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Chapter 4 Notes for Masochists (Formulas for Greatness)

Even in an unhappy season, all Rotisserie leagues are alike.

They buy the same number of hitters, only a few of whom aren't bought in every league, with the result that the hitting statistics that leagues pay money for are virtually the same. Here are the 1994 season stats of five National league auctions, ranked by home runs:

NL 1994	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$HR	\$RBI	\$SB	\$BA	\$TOT
SAL	44877	1401	6041	1048	0.276	740	917	528	2	2188
ERB	45125	1396	6058	1048	0.276	738	920	528	-2	2183
BUB	45160	1392	6036	1048	0.276	736	916	528	-0	2180
WGN	45027	1387	6051	1063	0.276	733	919	536	0	2187
RGK	45120	1379	5994	1073	0.275	729	910	541	-0	2179
league	45062	1391	6036	1056	0.276	735	916	532	0	2184
team	3755	116	503	88	0.276	61	76	44	-0	182
player	268	8.3	35.9	6.3	0.276	4	5	3	-0	13.00

From top to bottom, a 22 home run difference. It's fair to say the average league in the country was able to buy 1391 home runs in its auction. The average team would get 116 home runs if it stuck with its original roster. And the average player on each team would hit 8.3 home runs.

The American league auctions...

AL 1994	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$HR	\$RBI	\$SB	\$BA	\$TOT
LSL	47530	1625	7001	973	0.276	734	927	527	0	2188
ADL	46647	1623	6895	998	0.276	733	913	541	-0	2186
BZB	47112	1622	6950	993	0.276	732	920	538	0	2190
GSL	47145	1614	6927	982	0.276	729	917	532	-0	2178
SMS	46733	1607	6900	994	0.276	725	914	538	-0	2177
league	47033	1618	6935	988	0.276	730	918	535	0	2184
team	3919	135	578	82	0.276	61	77	45	0	182
player	280	9.6	41.3	5.9	0.276	4	5	3	0	13.00

... were even closer in the home run category: 18 separating the Lone Stars from South Main Street.

But the totals are quite different. South Main Street bought 206 more home runs than Salem's Lot, the best league (at predicting home runs) in the NL. The average AL hitter ties the NL hitter in batting average and is clearly better in the power categories, yet earns the same amount to the penny.

The question for most people isn't why they earn the same amount (both leagues use the standard budget of \$260 per team) but why the amount is \$13 rather than \$11.3 (\$260/23).

The explanation is that the average pitcher...

NL 1994	IP	W	Sv	ERA	Rto	\$W	\$S	\$ERA	\$Rto	\$TOT
ERB	9237	550	315	4.04	12.14	627	263	1	-0	891
SAL	9140	543	312	4.00	12.07	619	260	3	2	884
BUB	8932	529	312	4.14	12.23	603	260	-4	-3	857
RGK	8942	528	323	4.01	12.01	602	269	2	4	878
WGN	9020	525	309	4.11	12.26	599	258	-2	-3	851
league	9054	535	314	4.06	12.14	610	262	0	0	872
team	754	45	31	4.06	12.14	51	26	0	0	77
pitcher	84	5	4	4.06	12.14	6	3	0	0	8.53

... only contributes to two categories (wins and saves). The average hitter contributes to

three, hence is worth 50 percent more.

Because any given pitcher can *hurt* in two categories, and because there are many more than 108 to choose from on draft day, leagues aren't nearly as alike in the pitching stats that they buy. They happen to have a similar number of wins (which is how they are ranked above) and saves, but you can tell it's serendipity by comparing the ERAs, ratios and even IP of the different leagues.

In the AL:

AL 1994	IP	W	Sv	ERA	Rto	\$W	\$S	\$ERA	\$Rto	\$TOT
ADL	9478	567	280	4.61	12.99	647	243	0	-1	888
LSL	10170	602	278	4.59	12.91	687	241	1	1	930
BZB	9585	575	279	4.57	12.89	656	242	2	2	902
GSL	9819	583	270	4.66	12.97	665	234	-2	-1	896
SMS	9968	595	264	4.64	12.97	679	229	-1	-1	906
league	9804	584	274	4.61	12.95	667	238	0	0	904
team	817	49	23	4.61	12.95	56	20	0	0	75
pitcher	91	5	3	4.61	12.95	6	2	0	0	8.38

League differences are again quite apparent, and not just in ERA and ratio. The AL leagues bought pitchers in the auction who would win almost 50 more games, while the NL bought 40 more saves.

The average pitcher is supposed to earn exactly \$8.67 (50 percent less than \$13); he only earns approximately this amount, year to year, due to the fluctuations in what's available in the draft. Obviously, there are no league differences whatsoever by the end of the year in the wins category; that denominator never changes. The saves denominator can change slightly from one year to the next, and between leagues, depending on small fluctuations in the total number of saves.

