



FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

Even the baseball purist must wonder if our national pastime passes too much time

Posted Tuesday, Sep. 16, 2014

By Stefan Stevenson

MLB Pace of Game program

Here's a look at the league's rules, posted in every ballpark, to help keep the pace of the game moving:

- Umpires will not grant time for batters to step out of the box if to do so would unnecessarily delay the game. When given permission to leave the batter's box under Rule 6.02, batters may not step more than 3 feet from the batter's box.
- Rule 8.04 requires that the pitcher, when the bases are unoccupied, deliver a pitch within 12 seconds when the batter is in the batter's box and is set to hit. If the pitcher does not deliver a pitch within 12 seconds, the umpire has the authority to call a ball.
- When a Manager or Coach leaves the dugout for a second visit to the mound in one inning (mandating a pitching change) the Manager or Coach must indicate the relief pitcher who will enter the game. All other visits to the mound should be made as quickly as possible.
- Pitching coaches must have their starting pitchers warmed up and ready to throw the first pitch of a game at the scheduled start time.
- When possible, pinch hitters should warm up prior to going on to the on-deck circle. Unless there is a reason not to do so, the pinch hitter should be in the on-deck circle while the preceding hitter is at bat.
- Each Club must have a backup catcher available between half innings to warm up the pitcher if the game catcher has not finished putting on the protective equipment when the pitcher is ready to begin his warm-ups.
- Batboys must have a second bat readily available in the event a hitter breaks a bat during play, or if the bat goes into the stands and is not immediately returned.
- Players and staff will be subject to discipline for failure to adhere to the Pace of Game Rules and Procedures.

Even the purest of baseball fans must admit, at times, that the great game, our national pastime, often moves at a snail's pace.

After nearly a decade of game times decreasing, however incrementally, the length of an average major league game is back up in 2014. And if the pace holds, the average game will be the longest it's ever been. This season, games are averaging three hours and eight minutes.

And it's not revisionist history or some sort of longing for a game from our past that never really existed. Games really were shorter back in the day. The average time of a game 30 years ago was two hours, 40 minutes, according to Baseball Prospectus.

It's become such a worry for the league that outgoing commissioner Bud Selig lamented last month that he was aggravated.

"Let me give you my pet example: Player comes to the plate, ball one. Now he gets out of the box and he's adjusting all his equipment. What the hell? He hasn't swung. What is he adjusting?" Selig said.

Texas Rangers outfielder Daniel Robertson could tell him. Against the Angels on Sept. 9, Robertson spent more than four minutes during his five at-bats.

During that game, the Star-Telegram recorded the non-action time, things like the time between innings, visits to the mound and batters stepping out of the box. The breaks in the action amounted to one hour and 17 minutes of a game that lasted three hours and four minutes.

Between-inning breaks took the most time (33:24), but hitters stepping out of the box was a close second (24:37). And Robertson accounted for 4:32 of that by himself.

But it's not about routine for the rookie, who spent six years in the minors after playing at Oregon State. Each time he steps out of the box to look at third base coach Gary Pettis, to adjust his gloves or take a practice swing, he's doing it to break up the pitcher's rhythm.

"It's all about wearing that guy down," said Robertson, who went 0 for 5 that night. "Especially in the hot weather in Texas, I try to do it as much as I can, take a pitch or foul a good one off.

"If I can drag out a five-minute AB with him, in the grand scheme of things, five minutes in a game, you don't pay attention to that. But in reality that's a really long time, because now he's maybe thrown seven or eight pitches and this is just the first out. Or maybe the first guy swung real quick and you're the second guy."

The pace of the game doesn't bother Robertson, although he admits it did in college. The pace doesn't bother Rangers interim manager Tim Bogar, either. But he understands the complaints and the desire to attract younger fans who may find the game, ahem, boring.

"I understand why we get into this because of today's society and I get all this 'it's boring, it takes too long,' " Bogar said. "But to be honest with you, what do you do to make it shorter?"

Suggested remedies include instituting a pitch clock of some kind to force both the pitcher and hitter to stay engaged from pitch to pitch. Although that is unlikely to happen, the league and its new commissioner Rob Manfred, who replaces Selig in January, are likely to address the issue at the winter meetings in December.

