

GUIDE TO SCORING BASEBALL – THIRD INNING

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16-APR-2005

TOP OF THE THIRD

Top of the third, Cubs leading, and with the heart of their lineup coming up for round two. The first batter, Jose Hernandez, steps up to the plate, works the dirt in the batter's box for a moment and stands ready, staring in at the pitcher. Mercker's first pitch misses the plate for ball one. The next pitch looks better to Hernandez and he hits a weak pop-up that is eventually caught, in fair territory, by McGwire at first base. We score fly balls on the infield the same as on the outfield, so this is scored **F3**. If McGwire had been in foul territory, we would have scored the play as **F0-3** or *foul out* to the first baseman. Some people also use **L3** to differentiate a *line out* from a fly ball out.

The scoring for Hernandez's out appears on the right

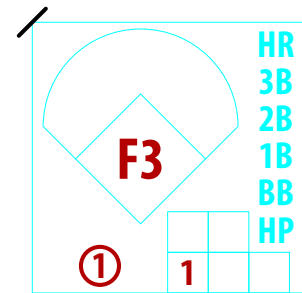
Mark Grace stands in, after getting a single in his first at-bat against Mercker. Like that at bat, Mercker misses with his first pitch, but gets Grace to swing at the second. Grace hits the third pitch into left-center field and runs to first base. Another single for the Cubs first baseman!

We draw a line from home to where the ball landed in left-center field, draw Grace's path along the bases, and circle the **1B** to indicate his single.

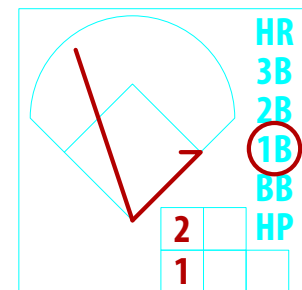
An aside, for those of you reading my description carefully, I'm reconstructing this game not from a videotape or radio recording of the game, but from the scorecard I made while watching the game back in 1998. I can tell almost everything about the game from this sheet of paper, but one thing I can't say is whether the first two strikes in an at-bat were swinging strikes or called strikes. I suppose one could write the number backwards if it was a called strike and forwards for a swinging strike, following the convention for third strikes, but I didn't do that for this game. So I'm taking a bit of license in my descriptions when I describe how a batter got the first two strikes on him. I really can't tell from the scorecard. In other words, when I describe Grace swinging and missing at the second pitch, it might actually have been a called strike that Grace thought was out of the zone.

Back to the action. Man on first, Sosa steps up to the plate with 58 home runs on the season, just three back from Mark McGwire and Roger Maris' season home run record. Sosa, like Grace, is 1 for 1 on the day, getting a single in the first inning. The crowd nervously anticipates Sosa hitting a home run, tying the game, and bringing his total one closer to their hero McGwire.

Sosa swings and misses at Mercker's first pitch for strike one (this is a pretty good bet with Sammy). Next, Mercker makes a great pitch and Sosa weakly grounds the ball to the Cardinal third baseman. Tatis makes a quick throw to the second baseman Deshields, who deftly touches the bag at second to force out Grace, leaps into the air to avoid the rapidly approaching Cub first baseman, and rifles the ball to McGwire at first to get Sosa out at first. Double play!



cubs third, hernandez



cubs third, grace

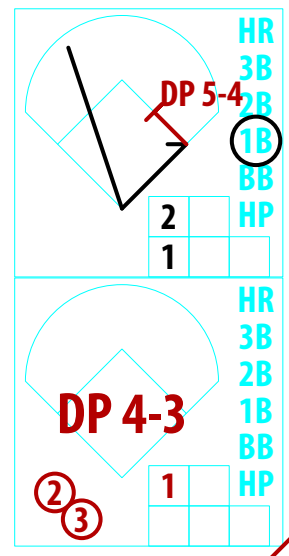
Note that the umpires often grant the out at second without the fielder *actually* touching the bag. Outs at second are so recorded because the baserunner going from first to second often runs out of the base paths, doesn't slide when he normally would, or raises his legs and arms high in the air in an attempt to interfere with the throw of the relay man at second, rather than focusing on getting to the bag before the fielder. Because of these idiosyncrasies, the umpire records the first out if the fielder *would have* beaten a normally running and sliding baserunner. If umpires were forced to be particular about the fielder touching the base at second, they'd also have to be particular about when the runner touched the base and whether they attempted to interfere with the fielder in inappropriate ways. Sometimes traditional rulings, like the high strike call, are enforced in a game as old as baseball even if they aren't codified in the rules.