So that's the pricing theory, along with the facts it's based on. Here are the formulas:

National League 1994 4x4 leagues

$$\begin{aligned} \$HR &= 13/6 * HR / 4.1 \\ \$RBI &= 13/6 * RBI / 14.27 \\ \$SB &= 13/6 * SB / 4.3 \\ \$BA &= 13/6 * ((966 + Hits) / (3500 + AB) - 0.276) / 0.0012 \\ \\ \$W &= 8.67/4 * Wins / 1.9 \\ \$Sv &= 8.67/4 * Saves / 2.6 \\ \$ERA &= 8.67/4 * (4.06 - (351.9 + ER) / ((780 + IP) / 9)) / 0.04 \\ \$Rto &= 8.67/4 * (12.14 - ((1052.1 + H + BB) / ((780 + IP) / 9))) / 0.07 \end{aligned}$$

American League 1994 4x4 leagues

$$\begin{aligned} \$HR &= 13/6 * HR / 4.8 \\ \$RBI &= 13/6 * RBI / 16.36 \\ \$SB &= 13/6 * SB / 4 \\ \$BA &= 13/6 * ((966 + Hits) / (3500 + AB) - 0.276) / 0.0012 \\ \\ \$W &= 8.67/4 * Wins / 1.9 \\ \$Sv &= 8.67/4 * Saves / 2.5 \\ \$ERA &= 8.67/4 * (4.61 - (399.5 + ER) / ((780 + IP) / 9)) / 0.04 \\ \$Rto &= 8.67/4 * (12.95 - ((1122.3 + H + BB) / ((780 + IP) / 9))) / 0.07 \end{aligned}$$

In a big hitting year, hitting denominators are supposed to be bigger — that's the way you keep the prices from getting bigger — but these denominators that you see above are much smaller than last year's denominators. Why is that?

The strike adjustment.

Since the players only played 71 percent of the season, the denominators effectively are lowered 29 percent. If they had played the full season, hitting home runs at the same pace, the home run denominators for both leagues would be multiplied by 1.4. The denominator for the NL, which was 5 in 1993, would have been 5.7 last year.

The adjustment in the qualitative categories — BA, ERA and ratio — is made by lowering the AB and IP in the formulas, rather than by lowering the denominators. The AB the average team buys in the auction are cut from 4700 to 3500 and the IP from 1050 to 780 in order to give full impact to the reduced AB and IP of individual players.

In 5x5 leagues, the denominators have to be larger across the board, and there's a slightly different allocation of money between pitchers and hitters.

The average hitter contributes in 4 categories, the average pitcher in 3: the average hitter is worth 33 percent more. This works out to \$12.5 for the average hitter and \$9.4 for the average pitcher. All the hitters bought in the league will end up earning \$2,100 (12.5 x 168), while the 108 pitchers will earn \$1,020.

The larger denominators cram the greater number of categories into these salary caps. The hitting summary for both leagues:

5x5	AB	R	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$R	\$HR	\$RBI	\$SB	\$BA	\$TOT
NL 1994	45062	6425	1391	6036	1056	0.276	621	503	617	360	0	2100
AL 1994	47033	7326	1618	6935	988	0.276	621	494	622	363	0	2100

The identical number of home runs in the average National league (1391) drops in value from \$735 to \$503, just as one example. All told, the four categories that are used in 4x4 leagues get trimmed a total of \$621, which goes to \$R.

The pitchers:

5x5	IP	SO	W	Sv	ERA	Rto	\$IP	\$W	\$S	\$ERA	\$Rto	\$SO	5(IP)	5(SO)
NL 94	9054	6800	535	314	4.06	12.14	507	370	117	-0	-0	515	993	1002
AL 94	9804	6627	584	274	4.61	12.95	549	404	104	-0	0	519	1056	1027

The 274 AL wins drop from \$667 to \$404. Saves take a much bigger pounding: from \$238 to \$104 (56 percent compared to 39 percent).

Why? Because the \$500 or so that go to either \$IP or \$SO have to come from somewhere; qualitative categories are nowhere (they have nothing to give); the hitter quantitative have given all they're going to; and the wins category has a positive association with both IP and SO: there's bound to be more there. In fact, so many owners undoubtedly kiss off saves that \$100 might be generous.

The reason I figure both IP and SO to be worth more than wins is simple: they are vastly more predictable.

In addition to different denominators, the formulas have different points-to-dollar conversions:

National League 5x5 leagues

$$\begin{aligned} \$R &= 12.5/5.32 * R / 24.3 \\ \$HR &= 12.5/5.32 * HR / 6.5 \\ \$RBI &= 12.5/5.32 * RBI / 23 \\ \$SB &= 12.5/5.32 * SB / 6.9 \\ \$BA &= 12.5/5.32 * ((966+H) / (3500+AB) - 0.276) / 0.0016 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \$IP &= 9.4/4 * IP / 42 \\ \$W &= 9.4/4 * W / 3.4 \\ \$Sv &= 9.4/4 * S / 6.3 \\ \$ERA &= 9.4/4 * (4.06 - (351.9+ER) / ((780+IP) / 9)) / 0.07 \\ \$Rto &= 9.4/4 * (12.14 - ((1052.1+H+BB) / ((780+IP) / 9))) / 0.11 \\ \$SO &= 9.4/4 * SO / 31 \end{aligned}$$

