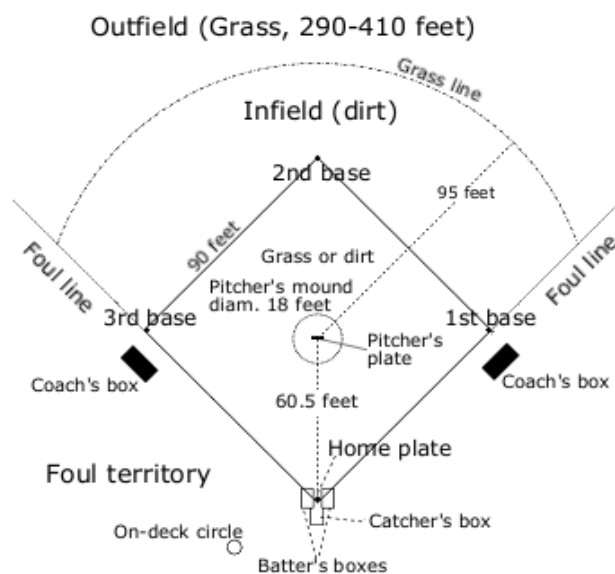


ENJOY THE GAME MORE

Know Your Baseball Lingo



Concocted by:

The Fifth & Seventh Inning Stretch Gang

(Longtime Fans of the Ohio & Copperheads Baseball Teams)

March 2000
Athens, Ohio

In a regular nine-inning contest, the loyal home fans traditionally stand up for several minutes and stretch, talk about how the game is going, etc., between the ending of the first half of the seventh inning and the beginning of the last half of the inning. When the Copperheads baseball team encounters double-headers, the games are played as seven inning games. Therefore, it seems logical that the stretch in these shortened competitions should be between the first half of the fifth inning and the beginning of the last half of the inning.

Note: You will find members of the *Stretch Gang* dispersed throughout the stands at every home game. They are a friendly lot, and will be happy to answer any questions you might ask about Ohio or Copperheads Baseball, or the sport in general.

The persons belonging to the *Stretch Gang* may be identified by their mature facial features, decelerated gait, and the reduced speed they exhibit when sitting down or standing up.

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INTRODUCTION

George F. Will, in his book, Men At Work: The Craft Of Baseball, stated *“And the reality of baseball is that the action involves blazing speeds and fractions of seconds. Furthermore, baseball is as much a mental contest as a physical one. The pace of the action is relentless: There is barely enough time between pitches for all the thinking that is required, and that the best players do, in processing the changing information about the crucial variables.”*



This document is directed toward the person who is a novice to the great game of baseball: the interested person, who has carefully read the complicated official rules of the sport, but still is not familiar with characteristic expressions that are associated with the entertainment - suicide squeeze, Baltimore chop, can o’ corn, bullpen, silo shot, Texas leaguer, blue darter, Bermuda triangle, neighborhood play, to name a few.

Following are 104 expressions not found in the rule book, which baseball people (managers, coaches, radio/TV announcers, and knowledgeable fans) are likely to use when describing action related to the game. The novice should be fully aware of these sayings, so that he/she can better understand and enjoy what is happening on the field.

So, here we go...



ENJOY THE GAME MORE: *Know Your Baseball Lingo*



1. “The batter eyes the sign from the third base coach, and steps into the box.”²

The secrecy of baseball lies in signs given, and stolen. Various hand/arm motions given from the third base coach tell the batter, and base runner (if there is one) what the manager/coach wants done on almost every pitch. Signs usually originate from the manager in the dugout to the third base coach - to the batter, and base runner. The strategy of the game is controlled by signing - missing one can cost runs, or the game. Stealing signs from the opposing team is an art, and can be important in the outcome of the game.³

2. “Strike three taking.” “Strike three called.”

The batter, with a count of at least two strikes, watches the ball go by while the umpire calls him out on a strike pitch. A no-no.

“Strike three swinging.”

The batter, though missing a good or bad pitch, makes an effort to get a hit.

3. “The pitcher has good location today.”

The pitcher is hitting the strike zone, or outside the zone with the ball consistent with where the catcher places his glove for a target. There are many pitches that can be thrown, depending on the skill of the thrower (straight fast ball; breaking balls - split-finger fast ball, sinker, slider, curve, knuckler, scroogie, slurve, cutter, and a variety of others - all can be launched at different speeds, and aimed at various locations). In general, each pitch requires a certain finger grip, arm and wrist action, coupled with a smooth, coordinated delivery. The idea is to fool the batter on every pitch, or make the batter hit the pitch that the pitcher wants him to hit.

4. “The pitcher shakes off the sign.”

The pitcher shakes his head no to a hidden finger sign given from between the legs of the squatting catcher behind the home base, who is requesting a certain pitch (fast ball, curve, slider, etc.). The sign may emerge from the manager in the dugout - to the catcher - to the pitcher, or from the catcher alone. The pitcher may shake off several signs before agreeing on one by nodding - at that point the ball is delivered toward the home base (plate) - with high hopes of

² Expressions are in quotation marks, as if the novice were listening to a radio announcer; key words are underlined. The derivation of these expressions is not given, because in many cases it is vague, or unknown.

