

2014 Fantasy Baseball Guide



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Foreward

Dear readers and **Billy Hamilton**, who made the cover of this year's guide. This is the second installment of the fantasy guide. A lot has happened in the past 12 months. When I wrote the first guide I honestly didn't know what I was doing (it can argued I still do not) and it shows when I read some of last year's evaluations. During the past year I've began writing about fantasy baseball for a few publications including [Baseball Professor](#) and [Through the Fence Baseball](#). Writing these two websites has made me a better writer and evaluator and I believe it shows in the player capsules.

The goal is to help owners who want to think for themselves and who are looking for new ideas on player evaluation. For example, some fantasy writers write analysis that reads something like, "Player X struggled at the plate because he had the burden of carrying the offense, which caused him to press. However, now that the team has improved he will not press as much and he'll become the player he once was." As a reader what am I supposed to do that? Is the writer his psychiatrist? If so, then that statement has a lot of weight. If not, it's pure speculation, means nothing and does not help with the evaluation of the player.

My approach to player evaluation is based on several pieces of information. I look at the data, scouting reports and other credible authors who have provided analysis or further information about the player. For example, **Yoennis Cespedes** had a down year in 2013. According to the [scouting report from Jason Parks](#) at Baseball Prospectus a reason why he struggled was due a poor approach at the plate. Specifically, he gears up for the fastball at all times, regardless of the count, which makes him susceptible to off-speed and breaking pitches. The table below shows his performance against off-speed and breaking pitches the past two seasons. The data in table coincides with the scouting report. Therefore, I don't see a big improvement in batting average coming for Cespedes in 2014. Maybe Cespedes will have a great year and I'll be incorrect. That's okay with me. I believe in process over performance because good process will normally win out in the end. With any game there is going to be variance that is out of your control. However, if you have a good process you're odds of performing well increase exponentially.

Split	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
2012	.260	.768	.303	23.4%	5.5%	15.4%
2013	.195	.579	.232	28.2%	3.3%	12.5%

This is the approach I took when writing the fantasy guide and I believe this provides more useful information and empowers the reader to make more accurate opinions on players. When someone reads my projections on a player it is my hope the reader will know why I'm down or high on a player.

I wrote the guide out of a labor of love so any feedback, even if its criticism would mean the world to me. Seriously, if you think my evaluations are no good or my methodology should be changed then please tell me. I want to be a better evaluator and the more information and ideas people tell me the

better. Since I wrote this myself I'm very certain you will find typos and grammatical errors. I tried my best to catch all of them, but if you find some I apologize ahead of time.

Why I Use Strikeout and Walk Rates

When you read my guide you'll notice I never mention K/9 or BB/9. Instead I refer to strikeout rate (K%) and walk rate (BB%). The reason why I do this is because rate based stats provide a pitchers true numbers because the percentages are determined by the number of batters faced. It also provides a better idea of how well a player pitched. In comparison, K/9 and BB/9 scale the game based on the number of innings a pitcher threw regardless of how many batters a pitcher faced.

For example, I'm going to illustrate how strikeout rate is a better statistic. Take a look at the table below. Both pitchers each had ten strikeouts in nine innings, but Player B was a more effective than Player A. If we use K/9 both players were just as dominate, but if you look at K% you'll notice Player B was a far more effective pitcher.

Splits	Innings	ABs	Hits	Walks	Strikeouts	K/9	K%
Player A	9	33	7	4	10	10	30.3%
Player B	9	27	5	1	10	10	37.0%

The tables below provide primers for strikeout and walk rates, which will make the fantasy guide more consumable. The data is based from the 2013 season.

Starting Pitchers	
Splits	K%
Elite	28.8%
Great	25.3%
Good	23.0%
Average	20.8%
Below Average	18.3%
Poor	15.7%

Relief Pitchers	
Splits	K%
Elite	38.0%
Great	30.3%
Good	25.4%
Average	22.0%
Below Average	17.6%
Poor	15.0%

Starting Pitchers	
Splits	BB%
Elite	3.7%
Great	5.0%
Good	6.3%
Average	7.5%
Below Average	8.9%
Poor	10.2%

Relief Pitchers	
Splits	BB%
Elite	3.5%
Great	5.5%
Good	6.9%
Average	8.5%
Below Average	10.5%
Poor	12.7%

Statistical/Sabermetric Baselines

Every fantasy owner should know the statistical baselines for player performance. In my player profiles I assume you'll know a hitter with a 25% HR/FB rate was extremely lucky or a hitter with a .370 BABIP was extremely lucky (**in most cases**).

Hitter Baselines

BABIP: This is the most misunderstood and misused baseball statistic in fantasy. It's widely used as a barometer for how lucky a player has been, but be careful because BABIP on its own does not tell the full story. It's important to **remember every player has their own baseline**. For example, Ichiro has a career BABIP of .347, which is 40 points higher than the Major League average (.290-.310). Last year he had a .300 BABIP, which appears normal, but in actuality was below average.

HR/FB: Shows how many fly balls turn into home runs

"Slash Line": AVG/OBP/SLG

Isolated Power (ISO): A measure of a hitter's raw power. Or, to look at it another way, it measures how good a player is at hitting for extra bases.

A little background about **ground balls, fly balls** and **line drives**; ground balls are a hitter's worst friend. Ground balls create 0.05 runs per out, fly balls create 0.13 runs per out and line drives create 1.26 runs per out.

HR/FB	
Excellent	20%
Great	15%
Above Average	12.5%
Average	9.5%
Below Average	7.5%
Poor	5%
Zima	1%

League Averages	
LD% (Lind Drive)	20%
GB% (Ground Ball)	44%
FB% (Fly Ball)	36%
IFFB% (Infield Fly Ball)	10%

ISO	
Excellent	.250
Great	.200
Above Average	.180
Average	.145
Below Average	.120
Poor	.100
Zima	.080

BABIP	
Normal	.290-.310

Batting Average of Hit Types	
LD	.670
GB	.236
FB	.288

Rating	K%	BB%
Excellent	10.00%	15.00%
Great	12.50%	12.50%
Above Average	15.00%	10.00%
Average	18.50%	8.50%
Below Average	20.00%	7.00%
Poor	25.00%	5.50%
Awful	27.50%	4.00%

Pitcher Baselines

Left On Base Percentage (LOB%): Measures the percentage of base runners a pitcher stranded on base over the course of a season.

Fielding Independent Pitching (FIP): Converts a pitcher's three true outcomes into an earned run average-like number. The formula is $(13*HR+3*BB-2*K)/IP$, plus a constant (usually around 3.2) to put it on the same scale as earned run average.

Expected Fielding Independent Pitching (xFIP): Calculated in the same way as FIP, except it replaces a pitcher's home run total with an estimate of how many home runs they should have allowed. This estimate is calculated by taking the league-average home run to fly ball rate (~9-10% depending on the year) and multiplying it by a pitcher's fly ball rate.

BB/9: Shows how many batters a pitcher is walking per nine innings. Usually, you want to refrain from drafting pitchers who walk a lot of hitters because it increases the likelihood those runners are going to score.

K/9: Shows how many batters a pitcher is striking out per nine innings. Usually, you want to draft pitchers who strike out a lot of batters because they help you in the strikeout category and most importantly, increase the likelihood they'll allow fewer runs, which will increase the opportunity of winning games.

K%: Shows the percentage of batters a pitcher is striking out. I find this statistic to be a more accurate than K/9. For example, suppose a pitcher strikes out two batters and allowed no hits or walks in three innings. His K/9 would be 6, but his K% would be 33%. The K% provides a more detailed story about the pitcher's dominance.

BB%: I feel the same about BB% as I do about K%. Please read K% for more information.

Fair Run Average (FRA): Scaled to run average and measures not only what a pitcher did, but also when he did it. Adjustments are made for defensive quality. Pitchers receive credit for good sequencing, thus rewarding pitchers who seem to work out of jams more often than usual.

HR/FB	
Excellent	5.0%
Great	7.0%
Above Average	8.5%
Average	9.5%
Below Average	10.5%
Poor	11.5%
Zima	13.0%

LOB%	
Excellent	80.0%
Great	78.0%
Above Average	75.0%
Average	72.0%
Below Average	70.0%
Poor	65.0%
Zima	60.0%

FIP	
Excellent	2.17
Great	3.36
Above Average	4.00
Average	4.56
Zima	5.68

Starting Pitchers		
Rating	BB/9	BB%
Excellent	1.54	4.2%
Great	2.05	5.0%
Above Average	2.48	6.5%
Average	2.99	7.8%
Below Average	3.64	9.3%
Zimal	4.27	10.8%

FRA	
Excellent	2.17
Great	3.36
Above Average	4.00
Average	4.56
Zima	5.68

Starting Pitchers		
Rating	K/9	K%
Excellent	9.63	26.0%
Great	8.95	23.5%
Above Average	7.82	20.4%
Average	6.76	17.3%
Below Average	5.79	14.5%
Zima	4.90	12.4%

Relief Pitchers		
Rating	BB/9	BB%
Excellent	.54	2.0%
Great	1.54	4.2%
Above Average	2.61	6.8%
Average	3.65	9.4%
Below Average	4.91	12.4%
Zima	6.95	16.0%

BABIP	
Normal	.300

Starting Pitchers	
Rating	Whiff%
Excellent	27.1%
Great	24.9%
Above Average	22.4%
Average	19.8%
Below Average	17.0%
Zima	14.6%

Relief Pitchers		
Rating	K/9	K%
Excellent	14.28	37.5%
Great	10.80	28.2%
Above Average	9.26	24.1%
Average	7.67	19.5%
Below Average	5.58	13.8%
Zima	3.60	9.1%

Player Correlations for Pitchers and Hitters

The table below is **pitching** correlation metrics from year to year (thanks to [Matt Klaassen](#)). These metrics try to show which ones are more repeatable than others and based on the table pitchers have the highest opportunity of maintaining their hit distribution (i.e. ground balls, fly balls, line drives).

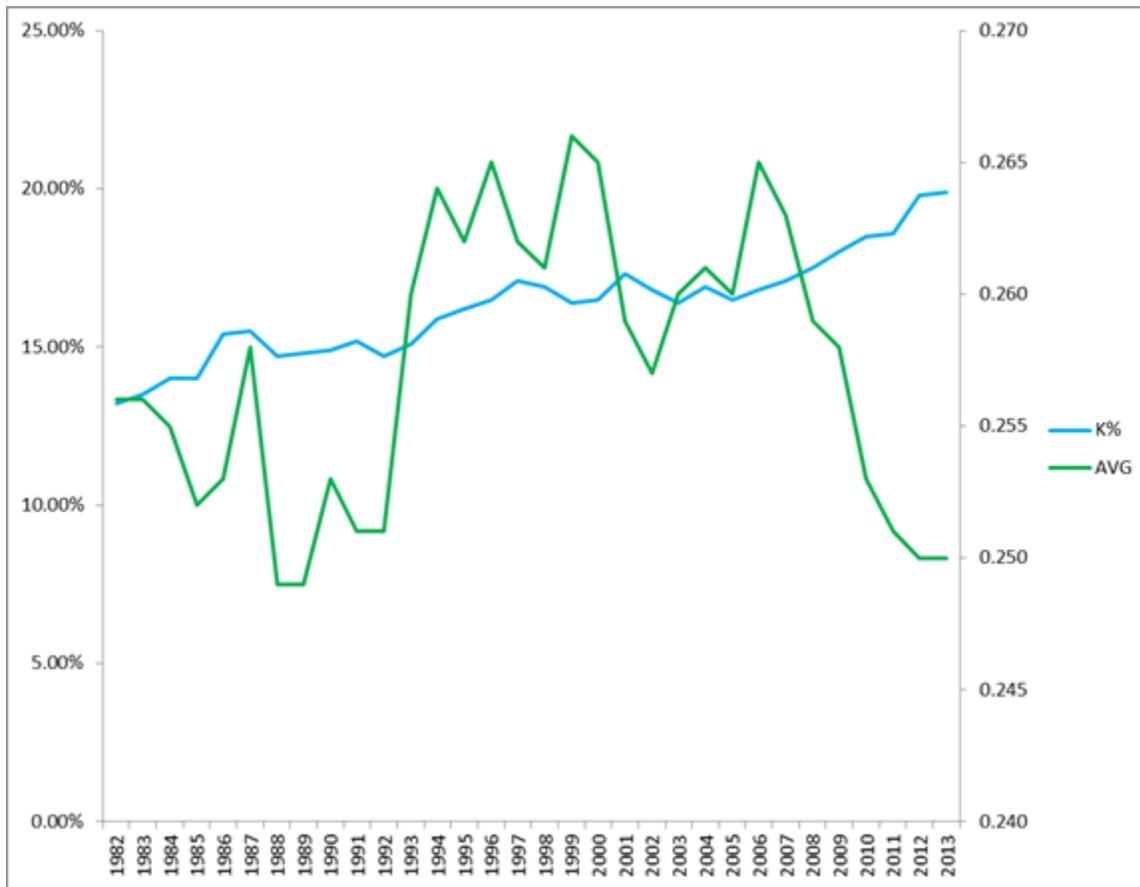
Pitching Metric	Year-to-Year Correlation 2002-2012
GB/FB	0.871
GB%	0.839
FB%	0.817
SwStr%	0.804
SO/TBF	0.803
SO/9	0.803
Contact%	0.789
O-Contact%	0.782
Swing%	0.747
Zone%	0.744
O-Swing%	0.730
uBB/TBF	0.711
Z-Swing%	0.701
xFIP	0.699
BB/9	0.692
Z-Contact%	0.664
F-Strike%	0.663
K/BB	0.630
tRA	0.589
FIP	0.584
WP/TBF	0.458
WHIP	0.430
IFFB%	0.422
HBP/TBF	0.404
HR/TBF	0.390
HR/9	0.390
ERA	0.373
IBB/TBF	0.358
HR/(TBF-BB-HBP-SO)	0.349
LOB%	0.238
BABIP	0.235
LD%	0.088
HR/FB	-0.029

Below is list of correlation metrics for **hitters** from [Matt Klaassen](#). A lot of these make sense, but what stands out to me the most is batting average, BABIP and ground ball rates.

Hitting Metric	Year-Year Correlation 2002-2012
Contact%	0.896
SwStr%	0.886
SO/(AB+SF)	0.870
SO/PA	0.861
Swing%	0.851
O-Contact%	0.848
Z-Swing%	0.845
O-Swing%	0.826
Z-Contact%	0.821
GB%	0.793
HR/(AB-K+SF)	0.775
Zone%	0.768
uBB/(PA-HBP-IBB)	0.765
FB%	0.759
HR/FB	0.740
HR/PA	0.737
iBB/PA	0.734
ISO	0.722
HBP/(PA-IBB)	0.627
OBP	0.611
3B/(2B+3B)	0.606
SLG	0.605
IFFB%	0.605
F-Strike%	0.593
3B/PA	0.590
wOBA	0.581
AVG	0.427
(3B+2B)/(H-HR)	0.407
BABIP	0.373
2B/PA	0.315
LD%	0.293

Pitcher Strikeout Rate Threshold for 2014

By now, we fantasy aficionados all aware of we're at historic levels in terms of strikeout rates. Since 2008, strikeout rates have increased year over year and 2013 was even higher (0.1 percent) than 2012. Therefore, it's important to adjust the strikeout rate used a benchmark when evaluating starting pitchers for 2014. The graph below shows pitcher's strikeout rates and batting average against since 1982.



On draft day every fantasy owner should have targets for each category. In general, it takes roughly 90-92 points to win a 5x5 roto league with 12 teams with weekly lineups. Therefore, fantasy owners should strive to finish third and fourth in every category.

For strikeouts, last year 1,400 strikeouts was more or less were the requirement. A pitching staff (with nine pitchers starting) will throw roughly 1,494 innings, of which, 1,314 will come from starting pitchers and 180 innings from relievers. In terms of the strikeout ratios, 85-88 percent of the strikeouts will come from starting pitchers. If you take 1,400 and multiple it by 87 percent you get 1,218 strikeouts needed from starters and 182 from relievers.

Now that we have these two end points we can calculate what strikeout rate is needed from starting pitchers in order to achieve 1,218 strikeouts. On average a starting pitcher has 4.25 plate appearances

per inning so if you multiply 4.25 by 1,314 you get 5,584.5; if you divide that number by 1,218 you get 21.81 percent. Therefore, starting pitchers need to have a strikeout rate of 21.81 percent in order to achieve 1,218 strikeouts.

Last year there were only 44 pitchers who pitched at or above the 21.8 percent threshold (with at least six games started). With strikeouts at such a premium, rostering extremely high strikeout pitchers such as **Yu Darvish** and **Max Scherzer** will provide extra roster flexibility and allow fantasy owners to win the strikeouts category.

Random tangent, suppose Darvish did not lose the four 1-0 games and finished the year with 16 wins instead of 13, rating Darvish as the number one fantasy pitcher would have more support. That said, the more I'm thinking about it, the more I like Darvish as my number one pitcher next year.

In order to finish third in saves requires approximately 99-103 saves, which is only 33 saves per pitcher (supposing you draft three closers). Using the same method outlined above, the strikeout rate needed from closers is 24.5 percent. The math calculation is as follows: 180 innings multiplied by 4.13 (plate appearances they face per inning) equals 743.4; 182 strikeouts divided by 743.4 equals 24.5 percent. Most closers fulfill this strikeout rate so during the evaluation period fantasy owners should focus on the pitchers job security and overall effectiveness.

It's also possible to fulfill this requirement by drafting closers near the end of your drafts. For example, last year I drafted **Grant Balfour**, **Jason Grilli** and **Casey Jansen** in the 16th and 17th round and their final totals were 105 saves and 196 strikeouts, both of which are above the thresholds needed for this category. In 2014 let the **Craig Kimbrell**, **Aroldis Chapman** and **Kenley Jansen** proponents use an early 5th-7th round pick on them and you can wait on saves.

Are All Strikeouts the Same?

A couple of months ago I was listening to an episode of the [Up and In Podcast](#)¹ (yes, I still re-listen to them) and one of the questions they were asked was, "Are all strikeouts valued the same in the eyes of a scout?" Are strikeouts earned via swing and miss worth more valuable than strikeouts where the batter is looking? They both said they preferred strikeouts that come from the swing and miss.

I sought out to see if starting pitchers with higher WHIFF (swing and miss) rates are more likely to have higher strikeout percentages.

Math / Primer

When I evaluate pitchers I look at strikeout percentage rather than K/9 because it provides a clearer picture a pitcher's true ability to strikeout batters. K/9 is a flawed statistic because it uses a static number in innings to determine the strikeout percentage and does not take into an account the actual numbers of hitters he faced.

Pitchers who allow a lot of base runners will benefit from K/9 while pitchers who minimize the hitters who reach base will get the short end of the stick. Not every pitcher will face the same number of batters in an inning so it's important to understand what percentage of batters he is striking out. That is what strikeout percentage accomplishes; it divides strikeouts by plate appearances.

For example, suppose a pitcher walks the bases loaded and strikes out the side in one inning. His K/9 for that inning would be three and his strikeout percentage would be 50 percent. However, suppose instead of walking the bases loaded he strikes all three of the batters he faced. The K/9 would still be three, but his strikeout percentage would be 100 percent.

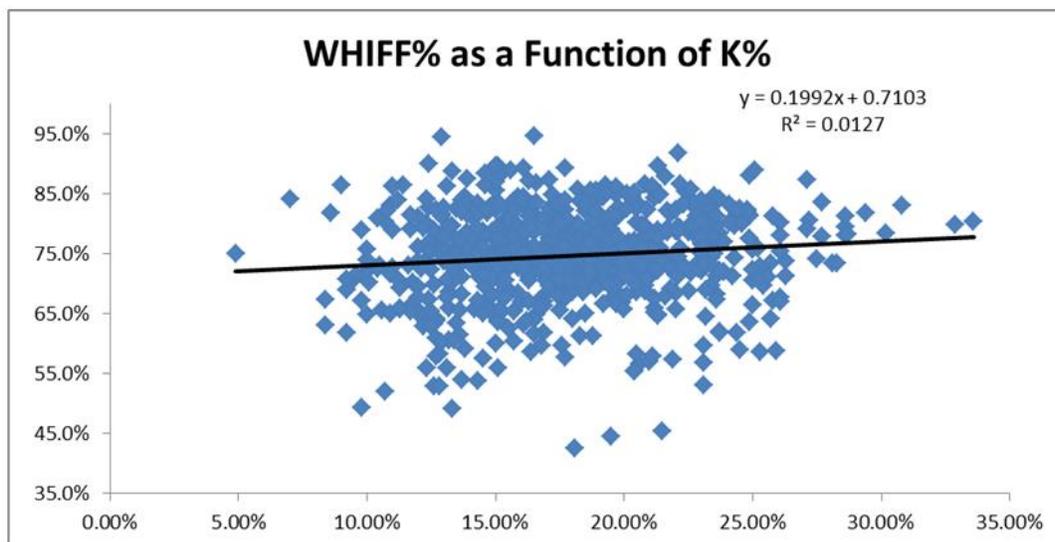
*A high-level introduction into regression: Regression describes the strength between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables, or, in other words, **how strongly do the variables correlate to one another?** R-squared is the numerical representation of the strength between the variables. R-squared is measured on a scale of zero to one with one representing a 100% correlation and zero representing no correlation. When observations are scattered randomly (on a scatter plot) around the data's best-fit line, the R-squared will be closer to zero. When the values are close to the best-fit line, the R-squared will be closer to one. A best-fit line is a straight line on a graph showing the general direction that a group of points seem to be heading.*

In short this was my method:

1. Look at the strikeout percentage (K%) of pitchers from 2010-2013 with at least 10 starts in a given year (725 pitchers)
2. Break down the strikeouts by type: looking and WHIFF
3. Plot each pitcher's WHIFF% (WHIFFs divided by total strikeouts) and K%

Analysis

Note: K% is on the x-axis and WHIFF% is the y-axis. The black line is the line of the best fit.



The graph suggests there is a slight positive correlation between a starting pitcher's K% and WHIFF rate, but with an R-squared of 0.012, there's barely any relationship.

With an R-squared that low, I refined my analysis to look only at starting pitchers with at least 100 strikeouts to see what effect this would have. The sample size was 434 pitchers (versus 725 pitchers in the first sample). The R-squared of this new sample decreased to 0.010, which confirmed the trend of the larger sample size.

When evaluating a pitcher's strikeout percentage, WHIFF% should be one of the last statistics used. That begs the question, what statistics should fantasy owners use to forecast and evaluate K%? In my next article, I'll attempt to provide metrics that correlate more to strikeout percentages for starting pitchers.

What effect does a decrease in fastball velocity have on pitcher performance?

When a pitching prospect makes his major league debut the first attribute evaluated is fastball velocity. Fastball velocity is the foundation of any future scouting report or fantasy evaluation that will be associated with him. A common assumption is more fastball velocity is better than less. As the graph below shows, in general, higher fastball velocities are more conducive to the generation of swing and miss (WHIFF) rates.

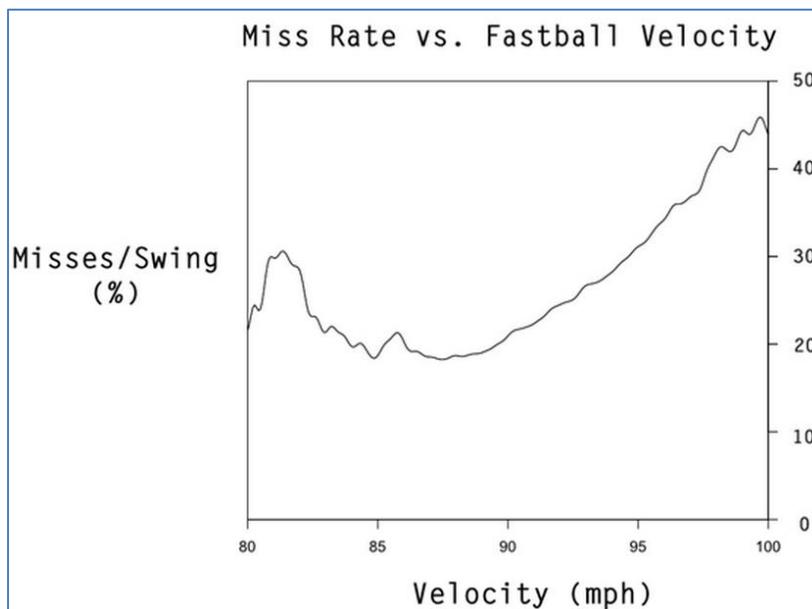


Image source: BaseballProspectus.com

However, fastball velocity is not the end-all-be-all for starting pitchers because there are a myriad of factors required to have sustained success. Does the fastball have movement? Does the pitcher have command? Is he throwing quality strikes? Is he changing sight lines? Is he able to successfully mix his

pitches? Is he hitting his spots? How early is the ball coming out of the hand? Without all of these attributes major league hitters will eventually time a pitcher's fastball regardless of how fast it is.

One of the best current examples of fastball velocity not being essential for long term success is **Tim Hudson**. Since 2008 his fastball has been 89-91 mph, but he has consistently been able to get batters out and has almost built a Hall of Fame career¹.

As pitchers age a loss in fastball is usually, unwelcomely and unexpectedly (from the pitcher's point of view) accompanied². Any time a pitcher loses a tick on his fastball there's always a lot of hubbub how his performance will also decline³. The two most recent and biggest examples of this manifestation is last year's performances of **Roy Halladay** and **CC Sabathia**, both of whom lost 1-1.5 mph off their fastball from the previous year and 2.5-3.5 mph decrease from two years ago. Based on these the two performances it's easy to quickly validate this belief and move on. However, **Felix Hernandez's** fastball velocity has been in steady decline since 2007 and he's been as good as he's ever been. The goal of this piece is to provide more clarity on what effect, if any, does a decline in fastball velocity have on a starting pitcher's performance, specifically ERA and strikeout rate.

Primer

I used the same data set for my [first article](#) which looked at the relationship between swing and miss (WHIFF) rates and strikeout rates. I looked at pitchers with at least ten starts (per year) from 2008 to 2013. I used regression to test the strength of the relationship of the variables I was measuring. R-squared is numerical representation of this relationship. The scale of R-square is from zero to one with zero representing no relationship and one representing 100 percent positive correlation. Lastly the change in data from year to year was determined by subtracting the more current year from the previous year. For example, if a pitcher had an ERA of 4.00 in 2012 and it went to 3.00 in 2013 the result would be -1.

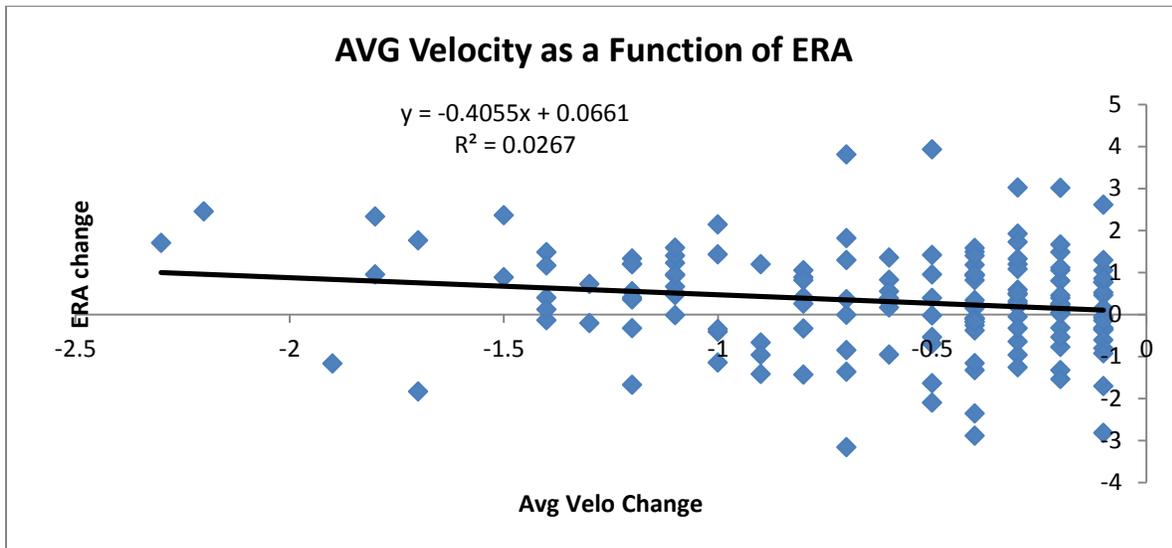
One Year Average Fastball Velocity Decline

The first question I wanted to research was what effect does a one year decline in average fastball velocity have on ERA and strikeout rates? The R-squared for ERA and strikeout rates were 0.027 and 0.071 respectively, which indicates there is very low correlation of a decrease in fastball velocity resulting in a pitcher's poor performance. The graph below shows the effect the decrease in average fastball velocity has on ERA. The change in average fastball velocity is the x-axis and the change in ERA is the y-axis. The black line is the line of best fit. The sample size consisted of 150 pitchers who had a decline in fastball velocity only from the year prior.

¹ If you don't believe, check out his career stats and compare them to **Roy Halladay**.

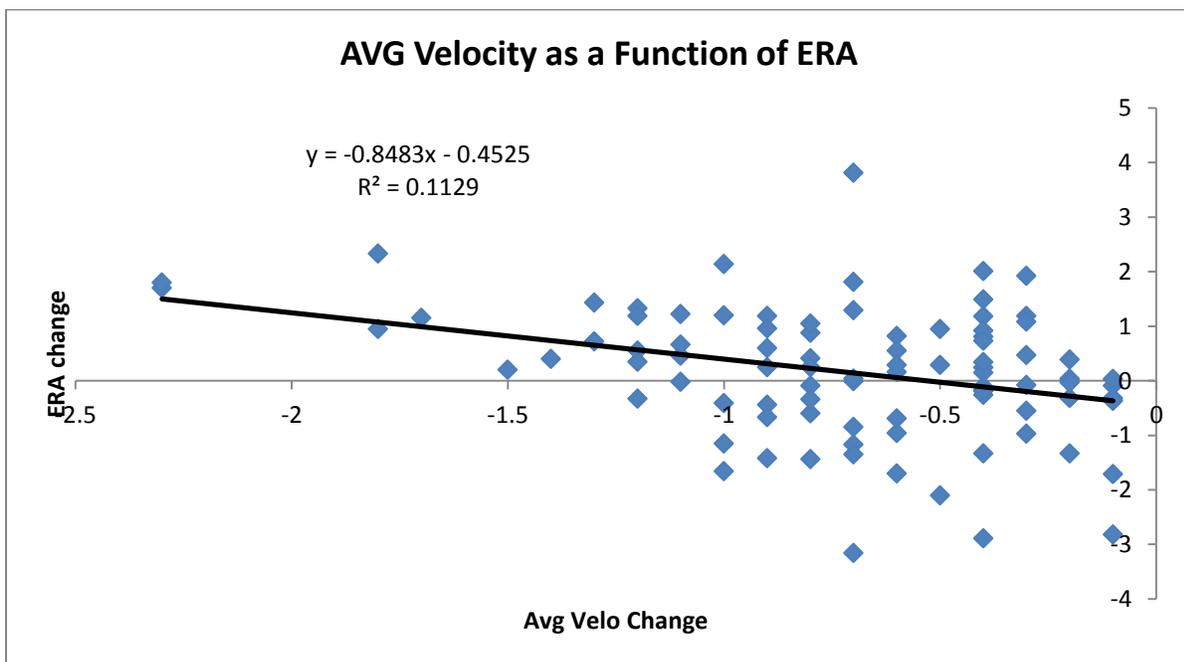
² A simple analogy is suppose it is Friday night and you're about to leave your apartment to play board games with your friends but as you leave your girlfriend asks if she can join. You're befuddled because you know she does not like board games and most likely does not like your friends, but you let her play because the ramifications are more severe than the provost will ever be ([Caylus](#) reference).

³ I will admit I've been guilty of this. I've been using generalizations like these in my player evaluations without ever questioning them.



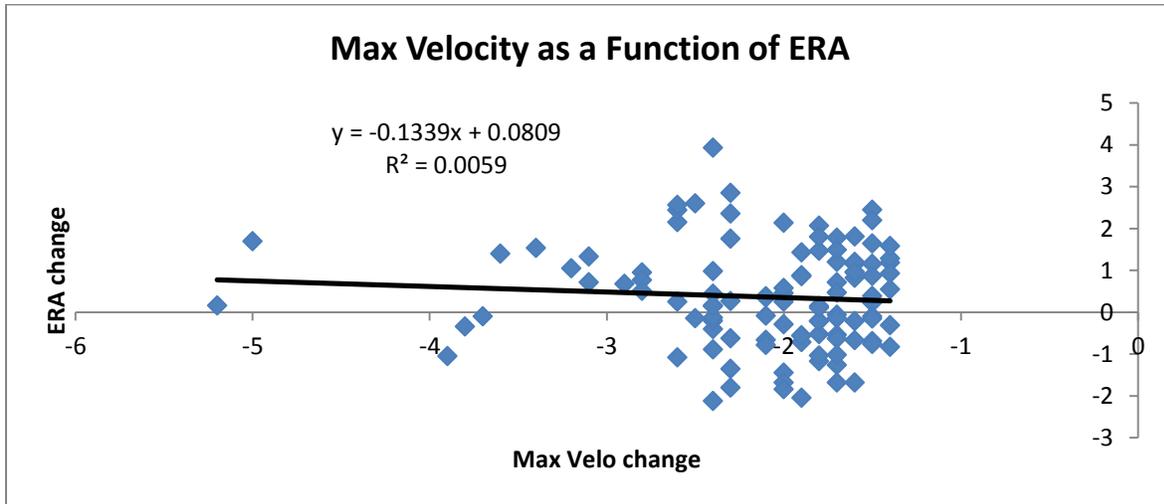
Year-Over-Year Average Fastball Velocity Decline

To come back to Halladay and Sabathia, I wanted to look at pitchers who had their fastball velocity decrease year-over-year for three or more straight years. In my sample I identified 29 players so small sample caveat. I plotted all the changes in their ERA (y-axis) and average fastball velocity (x-axis). Even though the R-squared is much higher (0.11) than only a one year decline in average fastball velocity, the R-squared value is still very low and therefore, there is little correlation to fastball velocity affecting a pitchers ERA. In terms of strikeout rate the R-squared was only 0.004, which indicates a decline in average fastball velocity has no effect on a pitcher’s ability to strike batters out.



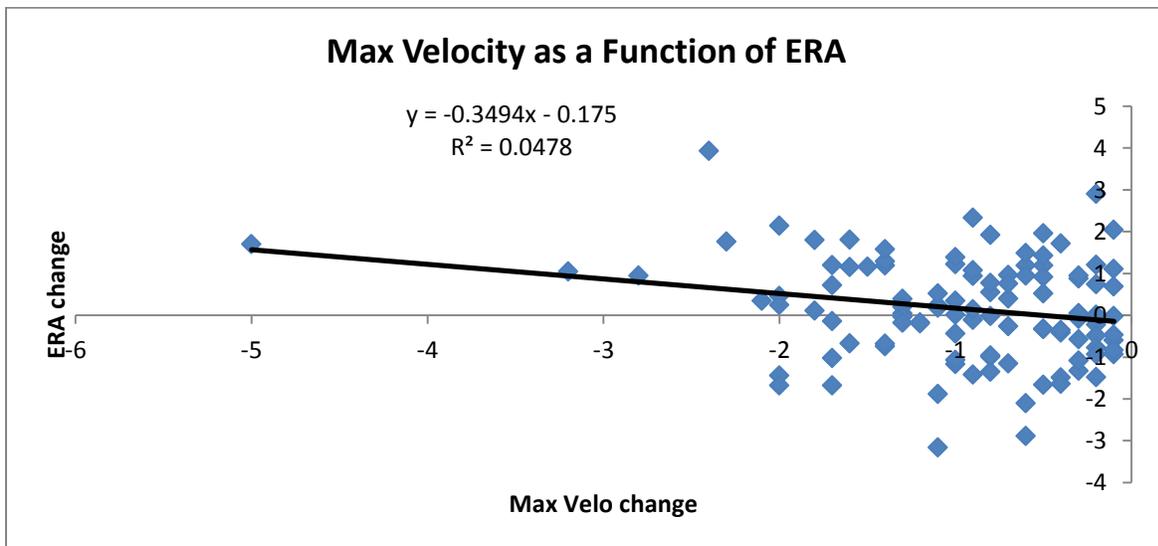
One Year Max Fastball Velocity Decline

So far I've shown a decline in average fastball velocity does not have any significant effect on a starting pitcher's ERA or strikeout rate, but what about maximum fastball velocity. Some baseball writers put more weight on maximum velocity as a better indicator of a pitcher's true velocity. The sample size consisted of 210 players. Similar to the results with average velocity there appears to be no correlation with a decrease in maximum velocity and ERA and strikeout rates with R-squares of 0.006 and 0.007 respectively.



Year-Over-Year Max Fastball Velocity Decline

Again, similar to the results found with average velocity there appears to be no correlation as ERA had an R squared of 0.05 and strikeout rate had an R squared of 0.001. The sample size was 30 pitchers.

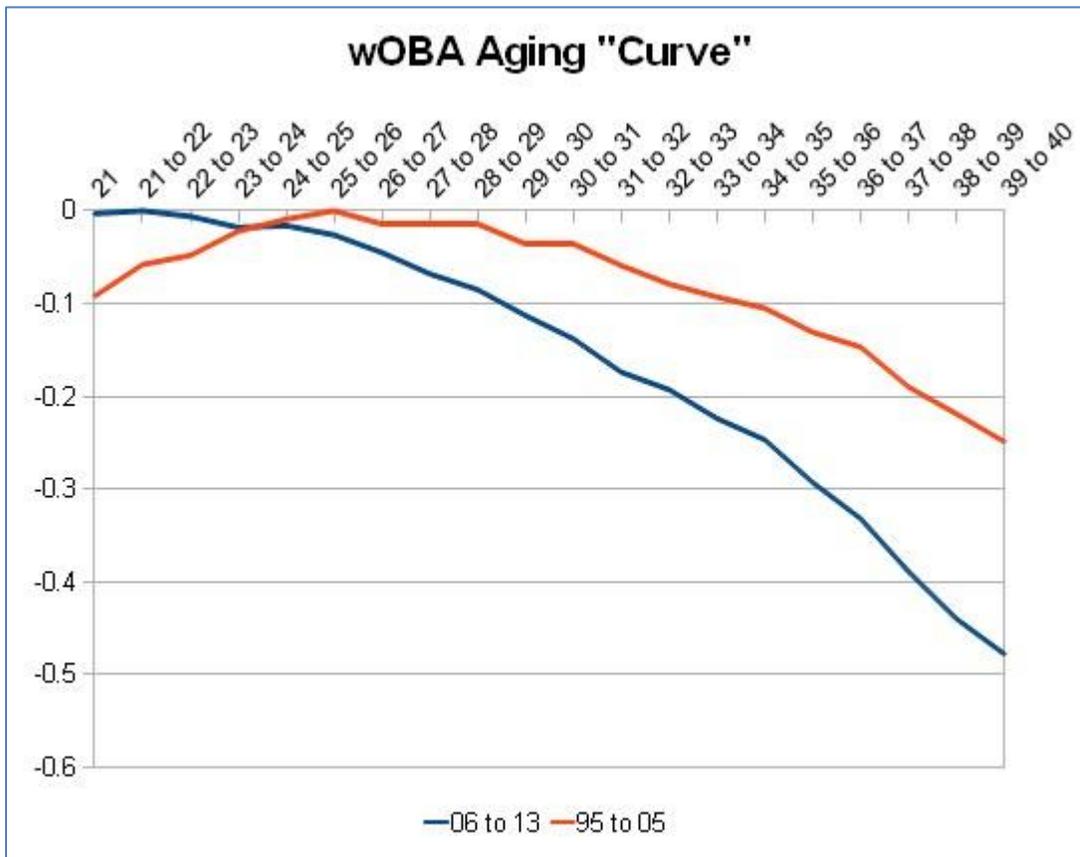


Conclusion

There are myriad of factors why a pitcher’s performance will improve or decline. Is fastball velocity one of those factors? Yes, but do not give that fact a lot of credence as there appears to be little to no correlation between a decline in fastball velocity and pitching performance. Any time a fantasy analyst cites a loss in fastball velocity as a major reason why not to roster that player call them out it.

Are Aging Curves Changing?

This is a [great piece by Jeff Zimmerman](#) and I highly recommend reading it. Zimmerman’s overall takeaway is, “In the past few seasons, hitters no longer improve once they arrive in the majors. Instead, their performance is constant until they begin to decline, which, on average, is at 26 years old.” The reason why included this is because if you believe his takeaways to be true then you should expect better numbers from rookies and players who will be playing their first year in the majors.



Player Evaluation

How I Evaluate Pitchers

When I look at pitcher the first thing I look at is how many bats does miss (i.e. strikeouts). Then I look at his walk rate. The reason why I look at these first is because those are the two true outcomes the pitcher entirely controls. If both those statistics are above average then that is a player I want on my team. Strikeout rate is the most important between the two because strikeouts is one of the statistics use for scoring and the more strikeouts the less likely a player will allow runs to score. Higher strikeout rates allow player to get away with more walks and/or hits than lower strikeout players. However, there is a walk rate threshold that will always be too high for me. Pitchers like **Matt Moore**, **Ubaldo Jimenez** fall into this category. The reason why I avoid high walk and strikeout pitchers is they're always playing with fire more often than not and are subjectable to blow up starts.

That said, high ground ball and low strikeout pitchers can still be successful. **Tim Hudson** and **Bronson Arroyo** have been consistently effective for most of their careers for being barrel missers and not bat missers. That may sound like the same thing, but it's not. By barrels I'm referring to hard contact; when a batter squares up a ball the hitter is putting the barrel, the sweet spot of the bat, to the ball. If a pitcher can induce a lot of weak contact (i.e. missing barrels) he can still be extremely effective. The only problem with barrel missers is their margin of error is smaller than a bat misser, which means they're not as consistent from start to start. Therefore, the barrel missers need to have better control and command in order to be successful. For example, **Jarrod Parker** had a pretty good 2013 season. During the first month of the season his command was off and his numbers were extremely poor. Once the command came back he was much more effective.

Then I look at the type of contact the pitcher is inducing. I prefer ground ball pitchers because ground balls have the lowest batting average among the three hit types (ground balls, fly balls and line drives). When a pitcher generates a lot of ground balls they're inducing a lot of weak contact and are less subjectable to allowing home runs. In general I try to avoid fly ball pitchers because they tend to be more homer prone. That said, pitchers who are fly ball pitchers can survive if they pitch in a good ballpark, have a good outfield defense and/or do not walk a lot of hitters. A perfect example of a player like this is **A.J. Griffin**. He allows a lot of fly balls and home runs, but he's still rosterable.

After that I look at his BABIP and LOB%. I'll ask myself was he unlucky with the BABIP? Was the BABIP a lot higher than his career norm? I ask the same questions in regards to LOB%.

Then I look at the pitcher's lefty-righty splits. Does he struggle against lefties? Righties? If so, why did he struggle? Was it a one year fluke or has this been a consistent problem? If it's been a consistent problem then I try to identify why he is struggling. More often than not the pitcher does not have a good secondary pitch that's conducive to getting out those batters. For example, suppose a righty has consistently struggled against left handed batters. The first thing I do is look at what types of pitches he throws and try to identify how good each pitch is. Some pitches are better at generating outs against lefties than righties and vice versa. For example, sliders and curveballs are more effective against right

handed batters (from right handed pitchers) because, in general, those pitches are moving away from the hitter; specifically, the hitter's bat. The slider and curveball are least effective against left handed hitters (in general) because those pitches move in, towards their bats. However, changeups and splitters work far better against lefties (from a right handed pitcher). This is not universally true because some pitches are effective against both left and right handed hitters. For example, **Chris Sale's** slider.

After that I'll do some research to see if the pitcher had any minor injuries that could have contributed to the poor season (if he had a poor season). Then I'll look at home-road splits. How they performed with runners in scoring position, men on-base among others. I'll try to find out if the pitcher made a mechanical change, added a new pitch or some other adjustment that contributed to their performance.

Lastly, when I'm projecting a pitcher's win totals I look at the quality of team and bullpen. This process has the highest variance because there are a ton of factors that determine how many wins a player receives, but I do my best. It is very important to not overlook this process because it could cause you to inflate or deflate a pitcher's performance. For example, if you do not project wins then you could potentially rate **Chris Sale** or **Adam Wainwright** the same, but in fact Wainwright has a higher likelihood of winning more games. My numbers are my best guess of what the player will actually do and not what his ultimate upside. For example, if the 2014 season was played 100 times what would the average season look like.

When evaluating young prospects without much of a sample size in the majors I rely heavily on scouting reports from Baseball Prospectus, Baseball America, Jim Callis and Keith Law in order to generate my projections. These people are paid to be talent evaluators and they know a lot more than I do. I recommend subscribing to all of these publications because they'll make a better and smarter fantasy player.

How I Evaluate Hitters

Other than the five traditional statistics (runs, batting average, RBI, batting average, stolen bases) I look at ratios and percentages because they provide a better indicator how often a player is doing something. The two most important percentages is strikeout rate and ground ball rate. Those stats tell me two things: 1) how often is the hitter putting the ball in play and 2) what type of contact is he making? Obviously, if a player is striking out a lot that means he's not putting the ball in play, which means he could be a batting average risk and/or there isn't a lot of upside with home runs, RBIs and runs. Ground ball rates are more important with power hitters because if a player is hitting more ground balls the less likely he'll hit home runs because the sheer number of opportunities (fly balls) is lower.

Ground balls have lower batting averages compared to fly balls and line drives because more luck is needed to record hits. Therefore, if a player hits more ground balls his batting average will be more BABIP dependent, thereby making their batting averages more likely to be influx from year to year. It's very important to look at a hitter's career batting averages, BABIP rates when determining if a player was lucky or not. Some hitters have high career BABIPs than the normal .290-300 range. For example

Chris Johnson had a career .347 BABIP before his .394 BABIP season in 2013. His BABIP should regress in 2014, but a major regression to the .300-.310 range is not very likely.

Next I look at contact rates and HR/FB rates. The latter is more important when evaluating power hitters. HR/FB rates, like BABIP, can vary from year to year. Therefore, it's important to try to identify his true HR/FB rate. Once you have that you can compare last season to his career and identify if he was lucky or not. Also, look at home-road splits because sometimes the home ballpark inflates or deflates power numbers. For example, Miller Park and Coors may inflate home run totals while AT&T Park and Petco will deflate power numbers. Contact rates are extremely important (I go to FanGraphs for this data). I want to see how often the player makes contact in general and on pitches in the strike zone. If a player dramatically increases or decreases their contact rates that raises my eyebrow and I dig deeper to find the cause. Maybe the contact rates dropped only against left handed pitchers? Then I research for information and I read he is dropping his front shoulder to quickly which is causing him to be out in front too much. If that's the case then this type of adjustment can be fixed, which means maybe last year's low contact rates were an anomaly and positive regression is expected.

I also look at the types of contact he's making. Is his isolated power or slugging percentage trending downward or upward? I want players who are making more hard contact than soft contact because hard contact either go out of the ballpark or find more holes in the defense more often.

Basically, I'm trying to paint a picture in my head of how the player is trending. In general, I prefer players that are trending upward than downward. Usually this refers to young versus old players. However, not every older player is necessarily trending downward. A common misconception is older players have less upside which can be true, but it's never absolute. It's because of this misconception really good older players with no signs of slowing down, like **Matt Holliday**, are always drafted lower than they should be. If you paint a picture as to what the player is doing you have better opportunity to identify which players should be bought or not. My numbers are my best guess of what the player will actually do and not what his ultimate upside. For example, if the 2014 season was played 100 times what would the average season look like.

When evaluating young prospects without much of a sample size in the majors I rely heavily on scouting reports from Baseball Prospectus, Baseball America, Jim Callis and Keith Law in order to generate my projections. These people are paid to be talent evaluators and they know a lot more than I do. I recommend subscribing to all of these publications because they'll make a better and smarter fantasy player.

Scouting Primer

This information is very important to understand some of the quotes I reference and some of the language I use. For each tool (hitter) or individual offering (pitcher), a scout assigns a grade on a numerical scale from 20 to 80 where an increase in ten represents one standard deviation from the mean. A 50 grade is that mean, representing major-league average. A 80 grade, the highest score possible, represents elite skill that a few players achieve. Sometimes modify scores are used to describe the strength/weakness of a particular grade. For example, a 55 grade represents solid-average and a 45 grade represents fringe-average. Lastly, the tables I used in this section are from [Baseball Prospectus Extra Innings](#).

20 = Poor; Zima

30 = Well below-average; Budweiser

40 = Below-average; Heineken

50 = Average; major-league regular; Guinness

60 = Above-average (plus); first-division; Racer 5

70 = Well above-average (plus-plus); all-star; Pliny the Elder

80 = Elite; Victoria

I interchangeably use scouting grades in my evaluations so please refer to these tables if you have any questions.

Fastball Velocity	Grade
97+ mph	80; Elite
94-96 mph	70; Well above average; plus-plus
92-94 mph	60; Above average; plus
89-91 mph	50; Average
87-89 mph	40; Below average
85-87 mph	30; Well below average
82-84 mph	20; Poor; Zima

The hit tool is the measure of how often a ball is properly squared up, driven with authority, and deposited into the field of play.

Hit Tool	Batting AVG at the MLB Level
.320+	80; Elite
.300-.320	70; Well above average; plus-plus
.285-.300	60; Above average; plus
.270-.285	50; Average
.250-.270	40; Below average
.225-.250	30; Well below average
<.225	20; Poor; Zima

Home Run Power	Home Runs at the MLB Level
39+	80; Elite
32-38	70; Well above average; plus-plus
25-32	60; Above average; plus
17-25	50; Average
11-17	40; Below average
5-11	30; Well below average
<5	20; Poor; Zima

The table below show how long it takes for the batter to get from home plate first base after he hits the ball. The best (fastest) times you can get is what's called a jail break, where the runner sprints to first base. For example, to avoid a double play the hitter will run the fastest to first base.

Speed (Left/Right)	Grade
3.9 (L)/ 4.0 (R)	80; Elite
4.0 (L)/ 4.1 (R)	70; Well above average; plus-plus
4.1 (L)/ 4.2 (R)	60; Above average; plus
4.2 (L)/ 4.3 (R)	50; Average
4.3 (L)/ 4.4 (R)	40; Below average
4.4 (L)/ 4.5 (R)	30; Well below average
4.5 (L)/ 4.6 (R)	20; Poor; Zima

Hitting Abbreviations

2B - Doubles

3B - Triples

AB - At Bats

AB/GIDP - At-Bats per Grounded Into Double Play

AB/HR - At-Bats per Home Run

AB/RBI - At-Bats per Runs Batted In

AO - Fly Outs

AVG - Batting Average

BB - Bases on Balls (Walks)

CS - Caught Stealing

FB - Fly Ball

G - Games Played

GB - Ground Ball

GIDP - Ground into Double Plays

GO - Ground Outs

GO/AO - Ground Outs/Fly Outs

GSH - Grand Slam Home Runs

H - Hits

HBP - Hit by Pitch

HR - Home Runs

IBB - Intentional Walks

LD - Line Drive

LIPS - Late Inning Pressure Situations

LOB - Left On Base

NP - Number of Pitches

OBP - On-base Percentage

OPS - On-base Plus Slugging Percentage

PA/SO - Plate Appearances per Strikeout

R - Runs Scored

RBI - Runs Batted In

SAC - Sacrifice Bunts

SB% - Stolen Base Percentage

SB - Stolen Bases

SF - Sacrifice Flies

SLG - Slugging Percentage

SO - Strikeouts

TB - Total Bases

TP - Triple Play
TPA - Total Plate Appearances
XBH - Extra Base Hits

Pitching Abbreviations

AO - Fly Outs
APP - Appearances
AVG - Opponents Batting Average
BB - Bases on Balls (Walks)
BB/9 - Walks per Nine Innings
BF - Batters Faced
BK - Balks
BS - Blown Save
CG - Complete Games
CGL - Complete Game Losses
CS - Caught Stealing
ER - Earned Runs
ERA - Earned Run Average
FB - Fly Ball
G - Games Played
GF - Games Finished
GB - Ground Ball
GIDP - Grounded Into Double Plays
GO - Ground Outs
GO/AO - Ground Outs/ Fly Outs Ratio
GS - Games Started
GSH - Grand Slams
H - Hits
H/9 - Hits per Nine Innings
HB - Hit Batsmen
HLD - Hold
HR - Home Runs
I/GS - Innings Per Games Started
IBB - Intentional Walks
IP - Innings Pitched
IRA - Inherited Runs Allowed
K/9 - Strikeouts per Nine Innings
K/BB - Strikeout/Walk Ratio

L - Losses
LD - Line Drive
LIPS - Late Inning Pressure Situations
LOB - Left on Base
MB/9 - Baserunners per 9 Innings
NP - Number of Pitches Thrown
OBA - On-base Against
PA - Plate Appearances
P/GS - Pitches per Start
P/IP - Pitches per Innings Pitched
PK - Pick-offs
R - Runs
RW - Relief Wins
SB - Stolen Bases
SHO - Shutouts
SLG - Slugging Percentage Allowed
SO - Strikeouts
SV - Saves
SVO - Save Opportunities
TB - Total Bases
TJ – Tommy John Surgery
TP - Triple Plays
UR - Unearned Runs
W - Wins
WHIP - Walks + Hits/Innings Pitched
WP - Wild Pitches
WPCT - Winning Percentage
XBA - Extra Base Hits Allowed

Overall Draft Strategy

Every fantasy player should create their projections for the upcoming season. The projections should be what is most likely to happen and not the most optimistic outcome. If a player consistent hurt (i.e. **Troy Tulowitzki**) then your projections should not expect him to play in 155 games. If you sit down and for one night you'll be able to come up with your own projections which will be invaluable because it allows to think about every player instead of relying on a narrative that is in your mind. If you do not have the time to create your own projections I recommend taking the average three or four sources you feel are really good. When you're evaluating sources to use I recommend you try to identify who wrote those projections. Usually they're written by one person or in the case of some sites, an average of all the writers on the staff, which is the worst version because the rankings will be generic.

Once you have your projections I recommend creating a value formula so you can numerically rank all of your players. If you're looking for a sample value formula and more in-depth information about this process I recommend reading *Winning Fantasy Baseball* by **Larry Schechter**. The book also goes into how to create player projections and how to get the most value possible during various draft styles.

Try Not Be Influenced by the Hosting Draft Sites Projections

Every website hosting draft use their own rankings and projections in draft rooms. Why is this important? Two reasons: 1) it's difficult not to be influenced by them during the draft. 2) This may be a shock to some of you, but there are always a good number of owners who did not prepare at all or only prepared for the first five rounds. What usually happens for these owners is they heavily rely on the hosting websites projections to make their draft decisions. Draft the team you want to have.

Position Scarcity

Other than catcher, I no longer believe this to be true. This is a myth that has plagued the industry for far too long. Regardless the size of your league the pool of players will be limited to the top X number of players and the stats show that value of the last player at each position is relatively the same. Larry Schechter proves this in his book *Winning Fantasy Baseball*. I highly recommend reading it.

A lot of times owners will overpay to get a player at a "scarce" position, but that does more harm than good. For example, if you play in 12-team league and there are 14 starting offensive positions for each team then the hitter player pool will consist of 168 players. Every player has a numerical number (or value) attached to them. The 168th player will have a specific value and so will the first player. Depending on when you draft that player you will either earn a profit or a loss. The 14th shortstop may not be as good as the second shortstop, but if you overpay for the second shortstop you're losing value because you could have rostered another player for more value at the same cost. The table below provides a crude example of a player overpaying for player at a "scarce" position. The first fantasy owner (blue heading) overpaid for a shortstop and got a nice value on an outfielder, but since he/she overpaid for the shortstop he/she only broke even. However, the green player was able to make a profit on both his outfielder and a shortstop, which means the green team should outperform the blue team.

Pos.	Value	Cost	Profit	Value	Cost	Profit
SS	\$18	\$20	-\$2	\$5	\$2	\$3
OF	\$3	\$1	\$2	\$22	\$19	\$3
Total	\$20	\$21	\$0	\$27	\$21	\$6

Get As Much Value As Possible

As I alluded to in the Position Scarcity section it's very important to get as much value as possible. In that section I mentioned every draft has a specific number of players and each of those players have specific values. Your goal should be at the end of the draft is to have as much profit as possible. If you're only at breakeven at the end of the draft you'll likely finish the year with a mediocre, middle of the road team. If you create your own projections and use a good value formula you'll be able to identify which players provide the most value during your draft (whether it's an auction or snake draft). Obviously, you do not want to load on one category, say stolen bases, just because you're able to get them at a good value. You want to be aware of how your team is looking and what type of players you need as the draft progresses. If you look at the table in the Position Scarcity section you'll notice the green generated more value than the blue team, which will give him a leg up.

Catcher Preview

The catching position has six top tier players with the next ten or 11 all about the same. After the top 17-18 you're grabbing at straws, but there are some players with nice upside. My strategy for this position depends on the type of league you're in. Specifically, if the league requires one or two catchers. If it's a 10-team mixer with one catcher league I'll be most likely be the last owner drafting a catcher. If it's a 12-team mixer with one catcher I'm going to try to acquire a tier one catcher, but if I don't get one then I'm waiting. If it's a two catcher league (regardless of size) I want at least one catcher in the first three tiers. Then I don't mind waiting for my second catcher especially if I got a tier one catcher. It's very important to note replacement level at catcher is extremely shallow and if you don't grab one you're going to have to start guys like **Jose Lobaton** like I did in one league last year.

Tier 1

Name
Joe Mauer
Buster Posey

Joe Mauer is my number one rated catcher because the switch to first base should result an increase in 10-15 percent of plate appearances assuming he's healthy. It's a mistake to automatically assume he'll stay healthy all year because of the position change, but you have to make a call and I'm betting he comes close to 600 at-bats. Combine that with a .323 lifetime batting average. **Buster Posey** quietly had a bad second half of the year (.244/.333/.310 slash line), which again proves he's not as good as his 2012 numbers indicate.

Tier 2

Name
Yadier Molina
Jonathan Lucroy
Wilin Rosario
Carlos Santana

If **Carlos Santana** plays the majority of games not as a catcher then he's my favorite out of this group because he's a far better hitter when he's not catching. **Yadier Molina** appears to be the safest player, but he's turning 32 in July and there's a lot of mileage on his body. Eventually he's going to slow down, but he hasn't shown signs yet. If **Jonathan Lucroy** played a full season in 2012 he would have finished the year with 20 home runs and 7 stolen bases. Last year he had 18 home runs and nine stolen bases. He legitimately has 20/10 upside.

Tier 3

Name
Salvador Perez
Miguel Montero

Matt Wieters
Brian McCann

I wouldn't be surprised if any of these players finish the year in the second tier because of each of them has the upside. **Miguel Montero** will bat fourth in a good lineup, but was the 2013 season the start of the decline? **Brian McCann** has hit 20-plus home runs since 2008, but will he hold up for a full year and will he sellout for power at the expense of the batting average? Will **Matt Wieters** finally stop switch hitting and finally start hitting righties? **Salvador Perez** finally played a full year, but he didn't build upon the promise of the 2012 season as his extra base hit percentage dropped almost one percentage point.

Tier 4

Name
A. J. Pierzynski
Josmil Pinto
Yan Gomes
Evan Gattis
Yasmani Grandal
Wilson Ramos
Jason Castro

Based on how **Jason Castro** performed last year it may be strange I have him this low, but he has injury concerns and I doubt he'll maintain a .351 BABIP and a 26.5 percent strikeout rate again. If **Yan Gomes** somehow gets the lion share of the catching duties he would be a tier three catcher because I believe in his bat. Despite his massive raw power, I'm not going to own **Evan Gattis** this year because the scouting report suggests he'll have a hard time making consistent contact. I'm not buying **Wilson Ramos** as a power threat because his 50-plus percent ground ball is extremely high for any power looking to hit 20-plus home runs.

Tier 5

Name
Derek Norris
John Jaso
Ryan Doumit
Carlos Ruiz
Jesus Montero
Devin Mesoraco
Wellington Castillo
Travis d'Arnaud
Jarrod Saltalamacchia
Russell Martin
Stephen Vogt

Mike Zunino
J. P. Arencibia
Hank Conger

If I have to pick one of these players for my fantasy team then I must have done something wrong in my draft. If I had to pick one these players I want **Devin Mesoraco**. He plays in a great hitter's ballpark, finally has the starting catcher job and has the raw tools to be a tier two catcher (**Kevin Goldstein** rated him as a [five-star prospect](#) and was rated as the [24th best prospect](#) in the majors back in 2012). Before the 2013 season one of my bold predictions was **Wellington Castillo** would hit 20 home runs. Obviously that didn't happen, but he did six of his eight home runs after the all-star break.

First Base Preview

Overall, if you're looking for power then first base quenches that, but it will come at a cost. Outside of **Paul Goldschmidt** and **Edwin Encarnacion** the power is going to come out at the expense of batting average. If you believe in **Chris Davis**, which I do not, then there's a third player. The second tier of first base will provide higher batting averages, but with only 17-25 power. Based on the construction of your roster during the draft it's important to identify which type of first baseman that will be needed in order to create a balanced team. Based on the NFBC ADPs in mid-February low batting average, power type of players are going later in drafts. This can present an opportunity if you build your roster with higher batting average players earlier in your drafts.

Tier 1

Player
Paul Goldschmidt
Edwin Encarnacion
Joey Votto
Chris Davis

Goldschmidt is the premiere first baseman because he's the only player who can provide above average production in all five categories. I have **Joey Votto** ahead of **Chris Davis** because I'm not automatically assuming he's not going to drive in runs this year. **Billy Hamilton** replacing **Shin-Soo Choo** in the lineup will reduce Votto's opportunities, but he also had the lowest batting average since 2008 with runners in scoring position. Davis is a very interesting player because last season came out of nowhere. His power is legitimate as I'm projecting him for 40 home runs, but I'm not sold he can on the .270-plus batting average. Encarnacion earns my number two rating because of his consistency the past two seasons.

Tier 2

Player
Prince Fielder
Eric Hosmer
Adrian Gonzalez

Freddie Freeman
Albert Pujols
Allen Craig

Prince Fielder has gotten himself in great shape and his personal problems should be behind him, but he's been making less hard contact year over year for the past three years. **Allen Craig** is this low because I have concerns about his ability to stay on the field the whole season especially if he's playing 65-plus percent of his games in right field and not because of last year's low power numbers. **Adrian Gonzalez** may no longer have a high ceiling, but he has a high floor. I love **Eric Hosmer**, but I'm concerned what his true power potential is. There are not many 20-plus home run hitters who hit ground balls more than 52 percent of the time. **Freddie Freeman** is a player who does everything well, but doesn't provide anything exceptional. I saved **Albert Pujols** for last because he is one of the most polarizing first basemen. You either believe his 2013 season derailed by injury and is due to bounce back to the 2011-12 form or the injury only exacerbated his decline. Not to tote the line, but last year it was a combination of both. He has a power ceiling of 30 home runs and he should have a lot of RBI opportunities with **Mike Trout** hitting in front of him the entire year.

Tier 3

Player
Mark Trumbo
Anthony Rizzo
Brandon Moss
Brandon Belt

Its possible **Mark Trumbo** could hit 40-plus home runs, but it's not as likely as you may think. In the last three years his HR/FB rate is 21.8 percent (compared to 19 percent at home) and if apply that rate the number of fly balls he hits in a season (150) then he would only hit 32.7 home runs. **Brandon Moss'** adjustments at the plate during the second half of the year and the limited at-bats against lefties make me a believer in his 2013 season. I love **Brandon Belt**, but the Giants ballpark dramatically suppresses his power potential. I have a hard time believing **Anthony Rizzo** will have another sub-.259 BABIP again.

Tier 4

Player
Nick Swisher
Adam LaRoche
Kendrys Morales
Corey Hart
Jose Abreu
Matt Adams
Mike Napoli

This tier of players are all basically the same as they'll provide 18-22 home runs with a batting average that won't help or hurt your ratios except for **Jose Abreu**. Abreu is a true wild card as he has the raw power to hit 35-plus home runs, but the scouting reports I've read question how much contact he's going to make. I wouldn't be surprised if **Matt Adams** was out of a starting job after two months because of **Allen Craig's** injury history and **Oscar Taveras** is an elite level prospect with a much higher ceiling than Adams. Adams did have 17 bombs, but eight of them came in September against possible below average pitchers. As of mid-February **Kendrys Morales** doesn't have a job and if he did, he would be my favorite player of this tier.

Tier 5

Player
Adam Dunn
Justin Morneau
Mark Teixeira
Chris Carter
Adam Lind
Mitch Moreland
Ryan Howard
James Loney
Yonder Alonso
Garrett Jones
Ike Davis
Logan Morrison

If I'm picking from someone on this list to put into my starting lineup then my draft has gone horribly wrong, but if had to pick one player I would go with **Justin Morneau** because he could have a 2013 **Michael Cuddyer** season and BABIP his way to a .290-plus batting average. **Chris Carter** is very intriguing because he could literally hit 35-plus bombs if his contact rate improves. **Mark Teixeira** was already in decline before missing the majority of 2013 season and I have doubts he'll be productive right out of the chute. If you leave a car in the garage for a year and turn it on, it's not going to run as well. **Ryan Howard** would be higher in the tier if he was platooned against lefties.

Second Base Preview

Second base is one of the deeper offensive positions in fantasy because there are players in every tier that could conceivably be in the first tier in 2015. Unlike shortstop second base doesn't provide very many elite level stolen base options. Instead, the position is rich with players who will provide average to above average production in at least four categories. With a lot of these players bunched up it's even more important to find the player that exceeds his draft day value.

Tier 1

Player
Robinson Cano
Jason Kipnis
Dustin Pedroia

With an early-ADP of 9.46 in NFBC leagues there is a lot of doubt about **Robinson Cano** moving to Seattle, [but I'm not one of them](#). Despite collapsing during the second half the past two seasons **Jayson Kipnis** could be a 20/30 player with an average batting average. How high is **Dustin Pedroia's** ceiling? Last year he had the lowest stolen base totals and isolated power of his career.

Tier 2

Player
Aaron Hill
Daniel Murphy
Matt Carpenter
Ian Kinsler

Despite coming off a significant injury a lot of fantasy owners are forgetting how good **Aaron Hill** was before the injury. Two years ago he 26 home runs, 14 stolen bases with a .302 batting average. If you ever saw **Daniel Murphy** play it would be hard to believe he's such a good fantasy player. I was believer in his talent last year and I'm not shying away. **Matt Carpenter** had a really good year, but I doubt he hits .388 with runners in scoring position again. I wasn't a **Ian Kinsler** guy last year and [I don't believe the change of scenery changes very much](#).

Tier 3

Player
Jose Altuve
Brandon Phillips
Martin Prado
Howie Kendrick
Ben Zobrist
Omar Infante
Jed Lowrie

Jose Altuve may have the most steals among second basemen at the end of the year, but he doesn't have much power and the Astros will most likely be bad for at least the first half of the season, which means he'll score less runs and have fewer RBI opportunities. Even though **Brandon Phillips** is in decline he'll still have value because he'll likely either bat second or fourth. If you compare **Martin Prado's** and **Howard Kendrick's** stats the past three seasons there isn't much of a difference, but Prado is going 65 spots ahead of Kendrick, which doesn't make sense. **Ben Zobrist's** baseball card statistics were down but

his contact rates were better last year. Barring a miracle resurgent year I see his home runs and stolen bases decreasing even more. **Omar Infante** is going to bat second for the Royals, which means he could score 90-plus runs especially if you believe **Eric Hosmer** takes the next step. You're likely not going to play **Jed Lowrie** at second base, but he's going to hit atop the A's lineup and I do not believe he's injury prone because his previous injuries have been fluky in nature.

Tier 4

Player
Brian Dozier
Jedd Gyorko
Chase Utley

It's easy to see the 19.5 HR/FB rate during the second of the season and say **Jedd Gyorko** is a prime candidate for regression, especially in that ballpark. However, he's hit for power the past three seasons in the majors and minors, which makes me believe the power is legit. **Brian Dozier's** power numbers may have been lucky because he had the second lowest average home run distance in the majors. When **Chase Utley** played he was extremely productive. Despite playing in the most games since 2009, but I still have injury concerns.

Tier 5

Player
Dan Uggla
Jurickson Profar
Neil Walker
Kolten Wong
Jordy Mercer
Dustin Ackley
Anthony Rendon
Marco Scutaro
Scooter Gennett
Gordon Beckham
Alexander Guerrero
Jemile Weeks

It's easy to right off **Dan Uggla's** poor year and say he no longer has value, but Uggla couldn't see last year, which means he could provide a positive ROI. I wouldn't be surprised if he hits 25-plus home runs with a .225-plus batting average. **Scooter Gennett** can flat out hit, but he won't hit for much power and will most likely be in a platoon with **Rickie Weeks**. Despite the high prospect rankings I'm not buying **Anthony Rendon** can stay on the field for a full year and if he did, I don't expect the average to be above .270 or the power to be above 14. Profar's prospect may make him a hot commodity on draft day, but if

you actually read his scouting reports his value came primarily from the glove. He's going to be a great player, but not in 2014.

Shortstop Preview

Shortstop is filled with a lot of stolen bases, which means if you don't get steals at this position you better acquire it at other positions. If you do get stolen bases at other positions you could get tremendous values with power-first players. In general this may be a position where it's better to wait to get your shortstop because the players at the top all have major questions entering into 2014.

Tier 1

Player
Troy Tulowitzki
Everth Cabrera
Ian Desmond

Before **Everth Cabrera** was suspended he was the number three shortstop on ESPN's Player Rater. As of mid-February he's going as the seventh shortstop, which I obviously think is too low. I do not believe he's injury prone and if he plays a full season he could provide 50-plus stolen bases. **Ian Desmond** looks like a slam dunk for 20/20, but there is risk with the batting average. For the past two seasons most of his batting average was fueled by swinging on 0-0 counts. Last year pitchers started making adjustments in those counts and he was a less effective pitcher.

Tier 2

Player
Starlin Castro
Jose Reyes
Hanley Ramirez
Elvis Andrus

The biggest question with **Jose Reyes** is how many stolen bases will he steal? If he steals 35-plus bags he's my number one shortstop. If he plays a full year he's very likely to steal 30-plus, but I have questions he can stay on the field even though last year's injury was fluky. I may be on an island here, but I believe **Starlin Castro** bounces back to the all-star level player he was before the 2013 season. Before the season the Cubs changed his approach at the plate. Specifically, they wanted him to walk more and get deeper into counts, but obviously that didn't work. I expect him to go back to his old approach. I understand why some would consider **Hanley Ramirez** as a top ten overall pick, but it doesn't make any sense to me. His 2013 numbers are clearly going to regress and the past two seasons he hasn't played well. **Elvis Andrus'** value comes from his potential stolen base totals and the fact he'll have high run totals batting second in the lineup.

Tier 3

Player
Ben Zobrist
Jed Lowrie
J. J. Hardy
Jean Segura
Andrelton Simmons
Xander Bogaerts
Alexei Ramirez

I'm extremely down on **Jean Segura** because he fell off the face of the Earth the second half of the season. It's possible he faded at the end of the year due to poor conditioning or learning the rigors of playing in the majors, but he's being taken ahead of **Jose Reyes** and **Ian Desmond**, which tells me fantasy owners are drafting last year's stats. **Jed Lowrie's** batting average is likely to regress, but not as much as you think. He's a fly ball/line drive hitter and makes a lot of solid contact, which will allow him to have a lot of doubles. Also, he'll likely bat either second or third for the majority of the year. **Ben Zobrist's** baseball card statistics were down but his contact rates were better last year. Barring a miracle resurgent year I see his home runs and stolen bases decreasing even more. If you get speed at other positions you'll get a great opportunity to draft Hardy's 20-plus power on the cheap. Contrary to **Andrelton Simmons'** scouting reports he hit for power and didn't steal very many bases. He'll likely hit fewer home runs than last year, but I think he'll steal 10-plus bases. **Alexei Ramirez's** stolen bases depend if he'll make enough contact to get on-base to steal bases again. In 2014 the batting average regresses and the stolen base totals decrease. **Xander Bogaerts** has the potential to hit 30-plus home runs when he reaches his offensive ceiling. That makes him extremely intriguing especially if you missed out on Hardy and are looking for power.

Tier 4

Player
Brad Miller
Jonathan Villar
Erick Aybar
Asdrubal Cabrera
Jordy Mercer
Jhonny Peralta

Jonathan Villar could steal 40-plus bases, but his batting average could be in the .230s. His scouting report suggests he could also hit 6-plus home runs, which makes him more attractive than other speed-first players. Even though he's still a work in progress **Brad Miller** flashed brilliance and performed well during the last two months of the season (.431 slugging). It's possible **Asdrubal Cabrera** is done as an everyday player after this season, but he'll still bat fifth or sixth, which means he'll have RBI opportunities. **Jhonny Peralta** is a better player than Cabrera, but since Peralta will most likely bat

seventh or eighth in the National League means he has less upside for runs and RBIs. No one is talking about **Jordy Mercer** as a solid fantasy option, but he performed last year, looks to have the everyday job and has 15/15 upside.

Tier 5

Player
Alcides Escobar
Jimmy Rollins
Yunel Escobar
Zack Cozart
Stephen Drew
Derek Jeter
Brandon Crawford

How many games does **Derek Jeter** play? Over-under on 85 games? I'm taking the under, which means not draftable in leagues besides AL-only. **Alcides Escobar** has the raw speed to steal 30-plus stolen bases, but his biggest problem is getting to first base. Since he doesn't walk his bat, which is below average, needs to improve if he's going to get on-base enough to be fantasy relevant.

Third Base Preview

Third base is a very deep position, but other than the first tier of players, this position is full of question marks with wide ranging possibilities. Similar to first base, there isn't a lot of stolen base potential, but there are a lot of middle tier players that will hit 18-plus home runs. However, unlike first base, the middle and late tiers have plenty of young players with the high upsides.

Tier 1

Player
Miguel Cabrera
Adrian Beltre
David Wright

Miguel Cabrera is either the first or second pick depending on your preference, but I do have some slight worries about his potential to play a full season even if he plays the majority of the year at first base. For three years in a row **David Wright** has outperformed **Evan Longoria** on ESPN's Player Rater, but Wright continues to get drafted after him, which doesn't make any sense. Even though **Adrian Beltre** will be turning 35 in April it looks as though he shows no signs of slowing down.

Tier 2

Player
Josh Donaldson

Evan Longoria
Kyle Seager
Matt Carpenter
Ryan Zimmerman

When evaluating **Josh Donaldson** you either believe last year was real or a fluke. I believe it was real. His batting average will regress to the .280s and he'll continue to bat second or third for an A's offense that should be better than last year. Everyone loves Longoria, but I only see a three category player who doesn't steal bases anymore and could be a batting average liability if he continues to strikeout 20 percent of the time. If **Kyle Seager** didn't have a brutal second half of the year his final numbers would have been a lot better. He's one of the rare players who can provide average to above average production in all five categories. At this point it's almost a certainty **Ryan Zimmerman** will miss at least two weeks of the season with an injury, but when he plays he's extremely effective.

Tier 3

Player
Pablo Sandoval
Chase Headley
Martin Prado
Pedro Alvarez
Aramis Ramirez
Brett Lawrie

In the early preseason [I wrote I wasn't high on Brett Lawrie](#), but according to his ADPs he presents a good value as he's being drafted as the 14th third baseman in NFBC drafts. If he plays a full year he could be a 15/15 player with upside for 20/20. He may also have a higher likelihood of injury due to his levels of #WANT, but at that ADP he is worth the gamble. If anyone is going to take this year seriously it's **Pablo Sandoval** because this is the last year of his deal. Headley is the **Alex Gordon** of third base as he doesn't provide above average stats, but he provides average value in every category. The biggest question with **Pedro Alvarez** is what will his batting average be? **Aramis Ramirez** is in decline and I prefer taking younger players with higher upside.

Tier 4

Player
Will Middlebrooks
Todd Frazier
Nick Castellanos
Matt Dominguez
Manny Machado
Nolan Arenado

If **Will Middlebrooks** is given every day at-bats he could hit 30-plus home runs. However, he's an extremely sneaky player and is prone to long cold streaks, which will make him a batting average risk. If **Todd Frazier** can become a .250 hitter he could be extremely valuable because of his 18-plus home runs and 4-9 stolen bases. **Matt Dominguez** has a real opportunity to become this year's **Josh Donaldson** (in terms of real life value) because they play superb defense, were post-hype first round draft picks and have similar raw power. **Manny Machado** provides more real life value than fantasy value because he doesn't hit for much power and he doesn't steal bases. During the second half of the season his performance fell off dramatically. **Nolan Arenado** could be a sneaky sleeper not only because of the home ballpark, but because he makes a lot of contact. My biggest hesitation is how much hard contact will he make?

Tier 5

Player
David Freese
Chris Johnson
Mike Moustakas
Matt Davidson
Lonnie Chisenhall
Mike Olt
Trevor Plouffe

Some fantasy owners may see **Chris Johnson's** extremely high BABIP and write off his 2013 season, but he has always been a high BABIP player. For example, before the 2013 season he had a career .347 BABIP. **Matt Davidson** is not a highly touted prospect which makes him an unsexy draft pick, but he has the raw power for 20 home runs and will get an opportunity to play every day. This is a make or break year for **Mike Moustakas** as **Danny Valencia** will most likely be his platoon partner against lefties.

Outfield Preview

After the first 3-4 players the outfield position is full of question marks, which means this position has a lot of players with upside and a lot of players who will disappoint. If you're playing with four-plus outfielders the outfielders you roster will determine whether you win or lose your league. Overall, I recommend rostering outfielders earlier rather than later in your drafts.

Tier 1

Player
Mike Trout
Ryan Braun
Andrew McCutchen
Jacoby Ellsbury
Adam Jones

Carlos Gonzalez

When I look at **Ryan Braun** I'm not worried about any potential hangover effect after his suspension and I expect him to return to the 30-plus home run and 15-plus stolen base totals. I'm predicting 13 home runs for **Jacoby Ellsbury**, which could be overly optimistic considering his home run totals outside of the monster year, but I'm banking on him getting a few extra home runs in that ballpark. Jones is seen as the safe, consistent pick, but if the ground ball rate stays at 48 percent I wouldn't be surprised if the power decreases. When **Carlos Gonzalez** went on the DL he was number one on ESPN's Player Rater. He is going to play a more taxing defensive position which isn't a good thing if you're banking on him staying healthy.

Tier 2

Player
Bryce Harper
Carlos Gomez
Matt Holliday
Alex Rios
Shin-Soo Choo
Yasiel Puig
Hunter Pence
Jay Bruce
Jayson Werth
Giancarlo Stanton

I was bullish on **Bryce Harper** last year and I still am this year because his numbers before running into a wall were extremely good. Pence saved his fantasy season with a monster September. He'll likely regress somewhat, but he's a five category player that will not hurt you in any category. Which **Alex Rios** will we get this year? Are the career high stolen base totals repeatable? I believe so. I've never been a fan of **Justin Upton** from a fantasy perspective because he's always been over drafted despite the statistical evidence. The big question with **Jayson Werth** is how many games will he miss? If he plays in 130-plus games I call that a win.

Tier 3

Player
Carlos Beltran
Allen Craig
Matt Kemp
Jose Bautista
Justin Upton
Alex Gordon
Melky Cabrera

Mark Trumbo
Jason Heyward
Starling Marte
Alejandro De Aza
Coco Crisp
Billy Hamilton
Alfonso Soriano
Brandon Moss
Curtis Granderson
Angel Pagan
Yoenis Cespedes
Torii Hunter
Josh Reddick
Domonic Brown
Shane Victorino
Wil Myers

Yoenis Cespedes' lack of an approach of the plate limits his upside despite how well he performed in his rookie year. I may be too low on **Giancarlo Stanton**, but how confident are you he receives more than 500 at-bats in 2014? **Angel Pagan** missed a substantial amount of the 2013 season with a hamstring injury, but he's stolen at 30 bases the previous three seasons (ok I cheated, he had 29 in 2012). Will **Matt Kemp** be ready on Opening Day? If so, can he play a full season? He is one of the players who will win you your league if he returns to form. Crisp's had the lowest average home run distance of any player last year, which tells me the power will regress. **Melky Cabrera** played four months of the season with various leg injuries before they found the cause of the injury; a tumor was found on his spinal cord. He had successful surgery and should healthy in 2014. For most of last year **Josh Reddick** battled a wrist injury, which ultimately put him on the DL twice and required offseason surgery. I believe 2013 was a lost season for him and I'm expecting the power to come back.

Tier 4

Player
Michael Brantley
Josh Hamilton
Nick Swisher
Michael Cuddyer
Corey Hart
Norichika Aoki
Christian Yelich
Adam Eaton
Josh Willingham
Craig Gentry

Martin Prado
Austin Jackson
Ben Revere
Brett Gardner
Ben Zobrist
Michael Bourn
Oscar Taveras
Avisail Garcia
Desmond Jennings
George Springer
Colby Rasmus
Will Venable
Leonys Martin

If **George Springer** were guaranteed to a roster spot on the major league club, he would be a top 20-25 outfielder because of the speed and power combination. If **Corey Hart** can play a full year he could hit 25-plus home runs. If **Oscar Taveras** began the year with a full time job he could be a top 20 outfielder. **Colby Rasmus** became more aggressive at the plate and hit for a ton of power. The problem is he struck out more and became a batting average risk. **Michael Cuddyer's** great 2013 season was due to an unsustainable BABIP. I bet there's one owner in every league that looks at his 2013 season and pays for last season's stats. During the second half of the year **Josh Hamilton** was an above average outfielder (.287 batting average, .801 OPS and seven home runs). The only question is will that performance continue in 2014?

Tier 5

Player
Nick Markakis
Michael Morse
Marlon Byrd
Nate Schierholtz
Junior Lake
Dexter Fowler
Carlos Quentin
Denard Span
Daniel Nava
Chris Carter
Chris Young
Kole Calhoun
Carl Crawford
Peter Bourjos
Jackie Bradley Jr.

Khris Davis
Rajai Davis
Gerardo Parra
Michael Saunders
Oswaldo Arcia
Matt Joyce

Based on the A's outfielders to stay on the field I wouldn't be surprised if **Craig Gentry** gets 400 at-bats and steals 30 bases. Some fantasy analysts have **Khris Davis** in their top 20-25, which doesn't make sense to me. His power numbers in the minors suggest his 2013 small sample will not repeat. **Carl Crawford** could be higher but how many at-bats will he get? **Michael Morse's** biggest problem has been staying on the field, but when he plays he's extremely good (.818 OPS the past four seasons with 77 home runs in 1,635 plate appearances). **Chris Young's** problems came when he altered his swing to cope with not playing every day. He's going to play every day for the Mets and it's possible he reverts back to the power and speed player. **Oswaldo Arcia** has above average raw power and is playing on a team that will allow him to get at-bats every day even when he runs into rough patches. However, he struggled immensely against non-fastballs, which means he is more likely to be a batting average risk.

Starting Pitcher Preview

This is the deepest position in fantasy, but it's not as deep as you think. It's important to acquire at least one tier one pitcher to act as the foundation of your pitching staff. With strikeout rates at all-time highs you need to roster at least two 200 strikeout pitchers (there were only 17 pitchers with 195-plus last year).

Tier 1

Player
Yu Darvish
Clayton Kershaw
Cliff Lee
Adam Wainwright
Max Scherzer
Felix Hernandez
Madison Bumgarner
Chris Sale
Jose Fernandez
David Price

Clayton Kershaw was really good last year, but not good enough to warrant a top ten draft pick because he doesn't produce overwhelming stats in all four categories. He was the best pitcher last year, but even so, his stats were not overwhelming. **Felix Hernandez's** fastball velocity has been in decline for at least five years and he has been able to maintain success. I see no reason why he falters this year. **David Price**

is staying in Tampa Bay, which improves his fantasy value because of the home ballpark and the quality of defense behind him. He changed his approach, specifically; he started to throw a lot of strikes (at **Cliff Lee** levels). In redraft leagues I'm not concerned about **Chris Sale's** health for the season because of two words: **Don Cooper**. The White Sox revamped the offensive, which provides optimism he can have a winning record.

Tier 2

Player
Stephen Strasburg
Anibal Sanchez
Homer Bailey
Mike Minor
Jordan Zimmermann
James Shields
R.A. Dickey
Danny Salazar
Gerrit Cole
Justin Verlander
Cole Hamels
Gio Gonzalez
Matt Cain
Patrick Corbin
Mat Latos
Jered Weaver
Alex Cobb
Kris Medlen
Chris Tillman
Shelby Miller
Michael Wacha
Justin Masterson

Everyone loves **Stephen Strasburg**, but he has never thrown more than 183 innings in a season and his strikeout rate was the lowest of career last year. The **R.A. Dickey** ranking probably stands out the most, but I believe injuries caused the velocity of the knuckleball to drop, but during the last two months of the season the velocity returned and he performed near the stats of 2012. **Danny Salazar's** ranking may also look too high, but his strikeout rate was the second highest among starting pitchers last year. There are questions about his durability, but if you miss out on a high strikeout pitcher, he could easily provide 200-plus strikeouts. **Justin Masterson** finally figured how to get out lefties; he threw the slider more and increased his strikeout rate six percentage points. **Kris Medlen** doesn't put up massive strikeout rates, but he doesn't walk anyone and induces a lot of ground balls. Most people would not know he had a 3.11 ERA last year.

Tier 3

Player
Andrew Cashner
Corey Kluber
Hisashi Iwakuma
A.J. Griffin
Julio Teheran
Hiroki Kuroda
Masahiro Tanaka
Chris Archer
A.J. Burnett
Lance Lynn
Yordano Ventura
Zack Greinke
Jon Lester
CC Sabathia
Sonny Gray
Dan Straily
C.J. Wilson
Jose Quintana
Jeff Samardzija
Tim Lincecum
Scott Kazmir
Doug Fister
Rick Porcello
Ervin Santana
Dan Haren
Jarrod Parker

Yordano Ventura probably starts the year in the minors for the first month or so, but if the Royals have any chance of earning a playoff berth Ventura is going to have to be in the rotation (and not **Bruce Chen**). Greinke began spring training (in 2013) with elbow problems and proceeded to no longer throw his slider; that tells me something is wrong physically. I'm not owning him in any league. **Jarrod Parker** only struck out 16.4 percent of batters, which is far too low in an era where strikeout rates are the highest ever. **Tim Lincecum** made one big adjustment that has me very optimistic about 2014; he is longer throwing the fastball up in the zone. Before the 2013 season he started looking (last year) at his advanced statistics and realized throwing the fastball up in the zone was a bad thing. Last year was the lowest percentage of fastballs up in the zone. Everyone loves **Doug Fister** because he's leaving behind the Tigers infield defense, but the Nationals defense is not a vast upgrade. In fact, I believe it's a very slight upgrade. I'm also not bullish on **Sonny Gray** primarily due to he's only a two-pitch pitcher who saw tremendous success because teams never saw him before. If the changeup takes a step forward he is a tier two pitcher.

Tier 4

Player
Ivan Nova
Drew Smyly
Bartolo Colon
Ryan Vogelsong
Travis Wood
Tyson Ross
Ricky Nolasco
Johnny Cueto
Kyle Lohse
Alex Wood
John Lackey
Hyun-Jin Ryu
Clay Buchholz
Matt Moore
Taijuan Walker
Phil Hughes
Francisco Liriano
Tim Hudson
Matt Harrison
Bronson Arroyo
Scott Feldman
Randall Delgado
Edwin Jackson
Yovani Gallardo
Matt Garza
Wade Miley

The biggest reason why I have **Matt Garza** ranked so low is because of the injury risk and he has had an ERA above 3.81 in four out of the five seasons. I'm not buying **Hyun-Jin Ryu** because his stuff average and his performance decreased dramatically when teams saw him for the second, third and fourth time. I may be overly bullish on **Ryan Vogelsong**, but he was a top 25 pitcher from 2011-12 and still pitches in a great pitcher's park. I used to be a big believer in **Matt Moore**, but he walks too many hitters and loses command from inning to inning which makes him extremely inconsistent. There's a lot of hype surrounding **Taijuan Walker**, but he is far from a finished product. He still needs to dramatically refine the command of his changeup if he's going to have sustained success. **Clay Buchholz** is really good, but can you get more than 130 innings? **Bartolo Colon** had a great 2013 season and his new team has some of the ingredients as his old team. For example, the ballpark is great for fly balls and the defense in the outfield will be really good. He will not win as many games, but he should still be good.

Tier 5

Player
Miguel Gonzalez
Jake Odorizzi
Wei-Yin Chen
Martin Perez
Henderson Alvarez
Tony Cingrani
Zach Wheeler
Zach McAllister
Hector Santiago
Felipe Paulino
Brad Peacock
Jeremy Hellickson
Mark Buehrle
Wily Peralta
Jake Arrieta
Jason Vargas
Ian Kennedy
Jake Peavy
Marco Estrada
Ubaldo Jimenez
Joe Kelly
Archie Bradley
Josh Johnson
Erik Johnson
James Paxton
Jorge De La Rosa

With **Ubaldo Jimenez** I'm not buying the last four months of the season compared to two-plus years of bad performance. Once **Zack Wheeler** stopped tipping his pitches his season turned a corner, but he still has to refine his command. He may be unfairly compared to **Matt Harvey**, but Wheeler will eventually be really good ... most likely starting 2015. There are a lot of similarities between **Martin Perez** and **Jarrod Parker** in terms of their 2013 statistical performance, but Perez is going far later in drafts. I ranked Parker much higher because he plays in a better home ballpark, which makes him more streamable. That said, I wouldn't be surprised if Perez outperforms Parker. **Archie Bradley** is considered to be the best pitcher in the minors and if the Diamondbacks are going to the playoffs Bradley will have to be in the rotation. He could be this year's **Gerrit Cole**. **Henderson Alvarez** doesn't miss a lot of bats, but he does induce a lot of ground balls and doesn't walk people, which makes him a great streaming option. **Marco Estrada** is the same pitcher as **A.J. Griffin** with the only difference is Griffin plays in a

great ballpark while Estrada plays in a bad one. Estrada is a great streaming option when he's on the road.

Reliever/Closer Preview

If I'm playing in a shallow league (13 teams or less) I'm not drafting a high end closer and I'll wait for a middle of the road closer. It's possible to draft the closers you need near the end of your drafts. For example, last year I drafted (in a 12-team mixed league) **Grant Balfour**, **Jason Grilli** and **Casey Jansen** in the 16th and 17th rounds and I finished third in saves. In deeper leagues I want one of the closers in the first two tiers and I'll wait and grab one tier four closer.

Tier 1

Player
Craig Kimbrel
Greg Holland
Aroldis Chapman
Joe Nathan
Trevor Rosenthal
Kenley Jansen

Overall, these closers will provide elite production in four categories and there's no question the job belongs to them. I'm down on **Kenly Jansen** because of potential injury concerns (he had a heart problem two years ago) and with **Brian Wilson** waiting in the wings I wouldn't be surprised if Jansen's leash is the shortest among this group. **Joe Nathan** is the least dominate of the bunch, but he has been consistent his entire career and will play on a team that should win 90-plus games.

Tier 2

Player
David Robertson
Grant Balfour
Sergio Romo
Jim Johnson
Glen Perkins
Koji Uehara

I have no doubt **David Robertson** is the best reliever in the Yankee bullpen, but since he doesn't have the "experience" closing games he may have a short leash. If the potential short leash didn't exist he would be in the first tier. I'm not worried about the "failed" medicals for **Grant Balfour** because most teams were fine with them. Even though Balfour has lost some zip on the fastball he'll still pitch in another pitcher friendly ballpark and behind another great defense. Barring injury **Jim Johnson** is going to be the A's closer. In fact he's the safest player in this tier. I believe the Giants finish fourth in the

division and will therefore have less save opportunities, but at the end of the day **Sergio Romo** is the best option in the Giants bullpen.

Tier 3

Player
Jonathan Papelbon
Casey Janssen
Ernesto Frieri
Nate Jones
Rafael Soriano
Fernando Rodney
John Axford

If I'm drafting one of these players I want to make sure I roster the reliever next in line because I wouldn't be surprised if they lose the closer role during the season. **Jonathan Papelbon** is a fastball heavy pitcher and last year his fastball sat in the 92 range instead of the 95 we've been accustomed to. He has been one of the most reliable closers ever, but I have doubts about how many games the Phillies win and how often he'll be used (i.e. he won't pitch in extra-inning games unless it's a save opportunity). **Fernando Rodney** is probably the safest bet to keep the closer job because of the contract he signed, but the Mariners bullpen has at least two players who could take saves away. **John Axford** presents the highest upside because after realizing he was tipping his pitches (after he was traded to the Cardinals) his numbers got a lot better. **Ernesto Frieri** is prone to the home run ball, which makes him more dangerous in H2H leagues, but if the Angels improve their performance he could be a tier one closer.

Tier 4

Player
Jesse Crain
Bobby Parnell
Addison Reed
Jason Grilli
Jim Henderson

Addison Reed lost two mph on his fastball and threw the most sliders in his major league career. With **J.J. Putz** waiting in the wings the hook for Reed may be fast. **Jesse Crain** is a great reliever, but with a one year deal I wouldn't be surprised if he's pitching for a different club and subsequently no longer closing at the end of July. I like **Jim Henderson** a lot, but the signing of **Francisco Rodriguez** means the Brewers are dumb enough to give Rodriguez saves in order to trade him at the trade deadline again. I'm not convinced **Jason Grilli** pitches the whole year, which means **Mark Melancon** is the most important non-closer to roster. Parnell should be in tier three, but I want to see him pitch in spring training first.

Tier 5

Player
Steve Cishek
Huston Street
Neftali Feliz
Tommy Hunter
Rex Brothers
Jose Veras
LaTroy Hawkins

The **LaTroy Hawkins** sign doesn't make a lot of sense, but as of early February the Rockies are saying he'll split save opportunities with **Rex Brothers**. That may be the case now, but Brothers is the better reliever and it's only a matter of time before he Brothers takes full control of the closing duties. Veras is another candidate that will likely be traded at the deadline, but unlike a **Jesse Crain**, he's not a very good pitcher. **Neftali Feliz** is likely to be the closer, but **Joakim Soria** has been successful in that role before. As of early February this is a situation that should be closely monitored because whoever gets the closer role could be a tier two player. If you own **Houston Street** you need to roster **Joaquín Benoit** because Street will eventually get hurt.

Hitter Profiles/Capsules

The data in the in the main player table comes from Baseball Prospectus. You'll notice some of the numbers I reference in the write-up (primarily ground ball, fly ball, HR/FB rates) are not the same in the main player tables. When I wrote the player capsules I was looking at various websites for statistical information so for **Josh Reddick** I may have been looking at Fan Graphs and for **Jed Lowrie** I was looking at Baseball Reference. All I can do is look at the overall trends I'm referencing and not focus on the specific number. For example, if a player's ground ball rate has increased for three straight years it doesn't matter that the write-up says his ground ball rate last year was 54 percent while the main player table says 53 percent. The overall trend is what matters. Also, I provide the player rater numbers for ESPN and NFBC. The numbers are the player's primary position. Lastly, the players I choose are players that could be owned in a 15-team mixed league.

Please make sure to read my [scouting primer](#) before reading my player profiles as this will help you to read the player capsules, especially for the prospects because I quote prospect evaluators a lot and they use the same language in the primer.

Jose Abreu

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: White Sox | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
Proj.			530	27	75	87	1	.240						

Abreu is relative unknown to the fantasy community because most likely we haven't had an opportunity to get a lot of looks of him in person or by video. Even if we did see him hit, he wasn't hitting against major league quality pitchers with plus velocity and command and exploding secondary stuff. The relative instant success of **Yoenis Cespedes** and **Yasiel Puig** has, perhaps, created unreasonable expectations for Cuban players thinking any Cuban player can instantly do well. [Ben Badler](#) and [Keith Law](#) both rate his raw power as 70 on the 20-80 scouting scale, which means he has the raw power to hit 32-plus home runs in the majors. In terms of raw physical ability he provides far less flexibility, which will put more pressure on his bat. From Badler's article, "the scouting community is split over whether his power will translate against major league pitching. Some scouts consider his bat speed to be only average at best ..." Bat speed is extremely important for any major league hitter; if you don't believe me ask **Dee Gordon**. If his bat speed is limited he is going to have trouble against fastballs on the inner half of the plate because bat won't be able to catchup and hit the ball. He could start his bat early to "cheat" on the fastball, but that would make him susceptible to breaking pitches. I probably won't own in many leagues because I prefer to own players with a known skill set and offensive output, but if you're feeling lucky he could be a tremendous value in 2014.

Dustin Ackley**Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Mariners | Position: 2B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (40), NFBC (34)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	24	607	12	84	50	13/3	.226	.622	.265	18.6%	8.8%	28.2%	50.2%
2013	AAA	25	104	2	21	14	0/0	.365	.972	.409	11.1%	15.1%	-	-
2013	MLB	25	384	4	40	31	2/3	.253	.660	.301	16.9%	8.7%	20.5%	53.8%
Proj.			520	11	75	50	11	.250						

The beginning of the season was especially brutal for Ackley. He performed so poorly (.205/.266/.250 with one home run and a .250 BABIP) he was sent down to the minors. He raked in the minors and was called back up to the majors ... this time as an outfielder. After getting promoted he hit .285/.354/.404 with three home runs and a .335 BABIP. After the call-up there were some adjustments he made at the plate that helped him become more successful. First he reduced his strikeout rate from 18 percent to 16 percent. Second, he increased his walk rate from seven percent to 9.8 percent. However, there were no major differences in the types of contact he was making. Specifically, he hit the ball on the ground nearly 52 percent of the time, which is really high for him considering he had a career 44 percent rate before. Also, among players with at least 400 plate appearances he ranked 22nd in terms of ground ball rate.

He doesn't have any platoon split in major league career, which means his batting average will not be as variable as other left handed hitters. Since he hits so many ground balls he'll always be BABIP dependent and it appears as though he will not be a high BABIP player. At this point in his development his fantasy ceiling for 2014 is **Neil Walker**, which means he's an AL-only play. That said, if he leads off for the Mariners he could be a sneaky play in 12-15 mixed leagues with MI slots because the Mariners should have a much better middle of the order, which could lead an 85-plus run season.

Matt Adams**Bats: L | Age: 25 | Team: Cardinals | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (34), NFBC (25)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	258	18	41	50	3/1	.329	.986	.360	20.7%	5.4%	45.0%	33.0%
2012	MLB	23	86	2	8	13	0/0	.244	.669	.317	26.4%	5.5%	35.7%	48.2%
2013	MLB	24	296	17	46	51	0/1	.284	.839	.337	25.1%	7.2%	29.3%	47.1%
Proj.			480	22	65	77	0	.265						

After a poor debut in 2012, Adams rebounded with a breakout season, albeit in a limited sample, in 2013. With **Carlos Beltran** leaving opens the door for Adams to have every day at-bats as **Allen Craig** will move to right field. The question is what will Adams do with a full season of at-bats? Craig has had problems staying healthy in his career and it's no surprise he had the healthiest season of his career playing mostly at first base. There are two likely scenarios that are likely to play out: 1) the Cardinals allow Craig to play right field because they have **Oscar Taveras** waiting in the wings to set up when Craig

hits the DL. 2) Adams is platooned at first with Craig. Specifically, Adams plays first against right handers while Craig plays right field. Against lefties **Jon Jay** plays right field and Craig plays first base.

The raw power is huge and the approach of the plate is conducive to sustain the contact necessary to not be a batting average sink (i.e. **Ike Davis**). That said, his aggressiveness can be exploited against good breaking stuff (.217 batting average against changeups, curveballs and sliders), which is true for most young hitters. Even though he has the raw power it's unlikely to maintain the 23 percent HR/FB rate. Also, the .337 BABIP is likely to regress as the HR/FB regresses so the .284 batting average will likely to regress. Last year eight of 17 home runs came in September, which tells me his final home run numbers could be fluky. In September there are a lot of call ups and the competition gets diluted, which presents an opportunity to have inflated numbers at the end of the year. Therefore, I only see Adams as a .265 hitter with about 25 home runs if he plays a full year, which puts him in a class with **Kendrys Morales** and **Brandon Belt**. Right he's a super deep sleeper, but I think the hype train will come and by draft day, his increase his ADP to a point where he'll no longer be a value.

Yonder Alonso

Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Padres | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (41), NFBC (31)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	88	5	9	15	0/0	.330	.943	.387	21.4%	10.2%	25.4%	46.0%
2012	MLB	25	549	9	47	62	3/0	.273	.741	.318	16.3%	10.0%	29.7%	48.3%
2013	MLB	26	334	6	34	45	6/0	.281	.710	.306	12.5%	8.5%	25.7%	49.6%
Proj.			470	9	53	65	5	.275						

Alonso missed six weeks in June and July with a fractured hand and then most of September with another hand injury. In terms of his performance he strangely has a better numbers at home (.287/.363/.407) than on the road (.266/.329/.362). Also, his HR/FB rate on the road is almost the same as at home, which indicates he's not likely to find his power stroke. Also, he may lose more at-bats to **Kyle Blanks** who did something most of the hitters could not do, which was hit home runs in Petco. At this point Alonso is strictly a NL-option at this point.

Jose Altuve

Bats: R | Age: 23 | Team: Astros | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (6), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	221	2	26	12	7/3	.276	.654	.309	12.4%	2.1%	23.4%	56.5%
2012	MLB	22	576	7	80	37	33/11	.290	.740	.321	11.7%	6.3%	26.2%	55.3%
2013	MLB	23	626	5	64	52	35/13	.283	.678	.316	12.6%	4.8%	22.9%	52.1%
Proj.			590	5	70	60	30	.285						

Altuve went seventh and eighth in ESPN and NFBC leagues respectively and if you drafted him (like I did) you made a slight profit. That said, his 2013 season was a slight disappointment considering he didn't do one of the two things he was supposed to do, which is score runs. Before the 2013 season I assumed he

was almost a lock to score 80-plus runs because I expected him to bat second in the lineup. Well, he did that, but the Astros lineup was extremely bad. There a couple of new faces, Dexter Fowler being the most prominent one, that should help improve the lineup, but overall it's going to be another bad lineup. It's possible **George Springer** could earn a job to begin the season or come up in May. That's important to monitor because if he made the big league ball club he would be the Astros third or fourth best hitter. If Springer gets a lot of at-bats I'd feel better about projecting Altuve for 75-plus runs, but as of late January fantasy owners should expect 63-68.

