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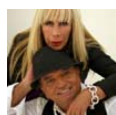
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## Sports

# Tallys Yunes, UM Professor, Solves MLB's Umpire Scheduling Dilemma

By Tim Elfink Tue., Sep. 6 2011 at 8:30 AM

Categories: **Sports**

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Next time you're six Buds deep at Sun Life Stadium and venting your rage at the ump about another wasted Marlins summer -- "Hey, blue! Grow another eyeball and you'll be a f\*\*\*ing Cyclops!" -- consider this: The guys behind home plate have a pretty insane schedule.

They actually have to call balls and strikes at 2,430 games in 780 series spread around 27 big-league towns. Factor in all the rules about who can work which games, and creating an MLB umpire schedule every winter causes a major-league headache for a retired crew chief. Or at least it did, until University of Miami assistant professor Tallys Yunes cracked the code.



Photo by Cbl62 via Wikimedia Commons

Yunes and a team of researchers have written a program that generates an ideal schedule for big-league umps that works so well that MLB has used it for the past three seasons. Now a **scientific journal has published** their background work.

"There's an enormous number of possible solutions," Yunes says. "The trick was teaching the program to choose the best one."

Yunes first confronted the umpire conundrum as a teaching assistant at Carnegie Melon University with colleague Michael Trick. Trick owns a company that helps MLB write its game schedule every year, and the league had asked him to tackle the tricky umpire plan.

Yunes's class of grad students wrote a program, but it didn't work very well. There are scores of rules governing umps' work schedules -- they're not supposed to work the same teams too many times, for instance, but they also shouldn't travel too far. Unlike players, they get vacation days that must be factored in.

"There's all these contradicting demands," Yunes says. "You have to compromise a lot."

In 2008, after taking a job as an assistant professor of management sciences at UM, Yunes tried again. This time, with Trick's help, he got it right. MLB gave it a shot for the '08 season and hasn't looked back.

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It's "been significantly easier and more efficient," Thomas Lepperd, baseball's chief of umpire operations, says in **Yunes' published study**.

The real irony: Yunes is from Rio de Janeiro. Until he recently married an American, he knew next to nothing about the American pastime.

"The whole terminology of baseball is still very overwhelming to me," he laughs.

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