"Pace of game is an important topic that we are thoroughly studying and discussing with the clubs and many participants in the game," MLB spokesman Mike Teevan wrote in an email.

The league's "Pace of Game" rules are posted in every ballpark to help keep the pace moving. Pitchers must deliver a pitch within 12 seconds when bases are empty, and umpires can keep batters from stepping out of the box.

Judging from the game timed by the Star-Telegram, it's not pitchers who are to blame, at least not on that night. Only one minute and five seconds was spent on pitchers stepping off the rubber. However, visits to the mound took up nine minutes and 20 seconds, including a disastrous eighth inning when the Angels scored seven runs and three Rangers relievers combined to allow six runs.

Rangers bench coach Bobby Jones, who has been playing and coaching professional baseball for 40 years, says the pace doesn't bother him when he's involved in the game. If he's sitting at home watching on TV, it's a different story. Like many fans, Jones gets annoyed by an often monotonous parade of delays.

While coaching a game, "you're thinking about what the next move is going to be and you're not just sitting and watching the game. We're anticipating," Jones said. "Sitting at home it's like, 'C'mon, let's go. Speed this thing up.' "

Jones echoed one of Selig's pet peeves.

"On ball one, you don't need to step out of the box and adjust your batting gloves. Just stay in the box and get ready because you haven't done anything yet, you haven't swung yet," Jones said. "I'd like to have it where you have to keep your foot in the box; I'd like to see that."

But Jones, like Bogar, isn't exactly sure what can be done to speed up the pace. Robertson, for one, worries the quality of the game will suffer if additional rules are added.

"Then what are you doing? Are you giving the fans the product they want? No," he said. "Anybody that knows the game understands that time doesn't matter. We're trying to win a game. You take as much time to make the best strategic moves you can as possible."

Plus, Robertson added, it's the little games within the game that make baseball so interesting.

"It's like chess; baseball is a game of chess," he said. "It's a bunch of little moves. When you're watching a chess match are you paying attention to how much time it takes?"

Good question.

But, then again, who's watching chess?

Correspondent John Henry contributed to this report.

Where does the time go?

On average, Major League Baseball games last just over three hours. The Rangers' 9-3 loss to the Angels on Sept. 9 was no different, clocking in at three hours and four minutes. A breakdown of the non-action parts of that game:

24:37

Hitters stepping out of the batter's box

9:20

Visits by catchers/coaches to the mound

33:24

Between innings

2:24

Replay reviews (1)

1:05

Pitchers stepping off the rubber

6:17

Other, including plate cleaning, switching balls

Time's up

Here's a look at the average game times in the major leagues over the years, according to Baseball Prospectus:

Year	Avg.
2014	3:08
2010	2:55
2000	3:01
1990	2:52
1980	2:38
1970	2:34
1960	2:38
1950	2:23

One batter's one-game saga

Rangers outfielder Daniel Robertson took the most time during his at-bats Sept. 9 against the Angels. Here's a look at the time he took between pitches in his five at-bats that night. Remember, this isn't the time of his whole at-bat, but only the time he delayed the game by stepping out of the box between pitches.

1st	7 pitches, :44 (flew out to left)
3rd	6 pitches, :59 (previous two hitters were retired in a combined six pitches)
5th	5 pitches, :36 (grounded into force-out to end inning)
8th	8 pitches, 1:34 (Including 21 seconds for a ball change; called looking)

9th 4 pitches, :39 (popped out to first to end the game)
Total 4:32

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Overlooked Ryan Rua could provide Rangers what they've lacked for years

GERRY FRALEY

Published: 15 September 2014 09:33 PM

Good baseball scouts know how to envision what a player will become. It is the art of projection.

As a high school player in the northern Ohio working-class town of Amherst, motto "Sandstone Center of the World," Ryan Rua was easily overlooked. Too skinny. No muscle. Not even warning-track power.

Roger Coryell, a former college coach who follows amateur players in Michigan and Ohio for the Rangers, saw a different player. The kid had athletic skills and exceptional bat speed. Coryell told Rua that if he could get bigger and stronger, he could do something in this game as a hitter.