American League 5x5 leagues

$$\begin{aligned} \$R &= 12.5/5.32 * R / 24.7 \\ \$HR &= 12.5/5.32 * HR / 7.7 \\ \$RBI &= 12.5/5.32 * RBI / 26.2 \\ \$SB &= 12.5/5.32 * SB / 6.4 \\ \$BA &= 12.5/5.32 * ((966+H) / (3500+AB) - 0.276) / 0.0016 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \$IP &= 9.4/4 * IP / 42 \\ \$W &= 9.4/4 * W / 3.4 \\ \$Sv &= 9.4/4 * S / 6.2 \\ \$ERA &= 9.4/4 * (4.61 - (399.5+ER) / ((780+IP) / 9)) / 0.07 \\ \$Rto &= 9.4/4 * (12.95 - ((1122.3+H+BB) / ((780+IP) / 9))) / 0.11 \\ \$SO &= 9.4/4 * SO / 30 \end{aligned}$$

I used to argue that the points represent how much a player helps a team in the standings, which they did (and do), roughly. The average hitter, plugged into the average Rotisserie team, gave it a 6-point boost; the average pitcher improved a team 4 points. In 5x5, the statement is the same for pitchers, but hitters only help their team 5.32 points.

The relationship is right (5.32 is 33 percent higher than 4); relative to the pitcher, the hitter in 5x5 leagues helps a team less than in 4x4 leagues. However, the tenuous connection of these points to actual standings points is exposed.

Some of the equations are ungainly and a lot of the decimals are unnecessary (there's never any real need to go to two decimals in the denominators; I do it to get rid of decimals in the average hitter's value). The math itself couldn't be more basic — if it was less, I'd be lost — and the goal isn't complicated at all: to distribute \$3,120 among 276 players in a way that reflects how much the players are worth.

The one thing the formulas must do is make the 276 players add up to \$3,120. The same goes for predictions. You can be wrong about all 276 players — both as to their stats and the value of their stats — but you really ought to have all 276 players add up to approximately \$3,120. I screwed this up last year.

My best category once again was at-bats.

1994 NL	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA
AP predicted	72100	1869	9186	1698	0.269
NL projected	73084	2156	9605	1611	0.274
AP/NL%	99%	87%	96%	105%	98%

The projected line is the NL hitter totals as of August 11 prorated to the full season.

The predicted line is the total of all the players who were presented on a team-by-team basis in last year's book.

The American League:

1994 AL	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA
AP predicted	77000	1957	9811	1523	0.265
AL projected	78538	2524	11219	1589	0.273
AP/AL%	98%	78%	87%	96%	97%

There was so much more hitting than expected that there were even more at-bats than predicted. In both leagues, the biggest surprise was the number of home runs, while the AL total was by far the biggest single surprise: 567 unaccounted for, had the season been played to the end.

The percentages may not look so bad, but there's no way your individual calls are going to be very good if you miss the big picture by this much. I saw hitting going down somewhat, not up sharply, last year. I know perfectly well *why* I did, yet what I can't figure out is how I missed the fact that the prediction formula itself was wrong. If the players did *precisely* what I predicted, they weren't going to be worth what I predicted.

The total for the NL projected stats above came to \$2,556. The AL was even higher: \$2,626.

There's no constant for what leagues earn with their final stats. It depends entirely on how many serious hitters (or pitchers) come along during the season; on rookies, rehabs, born-again — all the players who don't have salaries but pile up stats. The constant is the \$2,184 that the original 168 hitters are worth. So the leagues *could* have added up to more than \$2600 in hitting. But not likely. Closer to \$2500 is the norm.

It's not hard to calculate how far over I went: take the 168 hitters that any league drafted and add them up. But *since* we're doing this, let's look at some other stuff; don't want to waste space.

The Hollywood Stars, one of the veteran no-keepers leagues in Appendix A, paid \$1,976 for its 168 hitters. The five who fetched the highest salaries in HSS:

rk	HSS draft	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
1	BONDS, B	391	37	81	29	0.312	53	53	51	45	56
2	GRISSOM, M	475	11	45	36	0.288	33	45	49	41	43
3	PIAZZA, M	405	24	92	1	0.319	35	40	31	20	37
4	JEFFERIES, G	397	12	55	12	0.325	30	39	43	36	46
5	MCGRIFF, F	424	34	94	7	0.318	44	38	37	29	33
	average	418	24	73	17	0.312	39	43	42	34	43

As it turned out HSS overpaid for them by \$4 each. I predicted they'd earn \$3 more than they did. John Benson underestimated them by \$5. They earned \$4 less, on average, than they did the previous year.

