

Gameplan Baseball Hints and Tips v1.1

Introduction

This document is intended to provide some basic ideas on how to go about managing a gameplan baseball team to success (or less failure, depending on how tough your league is). In all cases these are only general hints, and you may have to modify them for your particular situation or targets. For example all of the economic hints and tips are really designed to build your team for 2-3 seasons and beyond, where you may not be planning to play long term.

Also be aware this was created with the 4.1 rules in mind, so any changes since may affect the validity of any of the below.

General

When you get your first team sheet you will have three main areas that you need to establish how well your team is set up, firstly the economic situation you are in (how many LPs you have, your various incomes, and wages), your short term prospects of success (making best use of your team to win games), and long term prospects (developing players, using free agency and the draft). So I will split the rest of the document into these three sections, although in reality they do have an affect on each other.

Contributors:

People that I can remember that have contributed to the creation and updates of this document, either directly with comments for improvements, or indirectly with discussions on <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/gameplanbaseball/> include:

Robert Dorman, Mike Sim, David Trice, Paul Beaumont, Troy Dilworth and Philip Howard.

No doubt I am forgetting people, but thanks to everyone at the site and on the various newsletters that have kept the game interesting by being good opponents.

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Key Points

As this has become a rather lengthy document I will summarise the really key points here for clarity:

- If you become successful the extra cash you get from losing dries up, so any plan that is aimed at creating a successful team either in the short or long term needs at least some attention paid to this area of the game. It can also be a major factor in most cases for creating a strong team in the first place
- Wage management is essential for long term success, as you will want to keep as much of your core as you can
- In the short term you should be looking to make the most of the players you have, through choosing your team, parameters, ordering your lineup, and selecting pitching rotations, etc.
- The other thing that helps in the short term is successfully managing form, through rotating players, using things like platooning, pinch hitting, reserves and draft squad, ADDFORM and bonuses
- Developing talent through the draft and the use of coaching to increase your team's strength in the long term
- Using the Free Agents pool to boost your team, both in the medium and long term

Economic Hints and Tips

General Tips

Manage your LPs well, they are your main route to long term success – both in terms of income so you can live with higher wages once you are successful, and also your pool of current LPs can do a lot for your future if used wisely. Try to prioritise all the various things you can do at any time, and ensure that you do the time critical ones that are important to your progress at the right times, and that you have enough LPs at that point to do them. Planning to buy an impressive Free Agent when he drops below a certain level of wages, only to find you don't have the LPs to do so that week can be very annoying.

Trainers

It can be very tempting to let your trainer level slide to a quite low value, because its benefits are hidden to you, in the reduction in duration of injuries you receive each turn, and also in players gaining less fatigue as they play. However it can be worth investing in, as injuries at the wrong time can seriously damage your squad, and fatigue can be very problematic as well – remember trainers work on all members of the squad, and the extra games from less fatigue and injury time can have a considerable value.

Also remember that trainers can go all the way up to 20, and although going this high takes a very high investment, it only costs 4 more to maintain at that level than level 19, and the same is true of each level, so if you think an extra level of trainers is worth 4 LP per year, then it can still be worth building it up that high, although that does take your maintenance costs per year to a total of 77 (note that 77/20 levels is a little under 4LP per level as suggested), which ties up a lot of your cash at the beginning of a season.

Income – Merchandising

Merchandising is important for winning teams to offset the lost LPs you get from your losses, although even for teams that are struggling each Merchandising point is still effectively 100% profit. It is also no risk, in that there is no way to lose from investing in merchandising, the only down side is if you don't win much it can take a while to get the LPs back out.

Merchandising is the best way of storing LPs from season to season, if you are going to have more than 100LPs at the end of a season, send the excess to Merc when you can, and you then won't lose half of them going into the next season.

Merchandising is also part of the core for winning teams LP management. At the end of the season top it up to 200 or as close as you can, and at the beginning of the season just let it decline until you have no risk of holdouts.

Wage Management

Early on its likely your team isn't seeing much success, so you will probably find this is giving you quiet a few LPs (as you get 4LPs per loss), and your wages wont hurt too much unless your team has really stagnated while under computer control. As a general rule 90 wages is low and easy to pay, 100 is below average, and 110 is pretty high. Remember you pay this 18 times during a season, so every one extra wage makes a fair difference in the end.