³ We are amateurs! Our explanations may not be completely on the mark, as seen through the eyes of the expert.

success (a called strike, a strike swinging, a foul, a strike out, or a ball hit to the field for an out).

5. “It’s a team that runs a lot of deep counts.”

A team with patience. Batters do not swing at the first pitch. They may take two called strikes before swinging. They try to get the pitcher to throw as many pitches as possible, or wait for a pitch they can hit. Remember, the batter is allowed a maximum of four balls, and he walks, or three strikes, and he’s out.

6. “The count is full, will the runner(s) be going? Maybe yes, maybe no.”

The count is three balls, and two strikes, runner on first base, with less than two outs.

Some action has got to happen, depending on what the managers want - the pitch is delivered - the runner starts for second base - the batter strikes out - the catcher throws the ball to second, where the baseman tags the runner out - double play! The same sort of thing can happen with men on first and second base. Of course, if the batter gets a hit, or walks, or the runner(s) stays put, a new scenario develops. Also, with the count full, two outs, and the bases loaded (runners on first, second, and third), or runners on first or first and second, the runners will always be trying for the next base on the next pitch (pay-off pitch).

7. “The batter hit for the circuit.”

In one game the batter hits, in no particular order, a single (one-base hit), a double (two-base hit), a triple (three-base hit), and a home run (four-base hit). Note: The home run comes in two varieties: (1) a ball hit into the grandstand or over the fence from fair territory, and (2) a ball hit in fair territory, which stays within the playing field (inside-the-park homer). This is exciting to watch. The ball, having been hit between the outfielders, or over the head of one, or down the foul lines into the corners, or off the fence/wall at a bad angle, eludes the men in pursuit, while the batter scurries around the bases. The scene usually ends in a dramatic safe slide into home base with the fans cheering!

8. “He’s a hacker - a free swinger.”

A batter with little self-discipline - will swing at balls thrown outside the strike zone.

9. “Will they green light him?”

The batter works the pitcher to a three-ball, no-strike count. Will he receive a sign from the third base coach to hit the next pitch if it looks good? Note: The term green light may also be applied to a base runner who has permission from the manager to steal a base whenever he wants to.

10. “It’s a gapper.” “It’s a ‘tweener. “It’s in the power alley in right center.”

The batter hits a pitched ball between the outfielders - usually good for a double, triple, or sometimes an inside-the-park home run.

11. “It’s a silo shot.” “It’s up the chute.” “It’s a pop-up.”

A ball that is hit high above the infield and, unless the sun is shining brightly or the wind is blowing hard, can be caught for an out with ease.

12. “The play created a Bermuda Triangle.”

This happens when a high fly ball along the first base foul line causes the right fielder to run in, the second baseman to hurry back on the grass to his left, and the first baseman to move backwards on to the grass, with the ball dropping between them for a hit. The same could be said for a similar play down the third base foul line involving the left fielder, shortstop, and third baseman.

13. It’s up the line.”

“There’s a base hit to right - the runner rounds third, heading for home - here comes the throw from the fielder – it’s up the line” - meaning the catcher catches the ball several feet up the third base line from home base, usually preventing the runner from being tagged out.

14. “It’s off line.”

A term used when any fielder throws the ball to another fielder, causing that fielder to move away from the base he is tending, thus allowing the runner to be safe.

15. “It’s a come-backer.”

A sharply hit bounced ball to the pitcher, who usually is able to throw the runner out easily.

16. “The players have a game of pepper going.”

This is a contest played on the sidelines in fun before game time by four or five players of the same team. It is an engagement in quickness and agility. One man bats while the others arrange themselves in a loose line 25-30 feet away. The ball is thrown by one of the line men toward the batter, who hits it back on the ground to any of the line players. The man catching the ball will many times make some fancy maneuver, such as a behind-the-back pass to another line player who, not to be outdone, loops it over his back, catches it, and throws it between his legs in the direction of the batter. Then the routine starts over again - a great way to warm up before the real competition begins.

17. It’s a Texas leaguer.” “It’s a dying quail.” It’s a blooper.” “It’s a flare.”

A batted fly ball in fair territory hit just beyond the out-stretched arm of an infielder, and in front of an outfielder, which falls for a hit.

18. “The batter hit a Baltimore chop.”

This sometimes happens when the batter takes a regular swing at a well-pitched ball, hitting it on the top half, causing a very high bounce off the plate, dirt, or grass, in fair territory, often resulting in an infield hit.

19. “It’s a can o’ corn.”

A “lazy” fly ball hit to the outfield, which can be caught without difficulty.

20. “There ‘s activity in the bullpen.”

An area near the playing field where a relief pitcher(s) warms up in preparation for entering the game, if needed.

21. “It’s a suicide squeeze.”

This play will arouse any crowd. It is used sparingly, and most often in the later innings when the team at bat is one run behind, or tied with less than two outs and a runner on third base. Timing is important. The sign is given, and the runner takes a good lead. The pitcher starts his motion, and as his arm comes up and forward, the runner high-tails it for home base. The batter must bunt the ball fair, preferably to the right side. If he does, the runner usually scores with ease. If the batter misses, the runner is a dead duck (“You’re out of there,” yells the ump).

