

## Rules of the game

# Author looks at baseball by the book

## Citing real plays, Meltzer explains 'cerebral game'

Want to get to know the sometimes convoluted and often-debated rules of baseball? Sports Weekly will be running a series of excerpts from Peter E. Meltzer's book *So You Think You Know Baseball? A Fan's Guide to the Official Rules*. The book, from publisher W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., is available June 10.

The author was interviewed via e-mail by USA TODAY Sports' Reid Cherner about his attempt to break down the baseball rule book.

**Q: Baseball is unlike any other sport (except perhaps golf) for its fascination with the rules. What is in the game's DNA that makes it so?**

**A:** Baseball has more of a tradition than any other major sport. Numbers and statistics are part of it. Baseball has a rich history of capturing every aspect of the performance of every player ever since the game began. It also has the most cross-generational appeal. Most of us can remember being taken to our first baseball game by our parents. It is the most cerebral game.



Write stuff: Peter Meltzer clarifies baseball rules.

As for the rules, the absence of a clock gives fans the chance to digest and analyze what is happening on the field. That's why fans love to keep their own scorecard as the game unfolds. The idea of memorializing the performance of each player as the game is going on (and then saving the scorecard) is unheard of in other sports.

**Q: What's your favorite rule in the book?**

**A:** The only item which may be eaten, drunk, smoked or injected which is specifically prohibited by rules is licorice, which cannot be used to discolor a baseball.

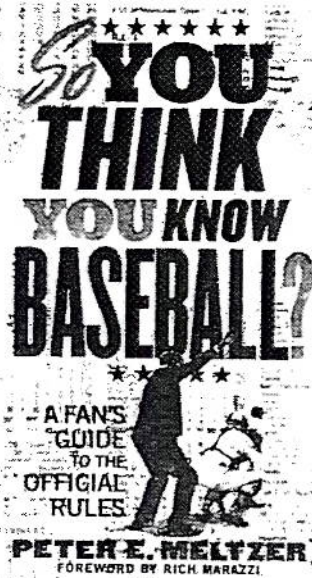
**Q: What makes this book different?**

**A:** It is the only book which focuses on actual Major League Baseball plays as opposed to dry hypotheticals invented by the author. This brings the plays to life and lets the reader know an umpire (or official scorer) actually had to deal with the situation at hand. It is more fun to analyze (real) plays than those created by the writer.

It is the only book which analyzes every baseball rule which has been the subject of interpretation as opposed to a random rule here and there, in hodgepodge fashion. It is the only book which analyzes both the "action on the field" rules and the official scorer rules.

**Q: What does the baseball rule book consist of?**

**A:** The first part (sections 2 through 9) relates to the action



**On deck:** Meltzer says his book, available June 10, "analyzes both the 'action on the field' rules and the official scorer rules."

on the field which can affect the outcome of the game and how umpires should deal with those situations. Did the ball hit the runner? Does the infield fly rule apply to that pop-up? Did the fielder obstruct the runner? Does that run count even though the third out occurred on the play? Can the batter run to first after the catcher did not catch strike three?

The second part (section 10) relates specifically to how the action on the field should be scored — i.e. the statistical component. Should that mental mistake by the fielder have been counted as an error? Does the runner get credit for a stolen base on a wild throw? Does the hitter get credit for an RBI even though he hit into a double play? Does the pitcher get credit for a save even though his team was up by five runs?

One is the province of the umpires on the field, and the other is the province of the official scorer.

**Q: Give me a sure winner on the rules to win a bar bet. Is there one you like?**

**A:** I'll pick two, both based on actual plays. First situation: bases loaded, two outs, batter doubles. All runners score but the runner on first missed second rounding the bases. The defensive team successfully appeals. How many runs score on the play? Answer: None, because the successful appeal was the third out of the inning and pre-empts any runs that may have scored on the play.

Second situation: Sept. 16, 2008, Rays against Red Sox. In

## EXCERPT

**Can a player be ejected after the game is over?**  
Yes. On June 23, 2010, the Los Angeles Angels-Los Angeles Dodgers game in Anaheim saw Dodgers catcher Russell Martin ejected after the game ended. When this happens, the ejected player is eligible to play in the next game but is subject to a fine.

With the Angels leading 2-1 in the top of the ninth, Reed Johnson was on second base and Martin was on first with two outs. Pinch-hitter Jamey Carroll hit a single to left field. Martin was called out at second base when Angels left fielder Juan Rivera threw behind him after he had rounded the base. Martin was ruled tagged out before Reed Johnson scored the apparent tying run. Since Martin was the third out, the game was over. Martin nevertheless was ejected for arguing the call. Two nights later, Dodgers first baseman James Loney was ejected after the game ended when he argued a Mariano Rivera third-strike call by umpire Phil Cuzzi in the Dodgers' 2-1 loss to the Yankees.

