

# Sports Flashes

From The Sporting News by J. G. Taylor Spink

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## Three-Hour Games Blamed on Smaller Strike Zone

The Chicago Cubs required eight hours and 46 minutes to play the first three games of the season. And Stanley Hack, starting his second season as the team's chief strategist, thought he had hit upon the answer.

"We now have with us the three-hour game," Hank declared. "If we shorten the strike zone just a little bit more we can have the four-hour game."

"It's all very clear now," said the man who perhaps was the greatest third baseman in the Cub history. "The strike zone used to extend from the top of the shoulders to the level of the knee. A few years ago they rewrote the rule and shortened it to within a space below the armpits to a level above the knees."

"The result is that the umpires subconsciously narrowed the zone even more and anything that isn't almost belt high or well below the armpits is being called a ball. And so we have three-and-two counts on more batters than ever before. The pitcher has to throw more pitches and all this takes time."

Hack cited an example. The other day in Cincinnati it took the Cubs three hours and 20 minutes to play a 6 to 4, ten-

inning game. The cubs got five hits off Corky Valentine and he was pitching effectively for seven innings, but Hack says he threw 112 pitches because he had three-and-two on so many hitters.

"Bob Rush allowed only five hits in seven and one-third innings and I'd say his control was pretty good, because he struck out eight batters," Hack answered. "Yet he was having three-and-two trouble, too, and he threw at least 140 pitches."

The Chicago manager hastened to point out that he's not criticizing the umpiring of that game. He said he thought Lon Warneke did a good job behind the plate and Rush himself questioned his decision only one pitch and not too much.

"But it has come to be an accepted fact," Hack asserts, "that a pitch must be almost down through the middle to be called a strike, and it hasn't always been that way." Hack says it wasn't that way when he was still playing in 1947, and he doesn't believe it was that way even five years ago.

The Cub manager was thought for a moment. "I don't know whether the long ball game is good or bad," he went on, "but it's here to stay unless there is a concerted drive to give the pitchers a better break on the strike zone."