"You talk to a lot of kids and try to encourage them," Coryell said. "Some of them take it to heart. Some of them don't."

And Rua?

"He took it to heart," Coryell said. "He's an old-school player."

The approach turned Rua into a power hitter at Lake Erie College, a rising NCAA Division II school in Painesville, Ohio. It helped Rua get his foot in the door in Major League Baseball as a 17th-round draft choice by the Rangers in 2011.

It got Rua to the majors last month. In his short time with the Rangers, Rua has shown the potential to be what the club has lacked for years: a right-handed hitter who can play all over the field.

Rua has appeared at first base and left field for all but one of his innings in the field with the Rangers. In four minor-league seasons, he primarily played second and third. Versatility makes Rua many players rolled into one.

"When you have somebody who can transition like that, it gives him more opportunities to be in a lineup," interim manager Tim Bogar said.

The bat is Rua's top tool. In one month against major-league pitching, Rua consistently has had good at-bats.

There are some flaws, as would be expected of a first-timer. Rua's swing can get a bit long as he pushes for his first major-league homer. He has taken only one walk in 64 plate appearances.

The Rangers can work with that. They believe Rua is a major-league hitter.

"When you talk to Ryan about hitting, he's very knowledgeable about this swing and what he wants to do," hitting coach Dave Magadan said. "He doesn't give away at-bats. He's got a good chance in every at-bat."

Rua needed help to get here. Coryell gave him the insight. Brian McGee, Lake Erie's coach, gave him the chance.

McGee had taken over a Division III program that moved up to Division II during the 2008-09 academic year. He searched for "under the radar" players such as Rua. The combination of a scholarship and the opportunity to play immediately with a program striving for better days sold Rua.

"Coming out of high school, he had a ton of upside but was a little bit raw," McGee said. "He did everything we asked him to do and more. In between classes, you'd see him in the cage hitting."

McGee helped Rua get a spot in the wood-bat Southern Collegiate League for the summer after his freshman season. A year later, Rua played in the higher-level Great Lakes Summer Collegiate League. When Rua was named most valuable player in the league's all-star game, other scouts noticed.

In Rua's junior year, Lake Erie practices and games because a regular stop for scouts. He became the first player drafted from Lake Erie, better known for its equestrian program.

"We didn't do it," McGee said. "Ryan did it. He's the most modest, down-to-earth kid I've ever coached. But he's very tough mentally. I'm not the easiest guy to play for, and I was tough on Ryan because he was so good. He responded."

Rua turned into the player that Roger Coryell thought he could be. That is scouting at its best.

Protecting the plate

A look at the highest individual averages on the Rangers for at-bats with two strikes in the count:

Hitter, AB, Avg.

Jake Smolinski, 26, .346

Adrian Beltre, 243, .276

Ryan Rua, 28, .250

Daniel Robertson, 85, .212

Leonys Martin, 238, .210

IN THE KNOW Ryan Rua

Age: 24. Ht., Wt.: 6-2, 205

How the Rangers got him: 17th-round draft choice in 2011 (534 overall).

As a Ranger: 16 games. 17-for-61 (.274), four doubles, seven RBIs.

2014 minor-league stats: Frisco (71 games), Round Rock (58). Combined stats, 18 HRs, 74 RBIs, .306 avg.

Did you know? Rua was an all-league basketball player at Amherst Steele High School. ... Over four minor-league seasons, he had 61 homers and 245 RBIs.

Think the Rangers' roster turnover was bad? Look at their Triple-A affiliate

By Gerry Fraley

9:13 pm on September 15, 2014

When the major-league team sneezes, the Triple-A club feels it.

As the Rangers went through players at record clip this season, their Round Rock affiliate in the Pacific Coast League dealt with constant turnover. Round Rock used 79 players — 41 pitchers and 38 position players — and made 203 transactions. The Rangers have used 64 players, including 37 full-time pitchers.

For Steve Buechele, his first season of managing at the Triple-A level was a valuable experience.

"That's part of the player-development side," Buechele said. "When things go a little haywire at the big-league level, there's going to be a trickle-down. You try to help the big-league club as best you can."