The discretion of umpires to eject players, coaches or managers for unsportsmanlike conduct or language is broad. In another incident involving Russell Martin, on September 26, 2011, home-plate umpire Paul Schrieber tossed Martin (who now was a Yankees catcher) from the game in the fifth inning because he made a joke after back-to-back walks by pitcher Phil Hughes. Or at least Martin says his comments were a joke, telling news reporters that he asked, "Did you stretch before the game tonight?" and added, "I feel like you're kind of tight tonight." Given the situation, it's not hard to see how Schrieber might have missed the humor, especially since Martin admitted afterward that he was being critical of the strike zone. However, as Martin put it afterward, "What, we can't talk anymore? It's a game, man, we're supposed to be having fun. I was just trying to get him to laugh. I didn't say he sucked. I didn't say he was the worst umpire in the league. I didn't cuss at him. I didn't say any of that stuff. And I got thrown out. That's tough to do."

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the bottom of the ninth with the score tied 1-1, Tampa had runners on second and third. Rays catcher Dioner Navarro hit a fair ball that bounced over the fence (commonly known as a ground-rule double, though this is a misnomer). What is the final score of the game and what kind of hit is Navarro credited with? Answer: 2-1 and Navarro is credited with only a single.

Baseball enthusiast George Will came up with this one: Can a team on defense record three outs without a fielder ever touching the ball after the pitch is thrown?

Runners on first and second, no outs (obviously). The batter hits an infield fly between second and third. The runner on first passes the runner on second, and the ball then hits the runner who had been on second. In this situation, the batter is out due to the infield fly rule, the runner on first is out when he passed the runner on second and the runner on second is out when the ball hit him. A little obscure, I suppose, but certainly fun to ponder nevertheless. There are actually quite a number of these situations that can theoretically arise.

## Rules of the game

# Even aficionados need a little etiquette

Want to get to know the sometimes convoluted and often-debated rules of baseball? Sports Weekly will be running a series of excerpts from Peter E. Meltzer's book *So You Think You Know Baseball? A Fan's Guide to the Official Rules*. The book, from publisher W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., is available June 10. The author was interviewed via e-mail by USA TODAY Sports' Reid Cherner about his attempt to break down the baseball rule book. Here is the second part of the interview.

**Q: Is there rule etiquette? If I'm in a group and I know the rule do I quote chapter and verse or do I say, "I might know the answer?" Which makes me less of a smart ass?**

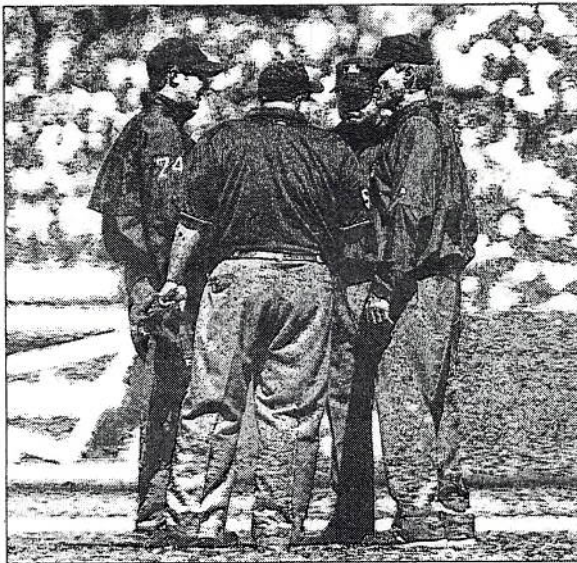
**A:** Chances are you might be considered a smart ass just for knowing the answer, but if you're in the right company, you might be admired instead. However, there is probably a limit to the extent to which you can impress your friends with your erudition and therefore, under no circumstance would I recommend quoting chapter and verse, even if you know. That suggests that you're spending a little too much of your free time studying the rulebook! Often I will know what rule to cite in a given situation, but I won't do it, even when among diehards. A few years ago, I wrote a thesaurus of hard words, and I learned early on that trying to impress others with vocabulary is a risky proposition.

**Q: It goes without saying that rules geeks will love this book. What is in it for the neophyte?**

**A:** It is my hope that fans at any level will be able to enjoy the book, although the book does assume at least a rudimentary knowledge of the game. Frank Fitzpatrick of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* captured what I was trying to accomplish, which was to "demystify — and in the process humanize — the game's complex and often arcane rulebook."