Dropping down the pay scale quite a ways:

rk	name	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
69	RHODES, K	269	8	19	6	0.234	5	12	14	3	3
70	WHITE, R	97	2	13	1	0.278	4	12	14	5	1
71	VIZCAINO, J	410	3	33	1	0.256	3	12	9	6	15
72	BURNITZ, J	143	3	15	1	0.238	2	12	12	11	8
73	CONINE, J	451	18	82	1	0.319	31	11	17	15	19
74	CORDERO, W	415	15	63	16	0.294	29	11	20	12	11
	average	298	8	38	4	0.277	12	12	14	9	9

These are the four worst \$12 hitters that HSS bought, along with the two best \$11 hitters (the secondary sort is \$ earned). If Bret Boone, the best \$12 hitter, or Glenallen Hill, the third best \$12 hitter, were included, it would be a very different picture, but the

one I want to present is of my prices beginning to overshoot the ultimate reality check: what HSS can afford to pay.

All the hitters the Hollywood Stars paid \$3 for:

rk	name	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
117	EISENREICH	290	4	43	6	0.300	15	3	12	9	17
118	THOMPSON, M	241	4	33	9	0.274	11	3	11	8	8
119	ALICEA, L	205	5	29	4	0.278	9	3	16	4	11
120	BRUMFIELD,	122	4	11	6	0.311	9	3	8	5	12
121	WEISS, W	423	1	32	12	0.251	6	3	4	9	6
122	MAGADAN, D	211	1	17	0	0.275	3	3	11	8	6
123	HANSEN, D	44	0	5	0	0.341	2	3	3	6	9
124	PRATT, T	102	2	9	0	0.196	-2	3	5	1	4
125	PAPPAS, E	44	0	5	0	0.091	-3	3	9	-1	4
126	FRAZIER, L	140	0	14	20	0.271	12	3	R3	-1	9
	average	182	2	20	6	0.268	6	3	8	5	9

Had I been carefully marshaling my money, I would have aced both the Stars and JB out for Eisenreich, Thompson, Alicea, Brumfield, Magadan, Pratt and Pappas — so I *better* have bought Bonds, Grissom and Jefferies.

The five worst crapshoot picks in HSS:

rk	name	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
164	BOGAR, T	52	2	5	1	0.154	-1	1	2	1	2
165	BATISTE, K	209	1	13	1	0.234	-1	1	4	2	6
166	GOFF, J	25	0	1	0	0.080	-2	1	5	-3	2
167	BENAVIDES, F	85	0	6	0	0.188	-3	1	1	-2	6
168	REED, J	103	1	7	0	0.175	-4	1	2	-1	3
	average	95	1	6	0	0.196	-2	1	3	-1	4

This is a classic negative sort — scraping the bottom of the barrel after the fact. Good \$1 picks by the Hollywood Stars, such as Jerry Browne and Greg Colburn, aren't counted. Nevertheless, my prices look like the second coming of Polyanna, while John Benson has come into his own.

Now, adding up all 168 hitters, this is the tally:

#	name	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
168	HSS-all	44966	1382	5997	1056	0.276	2173	1976	2335	1803	2144

The thing I see right away that doesn't look good is that my predicted prices for all these hitters exceed what they earned the year before by almost \$200.

It doesn't bother me that the Hollywood Stars only paid \$1,976 for them; that's their business. Mine is to devise formulas after the season that bring the hitters in close to the \$2,184 target — they're within \$11 of that. — and before the season that make all the hitter predictions fit within the salary cap.

Of course, I'm still under the overall cap. I've got \$785 left to buy pitchers with if I spend \$2,335 on hitters. HSS has \$1,144. JB has \$1,317. We have to check this out, too.

The five most expensive pitchers in HSS:

rk	name	IP	SO	W	Sv	ERA	Ratio	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
1	WETTELAND, J	64	68	4	25	2.83	9.47	37	43	40	41	50
2	BECK, R	49	39	2	28	2.77	11.47	31	43	40	42	46
3	MYERS, R	40	32	1	21	3.79	12.50	19	36	30	33	38
4	HARVEY, B	10	10	0	6	5.23	13.94	3	36	40	35	43
5	MADDUX, G	202	156	16	0	1.56	8.06	72	31	30	34	49
	average	73	61	5	16	2.29	9.42	32	38	36	37	45

Good news. I only get Bryan Harvey. Well, okay, not the *best* news I ever had, but

comforting in the masochists' chapter.

rk	name	IP	SO	W	Sv	ERA	Ratio	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
6	RIJO, J	172	171	9	0	3.08	11.96	21	26	30	28	40
7	AVERY, S	152	122	8	0	4.04	10.80	16	24	30	21	32
8	SWIFT, B	109	62	8	0	3.38	11.52	16	24	25	19	41
9	GLAVINE, T	165	140	13	0	3.97	13.23	10	23	20	18	24
10	HARNISCH, P	95	62	8	0	5.40	13.17	-2	23	25	20	30
	average	139	111	9	0	3.87	12.11	12	24	26	21	33

Trouble. The next five most expensive buys in HSS are all starters. The dollar equivalent of my letters grade last year gets me every pitcher here except Glavine. I'm discounting 1993 somewhat, but not nearly enough.

