will vary, but the lower a hitter is in the lineup the less often he will bat over the course of a season. In addition, if you pinch-hit for your pitcher he may bat only 2-3 times and if your 8th hitter can usefully bunt at least once he will only need to swing away 2-3 times with his lousy OPS.

Platoons. As a general rule, lefty batters do better against righty pitchers, and righty batters do better against lefty pitchers. A basic law of physics in baseball is that if a ball is spinning away from the hitter it is more difficult to hit it hard and fair. Conversely, a ball that is spinning towards the hitter can be hit very hard. Hence a righty pitcher will throw curves and sliders to righty batters while avoiding those pitches to lefty hitters. This is the principal reason that lefty hitters do better against righty pitchers and vice versa, and the reason why some batters learn to switch-hit. By batting from the opposite side, breaking balls become much more hittable. If the pitcher avoids those pitches, his choices narrow and he becomes more predictable. As a result, OPS is often 25%+ higher for a hitter when the pitcher is throwing from the opposite side.

This fact gives birth to platoons, bullpen, bench and lineup strategy. If the opponent starts a righty pitcher, look for more lefty batters to put in the lineup. Make sure they are better than the normal righty hitters at hitting righty pitchers. This improves your "match-ups." Second, be sure to alternate your righty and lefty bats. If you have 4 lefties and 4 righties and they are all consecutive, it makes it too easy for the opponent to bring in a lefty relief pitcher to face the 4 lefties and then a righty pitcher to face the 4 righties. Make him work harder and make more bullpen switches by batting your 4 lefties in the 1st, 3rd, 5th and 8th spots. Later in the game, use pinch-hitters that can attack the pitcher from the best side. Either you will get the advantage of the match-up or force him to make a risky pitching change. Then he will run out of options faster and you have a greater chance of facing a reliever who is having a bad hair day or one that he cannot replace because he has run out of better options. Conversely, be sure to plan your own bullpen and bench, and how you use them. Make sure you always have a decent righty and lefty choice for both a pinch-hitter and a relief pitcher when you get to critical match-up situations late in close games.

Some players defy the lefty-righty norm. For instance, some righty pitchers are more effective against righty hitters. I call this kind of player a "paradox," although there is usually a good explanation. A righty curveball pitcher will give up more home runs on hanging curves to righty hitters. A power pitcher often has a fastball that, due to the high RPM and 3/4 arm angle, will tail away and look like a backwards slider. Hence a righty "closer" (ace reliever) who is a "power pitcher" may be more effective against the lefty hitters because his fastball tails away from them. Meanwhile, a righty hitter may simply feel more comfortable and have more experience hitting against righty pitchers because most pitchers are righties. And a lefty hitter may actually hit lefty pitchers better because they use a different strategy. In setting your lineup, it's a very good idea to look at the lefty-righty stats for the opposing pitcher and for your own players. If you are facing a righty paradox, the ideal batters are righty paradoxes and the worst batters are lefty paradoxes. A paradox pitcher also has an advantage against a switch-hitter.

PITCHING

Choose a starting pitcher that may have platoon advantages or ballpark advantages. In Yankee Stadium and Pac Bell Park, it is easier to hit home runs to right field. Most home runs are pulled, so it is an advantage in those parks to bat lefty. Therefore, it is an advantage in those parks for the pitcher to be a lefty so that he has a platoon advantage against any lefty hitters. Or, if the opponent has entirely righty hitters, a mediocre righty pitcher with good breaking pitches may pitch better than a good lefty pitcher that is not as effective against righties. After you choose your pitcher, look at his pitches. You should use his better pitches more often, or use them as an "out pitch" when you have the hitter "set up" so that they don't expect it. For example, if your best pitch is a changeup, you shouldn't throw it all day long, you should wait until hitters have 2 strikes and have seen a few fastballs and then go to the changeup for the out.

Different pitches vary in speed and trajectory because of the spin and the laces. Without the laces, a baseball would have very little friction and move straight through the air until gravity forced it to the ground. The laces create turbulence and disrupt the flow of air around the ball. This causes aerodynamic effects that make the trajectory curve one way or another while also affecting the speed of the pitch. A **fastball** (typical speed: 90 MPH) comes out of the hand with backspin that cuts smoothly through the air and provides some lift, thereby making it come in fast and with a gravity-resisting flatness. The more RPM the pitcher's wrist action can apply to the ball, the more of a "rising" fastball he will have - one that comes in so flat it appears to defy gravity.

A **curve** (typical speed: 75 MPH) is called "the deuce" because the catcher signals with one finger for the fastball and two fingers for the curve, which is the 2nd most common pitch. It has the opposite spin – downward and forward with a wrist snap as the fingers come over the top of the ball. As a result, a well-thrown curve arches downward and hitters flail over the top of it. With a **slider** (typical speed: 85 MPH), the hand "slides" off the ball to the outside, putting a sideways rotation on the ball that makes it break down and to the side opposite from which it was thrown. For example, a righty pitcher's slider will break away from a righty batter. A **screwball** (typical speed: 80 MPH) is the opposite of a slider – the fingers slide off the inside so it breaks the other way. However, this arm motion is more difficult to master and does not produce as big a "break" or have the velocity of a slider.

The **sinker** (typical speed: 85 MPH) is also known as the "2-seam fastball". If you look closely at the seams you will see two joined semi-circles. A regular, 4-seam fastball is gripped across the fat part of one of the semi-circles so that on each rotation of the ball, 4 seams carve through the air, creating maximum aerodynamic effect. By rotating the ball 90 degrees across the grip, the fingers will instead cross the two seams that connect the semi-circles. This is the 2-seamer, where on each rotation only 2 seams carve through the air, and where the fingers have less seam to grab onto in the first place. Because of this subtle difference, a 2-seam fastball will have less speed and appear to "sink" and hence is often called a "sinker" or "sinkerball." Since the arm action is identical to the 4-seam or conventional fastball, a pitcher with a good fastball and a good sinker can keep hitters off balance simply by alternating between these two types of fastball.

