Making Managers Matter
HOMEBREWING MANAGER RATINGS IN PLAAY'S HISTORY MAKER BASEBALL

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After years of playing sports simulations—and playing baseball sims most—I was always a little perplexed as to why game designers never created a mechanism by which managers could matter. Organizations and fan bases fret endlessly about managing. Should we fire the one we have? Who would we then hire? Will he be a good manager or a bad manager? Then I opened the box for PLAAY Games' *History Maker Baseball*. Before I played the first game, I saw a potential answer to the question I'd always had. As I kept enthusiastically playing HMB, the answer became even more clear.

History Maker Baseball was the first game I played that made umpires matter, and it does so quite brilliantly as a seamless part of the game's natural flow. Every time I was instructed to consult the umpire's card, I thought it made sense. But if Don Denkinger, Angel Hernandez, and Joe West could be an integral part of HMB, why couldn't a Whitey Herzog or an Earl Weaver, a Cal Ripken Sr. or a Derek Shelton? Thankfully, *History Maker Baseball* provided me with the mechanism to create levels of managerial influence.

The answer was in the Manager Action Cards. In a regular HMB game, each manager would have six cards which could be played throughout the game. These cards give managerial advantages that can potentially benefit the team's performance. They are tools in a manager's toolbox. But Whitey Herzog had a better toolbox than Cal Ripken Sr., who went 68-101 as a manager for a .402 winning percentage. The senior Ripken lost 95 games with the Orioles in 1987 and then was fired after beginning the 1988 campaign 0-6. Herzog won three NL pennants and a World Series with the St. Louis Cardinals. How could a team benefit or suffer based upon their level of manager?

A strong manager would add one card to his game cache. A great manager would add two. Conversely, a subpar manager would subtract one card from the game cache, while a poor manager would subtract two. Now, it is true that a manager's ability is often commensurate with the level of talent he can field between the lines, just as a hitter's batting average can be affected by who hits before and after him in the lineup that season. A manager, like a player, can have a Manger of the Year-level season one year and a last place finish the next.

To assess managers, we combine their career winning percentage with that season's winning percentage. That sum then falls within a range that determines how his cache of cards will be affected in regular season games. The range is +2 cards down to –2 cards with most managers falling into the "No Change (NC)" category.

For the postseason, the math is the same. We will combine the manager's winning percentage for that postseason with his career winning percentage in the postseason. That range will also produce a result that will give the manager between +2 and –2 cards.

Each manager will have separate ratings for the regular season and the postseason.

REGULAR SEASON RANGE	CHANGE TO CARD CACHE	POSTSEASON RANGE	POSTSEASON CARD CACHE
1150+	+2	1200+	+2
1110 – 1149	+1	1050 – 1199	+1
938 – 1109	NC	500 – 1049	NC
888 – 937	–1	400 – 499	–1
000 - 887	–2	000 - 399	–2

Below are some examples of where managers would fall. You can even see the differences in seasons. Using the career numbers as an equal weight helps to offset what may have been an extraordinarily good season for the players or an atrociously bad one. Yet, the specific season numbers are used to assess performance in one specific season. RS W% denotes the regular season winning percentage for that specific season. CR W% denotes a manager's career regular season winning percentage. PS W% denotes the postseason winning percentage for that specific season, while CPS W% is a manager's career postseason winning percentage. Totals for the regular season and postseason are in the blue fields, while the final managerial ratings for that season are in the red field (Regular Season / Postseason).

MANAGERIAL CALCULATION EXAMPLES

MANAGER'S NAME	MANAGER'S TEAM	RS W%	CR W%	TOTAL	PS W%	CPS W%	TOTAL	FINAL RATINGS
Miller Huggins	1927 Yankees	714	555	1269	1000	545	1545	+2 / +2
Connie Mack	1910 Athletics	680	486	1166	800	558	1358	+2 / +2
Connie Mack	1916 Athletics	235	486	721	000	558	558	−2 / NC
Whitey Herzog	1982 Cardinals	568	532	1100	700	510	1210	NC / +2
Whitey Herzog	1985 Cardinals	623	532	1155	538	510	1048	+2 / NC
Whitey Herzog	1987 Cardinals	586	532	1118	500	510	1010	+1 / NC
Jim Frey	1984 Cubs	596	530	1126	400	500	900	+1 / NC
Don Zimmer	1989 Cubs	574	508	1082	200	200	400	NC / −1
Sparky Anderson	1975 Reds	667	545	1212	700	618	1318	+2 / +2
Sparky Anderson	1981 Tigers	550	545	1095	000	618	618	NC / NC
Sparky Anderson	1984 Tigers	642	545	1187	875	618	1493	+2 / +2
Darrell Johnson	1975 Red Sox	594	444	1038	600	600	1200	NC / +2
Ralph Houk	1961 Yankees	673	514	1187	800	500	1300	+2 / +2
Ralph Houk	1984 Red Sox	531	514	1045	000	500	500	NC / NC
Billy Gardner	1982 Twins	370	442	812	000	000	000	−2 / −2
Earl Weaver	1980 Orioles	617	583	1200	000	565	565	+2 / NC
Earl Weaver	1986 Orioles	451	583	1034	000	565	565	NC / NC
Joe Altobelli	1983 Orioles	605	518	1123	778	778	1556	+1 / +2
Joe Altobelli	1984 Orioles	525	518	1043	000	778	778	NC / NC
Cal Ripken, Sr.	1987 Orioles	414	402	816	000	000	000	−2 / −2
John McNamara	1981 Reds	611	485	1096	000	412	412	NC / −1
Derek Shelton	2021 Pirates	377	360	737	000	000	000	−2 / −2

Above, you can see how much difference a season can make. Connie Mack led the A's to a World Series in 1910. Six seasons later, he led them to 117 losses. There is still a postseason rating for Connie Mack in 1916 just in case you can pull off a miracle and lead them to the postseason or in case you do a "Worst Teams" league and the Philadelphia Athletics make the postseason.