One of the first things to do here is to isolate the players that you are paying higher wages to than their contribution suggests you should. An initial way to do this work out your normal wages for each class of player, so 4/5/6* in most cases you might accept 1 wage only, 7* for 2 or 3 wages depending on whether they play regularly, 8* for 3 or 4 wages, and so on. Mark out those that are above what you expect, and then look at them in more detail to see who you might want to replace both to make your team more effective and stronger economically.

One thing to check is the free agent market if it is available when you start, to see what sort of wage demands an equal or better replacement in the same position might make. Depending on how competitive a league is, and what point in the season, you might often find your expensive players you can get both better and cheaper replacements, although that won't always be the case.

Another thing to check is the real ability and usefulness of the player you are looking at. Things like a pitcher just lacking stamina means in practise he will perform as well as better ability more rounded pitchers, its just he will only be able to fit into a short reliever. For batters it will be more style and stadium related – if you have a large ballpark then players speed might be more important than power, as you wont be hitting as many homers, and it will help fielding as well.

Also to be aware of even at this point is experience and potential. Experience can make players significantly more effective than an equivalent rookie, so be aware of this. In my experience a player with 10+ years in the majors can be a major asset, even if their ability level is a little below what you would ideally want. Potential is key for the long term, as a general rule a 7* player will go up to an 8* player about 1 in 5 or 6 seasons, which is why trade values are calculated the way they are. Of course in addition potential also indicates the life cycle of the player in question, once a player is down to 0 potential they are generally fine the first year, but the following seasons the drop off will generally be extreme enough you will want to replace them as soon as possible.

Income – Stadium

The stadium is an important part of your income, as it is the main part you can affect that doesn't vary up or down with the wins you have in any given week. Essentially every one higher stadium level you can support means you should be able to have one higher wage bill.

Clearly each stadium level gives you 18 income per season, but how much does it cost?

Well ignoring stadium level 1 and 2, each stadium level you increase will cost 4 more LP to replace the two levels it drops when you get the postseason week 3 turn. Which means in the long term you can see the stadium levels as all equal in that you invest 4 LP at the beginning of the season for each level, and get back 18, for 14 LP per level profit.

The two main limiting factors for stadium levels are that it ends up costing 56LPs to maintain 15 levels, which will take a fair chunk out of your LPs at the beginning of the season.

Note that to make most profit from stadium levels you should get them before the first week of the regular season is run, however if you are trying to invest in higher levels it can still be worth increasing them up to week 13, to avoid having excess LPs at the end of the season, and also you will make some profit from them still (if you get them for week 10, it still is as profitable as merchandising at 100%, for example).

The other limiting factor for stadium levels is that your initial investment for each level takes more and more time to pay back for itself. For example if your stadium level is already 14, to advance to 15 costs 29. Assuming you are at the start of a season, this then pays back 18 during the first season, costs 4 more to maintain over level 14, then you get another 15 before you break even, only to be three weeks from having to pay 4 more maintenance again. Essentially it takes 2 full years to cover the investment of level 15 in isolation.

In contrast level 1 stadium pays its investment back in week 1. Everything is linear on this scale, so base your investment decisions based on how long you plan to run the team, divide the cost of the next level by 14 to see how long (in full seasons) before you are seeing a real terms profit from the stadium level you select (note these calculations ignore any lower levels of stadium you would be buying at the time, you can calculate each separately to see what the highest level you can buy that is worthwhile for you). Of course remember once the investment is paid back, you are seeing a 350% profit, and you have paid back the seasons costs by week 4, anything after that is your profit.

Income – Fans

Fans are the hardest part of your income to analyse, as they are both critical to your ability to cope financially over a season, but also hard to determine whether investing in more fans is particularly valuable.

As a general rule paying for fans if you aren't expecting to get enough at the end of a season to reach 40,000 and have some carry over is of limited value – although you will on average at least get your money back, and generally there will be some profit based on how many wins you had and when, it is heavily influenced by rounding – ie the extra fans you bought must push you over into the next 1,000 fans so you get one more LP that turn.