**Q: Give me some rules we almost always get wrong.**

**A:** A visiting team infielder reaches into the stands and is about to catch a foul pop fly. A home team fan pushes him away. Most people might think this is fan interference, but it is not because the player's protected territory ends where the stands begin. Next, most fans think the determination of which relief pitcher gets a save is an automatic formula. In fact, in certain instances, the official scorer has discretion as to who gets the save. Finally, there are numerous rules and situations which most fans don't understand, including "time" plays, interference and obstruction (and the difference be-



**Meeting of the minds:** It's the umpire's job to get the call right, and when there is doubt, consulting with your cohorts usually is a step in the right direction.

tween the two) and, of course, the good old infield fly rule.

**Q: The focus of the book is on plays that have actually occurred rather than odd theoretical plays that could happen. But is there one you can share?**

**A:** Here is one from the book: Is there any way, besides a balk by a pitcher or a stolen base, that baserunners can advance a base while the ball is still in the pitcher's hand? Hint: It has to do with the catcher.

The answer is yes. There is a form of balk caused by the catcher, although since a balk is by definition an act by a pitcher, the balk is charged to the pitcher. (This, though one sometimes hears the term "catcher's balk," this is actually a misnomer.) It occurs when the catcher sets up with one or both feet outside the catcher's box, violating Rule 4.03, which requires a catcher to station himself directly behind home plate. It is rarely called. But on June 24, 2000, the Atlanta Braves were playing the Milwaukee Brewers. In the top of the first inning, with Greg Maddux pitching, a man on first and Marquis Grissom at bat, Braves catcher Fernando Lumar was straddling the catcher's box while waiting for the pitch. Umpire John Shulock called a balk (on Maddux), which sent the Brewers runner to second base. That runner eventually scored and was the difference in a 2-1 Milwaukee victory. Braves manager Bobby Cox argued the call and was ejected. Shulock's call was atypical in that a catcher's balk is ordinarily called only on intentional walks. As to these walks, the rule provides that the catcher must stand with both feet within the box until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

## EXCERPT

On April 17, 2010, the Cleveland Indians were playing the Chicago White Sox. In the first inning, with one out, Cleveland's Grady Sizemore tripled to left-center field and scored when Shin-Soo Choo lined an apparent double to right. But Chicago appealed at first base, saying Choo missed the bag. First-base umpire Dan Bellino agreed Choo missed first base.

**1: Does Choo get credit for a hit?**

No. Rule 10.06(d).

**2: Does Choo get credit for an RBI, and if so, how would his at-bat be judged for scorekeeping purposes?**

He would get the RBI under Rule 10.04(a)(1) on the basis of an infield out. In essence, it would be no different than if he had hit a routine grounder to shortstop and was thrown out at first.

**3: What if there had been two outs when the play occurred — would the run have counted?**

No. This is not a time play because any play at first is a force situation, and when the third out is on a force, no run scores, regardless of when the runner on third crosses home plate.

**4: What if Choo had hit a triple while there were two outs, but he missed second base. How would his at-bat be treated and would the run count?**

He would get a single. Rule 10.06(d). The run would count here because, once Choo has reached first base, it is no longer a force situation. Therefore, presuming that Sizemore crossed the plate before Choo missed second (which is highly likely), the run would count.

On Sept. 16, 2008, the Tampa Bay Rays were playing the Boston Red Sox. In the bottom of the ninth, with the score 1-1, the Rays had runners on second and third. Rays catcher Dioner Navarro hit a book-rule double. What was the final score of the game, and what kind of hit was Navarros credited with?

The final score was 2-1, and Navarros was credited with a single. On a play like this, the game ends the moment the winning run scores, even if other runners are automatically entitled to score by virtue of a book-rule double. As for the scoring of Navarros's hit, Rule 10.06(f) provides that the official scorer shall credit such batter with only as many bases on his hit as are advanced by the runner who scores the winning run, even if with a book-rule double. Since the Rays had a runner on third, who had to advance just one base to score the winning run, Navarros got a single.

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**Q: Do even you have to consult your book?**

**A:** I wrote it, but I haven't memorized it. There are so many situations in baseball where the rulebook does not necessarily yield an intuitive answer, which is why one could probably win bar bets with so many of the situations in the book (and why it's so much fun to analyze situations that bring the rulebook into play).

## Altuve, Astros learn lessons

Continued from 11

### Building block

When Bo Porter accepted the Astros' managerial job in October after spending the previous three seasons as a member of the Washington Nationals' coaching staff, he knew he was inheriting a major rebuilding job. Houston lost 106 games in 2011 and 107 last year, and the average age of players on its roster this year is 27.