The changeup, forkball, and split-fingered fastball are other pitches that have arm action that looks like a fastball with very different results. All of them involve gripping the ball with less contact and pressure on the laces. By giving up some grip, the ball comes out of the hand with less speed and a lower RPM that builds up air pressure and further reduces speed. The **changeup** (typical speed: 75 MPH) is easiest to throw and is used as an accurate change of pace that can be 15 MPH slower than a fastball and yet come out of the pitcher's hand looking like it is going to be a fastball. The hitter who is timing his swing off the fastball will be fooled; the announcer may say the pitcher, "pulled the string," as though the batter missed the pitch because the pitcher had a string attached to the ball and pulled it away from him at the last minute. The **forkball** and **"split-finger"** (typical speed: 80 MPH) are essentially the same concept. The pitcher splits his fingers around the seams and the ball comes out with very little RPM which makes it slow down and drop quickly about when it gets to the plate. It can be a great pitch when the hitter is expecting a fastball or when a groundball is needed.

The most unusual pitch of all is the **knuckleball** (typical speed: 65 MPH). It takes to an extreme the idea of avoiding putting spin on the ball by not even allowing the fingertips to touch the baseball. Instead, the ball is gripped with the knuckles and when it is released it has no rotation on it whatsoever, and instead of the normal arm-whip action it is almost "pushed" towards home plate. As a result, tremendous air pressure builds and builds in front of the ball until it squirts off in an unpredictable direction like a paper airplane. Hardly anyone throws this pitch today because it is very difficult to throw and has become a bit of a lost art.

With all of these different pitches you would think the hitter would have no chance, and it does explain why the hitters make outs most of the time. But a typical pitcher will only have command of 3 pitches. And he may have flaws in mechanics that hurt his control. Or he may do something in his delivery that "tips" what pitch will be coming. Finally, many hitters can pick up the rotation on the ball. Looking closely in a mere split-second, if they can see the seams they know it's the slowly tumbling forkball. If the ball looks white, they know it is the high RPM of a fastball that blurs out the seams. If they see a red dot on the ball, it's a slider that is spinning around the axis of a seam.

The art of pitching is disrupting the balance of the hitter. His swing is a finely tuned mechanical machine that needs consistency. To disrupt it you need to keep the hitter from being able to predict the type of pitch, the speed, and the location. One basic way to do this is to constantly vary pitch, speed, and location and to consistently break the pattern of what you have done previously in the game. The hitter will tend to get into a groove and be better able to sync his timing to whatever you just did on the last pitch or two. So if he just saw a fastball, either throw a slower pitch like a curve or changeup or significantly change its location. If you just went "up and in" then go "down and away". Don't become predictable but keep varying things. Oddly enough if you train the hitter to expect a fastball, to be followed by a curve pretty soon, your best tactic will be to follow a fastball with another fastball. It's "scissors, paper, rock."

Working the count. An equally important way to beat the hitter is to "work the count" to your advantage so that you have more options, including throwing pitches out of the strike zone that the hitter might chase. Pitches out of the strike zone are more difficult to hit hard and fair. The reason this is critical is that a hitter on average may bat .250, but with a 3-1 count he will bat .350 and with a 1-2 count he will bat .150. The reason for this dramatic difference is the degree to which he can predict the pitch and set up his swing mechanics to hit the ball and to hit it hard. So you need to get ahead in the count.

The easiest pitch to hit for a base hit is a fastball over the middle of the plate, or on the outer half of the plate where it can be hit with a swing that starts later (and therefore has more time to see the ball and make accurate contact). The easiest pitch to hit hard for power is a pitch on the inside part of the plate when the hitter knows how fast it is coming. He can start his swing earlier, get the swing up to full speed with full arm extension, and hit the ball on the fat part of the barrel-head off the front part of the plate, when the pitch is still moving at a higher velocity. These are the pitches you want to avoid unless you don't think the hitter is swinging at all or you need a strike and don't think you can get one any other way. You will hear announcers and hitters talking about "being patient," "waiting for their pitch," "looking for a pitch that they can drive," "trying to turn on the ball," "getting something up in the wheelhouse," and "getting good pitches to hit." All of these phrases refer to the fact that the hitter is looking for an inside pitch he can pull with power or a pitch over the fat part of the plate where he can smoothly execute his mechanics with good contact.

As the pitcher, the trick is not letting the hitter have what he wants. Either make him guess wrong or get ahead in the count so that you have so many options that he cannot guess with confidence. Once you have 2 strikes on a hitter, he must "shorten his swing" and "protect the plate." That means he must forget about trying to swing early and pull inside pitches for power. He needs to wait on the ball, swing later, and by doing so get a better visual look at the location of the pitch so he can make contact. He must settle for any kind of contact because if he fails to make contact, he strikes out. Also, the hitter needs to either hit or foul off pitches that are close to the strike zone because if he doesn't swing the umpire may call the pitch a third strike. Hence, the hitter surrenders his ability to hit with power and starts hacking at anything close to the plate. This is wonderful for the pitcher who can become the cat and toy with the mouse by throwing things that may look like strikes that aren't, and by mercilessly changing pitches and location. He can then make the hitter miss because he can't make good contact, or get a called third strike from the ump on what the hitter thought was a bad pitch. Or, the hitter may be forced to put a bad pitch into play that is more likely to be an out. If the hitter chases the "high heat" it is more likely to be a foul or a popup or a swinging strike. If he chases the sinker or curve in the dirt a groundout is likely and perhaps a double play at that. If he chases inside or outside, a foul or a miss or a weak flyball or grounder is more likely. **So get ahead in the count. This is the heart of baseball.**

How do you get ahead in the count? Study the hitter. Does he always swing at the first pitch? Then throw bad pitches. Does he always take the first pitch? Then pipe a fastball. Is he timed on the fastball? Then throw the changeup. Did he just foul your best fastball straight back? Then give him the high heat up, moving him "up the ladder" and out of the zone and hopefully this time he will outright miss or pop it up. Does he guess curveball because he knows that is your best pitch? Then throw him curves way out of the strike zone

or throw him an inside changeup that he will mistakenly think is a curve because it starts out with the same trajectory. If your pitcher is a lefty and the batter is a righty, it will be easier for him to hit your breaking balls (curves, sliders). So throw him fastballs off the plate, or "backdoor" curves that start out so wide he thinks they are balls and then dip close to the outside of the strike zone.

