

## Scouting Facts

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We all know what they look like. They walk in with a bag full of information, tools for their trade, wearing a logo on their hat or shirt, and a thick string hangs out of their pocket. Whoever they are can be seen talking to coaches before the game, standing in odd places, and they must have season tickets because they usually sit right behind home plate. But sometimes they don't stay for the whole game. Who would come to a baseball game only to watch a few innings?

By the time you point them out, it's too late. They have already seen you.

Scouts get there early to evaluate a player long before his first at bat or his first pitch on the mound.

What is a scout?

There are generally two types of baseball scouts:

One, a professional scout working for a major league baseball club or two, a college coach looking for potential players to add to their university, or college programs.

So what do they look for?

Let's break this up into two groups:

First, let's talk about professional scouts first. Pro scouts are looking for tools first and foremost. For a position player...arm strength, running speed, hitting ability, the ability to hit with power, and fielding ability. For a pitcher...body type, arm action, velocity, and secondary pitches are evaluated. Also being evaluated are things such as athletic ability and character make up. Remember this: most are evaluating what a player will be versus what a player is presently. Also remember: season statistics (batting average, homerun totals, runners batted in, earned run average, wins and losses) warrant little attention from professional scouts while evaluating players.

Secondly, for college scouts much of the same attributes are being looked at in a player- yet on a smaller scale. A college scout is looking for a player who can help their school win next season versus a professional scout looking for a player who might help a major league team win years from now. College scouts evaluate players for immediate need as well. If they have a highly regarded freshman first baseman in their program with several underclassmen as backups, chances are they will not spend much time scouting for that position. College coaches will identify talent in the areas/positions they need and then gather necessary information (academics, character make up, coaching ability) they need to consider a player for their college program.

There is much more to add to what has already been mentioned but the important thing to discuss is what a player can do to maximize their ability to stand out for a scout.

Let it be known, every move a player makes is being evaluated. From the time a player walks into the ballpark until the time that player leaves the field, a good scout is watching and evaluating. Scouts look for "make up" or "character". Scouts will evaluate a player long before they even see the player's tools. Does the player present himself well? Does he wear his uniform correctly? If he has a full beard, that player may have reached his potential physically. Does he respect the game? Does he respect his coaches? How does he move around on the field in warm ups? Does he hustle? Does he look attentive? All of these things are being watched intensively to help a scout evaluate a player.

One of the most important things a scout can watch is "infield" or "in and out" before the game starts. A scout can see arm strength, defensive skills, hand actions, foot speed, and quickness from players during this time. This is important for players to take seriously. For example, maybe the player a scout came to

watch never has to make a defensive play during a game because the game itself did not present the situation. How can a scout evaluate his defensive skills? Easy...they already did. They watched "infield" before the game and gained plenty of information to evaluate that players tools. It's unfortunate that some of today's players do not take infield seriously. It's also unfortunate that some coaches do not deem infield important prior to their team's game. Needless to say, what happens prior to the first pitch is often overlooked by a player when in actuality it sometimes can be the most important part of their evaluation.

Now it's game time. Every player would love to get three hits and pop one over the fence for a scout. But scouts watch everything, remember? When a player hits a ground ball to the shortstop what was his "time" running to first base? Remember those strings hanging out of the pockets? Those are attached to stop watches getting accurate running times to measure speed. How many of us have seen the player that jogs in disgust because he didn't get a hit? Well he just missed an opportunity to show hustle and maybe that speed he possesses that scouts are looking for. A hit is better than an out, right? Not always for a scout. A hard lined drive that is caught by the left fielder shows a scout more than a seeing-eye ground ball pass the pitcher for a hit. A pitcher that shows good strike zone command with a good fastball and off speed pitch is more important than what the statistics say for a scout.

So you see, what a line score in the local paper states does not take place of what a scout actually witnessed. There is so much more for a scout to see than a box score. An average player can be given a higher evaluation if he takes the little things seriously. Often this leads to opportunities that tools alone would not lend.

Unfortunately, the reality is there are few players that possess the tools to be considered for the professional ranks in comparison to the number of players playing at the high school or college level. The percentages get better when discussing the opportunity for high school players to continue their baseball career at the college level. There are more universities, small colleges, junior colleges, and community colleges adding baseball programs to their athletic programs. The opportunity is there for players today. But what they do during the game is not the only thing scouts pay attention to.

So players, the next time you walk on the field with your shirt un-tucked with your glove on your head - remember who is watching. Parents, buy your kid a razor even though he is 6'2" and nicknamed Grizzly Adams. You might trick a scout into thinking he may be 6'4" in a few years.

Go by the golden rule: DO NOT GIVE A SCOUT ANYTHING TO QUESTION.

You may be a great player and a model citizen, but if you don't carry yourself well on and off the field, then what you do on the field may never get noticed. There have been many scouts who have given favorable evaluations to players without ever seeing them go 2 for 3 or throwing a shutout.

Also remember, maybe a player isn't interested in playing for the team a scout represents. Well scouts talk. Remember that first baseman that a college coach didn't need? Well he just called another coach in a different conference to let them know of the player so his competition didn't get better.

In closing, what a player does when nobody is watching will ultimately portray a player and his ability accurately. That's when the baseball gods are watching. They outrank a scout.

Hats on straight at the ballpark!

Best Regards.....

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