

## Out Of Bounds, Episode XXXVII: Sabermetrics

Written by {ga=larshancock}

Friday, September 14 2012 7:00 AM - Last Updated Thursday, September 13 2012 3:08 PM

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My current job can best be described as an independent entrepreneur, which makes the ubiquitous “what do you do for a living” question an awkward interrogative for me to respond to in a clear, concise, and non-rambling manner. I chose this course of action for a number of reasons, with certainly the potential to hit the proverbial (and, from my experience, mythical) home run so I can get out of the grind being near the top of the list. But more, I like the freedom being my own boss affords me. No irrational requests from egomaniacal sociopaths, no more fighting bureaucracy to make a simple and obvious decision, and no more worrying what to do with all my extra income, because there isn't any. Wait, that last piece sucks. But I digress.

So when I found myself this week forced to do something uncomfortable and nonsensical for the sake of politics, it really bothered me. How dare anyone impose their will on me and force me to do something that doesn't make any sort of sense, and disrupts the harmonious chi I seek on a daily basis! That is a special privilege I reserve for the my children at 6 AM (“sure, I'd love to get up RIGHT NOW and watch Mickey Mouse reruns with you. I was just thinking I need to do that instead of get proper sleep”), and for the commercial airlines, the SPECTRE in the novel of Lars Bond's life.

Amid a constant internal dialog of “serenity now”, it got me to thinking. Baseball has invented numerous statistics to determine just how shitty the 2012 Cleveland Indians are. A team that is otherwise a .500 ballclub, for example, would statistically be a .464 team with the simple replacement of one statistically average player with Matt Laporta (that's called waaWL%). And we also know that Ubaldo Jiminez is statistically worse than the average random career AAA clown you could call up to replace him due to his -0.9 WAR, because we needed a statistic to tell us that. But in our every day to day existence, how do we know how much our individual lives suck? How do we know that our awesome 2000 year was indeed that awesome, while the misery of 2006 we experienced, how miserable was that exactly? And where are our current lives versus the “times of our life” and the “good old days”, and are they trending in the right direction or not? The only solution here is statistics.

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What should we measure? Well, wealth is certainly not directly correlated to happiness. Wealth brings its own sets of problems (a "classier set of problems" as my business partner often offers to be sure, but problems nonetheless). Often the pursuit of wealth becomes a Quixotian goal in itself, where you devote your life to the collection of assets and toys and in the end throw away everything that brings you true happiness, ala *Citizen's Kane's* Rosebud. In the end, you have more work, more stress, and more things, which are in the end, just things and not happiness. And money certainly can't buy you love, even if it is an effective means of renting it.

To me, true happiness is about having control over your life. Control is a loaded word to be sure – do you have to rule the world to be happy? Do you have to be an authoritarian tyrant in your home and business lives, becoming as petulant as a three-year-old in order to get your own way and effect control? No, to me, control means the ability to do what you want when you want to do it. Being master of your own domain may mean, in fact, being subservient to others, but as long as that is happy and takes you where you want to go, you're in control. Middle managers clawing their way to the top in a punishing bureaucracy are likely not in control of their life in any way, where the UPS driver who just loves to drive his truck and talk to people may be in full control of his existence.

To this, I propose a lifetime index called the Formula for Measuring Liveliness, or the FML. The FML measures your day on an hour-by-hour basis, and assigns you a point when you are out of control for a particular waking hour. Ideal lives have an FML of zero, and if you are doing forced labor for 24 hours straight, you'll have an FML of 24. For each hour, you ask yourself, given my druthers, am I doing what I want to do for that particular hour? If you say no, add one to your daily FML.

Take today for example. I woke up around 7, so that's seven hours where I was doing what I wanted to do – sleep. Off to a good start, cumulative FML of zero. I then took an hour to get ready for work – shower, shave, dress, and pack for the airport. All activities work is forcing upon me, so I get a point there. I then commute for an hour, another point, take a meeting, another point, and head to the airport for a three-hour wait to get on a plane. By the time I get home at 7 central tonight (assuming SPECTRE cooperates, which is not a safe bet) my FML index will crank up to 13 for the 13-straight hours where I've been out of control of my life. I'll then enjoy time with my family, have a pleasant dinner with my wife, and go to bed, all activities which add no points to my FML yielding a pretty-ugly score of 13 for me today.

Like baseball statistics, though, this one must be tortured in order to ascertain how miserable I really am. Sleep really shouldn't count for or against you. The variation in the number of hours slept is usually pretty insignificant, and if you lose sleep for pleasure, it should count for your life

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instead of being neutral. In this case I propose the FML24 be the new standard, where you normalize your FML over the total number of hours you've been awake, and multiply by 24 to get a true indication of your life, which would indicate how awful your life would be if you were awake 24 hours a day. For me, my FML24 today would show the 13 hours where I've been out of control and about 4 hours of happiness, yielding a FML24 of 18.35. Yikes!

