

By George Maskin observing sports

So they've tightened up the strike zone in baseball.

At least in the majors.

One supposes the colleges and high schools will get around to doing the same thing... in an attempt to get more hitting into the game.

In case you missed the stories last week, here's the way the new rules will read next season:

It'll be a strike only if a pitch crosses entirely over the plate between the top of the knees and the batter's arm pits.

No strike should be called any more if the pitch just nips the corner or if it crosses shoulder high or even with the knees.

Tiger Catcher Bill Freehan, who should know, doesn't think the rule will affect the way the umpires call 'em.

"They have been following these rules for a long time, so it shouldn't be any different next season," Freehan was saying.

One umpire friend, who works in the American League, concurred.

"We'll be calling the same as last year."

ONE THING IS certain, the specific rules may change, but umpiring is a human thing and different umpires see strikes and balls in different ways.

More than one Tiger pitcher will tell you that he'd rather have Umpire A working behind the plate than Umpire Z.

"Heck, there are ump's who call a pitch two inches outside the plate a strike," one Tiger pitcher declared last season.

"And then there are other guys who make you bring the ball in waist high and entirely over the dish before they will call a strike."

Sportscaster Al Ackerman, who is featured on a show during the summer on Channel 4 with Red Jones, a former American League ump, was relating a Jones story at lunch the other day.

"Jones was just a rookie in the American League and was working with Cal Hubbard, now the ump-in-chief," Ackerman said.

"Red tried to make sure that he called every pitch just right—and he was," continued Ackerman. "But it was a long game and in the sixth or seventh inning, Hubbard walked up to his partner and complimented him for a good job.

"Then Hubbard added: 'But when that plate out, red, or we'll be here all night.'"

WHAT HUBBARD SAID to Jones brings back a lot of memories to yours truly. It happens almost every spring or summer when we're trying to get some exercise and enjoyment umpiring on the sandlots or in high school or college games.

You find yourself in a long game. It's lopsided. One team has a 10-run lead.

A player from the leading team gets up there to hit. The opposition pitching has been sick all day... pitcher after pitcher not being able to locate the plate.

So the ump suddenly decides to stretch out the strike zone and the poor kid finds himself with a strike or two against him on pitches which ordinarily might be a ball.

But, one thing an umpire tries never to do—that's call a bad third strike.

You might miss on a first or second strike... but it's a sin to goof on the third one. The batter doesn't have another chance if you call him out on a bad one.

Of course, there are times you call a third strike on a bad pitch. It just happens... just as when you know a pitch comes busting right in there and you yell:

"BALL."

IF BASEBALL REALLY wants to speed up the game, why not adopt what the Detroit Catholic League has followed during the past two years—a strike-two and ball-three game? In the Parochial League, which includes area teams such as Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Agatha and Bishop Borgess, a batter is out when he gets two strikes. He walks on three balls.

The rules have served two good purposes:

1—It has speeded up games.

2—It has put more attack in the games.

Batters learned that they couldn't stand up there and wait for pitches. If they watched as the ball sailed up there, they'd get themselves into a jam.

It's worked well for the pitcher. He can't afford to waste many pitches.

He must work harder to get the ball over... and when he does... the batter has a better chance to sock the ball someplace.

FOR THE MAJORS to adopt such a rule... or a rule whereby there could be a set pitcher for the pitcher would be too revolutionary. The baseball people don't think that way. They are content, by and large, to sit on their hands and wait.

Baseball should have inter-league play, whereby teams in the American League meet others in the National during the season.

It hasn't happened. A few owners have said they'd never go for that.

We're not one for changing rules for the sake of changing.

Football suffered by knocking out the two-team business for offense and defense and then restore it on the college level.

Basketball has had too many changes in college and prep games.

But when there is something that can really help a sport, why not give it a shot?

Yes, why not?

Maybe the new commissioner will.

Snowmobile Safaris

Going on winter safaris in snow country, on snowmobiles, is a growing pastime.

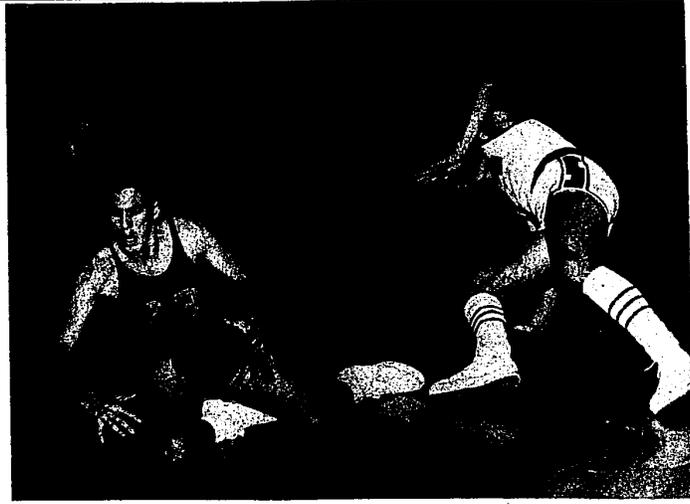
Though it's hard to say when the first snowmobile safari got underway, chances are it was introduced to Americans in 1959.