Once the hitter gets used to the idea that you are pitching him away, he will get his timing in a groove for outside pitches. Then you can "bust him inside" with an inside fastball that he will not be able to hit because he will not start his swing fast enough. A good strategy is simply to take the same pitch and move it back and forth from inside to outside to disrupt his timing. That's what it means when you hear an announcer say, "he got it in on his hands." The ball crosses the inside part of the plate near the hands, which are not moving very fast and are holding the narrow part of the bat. The fooled hitter will probably get a strike call, a foul ball, or a weak grounder or pop out.

What if the hitter is very patient and has good strike zone judgement? Then you need to be disciplined in not giving him good pitches to hit and get a little lucky. Maybe you throw a slider for a strike on the first pitch. You can hope he wasn't guessing it or hope he's taking or hope he grounds out. If you get lucky, you are ahead in the count. Maybe you throw strikes, but you keep them down and away so it is hard for him to pull the ball with power and you may get lucky on called strikes, foul balls, or groundouts. Once you are ahead in the count you can mix it up and keep him off balance. If you fall behind in the count against a very good hitter, then if the bases are empty you can "challenge" him with strikes and make him make a good hit. Remember that a .300 hitter still makes an out most of the time, and there's nobody on base to drive in. If there are runners in scoring position with the game on the line, you may need to give up a base on balls. If Sosa is up late in a tie game with a man on second, he should be intentionally walked. If it is early in the game,"pitch around him" by throwing him bad pitches that he may think are strikes. If you walk him it is not the end of the world, especially if first base is open. If you have to give him a pitch he can hit out of the park, try to make it early in the game with nobody on base.

Fatigue. The most important job for the manager during the game is to observe the pitcher and figure out if he is having a good day or a bad day with his pitching mechanics, and to assess the affect of fatigue over the course of the game. Ego-wise, pitchers never want to come out of the game and will rarely admit to fatigue. The manager needs to observe the degree to which the pitcher is hitting the catcher's target and the degree of success he is having with different pitches. The hitter will be doing the same thing. Pitches aimed down the middle should be strikes; if he's missing those, then he's done. Inside, outside, high, and low pitches aimed at being strikes should be strikes most of the time. You can be more forgiving about misses aimed at the corners, but consistently missing the target either means your pitcher is finished or he has very poor control. If you already knew he had poor control then you need to either accept the frequent walks or you need to forget about expecting to accurately hit the corners of the plate and aim more for the middle, which is a good first inning strategy for pitchers with poor control. If the pitcher cannot seem to throw his curve for a strike, the hitter may begin to "sit" on the fastball - guessing it and timing his swing for it. When the count is 3-1 and the hitter knows the pitcher can't throw a strike unless it is a fastball, the hitter can "look fastball" on the inside part of the plate. Often that is when you get your rocket of a home run pulled down the line. If the pitcher has a high pitch count, gave up a hit and a walk last inning, and then walks the leadoff hitter the next inning on four pitches (3 of which were intended to be strikes), then you have the makings of a disaster. Yank him!

Good stuff. Pitchers talk about "having their good stuff today." That is because on some days their mechanics are sharp and some days they aren't. Maybe the guy has the flu. Maybe he's got a dead arm because he pitched yesterday. Maybe he didn't get enough sleep. Maybe it's cold tonight and he didn't take enough time to stretch and keep his muscles warm. It happens. If your starter can't find the plate for 2 innings and the hitters seem to be hitting everything then the pitcher may not have it today. Also, you don't want to make too many pitching changes because you will run into a pitcher who is having a bad day and before you know it, walk, double, homer, game.

HITTING

The physics of hitting. To hit a ball hard, you need maximum bat speed and maximum ball speed. Think about throwing a ball against a wall - the harder it hits the wall the further it goes in the opposite direction. When a hitter swings, the swing starts out at zero speed and reaches top speed when the arms are fully extended, just as the wrists begin to roll over. Also, the speed is relative to the part of the bat and the radius of the swing arc. The hands are moving the slowest; the fat end of the bat is moving the fastest.

Meanwhile, the ball is slowing down as it approaches the plate. Therefore the hardest hit ball will occur when the far, fat end of the bat hits the ball when the ball is on the front of the plate, before it has had a chance to slow down any further. Because of the hitter's stance and how the swing arc moves through the plate, this "maximum" speed hit will typically only occur on inside pitches. The hitter starts his swing early enough to reach full swing speed and get the bat head out over the front part of the plate by the time the ball gets there. This type of hit will be pulled down the line or be a rocket of a foul ball.

For similar reasons, it is difficult to hit an outside pitch hard because the hitter's stance and swing prevent the bat from easily reaching outside pitches off the front of the plate. The swing arc more readily reaches outside pitches once they have traveled further across the plate and are on the back part of the plate. These pitches cannot be hit as hard, because the swing is not yet at full speed and the ball has slowed down. In addition the pitch may be a breaking pitch that is rotating and moving away from the bat which will further reduce the ability to hit the ball hard and fair. However, there is a benefit to the hitter in hitting outside pitches. Since he needs to wait until the ball reaches the latter part of the plate, he has more time to see the pitch before committing his swing mechanics. This increases the likelihood of making contact with the ball. This is what you need to do when you are protecting the plate with 2 strikes or are trying to poke a single into the opposite field to score the winning run from 2nd base with 2 outs.

