

40 Years Later, DH Debate Rages On In Baseball

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Sports Writer

The designated hitter turned 40 this year.

Fittingly, it's having sort of a mid-life crisis.

Never before has the imbalance between the American and National Leagues regarding Rule 6.10 been more of a potential problem.

The designated hitter rule has been controversial from day one. It's been criticized and even confusing since it was born. So it's only natural that Major League Baseball's once-bold experiment will continue to exist unevenly and indefinitely.

The DH debate won't die.

"A little controversy between the leagues is really not all bad," Commissioner Bud Selig said before the All-Star game in New York on Tuesday.

Selig cast one of the votes for using the designated hitter in AL games starting in 1973, when he owned the Milwaukee Brewers, then an AL franchise. He acknowledged this week that further geographic changes to divisions could force MLB to either scrap the DH altogether or install it for the NL, but that's a future possibility and not an imminent plan.

When Houston switched to the AL West this year to even out the leagues at 15 teams each, daily inter-league games became a necessity of the schedule.

"At the moment," Selig said, "we are not going to change it."

Perhaps the most polarizing of this sport's many quirks and imperfections, the designated hitter came to be when AL teams sought to boost their then-lagging product. The decision was made during a time when

the two leagues were far less integrated than now.

The gimmick not only worked to increase scoring and attendance but created a way for some of the game's greatest hitters to extend their careers — and make a lot more money.

Orlando Cepeda even credited the rule for boosting his Hall of Fame credentials, after Boston signed him for the 1973 season following a long career with San Francisco.

"That was one of the best years, because I was playing on one leg and I hit .289," Cepeda said earlier this season. "And I hit four doubles in one game. Both my knees were hurting, and I was designated hitter of the year."

Designated hitters last year had the second-highest average salary by position at \$8.1 million, behind first basemen at \$8.6 million. That's the

main reason why eliminating the DH to bring the AL back on line with the NL is almost unfathomable. Boston's David Ortiz, who recently passed Harold Baines on the career list for hits by a DH, is making \$14 million this season at age 37.

The designated hitter has also helped teams keep their best players in the lineup while giving them some type of rest. Minnesota All-Star catcher Joe Mauer is a prime example. When he needs a break from crouching behind the plate, manager Ron Garden can keep his potent bat in the lineup at DH.

"I get a lot of questions about the DH, how we use it and all that stuff, but basically the way I see it is I'd rather see David Ortiz hit than some

Campbell: The Best DH's In Baseball History

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Sports Writer

At 40 years and counting, the designated hitter debate continues in baseball.

Inarguably, though, some of the game's greatest batters have been able to extend or enhance their careers with the DH rule in the American League. Here's one take on the top five designated hitters:

5. HAROLD BAINES:

Baines had a 22-year all-AL career that began in 1980 with Chicago, and by 1987 the DH was his regular position. Over the final nine seasons of his career, Baines appeared in the outfield in only one game. But he kept on because of his bat, turning in one of his best years at age 40 in 1999 when he became an All-Star for the sixth time. Baines hit .322 with 24 home runs and 81 RBIs in just 345 at-bats that season for Baltimore, which traded him to Cleveland that August.