22. “It’s a safety squeeze.”

Same situation as above, only when the pitcher starts his motion, the runner hesitates in his advance toward home base. If the bunt is a good one, the runner attempts to score. If the batter misses, the runner hastily retreats back to third base.

23. “The home crowd wants the batter to pull the trigger.”

The batter is in a deep count - the fans want him to swing for a hit on the next good pitch. In other words - let’s get some action going - move the ball!

24. “The batter hits an inside-outer to left field/right field”

A left-handed batter hits an inside pitch, which comes off the bat curving slightly to left field - and - a right-handed batter hits an inside pitch, which comes off the bat curving slightly to right field. Note: The left-handed batter stands in the box on the right side of home base, while the right-handed batter stands in the box on the left side of home base (as viewed from behind home base) - confusing, but that’s how it works.

25. “The ducks are on the pond.”

The bases (first, second, and third) are occupied by runners.

26. “It’s a grand slam(mer), or if you will - a grand salami.”

A home run, most often hit into the grandstand, or over the fence in fair territory, which allows the runners on first, second, and third to score a run, along with the batter.

27. “The batter hits a line drive, or frozen rope, or blue darter, or clothesliner.”

A hard-hit ball in fair territory to the outfield, which travels close to and nearly parallel with the ground. It may be caught, dropped, or go for a base hit.

28. “The batter is overdue.”

The guy hasn't had a base hit in several times at bat. He's in a slump.

29. “The batter erased the collar.”

Gets a hit after going hitless for several times at bat.

30. “And they're at the corners.”

Runners at first and third bases.

31. “The pitcher showed some high heat on that one.”

A high ball traveling in the 90+ mph range across the plate just in or out of the strike zone.

32. “The guy in right field has a cannon.”

A very strong throwing arm.

33. “It's a dinger.” “So far.” “Downtown.”

Home run.

34. “Will the manager play hit and run? Or is that run and hit?”

Runner on first base, less than three outs, with the score close - count two balls, no strikes; two balls, one strike (brave managers will try the play on most any count) - the batter receives the sign to hit the next pitch - the runner starts for second, as the ball is thrown - ideally, the batter gets a base hit to right field, allowing the runner to reach third base. If the ball is missed, the runner may be credited with a stolen base, or may be tagged out. This can be an exciting play to watch. And as the play unfolds, it should be called “run and hit.”

35. “The umpire punches him out at second.”

The motion often used by umpires (the men in blue) designating at any base that the runner is out. The right fist is clenched, as the arm is quickly extended from the body, mimicking a boxer's punch.

36. “The pitcher sawed of the bat.”

The batter swings at an inside pitch, hitting the ball on the bat handle, and breaking it (wooden bat). This usually results in an infield out.

37. “The batter hit that one off the sweet part of the back.”

A small area at the thickest end of the bat, which, when hit by the ball, causes what players like to call “a sweet ringing sound” - and many times ends up as a solid base hit.

38. “Here comes the cleanup batter.”

A player who bats fourth in the batting order.

39. “What is the pitcher’s and catcher’s pop times?”

In brief, these are the times it takes a thrown ball to go from the pitcher to the catcher, and from the catcher to the second baseman. The continued use of a stop watch and video tape is essential in obtaining this information. So - when the runner on first base, with a stealing lead, finds his time to second base is less than the pitcher’s and catcher’s combined pop times, theoretically, he should reach his destination safely every time he tries.

40. “It’s a double steal.”

This rousing play is usually generated with men on first and third bases. Its purpose is to score a run without the batter hitting the ball in any way. According to George Will, the tactics take “aggressive managing... that will fail if the other team executes its response perfectly.” In other words, some luck is involved. Will goes on to say that there are eight ways that the play can be executed: “One is the regular double steal. The runner on first breaks for second. If the catcher comes up to throw through to second, then the instant the catcher’s arm starts forward the runner on third breaks for home.” If all is right he will bring about a run. The seven remaining ways are a variation of the one just described.

41. “The runner is on the keystone bag.”

Second base (middle of the arch).

42. “Foot in the bucket.”

The batter moves his front foot away from the plate as he swings at the ball.

43. “The batter bailed out on that pitch.”

The batter, fooled by a breaking ball on the inside corner of the plate, steps back quickly to avoid being hit.

44. “The runner makes a perfect Chicago slide into second base.”

The player slides feet first past the bag, hooking one foot on the corner as he goes by, and away from the fielder’s tag. This move affords him a safe passage to his destination.

45. “It’s a neighborhood play.” (“phantom tag”)

This action normally occurs with a try for a double play, starting at second base. A ground ball is hit to the second baseman, who throws or flips it to the shortstop, tagging the bag with his foot as he comes across it (one out), and throwing on to first base (two outs).

The problem arises when the runner going from first base to second is called out, even though the shortstop, clearly in the eyes of some, takes possession of

the ball a smidgen after he crosses second base. The cry from those not in agreement with the umpire's judgment: "Oh well, it was somewhere in the neighborhood."

46. "He's going to get a free pass."

The batter, because of circumstances in the game, receives four deliberate wide-pitched balls, and walks to first base.

