Abolish The Designated Hitter Essay, Research Paper

Abolish the Designated Hitter

Do you prefer a bases loaded double that clears the bases and involves an exciting play at home plate or a boring three-run homerun where the baserunners trot around the bases while the defense stands around with dazed looks about them? Would you prefer stolen bases, squeeze plays, and trying to move the baserunners to make something happen as opposed to a team waiting for someone to hit a homerun? If you prefer the aforementioned as opposed to the later then consider yourself a fan of “little ball.” No it’s not your son’s little league team it is a characteristic that defines the major difference between Major League Baseball’s two leagues: the American League (AL) and the National League (NL). The main factor that causes the difference between the two is the AL’s use of a Designated Hitter (DH: a position player who hits for the pitcher but does not play in the field). This was an “experiment” started by Major League Baseball (MLB) in the 1970’s that is unfortunately going on today. Although the DH may add runs to a team and length to a game, it takes away from the purity of the grand old game.

Stealing bases and advancing runners can make for a shorter game while the AL style can cause long, drawn out games. Although these happenings can occur in both leagues, movement of runners occurs on a higher frequency in the NL. Generally there are more runs scored in an AL game. This is a major factor in the length of the game. Although run scoring has increased throughout the league, it has caused the already long AL games to become even longer. Another reason for the longer game is that an AL manager might be quicker to change the pitcher because he does not have to consider pinch hitting for him later in the game because of the DH. In the NL a manager must factor in the possibility that the pitcher may be due up to bat in the next inning so he’ll leave the pitcher in and not take a five minute break for the new pitcher to warm up. Run production leads to many pitching changes which causes the problem of four hour baseball games. While this is not necessarily a significant amount of time in the scope of the universe, there are people who run marathons in a shorter length of time.

Major League Baseball and the World Wrestling Federation are two completely different entities. While fighting is associated with wrestling it is not associated with baseball, but fighting seems to be occurring in greater regularity in today’s baseball. The use of the DH in the AL can make a pitcher more likely to intentionally bean (hit with ball) a batter that he doesn’t like too much because that pitcher knows that he will not have to face the consequences since he does not bat. In the NL, if the pitcher has beaned someone intentionally, the other team will simply place a fastball in his back, and then they are even, until the next beanball and then we may have a NL brawl. In the AL the batter may simply take matters into his own hands by racing toward the pitcher to distribute his own justice. When that happens both team’s benches clear and a major brawl ensues. Had the DH rule not been in place maybe that batter would have just let that pitcher get his medicine at bat later on instead of providing the crowd with the unscheduled wrestling match.

The DH has added years to player’s careers and will continue to do so. Five hundred homeruns or three thousand hits. Either of those statistics practically guarantees induction into baseball’s Hall of Fame, and because of the DH a good hitter can reach either of these milestones with enough time. The typical DH is someone who is a liability on defense but can drive in runs hitting. A player who would typically sit on the bench and be relegated to pinch hitting in the NL can still play everyday as a DH and pad his stats. This puts some old records in jeopardy because of the DH someone could challenge the records just hitting and not having his weakness on defense or speed in the field exploited. It is misleading to look at career statistics of a player who was or is a DH because they did not have to go through playing in the field everyday. Someone who has reached either of the Hall of Fame benchmarks by way of the DH should only be rewarded with admission into the Hall if he was good enough before they became a DH.

The DH adds runs to scores, length to games, and years to careers. It also changes the beanball to brawl ratio from 3:1 in the NL to maybe 1:1 in the AL. More brawls means more

consumption of time. Too much time and too many fights are not something that has always been associated with baseball. Although the DH probably isn’t going anywhere, and others may give different reasons for increased time and scores, I would like for you to take about twenty homeruns out of each AL lineup. I bet after you do that the scores and time go down.

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