

Baseball Umpires Have Easier Job on Dustless Diamond

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Baseball umpires every day are getting to be better insurance risks principally because dust, once the bane of the blue-clad arbiter's existence, is being eliminated.

Sports writers all over the country are taking notice of the improvement, even in the wildcat leagues of Texas and the Far West where the old fashioned "skin" diamonds are being replaced by grass-sod affairs that compare favorably with major league grounds.

In the older days, decisions at the bases and at home plate were always close because the runner tore up the ground so viciously that he invariably raised a cloud of dust, a dust screen – to borrow the nomenclature of naval strategy, that hid his efforts from the umpire.

In that cloud of dust the umpire was frequently at his wits' end to decide the play properly. His uncertain attitude was frequently misunderstood by the fans, with the result that pop bottles, thrown with great force, were aimed at the judge of play.

Now he has an easy time, speaking comparatively, for dust is scarce. Sporting writers who have studied the matter this year explain the lack of dust is due to several factors.

First, of course, has been the better diamonds. Increased interest in baseball has enabled the club owners to build better

plants, with corresponding betterments in equipment. Grass diamonds cost money but the fans are supporting baseball more generously than ever and the bigger "gates" have gone to give the man who pays better surroundings.

On a grass diamond, which means a diamond with grass infield as well as a grass outfield, there is only a little earth, chiefly on the paths around the plate and the pitchers box. That small amount of earth can be rolled easily much more easily and economically than when the whole infield is made of earth, the so-called "skin" diamond.

In addition to the rolling, however, both on the small amount of earth surrounding the grass diamonds and even on the skin diamonds groundskeepers have learned to lay the dust with various chemicals, the best of which is calcium chloride.

Another factor producing dustless baseball has been, strange to say, the baseball itself, which seems to be unusually lively this year.

Home runs are more frequent than ever and the wonderful race for home run honors between Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig is causing great excitement over the whole country.