The last five pitchers that HSS paid double digits for:

rk	name	IP	SO	W	Sv	ERA	Ratio	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
44	MARTINEZ, P	145	142	11	1	3.42	9.95	29	11	25	10	18
45	DEWEY, M	51	30	2	1	3.68	14.03	1	11	5	12	10
46	ROJAS, M	84	84	3	16	3.32	9.86	28	10	10	11	16
47	HARRIS, G	12	9	1	0	8.03	21.16	-7	10	15	14	17
48	WATSON, A	116	74	6	0	5.52	14.24	-12	10	10	3	1
	average	82	68	5	4	4.17	12.00	8	10	13	10	12

Benson is in perfect sync with what the Stars can afford. Far from discounting this group, I'm giving it a raise.

Early Crapshoot in HSS:

rk	name	IP	SO	W	Sv	ERA	Ratio	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
79	YOUNG, A	115	65	4	0	3.92	11.69	7	3	1	1	0
80	MADDUX, M	44	32	2	2	5.11	11.86	1	3	5	7	8
81	NIED, D	122	74	9	0	4.80	13.57	-1	3	1	-8	-7
82	JUDEN, J	28	22	1	0	6.18	13.34	-4	3	5	-4	-1
83	BOUCHER, D	19	17	0	0	6.75	14.95	-5	3	-1	1	8
84	WHITEHURST	64	43	4	0	4.92	15.47	-7	3	5	3	4
	average	65	42	3	0	4.79	13.19	-1	3	3	0	2

These are all of the league's \$3 pitchers.

I'm back in sync with the market. Benson has a better grip on reality.

Final Crapshoot in retrospect, the five worst \$1 pitchers:

rk	name	IP	SO	W	Sv	ERA	Ratio	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
104	DAVIS, MA	16	15	0	0	8.82	18.18	-9	1	-5	-7	-6
105	PUGH, T	48	24	3	0	6.04	16.24	-10	1	-1	-12	-11
106	OLIVARES, O	74	26	3	1	5.74	14.78	-11	1	1	1	-4
107	HILLMAN, E	35	20	0	0	7.79	14.54	-12	1	5	-2	0
108	HARKEY, M	92	39	1	0	5.79	15.71	-20	1	-1	-9	-6
	average	53	25	1	0	6.27	15.55	-12	1	-0	-6	-5

Impressive here is the undeniable fact that Benson warns buyers away from every one of them.

It would be interesting to hear what John says about my proposal to allow bidding to start at negative values. Projecting actual stats, he comes up with more decidedly negative numbers than my letter grades do, resulting in decidedly different totals:

#	name	IP	SO	W	Sv	ERA	Ratio	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
108	HSS-all	9019	6499	516	308	4.11	12.19	842	1130	1230	832	1154

The first thing that should be noticed (in this chapter anyway) is that my retrospective prices, adding up to \$842, fall far short of the \$936 target for pitchers. If you go back to

look at the five leagues that were used to calculate the average National league, you'll see why. Nobody was able to find much decent pitching in NL auctions last year; HSS is only \$30 under what other leagues bought in auctions.

Meantime, the entire story of 1994 is written in the figure under 1993: pitchers who earned \$1154 two years ago were blasted down to \$842 last year.

Benson wins! Benson wins!

Maybe.

	totals	\$	HSS	AP	JB	1993
H+P	3015	3106	3565	2635	3298	

The goal, remember, is to spend \$3,120, and even HSS doesn't quite do that. My retrospective prices come in second; with a tweak of the wins denominator I could easily come in first, but I'd rather wear a hair shirt any day (the number of wins is the only constant left in baseball — I mean, wins per game). Third place goes to 1993. Which leaves AP and JB battling for the booby prize.

I'm 14 percent over the mark (3565/3120). The mark is 18 percent over Benson.

I overspend your money by \$445. Benson leaves you with \$485 that's not spent.

I could argue that my letter grades offered you vast flexibility. The B+ for Pete Harnish meant spend up to \$25 for him; try to get him for \$5.

Benson could argue that he would take a \$1 chance on Tim Pugh and, if his prediction turned out to be true, chuck him. It's actually a pretty good argument, and I should address it.

Fourteen of the 108 pitchers that HSS bought get negative predictions from Benson that add up to \$84. So \$98 more (84+14) might fairly be added to what Benson would spend for the 276 players under consideration here.

Or Benson might prefer to fill those 14 slots with pitchers he liked better. However, he'd have a hard time; out of the 281 National League pitchers who received forecast stats in his book last year (seems like a lot, but more than that would have pitched in a full season), only 96 were predicted to earn \$1 or more.

I handed out 144 passing grades in my book.

The truth, once again, finds us about equally benighted: 120 National League pitchers earned \$1 or more.

The source of the truth is, of course, Appendix B. Around we go.

But at least two things can be settled by logic alone.

First, more than 96 pitchers, no matter how bad they are, must have value in a game that requires 108 pitchers.

Second, if you don't want to pay hitters as much as \$2,184, then you really should pay pitchers more than \$936.