What's a little concerning is the stolen base success rate decreased slightly (from 75 percent to 73 percent). His ability to steal 30-plus bases is important because the majority of his fantasy value comes from stolen bases. Even if only steals 20 stolen bases he'll provide a negative ROI based on where he's going in drafts. That said, the Astros are expected to be bad again (they should be improved, though), it's possible Astros manager, **Bo Porter**, will still allow him to try to steal bags because winning is not their top priority (at the major league level). Another concern is his isolated power nearly 30 points, which means he was making less hard contact. Last year he saw 15 percent more fastballs than previous years. Subsequently, his batting average dropped from .328 to .280 against fastballs. Barring a fluky BABIP year fantasy owners should expect a year similar to last year, but if the stolen base numbers decrease he'll provide a huge loss in value because he doesn't hit for a lower of power, he will not have a lot of RBIs due to poor lineup and there is not a lot of upside he can provide above average runs.

Pedro Alvarez

Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Pirates | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (11), NFBC (6)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	235	4	18	19	1/0	.191	.561	.272	30.5%	9.2%	23.0%	60.1%
2012	MLB	25	525	30	64	85	1/0	.244	.784	.308	30.7%	9.7%	32.5%	49.9%
2013	MLB	26	558	36	70	100	2/0	.233	.770	.276	30.3%	7.8%	26.7%	47.5%
Proj.			550	30	67	89	1	.230						

If you have watched Alvarz play the past two years it's pretty simple to analyze him from a fantasy perspective. He provides a lot of power; strikes out a lot, can't hit lefties, is extremely pull happy, which makes him susceptible to the shift and therefore will be a batting average liability. To speak further about how his batting average is suppressed by the shift, Mike Podhorzer at [FanGraphs said](#), "according to data provided by Jeff Zimmerman, Alvarez actually hit into the shift eighth most often in baseball. Oddly, his BABIP on balls hit into the shift was actually higher than away from the shift and his overall BABIP. I have to assume this was simply good fortune, but it does tell us that we cannot blame the shift for his BABIP struggles in 2013."

Overall, his contact rates were five percentage points lower and the strikeout rate against every pitch type was basically the same as last year. Looking at the hit type performance (below courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#)) his batting average on ground balls took the biggest. There are two ways to interpret the data. One argument could be there's batting average upside and he could hit .250-.260 if

everything rolls right because his performance on line drives and fly balls will improve. Another argument could be his batting average on ground balls will repeat itself because he's hitting into the shift more often and therefore has a batting average upside of .240. I happen to believe in the ladder and therefore he will most likely be valued higher by other owners, which means I will not be owning him.

Split	2012				2013				2013: 2nd Half	
	AVG	OPS	ISO	BABIP	AVG	OPS	ISO	BABIP	Expected AVG	Expected BABIP
Ground Balls	.215	.442	.012	.215	.179	.370	.012	.179	.236	.226
Fly Balls	.376	1.597	.855	.156	.346	1.501	.820	.133	.288	.132
Line Drives	.754	1.738	.231	.754	.714	1.727	.299	.699	.670	.714

Elvis Andrus

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Rangers | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (2), NFBC (2)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	587	5	96	60	37/12	.279	.708	.312	11.1%	8.4%	18.9%	60.9%
2012	MLB	23	629	3	85	62	21/10	.286	.727	.332	13.5%	8.0%	18.8%	61.5%
2013	MLB	24	620	4	91	67	42/8	.271	.659	.312	13.9%	7.4%	13.9%	62.2%
Proj.			600	4	90	63	31	.270						

During the first half of the season he was only hitting .242/.300/.280 with zero home runs and 19 stolen bases, but he finished the year with a flurry, hitting .313/.369/.405 with four home runs and 23 stolen bases. A lot of the second half performance was fueled by a .352 BABIP, which is unlikely to repeat again over a large sample size. During the first half of the season his BABIP was low (.285). Since his ground ball rate will be 55 percent or higher he is always going to be BABIP dependent.

What's interesting his stolen base attempts only increased slightly (22 in the first half opposed to 28 in the second half) after his OBP increased nearly 70 points. With Ron Washington back as the Rangers manager means Andrus is going to bat second. That means he'll continue to score 85-plus runs.

Since his rookie year his stolen base totals have been: 33,32,37,21 and 42. The majority of fantasy value hinges upon his ability to steal 30-plus bases next year. The question is will he have another 21 stolen base season? Probably not. His walk rate has decreased year over year for four years in a row so even if he has a poor BABIP year his stolen base attempts shouldn't take a big hit because he'll still get on base via the walk. Andrus is one of the most consistent players in fantasy; he'll steal bases and score runs without much power and provide a solid batting average.

Norichika Aoki**Bats: L | Age: 32 | Team: Brewers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (38), NFBC (37)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	30	520	10	81	50	30/8	.288	.787	.304	9.4%	7.3%	23.0%	60.9%
2013	MLB	31	597	8	80	37	20/12	.286	.726	.295	5.9%	8.2%	15.5%	64.8%
Proj.			590	7	90	50	18	.287						

Aoki had the second-highest contact rate and lowest strikeout rate among qualified players, which means he'll get on-base at a very solid clip (career .355 OBP). Ben Lindbergh [said](#) after the trade, "(His) on-base percentage probably understates Aoki's offensive impact, because as a speedy hitter with baseball's highest groundball rate—62.5 percent of his balls in play last season stayed on the ground." In terms of his modest home run production, he saw negligible benefit from playing in Miller Park; he has a career HR/FB rate of 6.3 percent at Miller Park and 6.1 percent on the road. This indicates he should be able to maintain 7-12 home run output; if I had to go over under on ten home runs I would take the under. In the last two years he has stolen 50 bases, but he's not an exceptionally good base runner as he only has a 71.4 percent success rate. Also, a lot of his fantasy value was suppressed by an extremely low 37 RBI total; moving from the NL to the AL should give him 50-plus RBIs next year as he will not have the pitcher hitting in front of him.

Most importantly, the signings of Aoki and **Omar Infante** makes the lineup Yost-proof, which means Yost now has two players who should hit atop the Royals lineup, which means **Eric Hosmer** and **Billy Butler** will have two players with OBPs higher than .345 hitting in front of them.

Oswaldo Arcia**Bats: L | Age: 22 | Team: Twins | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (101), NFBC (87)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	21	262	10	54	67	3/2	.328	.955	.392	20.7%	9.4%	41.6%	34.5%
2013	AAA	22	128	10	25	30	2/1	.313	1.020	.366	23.9%	14.2%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	351	14	34	43	1/2	.251	.734	.336	31.0%	6.1%	31.4%	47.7%
Proj.			520	21	62	75	1	.235						

Normally I shy away from players with 30-plus percent strikeout rate hitters because they're likely to have reduced batting averages. However, Arcia may be one of the rare exceptions because he's on a team where can have ups and downs and not lose playing time. The [scouting report suggests](#) his offensive ceiling is a .285-plus batting average with lots of doubles and 17-25 home runs. Against fastballs he had a .323 batting average and 1.004 OPS, but against non-fastballs a .194 batting average and .522 OPS so it's pretty obvious how pitchers are going to attack him in 2014. Also, against fastballs he has a 35 percent ground ball rate and 46 percent fly ball rate, but against non-fastballs he has a 47.5 percent ground ball rate and 37 percent fly ball rate. The image below visually shows his propensity to hit ground balls against non-fastballs. It's going to be up to Arcia to make adjustments to the

adjustments pitchers are going to make to him. If he can stop rolling over on breaking pitches he'll become the .285-plus batting average player the scouting report suggests.

Sabermetric Outcomes - from 01/01/2013 to 01/01/2014

Pitch Type	Count	Foul/Swing	Whiff/Swing	GB/BIP	LD/BIP	FB/BIP	PU/BIP	GB/FB	HR/(FB+LD)
Fourseam	538	41.73%	28.42%	30.12%	27.71%	33.73%	8.43%	89.29%	17.65%
Sinker	286	40.71%	28.57%	53.49%	16.28%	27.91%	2.33%	191.67%	10.53%
Change	177	30.00%	40.91%	53.13%	12.50%	28.13%	6.25%	188.89%	15.38%
Slider	174	38.30%	43.62%	29.41%	29.41%	29.41%	11.76%	100.00%	0.00%
Curve	197	28.38%	31.08%	56.67%	10.00%	30.00%	3.33%	188.89%	0.00%
Cutter	107	33.96%	26.42%	76.19%	4.76%	19.05%	0.00%	400.00%	20.00%
Split	34	22.22%	55.56%	25.00%	0.00%	75.00%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%

Image source: BrooksBaseball.net

Nolan Arenado

Bats: R | Age: 22 | Team: Rockies | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (24), NFBC (19)

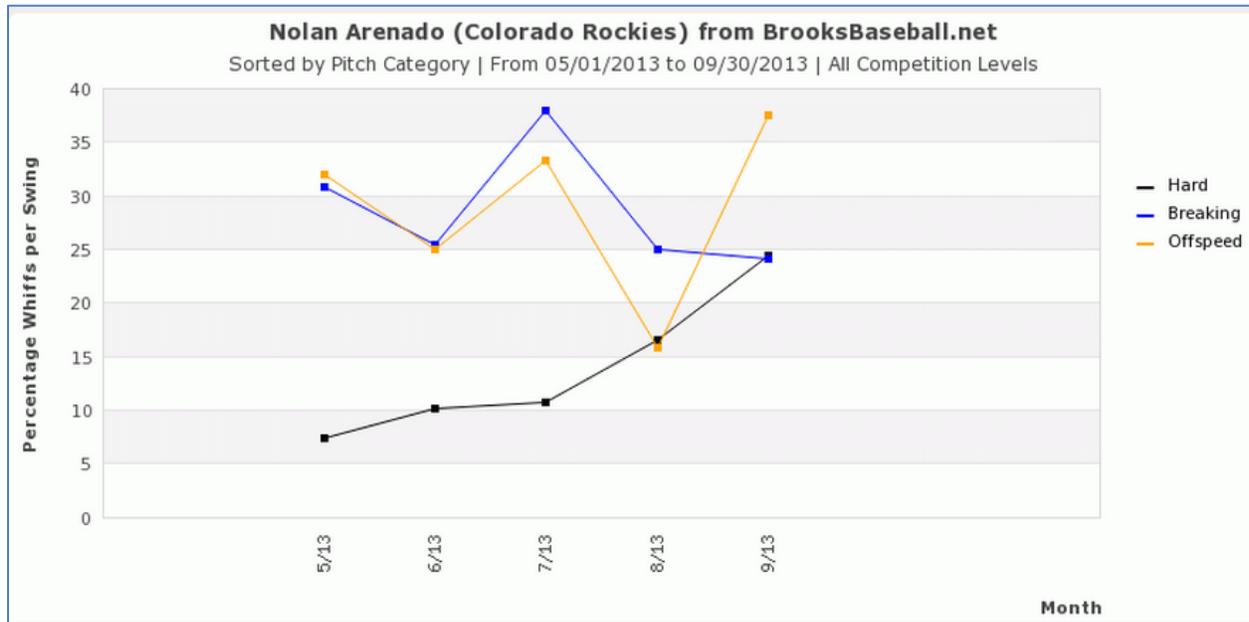
YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	21	516	12	55	56	0/2	.285	.766	.296	10.1%	6.8%	35.7%	45.2%
2013	AAA	22	66	3	14	21	0/2	.364	1.059	.368	12.0%	6.7%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	486	10	49	52	2/0	.267	.706	.296	14.0%	4.5%	23.7%	45.5%
Proj.			500	13	62	68	1	.270						

Before the season began every scouting publication had Areando as either a below average defender or a defensive liability, but that was quickly put to bed as he went out and won the Gold Glove. Arenado is not a fantasy player I'm particularly fond of going into 2014. Some fantasy analysts have him pegged to be a perennial all-star, but I don't see it; if his defense he holds up he could be an all-star, but the offensive profile isn't there for me. First of all, like a lot of Rockies hitters his final numbers benefitted greatly from playing in Coors (table below).

Split	AB	AVG	OBP	SLG	BABIP	HR
Home	242	.298	.335	.459	.312	5
Away	244	.238	.267	.352	.277	5

Second, his power potential is maybe 20 home runs if everything works out, but he's far away from reaching that. Unlike someone like **Will Middlebrooks** whose body and bat speed is geared for power, Arenado's swing (at this point) is geared for hitting line drives. Further proof of his lack of power showed up in the second half of the season as he only hit three home runs. Third, coming into the season he was

seen as someone who could easily square velocity. Well, that didn't happen as the year went on he struggled more and more against fastballs. For example, checkout his swing and miss rates against various pitch types (image below from BrooksBaseball.net).



Overall, his upside is high, but I don't see him fully actualizing that potential next year. At this point he doesn't provide any above average production that warrants being taken in shallow mixed leagues. If you're in a 15-team league and he's you're starting third baseman, you should pair him with another third baseman and platoon Arenado when he's on the road.

Cody Asche

Bats: L | Age: 23 | Team: Phillies | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (65), NFBC (41)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	263	10	42	47	1/1	.300	.873	.348	19.4%	7.6%	37.1%	43.8%
2013	AAA	23	404	15	52	68	11/3	.295	.837	.349	21.3%	7.8%	-	-
2013	MLB	23	162	5	18	22	1/0	.235	.691	.287	24.0%	8.4%	21.9%	46.5%
Proj.			420	12	50	50	5	.260						

Based on the scouting reports I've read suggests he'll hit .250-.270 with 10-15 home runs and stolen bases who will play an adequate third base. He'll likely hit seventh or eighth in the batting order so he will not have an opportunity to drive in a lot of runs or score a lot of runs.

Alex Avila**Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Tigers | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (27), NFBC (23)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	464	19	63	82	3/1	.295	.895	.366	23.8%	13.2%	38.0%	40.1%
2012	MLB	25	367	9	42	48	2/0	.243	.736	.313	24.0%	14.1%	31.4%	47.7%
2013	MLB	26	330	11	39	47	0/0	.227	.693	.305	29.6%	11.6%	28.6%	46.5%
Proj.			350	10	40	40	0	.230						

Is it possible that at the age of 26 that Avila is already done? Injuries yet again slowed down his season with a left forearm bruise (in June) and post-concussion symptoms (in August). For three straight years his batting average has decreased while the strikeout rate climbed. After looking at the data it looks as though there is little hope he'll regain his 2011 form. Also, his swing and miss rate has climbed from 26.4 percent in 2011 to 30 percent in 2013. Even though he had a good year for power, he's still hitting too many ground balls (44.1 percent), which leads me to believe the power will likely decrease.

Erick Aybar**Bats: B | Age: 30 | Team: Angels | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (13), NFBC (11)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	556	10	71	59	30/6	.279	.743	.301	11.2%	5.1%	28.7%	55.6%
2012	MLB	28	517	8	67	45	20/4	.290	.740	.316	11.0%	4.0%	23.5%	60.8%
2013	MLB	29	550	6	68	54	12/7	.271	.683	.292	10.0%	3.9%	19.0%	56.3%
Proj.			520	7	70	59	14	.272						

Last year Aybar was a deep sleeper because it was predicted to bat leadoff or the two-spot in very potent (on paper) lineup, but the enthusiasm quickly dissipated as he went on the DL in April and missed three weeks of the season with a [bruised left heel](#). During his eight year major league career has yet to play more than 144 games. Therefore, it's very likely if you draft him, you're going to need a backup.

Before last year he was seen as incredibly consistent (albeit unspectacular) and underrated player who could provide 5-10 home runs with 20-30 stolen bases. However, last year was the worst fantasy year he's had since 2008. The most concerning stat was his stolen base attempts rate per game was the highest of his career (table below).

Year	SB Attempts p/Game	SB	CS	Success Rate
2009	6.5	14	7	67%
2010	4.6	22	8	73%
2011	4.0	30	6	83%
2012	5.9	20	4	83%
2013	7.3	12	7	63%

Since he suffered his injury very early on in the season it very unlikely the heel injury limited his stolen base potential. There had to be another reason why he wasn't trying to steal bases any more. With the Angels offense struggling to score runs I don't believe **Mike Scioscia** gave him the red light. I believe the reason why the stolen base attempts were down was because his success rate was low (63 percent). I don't know why his stolen base rate was so poor, but it does raise concerns how many stolen bases he'll provide in 2014.

Other than his stolen base output I don't see any reasons for decline. He can still hit fastballs on the inner half (on both sides of the plate), which indicates his bat speed is still intact. Depending on his BABIP he'll have a batting average in the .270-.300 range with 5-10 home runs with 10-20 stolen bases.

Alejandro De Aza

Bats: L | Age: 29 | Team: White Sox | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (27), NFBC (24)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	152	4	29	23	12/5	.329	.920	.404	19.9%	9.9%	26.3%	53.5%
2012	MLB	28	524	9	81	50	26/12	.281	.760	.339	18.6%	8.0%	28.5%	46.3%
2013	MLB	29	607	17	84	62	20/8	.264	.728	.318	21.8%	7.4%	25.9%	46.6%
Proj.			500	17	80	75	20	.265						

Last year I underrated De Aza's power potential because of a small sample size that consisted of an extremely and uncharacteristically low HR/FB rate (7 percent). When comparing the home run outputs for the last two years I'm inclined to believe 2013 because of the line drive rate was essentially the same, which means he a lot of hard contact. For example, last year his line drive rate was [18th in the majors](#) among qualified hitters. He's literally next to **Jason Kipins** and **Andrew McCutchen**. He's not a very good base stealer with a career 70 percent success rate so his stolen base totals could go from 20 to 15. In terms of batting average I'm expecting a bounce back to the .280s because his ground ball rate has decreased year over year the past three seasons and he was unlucky with the batting average on ground balls, which should improve because he has above average speed. At the end of the year he'll have a .275 batting average with 18 stolen bases, 17 home runs with 70 RBIs and runs. Currently the White Sox have four outfielders for three spots, which means there's going to be a platoon. I don't foresee **Adam Eaton** or **Avisail Garcia** losing at-bats, which means De Aza will likely be on the better side of a platoon with **Dayan Vicedo** ... at least for the first half of the year before they trade **Adam Dunn** at the trading deadline.

Jose Bautista**Bats: R | Age: 33 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (32), NFBC (27)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	513	43	105	103	9/5	.302	1.056	.309	16.9%	20.2%	36.7%	42.9%
2012	MLB	31	332	27	64	65	5/2	.241	.886	.215	15.8%	14.8%	41.0%	42.7%
2013	MLB	32	452	28	82	73	7/2	.259	.856	.259	15.9%	13.1%	31.2%	46.4%
Proj.			500	31	82	84	6	.255						

Injuries have derailed Bautista's season the past two years. In 2012 it was a wrist and last year it was a [bruised hip](#). In the past two years he has only played 210 games and having just turned 33 does not offer a lot of optimism he can stay healthy for a full year. If I were the Blue Jays management I would just DH him and move **Adam Lind** for a right fielder, but I digress.

When I think of Bautista I mainly remember the 2011 season when he batted .300-plus with 40-plus home runs. However, since his resurrected his career in 2010 he's had the following batting averages: .260, .302, .241 and .259. I think it's relatively safe to say he is a .240-260 hitter rather than the 300-plus he showed in 2011. His power has been elite, but he was only pace for 35 home runs before being shut down in August. A contributor to the low home run total could be due to the lowest HR/FB rate since 2010. It's also possible the wrist surgery in the offseason also contributed. Also, the wrist surgery could have contributed to the ground ball rate increasing four percentage compared to last year. In fact, his ground ball rate has increased year-over-year since 2010.

On the positive side his chase rates on pitches out of the strike zone decreased one and half percentage points and his swing and miss rates dropped four and half percentage points. Overall, he's hitting the ball on the ground more often, is heading into his decline years, has missed substantial parts of the last two seasons with injury, whose power may be on the decline and doesn't hit for much average. With an ADP of 24 (as of late January) I will gladly pass.

Gordon Beckham**Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: White Sox | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (31), NFBC (30)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	499	10	60	44	5/3	.230	.633	.276	19.9%	6.3%	30.5%	47.7%
2012	MLB	25	525	16	62	60	5/4	.234	.668	.254	15.3%	6.9%	34.7%	45.4%
2013	MLB	26	371	5	46	24	5/1	.267	.694	.299	13.7%	6.9%	33.9%	38.9%
Proj.			500	12	57	55	4	.245						

Beckham has not showed any signs of significant improvement since his rookie season despite playing in one of the best hitters parks in the majors. Even though his batting average took a step in the right direction and he decreased his strikeout rate by four percentage points against right handed pitchers, Beckman is not a player you want to roster in your mixed league because he doesn't provide any above production in any statistical category.

Brandon Belt**Bats: L | Age: 25 | Team: Giants | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (16), NFBC (13)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	187	9	21	18	3/2	.225	.718	.273	27.3%	9.6%	35.8%	45.8%
2012	MLB	24	411	7	47	56	12/2	.275	.781	.351	22.5%	11.4%	35.2%	40.3%
2013	MLB	25	509	17	76	67	5/2	.289	.841	.351	21.9%	9.1%	33.0%	37.4%
Proj.			530	18	75	80	5	.280						

For two straight seasons Belt has had a .351 BABIP, which is eleventh best among hitters with at least 1,000 plate appearances the past two seasons. On the surface the BABIP looks odd because he doesn't have the above average speed necessary to beat out a lot of ground balls for hits. However, the player one spot higher than him on the BABIP list is **Allen Craig**, who isn't a speedster himself. I compared Belt's peripherals compared to the top 15 BABIP players the past two seasons with 1,000 plate appearances and what I found was he had the lowest in-play percentage (InPI%) and the highest fly ball rate of any player by far. Fly balls have an [expected batting average](#) .291 so naturally, the more fly balls that are hit, the higher the likelihood of having a higher batting average.

In 1,252 plate appearances he has a career 41.2 percent fly ball rate, which is above average, but with such a low in-play rate, I find it hard to believe the BABIP will stay at the .351 level. However, I think it's possible he could have a BABIP in the .320 range in 2014. Last year he a .216 isolated power away from the Giants ballpark, which basically equates to **Mark Trumbo's** power levels. I'm not saying he has the raw power of Trumbo, but it's important to consider how much the home ballpark suppresses how good Belt really is. Another example, say what you will about **Nate Schierholtz**, but look at what he did when he left San Francisco; he basically hit for no power (in the aggregate), but suddenly explodes for 21.

Towards the end of the year, Belt was hitting in one of the prime spots in the batting order, third. Will he hit third in 2014? If **Pablo Sandoval** returns to form, I could see Belt batting sixth, which would limit his fantasy potential, but that's a big "if". I don't see a lot of upside because of his home ballpark; maybe he cracks the top ten if everything works out.

Name	BABIP	Swng%	Miss%	InPl%	Chas%	Grnd%	Fly%
Brandon Belt	.351	50.5%	25.3%	33.7%	27.8%	34.7%	41.0%
Chris Johnson	.375	51.4%	25.4%	35.6%	33.9%	42.8%	32.9%
Dexter Fowler	.358	44.5%	24.1%	35.9%	21.5%	41.7%	35.2%
Carlos Gonzalez	.358	47.2%	29.2%	37.2%	31.8%	44.8%	30.0%
Shin-Soo Choo	.346	41.1%	23.8%	37.2%	20.3%	48.2%	29.7%
Joey Votto	.377	38.0%	20.9%	38.4%	16.7%	39.4%	34.4%
Torii Hunter	.364	53.2%	23.9%	38.5%	36.3%	50.0%	29.3%
Austin Jackson	.352	43.1%	20.8%	39.5%	22.9%	40.6%	33.0%
Howie Kendrick	.344	51.8%	21.2%	39.8%	35.6%	56.2%	21.2%
Michael Bourn	.344	42.1%	23.2%	40.4%	24.3%	54.4%	23.9%
Andrew McCutchen	.363	45.3%	22.5%	40.6%	22.3%	41.1%	34.8%
Mike Trout	.379	38.3%	20.0%	41.2%	22.6%	41.9%	33.9%
David Wright	.344	43.0%	18.6%	43.3%	21.5%	38.9%	38.8%
Allen Craig	.352	44.2%	18.6%	43.7%	27.3%	43.0%	32.0%
Matt Carpenter	.355	38.6%	14.3%	46.3%	19.8%	38.4%	33.9%
Joe Mauer	.373	35.9%	15.6%	46.3%	20.5%	49.3%	25.9%

Data source: BaseballAnalytics.org

Carlos Beltran

Bats: B | Age: 36 | Team: Yankees | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (21), NFBC (19)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	34	520	22	78	84	4/2	.300	.910	.324	14.7%	11.9%	34.8%	44.7%
2012	MLB	35	547	32	83	97	13/6	.269	.842	.291	20.0%	10.5%	30.8%	46.2%
2013	MLB	36	554	24	79	84	2/1	.296	.830	.314	15.0%	6.3%	26.7%	40.9%
Proj.			530	26	85	85	2	.280						

Last year Beltran finished the year as a top 20 outfielder and it makes sense to think things will only improve by moving from the NL to the AL and how his new ballpark is more conducive to left handed power, his stronger side. However, there are some warning signs. First, his chase rates have increased year-over-year since 2010, going from 24.2 percent to 29 percent (last year). Second, his isolated power has decreased year-over-year since 2011, going from .225 to .195 (last year). Third, he posted the lowest walk rate of his career. Fourth, his batting average against lefties has decreased year-over-year since 2009, going from .326 to .252 in 2013. I'll admit the sample sizes are small and this is the weakest argument because if you look at the last three years against lefties he's a .270 hitter. Fifth, he's no longer a threat to steal bases anymore; at this point fantasy getting more than five should be extremely happy. If you combine those three factors there is a high likelihood the batting average and stolen base totals will take a dip. Also, don't forget in 2012 he hit .269 so he is prone to having unusually low batting averages.

However, there are some positives. For example, he'll likely benefit from taking days off at the DH spot, which help keep him in the field and allow him the opportunity to be platooned against lefties, which probably will not happen, but should happen. We're all aware how the short porch in right field is extremely beneficial for hitters, but usually that power comes at a cost. **Curtis Granderson** and **Mark Teixeira** adjusted their swings to hit for more power, but that adjustment came at the cost of batting average. It's possible he could have a resurgence in power. In fact, I bet there will be an uptick, but my main concern what will be his ADP going into drafts. Odds are he'll likely be drafted as a top 15-25 outfielder, which means he'll have to perform just as well as he did last year. That's asking a lot of a player who will turn 37 years old at the end of April. In general I have a bias for taking younger players with more upside like much **Jason Heyward** or **Alex Gordon**.

Adrian Beltre

Bats: R | Age: 34 | Team: Rangers | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (2), NFBC (2)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	487	32	82	105	1/1	.296	.892	.273	10.1%	4.8%	37.8%	43.1%
2012	MLB	33	604	36	95	102	1/0	.321	.921	.319	12.5%	5.5%	35.2%	42.7%
2013	MLB	34	631	30	88	92	1/0	.315	.880	.322	11.3%	7.2%	29.6%	40.9%
Proj.			595	29	89	103	1	.303						

One week into the season Beltre will turn 35 years old and based on the advanced statistics it looks as though he's not slowing down. Normally when a player is this far into his thirties I tend to be lower on him because players this far past their peak have limited upside and more downside; the most recent example of a player with type of profile was **Paul Konerko** last year.

Last year he made tremendous strides at the plate. First, his walk rate was the highest it's been since 2008. Second, his contact rate was the highest in career (I can only go back as far as 2002). Third, he shows no signs of slowing down. The table below shows his first and second half splits.

Splits	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	.316	.901	.312	10.5%	5.5%	16.2%
2nd Half	.315	.847	.336	12.4%	9.6%	9.6%

From looking at the splits, I didn't see any significant change in performance that suggests his performance is on the decline. The biggest concern I have is his ISO (.193) because it was the lowest it's been since 2008, back when he was playing Seattle. With a career 13.8 percent HR/FB rate, it looks like the home run totals in 2011 and 2012 were a little fluky so fantasy owners should expect 25-30 home runs instead of 30-plus.

Xander Bogaerts**Bats: R | Age: 21 | Team: Red Sox | Position: 3B, SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (82), NFBC (53)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	20	219	6	40	35	5/1	.311	.909	.378	19.7%	13.5%	-	-
2013	AAA	20	225	9	32	32	2/2	.284	.822	.320	17.2%	10.9%	-	-
2013	MLB	20	44	1	7	5	1/0	.250	.684	.323	26.0%	10.0%	10.0%	50.0%
Proj.			560	17	70	75	1	.268						

In early February [Jason Parks](#), [Jim Callis](#) and [Keith Law](#) all ranked Bogaerts as the second best prospect in baseball. I linked out to their scouting reports in the previous sentence if you're looking for more in-depth information. During the postseason he gave us a glimpse of how good he can be because the adjustments he was making from at-bat to at-bat. At his peak he could be a .300 hitter with 25-plus home runs, which means he could be a MVP candidate. In the minors he hasn't shown a hitting preference against lefties and righties. For example in his minor league career, recording an .882 OPS against righties and an .838 mark against lefties.

Entering drafts there are two narratives fantasy owners should consider when evaluating his value. The first is prospects need time to get fully acclimated to the majors before they breakout. Recently highly regarded prospects such as **Mike Trout** (I know he struggled briefly when he first got called up), **Manny Machado**, **Bryce Harper**, **Yasiel Puig**, **Jose Fernandez**, **Matt Harvey** have all bucked the conventional trend of, "it takes time for prospects to develop before they're ready to consistently contribute." However, Jeff Zimmerman's [recent article suggests](#) that young prospects are at their best when they first enter the league. The second narrative could be he performs great right out of the chute. Since he plays in a good ballpark and a great lineup he could have a great opportunity to score a lot of runs. As of early February he's currently going as the 21st shortstop (right after **Jed Lowrie**), which is extremely low for a player with this type of potential. If that ADP holds up that means I'm going to be targeting him in all my leagues.

Emilio Bonifacio**Bats: B | Age: 28 | Team: Cubs | Position: OF, 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (17), NFBC (14)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	565	5	78	36	40/11	.296	.753	.372	20.1%	9.2%	17.6%	59.9%
2012	MLB	27	244	1	30	11	30/3	.258	.645	.325	19.0%	9.1%	19.2%	66.5%
2013	MLB	28	420	3	54	31	28/8	.243	.625	.312	22.3%	6.5%	19.9%	59.8%
Proj.			350	2	52	31	30	.257						

If you remove the fluky BABIP year (2011) Bonifacio has a career slash line of .250/.333/.321. Despite not being a very good hitter he still has plus-plus speed and is capable of stealing 30-plus bases if given the opportunity to play. He can play at every outfield field spot and anywhere on the in-field besides first base, which means if he lands on the right team he could find his way to 350-plus at-bats in 2014.

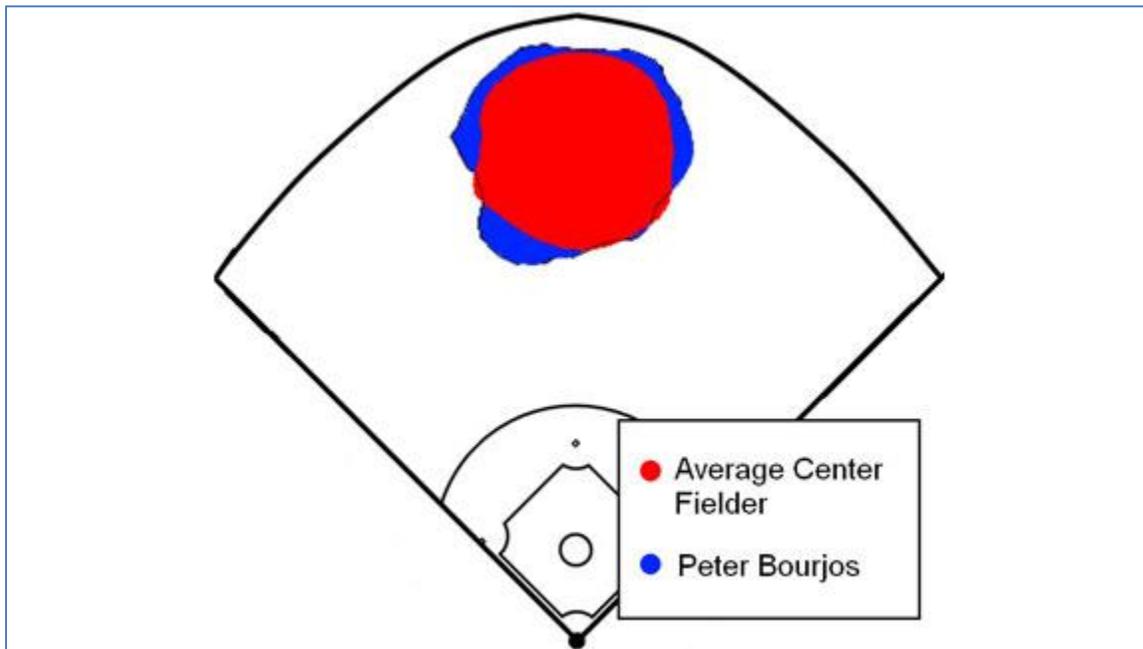
He'll likely go undrafted in drafts, but by the end of the year he will have fantasy relevance. Basically, he's a poor man's **Rajai Davis**.

Peter Bourjos

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Cardinals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (131), NFBC (130)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	502	12	72	43	22/9	.271	.765	.338	22.5%	5.8%	28.8%	59.4%
2012	MLB	25	168	3	27	19	3/1	.220	.606	.274	22.6%	7.7%	27.3%	62.0%
2013	MLB	26	175	3	26	12	6/0	.274	.710	.346	21.9%	5.1%	15.0%	67.7%
Proj.			490	10	63	63	20	.250						

Bourjos may be the best defensive center fielder in baseball. If not, he's certainly in the team photo. The photo below (from [Mark Simon](#)) illustrates how much ground he covers compared to everyone else.



In terms of his fantasy life value his biggest tool is his plus-plus (on the [20-80 scouting scale](#)) speed. In his only season as full time player he had 22 stolen bases, but in the minors he has totals of 50, 32 and 37 from 2008-10. He could steal 30-plus bases if given the opportunity. In the last two seasons the Cardinals, under **Mike Matheny**, are tied for 29th in the majors in stolen base attempts.

He's an extremely impatient hitter. For his career he has only averaged 3.68 pitches per plate appearance in his career, which puts him in the bottom 25 percent of the league. Also, for his career, he has .216 batting average against non-fastballs. The biggest wild card is whether or not the 12 home runs he posted in his only full season are legitimate. According to Home Run Tracker 42 percent of his home runs (in his career) had "just enough" power, which was a lot lower than I expected because the major league average is roughly 43 percent. The consensus on Twitter suggests the power is not real, but I'm

inclined to believe he can hit 8-13 next year. Overall, he'll be a batting average risk with below average power and can steal 30-plus base totals if he's allowed to.

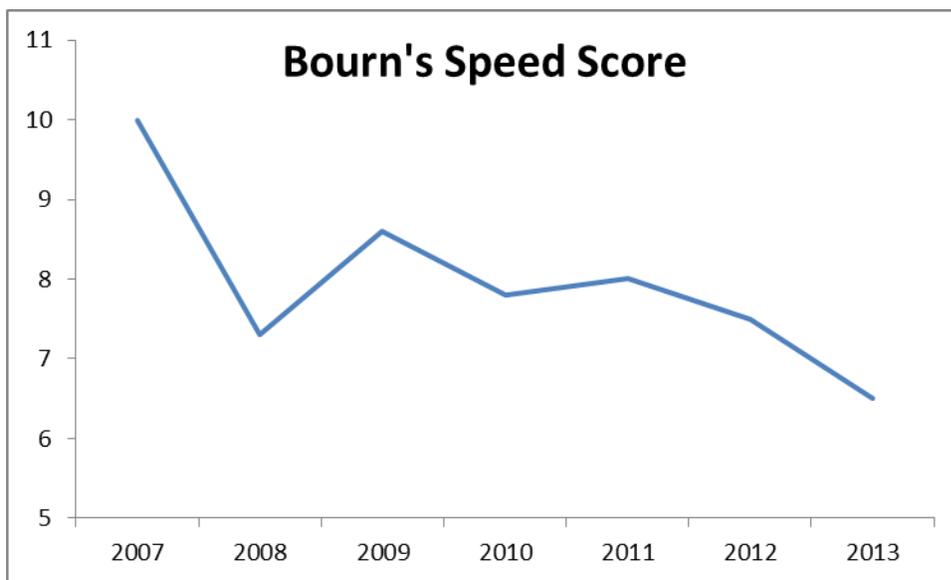
Michael Bourn

Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: Indians | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (49), NFBC (39)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	656	2	94	50	61/14	.294	.734	.369	19.4%	7.3%	20.7%	54.0%
2012	MLB	29	624	9	96	57	42/13	.274	.739	.349	22.0%	10.0%	23.8%	55.2%
2013	MLB	30	525	6	75	50	23/12	.263	.676	.338	23.0%	7.0%	17.6%	59.7%
Proj.			550	6	79	50	29	.271						

For some reason Bourn stopped stealing bases last year and when he attempted to steal bases he was caught more often than any other time in his career. It's possible a [poor hamstring was dogging him for the majority of the year](#), which required surgery. The recovery period is expected to be 4-6 weeks, which means he should be ready to go for spring training because the surgery happened in the middle of October.

Before 2012, Bourn's biggest fantasy asset was he would at least provide 40-plus stolen bases with an above average batting average. FanGraphs has a pretty cool stat called [Speed Score](#), which attempts to numerically show a player's speed over time. Last year was the lowest speed score of his career (6.5), which could be due to his age and / or his hamstring injury. He's made improvements against left handed pitching, hitting .268/.322/.358 last year; from 2008-10 he hit .239/.293/.310. Bourn is one of the rare players whose fantasy value is nearly reliant on providing exceptional production in one category and there's evidence to suggest he has begun his decline. Pass.



Jackie Bradley Jr.

Bats: L | Age: 23 | Team: Red Sox | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	229	6	37	29	8/3	.271	.809	.316	18.1%	12.9%	32.7%	51.2%
2013	AAA	23	320	10	57	35	7/7	.275	.842	.331	20.1%	11.0%	-	-
2013	MLB	23	95	3	18	10	2/0	.189	.617	.246	29.0%	9.3%	17.7%	64.5%
Proj.			520	9	60	60	15	.270						

Bradley is more likely to be a better real life player than fantasy player because his best tool will be his defensive value in center field. He only has average speed and the most stolen bases he's ever stole in a season is 16 during the 2012 season in high-a. His power is below average as he's expected to hit 8-12 at his peak. His hit tool is plus, which means he could be a .270-plus hitter next year. What you read is basically a distillation of the [scouting report from Baseball Prospectus](#). Heading into 2014 he will most likely play the entire year in the bottom third of the batting order, which will limit his RBI and run opportunities. Overall, fantasy owners should expect a .270 batting average with nine home runs, ten stolen bases with 60/60 runs and RBI. Therefore he should only be rostered in deep mixed leagues, but if your shallow league has a deep bench then he's rosterable.

Domonic Brown

Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Phillies | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (26), NFBC (23)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	184	5	28	19	3/1	.245	.725	.276	16.7%	11.9%	28.7%	52.2%
2012	MLB	24	187	5	21	26	0/0	.235	.712	.260	16.0%	9.9%	25.9%	47.6%
2013	MLB	25	496	27	65	83	8/3	.272	.818	.287	18.0%	7.2%	26.8%	46.2%
Proj.			520	22	73	85	8	.264						

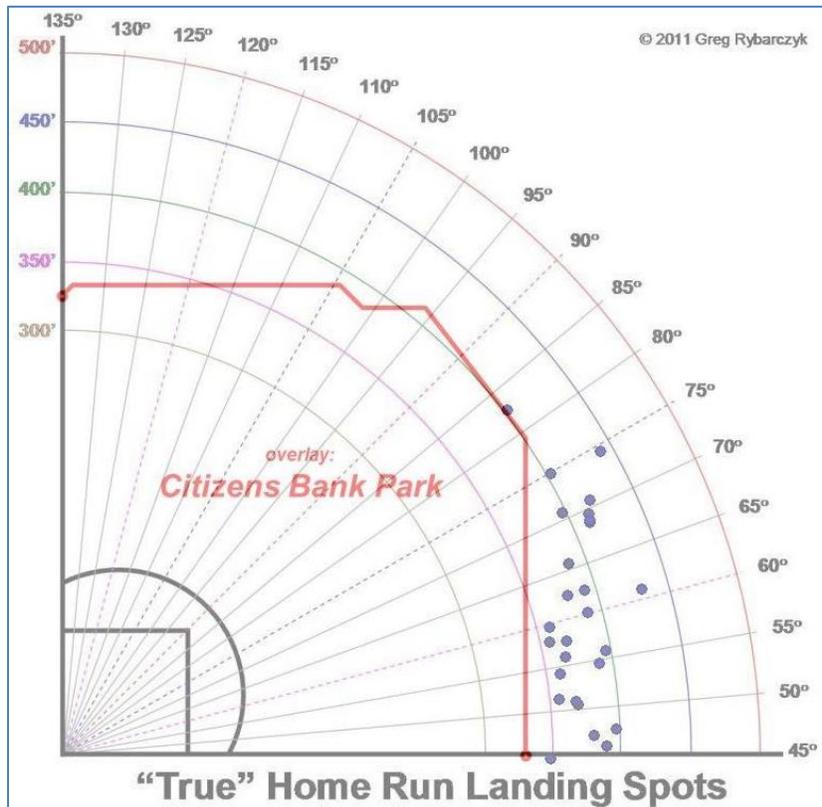
In his first three years in the majors he had a limited number of plate appearances so it's difficult to decipher any type of trend to compare to his 2013 numbers. However, if you combine the first three seasons he has roughly the same number of plate appearances as 2013 (table below).

Time	PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	K%	BB%	HR	HR/FB
2013	540	.272	.324	.494	.818	18.0%	7.2%	27	18.6%
2010-12	492	.236	.315	.388	.703	18.9%	10.4%	12	10.3%

Last year the month of May drove a lot of his fantasy value (table below). For example, he hit 44 percent of his home runs and hit 40 points more than the rest of the year.

Time	AVG	OBP	SLUG	HR	SB	K%	HR/FB
Rest	.264	.364	.439	15	5	19.7%	13.4%
May	.303	.303	.688	12	3	19.3%	37.5%

The biggest question is how legitimate was last season? Based on his where his home runs landed (below) it looks as though they all, except for one, had plenty of power, which implies the power is legitimate.



Source: HitTrackerOnline.com

With only one season under his belt it's difficult to project him moving forward. At times he looked extremely dominant and other times he had no clue what he was doing. Part of the problem could have been due to the post-concussion like symptoms he incurred [in late July](#). I think it's unfair to penalize a player who had one really good month because ups and downs are part of the game.

Let's look at the Phillies as a team. The Phillies offense probably will not be very good; they're banking on players in their mid-30s to sustain production levels they once had in their late-20s, which is unlikely to happen so there will not be as many opportunities to drive in runs. Also, Brown will most likely bat in the bottom third of the order, which will limit his run scoring potential. However, since the lineup is so old it's not inconceivable someone gets injured and Brown moves up to the heart of the order. Overall, I believe his power is legitimate, but I'm expecting 20-24 home runs in 2014.

Ryan Braun

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Brewers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (89), NFBC (94)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	563	33	109	111	33/6	.332	.994	.350	14.8%	9.2%	30.8%	45.9%
2012	MLB	28	598	41	108	112	30/7	.319	.987	.346	18.9%	9.3%	33.2%	47.3%
2013	MLB	29	225	9	30	38	4/5	.298	.869	.360	22.1%	10.7%	25.3%	55.4%
Proj.			590	33	95	105	18	.309						

I'm going to say right now that he's a top ten fantasy player and maybe a top five player. Other than a higher ground ball rate, which was nine points higher than last year, I don't see any major signs of decline. Before he was suspended he only had four stolen bases (out of nine attempts) so the days of 30-plus stolen bases may be over. However, I'm still confident he could provide 10-15. Unlike most players who missed substantial amount of time he missed time not because of injury, but because of a suspension, so there's potential degradation in his skill set due to injury. I don't care about the PED use and I'm not worried of a potential drop-off occurring once he longer uses PEDs, assuming he stops, because I have not seen any evidence to suggest PEDs positively impact performance. Suppose he reverts back to season he had in 2010 when hit .304 with 25 home runs, 14 stolen bases, 103 RBI and 101 runs; in 2010 he finished the year 13th on ESPN's Player Rater.

Jay Bruce

Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Reds | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (17), NFBC (14)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	585	32	84	97	8/7	.256	.814	.297	23.8%	10.7%	41.1%	39.4%
2012	MLB	25	560	34	89	99	9/3	.252	.841	.283	24.5%	9.8%	39.7%	39.2%
2013	MLB	26	626	30	89	109	7/3	.262	.807	.322	26.5%	9.0%	28.9%	40.3%
Proj.			580	30	87	97	7	.254						

Bruce has hit 30-plus home runs for three years in a row while producing a .252-.262 batting average and 97-plus RBIs. There are some troubling trends. First, his walk rate has decreased year-over-year while at the same time the strikeout rate has increased year-over-year. If you combine those trends with the fact last year's batting average was fueled by .322 BABIP implies his batting average should regress in 2014 (probably to the .240-.250 range).

The biggest question for Bruce's fantasy value is how well **Billy Hamilton** performs. Without Hamilton and **Joey Votto** there are literally no players that have OBPs greater than .315 so when he hits those 30-plus home runs more of them will come without runners on base. For example, **Ryan Ludwick** is expected to bat fourth in the lineup. If you believe Hamilton will succeed next year in the leadoff role then you should have nothing to worry about in terms of 2014 numbers. But if you're weary about Hamilton then you have drop Bruce in your rankings.

Billy Butler**Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Royals | Position: DH | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (23), NFBC (17)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	597	19	74	95	2/1	.291	.822	.316	14.1%	9.8%	30.7%	47.8%
2012	MLB	26	614	29	72	107	2/1	.313	.882	.341	16.3%	8.0%	28.6%	49.3%
2013	MLB	27	582	15	62	82	0/0	.289	.787	.326	15.3%	11.8%	21.5%	55.2%
Proj.			590	18	70	87	0	.295						

Below are Billy Butler's home run totals since 2009:

- **2009:** 21
- **2010:** 15
- **2011:** 19
- **2012:** 29
- **2013:** 15

Since he didn't miss any lengthy amount of time to injury it's pretty safe to assume the 29 home runs is an outlier and his true home run power is in the 15-20 range. You may be thinking the Kauffman Stadium is suppressing his power, but since 2008 his HR/FB rate at home is 12.7 percent compared to 11.7 percent on the road. His ground ball rate increased by three percentage points, which is another reason why the home run potential will most likely be in the teens versus the low 20s. Other than the varying home run totals, Butler is a fairly safe player in that you know what you're getting when roster him. In 2014 he will hit .290-plus with 18 home runs 80-90 RBI and about 70 runs because he'll likely hit fourth in a suddenly improved top of the order. If you believe **Eric Hosmer** takes the next step you have to like Butler even more because he will be batting with a lot of players on base.

Marlon Byrd**Bats: R | Age: 36 | Team: Phillies | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (22), NFBC (22)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	33	446	9	51	35	3/2	.276	.719	.316	16.2%	5.2%	20.5%	53.6%
2012	MLB	34	143	1	10	9	0/3	.210	.488	.257	20.3%	3.3%	31.5%	53.7%
2013	MLB	35	532	24	75	88	2/4	.291	.847	.353	24.9%	5.4%	30.2%	44.5%
Proj.			490	14	70	75	1	.282						

At the age of 36, Byrd is well beyond his prime and his offensive potential could fall off the map at any moment. By looking at his BABIP and HR/FB rate it's hard not to say 2013 was nothing but a fluke year where all the stars aligned. There is data to support his 2013 wasn't as big of a fluke as the top line numbers would indicate. From 2010-2012 he had a fly ball rate of 27.7 percent while last year it was 37.9 percent. What's important to note his fly ball rate in 2009 was 41.5 percent and it's no surprise he had a .283 batting average with 20 home runs. Even though his home run totals were definitely aided by

an insanely high HR/FB rate, but he can certainly hit 15-20 home runs next year because he's going to play every day.

In terms of his batting average, it looks as though he should provide above average numbers. Below are his batting averages for the last seven years:

- 2008:** .298
- 2009:** .283
- 2010:** .293
- 2011:** .276
- 2012:** .210 (in 153 plate appearances)
- 2013:** .291

To me, the 2012 season appears to be the outlier, which indicates he should be able to still hit for a fairly good average next year. If he can hit .270 with 18 home runs that's value that can help your team, most likely in 15-team mixed or 12-team mixed leagues with deep benches. Also, he'll most likely bat fifth in the lineup with **Chase Utley** and **Ryan Howard** hitting in front of him, which is very enticing especially against right handed pitchers (because Howard is not going to be platooned against lefties even though he should) in terms of RBI opportunities. Injury concerns are valid, but if you remove the 2012 season, he's averaged 137 games played the last five seasons. I don't believe he'll be a borderline top 20 outfielder again, but he can certainly be in the 40-50 range.

Asdrubal Cabrera

Bats: B | Age: 28 | Team: Indians | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (17), NFBC (14)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	604	25	87	92	17/5	.273	.792	.302	17.8%	6.6%	34.5%	48.3%
2012	MLB	26	555	16	70	68	9/4	.270	.762	.303	16.1%	8.4%	31.6%	45.0%
2013	MLB	27	508	14	66	64	9/3	.242	.700	.283	20.3%	6.2%	33.5%	41.2%
Proj.			550	15	65	65	9	.257						

Forget whether or not Cabrera can bounce back or not. The question I was asking myself before I started writing his player capsule was, "Is Cabrera even good?" It's crazy to think Cabrera is on the verge of becoming a bench only/part time player, but it's certainly possible. His batting average, slugging and home run totals have all decreased year over year for the past three seasons. The strikeout rate increased four percentage points last year. His batting average took a hit, but so did his BABIP. The decline in BABIP was apparent against all pitch types, which implies he suffered a decline in skill set and not bad luck. Even though he had an extremely poor second half, his first half wasn't overly impressive (table below). He did miss three weeks of the season with a [strained quadricep](#) at the beginning of June, but even before the injury he only had a slash line .256/.314/.438 with a 24 percent strikeout rate and .324 BABIP only five home runs in 221 plate appearances.

Split	BB%	K%	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	ISO	BABIP
1st Half	7.00%	23.00%	.255	.315	.421	.736	.166	.315
2nd Half	5.30%	17.20%	.228	.279	.380	.659	.152	.250

Cabrera was able to accumulate a lot of his RBIs and run totals due to playing in the two or three hole (while **Carlos Santana** was batting sixth ... great job **Terry Francona**) during the first four months of the year. Next year I expect Cabrera to bat seventh or eighth, which limits his fantasy potential. Cabrera has always been a better hitter against lefties than righties (table below), but last year his strikeout rate and poor performance was the same on both sides of the plate. Also, for three years in a row he's missed time due to various injuries; ankle, knee, back and wrist in 2011 and 2012. When his career reaches its conclusion we're going to look back view 2011 as his outlier season.

Year	Right Handed Pitching						Left Handed Pitching					
	AVG	OBP	SLUG	K%	BABIP	ISO	AVG	OBP	SLUG	K%	BABIP	ISO
2013	.247	.309	.421	20.4%	.286	.174	.232	.276	.363	20.0%	.277	.131
2012	.263	.329	.416	16.7%	.295	.153	.286	.356	.440	14.9%	.320	.154
2011	.265	.331	.468	20.1%	.298	.203	.291	.333	.444	13.1%	.309	.153
2010	.281	.335	.350	15.4%	.327	.069	.264	.308	.339	11.4%	.299	.074
2009	.309	.361	.452	15.2%	.356	.144	.306	.360	.401	15.6%	.369	.095
2008	.230	.322	.316	20.8%	.286	.086	.349	.427	.530	11.0%	.380	.181

Everth Cabrera

Bats: B | Age: 27 | Team: Padres | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (7), NFBC (6)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	23	212	1	22	22	10/6	.208	.557	.274	22.4%	7.9%	18.5%	63.1%
2012	MLB	25	398	2	49	24	44/4	.246	.648	.336	24.5%	9.6%	15.7%	66.8%
2013	MLB	26	381	4	54	31	37/12	.283	.736	.337	15.9%	9.4%	13.7%	64.2%
Proj.			550	6	89	49	50	.270						

One of the biggest hesitations I had about Cabrera before the 2013 season was would he get on base enough to steal the same number of bags as 2012. In 2012 he had an .324 OBP despite having a strikeout rate of nearly 25 percent and a .336 BABIP; not the type of profile you want to use an early middle pick on. Last year he reduced his strikeout rate nine percentage points, maintained the same BABIP and increased his OBP to .355. Other than the lowered strikeout rate, the contact rate improved six and a half percentage points while the swing and miss rate decreased nearly seven percentage points, which are both dramatic improvements. The major questions every fantasy player is asking is, will he play a full year and is he more than a one category player? The table shows how many games he has played (in the minors and majors) since 2008. If you average out those five seasons he has only played in 106 games. In 2010 he was only able to play in 76 games because of a nagging right hamstring strain and in 2011 he was bothered by a separated shoulder and was limited to only 60 games. It would have been nice if he had an opportunity to play a full year last year, but he didn't. I

believe he can play in 140-plus games this season because he's been healthy for the past two seasons and is still only 27 years old.

Year	Games Played
2008	121
2009	117
2010	87
2011	60
2012	149

There's talk in the fantasy community about whether or not he's nothing more than a one category player. I'm not buying that assessment. If he played 140 games he would have 80 runs, which is not that bad considering the Padres ballpark. Also, **Chase Headley** was really bad and if he performed like he normally did Cabrera's run totals could have been higher. Is the .283 batting average legitimate? Based on the contact rates, his improved plate discipline and his speed it certainly makes sense, but he's never hit for a high average the past four seasons prior to 2013. I'm projecting to have a .270 batting average with room for more. I love Cabrera this year entering drafts. Even though his stolen base totals the past two years have been suppressed by a lack of playing time (which wasn't due to injury), if he played in 155 games last year he was on pace for 60-61 stolen bases, which would have easily been the most in the majors.

Melky Cabrera

Bats: B | Age: 29 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (111), NFBC (118)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	658	18	102	87	20/10	.305	.809	.332	13.3%	5.0%	29.5%	51.8%
2012	MLB	27	459	11	84	60	13/5	.346	.906	.379	12.6%	7.2%	22.6%	56.1%
2013	MLB	28	344	3	39	30	2/2	.279	.682	.313	12.6%	6.2%	21.6%	52.2%
Proj.			550	15	79	73	15	.290						

Cabrera had been dealing with various leg injuries for four months of the season, but it wasn't until early September the reason for injuries was identified. A [MRI was performed and](#) it "revealed a tumor that was located in the spinal cord of his L1, which is the first vertebrae of the lowest section of the spine." As of now he appears to be healthy and is expected to make a full recovery before the start of spring training. Based on the linked article I'm willing to overlook last year's stats because his numbers were uncharacteristically low. For example, he had a 3.3 percent HR/FB rate despite playing in a more hitter friendly ballpark. Other than the home runs his stats looked relatively the same. The contact rate, walk rate and strikeout rate all looked similar, which implies if the home run power was at his normal levels he would have had 9-10 home runs last year. I'm not worried about the decreased stolen base totals because the leg injuries heavily contributed to that. Obviously his 2012 season will likely be his best season ever, but if he's healthy he can be a .290-plus hitter with 15/15 results with a ceiling for 20/20.

Seriously, he could be a 20/20 player. He was two home runs shy of 20/20 in 2011 with the Royals and he was on pace for an 18/18 season in 2012 before being suspended for PEDs. Speaking of the suspension I don't care about his previous drug because I haven't found any concrete evidence they dramatically improve performance. When I compare my projections to trusted sources (Baseball HQ, Rotowire and Rotoworld) I'm going to own him in every league, which is fine with me. Cabrera doesn't profile as an elite performer, but he provides a little bit of everything with a very good batting potential and he's only 29 years old.

Miguel Cabrera

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Tigers | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (1), NFBC (1)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	572	30	111	105	2/1	.344	1.033	.365	12.9%	15.7%	29.4%	47.4%
2012	MLB	29	622	44	109	139	4/1	.330	.999	.331	14.1%	9.5%	35.2%	43.7%
2013	MLB	30	555	44	103	137	3/0	.348	1.078	.356	14.4%	13.8%	29.7%	42.0%
Proj.			585	44	95	135	2	.327						

Other than he'll be 31 by the end of April and may be more injury prone due to having to play third base, he's either the first or second best fantasy hitter (depending on your preference). I prefer Trout because he's younger and is a five category player.

Lorenzo Cain

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Royals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (79), NFBC (65)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	24	147	1	17	13	7/1	.306	.763	.370	17.7%	5.7%	26.6%	46.8%
2012	MLB	26	222	7	27	31	10/0	.266	.734	.319	23.0%	6.1%	30.0%	50.0%
2013	MLB	27	399	4	54	46	14/6	.251	.658	.309	20.4%	7.5%	23.0%	53.6%
Proj.			350	6	48	37	13	.260						

Last year Cain was a trendy sleeper because he had seven home runs and ten stolen bases in only 244 plate appearances in 2012 and he was beginning the year as the everyday center fielder for the Royals. When he was given his opportunity to play he didn't do much with it as he didn't hit for power or steal bases. In 2014 he will get every opportunity to play every day, but other than extremely deep leagues he should not be owned; he'll most likely provide 5-10 home runs with maybe 15 stolen bases with a solid batting average.

Kole Calhoun

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Angels | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	410	14	79	73	12/3	.298	.877	.346	19.0%	9.5%	2012	AAA
2013	AAA	25	240	12	48	49	10/2	.354	1.047	.371	11.7%	11.7%	2013	AAA
2013	MLB	25	195	8	29	32	2/2	.282	.808	.311	18.5%	9.5%	2013	MLB
Proj.			465	14	60	60	14	.260					Proj.	

With Bourjos out of the picture, **Mike Trout** moves from left field to center and opens the door for Calhoun to be an everyday player or at least be on the good side of a platoon with **J.B Shuck**. I’ve seen him play and I’ve read the scouting reports. All I see is a fourth outfielder profile, but there are times when seemingly mediocre prospects have made the correct adjustments and have outperformed their OFPs (overall future potential). Recent examples include **Paul Goldschmidt** and **Kyle Seager**. Last year he hit eight homers in 222 plate appearances. At that pace he would have hit 20 home runs if he was given 550 plate appearances. However, those power numbers were achieved with a 14 percent HR/FB rate which is likely not sustainable in a larger sample (especially in that ballpark). Starting in 2011 his yearly stolen base totals (in the minors and majors) were 22, 13 and 13. Since he is a 40 runner (on the 20-80 scouting scale) he is going to have improve his base running ability to steal bags. With a 72.7 percent career stolen base success rate implies that improvement is not likely going to happen. Overall, he has 15/15 potential with a .260-.275 batting, but at this point he is an AL-only or 15-team mixed league play at this point.

Robinson Cano

Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: Mariners | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (1), NFBC (2)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	623	28	104	118	8/2	.302	.882	.316	14.1%	5.6%	25.6%	50.0%
2012	MLB	29	627	33	105	94	3/2	.313	.929	.326	13.8%	8.8%	23.5%	52.2%
2013	MLB	30	605	27	81	107	7/1	.314	.899	.327	12.5%	9.5%	24.7%	48.6%
Proj.			620	23	90	107	5	.299						

Any time you hear a hitter is going to Seattle or San Diego it elicits the same reaction when a pitcher goes to Colorado or Texas. According to ParkFactors.com Seattle is the [second worst hitter’s park](#) in the majors. Based on the deflated home-road splits of the top hitting prospects, **Justin Smoak**, **Kyle Seager**, **Jesus Montero** and **Dustin Ackley** as well as **Adrian Beltre’s** poor performance in his five years there (.266/.334/.442 slash line) it’s normal to assume going to Seattle dramatically hurts Cano’s value. However, Safeco has always affected right handed hitters more than lefties. Also, in an effort to make the ballpark more hitter friendly the Mariners made [adjustments to the ballpark](#) and brought in the fences last offseason, which [it did](#) (small sample caveat applies).

Last year was his lowest home run output since 2009, but his power potential has not declined. Keith Law spoke about this in his [piece](#), “[he] generates much of that pop from his hips, which is the kind of

power that tends to last longer into a player's career.” There has been some talk amongst my friends that his home run total could dip below 20. The image below shows where all of his home runs (last year) would have landed if he were playing in Safeco. The image shows maybe one home run would not have made it out. If he were playing in New York fantasy owners should have expected 25-30 home runs but now, they should expect 20-25 with him more likely to hit in the mid-20s.

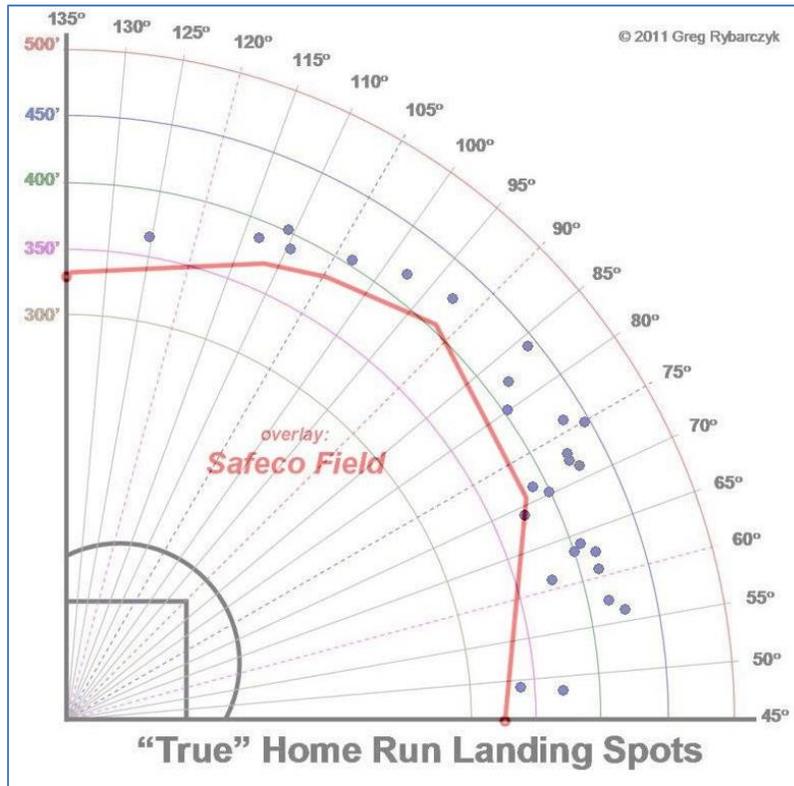


Image courtesy of [Hit Tracker Online](http://HitTrackerOnline.com)

The bottom line is going to Safeco doesn't improve his fantasy value and drop off in his batting average and power numbers should be expected. Before the move he was arguably a top five pick, but now he should be taken in the last half of the top ten because he is still one of the best hitters in baseball, plays a premium fantasy position and most importantly, never get hurts, averaging 160 games played the last seven years.

Matt Carpenter**Bats: L | Age: 28 | Team: Cardinals | Position: 2B, 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (3), NFBC (4)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	AAA	25	434	12	61	70	5/4	.300	.880	.328	12.7%	15.7%	29.2%	47.2%
2012	MLB	26	296	6	44	46	1/1	.294	.828	.346	18.5%	10.0%	36.8%	40.6%
2013	MLB	27	626	11	126	78	3/3	.318	.873	.359	13.7%	10.0%	26.2%	41.8%
Proj.			606	10	106	63	3	.301						

A show of hands of who saw Carpenter putting up the season he did in 2013? I literally had no idea he had the ability to put up numbers like he did last year. In last year's guide I had him as a fringe top 15 second base candidate who could score some runs, provide a little pop, but ultimately would regress because the 2012 BABIP was not repeatable. Not only did he repeat the BABIP, it actually increased (from .346 to .359). That begs the question, what will his batting average be in 2014? His contact rate increased nearly six percentage points and his line drive rate increased a little more than four percentage points, which indicates last year's BABIP could be sustainable. However, he doesn't benefit from plus speed, which means he's going to have to find holes in the defense to earn hits. Therefore, the batting average should regress, but only to the .295-.305 range.

Last year his fantasy value was greatly inflated by the 126 runs scored and the 78 RBIs. Next year I believe both regress. If the batting average regresses his run scoring opportunities should decrease. Also, **Matt Adams** is more likely a downgrade compared to **Carlos Beltran**. In terms of RBIs, it's extremely unlikely he bats .330 again with runners in scoring position. That said, the lower third of the lineup has upgraded offensively. For example, **Pete Kozma** and **David Freese** are both gone while **Jhonny Peralta** and **Kolten Wong** are in. Carpenter's batting average with men in scoring position should regress, but his opportunities should improve. For example, he only ranked 18th among second basemen in plate appearances among second basemen. All that said, I only expect him to drive in 60-65 RBIs next year. Since he doesn't steal bases or hit for a lot power, his fantasy value is going to be derived from the batting average and his runs scored. I believe in Carpenter the player and if he falls to you at the right price you should buy.

Chris Carter**Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Astros | Position: 1B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (29), NFBC (19)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	44	0	2	0	0/0	.136	.310	.250	43.5%	4.3%	42.9%	23.8%
2012	MLB	25	218	16	38	39	0/0	.239	.864	.295	31.9%	15.0%	41.5%	39.0%
2013	MLB	26	506	29	64	82	2/0	.223	.770	.311	36.2%	12.0%	36.0%	35.6%
Proj.			500	30	64	80	1	.219						

Last year I targeted Carter in every league because I thought he could provide 30-plus power with a respectable batting average that wouldn't hurt you. Turns out I was wrong on both fronts (he missed 30 home runs by one) and only had a .223 batting average despite a 36 percent strikeout rate. I was

incorrect about the batting average because I didn't expect a substantial increase in strikeout rate from the prior season.

In the past two seasons 36 of 45 home runs came on hard throwing pitches (fastball, cutter and sinker). During the same time frame he has a slash line of .270/.387/.591, which implies he struggles immensely against breaking pitches with movement. For example, he struggled against breaking stuff / balls with a lot of horizontal and / or vertical movement (changeup, curveball, splitter and slider): .171/.239/.306 with only nine home runs. In terms of his approach at the plate, he looks to pull the ball all the time, even with pitches are on the outer half of the plate (heat map below). Carter has enormous raw power (80 grade on the scouting scale), but it looks as though the power is going to be held back due to a below average hit tool. Lastly, do not forget he was able to achieve the .223 batting average with an above average BABIP (.311), which means his batting average could approach **Adam Dunn** territory.



Image source: BaseballAnalytics.org

Nick Castellanos

Bats: R | Age: 22 | Team: Tigers | Position: 3B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	A+	20	215	3	37	32	3/2	.405	1.014	.486	17.3%	9.1%	32.6%	43.6%
2012	AA	20	322	7	35	25	5/4	.264	.678	.322	22.3%	4.1%	30.8%	43.7%
2013	AAA	21	533	18	81	76	4/1	.276	.793	.307	16.8%	9.1%	-	-
Proj.			530	15	70	70	4	.270						

This is the projection Jason Parks [wrote about Castellanos](#), “Of all the prospects in the minors, Castellanos might receive the most mixed reviews, as he’s either a top-20 talent with future 6/6 hit/power at the major-league level, or he’s just an average player, a top 50 prospect that has some ability with the bat but not nearly the impact talent some project. I’ve seen it and I like it, but I tend to fall in the middle of the two camps; I think Castellanos is going to hit for a high average but I’m not sold the power shows up in the 25-plus home run range without selling out the contact to achieve it.” From the scouting reports I’ve read, no one doubts his tool because he can hit premium velocity and can hit for power to all fields. However, the biggest question is will be a .300 hitter out of the gate? Probably not. I’m projecting him to be a .280 hitter with 10-15 home runs, which is basically a **Pablo Sandoval** type of season. Unlike the young White Sox hitters, if Castellanos struggles the Tigers may have to pull him from the lineup as they have a quality infielder in the newly acquired **Steve Lombardozzi**. For Keith Law’s [scouting report go here](#). For Jim Callis’ [go here](#).

Wellington Castillo

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Cubs | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (21), NFBC (26)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	25	146	6	22	22	0/0	.260	.800	.305	21.0%	13.1%	32.3%	50.5%
2012	MLB	25	170	5	16	22	0/0	.265	.754	.348	26.8%	8.9%	26.8%	50.0%
2013	MLB	26	380	8	41	32	2/0	.274	.746	.347	22.7%	7.9%	23.9%	48.1%
Proj.			440	12	50	50	1	.271						

Last year I wrote how Castillo could be a great source for 20 home run power really late in fantasy drafts. Turns out I was dead wrong as he only hit eight. Even though I was incorrect about his power potential, there are positives to take away from last year. Of his eight home runs, six came in the second half of the year. As the season progressed he made adjustments at the plate and became a better hitter. In the first half of the year he only had a walk rate of 4.9 percent, but in the second half it was 12.7 percent. Additionally, his swing rate on balls outside the strike zone decreased from 27.8 percent to only 22.5 percent in the second half. Predicting 20 home runs may be bullish, but 13-18 is certainly reasonable in 2014. Also, he’s earned high marks within the Cubs organization for his defensive prowess and his ability to handle a pitching staff, which means he is expected to be the primary backstop for the next few years.

Jason Castro

Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Astros | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (11), NFBC (9)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	23	195	2	26	8	0/0	.205	.573	.250	18.9%	10.1%	27.8%	48.9%
2012	MLB	25	257	6	29	29	0/0	.257	.735	.309	20.7%	10.5%	28.4%	46.9%
2013	MLB	26	435	18	63	56	2/1	.276	.835	.351	26.5%	10.2%	28.8%	41.1%
Proj.			420	14	55	55	1	.260						

On the surface it looks as though Castro had an extremely lucky year with a .351 BABIP and 16.2 percent HR/FB rate. Of his 18 home runs, 13 came at home with a 26.5 percent HR/FB rate, which seems extremely high considering Minute Maid Park is not extremely beneficial for left handed power hitters. (To compare various ball park factor numbers please go [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Below is a breakdown of his pre and post all-star break performance.

Time	AVG	OBP	SLUG	K%	BB%	BABIP
Pre All-Star	.269	.331	.475	23.7%	8.2%	.324
Post All-Star	.290	.389	.507	32.1%	14.2%	.420

Based on the data it is highly unlikely he'll continue to strikeout 32 percent of the time and maintain a .290 batting average. I would not be surprised if the batting regresses to the .250 range next year. Another red flag has been his inability to stay on the field. For example, he missed the 2011 and part of the 2012 season with a torn ACL. Last year he missed 46 games primarily from a [sore right knee](#) and a knee sprain. He is one of the rare catchers who is expected to bat in the middle of the lineup, but since he strikes out so much and his propensity to get hurt makes him a pass for me because someone is going to pay for last year's numbers and I don't want to be me.

Starlin Castro

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Cubs | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (24), NFBC (22)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	674	10	91	66	22/9	.307	.773	.344	13.4%	4.9%	27.1%	51.8%
2012	MLB	22	646	14	78	78	25/13	.283	.753	.315	14.5%	5.2%	28.0%	49.5%
2013	MLB	23	666	10	59	44	9/6	.245	.631	.290	18.3%	4.3%	22.9%	54.2%
Proj.			650	12	82	73	16	.283						

Where do we begin? Last year I said Castro was the safest shortstop available and I stood by those words, drafting him in three of four leagues. Not only did proclaim he was the safest shortstop I said something to the effect of, "Castro has the raw talent to be super star, but has yet to put it all together over a full season." Any time we see a young player play really well it's only natural to assume that the player is going to get even better because the body and mind will mature. However, it's possible for young players in this current generation do not get dramatically better as they age. In fact in [Jeff Zimmerman's](#) piece he theorizes (with data) that young players play the best when they first get to the majors, sustain that performance for a few years then begin their decline. If Zimmerman is correct is it possible we have already seen Castro's ultimate ceiling? I'm not at that point yet, but it is something I'm strongly considering if he has another down year.

In terms of his 2013 season there were quite a few negative trends. For example, his strikeout rate increased four percentage points while walk rate decreased one percentage point. I'm not really concerned with the walk rate because he's never been a patient hitter and besides, he has shown throughout his career he knows how to put barrel on the ball with being patient.

Before 2013 Castro has always been able to smash non-fastballs as he had a .289 batting average. However, last year he only hit .219 against non-fastballs. A lot of decrease in performance, in general, can be deduced from poor BABIPs, which implies he was unlucky and is likely to rebound because of the three plus years of solid output. For his career he only has a stolen base success rate of 65 percent, which is extremely low. He's still a plus runner, but I have to believe the Cubs are going to strongly consider limiting his stolen base attempts moving forward. His 2013 was so bad that fantasy owners considering drafting him have to basically take a leap of faith because all the data suggests he was either unlucky or really bad; it depends how much you believe in 2013 versus the three years prior. I think Castro is a great buy low.

Yoenis Cespedes

Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Athletics | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (45), NFBC (35)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	26	487	23	70	82	16/4	.292	.861	.326	18.9%	8.0%	32.0%	46.4%
2013	MLB	27	529	26	74	80	7/7	.240	.737	.274	23.9%	6.4%	31.3%	43.2%
Proj.			520	24	72	82	11	.250						

Before the season began I was all-in on Cespedes, thinking we have only seen the tip of the ice berg of how good he's going to be. Well, that didn't happen. In fact he regressed in almost every department. One of the big reasons why his production slipped last year was due to a poor BABIP. Before 2013 I thought since Cespedes had plus speed his BABIP of .326 would be more sustainable. However, the BABIP was not sustainable because his strikeout rate increased five percentage points and his walk rate decreased one and half percentage points.

He doesn't have much of an approach at the plate; he's more see-ball, hit-ball mode; has trouble with pitches on the outer half of the plate; there's a lot of swing and miss in his game (16th in the majors in swing and miss rate) because he's looking to hit home runs with every swing. Based on the [scouting report](#) from Jason Parks I doubt Cespedes is going to improve dramatically. To build upon the scouting assessment that he's always gearing up for the fastball, which in turn makes him susceptible to breaking balls; below is a table of how he performed against off-speed pitches and breaking balls by year. The biggest number that stands out is the five percentage point increase in strikeout rate.

Split	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
2012	.260	.768	.303	23.4%	5.5%	15.4%
2013	.195	.579	.232	28.2%	3.3%	12.5%

Overall, he's a .250-.260 hitter due to the approach and impatience; he has the raw power to 40 home runs (as evidenced by the home run derby in 2013), but he's limited by his approach and his hit tool, which will limit his home run power to the mid-20s.

Lonnie Chisenhall**Bats: L | Age: 25 | Team: Indians | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (47), NFBC (28)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	212	7	27	22	1/0	.255	.699	.299	22.0%	3.6%	31.0%	43.4%
2012	MLB	23	142	5	16	16	2/1	.268	.741	.300	17.9%	5.3%	26.2%	49.5%
2013	MLB	24	289	11	30	36	1/0	.225	.668	.243	18.2%	5.2%	31.9%	42.9%
Proj.			440	16	59	59	1	.250						

Even though Chisenhall made his major league debut in 2011 he has only amassed 643 at-bats in his major league career. In those 643 at-bats there are 23 home runs which is encouraging. With a career .194 batting average against lefties (124 at-bats so small sample size caveat) and scouting reports stipulating he was going to struggle against lefties does not offer a lot of encouragement for fantasy owners looking for him to play 145-plus games. That said, they Indians don't have any other third base options at this point so it looks as if the worst that could happen is he'll be on the better side of a platoon with **Mike Aviliev**. What's the most encouraging is he hit a lot more fly balls, which if the trend keeps up he could be a sneaky candidate for 20 homers with .245-260 batting average.

Shin-Soo Choo**Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: Rangers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (15), NFBC (12)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	313	8	37	36	12/5	.259	.733	.317	21.8%	10.1%	29.1%	47.6%
2012	MLB	29	598	16	88	67	21/7	.283	.815	.353	21.9%	10.6%	24.9%	52.1%
2013	MLB	30	569	21	107	54	20/11	.285	.885	.338	18.7%	15.7%	20.5%	52.2%
Proj.			580	17	105	72	19	.284						

In three of the last five he seasons Choo has been a 20/20 player with a .392 OBP. Now he goes from a lineup of **Zack Cozart**, **Joey Votto** and **Brandon Phillips** to **Elvis Andrus**, **Prince Fielder** and **Adrian Beltre** so it's easy to understand why the fantasy community should be excited about Choo's fantasy potential. There are some red flags. First, he is going to turn 32 in July, which means he will be starting to enter his decline years. Second, his inability to hit left handed pitching. In the past three seasons he has a .220 batting average and .293 slugging percentage against lefties, which the second worst in the majors among qualified players. Third, he had the best HR/FB rate of his career (15.4 percent) while at the same time he's hitting more ground balls. From 2008-12 his HR/FB rate is 13.1 percent. In the last two years he has a 48 percent ground ball rate compared to a 40.5 percent ground ball rate from 2008-11. Now if he had the same HR/FB rate in 2013 he only would have had 16-17 home runs instead of 21. You may be thinking the increase in HR/FB rate was due to playing in Cincinnati, but his home run power was fueled by home runs on the road and not at Cincinnati. Fifth, Keith Law [pointed out](#), "Choo already missed about half a season due to an elbow injury, and as a player who gets hit by a lot of pitches, he's at greater risk for more extended DL stints than a player who isn't made of ball-magnets." I'm curious to see what his value / ADP will be as he enters drafts. If he plays a full year he'll score 100-plus runs with at least 15/15 production with a .275-plus batting average.

Zack Cozart**Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Reds | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (19), NFBC (19)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	AAA	25	323	7	57	32	9/2	.310	.825	.348	14.6%	6.6%	34.8%	37.3%
2012	MLB	26	561	15	72	35	4/0	.246	.687	.282	18.8%	5.2%	32.4%	47.4%
2013	MLB	27	567	12	74	63	0/0	.254	.665	.285	16.5%	4.2%	18.8%	57.0%
Proj.			530	12	59	55	1	.250						

The major reason why he was rated so highly in the ESPNs and NFBCs Player Raters was due to the 74 runs he scored. He accomplished that by hitting second in the lineup behind **Shin Soo-Choo** and ahead of **Joey Votto**. If Cozart was any sort of a hitter he should've scored 90-plus runs. With Dusty Baker out of the picture I bet Cozart hits eighth, which will lower his fantasy potential. Also, Cozart isn't a very good hitter.

Allen Craig**Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Cardinals | Position: 1B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (11), NFBC (10)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	200	11	33	40	5/0	.315	.917	.344	18.3%	6.8%	35.1%	50.6%
2012	MLB	27	469	22	76	92	2/1	.307	.876	.334	17.3%	7.2%	28.3%	47.2%
2013	MLB	28	508	13	71	97	2/0	.315	.830	.368	17.8%	7.1%	20.9%	49.1%
Proj.			520	18	72	92	2	.310						

Before missing the last weeks of the season with a mild-left foot sprain, Craig was on well on his way to playing a full season. With **Carlos Beltran** going to the Yankees and **Matt Adams** ready for every-day at-bats, Craig will most likely have play right field the majority of the year, which doesn't bode well for him to play in 150-plus games. Adams will likely be platooned so Craig will move over to first against lefties. Also, with **Oscar Taveras** on the heels of joining the majors it's not inconceivable he makes it to the majors sooner rather than later either because of injury or if Adams has a bad first six weeks of the year (which is very possible).

Last year [I was a big proponent](#) of Craig because the biggest reason why he has yet to provide elite fantasy value was his inability to stay on the field and not the skill set. While he was able to stay relatively healthy, he was only able to hit 13 home runs with an 11 percent HR/FB rate, which seems low when compared to his 15.9 percent HR/FB rate before last season. Another contributing factor to the low power totals was the seven percentage point drop in the fly ball rate compared to last year. To recap, he hit less fly balls and the HR/FB was uncharacteristically lower than his career norm. I think the power is going to rebound to the 18-22 range if he can play a full year. My biggest worry is will he be able to play the majority of the year in right field. For next year, he'll likely hit in the middle of the lineup again so there will be plenty of RBI opportunities. In most leagues, his value could be suppressed again on draft day and his ultimate upside is still a top ten player.

Brandon Crawford**Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Giants | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (30), NFBC (26)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	196	3	22	21	1/3	.204	.584	.228	14.1%	10.5%	27.3%	56.5%
2012	MLB	25	435	4	44	45	1/4	.248	.653	.307	20.0%	6.9%	26.5%	52.3%
2013	MLB	26	499	9	52	43	1/2	.248	.674	.290	17.5%	7.6%	22.1%	54.7%
Proj.			480	8	54	45	1	.245						

Let's talk about the positives first. His SLUG and ISO have increased year over year. Also, his batting average against righties has increased year over year. He's above average to good defender at shortstop and has the starting job in San Francisco without any better in-house options. On the downside he cannot hit lefties; .214/.274/.296 career slash line. Also, he can't non-fastballs as he has a career slash line of .145/.168/.196 with only one home run. He doesn't offer a lot of power, hits in the bottom third of a bad lineup, has limited offensive upside and frankly is not a very good hitter. Other than NL-only and the deepest of mixed leagues should be drafted.

Carl Crawford**Bats: L | Age: 32 | Team: Dodgers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (60), NFBC (63)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	506	11	65	56	18/6	.255	.694	.299	19.3%	4.3%	27.9%	52.6%
2012	MLB	30	117	3	23	19	5/0	.282	.785	.319	17.6%	2.4%	23.2%	55.8%
2013	MLB	31	435	6	62	31	15/4	.283	.736	.321	14.1%	6.0%	23.7%	51.1%
Proj.			420	10	64	35	18	.285						

In the last three seasons Crawford has been beset with injuries. In 2011 he missed a little more than a month with a hamstring injury. In 2012 he only played in 31 games due to recovering from Tommy John surgery. Crawford began the 2013 season on the Opening Day roster and looked like the player of old with a 301/.358/.470 slash line, nine stolen bases and five home runs before going on the DL with a hamstring strain. The injury caused him to miss a little more than a month of the season with this injury.

Upon his return he had a .270/.307/.361 slash line with one home run and six stolen bases. The one home run was suppressed by a 1.5 percent HR/FB rate, which is unlikely to happen again especially since he had 9.5 percent HR/FB rate before the injury. Also, while in the postseason he had four home runs, which if you add to the post-DL return would have given him a 7.5 percent HR/FB rate (I realize this is a huge leap). To begin the 2013 season he sported a [new batting stance](#), which looked like the same stance he employed before going to Boston; the batting stance provides optimism that the 2013 numbers can be improved upon.

The biggest questions for Crawford in 2014 will be health and playing time. For the past three seasons he's only averaged 92 games with major injures. Also, the Dodgers have four outfielders, which means Crawford may not get full playing even if he is injury free the entire year. At this point fantasy owners

should only count on 420 at-bats; when he plays he'll provide solid value in four categories and will not hurt your ratios. However, the star he once was is not likely to come back.

Coco Crisp

Bats: B | Age: 34 | Team: Athletics | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (19), NFBC (16)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	531	8	69	54	49/9	.264	.693	.284	11.1%	7.0%	27.5%	47.5%
2012	MLB	32	455	11	68	46	39/4	.259	.742	.280	12.6%	8.9%	30.4%	50.0%
2013	MLB	33	513	22	93	66	21/5	.261	.779	.258	11.1%	10.4%	28.3%	46.9%
Proj.			500	14	86	63	28	.262						

Who saw a career high in home runs coming for Crisp last year? Of the 22 home runs, 16 came against right handed pitching. Also, 12 of his home runs came in August and September. As Crisp has gotten older the platoon split has increasingly become more extreme (table below, data is from 2011-2013).

Split	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	K%	BB%	BABIP	ISO	HR/FB
v R	.281	.343	.447	.789	9.9%	8.9%	.289	.166	9.1%
v L	.225	.290	.349	.639	14.8%	8.5%	.245	.124	7.8%

If the A's were smart they would platoon Crisp against lefties, but **Bob Melvin** has mentioned several times that Coco is the team's leadoff hitter. For the past three seasons he has steadily increased the number of pitches seen per plate appearance from 3.46 in 2011 to 4.03 in 2013; to put that number into perspective the league average is 3.84 and 4.03 puts Crisp in the top 25 percent of players with at least 400 plate appearances. I bring this up because nine of his home runs came during hitters counts and another eight home runs came in neutral hitters counts, which suggests he became more aggressive at the plate when the count is in his favor. Also, his resurgence in power has come from hitting more fly balls as his fly ball rate was 34 percent in 2011, but it was 39.6 percent in 2013.

The biggest question is how many bases will he steal? Last year he had a major drop off, going from 39 to 21. In terms of speed, he hasn't lost that much; in 2011 I clocked him a 4.00 (from the left side) on a jail break double play and last year I clocked him at 4.05 in the same type of circumstance. It's more likely the [hamstring injury](#) he suffered in early May, which caused him to go on the DL, is the cause as to why he stopped running. Before he went on the DL he had eight stolen bases and when he returned from the DL mid-May he only had 14 stolen bases. Injuries have always been a problem for Crisp, which is another reason why the A's acquired **Craig Gentry**, so his stolen base production could be influx again. When the season ends Coco will still be 34 years old and will be a free agent so it's very possible he's going to be looking for a 2-3 year deal and the best way to get the contract is steal bases again. His batting average against lefties is likely to limit his batting average, but I wouldn't be surprised if he hits 15-18 home runs with 30 stolen bases next year.

Nelson Cruz**Bats: R | Age: 33 | Team: Orioles | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (44), NFBC (36)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	475	29	64	87	9/5	.263	.821	.288	22.6%	6.4%	35.3%	45.9%
2012	MLB	31	585	24	86	90	8/4	.260	.779	.301	21.8%	7.5%	35.6%	44.3%
2013	MLB	32	413	27	49	76	5/1	.266	.833	.295	23.9%	7.7%	31.7%	47.0%
Proj.			550	30	65	90	6	.255						

On February 22 Cruz signed with the Orioles for \$8M with almost another million in incentives. I can't help, but feel bad for him because A) he turned down a \$14M qualifying offer from the Rangers early in the offseason because he was hoping for long term contract and B) was subjected to draft pick compensation. For fantasy purposes this is one of the better spots for Cruz to land. First, the majority of playing time will be at DH, which help stay on the field because he's battled leg injuries for a good portion of his career. Second, Baltimore is one of the best parks for hitter's and home runs so I don't expect a major regression in home runs. Third, he'll bat fifth in a lineup that should score a lot of runs, especially if you believe in **Chris Davis**.

Last year Cruz had a really good season despite missing 50 games due to a PED suspension. Like I said for every player linked to PEDs, I don't care if a player took them or not. I have not found any substantial studies or data to suggest PEDs improve a player's performance so until I learn otherwise I'll continue to not care. Last year he had the highest HR/FB rate of his career (21.3 percent) compared to a career (before 2013) 17.5 percent rate. That data point suggests a regression is going to happen, but in 2009 he had a 21.2 percent HR/FB rate, which implies he's capable of maintain that rate in 2014, especially in Baltimore. For 2014 I expect him to hit 25-30 home runs with room for a little more if he plays in 150-plus games.

There are some red flags with his game. First, he had the lowest batting average against left handed pitching since 2010 last year (.279 batting average) . One reason for the decline was the BABIP was also the lowest ever, but that doesn't mean the batting average is going to regress. The table shows his performance against left handed pitching. You'll notice not only did the ground ball rate sky rocket, but he made less hard contact.

Year	GB% vs LHP	AVG vs LHP	SLUG vs LHP
2009	39.0%	.235	.432
2010	35.2%	.330	.587
2011	35.1%	.340	.700
2012	46.5%	.309	.554
2013	52.4%	.279	.462

Since 2009 he is a career .263 hitter against righties and a .296 hitter against lefties. If he can longer mash lefties, a decrease in the batting average is more likely to occur. Unlike the hit type trend against

lefties, his hit type distribution has been relatively the same, which is another reason why I believe the home run totals will be the same. Last year he had the highest strikeout rate of his career with 26.3 percent. The increase in strikeout rate was primarily driven by non-fastballs, which indicates he may be cheating even more on the fastball. In terms of the stolen bases there are two narratives you could subscribe to. The first could be since he is only on a one year deal he'll be more inclined to steal 10-plus bags to boost his value in free agency. The second is nine stolen bases is the ceiling because he has not stolen more than ten since 2010. I'm more inclined to believe in the ladder because he didn't steal more than usual last year.

Michael Cuddyer

Bats: R | Age: 35 | Team: Rockies | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (11), NFBC (11)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	529	20	70	70	11/1	.284	.805	.312	16.3%	8.2%	30.5%	53.5%
2012	MLB	33	358	16	53	58	8/3	.260	.806	.287	19.8%	8.1%	28.4%	51.7%
2013	MLB	34	489	20	74	84	10/3	.331	.919	.382	18.5%	8.5%	22.9%	52.5%
Proj.			500	17	78	70	8	.275						

Will Cuddyer have a .382 BABIP again? The smart money says no. I'm not a fan of using BABIP as the sole basis of an evaluation, but he hit the most ground balls of his career and the ground ball rate has increased year-over-year since 2009. He also has below average speed. Combine all of that with he'll turn 35 in March tells me he will likely fall back down to Earth in 2014. What exactly is Earth? Earth is a .275-.285 batting average with ten stolen bases with 15-20 home runs. If either **Carlos Gonzalez** or **Troy Tulowitzki** get end up on the DL, Cuddyer will most likely receive the first opportunity to bat third, which will provide more RBI and run opportunities. He'll most likely be over drafted because of last year's performance, but I still like him to be a quality fantasy player.

Travis d'Arnaud

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Mets | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (102), NFBC (76)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	279	16	45	52	1/1	.333	.975	.374	19.5%	6.3%	31.3%	43.6%
2013	AAA	24	56	2	19	12	0/0	.304	1.041	.349	15.4%	26.9%	-	-
2013	MLB	24	99	1	4	5	0/0	.202	.548	.244	18.8%	10.7%	28.4%	51.4%
Proj.			350	13	47	51	1	.235						

Since d'Arnaud did not exceed 130 at-bats, he will still be considered a rookie in 2014. For the past three seasons his development has been stunted by injuries. In 2013 he missed time due to a fracture of the first metatarsal in his left foot. In 2012 it was a torn ligament in his knee and in 2011 it was torn ligament in his thumb. He should begin the season as the Mets opening day starter and should get the lion share of games played. However, drafting young, unproven catchers can be too high of a risk especially in one catcher leagues. Also, it takes longer for catching prospects to develop because of the physical and mental demands are more strenuous. The Mets are a bad offensive club with little help on the way so

his baseball card stats are likely to be suppressed as well. Combine that with the fact he has only played in 100-plus games twice in his seven year professional career make him not rosterable. For a full scouting report check out [Mark Anderson's scouting report](#) at the time of his call-up in August.

Matt Davidson

Bats: R | Age: 23 | Team: White Sox | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	279	16	45	52	1/1	.333	.975	.374	19.5%	6.3%	31.3%	43.6%
2013	AAA	24	56	2	19	12	0/0	.304	1.041	.349	15.4%	26.9%	-	-
2013	MLB	24	99	1	4	5	0/0	.202	.548	.244	18.8%	10.7%	28.4%	51.4%
Proj.			350	13	47	51	1	.235						

Davidson was acquired in exchange for **Addison Reed** and quickly becomes the everyday third baseman for the White Sox for at least the next three, four years. His profile doesn't suggest he'll be anything greater than a solid, average player. He should play average defense with 15-20 home runs with a .250-.260 batting average (because of the high strikeout rate) with little to no stolen bases. Among fantasy third basemen he ranks in the 17-23 range with the likes of **Mike Moustakas**, **David Freese** and **Chris Johnson**; I would rather reach for Davidson in shallow leagues because he has more upside and will play his home games in one of the best offensive ballparks in the majors and will get every opportunity to play every day even if he struggles out of the gate.

This is part of the [scouting report](#) Keith Law provided after the trade to the White Sox. "He's a polished hitter for his age, turning 23 in March, with sound plate discipline and a smooth right-handed swing with good hip rotation for at least average power." For further analysis of Davidson feel free to read the analysis from [Baseball Prospectus](#).

Chris Davis

Bats: L | Age: 28 | Team: Orioles | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (1), NFBC (1)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	199	5	25	19	1/0	.266	.707	.366	30.0%	5.2%	36.9%	40.8%
2012	MLB	26	515	33	75	85	2/3	.270	.827	.335	30.1%	6.6%	34.7%	42.0%
2013	MLB	27	584	53	103	138	4/1	.286	1.004	.336	29.6%	10.7%	37.6%	36.8%
Proj.			590	40	87	103	2	.268						

Take a look at the blind resumes below. The data is the summation of the last three seasons. One of the players will most likely be a top ten pick and the other, maybe a ninth round pick. Judging by the heading you are probably guessing one of them is **Chris Davis**, which would be correct; he is Player A. Player B is **Mark Trumbo**.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	HR	RBI	SB	Runs
Player A	.277	.343	.515	91	242	7	203
Player B	.251	.300	.473	95	282	18	216

I'll submit right away the numbers are misleading because Trumbo accumulated his numbers with 392 more plate appearances, which is an insanely huge discrepancy. Don't forget why the discrepancy exists. In 2011 the Rangers had Davis begin the year in triple-A because he was below average in the nearly 900 plate appearances prior. I'm not trying to compare Davis to Trumbo or vice versa, but I want to show the type of player Davis has been over a larger sample size.

There's no question Davis was fantasy baseball's MVP. If you owned Davis and didn't finish either first or second you should consider doing something else in your spare time. Let's look at what Davis did in his career before 2013.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	K%	BABIP	WHAV
Career	.258	.310	.466	.775	31.0%	.335	.239

Now let's split his 2013 season in half. The halves are defined by pre and post all-star break.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	K%	BABIP	WHAV
1st Half	.315	.392	.717	1.109	28.0%	.355	.317
2nd Half	.245	.339	.515	.854	31.8%	.309	.234

Which performance looks more like his career numbers? I'll agree we're dealing with a small sample size and it's unfair to compare numbers from 2008 to 2013 because he is a much different hitter now than five years ago. That said the regression back to his career norm during the second half of the season is quite striking.

Davis will most likely be a top ten pick in drafts and I recommend avoiding him. He has elite power and will most likely hit 35-40 home runs, but he could be a batting average risk. I use the word risk because first round picks need to provide elite performances in three, preferably four categories. Unless **Buck Showalter** wants to bat **Nick Markakis** in the three hole for half a season again, Davis will most likely bat third or fourth the entire year, which should enable him to provide elite RBI production. However, suppose Davis' batting average plummets to .260 and he only hits 42 home runs. That's only two categories of elite production, which will put his fantasy owners at a statistical disadvantage.

Any major league player is capable of outperforming their normal skill set for an extended period of time. In order to become a major leaguer a player must possess elite level tools and a work ethic that maximizes those tools⁴. Therefore, any major leaguer can have a hot streak and play over their heads. For example, for the first eight weeks of 2013 **Vernon Wells** had a slash line of .301/.357/.538 with ten

⁴ Please exclude fringe major leaguers like **Tony Campana**.

home runs and was batting fourth for the Yankees. Another example is **Chris Shelton** hitting ten home runs with a .326/.404/.783 slash line in April 2006. I believe Davis had one of those hot streaks during the first half of the 2013 season. Davis is really good and should be a borderline top 20 pick, not a top ten pick. I'm not saying he is incapable of having a hot streak like that again, but the smart money says it won't happen.

Ike Davis

Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Mets | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (66), NFBC (33)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	129	7	20	25	0/0	.302	.925	.344	20.8%	11.4%	33.3%	43.8%
2012	MLB	25	519	32	66	90	0/2	.227	.771	.246	24.1%	10.4%	34.0%	44.0%
2013	MLB	26	317	9	37	33	4/0	.205	.661	.268	26.8%	15.1%	26.3%	49.8%
Proj.			400	18	55	66	1	.220						

To say Davis' 2013 season was disappointment was an understatement. Based on the second half of the 2012 season, I thought he ironed out the hitch in his swing and would hit .255 with 30-plus home runs. However, he struggled throughout the entire 2013 season and still had a hitch in his swing, even after he came back from triple-a (after a mid-season demotion). For information about what was wrong in his swing last year checkout what [I wrote at TTFB](#). The table below shows the splits in performance before and after his demotion.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HRs
Before	.161	.242	.258	.500	.216	31.9%	9.2%	5
After	.267	.429	.443	.872	.333	20.6%	22.4%	4

The first thing that stands out is the batting average, but that batting average was pretty empty as he didn't hit for any home runs. With 440 career plate appearances against lefties he only has a .204 batting average, which implies he's likely a platoon player moving forward. His 2013 season ended prematurely (late August) with a strained right oblique and looks to be ready for spring training. His raw power is immense, but the question is can he tap into that power? All the data suggests it's not going to happen, but with a current ADP of 349 (as of early February) he still worth a flyer at the end of drafts because he could be a 30-plus home run player. As of February 24 it [has been reported](#) he was suffering from an oblique injury for the first half of the season (in 2013), but didn't tell anyone. That could account for why his season was so poor. Another possibility is the injury didn't play big of a role.

Khris Davis**Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Brewers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (107), NFBC (103)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	113	4	23	24	1/0	.310	.936	.360	19.3%	14.3%	42.9%	35.7%
2013	AAA	25	243	13	35	37	6/4	.255	.822	.283	21.0%	11.0%	-	-
2013	MLB	25	136	11	27	27	3/0	.279	.949	.293	22.2%	7.2%	27.3%	45.5%
Proj.			520	21	61	61	5	.250						

Davis surprisingly had the highest slugging percentage (.639) of any player during the second half of the season. **Nori Aoki** is gone and **Ryan Braun** is moving to right field, which means Davis will have every opportunity to play every day in left field and prove last year was no fluke. Based on his small sample size last year some fantasy owners believe he could hit 30-plus home runs, but the 28.9 percent HR/FB rate is not going to happen again. First of all, he hasn't shown the ability to stay on the field. In the past two seasons he has only average 408 plate appearances. Second, he has shown the ability to hit for a lot of power in the minors. Prior to 2013 the most home runs he's ever hit in a season was 2010 with 22 in low-a. Also, while in the minors he has always been old for the age. In 2012 he played the season as a 24 year old and last year he was 25 in triple-a.

Davis will most likely be a three outcome player (strikeout, walk and home run) who can hit 17-25 home runs with a .250 batting average. He has power to all fields, which makes 25 home not entirely out of the realm of possibility. He still has problems with breaking balls on the outer half of the plate, especially from right handed pitchers. He's most likely going to hit in the bottom of the lineup which will limit his RBI and run opportunities with totals in the mid-60s appear to be his ceiling. Also, he's not a burner, but he has the speed to steal 3-6 stolen bases too. Some fantasy analysts have Davis in their top 30 among outfielders, which is way too high for player with a limited sample size and does not have the best track record in the minor leagues.

Rajai Davis**Bats: R | Age: 33 | Team: Tigers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (39), NFBC (28)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	320	1	44	29	34/11	.238	.623	.292	18.6%	4.4%	29.6%	52.5%
2012	MLB	31	447	8	64	43	46/13	.257	.687	.314	20.9%	6.0%	25.9%	52.2%
2013	MLB	32	331	6	49	24	45/6	.260	.687	.308	18.6%	5.8%	26.6%	45.6%
Proj.			325	4	50	35	40	.258						

In four of the past five seasons he's accumulated at least 40 stolen bases despite not having a full time job. The one year he didn't have 40, he had 34 in only 95 games played. Davis has always found a way to playing time and is always undervalued on draft day. As of now Davis doesn't have an everyday job, but **Andy Dirks**, the starting left fielder, can't hit lefties and **Torii Hunter** will turn 39 in July and could regress at any moment. Depending on the size of your bench Davis should be owned in all leagues, even

10-team mixed (assuming the bench is a decent size), because when he plays he will steal bases and provide a little pop.