47. "He plays the hot corner."

Third base.

48. "With that double, he sets the table."

Batter gets a crucial hit late in the game, becoming the runner who can tie the game, or score the winning run.

49. "The pitcher painted the black with that throw."

The ball is thrown for a strike over the inside, or outside, black edge of the plate.

50. "The string is out on this batter."

The count is full, three balls, two strikes - some action has got to happen on the next pitch (strike three swinging, strike three called, walk, base hit to the infield or outfield, ball hit for an out to any fielder, or an error by any fielder attempting to field a fair or foul ball).

51. "The pitcher pulled the string on that one."

The batter is fooled on an off-speed pitch and swings too quickly, for a strike.

52. "Deuces wild."

Showing on scoreboard: two runs, two hits, two errors, two outs, two strikes, two balls, in the second inning.

53. "He's a bush leaguer."

A player who says or does something unethical on the field of play to an opposing team member or members. You can be "bush", and still be in the major leagues.

54. "The batter shows an open stance - closed stance - straight stance."

Open stance: The legs are apart eighteen inches or so; the front foot is planted in the batter's box several inches farther away from the plate than is the back foot (with variations). Closed stance: The legs are apart eighteen inches or so; the front foot is planted several inches closer to the plate than is the back foot (with variations). Straight stance: The legs are apart eighteen inches or so, with both feet planted in the box, parallel to the plate (with variations).

55. "He gave him a brush-back pitch, some chin music, a purpose pitch on that one."

In one case, the pitcher is trying to establish his inside half of the plate. On the other hand, he may be throwing the pitch as a reminder of something out of line that happened earlier in the game to his teammate(s) (uncalled-for hard slide, hit batsman, verbal abuse, etc.).

56. “He wears the tools of ignorance.”

Said of the catcher with all of his protective paraphernalia.

57. “The batter jerked one, clouted one, went yard, put a charge into the ball.”

A ball really smashed by the batter for a home run over the fence/wall (“It’s out of here!”).

58. “The batter grabs some pine before stepping back into the box.”

He wipes his hands on a nearby pine-tar cloth, which will improve his grip on the bat.

59. “He’s a junk pitcher of the worst kind.”

He keeps the batter off balance by his wide assortment of pitches (mostly off-speed), both in and out of the strike zone.

60. “The pitcher really brings the ball, he smokes it.”

The guy has a flame thrower for an arm. Every pitch is lightning fast.

61. “It’s a seeing eye single” (“42 hopper.”)

A normal ground ball that finds a hole in the infield, and sneaks through.

62. “It’s a grass cutter.” (“worm burner.”)

A sizzling ball that hugs the ground from the time it leaves the strike of the bat, and rolls swiftly through the infield grass, sometimes going between the fielders for a base hit.

63. “It’s a snow-cone catch.”

Often a tough fly ball to catch, but nevertheless is, by a fielder, in the top of his gloves web.



64. “The ball handcuffed fielder.”

The batted ball put the fielder in such an awkward position (a misjudgment) that he could not field it cleanly, thus sometimes committing an error. In other words, a ground ball that the fielder gets to in the “in between” hop. As the old cliché goes, “The ball played the fielder, rather than the fielder playing the ball.”

65. “That’s called submarining the catcher.”

On a ball hit to the fielder, the runner on third makes a mad dash for home base, sliding in safely, just under the catcher’s tag.

66. “The pitcher shows a submarine delivery.”

A throwing style not practiced by many pitchers whereby, after the wind-up, the ball is released from below the waist - unlike the overhand or side-arm pitches.

67. “He pitched a perfect game.”

There have been several through the years. The most famous was by the New York Yankees’ Don Larsen in the 1956 World Series against the Brooklyn Dodgers - no hits, no runs, no errors, no walks, over nine innings, retiring 27 consecutive batters.

68. “It’s a stand-up double.”

The batter cracks a good one into the outfield, rounds first base in a hurry, and glides into second standing up, beating the throw from the outfielder in plenty of time.

69. “The pitcher greets the batter with a rocket.”

The batsman watches a really-really fast ball go by for a called strike. “That sounded low,” says he to the umpire.

70. “He boots it.”

A routine ground ball to an infielder is misplayed for an error.

71. “He’s an excellent closer.”

A replacement pitcher used in the eighth and/or ninth inning with his team in the lead - usually a fast-ball thrower.

72. “The batted ball caused a scissors play action.”

A ground ball is hit sharply in the hole between first and second base. The first baseman moves rapidly to his right, and dives at it with no success - the second baseman does the same thing to his left, with again no results, as the ball goes through for a hit.

73. “The bases are juiced.”

First, second, and third bases have a runner aboard, ready to scamper.

74. “He’s a southpaw pitcher.”

A left-handed baseball pitcher.

75. He’s a peeker.”

A batter who occasionally takes a quick glance back, trying to pick up the catcher’s sign, or at least where the ball’s location will be.

76. “It was a cliffhanger.”

A close contest with the score changing hands several times, and the winning run being scored in the last of the ninth inning.

77. “He’s got great bat speed.”

This term refers to the measured speed of the bat going through the hitting zone during one swing.