4. FRANK THOMAS:

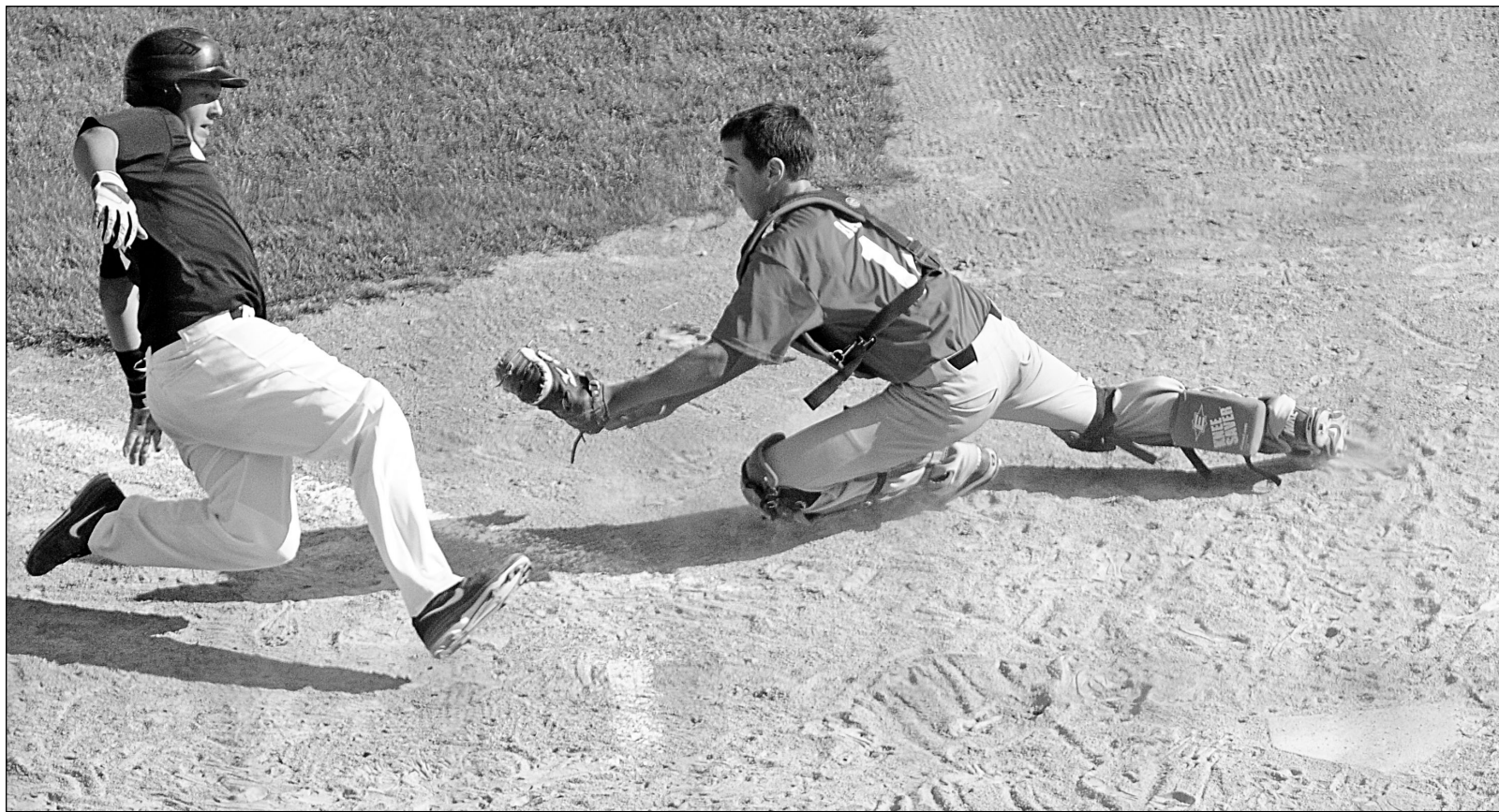
Thomas often spoke of the difficulty of being a good DH, given the challenge of staying sharp between at-bats without defense to play in the meantime. But the guy they called the "Big Hurt" was used as a DH more than a first baseman from 1998 through the end of his 19-year career in 2008 and exclusively for his final four seasons due in part to ankle problems. The two-time MVP, another AL lifer who made his mark with Chicago, is a strong candidate for the Hall of Fame when he becomes eligible in 2014, with 521 home runs and a .301 career batting average.

3. PAUL MOLITOR: The first DH to win the World Series MVP award, with Toronto in 1993, was a first-ballot Cooperstown inductee with 3,319 hits and 504 stolen bases over his 21-year career. Molitor was an infielder, mostly at third base, when his body allowed it, but persistent injuries steered him toward the DH role by the end of his tenure with Milwaukee. He won his final of four Silver Slugger awards as a DH with Minnesota in 1996.

2. DAVID ORTIZ: Ortiz became the leader in career hits by a DH this month, passing Baines with a double at Seattle, the organization he came up with before being traded to Minnesota. Claimed after the 2002 season by Boston, Ortiz has played sparingly at first base over 17 years in the majors but been a fixture among the AL offensive leaders, highlighted by the 54 homers and 137 RBIs he totaled in 2006, both league highs. His career on-base-plus-slugging percentage is a whopping .931.

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Yankton Comes Out Slugging



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton Black Sox baserunner Levi Schmidt, left, tries to sneak past Brandon Valley Border Cats catcher Kyle Bailey during the opening game of their VFW Teener baseball doubleheader on Wednesday at Yankton's Riverside Field. Schmidt was able to score on the play.