Ian Desmond

Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Nationals | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (3), NFBC (3)

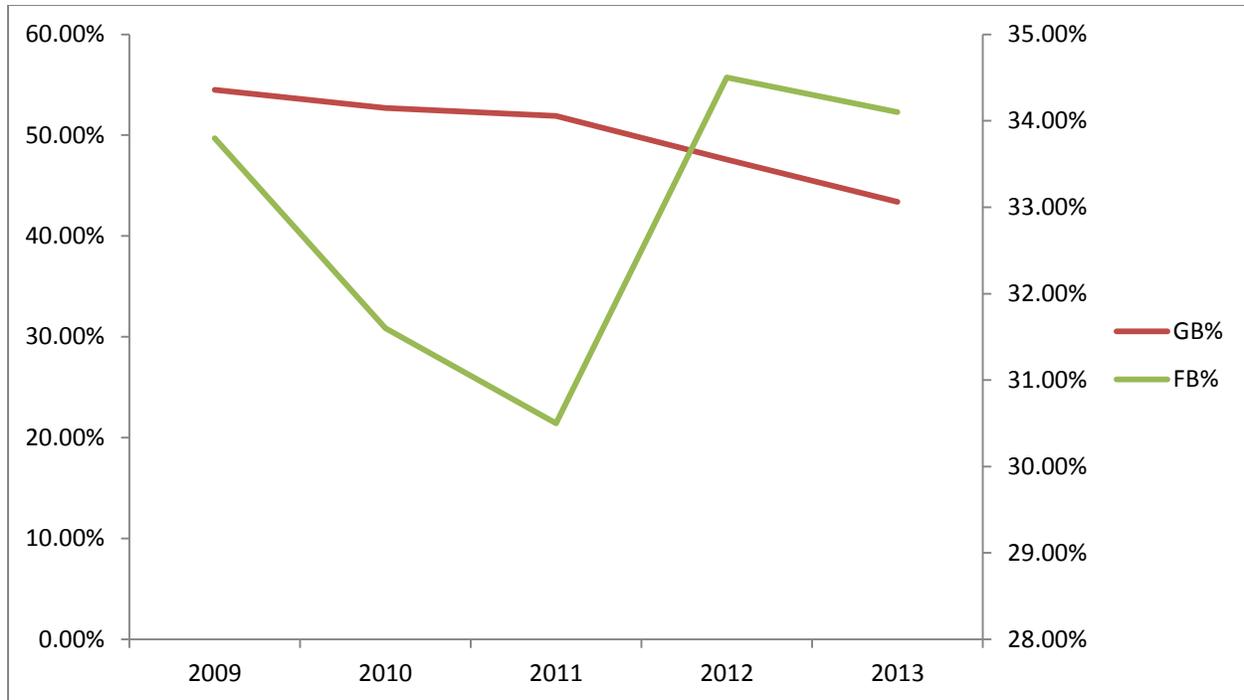
YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	584	8	65	49	25/10	.253	.656	.317	21.8%	5.5%	24.1%	58.8%
2012	MLB	26	513	25	72	73	21/6	.292	.845	.332	20.7%	5.5%	28.0%	51.1%
2013	MLB	27	600	20	77	80	21/6	.280	.784	.336	22.1%	6.6%	23.0%	48.6%
Proj.			583	20	75	75	20	.272						

Before the 2013 season I believed Desmond would regress slightly because his baseball card statistics were fueled by fluky career highs in BABIP (.332) and HR/FB rate (18.2 percent). It turns out the 2012 season was not a fluke as he quietly put up another 20/20 season last year. Any time a player puts up two similar seasons back to back it's easy to assume he'll perform similarly the following year. However, let's dig deeper and see what we find.

For two years in a row his power numbers have decreased slightly during the second half of the season. The table below provides his first and second half results for the past two seasons. The data suggests there was a decline in the power, but nothing nearly as dramatic as the two second halves **Jason Kipnis** has put up. Also, the fly ball distances were nearly identical for each half the past two seasons. Since the drop off in the home runs and the distances in fly balls looks negligible I'm willing to consider Desmond's poor second half power numbers as fluky.

Split	AB	HR	AVG	OBP	SLG	HR/FB
1st Half	700	32	.283	.341	.500	16.7%
2nd Half	413	13	.291	.368	.446	13.6%

Another question fantasy owners have to consider is will the batting average hold up again? In the past two seasons his BABIP has been higher (.335) compared to the three seasons prior (.315). Usually when a player sustains a new BABIP level for multiple seasons it usually coincides with a change in the approach at the plate. One of the adjustments he made was he started hitting less ground balls and more fly balls (image below). If you've read my writing before you know I love it when most players hit less ground balls because they become less BABIP dependent and it implies the player is making more hard contact and harder contact leads to more extra base hits.



Before the 2012 season he made another adjustment, swinging early in the count, specifically when the count was 0-0. In 2012 he swung at the first pitch at the at-bat 47 percent of the time and last year it was 38 percent. To add further context of how high that swing percentage was, in the last two years he has 13th highest swing rate of pitches in a 0-0 count. This new approach paid off as he had a .388 batting average when the count is 0-0 compared to a .262 batting average in all other counts. Despite putting up similar numbers to 2012 on 0-0 counts last year there are still some red flags. First, the swing rate decreased and the swing and miss rate increased (from 23 percent to 35 percent). The swing and miss rate increased because pitchers started taking advantage of his new aggressive approach, throwing less strikes (from 71 percent to 66 percent) and throwing more fastballs up in the zone, which resulted in him chasing balls out of the zone. He also made less hard contact as his isolated power decreased from .191 to .121. It's also worth noting he only had four home runs in 0-0 counts the past two seasons, which means the primary benefit from the new approach to plate was for his batting average.

Despite the better hit type distribution and the new approach there are additional red flags. The contact rates were the lowest of his career (75.3 percent compared to a career 79-80 percent) and the swing and miss rates were the highest of his career (26 percent compared to a career 22 percent). In conjunction with the decreased contact and swing and miss rates the strikeout rate was the highest of career, which reduces the likelihood of having a higher batting average.

The common theme in the fantasy community is Desmond is the safe elite/tier one shortstop because of the solid production the past two seasons and he's been able to stay on the field consistently the past four seasons (averaging 149 games played). However, there are some warning signs in his game. A big reason for the jump in his batting average was due to being more aggressive in 0-0 counts and it looks as though that strategy may no longer be as effective. If he reverts back to being a .260-.265 hitter he's no

longer a top four shortstop. That said, I have no problem with ranking him as high as number one among shortstops because of the consistency and the skill set, but I rather wait later in drafts and take a high upside player like **Xander Bogaerts**, **Andrelton Simmons** or **Brad Miller** because I'm not entirely sold Desmond is as safe as most would lead you to believe.

Matt Dominguez

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Astros | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (14)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	45	0	2	2	0/0	.244	.625	.297	16.7%	4.2%	30.3%	54.5%
2012	MLB	22	109	5	14	16	0/0	.284	.787	.299	15.0%	3.5%	21.4%	59.5%
2013	MLB	23	543	21	56	77	0/1	.241	.690	.254	16.3%	5.1%	31.1%	49.0%
Proj.			570	21	61	84	0	.255						

Similar to **Manny Machado** and **Kyle Seager**, Dominguez's 2013 performance was a tale of two halves. However, his season started very poorly and ended pretty well. The table below shows his 2012 performance and his 2013 broken out into halves.

Split	BB%	K%	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	ISO	BABIP
2012	3.5%	15.0%	.284	.310	.477	.787	.193	.299
2013: 1st Half	3.6%	15.5%	.227	.257	.383	.640	.156	.235
2013: 2nd Half	6.9%	17.3%	.260	.323	.430	.753	.170	.280

Obviously, the biggest numbers that stand out is the increase in BABIP, strikeout rate and walk rates. Similar to Seager, most of the BABIP increase in the second half of the season came from fastballs (from .240 to .320). The power is legit; of his 26 home runs the past two seasons [only five of them had "just enough" power](#). Despite not having a platoon advantage to inflate his batting average, he will still be able to make enough contact to be a .250-.260 hitter for two reasons. He doesn't strikeout at a high clip (only 16 percent) and his ground ball rate decreased by 12 percentage points. He could also be a sneaky play for 85-plus RBIs because I expect him to either bat fourth or fifth the majority of the year. On surface it looks as though he's a second tier fantasy third baseman, but if there's any third baseman capable of being the 2013 version **Josh Donaldson**, it's Dominguez. Both players play really good defense, have plus raw power, were both first round picks who scouts forgot about and will have an opportunity to hit in the middle of the order.

Josh Donaldson**Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Athletics | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (5), NFBC (3)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	26	209	13	38	45	5/2	.335	.000	.350	14.5%	9.8%	29.1%	46.8%
2012	MLB	26	274	9	34	33	4/1	.241	.687	.278	20.7%	4.8%	30.7%	44.2%
2013	MLB	27	579	24	89	93	5/2	.301	.883	.333	16.5%	11.4%	24.8%	48.0%
Proj.			580	23	92	88	2	.285						

Last year Donaldson had an ADP of 260 and 381 in ESPN and NFBC respectively and he ended the year as one of the five best fantasy third baseman in the majors. There's already been a lot of chatter in the among the fantasy community about how last year was an outlier and regression is coming. When you compare his 2012 numbers to 2013 it's easy to see why regression should happen. However, it's a mistake to compare 2012 versus 2013 on the whole because his 2012 was take of two halves. First of all, he only played 75 games so there's a small sample bias. Secondly, the beginning of the year started off so poorly he was demoted to triple-a in the middle of the year. The table below is a breakdown of his numbers before and after he was demoted to the minors in 2012. Which numbers look more like his 2013 performance?

Splits	AB	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
Before	98	.153	.163	.173	.194	26.0%	1.0%	4.2%
After	176	.290	.364	.381	.323	18.0%	6.7%	14.3%

There a lot of adjustments he made last year that are extremely encouraging. His strikeout rate, swing and miss and his swings on balls outside the zone all decreased. The walk rate almost doubled while his 14.4 percent HR/FB rate was nearly identical to the rate he posted after his call up in 2012. Based on the scouting report from [Chris Mellen](#) and last year's .333 BABIP I do not foresee Donaldson repeating his batting average. However, that doesn't mean I see a substantial drop off. I expect his batting average to be in the .275-.280 range. The 20-plus power is legitimate based on the sustained HR/FB rate and the lift he gets with his post-contact extension. Overall, I have a hard time believing last year was a complete mirage because based on a pure statistical level. The table below shows what he's done in his last 862 plate appearances. I have a hard time believing any player can luck into a performance this good over this long of time span.

AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
.298	.377	.497	.330	16.8%	10.3%	14.3%

Ryan Doumit**Bats: B | Age: 33 | Team: Braves | Position: C, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (19), NFBC (18)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	218	8	17	30	0/1	.303	.830	.331	14.8%	6.8%	31.4%	48.0%
2012	MLB	31	484	18	56	75	0/0	.275	.781	.306	18.6%	5.5%	34.9%	45.2%
2013	MLB	32	485	14	49	55	1/0	.247	.710	.282	18.4%	8.9%	28.7%	51.2%
Proj.			350	12	49	55	0	.250						

For the last three years Doumit has been a really solid two-catcher option play because he provided solid power numbers with a solid batting average. Even with the poor batting average last year he was still a top 20 fantasy catch, but the data shows he could regress even more. A career .268 hitter, last year his batting average (.247) was the lowest it's been since 2006. The drop in batting average came primarily against right handed pitching as he only hit .174 against their breaking pitches. The reason why he struggled against breaking pitches is he became a dead fastball hitter, which is probably due to a decrease in bat speed. Doumit will begin the season at the age of 33 and has an opportunity to be the everyday catcher for the Braves. **Evan Gattis** is the front runner to be the everyday catcher, but he's unproven, not a good defender, has trouble hitting right handed pitching and has never played a full more than 90 games at catcher in a season. Therefore, I wouldn't be surprised if Doumit usurps Gattis for the starting role, but I still do not recommend drafting him. Doumit will have a batting average in .235-.245 range with 10-14 home runs if he does get the better side of the platoon.

Brian Dozier**Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Twins | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (14), NFBC (12)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	25	181	2	15	17	3/2	.232	.623	.270	17.0%	7.0%	32.6%	43.5%
2012	MLB	25	316	6	33	33	9/2	.234	.603	.267	17.1%	4.7%	34.2%	49.1%
2013	MLB	26	558	18	72	66	14/7	.244	.726	.278	19.3%	8.2%	32.8%	44.4%
Proj.			550	15	75	75	12	.250						

From the scouting reports I read prior to Dozier's call up I expected him to be a doubles hitter who would consistently put the bat on the ball and have a batting average in the .270 range. So far in 963 plate appearances he has provided the opposite of the scouting reports with 24 home runs, 44 doubles and a .240 batting average. Of those 24 home runs, according to [Hit Tracker Online](#), 17 of them had "plenty" of distance and two were "no doubt," which tells me the power is legitimate.

What's the most promising aspect of Dozier's game is his approach at the plate. In his rookie year his swing percentage on pitches outside the strike zone was 33 percent and last year it was 23 percent. Combine that data point with the fact his contact rates were basically identical suggests he has made positive changes with his approach at the plate and less of a batting average risk for 2014. The 67 percent stolen base success rate are very concerning because it's possible he won't have the green light as much next year. For my projections, I'm not expecting any more than ten. The more I look at Dozier,

the more I like his chances for being one of the best values on draft day because his upside is a 15/15 player.

Stephen Drew

Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: - | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (16)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	321	5	44	45	4/4	.252	.713	.313	20.9%	8.5%	35.7%	43.8%
2012	MLB	29	287	7	38	28	1/2	.223	.657	.275	23.2%	11.3%	37.7%	36.6%
2013	MLB	30	442	13	57	67	6/0	.253	.777	.320	24.8%	10.8%	35.1%	39.6%
Proj.			450	10	58	58	2	.240						

In the last three years has a .245/.322/.403 slash line with 25 home runs and 11 stolen bases in 1,182 plate appearances. Those numbers don't look great, but they're not horrible considering the defensive position he plays. However, look at his numbers when you remove the numbers he put up at Fenway Park last year: .234/.261/.378. Just by looking at those numbers it's difficult to think he's even a good offensive player any more. His strikeout rate has increased year over year for three straight years while the contact rates are decreasing, which is never a good sign. Drew doesn't steal bases, is a batting average risk and has injury concerns. In drafts I rather take a player with upside like Brad Miller late in drafts. Drew's value increases slightly if he gets resigned by the Red Sox because he's a stream worthy option.

Adam Dunn

Bats: L | Age: 34 | Team: White Sox | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (28), NFBC (18)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	415	11	36	42	0/1	.159	.569	.240	35.7%	15.1%	39.2%	37.3%
2012	MLB	32	539	41	87	96	2/1	.204	.800	.246	34.2%	16.2%	39.8%	38.4%
2013	MLB	33	525	34	60	86	1/1	.219	.762	.266	31.1%	12.5%	35.6%	42.5%
Proj.			500	35	65	85	0	.211						

Dunn would have more fantasy value if he was platooned against right handed hitters only. Since 2008 he has a .194/.311/.389 slash line. If you own a lot of high batting average players it's conceivable you may want to roster Dunn because the batting average drain wouldn't be as pronounced. Also, his value increases in head to head leagues because the effect of the batting average doesn't nearly have the same impact as roto leagues.

Jarrold Dyson

Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Royals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (68), NFBC (60)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	44	0	8	3	11/1	.205	.535	.290	26.4%	13.2%	19.4%	71.0%
2012	MLB	27	292	0	52	9	30/5	.260	.650	.318	17.0%	9.1%	22.4%	61.2%
2013	MLB	28	213	2	30	17	34/6	.258	.692	.317	18.8%	8.8%	17.7%	66.5%
Proj.			275	1	35	35	31	.260						

Other than **Billy Hamilton**, Dyson could be the fastest player in the majors. If Dyson were given every day at-bats he could steal 55-plus bases, but since Ned Yost is the Royals manager means Dyson will never get an opportunity to be an everyday player even if someone were to get hurt. I say that because they have **Justin Maxwell** on the team and he would most likely be platooned with Maxwell. The table below combines his totals for the past two seasons. At this point he's someone worth knowing about and is someone who should be picked up if someone in the Royals outfield gets hurt.

PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR	RBI	SB	R
569	.259	.327	.341	.668	.318	17.8%	9.0%	2	26	64	82

Adam Eaton

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: White Sox | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (123), NFBC (116)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	488	7	119	45	38/10	.381	.995	.432	12.1%	9.4%	20.1%	61.4%
2012	MLB	23	85	2	19	5	2/3	.259	.794	.294	14.6%	13.6%	21.4%	67.1%
2013	MLB	24	250	3	40	22	5/2	.252	.674	.294	15.9%	6.1%	12.8%	63.8%
Proj.			550	8	85	60	28	.260						

Based on a great 2012 season, many industry analysts pegged him as the favorite to be the rookie of the year and the Diamondbacks long term center field solution. However, the enthusiasm quickly dissipated as he got hurt (strained left elbow) and was only limited to an ineffective 277 plate appearances. He has a great approach at the plate, which will allow him to have more favorable hitter's count. He also has plus speed, which should make him the White Sox's leadoff hitter. In 2012 he had 40 stolen bases between the majors and minors so it's not unreasonable to believe he's a lock for 20-plus. His home run ceiling for 2014 is between 8-12 home runs with room for a little more at maturity. My feelings about Eaton's playing time is similar to what I wrote about **Matt Davidson** in that the White Sox are not going to be a good team next year, which means as long as he's healthy, he's going to play every day even if he struggles. If he plays a full year I would expect a .255 batting average with seven home runs and 28 stolen bases with 70-plus runs; those are similar numbers to **Michael Brantley** and he was a borderline top 30 outfielder last year.

Jacoby Ellsbury

Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Yankees | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (4), NFBC (4)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	660	32	119	105	39/15	.321	.928	.336	13.4%	7.1%	30.4%	48.2%
2012	MLB	28	303	4	43	26	14/3	.271	.682	.304	13.3%	5.9%	30.5%	50.4%
2013	MLB	29	577	9	92	53	52/4	.298	.781	.341	14.5%	7.4%	19.8%	54.6%
Proj.			570	13	105	60	44	.295						

The talk among the fantasy community is will Ellsbury hit 30-plus home runs? Maybe 30-plus is too much. How about 20-plus home runs? My answer to that question is, remove the 32 home runs in 2011 and you'll see he only has 33 home runs in 2,472 plate appearances. Therefore, 20-plus home runs in unrealistic. However, I wouldn't be shocked if he hits 15-17. However, if I had to take the over-under on 14 home runs, I would take the under. That said, he could generate more home runs if he decides to sell out for power at the risk of a lower batting average (like **Curtis Granderson** and **Mark Teixeira**).

I don't really buy-in to the injury prone label; in 2010 he got hurt (broken ribs) because he ran into **Adrian Beltre**; in 2012 it was fluke play where he injured his shoulder sliding into second base. In two of the last three seasons the Yankees have finished seventh and fourth in the majors in stolen bases, which bodes well for Ellsbury to maintain the stolen base levels he posted last year. There has been talk of him being a top five draft pick, which isn't as crazy as it sounds. He provides elite production in three categories with room for a fourth if you buy-in to the home run potential.

Edwin Encarnacion

Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (4), NFBC (3)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	481	17	70	55	8/2	.272	.787	.292	14.5%	8.1%	32.6%	43.1%
2012	MLB	29	542	42	93	110	13/3	.280	.941	.266	14.6%	13.0%	42.5%	38.0%
2013	MLB	30	530	36	90	104	7/1	.272	.904	.247	10.0%	13.2%	33.2%	40.0%
Proj.			540	36	90	105	6	.275						

Encarnacion got even better in 2013 even though it didn't show up in his fantasy statistical categories. For example, his swing rate at pitches outside the strike zone decreased by four percentage points and his strikeout rate decreased four and half percentage points. He accomplished that while maintaining his power and still hitting for a solid average. His stolen base attempts dropped by half, from 16 to eight, the success rate was much higher. Fantasy owners should expect 4-9 stolen bases for 2014. The decreased strikeout rate gives me optimism he can at least maintain his .272 batting average with room to hit in the .280-.285 range. Lastly, he played ten games at third, which could be enough to be third base eligible in your league. After two years of consistent production, without and statistically significant home-road or lefty-righty splits and a more refined approach at the plate, I classify Encarnacion as a relatively safe top 15-20 fantasy player.

Alcides Escobar**Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Royals | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (20), NFBC (17)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	548	4	69	46	26/9	.254	.633	.285	12.2%	4.2%	24.0%	59.6%
2012	MLB	25	605	5	68	52	35/5	.293	.721	.344	15.4%	4.2%	20.8%	57.8%
2013	MLB	26	607	4	57	52	22/0	.234	.559	.264	13.1%	3.0%	24.2%	52.8%
Proj.			530	5	59	50	25	.240						

Last year I said he wasn't going to hit .293 again because he's an extreme ground ball hitter and he had .344 BABIP, which was nearly 70 points higher than his career BABIP. I also said once the batting average decrease the stolen bases would decrease the OBP would drop as well because he doesn't walk to the only way he'll get on base is via the hit. Not to toot my own horn, but that is exactly what happened in 2013.

Despite the down year, he still got a little unlucky with his BABIP (2.64) and I expect it to improve to the point where he can have a batting average in the .240-.250 range. In the past Royals Manager, Ned Yost, for some strange reason, loved to bat his .295 career OBP in the two hole, which made Escobar a deep sleeper in 12-team mixed leagues because of his stolen base and run potential. However, with the signing of **Omar Infante**, Escobar will likely spend most of time batting ninth, which means he's only a deep mixed league play. Lastly, since he's a fast runner it's possible he could have a year similar to 2012 again if he has a high BABIP again.

Yunel Escobar**Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Rays | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (21), NFBC (21)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	513	11	77	48	3/3	.290	.782	.316	11.9%	10.3%	23.7%	59.7%
2012	MLB	29	558	9	58	51	5/1	.253	.644	.273	11.5%	5.8%	22.6%	59.8%
2013	MLB	30	508	9	61	56	4/4	.256	.698	.281	12.6%	9.9%	23.5%	56.0%
Proj.			520	9	63	57	4	.255						

Escobar doesn't offer any stolen base potential. His power potential is somewhere between 9-13 with an opportunity for more if everything rolls right. In three of the past four seasons he has had a sub-.257 batting average without optimism an improvement is coming because of the high ground ball rates. The walk rate increased four percentage points, which is encouraging. Overall, he is a low ceiling, low floor type of player who should only be owned in the deepest of leagues.

Andre Ethier

Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: Dodgers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (67), NFBC (67)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	487	11	67	62	0/1	.292	.789	.348	18.7%	10.5%	30.3%	47.0%
2012	MLB	30	556	20	79	89	2/2	.284	.812	.333	20.1%	8.1%	29.2%	46.6%
2013	MLB	31	482	12	54	52	4/3	.272	.783	.315	17.2%	11.0%	29.0%	42.2%
Proj.			450	12	60	60	1	.275						

As of December 21st Ethier does not have an everyday job. In my opinion Ethier is a glorified **Matt Joyce** in that he can't hit lefties, provides moderate power numbers (13-18 home runs). Ethier made a lot of positive adjustments. First, the strikeout rate decreased three percentage points while the walk rate increase three percentage points. His .272 batting average makes it look like he had a bad year, but instead, it was the low .315 BABIP that fueled the lower batting average. I say .315 is low because he had a .334 BABIP from 2010-12.

In terms of the 2014 season, Ethier will likely be the odd man out for everyday playing time, but if **Matt Kemp** is not able to be ready for opening day or misses time, Ethier, not **Yasiel Puig**, would become the center fielder. Overall, his greatest asset is he'll provide an above average batting average, especially if he is platooned against righties (he has a .309/.388/.518 career slash line). Since his playing time is still up in the air he is only draftable in deep mixed leagues. If he had every day at-bats he could be the fifth outfielder in a 12-team mixed league.

Prince Fielder

Bats: L | Age: 29 | Team: Rangers | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (9), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	569	38	95	120	1/1	.299	.981	.306	15.3%	15.5%	31.3%	47.2%
2012	MLB	28	581	30	83	108	1/0	.313	.940	.321	12.2%	12.3%	31.2%	45.1%
2013	MLB	29	624	25	82	106	1/1	.279	.819	.307	16.4%	10.5%	26.6%	44.9%
Proj.			610	24	90	107	0	.295						

During the first half of the year Fielder struggled: .267/.363/.475 slash line with a .190 ISO, but in the second half of the season he hit .295/.362/.456 with a .161 ISO (easily the lowest of his career). He filed for [divorce in May](#), which could help explain why he struggled during the first half of the year.

After Fielder was traded to the Rangers Jason Parks, the head director of player scouting at Baseball Prospectus, [tweeted](#), "His bat looked slower, often unbalanced in his setup w/ less bat control than I remember him having. Rolled over a lot, as well." I agree he looked really bad in the playoffs; specifically, he didn't look comfortable in the batter's box and rolled over on a lot of balls. Last year I heavily dinged **Hunter Pence's** fantasy value entering 2013 because of his poor performance and that blew up in my face.

Last year Fielder had the lowest home run total of his career with 25. Since 2008 these are his home run totals (2008 to 2013): 34, 46, 32, 38, 30 and 25; definitely not a good trend especially as he enters his 30s. The biggest reason for the decline was against right handed pitching; the table below shows his advanced peripherals against righties. You'll notice other than luck based statistics (BABIP and HR/FB) and slugging, the numbers look almost the same. Another trend is his inability to hit the fastball; last year he batted .269 compared to a .321 batting average (from 2008 to 2012), which indicates he may have lost a tick of bat speed. The underlying numbers suggest he was unlucky with the power department and the fact he plays every game (behind **Miguel Cabrera**), every year provides stability. However, his slugging has been in decline year over year for three years now and it doesn't appear there's a lot of upside so he can be value at a certain ADP. If he falls to the fifth round, he can be a solid value.

Buster Olney [said](#), "Fielder's at-bats were alarming. He constantly swung at pitches out of the strike zone, and at one point, he saw a total of six pitches in the span of four at-bats -- which was read by some evaluators as a sign that Fielder was concerned about getting into two-strike counts.

Keith Law [said](#), "Fielder's timing seemed to be off all year, as he was less effective against fastballs but with no discernible pattern -- he actually hit slightly more line drives against them and slightly fewer popups than in his very successful 2012 season, and was better on fastballs on the inner half (all data via Bloomberg). That says to me that he's not suffering from a serious loss of bat speed that would bode poorly for the remaining aeon of his contract. He had a similarly down year in 2008 and bounced back the following season, so whether it was bad luck or something else, he seems like a good candidate for a rebound. Moving to a ballpark that's good for left-handed power hitters won't hurt either."

Fielder's problem with fastballs; as u get older ur bat speed is going to slow; if ur a good hitter (bat to ball type) you can maintain your power; his bat slowed; hitting is about comfort and confidence and he didn't have that at the end of the year and in the post season; he was rolling over on a lot of balls;

	SLUG	Swng%	Miss%	HR/FB	BABIP	Grnd%	Fly%	Line%
2013	.449	44.9%	20.2%	13.2%	.297	39.1%	37.2%	23.8%
2012	.550	42.4%	18.3%	21.4%	.326	39.1%	34.2%	26.7%
2011	.621	41.6%	18.4%	23.8%	.296	39.3%	38.2%	22.5%
2010	.618	41.4%	22.2%	22.1%	.341	39.0%	40.3%	20.7%
2009	.665	41.2%	22.8%	24.3%	.344	39.6%	41.2%	19.2%
2008	.604	44.8%	23.7%	18.2%	.388	37.1%	41.9%	21.0%

Dexter Fowler**Bats: B | Age: 28 | Team: Astros | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (50), NFBC (38)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	481	5	84	45	12/9	.266	.796	.354	23.1%	12.1%	32.0%	49.0%
2012	MLB	26	454	13	72	53	12/5	.300	.863	.390	24.2%	12.8%	29.3%	45.4%
2013	MLB	27	415	12	71	42	19/9	.263	.776	.323	21.3%	13.2%	25.2%	45.2%
Proj.			460	10	72	53	18	.268						

I've never been a Fowler guy. He's in the **Desmond Jennings** class of player where his draft day value is fueled by the scouting report of years past without any on the field production. I'll admit the scouting reports great; he's a five tool player who hits from both sides of the plate and plays above average defense. Despite playing his whole career in Colorado (667 games) he only has 40 home runs and 83 stolen bases (with 42 caught stealing). By now you know about his career home-road splits, but I'll show them again for a reference (table below).

Split	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR	RBI	Runs	SB
Home	.298	.395	.485	.365	19.4%	13.2%	27	146	226	48
Away	.241	.333	.361	.329	25.3%	11.5%	13	64	150	35

I used to be a lot of stock in these home-road splits because Rany Jazayerli mentioned on [his podcast](#) that these types of splits are not indicators of a player's true talent sometimes because since the air in Colorado is so much different everywhere else that curveballs break differently and therefore look different, which creates continuity errors for the hitters. I honestly don't know how much I buy it, but I'm willing to suspend my decision until the end of the 2014 season. However, I don't see how it's a good thing to leave Colorado to a Houston, which is a more neutral hitter's ballpark. By acquiring Fowler, he becomes either the best or second player on the Astros and therefore is going to play every day as long as he's not injured, which is another story. In his career he has yet to have 600 plate appearances in one year.

Nick Franklin**Bats: B | Age: 23 | Team: Mariners | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (18)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	21	267	7	39	29	3/2	.243	.725	.301	23.0%	8.1%	44.5%	36.1%
2013	AAA	22	142	4	28	20	7/0	.324	.912	.350	11.3%	16.9%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	369	12	38	45	6/1	.225	.686	.290	27.4%	10.2%	32.1%	37.1%
Proj.			350	12	45	45	12	.247						

Based on the scouting reports at both Baseball Prospectus and Baseball America's 2013 Prospect Handbook, they both indicated the mechanics of his swing from the right side will not provide very much success. In his brief time in the majors his slash line against lefties was .210/.296/.303 compared to

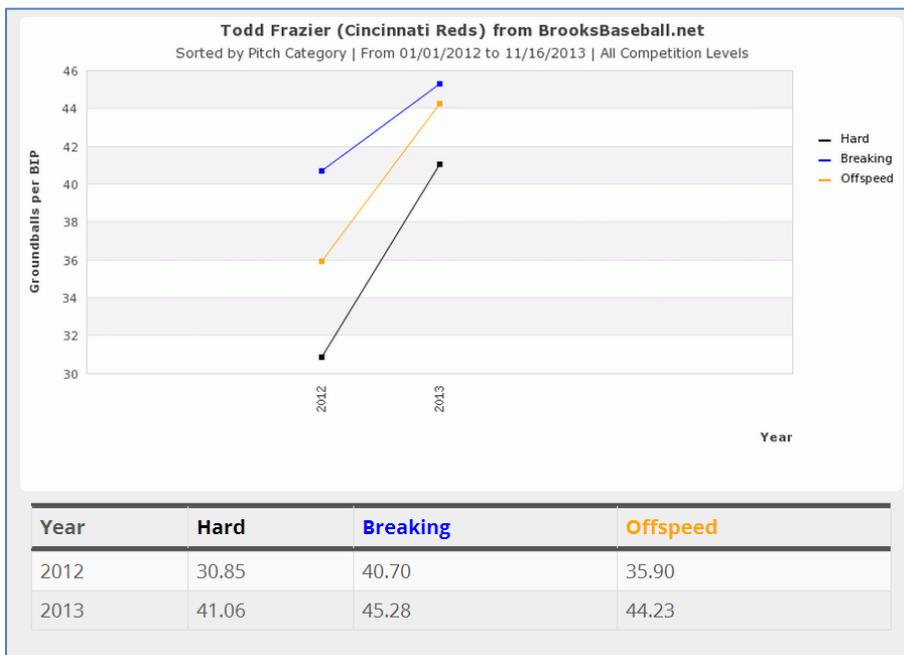
.232/.307/420 against righties. Surprisingly he hit 33 points higher at home compared to on the road. Other than hitting lefties, he struggled immensely on breaking stuff in the lower half of the zone (.129/.141/.271). If he was given full playing time he'll most likely be a .260-.275 hitter with 10-15 home runs with a lot of doubles (especially in that ballpark); he will also have to refine his approach at the plate and reduce his strikeout rate because the batting average upside will not be there if he has a strikeout rate of 27 percent again. With the signing of **Robinson Cano** Franklin looks either to be a bench player or minor leaguer, which makes him undraftable other than keeper leagues.

Todd Frazier

Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Reds | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (17), NFBC (13)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	112	6	17	15	1/0	.232	.727	.253	22.3%	5.8%	22.1%	53.2%
2012	MLB	26	422	19	55	67	3/2	.273	.829	.316	22.2%	7.7%	42.4%	35.9%
2013	MLB	27	531	19	63	73	6/5	.234	.721	.269	20.8%	8.3%	25.9%	46.7%
Proj.			530	20	66	80	4	.250						

One of the reasons why I liked Frazier as a deep sleeper last year was he could hit 20-plus home runs with an above average batting average. The reason I believed that was because he made a lot of hard contact as evidenced by the .225 ISO and the high fly ball rate. Well, last year his power number decreased and his ground rate increased ten percentage points (not a misprint, ten!). The exponential increase of ground balls led to a BABIP decreased, which, subsequently lowered his batting average nearly 40 points. The image below (courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net) shows his ground ball rates by pitch type.



When I looked at the ground ball rates by month and by pitch type the ground ball rate was really high during the first three months, but decreased only decreased six percent the rest of the year, which tells me the ground ball rate was essentially the same the entire year. It's positive to see the strikeout rate decreasing and walk rate increasing. Even though his batting average decreased against fastballs (from .304 to .267) his isolated power actually increased ten percentage points. He has plus power to all fields and plays in the best ballpark for right handed power so I wouldn't be shocked if he belts 25-plus home runs, but if he hits the ball on the ground 42 percent of the time again I don't see that happening. In terms of stolen bases, he's a below average runner so anything more than five stolen bases is great. Overall, it's all about the batting average. Will he be a .234 hitter or a .273 hitter? I'm inclined to believe the .234 more than .273, but that said, I expect his batting average to be .250 in 2014.

Freddie Freeman

Bats: L | Age: 24 | Team: Braves | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (3), NFBC (4)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	571	21	67	76	4/4	.282	.795	.339	22.4%	8.3%	34.6%	45.3%
2012	MLB	22	540	23	91	94	2/0	.259	.796	.295	20.8%	10.3%	36.1%	39.4%
2013	MLB	23	551	23	89	109	1/0	.319	.897	.371	19.2%	10.5%	30.0%	39.1%
Proj.			560	23	85	110	1	.275						

When looking at Freeman's peripheral statistics it's amazing at how consistent the last two seasons have been. For example, his HR/FB rates, the home run totals, games played, and as well as other peripheral stats are all basically the same. The major difference between the last two years is the BABIP as last year's BABIP was nearly 80 points higher. Even though the BABIP was higher, it doesn't necessarily mean it is going to decrease significantly because his career BABIP (before 2013) was .315, which means he could be a higher BABIP player. Dave Cameron [points out in his piece](#) since Freeman hits the ball to all fields, his batting average is going to remain high because he will not be hitting into the shift. That said, the batting average is going to regress. I'm expecting the batting average to be in the .275-.285 range. Freeman also took a step forward against lefties hitting .287 (in 196 plate appearances). Even before 2013 he was no stiff against lefties, hitting .245, which is remarkable considering how young he is. The most promising part of his game is not only has he reduced his strikeout rate year over year for the past three years, but he did so while increasing his walk rate. The question is does he take a step forward with power? It's possible he can eventually hit 25-plus, but his isolated power was actually lower compared to 2012 and the percentage of extra base hits were essentially the same. It's possible he becomes a MVP candidate, but with little room for growth in power department and the batting average decreasing tells me he's the safest first baseman in the majors. Lastly, the Braves lineup is not going to be as good as you think. The Braves are going to put **Evan Gattis** and **Chris Johnson** in prominent spots in the lineup, which doesn't help Freeman's ability to score and drive in runs.

David Freese

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Angels | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (28), NFBC (20)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	333	10	41	55	1/0	.297	.791	.356	20.7%	6.6%	23.7%	53.7%
2012	MLB	29	501	20	70	79	3/3	.293	.839	.352	21.5%	10.1%	22.8%	54.1%
2013	MLB	30	462	9	53	60	1/2	.262	.721	.320	20.3%	9.0%	17.5%	58.2%
Proj.			450	13	57	60	1	.280						

Before last year Freese was solid fantasy third baseman. He was drafted as the 11th third baseman in ESPN leagues because he could hit for a solid batting average with average power. However, he did none of those in 2013. He began last season [on the DL](#) and missed the first seven games of the year with a sore back. If you compare 2013 to his career numbers (below) you'll notice he deviated tremendously from his career numbers, which indicate the sore back could have contributed to down year.

Year	PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	ISO	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
2009-12	1,234	.296	.363	.446	.150	.359	21.3%	8.4%	15.5%
2013	521	.262	.340	.381	.119	.320	20.3%	9.0%	10.7%

He suffered from a brutal March, hitting .163/.255/.204 (in 55 plate appearances), but after March his season improved, but not at his career levels (table below).

PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	ISO	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
466	.274	.350	.402	.128	.332	20.2%	8.8%	11.5%

The first thing I look at when evaluating an older player (he'll turn 31 in April) coming off an uncharacteristically down year is how well they performed against fastballs on the inner half of the plate. Last year he had a .330 batting average compared to a career .297 batting average, which suggests he has not lost any bat speed. The biggest value he brings to the plate is batting average and average power production. In 2012 he had 20 home runs, but he accomplished that with a HR/FB rate of 20 percent while only hitting 26.2 percent fly balls. To put those numbers into perspective, there were only 17 players (with 400 plate appearances) last year who had a fly ball rate less than 26.2 percent. Of those 17 players the highest home run total was 17 (from **Eric Hosmer**). Freese is moving to a ballpark and division that is going to suppress his power. Overall, he is an average third baseman who will hit .280-plus with 10-15 home runs and not a lot of runs and RBIs because he'll most likely hit in the bottom third of the Angels lineup.

Avisail Garcia**Bats: R | Age: 22 | Team: White Sox | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (104), NFBC (111)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	21	47	0	7	3	0/2	.319	.692	.405	19.6%	5.9%	8.3%	66.7%
2013	AAA	22	174	6	29	32	4/2	.374	.960	.447	19.1%	6.4%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	244	7	31	31	3/3	.283	.731	.344	23.0%	3.5%	20.9%	59.3%
Proj.			530	15	66	70	10	.278						

Before being acquired by the White Sox, Garcia's Tigers teammates dubbed him "Little Miggy" because he looks like and has the same batting stance as **Miguel Cabrera**. Garcia is loaded with tools and could and with a wide range of outcomes because he has yet to actualize on a lot of his tools. In the 2013 Baseball America's Prospect Handbook says, "he's an average runner with good instincts who could become a 20-20 threat in the majors." Obviously expecting those numbers out of the gate are overly optimistic, but 15/15 season is definitely within reach because he's an average hitter with plus power and plays his home games in one of the best hitters parks. Like I mentioned with a lot of the young hitters on the White Sox is they're all going to have an opportunity to fail and keep an everyday job, which makes him more appealing that a player like **Michael Choice** who may not be afforded an opportunity to fail because his ball club has World Series aspirations.

Brett Gardner**Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Yankees | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (35), NFBC (30)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	26	477	5	97	47	47/9	.277	.762	.340	17.8%	13.9%	22.2%	58.1%
2011	MLB	27	510	7	87	36	49/13	.259	.713	.303	15.8%	10.2%	20.5%	62.7%
2013	MLB	29	539	8	81	52	24/8	.273	.759	.342	20.9%	8.5%	26.9%	48.6%
Proj.			490	7	81	50	28	.270						

When I targeted Gardner last year I was expecting 35-plus stolen bases, but I was extremely disappointed after he only stole 24, which is almost half what he put up in his prime. The reasons why he stopped stealing bases is unknown, but what is known is how many stolen base attempts were made by the team as a whole. The table below shows the total number of stolen base attempts the past five seasons. You'll notice, except for 2011, the Yankees do not steal a lot of bases, which implies the team may have given Gardner the red light? Either way, when projecting for 2014 it's hard to expect any more than 29-plus stolen bases next year.

Year	SB Attempts
2009	139
2010	134
2011	193
2012	120
2013	146

There were some positives from last year. First, he had the most home runs (eight) and RBIs (52) in his career. If the Yankees had a legitimate offense for the entire year he would have more than 81 runs. The batting average looked almost identical to his pre-2012 seasons. The biggest question is where will Gardner hit in the lineup? Will **Derek Jeter** hit in that spot? **Carlos Beltran**? To begin the year he will most likely hit in the bottom third of the order, but if something were to happen to **Jacoby Ellsbury**, Gardner would be the first candidate to take over leadoff duties. Overall, his biggest fantasy asset is his speed and it appears last year's numbers are not a fluke, which means he's only a deep mixed league play.

Evan Gattis

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Braves | Position: C, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (15), NFBC (11)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	A+	25	78	9	14	29	1/1	.385	1.289	.356	12.8%	10.6%	49.2%	32.3%
2012	AA	25	182	9	24	37	1/1	.258	.865	.262	14.0%	9.7%	38.4%	51.4%
2013	MLB	26	354	21	44	65	0/0	.243	.771	.255	21.2%	5.5%	30.9%	47.2%
Proj.			420	22	50	67	0	.235						

Gattis has massive power potential, but he is not without his flaws. He looks to pull the ball all the time, hitting the ball to left and center field 47.1 percent and 39.5 percent respectively. Also, he is very susceptible to breaking pitches that are moving away from him (curveballs, cutters and sliders). For example, against those pitches he had a slash line of .198/.232/.412 with a 26.8 percent strikeout rate. Also, he struggled immensely against right handed pitching. The table below provides his lefty-righty splits.

Splits	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	K%	BB%	BABIP
vs Left	.260	.308	.500	.808	17.3%	6.7%	27.0%
vs Right	.236	.284	.473	.757	22.7%	5.0%	24.9%

Despite being 27 years old, he has not had many at-bats in the upper minors before reaching the majors last year. For example, he has a total of 54 games played above high-a, which is extremely low for any prospect. If he's given the full time catching duties he will most likely be overvalued in drafts and I recommend you do not reach for him as he'll be a batting average liability as he struggles against non-fastballs and the league is going to attack those weaknesses even more in 2014.



Image source: BaseballAnalytics.org

Scouter Gennett

Bats: L | Age: 23 | Team: Brewers | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (30), NFBC (39)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	533	5	66	44	11/5	.293	.714	.328	12.4%	4.9%	29.1%	50.6%
2013	AAA	23	321	3	44	22	10/5	.280	.697	.333	16.9%	6.0%	-	-
2013	MLB	23	213	6	29	21	2/1	.324	.834	.380	18.3%	4.3%	20.2%	47.2%
Proj.			450	9	60	50	10	.270						

According to every scouting report I've read Gennett can really hit. He loves to swing the bat and doesn't take a lot of pitches, which lowers his fantasy value in OBP leagues. He has a lot of power for his size, but its more gap/doubles power because he has a level swing. What's extremely odd about his brief time in the majors is how well he performed on the road versus at home (table below). It's extremely unlikely he hits this well on the road again, but it's also highly unlikely he hits that poorly at home.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR
Home	.250	.306	.330	.636	.313	18.0%	6.31%	0
Away	.389	.402	.611	1.012	.442	18.5%	2.52%	6

With the emergence of **Gennett** and according to Brewers GM **Doug Melvin**, Gennett [has the inside track](#) to be the everyday second baseman. If I were a betting man, I bet **Rickie Weeks** and Gennett will be in a platoon and Gennett will get the better side of the platoon. Also, he's never had more than 14 stolen bases in any season so it's difficult to see him stealing more than ten bases.

Craig Gentry

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Athletics | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (72), NFBC (70)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	133	1	26	13	18/0	.271	.693	.330	17.6%	6.5%	25.7%	59.4%
2012	MLB	28	240	1	31	26	13/7	.304	.759	.364	15.2%	5.2%	24.7%	57.0%
2013	MLB	29	246	2	39	22	24/3	.280	.759	.337	16.0%	10.1%	21.8%	54.9%
Proj.			400	3	60	60	30	.280						

I would not be surprised if Gentry is a top 40 outfielder next year. Gentry is slated to be the A's fourth outfielder and platoon hitter against righties, but the past two years **Coco Crisp** and **Yoenis Cespedes** have both been on the DL with injuries. Gentry is an elite defender and can play at any outfield position, which means he'll have plenty of opportunity to play four, five games a week even when players are not injured. He also has plus-plus speed; last year in only 287 plate appearances he had 24 stolen bases. Suppose he receives 450 plate appearances? I wouldn't be surprised if he steals 40-plus bases. Unlike **Eric Young Jr.** and **Rajai Davis**, Gentry is a better hitter as he has consistently hit for a solid batting average without any platoon split and is likely to have more assured at-bats at the beginning of the season. In dynasty leagues this is the time to buy low on Gentry because Crisp is leaving Oakland after this year and the A's do not have any in-house candidates to take over centerfield. As of late January I expect Gentry to be the A's starting center fielder from 2015-16.

Paul Goldschmidt

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (2), NFBC (2)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	156	8	28	26	4/0	.250	.808	.323	29.9%	11.3%	38.0%	46.0%
2012	MLB	24	514	20	82	82	18/3	.286	.850	.340	22.1%	10.2%	32.0%	41.9%
2013	MLB	25	602	36	103	125	15/7	.302	.952	.343	20.4%	13.9%	24.4%	46.3%
Proj.			600	27	105	110	13	.295						

Last year I wasn't high on Goldschmidt because the offensive profile and the scouting report didn't suggest he couldn't hit substantially more than 20 home runs. However, his fantasy owners were extremely happy with the 36 home runs he hit last year ... not to mention the production in the other four categories. I noted last year he had to improve his batting average against right handed pitching (.262/.333/.436 slash line from 2011-12) and he went ahead and did that, posting a .300/.406/.534 slash line last year. Unlike **Justin Upton** whose fantasy value (while in Arizona) was primarily fueled by playing in the friendly confines of Chase Field, Goldschmidt has been a better hitter on the road than at home. The table below shows his home-road career slash lines.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG
Home	.274	.372	.502
Away	.307	.384	.538

Last year his home run power came with a HR/FB rate of 22.5 percent, which was eight percentage points higher than 2012. The question is, which HR/FB rate is his true power. The increase in his HR/FB rate was driven primarily away from Arizona; 19 percent at home and 26.8 percent on the road. In 2012 his HR/FB rate at home was 16.4 percent compared to 13.3 percent on the road. Clearly he made adjustment after the 2012 season that allowed him to have the season he did, but I have a hard time believing the road HR/FB rate is going to repeat in 2014. Another concern I have is his stolen base success rate; last year it was 68 percent compared to 86 percent in 2012. It's very possible 2013 is more of an indicator of his true talent because he's not a fast runner, which means it's possible he only steals 10-15 moving forward. Overall, there are a lot of positive adjustments he made last year, which make believe he should be a top tier fantasy first baseman. The contact increased two percentage points while the strikeout rate decreased two percentage points. However, I don't think he comes close to the 36 home runs and it's possible the batting average and stolen base totals regress. He's still my number one first baseman, but he's no slam dunk.

Yan Gomes

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Indians | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (16), NFBC (20)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	305	13	44	59	4/0	.328	.938	.392	21.5%	7.5%	34.9%	44.8%
2012	MLB	24	98	4	9	13	0/0	.204	.631	.246	28.8%	5.4%	32.3%	53.8%
2013	MLB	25	293	11	45	38	2/0	.294	.826	.342	20.8%	5.6%	32.6%	47.4%
Proj.			400	15	55	59	1	.271						

Gomes is primarily a two-catcher league play as he may not receive enough at-bats to be fantasy relevant in one catcher leagues. Last year his .294 batting average was fueled by a .342 BABIP. However, there are signs he won't regress to 2012s batting average (.204). First, the strikeout rate decreased eight percentage points while the walk rate was essentially the same. Second, he makes a lot of hard contact. Last year he was fifth among catchers with at least 300 PAs in extra base hit rate. Third, he's always been able to mash lefties and so-so against righties. Last year he made an adjustment against righties, specifically against pitches on the outer half of the plate. For example, he increased his batting average by 100 points while reducing his swing and miss rate by 13 percentage points. The adjustment he made was he started hitting those outside pitches to right field instead of trying to pull the ball. The spray charts below illustrates that point visually. Overall, the .294 batting average is going to regress, but not as much as you think. I expect him to be in the .270-.280 range to go along with 12-18 home runs depending on his playing time. With **Carlos Santana** likely to spend less time behind the dish, Gomes could be a top 9-13 catcher in 2014.

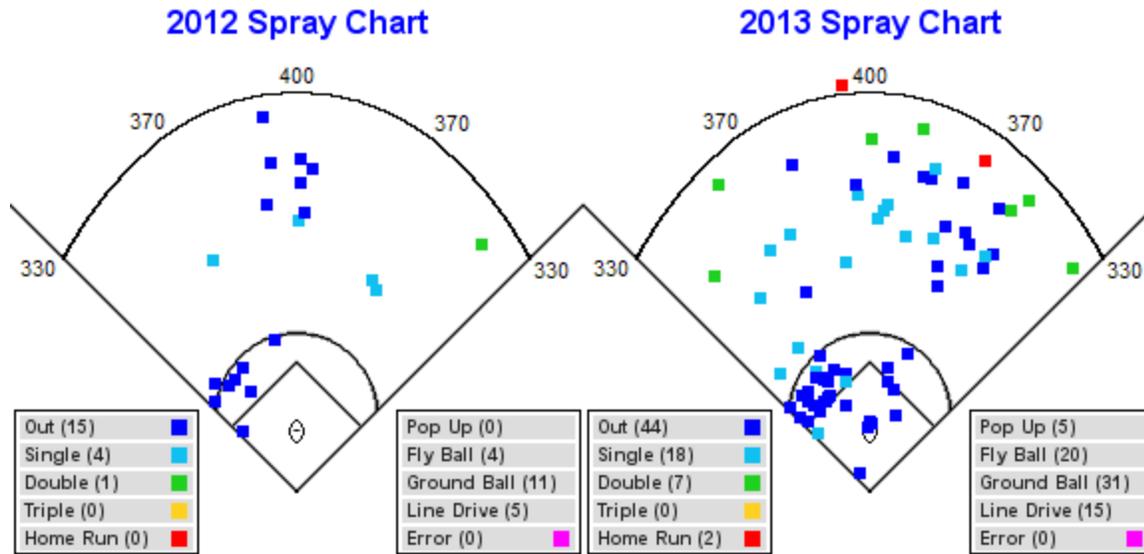


Image source: BaseballAnalytics.org

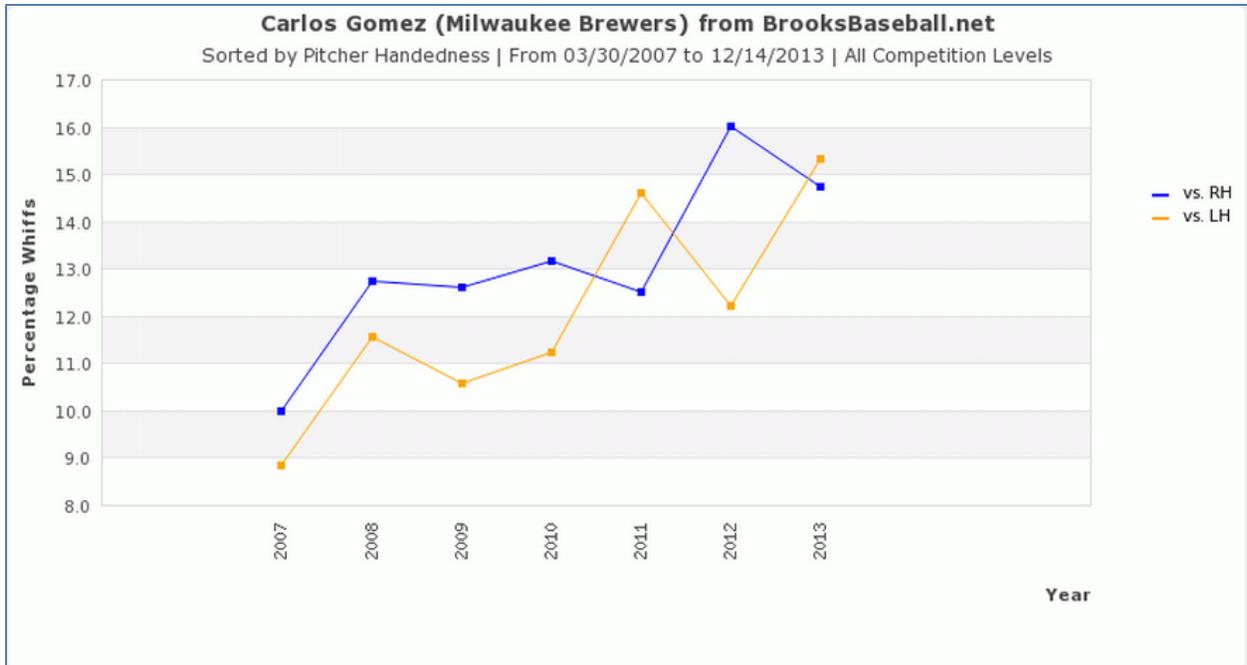
Carlos Gomez

Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Brewers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (3), NFBC (5)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	231	8	37	24	16/2	.225	.679	.273	24.8%	5.8%	32.5%	53.5%
2012	MLB	26	415	19	72	51	37/6	.260	.768	.296	21.7%	4.4%	33.8%	47.4%
2013	MLB	27	536	24	80	73	40/7	.284	.843	.344	24.7%	6.3%	27.7%	46.2%
Proj.			540	20	75	75	38	.270						

Gomez began his career as an elite speed, defense first player, but in the last two years he has morphed himself into one of the best offensive fantasy players in the game, providing 20-plus home runs with 35-plus stolen base potential. There are some red flags, specifically with the batting average. Despite lowering his strikeout rate to 21.7 percent in 2012, the strikeout rate went back to the same levels in 2011. He had a career high .344 BABIP last year; prior to 2013 his career BABIP was .311. Since he has plus-plus speed I'm not as worried about a major regression in the BABIP as compared to someone like **Michael Cuddyer**.

Some fantasy analysts may be more concerned about a BABIP regression because his swing and miss rate was the highest of career (27.3 percent, nearly three percentage points higher compared to his career before 2013). However, the jump in swing and miss rates came entirely against left handed pitching (image below from BrooksBaseball.net).



Contrary to what the image shows, Gomez did really well against lefties last year as he had a slash line of .315/.371/.622 and his strikeout rate was one percentage point lower than 2012.

According to the image his swing and miss rate decreased against righties, which makes sense since his walk rate increased two percentage points against them. If this trend continues there's no reason to think he cannot repeat the numbers he put up last year. The 18-22 power is legit, but I expect some regression in the batting average (probably in .270 range), but not nearly to the degree most would expect.

Adrian Gonzalez

Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: Dodgers | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (10), NFBC (9)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	630	27	108	117	1/0	.338	.957	.380	16.6%	10.3%	30.1%	48.7%
2012	MLB	30	629	18	75	108	2/0	.299	.806	.334	16.1%	6.1%	30.5%	44.7%
2013	MLB	31	583	22	69	100	1/0	.293	.803	.315	15.3%	7.3%	29.9%	41.6%
Proj.			600	22	85	105	1	.296						

In his first full season in LA, Gonzalez put up another solid season in terms of the power numbers and batting average. However, the 69 runs scored was more a function of the ineptness of the Dodgers lineup than a decline in skill set. It's possible with a full year of **Yasiel Puig** and a healthy **Matt Kemp** and **Hanley Ramirez** it's very possible Gonzalez's runs scored could improve. In terms of his approach at the plate, Gonzalez became a pull hitter (the percentage of ball hit to right field increased eight percentage points) and became more aggressive at the plate, swinging at more pitches and walking less. He achieved all of this while reducing his strikeout rate. In terms of the suppressed power numbers

compared to the 2010-11 seasons, he did not have a big home-road split, hitting 11 at home and on the road. With two straight years with less than 23 home runs and HR/FB rates of 9.2 percent and 10.9 percent, it looks as though the days of 30-plus home runs will not be likely. However, his fly ball rate, last year, was the highest it's been since 2009 so it's possible he could get lucky in the power department and hit in the upper 20s. Overall, there isn't a lot of upside left to Gonzalez's game, but he should still hit in the middle of the order of a very promising lineup.

Carlos Gonzalez

Bats: L | Age: 28 | Team: Rockies | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (12), NFBC (15)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	481	26	92	92	20/5	.295	.889	.326	19.4%	8.9%	25.4%	53.0%
2012	MLB	26	518	22	89	85	20/5	.303	.881	.352	19.9%	9.7%	20.3%	54.1%
2013	MLB	27	391	26	72	70	21/3	.302	.958	.368	27.1%	9.4%	21.1%	45.4%
Proj.			570	28	100	90	23	.298						

Last year, Gonzalez again missed a good chunk of time. In 2013 it was a [sprained middle finger](#) that sidelined him for the last two months. Recently he took practice swings and [reported no pain](#), which bodes well for him to be fully healthy for start of the 2014 season. On January 11 he had his [appendix removed](#) and cannot do physical activity for two weeks. The amount of time to recovery from this type of surgery can vary from a few days (**Matt Holiday**) or a few weeks (**Jason Heyward**) so fantasy owners will have to monitor how Gonzalez looks at spring training.

Other than injury another red flag against him was the disparity between his home-road numbers (table below provide his career stats with the Rockies).

Split	AVG	OPS	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	.339	1.033	18.6%	9.4%	24.1%
Road	.273	0.798	25.0%	7.5%	17.5%

Last year the tale flipped as he hit .332/.381/.606 on the road (a .406 BABIP helps) while only .273/.354/.576 at home. Last year he had the highest HR/FB of his career; I've seen some projections of near 40 home runs if he can play a full season; I think that's a little too bullish; however, if he does play a full year he can certainly hit 35-plus home runs.

The news out of Colorado is Gonzalez is [going to move from left field to center](#), which only increases the concerns he can stay healthy for a full season because center field is more physically taxing on the body. When he went on the DL last year he was the number one fantasy player, which makes him very intriguing for every fantasy owner. No one can predict if someone will get hurt. All we can do is make the best guess possible. However, predictions we make about team performance are more likely to be accurate. The Rockies pitching staff has a lot of upside, but I still feel they're the worst team in the division. That said, I expect the division to be a crap shoot because you can make a legitimate case for

every team in the division to win it. Suppose the Rockies are in last place and having nothing to play for in September and Gonzalez suffers a minor injury. I wouldn't be surprised if the Rockies shut him down in an effort to limit the effects of the injury. Overall, he has the talent to be a top five fantasy player, the only question is if he can stay healthy. The fact he is going to play a more taxing position and the appendix surgery makes me feel he isn't to play in more than 120 games. In shallow leagues he's more attractive and consequently less attractive in deep leagues.

My original projection for Gonzalez was 490 ABs, .298 batting average, 26 home runs, 82 RBI, 88 runs and 20 stolen bases. Obviously I wanted to take into account replacement level so I added Gonzalez's stats in conjunction with a replacement level player. The reason I did this is because when he misses time you're going to get some value from a replacement level player. The player I choose was **A.J. Polluck**. I added 80 ABs from Polluck and added them to Gonzalez's original projection.

Alex Gordon

Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Royals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (25), NFBC (21)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	611	23	101	87	17/8	.303	.879	.358	20.2%	9.7%	36.5%	43.0%
2012	MLB	28	642	14	93	72	10/5	.294	.822	.356	19.4%	10.1%	31.2%	45.5%
2013	MLB	29	633	20	90	81	11/3	.265	.749	.310	20.1%	7.4%	32.0%	43.9%
Proj.			580	17	82	75	10	.290						

The signing of **Norichika Aoki** and **Omar Infante** means is likely to going to move from the leadoff spot to fifth. I would personally bat him fourth because Billy Butler's lack of any type of speed stagnates the offense more than people realize, but with **Ned Yost** being a "traditional" manager will probably want to split his lefties and righties.

Since Gordon is going to bat fifth I expect the runs to decrease and RBIs to increase. How much they increase will not be as dramatic as you think because Butler's speed (he's literally one of the five slowest position players in the majors) is going to clog the base paths.

I've always liked Gordon as a fantasy player because he gives you a little bit of everything, but never any elite production other than batting average. Obviously, last year his batting average dropped significantly. The biggest reason for the drop off was against righties. From 2011-12 he has a slash line of .317/.391/.513 with a .378 BABIP compared to .244/.307/.376 slash line last year along with a .284 BABIP. His biggest struggle came against breaking stuff as his batting average plummeted from .303 in 2012 to .166 last year. I'm not concerned by the drop-off in batting average because of the type of contact he was making. Specifically, he was hitting more fly balls than ground balls. If you read the Justin Upton write-up you'll see there's not a lot of difference between Gordon and Upton, but Upton will most likely be drafted four, five rounds earlier.

Yasmani Grandal**Bats: B | Age: 25 | Team: Padres | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (65), NFBC (66)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	194	6	40	35	0/0	.335	.963	.381	14.9%	15.7%	32.0%	44.0%
2012	MLB	23	192	8	28	36	0/0	.297	.863	.333	17.3%	13.7%	24.1%	55.2%
2013	MLB	24	88	1	13	9	0/0	.216	.693	.257	16.7%	16.7%	22.9%	52.9%
Proj.			350	13	45	59	0	.271						

In July Grandal's season was cut short due to a collision with **Anthony Rendon** at home plate; he injured both his ACL and MCL in his right knee. He had surgery to repair his knee and it was reported his recovery time would be 9-to-12 months, which jeopardizes his availability for the beginning of the season. This may be a make or break year for Grandal with **Austin Hedges** already reaching double-a. It's only a matter of time Hedges becomes the Padres catcher of the future. I like Grandal's approach at the plate and his offensive projection, but at the end of the day he's an average real life catcher. If he played a full year he will hit in the .270-.280 range with 10-15 home runs.

Curtis Granderson**Bats: L | Age: 33 | Team: Mets | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (128), NFBC (107)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	583	41	136	119	25/10	.262	.916	.295	24.5%	12.3%	43.1%	39.7%
2012	MLB	31	596	43	102	106	10/3	.232	.811	.260	28.5%	11.0%	43.2%	37.7%
2013	MLB	32	214	7	31	15	8/2	.229	.723	.302	28.2%	11.0%	36.2%	40.6%
Proj.			570	30	70	85	15	.235						

In the offseason the Mets signed Granderson to a four-year, \$60 million dollar deal. The signing helps **David Wright** and **Daniel Murphy** because he is a legitimate cleanup hitter that should be able to drive in runs when they are on base. That said, I'm not entirely optimistic about his fantasy potential for 2014. First of all, let's look at the power. The image below shows where all of his 2012 home runs would have landed if he was playing in Citi Field. According to the image he would have lost approximately eight home runs, which would have lowered his home run totals to 35.

In the last two years his strikeout rate has been 28.3 percent as his swing and miss rates were 29.7 percent and 34.6 percent in 2012 and 2013 respectively. He has a flawed approach at the plate as he's selling out constantly to hit for power, which can be exploited by average major league pitchers. Also, since 2008 he has a .233 batting average against lefties (in 1,071 plate appearances), which means he should probably be platooned at times, which won't happen because of the contract. Granderson is going to be a glorified **Chris Carter** in that he'll likely hit in the .230s and hit 30-35 home runs; the only difference between Carter is Granderson may provide 5-10 stolen bases.

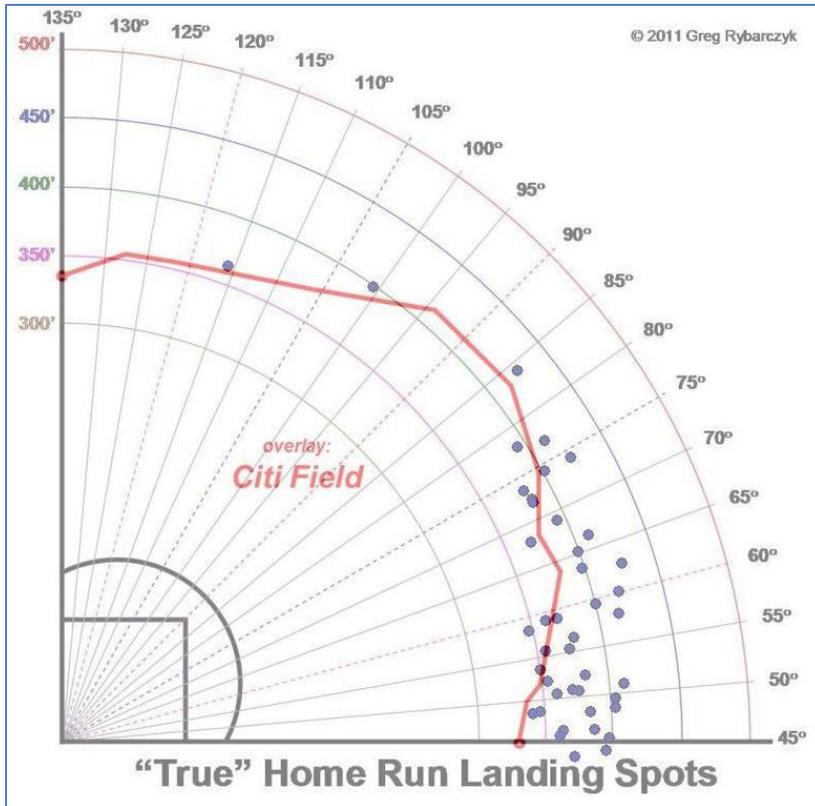


Image source: HitTrackerOnline.com

Jedd Gyorko

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Padres | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (16), NFBC (14)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	23	130	6	18	17	1/1	.262	.786	.289	18.1%	11.4%	33.3%	53.6%
2012	AAA	23	369	24	62	83	4/3	.328	.968	.344	16.7%	8.3%	33.7%	40.5%
2013	MLB	24	486	23	62	63	1/1	.249	.745	.287	23.4%	6.3%	34.0%	39.8%
Proj.			550	23	65	73	1	.255						

Before the 2013 season, I wrote off his power potential because I thought the power wouldn't translate at Petco Park. However, the opposite happened. Gyorko had the quietest 23 home runs last year (in only 125 games!). It's possible his numbers could have been better if it wasn't for a groin strain that made him miss a month of the season (mid-June to early July). The table shows his stats before and after the injury.

Splits	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	wOBA	ISO	K%	BB%	HR/FB
Before	.284	.341	.461	.802	.337	.347	.177	21.18%	7.84%	11.59%
After	.217	.263	.429	.692	.235	.296	.213	25.56%	4.82%	17.86%

Last year he had a higher slugging percentage and higher HR/FB rates at home compared to on the road, which means he's either capable of hitting more home runs or hitting less depending on what you expect his true power potential to be. I believe the road power increases and the home power decreases, which creates a wash. The power is legitimate. These are his home run totals the last three seasons (including the minors): 25, 30 and 23. His fly ball rate was 41.9 percent last year. There were 28 players (with at least 400 plate appearances) who had a fly ball rate greater or equal to 42 percent. 16 of them had at least 20 home runs and those 28 players averaged 22 home runs.

The only question is at what his batting average will be because that's the key to his fantasy viability. If he hits less than .240 he's barely usable because he'll provide no speed. Last year Petco suppressed his batting average, but that could have been due to the low .252 BABIP. The table below shows his home-road splits last year. The pre and post injury statistics cloud what his true talent is, but he'll likely be a .250-.260 hitter because of his home ballpark and high strikeout rate. In general I want my second baseman to provide a lot of stolen bases, but if you already have a speed-first player in the outfield such as Michael Bourn, then Gyorko is the perfect compliment.

Split	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	.237	.755	.251	20.5%	7.3%	16.5%
Away	.260	.737	.322	26.3%	5.3%	13.5%

Josh Hamilton

Bats: L | Age: 32 | Team: Angels | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (52), NFBC (43)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	487	25	80	94	8/1	.298	.882	.317	17.3%	7.2%	35.1%	44.7%
2012	MLB	31	562	43	103	128	7/4	.285	.930	.320	25.5%	9.4%	37.1%	39.7%
2013	MLB	32	576	21	73	79	4/0	.250	.739	.303	24.8%	7.4%	30.6%	42.1%
Proj.			500	25	71	80	2	.265						

I was not buying Hamilton at all last year for various reasons: his approach at the plate sucks. For example, he gives plenty of at-bats away and he is a see-ball, hit-ball, which causes him to have a lot of bad at-bats. Another example he sells out on the fastball (regardless of the situation), which make him look foolish against breaking stuff.

What's most concerning has nothing to do with his performance on the field. By now we all know the story about how he was away from baseball for four, five years due to drug abuse. Drug abuse rapidly ages the human body, to the extent no one knows. In May Hamilton is going to turn 33 years old, but he won't have a body of a typical 33 year old; he literally could have the body of a 39 year old.

Despite all of that, I believe the hate may go too far on Hamilton heading into 2014. Obviously he had a the worst season of his career, but there are signs of optimism. The table below provides a breakdown, by halves of the 2013 season. You'll notice he performed quite well during the second half of the year.

He was swinging and missing less and most importantly was making harder contact; during the first half of the season he was rolling over on a lot of pitches and was grounding out. Hamilton is a good buy low if he falls to the mid-40s among outfielders because he showed, albeit, in a small sample that his skills have not eroded away entirely. If he plays a full season, which he's done the past two seasons, he's certainly capable of hitting .250-.260 with 20-25 home runs and 100-plus RBIs.

Split	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR	Swng%	WHIFF%	HR/FB	GB%	FB%
1st Half	.224	.283	.413	.263	25.3%	6.9%	14	55.2%	32.3%	14.7%	40.8%	37.6%
2nd Half	.287	.341	.460	.359	24.1%	8.0%	7	54.5%	29.9%	9.7%	33.9%	40.7%

Billy Hamilton

Bats: B | Age: 23 | Team: Reds | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (146), NFBC (145)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	A+	21	337	1	79	30	104/21	.323	.852	.404	17.9%	12.8%	30.5%	51.2%
2012	AA	21	175	1	33	15	51/16	.286	.789	.371	20.2%	16.9%	26.2%	58.7%
2013	AAA	22	504	6	75	41	75/15	.256	.651	.310	18.6%	6.9%	-	-
Proj.			500	3	75	38	70	.240						

With **Shin-Soo Choo** gone, it looks as though Hamilton becomes the everyday center fielder and leadoff hitter for the Reds. Before his call up in September I got a chance to see Hamilton five separate times in 2012 when he was in high-a. In one of those games he got the opportunity to bat against **Josh Outman**, who was rehabbing for the Colorado Rockies. Say what you want about Outman as a pitcher, but he can throw a low to mid-90s fastball and most importantly can locate it, which is something Hamilton, at the time, has not seen by pitchers at that level. Outman threw three straight fastballs and Hamilton swung and missed two times. Every time I saw him he always had trouble with plus velocity, specifically he had trouble making consistent contact.

Based the scouting reports I've read from [Jason Parks](#) and [Keith Law](#), at the time of his call up, there are still a lot of major holes in his game. The biggest question they had is will the bat make enough contact to sustain an everyday job in the majors, which is basically what I saw in 2012. Last year in triple-a he had a .256 batting average despite his historic speed.

When I think of Hamilton I keep getting reminded of **Dee Gordon**, another player with 80 grade speed, who had questions how much contact he was going to make and would he have enough power to hit plus velocity. It's important to note that Hamilton is a far better prospect than Gordon. The more and more I think about Hamilton's value in 2014 the more befuddled I become. I think there are two scenarios of how his season will end. The first scenario is he hits .255-plus with a .300 OBP and steals 65-plus bases. The second scenario is he hits .225 with a .270 OBP during the first six weeks of the year and gets sent down to the minors to work on things. A lot of projection systems are doing a hedge of the scenarios I've mentioned, which is far, especially for mass consumption, but I don't believe the Reds will allow him to have a .235-.240 batting average and .280 OBP for a full season. If he hits, he'll stay in the

majors and if not, he'll be in the minors. I don't envision a scenario where he's a bench player for an extended period of time. When you're doing your own projections you choose one of the scenarios I provided and pick the one you believe will happen. I personally believe he won't hit enough to play full season in the majors.

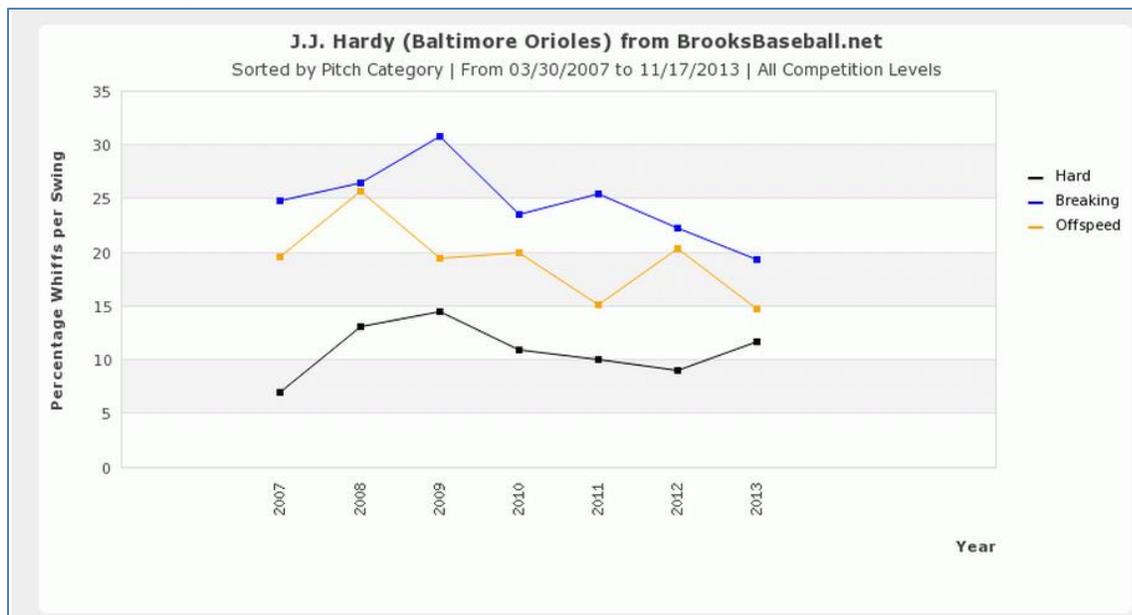
J.J. Hardy

Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Orioles | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (10), NFBC (8)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	527	30	76	80	0/0	.269	.801	.273	16.2%	5.5%	37.3%	45.4%
2012	MLB	29	663	22	85	68	0/0	.238	.671	.253	14.9%	5.3%	33.9%	50.1%
2013	MLB	30	601	25	66	76	2/1	.263	.738	.263	11.3%	5.9%	27.7%	50.7%
Proj.			590	24	70	70	0	.263						

Hardy was tied for the most home runs in the majors with 25. When you draft Hardy you're going to get power with an average batting average (.245-.265) with nothing else. For three years in a row his ground ball rate has increased year over year while his fly ball rate decreased. The low trending fly ball rate is a red flag that is hard to overlook and it makes believe his home run is 25 home runs instead of the 30 he posted back in 2011.

The image below, from BrooksBaseball.net, shows his swing and miss (whiffs) per swing rate by year since 2007. Overall, you'll notice he's not swinging and missing, which is an extremely positive sign. Since this newly found approach at the plate has not manifested itself in the walk rate, which leads me to believe he's swing at "his" pitch more often. If he's swinging at "his" pitch more often means he'll continue to make more solid contact. Overall, I don't see any signs of decline. When rostering Hardy make sure you have a good amount of stolen bases from other players because if not, your team will be at a deficit compared to other teams.



Bryce Harper**Bats: R | Age: 21 | Team: Nationals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (34), NFBC (41)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	19	74	1	8	3	1/1	.243	.690	.288	16.7%	10.7%	27.6%	50.0%
2012	MLB	19	533	22	98	59	18/6	.270	.817	.310	20.1%	9.4%	28.8%	47.7%
2013	MLB	20	424	20	71	58	11/4	.274	.854	.306	18.9%	12.3%	24.8%	49.7%
Proj.			495	27	77	89	17	.288						

Let's first begin with how Harper's final statistics looked at the end the year. The batting average, OBP, slugging and isolated power were all higher than last year. He reduced his strikeout rate a little more than one percentage point while he increased his walk rate three percentage points. Lastly he achieved all of this at the age of 20, which is scary because even the highest the best prospects are likely only in double-a at that age.

Now, any fantasy discussion has to talk about that night he ran into the wall at Dodger Stadium on May 13. The table below breaks down his performance before and after the injury.

Splits	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	HR/FB
Pre Injury	.303	.400	.622	.299	.299	27.0%
Post Injury	.262	.356	.433	.308	.308	13.3%

Based on the data it's obvious the injury plagued him for the rest of the season. At the end of the season he had surgery on at the [end of October](#). The early chatter in the fantasy community suggests he could be a top ten fantasy player because his upside is so high. For Harper to be a top ten player he needs to have to have elite level production in at least three, preferably four statistical categories. By now we all know his raw power is immense and is capable of hitting 40-plus. If he's going to make strides in the batting average he needs to improve upon his .229/.312/.376 slash line against lefties, specifically stop rolling over on offspeed pitches. Last year his stolen base output decreased by 38 percent (from 18 to 11). It's possible the left knee hindered his ability to steal even more bases. When healthy he is a 60 runner (on the 20-80 scouting scale), but he is unlikely to hold that speed as he ages (that's not a concern for the next two, three years). Currently Harper has an ADP of 14, which seems about right considering his upside. Or the ADP could be too high considering he hasn't actualized that upside into on the field results. I understand both sides of the argument, but are you taking **Prince Fielder** over Harper? **Hanley Ramirez**? **Evan Longoria**? Those three players are all being taken next to Harper and I rather take Harper.

Corey Hart**Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: Mariners | Position: 1B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	28	558	31	91	102	7/6	.283	.865	.324	22.8%	7.3%	36.3%	41.4%
2011	MLB	29	492	26	80	63	7/6	.285	.866	.323	20.7%	9.3%	32.1%	48.1%
2012	MLB	30	562	30	91	83	5/0	.270	.841	.318	24.3%	7.1%	37.2%	43.3%
Proj.			500	18	70	82	2	.253						

Hart missed all of the 2013 season with surgeries to both his knees; combine that with he'll turn 32 in March does not elicit a lot of enthusiasm. Seattle's ballpark heavily deflates right handed power. If you don't believe me, then ask **Adrian Beltre**. There were adjustments made to the ballpark at the end of the 2012 season, but those adjustments benefitted left handed hitters more. From 2010-12 his home run totals were 31, 26 and 30. It's easy to assume he'll revert back to those totals again, but remember, he accomplished those totals in one of the better hitter's parks in the majors. Also, he hasn't played baseball in a year. If you leave a car in the garage for a year and then turn it on, the car isn't going to run as smoothly.

Earlier I mentioned his impressive home run totals and how he played in a good hitter's park. Let's build upon that. From 2008-12 he has a 17.3 percent HR/FB rate at home (Miller Park) versus 11.5 percent on the road. With well over 1,250 at-bats for each split these are trends that cannot be ignored. If he played 145 games he would have 168 fly balls based on the 2010-12 data. If he had a 11.5 HR/FB rate he would have 19 home runs, which is almost a 37 percent reduction in his home run totals. If he's fully healthy (and that is a big if because he's going to begin the season as the everyday left fielder) and is able to play 130-plus games he can certainly hit 15-20 home runs. However, I do not see him hitting more than 20 in that ballpark.

In terms of batting average, the home ballpark also boosted his totals. From 2008-12 his career batting average at home is .290 compared to .259 on the road. Therefore, fantasy owners should expect a batting average in the .250-.265 range instead of .270-plus.

Chase Headley**Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Padres | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (20), NFBC (15)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	381	4	43	44	13/2	.289	.773	.368	21.0%	11.8%	29.7%	48.0%
2012	MLB	28	604	31	95	115	17/6	.286	.875	.337	22.5%	12.3%	28.6%	51.0%
2013	MLB	29	520	13	59	50	8/4	.250	.747	.319	23.7%	11.2%	23.8%	49.2%
Proj.			550	11	73	74	16	.280						

Similar to **Kyle Seager**, his ballpark has completely masked how good of a hitter he is. The table below shows his career stats at home versus the road.

Split	AVG	OBP	SLG	ISO	BABIP	HR	R	RBI
Home	.243	.334	.373	.131	.310	33	164	163
Away	.293	.366	.453	.159	.357	47	207	206

Last year I said he was being drafted too high based on his fluke 2012 season. The table below shows his career stats without the 2012 season versus his 2012 season.

Split	AB	AVG	OBP	SLG	HR
Everything Else	2,403	.265	.377	.394	49
2012	604	.286	.376	.498	31

To say Headley underperformed his ADP is an understatement, but it is possible nagging injuries could have contributed to the “down” year. He missed the start of the season with a [fractured left thumb](#) while trying to break up a double play in a spring training game. After the season he [underwent surgery on his left knee](#), which was bothering him the whole year. It’s possible his knee issues was the reason why his stolen base totals (eight) were the lowest they’ve been since 2008. Not only were the stolen bases down, the stolen base success rate and his BABIP were the lowest of his career. This has to be more coincidence; I believe Headley will bounce back.

Overall, Headley will provide a .275-.285 batting average with 10-15 home runs and 10-15 stolen bases. He could also be a sneaky play for 80/80 runs and RBIs if he the Padres lineup approaches its potential. What’s very interesting about the Padres in general, is if everyone is healthy at the start of the season their offense could be really good with **Everth Cabrera**, **Carlos Quentin**, **Yonder Alonso**, **Cameron Maybin** (assuming he’s healthy) and **Wil Venable**. This is the last year of Headley’s deal so if the Padres are out of the playoff race it’s very possible the Padres trade him at the trade deadline, which will positively impact his fantasy value.

Jason Heyward

Bats: L | Age: 24 | Team: Braves | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (80), NFBC (68)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	396	14	50	42	9/2	.227	.708	.260	20.5%	11.2%	25.6%	60.8%
2012	MLB	22	587	27	93	82	21/8	.269	.814	.319	23.3%	8.9%	32.1%	47.7%
2013	MLB	23	382	14	67	38	2/4	.254	.776	.281	16.6%	10.9%	23.9%	49.6%
Proj.			520	20	85	70	15	.268						

After his first 20/20 season the hype surrounding Heyward was immense heading to drafts. “Could he go 30/30?” was a question that was being bandied about in fantasy circles. That enthusiasm quickly faded as he began the year with right shoulder soreness, the same injury that derailed part of his 2011 season. Then a few weeks later he had his appendix taken out, which took him a month to recover from. After that he suffered a [hamstring strain](#) (in July), which didn’t require him to go on the DL. Then in late August he got hit in the face, broke his jaw and had to miss another month of the season.

Last year his strikeout rate decreased by six and half percentage points and his swing and miss rate decrease almost five percentage points. What’s most encouraging is he maintained his reduced ground ball rate from 2012. For the first two seasons of his career he had a 49 percent ground ball rate, which led me to believe he wasn’t going to provide the value his ADP suggested (i.e. he wasn’t going to hit enough home run). Therefore, it’s no surprise he had his first 20/20 season when he stopped hitting the ball on the ground.

Overall, I’m not entirely sold the 27 home runs he put up in 2012 are legitimate, but I’m confident he can hit 20-24. The stolen base output is the most concerning. Even if he played a full year he only would have 8-9 stolen base attempts, well below 2012s numbers. It’s possible the hamstring could have been a bigger issue than the Braves let on. I’m willing to give Heyward a mulligan and I’m still buying the 2012 season, specifically the 20/20 potential if begins the year healthy.

Aaron Hicks

Bats: B | Age: 24 | Team: Twins | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (138), NFBC (89)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	472	13	100	61	32/11	.286	.844	.348	20.6%	14.0%	34.3%	45.7%
2013	AAA	23	72	0	7	5	1/0	.222	.650	.314	25.6%	12.2%	-	-
2013	MLB	23	281	8	37	27	9/3	.192	.597	.241	26.8%	7.7%	30.0%	50.5%
Proj.			450	17	40	41	13	.220						

Last year I was surprised Hicks made the opening day roster because the scouting community said he wasn’t ready for the jump. He had one of the worst starts of any hitter last year, but he did show some signs of life starting in June with a .679 OPS. Hicks’ yearly totals are bad, but if you remove the first month of the season (his brutalist month), he looks more like a passable fantasy player (table below).

Split	PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR	SB
April	83	.113	.229	.127	.356	.174	31.33%	13.25%	0	3
Rest	230	.219	.270	.410	.679	.262	25.22%	5.65%	8	6

By looking at the table you can see the fantasy potential Hicks possesses. Suppose he had 450 at-bats and performed as the “Rest” data suggests then he would have had 17 home runs with 13 stolen bases. The .219 batting average and lack of runs and RBI still make him unplayable in shallow leagues, but there is fantasy potential for a sneaky good year as a fifth outfielder in 15 mixed leagues. There’s also room for more stolen bases as he stole 32 back in 2012 (in the minors). In terms of the scouting report his hit tool is fringe average so he’ll always have a below average batting average. As of now **Alex Presley** is the starting center fielder, but the Twins want Hicks to take the job and run with it. This is going to be a make or break year for Hicks in terms seizing the everyday job for the Twins because he’ll play the whole year at the age of 24.

Aaron Hill**Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (21), NFBC (23)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	520	8	61	61	21/7	.246	.655	.268	12.6%	6.1%	37.4%	40.8%
2012	MLB	30	609	26	93	85	14/5	.302	.882	.317	12.9%	7.8%	37.3%	39.0%
2013	MLB	31	327	11	45	41	1/4	.291	.818	.312	13.3%	8.0%	30.7%	42.1%
Proj.			600	22	90	85	3	.285						

After the first ten games Hill missed six weeks of the season with a [broken left hand](#) after **James McDonald** hit him. Even though he missed half of the season he still put up a good batting average and would have hit 20 home runs if he received the same number of plate appearances as 2012. As a pretty extreme pull hitter (53.6 percent of his hits went to left field), he has still managed to hit for a decent average the past two seasons. What's very surprising is he's been able to put breaking balls in play (sliders and curveballs) from right handed pitching despite being extremely pull happy. For example, the last two seasons he has a slash line of .313/.349/.493, but from 2008-11 his slash line is .214/.238/.366 against those pitch types. This indicates the batting average is legit and sustainable; to be clear, sustainable means he should easily hit .270-.275 with upside to hit .290-plus if everything rolls right. Since he was only one for five in stolen base attempts, suggests fantasy owners should not be expecting any more than six next year. Despite missing half of the season, his injury was extremely fluky in nature and this is a player who appears to have figured out how to hit righties, which implies his .290-plus batting average is legitimate. On top of that he should provide 20-plus home runs and a lot of RBIs and runs scored. He's currently going as the 11th second baseman (as of early February), which means this is a player I'm going to be targeting and rostering in most of my leagues.

Matt Holliday**Bats: R | Age: 34 | Team: Cardinals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (13), NFBC (10)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	446	22	83	75	2/1	.296	.912	.330	18.0%	11.6%	27.2%	49.0%
2012	MLB	32	599	27	95	102	4/4	.295	.877	.337	19.2%	10.9%	30.3%	48.1%
2013	MLB	33	520	22	103	94	6/1	.300	.879	.322	14.3%	11.5%	24.4%	49.1%
Proj.			550	21	95	100	1	.295						

Holliday has been one of the safest fantasy players in the game. He's hit at least 20 home runs since 2006 and has never had a batting average below .290 in his career. There are potential signs of aging for the 34 year old. His isolated power and slugging percentages were the lowest of his career. For the past two years he has struggled against fastballs on the inner half of plate. For example, his batting average has dropped 20 points and the ground ball rate has increased five percentage points compared to the three years prior. I wouldn't be surprised he hits less than 20 home runs based on the power trends, but he is still going to hit in the middle of one of the best lineups in the majors and should drive in and score a lot of runs. As of early February he currently has an ADP (in NFBC) as the 18th outfielder, which is about right considering his upside is limited and his floor is pretty low.

Eric Hosmer

Bats: L | Age: 24 | Team: Royals | Position: 1B | Player Rater: ESPN (8), NFBC (6)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	523	19	66	78	11/5	.293	.799	.314	14.6%	6.0%	27.3%	54.7%
2012	MLB	22	535	14	65	60	16/1	.232	.663	.255	15.9%	9.4%	26.7%	57.9%
2013	MLB	23	623	17	86	79	11/4	.302	.801	.335	14.7%	7.5%	20.0%	56.4%
Proj.			600	18	90	90	11	.297						

Hosmer’s 2013 season was a tale of two halves. For the first two months of the season, he only had one home run, a .333 slugging percentage and a 0.072 ISO (isolated power). In terms of hit location, he was hitting the ball on the ground and to left field 58 percent and 24 percent of the time respectively. From June on, he went on to hit .318/.367/.494 with 16 home runs, .494 SLUG and .176 ISO. What was most surprising he achieved these numbers while still hitting a lot of ground balls (49.5 percent), which is really high for a power hitter.

In the last two seasons, there were 65 players with 400+ plate appearances with a ground ball rate 49.5 percent or higher. Of those players, only one player hit more than 20 home runs (22 from Kendrys Morales). On average the 65 players had an average of 8.5 home runs, which makes me question how high Hosmer’s power potential could be. He has had a propensity for hitting ground balls his entire career: 51.5 percent and 45.7 percent in 2012 and 2011 respectively. Some fantasy analysts have cited Hosmer’s improvement was due to hitting more balls to right field and less to left field. However, the balls hit to right field only increased three percentage points (from 28 percent to 31.2 percent) and balls hit to left field were essentially the same (23.3 percent). The spray charts below show where all of hits landed in 2013. It’s difficult to see any major change in hit location, which adds more suspicion the .345 BABIP (from June on) is unsustainable.

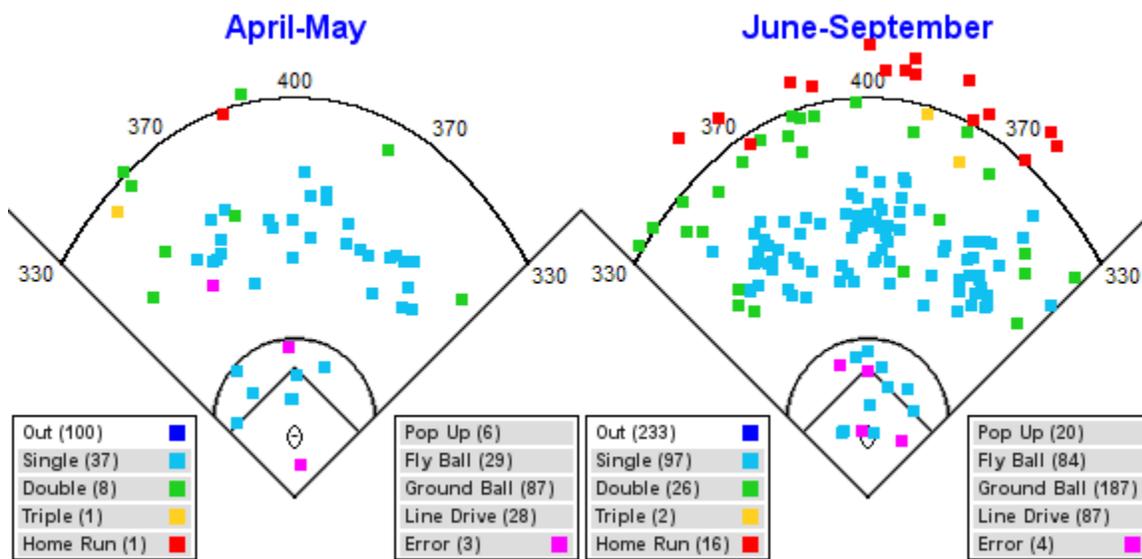


Image source: BaseballAnalytics.org

There was no bigger proponent of Hosmer last year than me, but his ground ball rate has historically been too high for me to believe he'll continue take another step forward in the power department. That said, I wouldn't at all be surprised if he does take that step forward because the scouting reports I've read (when he was a prospect) suggest he'll eventually become a monster offensive player. I don't want to invest a fourth, fifth round pick on a player at a premium offensives position whose biggest asset could be batting average with only a 15-22 home run projection.

Ryan Howard

Bats: L | Age: 34 | Team: Phillies | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (47), NFBC (34)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	557	33	81	116	1/0	.253	.835	.303	26.7%	11.6%	35.0%	43.0%
2012	MLB	32	260	14	28	56	0/0	.219	.718	.287	33.9%	8.6%	31.7%	44.7%
2013	MLB	33	286	11	34	43	0/0	.266	.784	.349	30.0%	7.3%	30.8%	41.0%
Proj.			350	18	65	75	0	.250						

Howard missed half of the season after undergoing surgery to a torn meniscus in his knee, but he is expected to be ready for spring training. With a .173/.223/.352 slash line against lefties, Howard is basically a platoon player at this point. Fantasy owners looking to buy Howard should be extremely happy if receives the **Brandon Moss** treatment and only plays against righties. Before I started writing his capsule I was ready to completely write him off, as a player who is clearly past his prime. However, I think there could be some value for him. The ground ball rate decreased back down to the levels he showed before the 2012 season. The HR/FB rate was the lowest of his career, which means it could positively regress. The strikeout rate decreased nearly four percentage points from his career high. I have feeling the hate will go too far on Howard and will most likely still be available near the end of your drafts. If he receives 500 plate appearances he could hit 25 home runs with a batting average in the .230s. I'm not buying last year's .266 batting average because his swing and swing and miss rates were the highest since 2008 (I don't have any data prior to 2008).

Torii Hunter

Bats: R | Age: 38 | Team: Tigers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (20), NFBC (20)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	35	580	23	80	82	5/7	.262	.765	.297	19.3%	9.6%	29.3%	50.8%
2012	MLB	36	534	16	81	92	9/1	.313	.817	.389	22.8%	6.5%	26.3%	55.0%
2013	MLB	37	606	17	90	84	3/2	.304	.800	.344	17.3%	4.0%	23.2%	55.1%
Proj.			560	15	90	80	2	.287						

During the past two years Hunter has switched from being a power hitter to a slash, ground ball hitter. For example, his ground ball rate from 2012-13 was 53 percent compared to only 47 percent from 2009-11. This was a [conscience adjustment](#) by Hunter, "It's something I did on purpose," Hunter admits, "I changed my swing plane and just told myself I'd start going for base hits." At this point in Hunter's

career he's not going to provide stolen bases and I expect the power to dip slightly because the decrease in HR/FB rate is an indicator his power is starting to subside.

If he's going to be a top 20-30 outfielder in 2014 he is going to have to hit for a .290-plus batting average with a lot of 90-plus runs and 80-plus RBIs, which is not guaranteed to happen because of the talent surrounding him. I'm not sold he gets the RBIs because the lower third of the lineup is not going to be very good; also, I expect **Ian Kinsler** to continue to decline. Don't overlook the loss of **Prince Fielder** because without Fielder **Victor Martinez** moves to the cleanup spot and **Austin Jackson** becomes the fifth hitter. The likelihood of a drop off in offensive production from the middle of the lineup is expected and there's no guarantee **Miguel Cabrera** will be healthy for a full season. Statistically, there are no signs of aging, which is quite remarkable since he finished the year at 38 years old. If the power decreases, his fantasy value will be more reliant on the back of the baseball card statistics (batting average, runs, RBI), which are more likely to regress than improve.

Raul Ibanez

Bats: L | Age: 41 | Team: Angels | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (63), NFBC (41)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	39	535	20	65	84	2/0	.245	.707	.268	18.4%	5.7%	31.5%	50.9%
2012	MLB	40	384	19	50	62	3/0	.240	.761	.243	15.8%	8.2%	32.8%	45.5%
2013	MLB	41	454	29	54	65	0/0	.242	.793	.273	25.8%	8.5%	29.4%	41.3%
Proj.			420	19	50	50	0	.235						

It's crazy that Ibanez was tied for 15th in the majors in home runs with 29 last year. Now the home run total is really nice, but 24 of those home runs came in the first half of the year and only five came in the second half. The table below breaks down his 2013 season by half.

Split	AVG	K%	BB%	BABIP	HR	HR/FB	Swng%	Miss%	Chas%
1st Half	.267	.236	.064	.273	24	26.4%	44.84%	25.47%	28.64%
2nd Half	.203	.290	.115	.272	5	9.3%	43.58%	31.10%	29.85%

What's strange about his second half of the year is other than strikeouts, there's no other statistical reason why he fell off so much. His BABIP was the same, the fly ball rate increased two percentage points and his walk rate doubled during the second half of the season. For the last three years against left handed pitchers he has a .221/.268/.386 slash line in 343 plate appearances. Against righties he has a .780 OPS with 16, 19 and 21 home runs during the same time frame. Another concerning statistic is his performance against fastballs from righties; during the first half he had a .298 batting average compared to a .181 batting average. Now, he hasn't historically hit fastballs against righties for the past three seasons (2010-2012): .229, .238 and .254 respectively.

Hopefully the Angels give Ibanez the **Brandon Moss** treatment and platoon Ibanez against lefties because if he does he becomes very usable 12-team mixed leagues or daily leagues. He's likely going to

bat fifth or sixth in an Angels lineup with Trout, Pujols and Hamilton hitting ahead of him. If Pujols and Hamilton can be 80 percent of what they used to be there are going to be plenty of RBI opportunities for Ibanez. He'll probably cost you next to nothing to acquire him and he could be a top 40-50 outfielder if he can stay healthy.

Omar Infante

Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: Royals | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (13), NFBC (16)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	579	7	55	49	4/2	.276	.696	.298	10.5%	5.3%	26.3%	50.4%
2012	MLB	30	554	12	69	53	17/3	.274	.719	.291	11.1%	3.6%	33.8%	46.5%
2013	MLB	31	453	10	54	51	5/2	.318	.795	.333	9.2%	4.2%	30.3%	42.6%
Proj.			540	10	80	75	7	.280						

Similar to **Marco Scutaro**, Infante's only plus fantasy tool is batting average, but unlike Scutaro, may not hit high in the lineup, which will lower his account stats. I tend to believe Ned Yost will have this lineup on Opening Day:

- Aoki
- Infante
- Hosmer
- Gordon
- Butler
- Perez

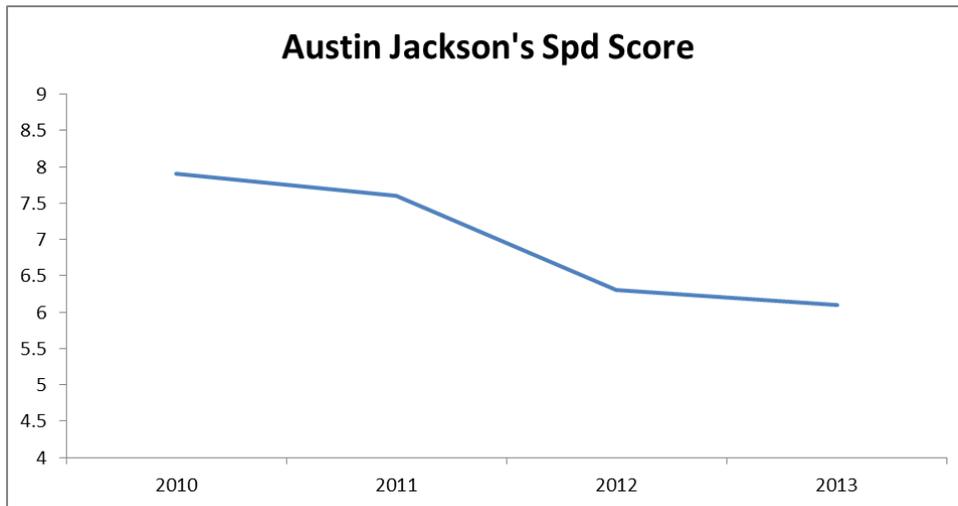
Aoki, and his career .355 OBP should lead off and with Hosmer entrenched in the third spot in the batting order it makes a lot of sense to have a right handed hitter between the two. In terms of power Infante does not offer a lot of upside, especially moving from Detroit to Kansas City; I would expect 6-9 instead 10-12 he has posted the past two seasons. He'll never be a high walk or strikeout hitter because he never wants to leave the bat on his shoulders. His offensive profile suggests his batting average will be slightly be BABIP dependent, but since 2008 he has a career .296 batting average; also, for eight straight years he's hit .271 or better. It's easy to point out his .318 average was BABIPed, but that batting average was accompanied by the best contact rate of his career so he was definitely aided by the BAPIP, but I'm willing to believe it's not that much of a fluke. Suppose Infante regresses to a .290-plus hitter with 6-9 home runs; that doesn't sound very appealing, but if he can return to the 17 stolen bases in 2012 you have a borderline top ten second baseman. What's encouraging is the Royals are not afraid to steal bases; last year they led the majors in stolen bases and two years ago they were seventh.

Austin Jackson

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Tigers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (48), NFBC (40)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	591	10	90	45	22/5	.249	.690	.340	27.1%	8.4%	30.4%	52.6%
2012	MLB	25	543	16	103	66	12/9	.300	.856	.371	21.7%	10.9%	34.7%	43.3%
2013	MLB	26	552	12	99	49	8/4	.272	.754	.333	21.0%	8.5%	26.1%	43.9%
Proj.			550	12	78	70	10	.278						

The addition of **Ian Kinsler** pushes Jackson from the leadoff spot to the fifth or sixth spot in the lineup, which will increase his RBI opportunities and lower his run scoring opportunities. This could have a positive benefit on his stolen base potential because with **Miguel Cabrera** no longer batting behind him he should have more opportunities to be more aggressive because the fear of getting thrown out isn't as big of a drawback. However his speed score (per FanGraphs) has been in decline since his rookie year, which doesn't provide a lot of optimism he can be a 20-plus base stealer again.



Combine the lack of speed and the fact he gone on the DL twice the past two years (2013 for a right thigh strain and in 2012 for an abdomen strain) means he is no longer as attractive as years past. Since he's been a fast player he was prone to high BABIP spikes (in 2012 and 2010), but with speed declining, the odds of the high BABIP spike are lower. Overall, he does not have much upside as he doesn't consistently hit for a high batting average, doesn't hit for much power, no longer steals bases and worst of all is no longer a 90-plus run candidate.

John Jaso**Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Athletics | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (34), NFBC (36)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	246	5	26	27	1/2	.224	.651	.244	13.2%	9.2%	32.8%	47.9%
2012	MLB	28	294	10	41	50	5/0	.276	.850	.298	14.1%	15.5%	28.2%	48.7%
2013	MLB	29	207	3	31	21	2/1	.271	.759	.331	18.1%	15.3%	24.7%	45.9%
Proj.			350	10	42	50	3	.273						

Post-concussion symptoms put an end to Jaso's season in late July and his availability for 2014 is still in question; as of late January, there are no whispers he will not be available for spring training. Last year I targeted Jaso in every league because his potential to lead all catchers in runs scored because of his career .364 OBP and I expected him to bat leadoff. I was bullish to believe the A's would drop Coco Crisp in the order so Jaso spent the majority of his time in the lower third of lineup. Despite hitting low in the batting order he would have finished in the top five in runs among catchers if he finished the year.

If Jaso is fully healthy entering the year he's someone I'm going to target again because the talk around the A's camp is they expect Jaso to be the primary DH to begin the season. Since he is a below average defender that will only help the A's pitching staff and his ability to stay on the field. Just because he's expected to be the full time DH doesn't mean he'll play in 120-plus games. The A's love to platoon their hitters in all situations, regardless of what inning of the game. For example, A's manager Bob Melvin will pinch hit for players in the sixth inning if it means putting his team and players in the best position to succeed. I expect Jaso will be platooned against lefties and will take a back seat to players needing a half-day (i.e. a DH day) during the season, which is more than you think. For example, **Coco Crisp** and **Yoennis Cespedes**, the players most likely to need half days played a combined 47 games in the DH spot.

