

# On Behalf Of Run Scorers

By Richard Zitrin  
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Scoring runs — that's the name of the game. The A's know it. The Giants know it.

But fantasy leaguers who play by rotisserie-league rules don't know it — at least not yet. In rotisserie leagues, scoring a run is worth as much as a batting-practice homer — absolutely nothing.

The A's brought Rickey Henderson back because they knew that they were getting baseball's best run scorer.

Henderson has scored 1,150 runs in the 10 seasons since he electrified baseball as a 20-year-old rookie. That's one run every 4.7 at-bats. That's phenomenal efficiency — the fifth-best scoring ratio of all time. It puts Henderson just behind Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Ted Williams and Jimmie Foxx, and just ahead of Mickey Mantle.

Henderson leads the majors in runs. He has scored 60 times in his 65 games with Oakland. At that pace, he is odds-on to lead the A's in runs, though he spent the first third of the season as a Yankee.

Brett Butler isn't quite Rickey Henderson, but Giants general manager Al Rosen knew what he was doing when he signed Butler to replace Chili Davis. Butler hits for average, bunts with the best, and he works his way on with walks. His on-base percentage always ranks near the top of the league.

Last season, Butler became the first Giant in 15 years to score 100 runs. Only Butler's propensity for being caught stealing detracts from his leadoff excellence.

With Robby Thompson walk-

ing more, the top of the Giants' order has become a strong scoring combine. GiantsVision statistician John Weinstein, himself a veteran fantasy league owner, thinks run scorers don't get enough respect. He's been tracking the Giants' fortunes when Butler and Thompson score, and when they don't.

The Giants have a winning percentage of better than .700 when either or both score. When neither scores, the team's percentage is about .250.

"Baseball is about scoring more than the other team," said Weinstein. "If there's no one on base, then who are the big guys going to knock in?"

With all this evidence on the importance of scoring runs, why do rotisserie leagues — by far the most popular form of fantasy league — ignore this key statistic? Mostly because the leagues' founders simply didn't think of it. Bowing to conventional baseball wisdom, they chose batting average, home runs, RBIs and stolen bases instead.

This makes rotisserie leagues dominated by power and speed. Why have the rules never changed? Glen Waggoner, an original rotisserie owner and the author/editor of the "official" rotisserie-league guide books, says that the founders have opted for simplicity. "Simplicity," he said, "is elegant."

A more likely explanation is that the rotisserie league, like so many other baseball institutions, fell back on that old standby, tradition. But some baseball tradition is just the inertia that comes with saying, "We've always done



**RICKEY HENDERSON**  
A productive return

it this way."

Whether it's tradition, simplicity or inertia, many fantasy owners complain that rotisserie stats grossly overvalue or undervalue certain players. Butler and Davis, for example, rate almost dead even by rotisserie standards. But what Giants fan would agree? Over the last six seasons, Butler has averaged 102 runs scored, Davis barely 70.

Wade Boggs is rotisserie's Rodney Dangerfield. He's the first player since Stan Musial in 1953 to have 200 hits and 100 walks in the same season, and he's done it the last three years in a row. He finished 1988 with a .476 on-base percentage. Boggs has scored 100 runs every year he's been a regular. Yet, for rotisserie owners, Boggs stands out only for his batting average.

Rotisserie players who change the rules to add runs scored, at-bats per run, or even on-base percentage will be rewarded with a better approximation of a player's real baseball value. And that makes for a truer test of a fantasy owner's skill.

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