To hit the ball hard for power you need to correctly guess inside pitches so you can start your swing early. But for maximum contact, you need outside pitches where you have more time to see the ball and hit the ball, and your swing needs to start later. This is the essence of hitting.

Look up the pitcher's pitch ratings so you know what he is more likely to throw. Have a plan for each at bat. If your goal is simply to get on base, then take a lot of pitches. This is also useful in the early innings because it helps run up the pitch count and tire the pitcher, exposes potential flaws in the pitcher's "stuff," and shows you the pitching strategy your opponent is using. If your goal is to hit for power, then you need to get inside pitches that you can pull and you need to guess them correctly both in terms of the type of pitch and the location. This is not going to happen except for pure luck unless you successfully work the count and eliminate pitcher options. Also, if you work the count to 3-1 you can "waste" a swing. That makes it safe to guess fastball and look inside. Even if you get a swinging strike you are still at bat, and with any luck you can check your swing if you are fooled. If you only need a single to win the game or if you are behind in the count, you just need to stay alive and make contact. To make contact you need to avoid guessing, wait longer before swinging, focus on the pitch location, and be prepared to check your swing if the pitch turns out to be a ball.

You need to practice and learn hitting skills. The basic skill is to time the swing correctly to make contact. Another basic skill is to learn the strike zone and the pitch types and trajectories and learn to take bad pitches or check your swing. The first advanced skill is learning to vary your swing timing to either pull the ball or hit to the opposite field, keeping in mind that the inside pitch should be pulled and the outside pitch should be hit the opposite way. Another advanced skill is using the controls to adjust your swing to the location (high, low, inside, outside) where the pitch is ending up. Doing that correctly gives you a power boost. Finally, the most advanced skill is guessing the type of pitch. Doing so correctly gives you the maximum power boost. In the ***Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001*** game, you can press a button to guess the type of pitch before the pitcher comes to a set position. To guess the pitch location, you need to press the control pad directional arrows towards that part of the strike zone as the pitch is being delivered. While you can do this in advance, the game allows you to watch the pitch and react at the last instant.

You should only guess the pitch when the penalty for being wrong is small. If the pitcher's best pitch is a fastball and he throws it early in the count, then you can guess on the first pitch. Worst case you'll just be up there with a strike on you. Also, you may find that you are better at hitting certain pitches because you are better at picking up their trajectories and timing their speeds. Then a good plan is to guess that pitch early in the count, while being prepared to check your swing if you spot the wrong trajectory or speed. The best strategy is to work the count in your favor and then look for a fastball or changeup since the pitcher will be reluctant to throw anything else.

ONE-RUN STRATEGIES

The principal of one-run strategies is to be willing to give up the chance to score a lot of runs in an inning in order to increase the odds of scoring at least once. Many of these strategies involve risks or willingly give up an out to put a runner in scoring position. A runner on third with less than 2 outs has seven ways to score: hit, error, ground ball, fly ball, passed ball, wild pitch, or balk. With the bases loaded, he can also score on a walk or hit batter. A runner on second is also considered to be in scoring position, especially with two outs where he can take a big lead or run on the pitch. He may advance to third and then score, or score on even a modest hit such as a slow ground ball that sneaks through the infield (what Crash Davis would call a "grounder with eyes"). Also, by being at 2nd the runner avoids being caught in a ground ball double play. The bottom line is that you are more likely to score precisely one run if you have a runner on second with one out than if you have a runner at first with nobody out. So there is a premium value on getting as far as 2nd base where you are safely out of the double play and in position to score. But if you need to score 5 more runs, you should avoid using one-run strategies because they involve giving up one of your precious 3 outs, which can kill your chances of a big inning.

One-run strategies should only be used when the one run that might score is likely to be critical to the game. This is unlikely early in the game when there are many innings yet to play and many more runs likely to be scored on both sides. The next run is not likely to be the last run that will be scored or the winning run. Hence, most one-run strategies will not be deployed until after the 5th inning or later. However, if two weak scoring teams are facing each other with ace pitchers on the mound, it could be a low-scoring game. As such, every scoring opportunity is more critical and it might pay off to use one-run strategies earlier in the game.

Sacrifice bunt. This play is used with less than two outs and runners on first or second or both. The hitter, who should be a good bunter or contact hitter, places a bunt where it must be fielded with the only option being an out at first, that results in the runners advancing into a better position to score (and possibly avoid a double-play that would eliminate all baserunners). It is best to bunt down third and try to force the 3B or pitcher to field the ball. When your pitcher is batting, this is a good play to call in any inning because he's not likely to be a good hitter anyway and you want to avoid a double-play grounder. The ideal time to use this play is in a tie or a one-run game in the late innings. If one run can tie the game or put you ahead for good, it's a critical strategy. If you already have a one-run lead, a two-run lead is substantially harder to overcome. Your opponent can manufacture one run at a time fairly easily by using one-run strategies or by hitting home runs with the bases empty. Getting that extra "insurance run" that gives you a 2-run lead is like a knife in the enemy's back.

To defend against a likely sacrifice, the infield needs to come in, particularly the 3B. This makes it harder to sacrifice and makes a double play more likely, but a good bunter can still be successful. And if the hitter is hitting away, a sharp grounder is more likely to get through the infield.

