<https://theathletic.com/520885/2018/09/13/stark-is-there-a-way-to-fix-baseballs-service-time-mess/>

* First, it was Kris Bryant, then Ronald Acuna Jr., then Eloy Jimenez, and Vladimir Guerrero Jr.
* These players all had done more than enough to deserve being called up to the bigs but it wasn’t enough and it's not their fault.
* Baseball is broken, it's not inherently the game's fault or the players but the new foundation of the game has been rebuilt.
* At this point, baseball is the only sport where there is a massive incentive not to have your best players on the field at all times or even on the 40-man roster.
* Holding prospects down can potentially save teams millions of dollars in the eyes of executives and push back their free agency year and in some cases find a way to add a year of control.
* The only way to stop this practice according to an executive is to make it not worth it (profitable) to hold guys down.
* There isn’t one known solution to this, there would need to be many changes in front office mentality and most importantly the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
* A player's service time counts the number of days they spend in the big leagues and that number correlates to when they hit arbitration and free agency, the years when players start to get paid what they are worth.
* 1st solution is to count years instead of days
  + “If this trend continues like this,” said an agent of one young player who wasn’t recalled this month, “where teams continue to put ‘smart and analytical’ ahead of the human side, this is how strikes happen. It’s going to force the union to deal with a lot of anger from these younger players. And they’re going to dig in.”
  + Basically, instead of adding up days if you showed up for one day in the majors, you would get a full year of service.
  + That may sound extreme but it basically would make it so that there is literally no benefit to holding players till a certain point of the year to gain extra control.
  + This would speed up the process towards arbitration and free agency for some guys but it wouldn't decrease the 6 years of control that teams have.
  + A solution has to get rid of counting days or provide a secondary path to arbitration and free agency, those are the basic principles of fixing the problem.
  + This still wouldn’t invite teams to call guys up, it just means that there wouldn’t be scenarios like Bryants where he was sent down for the first two weeks of the season to manipulate his service clock to gain an extra year.
  + As long as the service time system involves a form of counting, teams will find a way to manipulate it.
* 2nd solution is to grant free agency after four years instead of 6
  + On top of that arbitration would be swapped for a fixed salary scale based on various factors.
  + This would make it so guys aren't hitting free agency in their 30s when they are worth a lot less. It would also mean no more guys making $20+ million in their final years of arbitration given the owners would probably want the fixed salary scale to be much lower as a trade for granting free agency 2 years earlier.
  + Baseball could model the NBA and NFL where they give out scaled fixed contracts when drafted that are based on draft position and then expire at a certain point and you are granted free agency.
  + “If arbitration wasn’t a factor,” said the longtime exec who proposed this idea, “why would I care if Kris Bryant made his debut on April 1, April 25 or June 22? There’s no difference. The idea is to try to eliminate all the ways teams manipulate days. So to do it, players would have to give up something and owners would have to give up something.”
  + “In case you’re not an aficionado of modern baseball labor relations, we can sum them up this way: [MLB](https://theathletic.com/mlb/) and its players union would have a tough time these days agreeing on what New York deli to meet at for a pastrami on rye.”
  + It would be almost impossible for an agreement like this to happen, given the recent lockout and back in forth during negotiations, the PA and the league are not in a relationship where a change like this could happen any time soon.
* 3rd solution is the Super-Fives
  + This would allow a group of players to reach free agency earlier
  + If you had 5 years plus 100 days of service you would be a part of the group that reaches free agency earlier.
  + This would only apply to the elite players but it would definitely prevent more Bryant situations, to add an extra year of control you would have to hold guys down for much longer than a few weeks.
  + Again the same issue comes up where if you have counting involved it will be manipulated.
* 4th solution is counting age not service time
  + At 27 or 28 you would be granted free agency.
  + The NHL grants free agency at 27 or having seven accrued seasons.
  + This would really help in getting teams to want to call guys up earlier to get more of their prime instead of a few years.
  + One of the major flaws is that it would make superstars like Mike Trout that come up at 19 or 20 play more than 6 seasons before they reach free agency.
  + The system would have to be a mix of service time and age.
  + On top of that, it would really hurt college players, they don't make it usually till 24 or 25 which drastically decreases team control and incentive for players to even go to college.
  + High school and international players would be under control for much longer.
* 5th and final solution is the winds of WAR
  + This system would strictly base everything on how a player performs.
  + Specifically using Wins Above Replacement (WAR)
  + There could be more metrics combined or involved to reward the players actually making an impact and still keep the lesser performing players cheaper for teams.
  + Like some of the other solutions, the specifics of a deal like this would be impossible for the PA and the league to agree on.

