



Allan Roth, and Branch Rickey must be shaking their heads

The debate likely started when some hunter/gathers were deciding who could throw rocks the furthest or with the greatest accuracy. Someone said “this way” was the best measure of success and at some point someone came up with a string or other tool to measure and challenged how an individual was gauged. Challenging the “old” with the “new” is not something that simply came about as part of the computer age and baseball. It’s been going on long before that.

The battle over whether scouting or advanced analytics (sabermetrics, as Bill James coined it) is a fruitless, wasted conversation. It is borne out the media, those from a by-gone era, or from those engrossed in data analysis that question the grounds of scouting due to objectivity. Surely, general managers around the league and those within baseball must be laughing.

There has never been someone in management that was worth a damn that didn’t want as much information at their disposal to allow them to make decisions. The weight of that information with which they make decisions may fluctuate, but why wouldn’t you want as much information as possible to allow flexibility?

Scouting, Sabermetrics, and Fools

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More simply put, if something works, you're going to use it. To those that say the "numbers guys" aren't needed, if there wasn't value in analytics it would not have found its way into every club in the game. By the same token, the numbers geeks should take it upon themselves to realize that if scouting had no place that aspect of player analysis would wither and die. Neither is going away. General Managers want whatever tools they can have at their disposal in which to field a competitive team. If they could shake chicken bones in a bowl and see something that would allow them to get a leg up on their competitors, you better believe they would do it.

To those that say that this whole "Moneyball" thing is a waste, I would say that you're saying Branch Rickey was an idiot. Beyond the signing of Jackie Robinson, he's noted for creating the farm system, and the creation of the first dedicated Spring Training facility where batting cages, and pitching machines were used.

But more important than that, in 1947 Rickey hired the man that can really be called the father of advanced metrics, Allan Roth. Roth became the first full-time statistician in baseball history and delved into On-Base Percentage, saying that it had as much value as Batting Average. So, what would Rickey and Roth say to those with blinders on that discount the value of statistical analysis?

By the same token, just because there is a computer at a baseball fan's finger tips doesn't mean that the numbers always lead to the ultimate truth. The numbers in their various formulas simply add more colors to the palette, just the same as scouting reports. There is no one "truth". Step back from the keyboard and accept that.

The difference is only in how much one or the other is needed or focused on. Since both are here to stay, to discount one or the other is foolish. How each gets used is only at the discretion of the GM looking at the recommendations and making decisions. It may lean more toward the numbers or a scouting report depending on the need, but it all has value. It is all necessary.

There are still those that cling to the belief that the earth is flat. There are still those that say numbers or scouting can satisfy all aspects of player evaluation. In that, those saying as such should be declared the "Flat Earth Society of Baseball". In other news, somewhere there are people looking at scouting reports, and those looking at metrics reports and saying to themselves, "Information is power." They aren't likely to be overly concerned about whether the

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source is human or spit out of a computer. As long as it helps them be competitive, it's all that matters.



Maury Brown is the Founder and President of the [Business of Sports Network](#), which includes The Biz of Baseball, The Biz of Football, The Biz of Basketball and The Biz of Hockey. He [writes for Baseball Prospectus](#) and is a [contributor to Forbes](#)

He is available as a freelance writer

[Brown's full bio is here.](#)

He looks forward to your comments via email and can be [contacted here](#)

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