Note that if you were to pay for 1020 fans it costs you 17 LP, you would expect to get a minimum of 18LP back – plus they should grow during the season as you win, so a bit more. Of course if you reach 41000 you then lose some of the extra LPs of income (as fans income is capped to 40), however you will get half of your accumulated fans rolling over into the next season, depending on how many wins in the season this might even be more than 1000 extra fans the next season.

Gaining profit from fans is a very hit and miss affair. As a general rule I would say the main time it is beneficial is for a team that has finished rebuilding and is expecting a very good year (100+ wins), but only has the minimum amount of fans, so won't reach 48000 that season. In this case 50LP or so spent on fans before week one can be very profitable - up to about 150% profit. However it is risky, in that if you don't get the wins and get past 40000 fans then your profit will be more like 40-50% (70-90 wins), or less for lots of losses. Note you can also invest even more than this to try and have the same effect on less wins – for example 150LP of fans with 70-80 wins is about 100% profit, but your risk of loss gets greater the more you put in.

As a general rule I would suggest new players avoid spending much on fans, as it relies on you knowing accurately how many wins you will get during a season to make a decent profit.

End of Season Economic Management

The main things in my view for the end of the season are to try and accumulate a reasonable amount at least so you can pay for maintenance of stadium and trainers. On the other hand you may also find yourself entering the post season with more than 100 LPs, especially while your team is rebuilding and has low wages/high income.

So here are the best ways to squirrel away LPs for next season:

1. Merchandising up to 200 – 100% of the money is kept, although it may take some time to get it back
2. **High** levels of stadium/trainers, if you want them that high (or up to two levels lower. Remember each level of stadium/trainers costs an extra 4 LPs, this works either way – so the 29 LP it costs to get a level 15 stadium, you essentially only lose 4 LPs on when it declines at the end of the season, so you have kept 86% of your LPs (although tied up in having 13 stadium instead of 12 the next season), which is better than losing 50% to the excess rule. Even Stadium/Trainer level 5 (costing 9 LPs) is technically better than losing to excess, however levels below that do lose you LPs.
3. Keep it. Fans, low levels of stadium/trainers, etc are all worse than just holding the cash and letting it get halved.

Fans are never worthwhile to invest in at the end of a season (or even really beyond the first couple of weeks), as they at best halve in value, and if they are below 40000 you lose even more, or even all of it.

The other way of storing LPs is by retaining your draft squad until after the season finishes – you aren't paying any wages during the post season anyway, so there is no reason to promote/waive them until after the season end completes. When you do waive or promote them you get the LPs as appropriate. In general I would say most teams should clear the draft squad in one way or another at this point, paying wages for extra people should only happen in unusual circumstances.

You can also store LPs in players while the free agent market is active, buying a 10/11* player with potential that is at a decent price at week 16, and selling it week 17 so that it gets bought early in the next season. Assuming he gets bought during preseason you can get back 100% of half his LPs transferred from season to season. You do run the risk if he isn't bought before he retires you lose all the money, or if he stays on the market until when he value halves you get no bonus. However in both these situations it would seem like you would actually step in and buy him for your squad anyway. This method is unreliable at best however, but an option a well set up team that doesn't want to invest in stadium/merc might consider to transfer LPs between seasons.

Early Season Economic Management

The other key area you can have economic problems is early in the season, particularly once you have a successful, established team.

The main causes for this are the wage/value rises at the end of the season, and the drop in the number of fans at the beginning of the season. Combined this can be easily an increase of 10 wages, and a drop of 16 income. While a rebuilding team will have a fair amount of slack to deal with this, more established teams don't tend to have so much slack in their finances to survive until the mid season when income and the wage bill gets to a more reasonable point.

Ways to avoid this include things like:

- Limit the amount of 0 potential players you keep for a final season to 3, so that you can immediately drop them by promoting your draftees into their spots in the roster before week 1.
- Generally promote/waive all your draftees before week 1 so you aren't paying any extra wages, remember during a full season you pay at least the entire value of the player out in wages, so having extra players around is a liability, not an asset. This isn't always the best move however, as the draft squad does give you extra minor league spots for players to gain form in effectively.
- Try not to drop players onto the free agency market early that are going to disappear (7* and below mostly) so you only get half their value if there is a reasonable chance someone will buy them, although players with 0 potential left it probably isn't too important.
- Do wage control from the start of the season, worrying about strengthening once you are financially stable as a rule.