Hit and run. This can be called with less than two outs and a runner on first (or runners on first and second, but that is more risky and of smaller benefit). The runners steal on the pitch and the batter tries to put the ball in play, ideally a grounder through the infield spot vacated by the fielders who are covering the bases because of the runner. With the runner in motion, he can get from first to third on most balls that safely get through the infield. Also, it will make it much harder to get the lead runner on a ground ball that is fielded. This not only advances the runner, it avoids a double play even if the batter is out at first. The hit and run requires a batter who is a good contact hitter and it helps if the runner has some speed. Speed will help him get all the way to third, and it may also help him steal 2nd if the batter misses the pitch entirely. The most typical reason for the use of the hit and run is to avoid a groundball double-play, and with a good runner and good contact hitter, it is a reasonable percentage play at any time of the game. It also is a good strategy for advancing a runner into scoring position, although not nearly as safe as a sacrifice bunt. The principal risk is that if the batter hits a line drive out, the runner will be caught off base in a double play. Another risk is that the intentional ground ball may go right at a fielder who may still make the play at 2nd. Finally, the batter may miss the pitch (or there could be a pitchout) and the runner may be thrown out stealing, or picked off first.

To defend the hit and run, the infield must hold the runner at first and cover 2nd on the steal attempt. A pitchout or swinging strike may allow the runner to be thrown out.

Steal. The steal is an all-or-nothing gamble to get a runner into scoring position or to die trying. On average, real players can steal 2nd base successfully 67% of the time. If you can steal with this success rate or higher, you will score more runs overall. This is because of the combination of staying out of groundball double plays and getting a runner into scoring position. With a better than 67% chance and less than 2 outs, it is a reasonable strategy at any time in the game. If you steal with only a 50% chance of success, your chances of scoring one run in this inning may go up but the average number of runs you score in total will decline. Hence, with odds in the 50-66% range it is more of a one-run strategy to be used later in the game when the one run could be decisive. Generally, managers will only attempt to steal if either the odds of success are very good or if they need exactly one run to tie or win, and the best one-run strategy available to them is to steal. For example, if they have a great base-stealer at first in the 8th inning of a tie game with 2 outs, a sacrifice is not an option. And a hit and run is too likely to result in a groundout. But with good odds on the steal, a great way to score is a steal followed by almost any base hit.

To defend against the steal, the pitcher should keep the runner off balance with occasional pickoff throws to first. An occasional pitchout should also be called. Finally, pitch selection can help the catcher throw out the runner. A high fastball will help; a curve in the dirt will hurt.

Squeeze. The squeeze is a sacrifice bunt with a runner on third that attempts to score. It should be used with less than 2 outs because it is likely that the batter will be thrown out at first. A good bunter is required because if they miss the pitch the runner could be caught in a rundown and if they pop up the bunt it could result in a double play. In a safety squeeze, the runner on third waits for the bunt to get down safely before advancing. In a suicide squeeze, the runner goes on the pitch. If the batter can get the bunt down, there is almost no way to get the runner out. But if the batter misses the pitch, the runner will no doubt be caught stealing at home. The squeeze is a classic one-run strategy because it gives up an out in the interest of getting only one run.

In the first inning with a runner on third and nobody out, it is unlikely that the next run will win the game. Furthermore, with nobody out there are many other ways to not only get the run home, but to prolong the inning and score more runs. But in the 9th inning of a tie game with the pitcher at bat it is a different story. A classic debate occurred in a championship game when a team trailing by 2 runs in the 6th inning had runners on second and third with nobody out and the pitcher up. The pitcher was an excellent bunter and a strong pitcher. The manager, despite the 2-run deficit, wanted to keep him in to pitch another inning. A successful squeeze would score a run and put the tying run at third with only one out, with another few innings to play. But the plan backfired when the batter bunted into a double play. No more runs were scored and the game was lost by one run. Had a pinch-hitter been used, it is likely that at least one run or more would have scored in the inning. On the other hand, there was only a 3% chance that the squeeze would result in a double play. You make the call!

To defend against the squeeze, the infield needs to come in, and pitchouts are particularly interesting because it is a lot more valuable to eliminate a runner at third base. A pitchout that catches the runner in a rundown on a squeeze is a disaster for the offense.

Runner on third, zero or one out. It is worthwhile to take steps to get into this situation because of the seven ways of scoring. Hence, a good base-stealer may steal third. A runner on second with no outs may be sacrifice bunted to third. A runner on first with one out may try to advance to third on a single. Once the opportunity is created and the runner is at third, the batter must have a disciplined at-bat and put the ball in play. Contact is all that matters and it is the strikeout that must be avoided. Once there are two outs, there is very little premium in getting to third. A runner on second with two outs can take a big lead and often break with the pitch and score on almost any kind of hit. And with two outs, it will typically take a hit to score whether the runner is at 2nd or 3rd. So it is a cardinal rule in baseball that a baserunner should "never make the third out of an inning at third base."

Taking the extra base. There are smart times for a runner to take an extra base. There is a huge premium for getting from 1st to 2nd. Getting from 2nd to 3rd is less valuable. Getting from 3rd to home is what it is all about - the run doesn't count until you get to home. Stretching a single into a double is smart when the odds of making it are at least 67% (or somewhat lower if only one run is needed to win the game). The odds will depend on the runner's speed, how fast the outfielder can get to the ball, and the accuracy and strength of the outfielder's arm. Stretching a double into a triple or going from first to third on a single is worthwhile if the odds are 75% or better and there are less than two outs.

Stealing 3rd should be viewed the same way. If the odds aren't that good it is simply better to wait until there is a safer way to advance that will allow the inning to continue. Scoring from second on a hit or tagging up and scoring from third on a flyout are highly worthwhile because if you make it you have a run. Because of the payoff, even a 50% chance can be worthwhile if the run is important enough. But again, if there are no outs with a runner on third, there are so many other ways to score that patience is likely to be rewarded. Rightfielders will typically have better arms because they uniquely have to make long throws to third, so be careful about running on them. Centerfielders can have great arms, too, but many CFs are out there because of their speed and range and have poor arms. But they may get to the ball faster than you expect and compensate for their weak arm. LFs are often the worst fielders on a team and the easiest to run on, but they have a very short throw to third (which is why they are being hidden in LF where their deficiencies are less exposed).

