

Hit 'n Runnin' with Replay Baseball

The Hit & Run play seems to get as many or more questions from Replay Baseball players than any other facet of the game. As the advertisement states, each hitter and runner is individually rated for the H&R play, yet until you get comfortable with the game engine it can be difficult to discern the subtle differences between the ratings. Personally, when I started playing Replay three years ago, I was baffled by the H&R ratings and would only H&R with low strikeout hitters. It wasn't until I sat down and really studied the H&R chart in combination with the batter/pitcher ratings that I came to understand how the system works. Over the next few paragraphs I hope to illustrate the following:

- a) the ratings that make a good H&R hitter.
- b) how to tell which pitchers are tough to H&R against.
- c) that Replay Baseball maintains a hitter's value even with the H&R play on.

Let's start with a look at the H&R Chart along with some player cards. For the following example I'm going to be using the 2008 cards for Chipper Jones and Jason Varitek. I chose these two players specifically because they are on the opposite end of the spectrum when it comes to batting average (Chipper at .364 and the NL batting champ while Varitek struggled at a .220 clip) and their H&R ratings are very different.

We'll look at Chipper and 'Tek's H&R ratings below:

Chipper:

5	32	2	18	11	27
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Varitek:

3	32	10	18	10	26
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Looking at the first column, we see this result will ALWAYS advance the runner via a possible ground out or single. The difference is that Chipper's 5 is more likely to turn into a single than Varitek's 3, a reflection of Chipper's higher batting average. Almost all hitters will have a low number in this column ranging from 2-5, with the higher numbers going to players with higher batting averages.

Next we look at the 32 in the second column. Almost all players will have a 32, 33, or 34 in this column. This generates plays in which the ball is not put into play (pitch outs, caught stealing on a swing and miss (not a K though), possible pickoffs, balks, and pitches in the dirt that allow a SB). This column doesn't do much to separate the good/bad H&R hitters.

Next we come to column three and see that Chipper has a 2 here while Varitek a 10. This is our first indication that Chipper might be a good guy to call the H&R with and not so much with 'Tek. As we already discussed, the 2-5 results ALWAYS move the

runner along and possibly result in a hit for the hitter. A player who is good at the H&R will have the 2-5 number in this column while someone who is not will have a 10, 18, or 19. If you look at the H&R chart, those numbers ALWAYS result in possible strike out/throw out, line out, or ground out double plays...not good results! So far Chipper has two results that always move the runner along while Varitek only has one.

Next, we look at column four. This column often reflects the hitter's overall tendency to hit into double plays. If a hitter has a lot of Column 4-1's or Column 1-35's in his main 6x6 grid, you will see an 18 or 19 here. If he didn't hit into very many double plays, this will most likely be a 21 or 22, which decreases the chances of a double play. Regardless, these results aren't guaranteed to move the runner along as the defense. Both Chipper and Varitek hit into their fair share of double plays, so they've earned the 18.

Column five, like column three, is another big one to separate the good/bad H&R hitters. This is going to reflect how often the hitter strikes out and will range from a 10 (bad) to a 13 (excellent). If you look at the chart book you will see that a 10 is almost always going to result in a possible strike out/throw out double play opportunity. A 13 is much less likely to strike out and will often put the ball in play, moving the runner along. In Chipper's column five we find an 11, not the best but still requiring a roll on the pitcher's grade of 1 to be a sure strike out/throw out opportunity. Varitek again has a 10, almost always resulting in a strike out/throw out double play opportunity. That's two 10's, which means that 1/3 of the time Varitek will have the possibility of a strike out/throw out double play...not good! If you see a hitter with two 10's, you want to think of other ways to move the runner along.

Column six is a reflection of batting average AND slugging percentage. A hitter with a decent average and some pop will most likely have a 27 here, meaning more doubles and the possibility of a home run on the H&R play. A player with a low average OR low power numbers will have a 25 or 26 here, decreasing the number of doubles/homers. Chipper has a high average and a high slugging percentage, and as a result he has a well deserved 27. Varitek had a low batting average and slugging percentage, so he finds a 26.

Now that you've seen what makes up a hitter's grades, let's take a quick look at the pitcher grades. These grades are easier to read. If you take out a pitcher card and look at this H&R A row, you will notice that a pitcher will always have all of the result 1-5, but since there are six columns and five numbers one of the numbers will repeat itself. This is the key to pitcher grades. A great strikeout pitcher with a low WHIP will have two 1's, making it more likely to generate those strikeout/throw out double plays and influencing more positive results for the defense overall. A poor pitcher will have two 5's with everyone else falling in between with two 2's, 3's, or 4's. If you look at 2008 Brad Lidge, you will notice he has two 1's, but Johan Santana and Cliff Lee get two 2's. Lee and Santana had lower WHIPS than Lidge, but Lidge also had more K/9 IP.

Finally, we come to one of my favorite parts of the Replay H&R system: a hitter's batting average is accurately reflected even when calling the H&R. Some H&R systems

reduce all hitters to the same batting average based on their H&R grade, but in Replay Chipper is still a .364 hitter and Varitek is still a .220 hitter. Let's take a look.

For the sake of simplicity, I'm going to assume an average pitcher H&R grade line of 4-2-3-1-3-5 and an average fielding grade of 3. I know this is oversimplifying the problem, but I believe it still gives satisfactory results while keeping things manageable. With each hitter's H&R grades there are 36 different combinations possible when combined with the pitcher's grades. We're going to go through each of Chipper's grades and look at the results.

Let's start with the column one 5:

- 1/6 of the time the result will be a 6. Half the time (fielding grade of 3) this is a single. So this is 0.5 hits.
- 1/6 of the time the result will be a 7. Again, half the time this is a single. Another 0.5 hits.
- The other 4/6 of the time this will be a single. Chipper's total hit chances in column one is 5 out of 6.

Next we look at the column three 2 (remember column 2 doesn't put the ball in play, so we ignore that one):

- 4/6 of the time this will be a 3, 4, or 5 for an out.
- 2/6 of the time this will be a 6 or 7 for a possible hit. We already determined that half the time each of these would be a hit, so each result is 0.5 hit chances for a total of 1.
- Chipper's total hit chances in column three is 1 out of 6.

Next we look at the column four 18. This will always result in a non-hit event, so for column four Chipper's hit chance is 0 out of 6.

Chipper's column five 11 will always result in a non-hit event as well, so this is also a 0 out of 6 as far as hit chances.

Finally, Chipper's column six 27 will result in a hit 5 out of 6 times. Adding all of his hit chances up we get a total of 11 hit chances out of 30 (remember that we ignore column two since the ball isn't put into play) which is a .366 batting average! Pretty darn close to Chipper's .364 average he put up in 2008. If you do the same math for Varitek, you end up with a .216 average, very close to his actual average of .220.

I hope that I haven't made this more confusing for you and that you now have a better understanding of the Replay H&R system. A word of caution: I have no insights into the card making formulas or special insight from Pete, so nothing in this article is meant to be gospel on Replay, but merely to help folks understand the system better.