As expected, the Astros have struggled in the early going, posting a 14-36 record through Sunday while making the transition to the American League after 51 years in the National League.

But Porter also knew he would be inheriting a building block in Altuve.

"Even when I was in the other dugout, we knew he was always the guy on the Astros that we didn't want to beat us," Porter says. "He's one of the best hitters in our league."

Porter became even more impressed after his first conversation with Altuve.

"The first thing I found out is this is a guy who just loves to play baseball," Porter says. "When you have that kind of desire and passion to play, it just helps his skill set even more. He has that burning desire to be an even better player every single day. He is always looking to improve."

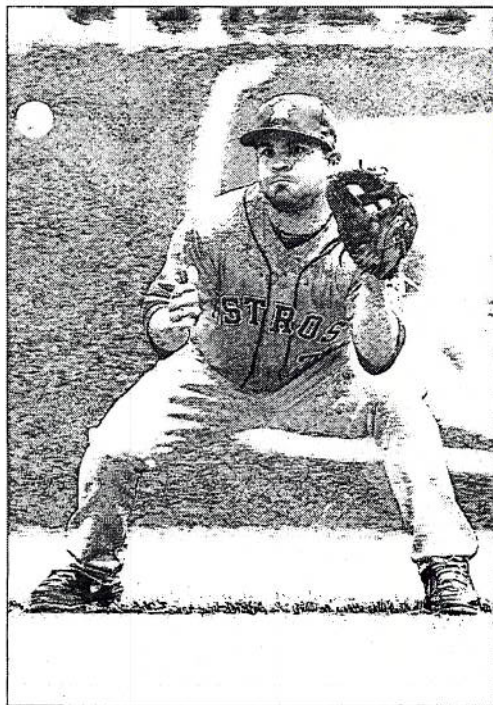
Altuve's defensive work has especially been elevated this season. While in the past critics pointed out his range and arm were somewhat lacking, he made only two errors in his first 223 chances and was part of 44 double plays in his first 45 games in the field.

His one error and .991 fielding percentage was seventh in the AL.

"That's something that I'm really working on," Altuve says. "I've been putting 100% of work into defense like I do hitting because that way I can help my team more. I feel like I'm getting a lot better."

It is now clear Altuve is more than just a novelty act. A smile comes to his face when it is suggested that he has proved to be a legitimate major league player rather than a short guy who can hit.

"I just go out and play as hard as I can every day," Altuve says. "I don't think what size I am really matters. I'm just trying to help our team win



By Charles LeClair, USA TODAY Sports

**Disproving critics:** Jose Altuve made two errors in his first 223 chances.

### Little big league

Jose Altuve was an All-Star in 2012, his first full season in the major leagues. Here are some of his 2012 stats compared with projected ones for 2013:

Year	BA	HR	RBI	R	SB	OBP	SEC
2012	.290	7	37	80	33	.340	.399
2013	.309	7	68	65	16	.343	.404

baseball games. It's not like I go out on the field thinking that I'm 5-6 and I'm the smallest guy out there. I'm just trying to help my team win games."

The Astros haven't won much and likely aren't going to in 2013. But Altuve has bought into Houston's rebuilding plan under second-year general manager Jeff Luhnow.

"It's been a tough start, but we're starting to play good baseball," Altuve says. "We're going to keep working hard, and we'll get better and better."

"We have a lot of young guys here, and once we put it together we're going to be a good team."

"Baseball is tough. It's a process. But we're staying positive."

Maybe the power of positive

thinking has helped Altuve grow an inch this season. He had been listed at 5-5 on the Astros' roster since making his major league debut on July 20, 2011, but is 5-6 this year.

"I've been 5-6 since I've been at least 17 or 18," Altuve says. "I think somebody made a mistake on the measurements."

He stands much taller in Porter's eyes.

"The great thing about baseball is that it doesn't matter what you look like if you put up numbers," Porter says. "Jose has put up numbers. He did it in the minor leagues, and he's done it in the major leagues. That's why he's an All-Star player. He's proven what can do."

Perrotto reported from Pittsburgh

## Rules of the game

# Designated hitter often a source of bemusement

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**On May 19, 2008, the Minnesota Twins played the Texas Rangers in Minneapolis. In the top of the 10th inning with the score tied 6-6, the Twins shifted Brendan Harris from the DH slot to the infield. Could the team then use a new designated hitter in his place?**

No, per Rule 6.10(b) (5). Because of this, the Twins lost the use of the DH for the remainder of the game. This forced pitcher Bobby Korecky to bat, and he got a hit in the 11th inning. Korecky pitched a scoreless 12th and was credited with the win after Minnesota scored in the bottom of the inning. Korecky became the first Twins pitcher to record a hit in an American League game since the DH rule went into effect in 1973.

