
Diamonds and Doodles

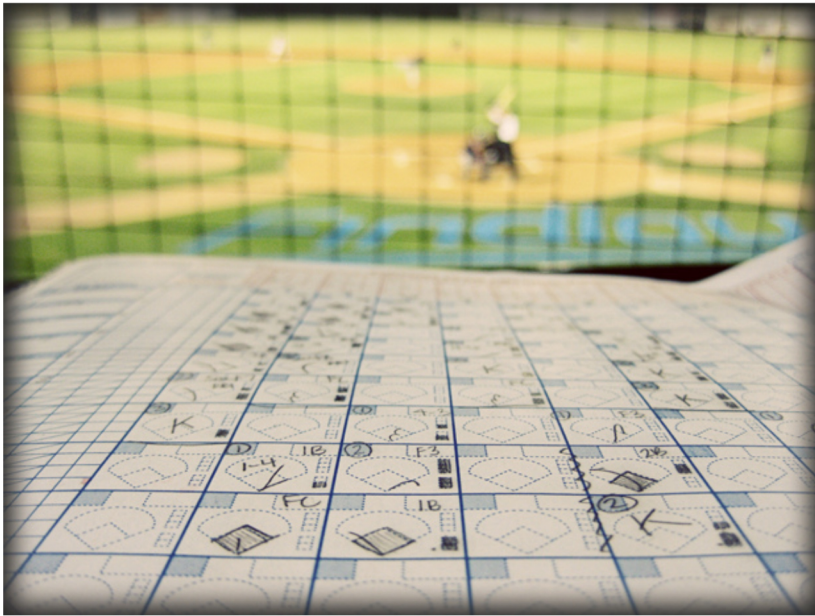
Posted on March 8, 2011 by Eric

Our first guest contributor for scorebook week is Patrick Truby, of [There's No I in Blog](#). Welcome aboard, Pat.



I've always admired neatly kept scorebooks because I've never understood them. The act of neatly scoring a complete baseball game seems like an impossible task for someone like me, who is equal parts obsessive-compulsive disorder and messy doodler. That doesn't make a ton of sense, I know, but no matter how hard I try to be neat and ordered, it's impossible for me to hold a pencil and paper without turning even the neatest, most organized piece of paper into a splatter of [Jolly Rogers and manturtles](#). This created a ridiculous amount of anxiety when, back in my ball playing days, the task of keeping my team scorebook became my responsibility.

On a few of my teams, bench players rotated scoring the games. Something about using the scorekeeping codes—the lines, colored squares, and backward “K”s—to create a readable account of the game on that grid pattern of boxes and baseball diamonds carried more pressure than a late-inning at-bat with runners in scoring position. I knew eventually I'd make a mess of it all. I doubt even now that I could accurately score a baseball game; basic things, like how to signify that an inning has ended or a player has been substituted, were never important to me. Instead, I got bogged down in the more artistic details.



By far the most important aspect of keeping score for me was creating the most accurate description of how hard and where a ball was hit. Anyone could write “1B” to signify a single. I was more obsessed with depicting how exactly a batter achieved that single. There's the saying that a swinging-bunt single is a line drive in a score book, but not in my scorebook. I attempted to draw the line to the exact point on the field where a batted ball was fielded. For that swinging-bunt single, I'd have drawn a very light line extending barely past home plate. A fly out near the outfield fence was just as easy. I needed to get the arc of the ball perfect, but that line would no doubt go just to the edge of the scorebook's outfield line. A line drive hit to left-center might be more difficult. I'd have to find the exact spot where the ball landed on the field and the corresponding spot in the book's scaled down field. Try as I might, I could never get it down to an exact science. If that line drive to left-center landed behind the shortstop, found a gap, and rolled to the outfield wall, I would be bothered for the rest of the game that I my little baseball pictogram gave the impression that a batter got a triple off a hit that landed in short-left.

In retrospect, my attention to that specific detail may have caused my scorebook doodling. I thought it kept me focused on both the game and the paper before me when really, my inability to draw the perfect lines caused hours of frustration. As games went on, my inner perfectionist would give way to my inner doodler. Lines wavered. Boxes got sloppy. To look at my scorebook, you'd imagine some kind of baseball catastrophe broke out in the sixth inning. I can't think of words to accurately describe how my doodles ruined a perfectly good scorebook except that, if any of my teammates went back and looked at one of the pages I scored, they'd probably think they were looking at a documentation of the rain and lightning delay that sent both teams to the equipment room for a few hours.

*Photo courtesy of [Jenny Ryan](#)



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