78. “He’s a pull hitter.”

A batter, because of his bat speed and other qualities, is able consistently to hit pitches fair close to the foul line - right-handed batter down the left field line; left-handed batter down the right field line. Most often this results in a stand-up double.

79. “The infield is pulled in.”

With the winning or tying run on third base, and less than two outs, the infielders position themselves two or three steps closer to home plate - hoping to prevent the runner from scoring on a ground ball.

80. “It’s a double play the hard way.”

Man on first base, less than two outs: A briskly hit ground ball is fielded by the left-handed first baseman (the play will also work with a right-hander, but not as smoothly), who throws to the shortstop coming across the bag, tagging it with his foot (one out), and then throwing back to the first baseman in time to register the second out - OR - let’s try this:

The first baseman, upon receiving the ground ball, steps on first base (one out), and then throws to the shortstop, who must tag the runner for the second out.

81. “The cutoff man takes the throw from the outfielder.”

Depending upon where the ball is hit fairly in the outfield, the shortstop or second baseman will venture a short distance onto the grass behind him to receive the ball from the outfielder. The cutoff man then turns, and is in a good position to direct his throw accurately to any base.

82. “The outfielder airmails the ball home.”

The batter delivers a base hit to the outfield, with a runner on second base, who heads for home. The fielder bypasses the cutoff man - throwing the ball on a one-hopper to the catcher, who tags the runner out - maybe.

83. “It’s a pitchout.”

This play involves a guessing game between managers. The question: is the runner on first base going to try to steal second base? If the defensive manager thinks he is, a pitchout may be called. The catcher gives the sign, and as the pitcher throws the ball way to the outside of the strike zone, the catcher moves to receive it. If the runner is going, he ordinarily is an easy tag-out; if not, it’s a wasted pitch, and the guessing continues.

84. “Shade this guy a little to the left side.”

Statistics on the batter show that he has a strong tendency to hit balls to the left side of second base; therefore, appropriate fielders are instructed to

position themselves one or two steps to their right from where they normally stand.

85. “It looks like they ‘re going to pitch around him.”

Sometimes, with a man or men on base, and a good batter at the plate, the manager will direct his pitcher not to throw anything that the batter can get the sweet part of the bat or - in other words - “If we have to walk him, we will - to get to a lesser batter up next.”

86. “It’s in the hole.”

A ground ball hit through the infield between the shortstop and third baseman, or between the second baseman and first baseman.

87. “He couldn’t get enough on the ball.”

A difficult infield grounder to field and throw out the runner, because the fielder must toss the ball off balance for any chance of a putout.

88. “The player got burned.”

An outfielder, playing in a step or two from his normal position, has the ball hit over his head for a double, triple, or even an inside-the-park home run.

89. “Diamond.”

The whole baseball playing field, or just the infield.

90. He catches the ball on the warning track.”

A track, ten to fifteen feet wide, around the entire perimeter of the diamond, made up of porous material such as limestone-sand, shale stone, etc. Its purpose is to warn the fielder of encroaching danger as he steps from the grass field while eyeing a high fly ball beaded for the wall or fence.

91. “Before-game practice, in part, consists of fungo hitting with a fungo bat.”

A ball is flipped a short way into the air and hit on the ground, or on the fly to the practicing fielders. The deed is done by the manager and or his coaches, using a relatively long, thin bat.

92. “Looking for the high hard one, he gets the slow curve.”

The batter is looking for a fast ball up in the strike zone; instead he gets a slow breaking ball down in the strike zone. It’s a guessing game - situations in real life can be that way.



93. “That team has the best spread in the league.”

In the club house the players and staff can always find a wide selection of foodstuffs.

94. “It’s a bang-bang play at third base.”

Man on first base with a good lead - count three balls, two strikes, two outs – the batter swings, and pokes a hit into right field - the runner well on his way to second, rounds it, and heads for third - the right fielder takes the ball on the first hop, and blazes it toward third - the third base coach signals the runner to slide - he does, but is a whisker too late, and is tagged for the third out! (There are many more variations on this sort of play)

95. “It’s a made-to-order double play.”

You can see this one coming - and it always seems to happen at a critical time in the game: man on first base with a short lead - any count - less than two outs - the batter swings, and knocks a perfect bouncer just to the left of the shortstop - the fielder either makes the play himself by tagging second and throwing on to first, or he flips the ball to the second baseman, who does the same thing.

96. “He was caught with a loaded bat.”

Anything to get an advantage on the pitcher (but remember - the pitcher also has his ways of loading the ball). In either case, it’s illegal. Believe it or not, through the years there have been some shrewd batters who have tried to beat the rules of batting - by drilling out the end of a wooden bat and filling the core with cork, then carefully sealing it; the bat is made lighter, and bat speed is increased. Ways have also been found to “doctor” aluminum bats.

97. “He’s a switch hitter.”

The player has the ability to hit equally well from both sides of the plate - it all depends on whether or not the pitcher throws with his right or left arm. Statistics show that a right-handed batter does better against a left-armed, and a left-handed batter does better against a right-armed (a lot of lefts and rights - does it make sense?).

98. “The rainbow throw to first base cost him.”

