Errors (We're Hitting)

The goal here is to reward our hitters for getting on base while limiting, if not eliminating, subjective calls that can lead to inconsistent and disputable scoring. We won't be scoring by the book related to "errors" and "hits" when we are hitting.

The error is a flawed stat that requires subjectivity to determine whether a play should have been made. The question then becomes, "What play should have been made?" This is youth baseball. They won't make every play. The reality is that any ball put in play gives our team a chance, and that should be recognized.

The first part of this is very simple. If one of our hitters puts the ball in play and reaches base safely, it will be scored as a hit. It doesn't matter if a fielder drops, misplays, or throws the ball away.

Errors can be scored to account for moving additional bases, however. For example, a clean single into the outfield that gets through the outfielder's legs, resulting in the batter ending up on third, would be a single, advancing on a two-base error.

The result of scoring this way is that our batting averages and on base percentages will be higher than normal, but that boost will be relative. Those who benefit most from that boost will be the players who consistently put the ball in play.

Fielder's Choice

There is a "by the book" definition of a fielder's choice and how I want to score it. By the book, a fielder's choice is typically scored when the scorekeeper determines that the fielder made a throw to a base to get a runner other than the batter, and he could have retired the batter if he had chosen.

One typical example is when there is a runner on first base and a ground ball on the infield. The infielder throws the ball to second to retire the runner at second base. Even though the batter is safe at first, a fielder's choice is scored (in the box score, the batter is given an out). I want us to continue scoring a fielder's choice in this situation since an out was recorded.

Another example is when a fielder attempts to record an out at another base but does so unsuccessfully. The scorekeeper determines that had the fielder chosen to throw to first, he would have retired the batter.

An example of this is with a runner on third and a ground ball on the infield, the infielder throws it home and the runner is safe. The batter is also safe at first, and no out is recorded. Note that the lead runner could have been going to second or third as well. This involves some subjectivity. I do NOT want to score this as a fielder's choice, particularly since no out was recorded. The batter will be awarded a hit.

In summary, if the batter puts the ball in play on the infield, and the fielder throws the ball to a base in an attempt to retire a runner other than the batter…

1. …if an out is recorded on that other base, it is a fielder's choice.
2. …if an out is not recorded on that other base, it is a hit.

By removing subjectivity, these calls are simplified.

Errors (We're Fielding)

We will look at errors a little differently when we are in the field. The reason is that we need some accounting of defensive miscues from a coaching standpoint (whereas we don't care how proficient the opposition is).

We will still be very charitable here, and error calls will be limited. The reason is that we will continue to have ways to track defensive proficiency without scoring errors (more on that in a moment).

We should limit error calls when we're in the field to the following situations:

1. Groundball to first base. On an easy grounder to first base where no throw is needed, all the player needs to do is field the ball (or stop it) and step on first base. If unable to complete the play (barring other factors), it should be scored as an error.

2. Groundball where force out would have been recorded. We should typically be generous to third basemen, shortstops, and second basemen related to fielding groundballs cleanly. Unless, however, they needed to field an easy groundball in order to execute a force out (step on the bag or toss to a nearby base), particularly when the runner isn't moving on the pitch. In these cases, the fielder is treated like a first baseman.

3. Dropped throw where out would have been recorded. If a force out would have been recorded (first or any other base without a tag), but the throw was dropped (not in the dirt or an otherwise wild throw), an error will be recorded for the player receiving the ball.

4. Dropped pop-up, fly ball, or lazy liner. If the defensive player is essentially camped under a ball but drops it, we will score an error. Note that errors won't apply on other balls in the air where the fielding player has to make a running or diving catch.

5. Runner advancing after bad throw or misplay. If a runner takes an additional base because a fielder throws the ball away or lets it get by him, an error will be recorded. Note that this will typically mean that the batter recorded a hit, but advanced to another base due to the error.

We should be charitable to infielders who need to field a groundball cleanly and make a throw across the field. Subjectivity applies when making these calls, and we will otherwise record useful defensive information that can help us compare defensive proficiency without tracking these as errors.

Defensive Tracking

If we're charitable to our defensive players related to scoring errors, how will we know who our best defensive players are? That's where defensive tracking comes into play.

We will use iScore, which allows us to separate innings, assists, and putouts by position. This way, we can compare the number of outs different players execute while playing the same position. This, ultimately, is more important than errors,

which may punish a player for getting to a ball and then making a mistake, when another player may not have gotten to that ball in the first place.

As a result, it's very important that we have the proper players in the field, before the inning starts, and assign credit properly when outs are recorded.

Wild Pitch vs. Passed Ball

This is a situation that is often scored incorrectly.

Wild Pitch

If a ball is pitched wildly (high, wide, or in the dirt), it gets by the catcher, AND the runner advances AS A RESULT of the ball getting by the catcher, it will be scored as a wild pitch.

Passed Ball

If a ball is not pitched wildly (catcher should have caught it with average effort), it gets by the catcher, AND the runner advances AS A RESULT of the ball getting by the catcher, it will be scored as a passed ball.

Stolen Bases

Even if scorekeepers get the distinction between wild pitch and passed ball right, they often misunderstand how it applies to stolen bases.

If the runner was moving on the pitch (moving before it reaches the catcher) and the ball gets by the catcher, it will NOT be recorded as a wild pitch or passed ball. It will be recorded as a stolen base.

The distinction: If the runner was not moving when the ball reached the plate and ONLY advanced because it got by the catcher, a wild pitch or passed ball will be scored.

Defensive Indifference

Defensive indifference should almost never be scored. Yet, many scorekeepers score it anyway.

A common example: Runners at first and third. The runner is held at first by the first baseman. The pitcher pitches from the stretch. The runner takes off for second base on the pitch. The catcher does not make a throw to second base (or it is cut off by the pitcher or middle infielder).

A second example: The first baseman holds the runner at first. The pitcher pitches from the stretch. The runner gets an enormous jump. The jump is so good that the catcher doesn't make a throw.

In each case, a stolen base should be recorded. It does not matter if a throw isn't made to second base.

There are two primary things involved in defensive indifference:

1. The defense doesn't make an attempt to hold the runner (particularly evident at first base)
2. The pitcher throws from the windup

If these two things are true, the defensive is, by definition, indifferent to the runner advancing.

This is most likely to occur when the runner on base doesn't matter to the opposition, and they are more focused on positioning their defense to make a play.

Again, this will be exceedingly rare.

Fielding Substitutions

Accuracy is important, but it's particularly important that we give credit to the right players. Having the right player at the right position when a player is involved in a

play isn't enough, however. We need to be sure that all players are in their proper positions when the inning begins.

The reason is that the number of innings a player plays at a position is relevant when comparing outs executed by inning. If we get this wrong, the rate of executing outs will be incorrect and will result in misleading data to compare players.

Hit Quality, Type, and Location

Registering hit quality and type will be important for two specific groups: Hitters and pitchers.

Hit quality is how hard a ball was hit (hard hit, medium hit, or soft hit). Most will be medium hit, but we should adjust for slow rollers and hard-hit balls.

Hit type is how we label the hit (groundball, line drive, pop-up, or fly ball). A pop-up is only on the infield. A similar hit to the outfield is a fly ball.

This information will help us track whether what our pitchers and hitters are doing is repeatable. For example, if a hitter is consistently hitting the ball hard but not getting good results, that is likely to change. If they aren't hitting the ball hard and getting hits, it's not sustainable. The same can be said for pitchers, hit quality and type, and their results.

We also want to know the location of hits and be sure that this is scored accurately. This is especially valuable for tracking tendencies of the opposition so that we can position our defense well.

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