**On Aug. 16, 1988, the Boston Red Sox were playing the Seattle Mariners. Red Sox manager Joe Morgan turned in an incorrect lineup that included two left fielders, Jim Rice and Mike Greenwell, and no designated hitter. Does the umpire have to bring this up on his own or does he have to wait until the other team points it out?**

If the DH is not designated prior to the game, one can't be used for that game. The umpire is supposed to enforce this whether the other team brings it up or not. Interestingly, however, the mix-up in this case wasn't detected by home-plate umpire Dave Phillips or Mariners manager Jim Snyder until after Seattle's 7-0 victory was in the books. If the umpire notices an obvious error on the lineup card, he

can bring it to the attention of the manager of that team anytime before the game starts.

Phillips apparently misunderstood that he was supposed to raise the issue.

"I checked the names and saw who was batting," Phillips said. "I just assumed Rice was the designated hitter. Funny that it never came up. But that's usually done by the other team. In my opinion, you have to use common sense as a guide. Before Rice batted, had the Mariners said anything, I would

have told the Sox to let their pitcher (Wes Gardner) bat. But when they didn't, and Rice was in the game, he was the designated hitter. Even if I'd known, I'd have waited until they said something."

However, the other umpires correctly noted that the umpires are supposed to enforce this rule themselves.

In the game, Greenwell played left field and Rice hit as the designated hitter.

**On July 22, 1999, the Cleveland Indians hosted the Toronto Blue Jays. Indians manager Mike Hargrove listed cleanup hitter Manny Ramirez as the designated hitter and number 7 hitter Alex Ramirez as the right fielder. However, the wrong Ramirez—Manny—played right field in the first inning instead of Alex. What happens in terms of the designated hitter?**

The Indians inadvertently used the designated hitter (Manny) defensively. Therefore they lost the designated hitter for the game. The rules provide that in this instance, Manny stays in the game and keeps his spot in the batting order, but that the pitcher (in this case Charles Nagy) has to hit in place of Alex in the number 7 spot. Nagy went 0-for-2.

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Attea Studios

slugger Chris Davis doesn't seem that surprising anymore. The upstart first baseman is off to an incredible start to the season, on pace to shatter career highs in nearly every offensive category.

But Davis inadvertently set off an online-auctioning firestorm when he hit two home runs at Camden Yards in Baltimore on May 29, a night the Orioles gave out free T-shirts honoring Davis to the first 10,000 attendees. The next afternoon, a T-shirt that was given away for free the night before sold for \$114.50 on eBay.

**Bauer ballade:** Cleveland Indians pitching prospect Trevor Bauer drew criticism (and no shortage of mockery) for his off-field hip-hop hobby during the offseason. He released a track that seemed aimed at ripping his former teammate, Arizona Diamondbacks catcher Miguel Montero — a player with whom Bauer had publicly clashed.

But the 22-year-old pitcher, now with Class AAA affiliate Columbus (Ohio), seems to be aiming toward positivity in his pastime. Upon request from Indians fans, Bauer wrote and recorded an original rap song called *Gutter to the Grail* to serve as intro music for a fan-hosted podcast.

The song name-checks a lengthy list of Bauer's once and future teammates and celebrates the Indians'

early-season success in 2013.

**This week in minor league shenanigans:** With "Bark in the Park" promotions growing in popularity at the major and minor league levels, the Wilmington (Del.) Blue Rocks — a high Class A Kansas City Royals affiliate — are offering cat owners the opportunity to bring their pets to the stadium. The Blue Rocks say the event is the first "Purr in the Park Night," but because of cat-safety concerns, pet owners will need to keep their pets in carriers. If the cats can handle it, they'll get to enjoy video tributes to famous cats, songs from the musical *Cats*, and, of course, educational programs on the importance of spaying and neutering cats.

**Coello's new old pitch:** Los Angeles Angels reliever Robert Coello has fooled hitters in 2013 with a form of forkball unlike most seen in the big leagues in recent years. Coello grips the pitch deep between his index and middle fingers, using the pressure from the fingers to take nearly all the spin off the ball. In effect, the pitch looks and moves like a knuckleball, wobbling to the plate.

Though forkballs enjoyed a run of popularity in the major leagues starting in the late 1950s, forkballs thrown like Coello's — with no spin — actually date to the earliest days of pro baseball. A 1908 article in *The Seattle Times*, dug up by Baseball

Nation's Rob Neyer, described Tacoma (Wash.) pitcher Bert Hall: "The young fellow simply put the ball between his first two fingers, drew back his arm and let fly. The result was a lot of wiggles on the ball that had the local help completely mystified."