Buechele said the events of the season reminded him patience is a prized virtue for a manager.

"You have to do with the situation as it is and not let it affect you," Buechele said.

Buechele declined to say if he will ask to be considered for the Rangers' managerial opening. He was a candidate with Colorado when the Rockies hired Walt Weiss as manager before the 2013 season.

Luis Sardinas impressing Rangers with 'survival skills'

By Gerry Fraley

9:17 pm on September 15, 2014

ARLINGTON, TX - SEPTEMBER 14: Manager Fredi Gonzalez #33 of the Atlanta Braves argues to third base umpire Bill Miller that Luis Sardinas #3 of the Texas Rangers should be out during the fourth inning of a baseball game at Globe Life Park on September 14, 2014 in Arlington, Texas. Upon video review Sardinas was ruled out on the play. Texas won 10-3. (Photo by Brandon Wade/Getty Images)

Middle infielder Luis Sardinas had three hits in a 10-3 win Sunday against Atlanta. The Rangers were most impressed with his swing on a single in the six-run sixth against right-hander David Hale.

Sardinas is a switch-hitter having more success from the right side. He is hitting .246 with a .539 OPS against right-handers and .333 with an .824 OPS against left-handers.

"He's got survival skills," interim manager Tim Bogar said. "He's a kid, but he's up there battling and battling. He may get a little abused early, but he makes the adjustments faster."

Briefly: Why did Mike Carp accept an outright assignment to Triple-A Round Rock after its season ended? To pick up an extra \$200,000. Had Carp taken free agency, the Rangers would have been freed of their financial obligation to him. Carp will earn a total of \$438,462 for his time with the Rangers, which included five singles in 40 at-bats. ... Left-hander Alex Claudio is in the market for a new club in the Puerto Rican winter league. Ponce, his club for the last three years, will not field a team this season because of financial concerns. There will be only five teams in the league this season. ... Rookie exuberance: In the last seven games, three Rangers runners have been thrown out as they tried to advance from second to third on a grounder to the left side. A rookie ran into the out each time: Rougned Odor, Ryan Rua and Sardinas.

Rangers will see slumping foe, familiar face in Oakland

By Gerry Fraley

9:15 pm on September 15, 2014

ARLINGTON, TX - JULY 27: Jed Lowrie #8 of the Oakland Athletics makes the out on Daniel Robertson #19 of the Texas Rangers throwing to first base for the double play in the fifth inning at Globe Life Park in Arlington on July 27, 2014 in Arlington, Texas. (Photo by Rick Yeatts/Getty Images)

The Rangers face Oakland for the first time since July 27 in a three-game series that begins Tuesday night at the Coliseum.

After the last meeting, Oakland was 65-39 and leading the American League West. The Athletics are 18-27 since then and had dropped to 10 games behind the division-leading Los Angeles Angels at the start of play Monday.

Oakland's bullpen has seven blown saves for 14 chances in that span, but the lineup has been a bigger problem. In the last 45 games, the Athletics are hitting .225 with an average of 3.6 runs.

Third baseman Josh Donaldson and outfielder-first baseman Brandon Moss have stopped hitting for power. They had 41 homers before the All-Star break and have 10 since the break. Moss on Sunday ended a stretch of 24 consecutive games without a homer.

Former Rangers catcher Geovany Soto has been of little use. He is hitting .234 with a .599 OPS for 51 plate appearances with Oakland. The Athletics are 1-6 in his starts.

National columnist: Michael Young could be perfect choice to manage Rangers

Published: 16 September 2014 12:59 AM

The Rangers could use some good PR and a manager that knows how to deal with people.

Michael Young would fulfill both needs, according to Sports On Earth's Richard Justice, which is why Justice said Young "might be a perfect choice to manage the Texas Rangers."

Justice pointed to the Young's long career as proof that he understands what has worked and what hasn't. He played with everyone from Alex Rodriguez to Vladimir Guerrero. He got into a fight with Rangers GM Jon Daniels but the two have since made up.

"Young understands that managing a team means interacting with players with different levels of talent and all kinds of different motivations," Justice wrote. "To be able to unite them in the quest of a common goal is what managing in the big leagues is about."

