

## Is it Time for a Six-Man Rotation?

Over the past thirty years, the emphasis of pitching with a five-man rotation replaced the old guard of four-man rotations with the feeling that the extra day rest would improve performances of the starting pitcher. This idea is at least tempered by one study done by Keith Woolner in the Baseball Prospectus book: *Baseball Between the Numbers: Why Everything You Know About the Game is Wrong* (Prospectus Entertainment, 2006, pg. 74)

After reading this, and feeling those results at least support it is no longer tried-and-true to believe this additional rest is better than managing pitchers better “in game”, in holding down pitch counts and assessing the effort a pitcher expends in getting those late-inning hitters out, the possibility of a new paradigm (that infamous word in the business world) struck: **the six-man rotation.**

First, this is not a year-long idea, but rather a month-to-month adjustment of the pitching staff to maximize the benefits received from the pitching staff in general. Due to scheduling of games, the ability to adjust the staff only makes sense and reverts back to the prior usage of pitching in the 1930's and 1940's to some degree. (Additionally, the 2007 World Champion Boston Red Sox considered this rotation plan – with SP Daisuke Matsuzaka being a long-time user of this in Japan. (*Fantasy Sports, April 2008, pg. 17.*))

The best way to explain ‘this version’ is by month.

**April. 6 starters** are used throughout the month, with 4 starts per man. With spring training typically not garnering enough work for the some to round into form, the extended spring training of April allows managers the ability to decide better on the 5<sup>th</sup> man in the rotation. More importantly, all starters are available for relief work, a couple times in the month. Since many have scheduled side sessions, the usage in bullpen assistance can get them the 'required' sessions. The ace of the staff, will see three 1-inning appearances. Others will see possibly longer stints, but no more than two appearances.

**May and June. 5-man rotation.** The sixth man goes to the bullpen as a long reliever. Bullpen set ups as usual.

Month	Days	Typical games	Starters	No of Starts						Relief Appearances						
				1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	
April	30	24	6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	2
May	31	28	5	6	6	6	5	5		0	0	0	0	0	0	3
June	30	27	5	5	5	5	6	6		0	0	0	0	0	0	3
July	31	25	6	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	2	2	2	2	2
August	31	28	4	7	7	7	7	7		0	0	0	0	0	6	6
September	30	28	4	7	7	7	7	7		0	0	0	0	0	6	6
October	2	2	4	1	1						0	0			1	1
		162		35	34	33	33	19	8	8	3	4	4	4	17	23
	IP	1498.5	Average Innings	6.8	6.5	6	5.8	5.5	5	5	1	1	1.5	1.5	2.3	2
			<b>Total IP</b>	236	221	198	190	105	42	42	3	4	6	6	39	46

July. **6 starters. #1 starter** goes one game extra than others in the rotation. Does not pitch out of the bullpen. Every other starter goes four times and makes bullpen appearances.

August, September and October. **4 Starters till the end of the season.** Saving the best for last. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> starters work half-dozen appearances out of the bullpen. Leveraging extra starts down the stretch, gives the team an opportunity to win the pennant as the games matter more. If the pennant is in hand, *revert back to a 5-man rotation*, or other manageable scenario.

The *Breakdown of Innings Pitched*:

Pitcher	IP	Relief IP
#1	<b>239.25</b>	3
#2	<b>225</b>	4
#3	<b>204</b>	6
#4	<b>195.75</b>	6
#5	143.6	39
#6	88	46
<b>Starters</b>	1095.6	104
Relievers	402.9	
6 Relievers	67.15	

The partial goal is to get *35 starts for the no. 1 pitcher* - which is still a light total compared to the 1970's workhorse examples of Steve Carlton, Nolan Ryan, Jim Palmer or Fergie Jenkins. But more importantly, between the no. 1, 2 and 3 starters they will see *11 relief appearances* that could be in key situations. The trade up between their stuff and the typical middle reliever/closer could be important to win one, two or more games that were lost due to a poor bullpen.

Leveraging these key innings with better pitchers, *who are throwing anyway*, could be worth exploring as a way to improve marginally a 90-win team to a 93-95 win team.

Realizing pitchers' quirks, this may not be possible. However, given a young staff that has been moved around a great deal in the minors, this could be a legit, rotational organization that pitchers adjust to, thrive in and prefer above all, after a period of adjustment. (Which might happen in a down season – allowing for a realistic time for experimentation throughout the organization.)

The *way they pitch* needs to be monitored much more than *when they pitch*.

Consistency is rare anyway, considering DL stints of most starters. With an early season 6-man rotation, the man sent to the bullpen first may have to step in for an injured pitcher. What better way to *train appropriately* than to have all ready started earlier on during the spring?

And knowing the *in-game* scenario, that every pitcher is capable of both starting and relieving to the benefit of the team, may be a psychological advantage to a team in the long term. Managers have to maximize options with position players, why not expand that to pitching staffs, like in the yester years of baseball glory.