After fielding a ground ball, instead of zipping it across the diamond to first, the third baseman, for some reason, nonchalantly threw it over, and the runner was safe.

99. “It’s a leg hit.”

The swiftness of the batter to first base after hitting what seemed to be a routine grounder to the shortstop is such that he beats it out for a hit.

100. “It’s a Sunday hip.”

A term used in describing a nice, slow, “high hopper” to an infielder, who effortlessly throws the batter-runner out at first base. Note: One former Athens area player declared that this delightful play seemed to happen to him only on Sundays.

101. “It’s a home run in a phone booth.”

A short pop-up.

102. “It’s a diamond with short porches.”

An expression used to explain the closeness of the right and left field stands.

103. “He’s a guy who really knows how to jump on the ball.”

Phrase used to characterize a good defensive fielder’s ability to lean, or start toward the area where he believes the ball will be hit. Factors involved: knowing the hitter’s tendencies, what kind of pitch is thrown, where the ball is moving as it approaches the hitter (outside, inside, down the middle, low, high, etc.).

104. “The bases are loaded.”

“The bat is loaded.”

“The ball is loaded.”

“The fans are loaded.”

You figure it out!

One last item: Now that you have familiarized yourself with the rules of the game, and have studied the Baseball Lingo offered herein, you should be ready for a little quiz – put on your thinking cap - here it is.

- 1. Question:**⁴ If the runner reaches third base with less than two outs, how many ways can he score a run? According to George Will’s book there are 11 - name them.
- 2. Question:** If the runner reaches third base with two outs, how many ways can he score a run? There are 2 - name them.
- 3. Question:** What is the maximum number of pitches a batter can receive from a pitcher during one official time at bat if he does not hit any foul balls after two strikes?
- 4. Question:** An official nine-inning baseball game is played. All players on the losing side end up with the exact batting average they started with at the beginning of the contest. How can this be?
- 5. Bonus Question:** How can a pitcher get credit for four strikeouts in one inning?

⁴ Answers to the five questions begin on the next page.

SUMMARY

There are many more sayings floating around in the World of Baseball. We have chosen 104, with explanations. If you are looking for additions to the list, below is a sample from the book, The Language of Sport, by Tim Considine, out of print, but available for reading in Ohio University's Alden Library.

<u>Expression</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
angel:	
Annie Oakley:	
around the horn:	
banjo hit (bleeder):	
Baseball Annie (green fly):	
belt buckle ball:	As Casey ⁵ says,
ivory hunter (bird dog):	
Black Betsy:	
caught leaning:	"You can look 'em up."
country-fair hitter:	
rush seats:	
square around:	
Statue of Liberty:	
strawberry:	
vultch:	

We hope that our goal has been achieved by this presentation - a better appreciation, and enjoyment of the grand game of baseball. Further, it is our hope that as you become more enthralled with this athletic pastime, you will be able to add to the Baseballisms shown above. Good luck!

Answers to Questions 1 and 2. Runner on Third Base^{6,7}

Ways of scoring <u>with less than two outs</u>	Ways of scoring <u>with two outs</u>
1. Soft outfield single.	1. Yes.
2. Infield hit.	2. Yes.
3. Sacrifice fly.	3. No.
4. Infield out.	4. No.
5. Safety squeeze.	5. Maybe.

⁵ The legendary Casey Stengel - longtime major league baseball player-manager, best known for his witticisms about the game.

⁶ Some may differ with the number of possibilities.

⁷ If bases are loaded, add one more: batter walks.

6. Suicide squeeze.
7. Error.
8. Balk.
9. Wild pitch.
10. Passed ball.
11. Steal of home.

6. Maybe.
7. Yes.
8. Yes.
9. Yes.
10. Yes.
11. Yes.

Answer to Question 3. 11 pitches. A player comes to bat in the first inning with two outs and a man on base (any base). The batter works the count to 2 balls-2 strikes or 3 balls-1 strike. If the count is 2 and 2, the next pitch is a ball, but the man on base is thrown out stealing to end the inning. (5 pitches received.) His time at bat is not complete, and he continues batting in the second inning. He works the count to 3 and 2 and on the sixth pitch either walks, strikes out, or hits a ball somewhere. Five pitches in inning 1 and 6 pitches in inning 2 equals 11 pitches. (In the first inning if the count had been 3 and 1, the fifth pitch would be a strike but the base runner is thrown out to end the inning.)

Answer to Question 4. The opening day game at the ball park results in a no-hitter, with the winning team scoring one or more runs. Therefore, the batting averages for the players on the losing side remain the same as they were at the beginning of the competition: .000.

Answer to Bonus Q. 5. The first batter of the inning strikes out, but the catcher does not catch the third strike and the batter reaches first safely. This is recorded as a strikeout. The second, third, and fourth batters all strike out. (Four strikeouts.)