But is today really going to be that bad for me? For example, I'm drinking a beer and writing a column, an activity I choose voluntarily, while being held captive in the airport (don't judge me just because it happens to be 11 AM, I'm just trying to lower my FML). My meeting was very pleasant with an extremely enjoyable person, and it achieved a positive result (I hope). Really, the only true misery for me today will be when I'm crammed inside that little uncomfortable tube for 5 hours trying to get home like some sort of sideshow freak on *That's Incredible*. And so I have advanced FML24 to FML24+ where you take into consideration the true misery of the situation. FML24+ isn't on a scale of zero to 24 like FML24, but on a scale of zero to infinity. Basically, if an hour is not only a forced activity but also a miserable activity, you not only add a point to your FML, but you remove that hour from the number of hours you divide to get the FML24+. The theory here is you take all the hours you are out of control and divide them by all the hours you are not miserable to get your true misery index. And for me, my FML24+ will likely be 26, which is higher than 24 and as such, today is officially sucky.

So if you want to benchmark your life, keep track of your FML24+ and see how you do on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis. And when someone asks you "how's it going", you can say "my FML24+ is 21 this week, but trending downward, so things are looking up." And you can use this as a tool to drive personal content.

Anyway, off to the questions.

**Occasionally when I walk into a restaurant I see a couple by themselves sitting on the same side of the booth with nobody across from them. What do you make of those people? – motherscratcher**

You can tell they're not married, that's for sure.

But seriously, I remember the good old days back when I was dating my wife. We were so into

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each other it was ridiculous, and wanted to be in constant contact with each other as if somehow we stopped touching or didn't kiss for five minutes that the wind would pick up and blow the other one of us away and we'd never see each other again. It was awesome and magical, and we loved every second together.

In retrospect, we were absolutely disgusting and complete jerks. Nobody wants to see that. We both came to realize this when we watched my friend Lester's wedding video, and in there we saw the two of us on the dance floor with what looked like me trying to eat her head with some sort of perverse and horrible drunken kiss that made ME want to puke. *We really look like that?* ?? The silence at our question let us know that we were just awful human beings for carrying on like that.

I get you're into each other people, I've been there. But, oh, how I wish someone had turned the hose on me and told me how I was offending society with my actions before I had to see it for myself. Those booths are roomy – spread those elbows out, dig in, give the hormones a rest, and just eat your dinner. Same siders are terrible and need to be stopped. We're eating here people!

### **When ordering curbside pickup at some shithole like Fridays, what is the proper tip? -motherscratcher**

I believe the proper tip is “go somewhere else for dinner.”

Oh, wait, you're talking about what you give Captain Acne delivering your meal to your car? Well, okay, so you've decided to overpay for mediocre food packed full of needless extra calories, and you're too lazy to get out of your car to go get it (I'm not judging here, mind you, well, yes I am, but I digress). We need to consider all the usual factors in tipping in order to understand what to give him.

- 1) Degree of difficulty. If you're sitting inside a restaurant, you want your waitress to be prompt, responsive, and serve your needs. She will take your drink and food orders, ensure your water and drinks remain full, deliver your food hot and quickly, and overall be pleasant and responsive to your constant whining and demands. Because that's what you expect. Skippy is just walking pre-bagged food to your car. Degree of difficulty: 0/10.

- 2) Societal expectations. Let's all be honest here, this is the only reason most of us tip. We

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don't want them talking bad about us behind our back, and spitting in our food the next time because we were too cheap to deliver the bare minimum dictated by society. The good news for you here is that this is an extremely grey area of the social law, and your boy won't have an ability to spit in your food if you continuously stiff him, as it will be boxed and bagged right at the hostess stand. He may talk bad about you, but probably not, because I'd bet at least 80% of people don't tip him. Note this doesn't mean you shouldn't, it just means he's not expecting it necessarily. Expectations 1/10 at best.

3. 3)What type of car you drive. Basically, if you drive a 73 Duster, the dude may tip you for delivering food to you. If you pull up in a C-Class Mercedes, however, you're a total asshole if you scrape off some pocket change and a gummy bear as a tip. This is the key determinant in how he will judge you, and as such you need to chip in at least \$1 for every \$10K of value of your car.

4. 4)Salary delta. Yeah, it's related to the above, but you need to consider how much money you make, and how much he makes in order to determine what is fair. Remember, he's getting paid squat, and 80% of the cars are stiffing him. He's running around in the heat/cold and doing his menial job as best he can, all so your lazy ass doesn't have to leave the car. You ought to show him that you appreciate him as a person by throwing a buck per every multiple of his salary that you make.

So if you drive a Maserati and make 200K a year, you need to give him about \$20. Seriously, you can afford it. A new Civic and 50K a year job? \$5 is more than generous.