Let's discuss how this is written on the scorecard, and why we write it this way. In Grace's box, we draw a line moving from first to second base, but stop the line halfway and put a hash mark to indicate he didn't make it to second. Above the play, we write **DP 5-4** to indicate how he got out, and to show that this is part of a double play. In Sosa's box we write the other half of the double play: **DP 4-3**. We also write the two circled outs, **2** and **3** in Sosa's box, indicating that he was responsible for these two outs. 5-4-3 double plays aren't particularly common in baseball, but with two slow runners and a sharply hit ground ball, a good infield can easily turn one.

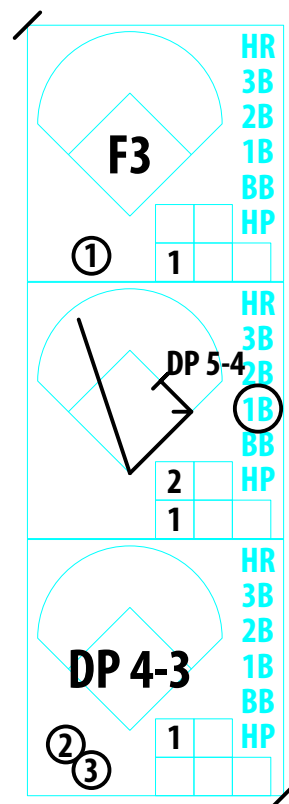
It might also make sense to put one of the outs in Grace's box, since he was actually the second out. But in my view, a scorecard is an attempt to record the action of a game, and to assign credit and blame where they belong. In this situation, there wasn't much Grace could do to avoid getting out, so he shouldn't get the blame that putting the out in his box would indicate. This logic is similar to the logic of putting the out in the box of a batter who hits into a fielder's choice, as Glenallen Hill did in the first inning. In fact, hitting into a double play is one of the worst things a batter can do, so much so that when a runner scores on a double play, the batter isn't granted a run-batted-in (RBI) on the play. Batters do get an RBI when a run scores during a play where they make a single out, such as a sacrifice fly (**SF**).

I've only scored two triple plays since I started scoring, but they're scored the same way as a double play. Each box where there was an out gets a **TP** and the play that resulted in the out, and the batter winds up with the last **TP** and three outs in his box.

The complete scoring for this half inning appears on the right. The Cubs got **0** runs, **1** hit (just because Grace was erased from the base paths on Sosa's double play doesn't take his hit away), **0** errors and **0** left on base. In the inning there were **0** strikeouts, **0** walks, and Mercker threw **5** strikes and **7** pitches.



cubs third, sosa



cubs third inning

BOTTOM OF THE THIRD

In the Cardinals half of the third inning, Tony LaRussa sends up Luis Ordaz, the pitcher Mercker, and catcher Eli Marrero. This was the period in LaRussa's managerial career when he was experimenting with putting the pitcher in the eighth spot in the batting order instead of the ninth. On my scorecard there are two extra player slots on the card (representing six additional batters) after the ninth person in the lineup. In a normal National League game, pinch hitters are most likely to appear in this ninth spot, so the scorecard accommodates these additional players with extra lines.

The first batter, the shortstop Ordaz, gets to a full count before popping up to the second baseman. You can see from the scoring on the left that we've recorded all five pitches, the manner in which he got out (**F4**), and wrote the first out in his box.

The pitcher manages to get Trachsel to throw him four pitches before watching the third strike zip over the plate for a called strike three. Since he didn't swing at the last strike, we put a backwards **N** in his box and indicate the second out in the inning with a circled number **2**.

The catcher fares no better against Trachsel, hitting a fly ball to the leftfielder Hill for the third out in the inning. **F7**.

So far, Trachsel is having a very good day. Through three innings, he's managed to face the minimum nine batters. He did give up the lead off hit to Deshields, but promptly threw him out. As you're probably guessing, his early success comes to a spectacular end later in the game.

①	F4		HR
	3	5	3B
	1	2	2B
			1B
			BB
			HP
②	N		HR
	1	2	3B
	3	4	2B
			1B
			BB
			HP
③	F7		HR
	1		3B
	2		2B
			1B
			BB
			HP

cardinals third inning

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