

GUIDE TO SCORING BASEBALL – FOURTH INNING

CHRISTOPHER SWINGLEY

16-APR-2005

TOP OF THE FOURTH

Top of the fourth inning with the Cubs still leading the Cardinals 2 – 0. Glenallen Hill steps into the box 0 for 1 after hitting into a fielder's choice in the first inning. He takes a ball from Cardinals pitcher Mercker and then drives one to right field. But it's not hit hard enough to get out and Cardinals right fielder John Mabry makes the catch. **F9**, one out.

Next up is Gary Gaetti, the Cubs third baseman. He's one for one with a single in the first inning that drove in a run. Mercker must be aware of this because he throws three straight balls to Gaetti. The next pitch is right down the middle for a called strike. Gaetti didn't even take the bat off his shoulders. The next pitch is a strike, so Mercker has worked his way back from 3 – 0 to a full count. On the sixth pitch, Gaetti hits one into left-center field and cruises into first with a single.

We should have the balls and strikes already filled out. To record the single we draw a line from home plate to where the ball was retrieved by the outfielder, mark his path along the bases with a line from home to first and a tail to indicate he stopped at first. Finally, circle the **1B** on the right of the at-bat box to indicate Gaetti's single.

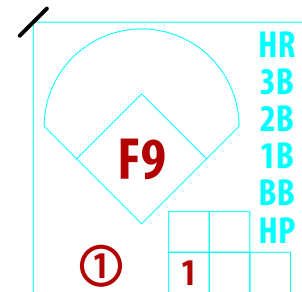
Micky Morandini is next. He hit a fly ball out in the first inning. On the first pitch to Morandini, Mercker comes set, starts his slide step to home and then throws over to first. The umpire calls this move a balk and motions Gaetti over to second. To indicate this, we move Gaetti over from first to second with a line along the base paths, and show that he stopped at second with a little tail. Write **BK** above the line to identify the play as a balk.

A balk is one of the stranger things to see in a live game because it's not always obvious why a baserunner was just advanced, and it's a very rare play because umpires often don't call pitchers for balks unless they do something really obvious (like drop the ball while standing on the rubber). Let's go through what a balk is.

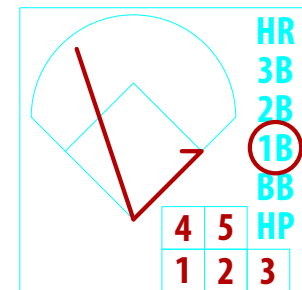
The intention of the balk rule is to punish pitchers for attempting to deceive runners with trick moves. A good pick-off move depends on some trickery to fool the runner into thinking the pitcher is throwing home, but without the balk rule, pitchers would spend all their time feigning throws, dropping the ball, and generally slowing the game down.

According to the official rules (8.05), there are thirteen ways a pitcher can be charged with a balk. When a balk is called, all runners advance one base. I have seen games decided in the ninth inning when the pitcher balks in a run for the other team. You should read all thirteen balk rules for yourself, but I'll discuss the most common ways pitchers get charged with a balk.

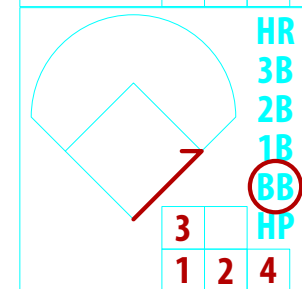
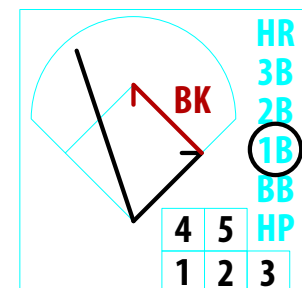
The most common balk call comes when pitchers don't step toward the base they are throwing to when attempting to pick off a baserunner. The rules state



cubs fourth, hill



cubs fourth, gaetti



cubs fourth, morandini

that you have to step toward the base you're throwing to, and if you've stepped toward home, you have to throw home. So a pitcher with a good pick off move to first will usually border on a balk when he makes it look like he's going to throw home, but suddenly steps toward first and throws there. Andy Pettitte was famous for his pick off move to first, and frankly, it could be called a balk every time because his leg and body is moving toward home while at the same time he's throwing the ball over to first. Yankee and Astros fans may disagree with my assessment of his move.