Desmond Jennings**Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Rays | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (43), NFBC (33)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	247	10	44	25	20/6	.259	.805	.303	20.6%	10.8%	30.3%	52.2%
2012	MLB	25	505	13	85	47	31/2	.246	.702	.298	21.3%	8.2%	30.6%	50.0%
2013	MLB	26	527	14	82	54	20/8	.252	.748	.295	19.1%	10.6%	25.9%	52.8%
Proj.			500	14	73	65	23	.250						

I've never been a Jennings guy. He's always been one of those players who are drafted highly because of his scouting report as a prospect and not because of the actual production he's produced in the majors. For example in the last three seasons, he's never had a batting average above .259; he's never had more than 14 home runs; he's never scored more than 85 runs. I'm not trying to say Jennings is a bad player because Rays ballpark has suppressed his stats. The table below is a breakdown of his career home-road splits.

Splits	AVG	OBP	SLUG	K%	BB%	HR	HR/FB	WHIFF%
Home	.235	.323	.396	19.9%	10.2%	18	9.9%	23.6%
Away	.264	.337	.421	20.4%	9.2%	19	10.5%	28.5%

His fantasy baseball ceiling is **Alex Rios** (a good **Alex Rios**) because he certainly has the raw speed to steal 40-plus and he has shown mid-teens power the past two years. However, the evidence is mounting against him. His ground ball rate increased six percentage points to 48.3 percent, which implies the 18-plus home run power is not in the cards. In terms of batting average the home ballpark is not helping, but he's also hitting a lot of popups; to his credit he reduced that, going from 18 percent to 12 percent. Since he has plus speed one would expect his BABIP to be higher, but with striking out and popping up 20 and 12 percent of the time respectively will suffocate the batting average. I wouldn't be surprised if he has .330 BABIP next year, but the smart money says no.

What hurts his value the most is the signing of **David DeJesus**, who will most likely assume leadoff duties against righties and push Jennings down to the bottom third of the lineup. Overall, we're talking about a player who will have the likes of **Yunel Escobar** and **Jose Molina / Ryan Hanigan** hitting behind him so his runs scored will most likely in the upper 60s, not the mid-80s; his stolen base success rate plummeted to only 71 percent, which could limit his stolen base potential. He probably will not provide more than 16 home runs if he continues to hit the ball on the ground 48 percent of the time. The upside is there, but the evidence that is mounting against him says otherwise.

Chris Johnson

Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Braves | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (14), NFBC (11)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	378	7	32	42	2/2	.251	.670	.317	24.0%	4.0%	26.4%	48.4%
2012	MLB	27	488	15	48	76	5/1	.281	.777	.354	25.0%	5.9%	33.2%	42.2%
2013	MLB	28	514	12	54	68	0/0	.321	.816	.394	21.2%	5.3%	22.8%	47.9%
Proj.			500	12	50	65	0	.285						

It's easy to quickly write off Johnson's 2013 season that was BABIP fueled and move on. However, before 2013 his career BABIP was .347 (in 1,318 plate appearances) so while 2013's BABIP probably cannot be repeated, a BABIP in the .350 range is certainly in play (pun intended), which should make a .275 hitter. The other peripheral stats are not appealing as he doesn't hit for a lot of power, steal bases or drive in a lot of runs. In terms of the runs and RBI opportunities I don't expect massive up jump because he will be hitting in the bottom third of the Braves lineup. For his power potential I wouldn't expect any more than 17 home runs. The 15 home runs in 2012 appear to be inflated by his brief time in Arizona, but all of the seven home runs he hit as a member of the Diamondbacks happened on the road. Johnson does have value in 15-team mixed leagues if can be a .275-plus hitter and hit 15-plus home runs and you'll be able to get him on the cheap too.

Adam Jones**Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Orioles | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (6), NFBC (6)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	567	25	68	83	12/4	.280	.785	.304	18.3%	4.7%	28.7%	53.9%
2012	MLB	26	648	32	103	82	16/7	.287	.839	.313	18.1%	4.9%	25.8%	51.4%
2013	MLB	27	653	33	100	108	14/3	.285	.811	.314	19.7%	3.6%	25.1%	52.2%
Proj.			620	29	98	98	14	.284						

In the past four seasons Jones has averaged 156 games played and has been the model of consistency. During those four years he has had the following batting averages: .285, .287, .280 and .284. And do not forget his home run totals have increased year-over-year in the same time period, going from 19 to 33. For me he's a border line top ten fantasy player because he is one of the safest players available and is still at the age where he could improve even more. He may not finish the year in the top ten, but you are almost guaranteed top 20 production.

The biggest red flag against him was his ground ball rate increased four and a half percentage points to 47.7 percent, which was the highest it's been since 2009. If you read my player capsule on **Wil Myers** you'll see players who hit the ball on the ground that much have an extremely difficult time hitting for power. If the 2013 ground ball rate repeats itself I wouldn't be shocked if his home run power is in the 22-26 range.

Matt Joyce**Bats: L | Age: 29 | Team: Rays | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (75), NFBC (53)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	462	19	69	75	13/1	.277	.825	.317	20.3%	9.4%	36.6%	39.9%
2012	MLB	27	399	17	55	59	4/3	.241	.769	.281	22.1%	11.9%	37.2%	43.5%
2013	MLB	28	413	18	61	47	7/3	.235	.747	.251	18.1%	12.3%	34.1%	41.7%
Proj.			425	18	61	60	7	.241						

Despite the batting average Joyce made a lot of improvements at the plate that should have resulted in a higher batting average that he ended up with last year. First, his strikeout rate decreased four percentage points while his walk rate slightly increased. Second, his fly ball and ground ball rates remained essentially the same. His isolated power has decreased year over year, which is trend that has been fueled more by a decrease in his BABIP rather than a systemic negative trend in skill set. Joyce can't hit lefties, but since he's platooned against lefties makes him more rosterable for fantasy purposes because his batting average won't receive a big dip. Joyce is the Rays third best power hitter and should bat near the middle of the order; if his batting average bounces back to the .250 range he'll be a serviceable fifth outfielder in a 12 and 15-team mixed leagues.

Matt Kemp

Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Dodgers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (91), NFBC (94)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	602	39	115	126	40/11	.324	.986	.380	23.1%	10.7%	39.0%	39.4%
2012	MLB	27	403	23	74	69	9/4	.303	.906	.354	22.9%	8.9%	31.6%	46.3%
2013	MLB	28	263	6	35	33	9/0	.270	.723	.353	26.2%	7.6%	29.9%	41.8%
Proj.			500	25	75	75	11	.280						

In the past two seasons Kemp has only played in 179 games and played in a career low 73 games last year. In 2012 he missed time due to hamstring and shoulder issues. Last year he suffered from a myriad of injuries (shoulder, hamstring and ankle). At the end of October he had surgeries on both his [left shoulder](#) and [left ankle](#). He is expected to be ready for spring training, but the offseason training and conditioning program will be limited because he will not be able to put weight on the foot for a month after the surgery.

Since he dealt with so many injuries it's hard to know how much weight, if any, should be used to evaluate his performance moving forward. Is the near 40/40 player coming back? He achieved the 39 home runs in 2011 with a HR/FB rate of 21.4 percent, which is was the highest of his career. The following year the HF/FB rate maintained at 20.4 percent, which implies the new found power is legitimate.

The biggest question I have is how much will he steal in 2014? In the last two seasons he's only stolen 18 bases. With injuries to his lower half it's reasonable to believe that the Dodgers would limit his stolen opportunities to avoid getting hurt again. It's also possible the injuries made him lose a tick of speed and he may not be as efficient as years past. Another possibility is he's fully recovered and is primed for a complete bounce back.

Dave Cameron wrote a great piece on ESPN about how elite players who had horrible seasons at the age of 28 and bounced back the next season. Basically, the main point of the article suggests Kemp will be fine and bounce back. For detailed information I highly recommend you [go here](#) to read it. As of late January I'm still pessimistic in deep leagues and more optimistic in shallow leagues.

Howard Kendrick

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Angels | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (15), NFBC (12)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	537	18	86	63	14/6	.285	.802	.338	20.4%	5.7%	26.9%	54.4%
2012	MLB	28	550	8	57	67	14/6	.287	.725	.347	19.4%	4.9%	20.3%	60.8%
2013	MLB	29	478	13	55	54	6/3	.297	.775	.340	17.3%	4.5%	18.0%	54.0%
Proj.			550	14	60	65	14	.285						

Maybe it's coincidence I started writing Kendrick's player capsule right after Martin Prado's, but before I started writing about Kendrick I asked myself, "how much different is Kendrick different than Prado?" The reason why this is an important question is because Prado is going six full rounds ahead of Kendrick as of early February in NFBC drafts. The table below compares the stats of both players for the past three seasons.

Split	PA	HR	SB	R	RBI	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%
Kendrick	1,690	39	34	198	184	.289	.766	.342	19.1%	5.0%
Prado	1,944	37	24	217	209	.282	.747	.293	9.0%	7.1%

In terms of fantasy value there doesn't appear to be any major differences between both players other than playing time. Last year he was only limited to 122 games because of various nagging injuries and by a fluke injury where he [hyperextended his knee](#) as he tried to avoid a collision with Colin Cowgill. Overall, if you the skillset Prado brings to the table then you have to like Kendrick. When looking at Kendrick's stat line the first thing I noticed was the big decrease in stolen bases as he went from 14 to six. In the first half of the year he had six stolen bases but didn't have any more during the last 31 games, which implies the injuries he was suffering from inhibited his ability to steal bases. Some analysts lower him in their rankings because he's a boring safe player without a lot of upside, which is true, because in the last five years his average season is a .287 batting average with 11.8 home runs, 11.8 stolen bases, 64 RBIs and 65 runs. I think a lot of fantasy analysts unfairly ding him because he never lived up to the lofty expectations fantasy evaluators bestowed on him years ago. Kendrick has high floor and a low ceiling, which is fine for me especially if he's going as the 14th second baseman off the board.

Jason Kipnis

Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Indians | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (2), NFBC (1)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	136	7	24	19	5/0	.272	.841	.313	22.7%	7.3%	27.8%	50.5%
2012	MLB	25	591	14	86	76	31/7	.257	.714	.291	16.2%	10.0%	27.6%	50.5%
2013	MLB	26	564	17	86	84	30/7	.284	.818	.345	21.7%	11.6%	25.9%	46.3%
Proj.			570	18	86	85	30	.270						

For two years in a row, Kipnis has begun the season red hot and completely faded away during the second half. The table below shows his first and second half performances the last two seasons.

	PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	HR	SB	CS	RBI	Runs
1st Half	744	.289	.409	.466	24	41	6	106	106
2nd Half	586	.247	.375	.349	7	20	8	54	66

Last year, I wasn't buying Kipnis because his 2012 season benefitted greatly from the first half of season, and I believed the reason he struggled was his inability to adjust the adjustments the league made. Specifically, he struggled against fastballs up in the zone and breaking stuff down in the zone. Those

struggles contributed to his strikeout rate increasing two percentage points and his in-play rate decreasing five percentage points.

Last year, his BABIP increased from .291 to .345, fueling the batting-average increase. The reason for the substantial increase in his BABIP from 2012 to 2013 came against left-handed pitching. Last year, he hit .308 with a .390 BABIP, while in 2012 he hit .215 with a .251 BABIP. The samples are still too low, but the 2012 performance seems more likely to repeat in 2014. Even though I do not expect Kipnis to hit .308 against lefties again, he will probably hit in the .230-.250 range. None of this explains his poor second half, though.

In the first half of the year, he hit .301 with a .361 BABIP and was only putting 38 percent of balls in play. In the second half of the year, he hit .261 with a .326 BABIP and put 44 percent of balls in play. Normally, when I see BABIPs decreasing while in-play rates increase, my first inclination is to think the hitter was hitting more ground balls. Kipnis did, in fact, hit more ground balls, but it was only one percentage point higher. It looks as though Kipnis just got unlucky and suffered the curse from the BABIP monster.

The biggest concern I have about Kipnis' game when comparing his performance in 2012 to 2013 is the strikeout rate increasing five and half percentage points and the in-play percentage decreasing from 45.1 percent to 40.8 percent. What's extremely encouraging is the number of doubles almost doubled, which implies there could be room for more power.

The second base position is extremely shallow, which will explain why most fantasy experts have him as their second or third second baseman, but I'm skeptical of the batting average regressing to the .260 range and the stolen base attempts decreasing. Despite having a substantially higher OBP in 2013, his stolen-base attempts were identical to 2012. If his OBP drops back to the .340 range, will he steal 30 bags again? Lastly, if you want to get geeky, the screenshot below visually shows his slugging percentage by each half of the year the past two years.

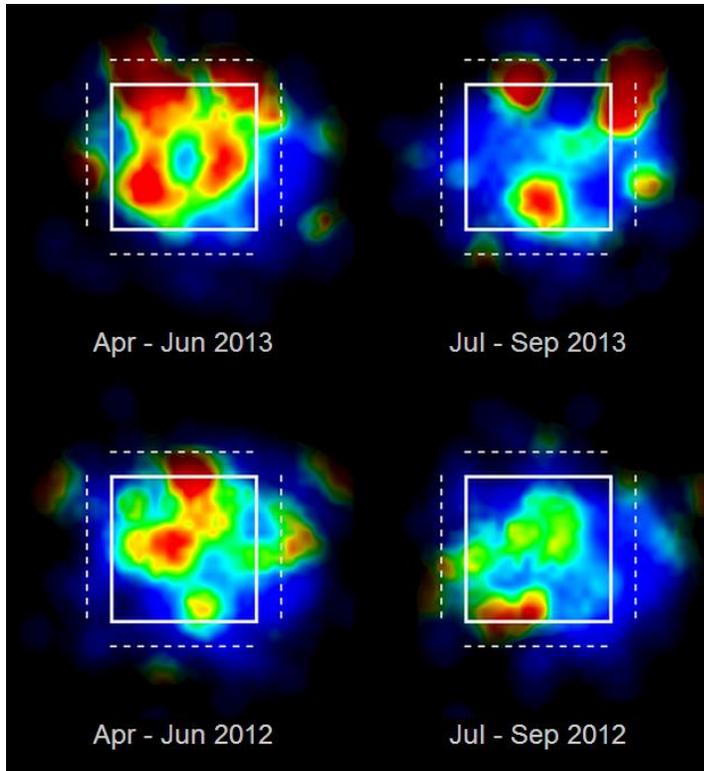


Image source: BaseballAnalytics.org

Adam LaRoche

Bats: L | Age: 34 | Team: Nationals | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (33), NFBC (21)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	151	3	15	15	1/0	.172	.546	.205	20.9%	14.1%	31.8%	46.7%
2012	MLB	32	571	33	76	100	1/1	.271	.853	.298	21.3%	10.4%	37.4%	37.9%
2013	MLB	33	511	20	70	62	4/1	.237	.735	.277	22.2%	12.2%	33.2%	39.9%
Proj.			540	22	75	90	1	.260						

After a bounce back 2012 season, LaRoche regressed across the board. So much so, it was the worst healthy season of his career. Last year I predicted the home run totals would regress to about 25, which was partially correct (he hit 20). More importantly I rated LaRoche as a safe, unsexy first baseman that wouldn't hurt you, which was incorrect. In the first half of the year he had a respectable slash line of .249/.331/.425 with 13 home runs. In the second half his slash line was .217/.333/.369 with only seven home runs. The biggest reason for his poor results came against left handed pitching. From 2008 to 2012 he had a slash line of .245/.295/.447 with a 28.3 percent strikeout rate and .306 BABIP against lefties. Last year it was .198/.254/.313 with a 26.8 percent strikeout rate and a .253 BABIP. I'm willing to chalk up 2013's performance as a small sample size blip where he was unlucky and rely more on the larger data set. For example, last year he had a .183 BABIP on fastballs; from 2008-12 his BABIP was .336. His

swing, whiff and in-play rates were all similar to previous years. At the age of 34, there may not be a lot of upside, but he can still be a .260 hitter with 20-25 home runs.

Junior Lake

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Cubs | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (116), NFBC (126)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	405	10	56	50	21/12	.279	.773	.353	23.4%	7.8%	31.6%	49.8%
2013	AAA	23	156	4	30	18	14/5	.295	.803	.347	19.4%	5.9%	-	-
2013	MLB	23	236	6	26	16	4/4	.284	.760	.377	26.8%	5.1%	21.0%	49.0%
Proj.			520	10	72	60	25	.250						

According to the [2013 prospect rankings](#) at Baseball Prospectus Lake is, “a polarizing prospect, Lake’s tools scream of major-league impact, but his execution still leaves a lot to be desired.” There’s a lot of hype about Lake being the next superstar, but that’s probably not going to happen in 2013 because he’s doing a lot of on the job training defensively. At the start of the year he played shortstop and third based, but he ended the year playing left and center field. He still takes bad routes to balls and has trouble reading balls off the bat, which is understandable. If he begins the year on the major league roster he’ll likely play every day to see if he could be part of the Cubs future plans. If he plays a full year he could be a 10/25 (home runs/stolen bases) type of player. He has the speed to have a higher BABIP, but he’s not likely to have a .377 BABIP again. In terms of batting average expect a .250 batting average because his approach at the plate can be rushed especially against right handed pitching who can locate a breaking ball.

Brett Lawrie

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (27), NFBC (17)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	150	9	26	25	7/1	.293	.953	.318	18.1%	9.4%	39.6%	44.1%
2012	MLB	22	494	11	73	48	13/8	.273	.729	.311	16.0%	6.2%	23.5%	55.1%
2013	MLB	23	401	11	41	46	9/5	.254	.712	.280	15.4%	6.8%	23.0%	53.4%
Proj.			500	14	66	64	14	.265						

Before I provide analysis on Lawrie, I want you to play blind resume and pick the player you would want on your team. The data is from 2012-13.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	HR	R	RBI	SB
Player A	.260	.354	.424	42	141	155	22
Player B	.265	.335	.401	22	114	94	22
Player C	.251	.341	.447	38	118	140	9

Have a pick? Player A is **Kyle Seager**. Player B is Lawrie. Player C is **Todd Frazier**. I'll admit Seager had a tremendous edge with the accounting statistics, as he received 314 more at-bats than Lawrie, but Frazier only had 58 more at-bats. I wouldn't be surprised if Lawrie is rated higher than both of those players going into drafts, which is really crazy because that ranking would be a result of that fluky sample size in 2011.

For his career he's 22 out of 35 in stolen base attempts (63 percent); he's not a terribly fast player and with a success rate that low tells me he'll either stop trying to steal bases or he'll become a better base stealer; both are possible, but I'm leading on the ladder.

The most troubling trend his propensity for hitting a lot of ground balls. In the last two years he has a 49.5 percent ground ball rate, which is extremely high for a player who is supposed to hit for a lot of power. Check out my player capsule on **Eric Hosmer** for more information about players with high ground ball rates.

He dealt with injuries coming into the 2013 season and suffered a severe ankle sprain in the middle of the year. It's hard to see injuries not to being a part of his career because he plays at one speed all the time, which is all out. It's possible Lawrie could rebound and put up the 20/20 season and .280 batting average fantasy analysts have bestowed on him before the 2012 season, but the fact is he hasn't done it and hasn't come close. If he fell enough in draft I would take a chance, but I don't see that happening.

Adam Lind

Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (14)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	499	26	56	87	1/1	.251	.734	.265	19.7%	5.9%	34.1%	44.2%
2012	MLB	28	321	11	28	45	0/0	.255	.729	.282	17.3%	8.2%	29.8%	51.2%
2013	MLB	29	465	23	67	67	1/0	.288	.854	.324	19.8%	9.8%	25.7%	50.6%
Proj.			460	20	65	74	0	.255						

After a subpar 2012 season, Lind rebounded with a solid 2013 season. The subpar 2012 season was primarily due to a very unlucky first half of the season and not a diminished skill set. With a career .219 batting average against left handed pitching he should be used only as a platoon player at this point. In 2013 he became more patient at the plate, evidenced by a career high walk rate and the lowest swing rate at balls outside the strike zone (25.8 percent) since 2009. Last year's .324 BABIP is another statistical standout as his career BABIP is .297. What's the most interesting is he never has a BABIP near that career norm. It's either been 20-30 points higher or lower than the career norm, which increases the risk and reward factor when drafting him because he could either have a .237-.250 batting average or a .288-.305 batting average. With a career 15 percent HR/FB rate it looks as though the HR/FB rate in 2013 was a little lucky. Limited at-bats against lefties will limit his ability to provide above average run and RBI totals, but if you're looking for 18-24 home run power with a .245-260 batting average he could be a nice draft day value.

James Loney**Bats: L | Age: 29 | Team: Rays | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (21), NFBC (17)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	531	12	56	65	4/0	.288	.755	.309	11.5%	7.2%	35.9%	42.9%
2012	MLB	28	434	6	37	41	0/3	.249	.630	.269	11.0%	6.0%	25.3%	49.0%
2013	MLB	29	549	13	54	75	3/1	.299	.778	.326	12.9%	7.4%	23.7%	45.1%
Proj.			550	12	60	70	3	.270						

Loney had the best of his career since his rookie year back in 2007 and the Rays rewarded his great year with a [three year, \\$21M contract](#). Loney had a resurgenet year, but he benefitted greatly from a high batting average on balls in play. The table below breaks down his 2013 into halves along with his performance from 2008-12. When looking at his 2013 numbers, what looks more normal? Clearly it's the second of 2013. Also, do not be fooled by the he loves to play in Tampa's ballpark narrative as he had a slash line of .245/.290/.374 at Tropicana Field last year. While on the road he hit .351/.404/.486 with a .391 BABIP. Loney is a below average offensive first baseman in real life and should revert back to the player in 2014.

Time	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
1st Half 2013	.315	.366	.466	.832	.338	12.1%	7.9%	11.8%
2nd Half 2013	.276	.332	.378	.700	.309	14.0%	6.6%	7.0%
2008-12	.276	.333	.399	.732	.300	12.2%	7.9%	6.7%

Evan Longoria**Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Rays | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (6), NFBC (4)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	483	31	78	99	3/2	.244	.850	.239	16.2%	13.9%	40.8%	41.1%
2012	MLB	26	273	17	39	55	2/3	.289	.896	.313	19.6%	10.6%	35.6%	41.1%
2013	MLB	27	614	32	91	88	1/0	.269	.842	.312	23.4%	10.1%	39.3%	39.3%
Proj.			550	28	85	85	1	.275						

Despite missing time the previous two seasons (oblique injury in 2011 and a hamstring injury in 2012) Longoria was finally healthy and played the most games of his major league career, but his fantasy owners were disappointed in his fantasy output. For the past three, four years he was always drafted in the top 10-20 despite actually putting up a season deserving of such an ADP. The rationale of the player acquiring Longoria was his upside was so high he deserved to be taken so high. I used to believe that, but that changed before the 2012 season after I realized there was enough of a track record to suggest the breakout wasn't going to happen.

So, let's talk about his 2013. The first thing I noticed was the increased strikeout (23.4 percent), which was the highest it's been since his rookie year. Based on the data at [Brooks Baseball](#) he had trouble hitting the fastball. Below are the strikeout rates on "hard" balls. Please note that since the site does not provide plate appearances **so I had to use at-bats instead.**

Year	K%
2013	20.2%
2012	13.6%
2011	13.7%
2010	17.8%
2009	17.8%

Another trend that stood out was his ineffectiveness against right handed pitching (table below). Overall, his batting average dipped last year, which could be due to a lower BABIP than other years. However, the strikeout rate was also dramatically higher, which if continues in 2014 will continue to inhibit his BABIP moving forward (assuming the 23.8 percent strikeout rate maintains or increases).

Year	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	K%
2013	.256	.327	.472	.298	23.8%
2012	.280	.359	.483	.315	20.5%
2011	.240	.348	.471	.240	16.0%
2010	.281	.355	.490	.315	19.4%
2009	.277	.363	.518	.311	21.7%

One of the positives is the increased number of fly balls was the highest of his career, which could lead to a higher BABIP and more home runs if he revert back to his career HR/FB rate of 16.5 percent (before 2013). Based on last year's strikeout how much upside does Longoria have? It's possible the batting average ticks up, but his .312 BABIP was essentially near his career BABIP level, which means if the BABIP ticks down he could be .255-.260 hitter. Other than batting average he's going to post above average totals in three categories, which warrants being taken in the third, fourth round in a 12-team mixed league. For example, as of early February he's being taken ahead of **Jason Kipnis**, **David Wright**, and **Troy Tulowitzki**. I would take all three of those players before Longoria.

Jed Lowrie

Bats: B | Age: 29 | Team: Athletics | Position: SS, 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (10), NFBC (9)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	309	6	40	36	1/1	.252	.685	.289	17.6%	6.7%	44.9%	36.3%
2012	MLB	28	340	16	43	42	2/0	.244	.769	.257	16.8%	11.1%	47.6%	34.4%
2013	MLB	29	603	15	80	75	1/0	.290	.791	.319	13.7%	7.6%	32.4%	37.2%
Proj.			550	15	83	75	1	.275						

Lowrie was finally able to stay healthy and fantasy owners who rostered him reaped the rewards. Lowrie had the third most doubles of any player last year. If he played in a different ballpark more of those doubles could have been home runs. Anyone who has seen Lowrie play defense knows he's not a shortstop. He has poor range and his throwing accuracy can get loose, which means he'll likely move to second base eventually in his career. It will be very interesting if the A's plan to keep him at shortstop for the entire 2014 season because it's possible uber prospect **Addison Russell** arrives (there are legitimate rumblings he could arrive in 2014) to the majors this year. Since Lowrie has trouble staying on the field before 2013 it's difficult to compare last year to any individual year, but there are some takeaways if you compare his numbers in the aggregate (table below).

Split	PA	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%	GB%	FB%
2013	662	.290	.791	.319	13.7%	7.6%	6.7%	34.0%	43.2%
2010-12	925	.256	.767	.277	16.2%	9.8%	8.9%	28.0%	51.6%

By looking at the BABIP and hit distribution it looks as though he's primed to regress in 2014, but there are signs for optimism. Last year he had a .305 batting average compared to a .285 batting average from 2010-12; the .285 batting average was suppressed by an extremely 2012 season where hit .184. Last year he had a .282 batting average against righties compared to a .242 batting average from 2010-12. The majority of the bump in batting average against righties, which begs the question what did he do differently? He became more aggressive at the plate, swinging five percentage points more often while maintaining his contact rates. Also, the strikeout rate decreased three percentage points and the swing and miss rate decreased two percentage points. On top of that his isolated power increased ten points (from .170 to .180), which means he made harder contact. That said, I'm not entirely convinced he's a .290 hitter, but I'm very confident he can hit .275-plus with a ton of doubles, especially in the A's ballpark.

Last year I was a proponent of Lowrie because the major red flag against him was never about talent, but instead of staying healthy. In previous years he suffered injuries that were fluky in nature, which leads me to believe he's not injury prone. Like **Ben Zobrist** he received a lot of his value from batting near the top of the lineup (primarily second and third), which means he should be able to accumulate the baseball card stats that a lot of second baseman / shortstops will not be able to achieve.

Jonathan Lucroy

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Brewers | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (4), NFBC (6)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	430	12	45	59	2/1	.265	.703	.317	21.2%	6.2%	29.2%	47.4%
2012	MLB	26	316	12	46	58	4/1	.320	.881	.338	12.7%	6.4%	31.5%	45.9%
2013	MLB	27	521	18	59	82	9/1	.280	.795	.290	11.9%	7.9%	29.8%	43.4%
Proj.			505	18	62	79	7	.285						

Last year I said the .338 BABIP (in 2012) would likely to cause his .320 batting average to regress in 2013.

In fact that is what exactly happened; the BABIP regressed to .290 and the batting average decreased to .285. Despite the batting average decreasing he made strides at the plate. For example, his strikeout rate has decreased year over year while his walk rate has increased year over year since 2011. He hit a career high number of balls to right field, the opposite field, which implies he's starting to hit the ball to all fields and is becoming a more complete hitter. His ground ball rate decreased nearly one and a half percentage point last year, which implies the skill set he displayed in 2012 is here to stay.

Combine all of that and Lucroy is developing into a really good hitter. With **Ryan Braun** and **Aramis Ramriez** expected to be ready for the start of the season, it's very likely they will hit third and fourth so Lucroy may not benefit from batting in the prime spots in the batting order (**Carlos Gomez** could bat fifth) as he did last year, which will limit his RBI and runs upside. In 2012 he suffered a fluke injury (his wife dropped a bag on his hand), which resulted in surgery and him missing 50 games. The table below shows what his stats could have been if he played a full year in 2012 and 2011. Based on the data Lucroy could provide sneaky value on draft day because his actual totals were suppressed. The power is legitimate because he basically has the same HR/FB rate at home and on the road.

Year	AVG	AB	HR	RBI	SB	R
2013	.280	521	18	82	9	59
2012	.320	521	20	96	7	76
2011	.265	521	15	71	2	55

Manny Machado

Bats: R | Age: 21 | Team: Orioles | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (10), NFBC (9)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	19	402	11	60	59	13/4	.266	.789	.297	15.3%	10.5%	30.7%	47.0%
2012	MLB	19	191	7	24	26	2/0	.262	.739	.293	18.8%	4.5%	29.4%	53.7%
2013	MLB	20	667	14	88	71	6/7	.283	.746	.322	15.9%	4.1%	20.2%	55.4%
Proj.			500	12	72	62	5	.270						

After a successful knee surgery Machado was [cleared to return to some baseball activities](#) as February 1, which means it's very possible he could be ready for Opening Day. Despite his on-field and real life value, Machado is a player I'm going to steer clear from for various reasons. After a great start to the season he was on pace to break the all-time doubles record, but after the all-star break he quietly had a very bad second half (table below).

Split	BB%	K%	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	ISO	BABIP
1st Half	3.7%	16.3%	.310	.337	.470	.807	.160	.361
2nd Half	4.7%	15.3%	.240	.277	.370	.647	.130	.260

In terms of how good of a hitter he is, he's not as good as the first half indicates or as bad as the second half indicates. For 2014, he'll probably put up a line similar to his 2013s final stat line with a little lower

batting average (.260-.275 batting average) due to the fact he hits so many ground balls. The table below shows the splits by hit type.

Split	LD%	GB%	FB%	HR/FB
1st Half	20.6%	47.1%	32.3%	7.9%
2nd Half	16.0%	46.0%	38.0%	8.6%

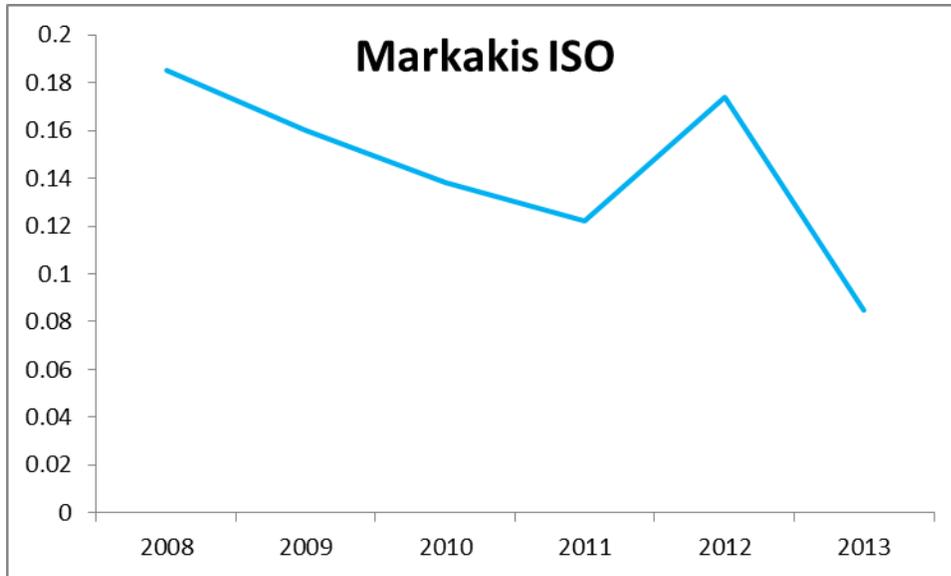
You'll notice there wasn't a dramatic change in his ground ball rate, which leads me to believe his batting average will be BABIP dependent. Another concern I have is how much is he going to run with surgically repaired knee? Last year, with a healthy knee, he was only 6 for 13 in stolen base attempts, which is enough to limit his stolen base attempts even if he wasn't coming off a major injury. Overall, he's most likely to provide above average production in two categories (runs and RBI), average production in batting average and below average production in stolen bases and home runs if he plays a full year, which is a big if. I still believe in his upside and he could be a top five fantasy third baseman, but not in 2014.

Nick Markakis

Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Orioles | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (57), NFBC (57)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	641	15	72	73	12/3	.284	.756	.300	10.5%	8.7%	32.6%	45.7%
2012	MLB	28	420	13	59	54	1/1	.298	.834	.310	10.8%	8.9%	28.9%	44.7%
2013	MLB	29	634	10	89	59	1/2	.271	.685	.291	10.9%	7.9%	22.3%	52.6%
Proj.			610	12	80	60	1	.290						

Markakis always had more doubles power than home run power, but prior to 2013 he was a relative safe bet to hit 12-15 home runs with 5-10 stolen bases, 60 RBI and 70 runs; basically a poor man's **Alex Gordon**. However, last year the doubles power dissipated (image below shows his isolated power the past six years) and he had the worst season of his career. It's possible a [herniated disc in his neck](#), which was suffered in early March, affected his play the entire year. Also, in 2012 he missed time because he tweaked his wrist while swinging at a pitch in June, then his thumb was broken when he was hit by a pitch in early September.



Historically, Markakis has been a steady player in 15-team mixed leagues because he provides a high batting average that's not empty, which is extremely scarce in deeper leagues. Speaking of batting average, last year was the lowest of his career and it's no surprise his BABIP followed suit. Last year he hit more ground balls than ever before, which if the trend continues means he will not be as attractive in 15-team leagues. An argument could be made he'll be the leadoff hitter on an Orioles offense that should be pretty good, but I believe **Adam Jones** and **Chris Davis** are going to regress (Davis more so); so maybe he only scores 75-85 runs instead of 85-95. However, if he can revert back to his career .360 OBP he'll easily provide 85-plus runs.

Starling Marte

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Pirates | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (16), NFBC (13)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	388	12	64	62	21/12	.286	.847	.344	21.1%	6.5%	28.8%	50.5%
2012	MLB	23	167	5	18	17	12/5	.257	.737	.333	27.5%	4.4%	19.1%	62.6%
2013	MLB	24	510	12	83	35	41/15	.280	.784	.363	24.4%	4.4%	22.8%	56.6%
Proj.			520	12	81	55	36	.265						

Before the 2013 season I didn't like Marte (from a fantasy perspective) because the scouting reports didn't suggest he was ready for a breakout (specifically, he had a lot of swing and miss in his game) and the high BABIP (.333) wasn't likely to last with a ground ball rate that high (57 percent). Since he's an above average runner he's more likely to have a higher BABIP, but the propensity to strikeout a lot along with a high ground ball rate told me to be pessimistic. Also, higher BABIP players who hit a lot of ground balls tend to have a wider range of outcomes. which makes them more unpredictable.

In 2013 his ground ball rate dropped six percentage points to 50.8 percent, which was still really high. He was 19th in the majors among batters with at least 400 plate appearances. His contact rate was 75.4

percent, which ranks in the bottom 20 percent of the majors. So basically he was the same player as the scouting report suggests; he will swing and miss a lot and hit a lot of ground balls.

Last year he had a .363 BABIP, which looks unsustainable even for a fast runner like Marte. Combine last year's BABIP and his approach at the plate tells me his batting average is likely to regress, which lowers his fantasy value across the board. A major reason why he was a top 20 outfielder last year was due to the high stolen base totals. However, if the batting average drops so will the OBP, which could limit his stolen base potential. Another hindrance on his stolen base totals could be his low career stolen base success rate of 72.6 percent (in the majors). It's also important to note he missed a little less than a month of the season with a hand injury ([strained ligament](#)) after he struck by a pitch so his 2013 stolen bases totals about have been 50-plus.

In terms of the power, he should be a safe bet for 10-15 with maybe room for more. Overall, expectations should be tempered as his batting average should regress to the .265-.275 range and I don't see massive upside with the stolen bases. He's still a top 20 outfielder, but not top ten.

Leonys Martin

Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Rangers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (31), NFBC (26)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	231	12	48	42	10/9	.359	1.033	.392	15.0%	9.2%	33.7%	48.3%
2012	MLB	24	46	0	6	6	3/0	.174	.605	.229	23.1%	7.7%	21.9%	56.3%
2013	MLB	25	457	8	66	49	36/9	.260	.698	.319	20.5%	5.5%	18.8%	59.8%
Proj.			480	9	72	55	36	.262						

The acquisition **Shin-Soo Choo** severely affects Martin's fantasy value because he goes from being the leadoff hitter to the ninth hitter. The 36 steals are legit as he has plus speed, but should he / will he be platooned against left handed pitching? Last year he had a slash line of .226/.280/.293 (in 144 plate appearances) against lefties. When **Craig Gentry** was on the team it seemed more plausible Martin would be platooned with Martin, but the Rangers traded Gentry for **Michael Choice**, who played center field in the minors, but profiles more as a left fielder. There are two scenarios, either Martin continues to play against lefties or Choice plays in center. I tend to believe Martin will continue to play because **Mitch Moreland** is scheduled to be the DH and Moreland struggles against lefties too; so I believe Choice will roam between left and right field and give **Alex Rios** and Choo a "day off" at DH. When comparing Martin to **Ben Revere**, Martin is far more attractive because he can hit 5-10 home runs compared to the zero Revere provides.

Russell Martin**Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Pirates | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (16)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	417	18	57	65	8/2	.237	.732	.252	17.0%	10.5%	29.9%	51.9%
2012	MLB	29	422	21	50	53	6/1	.211	.713	.222	19.6%	10.9%	29.3%	52.8%
2013	MLB	30	438	15	51	55	9/5	.226	.703	.266	21.3%	11.5%	24.3%	55.7%
Proj.			500	12	50	55	7	.228						

Martin is unsexy fantasy player because he will provide solid fantasy production next year because he'll play 125-plus games. A troubling trend is his propensity for hitting the ball on the ground (nearly 51 percent last year), which will make his batting average more BABIP dependent. Also, it makes his home run potential more unsustainable. If he can hit in the .220s again he's usable in deep two catcher mixed leagues, but if he slips below that he'll do more harm than good. If his home run total slips to the 10-12 range, he'll again, do more harm than good. Other than stolen bases he doesn't provide any elite level production, which only makes him an option for deep two catcher leagues. He finished 2013 as a top 20 catcher, but in drafts I recommend drafting a high upside catcher like **Yan Gomes** instead of Martin because catchers like Martin will be available on the free agent wire.

Victor Martinez**Bats: B | Age: 35 | Team: Tigers | Position: DH | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (14), NFBC (14)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	31	493	20	64	79	1/0	.302	.844	.303	9.7%	7.4%	36.5%	45.0%
2011	MLB	32	540	12	76	103	1/0	.330	.850	.343	8.6%	7.7%	28.4%	47.4%
2013	MLB	34	605	14	68	83	0/2	.301	.785	.313	9.3%	8.1%	29.1%	45.3%
Proj.			580	14	77	105	0	.290						

During the first half of the season Martinez struggled (.258/.314/.380 slash line with a .269 BABIP), which wasn't that unexpected since he missed the entire 2012 season recovering from microfracture surgery. In the second half he made an adjustment at the plate and stopped hitting ground balls and started hitting more line drives; specifically, his ground ball rate decreased six percentage points while his line drive rate increased five percentage points. During the second half of the season he had a .361/.413/.500 slash line with a .371 BABIP. I'm more inclined to believe the second half stats are more representative of his true talent; the batting average is obviously not sustainable, but he can certainly have a .300-plus batting average. In terms of the power, his last two seasons he has had a 7.2 percent HR/FB rate so the home run ceiling for next year is 15. With **Prince Fielder** gone, Martinez becomes the cleanup hitter and is primed to have a 100-plus RBI season if he stays healthy. The Tigers lineup is very top heavy; after the first four hitters there are a lot of question marks, which will limit how many runs Martinez will score. In general, Martinez should be a good value on draft day because DH-only players are usually devalued. For 2014 I'm expected a .300-plus batting average with 14 home runs, 105 RBIs and 70 runs.

Joe Mauer**Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Twins | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (8), NFBC (2)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	296	3	38	30	0/0	.287	.729	.319	11.4%	9.6%	22.8%	56.4%
2012	MLB	29	545	10	81	85	8/4	.319	.861	.364	13.7%	14.0%	23.2%	54.6%
2013	MLB	30	445	11	62	47	0/1	.324	.880	.383	17.5%	12.0%	24.1%	49.0%
Proj.			580	13	71	79	3	.320						

Mauer's season was cut short (in mid-August) [due to a concussion](#) he suffered when a ball was hit off his catcher's mask. Before being shut down, he was having a great year, specifically, in the batting average category. With a lifetime batting average of .323, Mauer is one of the safest batting average bets in baseball. During the offseason the Twins made the announcement that Mauer would [become a full time first baseman](#) and would not play at catcher ever again, which is great news for redraft leagues. I expect his plate appearances to increase 10-15 percent, which will give him a superior advantage against every other catcher because most catchers only play in 120-130 games. Therefore, Mauer could play 30 more games than most catchers (**Buster Posey** is the only one who could have just as many plate appearances). Mauer will likely provide a .320-plus batting average with average numbers in every other category and he's my number one catcher.

Cameron Maybin**Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Padres | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	516	9	82	40	40/8	.264	.716	.331	22.0%	7.7%	24.6%	60.4%
2012	MLB	25	507	8	67	45	26/7	.243	.656	.293	19.6%	7.8%	22.4%	60.3%
2013	MLB	26	51	1	7	5	4/1	.157	.467	.171	15.8%	7.0%	17.5%	60.0%
Proj.			350	7	40	40	15	.249						

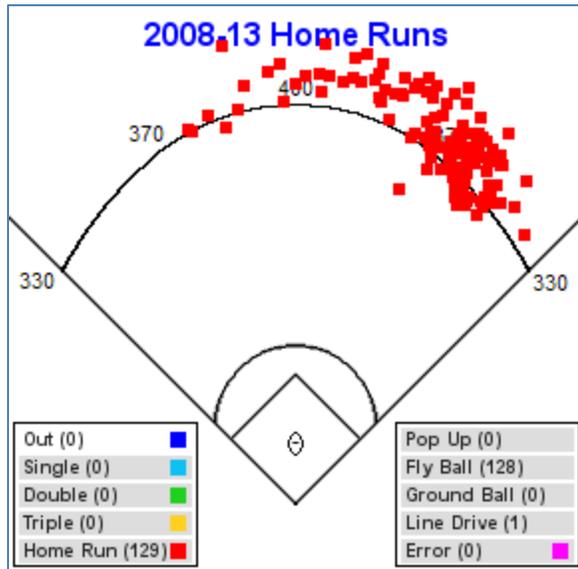
Since 2011 Maybin was bothered by his right wrist, but it was not diagnosed until 2013. In September 2013 he had a [successful surgery](#) on his wrist and has embarked on an 8-to-12-week recovery period, which may affect his attempt to play winter ball in preparation for the 2014 campaign. From 2008-10 he had a HR/FB rate of 11.7 percent, but since his wrist started to act up his HR/FB rate was 7.6 percent; so it's very possible the wrist injury impeded his power potential. The 2011 season provides a glimpse into the type of fantasy player Maybin could be if he were able to play a full season. With acquisition of **Seth Smith**, Maybin does not have an everyday job, but with **Carlos Quentin** being made of glass patrolling left field means it's inevitable before he lands on the DL, which will create an opportunity for Maybin to play every day because **Wil Venable**, whose slated to be the center fielder is better in right than center. If the wrist is healthy he could hit 15 home runs with 40-plus stolen bases with a .250 batting average.

Brian McCann

Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Yankees | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (14), NFBC (14)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	466	24	51	71	3/2	.270	.817	.287	16.9%	10.8%	39.6%	43.5%
2012	MLB	28	439	20	44	67	3/0	.230	.698	.234	15.6%	9.0%	37.8%	43.8%
2013	MLB	29	356	20	43	57	0/1	.256	.796	.261	16.4%	9.7%	33.0%	41.4%
Proj.			470	26	60	75	1	.249						

All the hubbub about McCann signing with the Yankees as being one of the “best” free agent signings has made it sound like he is the second coming of **Johnny Bench**. Granted, McCann is on pace to become a hall of fame catcher, but I’m not so sure he is the slam dunk everyone is saying. He’s a tremendous pull hitter and all of his home runs either went to right field or right-center (image below), which means he will certainly benefit from the short-field porch in Yankee Stadium. Also, he’s had at least 20 home runs in seven of his eight full seasons in the majors (he had 18 in 2007).



Source: BaseballAnalytics.org

Despite the optimism about his new home ballpark, do not overlook the fact his HR/FB rates have declined year-over-year since 2011, which indicates his raw power may not be as great as it once was. Obviously the HR/FB rate should increase in New York, but the power upside may be limited to 23-27 home runs.

In the last two seasons he has a .238 batting average in 889 plate appearances. He has especially struggled against lefties the last two years with a .227/.268/.368 slash line (287 plate appearances). Earlier in his career he struggles were not as dramatic. For example, from 2008-11 he had a slash line of .263/.336/.423 against lefties. It’s also conceivable he sacrifices more batting average for more power like **Curtis Granderson** and **Mark Teixeira** did. I big believer this will happen for one reason. He went to

go play in New York for a reason. It's possible the Yankees gave him the biggest offer, but I bet that since he's on the track to becoming a hall of fame player, playing in a park that will inflate his home run numbers certainly doesn't hurt.

I've heard a lot of chatter about how McCann will get more opportunities to DH since he's in the AL, but I'm not buying it. They already have an everyday DH in Alfonso Soriano and Carlos Beltran. I highly doubt both players will spend a lot of time on the bench when they're healthy, which means not that many DH appearances for McCann. Overall, he'll provide borderline top 5-6 catcher value because he'll provide above average power with a lot of RBIs. That said, expect a batting average in the .240-.250 range.

Andrew McCutchen

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Pirates | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (2), NFBC (3)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	572	23	87	89	23/10	.259	.820	.291	18.6%	13.1%	38.1%	42.4%
2012	MLB	25	593	31	107	96	20/12	.327	.953	.375	19.6%	10.4%	31.1%	47.0%
2013	MLB	26	583	21	97	84	27/10	.317	.911	.353	15.0%	11.6%	26.2%	44.0%
Proj.			600	22	94	84	23	.304						

I wasn't a believer in McCutchen last year because his 2012 season benefitted greatly from a BABIP that at the time looked unsustainable. Well last year was the second year in a row he had an insanely high BABIP. The question fantasy owners have to consider is how much weight should be placed on the past two seasons compared to the first three seasons of his career. Obviously the majority of the weight should be placed on the more recent numbers because he's a different player now than three years ago. However, his performance has varied throughout the past two seasons. The table shows the breakdown of the last two seasons by half.

Time	AVG	BABIP
1st 2012	.362	.407
2nd 2012	.289	.338
1st 2013	.302	.335
2nd 2013	.339	.380

In the past two seasons he has had an extremely high BABIP and a relatively normal BABIP (for him). Ideally I would prefer players who more sustained performance throughout the year instead of high variance from month to month. However, this is not Strat-O-Matic and players will naturally have ups and downs throughout the season.

Some rankers rank him as high as three, which is hard to disagree with because of the safety he provides. For example he has three straight years of 20/20 production, he's entering his age 27 season and plays in a weak division. However, there are some concerns. First the lineup is not terribly impressive. **Pedro Alvarez** provides a lot of raw power, but he has a .307 OBP the past two years;

combine that with **Neil Walker** is expected to bat fifth and they're keeping **Gaby Sanchez** as their everyday first baseman. I don't see McCutchen scoring more than 90 runs. The counter argument against that statement was he scored 97 runs with a lot of the players I mentioned. I'll agree that that's true, but I believe Alvarez takes another step back in OBP and if he regresses, the offense looks more below average than average. In terms of power it looks as though he's a 20-25 home run hitter than the 31 he displayed in 2012. I don't mind him going off the board third overall, but it's not a slam dunk.

Jordy Mercer

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Pirates | Position: SS, 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (29), NFBC (29)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	25	62	1	7	5	0/1	.210	.636	.250	20.6%	5.9%	30.4%	50.0%
2013	AAA	26	96	1	11	19	3/1	.333	.852	.392	15.6%	11.0%	-	-
2013	MLB	26	333	8	33	27	3/2	.285	.772	.330	17.0%	6.0%	23.3%	50.4%
Proj.			480	11	65	54	10	.265						

This offseason the Pirates lost offensive firepower in **Justin Morneau** and **Marlon Byrd**, which is probably why they were able to let go **Clint Barmes** who is more of a glove-first shortstop. Mercer is a bat-first shortstop, which fills a bigger hole for the Pirates in 2014. Mercer may have limitations defensively, but offensively he could be a very sneaky fantasy play as he could prove a .270 batting average with 8-14 home runs. He also has average to above-average speed, which means it's possible he could be a sneaky candidate for 10-13 stolen bases next year. I'll admit the stolen base projection is very optimistic but he stole ten in 2009 and nine in 2010. If you're playing in a 12-team mixed league with MI slots, Mercer, although his offensive potential is unspectacular, he has a great chance of providing a profit for your team on draft day.

Devin Mesoraco

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Reds | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (32), NFBC (28)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	50	2	5	6	0/0	.180	.586	.184	18.9%	5.7%	33.3%	48.5%
2012	MLB	24	165	5	17	14	1/1	.212	.640	.234	17.9%	9.2%	29.1%	53.0%
2013	MLB	25	323	9	31	42	0/2	.238	.649	.264	17.3%	6.8%	23.0%	49.2%
Proj.			440	14	43	55	0	.249						

Two years ago Mesoraco was once the 14th rated prospect by Jim Callis at Baseball America (in the Prospect Handbook) and [25th rated prospect](#) for Baseball Prospectus, but has yet to live up to those rankings. A lack of playing time (in 2012) certainly hindered his develop, but last year he got a little more than 55 percent of the playing time and didn't do much with it. With **Ryan Hanigan** being traded to the Devil Rays the starting job is Mesoraco's to lose. Mesoraco has a great mix of power and patience at the plate while at the same time he has shown the ability to make solid contact in bursts. In the last two seasons he has 536 plate appearances and he has a .230 batting average with a .254 BABIP with a 45 percent ground ball rate. The low BABIP could regress in 2014, but I wouldn't expect an enormous jump.

Usually with highly regarded young prospects I tend to believe in the potential the scouting reports even though the player has struggled for the first and second years, especially for catchers because they're learning curve is longer than any other hitter. Therefore, I would not be surprised if he hits .270-plus with 15-20 home runs if he puts it all together. With Hanigan out of the picture Mesoraco will most likely be the fantasy sleeper for a lot of fantasy analysts (including myself), which will drive up his ADP and make him less of a sleeper. He'll most likely finish the year as a top 8-10 catcher and has the raw skill set to be a top five fantasy catcher.

Will Middlebrooks

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Red Sox | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (33), NFBC (16)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	23	267	15	34	54	4/1	.288	.835	.335	24.5%	4.5%	30.4%	47.8%
2013	AAA	24	179	10	25	35	1/0	.268	.790	.288	19.4%	8.2%	-	-
2013	MLB	24	348	17	41	49	3/1	.227	.696	.263	26.2%	5.3%	32.3%	46.4%
Proj.			485	27	66	71	5	.235						

After a brutal start to the season where Middlebrooks had a slash line of .192/.228/.389 with a .221 BABIP (in 203 at-bats) he was sent down to the minor leagues for a little more than a month before rejoining the club in August. Upon his return he had a slash line of .276/.329/.476 with a .320 BABIP. Despite the good second half performance there are still some major holes in his game. First, as any Red Sox fan knows, he's prone to extended hot and cold streaks that can last three, four weeks at a time. Second, he still struggles against right handed pitching. For example, last year he batted .206 against righties and for his career he has a .239 batting average. A big contributor to his inability to hit righties is his inability to hit non-fastballs. For example, he has a .189 batting average against anything not a fastball. In terms of the positives, defensively, he's a plus defender, which is fantasy relevant because he'll provide value with the glove even when during a cold streak. In terms of raw power, its easily plus power. I wouldn't be shocked if he hits 30 home runs if he gets a full season of at-bats. He'll likely never be a .288 hitter again, but he can certainly hit in the .235-.245 range. In terms of a player comp, look no further than **Pedro Alvarez**. As of February 3 he is going as the 11th third baseman in NFBC leagues, ahead of Pablo Sandoval and Brett Lawrie. I was a big believer of Middlebrooks as a deep sleeper when I started writing the fantasy guide, but his ADP is too for me. As the 11th third baseman he's going to have to hit 25 home runs with a .240 batting average in order to provide any sort of profit.

Brad Miller

Bats: L | Age: 24 | Team: Mariners | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (28), NFBC (23)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	23	153	6	27	25	4/3	.294	.850	.333	17.1%	11.4%	-	-
2013	AAA	23	104	6	26	28	2/1	.356	1.022	.373	14.8%	12.3%	-	-
2013	MLB	23	306	8	41	36	5/3	.265	.737	.294	15.5%	7.2%	21.1%	51.3%
Proj.			530	10	85	55	10	.265						

Similar to **Kyle Seager**, Miller was one of the Mariners unheralded prospects who performed well during their rookie seasons. Some fantasy owners may see the eight home runs and believe he could be a dark horse for 15-18 home runs, but that is extremely overly optimistic, especially since he plays in Safeco half the year (only three of his home runs came in Safeco). I would expect 11-13 home runs and take any more as gravy.

In terms of his speed, he's not overly fast, a 50-55 runner with a career stolen base success rate of 71 percent. Miller is expected to bat leadoff and I'll bet the Mariners will try to manufacture offense by being aggressive on the basepaths, which should allow him to steal 8-12 bags. So far I estimate he's a 10/10 player, but let's talk about the other three fantasy categories. If he leads off he'll have an improved lineup batting behind him so it's not entirely crazy to expect 80-90 runs. The bottom of the lineup isn't going to be that good, so he'll probably drive in 50-60 runs. In terms of batting average the question is how much will Safeco suppress his ability to get hits? Seems like any top prospect that goes there struggles immensely and has dramatic home-road splits. He has enough speed to warrant a BABIP in the .300-.310 range which should allow him to beat out a few extra hits. If he can raise his BABIP he could maintain the .265 batting average with a little room for more. I project him to hit .265 with 10 home runs and 10 steals with 75 runs and 55 RBI. That may not seem like a lot, but that's borderline top ten shortstop who you'll likely find at the near the end of your drafts.

Yadier Molina

Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Cardinals | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (1), NFBC (1)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	475	14	55	65	4/5	.305	.814	.311	8.5%	6.4%	30.2%	49.8%
2012	MLB	29	505	22	65	76	12/3	.315	.874	.316	9.8%	8.0%	30.9%	43.5%
2013	MLB	30	505	12	68	80	3/2	.319	.836	.338	10.2%	5.5%	23.3%	44.7%
Proj.			505	13	64	73	3	.308						

There is no question Molina is the best all-around catcher in baseball and last year he was the best fantasy catcher. That said, heading into drafts fantasy owners should proceed with caution before drafting him. First, he had a career high in batting average with runners on base (.360), which unsustainable because since 2008 his career average with runners on base is .316. Therefore, his RBI totals should decrease. Second, his 2013 season benefitted greatly from a strong first half and a poor second half (table below).

Split	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	.341	.875	.361	9.4%	6.3%	7.0%
2nd Half	.280	.765	.295	11.5%	4.2%	9.6%

By looking at the data his BABIP regressed back to his normal career levels. Also, it is important to note the decline could have been due to age. In July he is going to turn 32 years old and historically catchers age faster than other position players. I pulled the slugging percentages of catchers by age since 1980

(table below). When you look at the data you'll notice there seems to be a pretty big drop off during the age 32 season. Overall, I still have Molina ranked very high because he's incredibly consistent, plays for one of the best offenses in the game and most importantly, he will play in 135-plus games.

Age	SLUG
24	.376
25	.388
26	.396
27	.391
28	.397
29	.389
30	.397
31	.388
32	.384
33	.392
34	.385
35	.384

Jesus Montero

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Mariners | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (69), NFBC (68)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	61	4	9	12	0/0	.328	.996	.400	24.6%	10.1%	31.7%	43.9%
2012	MLB	22	515	15	46	62	0/2	.260	.685	.292	17.9%	5.2%	30.5%	45.3%
2013	MLB	23	101	3	6	9	0/1	.208	.590	.231	19.1%	7.3%	29.9%	44.2%
Proj.			400	12	40	50	0	.260						

With **Mike Zunino** likely being the Mariners catcher of the future, Montero will see most of his playing time at the appropriate position of DH. I wouldn't put too much stock in 2013s numbers as it was a small sample size. Instead, I'm encouraged at his career numbers outside of Safeco Park: .287/.358/.444. Those numbers tell me he can hit, maybe not as much as people thought when he was still a prospect though. Now let's look at his road numbers: .226/.272/.341. The offensive skill set is still there and if he can put it all together, he can be a nice draft day value. Lastly, I wanted to mention Montero was suspended (while in the minors) for 50 games for violating baseball's drug policy; I think this has no bearing on his fantasy value, but something that should be noted. He came to spring training 30 pounds overweight and it looks as though he probably will not even make the club.

Miguel Montero**Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (28), NFBC (22)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	493	18	65	86	1/1	.282	.820	.317	17.5%	8.5%	32.4%	44.8%
2012	MLB	28	486	15	65	88	0/0	.286	.829	.362	22.7%	12.7%	32.7%	45.8%
2013	MLB	29	413	11	44	42	0/0	.230	.662	.282	23.2%	10.7%	24.7%	50.3%
Proj.			480	13	59	79	0	.280						

Before 2013 Montero was steady and reliable fantasy catcher who would hit for a solid average, moderate power and a lot of RBIs. However, last year he didn't provide any of those things. Injuries could have played a big role with his down season. He missed a month (from late July to late August) of the season with a [lower back strain](#), which ended up being a bulging disk. In October he had surgery to clean out [an infection in his left index finger](#). It's unclear how long he was bothered, if at all, by the finger or the lower back strain.

Last year his BABIP (.282) was the lowest it's been since 2007, which on the surface, suggests he was unlucky. However, his ground ball rate was the highest of his career and five percentage points higher compared to the year prior. From 2008 to 2012 Montero had a slash line of .283/.377/.439 against fastballs. In 2013 his slash line was .234/.360/.288. I bring this up because he saw a higher percentage of fastballs in 2013 than in 2012 and 2011, which suggests he either lost a tick of bat speed or the injuries piled up and he struggled to catchup to velocity. Overall, the strikeout rate, HR/FB rate and the walk rate were relatively the same as 2012 with the only difference being the career low BABIP and the ground ball rate being uncharacteristically higher than ever before. He'll turn 30 in July, which means he hasn't totally entered the decline phase of his career. I believe he bounces back to the .280 hitter with 15-18 home runs.

Year	Fastball %
2011	45.5%
2012	46.9%
2013	50.0%

Kendrys Morales**Bats: B | Age: 30 | Team: | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (19), NFBC (15)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	27	193	11	29	39	0/1	.290	.833	.296	14.7%	5.7%	28.8%	50.0%
2012	MLB	29	484	22	61	73	0/1	.273	.787	.315	22.2%	5.9%	26.4%	54.9%
2013	MLB	30	602	23	64	80	0/0	.277	.785	.309	17.4%	7.5%	24.2%	51.8%
Proj.			550	22	70	80	0	.275						

Despite playing in two pitcher friendly parks Morales has had OPS' in the .780s with at least 22 home runs in each season. Before the 2013 season I began I was wary about his fantasy potential because he was coming off career highs in strikeout rate (22.2 percent) and ground ball rate (51.2 percent). However, last year the strikeout rate decreased to 17.4 percent, more along his career norms while his walk rate was the highest of his career. Morales is a switch hitter but he doesn't major problem against either lefties or righties, which implies his batting average should continue to be in the .270-ish range. What's most concerning is his isolated power was the lowest of his career. The common assumption is Seattle's ballpark played a big part, but his ISO was .153 on the road and .189 at home. As of February 23 he doesn't have a team to play on, but a move out of Seattle can only help.

Mitch Moreland

Bats: L | Age: 28 | Team: Rangers | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (36), NFBC (23)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	464	16	60	51	2/2	.259	.733	.290	18.0%	7.6%	35.5%	47.1%
2012	MLB	26	327	15	41	50	1/1	.275	.789	.306	19.9%	6.4%	32.6%	47.9%
2013	MLB	27	462	23	60	60	0/0	.232	.736	.255	22.6%	8.7%	31.1%	46.1%
Proj.			420	19	60	65	1	.265						

For two weeks in May Moreland hit seven home runs and he started to look like he was on the cusp to cementing his role as the long term solution for the Rangers at first base. However that quickly dissipated as after May 18th he went on to hit .204/.279/.371 in 355 plate appearances. A .233 BABIP certainly contributed to the poor performance, but striking out nearly 25 percent of the time certainly didn't make things better. The question of Moreland's viability for 2014 is still up in the air as the Rangers need to significantly upgrade their offense and according to Rangers bloggers, Moreland is one of the main reasons why the Rangers offense underperformed in 2013. Moreland doesn't have elite tools, but his HR/FB rates have increased year over year and he still plays half of his games in Texas, an above average (no longer elite) hitter's ballpark. His ultimate upside may be a .270 hitter with maybe 25 home runs if he's given full playing time, which is quite rare for someone you can find in the last couple rounds of your drafts. The addition of **Michael Choice** tells me he's going to get at-bats against lefties, which will likely make Moreland a platoon hitter.

Logan Morrison

Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Mariners | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (27), NFBC (16)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	462	23	54	72	2/1	.247	.797	.265	18.9%	10.3%	28.5%	50.3%
2012	MLB	24	296	11	30	36	1/0	.230	.707	.248	17.4%	9.3%	36.7%	44.7%
2013	MLB	25	293	6	32	36	0/0	.242	.709	.281	16.8%	11.4%	23.6%	52.3%
Proj.			400	13	55	60	0	.240						

Morrison, who was recovering from a second knee surgery, did not take his first at-bat until early June. After the 2012 season I was pegging him as a potential bounce back candidate given his 2011 numbers

and we didn't know how much the balky knee hampered him during the 2012 season. Last year I targeted him as cheap (I play with a FAAB system) candidate for home runs and RBIs, but like in 2012, he disappointed, but it's possible the home ballpark was suppressing his power potential. This is a relatively small sample size, but in 346 plate appearances at home (since 2012) he only has a 5.2 percent HR/FB rate. On the road he has a 15.2 percent HR/FB rate in 321 plate appearances. Also, he has a .341 slugging at home compared to .439 on the road. According to [Stat Corner](#) the Miami ballpark is tied for the third lowest home run park factor of any ballpark the past two seasons (Oakland and San Francisco are the lowest).

The trade to Mariners strangely boosts his offensive potential as the ballpark in Seattle plays more favorably to left handed hitters. With **Corey Hart** slated to be the everyday left fielder, Morrison becomes the everyday first baseman, which bodes well for fantasy value because there will be less tension on the knees. He's only averaged 100 games played the past three years; if he can play in 130-plus games he could hit 20-25 home runs because he has the raw power to do so. Also, Morrison is one of the rare lefties who doesn't have a major platoon split against lefties with a career .244/.329/.379 slash line, which means he doesn't necessarily need to be platooned.

Michael Morse

Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: Giants | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (143), NFBC (99)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	522	31	73	95	2/3	.303	.910	.344	21.9%	6.3%	32.2%	45.5%
2012	MLB	30	406	18	53	62	0/1	.291	.791	.339	22.6%	3.7%	21.5%	56.6%
2013	MLB	31	312	13	34	27	0/0	.215	.651	.254	25.8%	6.2%	29.1%	47.9%
Proj.			400	20	65	65	0	.285						

The biggest roadblock to Morse's fantasy potential has been injuries. In 2012 it was a strained muscle in his back to begin the season, and hand issues towards the end of the year. Last year it was [quad strain](#) that he suffered on May 28 and lingered until June 22 before he was eventually put on the DL. Last year he had a 16 percent HR/FB rate, but from he had a 21.3 percent HR/FB rate.

AT&T Ballpark is a notorious pitchers park, but that mostly stems from its brutality against left handed hitters (if you don't believe me, ask **Brandon Belt**). For right handed pitching the park is neutral, which means Morse's power should not be affected by the ballpark if he's healthy. Also, to go back to his 2010-12 totals, he has a slash line of .296/.345/.516 in 1,298 plate appearances. Morse is an excellent buy low option that I recommend going the extra buck in your drafts to acquire him because if he can stay healthy he'll be one of the best draft day values.

Brandon Moss**Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Athletics | Position: 1B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (13), NFBC (11)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	28	196	15	32	33	4/0	.286	.952	.289	17.9%	9.8%	50.7%	33.6%
2012	MLB	28	265	21	48	52	1/1	.291	.954	.359	30.4%	8.8%	42.8%	36.1%
2013	MLB	29	446	30	73	87	4/2	.256	.859	.301	27.7%	9.9%	38.6%	34.6%
Proj.			500	27	75	85	2	.265						

Before the season I began I complete wrote off Moss' 2012 season as a fluke year that will never happen again and that I would be surprised if Moss would get more than 300 plate appearances for the A's, but obviously I was wrong as he was a borderline top ten first baseman. Moss was able to achieve his .256 batting average in multiple ways. First, the A's platooned him against left handed pitchers (with **Nate Frieman**). Second, his strikeout rate reduced 2.5 percentage points from the prior year. Most importantly, the strikeout rate and swing and miss rate (WHIFF) decreased substantially during the second half of the season (table below).

Splits	AVG	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	wOBA	ISO	WHIFF	K%	BB%
1st Half	.228	.461	.772	.281	.331	.232	33.1%	30.80%	9.60%
2nd Half	.296	.615	.989	.328	.411	.318	28.8%	23.15%	10.35%

Another reason why he performed better during the second half is the percentage of plate appearances against left handed pitchers dropped. In the first half 19 percent of his plate appearances came against lefties while in the second half it was only 14.7 percent. Based on the data I bet he'll continue to get less at-bats against lefties, which will suppress his runs and RBIs, but they'll inflate his batting average. I believe he has room to more than a .256 hitter next year based upon his second half results and the fact the A's are not going to bat him against lefties. Lastly, what's extremely interesting is the swing and miss (WHIFF) rate only decreased three percentage points while the strikeout rate a little more than seven percentage points. That tells me he'll always have a high strikeout rate, but it appears he became more selective at the plate and stopped swinging at "bad" pitches. If he for some reason were to leave Oakland, which is highly unlikely, he would have even more value. Below are his home-road splits the last two seasons (table below). For 2014 I expect 25-30 home runs with 80-plus RBI, 70-plus runs and batting average in the .280 range.

Splits	PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	ISO	HR	RBI	Runs
Home	385	.255	.330	.496	.240	19	58	47
Road	416	.281	.358	.600	.319	32	81	74

Mike Moustakas

Bats: L | Age: 25 | Team: Royals | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (40), NFBC (31)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	338	5	26	30	2/0	.263	.675	.296	14.0%	6.0%	29.9%	48.1%
2012	MLB	23	563	20	69	73	5/2	.242	.708	.274	20.2%	6.4%	40.2%	41.2%
2013	MLB	24	472	12	42	42	2/4	.233	.651	.257	16.1%	6.2%	32.7%	42.6%
Proj.			500	16	63	71	3	.245						

Is it time to call Moustakas a bust? It's possible, but this is a make or break year for him. His batting average and slugging percentages have decreased year over year for three years in a row.

What's strange is for the past two years he's performed above average for one half of a season and bad for the other half. In 2012 he started off really well before falling off a cliff. Last year, he started off extremely poorly and finished fairly well.

Year	Splits	BB%	K%	AVG	OBP	SLG	ISO	BABIP
2012	1st Half	7.00%	19.30%	.268	.327	.490	.221	.293
2012	2nd Half	5.60%	21.30%	.211	.261	.325	.113	.252
2013	1st Half	6.40%	13.00%	.215	.271	.327	.113	.228
2013	2nd Half	6.00%	20.50%	.259	.308	.416	.157	.302

His BABIP is something that can clearly improve, but his approach isn't conducive to a high BABIP. According to [Royals Review](#), "He continues to pop-out an alarming rate; his 16.6% infield fly-ball rate was the lowest of his career, but it was still the fifth-highest infield fly-ball percentage in MLB. It's difficult to sustain a high batting average when you have popped-out almost 1/5 of the time you have made contact during your career." The most promising stats I saw are he is finally hitting home run against non-fastballs. In 2012 he only hit two home runs against non-fastballs; last year it was eight home runs. Overall, he's more of a 15-team mixed league play, but don't sleep on him. This is a player who did hit 20 home runs in 2012 and has the raw power to hit 25 if everything rolls right, which is possible because he's only 25. That said, the Royals acquired **Danny Valencia** and his .329 batting average against lefties, which means he Moustakas could be platooned.

Daniel Murphy

Bats: L | Age: 29 | Team: Mets | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (4), NFBC (3)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	391	6	49	49	5/5	.320	.809	.345	9.9%	5.7%	25.7%	51.5%
2012	MLB	27	571	6	62	65	10/2	.291	.735	.329	13.4%	5.9%	23.8%	53.5%
2013	MLB	28	658	13	92	78	23/3	.286	.733	.315	13.6%	4.6%	29.2%	46.3%
Proj.			590	12	85	75	15	.290						

Rating Murphy as high as I did (13th second baseman) was certainly one of my best calls last year as most fantasy evaluators almost said he wasn't draftable. That said, I would be lying if I saw 23 stolen bases coming. It's a little scary how good of a fantasy season he could have had if he was actually surrounded by a competent offense the entire year. I don't see any reason why cannot replicate last year's season. He's expected to hit second again, in front of **David Wright** and **Curtis Granderson**, who should hopefully a competent number four hitter, which will allow him to score 85-plus runs. In terms of batting average, he had an extremely low batting average at home (.265), which was mainly due a low BABIP of .291. The reason why I say the BABIP was low because he has a .341 career BABIP at home. Murphy can flat out barrel balls and hit a lot of line drives. He can hit both lefties and righties effectively, which makes the batting average more sustainable. In terms of the power, he has a career six percent HR/FB rate, which along the lines of the 6.4 percent rate he had last year. The biggest question is will the steals repeat? If he steals 20-plus again, he's easily a top five second baseman. He never stole a lot of bases in his professional career (minors and majors) and the most he ever had prior to last year was 14 back in 2008. In my projections I'm expecting 15 because of the fact he has stolen more than that once.

Wil Myers

Bats: L | Age: 23 | Team: Rays | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (62), NFBC (64)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	21	388	24	66	79	2/2	.304	.932	.349	22.3%	10.3%	35.2%	47.1%
2013	AAA	22	252	14	44	57	7/1	.286	.876	.335	24.6%	10.0%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	335	13	50	53	5/2	.293	.831	.362	24.4%	8.8%	23.6%	50.2%
Proj.			530	23	72	81	5	.265						

I like Myers. I think he is going to be a really good ballplayer for a long period of time, but let's put the brakes on the hype surrounding him. I'm not surprised by the hype because with instant success of other top prospects (**Mike Trout**, **Bryce Harper**, **Matt Harvey** and **Manny Machado**) have spoiled people into believing prospects can have instant success.

I love his approach at the plate and how he hits to all fields (makes him less susceptible breaking stuff from right handers), but his .293 batting average was fueled by a .362 BABIP. Combine the BABIP with the 47.6 percent ground ball rate, the fact he's not a fast runner and he plays in an extreme pitcher's park indicates the .293 batting average is not likely to be repeated. Another downside with the ground ball rate is it could deflate his power potential. Last year there were 51 players, with at least 350 plate appearances, with a ground ball rate greater than or equal to 47.6 percent. Of those 51 players only three hit more than 20 home runs: **Adam Jones**, **Shin-Soo Choo** and **Michael Cuddyer**. I love Myers's chances of becoming a future all-star, but there are still signs he's not going to put up numbers similar 2013 at this point. If you can draft him in the 33-38 range among outfielders it is definitely worth the gamble, but I suspect the hype surrounding him will grow past the point where there will be any room for profit with an early ADP.

Mike Napoli**Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: Red Sox | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (17), NFBC (12)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	369	30	72	75	4/2	.320	1.046	.344	19.7%	13.4%	38.2%	43.0%
2012	MLB	30	352	24	53	56	1/0	.227	.812	.273	30.0%	13.4%	40.0%	43.7%
2013	MLB	31	498	23	79	92	1/1	.259	.842	.367	32.4%	12.6%	34.6%	40.4%
Proj.			480	23	70	90	1	.240						

In fantasy drafts I prefer (in general) taking younger players on the cusp or in their peak rather than older players who are leaving (or already left) their peak because the likelihood of the older player having a breakout is lower compared to the younger player. Napoli is one of those players I'm pretty sure I will not be owning in 2014, but based on the information below and not because of his age.

Based on that evaluation I was prepared to write off Napoli's numbers because he benefited (in the last three years) playing in extremely beneficial hitting ballparks, but after looking at his career data, he barely benefitted from those ballparks.

Splits	PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG
BOS + TEX	901	.261	.419	.516
Rest	2,330	.258	.391	.497

Last year was the the second year in row where he had a strikeout rate greater than 30 percent. Along with the high strikeout rate his swing and miss rate on fastballs was the highest in his career (32.5 percent), which indicates he may be losing (or has lost) a tick of bat speed. Overall, Napoli is a three outcome player; he either walks, strikes out or hits home runs. Those types of players fine as long as they produce a lot of home runs or a batting average high enough to not be a batting average sink (I'm looking at you **Chris Carter**). As of early February he's going as the 15th first baseman, which is about where I expected him to go when I first wrote his player capsule. 15th is too high for me as I rather take a chance on **Brandon Belt** or **Nick Swisher** who are going after Napoli and still have upside.

Daniel Nava**Bats: B | Age: 31 | Team: Red Sox | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (47), NFBC (44)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	27	161	1	23	26	1/1	.242	.711	.333	24.5%	10.1%	42.0%	42.9%
2012	MLB	29	267	6	38	33	3/0	.243	.742	.295	19.9%	11.7%	35.2%	41.8%
2013	MLB	30	458	12	77	66	0/2	.303	.831	.352	17.4%	9.5%	35.2%	37.1%
Proj.			460	13	78	68	0	.275						

Nava has a weird offensive profile in that he takes a lot of walks (10.3 percent walk rate), but he also strikeouts out a lot (19.4 percent career strikeout rate). Even though he has a career slash line of

.223/.307/.328 against lefties, I'm not sold he should be platooned against them because he hit .252/.311/.336 last year. However, with **Johnny Gomes** and **Mike Napoli** back in the fold means he will most likely be platooned. That said, he can straight up mash right handed pitching with a career .290/.387/.437 slash line. What makes Nava such an interesting fantasy player is he's the front runner to bat second in the lineup, which would provide numerous opportunities to score runs. He has below average power so 15 home runs may be his ceiling, but 40 doubles is certainly achievable, especially in that ballpark.

Derek Norris

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Athletics | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (23), NFBC (24)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	218	9	39	38	5/1	.271	.806	.287	16.7%	8.5%	38.9%	35.7%
2012	MLB	23	209	7	19	34	5/1	.201	.625	.255	28.4%	9.1%	25.8%	45.2%
2013	MLB	24	264	9	41	30	5/0	.246	.754	.301	23.1%	12.0%	27.6%	43.5%
Proj.			350	15	49	43	5	.255						

As I mentioned with **John Jaso**, Norris' playing time will be derived from by the matchups from game-to-game and inning-to-inning next year. Norris is the perfect complement to Jaso as Norris can mash left handed pitching, but struggles against righties. In his career he has a slash line of .280/.361/.496 against lefties compared to a slash line of .173/.271/.270 against righties. Norris may only receive 350 plate appearances, but most (approximately 65 percent) of those appearances will be against lefties, which will essentially make him a **Yan Gomes** type of player with just as much upside.

There is hope for optimism as he was fairly high prospect before being acquired by the A's and last year his walk rate increased three percentage points while his strikeout rate decreased five percentage points, which indicates he's making adjustments at the plate. When the A's acquired Norris in the **Gio Gonzalez** trade Norris' scouting report suggests he has the raw power to hit 15-20 home runs with a solid .240-plus batting average. We all know catchers take longer to develop and this is the type of player you can draft for basically nothing. It is also possible **Stephen Vogt** becomes the primary catcher because he bats left handed and is also another great platoon partner for Norris.

Mike Olt

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Cubs | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	A+	22	240	14	39	42	0/1	.267	.891	.314	24.0%	16.4%	41.0%	47.0%
2012	AA	23	354	28	65	82	4/0	.288	.977	.327	24.0%	14.5%	40.0%	42.6%
2013	AAA	24	361	14	48	40	0/0	.197	.671	.254	30.0%	13.1%	-	-
Proj.			350	11	51	51	0	.245						

In my opinion Olt was the best prospect the Cubs received in the **Matt Garza** deal in July. Therefore, the Cubs want Olt to seize the third base job; I'm sure the Cubs management would be highly disappointed

if **Luis Valbuena** is still playing every day. Last year was a lost year for Olt as he was dealing with eye problems the entire year. Specifically his right eye was [getting dry a lot](#) and he was taking eye drops to remedy it. However, he learned the drops he was taking could cause cancer so he [had to scrap that](#) and find another remedy. As of now there is no remedy, but more should be known once spring training starts. Before 2013 began Olt was seen by the scouting community as an above average everyday third baseman who could hit 20-25 home runs with plus defense with a .250-.260 batting average with a lot of OBP. If Olt can move past the vision problem I like him as a deep sleeper. If I knew Olt was fully healthy, he would be ahead of the **Matt Davidson, Mike Moustakas, David Freese** and **Chris Johnson** type of third baseman. Also, this could be a make or break year for Olt because Javier Baez, one of the best shortstop prospects in the game, is almost ready to be in the majors. Since the Cubs have a shortstop Baez is either going to play third base or shortstop, which means Olt could be the odd man out if he doesn't perform.

David Ortiz

Bats: L | Age: 38 | Team: Red Sox | Position: DH | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (3), NFBC (5)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	35	525	29	84	96	1/1	.309	.953	.321	13.7%	12.9%	35.3%	43.9%
2012	MLB	36	324	23	65	60	0/1	.318	1.026	.316	13.3%	14.6%	36.6%	39.8%
2013	MLB	37	518	30	84	103	4/0	.309	.959	.321	14.7%	12.7%	31.3%	42.5%
Proj.			500	25	79	90	0	.290						

For the past three seasons I've literally wrote off Ortiz as a player that is bound to collapse because of his age and every year he has proven me wrong. There's no doubt Ortiz is an extremely good hitter, but his numbers have benefitted greatly from playing in Fenway Park. The table has home-road splits since 2008.

Splits	AVG	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	wOBA	ISO	K%	BB%
Home	.304	.573	.974	.332	.407	.269	17.76%	13.80%
Away	.261	.493	.846	.269	.356	.231	16.94%	12.51%

The strikeout and walk rates and other hit type rates (ground ball, fly ball and so on) suggest a decline is not likely to happen, but the underlying stats do have some red flags. For example, he only had a 87 percent contact rate on pitches in the strike zone compared to averaging a 90 percent contact rate the past two seasons. That said, he averaged (approximately) 87 percent on those pitches from 2007-10. Having just turned 38 will likely keep his value down heading into drafts yet again, which is a point of view I will likely have heading into drafts because I believe he can't keep this pace forever and the wheels will come off; the only question will the regression be slow or very rapid like what happened to **Paul Konerko**.

Angel Pagan**Bats: B | Age: 32 | Team: Giants | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (86), NFBC (90)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	478	7	68	56	32/7	.262	.694	.285	11.7%	8.3%	36.4%	39.7%
2012	MLB	30	605	8	95	56	29/7	.288	.778	.329	14.7%	7.3%	29.8%	47.1%
2013	MLB	31	280	5	44	30	9/4	.282	.749	.307	11.8%	7.5%	26.3%	47.8%
Proj.			550	7	84	57	25	.285						

Before going on the DL with a [strained left hamstring](#), Pagan was having a poor season with a .262/.314/.374 slash line with only six stolen bases in 204 plate appearances. After returning to the lineup in late August he went on to hit .323/.376/.495 with three stolen bases in 101 plate appearances. From 2010-12 he had the following stolen base totals:

- **2010:** 37
- **2011:** 32
- **2012:** 29

It's possible the hamstring was bothering him before he went on the DL, which caused the lower stolen base output. Other than his stolen base totals I don't see any reason to suspect a decline in skill set; contact rates were the same; strikeout rate decreased three percentage points; the walk rate was the same; swings at pitches outside the strike zone decreased slightly. If he begins the year healthy, he'll bat in the leadoff position and will likely put up a .280/.330/.410 season with 25-30 stolen bases. The biggest is how many runs will he score? If Pagan is healthy he's going to be the Giants leadoff hitter because they do not have anyone else to fulfill that role. Therefore, if he's healthy, expect 90-plus runs. If you're a believer in **Brandon Belt** then Pagan could break the 100 run mark. Lastly, I'll note he has gone on the DL in two of the past four seasons. In 2012 he missed time due to an [strained left oblique](#).

Gerardo Parra**Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (55), NFBC (54)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	445	8	55	46	15/1	.292	.784	.342	16.6%	8.7%	27.5%	51.3%
2012	MLB	25	385	7	58	36	15/9	.273	.727	.323	17.9%	7.7%	23.4%	56.2%
2013	MLB	26	601	10	79	48	10/10	.268	.726	.305	15.1%	7.2%	17.6%	58.8%
Proj.			580	10	75	45	10	.270						

Parra is a "meh" player in that you know what you're getting from him, but the likelihood of him exceeding your expectations is non-existent. His fantasy owners going to get 7-12 home runs with a .260-.270 batting average, 10-15 stolen bases, 70-plus runs and 45-plus RBIs. Despite the reputation of being a fast player he only has a 57 percent stolen base success rate the last two years (25 out of 44). He clearly benefits from playing in Arizona's home ballpark (the table below provide his career stats).

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	HR/FB	K%	BB%	HR	RBI	SB
Home	.293	.347	.444	.344	7.7%	17.2%	7.1%	19	110	18
Away	.263	.315	.363	.311	5.4%	17.1%	6.8%	14	110	28

Based on the info Parra could be a usable fantasy player when he's playing at home. Parra can be very useful in 15-team mixed leagues that allow lineup changes in daily or twice a week so he could be streamed at home. Also, he struggles against left handed pitching with a .236 batting average compared to a .289 batting average against righties.

Dustin Pedroia

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Red Sox | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (5), NFBC (5)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	635	21	102	91	26/8	.307	.861	.325	11.6%	11.8%	30.5%	52.7%
2012	MLB	28	563	15	81	65	20/6	.290	.797	.300	9.6%	7.7%	31.4%	49.6%
2013	MLB	29	641	9	91	84	17/5	.301	.787	.326	10.4%	10.1%	23.9%	55.6%
Proj.			605	12	90	92	13	.295						

Last year Pedroia had the lowest home run and stolen base totals since 2007 (I'm excluding 2010 when he only played 75 games) and in the process disappointing his fantasy owners. When evaluating his power, the first thing I noticed was the substantially lower HR/FB rate. The HR/FB rate at home was relatively the same; 7.6 percent compared last year to an 8.6 percent rate (from 2008-12). The biggest drop off came while on the road with a 2.2 percent HR/FB rate last year compared to a 8.1 percent (from 2008-12). Obviously the road HR/FB rate will positively regress, but there are still warning signs his power may be on the decline. For example, other than his rookie year he had the lowest ISO of his career. Maybe that was due to the home runs? Last year he had the lowest extra base hit percentage of his career (table below). The table also shows that the percentage of base hits were still fairly low even if you remove home runs from the equation. Lastly, his ground ball rate was nearly five percentage points higher compared to 2012 and it was the highest of his career. Those four stats are quite alarming and therefore I conclude his power upside in 2014 is going to be limited. Instead of hitting 15-20 home runs I expect his home run totals to be in the 8-14 range.

Season	PA	Extra Base Hit%	Extra Base Hit% Minus HRs	ISO
2006	98	35.3%	23.5%	.112
2007	581	29.1%	24.2%	.125
2008	726	34.3%	26.3%	.167
2009	714	34.6%	26.5%	.152
2010	351	42.5%	28.7%	.205
2011	731	31.3%	20.5%	.167
2012	623	35.0%	25.8%	.160
2013	724	27.5%	22.8%	.114

Another concern is the stolen bases. Not only has his stolen base totals decreased year over year, his stolen base attempts have decreased as well. To his credit, last year was the most games he's ever played in a season; despite the one year he only played 75 games he's averaged 141 games played since 2007. The road power should definitely improve next year, but how much? The batting average should be about the same, but is there room for improvement? Probably not given the fact he's making weaker contact and is hitting the ball on the ground more than ever. He'll most likely be drafted as the second or third second baseman, but I rather take the upside of a **Jason Kipnis** or wait for a **Howard Kendrick** or **Omar Infante** later in the draft.

Hunter Pence

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Giants | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (8), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	606	22	84	97	8/2	.314	.871	.361	18.6%	8.4%	24.7%	54.8%
2012	MLB	29	617	24	87	104	5/2	.253	.743	.290	21.1%	8.1%	29.3%	55.5%
2013	MLB	30	629	27	91	99	22/3	.283	.822	.308	16.7%	7.6%	25.1%	52.1%
Proj.			610	20	86	90	17	.270						

I was wrong about Pence last year; I over emphasized his poor at-bats in the playoffs and thought they would translate into poor at-bats in 2013. Even though I was wrong about Pence I was correct about AT&T Park suppressing his home runs all the way up until September. In September he caught fire and saved his fantasy season (table below).

Time	AVG	OBP	SLUG	K%	BB%	HR	HR/FB	WHIFF%
April-August	.281	.328	.449	16.3%	6.3%	16	10.6%	23.6%
September	.293	.393	.667	18.8%	13.7%	11	30.6%	28.5%

Prior to September he was good, top 20 outfielder, but if he didn't have an unrealistic increase in his HR/FB rate in September he would not have finished nearly as high on either ESPNs or NFBCs player raters. Let's talk about the positives. He made great strides in his game, reducing his strikeout and swing and miss rates while maintaining his contact rates. He has been incredibly consistent the last six years. For example he has had these home run totals:

- **2008:** 25
- **2009:** 25
- **2010:** 25
- **2011:** 22
- **2012:** 24
- **2013:** 27

Like I said earlier I'm not buying the 27 home runs he hit last year, but he can certainly hit 20 again. Also, do not under estimate his .283 batting average as he was able to achieve that in one of the most pitcher

ballparks in the majors. Overall there are statistical signs of decline, but I can't help but think of **Jason Bay** when I see him play; Bay performed really well until it all came apart during his age 31 season for no apparent reason (it was as his baseball talent was essentially a house of cards that could crumble at any moment). That said, I think he'll be fine for 2014, but will most likely be over drafted, but he's basically an **Alex Gordon** type of player with a little more consistency.

Jhonny Peralta

Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: Cardinals | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (14), NFBC (20)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	525	21	68	86	0/2	.299	.824	.325	16.5%	6.9%	38.8%	40.4%
2012	MLB	30	531	13	58	63	1/2	.239	.689	.275	17.9%	8.4%	36.0%	45.1%
2013	MLB	31	409	11	50	55	3/3	.303	.815	.374	21.9%	7.8%	30.3%	40.5%
Proj.			545	14	67	59	1	.265						

I'm not going to discuss his PED suspension and how it possibly affected his performance in 2013 because I have not seen any evidence showing PEDs improve a player's performance. The biggest stat that stood out was his career highs in batting average (.303) and BABIP (.374). A lot of the BABIP came from his performance against left handed pitching. From 2008-2012 he had a slash line of .235/.318/.412 against lefties, but last year it was .352/.404/.560. Therefore, I expect the reverse platoon split to regress, which should give him a batting average in the .250-.260 range.

Prior to 2013, his suspension year, he has averaged 150 games played the past five seasons and appears to be safe to do so again. Since it's very likely he'll play 150-plus games he should be able to hit 11-15 home runs with room for more. He's will most likely bat in the bottom third of the Cardinals lineup when everyone is healthy so his run and RBI totals will be suppressed. However, he is still going to play in one of the best offenses so I expect the RBI totals in the low 70s and run totals the mid-50s.

Salvador Perez

Bats: R | Age: 23 | Team: Royals | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (9), NFBC (8)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	148	3	20	21	0/0	.331	.834	.362	12.7%	4.4%	27.3%	45.5%
2012	MLB	22	289	11	38	39	0/0	.301	.798	.299	8.9%	3.9%	28.5%	47.8%
2013	MLB	23	496	13	48	79	0/0	.292	.757	.311	12.0%	4.0%	24.1%	52.4%
Proj.			480	18	55	75	0	.293						

Last year I loved Perez as a mid-round sleeper, because he possessed the raw tools and was young enough to make a big jump in performance. He ended up as a borderline top ten catcher, which means he provided a small profit to his fantasy (he was drafted as a bottom top ten catcher). The biggest concern with Perez has been the injury in his short major league career. In 2012 it was torn meniscus and last year it was a concussion and lower leg tightness. There are other red flags. For example, the ground ball rate increased four percentage points, which will make his batting average more dependent

on BABIP and will create fewer home runs. I still believe he has the raw power to hit 17-20 home runs to along with a .290-plus batting average (which would make him a top five catcher), but based on his statistical record expectations must be tempered. At this point he's a safe top ten catcher.

Brandon Phillips

Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: Reds | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (8), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	610	18	94	82	14/9	.300	.810	.322	12.6%	6.5%	29.9%	48.5%
2012	MLB	31	580	18	86	77	15/2	.281	.750	.298	12.7%	4.5%	26.5%	52.4%
2013	MLB	32	606	18	80	103	5/3	.261	.706	.281	14.7%	5.9%	23.9%	50.0%
Proj.			595	17	80	85	4	.265						

For four straight years Phillips has hit 18 home runs. Therefore, he will hit 18 in 2014. End of analysis. All kidding aside, Phillips is a player in decline. For example, he the lowest slugging and isolated power of his career last year. These are fluky in nature because both of those numbers have been declining year over year for three years in a row. Combine that with the fact he's well into his decline years means the smart money says a bounce back in 2014 isn't likely to happen. That said, the Reds don't have a clear number four or number hitter in the lineup (I bet he bats fourth), which means Phillips could once again have inflated baseball card statistics, which will give him pretty good value in 2014. However, there are a lot of variables in play with the Reds lineup. Will **Billy Hamilton** get on-base enough? Who bats second? Will he get on-base enough? Overall, his skills have deteriorated, but he'll still have plenty of opportunities to drive in runs yet again. That said, the number of opportunities will most likely be a lot less with the loss of **Shin-Soo Choo**.

A.J. Pierzynski

Bats: L | Age: 37 | Team: Red Sox | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (12), NFBC (12)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	34	464	8	38	48	0/0	.287	.728	.291	6.6%	4.6%	23.6%	54.5%
2012	MLB	35	479	27	68	77	0/0	.278	.827	.280	15.0%	5.4%	29.2%	45.8%
2013	MLB	36	503	17	48	70	1/1	.272	.722	.288	14.4%	2.1%	28.8%	46.6%
Proj.			470	15	50	65	1	.270						

In the last two seasons Pierzynski has hit 40 home runs, 147 RBIs and a .275 batting average. Obviously the home run totals were fueled by his 2012 numbers, but he still had 17 last year. You probably think his numbers benefitted from playing in Texas, but he was the same hitter on the road and at home (table below).

	AVG	OBP	SLUG
Home	.268	.297	.433
Away	.277	.297	.417

A big reason for this resurgence was due to not hitting on the ground ball as much. From 2009-11 his ground ball and fly ball rates were 46.6 percent and 31.7 percent respectively. In the last two seasons his ground ball and fly ball rates were 39.9 percent and 38.2 percent respectively. That is why I don't believe the power resurgence to be a fluke. I don't believe 27 home runs is ever coming back, but he'll no play in one of the best hitters parks and one of the best lineups so 14 home runs could be his floor. With a career batting average of .283 he'll most likely provide above average production as well (.270-.280). After a "down" 2013 season, he may be a nice pickup late in your drafts especially if you're in a two-catcher league.

Josmil Pinto

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Twins | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	24	386	14	59	68	0/2	.308	.892	.349	15.7%	14.1%	2013	AA
2013	AAA	24	70	1	6	6	0/0	.314	.819	.356	16.0%	2.7%	2013	AAA
2013	MLB	24	76	4	10	12	0/0	.342	.963	.440	26.5%	7.2%	2013	MLB
Proj.			440	13	57	60	0	.270					Proj.	

The scouting report at Baseball Prospectus [suggests](#) Pinto will be an offensive first catcher without much impact on the defensive side of the ball. The scouting report also says he could be a .270 hitter with 15-20 home runs because he has a "good feel for hitting" and has a good approach at the plate; his minor league season last year was .400 (in 126 games). What makes Pinto an intriguing fantasy player is mainly due to **Joe Mauer** is moving to first base permanently. With no other legitimate options in-house (**Kurt Suzuki** does not count as reliable starting catching option any more) and the Twins in the middle of rebuild, Pinto is the front runner to earn the lion share of at-bats. In eight professional seasons, he has only played in more than 100 games played just three times, which is a very misleading stat because the minor league seasons are much shorter than the seasons in majors and he didn't miss time due to major injuries. Also, catchers need (or should) to take more days off limits the number of games he can play. In terms of his 2014 value, I'm confident he'll be able to hit .270-plus, but I don't know about the power actualizing this year so expect 10-15 instead of 15-plus.

Trevor Plouffe

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Twins | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (30), NFBC (23)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	286	8	47	31	3/3	.238	.697	.286	22.2%	7.8%	33.7%	50.5%
2012	MLB	26	422	24	56	55	1/3	.235	.756	.244	19.8%	8.0%	38.6%	43.8%
2013	MLB	27	477	14	44	52	2/1	.254	.701	.301	21.5%	6.5%	30.1%	43.4%
Proj.			390	11	45	45	1	.240						

In 2012 he hit 24 home runs with a .235 batting average. Last year he hit 14 home runs with a .254 batting average. Based on those two seasons it's possible he can hit 24 home runs with a .254 batting

average right? He has plus raw power, but his aggressive approach can cause him to give away at-bats. His biggest problem is he takes his previous at-bats to plate, which means if things are going well, then things will get better, but if he's struggling his poor performance will snowball on him.

With **Miguel Sano**, one of the best third base prospects in game, on the cusp on the majors Plouffe's time at third base may be gone sooner rather than later. The question is when will Sano get the call to the majors? Some believe he'll be in the majors in July, but by looking at his brief performance in double-a, he's going to need more seasoning and may have to wait until September before making it to the majors. If Plouffe struggles to begin the year it will make it more difficult for the Twins to keep Sano in the minors. On the other side of the coin, if Plouffe plays well he could keep the job for the rest of the year. Plouffe likes to swing and he'll always be a low batting average and OBP player, but he does have the raw power to run into 20 home runs if can find a hot streak. My final verdict is Sano comes up in September to get a cup of coffee and will be the everyday third baseman in 2015.

A.J. Pollock

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (65), NFBC (61)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	428	3	65	52	21/8	.318	.780	.353	11.0%	6.8%	23.7%	52.3%
2012	MLB	24	81	2	8	8	1/2	.247	.710	.257	11.8%	9.7%	27.5%	53.6%
2013	MLB	25	443	8	64	38	12/3	.269	.730	.314	17.0%	6.8%	22.8%	52.4%
Proj.			430	9	62	41	14	.265						

Pollock will most likely be the fourth outfielder with **Mark Trumbo**, **Cody Ross** and **Gerardo Parra** entrenched in the outfield. Therefore, his at-bats will most likely be limited. However, Ross could begin the year on the DL, which could leave the door open for Pollock for consistent playing time. Another scenario is **Martin Prado** takes over right field with Ross out and Eric Chavez plays third base. I believe the second scenario is more likely to happen, but either way there is no clear path to sustained playing time for Pollock at the beginning of the year. If he was given full time at-bats his biggest upside would be his speed. He's only two years removed from 36 stolen bases in double-a. That's not to say he is a one dimensional player because he can certainly hit 10-15 home runs, especially in that home ballpark.

Buster Posey

Bats: R | Age: 27 | Team: Giants | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (7), NFBC (5)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	162	4	17	21	3/0	.284	.756	.326	16.2%	9.7%	26.2%	57.9%
2012	MLB	25	530	24	78	103	1/1	.336	.957	.368	15.7%	11.3%	28.1%	49.2%
2013	MLB	26	520	15	61	72	2/1	.294	.821	.312	11.8%	10.1%	26.9%	49.2%
Proj.			525	18	70	85	2	.301						

Last year I said it was crazy for Posey to have an ADP of 18.25 (in NFBC) and 17.3 (in ESPN) because he clearly was not going to hit .385/.456/.649 for an extended period of time again and therefore, not

provide the same value as 2012. Turns out, I was right as he finished seventh and fifth on ESPNs and NFBCs player raters respectively. Hooray! Looking at the baseball cards stats it's easy to see why he finished so low. First of all, he quietly had a really bad second half of the season (table below).

Split	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	.327	.913	.341	11.0%	8.7%	10.3%
2nd Half	.242	.677	.268	15.4%	12.0%	8.2%

For the season, his power numbers and batting average reached career lows. Before 2013, his career HR/FB rate was 15.5 percent, last year it was 9.7 percent. Last year's hit distribution (fly balls, ground balls and line drives) were the same as his career numbers, which leads me to believe his HR/FB rate should regress back to the 13-14 percent range. Another reason why the HR/FB rate should increase is because the percentage of extra base hits (32 percent) was nearly the same as 2012 (35 percent).

Prior to 2013 his career BABIP was .339, but last year it was only .312, which implies he was unlucky last year. However, 2012s .368 BABIP inflates the .339 number. If you look at 2010, 2011 and 2013s BABIPs you'll notice they're all about the same, which implies he was a little unlucky, but not as much as you think. Overall, he'll have a .300-.308 batting average with 17-21 home runs with 80-plus RBIs. Since he'll play 15-20 games at first base means he'll be more likely to play in 145-plus games, which gives him an advantage against other catchers.

Martin Prado

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: D-backs | Position: 3B, OF, 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (12), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	551	13	66	57	4/8	.260	.687	.266	8.8%	5.8%	31.8%	55.4%
2012	MLB	28	617	10	81	70	17/4	.301	.796	.322	10.0%	8.4%	26.5%	51.8%
2013	MLB	29	609	14	70	82	3/5	.282	.750	.288	8.0%	7.1%	21.9%	51.0%
Proj.			550	13	63	75	3	.300						

Last year he had a brutal June (.209/.267/.319), which severely impinged on his fantasy value the first half of the season. However, after the all-star break Prado returned to form and hit .324/.374/.490, salvaging his fantasy season. Overall, though, Prado had a disappointing year as he had the second lowest slugging percentage since becoming an everyday player. His stolen bases decreased from his career outlier 17 last year to five, which is more align with his career norm. There are some positives to take away from last year. The strikeout rate decreased to a career low while his contact rates were the highest they've been since 2007. A lot of times it's an oversimplification to cite BABIP as the reason why last year's overall numbers were down, but I believe that's what happened.

Since Prado doesn't have a lot of stolen base potential and only moderate power (in terms of second basemen), he needs to be a .290-plus hitter in order to have significant fantasy value in shallow formats. He does play in an above average-good hitter's ballpark and his improved approach at the plate makes

me believe he could be a .290-plus hitter in 2014. Overall, other than batting average he does everything well, but nothing that is going to win your league, which means he'll likely be a draft day value. I'm expecting 9-13 home runs with 70/70 runs and RBI. As of early February Prado is expected to bat sixth in the lineup, which is going to suppress his baseball card statistics, but Aaron Hill isn't the beacon of health so it's possible Prado moves to the two hole if Hill is out of the lineup.

Jurickson Profar

Bats: B | Age: 21 | Team: Rangers | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (53), NFBC (38)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	19	480	14	76	62	16/4	.281	.820	.306	14.1%	11.7%	37.3%	47.1%
2013	AAA	20	144	4	27	19	6/1	.278	.807	.310	14.5%	12.7%	-	-
2013	MLB	20	286	6	30	26	2/4	.234	.644	.280	19.4%	8.0%	29.0%	46.3%
Proj.			525	12	60	60	18	.255						

I'm calling 2013 a lost season for Profar as his development was sabotaged from the beginning of his call-up. For example, he has specifically played shortstop his entire career in the minors, but when they called him up he played everywhere besides shortstop. He actually played four games in left field, ten at third base and 32 at second base. It's difficult enough to adjust to the pitching in the majors, but learning new positions with irregular playing on top of all that. You may be saying to yourself **Manny Machado** made the switch to third base after coming up through the minors as a shortstop and he performed really well. That is true, but Machado played third base every day and was afforded the luxury of knowing the third base job was so he could prepare accordingly.

I still believe in Profar as a real life prospect, but most fantasy owners forget the reason why he was ranked so highly among prospect writers had more to do with his defensive ability as a shortstop than offensive profile. According to the 2012 prospect rankings [Baseball Prospectus said](#) he could be a .300 hitter with 20/20 potential at full maturity, which is great. However, he just turned 21 years old and is a long way away from reaching his potential. In terms of 2014 value the second base job belongs to him and I expect him to steal 10-20 bases with 7-12 home runs and a .270 batting average. It's possible he may not steal very many bases because he only 16 in the 2012 season. As of early February he's going as the 15th second baseman off the board in NFBC drafts, which is about right. In mid-February the Rangers shut him down with a [sore shoulder](#). This could be a precaution, but this is something to monitor throughout spring training.