The excuse for my prices being too high is that I got swept up in my own software program. In the old days, I would say, Rickey Henderson's going to be worth \$55, Alex Cole \$1, and leave it at that. Nowadays, I enter these numbers in the players' data boxes in *Patton \$ On Disk* and — bingo — the players have stats.

Or I can enter stats and bingo they've got prices.

The only catch is, for this to work the prediction formula has to fit the predicted stats, or the stats have to fit the formula. The way this is done is to set up targets for the league; pretend these are final stats and figure out the denominators for them; then make sure all the individual prediction add up to the targets. Then double-check, because it gets confusing.

Player by player, it's almost impossible to see any incongruity that exists between the formula and the stats.

The prediction for Bonds last year: 39, 115, 25, .328 — worth \$51. It should have been:

39, 115, 25, .328 — \$49 (different formula). Or 41, 118, 25, .330 — \$51 (different stats). If the latter, I should have taken \$2 worth of statistics away from some other player, which I could accomplish by paring down the stats or the salary.

It's easy to do with the software program. This year I'll be fiddling with both the statistics and the formulas right up to the last second. Anyone can. If you want to see the prediction formulas for this season, press F2 when your *1995 Patton \$ On Disk* arrives. If you want to change them, press Options/Formula/Denominators; be brave, type in your own. To chicken out and return to the default, press F9.

Some people who venture into this chapter, I imagine, are more curious about many of the prices for last year than any of my wildest predictions. You should be. They are the wildest prices that I've ever seen.

Mark McGwire hit 49 home runs in 1987. Full season. The equivalent to last season is 35 home runs. Would have placed him fourth in the league.

McGwire's great rookie year was worth \$30. Only. Many readers couldn't believe it. But that's what the inflated hitting context did to him. In the 1994 formula, his season, scaled down by 71 percent, is also worth \$30. The same runaway hitting inflation; different, but effectively the same, denominators designed to combat it.

Andre Dawson, in the National League context, earned more in 1987, and that was effectively the same context that prevailed in the National League last year.

.71 x year	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	now	then
McGwire '87	395	35	84	1	0.289	30	30
Dawson '87	441	35	97	8	0.287	39	39

"Now" is what the scaled 1987 stats would be worth in the AL and NL, respectively, last year. "Then" is what the full seasons (49, 118, 1, .289 and 49, 137, 11, .287) were worth then.

Many recent seasons, of course, were worth much more than they would be now. Three of the most memorable:

.71 x year	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	now	then
Henderson '90	347	20	43	46	0.325	48	60
Bonds '93	383	33	87	21	0.336	52	56
Canseco '88	433	30	88	28	0.307	47	58

Rickey's MVP season was worth \$60, \$12 more than it would have been last year. Lofton earned \$61 *last year*.

Barry's third MVP season, the one in which he hit 46 home runs, wouldn't have been worth as much last year as Barry was worth last year.

Jose's 40-40 season — Rickey be damned, the greatest Rotisserie season ever — would have been third best in the league last year. Counting the NL, it would have been fifth best. Counting pitchers, it would have been seventh best.

We were watching the greatest season of all time.

Pitchers were rallying, modestly but unmistakably, in July and August. There were more promising pitchers waiting for September call-ups than promising hitters. Yet the great hitters would have continued their rampage. As the minutes counted down, the best players in the game were pressing the pedal to the metal.

Kirby Puckett, 7 RBIs on August 10.

Cecil Fielder, 9 RBIs in the last three games.

Barry Bonds, .367, 5 homers, 6 steals in August; thrown out twice trying to steal number 30 in the last two games.

Greg Maddux, 3-hit shutout on August 11.

Dave Justice, 4 RBIs, same game.

Tony Gwynn, .475 in August.

Brett Saberhagen, 1.88 ERA, 1 walk, 12 strikeouts, 2 wins in 2 starts in August.

Rafael Palmeiro, 5 RBIs on August 10.

John Wetteland, 3 saves in the last 4 games.

Rod Beck, 3 saves in the last 3 games.

Fred McGriff, 7 hits in his last 14 at-bats, 4 homers.

Matt Williams, home run No. 43 in the Giants' last game.

Ken Griffey, home run No. 40, a grand slam, in the season's last game.

Randy Johnson, 4 hits, 1 walk, 15 Ks, same game.

It's quite possible, even probable, that Donald Fehr was deaf to these arias. But the early strike date was a hopeful act. He must have believed the owners were opera buffs; if not that, were World Series fans; if not that, liked money. Otherwise, why not play on? Declare a fantasy strike: put every paycheck after August 11 into a kitty; dole it out the following spring. Fight the war the way this country is very lucky the South didn't. Feign innocence, never attack, see how well the enemy fights without its dander up.

Without a cause, or less of one. With some 200 salaries to trim the old-fashioned way — via free agency — weren't the owners going to reduce their payrolls anyway?

