



Crazy schedule joins PEDs, video replay as baseball's headaches

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Arriving at O.co Coliseum the weekend of May 31-June 2, I wanted backing with my notion that the White Sox and all other teams from the East and Central time zones risked a trail of tears touring through Pacific Time.

The reasoning was the pilgrims from east of the Rockies would have their body clocks thrown out of whack with big ball-parks and crafty pitching staffs making matters even worse.

After all, the Sox, already in a slump in a season of lousy offensive production, got shut out twice in three games in Oakland. The South Siders then went on to be blanked for 13 innings, scored five in the 14th, shockingly blew that lead against 1,000-1 odds and finally triumphed in 16 innings in the rubber game in Seattle Wednesday to salvage just one of the six games on the Left Coast journey.

But as you age, your steel-trap mind springs leaks. So in trying to affirm the A's, Angels and Mariners have a built-in advantage with their Shift Work Disordered visitors, A's manager Bob Melvin said going the other way – east – is even worse.

“I think you move around (a lot) during the course of the season,” he said. “We probably have as bad a travel as anybody, certainly as far as the miles go. The West Coast teams are always in a little bit of a disadvantage because we’re always going east, we always have long trips.



Athletics manager Bob Melvin feels his team has tougher travel than opponents back East. Photo credit [Keith Allison](#).

“Our only close trip really Anaheim, and then Seattle. Everything else is three-plus, four-plus hours. They’re looking at 50-minute flights for (much) of the season, other than going on the West Coast. It balances out.”

Melvin has his points. The Cubs can bus 90 minutes to Milwaukee. The Cubs and White Sox have quick up-and-down flights to St. Louis, Detroit and Cincinnati, and just slightly longer air miles to Cleveland, Minnesota, Kansas City and Pittsburgh. Atlanta is an easy trip.

The Mariners actually have worse travel than the A’s. Their shortest flight is two hours to the Bay Area. The M’s log the most air miles of any big-league team.

But whether the A’s or M’s have it worse than the Cubs or Sox, or the East Coast teams, going out to the West Coast is only the side issue.

Schedule joins steroids, replay as chronic issues

Major League Baseball has chronic problems. The biggest flare-up this week was the probe into the Miami-based steroids operation that is setting up a dragnet for some big stars. A couple of weeks back it was the sudden push toward widespread video replay after more ugly umpiring calls.

All along, almost out of sight, is barbaric scheduling, made worse by the requirement of near-daily inter-league scheduling. No longer do the schedulers allow teams to do the logical things, such as hit Oakland, Los Angeles and Seattle on the same trip in the American League, or Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco in the National League. On the opposite coast, an AL West team is not assured of touring New York, Boston and Baltimore on one swing, nor New York, Philadelphia and Washington in the NL.

If baseball wants to be “green” and save fuel and emissions, why did it have the Chicago teams make two-day trips to and from Anaheim each of the last two seasons?

On May 15, 2012, the Sox flew out to Anaheim after a day game at U.S. Cellular Field. They played the Angels in a night game May 16 and a day game May 17, then jetted back to Chicago to play the Cubs at Wrigley Field on Friday afternoon, May 18. In addition to massive energy consumption for this quick 3,800-mile round trip, this was a poor way to treat multi-million-dollar players and expect optimum performance.



Albert Pujols and the Angels make five trips to Texas in 2013, but don't hit both the Astros and Rangers on any of the swings. Photo credit [Marianne O'Leary](#).

It was the Cubs' turn this season for the in-and-out LA journey. At least they had a buffer of off-days before and after their two-day cameo appearance in Anaheim June 4 and 5.

Angels don't hit Houston, Arlington together on any trip

Probably the most nonsensical scheduling had the Angels making five different trips to Texas to visit just one opponent. On none of the swings did the Angels play both the Astros and Rangers, both AL West opponents. The Angels went to Arlington April 5-7, Houston May 7-9, and will return to Arlington July 29-31. Amazingly, Los Angeles makes two September Texas trips, to Houston Sept. 13-15 and to Arlington to close the season Sept. 26-30.



Robin Ventura had to lead his White Sox out to Anaheim and back over a 48-hour period in 2012, then the Cubs did the same thing this season. Photo credit [NJ Baseball](#).

nal “Star Trek,” why can’t we get this right? We haven’t yet invented the “Trek” transporters to get the players instantaneously from one coast to another, so we can only travel about 500-some mph, same as in 1959 when passenger jet service was introduced in the United States.

Baseball somehow survives in spite of itself.

Of course, with 30 teams to juggle, you can’t please everyone every day. But where baseball teams scrimp on paper press releases to supposedly save on the environment, they at the same time don’t care about the expenditure of fuel.

The wacky schedule affected Chicago teams further. Both the Cubs and Sox were on the West Coast at the same time in the first week of June. Then, they both played at home the weekend of June 7-9.

There’s a silly macho angle in all of this. Suck up the bad travel. It’s part of baseball.

Not when good baseball at the crucial moments is concerned. A few years back, a night postseason game in New York was followed by all-night flights to Los Angeles for both teams to play the next night in Tinseltown.

With computers seemingly more advanced than what was originally projected for the 23rd Century in the origi-