Remember if you do get into financial problems its not just the fact you will lose your best player, you also lose all flexibility to do things in the game until you either cut wages or wait until your fans build up.

Personally I try to always keep about 30 LP spare that I only use in rare circumstances, such as if an outstanding free agent appears, and also to act as a buffer against holdouts.

Short Term Success

General

This section is about getting the most out of the team you currently have – choosing the right players, selecting line ups, analysing your pitchers and batters to see where they are most effective, etc.

When looking at the ability of your players use all of the information you have available to you where possible – for example one 9* QUI pitcher might make a great starter, where another would be very poor. Also one Average Hitter might make .281 in a season, where another might only bat .175, this could be due to their variation within the Average category, other stats like speed, experience, fatigue or form – and of course luck.

One of the key factors in man management in gameplan baseball is the management of form – try and keep your in form players active so they can perform well and snowball even higher form ratings. Conversely players with negative form might be best served with a stint in the minor leagues while they turn things around. The new ADDFORM command could also be a useful tool here.

Remember from the rulebook – a player with Average hitting and +9 Form is comparable to a Good hitter with no form, or an Excellent hitter with –9 Form, and Form affects all 4 stats, so it can be a very strong affect on a players performance.

Other ways of getting form include putting players on the reserve squad, or for draftees leaving them on the draft squad. Use both of these appropriately, especially for your developing players, just like in the real MLB although some experience in the majors can help their development, their lack of experience overall will lead their overall form gains to be quite limited if they only play in the majors, having them spend the majority of the time in the minors where they can be more successful overall will help develop them more quickly as a rule.

Players with low form are more likely to have a poor week, this tends to lead to them having more negative form the following week if you keep playing them. This is not always the case, as a particularly strong week even against the grain can flip the player back to low/no form. It is better however to engineer the player back to positive form, using ADDFORM, reserve squad, or just dropping them for a bit, etc.

Obviously the key is trying to keep as many of your players on noticeably positive form as often as you can, this is even true of your fringe players as much as you can, as positive form helps improve players between seasons.

Pitching - Starters

The first thing about pitching is finding a decent starting rotation. These will be the pitchers that should be pitching most of the innings, so they should include as many of your highest rated pitchers as possible, as long as they fit the profile.

What is the profile for a starting pitcher? Firstly to be a quality pitcher (high Acc, Con, Qui), but also to have enough Stamina to go deep into games without getting too fatigued. It does you little good to have either a starter that you pull after 5 innings when he isn't getting hit, or going to 4-5 fatigue every time so starting fatigued or limiting your options if you do play them deep.

You have a couple of options here, in my opinion, you can survive with pitchers in the rotation with Average Stamina if you have a five man rotation, if you want to drop to a four man rotation you really need each of them to Good stamina as a minimum – remember one of your pitchers will pitch 3 games in a week with a 4 man rotation, so if things go wrong he could end up starting two fatigued each time. You will also want to keep MxH, MxB, MxE all tightly controlled in a 4 man rotation, even for the Excellent Stamina pitchers you still do not want to push them too hard.

There is an option in between which I used for a short while once, a 4.5 man rotation. This is where you have 4 decent starters, but they don't quite have the stamina to survive playing every 4th day. Instead you get a fifth starter, but always bump him down to 5th place at the start of each week, so he plays one game a week, and the rest all play 2.

You may also want to set the values for Max Hits, Max Batters, and Max Extra for your starters appropriate to their ability and stamina, so that the lower stamina members of the rotation don't get too fatigued by facing too many batters, and your best starters get more hits to play with.

Also you might want to set the Starter Innings parameter. Generally I would suggest 2 or 3 innings, although you might want to set it to 1 so that max hits always applies. I would certainly advise against setting it past 3 innings, as your starters will sometimes run into a really in form batting line up, and forcing him to pitch inning after inning where he is getting chewed up can take some time to undo. In most cases you will prefer the starter to get out without taking a complete pasting, but rather put a reliever in. Even if the reliever loses the form anyway, it is easier to drop a reliever in bad form down a spot or two so his bad form can recover without too much impact.