Baseball: Black Sox Blast Border Cats



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton Black Sox catcher Sheldon Gant makes the turn on a 1-2-3 double play during the opening game of the squad's doubleheader with the Brandon Valley Border Cats in VFW Teener baseball action on Wednesday at Yankton's Riverside Field.

The Yankton Black Sox pounded out 27 runs on the way to a doubleheader sweep of the Brandon Valley Border Cats in VFW Teener baseball action on Wednesday at Yankton's Riverside Field.

In the opener, four Yankton players had two or more hits each as the Black Sox rolled to a 15-0 victory.

Tyler Guthmiller went 3-4 with a RBI, and Sheldon Gant went 2-3 with two doubles and three RBI to lead Yankton. Hunter Ryan doubled and singled, driving in two. Bradey Sorenson helped his own cause with two hits and two RBI. Colin Muth and Levi Schmidt added hits.

Sorenson went the distance for the shutout.

In the nightcap, Muth, Skyler Schick and Adam Heine each had two hits as Yankton won 12-2.

Reid Sawatzke, Mason Townsend and Gant also had hits for Yankton. Muth drove

in a run in the victory.

Levi Schmidt picked up the win on the mound.

Yankton hosts Sioux Falls South today (Thursday) in a doubleheader. Start time is 1 p.m. at Riverside Field.

Region 3A

Tyndall 14, Winner 1

TABOR — Chase Kortan had two hits, including a grand slam, as Tyndall downed Winner 14-1 in the opening round of the VFW Teener Region 3A 13-14 Year-Old Baseball Tournament on Wednesday in Tabor.

Bryce Scieszinski picked up the win, holding Winner to two hits. Carter Brickman took the loss.

Tyndall will face Lead-Deadwood today (Thursday) at 7 p.m. Winner plays Redfield at 2:30 p.m. in an elimination game.

Parkston 8, Mission 1

TABOR — Parkston's Kyler Holzbauer scattered five hits on the mound and had a triple and a single at the plate in the squad's 8-1 victory in the opening round of the VFW Teener 13-14 Year-Old Region 3A Baseball Tournament on Wednesday in Tabor.

Austin Bizardie went 3-3 for Mission.

Austin Hammer took the loss.

Parkston will face Spearfish in the second round today (Thursday) at 5 p.m. Mission faces Chamberlain in an elimination game today at noon.

Lead-Deadwood 18, Redfield 2

TABOR — Colt Bradley came up a home run short of

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Around The Track: Newman, Busch Swapping Barbs After New Hampshire

BY DAN GELSTON
AP Sports Writer

Ahh, nothing like a little NASCAR name calling to spice up the week.

Kyle Busch called Ryan Newman an "ogre." Newman threatened to rearrange Busch's face and "fix it."

All that's missing is the principal to come break things up.

Busch and Newman are the latest drivers to feud following a dust-up at New Hampshire. Newman was involved in a pair of incidents with the Busch brothers that triggered the verbal sparring immediately after the race.

Newman was part of an accident that took out race leader Kurt Busch. Later in the race, he made contact with Kyle.

"I really hated that Kurt got tore up," Busch said. "I felt like he had the best car. And was proud of them guys but, man, just stupidity. I mean Ryan Newman's the biggest stupid idiot out here, and he's a big ogre and can do whatever he wants because he can probably kick anybody's butt. So no sense in getting in a fight with him, but glad he's out of a job."

Stewart-Haas Racing is giving Newman the boot at the end of the season to make room for Kevin Harvick.

Newman responded the next day on SiriusXM with some jabs of his own.

"I'm just afraid if I rearranged his face, I might fix it," he said. "We know that he's not very bright. He's a heck of a talent but he's not very bright. And I'll leave it at that."

But wait, there's more.

It's 2013. So that means there's only one way to settle a score. On the track with fenders flying? With fists in the garage?

Nah, Twitter.

Busch tweeted a sort-of apology for letting his emotions get the better of him after a tough race.

"I'm not sorry for how I feel in those moments, but could have expressed it better and certainly my comments about someone's livelihood went too far," he wrote.

THREE TIMES A WINNER: With three wins in one week, Scott Dixon is suddenly in very lofty company in the IndyCar record books.