The next most common mistake a pitcher makes is some sort of mental error, like accidentally dropping the ball while standing on the pitching slab, not coming to a complete stop (called the Set Position) before making his pitch, or forgetting where the baserunners are and throwing (or faking a throw) to a base where there isn't a runner.

Other balk rules aren't seen very often because they're bald attempts to deceive batter or runner, and pitchers learn very quickly they will be punished for these tricks. Things like pitching while not facing the batter, faking pitches while not on the slab or attempting to quick pitch are all balks that aren't seen very often but are in the rules to keep the contest between pitcher, batter and runner about pitching, not trickery.

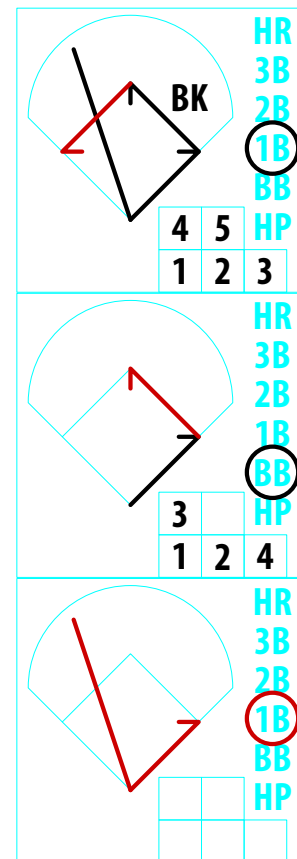
In this particular case, Mercker got a bit too cute trying to pick off Gaetti and the umpire called a balk on his move to first. Rattled, Mercker throws two balls, a strike, and then proceeds to walk Morandini. We draw Morandini's advance to first, and circle the **BB** to indicate he got a walk.

Scott Servais steps into the batter's box with two men on base and only one out. He's 0 for 1 on a fly ball out to start the second inning. He fares better this inning, hitting Mercker's first pitch into left center field for a single. Ron Gant is able to retrieve the ball very quickly and keeps Gaetti from scoring from second on the play. Everyone is safe, and the bases are now loaded.

In Servais' box we draw the path of the single from home to left center, draw a line from home to first base, and indicate he got a single by circling the **1B** on the right of his at-bat. On the play, Morandini advanced to second, so we move him along the bases, and Gaetti went to third. All these are marked in red in the image on the right.

Bases loaded, one out, and the pitcher's spot is up. The Cubs are leading, it's still early in the game, and Trachsel has gone through the Cardinal lineup in order, so he's coming up to hit. He gets two strikes on him, fouls off three straight pitches before taking a ball. He then fouls off the seventh pitch, and finally swings and misses. We should have a **1** and a **2** in the strike boxes, four fouls (**X**'s) in the lower left of Trachsel's box, and a **6** in the first ball box. His at-bat is finished with a forward **K** in the center of the box and a **2** with a circle around it to indicate that his swinging strikeout was the second out of the inning. The baserunners haven't moved, so those boxes remain the same.

Now we move up to the top of the card and Lance Johnson's row, but in the same fourth inning column. Two outs, bases loaded. Johnson flied out in the first inning and in the second inning. In this inning he takes two balls, a strike,

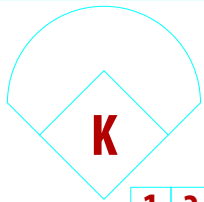


cubs fourth, servais

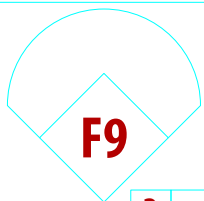
and then hits another fly ball out, this time to Cardinals right fielder Mabry. **F9**. Mercker has worked his way out of a bases loaded, one-out jam without allowing a run to score. The image on the right shows the scoring for both Trachsel and Johnson. On the actual scorecard, Trachsel is at the bottom and Johnson is at the top of the inning column but in this image, Trachsel's strikeout is on top, since his at-bat came before Johnson.