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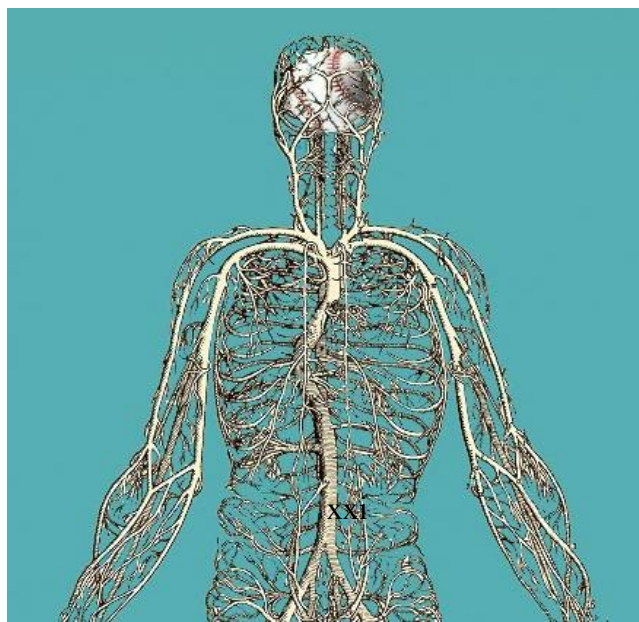
Bob Sympson, Athens, Ohio, edited the manuscript.

Henri Seibert, Athens, Ohio, did the art work.

Joe Carbone, Coach of the Ohio baseball team, Bill Toadvine, Assistant Coach, and Bob Wren, Retired Coach reviewed the manuscript and helped clarify explanations.

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Gene Beecher,
Pennsylvania;
Studio City,
Debrah
Cleveland, Ohio
several



Fort Loudon,
Emil Davidson,
California; and
Malisheski,
contributed
baseballisms.

ADDENDUM

to

ENJOY THE GAME MORE Know Your Baseball Lingo⁸

Concocted
by

The Seventh and Fifth Inning Stretch *Gang*⁹
(Longtime Fans of the Ohio & Copperheads Baseball Teams)

Athens, Ohio
March 2001

CORRECTION?

Yes, believe it or not, we “experts” appear to have made a mistake in the March 2000 writing. Most readers we have talked to claim that our description of “The batter hit for the circuit” is wrong (see page 2, number 7 in the March 2000 publication) - and - that our definition describes what happens when the batter hits for the Cycle. Circuit refers only to a home run.

There is still some controversy brewing over this subject but, for now, we will put it to rest, admitting that we were indeed wrong, and substitute the word Cycle for Circuit.

1. “The batter tomahawked the ball.”¹⁰

⁸ Don’t forget, the following expressions are for the *novice* - the person who has read the rule book, but is not acquainted with the real game’s language.

⁹ The reader should review pages i and v in the March 2000 publication. Because of a new format in 2001, Ohio University’s baseball schedule shows that the large majority of games will be nine-inning contests instead of seven-inning encounters (total home games = 29, 26 of which will be nine-inning engagements). Therefore, it would seem fitting that the *Stretch Gang* honor the home team tradition of standing up in the seventh, or fifth inning - whichever length the game may be.

¹⁰ First eleven entries courtesy of Ken Keylor, Westerville, Ohio.

The batter whacks a high-pitched ball, not necessarily out of the strike zone, with the barrel of the bat (thickest part) angled above the handle (thinnest part) - like the motion of throwing a tomahawk. It may or may not go for a base hit.

2. “The batter hit the ball with the fat part of the bat.”

The belted ball is hit in the exact middle with the thickest part of the bat, usually resulting in a line drive.

3. “The batter is seeing the ball well.”

He is making good swings, and good contact with the ball. Also, may be interpreted as a hot streak, where the batter has been getting a high percentage of base hits.

4. “The defense is pinching the corners on this guy.”

With less than two outs, men on first and third, the manager signals his first and third basemen to play in toward the plate more, making it easier to cut the runner off going home on a ground ball.

5. “It’s a big on the rug.”

A low, hard-hit ground ball to the infield.

6. “This guy throws what the batters refer to as a radio ball.”

A very swift pitch, which you can hear, but can’t see.

7. “The infielders are taught to knock everything down.”

With two outs and a man on second base, the manager reminds the infielders, if they can’t make a play on a ground ball, to at least knock it down to prevent the runner from scoring.

8. The rowdy fan yells at the pitcher, “Throw him a chair.”

In other words, strike the batter out, and make him sit down in the dugout. Also may refer to the pitcher throwing to locations that outline a chair.

9. “It’s a dipsey-doodle.”

Double play.

10. “The batter is choked up.”

With a fast-ball pitcher on the mound, the batter moves his hands two or three inches up the handle of the bat for better control of the bat, and contact with the ball. Often done with two strikes.

11. “It’s a rater.”

Home run.

12. Mark McGuire’s comment after hitting three home runs in one game: “Last night I couldn’t hit a ball with a wet newspaper. Tonight, I centered some balls.”

He got the sweet part of the bat squarely on the right part of the ball (see #37 in the March 2000 report).

13. “The batter is still alive.”

After a two-strike count, and numerous foul balls, the batter still has a chance to get a walk, a hit, get hit by the ball, or get on base by an error. The term can also be used when a foul fly ball is dropped by a fielder.

14. “Stitched potato.”

A baseball.

15. “He chased the change-up.”

The batter swings at an off-speed pitch out of the strike zone, and misses.