MANAGERS IN THE DRAFT POOL

By using manager ratings in *History Maker Baseball*, you can also place managers into a draft league pool. Maybe you are setting up a power hitting team. You may not want to draft a manager early. But what if you're drafting a run-first team such as the 1976 Oakland A's or the 1985 St. Louis Cardinals? Having a +2 manager could be advantageous. If you plan on moving a lot of runners along the base paths the old fashioned way—hit & run, bunt, sacrifice—you may want to draft a manager early.

It is my best advice to you, though, that if you put managers into a draft pool, that you make the +2 managers scarce so they are more valuable. Most managers should be rated NC, thus falling into the range of an average manager. I would also limit the –2 managers for the same reason. They should be scarce. When making a draft pool, you may also want to add an extra 10-15 average-to-subpar managers to the pool. That would allow you to hire and fire managers throughout the season.

A LITTLE FIRIN', A LITTLE HIRIN'

Another advantage of using manager ratings is that you can fire and hire managers just as a team would in major league baseball. For my own leagues, I have homebrewed a process by which this can work.

My concern was that any process that allowed hiring and firing would mean that a team, smartly, would fire a –2 manager before the first game of the season in lieu of hiring a better one. But that isn't realistic as optimism reigns supreme on Opening Day. Conversely, you would never fire a +2 manager, even when the team is woefully underperforming.

The answer is fluidity. You can allow the regular season managerial ratings to change throughout the season based upon the team's performance. The –2 or –1 manager can crawl out of the bottom as he "does a better job with his team," while the +1 or +2 manager can look like he's never managed a game in his life.

After a team wins five consecutive games, the manager's regular season rating moves up one notch (+1). When a team loses five consecutive games, a manager's regular season rating moves down one notch (–1). All ratings must not extend beyond –2 and +2, and this only applies to regular season ratings. Postseason manager ratings can not change as the postseason is too short to make such adjustments fairly.

If you have the 2021 Pittsburgh Pirates, and you are managed by Derek Shelton (–2/–2), you can still play Shelton into a better manager by putting together a few winning streaks. If you are playing the 1983 Orioles with Joe Altobelli (+1/+2) at the helm, a few losing streaks could make him a very average regular season manager and it could theoretically aid in costing the Orioles a trip to the playoffs.

As an alternative rule, and one that would work well in fictional leagues, you could start all managers at NC and then move them up and down dependent solely on the winning or losing streak rule described above. If your fictional manager then wins their division, they will go into the playoffs at +1. Managers who do not win their divisions but still make the wildcard will go into the playoffs at NC.

MANAGERS OF THE YEAR & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

I've played with the idea of having Managers of the Year and World Series champions trumping their own scores and becoming automatic +2's where it applies (regular season for the MOTY and postseason for the WS champion). Instead, I decided to leave the ratings where they are, trusting that the combination of single season and career numbers in assessing a manager is a fair one.

Jim Frey (Cubs) and Don Zimmer (Cubs) won the Manager of the Year award in 1984 and 1989, respectively. Frey is +1 in the regular season, and Zimmer is NC. You may want to give them both +2 because they won the award for their league. This is another way to do managers, and I would understand if you chose to do so. Dick Howser (Royals) won the 1985 World Series, and Dallas Green (Phillies) won in 1980. Howser is NC for the postseason and Green is +1. If you want to advantage them to +2 in the postseason as a reward for winning the actual World Series in those seasons, you may certainly do so. As Keith is fond of saying, it's your game. Play it as you see fit.

TO BE SPECIFIC...

If you would like to add or subtract specific cards for + or – managers, we have developed a system

by which you can do that, as well. Not all cards are created equal and we have thought about what a really active, good manager would add and what a poorer manager would have subtracted from his managerial arsenal. This is the structure we have come up with for such cases. The colors correspond with the colored of print on the manager action cards. All added and subtracted cards are taken from the base six cards allowed per game. If your manager is rated "NC," the additions and subtractions will not affect them.

	ADD	SUBTRACT
+2	Manager can add a total of two of the following: a fourth "Walk to the Pitcher's Mound" card, a second purple "Manager Influence" card, a second blue "Manager Influence" card, or a second red "Manager Influence" card.	
+1	Manager can add one of the following: a fourth "Walk to the Pitcher's Mound" card, a second "Argue with Umpire" card, or a second blue or red "Manager Influence" card."	
-1		Manager can only use five Manager Strategy Cards in the game. The maximum times he may use a multi-use card is twice.
-2		Manager can only use four Manager Strategy Cards in the game. He may only use a card once, even when multiple cards are in his stack. (For example, he may only use "Walk to the Pitcher's Mound" once, even though there are three cards available.)

Whatever you decide, it's nice to have a game with a structure that allows tweaks like these without throwing off the backbone of the game. Thanks to PLAAY for that.

Have fun!

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