Pitching - Relievers

Now that you have used up your best pitchers for your rotation, you need to sort out your relievers and chose whether to have a closer/setup man. Using a closer or not is really up to you, but to some extent it will be dictated by the pitchers you have left – what you really want is someone with solid ability, but low stamina (or you would have made him a starter). Note the one thing I have noticed with closers is that they often tend to have good form compared to most relievers (as they get lots of saves and low ERA outings), obviously assuming they aren't getting laced around the park.

I don't generally use a setup man, however if you have two pitchers that would make good closers you might use this. Setup relievers don't seem to get much form bonus though, so as a rule its probably better for him to be in the bullpen where he

If you have a high stamina low ability rookie around it can be worth making him your long inning reliever, as it is generally better to just give up a game than overwork your entire bullpen just to try and salvage one game you got quickly behind in. To do this you will probably want to set his Max Hits value to a moderately high number like 5 or 6, so he isn't taken out too easily.

When selecting your bullpen – ie all the rest of your pitchers, ignore fatigue and stamina as the computer will automatically select the best (ranked by you) bullpen reliever that is not fatigued (if any aren't). What you might want to do however is set the parameters of a low stamina reliever so that he doesn't come in at too early an inning, or limit the maximum number of batters he can face, so that he doesn't build up too much fatigue in a single game.

Also be sure to manage the form of your relievers as well as you can, if a reliever is in form move them up to list a bit where it makes sense so they get more innings while they are doing well, conversely drop down poor performers so they can get back to even form again, or of course use the reserve squad if you have a spot to use.

Batters – Starters

When selecting the 9 players you want to bat one of the main considerations is their playing positions. You do have some flexibility with the DH in case you have two good players that play in the same spot, in addition the DH spot can be good if you have a player that is very poor at fielding but a good batter.

It is easiest to start by choosing your best catcher, that eliminates one spot to select, as you may only choose a catcher for this spot.

Next select your infielders – 1B, 2B, SS, 3B. In general you want to select your best players in these positions, however if you have a spot where your best isn't all that hot, it is worth considering substituting another batter from a similar fielding position, the most similar positions are 1B and 3B, and also 2B and SS. There is some degree of interchangeability between all the infield positions failing that, however the fielding penalty gets higher the further you go. In general you still want to have most or all of your players playing their designated positions, however that's not always possible, especially when injuries factor in.

If you have a decent second string catcher you might consider playing them, although in the Rulebook it doesn't explicitly state where they fit in best, it is likely they will be able to cover 1B (and by extension probably 3B) without fielding too poorly, as this is normal in the MLB when catchers get older.

In the outfield the interchangeability is fairly high, although ideally you will select one LF, one CF, and one RF, its less critical than the infield. Consider the All Star Game in the real MLB where you don't even vote on the separate positions, just for 3 OF's. However ideally you will have one of each, as can be seen from the real MLB most players have a strong preference to playing one particular spot in the field, as there are a number of nuances to each spot.

It can also help your squad balance if you can get hold of an IF, either as a backup or to fill a hole if your squad, but they will also be useful when dealing with juggling the roster when you have injuries or are looking at free agents due to the extra flexibility. An OF I do not consider as important, as outfielders seem to be able to fill in for each other with little noticeable drop in performance anyway.

Batters – Lineup Theory

There are two slightly opposing factors when you choose your lineup – number of plate appearances, and complementary skills.

In terms of number plate appearances, the players near the top of the line up will get more plate appearances per game on average than a batter at the bottom of the line up, so in general you want your best players as near as possible to the top of the lineup. To put it into numbers each position higher in the order yields an 11% better chance of getting one extra plate appearance than the next in the order below it – so first spot gets an extra appearance 89% more than the last in the order. With between 3 and 6 plate appearances being normal in a game without extra innings, this equates to a reasonably important factor in the long run.

The opposing factors include that if you just put your best batter at the top of the lineup, and he gets a home run then he scores one run. If you had put someone good at getting on base before him in the lineup he is more likely to get an second run when he homers. Remember if you put your best batter at the top, then the second time around the order the worst batters will be hitting just before he comes to the plate, so he wont often have runners on he can score.

