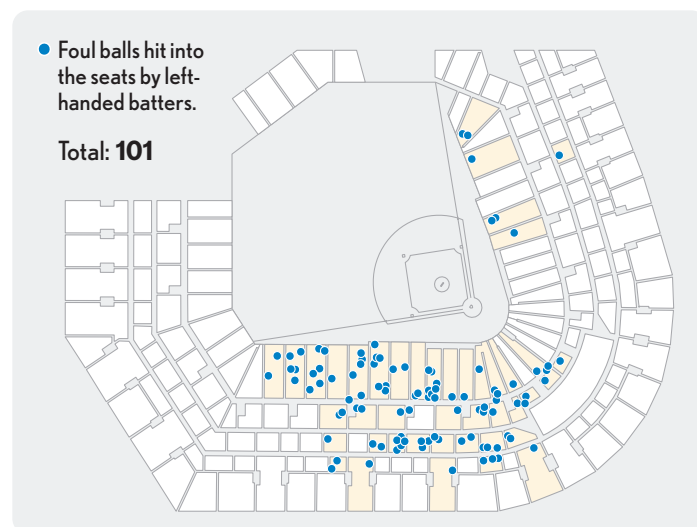
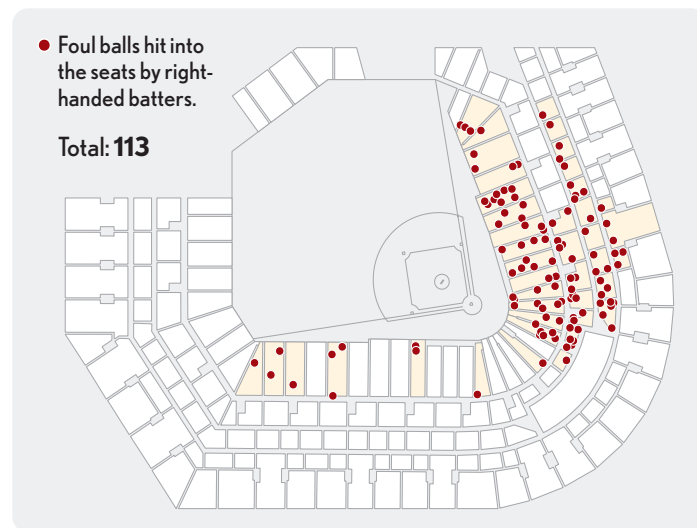
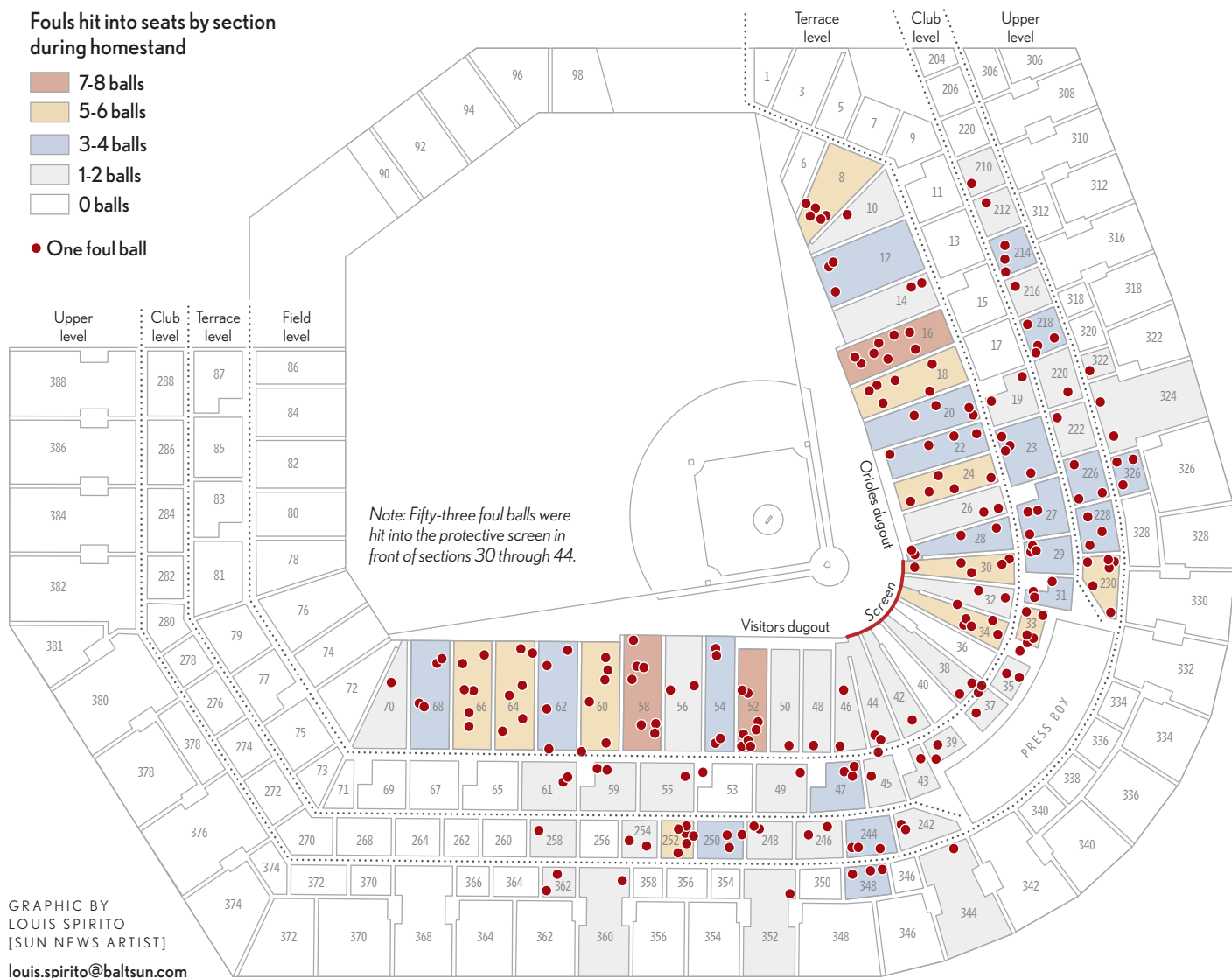


