

Revenge in Major League Baseball: Should MLB Issue Harsh Penalties for Beating Batters?

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In Major League Baseball, sometimes the baserunner slides and stabs the second baseman or shortstop with his cleat, either accidentally or intentionally, to sabotage the other team. This is called spiking. Then, the pitcher on the team of the player who got spiked retaliates by hitting the offending baserunner with the ball when he gets up to bat. This is called beanballing since they often try to hit the head, also known as the “bean”. The worst case of beanballing in MLB history was in 1920 when Ray Chapman got hit in the head by Carl Mays and died.

There are many reasons why the MLB should give serious penalties when pitchers bean batters. It is dangerous and painful. When a baseball moves quickly through the air and hits the batter, it could seriously injure them. Breaking a bone can even end the player’s career. It also raises the question of whether it is permissible for a pitcher to take matters into their own hands and do something aggressive to enact revenge.

On the other hand, there are reasons for the MLB not to give harsh penalties for beaming batters. The umpires and commissioner cannot always tell if the pitcher hit the batter maliciously. If they suspend a pitcher who didn’t actually mean to hit the batter, it could be a career altering consequence for an unintentional action. If judges aren’t sure about the intent of the offender, they should make their punishments less harsh to avoid wrongly assigning blame.

Discussion Questions:

1. Should the MLB issue harsh penalties for beaming batters, regardless of their intention?
2. In what circumstances is it justified to take matters into your own hands to seek revenge?
5. Is “an eye for an eye” fair? In other words, should you harm someone in a similar way to the way they harmed you?