The complete scoring for this half inning is at the bottom of the page, next to the scoring for the Cardinals fourth inning.

In this half inning the Cubs had no runs on two hits and left three men on base. There was one strikeout, one walk, and the Cardinals didn't commit any errors in the inning. These numbers are entered into the boxes at the bottom of the column.

		HR
		3B
xx ②		2B
		1B
1	2	BB
6		HP

(Move to the top)

		HR
		3B
③		2B
		1B
3		BB
1	2	HP

cubs fourth, trachsel and johnson

BOTTOM OF THE FOURTH

The bottom of the fourth starts off at the top of the lineup, with Delino Deshields. Cubs pitcher Trachsel has dealt with the Cardinals in order through the first three innings. Deshields got a lead-off single in the first inning, but was picked off at first base in the next at-bat.

Trachsel gets ahead of Deshields 0 – 2 before throwing a pitch off the plate for a ball. Deshields hits the fourth pitch to the third baseman for a weak ground ball out. The play is scored **5-3** indicating a ground ball out from Cubs third baseman Gaetti to Grace at first. Out number one.

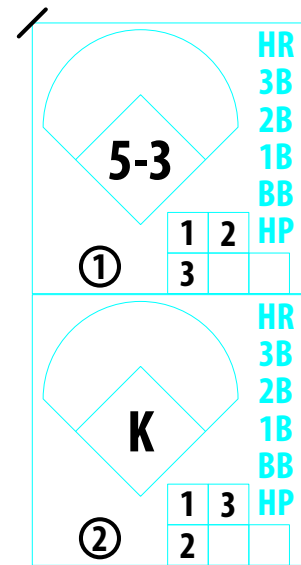
Fernando Tatis is next. He struck out looking in the first inning. He doesn't fare much better here, going to 1 – 2 before swinging and missing at the third strike. We draw a normal **K** in his box to indicate the swinging strikeout, and indicate the second out in the inning with a circled **2**. The first two at-bats are shown on the right.

The moment everyone in the stands and at home is waiting for has arrived. Mark McGwire strolls to the plate, bat in hand. Flash bulbs are already going off throughout the stadium as he takes his place in the batter's box. The last time he was up Trachsel threw four straight pitches out of the strike zone and McGwire took a walk.

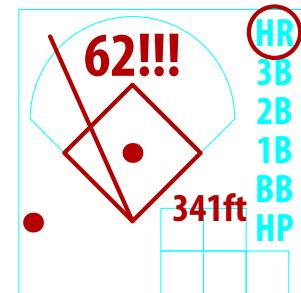
Trachsel gets the sign from Servais at the plate and delivers. McGwire unloads on the pitch and hits a low line drive toward the wall in left-center field. It's not hit very high in the air and as it flies toward the outfield, Glenallen Hill drifts over, tracking the ball. The fans cheer and rise to their feet. McGwire stands at the plate watching, and Trachsel turns around to see if the park can hold it. Collectively, everyone holds their breath until finally, at the last moment, the ball just clears the wall in left-center field! **HOME RUN!** Mark McGwire starts jogging around the bases, and picks up his son triumphantly at home plate. He has broken Roger Maris' long standing single season home run record. McGwire now holds the record with 62!

The image on the right shows how this is scored. First, draw a line from home plate to where the ball went over the wall in left-center field. Now draw McGwire's path around the bases, with no tails on any base. Circle the **HR** on the right side of the box. On a home run, the batter is credited with scoring a run (his own), so put a filled circle in the middle of his box. He also gets a run batted in for every man on base, as well as one for himself. In this case, there wasn't anyone on base, so we put a single dot in the lower left corner of his box to indicate McGwire's RBI.

