

## DH debate at 40: No sign of slowing down

Written by Associated Press  
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### Associated Press

The designated hitter turned 40 this year.

Fittingly, it's having sort of a mid-life crisis.

Never before has the imbalance between the American and National Leagues regarding Rule 6.10 been more of a potential problem.

The designated hitter rule has been controversial from day one. It's been criticized and even confusing since it was born. So it's only natural that Major League Baseball's once-bold experiment will continue to exist unevenly and indefinitely.

The DH debate won't die.

"A little controversy between the leagues is really not all bad," Commissioner Bud Selig said before the All-Star game in New York on Tuesday.

Selig cast one of the votes for using the designated hitter in AL games starting in 1973, when he owned the Milwaukee Brewers, then an AL franchise. He acknowledged this week that further geographic changes to divisions could force MLB to either scrap the DH altogether or install it for the NL but that's a future possibility and not an imminent plan.

When Houston switched to the AL West this year to even out the leagues at 15 teams each,

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daily interleague games became a necessity of the schedule.

“At the moment,” Selig said, “we are not going to change it.”

Perhaps the most polarizing of this sport’s many quirks and imperfections, the designated hitter came to be when AL teams sought to boost their then-lagging product. The decision was made during a time when the two leagues were far less integrated than now.

The gimmick not only worked to increase scoring and attendance but created a way for some of the game’s greatest hitters to extend their careers — and make a lot more money.

Orlando Cepeda even credited the rule for boosting his Hall-of-Fame credentials, after Boston signed him for the 1973 season following a long career with San Francisco.

“That was one of the best years because I was playing on one leg and I hit .289,” Cepeda said earlier this season. “And I hit four doubles in one game. Both my knees were hurting and I was designated hitter of the year.”

Designated hitters last year had the second-highest average salary by position at \$8.1 million, behind first basemen at \$8.6 million. That’s the main reason why eliminating the DH to bring the AL back on line with the NL is almost unfathomable. Boston’s David Ortiz, who recently passed Harold Baines on the career list for hits by a DH, is making \$14 million this season at age 37.

The designated hitter has also helped teams keep their best players in the lineup while giving them some type of rest. Minnesota All-Star catcher Joe Mauer is a prime example. When he needs a break from crouching behind the plate, manager Ron Garden can keep his potent bat in the lineup at DH.

“I get a lot of questions about the DH, how we use it and all that stuff, but basically the way I see it is I’d rather see David Ortiz hit than some pitcher,” Mauer said, intending no offense to his

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own teammates. "So we'll see. It is what it is right now."

Most of Mauer's AL peers predictably express support for the DH's existence, even if a lot of them would rather play a position than sit around between at-bats. The power of the players' union, protective of this lucrative and prominent job, is another undeniable force for the DH. And despite the complaints from dads with sleepy kids at long games, fans usually enjoy seeing runs cross the plate.

The cumulative AL batting average has beaten the NL's mark in each of the first 40 seasons of the DH. The last time the NL hit above .270 was 1939. The AL has 11 seasons of .270-plus batting during the DH era.

There are purists who have a hard time forgiving MLB for the installing the DH, though. Remember the movie "Bull Durham," when Kevin Costner's character Crash Davis launches his crude rant about the qualities and superficialities of life.

The NL guys, naturally, tout the purity of the no-DH game and the additional substitution strategy it provides. Many pitchers simply find it fun to try to hit — even if it means sometimes looking silly swinging meekly at strike three.

Yes, DH conflicts keep on coming — even in spring training. The home team is supposed to decide whether or not to use it and sometimes managers disagree.

Cincinnati's Dusty Baker wanted to use Shin-Soo Choo in that role for an exhibition game in March as a precaution for his tight right quadriceps but Arizona's Kirk Gibson insisted on keeping the pitcher in the lineup so he could let starter Brandon McCarthy take some swings. Baker and Gibson argued before the game about it at home plate. Gibson prevailed because the Diamondbacks were the host team.

When the games count, of course, the DH is used in AL ballparks and pitchers bat in NL venues.

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This year, that will force Detroit manager Jim Leyland to leave designated hitter Victor Martinez out of the lineup at Miami on the final weekend of the regular season while the other teams in the league use their DH as usual. If the AL Central or wild-card races are still unsettled then, that's the kind of potentially pennant-altering wrinkle that could someday prompt a change.

