

Computer to call balls, strikes in minor league

By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK — Get ready for strikes by robots.

MLB No, over-worked machines aren't walking out in a labor protest.

Computers will be used for ball/strike calls starting April 25 in the independent Atlantic League, where the distance between home and first will be shortened by 3 inches. The ground between the mound and home plate will lengthen by 2 feet for the second half of the season beginning July 12.

The 60-foot-6-inch distance between the front of the pitching rubber and the back point of home plate has been standard since 1893, but Major League Baseball reached a three-year deal to experiment in the Atlantic

League, an eight-team circuit that occasionally produces big leaguers. Infield defensive shifts will be limited. Pitchers there will have to get used to 62 feet, 2 inches this summer.

“That'll make a bigger difference than the 3 inches at first,” New York Yankees first baseman Greg Bird said.

Plate umpires will wear earpieces and be informed of ball/strike calls by a TrackMan computer system that uses Doppler radar. Umps will have the ability to override the computer, which considers a pitch a strike when the ball bounces and then crosses the zone. TrackMan also does not evaluate check swings.

“The beauty of baseball is that it's not foolproof. You've got to hit a round ball with a cylindrical bat square, and then you've got to get it past people,” said Joe West, who umpired his first big league game

in 1976. “The game is typically American. It's always somebody else's fault when they lose — and usually it's us.”

MLB has evaluated its umpires since first starting to install a QuesTec system in 2001 that umpires initially criticized as being inaccurate. Questec was used at a maximum of 11 ballparks in 2008, its final year.

A PitchF/x system, a partnership of MLB Advanced Media and Sportvision, was the basis of evaluations from 2009-16, and the TrackMan system was tested during the final year of that span. TrackMan has been used to evaluate umpires since 2017.

West, who has umpired more than 5,000 big league games and is on track to break Bill Klem's record in 2020, said the 2016 test was far from perfect.

“It missed 500 pitches in April, and when I say it missed 500 pitch-

es, that didn't mean they called them wrong. They didn't call them at all,” he said.

In addition, bases will become 18-inch squares in the Atlantic League, up from the 15-inch squares that have been standard since 1877. That will in effect cut the distance from the front of home plate to the front of first base from 87 feet, 9 inches to 87 feet 6 inches. The 90-foot measurement between bases is from the back of the plate to the back corner of first and third along the foul line.

While the distance between the mound and the plate will be lengthened, the height will remain 10 inches — its level since 1969.

“Changing the distance, that seems a little odd to me,” Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. “I know lowering the mound is an interesting one, obviously, something that would favor offense and

maybe in some level help with some pitching injuries.”

Other changes for the season: **Infield shifts** will be restricted by requiring two infielders to be on each side of second base when a pitcher releases his pitch. Infielders also will be prohibited from setting up on the outfield grass.

Each pitcher must face at least three batters or complete the half-inning, unless injured.

Between inning breaks will be cut from 2 minutes, 5 seconds to 1:45.

Mound visits are banned, except for pitching changes or medical issues.

Atlantic League teams are in Bridgewater, New Jersey; Central Islip, New York; High Point, North Carolina; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; New Britain, Connecticut; Sugar Land, Texas; Waldorf, Maryland; and York, Pennsylvania.

SCOREBOARD

Local schedule

■ **TODAY, MARCH 15**

No events scheduled

■ **SATURDAY, MARCH 16**

No events scheduled

■ **SUNDAY, MARCH 17**

No events scheduled

Bowling

AT JASPER/Eastown Recreation Center

MARCH 14

■ **THURSDAY AFTERNOON LADIES LEAGUE**

Strike Force 4, Missing in Action 0

Pin Action 3, Bowling Stones 1

Pin Pals 2 1/2, Gutter Girls 1 1/2

High games and series — Ginger Hedinger - 187.

