

SEVERAL MAJOR NEW RULES IN PLACE FOR 1862!

PITCHER'S BOX INTRODUCED; CALLED BALLS ADDED TO CALLED STRIKES; BAT SIZE REGULATED

NEW YORK CITY (Mar. 17, 1862) – The start of competitive base ball is six weeks away, and as players prepare to train ahead of the new season they will have some new rules & regulations to keep mind, thanks to the outcome of meetings of the National Base Ball Organization Executive Committee.

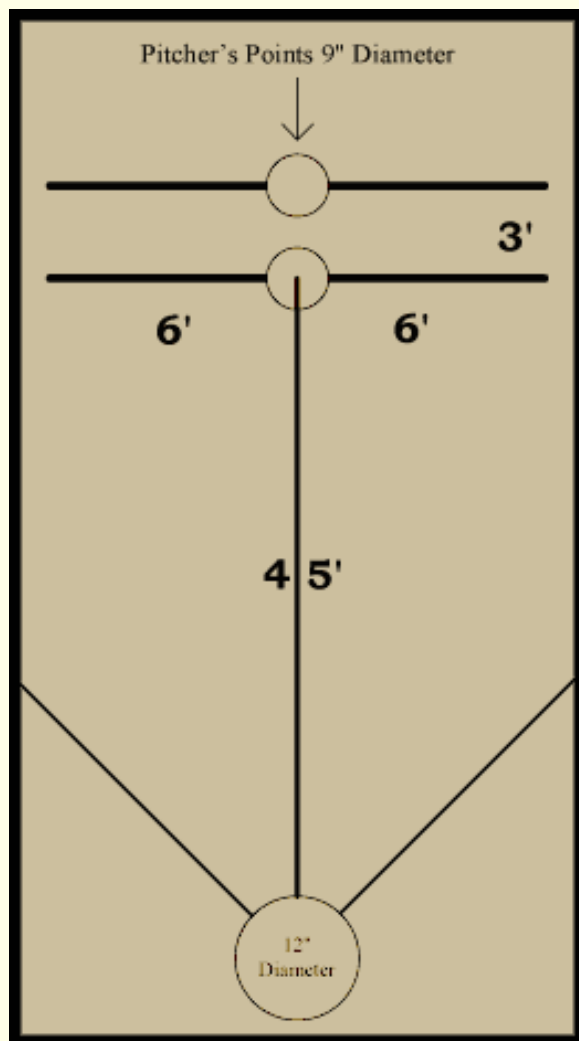
The last time the N.B.B.O.E.C. met to discuss changes to the sport was ahead of the 1858 season, when the Called Strike was introduced to cut down on the choosiness of batters while speeding up the pace of games. At the same the “Batter’s Line” was created so pitchers could have a more consistent point to aim to and thus umpires could have an easier time deciding what constituted a strike. This time, most of the discussion was about what to do on the pitcher’s side of things.

The introduction of the Called Strike was a success. Games were shorter, the pickiest of batsmen were forced into action, and the “wear & tear” on pitchers was reduced while general play and the amount of scoring were not greatly affected. However, pitchers still exhibited a tendency to deliver balls to generally unhittable places in an effort to goad excitable batters into easy misses. This seemed logical in practice, but not many hitters fell for such tricks and fans still had to suffer through the occasional ten-minute plate appearance as a result.

In early February, a question was posed to the N.B.B.O.E.C. by member Ryan Medley, the manager of Kings County B.B.C. That question was: “If a hittable pitch that a batter fails to swing at can be called a strike, why can’t a single unhittable pitch be called in a similar fashion?” It was a very good question – after the Called Strike was introduced, pitchers were still allowed to deliver several wayward balls before they were given their first warning by the umpire, and it took several of those before the batter was given a free base. Why not force the pitcher to deliver hittable balls, just as the batsman is forced to swing at them? It led to unanimous agreement: there would be [Called Balls](#) starting in 1862.

This led to another consideration. As of the start of the N.B.B.O.E.C. meetings, pitchers were to make their deliveries from no closer than a twelve-foot-wide line drawn exactly 45 feet from the front of home plate. Theoretically, if they wanted to pitch the ball from a step in front of second base they could, although nobody did. The committee wanted to tighten up

where pitchers could deliver the ball from, and in the process spoke to the players and coaches who were members. The consensus among the members who view the sport at field level was that pitchers who do not deliver the ball from right on the line do so from, at most, several feet behind it.



The result was the creation of a second line that would be drawn exactly three feet behind the current one. With one twelve-foot line 45 feet from home plate and a second one 48 feet from home plate, the N.B.B.O.E.C. had created the ["Pitcher's Area"](#), inside which all pitches had to be delivered from.

This led to a third, but minor, change: pitchers would immediately be required to keep one foot on the ground, and take only one step, when delivering the ball. No jumps, leaps, or crow hops to shorten the distance to the plate.

With the addition of Called Balls to Called Strikes and a set area from which all pitches had to be delivered from, the thought was that the consistency and quality of the sport would increase, and at the same time the length of games would continue to shorten.

With seemingly all the focus of the meetings on pitchers, batters still received some attention. Up to this point, the N.B.B.O. policy regarding batting equipment was essentially "B.Y.O.B.", or "Bring Your Own Bat". There were no limitations on bat length, width, weight, or size, or even shape – it just had to be made of wood. If a man could hold it and swing it, he could use it in a game. Some bats were perfectly round, some were more oval-shaped, and some were flat-sided like cricket bats to maximize the efficiency of bunting. Some bats were wider than others, some bats were longer than others, and some bats were heavier than others. That was about to change, although in just one way.

Some members of the N.B.B.O.E.C. did not enjoy the antics of the select few who came to the plate with comically wide bats that made a swing and a miss nearly impossible. With that in mind, consensus was made on a uniform bat width decree for 1862: starting immediately, bats were to be [no more than 2.5 inches in diameter](#).

That was the end of the business of the National Base Ball Organization Executive Committee for 1862, and it was very important business. Their changes, in summary:

- *As a companion to the Called Strike rule of 1858, any pitch delivered to an area deemed unhittable by the Umpire shall be called an "Unfairly Pitched Ball". After an initial warning to the pitcher, three further admonishments will result on in a free base for the batter.*
- *In addition to the 12' wide Pitcher's Line that is drawn 45' from home plate, a second 12' wide line shall be drawn 48' from home plate. The resulting lines, and the area between them, shall be referred to as the "Pitcher's Area", and all deliveries from the pitcher must take place from within it.*
- *Pitchers must keep at least one foot on the ground at all times when delivering the ball to the batsman. In delivering a ball to the batsman, the pitcher is permitted to take one step.*
- *All bats used in a competitive game must be no more than 2.5 inches in diameter, verifiable upon request. Bats may continue to be any length, shape, or weight, although they still must be made solely of wood.*

The rules of base ball continue to evolve, and this is unlikely to be the last of the changes.