Yasiel Puig**Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Dodgers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (30), NFBC (46)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	A+	21	52	1	10	4	7/4	.327	.830	.372	13.6%	10.2%	11.6%	79.1%
2013	AA	22	147	8	26	37	13/5	.313	.982	.339	17.4%	9.0%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	382	19	66	42	11/8	.319	.925	.383	22.5%	8.3%	21.7%	55.1%
Proj.			550	25	85	85	14	.275						

Puig will be one of the most hyped baseball players heading into 2014 and rightfully so. When I started doing research on Puig I knew about his hot start and how that hot start eventually fizzled, but what I didn't realize was the "fizzled" wasn't as bad as I thought. For example, starting in July he had a .278/.366/.470 with 12 home runs, .338 BABIP and seven stolen bases in 325 plate appearances (including the playoffs).

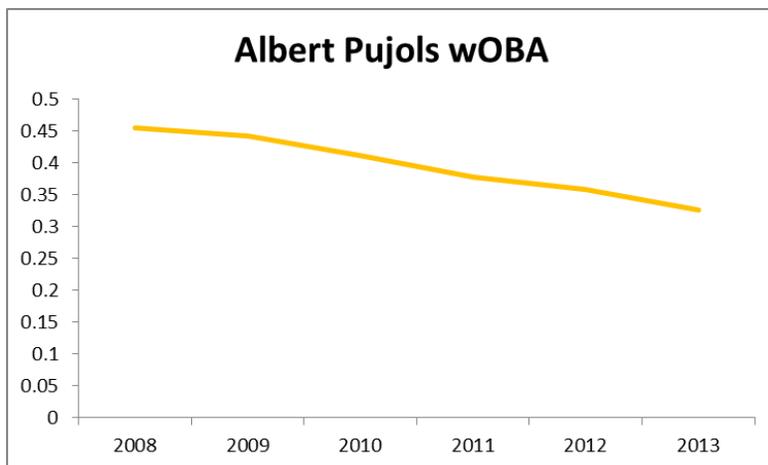
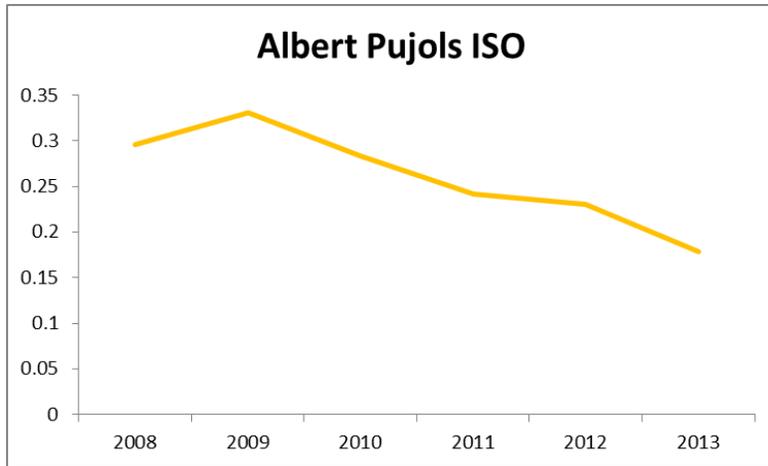
As the season wore on right handed pitchers started to throw more and more fastballs to him, specifically on the inner half. According to the [scouting report](#) from Chris Rodriguez at Baseball Prospectus his power comes when he extends his hands and clears his hips, which makes sense why righties were pitching him inside. In terms of lefties he can straight up mash: .340/.419/.583 in 117 plate appearances. He has huge raw power and could 32-40 home runs as early as 2014. At this point in his development there are ways to get him out if the pitcher executes properly so he may be a 22-28 home run type of player in 2014. In terms of stolen bases he has 70 grade speed (on the 20-80 scouting scale), but he isn't a good base runner, which explains the 55 percent stolen base success rate. For next year he'll probably have a .275 batting average with 25 home runs and 14 stolen bases with 85 runs and RBI.

Albert Pujols**Bats: R | Age: 34 | Team: Angels | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (35), NFBC (22)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	579	37	105	99	9/1	.299	.906	.277	8.9%	9.4%	31.8%	47.7%
2012	MLB	32	607	30	85	105	8/1	.285	.859	.282	11.3%	7.8%	33.6%	45.5%
2013	MLB	33	391	17	49	64	1/1	.258	.767	.258	12.4%	9.0%	32.9%	42.9%
Proj.			550	28	75	100	1	.275						

Last year I predicted Pujols would be a mistake based on where he was going last year in drafts because all the statistics pointed to an even bigger decline in 2013. Last year we saw the continuation of the negative trend in stats and skill set, but he was dealing with plantar fasciitis the entire year, which could have been the sole cause of the down year. The toll the injury took on his game was very apparent as he could barely run for a large portion of the season. Now that he had a [successful surgery](#) he appears likely to be healthy to begin the year. The biggest question is, supposing he is healthy how good will he be?

I believe his prime years are over; the MVP, the top two, three fantasy player in the game are gone because his isolated power, batting average, slugging percentage and wOBA have decreased year over year for the past four years. Don't believe? Check out these images below.



The most disturbing statistical trend is the rise of swings on pitches out of the strike zone. For example, in 2009 it was 22.9 percent, in 2012 it was 36.4 percent and last year it was 34.3 percent. This suggests he's becoming more impatient at the plate. This impatience could be derived from a decrease in bat speed because he's cheating on the fastball and therefore became more susceptible to breaking pitches. Another aspect to consider is Pujols' age. Technically he's 34, but a lot of players in the Dominican have lie before about their age, so it's possible Pujols is older than he says he is. I personally believe he is older because even when he was in late 20s he looked way older.

Let's talk discuss some positives. Suppose we added 16 more singles to his hit total, which would have given him a .306 BABIP for the year (his career BABIP) he would have had a slash line of .299/.365/.478. Suppose he had this slash line last year, how much higher would he rank? (thanks to [Chad Young's article](#) for this idea). I bet most would have him rated higher than the likes of **Eric Hosmer** and **Adrian**

Gonzalez. Don't overlook the fact he is going to have the **Mike Trout** hitting ahead of him, which means there are going to be players on base when he's at bat.

Suppose he played a full year he would have finished the year with 94 RBIs with 25 home runs and 72 runs. On ESPN's Player Rater he would have ranked (approximately) 17th among first baseman, just ahead of **Mike Napoli**. If you're drafting him you're banking on him reverting back to the 2012 player because he'll likely go in the 5th-6th round, which would be a nice profit considering he was the 32nd overall player on ESPN's Player Rater. At the end of the day it comes down to how much you believe his down season was a result of the injury and old age.

Carlos Quentin

Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Padres | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (85), NFBC (86)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	421	24	53	77	1/1	.254	.838	.261	17.4%	7.0%	42.8%	37.0%
2012	MLB	29	284	16	44	46	0/1	.261	.877	.252	12.1%	10.6%	40.9%	39.5%
2013	MLB	30	276	13	42	44	0/0	.275	.855	.297	17.2%	9.7%	34.0%	41.0%
Proj.			400	22	61	74	0	.259						

Can Quentin stay healthy for a full season in the National League? Below are the innings he's played in the outfield the past four years:

- **2010:** 897
- **2011:** 854
- **2012:** 590
- **2013:** 556

Clearly he has an extremely difficult time staying on the field and it looks as though he should be a DH in the American League. Suppose Quentin were to stay healthy for a full season, what would it look like? It's actually pretty easy if you combine the last two years in the majors (table below).

PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR	RBI	SB	R
660	.268	.368	.498	.866	.274	14.5%	10.2%	29	90	0	86

He clearly has fantasy value if he were to play a full year. I don't want the primary focus of his evaluation to be about injury, but that's the only thing holding him back. In September he had his third procedure on his right knee in September and [feels great](#) and expects to be fully healthy heading into spring training. The allure of Quentin becomes him more attractive in 12-15 team leagues because power will become scarce at some point in the draft and players like playing a full year will win you leagues. If you draft him, be prepared to have a backup plan.

Alexei Ramirez**Bats: R | Age: 32 | Team: White Sox | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (6), NFBC (5)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	614	15	81	70	7/5	.269	.727	.288	12.3%	7.5%	28.0%	52.4%
2012	MLB	30	593	9	59	73	20/7	.265	.651	.290	12.4%	2.6%	28.5%	51.2%
2013	MLB	31	637	6	68	48	30/9	.284	.693	.309	10.1%	3.9%	20.2%	55.1%
Proj.			600	6	70	60	21	.270						

For his career Ramirez has a 69 percent stolen base success rate, but he is a better base stealer than that data point suggests. In the last two seasons he has stolen 50 bases and with a 76 percent success rate, but prior to 2012 he only had 47 stolen bases with a 64 percent success rate. In terms of his approach at the plate, Ramirez is a hacker, which is okay (for fantasy purposes) because he makes enough contact to at least be a .265 hitter with an opportunity to hit .290 if he keeps the BABIP monster at bay. Since he's a ground ball hitter he is always going to have bigger fluctuations in his BABIP, which makes forecasting his performance difficult. In terms of the power, he had the lowest fly ball rate and ISO of his career last year so expecting him to return to 15-18 home runs is overly optimistic.

Overall, his floor is a .265 batting average with six home runs with 20 stolen bases. There is room for more stolen bases if he can get base at a higher clip, but since he is a low walk player he is going to have to hit his way to get on base. Therefore, his ability to steal bases will be BABIP dependent. If has an OBP of .287 fantasy owners can expect 20 stolen bases (like he did in 2012). If his OBP is .314 fantasy owners can expect near 30 stolen bases.

Aramis Ramirez**Bats: R | Age: 35 | Team: Brewers | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN 25), NFBC (22)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	33	565	26	80	93	1/1	.306	.871	.308	11.0%	6.9%	34.8%	38.6%
2012	MLB	34	570	27	92	105	9/2	.300	.901	.310	13.0%	7.0%	34.7%	42.5%
2013	MLB	35	304	12	43	49	0/1	.283	.831	.308	15.7%	10.3%	30.8%	45.3%
Proj.			470	20	64	70	1	.280						

2013 was an injury plagued season, going on the DL twice with injuries to his left knee. He basically missed the end of the year with knee surgery, which he suffered during a bench clearing brawl created by his teammate **Carlos Gomez** (on September 25, if you want to see the fight with your MLB.tv account).

Let's get to actual analysis. He is expected to be ready for spring training and should bat in the middle of the Brewers order, probably between **Ryan Braun** and Gomez or **Jonathan Lucroy**, which will allow him an opportunity to increase his baseball card stats if he can stay healthy the entire year. In last year's guide I said, "I have doubts whether he can stay healthy for the entire year; previous to 2012, he's only averaged 126 games played the past four years." Like I said last year, that's a big "if". From everything

I've read suggests his left knee was bothering him all year and it's difficult to estimate how much it affected him, but his ISO was the lowest since 2003 and he hit the most ground balls ever in his career (since 2002). The table below (from BrooksBaseball.net) shows the ISO broken out by pitch category.

Any time I see declines in contact rates or isolated powers from players in their mid-30s all I see are major red flags. In general, players in their mid-30s are well past their prime and have begun (or began) to lose a tick or two of bat speed, which means their upside is limited if even they're fully healthy to begin the year. Depending where he falls in drafts, he could be value, but in general I'm avoiding him.

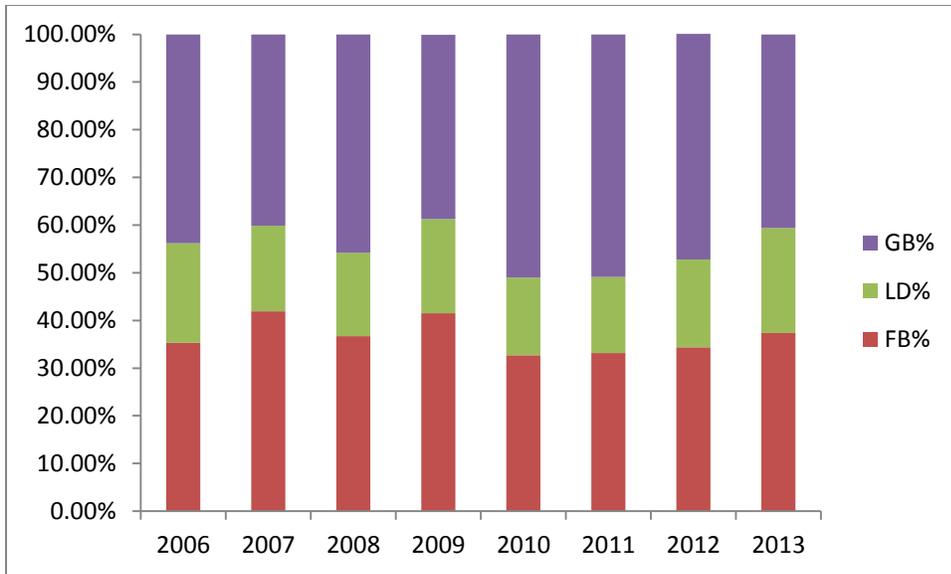
Year	Hard	Breaking	Offspeed
2013	.132	.190	.222
2012	.242	.131	.226
2011	.188	.225	.310
2010	.154	.207	.405
2009	.185	.195	.167
2008	.255	.233	.351
2007	.145	.279	.438

Hanley Ramirez

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Dodgers | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (5), NFBC (11)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	338	10	55	45	20/10	.243	.712	.275	17.1%	11.4%	25.2%	57.2%
2012	MLB	28	604	24	79	92	21/7	.257	.759	.290	19.8%	8.1%	28.6%	51.6%
2013	MLB	29	304	20	62	57	10/2	.345	1.040	.363	15.5%	8.0%	21.8%	45.4%
Proj.			500	20	65	65	17	.280						

Of all the players I've written about, no player screams regression more than Ramirez, but despite that he is being bandied about as a no doubt top ten fantasy player. I frankly do not get it. I believe the industry is inflating a small sample and is chasing last year's statistics. For example, will he have a .363 BABIP and 21.7% HR/FB rate again? Probably not. Before 2013 he had a career 13 percent HR/FB rate, which is far less than 2013s rate. Even his biggest fantasy proponents have to expect some decline next year. The question is, how much will he decline? Last year he had the highest line drive rate of his career (table below) and his ground ball rate was extremely low. The ground ball rate was at the same level as when he was .300-plus hitter.



From 2005 to 2010 his career BABIP was .347, but from 2011-12 his BABIP was .285, which creates doubt what his true BABIP is. Other than BABIP, his contact rates were the best of his career. That said, in 2011 he was beset by a myriad of injuries (foot, back and left shoulder surgery) that limited him to only 95 games. It's impossible to know how much the injuries affected his play, but if you're willing to discount 2011 as an injury riddled year then you're only left with one "bad" year. If you decided to discount 2011, then it's possible the 2012 season could be seen as a fluky poor year in which he was affected by the BABIP monster. I will admit a huge leap of faith is needed to come to that conclusion, but if you're willing to take that leap you could have a top ten talent in the early middle rounds. However, considering his ADP is already of a top ten player leaves little room for error. He has to 25-plus home runs and 20 stolen bases to be worth that pick.

Overall, this is a player who has only averaged 119 games the past four seasons (his 2013 thumb injury was a little fluky because he suffered it [while diving for a baseball in the WBC](#)), had an extremely high HR/FB rate that should regress especially since he plays in a pitcher's park and is now entering his 30s. The upside of a .300 hitter with 20/20 production is still there, but his track record suggests he should be a late second, early third round pick instead of a no doubt top ten pick. Lastly, shortstop is deeper than you think. I have no problem waiting for **Xander Bogaerts** or **Jed Lowrie** much later in drafts.

Wilson Ramos

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Nationals | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (17), NFBC (17)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	389	15	48	52	0/2	.267	.779	.297	17.5%	8.7%	30.7%	53.8%
2012	MLB	24	83	3	11	10	0/0	.265	.752	.306	19.8%	12.5%	20.3%	67.2%
2013	MLB	25	287	16	29	59	0/1	.272	.777	.270	13.9%	5.0%	18.0%	59.4%
Proj.			380	15	49	53	0	.267						

For the last two seasons injuries have limited his ability to play. In 2012 he missed most of the year with a torn ACL. For the first two months of last season Ramos spent majority of the time on the disabled list with two hamstring injuries. The Nationals need Ramos to be their everyday catcher because they do not have any capable starting catchers internally, which means the starting job should be his entering spring training.

In his past 399 plate appearances (2013 + 2012) he has 19 home runs with a 24.4 percent HR/FB rate and 56.3 percent ground ball rate. If you're considering drafting Ramos, the primary reason you're doing so is because of the home run potential. With a ground ball rate that high, I find it hard to believe the power will continue. Last year there were only seven players with at least 300 plate appearances that had a ground ball rate 56 percent or higher. They are as follows: **Everth Cabrera, Ben Revere, Jose Tabata, Norichika Aoki, Jean Segura, Jose Iglesias, Elvis Andrus**. All of those players do not hit for a lot of power, which makes me believe the power potential will not come to fruition in 2014.

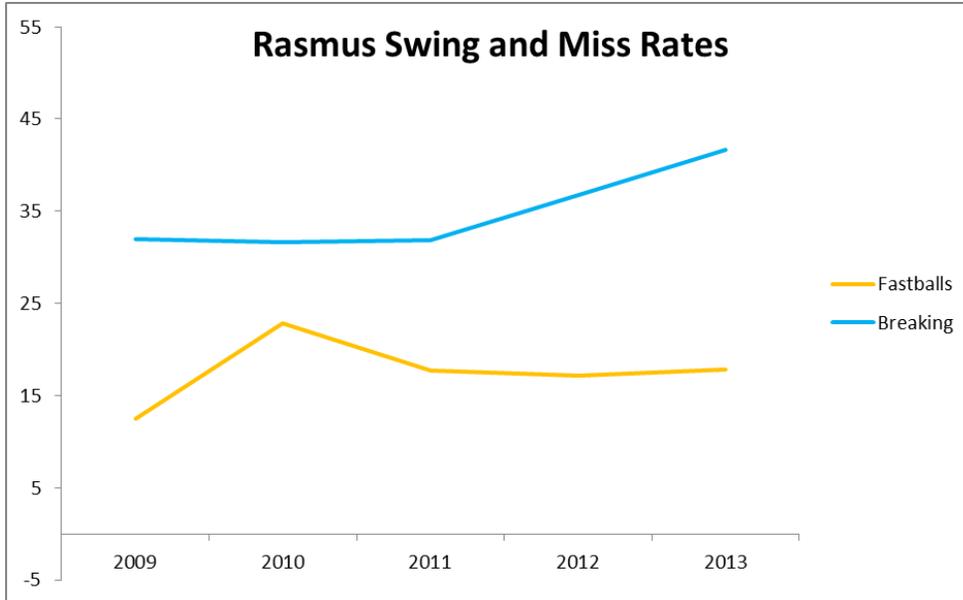
Colby Rasmus

Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (50), NFBC (53)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	471	14	75	53	5/2	.225	.688	.267	22.1%	9.5%	35.4%	43.2%
2012	MLB	25	565	23	75	75	4/3	.223	.689	.259	23.8%	7.5%	35.8%	44.3%
2013	MLB	26	417	22	57	66	0/1	.276	.840	.356	29.5%	8.1%	35.4%	38.1%
Proj.			478	26	75	75	2	.245						

Since his 2010 season Rasmus has been a fantasy sleeper, but every year since then he disappointed fantasy owners so much. Entering drafts last year a large portion of the fantasy community was starting to believe 2010 was a fluky outlier season. However, last year he provided his fantasy owners a borderline top 30 outfielder season when he was on the field; his missed time to an abdominal injury and getting hit in the head with a baseball.

Rasmus has made a major change in his approach at the plate; last year he became a hitter who was constantly looking for fastballs to drive. For example, his swing and miss rates, against righties, have maintained over the years, but against breaking balls they've sky rocketed (image below). Also, it's no surprise his strikeout rate reached an all-time high (29.5 percent).



Rasmus benefitted greatly from a very high and unsustainable BABIP of .356, which is unlikely to sustain itself in 2014. Another reason I'm not buying the increase in batting average is his inability to hit lefties. For his career, in 702 plate appearances, he has a .216/.286/.357 slash line, which means his batting average will depend on his performance against righties. The 25-30 power is legit, but the batting average is going to regress to the .240-.250 range because of his approach at the plate and his inability to hit left handed hitters. Also, he is expected to be a free agent at the end of 2014 and if he can hit 30-plus home runs he will be expecting a bigger pay day, which explains why his approach at the plate changed last year.

Josh Reddick

Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Athletics | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (83), NFBC (58)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	254	7	41	28	1/2	.280	.784	.318	18.0%	6.8%	42.3%	35.4%
2012	MLB	25	611	32	85	85	11/1	.242	.768	.269	22.4%	8.2%	41.2%	35.2%
2013	MLB	26	385	12	54	56	9/2	.226	.686	.255	19.5%	10.4%	29.8%	41.1%
Proj.			580	27	80	82	11	.242						

In early April Reddick [slammed into the fence](#) chasing down a fly ball in Houston. After sustaining the injury, the wrist problem lingered all year, which later caused him to go on the DL twice and to have surgery when the season ended; he [is expected](#) to be healthy and ready for spring training. When he went on the DL the first time Reddick [said](#) the following, "Obviously, it's not helping my swing any. I had trouble getting to that inside pitch with the wrist hurting." I'm willing to give him a mulligan for the entire season because it clearly bothered the entire season; his ground ball rate was the highest of his career and his HR/FB rate decreased five percentage points. Despite the wrist injury he managed to steal nine bases in only 114 games. I never bought into the 32 home runs he hit in 2012, but I'm certainly a

believer he can hit 24-28. If you combine that with the 10-15 stolen bases you'll have a top 35 outfielder that can draft later in the later rounds.

Anthony Rendon

Bats: R | Age: 23 | Team: Nationals | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (34), NFBC (31)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	68	3	14	3	0/0	.162	.673	.163	19.5%	13.4%	42.0%	36.0%
2013	AA	23	116	6	17	24	1/0	.319	1.064	.352	16.4%	19.7%	-	-
2013	MLB	23	351	7	40	35	1/1	.265	.725	.307	17.5%	7.9%	25.2%	44.4%
Proj.			470	14	60	60	2	.265						

In a brief sample in the majors, Rendon held his own with a .265 batting average and 23 doubles; 23 doubles may not sound a lot, but supposing he had 580 at-bats he would have had 38 doubles, which ranks fourth in the majors among second basemen. Every scouting report I've read suggests he has the offensive tools to be a .300-plus hitter with 15-20 home runs. Based on what I've seen on the field suggests he can get there, but maybe entering the 2015 season.

Since college, injuries have been the biggest road block for Rendon. Specifically, ankle injuries. During his entire three year college career he had lingering pain in his right ankle. Shortly after signing with the Nationals, he broke his left ankle. So in total, he has had three serious ankle injuries, which will extremely limit his stolen base totals in 2014. Upon Rendon's call up Nick J. Falteris and Bret Sayre Rendon [said](#) "His advanced pitch identification and elite bat speed allow Rendon to utilize the whole field—a talent that largely drives his impressive hit tool and in-game power utility." I encourage you to read this scouting report to get a better idea of what to expect from Rendon. As of early February he's being drafted around players such as **Neil Walker**, **Kolten Wong** and **Omar Infante**, which is about right considering his injury history. The biggest knock against him when compared to those three players is Rendon is likely to bat eighth in the lineup, which will severely limit the number of at-bats in the season and run and RBI opportunities.

Ben Revere

Bats: L | Age: 25 | Team: Phillies | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (70), NFBC (83)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	450	0	56	30	34/9	.267	.619	.293	8.5%	5.4%	13.5%	72.2%
2012	MLB	24	511	0	70	32	40/9	.294	.675	.325	9.8%	5.2%	14.9%	70.5%
2013	MLB	25	315	0	37	17	22/8	.305	.691	.344	10.7%	4.8%	11.2%	63.4%
Proj.			450	0	79	33	37	.295						

Revere missed half of the season after he broke his foot in mid-July. He is expected to be fully healthy when spring training begins, and should open the year as the Phillies' starting center fielder. Similar to **Michael Bourn**, Revere's fantasy value is derived on one fantasy category (two if you believe in the batting average). Since he missed nearly half of the season to injury it's easy to look at the 22 stolen

bases and think he was on pace for 40-plus. However, if he played a full year (145 games) he only would have stolen 36 bases. Since he'll only be 25 by the time the season starts I was surprised to see his [Speed Score](#) was the lowest it's been since 2011 (6.4). I'm inclined to not put much weight into the score as I would for older speedsters such as Bourn.

Revere had a brutal April, hitting .200 with a .237 BABIP, but the rest of the year he hit .347 with a .384 BABIP. His contact rate remained the same and the ground ball rate did not deviate much from his career norm, which means he'll be BABIP dependent again; also, since he'll be BABIP dependent you have to keep him in your lineup even during a bad month (such as April of 2013) because he should eventually hit his way out of it. If the Phillies lineup can stay healthy and that's a big if, Revere should be able to provide 35-plus stolen bases with 80-plus runs and a .285-plus batting average. Revere is the type of player you should roster if you have two elite power hitters such as **Chris Davis** and **Jose Bautista** because Revere is going to give you a zero in the power department. If you don't have enough power on your roster it's going to be extremely difficult to win because Revere doesn't provide elite level speed like **Everth Cabrera** or **Billy Hamilton**, which means he won't win you a category.

Mark Reynolds

Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Brewers | Position: 3B, 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (23), NFBC (18)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	534	37	84	86	6/4	.221	.806	.266	31.6%	12.1%	42.6%	42.9%
2012	MLB	28	457	23	65	69	1/3	.221	.763	.282	29.6%	13.6%	39.3%	41.5%
2013	MLB	29	445	21	55	67	3/1	.220	.699	.282	30.6%	10.1%	32.8%	45.7%
Proj.			400	22	54	64	37	.220						

For three years in a row, his home run totals have decreased year over year while his batting average has been .220; the days of 30-plus home runs appear to be over. The Brewers signed him to a minor league in mid-January. This probably the best spot Reynolds could have landed because the Brewers do not have a quality first baseman, which means he could find sustained playing time. Overall, he has a lot of swing and miss in his game, but when he makes contact the ball will go far.

Jose Reyes

Bats: B | Age: 30 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (12), NFBC (13)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	537	7	101	44	39/7	.337	.877	.353	7.0%	7.3%	29.3%	47.7%
2012	MLB	29	642	11	86	57	40/11	.287	.780	.298	7.8%	8.8%	25.7%	51.2%
2013	MLB	30	382	10	58	37	15/6	.296	.780	.315	11.2%	8.1%	22.6%	52.8%
Proj.			520	13	80	50	25	.285						

Reyes missed two months of the season with a severe, fluke ankle injury, but when he came back (in the middle of June) he didn't miss a beat the rest of the season. The biggest worry I have going into drafts is how many stolen bases will Reyes steal in 2014? After his return to the DL he only had ten stolen bases

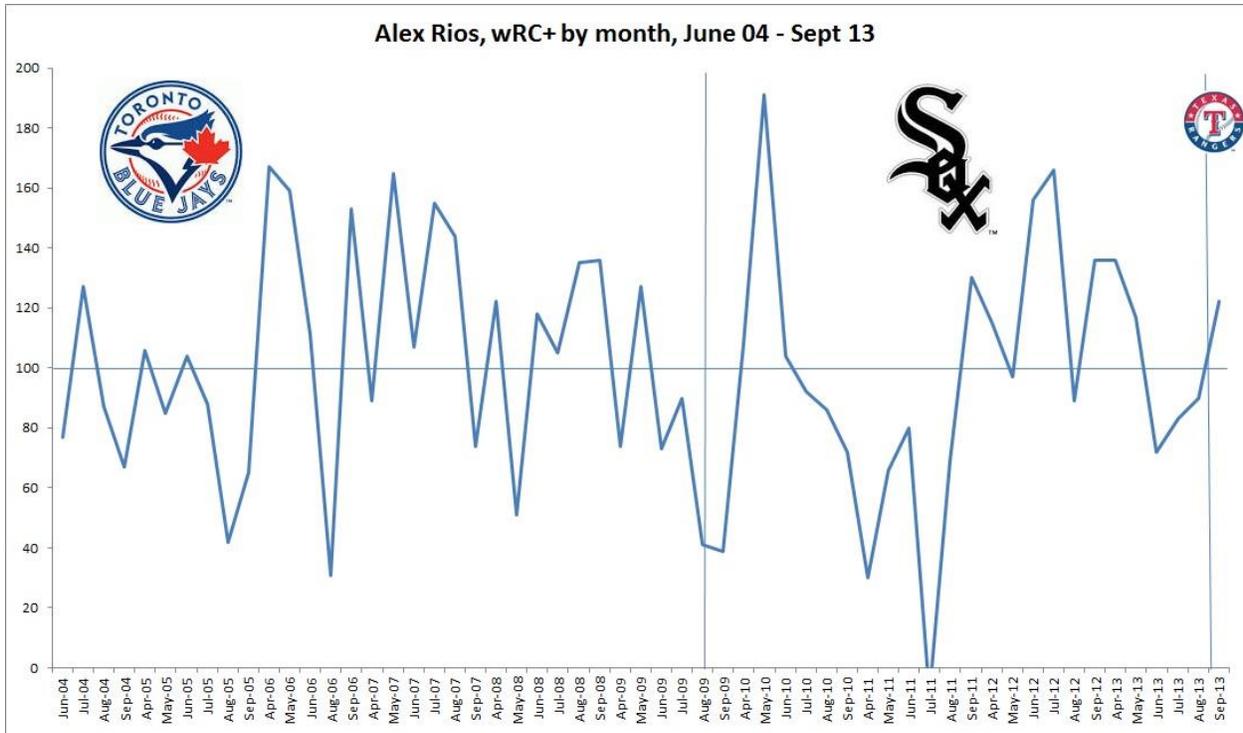
(in 83 games) and proceeded to have a stolen base success rate of 62.5 percent, by far the lowest of his career. In terms of power there are conflicting trends. The positive trend is he hit seven of his ten home runs at home with a 10.9 percent HR/FB rate, which is the highest rate of his career (*small sample caveat). On the downside his ISO has been in decline since 2011 and last year it was the lowest it's been since 2005, when he was 22 years old. Last year was the first year in his career (as of 2008) that he struggled against fastballs. For example, he had a 10.2 swing and miss rate and 7.9 percent strikeout rate. From 2008-12 his swing and miss rate was 6.9 percent and strikeout rate was only 6.1 percent. Overall, I have questions about his ability to play 140-plus games as he has only exceeded that threshold once in the past four years. I also have concerns about how many stolen bases he's going to steal. It's possible he steals 35-plus again, but since he didn't attempt many bases after coming from the DL worries me. If he can play 140-plus games he'll have a .285-plus batting average with average power and 85-plus runs.

Alex Rios

Bats: R | Age: 33 | Team: Rangers | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (7), NFBC (5)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	537	13	64	44	11/6	.227	.613	.237	11.9%	4.7%	30.0%	48.8%
2012	MLB	31	605	25	93	91	23/6	.304	.850	.323	14.4%	4.1%	32.2%	44.0%
2013	MLB	32	616	18	83	81	42/7	.278	.756	.311	16.3%	6.2%	26.6%	48.1%
Proj.			580	17	85	85	30	.270						

How lucky do you feel? That's the question you have to ask yourself when you're deciding whether or not to roster Rios. If you've played fantasy for more than four years you know all too well how Jekyll and Hyde Rios can be from year to year. Blake Murphy wonderfully [showed the peaks and valleys](#) of his performance since 2004 via the wRC+ (runs per plate appearance scaled where 100 is average) statistic (image below).



Last year he had the most stolen bases of his career (41) and he didn't slow down after being acquired by the Rangers. The Rangers were not afraid to steal bases as evidenced by the fact they led the majors in stolen base attempts. In three of the last four years he has had BABIPs .306 or higher while maintaining his walk, contact and strikeout rates. Basically, when evaluating Rios you have two options (in general): A) heavily weight the past three seasons, which means he's a top ten outfielder or B) you take into account he could literally fall apart and provide a negative ROI, which he's done in the past several times before. The deeper the league the less likely I'm willing to buy; odds are there will be a fantasy owner that will pay full value for Rios, which means you probably will not have to make the tough decision on draft day.

Anthony Rizzo

Bats: L | Age: 24 | Team: Cubs | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (27), NFBC (16)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	128	1	9	9	2/1	.141	.523	.210	30.1%	13.7%	39.0%	44.2%
2012	MLB	22	337	15	44	48	3/2	.285	.805	.310	16.8%	7.3%	25.6%	49.6%
2013	MLB	23	606	23	71	80	6/5	.233	.742	.258	18.4%	11.0%	28.2%	46.1%
Proj.			600	23	75	90	4	.270						

The biggest difference in Rizzo's advanced peripherals was his BABIP; in 2012 it was .310 and last year it was .258. With a limited sample size in the majors it's difficult to judge what his true BABIP should be. Based on his contact rates in the minors and in 2012, he profiles as someone who should have a normal

BABIP in the .290-.300 range. If that is indeed true, then his .258 BABIP seems insanely low and should improve in 2014. He has struggled against lefties the past two seasons. For example, he has a slash line of .196/.269/.347. However, in his last two years in triple-a (in 184 plate appearances) he has a slash line of .309/.382/.558 against lefties. Obviously we're working with a small sample size (both in the majors and minors) and the quality of pitching could be a question too, but at least he's shown the ability to handle lefties, which provides optimism for 2014.

Let's talk about the positives. His isolated power increased from .178 to .186, which was mainly due to hitting more doubles. Based on his scouting reports as prospect it's possible more of those doubles turn into home runs because he has the raw power to hit 25-plus. His walk rate increased three percentage points, but what's more impressive is the reduction in swing rate on pitches outside the strike zone (6.5 percentage points to 27.5 percent).

His down season could make him a draft day bargain. When young players struggle and there's a small sample size I put more weight on the scouting reports when he was a prospect. Specifically, I look at the raw tools because a wise scout one said, "always bet on the tools." I question if a bounce back is possible I always look at the raw tools because when in doubt always bet on tools. Rizzo has the tools to become an all-star type of player if everything rolls right. That's enough for me.

Jimmy Rollins

Bats: B | Age: 35 | Team: Phillies | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (16), NFBC (12)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	567	16	87	63	30/8	.268	.736	.275	9.4%	9.2%	33.7%	43.6%
2012	MLB	33	632	23	102	68	30/5	.250	.743	.262	13.7%	8.9%	31.8%	46.4%
2013	MLB	34	600	6	65	39	22/6	.252	.667	.288	14.0%	8.9%	26.8%	43.0%
Proj.			600	8	68	51	17	.240						

Rollins had the lowest home run total and ISO of his career with six and .097 respectively. He got a little unlucky with the HR/FB rate, but I wouldn't expect more than 12 next year because of his age. Since 2010 he's a .254/.323/.389 hitter. It appears he has lost a tick or two of bat speed as he struggled against fastballs on the inner half of the plate (from the left side). Therefore, it's no surprise he had a .207/.319/.276 slash line against righties last year. In order to be a relevant fantasy player in shallow leagues he is going to have to have 22-plus stolen bases again, which I highly doubt is going to happen.

Wilin Rosario**Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: Rockies | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (2), NFBC (3)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	54	3	6	8	0/0	.204	.691	.250	35.1%	3.5%	39.4%	42.4%
2012	MLB	23	396	28	67	71	4/5	.270	.843	.289	23.2%	5.9%	32.3%	49.5%
2013	MLB	24	449	21	63	79	4/1	.292	.801	.344	23.4%	3.2%	26.6%	44.3%
Proj.			460	22	67	77	4	.279						

Rosario was only limited to 121 games last year because he missed three weeks with a [calf strain](#) in September. If you combine the injury concerns with playing the catcher position and the fact he's a below average defender begs the question, "how much longer will (or can) he stay at the catcher position?" Since he only played four games at first base last year suggest the Rockies are still going to play him primarily at catcher. From a fantasy perspective the ideal situation is his workload mirrors what the Indians are doing with the Carlos Santana, spending half of the time at first base/DH.

It's a force of habit to review the home-road splits of any Rockies player before I start their evaluation. The table below shows his home-road splits the past two seasons. It looks as though a lot of his numbers are benefiting from playing in Coors.

Splits	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	.293	.884	.313	19.5%	6.6%	21.2%
Away	.268	.755	.325	27.3%	3.4%	19.1%

Other than his dramatic home-road splits, the statistic that jumped out to me was the decrease in HR/FB rate. For example, the HR/FB rate decreased eight percentage points, but there is hope for optimism. First, his road HR/FB rates were identical the past two years (19 percent). Last year his HR/FB rate at home was only 14.5 percent and in 2012 it was 28 percent. I believe he hits for more power at home next year, which means he should hit 25-plus home runs in 2014. It looks as though his .292 batting average was fueled by a .344 BABIP. You may be thinking the BABIP was derived from his home ballpark, but in fact it was inflated while on the road as he had a .360 BABIP. I bet his batting average regresses back to the .270ish range rather than the 290s. Also, do not overlook his stolen base potential as he has stolen four the past two seasons.

Cody Ross**Bats: R | Age: 33 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (98), NFBC (96)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	405	14	54	52	5/2	.240	.730	.279	20.8%	10.6%	40.4%	40.4%
2012	MLB	31	476	22	70	81	2/3	.267	.807	.317	24.4%	8.0%	40.9%	39.0%
2013	MLB	32	317	8	33	38	3/2	.278	.745	.303	14.2%	7.1%	26.7%	48.6%
Proj.			425	14	63	57	2	.255						

After a slew of injuries in 2013 (calf and hip) Ross' season ended in August when he had hip surgery. The recovery from the surgery is expected to sideline him until the middle of spring, which means he [could begin the 2014 season the DL](#). He made tremendous strides at the plate as his strikeout rate and swing and miss rate dropped ten and eight percentage points respectively. It's possible the injuries to his lower half sapped his power, which caused him to have the lowest HR/FB rate of his career. If he were to play a full year he could hit 20-plus home runs with a .250-.265 batting average, but his upside is limited because of the injury concerns and the fact he turned 33 in December. Also, he should be more of a platoon player against righties because he's a lifetime .250 hitter against them, but a .297 hitter against lefties. Lastly, with the additions of **Mark Trumbo** probably pushes Ross to the lower third of the batting order, which will limit his RBI and run opportunities.

Carlos Ruiz

Bats: R | Age: 35 | Team: Phillies | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (26), NFBC (30)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	410	6	49	40	1/0	.283	.754	.308	10.2%	10.2%	30.7%	47.0%
2012	MLB	33	372	16	56	68	4/0	.325	.935	.339	11.9%	6.9%	30.4%	46.3%
2013	MLB	34	310	5	30	37	1/0	.268	.688	.291	11.4%	5.3%	22.5%	52.7%
Proj.			370	6	50	45	1	.270						

When evaluating Ruiz's fantasy value for 2014 do not let the fluky 2012 season dramatically influence your analysis. If you remove the 2012 season, the most home runs he's had in his career is nine (in 2009). Keith Law wrote [in his piece](#), after he received his three-year \$26 million contract, that "right handers blew him up" last year with a .257/.301/.355 slash line. However, a .287 BABIP could have been the cause for the poor performance. For his career against righties he has a .274/.354/.404 and a .276/.369/.435 slash line against lefties. For his career his biggest upside from a fantasy perspective has been his ability to play 130-plus games with an above average batting average. However, he'll begin the year at the age of 35 and Keith Law also stated, "Just 70 catchers have reached 400 plate appearances in a season in which they were 34 or older." He's only rosterable in only the deepest of leagues.

Jarrod Saltalamacchia

Bats: B | Age: 28 | Team: Marlins | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (10), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	358	16	52	56	1/0	.235	.737	.304	30.8%	6.2%	41.7%	36.7%
2012	MLB	27	405	25	55	59	0/1	.222	.742	.265	31.0%	8.5%	45.0%	35.1%
2013	MLB	28	425	14	68	65	4/1	.273	.804	.372	29.6%	9.1%	32.8%	36.5%
Proj.			400	15	47	53	1	.230						

His 2012 HR/FB rate of 19.5 percent decreased back to normal levels in 2013 (11.6 percent) and it is no surprise his home run totals also decreased. The most glaring number is the .372 BABIP. Initially I thought it was driven as a function of Fenway Park, but he had a .360 BABIP on the road, which screams

regression. What could have caused the higher BABIP? Maybe he was hitting the ball better against left handed pitchers? No, only a marginal improvement. Maybe he was hitting more balls against the Green Monster? No. Maybe he improved against breaking stuff? No. Fastballs? No. Did his swing and miss rates decrease? No. Did the contact rates increase? Yes, only two percentage points. Basically, his batting average appears to be a fluke and fantasy owners should expect a .220-235 batting average especially in the spacious confines of Sun Life Stadium.

Hector Sanchez

Bats: B | Age: 24 | Team: Giants | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (51), NFBC (53)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2013	AAA	23	85	3	10	11	0/0	.271	.787	.294	15.2%	12.1%	-	-
2012	MLB	22	218	3	22	34	0/0	.280	.685	.349	22.9%	2.2%	31.3%	46.3%
2013	MLB	23	129	3	8	19	0/0	.248	.649	.296	20.7%	5.0%	30.3%	45.5%
Proj.			240	6	30	25	0	.275						

In my initial catchers rankings I said Sanchez could be a top 10-12 catcher if he were to become the everyday catcher, which, after looking back is too bullish. In hindsight I should have said 11-15 catcher with full playing time. At the beginning of the 2011 season Sanchez was in high-a and by the end of the year he was in the majors holding his own. In 401 career plate appearances he has a slash line of .267/.299/.370 with six home runs. What I like about his skill set is he makes consistent contact and has solid gap power, which is perfect for AT&T Park. With **Buster Posey** averaging nearly 118 games played at catcher the past seasons Sanchez will only get enough at-bats to be someone worth remembering in the back of your mind if Posey were to miss an extended period of time.

Pablo Sandoval

Bats: B | Age: 27 | Team: Sandoval | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (15), NFBC (12)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	426	23	55	70	2/4	.315	.909	.320	13.5%	6.9%	33.8%	46.2%
2012	MLB	25	396	12	59	63	1/1	.283	.789	.301	13.3%	8.6%	30.9%	46.8%
2013	MLB	26	525	14	52	79	0/0	.278	.758	.301	13.5%	8.0%	26.2%	45.7%
Proj.			500	22	70	80	0	.282						

In most cases its cheap analysis to say (about any player), “this is a contract year and this offseason he’s going to motivate himself to get in the greatest shape of his life.” However, when it comes to Sandoval and his continuous lack of [#want](#) for not being in shape and being ready to play every day, this is especially important. There’s no doubt in my mind and Giants management, which is pure speculation on my part, his poor conditioning has contributed to his inability to maximize his true talent, which makes it more difficult to evaluate his career numbers. I’ve had the opportunity to meet Sandoval in a social setting and living in San Francisco affords me the opportunity to read about [his shenanigans](#) in the local media. This is a player who values partying more than playing the game, but with free agency

looming I'm very confident this offseason he will get in the best shape of his life and put his best foot forward to having the best year he can possibly have.

Other than missing 14 games with a [strained left foot](#) Sandoval has healthy the whole year. In terms of statistical analysis, last year he had the lowest ISO of his career against fastballs (.136) and on fly balls (.327). The lack of hard contact led to the lowest batting average on fly balls in his career. The table breaks below down his performance on fly balls since 2009 (green cells) opposed to his overall numbers (blue cells).

Year	Fly Balls			Overall			
	AVG	ISO	BABIP	AVG	ISO	BABIP	HR
2013	.210	.327	.135	.278	.139	.301	14
2012	.230	.393	.148	.283	.164	.301	12
2011	.252	.583	.099	.315	.237	.320	23
2010	.280	.341	.218	.268	.140	.291	13
2009	.282	.529	.157	.330	.226	.350	25

You'll notice in two of the five years he has isolated power greater than .500. In those two years is when he hit 20-plus home runs. It's also no surprise he had his two best batting average seasons when he was making hard contact. I believe the lack of hard contact was primarily due to a lack of conditioning and I have to bet he'll be in the best shape of his life (yes, another cliché) when he arrives at spring training. Therefore, I bet he hits 20-25 home runs with a .280-.290 batting average.

Carlos Santana

Bats: B | Age: 27 | Team: Indians | Position: C, 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (6), NFBC (4)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	552	27	84	79	5/3	.239	.808	.263	20.2%	14.7%	33.3%	50.1%
2012	MLB	26	507	18	72	76	3/5	.252	.785	.278	16.6%	14.9%	31.6%	48.7%
2013	MLB	27	541	20	75	74	3/1	.268	.832	.301	17.1%	14.5%	24.9%	48.1%
Proj.			540	20	80	86	3	.265						

For the past three-plus years Santana has been a fairly stable fantasy player. In the past three years he's averaged the following seasonal output:

AVG	HR	RBI	R	SB
.253	22	77	77	3

His batting average may not overtly spectacular, but in the modern era where strikeout rates are at an all-time and batting averages not being this low since 1972, a .253 batting average is the equivalent to a .270 batting average ten years ago.

In 2012 he was dealing with concussion and back troubles during the months of May and June. During the other months of the season Santana was really good. The table below breaks down his performance by when he was healthy and not healthy (May and June) in 2012.

Splits	AVG	OBP	SLUG	HR
Healthy	.275	.467	.479	16
Not Healthy	.203	.301	.291	2

Slicing and dicing small numbers in this manner usually weakens the strength of the narrative the author is providing, but I wanted to show how his numbers could be when he's healthy and when he is not dealing with the rigors of catching.

Based on his offensive upside it's no wonder why Santana played the fewest number of games at catcher (84) in his career last year. Anyone who has seen Santana play defense at catcher knows he's a below average defender, which is another reason why the Indians appear to be slowly moving him off the position. Also, there's statistical data that shows he's a better hitter when he's not behind the dish. The table below provides his career offensive stats by defensive position played.

Split	PA	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
as C	1,295	.246	.365	.436	.801
as 1B	461	.267	.373	.492	.865
as DH	336	.263	.360	.412	.772

You might look at last year's 74 RBI and 75 runs and believe those numbers are not overly spectacular and there is not much room for upside. However, it's important to note he spent the first four months of the year batting sixth in the batting order instead of third or fourth. For some reason **Terry Francona**, the 2013 AL manager of the year, decided to put **Asdrubal Cabrera's** .299 OBP atop the batting order instead Santana's .377 OBP. During the middle of August Francona wised up and moved Santana to the fourth spot and kept him there the rest of the season and in the playoffs.

Overall, he should be a fairly consistent performer with room for improvement in batting average if he plays even fewer games at catcher. The home run power is legitimate and fantasy owners should expect 18-plus. In terms of batting average I expect the range to be .255-.265 with room for more. Also, if **Michael Bourn** can revert back to the 2011-12 version of himself when he had OBPs of .380s, Santana could drive in 100 RBIs.

Michael Saunders**Bats: L | Age: 27 | Team: Mariners | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (74), NFBC (55)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	161	2	16	8	6/2	.149	.424	.212	31.3%	6.7%	36.4%	44.4%
2012	MLB	25	507	19	71	57	21/4	.247	.738	.297	23.9%	7.8%	28.6%	51.4%
2013	MLB	26	406	12	59	46	13/5	.236	.720	.298	25.2%	11.5%	28.0%	45.2%
Proj.			450	15	65	52	17	.239						

In 2012 Saunders was one home run away from joining the 20/20 club and it was that fact that made him a sneaky sleeper for 2013. Last year he went on the DL in early April with a [shoulder strain](#). Obviously he fell well short of 20/20 so what happened? The 15 percent HR/FB rate regressed to 11.3 percent while the number of stolen base opportunities decreased as well. In terms of the HR/FB rate it's possible Seattle's ballpark is dampening his numbers, but the difference between his home-road splits are not overwhelming (table below).

Splits	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	ISO	K%	BB%	HR/FB
Home	.215	.284	.343	.627	.273	.128	26.2%	8.8%	9.8%
Road	.233	.305	.402	.707	.294	.169	25.8%	9.3%	11.4%

With a career 26 percent strikeout rate and no discernable platoon split to boost his batting average, he'll always be a low batting average player. However, he did make strides with his approach as he increased his walk rate four percentage points. Also, his swing rated, on pitches outside the strike zone, dropped seven percentage points from 30 percent to 22 percent. To put 22 percent into perspective, that's the same rate **Shin-Soo Choo** had. At the end of the day, Saunders will most likely be platooned against lefties, but there are signs he could repeat his 2012 season, which makes him a sneaky play in deep mixed leagues.

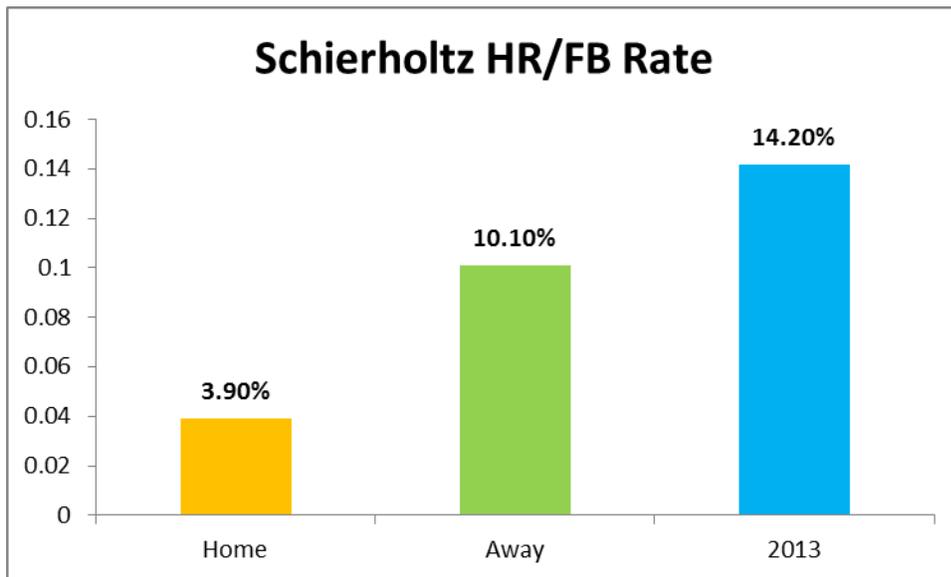
Nate Schierholtz**Bats: R | Age: 30 | Team: Cubs | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (56), NFBC (51)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	335	9	42	41	7/4	.278	.756	.315	16.9%	5.8%	33.1%	44.9%
2012	MLB	28	241	6	20	21	3/2	.257	.728	.292	17.1%	8.6%	27.5%	50.0%
2013	MLB	29	462	21	56	68	6/3	.251	.770	.270	18.7%	5.8%	30.4%	44.2%
Proj.			490	20	64	78	5	.255						

In the last six seasons Schierholtz has had 1,775 plate appearances and 81 percent of those at-bats have come against right handed pitchers. For most of his career teams have platooned him against left handed pitching, which I don't understand (table below).

Split	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP
vs L	.265	.315	.367	.323
vs R	.265	.314	.438	.294

It's to assume the home run totals he put up last year will not repeat itself because he had a career high 14.2 percent HR/FB rate, but don't forget he played the vast majority of his career in San Francisco, which is extremely brutal for left handed power. If you don't believe me, ask **Brandon Belt** what he thinks. From 2008 to 2012 he has a career 3.9 percent HR/FB rate at home compared to a 10.1 percent HR/FB rate on the road (image below). Based on that information it looks as though last year's HR/FB rate is not as high as previously thought.



The Cubs are not going to be good next year, which has its fantasy benefits for Schierholtz because he's going to bat fourth in the lineup. If you believe **Starlin Castro** and **Anthony Rizzo** will bounce back then you have to love Schierholtz. Another trend I like is he had a career high fly ball rate, which was five percentage points higher than his career norm, which provides more evidence his career year was not a fluke. The one big reservation about Schierholtz's fantasy value was the Cubs signing of **Justin Ruggiano**, who could vulture at-bats, especially against left handed pitchers with his .506 slugging percentage. Since the Cubs are going to be bad I bet **Junior Lake** will get an opportunity to play every day because he's young and could be a part of the Cubs future, which means either **Ryan Sweeney** or Schierholtz will lose at-bats. I'm inclined to believe Sweeney would lose at-bats, but it's something to monitor.

Marco Scutaro**Bats: R | Age: 38 | Team: Giants | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (22), NFBC (22)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	35	395	7	59	54	4/2	.299	.781	.312	8.1%	8.5%	30.3%	51.2%
2012	MLB	36	620	7	87	74	9/4	.306	.753	.319	7.2%	5.9%	29.8%	45.7%
2013	MLB	37	488	2	57	31	2/0	.297	.726	.314	6.2%	8.2%	21.5%	54.1%
Proj.			520	3	75	50	2	.290						

Scutaro can definitely make just as much contact as any other hitter in the majors. However, since his only plus asset (for fantasy owners) is batting average makes him a huge liability for anyone looking to roster him. His low RBI totals were extremely fluky as he was batting second in the Giants order he should have had more RBI opportunities; I expect him to drive in 60-65 RBI next year. What was the most surprising was he only scored 57 runs despite having a .357 OBP. The run totals should increase if **Buster Posey**, **Hunter Pence** and **Brandon Belt** to continue to improve and **Pablo Sandoval** reverts back to the talent he was two years ago. Scutaro shows no signs of aging, but he turned 38 in October and is more likely to get worse than get better.

Kyle Seager**Bats: L | Age: 26 | Team: Mariners | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (12), NFBC (8)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	182	3	22	13	3/1	.258	.691	.303	17.9%	6.5%	39.1%	35.5%
2012	MLB	24	594	20	62	86	13/5	.259	.738	.286	16.9%	7.1%	37.0%	38.8%
2013	MLB	25	615	22	79	69	9/3	.260	.764	.290	17.6%	9.8%	31.6%	40.0%
Proj.			600	22	90	70	8	.273						

I love **Kyle Seager**. I've owned him the past two seasons and have been extremely happy with his fantasy production ... well except for the second half of 2013, but more on that later. Last year he was the 18th and 13th third baseman taken in ESPN and NFBC leagues and I suspect he'll move up slightly in drafts, but since he plays on a bad West Coast team and his numbers are not overtly impressive (on the whole) he could still be a draft day value. Seager is a really good hitter, but most people are not aware because of how much his home ballpark suppresses his numbers. The table shows his career home-road splits.

Splits	AB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	HR	RBI	SB	HR/FB
Home	668	.228	.305	.340	.645	13	65	11	5.6%
Away	723	.289	.345	.491	.836	32	103	14	12.5%

Last year Seager started the year red hot with a .293/.359/.488 slash line but fell off a cliff during the second half of the year with a .212/.309/.336 slash line. A big reason for the drop off was decline in his BABIP (.319 to .245), but upon closer inspection, the drop off in BABIP came strictly from fastballs (table

below courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net). If you compare his 2012 season to each half of the 2013 season, which half looks more like 2012?

	2012				2013: 1st Half				2013: 2nd Half			
Split	AVG	SLG	ISO	BABIP	AVG	SLG	ISO	BABIP	AVG	SLG	ISO	BABIP
Hard	.289	.507	.217	.295	.335	.558	.223	.336	.216	.378	.162	.212
Breaking	.178	.295	.116	.241	.232	.358	.126	.357	.227	.318	.091	.357
Offspeed	.276	.368	.092	.319	.222	.378	.156	.229	.182	.212	.030	.250

A player comp to Seager in terms of fantasy production is **Manny Machado** but I'm sure he would have gone three, four rounds ahead of Seager if Machado didn't hurt his knee. Check out both of their 2013 stats if you don't believe Seager provided similar value to Machado.

Player	HR	RBI	SB	R	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%
Seager	22	69	9	79	.260	.338	.426	.764	.290	17.55%	9.78%
Machado	14	71	6	88	.283	.314	.432	.746	.322	15.92%	4.09%

If Seager didn't have the extremely poor second half he would have easily finished the year as an easy top ten third baseman. The only question how legitimate is the first half of the 2013 season? When I compare his 2013 splits against his 2012 season, the first half seems more indicative to his true talent. His career home-road splits show he is a really good hitter, but his home ballpark masks how good of a hitter he really is. When I evaluate really good players with a relatively small sample size I put the most weight on their true talent. Therefore, I believe will hit .275 with 22 home runs, eight stolen bases, 90 runs and 75 RBI; I also assumed he would either bat second or third in the lineup.

Jean Segura

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Brewers | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (1), NFBC (1)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	404	7	57	44	37/13	.304	.771	.341	13.5%	6.0%	24.9%	57.5%
2012	MLB	22	151	0	19	14	7/1	.258	.640	.302	13.9%	7.8%	13.0%	69.1%
2013	MLB	23	588	12	74	49	44/13	.294	.752	.326	13.5%	4.0%	14.1%	63.4%
Proj.			580	8	70	50	34	.260						

Similar to **Chris Davis**, if you owned Segura and didn't perform well in your league you should consider having a different hobby. Odds are Segura will be drafted as a top five shortstop, which will be due to his overall 2013 numbers. However, what gets lost is how he fell apart in the second half of the season. The table below is a breakdown of the 2013 season.

Split	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB	CS	AVG	OBP	SLG	BABIP
1st Half	372	11	54	36	27	5	.325	.363	.487	.349
2nd Half	216	1	20	13	17	8	.241	.268	.315	.285

Yes, that is not a misprint; he only had one home run and 13 RBIs after the all-star break. Obviously as the BABIP regressed dramatically, which led to his statistical output decreasing. What's strange is he had a .342 BABIP on the road versus a .312 BABIP at home. The reason why I say it's strange is because the Brewers play in one of the best hitter's ballparks in the majors. The image below (from BrooksBaseball.net) shows his performance against different pitch types. What's unlikely to reoccur is the .340 BABIP to reoccur again against fastballs because the major league average BABIP on fastballs since 2008 is .304.

Results and Averages - from 01/01/2013 to 01/01/2014													
Pitch Category	Count	AB	K	BB	HBP	1B	2B	3B	HR	BAA	SLG	ISO	BABIP
Hard	1489	348	45	21	2	82	11	7	9	.313	.463	.149	.340
Breaking	615	194	35	3	2	37	6	3	2	.247	.340	.093	.293
Offspeed	181	53	6	0	2	12	3	0	1	.302	.415	.113	.326

Segura had the third highest ground ball rate in the majors (among players with at least 400 plate appearances), which means he will always be BABIP dependent, but since he's a plus runner (I clocked him running a 4.0 from the right side) he should be able to beat out a lot of ground balls. The only concern I have is the power potential. The scouting reports suggest he could hit 10-15, but I don't see it; I see more doubles power than home runs in the next one to two years. I feel confident he will steal 30-plus bases with a .270-plus batting average. Segura is a good player, but he's not going to repeat 2013's numbers next year because those numbers were fueled by an extremely fluky first half of the season.

Andrelton Simmons

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Braves | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (15), NFBC (10)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	174	3	29	21	10/2	.293	.791	.314	9.9%	9.9%	29.9%	51.4%
2012	MLB	22	166	3	17	19	1/0	.289	.751	.310	11.5%	6.6%	21.3%	61.8%
2013	MLB	23	606	17	76	59	6/5	.248	.692	.247	8.4%	6.1%	25.9%	49.0%
Proj.			600	16	70	70	10	.260						

A show of hands of who saw 17 home runs coming? In 1,096 at-bats before 2013 (both in the majors and minors) he had a total of nine home runs, nine! A big reason for the jump in home runs was the dramatic increase in his fly ball rate (from 27 percent to 39 percent). His scouting reports as prospect never mentioned he had the ability to hit for average power, which means either the scouting reports were wrong or Simmons' made an adjustment at the plate.

According to Hit Tracker, eight of his home runs (47 percent) came with the designation of “just enough”, which seems oddly high. Last there were 34 percent of home runs who had that designation, which suggests he got a little lucky his home run rate. In terms of his stolen base potentiation, he’s an average to plus runner, who needs to make better reads if he’s going to improve on his career 68 percent success rate (both majors and minors). If he doesn’t improve upon his stolen base success rate he only be 5-7 stolen base player, which makes him less attractive. Also, the Braves have finished 24th, 22nd and 25th in the majors in stolen base attempts the past three seasons, which means his stolen base attempts may be limited. In terms of his BABIP, there’s definitely room for improvement as he got extremely unlucky with the fly balls he hit (table below). Overall, I don’t believe he’s going to hit 17 home runs again. If I were a betting man I would say 11-14. Since he’s not going to steal a lot of bases and he’ll only provide moderate power means he’s a player more suited for 12-team mixed leagues rather than the standard ten-team mixed leagues.

Split	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	ISO	BABIP	Expected AVG	Expected BABIP
Ground Balls	.185	.185	.194	.379	.009	.185	.236	.226
Fly Balls	.188	.187	.502	.689	.315	.121	.288	.132
Line Drives	.653	.634	.867	1.501	.214	.630	.670	.714

Seth Smith

Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: Padres | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (105), NFBC (92)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	476	15	67	59	10/2	.284	.830	.320	17.4%	8.6%	33.9%	42.4%
2012	MLB	29	383	14	55	52	2/2	.240	.754	.285	22.2%	11.3%	33.9%	44.6%
2013	MLB	30	368	8	49	40	0/0	.253	.721	.320	22.9%	9.5%	28.8%	48.1%
Proj.			370	12	50	46	2	.250						

Smith will likely be on the better side of a platoon with **Chris Denorfia** because Smith has a career .201/.269/.313 slash line against lefties. However, on the positive side, he does have a .822 OPS the past three seasons. There are trends I don’t like as his strikeout rate has been near 23 percent the past two seasons and his ground ball rate has increased six percentage points during the same time. Other than NL-only leagues he shouldn’t be owned because he doesn’t provide any average statistical category output (similar to **Gerardo Parra**) and will likely be in a platoon all year.

Justin Smoak**Bats: B | Age: 27 | Team: Mariners | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (40), NFBC (30)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	427	15	38	55	0/0	.234	.719	.273	21.5%	11.2%	33.3%	48.0%
2012	MLB	25	483	19	49	51	1/0	.217	.654	.242	20.7%	9.2%	31.8%	47.2%
2013	MLB	26	454	20	53	50	0/0	.238	.746	.278	22.8%	12.3%	34.4%	40.7%
Proj.			400	12	40	40	0	.225						

Despite having a solid first half of the season (slash line of .272/.372/.431), those numbers quickly dissipated with a slash line of .203/.294/.392 in the second half of the season. His biggest problem has been the inability to hit anything that's not a fastball. For example, he has a career slash line of .191/.258/.319 against non-fastballs. It's possible he figures it out, but I'm not buying it.

Denard Span**Bats: L | Age: 30 | Team: Nationals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (46), NFBC (42)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	284	2	37	16	6/1	.264	.687	.297	11.6%	8.7%	21.6%	58.0%
2012	MLB	28	516	4	71	41	17/6	.283	.738	.315	10.9%	8.3%	19.4%	62.2%
2013	MLB	29	610	4	75	47	20/6	.279	.707	.313	11.6%	6.3%	16.7%	59.1%
Proj.			570	4	80	46	20	.278						

Despite having plus speed, Span has never stolen more than 26 stolen bases. The problem with owning Span is he doesn't provide any other above average fantasy statistics. Span is expected to leadoff for the Nationals again, which could lead to 85-plus runs scored, especially if **Bryce Harper** bounces back from a "down" year. Even if Harper progresses, **Jayson Werth** is likely to regress, so it's possible their performances cancel each other out and the offensive performance will essentially be the same as last year. Since he doesn't have a platoon split he'll be a safer bet to hit more along his career .283 with room for more with a high BABIP.

George Springer**Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Astros | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	22	73	2	8	5	4/2	.219	.630	.304	30.9%	7.4%	22.5%	52.5%
2013	AA	23	273	19	56	55	23/5	.297	.978	.390	29.7%	13.0%	-	-
2013	AAA	23	219	18	50	53	22/3	.311	1.050	.362	24.3%	15.4%	-	-
Proj.			450	18	60	60	27	.245						

Based on his 2013 stats in the minors (in both double-a and triple-a) it looks as though Springer is ready to play in the majors. The biggest question is when do the Astros give him a 25-man roster spot? Springer plays centerfield, but the Astros acquired **Dexter Fowler** who plays center so if Springer plays in

the majors it will likely be at a corner. Currently the Astros are projected to start **L.J. Hoes** and **Robbie Grossman** at the corners, which means Springer doesn't have a huge bar to climb in order to become a starter. Last year he hit 37 home runs and stole 45 bases last year with a .300-plus batting average. He is one of the rare prospects who have 30/30 upside, but there are questions how his skill set will translate in the majors. Based on the scouting reports from [Jason Parks](#) and [Keith Law](#) there are questions if he will make enough contact to be conducive for the power to play in game action. A player comp Parks gives is **Chris Young**, who during his prime was a legitimate top 10-20 fantasy outfielder. Both scouting reports suggest his approach at the plate when he has two strikes need a lot of refinement. It's because of the further refinement in the approach at the plate is the reason why we don't see him for at least the first 3-6 weeks of the season. As of late January he's only draftable in leagues with deep benches like NFBC. If you're league allows deep benches then Springer is certainly draftable because of the upside he provides, but be prepared for a .240-.250 batting average in 2014. Since he's so fast he could be a high BABIP player, which means he could be a .270-plus batting average player as gets more reps in the majors.

Alfonso Soriano

Bats: R | Age: 38 | Team: Yankees | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (10), NFBC (8)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	35	475	26	50	88	2/1	.244	.759	.266	22.2%	5.3%	47.7%	32.9%
2012	MLB	36	561	32	68	108	6/2	.262	.821	.303	24.9%	7.2%	40.5%	38.9%
2013	MLB	37	581	34	84	101	18/9	.255	.791	.289	24.9%	5.8%	33.8%	42.2%
Proj.			550	25	79	86	8	.255						

The signing of **Carlos Beltran** probably makes Soriano the everyday DH who will play 50-70 games in the outfield. Despite only averaging 129 games played from 2007-11 (primarily due to various injuries), he has averaged 146-147 games played the last four seasons. It's no surprise that in the last two years he was finally healthy and he put up monster fantasy seasons. For example, his home run totals have increased year over year the last four years despite playing into his late-30s. Last year was the highest HR/FB rate of his career (18.9 percent) and that's bound to regress. Even though he'll play in Yankee Stadium the power benefit is in right field, which is more beneficial for left handed hitters. With his inability to hit righties (table below) he'll most likely struggle to hit for a high average; also in three of the last four years his batting average has been below .244.

Split	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	ISO	K%	BB%
vs R	.247	.297	.470	.767	.280	.222	23.7%	5.8%
vs L	.268	.338	.497	.835	.307	.230	23.0%	9.4%

Other than his performance against righties the biggest red flag is the decrease in the fly ball rate; in 2010 his fly ball rate was 54.3 percent and last year it was only 42 percent, which is still fairly high, but the drop off is substantial. However, other than that there's nothing in the data to suggest he's slowing down. If he can stay healthy, which should continue if he plays the majority of time at DH, he'll hit 25

home runs with 5-10 stolen bases and a lot of RBIs because he'll likely bat in the middle of a potent lineup.

Giancarlo Stanton

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Marlins | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (56), NFBC (59)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	516	34	79	87	5/5	.262	.893	.314	27.6%	11.6%	28.1%	49.4%
2012	MLB	22	449	37	75	86	6/2	.290	.969	.344	28.5%	9.2%	36.7%	39.5%
2013	MLB	23	425	24	62	62	1/0	.249	.845	.313	27.8%	14.7%	23.3%	48.8%
Proj.			560	35	86	91	6	.261						

I've never been a Stanton guy. He has only averaged 130 games played the last three seasons and 120 the last two seasons. In 2012 it was a knee. Last year it was a sore foot / ankle and hamstring. When compared to the injury history of a **Jacoby Ellsbury** I feel more confident about Ellsbury playing a full year because some of Ellsbury's injuries were fluky in nature where Stanton's injuries are from his body breaking down.

He's only had a batting average above .262 once (in 2012, with an extremely high BABIP of .344). He has never had more than 87 RBIs. After all of that he is still drafted in the third, fourth round, which is too high for me. He only provides one elite level stats in one category (home runs). The batting average will likely be in the .250-.260 range, which is average. I don't see the batting average improving as he still struggles with breaking pitches from right handers (.228/.299/.481 career slash line). The Marlins second best hitter is **Christian Yelich** who is also still raw and unproven. Even though he'll bat in the middle of the order his RBI and run opportunities will be limited because he'll have **Garret Jones** and **Jarrod Saltalamacchia** hitting behind him. Lastly, he doesn't steal bases. His upside may be five to six supposing he's healthy, which is a big if. Suppose he plays a full year, he'll probably hit .255 with 40 home runs with 90 RBI, 70 runs and two steals. That doesn't add up to a third round pick.

My original projection for Stanton was 480 ABs, .260 batting average, 33 home runs, 83 RBI, 74 runs and three stolen bases. Obviously I wanted to take into account replacement level so I added Stanton's stats in conjunction with a replacement level player. The reason I did this is because when he misses time you're going to get some value from a replacement level player. The player I choose was **A.J. Polluck**. I added 80 ABs from Polluck and added them to Stanton's original projection.

Nick Swisher**Bats: B | Age: 33 | Team: Indians | Position: 1B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (31), NFBC (19)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	526	23	81	85	2/2	.260	.822	.295	19.7%	15.0%	35.8%	42.8%
2012	MLB	31	537	24	75	93	2/3	.272	.837	.324	22.6%	12.3%	33.7%	42.7%
2013	MLB	32	549	22	74	63	1/0	.246	.763	.288	21.8%	12.1%	33.2%	40.8%
Proj.			550	22	85	80	1	.260						

2013 was the poorest fantasy season for Swisher since 2008. One potential cause for this could have been due to something mechanical, specifically a change in his swing. Swisher dealt with an undisclosed left shoulder issue all year so it's hard to say how much it may have impacted his performance. Eno Sarris at FanGraphs [argues the injury improved](#) his swing.

His down 2013 season came primarily against right handed pitching. From 2008-12 his slash line against righties was .254/.342/.482 with a .296 BABIP. However last year the slash line was .220/.310/.370 with a .278 BABIP. The first inclination would be to question the effect of Cleveland's ballpark, but Progressive Field is one of the best hitter's parks for left handed hitters; not as good as Yankee Stadium though. He struggled against fastballs up in the zone (from righties); specifically, he had the highest swing and miss rate (34.4 percent) against those pitches since 2008; as a point of comparison, from 2008-12 his whiff rate was 28 percent. Against fastballs in general (from righties), he had a career low 10.1 percent HR/FB rate; from 2008-11 his HR/FB rate is 19.1 percent. The data suggests he was more unlucky than anything else. I think the batting average positively regressed to the .260-plus range while the home run power stays in-tact.

Oscar Taveras**Bats: R | Age: 21 | Team: Cardinals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	20	477	23	83	94	10/1	.321	.953	.323	10.5%	7.9%	30.7%	55.1%
2013	AAA	21	173	5	25	32	5/1	.306	.803	.324	11.8%	4.8%	-	-
2010	Rk	18	241	8	40	45	9/5	.303	.832	.348	17.7%	5.0%	27.0%	60.3%
Proj.			400	17	70	70	2	.290						

Some evaluators have compared Taveras' bat-to-ball ability with the likes of **Vladimir Guerrero**, which is extremely high praise. Last year he was only limited to 46 games in triple-A because of an ankle injury, but the early reports (in early February) say he should be fully healthy when spring training starts. For a full scouting report on how good Taveras could be read [Jason Parks' scouting report](#). Parks finished his scouting report with, "He's ready to hit at the major-league level ... so whenever he gets to promotion, be prepared to watch a future batting champion and perennial all-star." With praise that high suggests he could eventually be a top ten fantasy pick. In terms of 2014 there's starting job available for him on the major league roster so his fantasy value will be dependent upon the health of the major league roster. For example, if any of the outfielders were to get hurt (I'm looking at you **Allen Craig**) or if **Matt**

Adams struggles out of the gate, which is higher than you think, then Taveras should be the first call up the Cardinals make. If Taveras begins the year in the minors he's ownable in any league format because his upside is so high, but any time you take a player who isn't in the majors there's a lot of risk. Just ask the Taveras owners last year. If he were to play a full year he would be a top 20 outfielder.

Mark Teixeira

Bats: B | Age: 33 | Team: Yankees | Position: 1B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (88), NFBC (52)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	589	39	90	111	4/1	.248	.835	.239	16.1%	11.1%	39.5%	41.4%
2012	MLB	32	451	24	66	84	2/1	.251	.807	.250	15.8%	10.3%	36.3%	44.2%
2013	MLB	33	53	3	5	12	0/0	.151	.609	.156	30.2%	12.7%	31.0%	37.9%
Proj.			400	21	69	80	0	.240						

Teixeria missed most of the season due to surgery to repair a torn tendon sheath in his wrist. The surgery was successfully completed in July and looks like he should [be ready for](#) the 2014 season. The question is do you want to roster him for your team? The biggest question I have is will his power come back? Usually, it takes half a season for a hitter to regain his power stroke after wrist surgery. From 2010-12 he had a slash line of .252/.347/.484 with an average of 32 home runs, 101 RBI and 90 runs. In terms of his approach at the plate, he's extremely pull happy from both sides of the plate. He benefits in the power department from playing in New York; 13.1 percent HR/FB fly ball rate on the road versus a 19.5 percent HR/FB rate at home. Lastly, he's facing the shift more and more which is going to limit his batting average upside. Last year, he went 17th and 23rd among first basemen in ESPN and NFBC respectively, which was substantially lower than his 2012 ADP.

Overall, he basically missed a year of playing time due to injury and I don't care how good a player is there is going to be a learning curve to begin the season; for example, if you leave a car in the garage for a year and then turn it on, it's not going to run as well. Combine that fact with he was already in decline before the injury doesn't make him an attractive fantasy player. If I do draft him, I'm stashing him on my bench for the first 4-6 weeks of the year.

Ruben Tejada

Bats: R | Age: 24 | Team: Mets | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (92), NFBC (45)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	328	0	31	36	5/1	.284	.696	.331	13.3%	9.3%	26.0%	49.4%
2012	MLB	22	464	1	53	25	4/4	.289	.685	.339	14.6%	5.4%	27.9%	43.6%
2013	MLB	23	208	0	20	10	2/1	.202	.519	.228	10.6%	6.6%	27.1%	51.4%
Proj.			500	1	50	30	4	.270						

During Tejada's first three seasons in the majors he had the following slash line: .271/.336/.331, which may not jump off the page, but since he was able to do that at the ages between 20-23 is quite remarkable. Last year he struggled. For example he only had .259 OBP in 227 plate appearances. He was

such in a big funk the Mets sent him to triple-a to work on a few things. While in the minors his numbers rebounded. Tejada doesn't have explosive tools or fantasy upside. At the plate he is more of a grinder than anything else because he works the count and makes contact, not hard contact because his power is limited. Since he's maybe an average runner, he won't provide any value in the walks department. Basically, he shouldn't be owned in any mixed league. If you play in an OBP league, he comes a sneaky play in 12-team leagues that carry a MI position.

Mike Trout

Bats: R | Age: 22 | Team: Angels | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (1), NFBC (1)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	19	123	5	20	16	4/0	.220	.672	.247	22.2%	6.7%	42.5%	42.5%
2012	MLB	20	559	30	129	83	49/5	.326	.963	.383	21.8%	10.5%	31.4%	48.9%
2013	MLB	21	589	27	109	97	33/7	.323	.988	.376	19.0%	15.4%	30.3%	43.8%
Proj.			600	27	130	110	33	.324						

Trout is the best player in baseball. He reduced his strikeout rate three percentage points and increased his walk rate five percentage points. Also, do not forget he was the Angels offense for the majority of the year. If Pujols and/or Hamilton can revert to even shells of their former selves, Trout could have an even bigger year than you think.

Mark Trumbo

Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: 1B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (12), NFBC (8)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	539	29	65	87	9/4	.254	.768	.274	20.9%	4.4%	31.7%	51.0%
2012	MLB	26	544	32	66	95	4/5	.268	.808	.316	26.1%	6.1%	33.1%	49.6%
2013	MLB	27	620	34	85	100	5/2	.234	.747	.273	27.1%	8.0%	25.2%	50.4%
Proj.			572	35	70	95	3	.243						

Checkout the blind resumes below. The data is for the past three seasons. Which player would you rather have for your fantasy team?

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	HR	RBI	SB	Runs
Player A	.277	.343	.515	91	242	7	203
Player B	.251	.300	.473	95	282	18	216

Player A is **Chris Davis**, most likely a top ten pick and Player B is Trumbo, a seventh round pick at best. For the full analysis of this comparison I recommend you check out Davis's player capsule of the write up I did at [Baseball Professor](#).

By this point fantasy owners should be aware what Trumbo brings to the fantasy table; home runs. While playing a little more than three seasons in the pitcher friendly ballpark of Los Angeles he already has 95 home runs. There's early chatter that moving to Chase Field will give him 40-plus home run potential. The question is, is that crazy? For the past three years his HR/FB rate at home was 18.9 percent compared to 21.8 percent on the road. That sounds like a noticeable difference, but let's how that translate into actual home runs. In the past three seasons he has averaged 150 fly balls per season. Suppose he played a full year at a 21.8 percent HR/FB rate; that would only be 32.7 home runs, which is a far cry from 40-plus. Obviously, he is going to have a unique HR/FB rate at home, which could be higher than his career away rates. That is why I'm projecting him for 35 home runs. What's going unsaid in a lot of fantasy evaluations is whether or not he'll continue to steal 5-8 bases next year. Last year Arizona ranked 20th in the majors in stolen base attempts; in 2012 they were 15th. Some may think those steals do not matter, but those steals will give him an advantage over the likes of **Prince Fielder** and **Freddie Freeman**. I think Trumbo steals 3-5 bases this year because they allow **Paul Goldschmidt** to steal bases and he's not a fast runner; there are a lot of flaws with that rationale, but it's the best one I could think of. Overall, he has made strides at the plate with the walk rate increasing year over while at the same time his strikeout rate and swing and miss rate have increased during the same time frame.

Troy Tulowitzki

Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Rockies | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (4), NFBC (4)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	537	30	81	105	9/3	.302	.916	.305	13.0%	9.7%	30.8%	47.5%
2012	MLB	27	181	8	33	27	2/2	.287	.846	.284	9.4%	9.4%	31.8%	51.4%
2013	MLB	28	446	25	72	82	1/0	.312	.931	.334	16.6%	11.1%	23.2%	44.6%
Proj.			550	25	83	96	2	.283						

Yet again, Tulowitzki missed nearly a month of the season with broken ribs. Before the injury he was the best player in baseball.

Splits	PA	AVG	OBP	SLG	HR	BABIP
Before Injury	252	.347	.423	.635	16	.353
After Injury	260	.277	.369	.446	9	.315

Tulowitzki's player profile will be the shortest in this year's guide because his fantasy value is entirely based on whether or not he can stay healthy. If he plays a full year he will easily be a top five overall player. If he misses a substantial amount of time you'll have a nice top 40-50 player. In order to draft him you're going to have to use a second or an early third round pick, which is about right. In deep leagues I'll pass, but on shallow leagues I'll take that risk.

My original projection for Tulowitzki was 450 ABs, .300 batting average, 23 home runs, 85 RBI, 71 runs and one stolen base. Obviously I wanted to take into account replacement level so I added Tulowitzki's stats in conjunction with a replacement level player. The reason I did this is because when he misses

time you're going to get some value from a replacement level player. The player I choose was **Yunel Escobar**. I added 100 ABs from Escobar and added them to Tulowitzki's original projection.

B.J. Upton

Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Braves | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (160), NFBC (85)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	560	23	82	81	36/12	.243	.759	.298	25.2%	11.1%	35.1%	46.3%
2012	MLB	27	573	28	79	78	31/6	.246	.752	.294	26.7%	7.1%	35.0%	46.9%
2013	MLB	28	391	9	30	26	12/5	.184	.557	.266	33.9%	9.9%	27.9%	50.0%
Proj.			500	18	65	65	18	.230						

Before 2013 Upton was a five tool fantasy player that wouldn't help or hurt your batting average. But last year he fell off completely. So much so he provided negative value compared to replacement level. So what went wrong for Upton last year? His strikeout rate increased seven percentage points, which was the second highest in the majors among players with at least 400 plate appearances. His ground ball rate was the highest it's been since 2008, his isolated power was the lowest ever in his career and his infield fly ball rate increased nine percentage points to 19.3 percent. Remember infield fly balls are essentially outs, so if you combine the infield fly balls and his strikeouts, he was making an out more than 45 percent of the time! Also he only made contact 72 percent of the time when pitches were in the strike zone, which means he swung and missed at pitches in the strike zone 28 percent of time. To put that into context he was the lowest of any hitter in the majors with at least 300 plate appearances [last year](#). It's easy to say he got unlucky because of a lower BABIP, but the BABIP was a direct function of Upton's inability to make solid contact and poor approach at the plate.

As I mentioned earlier he didn't suffer a major injury (that we know of) until July so injury was not the cause for this performance. David Lee provides some [interesting information](#) about the changes that were made to swing last year and how that could have negatively impacted his season.

As of late January he's going in the 20-21 round at NFBC, which seems too low for someone who was borderline top 40-50 player last year. I wouldn't mind reaching for him in the mid-teens in a shallow league because this could be a great buy low opportunity. Normally I don't put too much emphasis on spring training numbers, this is a player you want to watch a lot because if he rebounds he could win you your league.

I'll end this player profile with a quote from Frank Wren, the General Manager of the Braves. At the end of the year he was asked what could have caused Upton's poor season. This is what [he said](#), "What I hope happened to B.J. and what I'm theorizing is that he fell into the same trap that so many free agents fall into, trying to do too much, trying to justify and win over a new fan base. It's a deep hole that gets deeper the harder you try. ... B.J.'s very talented, he's young, he can do a lot of things on the baseball

field. We've got to help him get back on track. That's plain and simple. There's a reason why there were a lot of clubs after him last winter."

Justin Upton

Bats: R | Age: 26 | Team: Braves | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (24), NFBC (18)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	592	31	105	88	21/9	.289	.898	.319	18.7%	8.8%	38.1%	43.0%
2012	MLB	24	554	17	107	67	18/8	.280	.785	.327	19.3%	10.0%	30.4%	48.6%
2013	MLB	25	558	27	94	70	8/1	.263	.818	.321	25.0%	11.7%	29.9%	44.5%
Proj.			550	25	95	75	10	.269						

Compare the two players below and pick the one you rather have on your fantasy team. The data set is for the past two seasons.

	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	HR	SB	RBI	R
Player A	.280	.348	.438	.786	34	21	153	183
Player B	.272	.354	.447	.801	44	26	137	201

Obviously the slight edge goes to Player B, who is **Justin Upton**. Player A is **Alex Gordon**. I submit there is not much difference between the two players, but I'm sure Upton will be drafted four, five rounds ahead of Gordon. Last year I wasn't buying into Upton because a lot of his statistics benefitted from playing in Arizona's ballpark. The data below are his him-road splits from 2010-12 while he played his home games in Arizona.

	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	CS	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
Home	781	149	243	39	131	20	13	.311	.392	.536	.928
Away	860	136	218	26	93	37	12	.253	.331	.408	.739

Now look at 2013 stats. They look very similar to his away numbers the three years prior. Upton is a really good major league player, but he's not the superstar some thought he would be.

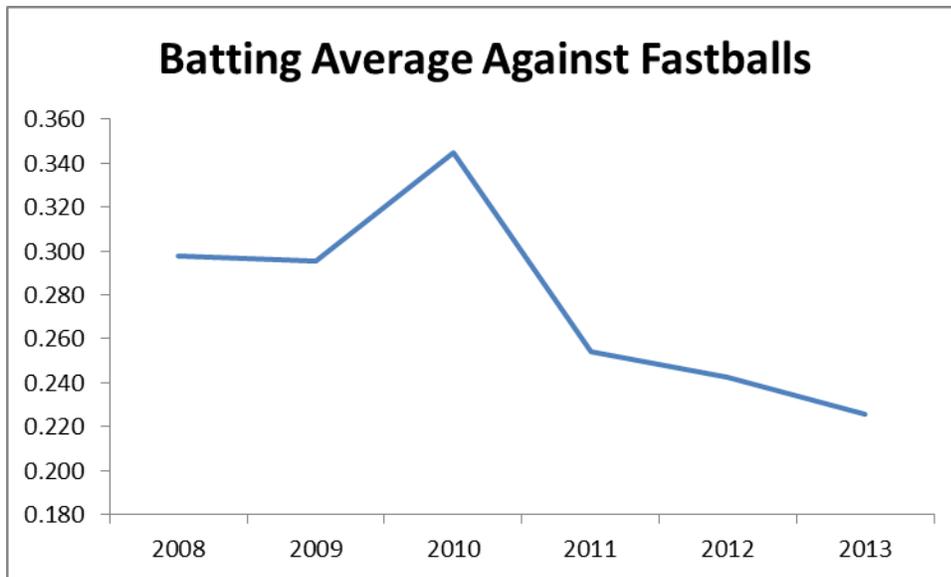
Let's have some real fantasy evaluation based on 2013. His strikeout rate ballooned to 25 percent, nearly six percentage points higher than last year. His swing and miss rate was 30 percent, five and half percentage points higher than last year and the highest of his career. He had the lowest stolen base total of his career on a team for a team that has ranked 27, 18 and 26 in the majors in stolen bases the last three years. I think it's time to give up on the dream that he is going to improve and live up to the promise the 2009 season showed.

Dan Uggla

Bats: R | Age: 34 | Team: Braves | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	600	36	88	82	1/3	.233	.764	.253	23.2%	9.2%	38.2%	46.2%
2012	MLB	32	523	19	86	78	4/3	.220	.732	.283	26.7%	14.9%	38.7%	38.7%
2013	MLB	33	448	22	60	55	2/0	.179	.671	.225	31.8%	14.3%	38.5%	45.3%
Proj.			520	24	70	78	2	.230						

Uggla was bad last year. His strikeout rate increased five percentage points and his batting average was barely higher than my weight. On top of all of that his contact rates of pitches within the strike zone was tick below 76 percent; to put that into perspective from 2008-2012 his contact rates were 80-81 percent. His batting on average against fastballs has been trending down for three years (image below), which indicates he has lost a tick on his fastball. In order to compensate for the decreased bat speed he cheats for the fastball by gearing for the fastball. When he does this he becomes more susceptible to breaking pitches; last year he hit .082 against breaking pitches and for the past two seasons he's only batting .138, which implies an improvement in batting average isn't likely to happen.



Now let's talk about the positives. However, his poor performance could be do vision problems; in the middle of August he had [Lasik eye surgery](#). He started experiencing eye problems during the 2012 season according to [the Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#).

This is a quote from the article, "It was harder to focus, even on the field. This year I was just trying to battle through it, thinking, 'Oh, it's gonna come [around] like it always does,' not thinking, 'Maybe I'm not seeing the ball.' But after bailing out on so many curveballs and taking so many front-door sliders and hanging sliders, I thought, 'Let me go get this checked out because something's not right.' On video, the balls I'm ducking out of the way on aren't really that close."

Despite the poor performance, if he played a full year he would have hit 28 home runs. Uggla is owed \$26 million the next two years so the Braves are likely going to give him every day at-bats, at least to begin the season. Before going on the DL in 2013, Uggla never missed an extended amount of time. For example, from 2006-12 he averaged 156 games. Supposing the vision problems affected his performance the past two seasons makes Uggla a buy low candidate. To clarify, the days of a .250-plus hitters is probably gone, but I wouldn't be surprised if he's a .230-.240 hitter with 26-plus home runs.

Chase Utley

Bats: L | Age: 35 | Team: Phillies | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (9), NFBC (10)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	398	11	54	44	14/0	.259	.769	.269	10.4%	8.6%	40.0%	44.9%
2012	MLB	33	301	11	48	45	11/1	.256	.793	.261	11.9%	11.9%	31.7%	46.0%
2013	MLB	34	476	18	73	69	8/3	.284	.823	.305	14.9%	8.5%	31.4%	41.9%
Proj.			550	18	76	85	7	.268						

The biggest concern with drafting Utley will be his ability to stay on the field because he has chronic knee issues that will never entirely go away, but last year was the most games Utley has played since 2009 and he had his best fantasy season since 2009. Currently he's going as the 12th second baseman in NFBC in early February, which is a little low is considering how well he performed last year. I think the low ADP is more likely due to injury concerns rather than regression, which I believe is going to suppress his value more. Despite the good year last year there are some red flags. His strikeout rate against right handed pitching increased three percentage points (to 15 percent) and his swing and miss rate increased four percentage points (to 16.1 percent), which is concerning because he's always mashed right handed pitching. In fairness, he did have a .302 batting average despite what I mentioned. However, the batting average was fueled by a .327 BABIP, the highest since 2008 (I cannot go beyond 2008), which tells me he's going to regress. Overall, his .305 is the highest BABIP he's had since 2007, which means it should regress in 2014.

In general his strikeout rate increased three percentage points and his walk rate was the lowest it's been since 2007. Walks are not the end all be all if he's putting more balls in-play, which he did not do. In fact it was a little less (1-2 percentage points) compared to the last two seasons. Utley's 2014 value depends on how deep your bench will be. If you play at ESPN where there are only three bench spots and one DL spot then he's not as attractive because odds are you will need that DL spot for players better than Utley, which means you'll either have to drop him or use a bench spot on him, which at this point, he's not good enough to be a must own player. Conversely, he becomes more attractive in leagues with deeper benches. I prefer to not own players pre-disposed to injuries because I like use my bench spots with pitchers so I can stream them, but if you own Utley and a replacement level second baseman, you can have a fringe top 6-7 player (in the aggregate).

My original projection for Uteley was 400 ABs, .273 batting average, 15 home runs, 60 RBI, 67 runs and six stolen bases. Obviously I wanted to take into account replacement level so I added Uteley's stats in conjunction with a replacement level player. The reason I did this is because when he misses time you're going to get some value from a replacement level player. The player I choose was **Yunel Escobar**. I added 150 ABs from Escobar and added them to Uteley's original projection.

Will Venable

Bats: L | Age: 31 | Team: Padres | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (28), NFBC (25)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	370	9	49	44	26/3	.246	.704	.300	22.4%	7.5%	28.1%	48.8%
2012	MLB	29	417	9	62	45	24/6	.264	.765	.320	20.0%	8.7%	26.7%	55.4%
2013	MLB	30	481	22	64	53	22/6	.268	.796	.313	22.9%	5.6%	20.6%	53.0%
Proj.			480	16	75	64	18	.251						

I'm not buying Venable next year. The majority of his fantasy value came during an extremely fluky month in August where if you remove that month (table below) he was barely startable in deep mixed leagues.

Time	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	HR	HR/FB
Rest	.239	.304	.422	.280	14	14.4%
August	.367	.395	.697	.432	8	36.4%

One of the knocks I had against him was he was a platoon player because he wasn't able to hit lefties, but last year he took a step forward hitting .276/.309/.524; before last year his career slash line against lefties was .216/.395/.287. However, I want see the trend continue over a larger sample size before I'm ready to believe he has figured out lefties.

Venable's walk rate last year was the lowest of his career, which means his stolen base opportunities will be more derived from his BABIP because he'll need to hit his way to get on base. Having turned 31 in October he has started to enter his decline years, which means his stolen bases could slightly decline for the fourth year in a row. I like Venable as a .245-.255 hitter who will provide 15 home runs and 20 stolen bases, but he'll most likely be drafted as the player he was last year.

Dayan Viciedo

Bats: R | Age: 25 | Team: White Sox | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (81), NFBC (75)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	102	1	11	6	1/0	.255	.641	.321	20.4%	8.0%	26.3%	60.5%
2012	MLB	23	505	25	64	78	0/2	.255	.744	.286	22.1%	5.2%	25.8%	52.1%
2013	MLB	24	441	14	43	56	0/0	.265	.731	.308	20.7%	5.1%	26.3%	51.7%
Proj.			375	12	47	50	0	.262						

The acquisition of **Adam Eaton** and **Avisail Garcia** probably puts Vicedo on lighter side of a platoon with **Alejandro De Aza** to begin the year, which makes him an AL-only play at this point. However, Vicedo does become more interesting when the White Sox trade **Adam Dunn**, whose entering the last year of his deal, in July. The re-signing of **Paul Konerko** throws a wrench into the lineup situation because he'll most likely get at least 250 at-bats, probably in a platoon with Dunn at DH, but it's not entirely crazy to think Konerko becomes the everyday DH. When looking at his stats, Vicedo is more of a 15-20 home run player than the 25 he hit two years ago; he doesn't steal bases and will not have a batting average greater than .275.. If you play in large mixed leagues with deep benches and lineups are set twice a week, say in NFBC, he could be worth a flier on draft day because he can mash lefties; for his career he has a slash line of .322/.357/.551 with 16 home runs in 336 plate appearances.

Shane Victorino

Bats: B | Age: 33 | Team: Red Sox | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (17)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	519	17	95	61	19/3	.279	.847	.292	10.8%	9.4%	33.9%	48.3%
2012	MLB	31	595	11	72	55	39/6	.255	.704	.278	12.0%	8.0%	28.9%	53.8%
2013	MLB	32	477	15	82	61	21/3	.294	.801	.321	14.1%	4.7%	24.7%	50.3%
Proj.			535	13	92	62	16	.270						

Last year I wasn't buying the Victorino signing because his skill set appeared to have eroded and was likely to continue to erode. On the surface that appears to be true, but I didn't take into account much of a positive effect Boston's ballpark would have on his offensive production (table below).

Split	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
Home	.322	.365	.485	.352	13.6%	3.5%	10.3%
Away	.266	.337	.418	.291	14.5%	5.8%	10.8%

He [stopped hitting left-handed](#) in August due to hamstring and back injuries. He tried to go back to hitting lefty against right-handers temporarily in the ALCS, but he didn't see good results so he abandoned hitting from the left side. Throughout his career, Victorino has been a much better from the right side. Below are the splits:

Batting RH: .303/.373/.506

Batting LH: .268/.329/.401

As of now he plans on going back to switch hitting at the start of 2014. There are still signs that regression is coming; he had career highs in the strikeout rate and swing and miss rate while his walk rate was the lowest of his career. I'm still not sold on him as a right handed hitter as he only has a .252/.317/.714 slash line the past four years. Overall, I believe the batting average comes down to the .265-.275 range and he provides 13 home runs and 16 stolen bases.

Jonathan Villar**Bats: B | Age: 23 | Team: Astros | Position: SS | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (38), NFBC (27)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	21	326	11	54	50	39/8	.261	.732	.319	23.1%	9.3%	23.8%	60.0%
2013	AAA	22	339	8	47	41	31/7	.277	.784	.358	24.1%	8.3%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	210	1	26	8	18/8	.243	.640	.362	29.5%	10.0%	7.8%	73.8%
Proj.			530	8	67	42	40	.235						

Villar's skill set doesn't offer a lot of real life upside, but he offers a ton of fantasy upside because of his plus-plus speed. After his call-up to the majors he had 18 stolen bases in 58 games. At that rate, if he played 145 games he would have had 45 stolen bases, which would have him tied for third most in the majors. Since he's a plus-plus runner he should have a higher BABIP, which helps explain the .362 BABIP last year. However, with that really high BABIP he only had a .243 batting average, which means if the BABIP regresses how low will his batting average be?

The scouting reports suggest he'll struggle against right handed pitchers due to the flat plane of his swing. Against righties he had a .374 BABIP compared to a .333 BABIP against lefties last year. I expect his batting average to regress against righties which means he'll likely be a .230 hitter who could steal 40-plus bases. Even though he's not a good hitter he'll get every opportunity to play every day so the odds of him reaching 40-plus stolen base target is extremely possible. In dynasty formats be careful about keeping him because **Carlos Correa**, the number one pick in 2012s draft, could be in the majors as early as 2014. And with second and third already filled with solid players, Villar may end up as a bench only player in 2015.

Stephen Vogt**Bats: L | Age: 29 | Team: Athletics | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	27	349	9	48	43	1/0	.272	.774	.306	15.4%	10.6%	42.5%	34.9%
2013	AAA	28	296	13	55	58	0/1	.324	.945	.344	13.3%	11.2%	-	-
2013	MLB	28	135	4	18	16	0/1	.252	.695	.286	18.9%	6.1%	35.9%	34.0%
Proj.			350	8	45	45	0	.255						

In 865 plate appearances in triple-A Vogt has a career slash line of: .295/.404/.486, which means he has nothing left to prove in the upper minors. Its possible those numbers will not translate in the majors, but Vogt was the primary catcher for the A's in the playoffs last year, which tells you how much they believed in him. Entering 2014 Vogt may not begin the year in the majors, but as of late January I believe he breaks camp. With **John Jaso** likely to be used primarily as a DH, Vogt appears likely to be on the good side of a platoon with **Derek Norris**. Vogt has a good approach at the plate and he doesn't take at-bats off, which leads me to believe he can be .250-.260 hitter with 8-12 home runs if he receives 350-400 plate appearances. Also, he is another great clubhouse leader. For example, according to the 2013

Baseball Prospectus Annual, “He's personable, intelligent, hard-working, and a candid yet diplomatic teammate with a statesman's poise.” On the surface this doesn't have any fantasy implications, but it does because, it increases to the likeliness he stays on the ball club.

Neil Walker

Bats: B | Age: 28 | Team: Pirates | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (17)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	596	12	76	83	9/6	.273	.742	.315	16.9%	8.2%	32.0%	47.8%
2012	MLB	26	472	14	62	69	7/5	.280	.768	.326	19.6%	8.9%	32.3%	45.7%
2013	MLB	27	478	16	62	53	1/2	.251	.757	.274	15.4%	9.1%	30.0%	43.7%
Proj.			470	15	63	65	3	.265						

Prior to the season Walker was dubbed (by me and a lot of fantasy experts) as one of the safest second basemen available because he didn't provide any overtly great tools, but fantasy owners knew what they were getting, which was moderate power, solid batting average with enough steals to make him fantasy relevant. Any owner that owned Walker was certainly disappointed as his batting average fell significantly and he didn't steal any bases. Walker did go on the DL in July (for two weeks) with an [oblique injury](#). It is possible that injury could have been the reason why the low stolen bases totals were low. In 2012 he went on the DL with a herniated disc. It's possible the back problems he is suffering from could become chronic and limit him the rest of his career.

In terms of the batting average decline, it looks as though he may have been unlucky with the BABIP. His ground ball rate decreased by four percentage points compared to last year while the fly ball rate increased nearly five percentage points. Most importantly, he had the lowest strikeout rate and highest walk rate since become a full time player. If his BABIP stabilizes I wouldn't be surprised he is .285/.385/.485 hitter and if (that's a big if) he can play 145-plus games he could be one of the best values on draft day. He's currently going ahead of **Kolten Wong** and **Omar Infante**, which is too high for me considering Walker's potential injury issues and the fact he may not steal bases any more.

Jemile Weeks

Bats: B | Age: 27 | Team: Orioles | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	25	45	0	5	10	1/0	.333	.834	.405	15.7%	11.8%	21.6%	62.2%
2012	MLB	25	444	2	54	20	16/5	.221	.609	.256	13.7%	9.8%	28.5%	54.6%
2013	AAA	26	520	4	96	40	17/2	.271	.745	.328	16.1%	13.0%	-	-
Proj.			400	2	55	40	22	.240						

Weeks found his way to the Orioles roster basically for when the Orioles traded **Jim Johnson** to the A's for him in December. Weeks biggest fantasy asset is his plus speed. In the last three years (minors and majors) he has 56 stolen bases with a 75.7 percent success rate. When evaluating Weeks' fantasy potential I recommend to not let the 2011 numbers overly influence you because he BABIPed his way to an unsustainable .303 batting average. His approach at the plate isn't very good as he can get antsy at the plate and become too aggressive. If he can BABIP his way to the .310-.320 range he should be able to hit in the .260-.270 with enough stolen bases to be fantasy relevant in 12-team mixed leagues with a MI position. However, he'll provide no power and will most likely bat ninth in the lineup with little RBI and run opportunities. Basically, if you're looking for cheap speed Weeks could be a relatively cheap option, but be prepared for a sub-.250 batting average.

Rickie Weeks

Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Brewers | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (47), NFBC (26)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	453	20	77	49	9/2	.269	.818	.310	20.8%	9.7%	28.4%	52.8%
2012	MLB	29	588	21	85	63	16/3	.230	.728	.285	25.0%	10.9%	30.1%	50.0%
2013	MLB	30	350	10	40	24	7/3	.209	.663	.268	26.3%	10.0%	23.1%	54.2%
Proj.			250	8	35	35	7	.220						

Last year I wrote Weeks would be a good value at the ADP he was being drafted because the first half of the season he was extremely unlucky with the BABIP and he performed to his normal standards during the second half of the season. Well, that prediction was completely wrong as he posted the lowest OPS in his career (.663) and missed the last seven weeks of the season with a hamstring strain, which required surgery. In terms of his 2013 performance, there's nothing I liked. His ground ball rate was 49 percent and his strikeout rate was 26.3 percent, easily both career highs. With the emergence of **Scotter Gennett** and according to Brewers GM **Doug Melvin**, Gennett [has the inside track](#) to be the everyday second baseman. If I were a betting man, I bet Weeks and Gennett will be in a platoon and Gennett will get the better side of the platoon. It's also important to point out this is the last year of Weeks' contract and it's highly unlikely he will be a part of the Brewers so I wouldn't be surprised if Weeks' playing time decreases significantly the second half of the season or if he gets traded.

Jayson Werth

Bats: R | Age: 34 | Team: Nationals | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (9), NFBC (9)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	561	20	69	58	19/3	.232	.718	.286	24.7%	11.4%	32.8%	46.9%
2012	MLB	33	300	5	42	31	8/2	.300	.827	.356	16.6%	12.2%	33.8%	45.0%
2013	MLB	34	462	25	84	82	10/1	.318	.931	.358	19.0%	11.3%	26.3%	39.5%
Proj.			550	26	86	92	12	.282						

Before the 2013 season the common theme among the majority of his fantasy evaluations were how this could be the beginning of the end for Werth because of his age and the myriad of injuries in 2012 that limited him to only 81 games. Last year he wasn't immune to the injury bug as he missed the month of May with a hamstring injury, but after he returned to the lineup he was one of the best hitters in the majors, hitting .334/.421/.569 with a .376 BABIP the rest of the year. I know during the early part of his career he had trouble staying on the field but I never bought into the injury prone rap he got because he played in 150-plus games from 2009-2011 before the injury plagued 2012 season.