It didn't take snowmobile owners long to realize that the fun of snowmobiling could be multiplied by stretching outdoor hours into days with overnight stops at lodges or campsites, welcome meals around a campfire, time to explore.

Whoever organized the first safari started something that has captivated thousands... urbanites, rural folk, camping enthusiasts and employer types.

GETTING TO the point of departure is no problem. A motorized camper or a car can tow a snowmobile on a lightweight trailer. Or the snowmobile can be carried in the back of a station wagon or pickup truck.

Butting the safari is a matter of choice.



DOWN ON HIS KNEES goes Bill Styles (23), of Redford Union, after being tripped by Southfield's Rick Ellison (44) after a wild scramble for the ball.

Salute Goes To Defense At Borgess

It's not often in modern-day basketball that players draw much praise for their defensive work.

But in the 53-42 victory Bishop Borgess forged over Bishop Foley, names like Steve Shaw and Dave Cranovich rated salutes -- for keeping the opposition in check.

The pair helped Borgess contain Foley to just six points in the first period and seven in the third as Borgess built up enough of a working-point margin to emerge with a 53-42 victory.

Mark Quarry accounted for 24 points for the winners as Borgess took a 14-6 lead after one period, led 30-20 at the half and entered the final period with a 43-27 edge.

Jim Pomaranski was second in scoring for the winners with nine points.

Borgess hit well from the field, most of the night, especially while the starters were on the floor.

U-M Banks Michigan, Ohio Talent

Michigan's football success this past season was built primarily on talent recruited from Michigan and Ohio. That was indicated in the list of letter-winners for the 1968 season recently released by Head Coach Bump Elliott.

Varsity awards were given to 27 players from Michigan and 18 from Ohio.

Michigan's football squad was largely constructed around players from these two states in addition to Illinois. Only four other states, Tennessee, Texas, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, were represented on the letter-winning list.

Michigan finished with a 9-2 season record and posted a fine 6-1 mark for a second-place finish in the Big Ten. Because of this success, an unusually large number of players were able to compete in many of Michigan's victories.

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Raiders Wrestle To Title

North Farmington High's wrestlers emerged with the team trophy in the Garden City West quadrangular tournament.

The Raiders scored 47 points to Flat Rock's 39, Redford Union's 36 and West's 34.

The final results for titles:

95 pounds -- Ken Haller (NF) defeated Jeff Vagen (FR).

103 -- Ken Coaker (FR) defeated Dennis Blackmore (RU).

112 -- Bob Morris (RU) won on default.

120 -- Tom Tooney (NF) defeated Rick Warwick (West).

127 -- Lee Scott (RU) defeated Gary Chapman (NF).

133 -- Mike Elchhoff (NF) pinned John Kazen (W), 3:33.

138 -- Terry Rhoades (West) pinned Steve Wilson (NF) 3:47.

145 -- Bill Taylor (FR) defeated Don Neuenwander (NF).

154 -- Wally Slater (FR) defeated Steve Low (NF).

AFTER 10 DAYS rest from game action, the Detroit Lions got back to work Sunday in Atlanta.

The Lions, by winning, could hurt themselves. They wouldn't be able to draw as early in the forthcoming college draft.

It's expected that Bill Munson will be back at quarterback for the Lions who haven't won in their last seven games.

They end the season next Sunday at Washington.

Howie Broadman Is Runnerup In Fencing Tourney

EAST LANSING -- Farmington's Howie Broadman took runner-up honors in the recent Michigan State University intramural foil fencing meet, placing second in the field of 20 contestants.

Broadman, a freshman, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sylvan Broadman of 25705 Middle Belt Rd., Farmington.

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Sorrows Stages Wild Point Story

Our Lady of Sorrows turned loose with a mighty offensive punch to gain a 73-57 victory over Waterford Our Lady of the Lakes.

Last spring, the Lakes reached the quarterfinals in the state high school basketball tournament, but loss of most of the team's stars is being felt.

With Terry Doyle and Dennis Hobbing hitting well in the first period, Sorrows pulled ahead, 20-14, in the first period and stayed in command the rest of the way.

Doyle flipped in 17 points during the game while Mike Hart meshed 13 and Dan McGrath had 10.

Most of the OLLH scoring was accounted for by Jerry Yestick and Pat McColerthy who had 15 and 14 points, respectively.

The victory gave Sorrows a 1-1 record in Catholic League play.

The winners had a 27-23 edge in field goals and made 19 out of 36 free throws to 11-23 for the losers.

St. Agatha Blitzed By Mt. Carmel

St. Agatha High's basketball team will have to spend the week brushing up on its defenses.

A 101-63 trouncing at the hands of Mt. Carmel didn't help the Townshippers in their bid to improve their record in the Catholic League's Southwest Division.

While Jerry Myron had 26 points for the winners, the taller, stronger Mt. Carmel team boasted too much of a one-two punch in Pat Gallagher and Gary Lybik.

They combined for 49 points between them, Gallagher getting 25 and Lybik 22. Gallagher also picked off 15 rebounds as Mt. Carmel dominated the boards at both ends of the floor.



ELECTED co-captain of the 1969 Albion College football team is Rick Bensing, a junior from Farmington. He was one of the top defensive backs for the Britons who finished second in the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Association grid standings during the past season.

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