**Mariano-oh, no:** As Mariano Rivera's 2013 retirement tour continues, the iconic closer often finds on-field presentations and special gifts. That was the case at Citi Field last week, when the 43-year-old New York Yankees closer got trophies commemorating his work with New York City's firefighters (and his figurative role as a firefighter) and the opportunity to throw out the ceremonial first pitch before his last game at the Mets' home.

Rivera threw the first pitch of the night to retired Mets closer John Franco, then, three hours later, threw the last pitch of the night to Mets outfielder Lucas Duda — a cutter that Duda lifted into right field for a walk-off single.

Rivera allowed three consecutive hits that tied and won the game for the Mets, marking the first time in Rivera's 19-year career that he blew a save without recording an out. It also raised his career ERA against the Mets to 3.53, his second highest against any team.

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RULES OF THE GAME

# INFIELD FLY RULE HAS FLEXIBILITY

*Sports Weekly is running a series of excerpts from Peter E. Meltzer's book So You Think You Know Baseball? A Fan's Guide to the Official Rules. The book, from publisher W.W. Norton & Company Inc., is available June 10. This week's excerpt focuses on the infield fly rule:*

**True or false? The infield fly rule requires that the ball be hit in or near the infield.**

False. In fact, the definition of "infield fly" makes no reference to where the ball is hit other than requiring it to be fair. A controversial play, which played a key role in ending the Atlanta Braves' 2012 season, involved an infield fly rule call on a ball that was nowhere near the infield. It also was the last game of Braves third baseman Chipper Jones' career.

On Oct. 5, in the first year of baseball's one-game wild-card playoff format, the Braves were hosting the St. Louis Cardinals. The Braves were trailing 6-3 in the eighth inning with one out and runners on first and second when Atlanta's Andrelton Simmons hit a pop fly to left. Cardinals shortstop Pete Kozma drifted back ... and back ... and back a little farther until he was well into the outfield. He finally was camped under the ball, waiting for it to come down, but at the last second he peeled off, apparently assuming left fielder Matt Holliday, who was a few feet behind him, would make the catch. However, that did not happen, and the ball dropped between them. But umpire Sam Holbrook, working left field as one of six umpires for the playoff game, ruled it an infield fly.

Therefore, instead of having the bases loaded with one out, the Braves were left with runners on first and second and two outs. The Atlanta fans were so upset they began littering the field with debris, causing an 18-minute delay. Braves manager Fredi Gonzalez protested the call.

Atlanta's next batter, pinch-hitter Brian McCann, walked to load the bases, but Michael Bourn struck out to end the inning. The Braves went on to lose 6-3, and their season was over.

It is not clear what caused Kozma to move away. It could have been the crowd noise or hearing the

infield fly call or perhaps assuming that Holliday was calling him off. (Holliday probably could have caught the ball if he had kept running, but he stopped, presumably because he thought Kozma would catch the ball.)

The question is, did the umpires blow the call? In the news media and blogosphere immediately after the game, opinions were divided. Some said Kozma was way too far into the outfield for the infield fly rule to apply. Also, the call was not made until the last second, rather than when the ball was at its apex. Others, however, citing the definition of the rule itself, argued that the key issue was not where the infielder was standing but whether he could catch the ball with "ordinary effort."

In fact, the comment to the definition of infield fly says, "The umpire is to rule whether the ball would ordinarily have been handled by an infielder, not by some arbitrary limitation, such as the grass, or the baselines." That Kozma was facing the infield and momentarily waiting for the ball suggests that it could have been caught by him with ordinary effort.

It was a tough way for Jones' career to end, especially since he had rallied against the new one-game playoff system.

As noted previously, a ball does not necessarily have to be hit in the infield for the infield fly rule to apply. However, does it at least have to be caught by an infielder?

No. It can be caught by any fielder. The only question is whether the fly ball could be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort.

**True or false: The rules themselves make no reference to an infield fly rule?**

True. There is merely a definition of "infield fly." The infield fly rule is referenced in a comment to the definition and in the Approved Ruling to Section 6.05(1), but not in the rules themselves.

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## SIGNATURE SALARY

**Pete Rose, Major League Baseball's all-time hits leader, might be banned from baseball, but he's still making a ton of money off the game — or at least off being Pete Rose.**

Working and living in Las Vegas, Rose, 72, sells autographs year-round, and his signature makes him more than \$1 million a year, according to a *Wall Street Journal* report.