Let's discuss his 2013 season. The home runs look a little fluky when you compare his last year's 18.2 percent HR/FB rate to the previous two seasons, but he has had HR/FB rates as high back in 2008 and 2009. Also, check out the ground ball rates from 2008-2010 and compare them to 2011-12, the seasons where he didn't hit for power. You'll notice he was hitting a lot of ground balls in 2011-12, which lowered his HR/FB rates. Now look at the 2013 ground ball and fly ball rates. You'll notice they coincide with the 2008-10 seasons, which doesn't surprise me his 2013 season was similar to 2008-10 seasons.

Also, during to the 2013 season he made a mechanical adjustment, specifically [holding his hands higher](#) while in his stance. Why this is important is he put his hands in the same position they were back in 2008-10, which again is not surprising he had a comeback year. In terms of the .358 BABIP, that's likely not going to repeat, but with a career .317 BABIP a drop off to the .320s isn't unrealistic. So instead of hitting .318 again, expect a batting average of .275-.285. I believe the power levels are legit and he shows no signs of regressing in the stolen base department.

Overall, the latest adjustments at the plate suggest he has the ability to be a top 20 fantasy outfielder, but the biggest question with Werth will again be health. He'll most like be drafted as a top 20 outfielder, which is about right considering his upside. When you're drafting you're banking on him staying healthy, which is unpredictable.

My original projection for Werth was 480 ABs, .285 batting average, 24 home runs, 85 RBI, 75 runs and ten stolen bases. Obviously I wanted to take into account replacement level so I added Werth's stats in conjunction with a replacement level player. The reason I did this is because when he misses time you're going to get some value from a replacement level player. The player I choose was **A.J. Polluck**. I added 70 ABs from Polluck and added them to Werth's original projection.

Matt Wieters

Bats: B | Age: 27 | Team: Orioles | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (13), NFBC (10)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	500	22	72	68	1/0	.262	.778	.276	15.2%	8.7%	37.6%	45.7%
2012	MLB	26	526	23	67	83	3/0	.249	.764	.274	18.9%	10.1%	34.5%	47.1%
2013	MLB	27	523	22	59	79	2/0	.235	.704	.247	18.0%	7.4%	32.7%	43.4%
Proj.			525	22	65	78	2	.244						

Wieters' greatest asset is his power. In 2013 he was tied for the most home runs (along with **J.P. Arencibia**) with 21. Despite the high home run and RBI totals, he still barely cracked the top ten. Why? It was due to the low batting average and run totals. In terms of the batting average, the .247 BABIP appears it's likely to positively regress, especially since he had the highest fly ball rate of his career. I'm expecting his batting average to rebound to the low-.250s.

It seems as though Wieters has been in the league for ten years, but he's actually only played in five seasons. Since he's only been in the league for a short amount of time (in terms of baseball careers) and possesses tremendous raw tools, odds are he is going to have an outlier season where he puts up career year season. Good luck predicting when that will happen, but I wouldn't be surprised if he has his **Chris Davis** year in 2014 because Wieters is entering his prime. Wieters is a relatively safe bet for a .250 batting average and 20-plus home runs.

Josh Willingham

Bats: R | Age: 35 | Team: Twins | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (121), NFBC (80)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	488	29	69	98	4/1	.246	.810	.287	26.6%	9.9%	39.5%	40.2%
2012	MLB	33	519	35	85	110	3/2	.260	.890	.287	22.9%	12.4%	39.3%	43.6%
2013	MLB	34	389	14	42	48	1/0	.208	.709	.269	27.2%	14.0%	33.2%	42.5%
Proj.			450	25	70	87	2	.250						

Willingham missed five weeks of the season with a medial meniscus tear and bone bruise in his left knee. According to [USA Today](#), he "first tweaked his knee while sliding on a stolen base attempt, and he's been bothered by it for much of the last few weeks. He tried to take a shot to relieve the pain, but that was ineffective." To be more specific the injury first occurred on April 27. It's possible the injury hindered his ability to hit for power. However, even after he came back from the DL (in August) he only hit four home runs in 173 plate appearances. Despite the poor offensive numbers Willingham's fly ball rate was the same; his walk rate improved and his strikeout increased four percentage points, but the 2013 strikeout rate is comparable to the 2011 season. Preferably Willingham would spend most of his time at DH, with **Jason Kubel** on the roster, Willingham will most likely play the majority of time in left field. To conclude, neither the 2012 or 2013 season is representative of Willingham's true skill. I would use 2011 season as reasonable expectations for Willingham next year if he is healthy for a full year.

Kolten Wong

Bats: L | Age: 23 | Team: Cardinals | Position: 2B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	21	523	9	79	52	21/11	.287	.754	.318	12.8%	7.6%	28.7%	55.7%
2013	AAA	22	412	10	68	45	20/1	.303	.835	.332	13.0%	8.9%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	59	0	6	0	3/0	.153	.363	.191	19.4%	4.8%	14.0%	65.1%
Proj.			475	7	55	55	18	.271						

Wong has a fantasy profile similar to **Jose Altuve**, but Wong has a little more power potential. Wong has plus (on the 20-80 scouting scale) bat-to-ball ability and has good power for size, but it's more doubles power than home run power. Unlike Altuve, Wong is going to be surrounded by the best offense in the National League and should have plenty of opportunities to drive-in and score runs. With his career minor league OBP of .392, he should bat second, but you never what Matheny will do when it comes to lineup construction. For example, he batted **Shane Robinson** second in the World Series. If Wong is expected to hit second, he's top 11 second baseman because he'll hit .280-plus with a potential for 20 stolen bases, 8-12 home runs and maybe 90 runs scored. For a full scouting report on Wong [read Jason Park's article](#).

David Wright

Bats: R | Age: 31 | Team: Mets | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (7), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	389	14	60	61	13/2	.254	.771	.302	21.7%	11.6%	35.6%	45.2%
2012	MLB	29	581	21	91	93	15/10	.306	.883	.347	16.7%	12.1%	34.4%	45.2%
2013	MLB	30	430	18	63	58	17/3	.307	.904	.340	16.1%	11.2%	29.0%	42.3%
Proj.			515	22	80	85	22	.299						

When you look at Wright's stats, do not forget he missed six weeks of the season with [a strained hamstring](#). If he was able to play full season he would have had 30 home runs, 24 stolen bases with 100 RBIs and runs despite playing on one of the worst offenses in the league. All the peripheral data suggests there's no reason to expect a decline in 2014. For example, his strikeout rate has been in decline year over year since 2009, and his ISO was the highest it's been since 2010. Against pitches in the zone, he had a 90.5 percent contact rate, the highest of his career. His contact rate, overall, was the highest its been since 2008.

The only major downside I can see to his game is the injury bug as he has only averaged 134 games played the last five years. Last year it was the hamstring. In 2011 it was stress fracture in his lower back and it was a concussion due to a hit by pitch. Another downside to Wright's value is the hitters surrounding him in the lineup. **David Murphy** is an above average player, I'm not sold on **Curtis Granderson** being anything more than three outcome player and **Chris Young** is coming off the worst year of his career. This is going to be a bad lineup so expectations must be reasonable, but he has the best opportunity as finishing as the second best fantasy third baseman in 2014.

Christian Yelich

Bats: L | Age: 22 | Team: Marlins | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (103), NFBC (105)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	A+	20	397	12	76	48	20/6	.330	.922	.397	19.0%	11.0%	16.4%	61.1%
2013	AA	21	193	7	33	29	5/5	.280	.883	.346	23.4%	11.7%	-	-
2013	MLB	21	240	4	34	16	10/0	.288	.766	.380	24.2%	11.4%	10.9%	64.6%
Proj.			540	15	77	65	20	.260						

For a full briefing on Yelich I recommend reading Jason Parks' [scouting report](#). Basically Jason had glowing remarks, saying he could hit .300-plus with 20-plus home runs when he is at full maturity. The big key there is at full maturity. Given what he did in his brief sample last year some fantasy owners may be ready to make him at the backed of the 20s among outfielders, which I think is too high, but I don't think it's crazy. I think Yelich will always be a high BABIP player, but even at .380 that cannot be sustainable for a season. Instead of hitting being a .287 hitter, he could be a .270 hitter with 10-15 home runs with 30-plus stolen bases; he has the raw speed to steal 30 and has stolen 32 in 2011. He plays in a pitcher friendly ballpark without a lot of offensive help besides **Giancarlo Stanton** so his accounting totals could be suppressed. Do not overlook Stanton's injury history because Stanton misses a lot of time Yelich's numbers are going to be negatively impacted. When you're looking to roster your third outfielder and you see the likes of **Curtis Granderson, Austin Jackson, Will Venable** and Yelich is still available it's going to be hard to pass up Yelich given his scouting report. I think his saving grace will be the stolen bases because even if his batting average regresses dramatically he should still provide the home runs and stolen bases necessary to hold or mitigate his 2014 value.

Eric Young Jr.

Bats: R | Age: 28 | Team: Mets | Position: OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (36), NFBC (29)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	198	0	34	10	27/4	.247	.640	.304	16.6%	11.4%	20.9%	62.7%
2012	MLB	27	174	4	36	15	14/2	.316	.825	.367	15.8%	6.6%	28.4%	56.0%
2013	MLB	28	539	2	70	32	46/11	.249	.645	.301	16.7%	7.7%	15.5%	61.3%
Proj.			340	1	57	33	33	.250						

I wouldn't be surprised if Young becomes the younger version of **Rajai Davis** in that he will not have a job on Opening Day, but he will find enough playing time to steal 40-plus bases. Young's only carrying tool is his speed and as an above average base runner (80 percent career success rate). He doesn't offer power and he hits a lot of ground balls so he'll always be BABIP dependent, but he's the dark horse to be the Mets fourth outfielder, which means if someone misses an extended amount of time, Young will vault to a top 30-40 outfielder.

Ryan Zimmerman

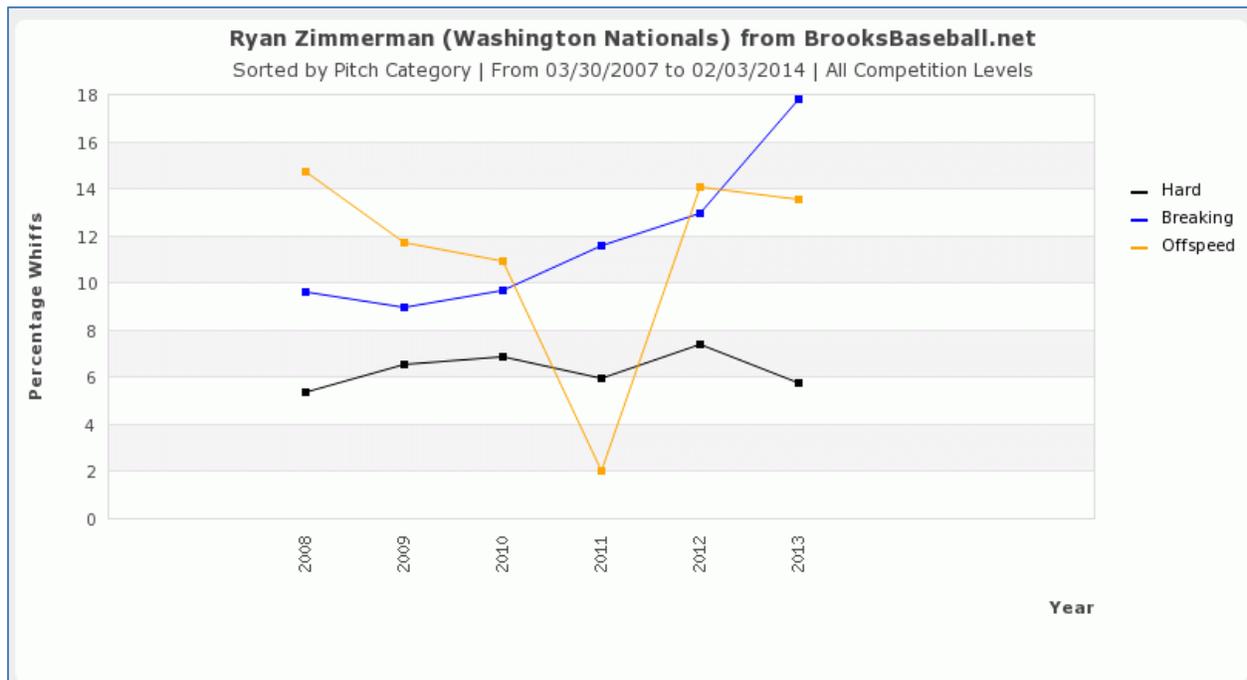
Bats: R | Age: 29 | Team: Nationals | Position: 3B | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (9), NFBC (5)

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YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	395	12	52	49	3/1	.289	.798	.326	16.6%	9.3%	27.5%	53.9%
2012	MLB	27	578	25	93	95	5/2	.282	.824	.313	18.1%	8.9%	27.2%	51.2%
2013	MLB	28	568	26	84	79	6/0	.275	.809	.316	21.0%	9.5%	22.5%	48.8%

Proj.			535	20	83	83	5	.270					
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Before the 2013 season began I wasn't high on Zimmerman because his 2012 performance was "enhanced" due a couple of cortisone injections throughout the season and I wasn't confident he would play in 145-plus games. Turns out he was able to play in 147 games and was relatively healthy (for him). Prior to September, he was having a sub-par year with only 15 home runs, 61 RBI and a slash line of .275/.389/.434. However, his fantasy season was saved as he went on to hit 11 home runs (34.4 percent HR/FB), 18 RBI and a .280/.337/.478 slash line in September. Similar to **Hunter Pence**, I'm wary of believing in players who made a good portion of fantasy value come in September because the quality of pitching is highly variable and a lot of times it's minor leaguers pitching. There are still major red flags. The strikeout rate has increased year over year and it reached a career high last year with 21 percent. His contact rate on pitches outside the strike zone was a career low, which implies he could have been cheating on the fastball and therefore, was susceptible to the breaking and offspeed pitches. The image courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net shows swung and missed a lot on those very same pitches.



Overall the HR/FB rate of 17.6 percent was greatly aided by the exceptional September (34.34 percent). However, prior to September he had an 11.8 percent HR/FB rate, which was the lowest of his career since 2008. Overall, he has dealt with injuries, both severe and nagging, the last four years and hasn't played in more than 147 games since 2009. His power is slowly declining and he's striking out way more than ever. This isn't a profile that isn't very exciting and screams, "stay away," but he'll still bat in the middle of the Nationals lineup behind a healthy **Bryce Harper** so he could still provide solid value, but I believe his career is beginning to trend downward.

Ben Zobrist

Bats: B | Age: 32 | Team: Rays | Position: SS, 2B, OF | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (11), NFBC (11)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	588	20	99	91	19/6	.269	.822	.310	19.0%	11.4%	29.9%	49.5%
2012	MLB	31	560	20	88	74	14/9	.270	.848	.296	15.4%	14.5%	29.2%	48.6%
2013	MLB	32	612	12	77	71	11/3	.275	.756	.303	13.0%	10.3%	27.3%	48.2%
Proj.			580	12	86	70	9	.270						

The biggest asset Zobrist provides is roster flexibility, but all I see when I look at his FanGraphs page is regression. For example, his stolen base attempts decreased by 44 percent and his home run output decreased by 40 percent. The decrease in power could have been due to an extremely low HR/FB rate of 6.2 percent. Zobrist isn't foreign to having an extremely low HR/FB rate as he also had a rate of 6 percent in 2010. In 2010 the HR/FB rate (four percent) was suppressed by Tropicana field, but last year it was the opposite as he had a 4.6 percent fly ball rate on the road compared to an 8.1 rate at home. Last year his contact rates were up nearly three percentage points while the distribution of hit types (ground balls, fly balls and line drives) were the same. Also, he reduced his strikeout rate to 13 percent, which is the lowest of his career. The improved contact and strikeout rates imply the decreased power numbers were a result of bad luck, but I happen to believe it was more of a function age than bad luck.

Other than position flexibility, what makes Zobrist appealing is he'll likely bat second in a lineup that should be improved with a full season of **Wil Myers** and **David DeJesus**. Batting atop of the lineup will allow him the opportunity to continue to accumulate 80-plus runs. Maybe the decrease in power was bad luck, age decline or maybe a combination of both. Overall, Zobrist has been a very consistent player who has a high floor and limited upside who provides position flexibility, which is more of an asset in deeper leagues. If you draft him I highly recommend rostering as your shortstop because second is a relatively deep position.

Mike Zunino

Bats: R | Age: 23 | Team: Mariners | Position: C | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (50), NFBC (42)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	AB	HR	R	RBI	SB/CS	AVG	OPS	BABIP	SO%	BB%	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	21	51	3	6	8	0/0	.333	.974	.333	12.3%	8.8%	40.0%	27.5%
2013	AAA	22	203	11	38	43	0/0	.227	.775	.269	28.8%	7.4%	-	-
2013	MLB	22	173	5	22	14	1/0	.214	.620	.267	25.4%	8.3%	29.6%	47.8%
Proj.			440	15	55	55	0	.220						

Scouts love Zunino. Baseball America ranked him #1 and Baseball Prospectus #2 in the Mariners system respectively before the 2013 season began. (If you don't subscribe to BP or BA, you should). Based on what I've read and seen it looks as though Zunino is not close to being ready to hit the offensive projections described in his scouting reports. It looks as though Zunino is a mistake hitter who struggles against breaking stuff. Last year he had a .131 batting average against changeups, sliders and curveballs. His name may make him draftable for some fantasy owners, but I recommend staying away even in two catcher leagues. For a full scouting report check out [Jason Parks' scouting report](#) at the time of his call-up in June.

Pitcher Profiles/Capsules

The data in the in the main player table comes from Baseball Prospectus. You'll notice some of the numbers I reference in the write-up (primarily ground ball, fly ball, HR/FB rates) are not the same in the main player tables. When I wrote the player capsules I was looking at various websites for statistical information so for **Jarrod Parker** I may have been looking at Fan Graphs and for **Tommy Milone** I was looking at Baseball Reference. All I can do is look at the overall trends I'm referencing and not focus on the specific number. For example, if a player's ground ball rate has increased for three straight years it doesn't matter that the write-up says his ground ball rate last year was 45 percent while the main player table says 43 percent. The overall trend is what matters. Also, I provide the player rater numbers for ESPN and NFBC. Lastly, the players I choose are players that could be owned in a 15-team mixed league.

Please make sure to read my [scouting primer](#) before reading my player profiles as this will help you to read the player capsules, especially for the prospects because I quote prospect evaluators a lot and they use the same language in the primer.

Also, you'll note I do not have any write-ups on relief pitchers. I did this for two reasons. First, I do not have the time necessary to give them a proper evaluation. The Reliever/Closer preview provides a glimpse into how I evaluated the position. Second, a player's skill set is irrelevant in regards to whether the player is rosterable. For example, **Chris Perez** is not a good pitcher, but he was owned at the end of every draft last year because he was the primary closer for the Indians. There's only 30 closers (give or take) and they're all going to be rostered no matter what. If you're looking for information about the closers you can always ask me on Twitter [@MattCommins](#).

Henderson Alvarez

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Marlins | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	63.7	1	40	3.53	1.13	15.4%	3.1%	.281	77.2%	17.8%	22.7%	57.1%
2012	MLB	22	187.3	9	79	4.85	1.44	9.8%	6.7%	.291	70.1%	21.6%	20.7%	59.9%
2013	MLB	23	102.7	5	57	3.59	1.14	13.6%	6.5%	.271	67.7%	3.6%	17.8%	57.3%
Proj.			160	9	93	3.62	1.15	15.0%						

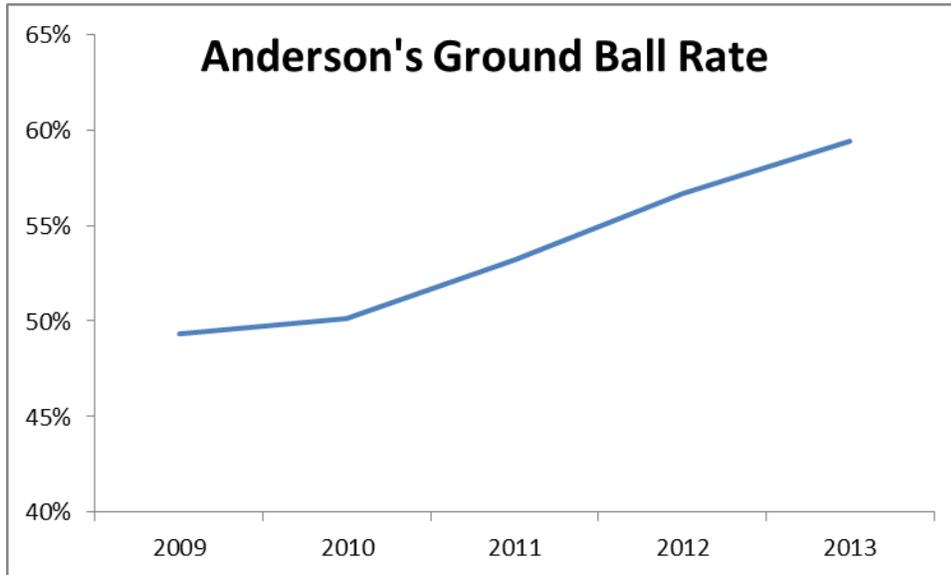
Alvarez is the last player capsule I'm writing. The reason why he's the last is because he was brought to my attention by Joe Sheehan via his newsletter. For an excerpt of the specific piece that got me at least thinking of Alvarez [please go here for an excerpt](#). When I reviewed his stats before I created my list of players to write about I originally NDed him (not draftable) and did not put him on the list because the strikeout rate was not going to be high enough to be a consistent fantasy starter. After reading Joe Sheehan's I'm convinced he has value in deep mixed leagues as a streaming option. I'm not going to give away his piece because you should subscribe if you haven't done so already, but he does two things really well from a fantasy standpoint. He doesn't walk batters and he induces a lot of ground balls. The question I have is how good will the defense be in 2014? It's possible **Rafael Furcal** could be an above average second baseman because he was so good at shortstop. **Casey McGehee** is well, **Casey McGehee**. Another aspect to his game that I'm wary about is his inability to get lefties out. For his career lefties have a .290/.349/.467 slash line against him. A reason for the poor slash line is due to the fact he doesn't have a quality breaking pitch to get them out. He does throw a fastball and two-seam fastball, which can induce a lot of ground balls, but he still needs a change of pace pitch that has different speed than his fastball. To quote Mr. Sheehan, "The upside (with Alvarez), however, is a groundball machine who allows a minimal ISO, keeps the ball in the yard, cuts down his walks and gets enough help from his infield to post an ERA around 3.00 and a WHIP close to 1.1. Give me a pitcher with a demonstrated repeatable skill, and I'll take my chances on the rest."

Brett Anderson

Throws: L | Age: 26 | Team: Rockies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	83.3	3	61	4.00	1.33	17.1%	7.0%	.306	73.0%	16.3%	19.9%	63.0%
2012	MLB	24	35	4	25	2.57	1.03	18.2%	5.1%	.272	73.0%	7.7%	12.9%	62.4%
2013	MLB	25	44.7	1	46	6.04	1.61	23.0%	10.5%	.359	61.5%	20.0%	19.2%	63.8%
Proj.			93	7	74	3.90	1.29	20.5%						

Odds are if you're reading this you're aware of Anderson's lengthy injury history the past four seasons and how he has only made 43 starts during that time and has pitched 163 innings the past three seasons. Let's forget the injury concern for the moment and discuss the pitcher first. Anderson is a surprising good fit for Rockies ballpark as his ground ball rate has increased every year in the majors (image below). In the **Jordan Lyles** player capsule I discuss how the Rockies were able to have three starters with ERAs under 3.50 last year (**Tyler Chatwood**, **Jorge De La Rosa** and **Jhoulys Chacin**). Basically, all them have high ground ball rates and induce more weak contact than hard.



With Colorado being the best hitter's park in the majors, the more weak contact a pitcher can induce the better. If you combine the high ground ball rate with the low 6.3 career walk rate you have the recipe for a pitcher to be successful. There is one major concern; he has a below average strikeout rate. In his last three seasons (162 innings) he only has a strikeout rate of 19 percent, two full percentage points less than my minimum threshold of 21.8 percent. In his only fully healthy year as a starter (2009) he had a 20.4 percent strikeout rate which provides optimism.

Going to Colorado isn't necessarily the fantasy death sentence most fantasy owners think. Don't forget the NL West contains three of the best pitcher's parks in the majors, which will make him a great streaming option. The big question is will make enough starts to even be a streaming option? When I think of how Anderson's career will play out I can't help but think of **Rich Harden**; a pitcher who had

amazing potential, looked really good when they first made it to the majors, but could never stay on the field. Despite spending a lot of time on the DL, he threw 140-plus innings three times. That may not sound a lot, but if Anderson can throw 140 innings he should provide a profit for his fantasy owners. His draft day value is going to be extremely suppressed, which means he doesn't have to have 32 starts to make a profit. When you draft him you should expect no more than 15 starts with a 21 percent strikeout rate and a average ERA and WHIP totals.

Chris Archer

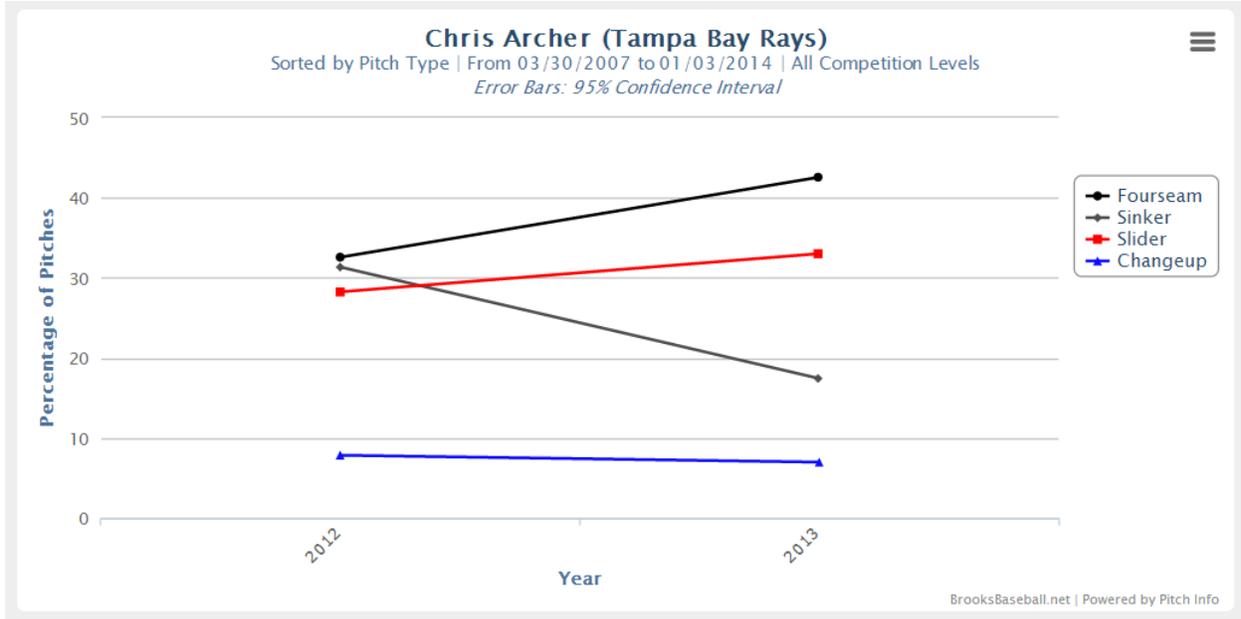
Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Rays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (64), NFBC (84)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	23	29.3	1	36	4.60	1.23	29.5%	10.7%	.290	61.0%	13.0%	34.8%	48.5%
2013	AAA	24	50	5	52	3.96	1.46	23.2%	10.3%	.000	73.6%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	24	128.7	9	101	3.22	1.13	19.2%	7.2%	.253	78.8%	16.1%	26.3%	50.6%
Proj.			190	13	146	3.59	1.17	19.8%						

Ok, I get it the 79 percent LOB% and .253 BABIP make it look like Archer is a prime candidate for regression as his FIP (4.07) and xFIP (3.91) would indicate. However, I don't put much weight on those two estimated performance metrics because those statistics assumes every a pitcher playing on a level playing field (i.e. same defense, ballpark and etc). However, that's not reality. Pitchers pitch in more favorable pitching environments and / or better defenses. The Tampa Rays pitching staff as a team had a .286 BABIP and 73.6 LOB%. When you compare Archer's numbers against the Rays pitching staff his numbers are going to regress, but not as much as his FIP and xFIP would indicate.

The biggest improvement Archer made in 2013 was the lower walk rate. This is something he's been consistently working on. In 2011 it was 13 percent (in double-a and triple-a), in 2012 his walk rate was 11 percent and last year it was only 7.2 percent (in the majors). The improved command has led to a decreased strikeout rate, but I don't see that as a red flag moving forward because he has two plus-plus offerings (fastball and slider) that can miss a lot of bats. That said, if the strikeout rate drops even further he'll only a stream only option in 10-team leagues.

The key to whether Archer becomes a top 20 or top 40 fantasy starter is dependent on how the changeup matures. During the last two years he's basically been a two-pitch pitcher (image from BrooksBaseball.net below), throwing his fastball and slider 93 percent of the time (the sinker is his two-seam fastball). As of now his repotoirre is not conducive to getting left handers out consistently. If the changeup develops, it will be the perfect compliment to the fastball against left handed hitters. In the last two years lefties having a slash line of .266/.344/.472 (in 364 plate appearances) so if he's going to take the next step and become a dominant starting pitcher the changeup has to become a true third pitch. Michael Valancius at DRaysBay says [otherwise](#).



Overall, Archer will never have great command, but with a walk rate of 7.2 percent, the two plus-plus pitches, his home ballpark and the defense behind him will give him an opportunity to be more than a streaming option. Archer has more upside, in 2014, than **Matt Moore**.

Jake Arrieta

Throws: R | Age: 28 | Team: Cubs | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (172), NFBC (143)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	26	114.7	3	109	6.20	1.37	22.0%	7.1%	.320	57.3%	18.2%	27.4%	50.2%
2013	AAA	27	79.3	7	77	4.08	1.35	22.8%	8.9%	.000	66.9%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	27	75.3	5	60	4.78	1.33	18.5%	12.7%	.239	69.3%	15.3%	29.5%	45.5%
Proj.			160	10	119	4.20	1.31	19.1%						

It's pretty rare to have a pitcher with the raw ability to be an ace be a big unknown to the majority of the fantasy community, but that's what Arrieta is, a pitcher with ace stuff but hasn't yet harnessed that stuff. His fastball has natural boring action, sits 93-95 mph with room for more and most importantly he can hold the velocity late into games. He throws a slider, changeup and curveball; all of which can be bat missers.

There are times when he's on and when he is not, he can be one of the best pitchers in the majors. For example check out his performance on August 16 against the Cardinals. However, there are many times when he looks really bad and becomes extremely hittable. Since his performance can vary from start to start his overall future may be a reliever (a very dominant one), but for 2014 the Cubs, who are in need of high ceiling pitching they are going to give Arrieta every opportunity to succeed as a starter. Despite the really good stuff his strikeout rate decreased nearly four percentage points; the tradeoff could be that he generated the highest contact rates since his rookie season. Overall, Arrieta is a lottery ticket

you should get during the backend of your drafts because it's possible he starts to put it all together and becomes an ace; if he struggles you'll have no problem dropping him; win-win.

Bronson Arroyo

Throws: R | Age: 37 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (50), NFBC (46)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	34	199	9	108	5.07	1.37	12.6%	5.3%	.278	74.4%	21.3%	34.1%	43.8%
2012	MLB	35	202	12	129	3.74	1.21	15.4%	4.2%	.286	76.7%	14.1%	30.4%	46.7%
2013	MLB	36	202	14	124	3.79	1.15	15.1%	4.1%	.267	77.9%	23.9%	21.8%	49.8%
Proj.			202	11	114	3.90	1.19	14.5%						

Arroyo is one of the most extremely durable pitchers in the last ten years, averaging 200-plus innings since 2004. Anyone who has seen him pitch knows he's innings-eating junkballer who is extremely effective against right handed hitters and struggles against left handed pitchers. The table below is his breakdown against lefties and righties since 2008.

Split	AVG	OPS	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Righties	.232	.661	18.4%	5.6%	10.1%
Lefties	.294	.846	11.2%	6.3%	15.1%

Since he doesn't have overpowering stuff he'll be more susceptible to the home run and he has been good at limiting the home run for most of his career, but in two of the last three years he's had HR/FB rates greater than 14 percent. Last year he had the second highest HR/FB rate of his career and the only reason he didn't have an ERA as high as 2010 was the extremely low .267 BABIP. If he had his career BABIP of .292 his ERA would have been in the mid-4s. That said, in deeper mixed leagues Arroyo is a safe pitcher in that he'll provide 200 innings of fairly average numbers in three categories. Also, since he doesn't walk hitters the likelihood of him hurting your ratios in a stream is lower than most stream-only options. That said, before you stream him, you preferably you want to avoid lineups with good left handed hitters. Lastly, I do not believe the move to Arizona has any effect (positive or negative) on his stats in 2014 because he's moving from one hitter's ballpark to another one.

Homer Bailey

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Reds | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (22), NFBC (24)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	132	9	106	4.43	1.28	18.9%	5.9%	.296	71.2%	15.8%	29.9%	45.1%
2012	MLB	26	208	13	168	3.68	1.24	19.2%	5.9%	.290	73.6%	14.5%	29.9%	49.7%
2013	MLB	27	209	11	199	3.49	1.12	23.4%	6.4%	.284	73.7%	18.0%	20.4%	51.7%
Proj.			205	15	171	3.50	1.15	21.5%						

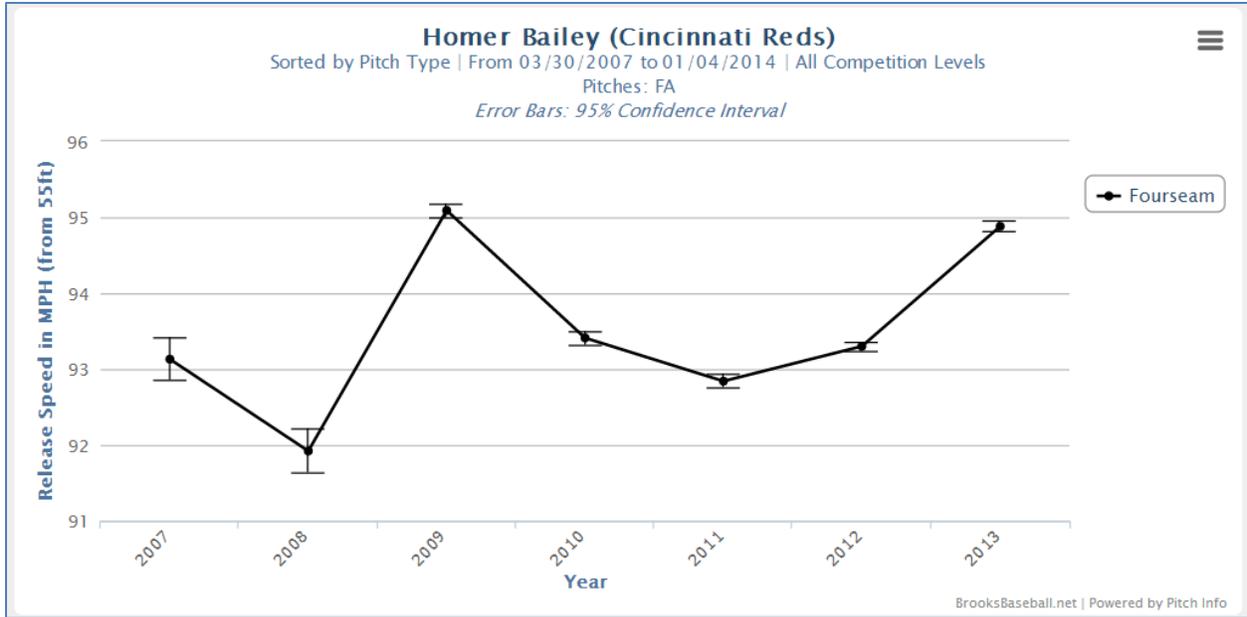
The best way to describe Bailey's 2013 season was he took another step forward. The strikeout rate increased four percentage points, the ground ball rate was the highest of his career, his command improved dramatically despite what the slight increase in walk rate would suggest. The question is will he take the next step to becoming a top 10, 15 fantasy pitcher? The biggest hurdle he'll have to overcome are his home-road splits (table below; the data is for his career) because the Reds play in one of the best hitter's parks in the majors.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	OPS	K%	BB%
Home	4.64	1.37	.269	.767	21.1%	7.7%
Away	3.69	1.24	.250	.686	18.4%	6.8%

Last year he posted a 3.35 ERA and 1.03 WHIP so it's possible he may have turned the corner. Another aspect of his game that has improved greatly is the reduction of blowup starts (below); a blowup start is defined by an outing where he gives up five or more earned runs.

- **2008:** 50%
- **2009:** 30%
- **2010:** 21.1%
- **2011:** 18.2%
- **2012:** 15.2%
- **2013:** 12.5%

Lastly, the velocity on his fastball took a big jump, going from 93 mph to nearly 95 mph (image below is from BrooksBaseball.net). A possible reason for this was he threw the fastball less than ever before; in 2010 he threw it 62 percent of the time and last year he only threw it 47 percent of the time. Instead of throwing the four-seam fastball he relied more on the two-seam fastball, throwing it seven percent of the time in 2010 to nearly 14 percent last year. Therefore, it's no surprise his ground ball rate was a career high last year; two-seam fastballs typically moves down and in to his arm side, which limits the amount of hard contact from right handed hitters.



Overall, Bailey is one of the safest pitchers heading into fantasy drafts because of the increased use of the two-seam fastball and the velocity spike of the four-seam. The only concern I have is how high will the strikeout rate be? Was last year’s strikeout rate sustainable or an outlier? I recommending counting on a strikeout rate of 21-22 percent instead of the 23 percent he posted last year.

Trevor Bauer

Throws: R | Age: 23 | Team: Indians | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	21	16.3	1	17	6.06	1.65	22.1%	16.9%	.273	59.5%	15.4%	29.5%	50.0%
2013	AAA	22	121.3	6	106	4.15	1.58	19.3%	13.3%	.000	76.1%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	22	17	1	11	5.29	1.82	13.6%	19.8%	.240	75.5%	17.6%	36.2%	40.4%
Proj.			120	7	70	4.50	1.40	15.0%						

This is what Chris Mellen had to say [about Bauer](#), “The enigmatic Bauer has the talent to be much higher on this list, but the application of that talent has been lacking since being acquired by the organization. The former third-overall pick needs to commit to making adjustments, which starts with refinding his delivery.”

I’ve watched all of his starts in the majors and one start in triple-a (in 2012) and I have concerns as to whether or not he can throw strikes consistently. Based on his walk totals in triple-a last year it looks as though problems have persisted and maybe got even worse. [Alex Speier](#) wrote a great article as to why Bauer had trouble throwing the ball for strikes in 2013. This is a snippet from the piece, “He reduced his stride in 2013, but in doing so, he gave up some of the Lincecum-like tilt in his hips and shoulders that had been a defining element of his delivery at his most effective. Not only did his control suffer, but his stuff flattened out.” Despite his poor 2013 season Bauer still has a legitimate opportunity to earn the

fifth spot in the rotation with **Carlos Carrasco** being his primary competition. Based on Alex Speier's article he has made an adjustment and the stuff looks extremely better. Obviously we need to see how he looks against live hitters before we make a more accurate judgment about his fantasy viability. As of mid-February no one is talking about Bauer in the fantasy community, which makes him a perfect buy low candidate in deep mixed leagues.

Brandon Beachy

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Braves | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	25	81	5	68	2.00	0.96	21.3%	9.1%	.200	77.9%	7.6%	38.0%	45.2%
2013	AAA	26	30	1	26	3.00	1.37	20.0%	13.8%	.000	78.8%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	26	30	2	23	4.50	1.03	19.2%	3.3%	.250	58.3%	15.6%	36.4%	46.6%
Proj.			165	9	125	4.45	1.34	19.5%						

In June of 2012 Beachy underwent Tommy John surgery and was only able to make five starts in 2013 before his elbow flared up again. He eventually underwent arthroscopic surgery in September to [cleanup the lingering debris](#). According to the Braves he's expected to be ready for the start of spring training. However, I do not trust pitchers in their first year back because command is the last thing to comeback; typically it takes a full year before they're back to the pitcher they once were. For example, **Adam Wainwright** was one of the best pitchers in baseball before missing the entire 2011 season with a TJ surgery. Upon his return he had a 4.73 ERA and 1.34 WHIP during the first half of the season before showing glimpses of the Wainwright of old. The one promising thing about his brief time in the majors last year was the velocity on his fastball was nearly what it was pre-surgery.

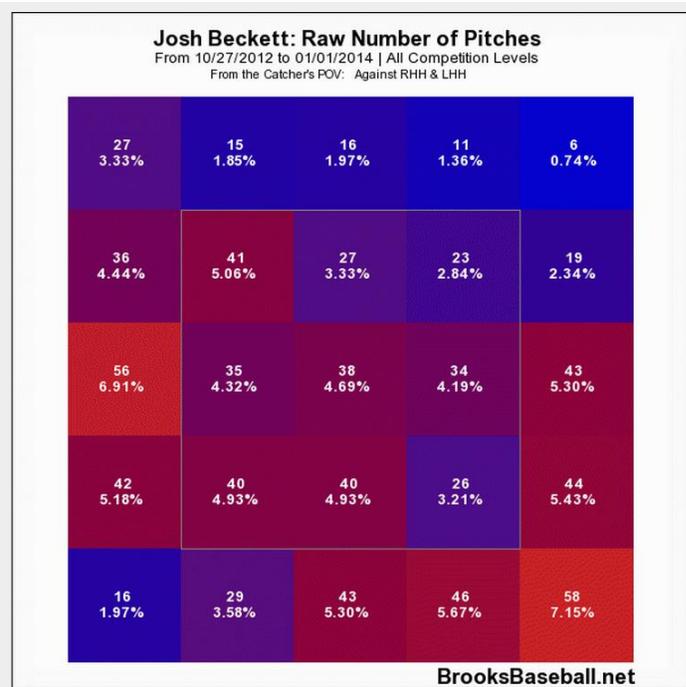
Josh Beckett

Throws: R | Age: 32 | Team: Dodgers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	31	193	13	175	2.89	1.03	22.8%	6.8%	.245	80.0%	12.2%	35.8%	46.4%
2012	MLB	32	170.3	7	132	4.65	1.33	18.1%	7.1%	.294	69.4%	12.8%	32.5%	47.7%
2013	MLB	33	43.3	0	41	5.19	1.50	21.0%	7.7%	.323	65.7%	19.0%	31.6%	43.6%
Proj.			150	11	115	4.45	1.41	19.8%						

To quote Eric Stephen at [True Blue LA](#), "Injuries cut short Beckett's season. He went on the disabled list in June with a left groin strain, but as that malady healed Beckett began to feel tingling and numbness in his fingers. He was eventually shut down with nerve irritation and ultimately had surgery in July to remove a rib on his right side to relieve the pressure in his nerves caused by Thoracic Outlet Syndrome." In terms of forecasting what to expect from Beckett it's going to be tough because there isn't much history to go on; I will say he used the same doctor as **Chris Carpenter** a year ago and he missed the entire 2013 season. As of early January I'm penciling Beckett for 150 innings and roughly 24 starts with the expectation he'll eventually be healthy in 2014.

The drop in fastball velocity from 2011 to 2012 has been well documented, but his fastball quietly ticked up one mph last year (from 92 to 93 mph). He'll never be a power arm again and has to remake himself into a command-control pitcher who will change speeds. Based on his recent starts as a Dodger (in 2012 and 2013) it doesn't look like this is going to happen. For example, he's always loved throwing the fastball up in the zone, which is fine when you're throwing 97 mph. However, if you're throwing 90-92 then the pitch becomes more hittable. The image below, from BrooksBaseball.net, shows the pitch frequency of fastballs; the percentages are nearly the same as earlier in his career.



Archie Bradley

Throws: R | Age: 21 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	A	19	136	12	152	3.84	1.26	26.1%	14.4%	.248	68.7%	7.0%	27.2%	59.5%
2013	A+	20	28.7	2	43	1.26	1.12	37.4%	8.7%	.000	89.0%	-	-	-
2013	AA	20	123.3	12	119	1.97	1.23	23.5%	11.7%	.000	81.2%	-	-	-
Proj.			110	8	98	3.65	1.25	23.0%						

Even though Bradley has yet to make it past double-a and is not expected to even sniff a job in the majors to begin the year, he made it in this year's guide because of his tremendous upside and the status of the general manager and the state of Diamondbacks rotation, specifically the injury history of **Brandon McCarthy**. For a full scouting report on Bradley [go here](#), but this my takeaway from reading Jason Parks' report. He is going to miss a lot of bats, he has the body to log 200-plus innings and has the OFP (overall future potential) to be an ace and has already dominated double-a and appears near ready for the majors. This is the last year of Kevin Towers' contract, which means this is going to be a make or

break year for him. After back to back 81 win seasons it's time for all of Towers' trades and signings to manifest themselves into winning and a playoff berth. McCarthy has only averaged 139 innings the past three seasons which means the Diamondbacks are going to need a sixth starter and currently the best options are either Bradley or **Josh Collmenter**. Combine all three of those factors means he could be this year's **Gerrit Cole**, who gets called up in July and helps you win your league.

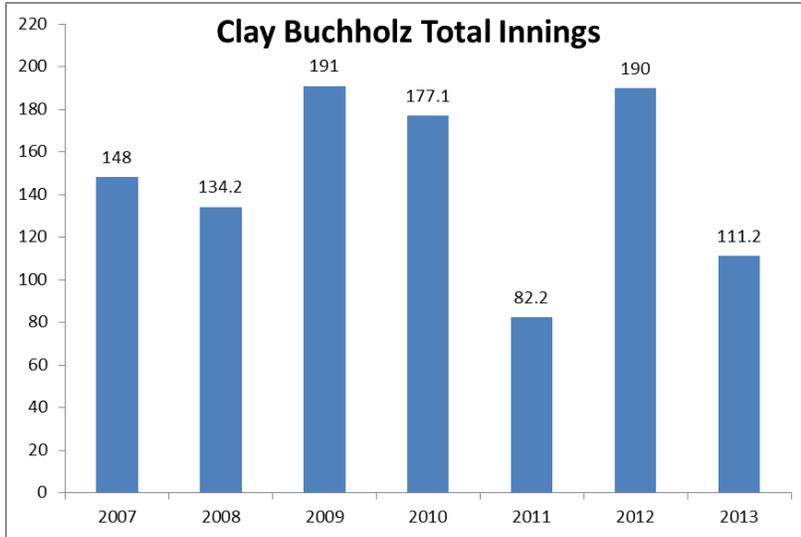
Clay Buchholz

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Red Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (21), NFBC (69)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	82.7	6	60	3.48	1.29	17.0%	8.8%	.264	78.9%	13.0%	31.7%	54.7%
2012	MLB	27	189.3	11	129	4.56	1.33	16.1%	8.0%	.284	69.7%	15.9%	28.0%	52.4%
2013	MLB	28	108.3	12	96	1.74	1.02	23.1%	8.7%	.254	83.6%	5.6%	26.4%	51.7%
Proj.			140	10	124	3.50	1.20	22.8%						

It's easy to see the .254 BABIP and 83.7 percent LOB% rate and say a regression is coming, but those statistics do not explain the dramatic spike in Buchholz's strikeout rate. Last year he threw the cutter more than ever before and with good reason; FanGraphs rated it as 11.9, which ranked as fourth among pitchers with at least 100 innings thrown last year. The cutter decreased in velocity by two mph, but what he lost in velocity he gained in movement, specifically horizontal movement. According to [Gordon Edes](#) the horizontal movement increased from 1.8 inches to 3.4 in 2013. "Last season, they batted .248 with a slugging percentage of .323. This season, it's a .135 average, with a .154 slugging percentage. The strikeout percentage on the pitch also has risen, from 13.8 percent last season to 17.2. (data as of May 21)." Buchholz confirms in the article that he has two cutters; one as get me over pitch and the other as put-away pitch.

His biggest red flag is injuries. They have been a major part of his career the past three seasons; last year it was a neck / shoulder; in 2012 it was a bad back (at the end of the year); in 2011 it was the back again. The graph below shows the total number of innings he's pitched since 2007 (both majors and minors). You'll notice he's never eclipsed 200 innings in his career; he has pitched more than 190 innings twice (in 2009 and 2012) though.



When rostering Buchholz you're taking a gamble on whether or not he can throw more than 140 innings. If he can stay healthy, he has top-20 starter upside because I believe the new strikeout rate and he'll pitch for one the best teams in the majors will allow him greater opportunities to earn wins. For my projections I'm projected him for 140 innings, which could be too conservative, but the injuries he's suffered the past three seasons are injuries that linger instead of going away.

Mark Buehrle

Throws: L | Age: 35 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (96), NFBC (88)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	205.3	13	109	3.59	1.30	12.7%	5.2%	.294	73.3%	11.2%	29.2%	50.8%
2012	MLB	33	202.3	13	125	3.74	1.17	15.1%	4.8%	.270	74.8%	13.4%	31.6%	46.7%
2013	MLB	34	203.7	12	139	4.15	1.35	15.9%	5.8%	.305	73.4%	15.3%	24.9%	51.5%
Proj.			202	11	118	4.10	1.30	15.0%						

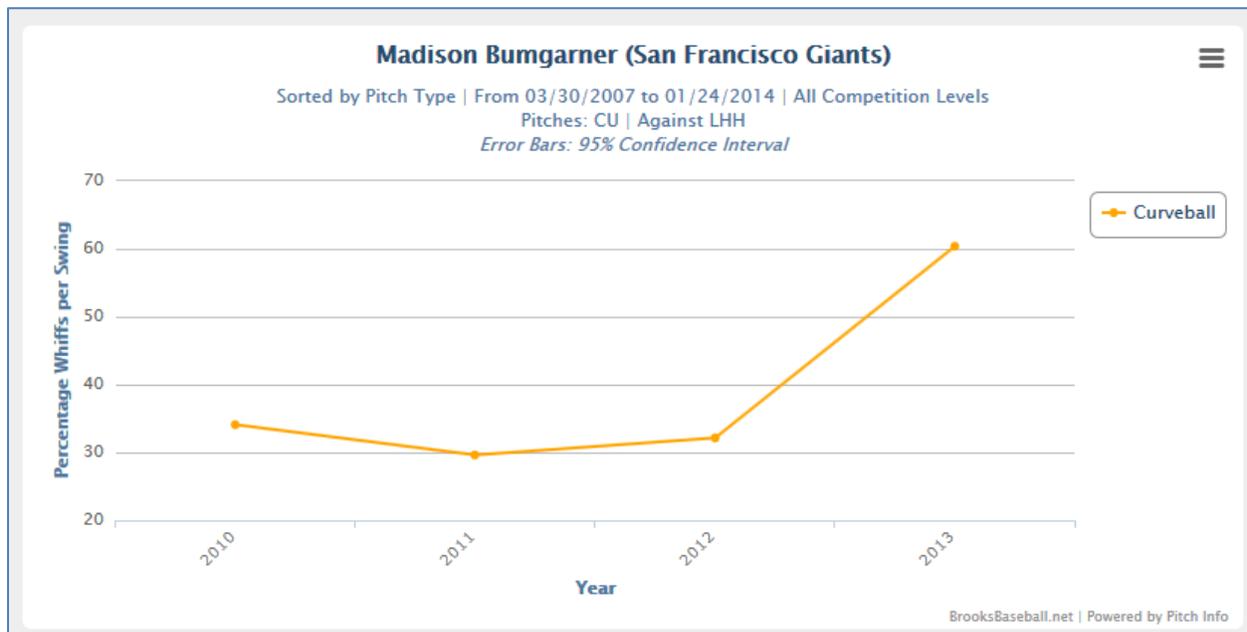
Buehrle is a quality real life starting pitcher, but should not be drafted in mixed leagues less than 15 teams because he does not provide average production in any category. Also, pitchers like him will be freely available on the waiver wire all year so I recommend taking any other lottery ticket available before thinking of drafting Buehrle. Lastly, don't be fooled by the 3.36 ERA at home last year as his 1.34 WHIP points to him getting lucky last year.

Madison Bumgarner

Throws: L | Age: 24 | Team: Giants | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (9), NFBC (9)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	204.7	13	191	3.21	1.21	22.6%	5.5%	.322	72.4%	7.4%	28.6%	50.9%
2012	MLB	22	208.3	16	191	3.37	1.11	22.5%	5.8%	.276	73.5%	13.9%	29.1%	52.2%
2013	MLB	23	201.3	13	199	2.77	1.03	24.8%	7.7%	.252	75.6%	13.8%	22.3%	53.3%
Proj.			205	14	195	3.20	1.07	24.5%						

It's hard to believe how consistent Bumgarner has been considering he just turned 24 in August. Other than the .251 BABIP and the increase in walk rate (which coincided with the increase in strikeout rate) there is not a lot to be concerned about heading into 2014. The biggest question I have is how will the strikeout repeat or will it regress? The jump in strikeout rate came solely against left handed hitters. Last year they struck out 36 percent compared to 25.5 percent in 2011-12. So what caused him to be more effective against lefties? The curveball. The image below (courtesy from BrooksBaseball.net) shows the swing and miss rate doubled against the curveball last year. Do I believe in the new strikeout rate? Yes.



The only concern I have is durability. Specifically, Bumgarner throws a high proportion of sliders, throwing the slider 40 percent of the time. Some research has been done suggesting throwing sliders [creates a higher risk of injury](#), then throwing less sliders reduces his injury risk. I personally do not agree throwing sliders increases the likelihood of injury. Overall, he is one of the safest starting pitchers. Last year's ERA is probably is not repeatable, but he should have an ERA in the 3s. The new strikeout is legitimate. He pitches in one of the best pitcher's ballparks in the majors and has logged 200-plus innings for four years in a row.

A.J. Burnett

Throws: R | Age: 37 | Team: Phillies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (34), NFBC (31)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	34	190.3	11	173	5.15	1.43	20.7%	9.9%	.294	70.0%	20.4%	28.0%	53.6%
2012	MLB	35	202.3	16	180	3.51	1.24	21.2%	7.3%	.294	74.1%	14.6%	21.4%	60.9%
2013	MLB	36	191	10	209	3.30	1.21	26.1%	8.4%	.305	71.8%	12.0%	18.2%	59.9%
Proj.			190	12	185	3.65	1.28	25.0%						

Last year Burnett's strikeout increased five percentage points to 26.1 percent, which was the ninth highest in the majors among starting pitchers with at least 20 starts. The reason why the strikeout rate ticked up came primarily against right handed hitters as the strikeout rate increased from 22 percent to 29.6 percent. The biggest adjustment he made was the location of the fastball. For example, the percentage of pitches up in the zone decreased by six percentage points (to only 30 percent of the time) while the percentage of pitches down in the zone increased five percentage points. Unlike a lot of strikeout pitchers Burnett induces a lot of ground balls and he was able to maintain the same ground ball rate despite the increase in strikeout rate. Moving to the Phillies will have a dramatic effect on his ground balls turning into outs. First, the defensive infield on the left side of the diamond is below average; **Jimmy Rollins** and **Cody Asche** are both below average defenders. Also, **Ryan Howard** is a well below average defender. Last year the Pirates, according to Baseball Info Solutions, shifted 494 times, the sixth-most in the majors. The Phillies hardly used the shift (the Phillies shifted only 45 times last season, the second-fewest), which is going to also limit Burnett's effectiveness in 2014.

Trevor Cahill

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (140), NFBC (94)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	207.7	12	147	4.16	1.43	16.3%	9.1%	.302	72.8%	13.3%	22.3%	59.1%
2012	MLB	24	200	13	156	3.78	1.29	18.6%	8.8%	.289	71.4%	14.2%	19.7%	65.7%
2013	MLB	25	146.7	8	102	3.99	1.42	16.0%	10.2%	.289	73.5%	15.7%	18.4%	59.5%
Proj.			170	11	102	4.05	1.38	15.5%						

Cahill originally landed on the disabled list on July 1 with a right hip contusion, but he tweaked his throwing shoulder not too long after that. In total, he missed six weeks. Upon his return from the DL he posted a 2.70 ERA. However, don't get your hopes up as the ERA was accompanied by a 1.44 WHIP so he wasn't suddenly pitching better. When looking at his career stats the 2010 season stands out like a sore thumb. If you remove that season he's basically a high three, low four ERA pitcher who doesn't strikeout a lot of batters, but generates outs via the ground ball. Since he's a ground ball pitcher a repeat of the 2010 season can always happen, but FanGraphs rates all of pitches (except for the changeup he hardly throws) as below average; he has four seasons of average performances and has limited upside.

Matt Cain

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Giants | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (67), NFBC (65)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	221.7	12	179	2.88	1.08	19.7%	6.9%	.260	70.6%	4.6%	33.2%	48.7%
2012	MLB	27	219.3	16	193	2.79	1.04	22.0%	5.8%	.259	79.0%	10.7%	34.5%	44.7%
2013	MLB	28	184.3	8	158	4.00	1.16	20.8%	7.2%	.260	71.6%	16.2%	28.9%	43.1%
Proj.			200	13	156	3.42	1.13	20.0%						

What happened to Cain last year? He had one of the weirdest years in recent memory. He pitched really well in most of the games he pitched; 20 of his 30 starts were quality starts, which tied him for 30th among all starting pitchers. However, despite pitching well in the majority of his starts, it seemed as though he was more susceptible to the blowup start (outings where a pitcher gives up five or more earned runs). In 266 career starts Cain has 42 blowup starts, which is a little less than 16 percent of his starts. Last year he had five blowup starts, which was a little less than 17 percent of his starts so he didn't have a vastly larger number of blowup starts. The table below provides the percent of blowup starts as well as his ERA for all of his blowup starts. The data suggests there are two trends. First, the percentage of blowup starts are increasing and last year his blowup starts were extremely brutal in terms of ERA. The cause for the increase of blowup starts could be due to (or a mix of) bad luck, decreased quality of his stuff or the [elbow fragments](#) in his right elbow that could have caused discomfort.

Year	Blowup Start ERA	% of Blowup Starts
2006	10.37	25%
2007	14.73	13%
2008	10.16	21%
2009	8.87	12%
2010	11.25	12%
2011	7.80	15%
2012	7.18	16%
2013	13.69	17%

It is also worth noting the first half and second half splits. The differences that jump out at me are the LOB and HR/FB, but it's hard to pin all of his performance on those two stats alone; during the second half of the season he faced teams with an overall winning percentage of 48 percent, which also could have inflated his stats.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	LOB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	5.06	1.18	.226	.262	22.1%	7.9%	63.4%	12.8%
2nd Half	2.36	1.12	.232	.265	18.8%	6.1%	84.5%	7.9%

I wasn't buying Cain in last year's guide because I never like pitchers who continue to work up in the zone despite a velocity decline. Last year his velocity was the same as the past two seasons, but he still likes to throw the ball up in the zone; based on my calculations he threw it in that location 35 percent of the time, which is only four percentage points less than the 2008-09 seasons. I believe Cain got unlucky with the number of runs he allowed in his blowup starts and there should be some regression.

Chris Capuano

Throws: L | Age: 35 | Team: Red Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (175), NFBC (135)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	186	11	168	4.55	1.35	20.9%	6.6%	.311	72.0%	16.1%	32.1%	48.9%
2012	MLB	33	198.3	12	162	3.72	1.22	19.8%	6.6%	.284	73.2%	14.2%	32.4%	46.9%
2013	MLB	34	105.7	4	81	4.26	1.41	17.7%	5.3%	.334	68.9%	12.8%	25.7%	50.4%
Proj.			120	7	82	4.02	1.30	17.5%						

Capuano was on the DL two times and missed 52 games with a [calf strain](#) in April, [shoulder strain](#) in June and a [groin strain](#) in September. Also, this is a pitcher who has had two TJ surgeries in his career. Other than injuries there are other trends that are not promising. His strikeout rate has decreased year over year for three straight years and last year he allowed the highest batting average against of his career (albeit with a .334 BABIP). Overall, he's stream only option as he doesn't provide any exceptional statistical output with a long injury history who just turned 35 years old.

Carlos Carrasco

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Indians | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	124.7	8	85	4.62	1.36	15.9%	7.5%	.293	69.3%	14.3%	27.6%	54.3%
2013	AAA	26	71.7	3	79	3.14	1.12	26.5%	7.0%	.000	70.9%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	26	46.7	1	30	6.75	1.76	13.8%	8.3%	.364	60.7%	11.1%	22.2%	52.5%
Proj.			140	7	103	4.25	1.29	19.0%						

Based on Carrasco's 13.8 percent strikeout it is hard to believe his fastball sits in the 95-97 mph range. He missed part of the 2011 season and all of the 2012 season recovering from a TJ surgery. In 2013 he was up and down between the majors in the minors. It usually takes a year before the command of pitches come back when recovering from a TJ and Carrasco's numbers showed a lack of command in his first half stats in the majors. However, during the second half of the year he performed much better as the table below shows.

Split	Innings	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	28.2	9.10	2.09	.367	.387	10.3%	8.9%	13.8%
2nd Half	18	3.00	1.22	.258	.327	20.8%	6.9%	0.0%

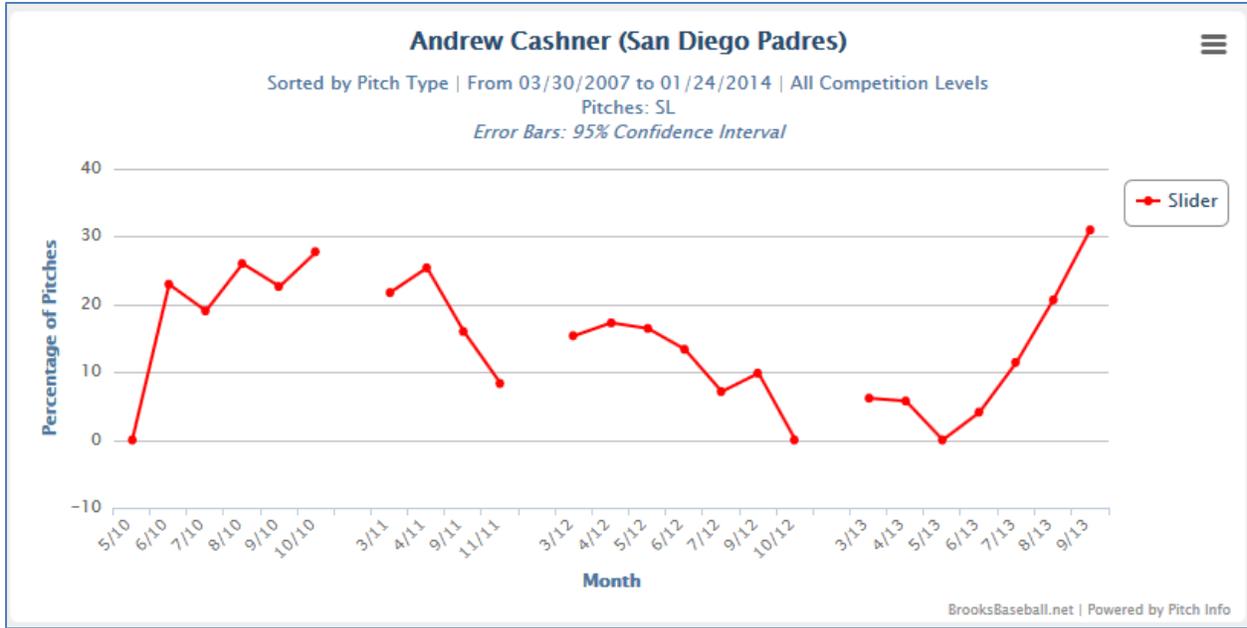
Obviously we're working with a small sample size, but I'm very optimistic about the strikeout rate. If you see him pitch he was really good stuff. His best secondary pitch is the slider, which is a perfect complement to the upper 90s fastball. He also throws a solid changeup which keeps hitters honest. Overall, he has the raw stuff to be a low-end number two or high-end number three starting pitcher. The only question is will the command improve in 2014. It's important to note the majority of the good second half performance came when he was in the bullpen. Five of those innings came in one relief role against the Angels which he looked good. After that outing he was given another opportunity to start (@Minnesota) and gave up four earned runs in 4.1 innings. After that outing he pitched out of the bullpen and pitched great. The Indians have an open competition for the fifth starter spot in the rotation and the two most likely candidates to fill that spot is either Carrasco or **Trevor Bauer**. Carrasco still has the raw stuff to be a very good starting pitcher and if he can improve his fastball command his command of the secondary offerings will not have to be nearly as sharp. If he ends up in the bullpen I wouldn't be surprised if he is the closer at the start of the 2015 season.

Andrew Cashner

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Padres | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (41), NFBC (43)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	10.7	0	8	1.69	0.66	20.5%	10.3%	.077	89.3%	11.1%	33.3%	55.6%
2012	MLB	25	46.3	3	52	4.27	1.32	26.5%	9.7%	.311	70.9%	17.9%	23.9%	59.0%
2013	MLB	26	175	10	128	3.09	1.13	18.1%	6.6%	.269	72.4%	10.9%	21.8%	56.0%
Proj.			185	12	145	3.25	1.14	20.1%						

For the first half of the season Cashner holstered his slider, his best secondary pitch, and never threw it. However, starting in July he started to reincorporate the slider and by the end of the year he was throwing it just as much as he used to do when he was part of the Cubs organization back in 2010-11 (image below courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net).



Despite the slider being used more, the velocity of the slider was a lot lower than previous years. [Chris Cwik](#) questions the classification of Cashner’s slider, implying that the addition of a curveball is lowering the velocity readings because it is being categorized inappropriately. Either way, Cashner’s season was a tale of two halves (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	3.81	1.27	.262	.298	16.2%	6.8%	8.4%
2nd Half	2.14	0.95	.194	.236	20.7%	6.5%	6.5%

Towards the end of the season he started to look like an ace, but there are still health concerns about his ability to sustain a starter’s workload. This presents a buy low opportunity for fantasy owners who believe he will stay healthy this year.

Overall his walk rate decreased three percentage points while the strikeout rate decreased eight percentage points. However after he started to reincorporate the slider the walk rate sustained itself and the strikeout rate ticked back up. There are numerous theories as to why he didn’t throw the slider during the first half of the year. Maybe the Padres took it away so he could further refine his other secondary pitches or maybe they wanted to keep him healthy. There are many questions surrounding his viability heading into 2014. He could be a top 15 starting pitcher or a stream only option. I believe he can stay healthy and the strikeout rate will tick back up to 20-21 percent because the reincorporation of the slider.

Jhoulys Chacin

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Rockies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (58), NFBC (52)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	194	11	150	3.62	1.31	18.1%	10.5%	.262	74.5%	14.7%	24.5%	59.6%
2012	MLB	24	69	3	45	4.43	1.62	14.3%	10.2%	.311	79.0%	14.7%	30.9%	42.3%
2013	MLB	25	197.3	14	126	3.47	1.26	15.4%	7.5%	.288	71.9%	9.2%	20.4%	51.4%
Proj.			100	6	74	3.15	1.25	19.0%						

It seems as though all the Rockies pitchers were given a memo before the 2013 season; it probably said something to the effect of, “do not walk hitters and generate as many ground balls as possible.” And that’s what Chacin (and the other successful starters) did; his walk rate decreased nearly three percentage points and his ground ball rate increased eight percentage points. Chacin is a very interesting buy low candidate, especially if you stream when he’s not at home. The table is a breakdown of his career home-road splits.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	4.18	1.37	.250	.283	16.7%	9.8%	10.3%
Away	2.86	1.28	.235	.284	20.3%	9.7%	7.2%

The high walk rates inflate the pitcher he was last two years, especially for the away games because they were heavily slanted towards the first three years of his career; the last two seasons he’s only had 7.6 percent walk rate. Obviously the road ERA looks too low for its own good, but he’s had ERAs below three in four out of five seasons (table below).

Year	G	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP
2009	4	2.70	2.10	.308	.500
2010	13	2.44	1.24	.219	.300
2011	13	3.68	1.31	.225	.256
2012	7	2.72	1.29	.255	.289
2013	13	2.44	1.22	.243	.292

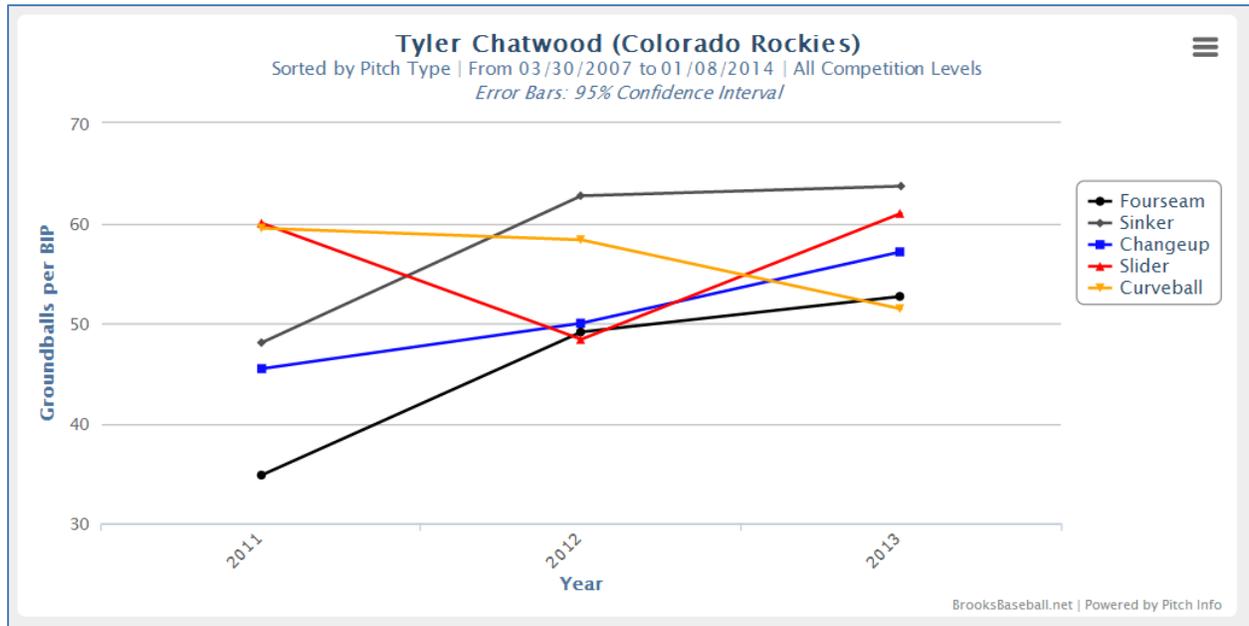
With Chacin’s ability to generate a lot of ground balls, his road performance and the fact he’s only 26 with room for improvement makes him rostersortable in mixed leagues as shallow as 12 teams. It is also worth noting in 2012 he was on the DL for nearly four months with a pectoral injury, which isn’t nearly as bad as a shoulder or elbow; therefore, I’m not that concerned about the injury recurring in 2014.

Tyler Chatwood

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Rockies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (123), NFBC (113)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	22	37.3	0	31	5.79	1.90	17.1%	10.5%	.394	67.0%	7.4%	21.6%	60.8%
2012	MLB	22	64.7	5	41	5.43	1.65	13.9%	11.2%	.308	67.8%	22.5%	18.6%	59.1%
2013	MLB	23	111.3	8	66	3.15	1.43	13.9%	8.6%	.314	76.3%	8.9%	15.7%	61.5%
Proj.			175	10	95	4.05	1.42	14.0%						

When you look at the pitchers who pitched well for them and the acquisition of **Brett Anderson** it appears the Rockies have a type of pitcher they're trying to acquire; they want pitchers who can throw in the 91-95 range who also generate a lot of ground balls. The personification of this type of player is Chatwood as his fastball sits at 94 mph and he had the third highest ground ball rate among starters with at least 100 innings pitched. Other than the curveball all of his pitches had career highs in generating ground balls (image below from BrooksBaseball.net).



Despite the really high ground ball rate there are still signs of regression coming. I looked at starting pitchers with at least 100 innings pitched (by year) since 2008 who had at least had a 52 percent ground ball rate and had a WHIP greater than or equal to 1.43. I was able to find 20 pitchers and they're aggregated ERA that year 4.81. It's possible the WHIP decreases as the .314 BABIP regress, but with 14 percent strikeout rate (i.e. doesn't miss bats consistently) and a 62 percent strike thrown rate he's going to be subject to BABIP fluctuations. I bet the ERA increases a full run next year; if you're wondering if he performed better on the road versus' at home, his numbers are identical.

Wei-Yin Chen

Throws: L | Age: 28 | Team: Orioles | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (124), NFBC (101)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	26	192.7	12	154	4.02	1.26	18.8%	7.0%	.274	72.8%	13.9%	38.0%	42.6%
2013	AA	27	12	1	8	3.00	0.92	18.2%	4.5%	.000	63.6%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	27	137	7	104	4.07	1.32	18.2%	6.8%	.305	76.0%	14.7%	30.1%	39.6%
Proj.			180	11	126	4.01	1.29	18.0%						

In mid-May Chen went on the DL with a [right oblique strain](#) and missed nearly two months of the season. When you watch Chen pitch, what you see is what you get; a 90-92 mph fastball with three average to below average pitches. What he lacks in stuff he makes up with the ability to throw strikes with any of his pitches. He's a fly ball pitcher and without plus stuff he'll always have larger home run totals (i.e. above average HR/FB rates). He does have a solid strikeout rate considering his stuff, which will make him a useful spot start, especially when he's at home. He has a 20.1 percent strikeout rate at home in 27 starts compared to only a 17 percent strikeout rate on the road (in 28 starts).

Tony Cingrani

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Reds | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (63), NFBC (86)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	22	5	0	9	1.80	1.20	40.9%	9.1%	.300	108.7%	25.0%	36.4%	63.6%
2013	AAA	23	31.3	3	49	1.15	0.80	41.9%	9.4%	.000	89.4%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	104.7	7	120	2.92	1.10	28.6%	10.2%	.241	82.1%	18.4%	33.6%	40.7%
Proj.			170	9	159	3.79	1.39	24.0%						

Cingrani is essentially a one pitch pitcher. He throws the fastball 81 percent of the time, which ranks third among starters last year (**Ross Detwiler** and **Bartolo Colon** are the other two ahead of him).

Despite primarily throwing a fastball he had a 28.6 percent strikeout rate; the reason he was able to achieve success is he gets great extension on the mound which makes his 92-94 mph fastball look even faster; also the fastball has excellent life and the deception in the delivery also aids in the fastball's effectiveness; lastly, he can easily change vary the speed of the fastball and can locate it in all four quadrants in bursts. In general, a starting pitcher who primarily throws one pitch and can consistently get outs is exceeding rare.

Despite the gaudy strikeout numbers there are still red flags. The first is the walk rate of ten percent and his 1.10 WHIP. I don't believe the WHIP will repeat itself. I found 46 pitchers since 2010 (with at least 20 starts) who had walk rates greater than or equal to ten percent and the average WHIP was 1.44; the only way the WHIP sustains itself is if the strikeout rate basically repeats, which I do not see happening. Second, he only threw 135 innings, which means he'll likely only be limited to the 170-180 range. Third, the Reds are going to be bad next year; other than **Joey Votto** and **Jay Bruce** the team is going to have a .310 OBP so I don't foresee them scoring runs to earn wins.

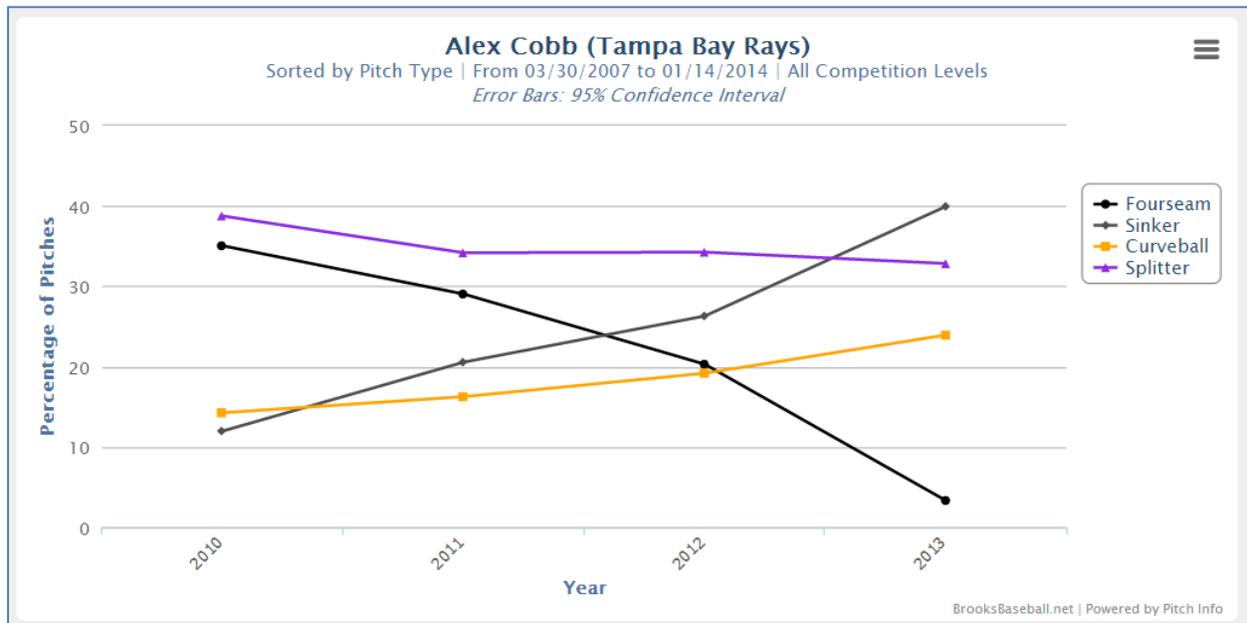
Overall, the stats do not suggest a major regression is coming, but I'm going to be more skeptical than most with my fantasy evaluation of him. Don't forget he only pitched 104 innings last year, which means his stats could be more heavily weighted with a small sample size. Combine that with the reliance on one pitch makes me pessimistic he can perform at the same level as last year.

Alex Cobb

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Rays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (36), NFBC (60)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	41.3	1	44	4.14	1.50	23.7%	9.7%	.355	68.7%	4.2%	20.5%	59.8%
2012	MLB	24	136.3	11	106	4.03	1.25	18.6%	7.0%	.295	68.5%	14.5%	19.1%	62.7%
2013	MLB	25	143.3	11	134	2.76	1.15	23.2%	7.8%	.279	81.4%	18.3%	18.6%	59.6%
Proj.			200	14	167	3.30	1.20	21.5%						

Cobb missed nearly two months of the season after getting hit by a batted ball in the middle of June. Other than the [removal of one of his ribs](#) to clear a blood clot, Cobb has been relatively healthy. The biggest change in Cobb's game was the elimination of the fastball in favor of increased usage of the sinker. The image, courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#), below shows the pitch the frequency of pitch type in his career.



What's peculiar about Cobb's stat line is he had a HR/FB rate of nearly 15 percent, a LOB% of 81.4 percent while maintaining a 2.76 ERA. He gave up 13 home runs last year and most, if not all, must have come with no one on-base. Also, another sign of good luck was his career best .279 BABIP, but don't let that fool you into believing he was lucky. He was top ten among starters with at least 20 starts in ground ball rate; combine that with a 23 percent strikeout rate, it's no wonder why his BABIP and LOB rates

were so low. Overall, I'm not entirely sold on last year's strikeout rate, but I believe he'll have a 21 percent strikeout rate, which when combined with ground ball rate the Rays superior infield defense bodes well for his fantasy value.

Gerrit Cole

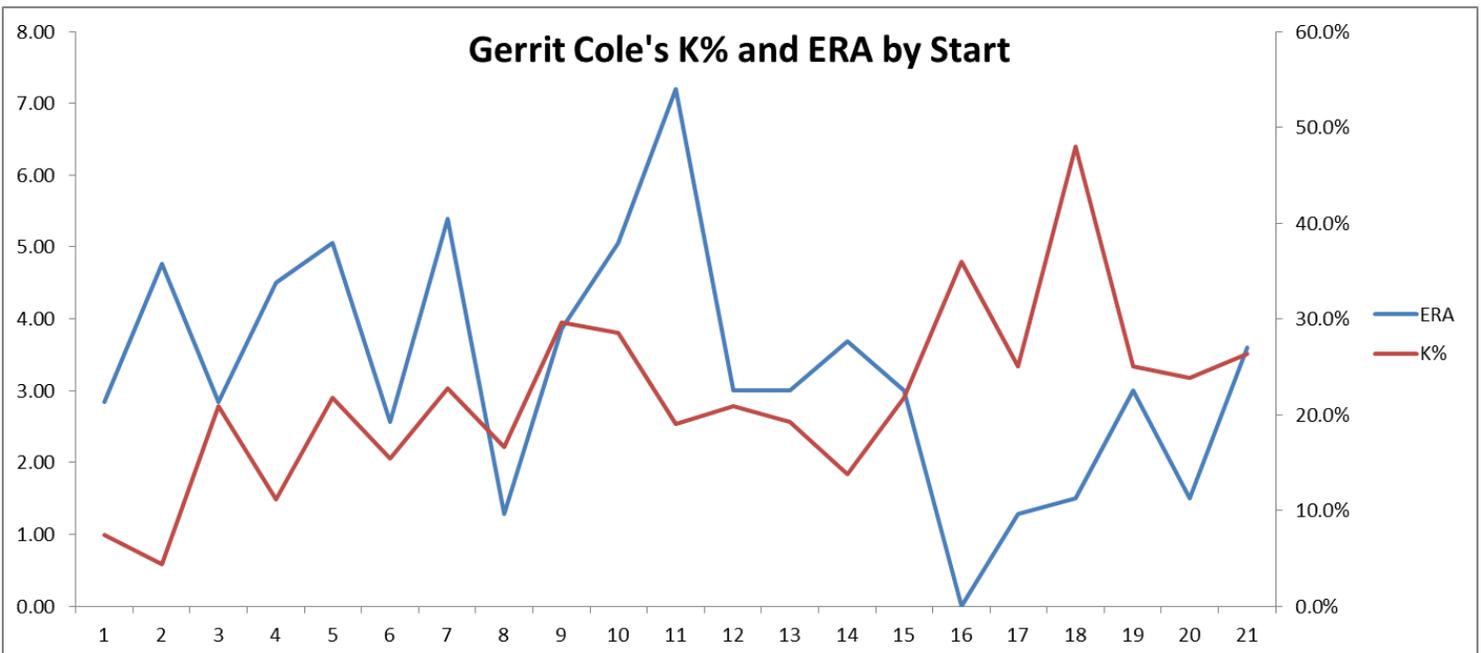
Throws: R | Age: 23 | Team: Pirates | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	21	6	1	7	4.50	1.17	29.2%	4.2%	.375	57.1%	0.0%	37.5%	31.3%
2013	AAA	22	68	5	47	2.91	1.06	17.5%	10.4%	.000	75.3%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	22	117.3	10	100	3.22	1.17	21.3%	6.0%	.308	74.5%	11.5%	18.9%	53.6%
Proj.			180	14	168	3.35	1.19	24.0%						

I'm going to come out and say it. I bet most fantasy analysts are going to jump on the Cole bandwagon and I will happily jump on too. The table below provides his stats in the majors for the entire year including the postseason.

GS	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
21	3.16	1.12	.243	.298	21.6%	5.9%	8.7%

I'm sure a major reason why a lot of fantasy analysts are going to recommend him is how good much better he got as the season wore on (image below). You'll notice after the 14th start the strikeout rate rose dramatically and the ERA consequently went down. In his last seven starts (after the 14th start) he had 29.7 percent strikeout rate, 1.88 ERA and 0.95 WHIP. What happened in the last seven starts that allowed him to be so successful? When he was first called up he threw primarily fastballs, 78 percent of the time, and neglected his secondary stuff. In October he was only throwing the fastball 58.5 percent of the time, throwing his curveball and slider a lot more; the slider could be one of the best sliders in the game when it's thrown with command.



Overall, he has the raw stuff to literally be the best pitcher in baseball and we saw glimpses of how good he can be starting last September. Another thing to consider is how good the Pirates bullpen was last year. The bullpen performance is probably not going repeat what they did last year, but they should be really good yet again, which means if Cole leaves the ballgame with a lead, he's more than likely to earn the win because the bullpen would have held his lead.

Bartolo Colon

Throws: R | Age: 41 | Team: Mets | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (17), NFBC (15)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	38	164.3	8	135	4.00	1.29	19.5%	5.8%	.305	70.0%	13.6%	32.4%	49.1%
2012	MLB	39	152.3	10	91	3.43	1.21	14.3%	3.6%	.286	76.3%	11.9%	29.8%	51.3%
2013	MLB	40	190.3	18	117	2.65	1.17	15.2%	3.8%	.294	80.0%	8.8%	27.5%	46.5%
Proj.			180	12	109	3.40	1.19	15.6%						

Colon's fantasy 2013 tale is a very easy one to tell. He throws a lot of fastballs for strikes, goes six innings and keeps his team in games. With the Mets signing **Chris Young** and **Curtis Granderson** to go along with **Juan Lagares** the Mets may have one of the best defensive outfield's in the majors, which can only improve Colon's ability to get outs since he's fly ball pitcher. He should see a slight uptick in strikeouts as he'll be facing pitchers 2-3 times per start. However, the Mets offense is a giant downgrade from the A's, which means he'll have less wins. That said, other than wins he'll put up similar numbers to 2012 because the team and home ballpark conditions are basically the same and he leaves one of the best divisions in baseball to one of the worst divisions. Lastly, it is very interesting the A's choose to give **Scott Kazmir** more money instead of bringing back Colon. Maybe there's a big reason why Billy Beane choose not Kazmir over Colon?

Patrick Corbin

Throws: L | Age: 24 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (23), NFBC (21)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	22	52.3	3	55	3.44	1.38	24.2%	6.6%	.349	72.7%	11.8%	23.4%	55.2%
2012	MLB	22	107	6	86	4.54	1.33	18.9%	5.5%	.317	71.2%	15.9%	27.5%	48.4%
2013	MLB	23	208.3	14	178	3.41	1.17	20.7%	6.3%	.283	75.9%	15.0%	21.7%	51.2%
Proj.			205	14	165	3.50	1.19	20.7%						

Before the 2013 season began Corbin was seen as nothing more than backend starter whose upside would be to carve out a lengthy, but unspectacular career because he throws a lot of strikes and didn't have. Corbin's 2013 season started off better than any of his biggest fantasy proponents could have imagined, but after the all-star break he fell off completely (table below).

Splits	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	LOB%	HR/FB
1st Half	2.35	1.00	.206	.249	21.2%	6.4%	81.9%	7.3%
2nd Half	5.19	1.45	.289	.343	19.9%	6.1%	68.6%	12.7%

The stats, from both halves, suggest he got extremely lucky in the first half and unlucky during the second half. I don't believe either half is representative of his true talent. Earlier I mentioned he was seen as a contact only pitcher, but last year his contact rate decreased from 82 percent to 78 percent, which is a huge decrease. To add some perspective on contact rates; 82 percent puts him in the top 20 among starting pitchers, in the same company as **Andy Pettitte** and **Wade Miley**; at 78 percent puts him in the top 60 among starting pitchers. As the contact rate fell, the strikeout rate increased three percentage points to levels that make him more than a backend fantasy starting pitcher. If he's going to take a step forward in 2014 the changeup, his third pitch, is going to have to improve. He is a very athletic pitcher and has the ability to make adjustments more quickly than other pitchers. For 2014 I bet he puts up similar numbers to 2013 but the highs and lows will not be as high.

Jarred Cosart

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Astros | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	22	27.7	1	24	2.60	1.41	20.3%	11.0%	.325	75.0%	0.0%	18.7%	62.7%
2013	AAA	23	93	7	93	3.29	1.33	23.2%	12.5%	.000	75.0%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	60	1	33	1.95	1.35	13.4%	14.2%	.246	85.9%	8.6%	20.3%	57.0%
Proj.			180	9	154	4.20	1.45	22.0%						

When you see Cosart's fastball, which sits in the mid-90s, it's easy to fall in love with his fantasy potential. Also, he has a devastating curveball that is a true bat miser. However, he has a problem throwing consistent strikes, which is why his walk rate was 14 percent in his brief call up to the majors and a 11.2 percent walk rate his last two years in the minors. According to [Nick J. Faleris](#), "Cosart has some violence to his delivery, coming with a hard head jerk through his release, leading to inconsistent execution. Additionally, he throws across his body, creating tough angles but also making it difficult to work both sides of the plate and causing command issues with his curveball, in particular."

Overall, he has really good stuff but lacks the command to be as good as the stuff suggests he should be. These shortcomings will probably make him an elite reliever eventually, but for 2014 the Astros are going to give him 170-190 innings to see if he can figure it out because they're not going anywhere in 2014. The 13 percent strikeout rate will tick up, but he's going to lose a lot of value in the WHIP department because of how many walks he's going to allow.

Johnny Cueto

Throws: R | Age: 28 | Team: Reds | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (107), NFBC (153)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	156	9	104	2.31	1.09	16.5%	7.4%	.249	76.4%	7.6%	23.8%	59.0%
2012	MLB	26	217	19	170	2.78	1.17	19.1%	5.5%	.296	78.8%	9.4%	25.9%	53.3%
2013	MLB	27	60.7	5	51	2.82	1.05	21.1%	7.4%	.236	81.5%	24.1%	17.5%	54.8%
Proj.			140	9	108	2.89	1.13	19.8%						

Last year Cueto went on the DL three times for the same injury; [a sore muscle behind his pitching shoulder](#). Before coming off his last DL stint he modified his delivery to help alleviate the recurring injuries to his shoulder and back. Specifically (from [Trent Rosecrans](#)), "I think it's like a golf swing, you get the momentum open, when he flies open, the arm is dragging and the lag in the arm is what causes the pain and the strain," Lessard said. "When he's more closed, mechanically, he's more efficient and he doesn't have that lag in his arm." The results were good in first two starts after the changes were implemented, but he performed poorly in the playoffs against the Pirates.

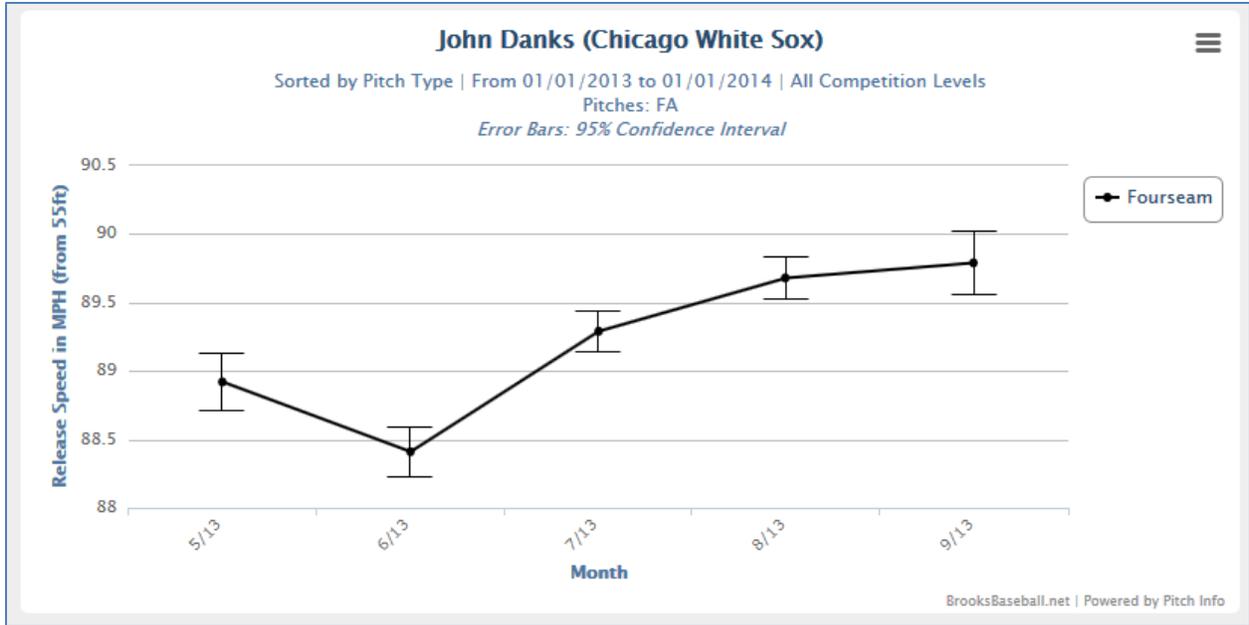
Another aspect to consider is the Reds as a team. In the past 2-3 years the Reds have been a contending team, but that's not going to happen this year. The Reds, outside of **Joey Votto** and **Jay Bruce**, is going to have an aggregate OBP of .310, which means they're not going to be able to score a lot of runs, which therefore will limit his ability to earn wins. Overall, when he's healthy he pitches like an ace, but he has only made 68 starts the past three seasons. The new delivery is encouraging, but there are too many red flags with the injury history and how bad the Reds are going to be make Cueto unattractive for 2014.

John Danks

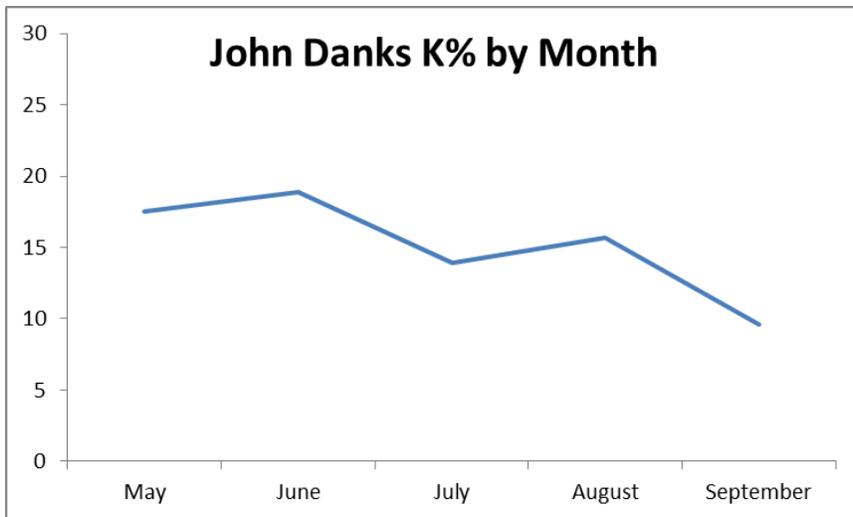
Throws: L | Age: 28 | Team: White Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	170.3	8	135	4.33	1.34	18.5%	6.3%	.313	70.1%	13.6%	28.6%	50.4%
2012	MLB	27	53.7	3	30	5.70	1.49	12.6%	9.7%	.282	64.6%	13.7%	30.4%	50.0%
2013	MLB	28	138.3	4	89	4.75	1.29	15.3%	4.6%	.283	70.7%	22.6%	28.9%	45.5%
Proj.			165	7	96	4.50	1.29	15.0%						

Danks missed the first two months of the season as he continued to recover from the shoulder surgery that caused him to miss most of the 2012 season. When came off the DL he was healthy for the rest of the season, but he did not look like the pitcher we saw earlier in his career. The fastball velocity was the lowest of his career and he was giving up a lot of home runs; he had the second highest HR/9 of any starting pitcher with at least 20 starts last year (**Joe Blanton** had the highest). That said, the velocity ticked up as the season progressed (image below courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#)), which provides optimism.



The walk rate was the lowest of his career, which could be good and bad; bad in that he threw fastballs over the middle of the plate instead of walking someone. Overall, he has had an ERA under four since 2010; the strikeout rate is already below average and it's not improving (image below). He's maybe worth a flyer in the last round of your draft.



Yu Darvish

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Rangers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (5), NFBC (4)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	25	191.3	16	221	3.90	1.28	27.1%	10.9%	.295	70.5%	11.2%	27.2%	51.4%
2013	MLB	26	209.7	13	277	2.83	1.07	32.9%	9.5%	.264	83.9%	20.6%	29.0%	46.3%
Proj.			210	17	262	2.70	1.05	32.1%						

Last year Darvish lost four 1-0 games last year, which is extremely fluky. Supposing he won all four of those games he would've finished with 17 wins and would have finished third on ESPN's Player Rater. With the addition of **Prince Fielder** and **Shin Soo-Choo** the offense should be improved so the likelihood of him losing those types of low scoring games should be a thing of the past. He led the majors in strikeouts and by a wide margin; he had 37 more than **Max Scherzer**. If you roster Darvish he provides more flexibility in terms of how you construct your pitching staff. For example, **Jordan Zimmerman's** below average strikeout rates become less of a roadblock.

Randall Delgado

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (128), NFBC (125)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	22	92.7	4	76	4.37	1.41	19.0%	10.5%	.299	70.3%	12.7%	24.1%	55.6%
2013	AAA	23	64	2	57	5.91	1.63	19.3%	11.9%	.000	65.0%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	116.3	5	79	4.26	1.19	16.7%	4.9%	.266	76.1%	26.4%	26.8%	47.2%
Proj.			190	12	129	4.35	1.25	17.5%						

Last year Delgado made tremendous strides with his control, decreasing his walk rate in half; going from a career walk rate (prior to 2013) of ten percent to five percent in 2013. The enhanced walk rate came at the cost of a decreased strikeout rate. His best secondary pitch is the curveball; in 2012 he was tipping the curveball, which resulted in hitters hitting .341 against it. In 2013 he made some adjustments and hitters only hit .257 against the curveball. One big problem Delgado had last year was with the long ball; last year he gave up 24 home runs which puts him in the top 20 among starting pitchers; it could've been higher if had more than 20 starts. In order to be a viable fantasy starting pitcher he's going to have to increase the strikeout rate, but it's looking more like he's turning himself into a ground ball pitcher. He's only a viable streaming option.

Ryan Dempster

Throws: R | Age: 37 | Team: Red Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (153), NFBC (157)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	34	202.3	10	191	4.80	1.45	21.7%	9.3%	.324	70.4%	15.0%	27.4%	49.6%
2012	MLB	35	173	12	153	3.38	1.20	21.3%	7.3%	.277	75.7%	13.8%	29.4%	48.8%
2013	MLB	36	171.3	8	157	4.57	1.45	20.8%	10.5%	.296	72.3%	18.2%	30.0%	46.4%
Proj.			0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.0%						

Despite above average raw stuff, Dempster's biggest problem has been walks. Entering the 2013 season I was optimistic because he was coming off the lowest walk rate of career while maintaining an above average strikeout rate. Unfortunately, he took a step backward in the walk rate as he had the highest walk rate since the 2007 season. You may be thinking Fenway Park inflated those numbers, but in fact his walk rate was higher on the road (11.6 percent). Dempster is basically a fastball, slider pitcher who will throw a splitter to lefties. I bring that up because he has a reverse platoon split the last four seasons as right handed hitters have hit him better than lefties. The table is a breakdown of how right handed hitters have fared since 2010.

Year	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	WHIFF%	HR/FB
2010	.252	.717	.288	19.8%	7.8%	26.6%	13.3%
2011	.245	.729	.284	20.4%	7.6%	21.9%	13.0%
2012	.257	.742	.285	17.5%	6.7%	23.5%	11.6%
2013	.281	.858	.308	18.8%	8.8%	23.7%	17.4%

Dempster's poor performance last year against righties was primarily driven the lack of fastball command (which helps explain the higher walk rate) as he missed too often in the middle of the plate. Lastly, he only averaged five and half innings per start, which severely limited his opportunities for wins. Overall, Dempster is an average pitcher whose unreliable from start to start because of the high walk rate and just because he pitches for a good team doesn't mean he'll provide 12-plus wins because barely goes over five innings each start. **Please note Dempster will not play in the 2014 season.**

Ross Detwiler

Throws: L | Age: 28 | Team: Nationals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	66	4	41	3.00	1.26	14.8%	7.2%	.272	78.7%	12.3%	28.4%	48.8%
2012	MLB	26	164.3	10	105	3.40	1.22	15.3%	7.6%	.263	70.8%	11.9%	25.7%	56.1%
2013	MLB	27	71.3	2	39	4.04	1.49	12.3%	4.4%	.344	71.2%	11.4%	18.6%	52.7%
Proj.			140	7	71	4.85	1.47	13.0%						

As of early January Detwiler's role (starter or bullpen) is still in flux, but this player capsule will assume he beats out Tanner Roark and earns the fifth spot in the Nationals rotation.

In early July he was shut down for the rest of the year with a herniated disk in his back, which started bothering him since mid-May according to the [Washington Times](#). He did not require any surgical procedure; instead, what was prescribed was rest. The table shows his performance before and after the injury.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Before	2.76	1.45	.306	.338	11.7%	5.1%	6.4%
After	6.31	1.56	.330	.370	13.4%	3.4%	6.7%

Despite the low ERA there are warning signs. It doesn't take a statistician to know the 2.76 ERA is not sustainable with a 1.45 WHIP. In terms of the scouting report, he throws basically one pitch (fastball), albeit in different variations, which limits his strikeout rate potential. The benefit to throwing a sinking fastball is generates a lot of weak contact and/or ground balls. That said, he shouldn't be owned in anything besides a NL-only league because doesn't generate enough strikeouts to be started.

