

Hi Again: There are many different things that go into being a successful Scoresheet general manager. The most important is probably the pre-season draft; it is hard to win if your team does not have good players (as I am finding out). But there is more to playing than just the draft. Making trades, your lineup card strategy decisions, and in-season drafts, can all play a key role in how your team does.

Most Scoresheet leagues are somewhat smaller than the corresponding major league (most of us play in 10 team ALs picking from 14 real American League teams, or in 10 to 12 team NLs picking from 16 real NL teams). This difference means that Scoresheet teams generally are pretty solid, and many Scoresheet teams have a few extra players at various positions that they could deal. If you are weak at a position, but have some extra strength somewhere else, then there should be another team in your league that could use help at the position you are strong at and has some extra help where you are weak. And thus, that team would be a perfect one to try and make a deal with. Many weeks we do print a list of players with the "most unused playing time" in your league. If you find yourself playing guys out of position, or worse yet using the dreaded AAA players on a regular basis, then take a look at that list and see who can afford to give up a guy at the position you need.

Even if you are not having to use AAA players it is pretty hard to compete in most Scoresheet leagues if you are having to use two or three hitters who have averages in the low .200s with little power, or many pitchers who ERAs are over 5 (or even over 6!) As mentioned above, the average Scoresheet team IS stronger than the average major league team. When looking at your roster you should not be comparing it to an average major league team to get an idea of how you think you should be doing. Instead, you need to compare it to the other teams in **your** league.

And certainly just having enough at-bats or innings pitched to avoid AAA players is usually \*not\* enough to compete for first place. Ideally you are fielding guys at **every** position who are **at least** in the top 10 or 12 at their position in real life. If you have a strong bench/bullpen and every week you have good players who are not getting playing time, then try and package two or three of them for one much better player. Or, if the injury bug has hit you hard, maybe you need to think about trading one of your remaining very good players for 2 or 3 good players. No matter how good a player is, baseball is not a sport where one guy can win a title by himself. Please note that I am NOT advocating trading a superstar for some utility guys just to fill a couple holes. But if you can get two good players for one better player than sometimes that can help your team, especially in a one-year league, where you are not trying to amass superstars to keep for years to come.

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**LINEUP DEADLINE:** As we mentioned last week, the deadline for turning in lineups and/or trades to have them used for that week's Scoresheet games is by/before the first major league game begins on Monday. (A Scoresheet week runs from Monday thru Sunday.) Please note that it is when the first major league game begins that determines the deadline, NOT just the first game in your type of league (AL or NL.)  
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**Rank or PH For:** This column always seems to cause a lot of confusion. Very Simply: **If you put a dash in a player's rank or PH for column he gets pinch hit for, if you put a number in his rank or PH for column then he does NOT get pinch hit for,** versus that type of pitcher. This does apply to hitters listed in both the starter and in the bench sections - if you don't put a number in the PH or rank column for a starter, then he will get pinch hit for if there is an available player on the bench who has a number in that column. Probably the easiest way to think of how to number your players for that column is to think of the starters and bench players as all being listed in the same section, and then number them accordingly. Simply give the best hitter on your team versus that type of pitcher (RHP or LHP) a 1, the second best a 2, and so on. The weaker players that you would want to pinch hit for if you are behind late in a game should get a dash.

We **do** look at the pitcher at that time to decide which column to use (vs. LHP or vs. RHP). For instance, you can have a dash for a player vs. LHPs and a number for that same player vs. RHPs, and then if that hitter faces a LHP late in the game he'd be pinch hit for (since he has a dash versus LHPs), and if he faces a RHP he'd hit for himself (since he has a number versus RHPs.) Pinch hit numbers are also used to juggle your lineup when subs have to start a game.

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That one line of stats at the bottom of your last game shows what your opponent's players did in real life that week, weighted by how much they actually played against your team. (Meaning that a player who got 8 at-bats against your team that week will count twice as much for those stats as one who only got 4 at-bats against you.) Glancing at that line will give you an idea of whether you faced hot or cold players each week, which will affect how your players do in Scoresheet. There are also a number of other factors, which will affect individual stats: fielding, platooning, occasionally benching a player, etc. I will spend some of next week's newsletter talking about some of these.

Have a great week!

- Jeff Barton