**I'm going on year five of going to the same shoe shine guy and I still don't know what he charges. I've given him varying amounts of money over the years and still can't gauge from his reactions if I am paying him the correct total or not. What is a reasonable national average for a non-airport shoe shine these days?**

**Also, at the fruit stand outside of my office these old dudes run around to take your cash and offer you a bag. Are you supposed to tip these guys? I mean like, WTF, I don't need a bag and I am helping myself, so I see no way they differ from grocery store cashiers yet I feel as if I am stiffing them when I don't tip. —eoy2e3**

First of all, congratulations for taking pride in your personal appearance sufficient to have a consistent shine on your shoes. There's a movement toward apathy in appearance that manifests itself in society at large that is fundamentally destructive to the work ethic of this country, and the ability to compete on a global basis. The Germans? Shiny shoes. The Japanese? Blinding. And we wonder why we're losing our edge as a nation.

I knew a guy that used to shower and get dressed business casual before he would work from

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home all day. Mind you, I work in gym shorts, often unshowered, but often my productivity reflects such apathy. With a clean shave and a button down shirt on, though, I'm like Iron Man in his suit and ready to solve the world's problems, or at least peddle whatever shit I've got in the bag today like the superhero I know is within me.

To your question, there are three different levels of what a shoe shine guy can do, and you should pay accordingly. Note that the total you pay should be independent of what is actually charged – the price plus tip is all his money anyway, and you are just offering him fair value for his work, retail price be damned.

The most basic shine is just a basic shine. Hits your shoes with the brush, slaps them with the rag, maybe squirts a little water on them. Just wiping off the dirt and bringing out the natural polish. Often for this shine he doesn't even untie your shoes, he just slaps them around for a bit and makes them look good. For this base service, \$4-\$5 is more than sufficient.

The next level is the shine and polish. He'll unlace your shoes and take the laces out, and apply polish to them to ensure they look as good as new. This is a much more involved process and as such he should be paid more for the additional labor. For a good polish and shine, he's adding months if not years to the life of your shoe, so you're really making an investment in your future here. \$10 is the right amount.

On the top end, you get one of those half an hour jobs where they basically reconstruct the dried out scraps of leather you have shamelessly put on your feet for years, and turns them into a brand new set of Bruno Maglis. There's polish, there's wax, there's a foot massage, a witch doctor comes in to exorcise your demons – full spread, the works. Lather, rinse, repeat. For that, you need to pay at least \$15, and probably \$20, plus reimburse him for any live chickens sacrificed to save your soles.

Regarding the fruit stand guys, by no means should you tip those guys. They're not hired help, they have ownership in the fruit stand. The cardinal rule of tipping is you never tip the owner of a business. Would you slip Larry Dolan a \$20 if the Indians perform exceptionally well at a game? Never, and not just because it's a ridiculous hypothetical to consider the Indians actually performing well. Plus, by tipping them it encourages them to annoy you and others. It's like feeding pigeons – the rats with wings can find their own food quite well thank you, no need to encourage those vermin to harass you. Seriously, what's the worst case scenario? You're supposed to tip them and you don't. They'll just recognize you and refuse to help you if that's

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the case, and how are you losing there? Not tipping them is win-win.

**What's up with the bathroom concierge dudes? Seriously, thanks for the paper towel and High Karate splash...but I'll give you two bucks NOT to be lurking in the Men's room.**  
–pod2dawg

On one sense, you have to feel bad for the bathroom concierge. Here is a man who spends eight hours a day in a bathroom, with all the horrifying aromas that are present inside such, and he also cleans up after each and every patron that uses the facility. Everyone hates the men's room attendant, and he knows it, so for his tireless service in what is essentially an open sewer ripe with disease, he gets your scorn and a measly buck from you. Terrible way to make a living.

On the other hand, though, fuck that guy. He's like the mob offering you protection – you don't need protection if the mob isn't there in the first place, and you can get a towel and turn on the water all by yourself without paying a buck for, well, absolutely nothing of use. I'm flying to Charlotte right now, and I'm dreading that airport because they have men's room attendants. And what if you don't have singles? Can you not pee? Do you need to give them a five? Do you make your own change out of the pee-soaked dollars in the fishbowl? How dare you put me in that situation Charlotte Airport – you're really cranking up my FML24+ score! I'm half tempted not to wash my hands just to spite them, and when foregoing hygiene is a logical choice, the attendant must go.

And the gum/mints they offer? Ew. Yes, please, I want to pay a dollar for an item that's been laying on the counter in a public men's room all day, and then put that item in my mouth. Seriously, who thought that was a good idea? Let me touch the dispenser of cologne that's been handled by countless dozens of guys that have just used the toilet – I can't think of a downside to that! There is literally nothing you can sell me in the men's room that I would want in any way. Just go away, and let me use the facilities in private, and for free, like nature intended.

The only place they have real value is in a strip club. Once you go into one of those establishments, you're basically agreeing to be shook down for every dollar you have, so being extorted to urinate shouldn't cause you any concern. Attendants are always on duty at a strip club, though, providing a key public service – keeping guys from fapping in the men's room. I'll gladly pay a buck to the guy ensuring the restroom is DNA-free. You know what, here's two

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buddy. You've earned it.

*Please email questions to [lars.hancock@yahoo.com](mailto:lars.hancock@yahoo.com), tweet them @ReasonsImADrunk, or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock. And remember, vote Lars for President in 2012.*