FROM THE COVER

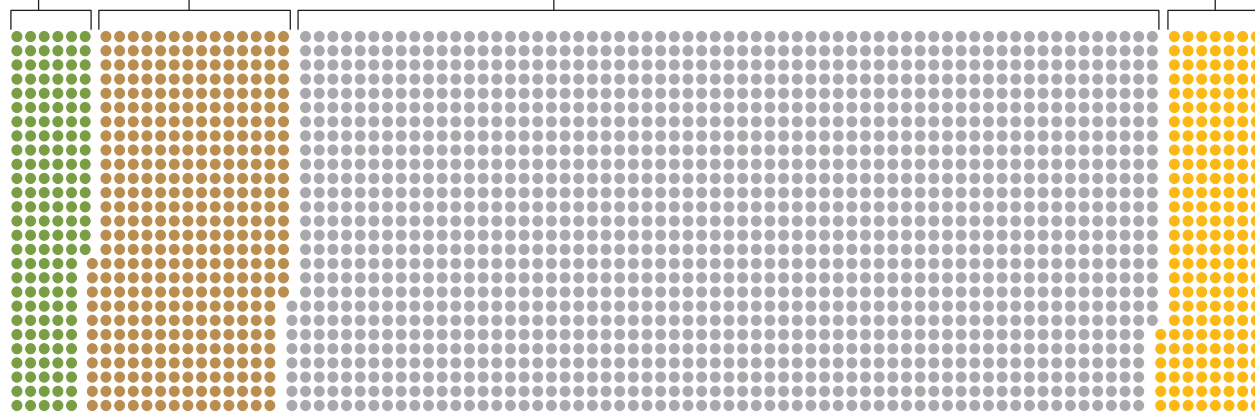
TRACKING FOUL BALLS

If you attend an Orioles game hoping to catch a foul ball, this guide might give you pause. In an attempt to find the best places to catch a foul, *The Sun* plotted every foul ball hit into the seats at Oriole Park during a nine-game interleague homestand from June 8 through June 17. The results appear inconclusive, although chances for a souvenir seem best in sections behind first base and third base. So if you'll be sitting in any "hot" section, consider bringing a glove.



During the nine-game homestand, a total of 2,657 pitches were thrown. Pitches were slightly more likely to be hit fair than foul, and 64 percent of all pitches were not struck at all, while 8 percent headed into the seats.

