

### Figure 1-1. The Evolving Game. Some Major Rule Changes, 1845-1903

- 1845 N.Y. Knickerbocker Club rules call for diamond-shaped infield with bases set forty-two "paces" apart. Batter out on three strikes. Team scoring twenty-one runs at completion of an inning wins game.
- 1857 Nine innings constitute a game.
- 1858 Bases set thirty yards apart. Canvas bags denote the three bases and home plate is a flat, circular iron plate. Pitching distance set at forty-five feet from home plate. Pitcher must employ underhand delivery. Umpire may call strikes.
- 1863 Umpire calls bad pitches balls, which allows for bases on balls.
- 1864 Abolition of one-bounce catch of a fly ball as an out.
- 1865 Pitcher's box introduced. Until abolished in 1893, the box varies in size from twelve to four feet in width and from seven to three feet in length.
- 1871 Batter allowed to call for a high or low strike zone.
- 1872 Adoption of modern measurements for an official ball. Ball must weigh from 5 to 5.25 ounces and measure 9 to 9.25 inches in diameter.
- 1875 Nine called balls enables a batter to take his base on balls.
- 1877 Fair-foul hit rule is abolished.
- 1880 Eight called balls enables a batter to take his base on balls.
- 1881 Seven called balls enables a batter to take his base on balls. Pitching distance increased to fifty feet from home plate.
- 1884 No restrictions on pitching delivery in NL. AA and UA retain shoulder-line limit. Six called balls for a batter to walk in NL; six in the AA.

### Figure 1-1 (continued)

- 1886 Seven called balls for a batter to walk in NL; six in AA.
- 1887 NL and AA agree to use common set of rules. Five called balls for a walk; batters allowed four strikes. Batters no longer may request high or low strike zone. Batter drawing bases on balls credited with base hit and charged with time at bat. Pitcher's box reduced to a 5.25 by 4 foot rectangle.
- 1888 Three strike rule returns. Batter no longer credited with a hit for a base on balls.
- 1889 Modern four ball and three strike rule in effect.
- 1890 Players League sets pitching distance at fifty-one feet. Two umpires used in a game.
- 1891 Player substitutions permitted (no re-entry for players removed). Prior to this ruling, substitutes limited to cases of injury or special agreement.
- 1892 Batter goes to first base when hit by pitched ball.
- 1893 Modern pitching distance set at 60.5 feet. Pitcher's box replaced by rubber plate 12 by 6 inches, usually placed atop a mound (mounds used since the 1860s by some clubs).
- 1895 Pitcher's slab enlarged to 24 by 6 inches. Modern infield fly rule in effect. Ball may not exceed 2.75 inches in diameter.
- 1900 Shape of home plate changed from twelve-inch square to pentagon-shaped plate seventeen inches wide.
- 1901 Modern foul ball rule in effect in NL; AL adopts rule in 1903.
- 1903 Height of pitcher's mound limited to fifteen inches above playing field. Baselines must be level.

Sources consulted include *Total Baseball* (1993); Macmillan *Encyclopedia* (6th ed.); J. Thom and J. Holway, *The Pitcher* (1987).