## **Rockies, Orioles win lottery for draft picks**

NEW YORK — The Rockies, Orioles, Indians, Marlins, Royals and Brewers won picks after the first round of next year's draft in Major League Baseball's second annual competitive balance lottery.

The lottery involved the 10 teams with the lowest revenue and 10 in the smallest markets and was six picks after the first round. A club's odds of winning the lottery were based on its winning percentage last season.

The teams that did not win a pick after the first round were entered into another lottery for picks after the second round.

The Padres, Diamondbacks, Cardinals, Rays, Pirates and Mariners won second-round picks.

The competitive balance draft was agreed upon as part of the labor agreement that went into effect in 2012.

## **Ted Williams' 1946 jersey sells for \$184,000**

NEW YORK — A jersey worn by Ted Williams in 1946 sold for \$184,000 and a Babe Ruth model bat from 1925-27 went for more than \$166,000 in live bidding this week by Hunt Auctions.

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Items from Warren Spahn's personal memorabilia collection amassed over \$900,000. Spahn's 1957 Cy Young Award sold for \$126,000 and his personal Hall-of-Fame ring went for \$55,200.

The auctions were held Monday and Tuesday in Manhattan. Hunt Auctions, an Exton, Pa.-based company, released its sales figures Wednesday.

Other expensive items were Chris Chambliss' 1976 ALCS winning home run ball, which sold for \$82,655, a Brooklyn jersey worn by Roy Campanella that went for \$55,200, a New York Mets uniform worn by manager Casey Stengel for \$46,000 and a baseball from Jackie Robinson's first major league game for \$34,500.

### **MLB draft spending up 6 percent this year**

NEW YORK — Teams spent \$219.9 million on signing bonuses for selections in baseball's amateur draft this year, up six percent from \$207.8 million at a similar point last year.

The rise followed a 10 percent drop from a record \$233.6 million in 2011, the last year before restrictions imposed by baseball's collective bargaining agreement with players.

Eleven teams went over their signing bonus pools — one more than last year — and will pay a total of \$1.8 million in tax, according to preliminary figures compiled by Major League Baseball. But no club went over by more than five percent and reached the second level of penalties, which would cause a club to forfeit its next first-round draft pick.

Baseball's labor contract assigns a slot value to all picks in the first 10 rounds, with the amount starting at \$7,790,400 this year for the first pick and decreasing to \$135,300 for the final selections of the 10th round.

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If a team fails to sign a player, the amount of that slot is deducted from its pool. Just eight players in the first 10 rounds didn't sign, including one first-rounder: high school pitcher Phillip Bickford, selected by Toronto with the 10th overall selection.

For the 11th through 40th rounds, the amounts of bonuses exceeding \$100,000 per pick are added to a team's total for calculating the tax.

A club exceeding its pool total faces escalating penalties, starting with a 75 percent tax on the overage, graduating to a 100 percent tax and the loss of its next two first-round picks.

Exceeding their thresholds were Atlanta (\$156,950 tax), the Chicago Cubs (\$383,925), Kansas City (\$59,025), the Los Angeles Dodgers (\$190,050), the New York Yankees (\$85,500), Philadelphia (\$55,125), Pittsburgh (\$73,350), St. Louis (\$243,375), San Francisco (\$169,950), Seattle (\$220,500) and Texas (\$170,775).

Last Friday was the deadline for draft picks to sign, except for players who have exhausted eligibility for college baseball — a group that may sign up until a week before next year's draft. The players with the later deadline totaled \$1.6 million in bonuses for the 2012 draft.

## MLB All-Star game TV rating up slightly from '12

NEW YORK — The Major League Baseball All-Star game's television rating is up slightly from last year's record low.

The American League's 3-0 victory Tuesday night on Fox earned a 6.9 rating and 12 share, up from a 6.8/12 in 2012.

Played at the Mets' Citi Field, the game's viewership got a boost from its trip to the big market of New York. The 11.3 rating there was up 16 percent from a year ago, when Kansas City hosted.

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There was also a spike in viewers when Mariano Rivera made his final All-Star appearance, with the rating peaking at 7.6/13 right about that time.

Ratings represent the percentage of all households with televisions tuned into a program, while shares are the percentage watching among those homes with TVs in use at the time.