In defending baserunning, it is typically better to hit the cutoff man. The ball slows down so much during a long throw that it is usually better to make a fast, shorter throw followed by another fast, shorter throw. Plus, the cutoff man can consider other options to keep other runners from advancing. If there is a single with a runner on second who tries to score, a throw from the outfield to the catcher may allow the batter to go to second. But if the throw is cut off, he is likely to be out or to be held at first.

STRATEGIES FOR LATE IN THE GAME

If you are leading, you can throw more strikes and challenge the hitters to put the ball in play and get it past your defense. Even allowing some contact is better than allowing walks. On offense, your chance of clinching the win will go up another big notch if you just get one more run, so you can go to the one-run strategies. And you can eventually bring in the defensive subs to tighten the knot. If you are trailing, you need to get on base. Take more pitches to increase your chances of walking or wearing down the pitcher. Avoid wasting outs like the plague. Avoid one-run strategies unless you are trailing by only one run. Pinch-hit. Double-switch.

Bullpen management. The average starting pitcher will last six innings and throw perhaps 90 pitches. If you don't match or exceed this average, your bullpen will run out of gas from overuse. So you can't always yank the starter at the first sign of trouble. If you're in a blowout, you can pull your starter early and go to the worst pitcher you have that has good endurance, what is known as a "long reliever" or "mop-up man." This allows you to avoid using up your good relievers in a game that is probably already decided. If you are trailing by just a few runs, then you will want to pinch-hit for the pitcher in the 6th inning or later because you need to score to win. If you are in a one-run game and have a great, strong pitcher on the mound then you can let him keep batting on the theory that you will keep them scoreless and find a way to score a run of your own without pinch-hitting.

It is when you are protecting a small lead that bullpen choices become the most critical. Even if your starting pitcher does not appear to be fatigued, if he makes a mistake or two and puts the tying run on base you need to shut down the threat. The best way to do that is to go to a fresh pitcher who is even better than your starting pitcher and then to use more than one relief pitcher to optimize the match-ups. To preserve this ability, a good manager will not use his best relief pitchers until the 6th or 7th inning and only then in a close game. The logic is that if you are already losing, why waste your best relievers? And if you are ahead, why waste the best relievers when you may continue to outscore the other team and they don't even have anyone in scoring position yet? Your best relievers should be saved, literally, for "save" situations, where a few hits against you will throw away a game that you are in a position to win. Most managers will use their best reliever as a "closer" who only appears in the 9th inning to protect a small lead and "close out" the win.

But statistically, an even better use of a great reliever would be to come in with runners in scoring position of a tie game, even if it is in the 7th or 8th inning. That's when you want to prevent even one hit because just one hit could make you lose the game. Keep in mind that pitchers have good days and bad days. Unlike hitters, they don't often have "average" days; they either are dominating or dominated. If a guy is pitching well, leave him in longer, but keep an eye on pitch counts and fatigue so you don't go too far. If he is clueless, get him out quickly. Try to keep pitching changes to a minimum because if you make too many changes eventually you will find the guy who doesn't have his good stuff today and before you figure it out the game will be out of hand.

The best bullpen staff is as follows. Have at least one great all-around reliever that you keep on the bench until there is a critical fire that must be put out or you have reached the 9th inning of a 1-run game to save. Have at least 2 other good relievers, one very good at

retiring righties and one very good at retiring lefties. These guys pitch in close games in the 7th or 8th inning and you pick the one that matches up the best with the hitters that are coming up. Then, you will still want at least one more lefty and one more decent righty that can be used in long relief or can be brought in to match up properly against one lefty or righty hitter in a key situation. Finally, you want a long reliever who may be your worst reliever but he has good enough endurance to be used occasionally as a starting pitcher and can log innings in a blowout when you would rather preserve your bullpen for the next day.

Pinch-hitting. You only get 27 outs and you don't want to waste them. In close games, every out is critical in the late innings. With nobody out and bases empty, you will still only score 1/3rd of the time. With one out and bases empty, the odds of scoring plummet. Also, you will not get that many chances with runners in scoring position. If you give up an out when you already have runners in scoring position, it drastically cuts your chances of scoring. In these situations, if you don't mind pulling the pitcher, or you are trailing after the 5th inning, you need to be pinch-hitting with increasing desperation. That includes your weakest hitting non-pitchers, or platoon players facing bad match-ups against a relief pitcher.

Be sure you have a backup player to replace the guy that is being removed for the pinch-hitter and make sure you don't run out of pinch-hitting options prematurely. For example, suppose you platoon a righty and lefty CF and started the lefty. In the 7th inning of a tie game, a lefty reliever comes in to face the lefty CF. Bring in the righty CF or another hitter to bat. It is likely to be the last at bat of the game for that spot in the order, and even if it isn't, the game is on the line right now. If it were the 5th inning you would have to think about it because at that point plenty more runs may score so the game may not, in fact, be on the line right now. And if you pull your lefty CF now, the righty CF may have to bat 2-3 more times and you will be powerless to pull him against righty relief pitchers that match-up well against him.

Save the right kind of pinch-hitter for the right situation. If you need a baserunner, take the guy who draws a lot of walks, take pitches and have patience at bat. If you need contact to advance a runner, take the guy with the high batting average and don't try to pull the ball. If you need power – such as if you are trailing by three runs but have the bases loaded – take the guy with the high slugging percentage and work the count so you can wait for a good pitch to pull.