16. “It’s a merry-go-round out there.”

No outs, bases loaded - runs keep scoring by hits, walks, errors - at least for a while. “Are we ever going to get these guys out?” yells the manager from the dugout.

17. “The pitcher is hanging breaking balls.”

The curve or slider does not have a good “bite” or break to it. The ball flattens out, making an easy target for the batter to hit.

18. “It’s a courtesy throw over to first base.”

A lackadaisical toss over to first by the pitcher from his stance on the mound to let the runner know that he knows he’s there.

19. “The pitcher has a good tailing fast ball working.”

The ball thrown by the right-handed pitcher tails away from the left-handed batter, and into the right-handed batter. The ball thrown by the left-handed pitcher tails away from the right-handed batter, and into the left-handed batter. The pitch may or may not be in the strike zone.

What makes a tailing fast ball tail?

The different pressures applied by the forefinger and middle finger on the ball as it is released.

20. “That pitch was in the batter’s wheel-house, and he didn’t swing at it.”

The ball is thrown to a spot where the batter normally gets a high percentage of his hits.

21. “That pitch was grooved.”

The pitcher put the ball right in the middle of the batter’s wheel-house, and he hit it for a tater.

22. “He couldn’t find the handle.”

A ground ball hit to any defensive position, whereby the player has difficulty fielding it on the first try, with the runner making first base, and perhaps an extra base or two, because of the error.

23. “If the umpire is going to squeeze him (the pitcher), he’s in trouble.”

A tight, or small, strike zone, favoring the batter.

24. “It’s four to nothing for the good guys in the fifth.”

The team you want to win.

25. “In the second inning, the team batted around.”

All nine players in the lineup come to bat in a single inning.

26. “The batter hit a pool shot to second base.”

A ground ball hit off the end of the bat with lots of spin on it. “Chalk up,” hollers a guy from the opposing bench.

27. “Stretching for the hard-hit grounder, the shortstop fell down hard on the green cement.”

Artificial turf.

28. “Let’s have a little two-out lightning”, yells a hometown fan from the grandstand.

Two outs in the bottom of any inning, no one on base, the home team slightly behind - in other words, “Let’s make something happen in a hurry - like a rally to go ahead!”

29. “The catcher sets up inside.”

In a squat position, he moves his body and glove hand to the inside of the plate for the pitcher’s target.

30. “The team scored an insurance run(s) in the inning.”

When either team has a one-run lead in the late innings, an additional run(s) may “insure” a victory; however, in baseball, with no time clock, you never know.

31. “It’s a hitter’s/pitcher’s ballpark.”

Certain atmospheric conditions, and physical structures often help hitters and pitchers better their performance in a given ballpark. Wind, sun, shadows on the playing field, grass length, artificial turf, size of foul territory, over-all size of the playing field, length of foul lines, height of fences/walls, night lighting, all play a part.

32. “The pitcher is nibbling.”

He is trying to induce the batter to swing at balls thrown on the corners of the plate, but not over it. He’s not challenging the hitters.

33. “The fielders pulled an Alphonse and Gaston.”

This is a fun play to watch, if you are a nonpartisan fan in the grandstand - but - if you are the defensive manager eyeing the execution of the “circus act”, it is quite a different story.

The situation comes about when a high fly ball is hit between two or more fielders (see page 3, number 12 in the March 2000 writing). Arriving on the scene where the ball is judged to land, each player hesitates, then a quick dialogue: “You got it?” “No, you take it.”

“No, you get it.” Gestures are made - confusion reigns - the split second decision is not achieved, and the sphere drops for a hit. Meanwhile, the head guy in the dugout goes bananas. “When the hell did we ever practice that play for a game preparation?” he shouts to the bewildered fielders.

Note: The term “Alphonse and Gaston” used in baseball lingo stems from a Hearst Sunday gag strip in the early 1900s. The characters showed good behavior at all times (“You first, my dear Alphonse!” “No, no - you first, my dear Gaston!”) They became immortalized as a universally understood symbol of excessive politeness.¹¹

34. “He hit that one a country mile.”

A very long way over the fence for a home run.

35. “The batter is in the hole...”

The count goes to no balls and two strikes.

36. “In the late fall and winter season, the Hot Stove League is the only game in Town.”

Reference here is made to bygone days for some, when old-time baseball fans sat around the potbellied stove, reviewed the past season, told stories about the sport, and looked forward to the next season.

37. “The visiting team is beating the blood out of the ball.”

A series of innings where lots of skimpy infield hits are produced, putting the home team behind.

38. “The pitcher would like to ring him up”; “The pitcher rang him up”; “The pitcher has rung him up.”

To say it another way - put a strike-out in the score book for the batter.

39. “The outfielder throws a fill to the plate.”

¹¹ From the World Encyclopedia of Comics, edited by Maurice Horn. 1999. Chelsea House Publishers, Broomall, PA.

The right fielder catches a line drive fly ball, and delivers a scorching one-bounce throw to home base, doubling up the runner trying to score from third.

40. “The pitcher throws a barber shot to the batter.”

The ball zooms in just under the hitter’s chin, backing him off the plate - a close shave.