And a little positive PR wouldn't hurt after Nolan Ryan left the team last winter and Ron Washington unexpectedly resigned earlier this month.

Justice argues that Young would have the trust of the fans the way Nolan Ryan did when he returned to the team as an executive and that Young is the "only potential replacement for Washington who could instantly win over the fan base."

As for Young's lack of managing experience?

The Cardinals' Mike Matheny and the Tigers' Brad Ausmus didn't have managing experience before taking over their respective teams. Matheny will take St. Louis to the playoffs for the third straight year. Ausmus is in position to have the Tigers there in his first season.

It can be done.

ESPN DALLAS

W2W4: Rangers vs. Athletics

September, 16, 2014

By Calvin Watkins | ESPNDallas.com

Here's a preview:

What's up with the A's?: Battling to stay alive in the AL Wild Card chase. The Athletics after going 51-30 in the first 81 games of the season have since gone 32-36. They begin a nine-game homestand this week and need almost every game to keep pace. Josh Donaldson is the team leader in home runs (27), RBI (95) and hits (142). Brandon Moss is second in hits (113) and RBI (79). Tuesday's starter, Scott Kazmir has a 8.20 ERA in his last four starts. Oakland has won four of the last five meetings against the Rangers.

What's up with the Rangers?: They're hot. The Rangers have won three in a row, first time since June mid-June that's occurred. Leonys Martin has 37 multi-hit games, third on the team behind Adrian Beltre (49) and Alex Rios (38). Martin also is hitting .337 as a leadoff man and hit .385 on the just completed homestand. Adrian Beltre leads the Rangers in HR (18) and RBI (71). Elvis Andrus has 151 hits and a career-high 33 doubles this season.

Rangers' injury report: OF Michael Choice had a MRI on his strained left hamstring and is doubtful for the road trip. Jake Smolinski (foot) should return after not playing since July 21. Jim Adduci (concussion) and Scott Baker (elbow) are questionable. Robinson Chirinos has played well in his return from a stiff neck. He's reached base in five of nine plate appearances.

Pitching Matchups: Tuesday: RHP Nick Tepesch (4-10, 4.47) vs. LHP Scott Kazmir (14-8, 3.32); Wednesday: LHP Derek Holland (1-0, 0.86) vs. RHP Jeff Samardzija (4-5, 3.41); Thursday: RHP Nick Martinez (3-11, 4.93) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (13-8, 3.18).

Rangers rookies play dress-up

September, 15, 2014

By Calvin Watkins | ESPNDallas.com

The Texas Rangers are set to embark on their final road trip of the season, a six-game California swing starting Tuesday night in Oakland and ending Sunday in Anaheim.

As part of an annual tradition on most baseball teams, the Rangers' rookies had to dress up in a variety of costumes.

Several, including Tomas Telis, Spencer Patton and Rougned Odor, were outfitted in what could be described as colorful clothing.

SPORTS ON EARTH

Young The Right Man For Rangers
Richard Justice
September 15, 2014

Above everything else, it's about managing people. Running a big league baseball team is so much more than that, but this is where it starts. This is also where many managers fail.

That's why I think Michael Young might be a perfect choice to manage the Texas Rangers. First, he'd be a huge public-relations coup, and after all that has happened the last two years, the Rangers could use one.

One day, it was their most popular player, Josh Hamilton, bolting to sign with the Angels. Another, it was team president Nolan Ryan resigning after a spat with general manager Jon Daniels.

And there were the late-season problems, letting the AL West slip away in the final week of the 2012 season and losing an extra regular-season game last year to miss the AL Wild Card Game.

This season was going to be Daniels' chance to reestablish his expertise at assembling a winning baseball team. His blueprint was shredded when injuries decimated the roster, and the Rangers likely will finish with the worst record in baseball. Then, popular manager Ron Washington abruptly resigned without explanation.

Young could bring a dose of feel-good news. He's probably the third-most popular player in franchise history, behind Ryan and Hamilton. He's a seven-time All-Star and was the face of the franchise for a lot of his 12 seasons (2001-2012), especially the years before they became competitive and won two straight American League championships in 2010-2011.