The double-switch. This tactic was really invented because of the desire to avoid unnecessary and risky pitching changes, where you might have the misfortune to bring in a guy who doesn't have his good stuff today. If you are making a pitching change, to do a double-switch you look in your batting order for the most recent average or poor hitter to have batted. Suppose it's your LF batting 7th, who just hit last inning, and in your next inning the 8th spot will be coming up first. You put the new pitcher in 7th spot, and bring in a new LF in the 9th spot. Your new pitcher comes in and pitches well and gets you out of the inning while throwing only a few pitches. You go to bat, and after the 8th hitter leads off, the new LF comes to bat in the 9th spot. You have avoided a pitching change. Now, you could have left the new pitcher in the 9th spot and then pinch-hit for him, but then you would "roll the dice" and take the risk that the next pitcher you brought in would get tattooed. Instead, you are able to get a 2nd inning, or part of one, out of the other pitcher that you are able to keep in the game because of the double-switch.

Defensive substitution. This will reduce your ability to score more runs, because you will probably take better offensive players out of the lineup and when you bring in a defensive sub, he will no longer be available as a pinch-hitter. Therefore defensive substitution should only be done when you don't need to score any more runs or it is unlikely that the defensive sub will come to bat. This could be with a one-run lead in the 9th, a 2-run lead in the 8th, or a 3-run lead in the 7th. Look for situations where you can make a significant difference in the defense without doing much to hurt the offense (either because that position in the order doesn't come up for awhile, if at all, or because you have a defensive sub who is a decent hitter).

Pinch-running. Given that there are very few players on the bench, you only get to make a few moves and they need to be valuable ones. Pinch-running is such a waste that managers rarely do it and when they do it they will often use starting pitchers who are not scheduled to pitch that day. This avoids using up a bench player but exposes the pitcher to potential injury. In any case, I believe the only situation that deserves the use of a pinch-runner is when you are likely to score him from 2nd to win the game. You have to believe it will be the winning run, and it must be from 2nd. If the guy starts on first but you expect to have him steal or be bunted to 2nd, that's fine. But if he is going to be on 3rd then any runner

will do. The reason to pinch-run is to get a huge speed advantage that helps you score the winning run from 2nd or perhaps even 1st. And it should be in the last inning of the game, or close to it. If it isn't, you may find yourself completely out of pinch-hitters being forced into a bad match-up, such as having to bat with the pitcher. For example, if you are losing, it will take more than one run to win the game, so it is dubious to use your bench to pinch-run to get just one run. You should try to score with the "slow" runner that already reached base and use your bench to create the other runs needed to win.

ROSTER MANAGEMENT

The ideal team has 14 position players (hitters) and 11 pitchers. This includes 2 catchers, 6 infielders, 6 outfielders, 5 starting pitchers, 1 long reliever (who can also spot start, known as a "swing man"), 2 middle relievers, 2 quality "setup" relievers, and 1 great closer. Many teams will carry 3 catchers (and 5 outfielders) and use them carefully because they are more prone to injury and cannot play every day.

Among the hitters, the ideal balance is an equal number of lefties and righties and starters that are well-suited to the special lineup spots. Lefty bats are hard to come by since more than 2/3 of hitters (and pitchers) are right-handed. But since most of the pitchers are righties, there will be a platoon advantage if you have more lefty hitters. But if you have too many lefties you will be vulnerable to lefty pitching. Ideally you will have some star players that play almost all the time. This allows you to stockpile your bench players to provide good platoons at the other positions. If you have an average LF but he is backed up by 3 other guys that can play LF as well, and 2 are lefties, then you can be guaranteed of the best match-ups in that slot throughout the game. So a weakness can become a strength. To make this work you will need to have one or two utility players that can play a lot of positions so you don't have to spread your bench so thinly that each position has only one backup. If the latter occurs, you will be outmatched by pitching changes.

Regardless of your platoons, you want to have at least 2 righty and 2 lefty hitters in reserve on the bench. Save your best ones for later in the game. If you have one guy who crushes lefty pitching, just having him sitting there on your bench can "freeze out" your opponent from being able to even bring in any of his lefty relievers for fear that you will pinch-hit. To make good on this threat you want to have every position covered so that you at least

have the option of pinch-hitting. And avoid using your last lefty or last righty until the end of the game, otherwise you will endure long periods of bad match-ups because you will not have the hitter you need to drive the pitcher out of the game.

Make sure your bench is versatile enough to cover all of your weaknesses. That includes good defensive backups for positions where your starting players are bad defenders. You should have at least one excellent baserunner that can come off the bench, and avoid using him as an early pinch-hitter. You should have platoon-mates for your weakest starting hitters and backups for the platoons so you can handle at least 3 pitching changes. The best backups are guys that have solid batting averages and play many positions. Batting average is key because in many pinch-hitting situations all you need is a single to score a key run from second.

On your pitching staff you should have an ace starting pitcher and a solid number two. This allows you to break losing streaks, to match-up well against strong opponents, and to be more likely to win key playoff games. Your other starting pitchers will start less often and throw fewer innings per start, so they do not need to be as good. This is especially true for the fifth starter because with occasional days off in the schedule his spot will be skipped entirely. Your bullpen is going to be used to help the good starters close out the late innings of victories and to log tons of innings when your bad starters have to make an early exit. If the bullpen is good, you will still be competitive with your lower-level starting pitchers. This is because when you go to the pen the pitching improves and you get the benefit of pinch-hitting in the pitcher's spot. Starting pitchers should be righties, because most hitters are righties. But another option is a lefty paradox, which is better at getting out the righties (and switch-hitters). The worst starting pitching option is a normal lefty who is below average against righties. He is likely to only face righties and rather than starting he would be more effective coming out of the bullpen to face key lefty hitters that cannot be subbed for later in the game.