Most of the free agents were bums. It doesn't take collusion to stop paying Willie McGee \$3,562,000. Just don't do it. Sign him again for \$300,000. He'll do it. That's more than \$3 million right there. Teddy Higuera was paid \$3.5 million last year. Don't pay him anything; don't even let him near your team. That's almost \$7 million that the same (or better) product doesn't cost.

player	Paid in \$1994	Pay in \$1995	+/-
Willie McGee	\$3,562,500	\$300,000	(\$3,262,500)
Ted Higuera	\$3,500,000		(\$3,500,000)
Bud Black	\$3,250,000	\$250,000	(\$3,000,000)
Andre Dawson	\$4,425,000		(\$4,425,000)
Daryl Boston	\$400,000	\$109,000	(\$291,000)
Dave Henderson	\$750,000	\$109,000	(\$641,000)
Tim Lincecum	\$3,412,500	\$2,000,000	(\$1,412,500)
Frank Viola	\$4,333,334	\$1,500,000	(\$2,833,334)
Dwight Gooden	\$4,616,667		(\$4,616,667)
Benito Santiago	\$3,800,000	\$2,100,000	(\$1,700,000)
Terry Pendleton	\$3,200,000	\$2,200,000	(\$1,000,000)
Jeff Blauser	\$3,750,000	\$3,500,000	(\$250,000)
Andy Van Slyke	\$3,550,000	\$2,200,000	(\$1,350,000)
Kent Hrbek	\$3,100,000		(\$3,100,000)
Eric Davis	\$3,000,000		(\$3,000,000)
Vince Coleman	\$3,125,000		(\$3,125,000)
Darryl Strawberry	\$109,000		(\$109,000)
Bill Swift	\$2,316,667	\$2,425,667	\$109,000
Jack McDowell	\$5,300,000	\$5,400,000	\$100,000
Paul Assenmacher	\$2,583,334	\$950,000	(\$1,633,334)
Dave Stewart	\$4,250,000	\$1,500,000	(\$2,750,000)
Mark Grace	\$4,400,000	\$3,500,000	(\$900,000)
Kevin Mitchell	\$3,750,000	\$4,000,000	\$250,000
Brett Butler	\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000	\$0
Dan Pasqua	\$1,750,000		(\$1,750,000)
Kevin Brown	\$4,225,000	\$4,000,000	(\$225,000)
Tom Henke	\$3,752,625	\$3,000,000	(\$752,625)
Larry Walker	\$4,025,000	\$5,500,000	\$1,475,000
Paul O'Neill	\$3,833,334	\$5,500,000	\$1,666,666
Mike Stanley	\$512,550	\$4,000,000	\$3,487,450
Mike Gallego	\$1,575,000	\$1,000,000	(\$575,000)
Terry Mulholland	\$3,350,000	\$500,000	(\$2,850,000)
Greg Jefferies	\$4,600,000	\$5,400,000	\$800,000
Steve Ontiveros	\$120,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,080,000
total	\$105,727,511	\$65,643,667	(\$40,083,844)

See? It's easy. I just saved over \$40 million for the owners; even gave some raises. Took me 10 minutes. Huge amounts of further savings (Tom Browning \$3.5 million, Rob Dibble 2.4, Danny Darwin 2.6, Dave Winfield 2.7, Candy Madlonado 2.6) yet to come. No collusion; no strike; barely any haggling. Still more savings in store from all the players eligible for arbitration in the existing Agreement who don't have to be *offered* arbitration — as the owners finally figured out this winter.

Conservatively, costs could have been cut by more than \$100 million in the offseason, playing by the old rules. (Probably have been, by the time you read this.)

Refusing to continue to play by the old rules cost the owners an estimated \$580 million in lost revenues. They saved \$230 million in salaries, for a net loss of \$350 million: \$12.5 million each.

The players lost \$230 million. About \$230,000 each.

The owners want to get even. They never can.

For the players — if they get the chance — playing just as well this year will be their best revenge. It will be bitter, though. They understand even better than the fans how much was lost to the strike (not money) and how irretrievably lost it is. Frank Thomas knows. Matt Williams knows.

Tragically, the players *do* need the owners. When the United Baseball League was being floated in November, one of the player agents said only the best players — the ones thinking Cooperstown — wouldn't be tempted. He did not understand that the best players need other players. Frank Thomas and Matt Williams do not want asterisks.

Had the season been played to its conclusion, only fools would have continued to argue that any and all records were tarnished. By expansion. By the rabbit ball. By the weather. By the umpires. By the bats. By the gloves. By the altitude. By the air-conditioning. By greed. By the Nautilus room...

I love the last two, don't you? Phil Rizzuto: "Man oh man, all these players think about these days is hitting home runs. They shouldn't have these incentive clauses in the contracts. So many wins, so many saves — puts too much pressure on a player. Will you *look* at that guy's forearms? He's been hitting the weights too much. Somebody ought to tell him to take it easy. In my day, I'm telling you, players were either skinny little runts, like me and Billy, or if they had muscles, like the Mick, he at least stayed up all night drinking."

Give Babe Ruth an asterisk — why don't we? — for breaking his own homer record with the baseball they juiced up to make sure he did.

Give Hack Wilson an asterisk for setting the NL home run and RBI records in a year when the average hitter (counting pitchers) hit .303.