R.A. Dickey

Throws: R | Age: 39 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (60), NFBC (49)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	36	208.7	8	134	3.28	1.23	15.3%	6.2%	.278	75.1%	10.1%	27.8%	55.6%
2012	MLB	37	233.7	20	230	2.73	1.05	24.8%	5.8%	.275	79.9%	14.1%	29.0%	51.5%
2013	MLB	38	224.7	14	177	4.21	1.24	18.8%	7.5%	.265	73.2%	20.3%	28.2%	47.1%
Proj.			215	13	176	3.50	1.16	21.0%						

After the first two months of the season Dickey had a 5.18 ERA and 1.41 WHIP. It turned out [he was dealing with](#) a back injury, nick stiffness a cracked fingernail and shoulder tightness, which could have contributed to the poor start. After the first two months of the season his performance improved dramatically, but still not to the Cy Young type of levels in 2012 (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First 2 Months	5.18	1.41	.255	.281	18.4%	9.9%	14.0%
Rest of Season	3.72	1.15	.236	.258	19.0%	6.3%	12.2%

While his health improved so did the velocity of the knuckleball. In general, I believe blaming poor performance on a minor decline in fastball velocity is rubbish, but this is one of the rare times where velocity is extremely important. The table shows the velocity of the knuckle ball, by month, starting in 2012.

Month	Velocity
12-Apr	76.62
12-May	76.49
12-Jun	77.49
12-Jul	76.95
12-Aug	76.99
12-Sep	77.25
12-Oct	77.44
13-Mar	75.09
13-Apr	74.98
13-May	74.44
13-Jun	74.93
13-Jul	75.39
13-Aug	76.97
13-Sep	77.18

For the first four months of the season the velocity of the knuckleball was well below that of his 2012 season (and his 2011 season). It was only starting in August did the velocity reach the same velocity as 2012. So what were his numbers in August and September? The table below provides that information as well as his 2012 numbers as a means of a comparison.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Last 2 Months	3.35	1.13	.234	.264	21.0%	6.3%	11.5%
2012	2.73	1.05	.226	.280	24.8%	5.8%	10.9%

It looks like he performed near his 2012 levels, but still not at those levels. The big question for fantasy owners how reliable will Dickey be in 2014? He plays in the bam box in Toronto, which doesn't help his value, but I believe the last two months of the 2013 are sustainable if he's fully healthy. His down year will most likely give you an opportunity to acquire him at a discount if you believe a 39 year old can stay healthy.

Felix Doubront

Throws: L | Age: 26 | Team: Red Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (120), NFBC (56)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	10.3	0	6	6.10	1.94	12.8%	17.0%	.344	69.9%	9.1%	34.4%	46.9%
2012	MLB	24	161	11	167	4.86	1.45	23.6%	10.0%	.313	70.0%	19.0%	29.0%	47.6%
2013	MLB	25	162.3	11	139	4.32	1.43	19.7%	10.1%	.310	69.9%	10.0%	28.5%	51.1%
Proj.			150	10	118	4.40	1.44	20.3%						

As of early January Doubront is not expected to be part of the Red Sox rotation. This capsule assumes he is in the starting rotation. Despite solid strikeout rates the past two years, he has had loose command of

the strike zone, which explains the ten percent walk rate. In the past two seasons he has made 58 appearances, in those appearances he's given up five or more earned runs 12 times, which equates to 21 percent of the time. The unpredictability from start to start makes starting him, even in really good matchups, a little stressful as he could ruin your ratios with a blowup start.

Kyle Drabek

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	24	71.3	4	47	4.67	1.60	14.8%	14.8%	.274	73.3%	20.4%	23.3%	57.6%
2013	AAA	25	14.3	1	12	3.77	1.12	20.7%	3.4%	.000	68.5%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	25	2.3	0	3	7.71	2.57	21.4%	14.3%	.429	89.3%	50.0%	25.0%	50.0%
Proj.			100	5	83	4.67	1.60	21.4%						

The only reason why Drabek made it in the fantasy guide is because MLBDepthCharts.com lists him (as of late January) as the fifth pitcher in the Blue Jays starting rotation. Drabek missed the final four months of the 2012 season after having another TJ surgery. I don't even recommend rostering good pitchers coming off the first year after surgery let alone a player who has yet to have consistent success in the majors.

Danny Duffy

Throws: L | Age: 25 | Team: Royals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	105.3	4	87	5.64	1.61	18.4%	10.8%	.329	70.8%	14.3%	35.1%	43.8%
2012	MLB	23	27.7	2	28	3.90	1.59	23.1%	14.9%	.329	75.2%	8.0%	37.9%	37.9%
2013	MLB	24	24.3	2	22	1.85	1.36	21.2%	13.5%	.284	85.3%	0.0%	40.0%	32.3%
Proj.			130	7	109	4.35	1.36	21.5%						

At the very early part of the 2012 season Duffy underwent Tommy John surgery and he made it back last August. However, the call up was short lived as he went on the DL with forearm tightness and was shut down the rest of the year. What's promising is the fastball velocity was almost at the pre-injury levels. However, I do not trust pitchers in their first year back because command is the last thing to comeback; typically it takes a full year before they're back to the pitcher they once were. For example, **Adam Wainwright** was exceptionally good before missing the entire 2011 season with a TJ surgery. Upon his return he had a 4.73 ERA and 1.34 WHIP during the first half of the season before showing glimpses of the Wainwright of old. Duffy always had a problem with control (career 12 percent walk rate) and since he is most likely going to need more time to regain his command fantasy owners should have limited expectations. Also, he only threw 90 innings last year; I'm projecting him for 130, which may be a little pessimistic, but I don't believe the Royals will push Duffy too hard in 2014.

Nathan Eovaldi

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Marlins | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (130), NFBC (137)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	21	34.7	1	23	3.63	1.38	15.8%	13.7%	.263	76.3%	6.9%	31.2%	48.4%
2012	MLB	22	119.3	4	78	4.30	1.51	14.8%	8.9%	.317	73.4%	9.6%	27.8%	49.7%
2013	MLB	23	106.3	4	78	3.39	1.32	17.3%	8.9%	.287	73.9%	8.5%	26.5%	48.9%
Proj.			170	9	106	3.95	1.35	16.0%						

One reason why I was not buying into Eovaldi as fantasy starter and as a real life starting pitcher was the lack of pitch that could consistently get lefties out. Despite a really good 106 innings my evaluation for 2014 will not change. Other than the fastball he features a slider and curveball, both of which are not conducive to getting lefties out. In 2012 lefties hit .318 against him and last year only .246. So what changed? He threw more fastballs. Last year he threw fastballs 63 percent of time compared to 74 percent last year. I don't believe this strategy is sustainable in the long term and will eventually put him in the bullpen (he'll be a great eighth inning reliever and possibly an above average closer), but since the Marlins are rebuilding and in need of starting pitching, Eovaldi will get every opportunity to have 32 starts in 2014. I just don't want those starts to count towards my ratios.

Robbie Erlin

Throws: L | Age: 23 | Team: Padres | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (167), NFBC (174)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	21	52.3	3	72	2.92	1.28	31.6%	6.1%	.353	79.5%	14.3%	34.1%	44.7%
2013	AAA	22	99.3	8	84	5.07	1.60	18.5%	7.5%	.000	65.7%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	22	54.7	3	40	4.12	1.24	17.6%	6.6%	.283	70.5%	11.8%	31.9%	41.9%
Proj.			120	8	84	3.55	1.24	18.0%						

As of early January it looks as though Erlin may not begin the season with the Padres, but he will likely be the first call up if a starting pitcher were to get hurt. The scouting report looks fairly similar to the **Patrick Corbin's** before his call up; he'll fill the zone with his 88-91 mph fastball (four-seam and two-seam) for good quality strikes due to his plus command and control. His best secondary pitch is the changeup, which can be a plus pitch in time; he also features a curveball and an occasional slider. He can be a little homer prone but Petco will help mask that. His 2013 numbers do not look overly impressive but a lot his numbers are being dragged down by a nine earned run outing in July against the Nationals. If you remove that outing he actually had a 2.84 ERA. Erlin is someone you want to have on your radar in case someone gets hurt because he will be a great streaming option. Lastly, he had inflammation and tendinitis around his elbow ligament during the 2012 season. He decided to rest and rehab the injury and it looks as though he is past the injury.

Marco Estrada

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Brewers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (74), NFBC (90)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	92.7	4	88	4.08	1.21	23.1%	7.6%	.287	70.0%	13.1%	35.1%	46.9%
2012	MLB	28	138.3	5	143	3.64	1.14	25.4%	5.2%	.298	72.3%	14.8%	35.7%	41.8%
2013	MLB	29	128	7	118	3.87	1.08	23.0%	5.7%	.262	74.1%	17.6%	33.4%	44.0%
Proj.			100	7	84	3.39	1.13	21.7%						

In early June Estrada went on the DL with a [hamstring strain](#) and he ended up missing two months of the season. After coming off the DL he came off the DL he was different pitcher as the table below indicates. A small sample caveat applies as he only had nine starts after he came off the DL.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Before	5.32	1.36	.275	.310	20.7%	6.0%	15.1%
After	2.15	0.75	.165	.199	26.2%	5.3%	7.1%

Despite what the strikeout rate indicates, Estrada doesn't have overpowering stuff. He throws a fastball in the 89-91 mph range with a solid curveball and changeup. In general he reminds a lot of **A.J. Griffin** in terms of the skill set; both have average stuff, give up a lot of home runs and they do not walk a ton of batters. The only major difference is the ballpark they play in as Estrada's home ballpark makes his numbers look much worse while the opposite is true for Griffin. For example, in the last two years Estrada given up 25 home runs at home (15.5 percent HR/FB rate) compared to only 12 home runs on the road (6.7 percent HR/FB rate). The table below shows his home-road splits for the past two seasons, where he was primarily a starting pitcher.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	4.40	1.14	.252	.302	27.0%	4.4%	15.5%
Road	3.15	1.09	.225	.270	21.7%	6.4%	6.7%

The road numbers were heavily influenced by some of the lucky numbers he put up last year, but there is still a compelling contrast between pitching on the road and at home. What's interesting is how the strikeout rate increases dramatically at home, which must be due to trying to limit runners getting on base because of the hitting environment. Overall, Estrada has value as a streaming option while on the road for leagues as shallow as 12-team mixed leagues because he's basically the same pitcher as **A.J. Griffin**, but Estrada will go severely cheaper.

Scott Feldman

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Astros | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (62), NFBC (55)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	32	2	22	3.94	1.09	17.1%	7.8%	.239	70.1%	15.8%	21.8%	69.0%
2012	MLB	29	123.7	6	96	5.09	1.38	17.9%	6.0%	.318	61.0%	14.3%	26.4%	46.6%
2013	MLB	30	181.7	12	132	3.86	1.18	17.4%	7.4%	.258	69.4%	14.7%	24.5%	55.0%
Proj.			190	12	129	4.17	1.25	17.4%						

Last year Feldman split time between the Cubs and Orioles. His best skill is to generate ground balls, but he's not exceptional at it; in the last three years he has a 46 percent ground ball rate, which ranks 43rd among starters with at least 50 starts. Since he's a ground baller we have to talk about the Astros defensive infield, which consists of a plus-plus defender at third base and solid defender at second base. The shortstop has the tools to be an above average defender, but he can play the game too fast and make mistakes on routine plays. In terms of 2014, it's easy to say his 2013 numbers were fueled by an exceptional .258 BABIP, but as a ground ball pitcher fluctuations in BABIP are more likely to happen. Feldman isn't going to provide above average value in any statistical category and doesn't have enormous upside, which means he should not be drafted in shallow leagues. In 15-team mixed leagues he's a solid starter who you can stream in good matchups.

Jose Fernandez

Throws: R | Age: 21 | Team: Marlins | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (7), NFBC (5)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	A	19	79	7	99	1.59	0.87	33.6%	6.1%	.282	80.6%	3.8%	32.5%	50.9%
2012	A+	19	55	7	59	1.96	1.00	27.1%	7.8%	.273	79.3%	0.0%	35.1%	49.6%
2013	MLB	20	172.7	12	187	2.19	0.98	27.5%	8.5%	.240	79.4%	9.5%	26.1%	50.5%
Proj.			195	12	201	3.15	1.13	26.5%						

Anyone who has seen Fernandez pitch know he is really good and has elite stuff (check out this bad swing he induced from one of the best up and coming hitters [in the game](#); image courtesy of [FanGraphs](#)), but there are some red flags for his potential for 2014. First, in the last three years the Marlins are 28th in the majors in wins and I don't see that improving in 2014; the Marlins lineup is bad ... if **Christian Yelich** is a team's second best hitter then the lineup is going to have trouble scoring runs; also, the bullpen isn't good which means the bullpen will blow a few of his leads. Second, will he have a .240 BABIP and 79 percent LOB% rate again? Since he strikes out a lot of batters he'll always have higher LOB% rates and lower BABIPs, but a regression should happen.

Let's talk about the most important positive trend; as the season wore on he got better and stronger. The table is a breakdown of the 27 starts where I compared the first 14 games against the last 17 games. Another positive trend is he will most likely not have an innings cap so it's possible he'll throw 190-plus innings in 2014.

GS	Innings	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First 14	79.7	3.05	1.11	.203	.257	24.9%	8.9%	7.2%
Next 13	88	1.43	0.84	.159	.224	30.8%	7.8%	6.3%

Doug Fister

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Nationals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (61), NFBC (51)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	216.3	11	146	2.83	1.06	16.7%	4.2%	.272	73.3%	6.4%	27.0%	51.1%
2012	MLB	28	161.7	10	137	3.45	1.19	20.4%	5.5%	.296	70.9%	13.6%	23.7%	56.5%
2013	MLB	29	208.7	14	159	3.67	1.31	18.0%	5.0%	.332	73.5%	11.1%	20.1%	59.4%
Proj.			185	13	139	3.58	1.24	19.3%						

After being traded to the National for a bunch of spare parts the fantasy community rejoiced; he was finally leaving the poor Tigers infield that contained the likes of **Miguel Cabrera** and Fister could finally put up the numbers indicative to his skill set. Well, I'm not buying it. Say what you want about Cabrera's defense, **Ryan Zimmerman** was almost just as bad last year. Cabrera had a UZR of -16.8 while Zimmerman's UZR was -14. If you didn't watch the Nationals play last year all I'll say is Zimmerman cannot throw the ball anymore; he literally can air mail any throw regardless of how the ball that was hit. Also, I'm not sold that **Anthony Rendon** is even an upgrade over **Omar Infante** defensively. I do believe **Ian Desmond** is an upgrade over **Jhonny Peralta**, but it's not a big difference. I bring this all up because Fister is an extreme ground ball pitcher and as such, will depend on the competency of his infield to get outs on his behalf and I do not see any marketable improvement with the Nationals infield.

Other than the Nationals infield, Fister possess all the numbers you want from a number three fantasy starting pitcher. He provides solid ratios, a slightly below average strikeout rate, doesn't walk batters and should provide 180-plus innings. In 2012 he was on the DL for about 40 games with an [abdominal muscle strain](#), which is an injury that doesn't worry me as much as a shoulder or elbow. In terms of the landing Washington providing a huge boost to his fantasy value, I don't see it. The strikeout rate will increase slightly because he'll be facing the pitcher twice a game and the overall talent level in the NL is lower, but I expect more of the same in 2014.

Gavin Floyd

Throws: R | Age: 31 | Team: Braves | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	193.7	12	151	4.37	1.16	18.9%	5.6%	.278	67.7%	13.1%	30.4%	48.9%
2012	MLB	29	168	12	144	4.29	1.36	19.9%	8.7%	.299	74.9%	16.1%	29.5%	51.6%
2013	MLB	30	24.3	0	25	5.18	1.60	22.7%	10.9%	.333	71.9%	26.7%	22.4%	56.7%
Proj.			40	1	31	4.50	1.40	20.0%						

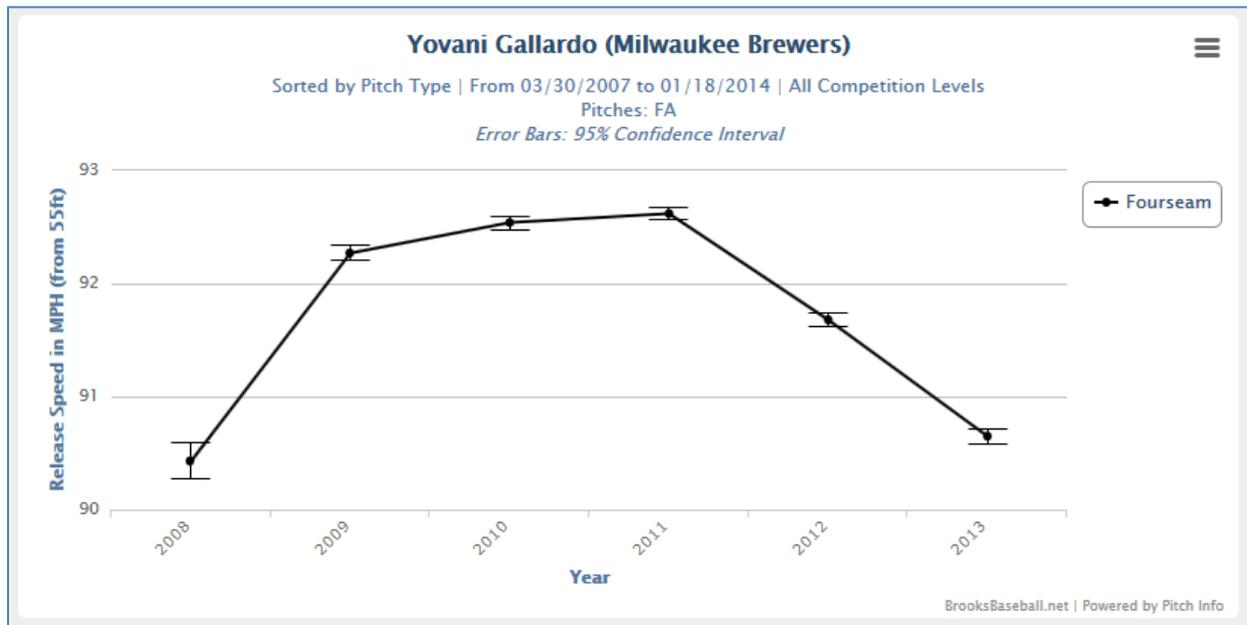
This past May Floyd had a TJ surgery and hopes to be ready in May of 2014. At this point he should not be owned in any format until he starts throwing in the minors.

Yovani Gallardo

Throws: R | Age: 28 | Team: Brewers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (97), NFBC (92)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	207.3	17	207	3.52	1.22	23.9%	6.8%	.291	74.8%	15.7%	30.8%	51.4%
2012	MLB	26	204	16	204	3.66	1.30	23.7%	9.4%	.290	78.4%	16.8%	28.1%	51.4%
2013	MLB	27	180.7	12	144	4.18	1.36	18.6%	8.5%	.299	70.2%	17.0%	19.6%	53.1%
Proj.			190	11	137	3.95	1.32	18.5%						

Gallardo’s biggest problem throughout his career has been to throw strikes consistently. Since 2008 he only has a 60.7 percent strike rate, which puts him in the bottom ten percent of the league among starting pitchers. Early in his career he was always a sleeper for me because he always provided 200-plus strikeouts a year and he was never drafted as high as he should have. In the last two years the velocity on his fastball has decreased two mph since 2011 (image courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net).



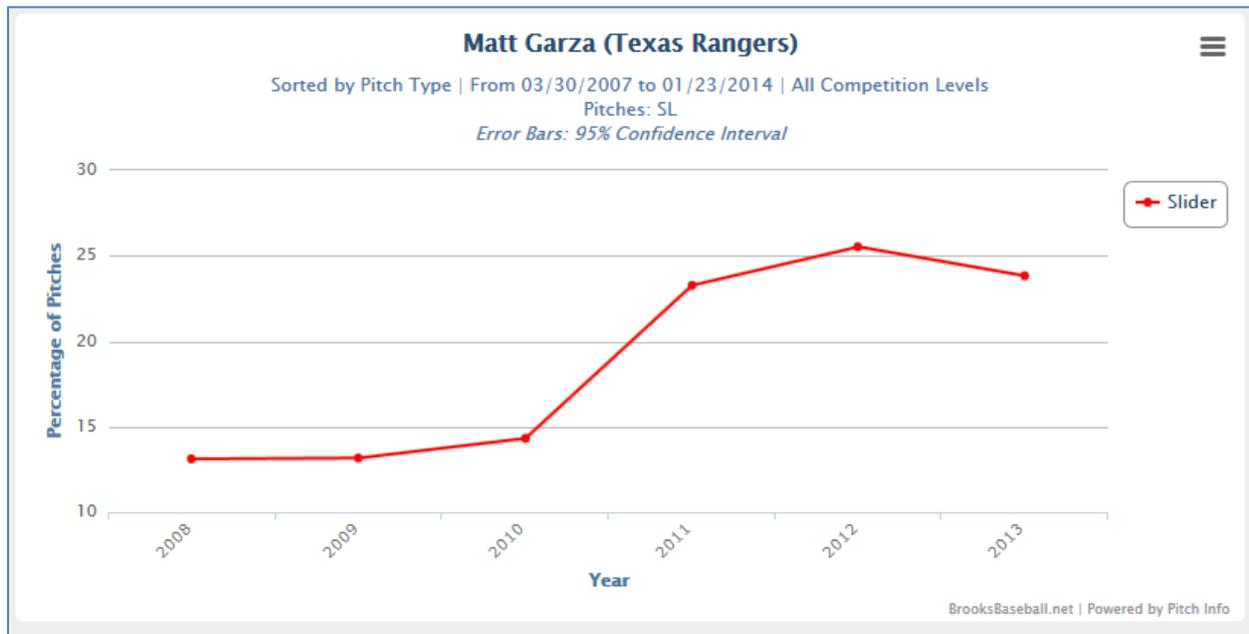
I bring up the decline velocity because he’s throwing the fastball less and less during the past two seasons. Instead of throwing the fastball he’s utilizing the slider and sinker more often. The usage of the sinker took an even bigger step forward last year as he threw it a little less than 17.5 percent of the time (in 2011 it was only 4.7 percent of time). As the sinker usage increased so did the ground ball rate (last year it was the highest of his career), but that came at the expense of the strikeout rate, which was the lowest of his career. This adjustment to becoming a ground ball pitcher makes a lot of sense considering his home ballpark and the decline in fastball velocity. In terms of his fantasy value he’s similar to **Doug Fister**, but with far less command.

Matt Garza

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Brewers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (76), NFBC (63)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	198	10	197	3.32	1.26	23.5%	7.5%	.306	69.7%	11.3%	24.1%	54.2%
2012	MLB	28	103.7	5	96	3.91	1.18	22.6%	7.5%	.271	74.3%	20.0%	27.8%	54.4%
2013	MLB	29	155.3	10	136	3.82	1.24	20.9%	6.4%	.290	73.4%	18.7%	24.4%	44.7%
Proj.			160	10	128	3.95	1.26	20.5%						

From 2008-10 he was relatively healthy only going on the DL once (in 2008 for an inflamed radial nerve in his elbow); however, starting in 2011 he started experiencing shoulder and elbow problems. Last year his season did not begin until late May due to a shoulder strain. In 2012 his season came to an end in July due to a stress reaction in his elbow. And in 2011 he missed three weeks with an elbow contusion. He's been on the DL for elbow and shoulder issues, but never requiring surgery. Starting in 2011 he started throwing the slider a lot more than previous years (image below from BrooksBaseball.net). Maybe it's a coincidence he started having elbow and shoulder problems?



Last year his walk rate was the lowest of his career and it's no surprise considering he threw the fastball more than ever before (he basically became a two-pitch pitcher throwing fastballs and sliders). This pitch combination works great against right handed batters, but not left handers. In fact last year lefties had the highest batting average against Garza in his career (table below) and the lowest strikeout rate since 2011.

Year	PA	AVG	OBP	SLUG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%
2008	371	.244	.311	.410	.720	.273	18.6%	8.6%
2009	458	.196	.300	.309	.608	.240	24.2%	12.2%
2010	417	.241	.318	.412	.730	.259	15.8%	9.4%
2011	392	.247	.296	.338	.634	.329	26.0%	6.1%
2012	207	.247	.302	.442	.745	.291	25.6%	6.8%
2013	345	.271	.314	.420	.733	.326	21.7%	5.5%

Another concern is he pitches up in the zone with the fastball and has allowed 35 home runs the past two seasons. Going to Miller Park certainly does not ease concerns about the home run issue. However, his fastball has maintained its velocity throughout the years so I'm not as concerned as I am with a **Tim Lincecum**. Overall, if he can stay healthy, and that's a big if, he'll likely have an ERA in the upper-to-mid-3s with a strikeout rate that will make him a solid number four starting pitcher for your fantasy team.

Jaime Garcia

Throws: L | Age: 27 | Team: Cardinals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	194.7	13	156	3.56	1.32	18.9%	6.1%	.318	66.8%	11.4%	22.3%	56.9%
2012	MLB	25	121.7	7	98	3.92	1.36	19.0%	5.8%	.339	69.1%	8.6%	21.7%	58.4%
2013	MLB	26	55.3	5	43	3.58	1.30	18.4%	6.4%	.300	72.3%	19.4%	18.1%	66.1%
Proj.			100	5	74	3.67	1.33	19.0%						

Garcia, despite showing great promise in the 2010 season, has never thrown more than 200 innings in his career and he's coming off two years where he has dealt with a shoulder strain. After making nine starts last year he missed the rest of the year due to a [shoulder surgery](#). As of early January his offseason throwing program is expected to have him ready for spring training. When healthy, he's a number four fantasy starting pitcher as he provides average, but now overwhelming production in all four statistical categories; if he could make 31 starts he could be a sneaky play for 14-plus wins. At this point I am going to believe he's healthy when I see him pitch.

Kevin Gausman

Throws: R | Age: 23 | Team: Orioles | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	22	46.3	2	49	3.11	1.06	25.7%	2.6%	.000	64.9%	-	-	-
2013	AAA	22	35.7	1	33	4.04	1.26	23.1%	6.3%	.000	67.3%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	22	47.7	3	49	5.66	1.34	24.4%	6.5%	.328	64.4%	21.6%	27.8%	46.6%
Proj.			100	6	91	3.86	1.29	23.5%						

Similar to **Yordano Ventura**, Gausman could be this year's version of **Matt Harvey** / **Shelby Miller** / **Jose Fernandez**. Ventura may have the better fastball, but Gausman has him beat in terms of the depth of

arsenal. That’s not to say Gausman has a bad fastball; he routinely sits in the mid-90s and can touch 100 mph every blue moon. He throws two devastating changeups (a straight changeup and a circle changeup) that can both miss bats on both sides of the plate. Combine that with a slider that is bordering on the cusp of becoming a plus pitch, then you have the makings a potential number starter. The biggest thing he’s going to have to work on is the command of the fastball. Specifically, he likes to throw it belt up and when you do that you become more homer prone, as evidenced by the 17 percent HR/FB rate. Similar to Ventura it’s actually possible that Gausman could become a legit number one starter if he makes the appropriate adjustments. He should win the fifth starter job in Baltimore to begin the year; now pitching in the AL East isn’t ideal, but he still has a top 20 fantasy ceiling because the stuff is so good. I’m putting more faith into the scouting report and what I’ve seen over the data he accumulated in the majors last year.

Dillon Gee

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Mets | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (65), NFBC (59)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	160.7	13	114	4.43	1.38	16.1%	10.1%	.270	71.5%	13.6%	28.0%	53.2%
2012	MLB	26	109.7	6	97	4.10	1.25	21.0%	6.3%	.302	68.9%	16.2%	23.9%	54.8%
2013	MLB	27	199	12	142	3.62	1.28	16.9%	5.6%	.296	77.9%	13.6%	29.1%	47.8%
Proj.			100	6	67	3.35	1.22	17.3%						

Gee throws five pitches, but he’s basically a fastball, slider and changeup pitcher. In order to get outs he throws any of his pitches in any count to both righties and lefties. None of the pitches rate any higher than average, but the sum is greater than the parts as he’s able to keep batters off balance. Most of his value last year came from the 3.62 ERA, which aided greatly by the high 78 percent LOB% rate. If you’re planning on using him the entire season he should only be drafted in NL-only leagues because he doesn’t present a lot of upside. However, looking at his home-road splits he can be a sneaky stream option in mixed leagues. The table below shows his home-road splits for the past three seasons.

Splits	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
Home	3.26	1.22	.243	.276	18.1%	7.3%	10.8%
Away	4.80	1.40	.274	.309	17.0%	7.3%	11.1%

Based on the data it’s obvious he has benefitted from playing in Citi Field, but is it sustainable for 2014? When looking at the data it looks as though he’s basically the same pitcher, but he happens to have a lower BABIP, which makes sense considering the historical park effects data. The Mets basically have a brand new outfield consisting of two plus defenders and one elite defender that should improve his value in 2014. Lastly, in 2012 he went on the DL in July and missed the remainder of the season due to artery replacement surgery to decrease the likelihood of poor blood flow to his shoulder. I don’t believe this to be any major mark against him.

Gio Gonzalez

Throws: L | Age: 28 | Team: Nationals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (45), NFBC (36)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	202	16	197	3.12	1.32	22.8%	10.5%	.287	77.1%	11.4%	28.4%	52.1%
2012	MLB	26	199.3	21	207	2.89	1.13	25.2%	9.2%	.267	74.1%	7.3%	24.6%	53.7%
2013	MLB	27	195.7	11	192	3.36	1.25	23.4%	9.3%	.286	75.3%	13.7%	24.4%	47.9%
Proj.			200	14	181	3.35	1.25	23.3%						

Last year I said Gonzalez’s 2012 season was a prime candidate for regression and that’s exactly what happened. Basically the strikeout rate, walk rate, and ground ball rate were all the same, but the BABIP and HR/FB rates regressed back to their normal levels. The only concern about his 2013 season campaign was the two percent decrease in strikeout rate. When you compare 2013s strikeout rate it’s more in-line with 2011s and 2010s strikeout rate, which adds more credibility to the notion that 2012s strikeout was the outlier. Last year the strikeout rate decreased against both lefties and righties. Last year the curveball generated the lowest swing and miss rate of his career against righties (image courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net). I ran the same pitch type charts for left handed hitters and I didn’t see any alarming trends. I’m not too concerned about the strikeout dropping, but what I do not like are the walks. It’s hard for me to trust pitchers who walks a lot hitters because they’re more susceptible to big innings and having their home runs count for two and three runs instead of only one. That said, I expect him to put similar numbers as 2013.



Miguel Gonzalez

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Orioles | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (73), NFBC (68)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	28	44.7	3	53	1.61	0.72	32.1%	6.1%	.208	65.4%	3.4%	33.0%	48.9%
2012	MLB	28	105.3	9	77	3.25	1.21	17.7%	8.1%	.260	82.6%	11.3%	39.5%	39.9%
2013	MLB	29	171.3	11	120	3.78	1.23	16.9%	7.4%	.260	73.6%	15.5%	32.0%	45.2%
Proj.			175	11	116	3.99	1.25	17.0%						

Despite being seen as an organizational guy, Gonzalez in the last two years has a 3.58 ERA and 1.22 WHIP in 48 games (and 43 starts). He's a fly ball pitcher without overpowering stuff so he relies on hitting his spots and changing speeds to get hitters out; however, when he hisses, he allows a lot of hard contact, which is why he'll always have high HR/FB rates. Over his career he is going to be a more valuable real life pitcher than fantasy pitcher because he'll consistently provide 170-plus innings a year with a low 4.00s ERA and keep his team in the game for the six innings he pitches. At this point he is only an AL-only play.

Sonny Gray

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	22	4	0	2	9.00	2.75	8.3%	4.2%	.500	66.7%	0.0%	31.6%	47.4%
2013	AAA	23	118.3	10	118	3.42	1.32	23.9%	7.9%	.000	70.5%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	64	5	67	2.67	1.11	25.7%	7.7%	.276	74.9%	12.9%	18.6%	54.5%
Proj.			195	13	165	3.69	1.28	21.8%						

Gray is going to be one of the most hyped sleepers going into drafts, but I'm not buying the hype. First of all, his ultimate role is still in question. Is he a starter or a reliever? As an A's fan I've seen Gray pitch a lot in the majors and triple-a and he currently doesn't have the arsenal to throw 200-plus innings year over year. He's a two-pitch pitcher which makes him more hittable the second time a team sees him. For example, look at the swings made in game two of the ALDS and compare the swings to game five. You'll see they were not fooled as much and Gray's pitches found more barrels. There's a question about his size; standing at 5'11 he lacks the prototypical size and body to hold up to a starters workload; he receives a lot of comps to **Tim Hudson** because both of the similar stature and the immediate success they earned in the majors.

In terms of his 2013 performance you couldn't ask for a better fantasy combination. He strikes out a lot of batters, generates a lot of ground balls, plays in one of the best pitcher's ballparks and behind one of the best defenses in the majors that recently got better with the additions of **Craig Gentry** and **Nick Punto**. That said, I'm still not sold. I bet Gray has a great first half and falls off afterward; that said if the changeup develops then he can be a monster. If the changeup doesn't develop he will be a great set-up man.

Zack Greinke

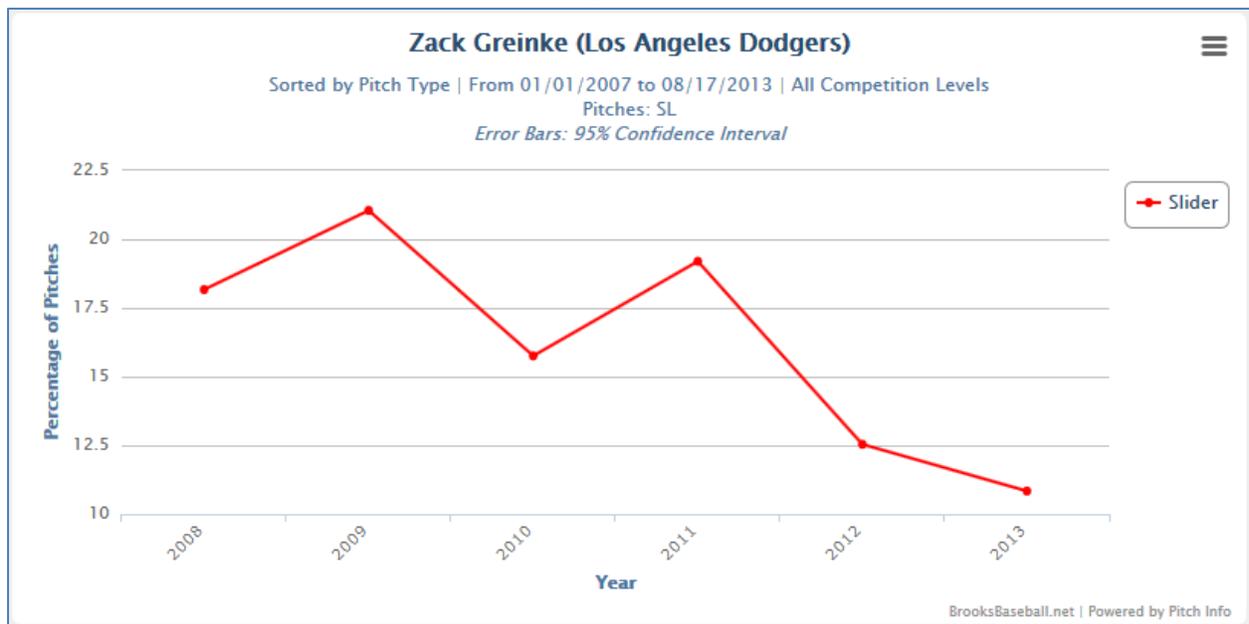
Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Dodgers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (15), NFBC (13)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	171.7	16	201	3.83	1.20	28.1%	6.3%	.319	69.8%	16.2%	26.1%	50.6%
2012	MLB	28	212.3	15	200	3.48	1.20	23.0%	6.2%	.306	74.5%	11.9%	26.2%	53.9%
2013	MLB	29	177.7	15	148	2.63	1.11	20.6%	6.4%	.276	80.8%	13.8%	19.6%	52.2%
Proj.			180	12	140	3.35	1.19	20.0%						

At the start of spring training Zack Greinke was diagnosed with [elbow inflammation](#) and at the time of the diagnosis was seen a minor injury. That proved to be true as he was able to begin the year on the opening day roster. Other than Carlos Quentin breaking his collar bone Greinke had a healthy season. Despite what the ERA suggests, there are some major red flags with Greinke heading into 2014.

First of all he started throwing the slider a lot less compared to previous years (image below from [BrooksBaseball.net](#)). In past years, he'd thrown it between 15-20 percent of the time. However, last year, it's about five percent of the time. I will mention during the last two months of the season there was a spike in his slider usage, which resembled the usage of previous years. Why does decreased slider usage have a big effect on his 2014 value? Since 2008 the slider has been his most used secondary pitch. During that time the slider has a 53.6 percent strikeout rate, which makes it even more odd he would suddenly scrap that pitch in 2013. A possible reason why he scrapped the slider was due to elbow problems, which can be exacerbated [by throwing a lot of sliders](#).

Instead of throwing the slider he threw more cut fastballs and changeups. This change resulted in the strikeout rate dropping two and a half percentage points last year, which was the lowest it's been since 2010. To recap, he abandoned the slider the same year he reportedly had elbow inflammation. Therefore, I'm concerned about his health moving forward.



Second, Greinke had a great year, but there are signs he was lucky. For example, he had a six percent HR/FB rate on the road, which is not likely to be repeated again. Also, the .276 BABIP and 81 percent LOB% rates are clear numbers that should regress as well. Overall, Greinke's numbers are going to regress from 2013; add a potential elbow problem that manifested itself in a decreased usage of the slider, his best pitch, creates a recipe I do not want to have on my fantasy team.

A.J. Griffin

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Athletics | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (31), NFBC (29)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	58.7	4	47	3.07	1.01	19.7%	4.6%	.260	61.2%	5.7%	34.2%	46.5%
2012	MLB	24	82.3	7	64	3.06	1.13	19.0%	5.7%	.264	81.3%	12.8%	34.5%	42.5%
2013	MLB	25	200	14	171	3.83	1.13	20.8%	6.6%	.242	77.3%	20.1%	34.6%	38.3%
Proj.			190	13	148	3.72	1.13	20.0%						

Despite being tall with a high release point, Griffin is a fly ball pitcher. He doesn't have overpowering stuff and since he's a fly ball pitcher means he is more susceptible to home runs. Therefore, it's no surprise he allowed the second most home runs in the majors last year. Despite allowing so many home runs he was able to limit the damage of the home run by not giving away free passes via the walk (career 6.2 percent walk rate) and an above average strikeout rate. And it doesn't help to be in a home ballpark that suppresses home runs and to have one of the best defensive outfielders in the majors behind him too. The table below shows his career home-road splits.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	3.45	1.12	.225	.251	19.7%	6.8%	9.3%
Road	3.77	1.15	.238	.253	20.4%	5.5%	14.6%

Based on the table it looks as though he's able to sustain some success on the road despite being more homerun prone outside of Oakland, which means he isn't a stream only player. That said, he still had the best fantasy season of any A's pitcher last year; he strikes out enough batters and plays in one of the best pitchers parks in the majors and the A's have upgraded their defense with the signing of **Craig Gentry** and **Nick Punto**. I expect Gentry to be more than the platoon bat most baseball analysts are projecting.

Justin Grimm

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Cubs | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	23	14	1	13	9.00	1.79	20.0%	4.6%	.438	46.6%	9.1%	22.9%	45.8%
2013	AAA	24	48	3	45	4.31	1.44	21.6%	9.1%	.000	66.6%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	24	98	7	76	5.97	1.57	17.2%	7.7%	.333	63.7%	17.2%	28.2%	47.2%
Proj.			140	8	95	3.99	1.39	17.5%						

A year ago Grimm was a promising prospect for the Rangers, but his star lost a lot of shine after struggling in the in majors. His fastball sits in the 93-94 mph range (and can touch 96 mph) with two average pitches that are conducive to getting out both lefties and righties (curveball and changeup). As of early February Grimm isn't expected to be in the Cubs rotation, but he has more potential than the incumbent fifth starter **Chris Rusin**. The reason why his 2013 stats were so bad because he suffered from a .333 BABIP and 63.7 percent LOB% rate, which explains why his FIP was one and half run lower than his ERA. Since his strikeout rate is below average he shouldn't be considered in shallow mixed leagues, but he can be a very sneaky play in NL-only leagues as I wouldn't be surprised if he has sub-3.99 ERA with a 1.30-40 WHIP.

Jeremy Guthrie

Throws: R | Age: 34 | Team: Royals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (101), NFBC (87)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	208	9	130	4.33	1.34	14.6%	7.4%	.285	69.6%	11.5%	35.7%	44.1%
2012	MLB	33	181.7	8	101	4.76	1.41	12.8%	6.3%	.294	70.0%	17.4%	30.0%	46.0%
2013	MLB	34	211.7	15	111	4.04	1.39	12.3%	6.5%	.296	78.2%	15.9%	28.0%	47.9%
Proj.			210	9	102	4.60	1.40	12.5%						

His greatest asset is his durability, starting at least 30 games the five seasons. However, despite pitching in 211 innings last year, Guthrie only had 111 strikeouts (12.3 percent strikeout rate). Also, he is an extremely pitch to contact pitcher; he led the majors among qualified starters with a contact rate of 88.5 percent. What's maddening about Guthrie is he does have good stuff, but he can look great for a few innings before it all falls apart and he gets pummeled. I do not recommend drafting him as he or someone close to him will always be on the waiver wire.

Cole Hamels**Throws: L | Age: 30 | Team: Phillies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (40), NFBC (40)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	216	14	194	2.79	0.99	22.8%	5.2%	.255	78.4%	13.8%	24.8%	60.0%
2012	MLB	28	215.3	17	216	3.05	1.12	24.9%	6.0%	.290	78.1%	15.2%	29.2%	48.9%
2013	MLB	29	220	8	202	3.60	1.16	22.3%	5.5%	.295	72.5%	14.0%	25.2%	48.5%
Proj.			185	12	160	3.20	1.12	22.2%						

If you remove the first two starts of the season where he gave 15 percent of all the earned runs all year, Hamels would have line of 3.22 ERA, 1.12 WHIP, 22.8 percent strikeout rate and a 5.3 percent walk rate. When I compare those numbers to his numbers the past three seasons I do not see much of a difference and neither should you. His player rater value was suppressed by the eight wins, which has to regress in 2014. That said, the Phillies are going to be bad despite what Phillies management says; I wouldn't be surprised at the slightest if the Phillies finish in last place in the NL East. Expecting any more than 13 wins may be a stretch.

As of February 12 Hamels is expected to not be ready for Opening Day due to bicep tendinitis. According to [Jim Salisbury](#) the reason why he will not be ready is due to his offseason throwing program has been delayed by the injury. Hamels said, "Don't feel alarmed. I'm at the point where I feel healthy now. I'm just trying to build strength and stamina." Despite what Hamels said this cannot be a good thing. This is the same type of injury that plagued **Alexi Ogando** last season. Ogando had bicep tendinitis in early May then went on the DL two additional times with shoulder related injuries. Before the injury Hamels was my tenth starting pitcher, but now he drops 20th and he could drop more depending upon how he progresses in spring training. The drop may look like a big drop, but so many good pitchers available it's difficult to take someone already hurt versus someone whose healthy.

J.A. Happ**Throws: L | Age: 31 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (194), NFBC (128)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	156.3	6	134	5.35	1.54	19.2%	11.9%	.298	65.4%	14.3%	34.1%	39.0%
2012	MLB	29	144.7	10	144	4.79	1.40	23.0%	8.9%	.315	70.6%	13.9%	34.8%	49.2%
2013	MLB	30	92.7	5	77	4.56	1.47	18.6%	10.8%	.288	68.5%	11.1%	34.7%	42.9%
Proj.			180	10	134	4.60	1.44	19.2%						

Happ was considered, by some, as a deep fantasy sleeper because his fastball velocity ticked up and his strikeout rate soared from 19 percent to 23 percent. However, last season his season was cut short due to a freak injury (hit by pitch). Speaking of injury, he missed the remainder of the 2012 season due to a broken foot, another freak injury. Happ is expected to be fully recovered in time for spring training and is expected either be the long man out of the bullpen or the fifth starter. If he becomes the starter, he has limited upside because he walks too many hitters and doesn't have the stuff to get enough strikeouts to get out of those jams consistently and when batters do make contact a lot of the contact is

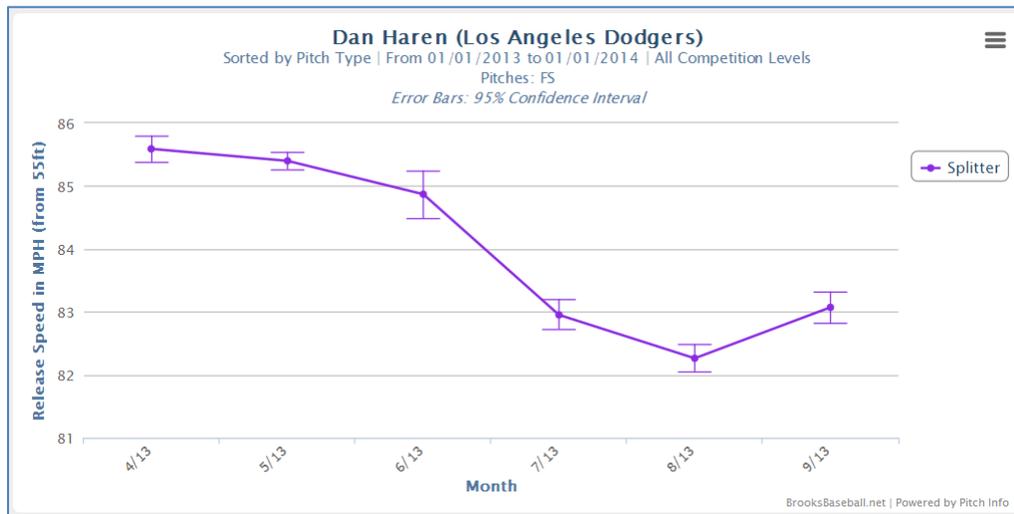
hard-hit. At this point he’s streaming option in mixed leagues and is rosterable in 15-team mixed leagues.

Dan Haren

Throws: R | Age: 33 | Team: Dodgers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (91), NFBC (93)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	238.3	16	192	3.17	1.02	20.1%	3.5%	.272	71.5%	9.3%	33.0%	49.4%
2012	MLB	31	176.7	12	142	4.33	1.29	19.0%	5.1%	.302	70.9%	15.6%	35.3%	45.7%
2013	MLB	32	169.7	10	151	4.67	1.24	21.1%	4.3%	.302	70.3%	19.2%	30.2%	42.1%
Proj.			180	12	143	3.60	1.23	20.5%						

In early July Adam Kilgore [wrote about](#) an adjustment Dan Haren made that potentially turned around Haren’s season. Kilgore reported that Haren added another splitter that was thrown a lower velocity than all of his other pitches. “He (Haren) had trouble fooling hitters because all of his pitches hummed at similar velocities. According to FanGraphs.com, Haren’s fastball (89.2 mph), cutter (85.8) and splitter (83.5) offered little disparity.” The addition of the new splitter allowed there to be separation between his other pitches and according to [BrooksBaseball.net](#) the velocity of the splitter decreased at the time of Adam’s article.



After the article was published Haren pitched extremely well. The table below provides a breakdown of his performance before and after this adjustment was made.

Split	GS	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Before	15	6.15	1.44	.306	.333	18.3%	3.6%	15.8%
After	16	3.29	1.05	.228	.271	23.5%	5.1%	8.9%

Haren went on the DL at the end of the June with shoulder stiffness, but there was also mental fatigue as well. According to another quote from Adam in regards to Haren’s mental state when he went on the DL, “From a personal standpoint, it was really tough,” Haren said. “I hadn’t been away from my kids. It’s a year of their lives I’ll never get back. From that standpoint, it’s sad. But one day, they’ll understand what I had to do to make a living. I think they’ll get it.”

The question for every fantasy owner is how much weight to put on Haren’s resurgent second half of the year? He’s going to pitch in a better ballpark and arguably a better defensive outfield, especially if **Matt Kemp** can play 150-plus games, so Haren appears to be a prime bounce back candidate.

Matt Harrison

Throws: L | Age: 28 | Team: Rangers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	185.7	14	126	3.39	1.28	16.3%	7.4%	.290	72.3%	8.4%	28.1%	54.0%
2012	MLB	26	213.3	18	133	3.29	1.26	15.2%	6.7%	.284	78.6%	13.6%	25.4%	53.4%
2013	MLB	27	10.7	0	12	8.44	1.97	23.5%	13.7%	.400	54.9%	25.0%	25.8%	48.4%
Proj.			165	13	101	3.45	1.29	15.7%						

Back and shoulder injuries limited Harrison to only two starts last year. His last surgery, which was successful, [was to fix Thoracic Outlet Syndrome](#); essentially it was the last procedure he needed to get his shoulder 100 percent. As of early January he is expected to be ready for the start of the season. Prior to 2013 he was very much like **Jeremy Hellickson** in that his baseball card statistics were consistently lower than all of the advanced statistics.

Suppose Harrison comes back fully healthy, how good can he be? Before the 2013 he was improving every year despite the fact he doesn’t have plus secondary pitches. Even though he doesn’t miss a lot of bats, he does miss a lot of barrels. The difference between the two is fairly simple; by barrels I mean hard contact; and it’s no surprise he’s had a 46 percent ground ball rate the past three seasons. He doesn’t offer a lot of upside as we’ve probably seen his best seasons, but this is the type of pitcher who you can probably snag for cheap in deeper drafts because most fantasy owners have probably forgotten about him and he could provide above average totals in the win and ERA department. He should not be taken in 10-team leagues as he doesn’t strikeout enough players to warrant a permanent roster spot.

Jeremy Hellickson

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Rays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (142), NFBC (139)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	189	13	117	2.95	1.15	15.1%	9.3%	.223	82.0%	10.7%	39.1%	41.5%
2012	MLB	25	177	10	124	3.10	1.25	16.7%	8.0%	.262	82.7%	15.4%	32.1%	46.9%
2013	MLB	26	174	12	135	5.17	1.35	18.3%	6.8%	.307	66.2%	15.9%	30.0%	44.6%
Proj.			120	12	84	3.90	1.28	18.0%						

As of February 3 Hellickson [will miss the first six to eight weeks of the season](#) after having arthroscopic surgery on his right elbow. The player capsule below assumed he was going to enter the season. I believe the surgery will only affect the number of innings he throws and his peripheral statistics will be remain the same.

During Hellickson’s career, prior to 2013, he was able to have excellent baseball card statistics despite what the advanced stats predicted. For example, he always had low BABIPs and LOB% rates despite the shroud of regression being ever present. Last year he was unable to stave off the effect of the regression and subsequently performed miserably. Before the 2013 season Jason Collette wrote an [amazing piece](#), which explained why Hellickson was going to have another great year despite everything we know about regression. I bring up Jason’s article because I was big believer in Hellickson last year and I watched him more than any other pitcher last year and he frankly was not good last year; the advanced stats suggest he was unlucky, but I’m not buying it. Despite the poor 2013 season there is still hope optimism. The walk rate is trending downward while the strikeout rates are trending upward.

Earlier this year, Doug Thorburn [reviewed](#) Hellickson’s problems with men on base and attributed it to the use of the slide-step. Historically, Hellickson would vary how often he used the slide-step in order to attempt interrupt the hitters timing. Last year he used the slide-step a lot more and Doug believes this made him ineffective.

According to R.J. Anderson, Hellickson’s [problems stems](#) from not throwing inside to left handed hitters, but after reviewing the data, he has never pitched inside to pitchers; in fact, in 2013 was the most he’s ever thrown inside to them.

Jason Collete [sums up how I feel about Hellickson](#). “Hellickson is not broken mentally or physically. He had a rough patch earlier this season that he was able to recover from before recently falling off the wagon of success. Hitters are finding more success off him these days because they are not having to look too many places for his pitches. If Hellickson is to once again be effective with his pitches on the outside, perhaps he should work on pitching inside to batters again.”

Felix Hernandez

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Mariners | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (14), NFBC (14)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	233.7	14	222	3.47	1.22	23.0%	7.0%	.307	72.7%	11.5%	26.2%	54.6%
2012	MLB	26	232	13	223	3.06	1.14	23.7%	6.0%	.308	75.0%	9.7%	23.8%	54.1%
2013	MLB	27	204.3	12	216	3.04	1.13	26.2%	5.6%	.313	75.1%	14.2%	20.0%	55.6%
Proj.			220	14	214	3.05	1.14	25.0%						

Hernandez has been incredibly consistent the past six years, averaging a 2.94 ERA, 1.17 WHIP, 23 percent strikeout rate and seven percent walk rate; most importantly he shows no signs of slowing down. The biggest red flag against him is the number of innings he’s pitched so far into his career (1,824

innings in nine seasons and he's only 27 years old!). His fastball velocity has been in decline for years and he hasn't missed a beat despite only throwing 90-92 mph instead of 96-97 in his rookie season; his strikeout rate was the highest of his career and his walk rate was the lowest of his career. Some fantasy owners have the mentality of, "eventually all pitchers get hurt" and I would agree with them, but this is not an argument that should be applied to Hernandez.

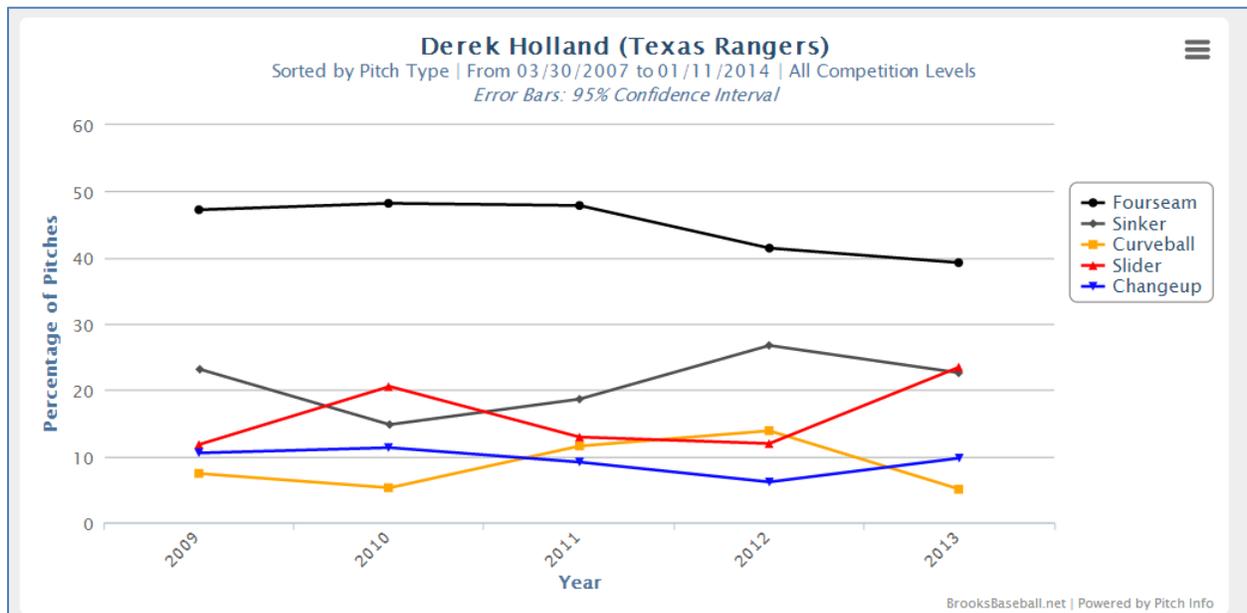
Derek Holland

Throws: L | Age: 27 | Team: Rangers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (55), NFBC (48)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	198	16	162	3.95	1.35	19.2%	7.9%	.305	72.8%	14.7%	26.5%	52.0%
2012	MLB	25	175.3	12	145	4.67	1.22	19.9%	7.1%	.261	67.9%	19.0%	34.8%	48.2%
2013	MLB	26	213	10	189	3.42	1.29	21.1%	7.2%	.307	75.1%	12.6%	26.8%	45.8%
Proj.			110	7	89	3.48	1.28	20.8%						

In January Holland suffered a "[freak accident](#)" where he damaged the cartilage in his left knee. The injury required arthroscopic surgery and is expected to miss the first half of the season. According to the article "did not damage his ACL or MCL, and Daniels said Holland's long-term prognosis is good." In theory this injury should not affect his ability to perform well in 2014. In general I avoid players who are already hurt because setbacks can occur at any moment, but this isn't a shoulder or elbow injury so I have more optimism about 2014 for Holland.

Last year Holland started using the slider, his best secondary pitch, more than ever before (image below courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#)). According to BrooksBaseball.net he used the slider more against both lefties and righties too.



His strikeout rate increased a little more than one percentage point compared to last year. The increase came against solely against left handed hitters as his strikeout rate went from 17.7 percent in 2012 to 24.6 percent in 2013. The strikeout rate remained the same against righties, which indicates another leap in the strikeout rate is not going to happen.

In 2012 home runs was the biggest adjustment he had to improve upon (he allowed 32 home runs) and it looks as though he achieved that as he only allowed 20 home runs and his HR/FB rate decreased by 50 percent. The biggest fantasy question is will the 2013 HR/FB rate sustain itself? The majority of the home runs he allows come against right handed hitters, specifically 91 percent of the total home runs allowed in his career. Earlier I mentioned he threw the slider more against righties and lefties. That also coincided with him throwing the sinker less to righties. Not surprisingly of the 30 home runs he allowed to righties in 2012, 19 of them came against the sinker. Basically, the decreased usage of the sinker made him less home run prone to righties, which makes me believe in 2013s HR/FB rate.

Tim Hudson

Throws: R | Age: 38 | Team: Giants | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (93), NFBC (99)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	35	215	16	158	3.22	1.14	17.9%	6.3%	.273	72.4%	9.8%	23.0%	60.8%
2012	MLB	36	179	16	102	3.62	1.21	13.6%	6.4%	.270	71.1%	8.3%	25.0%	57.5%
2013	MLB	37	131.3	8	95	3.97	1.19	17.8%	6.7%	.281	68.1%	14.1%	18.9%	60.5%
Proj.			180	11	113	3.75	1.20	16.1%						

When Hudson came up in 2000 he was a power pitcher, but as the years progressed he changed his game to that of command/control pitcher who relied on hitting his spots and generating ground balls. As time as gone on he has increased the number of pitches in his repertoire, all of which are designed to generate ground balls. He has been extremely successful at generating ground balls as he ranked eighth in ground ball rate among pitchers with at least 20 starts last year. The biggest knock against Hudson’s fantasy value before the 2013 season was the extremely low strikeout rate (13.6 percent), but it looks as though that was an outlier as the strikeout rate in 2013 returned to a relatively normal rate (17.8 percent). From 2008-11 his strikeout rate was 16.1 percent.

The question is what could have caused the low strikeout rate in 2012? Hudson missed the first month of the season after offseason surgery to repair a herniated disc. Also, during the first half of the season his strikeout rate was 15.4 percent compared to only 12 percent the rest of the way. I believe the 2012 strikeout rate was an outlier because the strikeout rate increased in 2013 and the majority of the 2012 totals were negatively influenced by a small sample size.

Overall, I’m expecting a 16 percent strikeout rate and things to be pretty much the same. Last year he had a freak accident (someone stepped on his ankle as he was covering first base) so he’s not a big injury risk as the innings pitched would indicate. He’ll likely provide a sub-3.80 ERA with a decent number of strikeouts to be rosterable in NL-only and possibly deep mixed leagues. Lastly, I don’t believe

the Giants ballpark will play that big of a role in dramatically effecting his stats in 2014 because he is so reliant on ground balls that cavernous outfield will have less effect on his output than say a fly ball pitcher such as **Phil Hughes**.

Phil Hughes

Throws: R | Age: 28 | Team: Twins | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (249), NFBC (111)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	74.7	5	47	5.79	1.49	14.1%	8.1%	.304	65.4%	10.5%	37.7%	38.6%
2012	MLB	26	191.3	16	165	4.23	1.26	20.2%	5.6%	.286	73.9%	16.7%	40.3%	38.3%
2013	MLB	27	145.7	4	121	5.19	1.46	18.8%	6.5%	.324	68.7%	14.3%	38.7%	35.0%
Proj.			180	11	140	3.86	1.27	20.0%						

I loved the Hughes signing for the Twins. It appears as though they're creating a starting rotation of pitchers whose skill set will play up in the ballpark and the outfield is eventually going to contain outfielders who are plus defenders. Hughes was poorly suited to pitch in Yankee Stadium and it really dragged down his numbers. The table below shows his home-road splits since new Yankee Stadium opened in 2009.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%	HRs
Home	4.82	1.34	.269	.297	20.4%	6.8%	13.7%	71
Away	3.99	1.27	.250	.292	19.6%	7.2%	6.9%	30

After looking at the sheer number of home runs he allowed in New York is quite staggering and for me, provides optimism for 2014. Even though Target Field limits power from left handers, it's a neutral park because doubles and triples occur more frequently. The biggest benefit to changing teams has to be the psychological benefit of no longer pitching in Yankee Stadium because I assume playing in that stadium had to take a toll. The Twins are going to be bad for most of 2014, which is going to limit his ability to earn wins, but starting in 2015, when the kids on the farm start showing up, he is going to be a 12-team mixed league option. In deep mixed leagues he presents an opportunity to provide sneaky value because the strikeout rate is legitimate and it's hard to quantify how much a change of scenery will affect his performance.

Hisashi Iwakuma

Throws: R | Age: 32 | Team: Mariners | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (6), NFBC (7)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	31	125.3	9	101	3.16	1.28	19.5%	8.3%	.282	81.9%	20.2%	23.7%	56.1%
2013	MLB	32	219.7	14	185	2.66	1.01	21.4%	4.8%	.252	81.9%	17.0%	24.4%	53.2%
Proj.			175	13	140	3.39	1.14	20.5%						

Among starting pitchers Iwakuma provided one of the best ROIs last year, striking out 21 percent of batters and posting a 2.66 ERA. Also, most people do not know he had a better ERA, WHIP and more wins than **Felix Hernandez**. Any time I see a .252 BABIP and a 82 percent LOB% rate I naturally say a regression is inevitable, but how much?

The table below provides his home-road splits for his career. When looking at his ERA it looks as though he is not that dependent on Safeco, but all the other peripheral statistics suggest has gotten lucky in some respects. The most troubling and out of place stat is the HR/FB rate as it's pretty high considering his perceived skill set and the fact he's a ground ball pitcher. Despite what his numbers suggest, he's not an overpowering pitcher; his fastball/sinker only sits in the 89-90 mph range and he's able to miss bats because he has a dynamite split finger pitch.

	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
Home	2.71	1.01	.218	.257	22.8%	5.3%	12.8%
Away	3.01	1.22	.245	.272	18.2%	7.1%	13.0%

Even though he hasn't been hurt during his brief time in the majors, injuries are still an issue as his shoulder has been surgically repaired. Michael Barr [said last June](#), "One, he's had a series of shoulder issues in his career, although he's been relatively healthy going on two seasons now. This is ostensibly why the club used him out of the pen to start 2012 and also why he's only averaging 93 pitches per start in 2013. Most pitchers are ticking time bombs, but in Iwakuma there's definitely increased risk."

As the year progressed he got stronger and "he (Iwakuma) does know that he found better upper-and-lower-body balance towards the latter part of the season and it caused less stress on his shoulder and elbow," (source: [Seattle Times](#)). Overall, I have a bad feeling about Iwakuma heading into 2014 and I'll admit this is a hunch because I can't find anything in the data to confirm my hunch. As of February 12, he is going to miss 4-6 weeks [because an injury to the middle finger on his right hand](#).

Edwin Jackson

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Cubs | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (196), NFBC (192)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	199.7	12	148	3.79	1.44	17.2%	7.2%	.330	73.9%	10.9%	24.2%	49.0%
2012	MLB	28	189.7	10	168	4.03	1.22	21.3%	7.3%	.278	71.2%	13.7%	31.3%	50.7%
2013	MLB	29	175.3	8	135	4.98	1.46	17.4%	7.6%	.322	63.3%	12.6%	22.8%	54.7%
Proj.			190	11	133	4.02	1.29	18.0%						

For the past four seasons Jackson has had higher ERAs than his FIP and xFIP, which implies he's not pitching up to the level as his suggested ratios. Last year I was a big fan of Jackson because it finally started to appear he was finally starting to "get it" and pitch to the level his stuff suggests. For example, he was coming off a year where he had his best strikeout rate ever and the second best walk rate of his career.

Last year Jackson morphed himself into a ground ball pitcher, throwing the sinker almost twice as often as any other year prior. The sinker worked at generating more ground balls as the ground ball rate increased four percentage points, reaching a career high as a starting pitcher. Despite the high ground ball rate he suffered from a poor BABIP (.322) and LOB% (63.3%); these numbers should improve next year, which makes him a bounce back candidate. However, the increased ground ball rate came at the expense of the strikeout rate as it was one of the lowest strikeout rates of his career. I'm expecting Jackson to have an ERA around four with a strikeout rate in the 18 percent range, which makes a deep mixed league play.

Ubaldo Jimenez

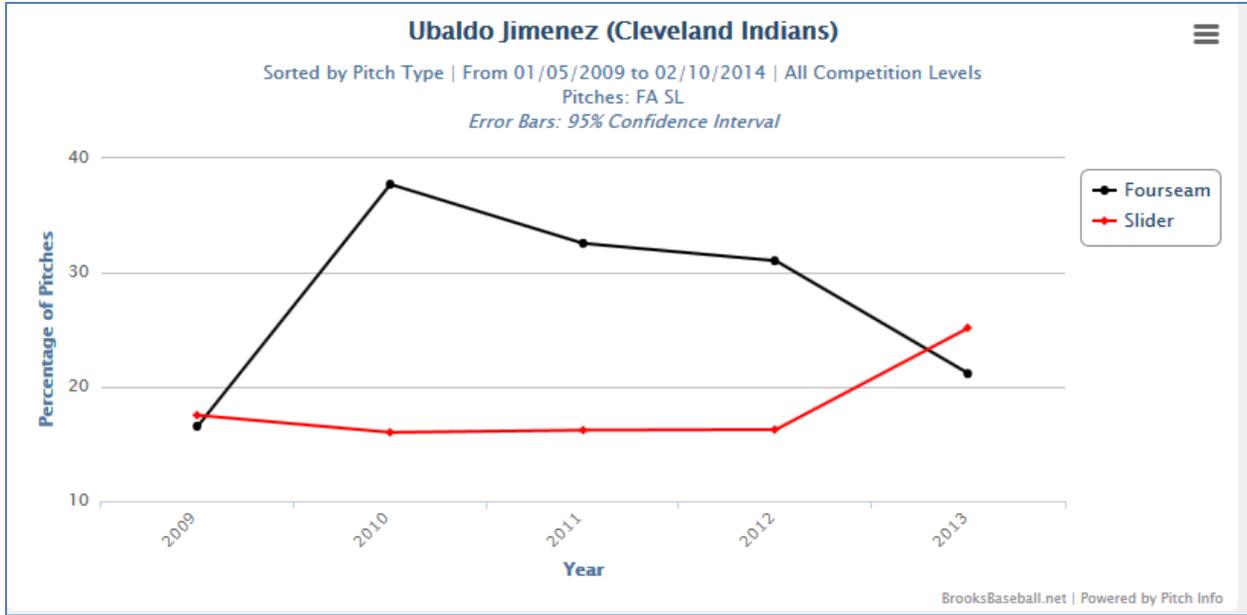
Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Orioles | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (49), NFBC (35)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	188.3	10	180	4.68	1.40	21.9%	9.5%	.314	65.0%	11.6%	28.2%	50.8%
2012	MLB	28	176.7	9	143	5.40	1.61	17.8%	11.8%	.309	68.6%	15.4%	32.0%	43.8%
2013	MLB	29	182.7	13	194	3.30	1.33	25.0%	10.3%	.304	76.5%	12.9%	26.4%	48.4%
Proj.			185	11	173	4.67	1.46	24.0%						

How much stock do you put in four months of great performance versus a little more than two years of below average performance (table below)? That is seemingly the question every fantasy owner has to ask when evaluating Jimenez.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Two-plus years	5.10	1.49	.260	.309	20.0%	10.8%	11.5%
Last four months	2.40	1.32	.240	.314	25.2%	9.7%	6.0%

The numbers that stand out to me the most is the walk rate and WHIP. With numbers that high it's pretty obvious the 2.40 ERA is not sustainable. However, the five percent increase in his strikeout rate provides some optimism that maybe he has turned the corner and could be fantasy relevant in 2014. The jump in strikeout rate came primarily from left handed hitters (from 18 percent to 29 percent) compared to right handers (17.5 percent to 20.7 percent) when comparing last year to 2012. The major change in his game was he started throwing the slider more (to both lefties and righties). While he threw the slider more he threw the fastball less, which makes sense because his velocity only sits in the 92 mph range compared to 95-96. The image below shows the pitch usage by year of the slider and fastball (courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net).



In general, it’s never a good idea to inflate a small sample size in the face of the larger sample size. The article from [Ben Lindbergh](#) suggests the quality of his stuff ticked up because of mechanical changes, but the success of those changes could be short lived because “... eventually abandoned them or proven unable to keep them consistent.” The last four months of the season makes Jimenez very tempting but I cannot overlook the two-plus seasons of poor performance because the performance he showed could fall apart at any moment.

Erik Johnson

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: White Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	23	84.7	8	74	2.23	0.92	22.6%	6.4%	.000	81.0%	-	-	-
2013	AAA	23	57.3	4	57	1.57	1.08	25.0%	8.3%	.000	81.8%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	27.7	3	18	3.25	1.55	14.1%	8.6%	.290	75.7%	16.7%	31.6%	49.5%
Proj.			190	10	133	4.00	1.39	18.0%						

Based on the scouting reports from [Jason Parks](#) and [Keith Law](#) Johnson projects to be an innings eater without much bat missing ability; basically a solid number four starter. That has a ton of real life value, but in fantasy circles means he’s a stream option. A big road block to his fantasy value in 2014 is the home ballpark because mistakes are forgiven less often. He does feature four average to above average pitches that can play up if his command takes a step forward, which is very possible given his athleticism. He pitched 169 innings last year which means he should pitch 190-plus if he’s healthy for a full year. Heading into 2014 I think he’s the same type of pitcher as **Dan Straily** (in terms of player type), but with far less upside.

Josh Johnson

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Padres | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (335), NFBC (154)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	60.3	3	56	1.64	0.98	23.9%	8.5%	.239	82.2%	5.1%	26.2%	54.4%
2012	MLB	28	191.3	8	165	3.81	1.28	20.7%	8.1%	.302	71.9%	9.9%	26.4%	50.0%
2013	MLB	29	81.3	2	83	6.20	1.66	21.6%	7.8%	.357	63.2%	25.0%	23.8%	50.8%
Proj.			126	8	103	3.80	1.25	21.0%						

How many innings is Johnson going to throw? That's the biggest question I have from a fantasy standpoint. Last year he was on the DL for 50 days with a forearm strain while also missing seven days with a blister and another 39 days with tricep inflammation. In October he had surgery to [remove bone spurs in his elbow](#) and is expected to be ready for spring training. In 2011 he missed most of the season with shoulder inflammation. In 2010 he missed a month of the season with shoulder inflammation again. Lastly, he had a TJ back in 2007.

Other than the gaudy ERA, which was heavily influenced by a high BABIP, LOB% and HF/RB rate, the strikeout, walk and ground ball rates were on par with his career numbers. Now he gets to leave hitter friendly confines of Toronto to San Diego, no longer the best pitcher's park, but still a top five. The Padres infield is above average, only if **Chase Headley** remains on the ball club the entire year. If he can make 20 starts, and that's a big if, he'll most likely provide a positive ROI for his fantasy owner because all the underlying stats suggest the ability is still there if he can stay healthy.

Scott Kazmir

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Athletics | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (88), NFBC (54)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	26	150	9	93	5.94	1.58	13.6%	11.6%	.281	68.2%	14.6%	37.2%	43.3%
2011	AAA	27	15.3	0	14	17.02	2.74	20.6%	29.4%	.500	37.5%	0.0%	27.0%	56.8%
2013	MLB	29	158	10	162	4.04	1.32	24.1%	7.0%	.324	73.4%	18.4%	24.4%	45.7%
Proj.			168	13	155	3.60	1.30	23.7%						

After the signing of Kazmir, the mentality among A's fans is "in Beane we trust," but that's not enough for me as he's also the same person who signed **Ben Sheets** for \$10M based on one workout. Last year his line drive rate was high, his HR/FB rate was high and also gave up an above-average number of doubles. Also, he was more effective against lefties than righties with batting averages of .226 and .275 respectively; however he did have a .342 BABIP and had the same strikeout rate against righties, which offers optimism that his performance will improve. The Indians had a fairly easy schedule, which allowed them an easier way into the playoffs. One narrative against Kazmir is he also faced a cupcake schedule. Of his 29 starts, 15 came against teams with records below .500; against sub-.500 teams he had a 3.83 ERA compared to 4.27 ERA amongst the above .500 teams.

In Sam Miller's [piece](#) he asks is there any difference between Kazmir and Jeff Samardzija (or El Shark)?

The Kaz: 158 IP, 9.2 K/9, 2.7 BB/9, 1.1 HR/9, 4.04 ERA, 3.51 FIP, 23% LD rate
 El Shark: 175 IP, 9.3 K/9, 2.9 BB/9, 1.0 HR/9, 3.81 ERA, 3.55 FIP, 22% LD rate

It's shocking that Kazmir was basically out of baseball for almost two years and he received \$22 million over two years, but this is the type of deal that makes sense for the A's. If Kazmir falters they have **Tommy Milone, Drew Pomeranz** and **Dan Otero** (I'm in the minority that thinks Otero can be an effective fifth starter) ready to take over for him, but he can maintain the 24 percent strikeout rate he could be a nice draft day value. Lastly, he doesn't go deep into games because he can be fairly inefficient, but the A's bullpen is deep enough to hold leads for him if he only goes six innings.

Joe Kelly

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Cardinals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (85), NFBC (91)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	72.3	2	45	2.86	1.33	15.1%	7.0%	.322	73.0%	3.4%	26.9%	58.9%
2012	MLB	24	107	5	75	3.53	1.38	16.4%	7.9%	.306	73.7%	12.5%	24.5%	56.0%
2013	MLB	25	124	10	79	2.69	1.35	14.8%	8.3%	.289	82.4%	12.7%	20.5%	54.4%
Proj.			170	12	102	3.98	1.37	15.5%						

Kelly was a very polarizing pitcher in the fantasy community as he put up great numbers and appeared to have great stuff when looking at the pitch data on BrooksBaseball.net, but never won the affection of the sabermetrically inclined evaluator who watched him pitch. The advanced stats agree he got extremely lucky last year. For the season, he allowed a .272 average with the bases empty, a .244 average with runners on base and a .174 average with runners in scoring position. He managed to have a 82.4 percent LOB% while only striking out 15 percent of batters; normally I'll accept higher LOB rates if the pitcher is a high strikeout pitcher because the less often the ball is put in the play, the higher the likelihood the runners will stay where they are. Kelly is a ground ball pitcher (he would have ranked in the top 20 among starters if he qualified) who will more likely have BABIP fluctuations, which makes predicting his performance more difficult. With the signing of **Jhonny Peralta**, the addition of **Kolten Wong** and **Mark Ellis** the defensive infield is going to vastly compared to last year. That said, he doesn't have the over powering necessary ([David Schoenfield](#) comps Kelly to Derek Lowe) to maintain the ERA numbers he put up last year; I'm expecting his ERA closer to his FIP the past two seasons.

Ian Kennedy

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Padres | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (159), NFBC (165)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	222	21	198	2.88	1.09	22.0%	6.1%	.270	79.2%	9.6%	34.2%	44.0%
2012	MLB	27	208.3	15	187	4.02	1.30	20.8%	6.1%	.306	74.9%	12.8%	36.9%	43.1%
2013	MLB	28	181.3	7	163	4.91	1.40	20.5%	9.2%	.295	69.1%	19.4%	27.9%	43.7%
Proj.			189	10	151	4.50	1.36	20.5%						

At the trading deadline the Padres acquired Kennedy just before Wednesday's trade deadline for left-handed reliever **Joe Thatcher**, a minor leaguer and a draft pick ... or in other words, basically nothing. Despite what the 2011 season suggests, he has fringe average stuff; the fastball sits at 90 mph and relies on changing speeds with his pretty good changeup to get outs. From 2011-12 he posted a really good walk totals (6.1 percent specifically), but last year it got worse as the walk rate was 8.4 percent in the first half of the season and 10.5 percent the second half. Kennedy has a brutal combination of having mediocre stuff and generating a lot of fly balls; that combination usually means he will be more home run prone and he has, giving up 55 the past two seasons. Moving from the bam box in Arizona to fly ball and pitcher friendly confines of San Diego increases his fantasy value, but unless he finds a way to limit the walks he will only be a stream only option in deep mixed leagues.

Clayton Kershaw

Throws: L | Age: 26 | Team: Dodgers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (1), NFBC (1)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	233.3	21	248	2.28	0.98	27.2%	5.9%	.269	78.6%	8.8%	31.8%	51.1%
2012	MLB	24	227.7	14	229	2.53	1.02	25.4%	7.0%	.262	77.9%	10.3%	28.2%	53.7%
2013	MLB	25	236	16	232	1.83	0.92	25.6%	5.7%	.252	80.6%	9.2%	21.0%	53.7%
Proj.			220	16	218	2.40	0.95	25.5%						

Kershaw is great and anyone saying anything less than he's the best pitcher in baseball should raise questions to that person's sanity. He's still my number one starting pitcher (this could change because **Yu Darvish** is extremely close and my projection could change during spring training), but it wasn't an easy, slam dunk choice. Last year he had a 5.1 percent HR/FB rate on the road compared to a career 7.5 percent HR/FB rate. He's always been a low BABIP pitcher, but the .251 BABIP was the lowest of his career and I have to believe that increases, only slightly. My biggest concern about his fantasy is the Dodgers as a team. Odds are they're going to be the preseason favorites to win the NL West by the majority of people, but I don't see it. **Hanley Ramirez** is not going to repeat the numbers he put up last season; I want to see **Yasiel Puig** do it over a larger sample before I give him the key to the city; what is **Matt Kemp** going to do?; the bullpen consists of **Kenley Jansen** and then a lot of relievers who could blow up at any time such as **Chris Perez**, **Brian Wilson** and **Brandon League** ... I have to believe one of those three guys cost him one or two wins.

Corey Kluber

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (78), NFBC (58)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	26	125.3	11	128	3.59	1.36	23.5%	9.0%	.316	69.6%	9.1%	29.0%	50.7%
2012	MLB	26	63	2	54	5.14	1.49	19.2%	6.4%	.342	63.2%	16.4%	28.5%	48.7%
2013	MLB	27	147.3	11	136	3.85	1.26	22.4%	5.4%	.329	72.9%	17.9%	20.6%	51.1%
Proj.			195	13	168	3.55	1.22	22.1%						

Kluber missed a month of the season (in August) with a [sprained middle finger](#). Before going on the DL, Kluber was one of the best pitchers in the majors, which is funny because he wasn't scheduled to even be in the rotation at the start of the year, but injuries and a double header gave him an opportunity to start. And from that day forward he took the ball every fifth day until he went on the DL. When he returned he clearly didn't look like his old self. The table below shows his performance before and after the injury.

Split	GS	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%	GB%
Before	19	3.54	1.20	.258	.319	23.2%	5.2%	11.3%	46.9%
After	5	5.33	1.58	.337	.395	18.3%	6.4%	13.6%	40.7%

I'm inclined to believe the injury he suffered last year was a fluke injury and is not likely to affect his ability to stay healthy in 2014. Let's talk about his arsenal. The cutter is his best pitch as FanGraphs gives it the second [highest score](#) of any starting pitcher with at least 100 innings pitched. He added a two-seam fastball during the 2012 season because major league hitters were barreling up his four-seam fastball. The two-seamer helped increase the amount of weak contact he induced. He also features a wipe out slider that ranks as the 6th best among starting pitchers with 100 innings pitched.

What's strange about his performances the past two years is he's had very high BABIPs, which is a lot higher than the normal .290-.300 range. Since he generates a good number of ground balls I have to believe the BABIP is going to regress. Overall, Kluber is one of the most intriguing players heading into 2014 because if he takes a step forward he could be a borderline top 20-25 starting pitcher. I don't believe the 2013 season was fluke.

Hiroki Kuroda

Throws: R | Age: 39 | Team: Yankees | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (38), NFBC (37)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	36	202	13	161	3.07	1.21	19.2%	5.8%	.287	79.9%	14.1%	30.1%	51.1%
2012	MLB	37	219.7	16	167	3.32	1.17	18.7%	5.7%	.281	77.7%	16.6%	24.7%	58.1%
2013	MLB	38	201.3	11	150	3.31	1.16	18.2%	5.2%	.282	75.8%	13.6%	25.2%	50.7%
Proj.			200	13	139	3.40	1.17	17.9%						

Look at the table below and choose which player you would prefer to have on your fantasy team. The table is summation of the past two seasons.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Player A	3.31	1.16	.249	.284	18.5%	5.5%	10.9%
Player B	3.57	1.26	.267	.318	19.0%	5.2%	9.5%

Player A is Kuroda and Player B is **Doug Fister**. They're basically the same player, but I'm very confident Fister will be ranked higher and will go ahead of Kuroda in most drafts even though Kuroda has been the

better pitcher. I will say 2014 will be a new season and we do not get to carry over the past performance, but it's difficult to not like Kuroda. That said, Kuroda does have some red flags. The first is his age as he will turn 39 years old in February and eventually he's going to lose a step. Second, he had mediocre stats the second half of the season (table below; data is only for 2013) for the second year in a row. His performance fell off during the second half of the 2012 season but last year the decline was pronounced. For example, he struggled so much during his last eight starts (6.56 ERA) that he [skipped bullpen sessions](#) in an effort to stay sharp.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First Half	2.65	1.05	.227	.253	17.7%	5.1%	9.8%
Second Half	4.25	1.32	.279	.325	18.9%	5.4%	10.4%

After looking at the velocity of all his pitches throughout the season, the velocity of all of his pitches actually increased as the season progressed. I looked at the performance of all of his pitches and they looked identical to the 2012 numbers, which indicates he fell into some bad luck during the second half. What's strange is he's a much more effective pitcher away from Yankee Stadium (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	2.57	1.01	.218	.251	19.6%	5.4%	10.2%
Road	4.13	1.33	.282	.317	17.3%	5.5%	11.5%

After looking at table like this he provides the most value as a steaming option, but I have hard time believing the dramatic home-road split performance continues. Kuroda has been extremely consistent regardless of the league and/or home team he plays for so it's hard to see anything changing even though he'll turn 39 in February and has struggled during the end of the season the past two seasons.

John Lackey

Throws: R | Age: 35 | Team: Red Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (47), NFBC (45)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	31	215	14	156	4.40	1.42	16.8%	7.7%	.319	69.3%	9.9%	28.2%	49.2%
2011	MLB	32	160	12	108	6.41	1.62	14.5%	7.5%	.339	63.6%	12.6%	31.3%	45.9%
2013	MLB	34	189.3	10	161	3.52	1.16	20.7%	5.1%	.281	76.9%	17.6%	27.5%	50.7%
Proj.			180	13	136	3.97	1.28	19.5%						

After a bad 2011 season and a TJ surgery that caused him to miss the entire 2012 season, Lackey was basically left for dead by a majority of fantasy owners. For the first half of the season it was vintage Lackey as he had a 51.6 percent ground ball rate and 22.5 percent strikeout with a 2.78 ERA and 1.14 WHIP. However, as the ground ball rate and strikeout rate fell so did the ERA and WHIP (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	GB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	2.78	1.14	.236	.276	22.5%	5.6%	51.6%	15.6%
2nd Half	4.35	1.18	.258	.289	18.6%	4.7%	41.7%	11.3%

Since he missed the entire 2012 season it's possible he wore down towards the end of the season; to help combat that the Red Sox and didn't pitch deep into games for the first 7-8 weeks of the season; he averaged five and half innings per start until the middle of June. Another item that aided his 2013 season was his performance at home; specifically he had a 2.47 ERA and 1.03 WHIP in 13 starts at home. If you look at his advanced stats compare them to the rest of the team you'll see he was extremely lucky (table below).

Split	HR/FB	BABIP	LOB%
Lackey	8.00%	.273	77.80%
Team	9.10%	.293	74.10%

Overall, Lackey is a solid pitcher who is quite tempting because of the increased strikeout rate and the return of the ground ball rate. However, his performance at home is likely not to repeat itself so a regression should occur, but not as much as you would think. What should also regress is the number of wins he'll earn as the 10-13 record is a low winning percentage for a pitcher on one of the better teams in the majors.

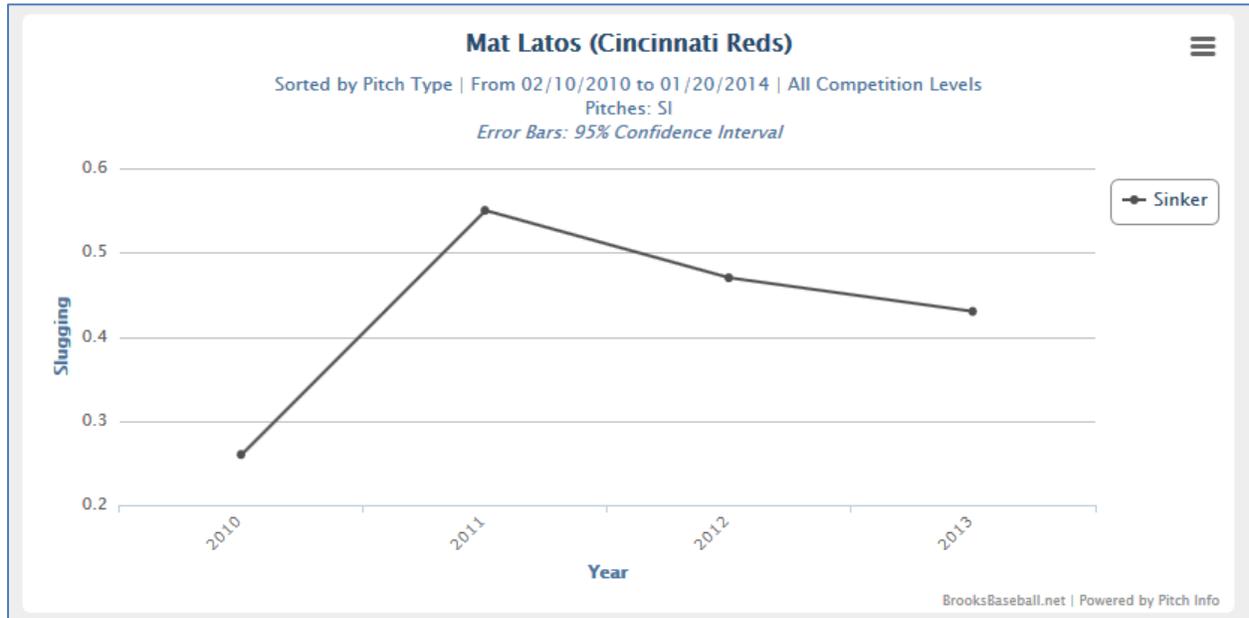
Mat Latos

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Reds | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (20), NFBC (19)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	194.3	9	185	3.47	1.18	23.2%	7.8%	.284	71.4%	8.9%	35.5%	48.5%
2012	MLB	24	209.3	14	185	3.48	1.16	21.6%	7.5%	.266	75.5%	15.3%	29.0%	50.9%
2013	MLB	25	210.7	14	187	3.16	1.21	21.2%	6.6%	.299	74.6%	12.0%	19.9%	50.6%
Proj.			210	12	171	3.25	1.19	21.0%						

It was revealed in late-September Latos was playing with an abdominal strain [for three months](#) and after the season he had an unrelated surgery to remove bone chips from [his right elbow](#), which is a very common procedure. Last year some fantasy owners bypassed Latos out of fear his 2012 numbers would regress significantly. For example, the .266 BABIP and 75.5 percent LOB% rate both looked like clear candidates for regression, especially considering the home ballpark. In 2013 the BABIP did regress and the LOB% rate was relatively the same, but his ERA was even lower than last year. What happened? He gave up far less home runs. In fact it was the lowest HR/FB rate of his career. In terms of BABIP, it was the highest of his career so if both the HR/FB rate and BABIP both regress they should basically cancel each other out. Last year he incorporated the sinker more than ever before, which induced a lot of weak contact. For example, the image below shows the slugging percentage of the sinker for the past four seasons (courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#)). When you look at the pitch usage over time you'll notice he started throwing the sinker a lot more after being traded to the Reds, which is quite remarkable because

he made adjustments to his game immediately. Making major adjustments like that tell a lot about a pitcher's makeup. [On February 14](#) he slipped while throwing and tore the meniscus in his left knee. He had surgery soon after and is expected to miss at least ten days. This obviously isn't a good thing because any delay in the training regimen could negatively affect his readiness for the start of the 2014 season. As of mid-February I'm not that worried about this and he is one of the safest number two fantasy starters in baseball.



Mike Leake

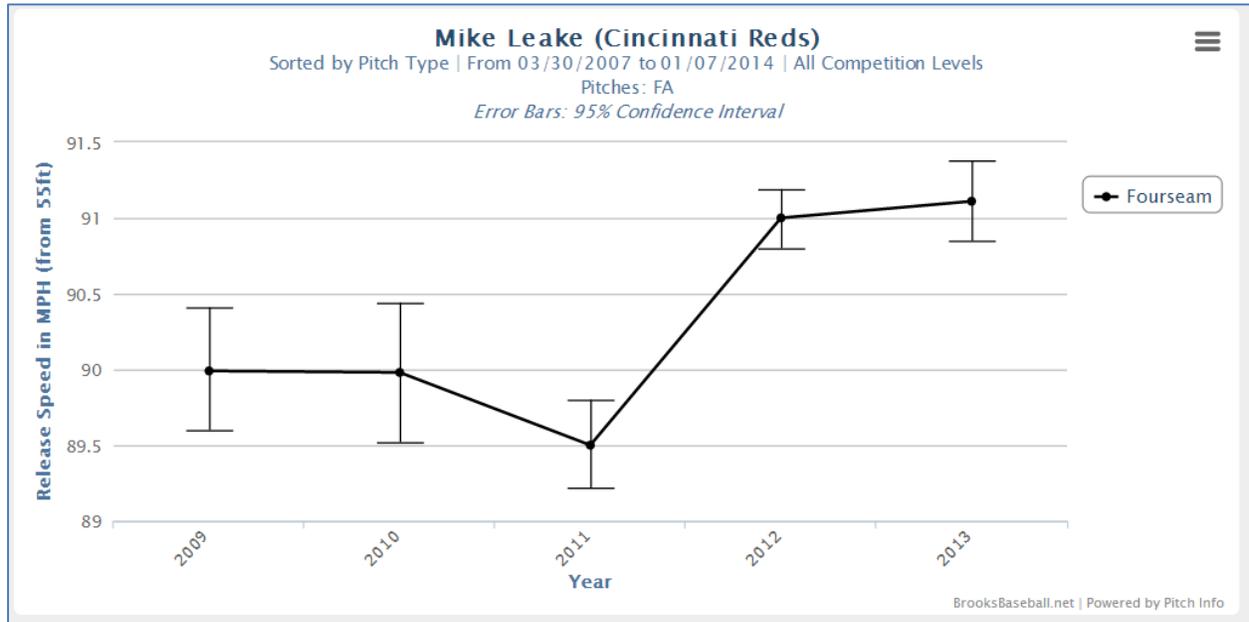
Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Reds | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (54), NFBC (47)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	167.7	12	118	3.86	1.17	17.0%	5.5%	.270	75.8%	15.9%	29.0%	52.0%
2012	MLB	24	179	8	116	4.58	1.35	15.3%	5.4%	.306	70.9%	19.0%	24.5%	53.0%
2013	MLB	25	192.3	14	122	3.37	1.25	15.2%	6.0%	.285	77.7%	20.4%	17.5%	53.3%
Proj.			100	7	58	3.51	1.27	15.0%						

Similar to **Jeff Locke**, Leake is not overpowering, has to rely on hitting his spots and generates a lot of ground balls to get outs consistently. However, unlike Locke, Leake has marginally better stuff but it goes unnoticed because of his home ballpark. The table below shows his home-road splits for his entire career.

Split	GS	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%
Home	59	4.49	1.36	.283	.306	16.2%	5.9%
Away	50	3.45	1.27	.261	.287	15.1%	6.5%

Based on the data Leake could be a really sneaky play in 12 / 15-team mixed leagues if you stream him on the road. Also another point of optimism is his fastball has increased for the past two seasons (image below from BrooksBaseball.net). The HR/FB rate of 11.5 percent was the lowest of his career and it looks like it should regress back to the 13-14 percent range he had prior to 2013. However, he threw the most pitches ever down in the strike zone last year, which makes me believe the 11.5 percent HR/FB is legitimate.



Cliff Lee

Throws: L | Age: 35 | Team: Phillies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (4), NFBC (6)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	232.7	17	238	2.40	1.03	25.9%	4.6%	.291	81.4%	12.1%	25.8%	53.3%
2012	MLB	33	211	6	207	3.16	1.11	24.4%	3.3%	.309	78.5%	14.7%	31.9%	50.3%
2013	MLB	34	222.7	14	222	2.87	1.01	25.3%	3.7%	.287	76.7%	15.5%	24.3%	49.4%
Proj.			220	14	216	3.01	1.04	25.2%						

Last year Lee lost one mph on his fastball and he still provided ace-like stats for his fantasy owners. Even though he's a high strikeout pitcher he doesn't rely on overpowering stuff, but instead relies on pinpoint command. The only reservation I have about Lee is his age as he'll turn 36 in August, but I can't find any statistical data to support he's about to slow down. I looked at his first and second half splits and he actually got better as the season went on. For example he had a 37.5 percent strikeout rate, 1.85 ERA, 0.69 WHIP with only *one walk* in the month of September! Obviously he cannot perform like an ace forever and it's that fact that is going to suppress his value in 2014.

Jon Lester

Throws: L | Age: 30 | Team: Red Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (53), NFBC (49)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	191.7	15	182	3.47	1.26	22.8%	9.4%	.286	78.1%	14.7%	28.2%	56.2%
2012	MLB	28	205.3	9	166	4.82	1.38	18.9%	7.8%	.312	67.6%	17.5%	24.1%	54.5%
2013	MLB	29	213.3	15	177	3.75	1.29	19.6%	7.4%	.300	73.7%	12.7%	25.2%	50.3%
Proj.			205	14	159	3.68	1.29	19.9%						

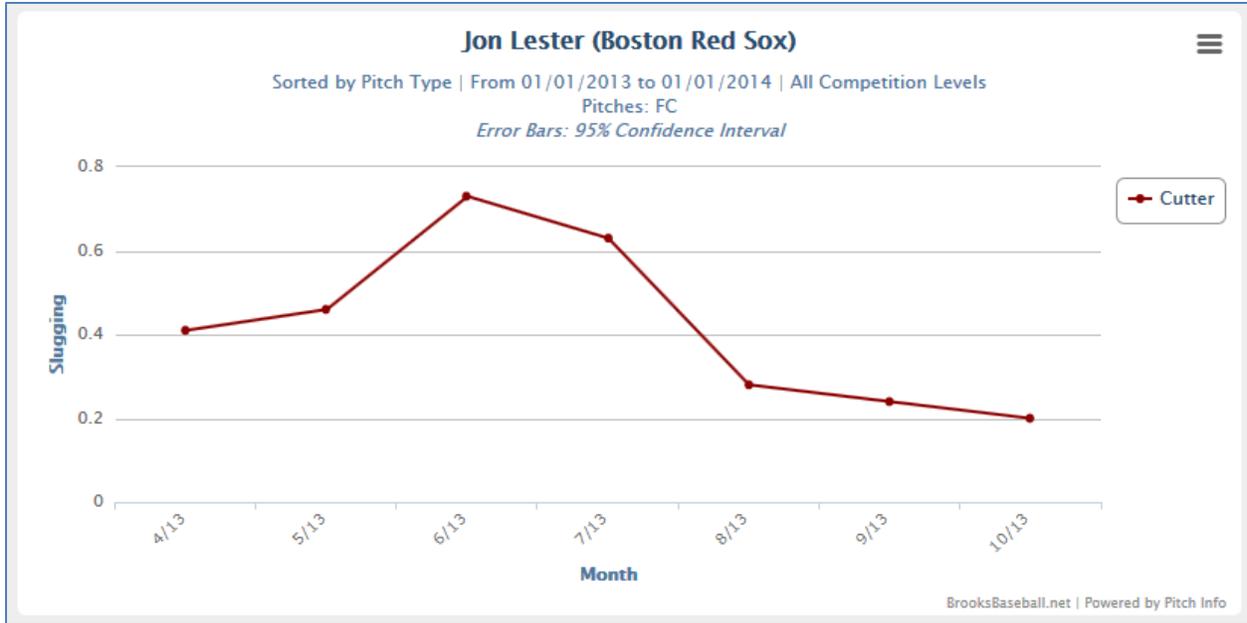
Look at the table below and choose which player you would prefer to have on your fantasy team. The data was pulled for only the 2013 season.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Player A	3.75	1.29	.253	.301	19.6%	7.4%	8.5%
Player B	3.00	1.20	.252	.300	19.7%	6.3%	8.8%

Obviously you would take Player B because he has the lower ERA and WHIP, but overall both players look the same. Player A is Lester and Player B is **Hyun-Jin Ryu**. If you read my player capsule on Ryu you'll notice I'm not very high on him, which means I'm not buying Lester right? First the second half of the season was much better than the first half (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First Half	4.58	1.37	.260	.303	19.1%	8.4%	12.4%
Second Half	2.57	1.19	.242	.298	20.3%	6.0%	3.9%

Even though his ERA looks really good, I have my doubts the 3.9 percent HR/FB rate is going to repeat itself. The fact he basically had the same BABIP while batters hit nearly 20 points less tells me he was inducing more weak contact. Eno Sarris has a pretty cool article suggesting a [mechanical change to his delivery](#) improved the command, velocity and deception (movement) of his cutter, his best secondary pitch. When looking at [BrooksBaseball.net](#) he started throwing the cutter more during the second half of the season and hitters made weaker contact against the pitch as the season progressed (image below).



The cutter may have improved, but the ground ball rate has been in decline for three straight years (and even during the second half of 2013) in a row and even though the strikeout rebounded from the really low 2012 rate, it only ticked up slightly. Lester is a very solid pitcher, but because of the team he plays for and what happened in the playoffs Lester is one of those players who will likely be over drafted because he'll provide 210 innings with an average strikeout rate, ERA and WHIP. The biggest asset he'll bring is the ability to provide 14-plus wins.

Colby Lewis

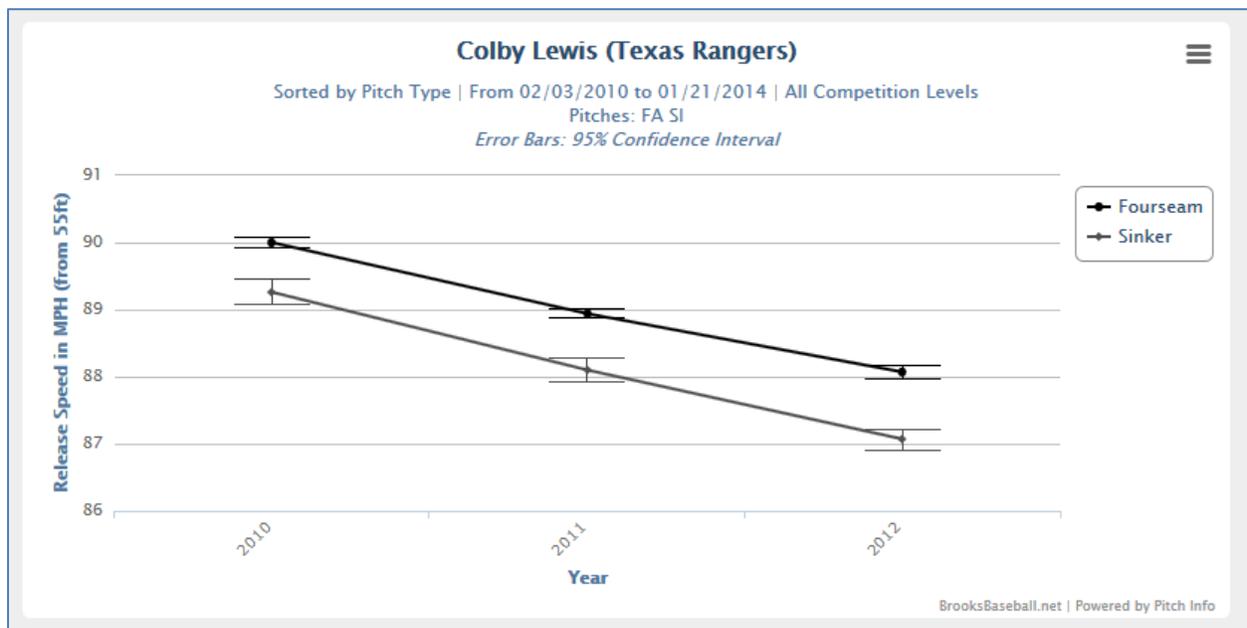
Throws: R | Age: 34 | Team: Rangers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	30	201	12	196	3.72	1.19	23.2%	7.7%	.275	71.9%	11.4%	36.7%	44.8%
2011	MLB	31	200.3	14	169	4.40	1.21	20.1%	6.7%	.266	73.0%	14.8%	43.7%	39.7%
2012	MLB	32	105	6	93	3.43	1.08	21.8%	3.3%	.279	73.5%	14.4%	39.8%	38.0%
Proj.			100	6	79	4.25	1.20	20.2%						

Lewis missed half of the 2012 and the entire 2013 seasons recovering from a torn flexor tendon in his right (throwing) forearm. Then in August he had a hip resurfacing surgery to help repair a chronic hip condition. This offseason the Rangers signed him to a heavily incentive laden contract in a hope he's fully healthy. Lewis currently on a throwing program and according to the [Rangers pitching coach](#), "Lewis is getting better extension in his delivery." With **Derek Holland** expected to miss the first half of the season, the Rangers are counting on Lewis to provide the same production he did back in 2010-11, which is a tall order for a pitcher who hasn't pitched since 2012.