For the last seven years, Rose has spent several hours a day, from 15 to 25 days a month, signing his name at various locations around Las Vegas, because merchandise shops in several malls sell items. "I need conventions," he told the *Journal*.

Buy a piece of memorabilia, get an autograph. That includes photos, baseballs, bats and more, ranging from \$75 to \$800.

"Pete's job is to be Pete Rose," Joie Casey, president of Hit King Inc., which manages Rose's autograph ventures, said in the report.



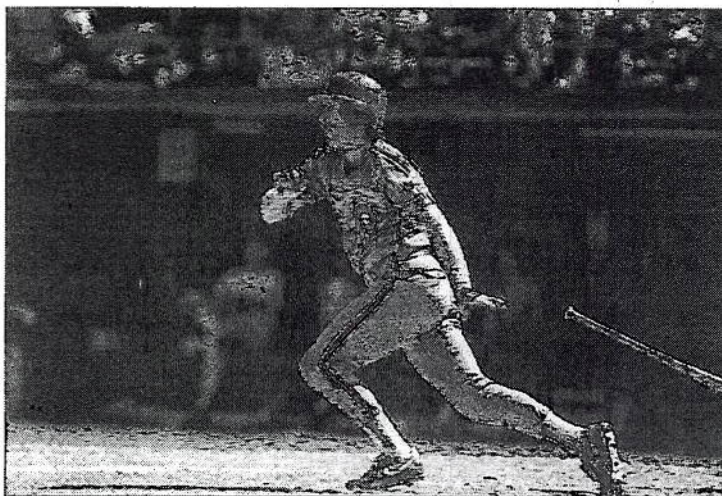
Signing days: MLB hits leader Pete Rose, right, makes a reported \$1 million a year by signing autographs for about 15 to 25 days a month.

"And he's the best Pete Rose there's ever been."

Rose isn't planning to go anywhere. His deal with Hit King runs through 2017. The company's best year was 2007, when total sales hit \$3.5 million, Rose said.

"I must say that what I do — and I don't mean to sound arrogant

about this — but what I do, I think I'm the best at it," Rose said. "Willie Mays is not going to do this, because he don't want to do it. Hank Aaron is not going to do it. Carl Yastrzemski is not going to do it. Some guys do shows. They do card shows. No one is going to try to do this 15 days a month."



1987 photo by Stephen Dunn, Getty Images

Gold standard: Mike Schmidt won nine Gold Gloves and three NL MVP awards and was a 12-time All-Star.

great hitting and fielding skills. The rise of these players came from the constant improvement in fielding. Through the course of baseball history, players grew bigger, stronger and faster. Pitching and hitting balance each other, so they never get out of whack for too long. Nothing balances defense, however, something that can most clearly be seen in declining error rates over time. That decline also shows in the ability of fielders to make outstanding plays.

**Offense and defense**

After Graig Nettles joined the New York Yankees in the early 1970s, I saw him make a play I had never seen before. On a slow roller down the third-base line, Nettles leaned over and, in one motion, scooped up the ball with his bare hand and threw to first base for the out. Off balance, he made a perfect throw. I don't know if Nettles invented that play, but he started a trend. Today, major league third basemen make that play regularly. Even hefty Pablo Sandoval makes it. With more third basemen playing at a high defensive level, these defenders have distinguished themselves with their hitting.

Five great hitting third basemen emerged during an offensive boom in the 1990s to qualify for the list, including a great fielder in Jeff Cirillo and a poor one in Chipper Jones. Between 1998 and

**Position OPS rankings**

Ranking by offense, positions are ordered slightly differently, but third basemen still occupy the middle.

1974-2012	On-base plus-slugging percentage (OPS)
Shortstops	585
Catchers	705
Second basemen	712
Center fielders	746
Third basemen	750
Designated hitters	767
Left fielders	778
Right fielders	786
First basemen	805

**Defensive spectrum**

Third basemen sit at the intersection of offense and defense. The defensive spectrum below theoretically shows which positions require more defense and which require more offense. The defensive spectrum goes in a circle of where players come as they assess defensive skills. The good offensive players at the top of the spectrum can move to the infield corners on the outfield. Think of Cal Ripken Jr. moving from shortstop to third base or Todd Hunter moving from center to right field.

- The spectrum is determined by how much players are involved in defense.
- Catcher (Defense more important)
- Shortstop
- Second base
- Center field
- Third base
- Right field
- Left field
- First base
- Designated hitter (Offense more important)

2001, three more third basemen would join them: Scott Rolen, Eric Chavez and Troy Glaus. Aramis Ramirez, Morgan Ensberg and Mike Lowell followed, with a great deal of overlap among these three groups. A similar offensive explosion in the 1930s produced only two such third basemen.