Give Bob Gibson, Don Drysdale and Denny McLain asterisks all for pitching from the top of Old Smokie in 1968.

Baseball changes. Often far more blatantly — both as to cause and effect — than last year. Between 1918 and 1919, the American League expanded its schedule from 130 games to 140 games; obviously, those extra 10 games really tuckered out the pitchers, because homers rose from 98 to 241. In 1920, 14 more games were added to the schedule, and the pitchers continued to wilt: 370 home runs. In 1921, the same number of games, 477 home runs. In 1922, pitchers started to get in shape: 524 home runs. Finally, in 1923, the fourth time through, pitchers had adjusted to the 154-game schedule — that had to be the explanation — and gave up only 441 home runs.

The next year they gave up 395, the next year 533.

The baseball has always been changing. Sometimes to the pitcher's detriment, other times to the hitter's. Other pieces of equipment, like the gloves, have been evolving constantly in one direction. The one thing that isn't supposed to change — and certainly not evolve in one direction — is the player, hitter or pitcher.

Tough. He has.

Did you see the cuts Lou Gehrig was taking on the Ken Burns documentary? Would you rather see your kid copy that swing or Ken Griffey Jr.'s?

Did you see Walter Johnson throw the baseball? Randy Johnson — he's not exactly Juan Marichal himself — but who would you rather face?

I'd like to see Ty Cobb keep up with Kenny Lofton — then or now.

Sacrilege. In the game of baseball. In all other sports, *all* others, it's a given that players are bigger, stronger, faster, better trained. In baseball, it's not a given — it is arguable that they're not, which in itself is fascinating — and you sure better not say it.

Will Ken Griffey Jr. have a better career than Willie Mays?

Hey, I'm just *asking*.

Will Frank Thomas eclipse Ted Williams?

Sorry! Don't throw rocks at me!

Will Greg Maddux win 30 games this year?

Will Tony Gwynn bat .400?

Who will hit 62 home runs?

There's, oh, a 50 percent chance of one of these happening if they start on time.

I believe this partly based on what I see. The evidence of my eyes and ears, at the ballpark and in my memory. I don't recall players being this good or this determined. When I think back to when I was a kid, I remember Willie and Musial and Koufax, of course, but then it sort of drops off to Norm Cash and Jim Gentile. I'd be very surprised if Albert Belle, who took a while to figure this game out himself, loses the fire in his belly as quickly as they did.

And partly I believe this as a bean counter. That's what John Benson calls me. I like it. If it didn't have a negative connotation with most people, it would go on the cover of the book. Counting beans is the perfect description of my pricing system. As soon as the season is over, I add up how much there was of this and that, then figure out who got what share of it. Every price that you see in this book simply tells you how many beans a player got in comparison to the average player. Consequently, it's much harder for individual players to stand out in years when the average players are full of beans.

avg plyr	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$
NL 1987	365	11	49	11	.273	13
NL 1994	376	12	50	9	.276	13

avg plyr	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$
AL 1987	378	14	53	9	.267	13
AL 1994	392	13	58	8	.276	13

These are the two hardest years since the beginning of Rotisserie baseball to stand out in. Once the 1994 average hitter is multiplied by 1.4, as he is here, you can see that 1994 does closely resemble 1987, in both leagues. There are category differences, but many players, such as McGwire and Dawson earlier in this chapter, can be switched from one formula to the other without a dollar's worth of difference.

Put another way, each year amounts to the same hill of beans. Far bigger hills than, say, the hills as recently as three years ago:

avg plyr	AB	HR	RBI	SB	BA	\$
NL 1992	350	8	41	10	.265	13
AL 1992	378	10	47	8	.265	13

So, without worrying about the stats — without chopping one set down or expanding the other, and being befuddled by that — we can get a good, clear picture of how the best players in 1994 were doing, when the music stopped, in comparison to the 1987 players,

who we know had monster stats (creating the illusion of monsters), simply by comparing what they earned.

Well, there's a slight complication. Over the years, as most readers who have made it to here already know, I've flip-flopped the wins and saves denominators. 1987 was a saves flop. 1994 is a wins flip. Can't compare flips to flops, so 1987 has been flipped again. Otherwise all 1987 denominators stand.

That out of the way, we can go back to the question of whether last year was or was not like 1987. How great were the 10 best players of each year, compared to basically the same average player?

1987		1994	
Jimmy Key	\$46	Greg Maddux	\$72
Vince Coleman	\$45	Jeff Bagwell	\$63
Eric Davis	\$43	Kenny Lofton	\$61
Tony Gwynn	\$42	David Cone	\$53
Paul Molitor	\$42	Barry Bonds	\$53
Roger Clemens	\$42	Albert Belle	\$50
Alan Trammell	\$39	Mike Mussina	\$48
Andre Dawson	\$39	Frank Thomas	\$46
Frank Viola	\$38	Bret Saberhagen	\$46
Tim Lincecum	\$38	Ken Griffey Jr.	\$45
average	\$41	average	\$54