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The Only Rule Is It Has to Work: Our Wild Experiment Building a New Kind of Baseball Team

Ben Lindbergh, Sam Miller

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What would happen if two statistics-minded outsiders were allowed to run a professional baseball team?

It's the ultimate in fantasy baseball: You get to pick the roster, set the lineup, and decide on strategies -- with real players, in a real ballpark, playing in real time. That's what Ben Lindbergh and Sam Miller got to do when the Sonoma Stompers, an independent minor-league team in California, offered them the chance to run the team's baseball operations according to the most advanced statistics. Their story is unlike any other baseball tale you've ever read.

We tag along as Lindbergh and Miller apply their number-crunching insights to all aspects of assembling and running a team. We meet colorful figures like general manager Theo Fightmaster and boundary-breakers like the first openly gay player and the first Japanese manager in American professional baseball. Even José Canseco makes a cameo appearance.

Will sabermetrics bring the Stompers a championship, or will they fall on their face? Will the team have a competitive advantage or is the old folk wisdom really true after all? Will the players be able to maximize their talents and attract the attention of big-league scouts, or will this be a fast track to oblivion?

It's a wild ride, as the authors' infectious enthusiasm and feel for the absurd make the Stompers' story one that will speak to numbers geeks and traditionalists alike. And it proves that you don't need a bat or a glove to make a genuine contribution to the game.

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