He won at Pocono on July 7 for his first win of the season, then added two more last weekend in the doubleheader at Toronto to become the winningest active driver in IndyCar. His 32 career wins ranks seventh all-time behind some of the biggest names in open-wheel racing: Three Unsers, two Andrettis, and the all-time leader, A.J. Foyt.

It's a position Dixon never dreamed he'd be in when the New Zealander joined the Champ Car Series as a 20-year-old in 2001.

"I started this when? I was 20 or 21 — I was probably trying to think of where to go that night instead of what my future was holding," he said.

With his two wins at Toronto, Dixon passed teammate Dario Franchitti, Paul Tracy and Sebastian Bourdais, who all have 31. But Dixon has a ton of ground to gain on the competition: Tracy has retired from full-time IndyCar competition

and Bourdais is saddled with inferior equipment at Dragon Racing. Franchitti turned 40 this year and nobody knows — including him — how long he'll continue racing full-time.

Dixon turns 33 next week and has a lot of racing left in his future while driving for Target Chip Ganassi Racing, where he's been since the fourth race of the 2002 season.

"I tried to just concentrate on it on a day-by-day basis, week-by-week," he said. "I'm very fortunate to have 31 of those wins with this team, 12 years with this team. I think me and Helio (Castroneves) are probably the longest active drivers with one team, which I think says a lot for the wins we've had and what we've achieved together. It's cool to be on that list and moving up it."

Foyt leads all drivers with 67 wins. Mario Andretti is next with 52 followed by son Michael's 42 victories. Fourth on the list is Al Unser with 39 wins, followed by Bobby Unser at 35 and Al Unser Jr.'s 34 victories.

"It does feel amazing," Dixon said. "Moving closer to some of these guys, years ago I didn't think I'd ever be in this position. I was a happy kid from New Zealand racing cars, then it worked into one day I was actually getting paid to race cars. It was a win-win situation."

"But for me, I think stats are for maybe when you retire, you kind of look back on it. No disrespect to anybody or anything about it. I want to race. I hope we can win

more races together. But to be on that list, yeah, it's amazing to be among those names. What I hope for is we can win a few more."

GET OUT THE WAY! Helio Castroneves knew he didn't have the car to catch Scott Dixon in Sunday's race at Toronto. He figured his only shot was on restarts, and he got two in the final 15 laps.

But IndyCar allows lapped cars to line up with the leaders on restarts before the final 10 laps of the race, and dealing with that traffic cost Castroneves his chance on the second-to-last restart.

It's a rule the three-time Indianapolis 500 winner wants changed.

"What are you going to do, 15 laps to go? You're not going to lap the field, you're not going to get your lap back," he said. "It's very unusual for you to be very lucky, get your lap back, have a very good finish. I think we should review that kind of scenario, because even if I would be in that situation, which I've been, it's not fun because what are you doing there? You're in the middle of the leaders and you can cause a big mess."

"I wasn't happy. I wish they would change that rule."

Race-winner Dixon thinks the rule should be applied based on the race track.

"I think it's more track-dependent. Indy, they say 10 laps to go, people need to get out of the way. That's a lot different to Iowa. It's a third of the size, the 10 laps go by very quickly," Dixon said. "I think for the drivers that are in those situations, they probably want to get

out of the way. But they're probably also fighting for somebody that's on the same lap right around that same position."

Dixon said there's been discussion about the rule in recent driver meetings.

"It's one of those things I think some weekends it works for you, some it doesn't," he said. "Courtesy-wise, if I was in that situation, several laps down, when you're racing from a lap down, you can get your position back off strategy, that's different. But, yeah, I think if you're more than one lap down, you should probably get out of the way."

GETTING DIRTY: Go ahead, spill the dirt.

NASCAR is set for its first dirt race in more than 40 years on Tuesday when the Truck Series hits Eldora Speedway.

The last time one of NASCAR's top touring series competed on dirt was Sept. 30, 1970, when Richard Petty won a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series (called the Grand National Division at that time) race at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds in Raleigh.

There are five, eight-lap qualifying events and a 15-lap last-chance race to come up with the 30 competitors (regularly 36 in the Truck Series) who will start the 150-lap race at the Tony Stewart-owned track. The race is broken into three segments of 60, 50 and 40 laps.

Set the DVR so the kids can watch the next day. The green flag drops at 9:30 p.m. ET on Speed.

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