You'll notice that I put a few other notations in the box, including that this was his 62nd home run, and the distance it travelled. I often include other pieces of information either in the boxes themselves, or write the information in the margins of the scorecard and connect the at-bat with the note using a symbol like an asterisk. A footnote of sorts. Useful bits of information include what happened on a strange play, the nature of an injury, or just something funny or interesting. During a baseball game two years ago in my home town of Fairbanks, two women decided to run onto the field topless. In that at-bat box, I put an



deshields and tatis



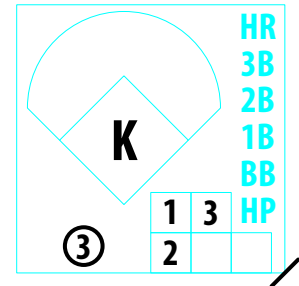
cardinals fourth, mcgwire

asterisk, and in the margins I wrote—**Streakers!** Little notes like this can help you to understand the action when the normal scoring can't convey all the action, and they also can mark momentous or curious events in a game you were watching.

After ten or fifteen minutes of celebration, we're finally ready for the fourth batter of the inning, Ray Lankford. He struck out swinging to lead off the second inning. This inning he fares no better, taking the count to 1 – 2 before swinging and missing. Strike three, and the third out in the inning. We draw a normal **K** in the box, indicate the third out in the inning, and draw a diagonal line in the lower right corner of Lankford's box to indicate the end of the inning.

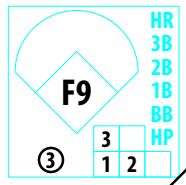
Lankford's scoring is shown on the right.

The Cardinals finally broke through, scoring one run on one hit off Trachsel. And what a run it was, marking the first time since 1971 that someone has broken the single season home run record. The record would be broken again just a few years later by Barry Bonds, but the contest between Sosa and McGwire in 1998 was historic, and far more memorable than when Bonds smashed McGwire's record. There were no errors and no one left on base. Trachsel managed two strikeouts in the inning and didn't walk anyone.

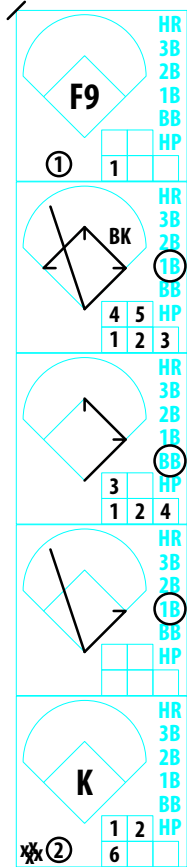


cardinals fourth, lankford

END OF THE FOURTH



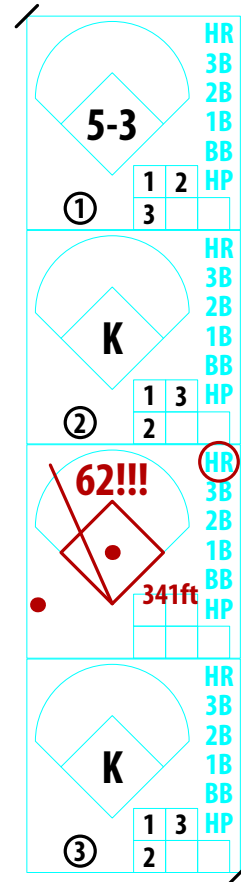
(3 empty boxes)



cubs fourth

The complete scoring for the fourth inning appears on the left and right. The Cubs scoring started in the fifth row of the scorecard, with Glenallen Hill, and after Trachsel struck out, continued at the top of the card in Lance Johnson's row. The Cardinals started the inning with their lead off man, Delino Deshields.

At the end of four, Cubs 2, Cardinals 1.



cardinals fourth