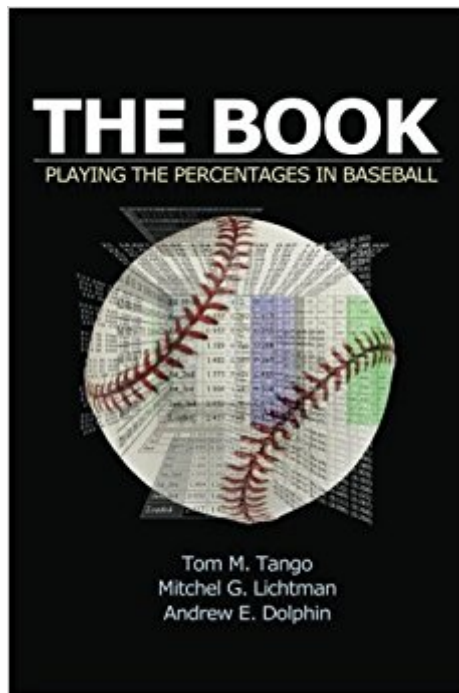




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# The Book: Playing The Percentages In Baseball



## Synopsis

Written by three esteemed baseball statisticians, *The Book* continues where the legendary Bill James's *Baseball Abstracts* and Palmer and Thorn's *The Hidden Game of Baseball* left off more than twenty years ago. Continuing in the grand tradition of sabermetrics, the authors provide a revolutionary way to think about baseball with principles that can be applied at every level, from high school to the major leagues. Tom Tango, Mitchel Lichtman, and Andrew Dolphin cover topics such as batting and pitching matchups, platooning, the benefits and risks of intentional walks and sacrifices, the legitimacy of alleged "clutch" hitters, and many of baseball's other theories on hitting, fielding, pitching, and even baserunning. They analyze when a strategy is a good idea and when it's a bad idea, and how to more closely watch the "inside" game of baseball. Whenever you hear an announcer talk about the "unwritten rule" or say that so-and-so is going "by the book" in bringing in a situational substitute, *The Book* reviews the facts and determines what the real case is. If you want to know what the folks in baseball should be doing, find out in *The Book*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"I can heartily recommend . . . *The Book: Playing the Percentages in Baseball*, by a trio of talented sabermetricians." -- Rob Neyer --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"I can heartily recommend . . . *The Book: Playing the Percentages in Baseball*, by a trio of talented sabermetricians." -- Rob Neyer, co-author of *The Neyer/James Guide to Pitchers* "It's the book I've always wanted to do."--John Dewan, author of *The Fielding Bible* --This text refers to an out of print

or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the common phrases that we hear in baseball is that a manager was playing by "the book." That is, the manager was doing what the unwritten rules of baseball suggest. One example at the outset illustrates: walking a batter intentionally with first base open. This book, in essence, rewrites the book. The authors use a detailed data base (including each at bat over a period of years) and then do a statistical analysis of results. And, they argue, the unwritten book is often wrong. The first chapter lays out the logic of this book's orientation. Many readers might find the chapter dense and too quantitative for their taste. My advice? Close the book and put it away, because the book features much statistical analysis. To illustrate the work's approach. . . . Here are some issues addressed: How real are batting streaks (Answer: You can't predict how a player will do during a hot streak; there is no inherent "momentum")? Chapter three looks at pitcher-batter confrontations. Do certain pitchers "own" batters? Do certain hitters "own" pitchers? Data analysis suggests that we overrate these ideas. We all talk about clutch hitters and clutch pitchers. Chapter 4 takes this notion on (read the book to find out what actually happens). Chapter 5 examines how to construct a batting order; Chapter 6 examines lefty-versus righty confrontations between hitters and pitchers; Chapter 9 looks at the value and efficacy of the sacrifice bunt; and so on. If the reader is a figure filbert and likes sabermetrics, this book will be a delight. If you are old school, not so much! But, for me, a lot of fun. . . .

The research done in this book is very strong. Yes, it can be a little dry and there are a lot of charts and a few graphs and not much in the way of compelling writing... but the stats usually speak for themselves. My favorite part was actually just the "monstrosity chart" which shows all the different possible base-out-inning combinations and the odds of the home team winning from a range of -4-+4 (four runs behind to four runs ahead). You could look at the chart and see that a sac bunt is rarely going to increase your odds of winning... one of the few exceptions being a tie game in the bottom of the 9th. Runners on first and second and no one out. Overall a good book, but if you're not into the stat side of baseball, this is not for you.

The authors of "The Book" reveal truths of baseball derived from careful statistical analysis. The clear explanations are such that any person who can understand percentages will gain insight from the book. The conclusions (and data upon which they are based) are truly amazing. I have never read a book on baseball in this league. Every angle of the game is analyzed objectively. While it is

presented such that "non-math" people can understand it, there is enough meat to the analysis that substantiate the conclusions without scaring the average reader. My purpose in studying baseball is from a sports betting perspective. The conclusions (such as run equity and win percentages given different situations) make this book a mandatory purchase for anyone who bets on Baseball live, or conducts a very thorough analysis of moneyline prices. There has never been a book on baseball so well written that targets all ranges of saber-metric fans. This will teach you the subtleties in baseball that add small percentages to winning games and scoring runs. If you are a fantasy baseball player, a lot of this content is invaluable to you as well.

Very useful

Other sabermetric books have been written in the last few years, The Book is the best one by far. It is chock full of information, results from research and answers a lot of interesting baseball questions. The three authors, Tom Tango, Mitchel Lichtman and Andrew Dolphin have academic backgrounds and work for major league teams as employees or consultants. They use statistical methods to extract and comprehend information from a massive database of baseball games. For the layman, there may be too much math throughout the book. However, they do a fantastic job of summarizing each idea in plain English at the end of each section. For example, in chapter 2 on hot and cold streaks, after presenting data, explaining their process and interpreting results, they summarize the section with "Knowing that a hitter has been in or is in the midst of a hot or cold streak has little predictive value. Always assume that a player will hit at his projected norm (adjusted for the park, weather, and pitcher he is facing), regardless of how he has performed in the very recent past. A player's recent history may be used as a tiebreaker." Managers, players, fans and the media often put too much emphasis on results from small samples sizes. The authors warn against making this mistake. "One of the pervasive themes of this book is the danger of inferring too much from too little by underestimating the influence of randomness". For example, they summarize a section on pitcher-batter matchups with: "Knowing a player will face a particular opponent, and given the choice between that player's 1,500 PA (plate appearances) over the past three years against the rest of the league or twenty-five PA against that particular opponent, look at the 1,500 PA. "They aren't afraid to point out when general baseball wisdom is correct. On starting pitchers, they write, "pitchers perform best with five days of rest, and worst with three days of rest. To manage our entire starting rotation effectively, four days of rest seems to be the optimal point. The current MLB pattern of scheduling the starting rotation works." This book is at the top of my

recommendation list for thinking baseball fans. I'm a bit surprised that I'm the first reviewer of this book on , since it has been out for three months. The sales ranking (currently #47,000 as I write this review) is disappointing for such an incredible book. The Book deserves to be at the top of the baseball best seller's list.

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