



Curve Ball. (Book Reviews)



Magazine **Technometrics** February 1, 2002 | Ziegel, Eric R.

Curve Ball, by Jim ALBERT and Jay BENNETT, New York: Copernicus Books, 2001, ISBN 0-387-98816-5, xviii + 350 pp., \$29.00.

Subtitled "Baseball, Statistics, and the Role of Chance in the Game," this is a wonderfully fascinating book. I am one of those statisticians, who, as a kid, loved baseball and baseball statistics. So here I am now with 30 years of industry experience as a statistician, half of them spent as the Technometrics Book Reviews Editor. Making an effort to take some interest in sports statistics, I previously reported Bennett (1998), a collection of chapters, each written about a different sport, including one about baseball. See Ziegel (2000). Here the editor of that volume is back with a co-author and an entire book on the statistics of baseball.

For me, reading this book might be a completely entertaining experience. Connecting for me starts right out with Chapter 1, "Simple Models from Tabletop Baseball Games." It begins by discussing the Cadaco board game, All-Star Baseball, for which I used to create my own current player disks each year to add to the realism of my games. Dividing 360[degrees] by outcomes for hitters was easy. After 10 pages, the book moves onto APBA, which somehow escaped my notice (I grew up in rural Ohio) until I went to college. I got APBA the next summer. It's much more advanced but gets only 5 pages here. Also discussed are Strat-O-Matic Baseball and Sports Illustrated Baseball.

If you grew up quicker than these authors and I, move on to the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 begins "Exploring Baseball Data," and Chapter 3 introduces probability models. Then the fun really begins, and subsequent chapters deal with such exciting baseball topics as situational effects, the hot hand, measuring offensive performance, clutch plays, and predictions. The book concludes with everyone's all-time favorite, "Did the Best Team Win?" Marketed for mass market purchase at \$29.00. it is an absolute necessity for any statistician who still follows baseball to run right out to Borders or amazon.com and buy a copy.

REFERENCES

Bennett, J. (ed.) (1998), *Statistics in Sports*, London: Arnold.

Ziegel, E. (2000), Editor's Report on Statistics in Sports, edited by J. Bennett, *Technometrics*, 42, 224.

Ziegel, Eric R.

Copyright Technometrics

<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-83664738.html>