MARCH 12

■ **SPRINGS VALLEY BANK CITY LEAGUE**

Tablex 7, Fullnet 2

Fuhs Lawn Care 9, Bye 0

Brosmer Chiropractic 9, Heaven's Best 0

Eastown Recreation 7, Headquarters 2

YMI 7, Ruxer Ford 2

High games and series — Chris Klein - 224,

Anthony Schmitt 246-248-662, Jacob Kiefer 200-

208-204-612, Ron Schitter 233-236-667, Craig

Lemond 209-202-225-636, Steve Berg - 238,

Jeff Young 213-227-608, Steve Clem 210-201-

214-625, Steven Kieser 221-203-236-660, Justin

Broeker 232-227-630, Brian Mehringer - 224, Nick

Messier 222-211-600, Logan Ingle - 222, Josh Fuhs

214-246-619.

Grade swimming

■ **AT HUNTINGBURG**

Wednesday

PAC CONFERENCE MEET

Southridge Individual Results

100 individual medley — 1. N. Fant

50 butterfly — 1. N. Fant

50 freestyle — 1. R. Sherer

100 freestyle — 1. R. Sherer

400 freestyle relay — 1. N. Fant, P. Roy, M. Songer,

R. Sherer

Pro baseball

■ **MLB SPRING TRAINING GLANCE**

All Times EDT

AMERICAN LEAGUE

	W	L	PCT.
New York	9	6	.600
Oakland	11	8	.579
Cleveland	11	8	.579
Kansas City	12	9	.571
Minnesota	11	9	.550
Toronto	9	8	.529
Baltimore	10	9	.526
Los Angeles	10	9	.526
Detroit	9	9	.500
Seattle	8	8	.500
Tampa Bay	9	10	.474
Houston	9	10	.474
Chicago	7	10	.412
Texas	7	11	.389
Boston	6	12	.333

NATIONAL LEAGUE

	W	L	PCT.
San Diego	11	6	.647
Atlanta	11	8	.579
Washington	11	8	.579
Chicago	12	9	.571
Philadelphia	10	8	.556
Los Angeles	10	8	.556
Miami	10	10	.500
Milwaukee	10	10	.500
Arizona	9	9	.500
New York	9	10	.474
Pittsburgh	8	11	.421
Colorado	8	11	.421
St. Louis	7	10	.412
San Francisco	7	12	.368
Cincinnati	5	10	.333

Thursday's Games

Philadelphia (ss) 4, Tampa Bay 3

Washington 10, Minnesota (ss) 4

Pittsburgh 11, Philadelphia (ss) 2

Boston 4, Detroit 4

Minnesota (ss) 7, Baltimore 6

Miami 12, Houston 6

N.Y. Mets 1, St. Louis 1

N.Y. Yankees 1, Toronto 1

Texas (ss) 5, Kansas City 4

Chicago Cubs 2, Texas (ss) 1

Cleveland 9, Colorado 3

Cincinnati 3, L.A. Dodgers (ss) 3

L.A. Angels 7, Milwaukee 7
Arizona 3, San Francisco 0
L.A. Dodgers (ss) 12, San Diego 0

Friday's Games

Toronto vs. Philadelphia at Clearwater, Fla., 1:05

p.m.

Detroit vs. Tampa Bay (ss) at Port Charlotte, Fla.,

1:05 p.m.

Miami vs. Atlanta at Kissimmee, Fla., 1:05 p.m.

Baltimore vs. Minnesota at Fort Myers, Fla., 1:05

p.m.

Boston vs. N.Y. Yankees at Tampa, Fla., 1:05 p.m.

Washington vs. N.Y. Mets at Port St. Lucie, Fla.,

1:10 p.m.

L.A. Angels (ss) vs. San Francisco at Scottsdale, Ariz.,

4:05 p.m.

Cleveland vs. Texas at Surprise, Ariz., 4:05 p.m.

Chicago Cubs vs. Chicago White Sox at Glendale, Ariz.,

4:05 p.m.

San Diego vs. Milwaukee at Phoenix, 4:05 p.m.

Arizona vs. L.A. Angels (ss) at Tempe, Ariz., 4:10

p.m.

