How His Decimals Deceive:

James's Whatnot and What Not to Believe

In his new, much heralded Historical Abstract, famous baseball "guru" Bill James proudly introduces us to his attempt at a seemingly succinct (for once!) decimal to determine a batter's run production, i.e., the Run Average, derived from the following formula: $\underline{(R+RBI)}$

AB

Lesser known Barry Codell's little known Scoring Average, however, has already established itself as the logical litmus test for an individual's contribution to team scoring. Since both formulae address exactly the same categories (runs, runs batted in, and at bats) in different ways, let us reconsider the consequences of the two statisticians' considerations.

Codell's historically radical ratio is derived sequentially from two crucial aspects of his public inventions: the Base-Out Percentage (1979, Baseball Research Journal) and the Runs Tallied, the denominator (AB-H) the groundbreaking Outs Batting calculation from the former, and ½(R+RBI) i.e., Runs Tallied (1990, Baseball Research Journal), the equally revolutionary numerator, culminating in the Scoring Average:

$$\frac{\frac{1}{2}(R + RBI)}{(AB-H)}$$

This startling averaging of runs and RBI's statistically restates a baseball truism: virtually all runs besides homers are contributory tallies created equally and therefore halved into "run-scorer" and "run-plater." The full run tallied from the solo home run fulfills the reasonable promise of his premise.

James' immodest proposal appears ill conceived from start to finish, and especially when compared to Codell's precedent. To begin with, what could be the significance of totaling a player's Runs and RBI's, an unfortunate and "uncredited

homage" to the late Joe Reichler's "Runs Produced?" The resultant batter's number cannot be translated to team contribution. The arbitrary R + RBI amalgam measured against an At-Bat backdrop is, in a word, erroneous. The use only of AB creates a divisor with an ill-fated dividend! Indeed, both numerator and denominator are misguided, and these two negatives are no positive: they present a new nominee for James' new leading misleading number. Yet "certain men of James"--to use New Testament phraseology (see Galatians 2:12)--must follow him. Let us instead go beyond his ponderous pondering, well into the mystical, statistical well to find the code of Codell!

Perusing Codell's sampling of 2001 Scoring Average leaders quickly displays the contradictory findings in player comparison. For example, Jason Giambi vs. Luis Gonzalez:

	Run Average (James)	Scoring Average (Codell)
Giambi	$\frac{229}{520}$ = .440	$\frac{114.5}{342.0}$ = .335
Gonzalez	$\frac{270}{609}$ = .443	$\frac{135}{411}$ = .329

What to weigh? Who outdid whom? In James' usage of the three common factors, Gonzalez produced better; in Codell's Giambi led. In trying to verbally express these percentages, only Codell shows sense, to wit: in Run Average, Giambi's .440 figure symbolizes what can only be called 44 "combo numbers" (R + RBI!) per 100 at bats, straddling the line between meaninglessness and inexplicability.

Scoring Average, on the other hand, simply and most interestingly says Giambi tallied 33-1/2 runs per 100 outs batting, a most rational reportage of individual scoring, for no individual number added comes closer to the score of the game!

How a phenomenon became noumenon is that tale too detailed to detail here, a sorry story of missed history. Let us remind, though, that over a decade ago, the respected Baseball Black Book supplanted Thomas Boswell's imitative Total Average and Bill James' incomprehensible Runs Created with Barry Codell's more original Base-Out Percentage and Runs Tallied, respectively. Ten years earlier, the three men had been lazily lumped as pioneers of the game's statistical explosion in a "landmark" article in *Sport* magazine, following the Society for Baseball Research (SABR) St. Louis convention where Bob Costas predicted "Barry's numbers and Bill's words will have a permanent impact upon our game." Now, as an entire generation of "new numberers" has fully evolved, these hints of prescience have come, without doubt, to fruition only in the continuing application of Codell's calculations, while creating his self-imposed awaiting for the publication of the Diamond Mean, Hitting Average, Essential Bases theory, Irreal Numbering, and the ultimate--**Diamond Numbers Averaging (DNA**)!!

The "Father of the BOP's" historical influence on the subsequent confluence in his field may well be compared, ironically, to his owned beloved thinker Philo, so reasonably and radically portrayed by foremost religious scholar Harry Austryn Wolfson ("Ben Zev"): formulating a world in which its inhabitants have been allowed, unbeknownst to them, to blithely pontificate about its origins.

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