Among the fielding positions, third base ranks last in Hall of Fame representation. The emergence of players at this position who excel at defense and offense might change that dramatically. Jones will enter in a few years. A good case will be made for Rolen and Beltré. Longoria and Cabrera are off to good starts to their careers.

We should be arguing Cabrera, Longoria and Beltré like fans once argued Mantle, Mays and Snider. We should not wait until their Hall of Fame elections to appreciate the current greatness at the hot corner.

Pinto writes for BaseballMusings.com, an affiliate of USA TODAY Sports Digital Properties. Follow on Twitter @StatsGuru.

**Rules of the game**

**Intentional walks, K's can be convoluted calls**

Want to get to know the sometimes convoluted and often-debated rules of baseball? Sports Weekly is running a series of excerpts from Peter E. Meltzer's book *So You Think You Know Baseball? A Fan's Guide to the Official Rules*. The book, from publisher W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., was available starting June 10. This is the final excerpt in the series.

**Bases on balls**

On October 14, 2003, the New York Yankees were playing the Boston Red Sox in Game 5 of the American League Championship Series. In the second inning, Boston pitcher Derek Lowe was facing Nick Johnson with a runner on second and two outs. On a 3-0 count, Lowe intentionally missed the strike zone by throwing well wide of the plate for ball four. It was the first pitch of the at-bat that Lowe intentionally missed the strike zone.

**1: Would that be considered an intentional walk?**

Yes.  
**2: If the situation were reversed and Lowe intentionally missed with the first three pitches, but then changed his mind, tried to get Johnson out, but the next pitch missed, is that an intentional walk?**

No. Under Rule 10.14(b), the only pitch that is relevant for determining an intentional walk is the last one.

**3: Say that, with the 3-0 count, Lowe intentionally missed the strike zone by throwing the ball in the dirt, but otherwise over the plate. Johnson didn't swing. Intentional walk?**

No. For an intentional walk, the pitch must be wide of the plate. If a pitch is intentionally high or low, it won't be called an intentional walk if it's not also wide. Presumably, batters can swing at a bad pitch thrown within the width of the plate no matter how high or low, but not one that is very wide.

**Strikeouts**

**1: Which, if any, of the following would be counted as strikeouts?**

A. On June 15, 1994, the Texas Rangers were playing the Seattle Mariners. In the eighth inning, with one out, the Rangers had Ivan Rodriguez on first and Jose Canseco on second with Dean Palmer at the plate. On a 1-2 pitch, Palmer swung and

missed, but catcher Dan Wilson did not hold on to the ball. (This is the same play we examined previously but from a different perspective.)

B. On July 17, 1978, the Kansas City Royals were playing the Yankees. In the tenth inning, with the score tied 5-5, a runner on first and no outs, Reggie Jackson of the Yankees attempted a bunt with two strikes on him. He popped the ball up in foul territory, where it was caught by Royals catcher Darrell Porter.

C. Both of them are strikeouts.  
D. Neither of them is a strikeout.

The correct answer is A. That is a strikeout because Rule 10.15(a)(2) provides that a strikeout occurs when a batter is put out by a third strike not caught when there is a runner on first with less than two outs. Choice B is not a strikeout because Rule 10.15(a)(4) provides that the fielder who catches the foul fly is credited with a putout in this situation.

**2: Can a pitcher be credited with striking out a batter he didn't face?**

Yes. On August 23, 2006, the Chicago White Sox were playing the Detroit Tigers. In the seventh inning, after issuing a leadoff walk, Tigers reliever Colby Lewis went to a 2-2 count on Scott Podsednik, who was attempting to sacrifice bunt the lead-off runner to second base. Tigers manager Jim Leyland then elected to bring in left-handed Jamie Walker, who was attempting to sacrifice bunt the lead-off runner to second base. Tigers manager Jim Leyland then elected to bring in left-handed Jamie Walker. White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen countered by sending Brian Anderson to the plate to pinch-hit for Podsednik. Walker delivered one pitch; Anderson swung and missed for a strikeout. Per Rule 10.15(b), the strikeout is credited to Walker, who threw the third strike, but is charged to Podsednik, who had the first two strikes called on him.

**3: Would the result be different if Anderson came in with a 2-1 count on Podsednik and Anderson then struck out?**

Yes. The above rule only applies if there are two strikes on the replaced hitter. In this case, Anderson would be charged with the strikeout instead of Podsednik.

Excerpts from *So You Think You Know Baseball? A Fan's Guide to the Official Rules* by Peter E. Meltzer. Copyright (c) 2013 by Peter E. Meltzer. With permission of the publisher, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.