The other effect is complementary skills, I will explain with a table:

First Batter	Second Batter	Complementary?
HIT	HIT	Yes – if the first gets on base then the second has the possibility of scoring them with a hit
HIT	POW	Yes – if the first gets on base then the second has the possibility of scoring them with a home run
HIT	SPD	No – if the speedy player even gets on, they have a batter in front of them stopping them stealing/taking extra bases
SPD	HIT	Yes – if the first gets on base then he has increased possibility of scoring with a hit through steals or fast base running
SPD	POW	No – home runs score you from any base, it doesn't matter how fast you run
SPD	SPD	No – most of the time only one runner can steal, and having a fast runner on doesn't help either of them do it particularly
POW	HIT	No – Power batters leave the bases empty when successful so no advantage to hitting after one
POW	SPD	No – There is no advantage here
POW	POW	No – Power hitters should clear the bases, so nothing for the second one to do

So what does this mean overall? It means you should try and keep your best hitters together in a bunch (HIT/HIT complement), try and get batters with speed on before your best hitters (SPD/HIT), put your power hitters after your best hitters (HIT/POW). In all cases it can be worth doing more than one of any given player type in a row in your lineup, as in baseball success is often measured by doing your job 30% of the time.

Batting – Sample Line Up

So what would a normal batting lineup look like with that considered:

- 1 Good HIT and Best SPD
- 2 Good HIT and with speed if available
- 3 Best HIT
- 4 Good HIT and Best POW
- 5 Good HIT and Good POW
- 6 Decent SPD
- 7 Decent HIT
- 8 Decent HIT
- 9 Decent POW

Note that at position 6 in this example you essentially are starting around again, but with your lesser players, but in the same general vein. Please note when I say ‘Good’ above I am not referring to the class Good (Go) as shown on turnsheets, but just what is a good rating in terms of your squad.

Note there is a fair amount of debate about what the best way to do things are, particularly at the bottom of the order. My personal preference is above, and have a lower average, decent power hitter at the bottom, so that when he does get hits he will more often be getting extra base hits clearing the way for the lead off hitter. Remember as well as being a speed guy, your lead off man usually has a good average, so he will usually make a number of RBIs playing the lower order batters round the bases, although this does limit the value of his speed on those occasions, there are likely to be far more with the bases empty anyway as the bottom of the order wont be the best hitters in your lineup by quite a way.

There are other routes to go, and this could be by the managers preference, or squad specific, or even fairly commonly tailored to the stadium. If you are in a small stadium, and particularly if your entire leagues tends to smaller stadia, then speed might be sacrificed so that you are mostly a hitting and power team, alternating a couple of high average players then a couple of power hitters down the order.

Pinch Hitters and Platooning

Pinch hitters can be useful as they will only replace players who are not performing in a given game. In general a pinch hitter will probably have a decent Hit or Pow rating, but poor Fielding so that you don't want them on the field too much giving up errors, but if you are slightly behind then the bonus of strong hitting can offset the drop in fielding, especially in the last few innings where chances are the player might not even have to field a single ball (unless at 1B).

Pinch Hitting can be useful also to allow you to rest players with Fatigue in the middle/late end of the season, but help them not to lose too much form hopeful but getting the odd at bat during the week. When doing this you might want to make the pinch innings fairly early comparatively to increase the chance of them getting a few more at bats when they do play, while they will still miss most of the games and their fatigue should drop, they will get at least a reasonable amount of chances to get some hits and keep their form up.

Platooning can be worthwhile no doubt if you have players with similar abilities and position to trade in when needed. One position where this might happen is a second catcher of opposite hand that you need as a backup anyway. I have analysed 3 seasons of play by play data below to give a statistical breakdown of how much difference it makes to batters in the game, so you can judge if a Av hitting left hander is as good as a Go hitting right hander against a right handed pitcher, or vice versa.