As noted earlier, you should have at least 2 lefty relievers, and 3 is also acceptable. At least once in the late innings there will be a situation where the opponent comes up and has 2 of the first 3 hitters batting left-handed. That's a good inning for one of the lefties to throw. Then, there will be another inning like that, or a few occasions where the star lefty hitter on the other team comes up with men on base and you will want to use another lefty reliever for just that one at bat. This is a good way to take lefty pitchers who are mediocre or

downright bad at facing righty hitters and use them carefully to face lefty hitters most of the time. Another good tactic is to look at the statistics and to plan to have at least one or two righty paradox pitchers who are good at retiring the lefty hitters and switch-hitters that end up batting lefty. It is also useful to have a few paradox hitters to counteract paradox pitchers.

Think of the use of the bullpen and bench like a chess game where you are trying to checkmate your opponent by creating a match-up in your favor that the opposing manager cannot counter. Baseball is all about match-ups. To do this your bench needs to have all the weapons and you have to be careful not to waste them too early in the game. Save them for when the game is on the line and a single run can be the deciding factor. If you are going to use them earlier, it should be for a big opportunity, like the chance to pinch-hit a three-run homer when you are down by a run.

TRADES

Many people make the mistake of thinking that the measure of a trade is the direct comparison of the statistics of the players in the deal. That is not at all the issue, although it should certainly be used as a starting point. The real measure of a trade is how much my team improves, versus how my opponent did. Of course, if the opponent is in a different league I couldn't care less about the second factor.

In determining how much your team improves, you have to look at where your team got better and by how much, and where it got worse and by how much. A trade will typically be a great trade if you can get rid of players that were not getting much playing time for you, in exchange for players that will get plenty of playing time. This is guaranteed improvement, because if the players you gave up were not playing anyway, you did not get worse by trading them. And if the players acquired are good enough to beat out your incumbents, then that can only be the case if they represent an improvement.

A useless trade would be one in which you trade a guy who plays all the time for another guy who plays all the time. You got better and you got worse at the same time. Not only that, you may have driven to the bench a perfectly reasonable starter who is now wasted because they are on the bench, while opening a hole where you gave someone up. So try to get rid of the playing pieces you don't really need and get help in positions where you need it, period.

In ranking players and looking at the degree of improvement, you cannot make a direct comparison of the statistics and ratings of players that play different positions. For example, just about any reasonable first baseman is going to hit better than just about any reasonable shortstop. Does that make 1B more valuable? No, because on any team there can only be one 1B and you must also field one SS. The relative value should be the basis for the trade. The best 1B may be of comparable value to the best SS. The average 1B may be of comparable value to the average SS. But the OPS of the average 1B may be .850 while the average SS may be .740. It doesn't matter because you do not have the option of playing 2 guys at 1B at the same time. The only thing that matters is how good the 1B and SS are relative to the other guys available to play that same position.

An additional wrinkle is that 1B and LF are relatively less valuable because defense is less important; it is easier to find good hitters that can play at those spots. That means you can construct a great platoon at 1B or in LF without creating a defensive liability. And you get the advantages of the platoon and you have better pinch-hitting to boot. Conversely, if you are forced to platoon 3 guys at SS, none of them are likely to be good hitters and at least one will be a bad defender. So now you have bad defense at a critical defensive position and your pinch-hitting roster is loaded with banjo-hitting middle infielders. As a result, notwithstanding the superstars like Barry Bonds and Mark McGwire, a good LF or 1B is not as valuable as a good SS, 2B, or CF who can hit, field well, and stay in the lineup. Plus, they also free up bench spots for better pinch-hitters who can platoon in LF or 1B. Everyone gets carried away with the power numbers at 1B and LF and the all-stars at those positions. If you want to be a champion you should build around a guy like Alex Rodriguez who fields a solid SS and hits far, far above the average SS. Your opponent may have McGwire but you may have a platoon that can still hit 40 HRs. Meanwhile, if you have A-Rod at SS that's another 40 dingers and your opponent has a gloveman who can only hit 5, so you are now way ahead.

In looking at pitcher values relative to hitters, look at the stat called BFP (batters facing pitcher). For a stud hoss like Randy Johnson, he will have faced over 1000 batters. A top hitter will have no more than 700 at bats. If the hitter has a big impact on defense, that increases his value, but otherwise the pitcher who has 1000 "at bats" that are outstanding is more valuable than a comparable hitter with only 700. This is reflected in the Majors today in the high salaries going to the best starting pitchers. Relief pitchers are another

story. A guy with 60 innings in a year may only have 250 BFPs, well below an everyday position player. But if he is a closer that only appears with the game on the line, one of his BFPs is a lot more valuable than the hitter's average AB. A clear way of thinking about this is by asking how valuable a great hitter would be if he could be a "relief hitter" that came in for the 9th inning and got to have not just one at bat, but every at bat in the inning. Or for that matter, every at bat with runners on base to be driven in. That, in effect, is what the closer gets to do if he is used cleverly, so his value is higher than his BFPs or innings pitched would indicate.

IN CLOSING

I programmed my first computer sports game in 1973. I began playing in my first fantasy baseball league in 1976, three years before the start of Rotisserie that is given credit today for "inventing" the fantasy leagues that now have 20 million members. In the 1980s I built EA Sports and pioneered the use of sports leagues and famous athletes in video games. I have attended over 700 Major League Baseball™ games, most of them from the front row where I have been able to discuss strategy with players and collect dozens of foul balls. I have worked personally with and learned baseball lessons from many professional players including multiple MVPs, team owners, and managers including Earl Weaver. In 1990, I attended a game in every major league stadium in the same season and even took in a Japan league game in the Tokyo Dome. And for the last five years I have made it a labor of love at 3DO to build the best baseball game in the world, ***Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001.***