<https://theathletic.com/1325167/2019/10/26/what-kris-bryants-service-time-grievance-means-for-the-cubs-the-union-and-major-league-baseball/>

<https://theathletic.com/1579879/2020/02/03/after-kris-bryant-loses-landmark-grievance-players-may-push-to-change-service-time-system/>

* On behalf of Kris Bryant, the Players Association filed a grievance against the Cubs and the league for service time manipulation.
* Kris Bryant's agent Scott Boras (The biggest agent on the planet) and the Cub's current president of baseball operations Theo Epstein testified before an arbitrator in New York.
* In 2015 the Cubs started Bryant at Triple-A Iowa to start the season. They delayed his promotion to the majors until April 17th to make it so they have seven years of control instead of six.
* He was promoted one day after the cut-off point that would have granted him free agency a year earlier. (A player **needs** 172 days of service time to be granted a year of service)
* Bryant would have been a free agent after the 2020 season instead of the 2021 season.
* The Cubs had said that the “reason” for holding him down was so he could work on his defense at third base.
* “It was so obvious,” Bryant said in February. “I think they’re going to do it to (Vlad Jr.): ‘Oh, he’s gotta work on his defense.’ Stuff like that. But now I can look back on it and just laugh about it because I was told to work on my defense, too, and I think I got three groundballs in those games that I played. So it’s like, ‘Oh, now he’s ready.’”
* “Our side, the owners’ side, I think it’s good for the game when the best players are in the big leagues,” Bryant said during spring training. “When (this issue) disappears, it’ll be good. There doesn’t need to be attention brought to this thing, and every year the attention is brought to this. You don’t want to focus on that. You want to have the kid in the big leagues. Let’s figure out a way to get this to not be a thing anymore. That’s just a common-sense thing on both sides.”
* Teams and the league constantly promote these top prospects on social media to try and garner even more advertisement revenue and attention but refuse to let them come up without manipulating their career in some form.
* Kris Bryant lost his grievance against the Cubs.
* The PA probably won't ever find another case like his that is more blatant.

<https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/33761266/the-end-mlb-service-manipulation-how-kris-bryant-paved-way-next-kris-bryant>

* Service time manipulation has finally been hampered or maybe ended.
* On opening day this year 5 of the top 25 prospects were on opening day rosters.
* It did end up working out for Bryant, he just signed a 7-year $182 million deal with the Rockies.
* “‘When we went to a hearing, I told Kris there was no way an arbitrator was going to legislate new rules,’ said Scott Boras, Bryant's agent. ‘This step would create a basis for overcoming the commissioner's office argument that if there's true service time manipulation, a grievance would remedy any wrongdoing.’”
* "The 'Bryant Rule' was created on the basis of the fact that no arbitrator would in fact legislate new rules as evidenced by the clear, factual premise that clearly illustrated service time manipulation was happening. It was boldly utilized saying there is no rule that prevents it and was so stated in the hearing testimony."
* Some of the changes that come from the new CBA are…
  + No matter what day the player comes up from the minors they will be given a full year of service **IF** he finishes 1st or 2nd in Rookie of the Year voting.
  + A new system rewards teams with extra draft picks if they promote their top prospects on Opening Day. If a player receives a full year of service from finishing top three in Rookie of the Year or MVP/Cy Young their team gets an extra draft pick after the first round.
  + A pre-arbitration pool was added. The best players in a class (position) will get a pay boost based on on-field performance. The top 100 players via a WAR-based formula and the end of the year award winners will split up a $50 million dollar pool annually.
* "It's nice to see some changes in that area," Bryant told ESPN this spring. "It feels good that guys are going to be more rewarded for what they do on the field. If I paved the way, that's great."
* "The younger guys appreciate the veterans putting in the work, not only for them, but fighting for the younger generation," Torkelson said. "They were us at some point, and they wanted us to get a fair chance as well."
* "As an industry we should not be stopping these guys from being stars," Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto said. "It's not lost on me, with this new CBA, that we saw more of it [top prospects making teams] this year. It could just be because we're dealing with an extraordinary group of players or it could be because those two planets meshed."
* “In his fourth year with the Brewers, Burnes compiled an 11-5 record, 2.43 ERA and led all pitchers with a 7.5 FanGraphs WAR. But because he is still in pre-arbitration, he made just $608,000 in salary. After the CBA changes, if the Brewers ace were to take home the award again in 2022, he'd get a bonus -- something Bryant didn't receive after his back-to-back award-winning seasons in 2015 and 2016.”
* "Going through all that, I knew it wasn't necessarily for me," Bryant said. "All that going my way was very slim. I took it upon myself thinking, 'I need to do this for the people that come after me.'"