Batter	Pitcher	At Bats	Average	Apps	OBP
L	L	2948	.287	3212	.319
L	R	4596	.322	5161	.372
R	L	5455	.315	6033	.356
R	R	9446	.289	10358	.328

For platooning specifically the change from the first to the third line is the key, which predicts a 28 point higher batting average, and 37 on the On Base Percentage. Considering the number of at bats and plate appearances these are over this should be reasonably reliable as a guide, however note that half the data will have been with my pitchers and batters, so that makes these figures a little less reliable than an ideal set of data, however until I have a significant amount of extra data from another league/team it still can act as a good guide of what to expect in my opinion.

One thing it does highlight for me – for getting players in form, particularly say inexperienced batters, either trading out the left handers vs left handed starters, or if they are right handed platooning them in.

Clearly platooning can be combined well with pinch hitting, as the players that platoon in and out, can also be set up to pinch hit for each other, as in the late innings the starter is commonly not pitching any more, and it means that if the starting batter for that game is not hitting that day, the other batter can have a go, limiting the damage to the form, and giving a chance to both batters regularly, mostly in situations that favour them.

Long Term Success

General

A large part of long term success is of course the financial situation, this has been covered in earlier sections but should be reiterated here – you cannot build a successful dynasty in the game without giving at least some attention to building a strong financial base, and keeping control of the wage bill. In this section however we will be looking at the other game aspects that affect your long term success – managing your roster, draft, and the free agent market.

Potential and Experience

Key things to look at are experience and potential when considering long term success. Experience is important in that it will improve the players performances, and potential is key it that gives longevity to the player so that you can rely on them being able to perform in future seasons. Even if you draft 3 players and get 17 from free agency every season, you will still have 8 players that you had the previous season, so some amount of potential is always useful – effectively you don't really want your average potential to drop below about 3, or it will be very difficult to replace everyone fast enough to maintain the success of the team.

High potential players are also good economically, because if you decide to offload them another manager is more likely to pick them up, rather than retiring, so that you get the extra cash when they sign up.

Note that each 5 points of potential can be roughly equated to one ability rank, however that will either cost 50 LPs of coaching (and increase player value by 10 LPs, or one entire wage the next season), or take 5 seasons on average (or a combination) to develop.

Rating Players

It is important to be able to compare players and know who is the better. You have a number of measures to use, however none of them are totally accurate so its best to take a view of them all together.

From the rulebook each class (Po, Fa, Av, Go, Ex, WC) covers 5 or 6 ranks in fact, and the total scale goes from 1 to 35. This would mean that 5 of the classes has 6 ranks, and only one has 5. For convenience I will assume this is WC, although it could be any of them, but it wont make much overall different which really. The table to the right indicates an approximation of this ranking system. To work out a players score, add the four skills from your team sheet or scouting together to get a number from 0-20. Check the table below to see if that is high, low or average.

Rank	Class	Average Rank	Score
1-6	Po	3.5	0
7-12	Fa	9.5	1
13-18	Av	15.5	2
19-24	Go	21.5	3
25-30	Ex	27.5	4
31-35	WC	32	5

Ability	Worst	Best	Average	Low	High
4	Fa Fa Fa Po	Av Fa Fa Fa	4,5	3	-
5	Av Fa Fa Fa	Av Av Av Fa	5,6	-	7
6	Av Av Fa Fa	Av Av Av Av	6,7	-	8
7	Av Av Av Fa	Go Go Go Av	9	7,8	10,11
8	Go Av Av Av	Go Go Go Go	10,11	9	12
9	Go Go Go Av	Ex Ex Go Go	12,13	11	14
10	Ex Go Go Go	Ex Ex Ex Ex	14,15	13	16
11	Ex Ex Ex Go	Ex Ex WC WC	16,17	15	18
12	WC WC WC Ex	WC WC WC Ex	19	-	-

Comparatively when looking at ability, which is presumably indicative of the sum of the four abilities you get a result from 4 to 12, where a 4* player has skills something like Fa Fa Fa Fa (Score 4), and a 12* might be WC WC WC Ex (Score 19) or similar. How can you tell from the combination of these whether a player is likely play well for the classes he has listed, or badly?

Well if you look consider there is a fairly wide gap between the best and worst of each ability grade, the same as within the classes of each skill, then for example, Go Go Av Av (Score 10) in any order might generally indicate a slightly lower end 8*, or a better 7* player. Note this is only an average, the player could be at the very lowest rank of each class and actually be a fairly poor 7*, or right at the top just 4 points short of being Ex Ex Go Go (Score 14) and actually a very good 8* - in fact that would probably be better than an 8* can be, however with little to go on you have to make the most of the information you are given and assume it is less unbalanced.

