

## MLB is considering a rule change. What is the golden at-bat proposal?

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**Warm-up question:** Have you ever seen a big change in a sport or activity you enjoy? How did it affect the experience for you?

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A MARTÍNEZ, HOST:

All right. When a football or a basketball game comes **down to the wire**, the stars are usually out there. They're not sitting on the bench, or on the field, or on the court. Baseball, though, is different. Stars have to wait their turn. So when Shohei Ohtani towed the mound against Mike Trout in the last at bat of the World Baseball Classic's championship game last year, I mean, it was quite the moment. Here's the Fox Sports broadcast.

JOE DAVIS: Three, two. He struck him out. Ohtani strikes out Trout, and Japan's back on top of the baseball world.

MARTÍNEZ: So what if there could be a moment like that every single game? Well, that's the idea behind a new rule being **floated** by Major League Baseball's commissioner. It's called the golden at bat. Former Los Angeles Dodgers general manager Dan Evans is here to **walk us through** the pros and cons. So Dan, can you walk us through how the league is considering implementing this so-called golden at-bat rule? I mean, are we talking about once a game? How's it going to work?

DAN EVANS: First of all, thanks for having me on. The golden at-bat rule has been **tossed around** for a few years, and I think it's originating from the entertainment side of the game. There's some thoughts about you can do it at any point during the game - seventh inning or later, trailing. But then there's questions, as, you know, all baseball fans know. What about a reentry rule? What about bringing a reliever back? There's all sorts of questions. The problem is it really **messes with** the very order of the game, that second-grade rule that you learned about not **cutting in line**. The game is so orderly.

And yet, this is one sport where order is embraced, and order has always been there. I love the entertainment element of it. I love exploring it. But I also think it's **tinkering with the very fabric of** the game.

MARTÍNEZ: Now, the commissioner, Rob Manfred, he floated this on a podcast in October. It kind of just stayed buried until it **got some traction** this week. Dan, I was open to the pitch clock. I was open to larger bases. This thing seems to, like, really shake the fundamentals of the game. I mean, this might be too far for me.

EVANS: For me, too you know? And I don't think it's the traditionalist in both of us because we're both open to new things. And like you, I mean, I'm - **I was all over** the man on second. I love the idea of the infield shift. The pace of the game rules have been great for the fan experience. But this one just seems like a sport that's more sum of the parts. I have trouble when the haves and the have-nots are further separated by inserting a star. I think part of the magic of the game is the **stars aren't always aligned** so people like Bobby Thomson or Rajai Davis or Ben Zobrist come up and win a ballgame. I think that's part of what people embrace about the history of baseball.

MARTÍNEZ: Plus, a pitcher - imagine having to work twice as hard facing Shohei Ohtani in the eighth and then maybe facing him in the ninth. I mean, that's asking a lot of pitchers.

EVANS: Well, let me ask you this. Here's a question for you. What if Ohtani's up next? Does he bat twice? If he fails, does he lose an at bat the next time? I think in theory, it's fun. It's entertaining. I'd love to see it in the All-Star Game. But seeing it in the regular season or the postseason, it just doesn't work for me.

MARTÍNEZ: To answer that question, Dan, if a Dodger fan were answering that, yes, Shohei Ohtani bats twice, and he bats in every single at bat the entire game. I think Dodger fans will be more than happy with that. So we're going to keep an eye on whether this golden at-bat idea makes its way from the boardroom all the way to the ballpark. Dan Evans, former general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Dan, thank you very much for speaking with us again.

**Vocabulary and Phrases:**

1. **Down to the wire:** A situation where the outcome is decided at the very last moment.
2. **Floated:** Proposed or suggested as an idea for consideration.
3. **Walk us through:** Explain or guide someone step by step through a process or concept.
4. **Tossed around:** Discussed or considered in a casual or informal way.
5. **Messes with:** Disrupts or interferes with something, often in a negative way.
6. **Cutting in line:** Breaking the established order or skipping ahead unfairly.
7. **Tinkering:** Making small adjustments or changes, often in an experimental way.
8. **The very fabric of:** The essential structure or foundation of something.
9. **Get some traction:** Start gaining attention, support, or momentum.
10. **Was all over:** Was very enthusiastic or supportive of something.
11. **Stars are/aren't aligned:** Everything is/isn't perfectly set up for success or a desired outcome.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. What is the proposed "golden at-bat" rule, and how would it change the game of baseball?
2. Why do some fans and experts think the "golden at-bat" rule would disrupt the order of the game?
3. What are some past changes to baseball that were mentioned as successful or popular?
4. Why does Dan Evans think the "golden at-bat" rule is more suited for the All-Star Game rather than regular or postseason games?
5. What concerns are raised about the impact of the "golden at-bat" rule on pitchers?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you think about the idea of introducing new rules to traditional sports? Should there be limits to how much a sport can change?
2. Have you ever supported a change to a tradition or rule in a sport or activity you follow? How did it work out?
3. What do you value most in a sport: entertainment, tradition, or fairness? Why?
4. Can you think of other examples where tinkering with rules has improved or hurt an experience (in sports or otherwise)?
5. If you were in charge of changing a rule in your favorite sport or activity, what would it be and why?