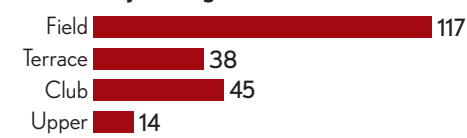
- 151** Pitches hit safely into play.
- 381** Pitches hit into fair territory resulting in outs or fielding errors.
- 1,703** Pitches not struck by a batter. For example, a called strike, swinging strike, ball, or batter hit by pitch.
- 422** Pitches hit into foul territory.



214
Total number of pitches hit foul into the seats

- 24** Average number of foul balls hit into the seats per game
- 46** Highest number of foul balls hit into the seats in one game (June 8)
- 13** Lowest number of foul balls hit into the seats in one game (June 15)

Foul balls by seating level



Foul balls by pitch type



Fouls are fair game for fans

FOULS [From Page 1D]

itors dugout but not far from the adjacent tarps. Section 252, however, is a small section on the club-suite level, at the midpoint of the left-field line, between the lower bowl of seats and the third deck. There are only 126 seats in the entire section.

Every major league team has dealt with fans injured by foul balls. Team officials say that despite precautions, accidents occur.

At the beginning of this season, the foul screen behind home plate at Camden Yards was expanded by 9 feet in height to 26 feet. The alteration was sparked when a foul ball by Jay Gibbons flew over the screen last Septem-

"EVERYBODY HAS THAT STORY WHERE THEY'VE COME CLOSE."
ORIOLES OFFICIAL GREG BADER

ber and hit his wife, Laura, in the ribs.

Orioles director of communications Greg Bader said that from the time fans enter the ballpark, they are given warnings about batted balls. The team plays a pre-game message on the JumboTron that encourages fans to be aware of foul balls. Bader said the Orioles' ushers and medical personnel are well trained and respond within seconds.

MLB tickets also state that the teams and the league are not liable for damages or personal injuries resulting from foul balls or errant bats flying into the stands.

Bader said you can always tell who wants a foul ball based on



So close, and yet so far: Fans, including some reaching over the fence, watch a rolling foul ball during a recent Orioles home game.
GENE SWEENEY JR. [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

whether the fan has a glove. "It's interesting to see how important catching a foul ball is to some fans," he said. "I'm sure everybody has that story where they've come close."

During a day game later in July, Section 52 was again put to the test. In the section sat the three generations of the Frick family — a grandfather, father and son.

"We thought it would be nice to take three generations to a ball-

game," said the father, Shawn Frick, 37, a used-car salesman from Annapolis.

In the top of the third inning, Tampa Bay Devil Rays catcher Dioner Navarro sliced into the section a pitch from Steve Trachsel. Dane Frick, the grandfather, 64, fought for the ball with Jeff Seganos, 32, of Ansonia, Conn.

It is odd, and sometimes incomprehensible, how foul balls can bring people together. The oldest

Frick, who is from Silver Spring and has lived the past 24 years in Australia, couldn't remember the last time he attended a baseball game. He had hoped, before the ball was snatched away from him, to give it to his 5-year-old grandson, Evan, whom he had just met that week.

"I stood up and dropped everything," Dane Frick said. "I think it bounced on the chair or the ground, and he [Seganos] got it. I

was explaining to Evan, 'We almost got it, but he was better than we were.' And then a guy in a white shirt said, 'Give it to him.' And he did, he gave it to him right away."

Seganos said he never caught a foul ball before, either, but was happy to give it to Evan. The applause from the crowd assured him he made the right decision.

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GATHERING THE STATISTICS



Louis Spirito keeps his eye on the ball at Oriole Park.
GENE SWEENEY JR. [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

BY LOUIS SPIRITO [SUN NEWS ARTIST]

The project began from basic curiosity. Being a professional cartographer and a baseball fan led to a fascination about foul balls — who hit them, how many were hit, where they all went.

I started by creating a custom score sheet that allowed me to track several types of data. I then observed all 2,657 pitches in a nine-game Orioles homestand from the right-field club level, in Section 288. The result was a database that held the location of every foul ball hit plus other information, such as pitcher, batter, pitch type, pitch speed, inning, etc. For the graphic, I decided to keep the focus on balls that were hit into seats because this is where the game interacts with the fans on a unique level.

If you think this project is a bit too esoteric, consider: Over those nine games, 151 pitches were hit safely into play, while 214 were hit to the fans.

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