So for example if you have a 7* player with Av Av Av Av (Score 8), then the likelihood is that he is quite high up in terms of the Av skills, but also he is probably a lower quality 7* than the average. Note you might see best and worst outside what I have seen, it is based on a relatively limited sample set, if you do please contact me so I can update the list.

Drafting

Generally you will have a good idea of what you want from the draft, clearly one key facet is to try and free up a number of special actions so you can scout the list for the more dubious picks that you might have to make. Generally I don't scout the best players in the draft, as you don't really need to know what their stats exactly are to know you will bid on them, it is more the next tier where they may or may not be suitable for you. Remember to note that the draft list is in order by value within each ability range, not their ability (its possible they are related in some way, but I don't know of any such thing being said) so there is no implicit reason you should pick the highest person on the list in each section.

As well as the position, ability, and best stat, you will also want to consider potential and value quite carefully. Remember if you intend to keep them a player with a value of 19 will cost you 18 LP less in the following season than one that has a value of 20. However there has been some discussion, with no real result, that a player with a higher value might be indicative of being a slightly better player within the ability level given. No solid conclusions have been come to however.

You may wish to keep draft players in the draft squad for some time in the season (as they can gain form there without taking 1 of your 3 reserve squad places) but as a rule only do this for draftees that you think will be able to help you in the near future, as it is costing you extra LPs to pay them.

Coaching

Not all coaches are keen on coaching at all, some coach very heavily, generally though Coaching can be a very important tool in developing your squad over the long term.

Firstly don't coach players who are already quite high in value, otherwise it accelerates the time before you will want to release them to reduce their wage demands. Coach players who are cheap, so that you don't risk losing them to free agency for a fairly long time, as you should be able to afford to keep them on your squad and benefit from the coached ability as long as possible. Remember if you have to put the player on the free agent market to get his wages under control you can then lose that investment in the coaching.

Note that the rulebook states that coaching is more effective on skills that are low, ie you get diminishing returns as you train the same skill higher and higher. From this we can assume it isn't very efficient to train your best hitter in hitting, and that as a general rule its probably best to use coaching to fill in gaps where a player is poor, where doing so will be useful. For example increasing the low fielding a player has so that he doesn't always have to be in the DH spot and can act as backup at least for his position.

Your Squad and Stadium

You will want to get players that are strong in skills that suit your particular stadium, so if you have a small stadium you will probably want pitchers that have high Control, and batters good at Power, where if you are in a large stadium you will probably favour speed both for fielding in the large areas, and stretching hits in the outfield to extra bases.

Free Agency

Through free agency you have the ability to do two main things – control your wage bill, and build or rebuild your squad.

The thing to remember with free agency is that it isn't just your fastest way of strengthening your team, it is also your opponents. The random free agents that appear when someone retires on the list tend to be not much different for the level of ability of draftees, although they often have some experience. Therefore most of your team strengthening is done by reducing the strength of other teams in the league.

Unsurprisingly most of the other teams (except those in serious rebuilding, or computer controlled) won't be doing this willingly, so it's essential to keep a good track on what the other teams need, when other coaches are likely to step in for a free agent, and how much over you might need to bid to win when you are bidding against another manager.

Astute use of the free agency system is one of the primary keys to success in gameplan baseball in my opinion, however the market will change over time and will vary from league to league so no hard and fast rules can be made on what is a good way to use it.

One thing that is generally true though is not to get too attached to your players – if you have a 7* reliever for 3 wages, and you see an 8* reliever for 3 or even 2 wages on the market (assuming similar experience/potential), then it might be a good idea to go for them and strengthen your team, although scout them first to check their balance of skills is appropriate for the role they will be playing in. As a rule I prefer to be bidding on a free agent per turn, there is usually something there that can reduce your wage bill, or strengthen your team, or both. Unlike some other games in baseball players don't have to get used to playing with each other to become effective, so a high turnover rate doesn't implicitly have any disadvantage.