Kansas City vs. Colorado at Scottsdale, Ariz., 4:10

p.m.

Tampa Bay (ss) vs. Pittsburgh at Bradenton, Fla.,

6:05 p.m.

St. Louis (ss) vs. Houston (ss) at West Palm Beach, Fla.,

6:05 p.m.

Houston (ss) vs. St. Louis (ss) at Jupiter, Fla., 6:05

p.m.

L.A. Dodgers vs. Cincinnati at Goodyear, Ariz., 9:05

p.m.

Saturday's Games

Atlanta vs. Boston at Fort Myers, Fla., 1:05 p.m.

St. Louis vs. Washington at West Palm Beach, Fla.,

1:05 p.m.

N.Y. Mets vs. Miami at Jupiter, Fla., 1:05 p.m.

Minnesota vs. Tampa Bay at Port Charlotte, Fla.,

1:05 p.m.

Pittsburgh vs. Detroit at Lakeland, Fla., 1:05 p.m.

Toronto (ss) vs. N.Y. Yankees at Tampa, Fla., 1:05

p.m.

Houston vs. Philadelphia at Clearwater, Fla., 1:05

p.m.

Baltimore vs. Toronto (ss) at Dunedin, Fla., 1:07

p.m.

Colorado vs. Milwaukee (ss) at Phoenix, 4:05 p.m.

Texas vs. Cincinnati at Goodyear, Ariz., 4:05 p.m.

Milwaukee (ss) vs. Kansas City (ss) at Surprise,

Ariz., 4:05 p.m.

San Diego (ss) vs. San Francisco (ss) at Scottsdale,

Ariz., 4:05 p.m.

L.A. Dodgers vs. Chicago White Sox at Glendale,

Ariz., 4:05 p.m.

Kansas City vs. San Diego at Peoria, Ariz., 4:10

p.m.

Chicago Cubs vs. Arizona at Scottsdale, Ariz., 4:10

p.m.

Cleveland vs. L.A. Angels at Tempe, Ariz., 4:10 p.m.

Kansas City (ss) vs. San Diego (ss) at , 4:10 p.m.

Seattle vs. Yomiuri at Tokyo, JP 11:05 p.m.

Seattle vs. San Francisco (ss) at , 11:05 p.m.

Pro basketball

■ **NBA**

All Times EDT

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
x-Toronto	49	20	.710	—
Philadelphia	43	25	.632	5½
Boston	42	27	.609	7
Brooklyn	36	34	.514	13½
New York	13	55	.191	35½

Southeast Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Miami	32	35	.478	—
Orlando	32	38	.457	1½
Charlotte	30	37	.448	2
Washington	29	39	.426	3½
Atlanta	24	45	.348	9

Central Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
x-Milwaukee	51	17	.750	—
Indiana	44	25	.638	7½
Detroit	34	33	.507	16½
Chicago	19	50	.275	32½
Cleveland	17	52	.246	34½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Houston	42	26	.618	—
San Antonio	39	29	.574	3
New Orleans	30	40	.429	13
Memphis	28	41	.406	14½
Dallas	27	41	.397	15

Northwest Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Denver	45	22	.672	—
Portland	41	26	.612	4

Oklahoma City	42	27	.609	4
Utah	39	29	.574	6½
Minnesota	32	37	.464	14

Pacific Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Golden State	46	21	.687	—
L.A. Clippers	39	30	.565	8
Sacramento	33	34	.493	13
L.A. Lakers	31	37	.456	15½
Phoenix	16	53	.232	31

x-clinched playoff spot

Wednesday's Games

Oklahoma City 108, Brooklyn 96

Washington 100, Orlando 90

Atlanta 132, Memphis 111

Miami 108, Detroit 74

Golden State 106, Houston 104

Utah 114, Phoenix 97

Thursday's Games

Indiana 108, Oklahoma City 106

Orlando 120, Cleveland 91

Boston 126, Sacramento 120

Toronto 111, L.A. Lakers 98

Utah 120, Minnesota 100

Denver 1