He played with Alex Rodriguez when the Rangers were attempting to build the franchise around the star. He saw how that experiment failed. He also played with Vladimir Guerrero, who was extremely popular, a guy around whom players rallied.

Young knows that the game is not easy, and because he had an awareness of the people around him, he would know that every player isn't going to care as much as he cared. He was a leader in a quiet way, a guy who led more by example, but would also say what needed to be said. He was universally respected by his managers and teammates alike.

Young's journey was not without some bumps in the road. He was asked to change positions three times in his career and wasn't always the good soldier. He asked to be traded at least once and feuded with Daniels a time or two. They're said to have resolved their differences during a long chat at a mutual friend's wedding last winter.

Because of all this, Young understands that managing a team means interacting with players with different levels of talent and all kinds of different motivations. To be able to unite them in the quest of a common goal is what managing in the big leagues is about.

Young would be viewed almost the same way Ryan was when he returned to the franchise and took over as team president in February 2008. Fans trusted Ryan in a way they'd never trusted anyone else. To many, it's no coincidence the Rangers were in the World Series two seasons later.

That was a large leap for a franchise that had never won as much as a playoff series in its first 38 seasons of existence. Daniels deserved more credit than Ryan for the success, but from a PR standpoint, the optics of Ryan sitting there in the front row spoke volumes.

With Rangers' home attendance down for a third straight year, with it off almost 700,000 from two years ago, the Rangers need to do more than simply hire a competent manager. They need someone to inspire confidence in fans. Young is the only potential replacement for Washington who could instantly win over the fan base.

Wait, you're saying, Michael Young has no experience. Hasn't been a big league coach. Hasn't even managed a bowling team. How is he qualified to manage against Mike Scioscia and Bob Melvin in the American League West?

Baseball people once agreed that a guy needed managerial experience, at least in the minors. If he didn't have managerial experience, he at least needed to have sat there beside a Gene Mauch or an Earl Weaver and taken notes. But general managers have become convinced in recent years that previous managerial experience is not a make-or-break deal.

Mike Matheny had never so much as worn a big league uniform since his playing career ended. But Cardinals general manager John Mozeliak hired him in November 2011 because he was the leader of the Cardinals during his playing days.

He also had the presence and demeanor of a great leader, and Mozeliak figured that if he surrounded him with smart coaches, he might have himself the right guy to replace a legend, Tony La Russa.

Matheny is about to lead the Cardinals to a third straight playoff appearance. To say he has been a smashing success would be an understatement. He had no experience, but he had something at least as important. He had a feel for what players need. He had a feel for the games, for umpires and for dealing with the media and fans.

When another future Hall of Famer, Jim Leyland, retired last winter, Tigers general manager Dave Dombrowski turned to Brad Ausmus.

Like Matheny, Ausmus had never managed a game. Like Matheny, he was a leader on most of his teams, a de facto captain. He's also smart and engaging and the kind of man that others tend to trust. In a year when the Tigers have played inconsistently, Ausmus has drawn nice reviews.

There's absolutely no reason Young couldn't do the job as well as Matheny and Ausmus have done theirs. Daniels would surround him with a competent staff and assist him at every step along the way.

No amount of managing in the minor leagues can completely prepare someone. Some of baseball's most competent coaches have spoken of being overwhelmed by the speed of the game and the rapidity with which they must make decisions when they're hired to manage.

Some of them adjust. Some can't. If the Rangers are looking for a sure thing, they'd better attempt to lure Jim Leyland out of retirement. Otherwise, they simply have to measure everything that can be measured and go from there.

In the end, though, it's a people business. It's being able and willing to deal with people straightforward and honestly. When you consider how much input many front offices have in generating lineups, defensive alignments and favorable late-inning match-ups, it can't be overstated how important that quality is.

Let's face it, there are dozens and dozens of qualified people out there. The Rangers' interim manager, Tim Bogar, is one of those. So is pitching coach Mike Maddux. Daniels couldn't go wrong with either. And while Young's hiring would create a bit of extra buzz, it could not fix everything. That's okay. There's a long off-season ahead. He'd simply be one step in the right direction.