What kind of pitcher can we expect from Lewis if he is healthy when the season begins? When healthy he's been a league average fantasy pitcher, posting a 3.93 ERA, 1.18 WHIP, 21.7 percent strikeout rate

and 6.4 percent walk rate. He had a really good 2010 season and looked like he could be a legitimate number two fantasy starter, but in 2011 he regressed in the stat column and also the quality of his stuff also decreased, which changed his fantasy profile to merely a spot starter. When I looked at his stats on BrooksBaseball.net I noticed his fastball and sinker got hit a harder in 2012 compared to the 2010-11 seasons. When I looked at the velocity of both pitches they were trending down (image below). It's sloppy analysis to automatically correlate the drop in performance due to a decrease in velocity. In the past Lewis liked to pitch up in the zone with his fastball, which works better when the pitch is thrown in the low to mid-90s, but not at 87-88 mph. According to pitch location data it appears as though he's attempted to throw the fastball down in the strike zone, but still missed a lot in the middle of the zone. Overall, the player we saw in 2010 is not coming back unless the fastball ticks up, which I doubt is going to happen.



Tim Lincecum

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Giants | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (89), NFBC (73)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	217	13	220	2.74	1.21	24.4%	9.6%	.281	78.5%	9.5%	28.7%	52.5%
2012	MLB	28	186	10	190	5.18	1.47	23.0%	10.9%	.309	67.8%	16.7%	26.8%	49.3%
2013	MLB	29	197.7	10	193	4.37	1.32	22.9%	9.0%	.300	69.4%	16.9%	23.4%	49.7%
Proj.			195	13	174	3.99	1.29	23.0%						

When the Giants resigned Lincecum to a two year deal for \$35 million I didn't mind the signing because he still misses a lot of bats and most importantly, the value he adds to the franchise from a marketing point of view and to the Giants brand is worth more than the contract. While I agree it's a mistake for any team to sign their franchise player solely based on the fact the fan base loves the player; the Nationals did that with **Ryan Zimmerman** and I bet they're regretting that move; ask what the Cardinals

think about not signing **Albert Pujols**. What makes the contract a good contract is it's a short term deal (two years) and he still misses bats, which means he could still improve and approach the pitcher he once was or at the very least provide superior value as a bullpen arm.

Lincecum's biggest problem the past two seasons has been pitching with runners on base (table below, which came from [Baseball Prospectus](#)). The cause for this could be bad luck, his inability to hold runners and/or his command is worse while in the stretch.

Season	Bases Empty	Men On
2010	.246/.316/.357	.236/.301/.373
2011	.248/.326/.382	.184/.270/.290
2012	.248/.319/.421	.269/.370/.434
2013	.239/.308/.401	.260/.340/.372

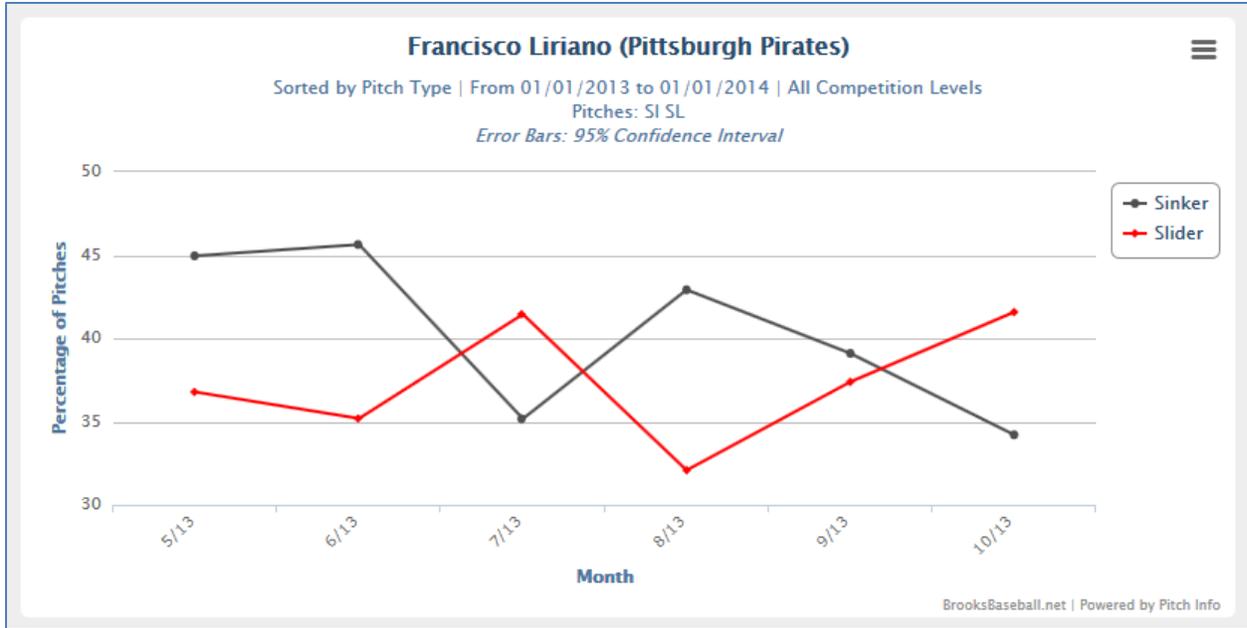
His BABIP with men on base the past two years is a combined .319 compared to .268 in 2010-11. During the past four seasons the percentage of strikes he's thrown is identical when the bases are empty compared to men on base. The most important improvement/adjustment he made was he decreased the number of pitches up in the zone (three percentage points specifically), which indicates he realizes he can no longer pitch up in the strike zone any more. If you read my fantasy guide last year the biggest reason why I didn't believe a major change was going to occur because pitching up in the zone with a decreased velocity is always a recipe for disaster and the definition of disaster is a lot of hard contact and home runs. He'll likely cost you next to nothing to acquire next year and still has tremendous upside if he can improve his command with men on base.

Francisco Liriano

Throws: L | Age: 30 | Team: Pirates | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (27), NFBC (30)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	134.3	9	112	5.09	1.49	19.0%	12.7%	.290	67.2%	12.1%	31.5%	53.3%
2012	MLB	28	156.7	6	167	5.34	1.47	24.1%	12.6%	.300	66.5%	14.2%	32.9%	48.4%
2013	MLB	29	161	16	163	3.02	1.22	24.5%	9.5%	.290	77.5%	11.3%	18.8%	54.2%
Proj.			150	9	140	3.30	1.29	24.0%						

Last July I [started to cave in](#) and began to believe in Liriano's resurgent season. Of course after I write that he goes on to have a 3.95 ERA and 1.26 WHIP in his last 14 starts. However, if you remove the one extremely brutal start in Colorado where he gave up ten earned runs his ERA for the year would be 2.50. The big question is was last year legitimate? He's essentially a two-pitch pitcher (fastball and slider) with one of the best sliders in the game; it is so good he is able to get outs (either via the strikeout or ground ball) with it on both sides of the plate. The big adjustment he made was he started using the slider as his primary pitch rather than the fastball (image below courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#)).



There are some red flags though. Even though he just turned 30 in October and has been in the majors since 2005 (I swear I'm not kidding), last year was the second most innings he has ever thrown in a single season with 161. Second, obviously if 161 innings is the most he's ever thrown then injuries must have been a big part of his career and they have. Third, he's never had back to back good seasons before. Injuries have been a road block to sustaining his performance, but it is still something to be aware of. Overall, when you roster him you're taking a leap of faith that he can healthy again and continue to throw strikes. The fact he's only thrown more than 190 innings once makes the risk too high for me, but if you take a chance on him I totally understand because the adjustment of using the slider as his primary pitch is what allowed him to be so successful in 2013. Lastly, this is the last year of his contract with the Pirates and if he can have another year similar to 2013 he will be due for a big pay day.

Jeff Locke

Throws: L | Age: 26 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (92), NFBC (95)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	141.7	10	131	2.48	1.19	22.4%	7.4%	.296	82.0%	7.1%	33.8%	50.4%
2012	MLB	24	34.3	1	34	5.50	1.37	23.0%	7.4%	.313	68.2%	22.2%	28.1%	53.1%
2013	MLB	25	166.3	10	125	3.52	1.38	17.6%	11.8%	.278	75.7%	12.4%	18.8%	57.7%
Proj.			120	7	79	4.99	1.39	17.0%						

In early June I [wrote](#) about Locke and how I wasn't buying his great start to the season because all the advanced statistics and scouting reports suggested his great start wasn't sustainable. I don't want to rehash that particle and put it here, so if you're looking for a more in-depth article I suggest you checkout the article. The table below is a breakdown of each half of the season.

Splits	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
1st Half	2.15	1.13	.202	.231	16.7%	10.8%	6.7%
2nd Half	6.12	1.87	.308	.374	18.9%	13.5%	13.2%

Obviously Locke isn't nearly as bad as the second half numbers suggest, but his upside is fourth, fifth starter because his stuff isn't overpowering as he's a sinker baller and is a pitch to contact type of pitcher. Also, he doesn't strikeout enough hitters to be a reliable fantasy pitcher week in and week out. As of right now, even without **A.J. Burnett** in the rotation, Locke may not even begin the year in the Pirates rotation.

Kyle Lohse

Throws: R | Age: 35 | Team: Brewers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (51), NFBC (50)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	188.3	14	111	3.39	1.17	14.3%	5.4%	.269	71.3%	8.6%	31.9%	45.7%
2012	MLB	33	211	16	143	2.86	1.09	16.6%	4.4%	.262	77.1%	10.1%	30.1%	46.7%
2013	MLB	34	198.7	11	125	3.35	1.17	15.5%	4.5%	.276	79.1%	15.4%	28.5%	47.1%
Proj.			195	11	118	3.60	1.18	15.5%						

Despite moving to a worse defensive team and one of the best hitters parks in the majors Lohse had a year similar to the two years prior with the Cardinals. In fact, last year he performed better at Miller Park than on the road (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	2.97	1.16	.264	.287	15.2%	3.9%	11.2%
Road	3.76	1.18	.253	.272	15.9%	5.1%	10.2%

To steal an idea directly from the 2013 Baseball Prospectus Annual, Lohse has found great success by embodying those most basic of pitching clichés: get ahead of hitters (sixth highest first-pitch strike rate in baseball), avoid walks (seventh lowest walk rate), and let your defense do the work (ninth in in-play rate). Even though he has been incredibly consistent the past three seasons I'm still wary of rostering him because he turned 35 in October, he allows a lot of home runs (11th most allowed) and his room for error is so small he could go from a top 50 starting pitcher to a NL-only play at any moment. If you believe Lohse can sustain his performance for another year, then you should be able to get him at a great price because I expect most fantasy owners will share my viewpoint on him.

Cory Luebke

Throws: L | Age: 29 | Team: Padres | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	25	17.7	1	18	4.08	1.30	23.7%	7.9%	.292	80.8%	20.0%	31.3%	50.0%
2011	MLB	26	139.7	6	154	3.29	1.07	27.7%	7.9%	.271	72.3%	10.4%	35.3%	44.2%
2012	MLB	27	31	3	23	2.61	1.16	17.7%	6.2%	.276	75.1%	3.6%	29.8%	52.1%
Proj.			0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.0%						

Luebke hasn't taken the mound since his Tommy John surgery in early 2012 (May). He has been delayed on three separate occasions, which does not bode well for his 2014. Other than dynasty leagues he should be drafted.

Jordan Lyles

Throws: R | Age: 23 | Team: Rockies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (288), NFBC (105)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	20	94	2	67	5.36	1.41	16.1%	6.3%	.307	65.0%	16.5%	28.6%	46.8%
2012	MLB	21	141.3	5	99	5.09	1.42	15.8%	6.7%	.302	61.2%	18.3%	23.7%	57.0%
2013	MLB	22	141.7	7	93	5.59	1.51	14.5%	7.6%	.314	63.1%	16.3%	22.5%	52.5%
Proj.			100	6	58	4.25	1.40	15.0%						

After learning he was traded to the Rockies I had the same thought most of you probably had; this is going to make him undraftable and I still hold that belief, but there is room for optimism because he looks like (on a stat sheet anyway) very similar to pitchers who were relatively successful at Coors Field last year. For example, **Tyler Chatwood**, **Jhoulys Chacin** and **Jorge De La Rosa** all performed well. The table below show their 2013 stats compared to Lyles. In general they're all very similar; they don't miss a lot of bats, but instead rely on generating a lot of weak contact and ground balls. According to the 2013 Baseball Prospectus Annual Lyles is "works a smart game, is responsive to coaching," which indicates he can apply the tactics his colleagues have successfully implemented. I'm still not recommending him in anything other than a NL-only league, but he should not be overlooked if he starts to have success to begin the year.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	GB%
Chatwood	3.15	1.43	.274	.314	13.9%	8.6%	58.5%
De La Rosa	3.49	1.38	.263	.303	15.7%	8.7%	47.3%
Chacin	3.47	1.26	.250	.288	15.4%	7.5%	46.8%
Lyles	5.59	1.51	.284	.314	14.5%	7.6%	48.4%

Lance Lynn**Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Cardinals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (57), NFBC (42)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	34.7	1	40	3.12	1.04	29.4%	8.1%	.272	76.2%	11.5%	31.7%	59.8%
2012	MLB	25	176	18	180	3.78	1.32	24.2%	8.6%	.321	75.6%	12.8%	27.2%	49.2%
2013	MLB	26	201.7	15	198	3.97	1.31	23.1%	8.9%	.314	71.8%	10.4%	25.7%	48.5%
Proj.			195	14	174	3.85	1.30	23.0%						

After having a horrible second half of the year in 2012, Lynn was determined to improve and he came to spring training [41 pounds lighter](#) in an attempt to increase his stamina. Based on the stats it looks as though he accomplished that, but his problem was his performance was mediocre the entire season. Despite having a 93-94 mph fastball and a biting curveball he still can get hit hard every couple of starts for two reasons. First, since he doesn't have a good changeup, left handed hitters eat him up. For example, the past two years lefties are hitting .270 with an ISO of 1.71. Also, the reason why his walk rate is so high is primarily due to lefties as he has a 13.7 percent walk compared to only a five percent walk rate against righties. The majority of his value the past two years have been the high win total and I suspect he should be able to win 14-plus games if he's able to make 31-32 starts again. Other than wins he'll provide an ERA in the high-3s, a 1.30ish WHIP and a strikeout rate somewhere in between 22-23 percent. Overall, he's a backend rotation starter who is allowed to stay in the rotation despite being a clear candidate for the bullpen because he's making the league minimum, but when he starts getting expensive the Cardinals will either trade him or put him in the bullpen.

Paul Maholm**Throws: L | Age: 31 | Team: Dodgers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (144), NFBC (74)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	162.3	6	97	3.66	1.29	14.1%	7.3%	.286	72.1%	9.3%	23.4%	54.8%
2012	MLB	30	189	13	140	3.67	1.22	17.8%	6.7%	.281	75.7%	14.4%	25.3%	55.6%
2013	MLB	31	153	10	105	4.41	1.41	15.7%	7.0%	.310	71.2%	16.7%	20.9%	55.4%
Proj.			165	9	99	3.95	1.39	15.5%						

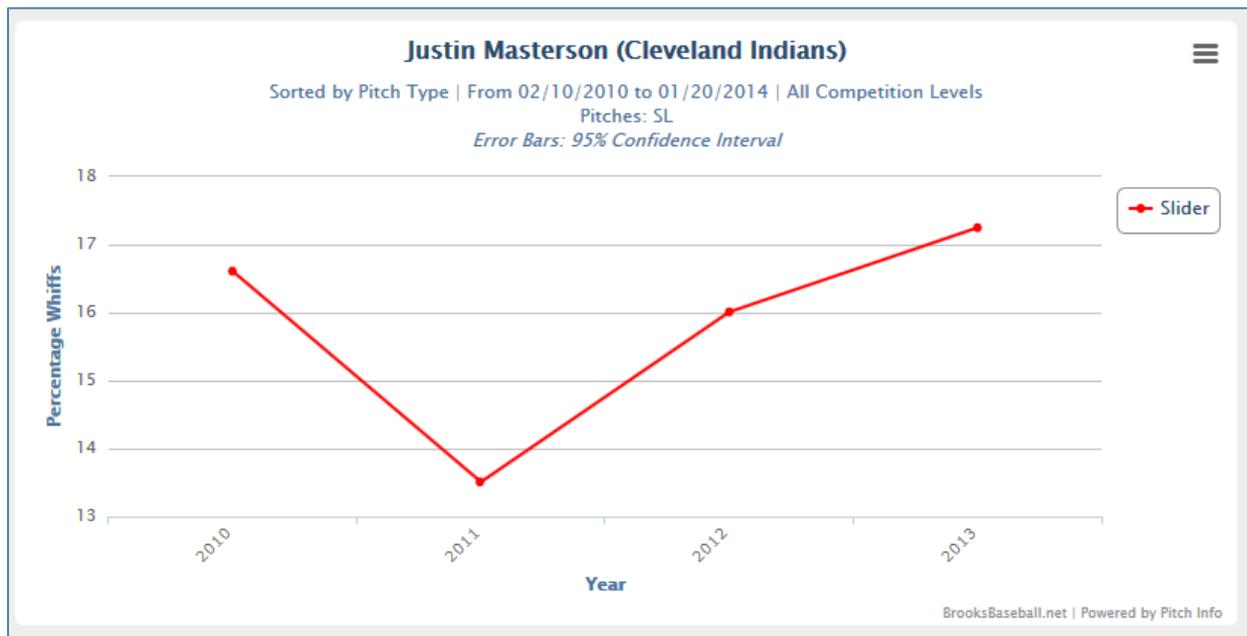
Prior to the 2013 season Maholm had two straight years with ERAs 3.68 despite having fringe average stuff because he throws a lot of strikes, throws any pitch in any count and generates a lot of ground balls. Last year he was dark horse for some fantasy analyst because his strikeout rate increased three and half percentage (to 19.4 percent), but last year the strikeout rate decreased to career levels (16 percent). From 2011-12 he had a .287 BABIP while last year it was .315. The vast majority of the increase in BABIP came from line drives as the batting average was .733 and .724 BABIP, which is extremely high as the normal BABIP on line drives is .667. Basically, there's room for positive regression in 2014. Maholm's scouting profile sounds like the type of starter that should only be drafted in the deepest of leagues. Going to the Dodgers could make him a sneaky stream option in 14-team mixed leagues with deep benches because of the ballpark.

Justin Masterson

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Indians | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (29), NFBC (22)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	216	12	158	3.21	1.28	17.4%	7.2%	.302	72.9%	7.8%	22.1%	59.3%
2012	MLB	27	206.3	11	159	4.93	1.45	17.5%	9.7%	.309	66.4%	13.6%	21.2%	59.3%
2013	MLB	28	193	14	195	3.45	1.20	24.3%	9.5%	.285	75.4%	15.7%	17.0%	63.3%
Proj.			195	13	174	3.45	1.23	23.0%						

Before the 2013 season I wasn't buying Masterson because he didn't have a pitch to consistently get out left handers. Last year he found that pitch and it was the slider. He's been using a slider before, but last year the command ticked up and became the second best slider in the game (among qualified starting pitchers) according to [FanGraphs](#), behind only **Yu Darvish**. The image below (courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#)) shows the percentage of swings and misses on the slider the past four seasons. One reason for his improvement last year, according to the [Indians pitching coach](#), is "Masterson altered bullpen routine between starts this season for the pitcher's improvement across the board."



The table below shows his performance against left handed hitters in 2013 compared to the three years prior. Obviously he missed more bats and induced more weak contact, but the walk rate is still worrisome; that's a minor quibble though. In early September he missed three weeks of the season with an [oblique strain](#) and when he came back he was used exclusively as a reliever. Lastly, by all accounts Masterson is a hard worker and the improved effectiveness should make him a top 30 starting pitcher; top 20 is overly optimistic because of the high walk rate.

Splits	PA	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
2013	494	.248	.698	.296	19.4%	10.9%	11.4%
2010-12	1,488	.292	.785	.321	13.3%	8.7%	10.1%

Zach McAllister

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Indians | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (114), NFBC (82)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	63.3	5	52	2.98	1.23	20.2%	7.4%	.300	72.6%	8.8%	33.9%	44.0%
2012	MLB	24	125.3	6	110	4.24	1.36	20.3%	7.0%	.304	64.6%	14.3%	35.8%	43.3%
2013	MLB	25	134.3	9	101	3.75	1.36	17.4%	8.5%	.295	72.6%	10.8%	31.6%	43.2%
Proj.			185	11	137	3.99	1.35	19.0%						

McAllister missed a month of the season with a [right finger strain](#) and when he was healthy he was a league average pitcher. It's possible the finger played a bigger role on his performance as his stats were slightly better after coming back from the injury (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Before	3.43	1.37	.264	.295	15.8%	7.7%	8.1%
After	4.06	1.35	.251	.296	19.0%	9.2%	6.5%

His biggest problem is he doesn't have dominant stuff, but has enough stuff and above average command to keep a job at the backend of the rotation. Overall, the strikeout rate was lower (even when he came off the DL) compared to 2012 while the walk rate increased, which are trends I do not want to see from a pitcher with his type of profile. Overall, he'll provide a high-3s ERA with below average strikeouts with a WHIP that will hurt you and therefore, take away any possible gains the ERA provided.

Brandon McCarthy

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (177), NFBC (129)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	170.7	9	123	3.32	1.13	17.8%	3.6%	.296	67.6%	8.7%	25.6%	52.1%
2012	MLB	28	111	8	73	3.24	1.25	15.6%	5.1%	.295	77.1%	9.8%	30.2%	46.2%
2013	MLB	29	135	5	76	4.53	1.35	13.2%	3.6%	.320	68.7%	15.1%	19.0%	53.1%
Proj.			120	7	75	3.67	1.25	16.1%						

McCarthy's biggest roadblock to fantasy relevance has been he's never on the field. Despite being fairly injury prone he has made adjustments, after joining the Athletics in 2011, to his delivery to put less stress on the arm, with mixed results. For example, he threw a career high number of innings (170) in first year with the Athletics. In 2012 he was on the DL two times. The first trip to the DL was for 72 games with various shoulder problems. The second was a fluke injury where he was struck by a batted

ball. Last year he missed two months with [shoulder soreness](#). Overall, he has only averaged 139 innings per year the past three seasons.

Despite the high ERA McCarthy does have fantasy value in 2014 for two reasons: he doesn't walk batters and he is a ground ball pitcher. From 2011-12 he had a strikeout rate of 16.1 percent and last year it dipped to 13.2 percent despite moving from the AL to the NL. I have to believe the shoulder injury had to play a part in that. What's going to make or break his 2014 season is the refinement of the changeup; in 2012 hitters hit .264 against it with a 21 percent strikeout rate; last year they hit .369 with only a 10 percent strikeout rate. The reason why this is an important pitch is it will keep hitters off balance and not look dead red for the sinker and cutter.

Overall, he cannot be trusted to provide more than 140 innings and it looks as though he took a step back in terms of performance, which on the surface makes not draftable. However, if there is anyone who is willing to make dramatic adjustments based on data, it's McCarthy. When healthy I expect the ERA to be in the mid-3s, the WHIP to be in the 1.20s and for the strikeout rate to be in the 16 percent range, which makes him a good stream option. Also, when he gets hurts you can easily drop him and not look back.

James McDonald

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (272), NFBC (193)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	171	9	142	4.21	1.49	18.8%	10.3%	.303	77.0%	14.6%	34.5%	44.0%
2012	MLB	27	171	12	151	4.21	1.26	21.2%	9.7%	.269	70.8%	13.4%	34.5%	44.6%
2013	MLB	28	29.7	2	25	5.76	1.65	18.1%	14.5%	.315	55.3%	3.4%	33.7%	44.2%
Proj.			50	2	42	4.20	1.35	21.5%						

McDonald was a [preseason favorite](#) for me last year, but in May he went on the DL with [shoulder problems](#) and he never returned to the majors. He did make nine appearances in the minors during the rehab, but was unspectacular and the Pirates released him. I've always liked McDonald, but he's currently without a job. If he signs with a NL team I like his chances to put up similar numbers to his 2012 season.

Kris Medlen

Throws: R | Age: 28 | Team: Braves | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (30), NFBC (26)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	24	107.7	6	83	3.68	1.20	18.9%	4.8%	.299	73.8%	13.3%	31.1%	46.7%
2012	MLB	26	138	10	120	1.57	0.91	23.1%	4.4%	.261	85.0%	6.7%	25.3%	57.6%
2013	MLB	27	197	15	157	3.11	1.22	19.1%	5.7%	.299	76.9%	12.6%	24.6%	49.2%
Proj.			200	14	156	3.24	1.22	20.0%						

Despite only being 5'10 tall and having a fastball that sits 89-90 mph he's able to miss bats with only three pitches through exceptional location and deception. The biggest stat from 2013 that stands out is the 77 percent LOB% rate. On the surface the number looks high and the normal assumption is to want to normalize that number when forecasting for next season, but when you compare his number to the rest of the Braves pitching staff you'll notice it matches identically. So something must be happening for the Braves to have such a high LOB% rate. I'm not surprised this happened because of one simple reason: they had a full year of **Andrelton Simmons** at shortstop. If you haven't seen Simmons play, you should because he is the closest thing you're going to see that resembles **Ozzie Smith** or **Rey Ordonez**.

With a pitcher of his size, such as **Sonny Gray** and **Yordano Ventura**, one concern I have is will he be able to hold up to a starters work load year after year because pitcher that size don't usually hold up for extended periods of time. Also he had a big jump in innings pitched, pitching 44 innings more innings, which could be a concern if you believe in the [Verducci Effect](#), which I do not. I think we see more of the same next year from Medlen; the ERA may tick up slightly, but all the peripheral stats should stabilize. If the Braves hitters, specifically the Upton brothers can hit for a full year there's no limit how good the team will be, which means more win potential. I would not be surprised if he wins 17-plus games next year.

Wade Miley

Throws: L | Age: 27 | Team: Diamondbacks | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (77), NFBC (70)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	40	4	25	4.50	1.65	13.9%	10.0%	.321	79.9%	15.0%	30.1%	49.6%
2012	MLB	25	194.7	16	144	3.33	1.18	17.8%	4.6%	.293	72.0%	7.5%	31.9%	48.2%
2013	MLB	26	202.7	10	147	3.55	1.32	17.4%	7.8%	.296	75.7%	16.9%	20.3%	55.7%
Proj.			200	11	136	3.99	1.31	17.5%						

Is it possible for a pitcher to get lucky two years in a row? If the answer is no, then ask checkout **Jeremy Hellickson's** numbers. In 2012 Miley, the extreme control artist was able to put up solid numbers because he had the fifth-lowest walk rate among NL starting pitchers and limited the number of home runs. Last year the walk rate regressed to the levels he showed throughout his career in the minors and the HR/FB rate almost doubled. Despite all that his ERA only increased 20 points. What happened? He increased his ground ball rate nine percentage points, which limited the number of home runs despite the HR/FB rate increasing so much. Over his brief career he's only slightly better on the road (table below), which makes him more than stream-only pitcher, supposing you believe the home-road splits. Despite Miley being fairly consistent the past two seasons he has a profile that I tend to avoid in drafts. He is a command and control pitcher who has average stuff and relies on hitting his spots to generate outs, which means he'll be at the mercy of balls in play, thereby making his performance more unpredictable. Lastly, he plays in one of the worst home ballparks for pitchers; I'll pass.

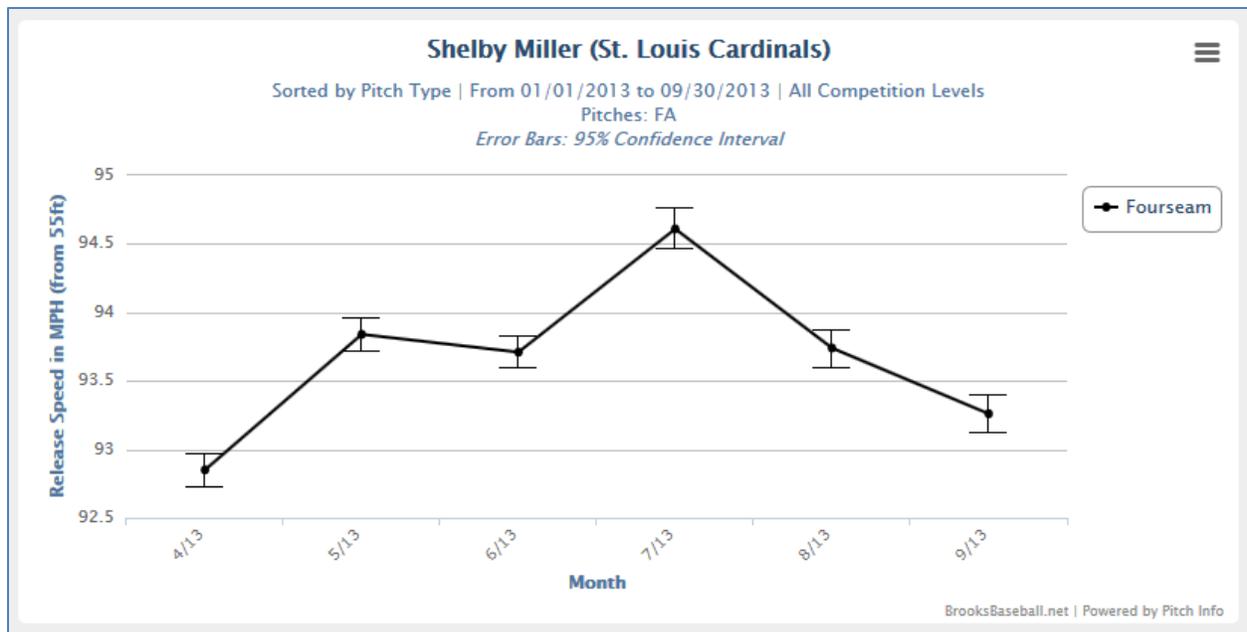
Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	3.73	1.30	.264	.297	15.9%	6.5%	9.0%
Road	3.54	1.29	.262	.304	18.4%	6.7%	9.5%

Shelby Miller

Throws: R | Age: 23 | Team: Cardinals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (23), NFBC (17)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	21	136.7	11	160	4.74	1.38	26.7%	8.3%	.322	73.2%	15.2%	46.9%	39.5%
2012	MLB	21	13.7	1	16	1.32	0.95	29.6%	7.4%	.273	85.7%	0.0%	31.0%	48.3%
2013	MLB	22	173.3	15	169	3.06	1.21	23.4%	7.9%	.280	80.1%	14.3%	30.8%	43.7%
Proj.			185	14	165	3.45	1.23	23.0%						

For the first four months of the season Miller was one of the best fantasy starting pitchers in the majors, but when August came around the velocity of fastball dropped one and half mph (image below courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net) and so did his overall performance.



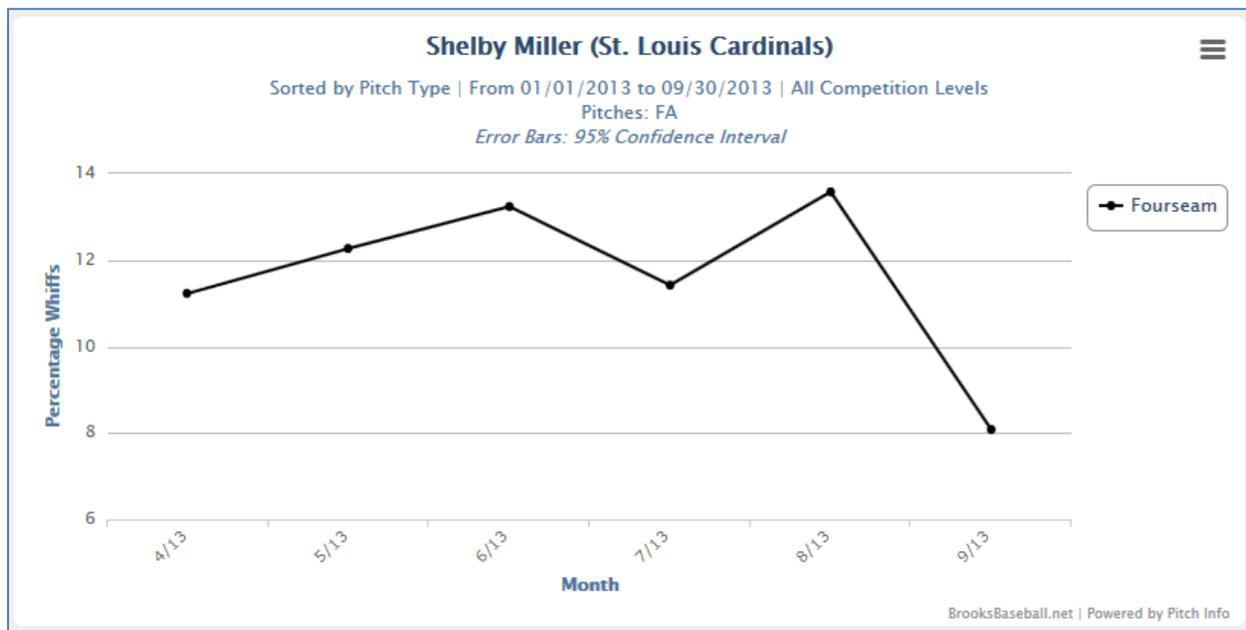
Earlier I mentioned his performance decreased as the fastball velocity decreased. The table shows his performance for the first four months compared to August and September.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Before	2.79	1.11	.224	.287	26.4%	6.8%	8.4%
Aug + Sep	3.63	1.40	.255	.280	17.9%	9.9%	13.0%

But how does the table look when you break out August and September into separate rows?

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Before	2.79	1.11	.224	.287	26.4%	6.8%	8.4%
August	4.55	1.52	.270	.311	23.6%	9.4%	22.6%
September	2.76	1.30	.238	.256	12.0%	10.4%	5.3%

Normally I don't focus on the fastball performance with most pitchers, but last year he threw the fastball 71 percent of the time, which is almost near **Bartolo Colon** levels. The talk in the fantasy community is that Miller wore down at the end of the season, which makes sense as he threw the most innings in his professional career (173). By looking at his September numbers it was obvious he wasn't the same pitcher as before; the strikeout rate fell off the map and the walk rate increased substantially. By looking at these numbers it's obvious why the Cardinals never used him in the playoffs. As the fastball lost velocity, the less of a dominating pitch it was, which is why the strikeout rate fell off so sharply. Overall, Miller should have another great year as he's shown he's able to miss bats consistently despite throwing one pitch, but the 80 percent LOB% and .280 BABIP should regress.



Tommy Milone

Throws: L | Age: 27 | Team: Athletics | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (86), NFBC (57)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	26	1	15	3.81	1.23	13.6%	3.6%	.299	73.7%	8.0%	33.8%	41.9%
2012	MLB	25	190	13	137	3.74	1.28	17.3%	4.6%	.310	73.6%	13.1%	33.3%	44.2%
2013	MLB	26	156.3	12	126	4.14	1.27	18.9%	5.8%	.284	71.1%	16.1%	34.2%	39.7%
Proj.			100	7	74	3.35	1.14	19.0%						

As of mid-January Milone currently does not have a spot in the starting rotation and will likely begin the season as the long man in the bullpen. That said the newly signed **Scott Kazmir** is not the beacon of health and pitchers get hurt all the time so unless **Drew Pomeranz** lights up triple-a, Milone will be the first pitcher called upon to take the ball every fifth day. Despite having fringe average stuff he was able to increase his strikeout rate one and half percentage points. Also, of all the pitchers on the A's staff no one benefits more from pitching in Oakland's ballpark. The table below shows his home-road splits the past two seasons.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	3.02	1.14	.245	.273	17.6%	5.0%	9.3%
Away	4.76	1.40	.289	.323	18.4%	5.3%	12.1%

It doesn't take any advanced sabermetrics to know he clearly benefits from the spacious dimensions in Oakland. Milone is a great streaming option for all leagues if he can maintain last year's 19.6 percent strikeout rate at home. Even if the strikeout regresses back to the 17.5 percent range he will still be a great streaming option in deep mixed leagues.

Mike Minor

Throws: L | Age: 26 | Team: Braves | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (18), NFBC (16)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	23	82.7	5	77	4.14	1.49	21.3%	8.3%	.350	74.4%	8.3%	35.4%	41.4%
2012	MLB	24	179.3	11	145	4.12	1.15	19.9%	7.7%	.252	70.6%	13.9%	38.9%	40.3%
2013	MLB	25	204.7	13	181	3.21	1.09	22.1%	5.6%	.272	75.1%	13.1%	31.3%	40.5%
Proj.			200	14	163	3.44	1.10	21.0%						

Last year Minor proved the second half of 2012 was no fluke and basically made [my prediction](#) about his future performance correct. So what went right last year? All of his pitches became more effective and this is represented visually below (from [BrooksBaseball.net](#)).



The walk rate decreased two percentage points and most importantly, he gave up far less home runs. In 2012, most of the home runs he allowed came during the first half of the year and inflated his overall HR/FB rate. In his last 47 starts he has an eight percent HR/FB rate. He did struggle during the second half of the season (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First Half	3.02	1.08	.232	.278	23.5%	5.3%	9.1%
Second Half	3.48	1.10	.233	.269	19.9%	6.0%	7.8%

I expect both the .272 BABIP and the 75.1 percent LOB% rate to regress, which means his ERA will regress, but it won't be a major increase. I believe the numbers he put up during the second half of the year is basically what he is going to produce in 2014, which basically makes Minor is a really solid low-end number two or high-end number three fantasy starting pitcher in a 12-team mixed league. Lastly, I expect the strikeout rate to be in the 20-21 percent range.

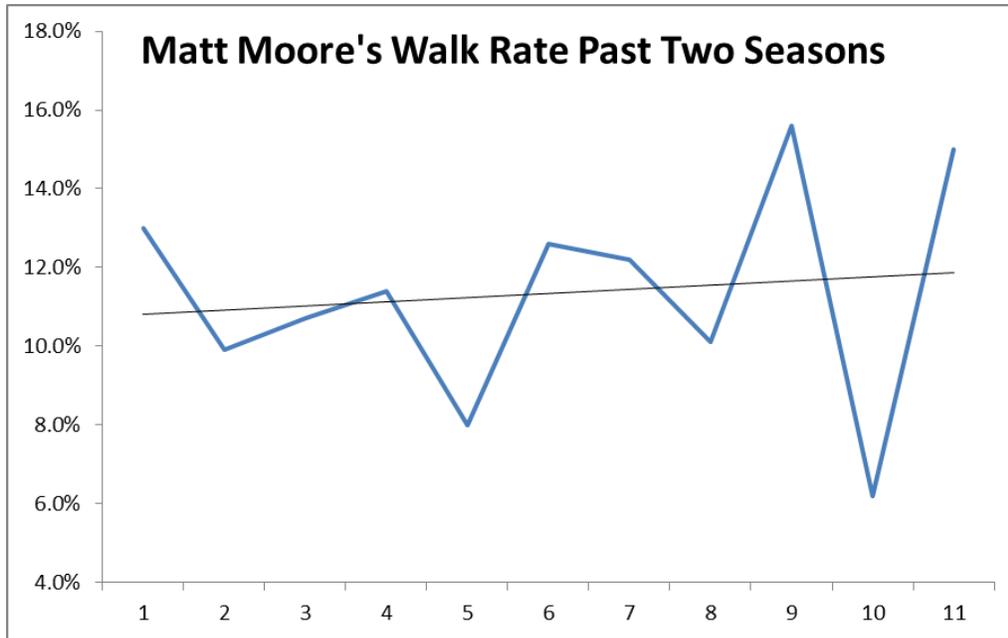
Matt Moore

Throws: L | Age: 24 | Team: Rays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (46), NFBC (33)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	9.3	1	15	2.89	1.29	37.5%	7.5%	.381	84.9%	20.0%	26.3%	52.6%
2012	MLB	23	177.3	11	175	3.81	1.35	23.1%	10.7%	.294	72.9%	10.4%	39.7%	44.0%
2013	MLB	24	150.3	17	143	3.29	1.30	22.3%	11.8%	.259	78.6%	11.6%	32.4%	45.7%
Proj.			170	13	149	4.10	1.33	22.5%						

Last year I was all-in on Moore, rostering him in three of my four leagues; I believed 2013 was going to be the season where this highly touted prospect would finally breakout and establish himself as an ace.

What his fantasy owners got were a lot of wins, a lot of stressful outings/situations where for the most part got out of and a lot of walks. Even though the 3.29 ERA suggests he was dominant, but he was far from that as he got lucky more times than not as evidenced by the .259 BABIP and 78.6 percent LOB% rate. Moore’s biggest problem has been walks the past two years and the lack of consistency as he can literally lose the strike zone from inning to inning. Also, he led the majors in wild pitches last year. The image below shows his walk rate by month by the past two seasons (the black vertical line is the trend line).



By looking at the graph it looks as though Moore’s issues with walks will most likely not go away in 2014, which means I’m not going to roster him. He generates a really good strikeout rate, but it’s not high enough to avoid from runners already on base from scoring. On top of all that he missed the month of August with a [sore elbow](#). I still have faith Moore will eventually put it all together, but I want to see him do it before I’m willing to ride the Moore ride again.

Brandon Morrow

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (279), NFBC (182)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	179.3	11	203	4.72	1.29	26.1%	8.9%	.299	65.5%	14.4%	32.8%	40.7%
2012	MLB	27	124.7	10	108	2.96	1.11	21.4%	8.1%	.252	77.3%	11.1%	34.2%	47.5%
2013	MLB	28	54.3	2	42	5.63	1.49	17.4%	7.4%	.302	66.0%	19.7%	36.1%	41.4%
Proj.			120	7	84	4.00	1.29	18.0%						

In early June Morrow was put on the DL with a [forearm strain](#); as time went on the Blue Jays transferred to the 60-day DL and missed the rest of the season. In early December Morrow began throwing without

restriction and appears ready for spring training. In the last four seasons he has only averaged 126 innings, mostly due arm and shoulder injuries. Outside of the injury history there are some bright spots. First, his walk rate has decreased year over year for the past four seasons, but that has come at the expense of strikeout rate year over year. With a strikeout rate just a tick above 17 percent (last year) makes it look as if he lacks upside, but he had a 23 percent strikeout rate at home compared to 8.5 percent strikeout rate on the road, which is very fluky. In terms of the ERA, neither the 2012 or 2013 numbers are representative of his true talent because both seasons were influenced heavily by BABIP, LOB% and home run rates. When looking at Morrow fantasy owners should only expect 100-130 innings with a 21 percent strikeout rate and an ERA in the low fours.

Jon Niese

Throws: L | Age: 27 | Team: Mets | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (129), NFBC (89)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	157.3	11	138	4.40	1.41	19.9%	6.3%	.333	67.0%	12.8%	22.8%	57.9%
2012	MLB	25	190.3	13	155	3.40	1.17	19.7%	6.2%	.272	76.5%	15.5%	26.2%	52.7%
2013	MLB	26	143	8	105	3.71	1.44	16.9%	7.7%	.326	72.4%	10.3%	21.7%	54.6%
Proj.			100	6	74	3.42	1.25	19.0%						

Last year Niese missed nearly two months of the season with a [partial tear of his rotator cuff](#); this was the first major injury to the elbow/shoulder since being called up by the Mets since 2008. For the second year in a row he had an ERA below 3.72 despite a 50 point increase in BABIP. The strikeout rate dropped three percentage points, but that decrease also led a three percentage increase in ground ball rate. As I mentioned earlier for two out of the past three years he has had an ERA under 3.72; most of that ERA came from pitching at home as the table below indicates; the data is for the past three seasons.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	3.34	1.27	.253	.298	18.8%	6.9%	9.3%
Away	4.38	1.39	.282	.333	19.0%	6.5%	11.5%

Niese doesn't have overpowering stuff as his fastball sits in the 89-90 mph range. In terms of secondary stuff he throws a cutter, curveball and throws a changeup every blue moon; earlier in his career the curveball was his best pitch, but last year it became more hittable as hitters hit .300 against it compared to a .200 batting average the two years prior. Niese will never be more than a real life number three starter because his biggest asset is he keeps the ball down, throws a lot of strikes and insert another cliché {here}. Overall, he's a really good streaming option in all leagues.

Ricky Nolasco

Throws: R | Age: 31 | Team: Twins | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (48), NFBC (41)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	206	10	148	4.67	1.40	16.6%	4.9%	.331	66.2%	10.9%	27.9%	50.1%
2012	MLB	29	191	12	125	4.48	1.37	15.0%	5.6%	.310	69.3%	10.7%	27.7%	52.0%
2013	MLB	30	199.3	13	165	3.70	1.21	19.8%	5.5%	.299	70.9%	11.6%	25.2%	47.1%
Proj.			190	11	143	3.70	1.25	19.4%						

Before I write the Nolasco's player capsule I am not going to own him in any league because of his propensity to have blowup starts (an outing with five or more earned runs). Since 2009 he has given up five or more earned runs 20.6 percent of time; that's literally one out of five starts. You could be asking yourself those numbers were heavily inflated due to the 2009-11 seasons and you're correct, but over the past two years its 17.2 percent. So has improved in that respect, but nothing substantial. When a pitcher has this high of a propensity to blow up and really put your ratios in a hole I tend to not even bother. I rather start a low risk type of pitcher like **Mark Buehrle** (a guy who will go six innings, give up three earned runs) because I know what I'll get from him. What I don't want to have happen are the 9-11 earned runs over two innings, which Nolasco has a higher propensity of doing. If you draft him, you have to always leave him in your starting lineup.

Time for the scouting report. Quote from the Baseball Prospectus 2013 Annual, "Once an extreme fly-ball pitcher, too often snake bitten by home runs, Nolasco gradually altered his pitch selection to induce more groundballs." Before 2013 the new deployment of pitches lowered his strikeout rate so much he was no longer a consideration in 12-team mixed leagues. However, last year his strikeout rate increased nearly five percentage points due to more incorporation of the slider, his highest strikeout pitch and the pitch he used the most. Basically he was pitching backwards last year (similar to **Francisco Liriano**) throwing his secondary pitches first to setup the fastball. In terms of durability he's pitched 185-plus innings in four out of the past five seasons and is moving to another spacious ballpark that should not have large effect on his HR/FB rate.

Sean Nolin

Throws: L | Age: 24 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	23	92.7	8	103	3.01	1.23	26.8%	6.5%	.000	77.1%	-	-	-
2013	AAA	23	17.7	1	13	1.53	1.30	18.6%	14.3%	.000	92.9%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	1.3	0	0	40.50	6.00	0.0%	9.1%	.667	30.3%	50.0%	20.0%	30.0%
Proj.			120	7	79	3.65	1.29	17.0%						

Remove the one start he made at the end of the 2013 season as it was not indicative to how good he is. For the full scouting report you should check out [Baseball Prospectus](#). Based on the scouting report he won't be the sexiest of pitchers when he's in the majors, but he will get outs because he has pitchability and a good command profile. Since he is a fly ball pitcher he'll be more home run prone at home so he

may only be a stream option. Whether he begins the year in the majors or has to wait for someone to get hurt (i.e. **Brandon Morrow**) he should be the first call up from the minors. As of now, he's an interesting candidate to monitor at spring training.

Bud Norris

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Orioles | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (139), NFBC (131)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	186	6	176	3.77	1.33	22.1%	8.8%	.294	72.8%	14.3%	33.6%	46.0%
2012	MLB	27	168.3	7	165	4.65	1.37	22.5%	9.0%	.301	72.1%	14.4%	35.1%	43.9%
2013	MLB	28	176.7	10	147	4.18	1.49	19.0%	8.7%	.333	73.3%	12.1%	27.6%	45.7%
Proj.			160	8	118	4.20	1.46	19.0%						

Norris was a one-time fantasy sleeper who is now regulated to stream-only status because for two primary reasons. First, the strikeout rate dipped well below the necessary strikeout threshold of 21.8 percent while he continued to walk nearly nine percent of batters. Second, he just cannot get left handed hitters out. The table below shows his aggregated performance since 2010. The reason why he struggles against lefties is the changeup isn't good enough to get out hitters and that's why he's faced more lefties the last four years.

Split	PA	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Righties	1,431	.243	.681	.304	23.3%	7.5%	8.4%
Lefties	1,553	.278	.825	.326	20.2%	11.1%	12.4%

Eventually Norris will end up in the bullpen but since the Orioles are in dire need of starting pitching, Norris will get another opportunity in the starting rotation, but this will most likely be the last year as **Dylan Bundy** will be a year removed from TJ surgery and **Eduardo Rodriguez** should be ready to be to step in the rotation by July. For 2014 he's a stream only option, preferably against teams without a lot of good left handed hitters.

Ivan Nova

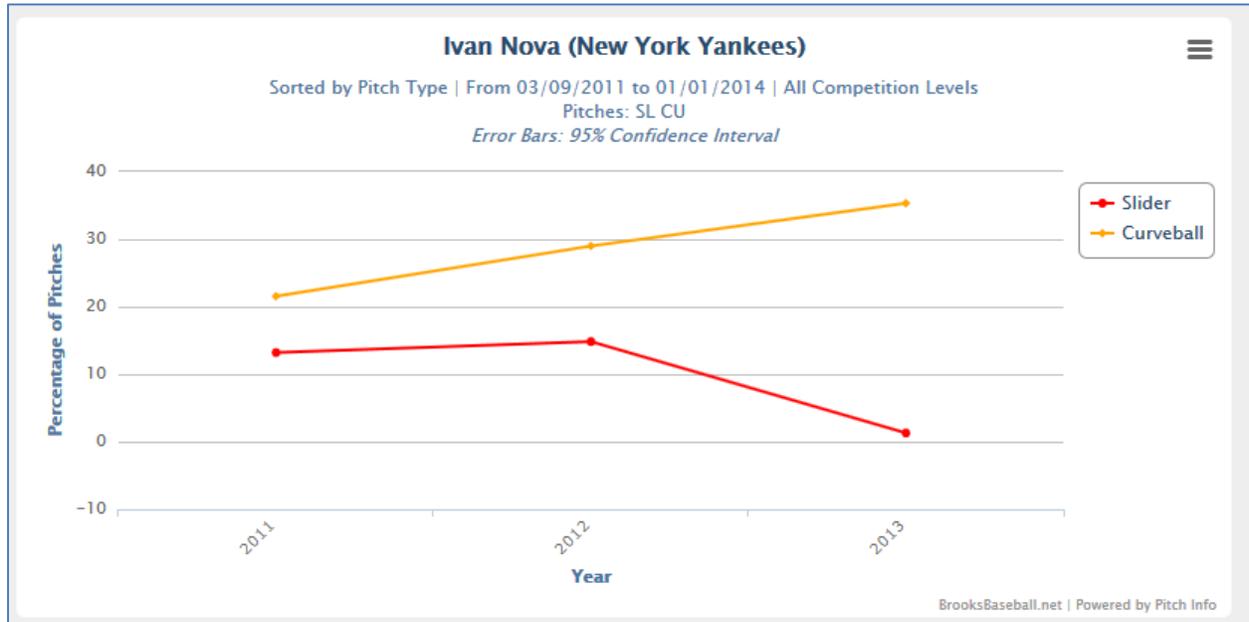
Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Yankees | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (75), NFBC (76)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	165.3	16	98	3.70	1.33	13.9%	8.1%	.283	73.1%	9.6%	25.9%	56.3%
2012	MLB	25	170.3	12	153	5.02	1.47	20.5%	7.5%	.331	72.5%	19.7%	28.3%	48.8%
2013	MLB	26	139.3	9	116	3.10	1.28	19.8%	7.5%	.313	79.8%	10.6%	21.4%	56.2%
Proj.			165	11	124	3.25	1.21	19.4%						

At the end of April Nova went on the DL for a month with what the team described as elbow tricep soreness, as well as an oblique strain, and also a neck injury. After coming off the DL the Yankees used

him in relief, but he was sent down to the minors to because they wanted to him to be a starter and to [stretch him out](#). He eventually came back to the majors for good at the end of June.

After he came off the DL he scrapped the slider entirely and starting throwing the curveball more often as the image from [BrooksBaseball.net](#) suggests. I think it's more than coincidence he has elbow trouble and then scraps the slider entirely. If I were to guess the slider was doing more harm than good.



In terms of his performance I never bought 2012s ERA (5.02) as true indicator of his true skill level as that season was marred by bad luck. In 2013 after he was recalled from the minors (in late June) he went to put up these numbers (table below) as a starting pitcher.

ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
2.70	1.19	.242	.289	18.8%	7.1%	8.7%

He achieved those numbers by throwing a fastball, sinker and curveball. His fastball sits in the mid-90s and can touch 97 mph, but it was the curveball that was game changer. His delivery lacks deception, which caused his plus fastball to be more hittable (.316 batting average from 2011-12). Also, there wasn't much variation in speeds with his pitches as the slider was only 6-8 mph different than the fastball. The curveball appears to be the better compliment to the fastball because it's thrown at 80 mph and it disrupts the timing of the hitter more. After rejoining the Yankees at the end of June the curveball had a strikeout rate of 46.5 percent. Some fantasy analysts have pointed to poor defensive infield as a roadblock to Nova's fantasy success, but if **Derek Jeter** is no lock to play and if Jeter's out, Brendan Ryan one of the best defensive shortstops in the majors will replace him. I'm extremely optimistic about Nova next season.

Jake Odorizzi

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Rays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	22	7.3	0	4	4.91	1.64	11.8%	11.8%	.280	75.5%	11.1%	39.1%	43.5%
2013	AAA	23	124.3	9	124	3.33	1.13	25.2%	8.1%	.000	74.3%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	29.7	0	22	3.94	1.21	18.0%	6.6%	.287	74.0%	11.5%	32.1%	38.3%
Proj.			150	10	108	3.85	1.21	18.5%						

With **Jeremy Hellickson** out for the first six-eight weeks of the year means Odorizzi will get the first opportunity to seize the fifth spot in the Rays rotation. Odorizzi profiles to be a very solid number four starter, which provides a lot of real life value, but not as much fantasy value. For a full scouting report please go to [Baseball Prospectus](#). I've seen him pitch on a couple of occasions and he's a fly ball pitcher, which isn't necessarily a bad thing because he plays half of his games at Tropicana Field. He does have the stuff to miss bats, which is evidenced by the 18 percent strikeout rate, but none of his pitches are true bat missers. Therefore, expecting any more than a 19.5 percent strikeout rate is overly optimistic. Just because Hellickson is expected to be out six-eight weeks does not guarantee everything will go as planned. Therefore, I do not guarantee Odorizzi loses his spot in the rotation in after two months of the season. Because of his home ballpark he'll be a great stream option in leagues as shallow as 12-team mixed leagues, but that's about it.

Alexi Ogando

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Rangers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (94), NFBC (117)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	169	13	126	3.51	1.14	18.2%	6.2%	.266	71.3%	10.3%	34.5%	43.4%
2012	MLB	28	66	2	66	3.27	1.00	25.1%	6.5%	.237	75.8%	14.8%	38.4%	43.4%
2013	MLB	29	104.3	7	72	3.11	1.23	16.8%	9.6%	.254	80.8%	13.4%	28.9%	46.8%
Proj.			120	7	91	3.55	1.23	19.5%						

With **Derek Holland** on the shelf for the first half of the year Ogando becomes the Rangers number two starting pitcher. Ogando first went on the DL in mid-May with [biceps tendinitis](#) and missed three weeks. Then he returned from the DL he went back on the DL with [shoulder inflammation](#) and missed another six weeks of the season. Then in mid-August he went back on the DL with [nerve inflammation in his shoulder](#). Combine all of that with the fact his strikeout rate decreased nine percentage points and the walk rate increased three percentage points a picture of a pitcher that's not worth owning. It's possible all the injuries contributed to his poor results last year. It's also possible the yo-yoing from the bullpen to the starting rotation helped create the arm and shoulder problems he experienced last year. The table below breaks down the number of appearances he's made as a starter and a reliever since he joined the Rangers. By looking at the data I can't help but think of players like **Joba Chamberlain** and **Neftalí Feliz** whose arms were never the same again after being yo-yoed. The injury history and decreased strikeout rate makes Ogando a pass for me.

Year	Starter	Reliever
2010	0	44
2011	29	2
2012	1	57
2013	18	5

Jarrod Parker

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Athletics | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (69), NFBC (64)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	5.7	0	1	0.00	0.88	4.5%	4.5%	.200	100.0%	0.0%	37.5%	56.3%
2012	MLB	23	181.3	13	140	3.47	1.26	18.6%	8.4%	.290	74.3%	8.5%	25.8%	49.0%
2013	MLB	24	197	12	134	3.97	1.22	16.4%	7.7%	.260	73.2%	14.9%	29.5%	45.9%
Proj.			195	14	130	3.80	1.24	17.1%						

During the month of April Parker was really bad. He had an ERA of 7.36, 2.01 WHIP and a .350 batting average against. However, after April he pitched like an ace. The table shows his stats from May until the end of the season.

ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
3.38	1.09	.220	.238	17.2%	7.0%	10.1%

There's a lot of hype surrounding Parker heading into 2014. With the loss of **Bartolo Colon**, Parker becomes the de facto ace of the staff. For me the strikeout rate is way too low for me to make him any higher than a fourth starter on a pitching staff. Now, he may be a better real life than fantasy pitcher because he's better at missing barrels than bats, which allows him to induce a lot of weak contact and to have low baseball card statistics. His best secondary pitch is the changeup and it's among one of the very best in the majors; what's great about the changeup is that it is the perfect complement to the fastball because it's thrown with the same arm speed as the fastball. That explains why he was able to hold the opposition to such a low batting average against because of all the weak contact. It's possible he could have a very similar season in 2014, but a pitching profile that has an extremely low strikeout rate and is dependent on generating weak contact to get outs is not a profile want to have on my fantasy team.

Felipe Paulino

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: White Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	26	91.7	1	83	5.11	1.54	20.2%	11.2%	.332	58.5%	4.1%	37.0%	48.1%
2011	MLB	27	139.3	4	133	4.46	1.44	22.2%	9.2%	.341	70.8%	11.7%	30.1%	50.9%
2012	MLB	28	37.7	3	39	1.67	1.22	25.0%	9.6%	.283	90.9%	8.8%	35.4%	46.9%
Proj.			135	10	115	3.95	1.30	22.0%						

I loved the signing Paulino by the White Sox because it's low cost (\$1.75 million) and there is tremendous upside that if he can finally stay healthy, he could be the best free agent signing of the offseason by any team. For his career he has a 21.6 strikeout rate and had a 25 percent strikeout in his last season in the majors. The question about Paulino has never been the quality of stuff, but can throw strikes consistently and limit the walks. He missed most of last season due to a TJ surgery and shoulder problems. He's always had a violent delivery, but you know who else has a violent delivery? **Chris Sale**. The White Sox, Don Cooper specifically, has been able to keep Sale and other pitchers healthy so why not Paulino? Paulino should be drafted in shallow to medium sized mixed leagues, but he is someone worth monitoring in spring training and during the season.

James Paxton

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Mariners | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	23	106.3	9	110	3.05	1.41	24.3%	11.9%	.322	75.0%	6.7%	28.5%	53.6%
2013	AAA	24	145.7	8	131	4.45	1.48	20.5%	9.1%	.000	65.9%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	24	24	3	21	1.50	0.92	22.3%	7.4%	.203	88.5%	22.2%	14.3%	61.9%
Proj.			165	11	137	4.47	1.40	21.3%						

Paxton looked great in his brief call-up to the majors last year, but I have doubts whether he can sustain that performance over a full year. Obviously he's bound to regress regardless because holding a 1.50 ERA is almost impossible, but let's take a look at his profile. First of all he has a very deceptive delivery as he drops straight down towards the end of the windup; the delivery looks very complex as there are a lot of moving parts. When a pitcher has a complex delivery any mishap in the delivery can cause the pitcher to miss location (duh) and with Paxton having problems throwing consistent strikes in the minors (12 percent career walk rate) I have to believe this is going to continue in 2014. In his brief call-up his walk rate was only 7.5 percent which provides optimism, but its still a small sample size.

Paxton is by no means a soft tosser as his fastball sits 94-95 mph. Other than the fastball he features a curveball that plays up because of the velocity of the fastball and the deception of the delivery. He still lacks a consistent third pitch (he has a cutter, but it's still not where it should be in terms of command), which is going to hinder his ability to get hitters out the third and fourth time through the order. That said, if he can sustain his delivery he should be able to stick in the rotation, but he hasn't shown that he can over a larger period of time.

Brad Peacock

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Astros | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (191), NFBC (127)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	134.7	12	139	6.01	1.58	22.7%	10.8%	.340	60.8%	11.2%	39.7%	39.4%
2013	AAA	25	79	6	76	2.73	1.10	24.3%	7.0%	.000	78.2%	-	-	-

2013	MLB	25	83.3	5	77	5.18	1.38	21.1%	10.1%	.270	69.1%	21.1%	32.0%	43.2%
Proj.			185	9	158	4.20	1.35	21.9%						

Despite having a fastball that sits 93-94 mph it's very hittable; the reason why it's hittable is because it's fairly straight / flat (i.e. has no plane or movement). One of the negatives to having a flat fastball, no matter how fast it is, is the pitch can be homer prone. It's no surprise he's struggled in the majors and upper minors with the long ball. In terms of secondary offerings, he throws a curveball, changeup and slider / cutter with the curveball being the best pitch, but all of them are fringe average pitches. Now, his final 2013 numbers undersell how well Peacock pitched at the end of the year. The table below is a breakdown of his season before and after the all-star break.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	8.07	1.76	.286	16.7%	12.3%	17.8%
2nd Half	3.64	1.18	.216	23.8%	8.8%	10.6%

I'll admit the sample size is low for both sample sizes, but this offers a glimpse of what he could be. With small sample sizes the question you should be asking is who did he face in those nine starts during the second half of the season. Four of the teams he faced were in the playoffs last year so he didn't benefit from a cupcake schedule. At the end of 2014 I believe Peacock will be a better fantasy player than teammate **Jarred Cosart** because Peacock has a safer profile, albeit with much less upside.

Jake Peavy

Throws: R | Age: 33 | Team: Red Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (70), NFBC (61)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	111.7	7	95	4.92	1.26	20.2%	5.1%	.317	63.8%	10.8%	30.0%	44.8%
2012	MLB	31	219	11	194	3.37	1.10	22.0%	5.6%	.272	76.3%	12.3%	38.9%	41.5%
2013	MLB	32	144.7	12	121	4.17	1.15	20.5%	6.1%	.268	70.0%	14.2%	36.5%	37.6%
Proj.			130	8	102	4.10	1.18	20.1%						

Despite a fairly lengthy injury history with shoulder problems Peavy missed six weeks of the season with a fluke [rib fracture](#). In the past four seasons he has only averaged 145 innings per year, which is the biggest red flag against him because his walk and strikeout ratios have been fairly stable during that time. Also, he still has the above average command and control as evidenced by the walk rate. In terms of the scouting report he is one of the rare pitchers who features six pitches, but he's mainly a fastball, sinker and cutter pitcher. If he were to pitch 200 innings he could top 40 starting pitcher because he would probably win 14-plus games on the Red Sox, he can still miss bats and the walk rate would limit the big inning in the hitter friendly park in Boston. The odds of him throwing 200 innings are extremely low so plan on 130 innings with an ERA slightly over four with a 1.18 WHIP.

Wily Peralta

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Brewers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (131), NFBC (126)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	146.7	7	143	4.66	1.58	22.0%	12.0%	.351	70.9%	10.6%	21.2%	56.4%
2012	MLB	23	29	2	23	2.48	1.21	20.4%	9.7%	.304	77.1%	0.0%	20.8%	58.4%
2013	MLB	24	183.3	11	129	4.37	1.42	16.1%	9.1%	.293	66.6%	18.3%	18.5%	55.1%
Proj.			190	11	136	4.10	1.40	18.4%						

Last year I pegged Peralta as a deep sleeper because he was going undrafted in many leagues and the quality of his raw stuff was good enough to miss a lot of bats. For the first 15 starts Peralta was really bad, but he quietly turned around his season the rest of the year (table below).

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st 15 Starts	6.08	1.66	.304	.329	12.1%	8.6%	12.7%
Next 17 Starts	3.05	1.23	.229	.269	19.6%	9.6%	10.0%

Even though he performed really well the walk rate actually increased. After watching him in 2013 I believe he'll always have trouble throwing strikes consistently because there's a lot of moving parts in the delivery, which makes it difficult to repeat consistently. For example, among the 128 starting pitchers with at least 20 starts last year he ranked 113th in strike percentage. During the first 15 starts his strike rate was 60.2 percent and for the rest of the year it was only 61.8 percent.

In general, I tend to avoid high walk pitchers (I'm looking at you **Matt Moore**) despite how good their stuff is because they'll always be more susceptible to big innings. He is a very attractive player in NL and deep mixed leagues because he did improve as the year wore on and struck out more batters, but he should be nothing more than a flyer.

Martin Perez

Throws: L | Age: 22 | Team: Rangers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (105), NFBC (85)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	21	127	7	69	4.25	1.40	12.7%	10.3%	.277	66.7%	8.1%	31.6%	54.5%
2012	MLB	21	38	1	25	5.45	1.63	14.1%	8.5%	.333	63.5%	8.8%	26.4%	52.7%
2013	MLB	22	124.3	10	84	3.62	1.34	15.9%	7.0%	.292	77.0%	17.0%	23.0%	51.6%
Proj.			190	12	122	3.90	1.33	16.5%						

Check out these two pitchers from last year and tell me which one you prefer the most.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Player A	4.01	1.22	.242	.264	16.1%	7.6%	10.1%
Player B	3.62	1.33	.267	.294	15.9%	7.0%	11.5%

I think in general most people would choose Player A because it looks as though his ERA should be lower because of the lower WHIP, but still Player B looks pretty comparable to Player A. Player B is **Martin Perez** and Player A is **Jarrod Parker**. Shocked? I was because after a subpar 2012 season (in the triple-a and the majors) and unspectacular 2013 I pretty much wrote him off. And that’s what I love about writing this guide. It forces me to consider every player before writing off any player because I’m forced to put my thoughts and opinions on paper.

For five years I’ve been reading scouting reports from various sources about he’s going to be an ace. I got to see him in 2012 and the stuff looked good, but I didn’t see anything close to an ace, specifically, the command wasn’t there. When the 2012 season and his numbers were worse than what I expected from a highly touted prospect. The stats looked much better in triple-a this year, but when he got called up the numbers and more importantly, the stuff looked better, but not near the level needed to be owned in a 12-team mixed league. The table below is a break down his 2013 into the first ten starts and the next ten starts.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First 10	3.81	1.39	.268	.295	15.1%	7.4%	13.0%
Next 10	3.44	1.29	.265	.293	16.6%	6.6%	10.5%

I didn’t find any remarkable changes in the data to show he was getting better as the year progressed. So in terms of his fantasy value for 2014 he’ll probably have a high three ERA with a decent WHIP. That said, he still has a mid-90s fastball a killer changeup and a slider and curveball that are still works in progress. When I do my rankings and projections I’m very likely to bump him up a few spots because if everything starts to click he could be bring a tremendous ROI.

David Phelps

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Yankees | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (184), NFBC (121)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	25	6.7	1	7	0.00	1.05	25.9%	11.1%	.235	100.0%	0.0%	53.3%	33.3%
2012	MLB	25	99.7	4	96	3.34	1.19	23.2%	9.2%	.258	82.5%	16.7%	32.8%	47.7%
2013	MLB	26	86.7	6	79	4.98	1.42	21.0%	9.3%	.323	66.8%	11.8%	27.6%	45.5%
Proj.			120	7	103	4.00	1.38	22.0%						

In May [I wrote](#) how David Phelps was a must add in all formats. Two months after I wrote that piece he went to the DL with a [forearm strain](#). After a month on the DL one of his minor league rehab starts was cancelled because he [was diagnosed](#) with “another forearm strain in the area that connects his forearm and his elbow.” Obviously I’m a proponent of Phelps from a fantasy perspective, but he has yet to throw more than 160 innings in any professional season (majors and minors) so expecting more than 170 is overly optimistic; the closest he came was 158 innings back in 2010.

Supposing he's healthy for 2014 I have questions about the defense behind him and whose going to be in the bullpen to hold leads for him when he leaves games early (he only pitched into the 7th inning in two of his 23 starts in his career). Forecasting bullpen performance can be a crap shoot because at any given moment a reliever could come out of nowhere (i.e. **Ryan Cook**) or no longer be effective despite consistent performance (i.e. **Heath Bell**). Other than **David Roberston** and **Shawn Kelly**, who can the Yankees trust to get outs? In terms of defense, **Carlos Beltran** is a below average right fielder, the infield is in flux as **A-Rod** may or may not play and who knows what **Derek Jeter** will provide. In terms of the quality of stuff he doesn't have an overpowering fastball, but instead relies on throwing any one of his five pitches regardless of the count or situation.

Michael Pineda

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Yankees | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	A+	24	8.3	0	7	1.08	1.08	19.4%	5.6%	.000	66.7%	-	-	-
2013	AA	24	9	1	8	4.00	1.33	20.0%	15.0%	.000	88.2%	-	-	-
2013	AAA	24	23.3	1	26	3.86	1.03	27.1%	6.3%	.000	69.0%	-	-	-
Proj.			35	2	33	3.90	1.31	24.0%						

Pineda was acquired by the Yankees in 2012 for Jesus Montero and he has yet to pitch for the Yankees due to shoulder problems, which required surgery. Pineda made a return in 2013, pitching in ten games in the minors. However, after the tenth outing he was shut down for the rest of the year with shoulder stiffness. As of now (January 1) he appears to be one of the candidates for the fifth spot in the rotation. The upside of Pineda is insanely high as he was once a top ten starting pitcher when healthy. At this point you have to see how he looks in spring training before deciding whether to roster him or not.

Rick Porcello

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (82), NFBC (71)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	182	14	104	4.75	1.41	13.3%	5.9%	.316	67.4%	12.0%	25.4%	57.5%
2012	MLB	23	176.3	10	107	4.59	1.53	13.7%	5.6%	.344	69.0%	13.8%	19.6%	57.7%
2013	MLB	24	177	13	142	4.32	1.28	19.3%	5.7%	.315	69.8%	17.3%	19.5%	57.7%
Proj.			185	14	140	3.61	1.28	19.5%						

Since his rookie year in 2009 Porcello has been on many fantasy sleeper lists and last year he finally started to build upon the promise his rookie season showed as he set career highs in his strikeout and ground ball rates without sacrificing the walk rate. The biggest question for fantasy owners is the performance sustainable?

Before the 2013 season Porcello said would abandon his slider and start throwing his curveball more often. He was one of the rare athletes who actually told the truth as he only threw the slider 6.5 percent of the time, a career low; he threw the curveball 16.5 percent of the time, a career high. The reason why

the slider was reduced was because it was by far the worst pitch; earning a -17.32 run value (per [FanGraphs](#)). Instead of throwing the slider to righties, he started throwing more changeups, which is counterintuitive, but it worked.

If Porcello is going to take the next step he is going to have to figure out way to get left handed hitters out. The table below shows his performance in 2013 compared to the rest of his career.

Totals	AVG	OBP	SLUG	BABIP	K%	BB%
2013	.301	.360	.450	.336	15.1%	8.1%
2009-12	.308	.381	.464	.330	13.5%	7.3%

Another trend that is worrisome is his propensity for having a lot of blowup starts. A blowup start is a start where he gives up five or more earned runs. It makes sense he would be susceptible to a blow up start because as a ground baller bad luck can occur from inning to inning. If you draft him, you have to keep him in your lineup no matter what because he will be prone to hot and cold streaks. The table below shows the number of outings he’s had where he has had a blowup start.

Year	5+ ER Starts
2009	5
2010	7
2011	8
2012	4
2013	6

Overall, the big jump in strikeout rate came against righties as the strikeout rate increased nine percentage points while it only increased two percentage points against lefties. Also, the Tigers have remade their defensive infield; **Prince Fielder**, possibly the worst defensive first baseman is gone; **Ian Kinsler** in an upgrade over **Omar Infante**; **Jose Iglesias** is arguably the second best defensive shortstop in the majors; I don’t know if **Nick Castellanos** is an upgrade or not at third, so I’m calling that a push; the bottom line is Porcello is expected to reap the rewards. Scrapping the slider allowed his other pitches to play up and allowed him to have a breakout 2013, but his ineffectiveness against lefties will limit his upside for 2014.

David Price

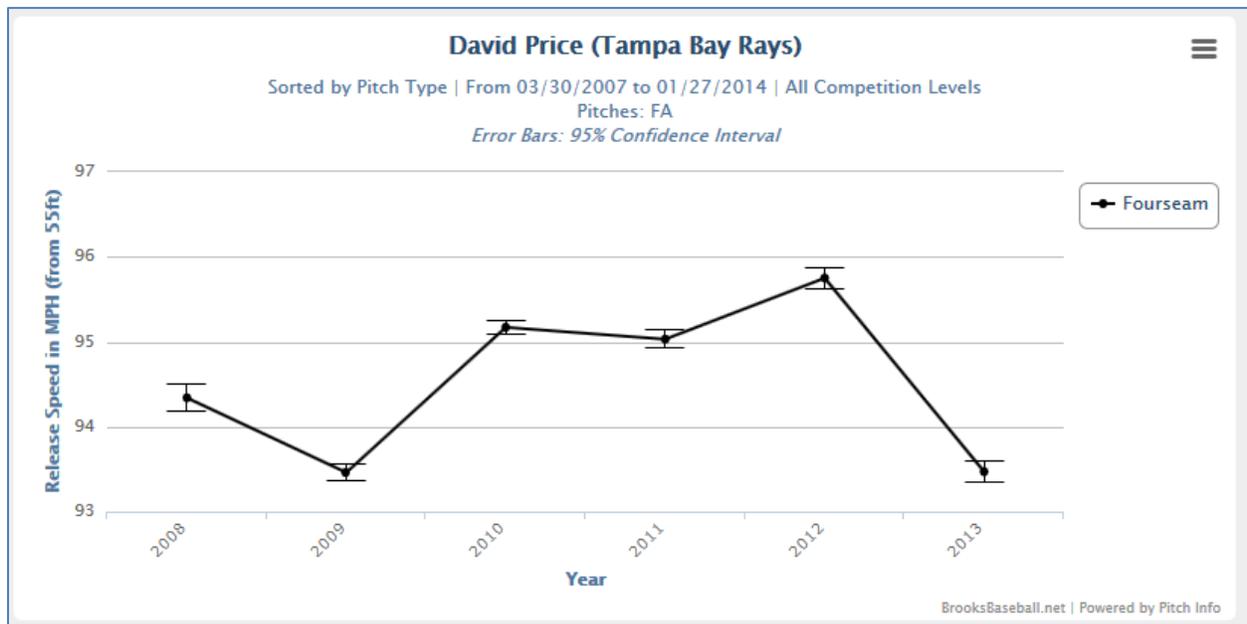
Throws: L | Age: 28 | Team: Rays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (33), NFBC (34)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	224.3	12	218	3.49	1.14	23.7%	6.9%	.281	73.3%	11.8%	32.0%	48.4%
2012	MLB	26	211	20	205	2.56	1.10	24.5%	7.1%	.285	81.1%	13.2%	23.0%	57.6%
2013	MLB	27	186.7	10	151	3.33	1.10	20.4%	3.6%	.298	70.0%	13.3%	23.3%	50.9%
Proj.			190	14	149	3.05	1.03	20.2%						

During the first half of the season Price didn't look like the reigning Cy Young award winner (table below). In mid-May Price went on the DL with a [strained left tricep](#), which could have been the cause for the performance.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Before	5.24	1.44	.264	.345	20.6%	5.9%	15.1%
After	2.53	0.96	.233	.279	20.3%	2.6%	6.0%

Despite putting up vintage Price numbers there were still some red flags. The first most fantasy analysts are going to bring up is the loss in velocity (image below from [BrooksBaseball.net](#)), which is true. The velocity was even down after he came back from the DL.

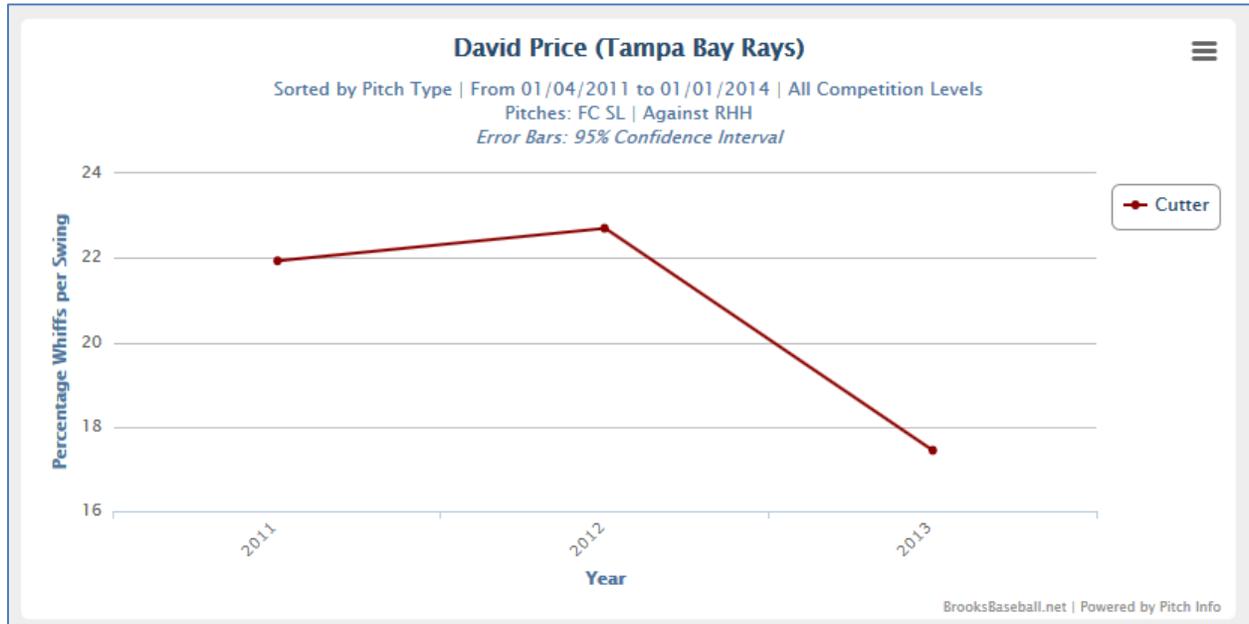


However, how did batters do against the fastball last year? The table below compares how hitters fared against his fastball last year, **after Price came off the DL** compared to 2009-12 seasons.

Split	AVG	OPS	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
2013	.230	.569	22.5%	2.9%	4.3%
2009-12	.224	.650	22.8%	9.3%	8.5%

Judging by that data it looks like the fastball velocity had no dramatic impact on his performance. By looking at all the data it's obvious the new adjustment he made after coming off the DL, he wanted to throw a lot of strikes. After returning from the DL in early July he led all pitchers (with at least 15 starts) in walk rate (2.6 percent).

Other than the injury he suffered the four percent drop in strikeout rate is extremely concerning. The drop came against righties as they struck out 19.5 percent last year compared to 24.6 percent the two seasons prior. The reason for the drop off came from the slider/cutter not being as effective in generating more swings and misses. According to BrooksBaseball.net the usage of the slider/cutter increased four percentage points compared to last year, which makes me believe last year's strikeout rate may be here to stay.



Lastly, Price has greatly benefitted from playing in Tropicana Field. The table below show his career home-road splits. As of late January he is still a member of the Rays, but if he gets traded to a more hitter friendly ballpark, then fantasy owners should adjust appropriately.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	2.84	1.10	.221	.274	23.2%	6.9%	7.7%
Road	3.66	1.23	.246	.291	21.0%	7.4%	10.7%

Overall, Price will no longer be a top five pitcher because of the 20 percent strikeout rate is likely to be repeated and he's already had elbow issues and based [Russell A. Carleton's research](#), prior injury is the most predictive for suffering future injury.

Jose Quintana**Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: White Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (59), NFBC (53)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	23	48.7	1	41	2.77	1.17	20.9%	7.1%	.300	71.9%	2.6%	28.4%	57.5%
2012	MLB	23	136.3	6	81	3.76	1.35	14.3%	7.4%	.299	74.7%	12.7%	26.5%	52.8%
2013	MLB	24	200	9	164	3.51	1.22	19.7%	6.7%	.283	76.6%	16.1%	26.2%	49.0%
Proj.			200	13	148	3.60	1.25	19.0%						

In 2012 Quintana started his major league career on fire with a 2.04 ERA (in ten appearances), but those numbers quickly regressed to a 5.01 ERA in 15 appearances. What happened was a combination of two things; first, the raw stuff isn't overpowering and second the league made adjustments to him after he longer had the benefit of surprise. Last year it appears as though he did what all quality major leaguers do, which is making adjustments to the adjustments the league made to him.

In general it appears there were no major differences in his statistics except for a couple of items. First, he was in second place, among pitchers with at least 100 innings pitched, in pop-up rate with 15.6 percent (last year it was 7.5 percent), which is likely unsustainable.

Second, the biggest question for fantasy owners is how legitimate was the spike in strikeout rate? If he can maintain the 19.7 percent strikeout rate he can be a valuable pitcher, but if he reverts back to the 14 percent he showed in 2012 he's nothing more than streamer.

The strikeout rate increased against both righties and lefties so that wasn't the cause for the increase. The fastball, not any of his secondary offerings, was the cause for uptick in the strikeout rate. For example, the strikeout rate on the fastball was 23 percent compared to 12 percent in 2012. I was shocked to see this as normally increases in strikeout rates are fueled by the refinement of a secondary pitch. His fastball velocity jumped one mph, but that alone is not enough to explain such a massive jump in strikeout rate. The biggest change he made was he challenged hitters with the fastball when the batter was two strikes; in 2012 he had a 31 percent strikeout rate compared to a 39 percent strikeout rate. Lastly, during the first half of 2012 he had a 17.1 percent strikeout rate and a 12.5 percent strikeout the second half of the year, which adds even more legitimacy his true strikeout rate potential is in the 17-20 percent range.

Quintana doesn't have overpowering stuff but relies on command and sequencing to get outs and from everything I've read suggests he's a very [cerebral pitcher](#) who is constantly trying to find new ways to get hitters out. I believe his strikeout rate will be in the 17-20 percent range in 2014 and he'll have a mid-3 ERA with a solid WHIP.

Erasmus Ramirez**Throws: R | Age: 23 | Team: Mariners | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	22	59	1	48	3.36	1.00	20.2%	5.0%	.243	67.2%	12.8%	29.7%	45.6%
2013	AAA	23	43.7	3	42	3.09	1.31	22.7%	7.6%	.000	78.2%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	72.3	5	57	4.98	1.45	17.8%	8.1%	.300	70.2%	19.4%	27.9%	46.8%
Proj.			165	8	115	4.12	1.36	18.0%						

After a spring training game Ramirez reported to have a sore arm, which is the reason why he didn't start the season in the majors. A couple of days later Ramirez ended up on the DL with a sore tricep (or a tricep strain); he was on the DL until early June. Even though the advanced statistics said Ramirez would regress in 2013, I didn't think his stats would regress this much.

It's possible the injury negatively affected his ability to get outs, but the velocity on all of his pitches all looked the same as last year. Last year he incorporated the slider more to right handed batters and the results were mixed as the batting average against climbed 40 points to .229; however, that may have fueled by a .338 BABIP; what's most important is the strikeout rate was almost the same. In 2012 lefties only hit .207 against him (which was not sustainable), but last year they hit .286. In terms of his home-road splits there are no major differences. Overall, his triple-a stats the last two years you'll see both the strikeout rate and walk rate increased last year, which could mean multiple things. Maybe his command was loose, but got away with it because he was effectively wild? At this point he's a stream only option right now.

Garrett Richards**Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Angels | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (132), NFBC (97)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	77	7	65	4.21	1.58	18.7%	10.1%	.346	76.0%	10.4%	2012	AAA
2012	MLB	24	71	4	47	4.69	1.56	14.8%	10.7%	.308	65.3%	10.3%	2012	MLB
2013	MLB	25	145	7	101	4.16	1.34	16.3%	7.1%	.302	68.6%	15.4%	2013	MLB
Proj.			170	11	108	4.35	1.35	16.3%					Proj.	

Richards has really good stuff; his fastball and cutter sat at 95 mph and maxed out at 97 mph, but he is a reliever masquerading as starter. His biggest problem is the lack of command of his secondary pitches, which is primarily the slider. Without command of the slider there's no velocity separation in the cutter and fastball, which makes him more hittable. Speaking of the fastball, if he misses up in the zone it becomes flat and more hittable. Since he split time between the bullpen and as a starter I wanted to show his stats as a starter and reliever (below).

Splits	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
Starter	4.18	1.31	.263	.302	16.4%	7.4%	10.0%
Reliever	4.10	1.44	.281	.321	16.0%	6.4%	16.0%

Based on the data in the table it appears as though there isn't much difference between which role he has. However, the question I have is, "why is he so hittable even though his fastball can touch 97 mph?" Unless he finds a secondary pitch to change speeds, he will always be a league average starter. Richards should be used in either the eighth or ninth inning, but since the Angels are desperate for starting pitching (even after the trade for **Tyler Skaggs** and **Hector Santiago**) Richards is going to be their number three starter.

Tanner Roark

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Nationals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	25	147.7	6	130	4.39	1.41	20.2%	7.3%	.332	65.2%	11.9%	27.8%	48.8%
2013	AAA	26	105.7	9	84	3.15	0.99	20.0%	4.8%	.000	65.3%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	26	53.7	7	40	1.51	0.91	19.5%	5.4%	.243	79.8%	4.2%	17.0%	54.6%
Proj.			110	6	85	3.98	1.27	19.8%						

As of January it looks as though Roark is going to battle **Ross Detwiler** for the fifth spot in the Nationals rotation. The following capsule assumes he earns that job. In general I'm not high on players who repeat a level in the minors and who are also old for the level. Roark is one of those types of players as he repeated double-a at the age of 25 before reaching triple-a at the age of 25. This past September Roark was given the opportunity to be a starter and he performed extremely well in five starts (table below).

ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB
1.74	.903	.216	.256	17.6%	3.4%	4.3%

Roark doesn't have overpowering stuff as none of his pitches can miss bats consistently so his numbers are going to regress in 2014. The big positive in his game as he reduced his walk rate; from 2010-12 his walk rate was 7.5 percent, but last year, both in the minors and majors, had a walk rate of five percent. Roark is one of those pitchers who are going to have more value in real life than in fantasy as he doesn't project to provide any above average production in any one category. I believe Roark is a better pitcher than Detwiler and Roark will be the fifth starter for the Nationals.

Wandy Rodriguez

Throws: L | Age: 35 | Team: Pirates | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	32	191	11	166	3.49	1.31	20.5%	8.5%	.289	79.2%	15.9%	29.8%	50.5%
2012	MLB	33	205.7	12	139	3.76	1.27	15.9%	6.4%	.280	70.3%	11.9%	27.7%	53.2%
2013	MLB	34	62.7	6	46	3.59	1.12	17.7%	4.6%	.255	80.0%	17.2%	31.9%	47.8%
Proj.			100	6	66	4.50	1.25	17.0%						

Before the 2013 season began Rodriguez was an extremely unattractive fantasy option because he was 34 years old and the strikeout rate was in severe decline. After making 12 starts (last year) he went on the DL with forearm tightness and only made one rehab start before being shut down for the rest of the year. Despite only being limited to 12 starts there were noticeable improvements to his game; the strikeout rate ticked up two percentage points while the walk rate decreased nearly two percentage points. That said, the 3.59 ERA doesn't appear sustainable as the BABIP of .255 and a 80 percent LOB% rate. I don't recommend rostering in him anything other than NL-only leagues because even if he is fully healthy next year he doesn't have the upside of the majority of pitchers who will still available when you're deciding to roster him.

Esmil Rogers

Throws: R | Age: 28 | Team: Blue Jays | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (210), NFBC (118)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	83	6	63	7.05	1.89	15.6%	11.7%	.352	68.3%	17.9%	29.2%	46.4%
2012	MLB	26	78.7	3	83	4.69	1.44	23.9%	8.6%	.341	70.2%	13.7%	24.3%	52.4%
2013	MLB	27	137.7	5	96	4.77	1.42	16.1%	7.4%	.304	73.0%	20.6%	23.8%	50.9%
Proj.			80	5	50	4.60	1.43	16.1%						

At one point every fantasy analyst probably has recommended Rogers at one point because the stuff will flash greatness, but it will take several bad outings before a great one appears. The Blue Jays are loaded with starting pitchers; on the major league club and minor leaguers that are ready to be in the rotation right now (i.e. **Sean Nolin** and possibly **Marcus Stroman**). It's highly unlikely he begins the year in the rotation, but if he does he's only an AL-only play.

Jorge De La Rosa

Throws: L | Age: 33 | Team: Rockies | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (72), NFBC (62)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	59	5	52	3.51	1.19	21.2%	9.0%	.267	70.8%	8.9%	29.4%	50.3%
2012	MLB	31	10.7	0	6	9.28	1.78	11.3%	3.8%	.300	41.7%	27.8%	43.9%	39.0%
2013	MLB	32	167.7	16	112	3.49	1.38	15.7%	8.7%	.303	75.4%	12.5%	17.5%	52.9%
Proj.			185	11	115	4.01	1.38	16.0%						

Despite dealing with injuries the last two years, specifically a TJ, De La Rosa was able to throw the most innings his career (167.2). His final numbers are pretty impressive, but there are some red flags. Any time I see a high WHIP (1.38) and a low ERA I know that pitcher must have gotten lucky somehow. And he was lucky with a 75.4 percent LOB rate and 7.7 percent HR/FB rate. However, there are signs that his 2013 could be somewhat sustainable. His ground ball rate of 47.3 percent was 24th among qualified starters, which means he is going to induce more weak contact than hard, which is a recipe that can work in Colorado’s ballpark. He has a below average strikeout rate and high WHIP which means he’s going to be a liability in at least two categories. However, prior to 2012 his career strikeout rate was about 20 percent. The question is will the strikeout rate improve? The table below shows his swing and miss (WHIFF) rates since 2006.

Year	WHIFF%
2006	8.7%
2007	8.1%
2008	10.40%
2009	10.80%
2010	11.20%
2011	11.40%
2012	12.30%
2013	9.20%

2013 was the lowest WHIFF rate since 2007; combine that with the fact his fastball sits in the low 90s (90-92 mph) instead of the mid-90s (93-96 mph) it seems unlikely a jump in the strikeout rate is going to occur. In terms of the wins category I believe the Rockies are going to finish in last place, which means his opportunities for wins will be lower.

Tyson Ross

Throws: R | Age: 26 | Team: Padres | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (89), NFBC (119)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	25	78.3	6	64	2.99	1.25	19.4%	8.8%	.283	71.3%	7.7%	23.3%	64.1%
2012	MLB	25	73.3	2	46	6.50	1.81	13.5%	10.8%	.360	64.0%	12.1%	24.3%	55.2%
2013	MLB	26	125	3	119	3.17	1.15	23.6%	8.7%	.282	71.5%	11.6%	21.6%	59.1%
Proj.			150	10	134	3.55	1.19	22.9%						

Before I started writing Ross’ player capsule I wanted to completely write him off because as an A’s fan I’ve seen Ross be bad for the first three years of his career. His biggest problem with the A’s was he ly he could never throw strikes consistently. Towards the end of last season I saw Ross’ box scores and I never trusted them and totally wrote them off, but it’s hard to write off a 2.40 ERA as a starter. So what went right? First he simplified his repertoire. Instead of throwing three types of fastballs, he only threw two; the changeup has more fading action than previous years, but that pitch is hardly thrown. He’s a two

pitch pitcher (fastball and slider), but he can get away with it because his fastball has so much movement on it.

He made a slight adjustment in his mechanics that paid huge dividends. Specifically, “Early in spring training, Darren had me make a small adjustment to my warm-up routine that got me to get the timing down. I’m a tall, lanky guy, so he had me do this simple step-through drill. The idea was to sync up my foot strike to get my arm up in time. Everything flows from there. It was a very minor adjustment, but it’s what I needed to get on track” (source: [Geoff Young](#)). I never liked his delivery because it seems as though he’s throwing his across his body, which doesn’t bode well for throwing 200-plus innings year after year. That said, the delivery does look less violent than years past which bodes well for the 2014 season. He’s never thrown more than 155 innings in a season so expectations must be tempered, but the strikeout rate is legit and he still plays in one of the best pitching environments.

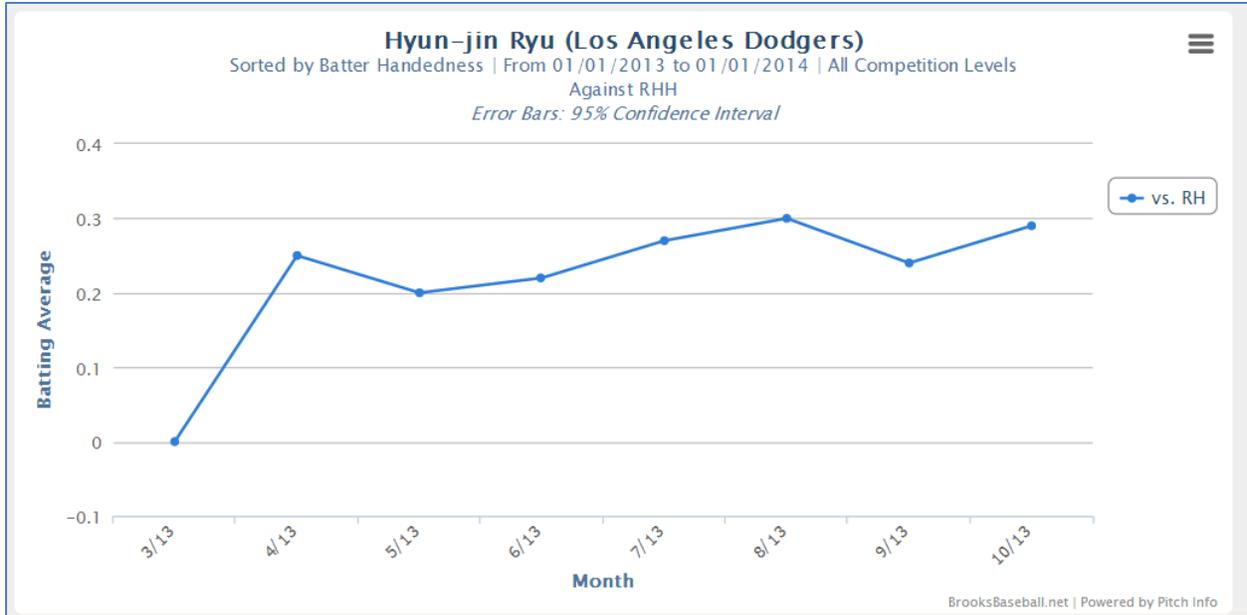
Hyun-Jin Ryu

Throws: L | Age: 26 | Team: Dodgers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (28), NFBC (25)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	MLB	26	192	14	154	3.00	1.20	19.7%	6.3%	.296	78.2%	12.8%	21.4%	55.5%
Proj.			190	13	136	3.81	1.31	18.4%						

I know the numbers looked really good but I don’t know if it is sustainable. Before I delve into the statistical numbers let’s walk through his scouting report. The fastball sits 88-92 mph and he can throw it fairly consistently to all four quadrants with accuracy. However, there are times it flattens out and becomes very hittable. His best secondary pitch is the changeup, which is a true weapon as it has really good fading action. The other secondary pitches (curveball and slider) are average pitches. Overall, he doesn’t have terrific stuff, but he’s able to generate outs. Normally pitchers who fit this mold will earn designations such as “he’s crafty” or even the more clichéd moniker “he just knows how to pitch.”

As the season wore on, his command improved. During the first half of the year his strikeout to walk ratio was 2.38, but in the second half of the season it was 6.10. Last year he pitched backwards a lot to right handed hitters, throwing the changeup to setup his fastball. This sequence can work initially, but major league hitters are fast learners and will eventually no longer be fooled. The image below (from [BrooksBaseball.net](#)) shows how the right handed hitters improved their batting average against Ryu as the season wore on.



Normally left handed pitchers have platoon splits where they're better against lefties than righties. Ryu had a reverse platoon split as righties hit .245 against him compared to a .270 batting average from lefties. He threw mostly fastballs and sliders, his least effective secondary pitch, to lefties, which helps explain the reverse platoon split. Since Ryu doesn't have terrific stuff he is going to have to rely on command and changing speeds, which makes the margin for error a lot smaller. Since he has good fastball command he'll rarely miss with the fastball up in the zone, which will limit the number of home runs he allows.

Lastly, on the surface it looks as though his HR/FB and LOB% rates are clear candidates for regression, but when you compare them against the Dodgers pitching staff as a whole you'll notice his numbers are not that much different so a regression may not be as large you may think.

Split	HR/FB%	LOB%
Dodgers	9.5%	75.4%
Ryu	8.7%	78.2%

Based on the home ballpark and the defense behind him (especially if Matt Kemp plays 150-plus games in center) he should be pitching in a lot of favorable matchups behind a good defense the majority of the season. There are some red flags though. The lack of overpowering stuff lowers his margin of error and makes him more susceptible to teams who see him multiple times. The table below shows his performance against teams he faced multiple times; "1st" refers to him facing a team for the first time and "2nd" refers to all subsequent times. There is a small sample caveat applies as the "1st" sample only consists of six starts while "2nd" consists 12 starts.

Split	ERA	WHIP	BB%	K%
1st	2.43	1.24	9.2%	27.5%
2nd	3.26	1.28	6.3%	12.9%

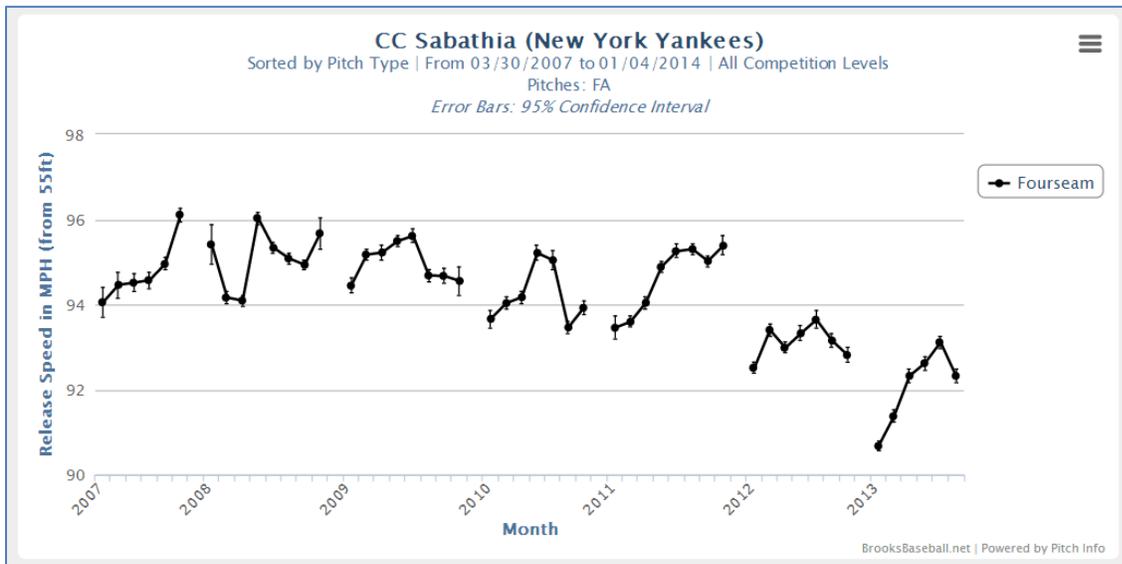
The table suggests he wasn't nearly as effective the more hitters saw him, which indicates Ryu is going to have to make further adjustments in 2014 as the book continues to get written on him. I don't expect him to fall apart because he simply can get hitters out, but probably not at the rate he did last year.

CC Sabathia

Throws: L | Age: 33 | Team: Yankees | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (110), NFBC (84)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	237.3	19	230	3.00	1.23	23.4%	6.2%	.318	77.0%	9.6%	27.4%	52.1%
2012	MLB	31	200	15	197	3.38	1.14	23.6%	5.3%	.288	71.6%	13.8%	29.0%	53.3%
2013	MLB	32	211	14	175	4.78	1.37	19.3%	7.2%	.308	67.4%	16.4%	27.5%	50.2%
Proj.			200	14	160	3.67	1.30	20.6%						

Much has been said about Sabathia's decreased velocity being the primary cause for his down season, but most people forget to mention his fastball velocity actually increased as the season progressed except for August (a hamstring pull is most likely the cause for the drop off). Please see the image below of Sabathia's fastball velocity since 2007 (courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net).



When looking at the chart (above) the decline in fastball velocity is quite apparent, but according to the data in the table below the effectiveness of the fastball didn't change very much in 2013 (data from BrooksBaseball.net). Also, from the research I've done, [a drop in fastball velocity does not correlate to poor performance](#). Therefore, something else must have caused the poor performance.

Year	AVG	SLG	ISO	BABIP	K%	BB%
2008	.305	.458	.154	.320	1.47%	7.22%
2009	.249	.408	.158	.274	12.31%	8.85%
2010	.267	.373	.107	.301	14.12%	1.12%
2011	.292	.448	.156	.324	14.09%	9.76%
2012	.308	.492	.184	.335	11.88%	6.60%
2013	.288	.481	.193	.303	13.14%	1.00%

There must be another reason why 2013 was such a poor season. According to one talent evaluator the weight loss [was detrimental](#). “The weight loss has created a balance problem for him. He’s all over the place. He’s learning how to pitch in that body, a body he’s really never had. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with him other than that. Sometimes you pitch at a certain weight all your life and then someone has the brilliant idea that you should lose weight because it’s putting stress on your knees, you do it, and then you’re dealing with something else.”

Sabathia was bad last year, but I believe he can still rebound and turn it around because he never relied on the fastball to get guys out. Also, you don’t need to throw in the mid-90s to get batters, just ask **Hyun-Jin Ryu**. I don’t believe he’ll return to 2011 levels, but he could still be a usable starter in 12-team mixed leagues if can repeat his delivery with his new, slimmer body.

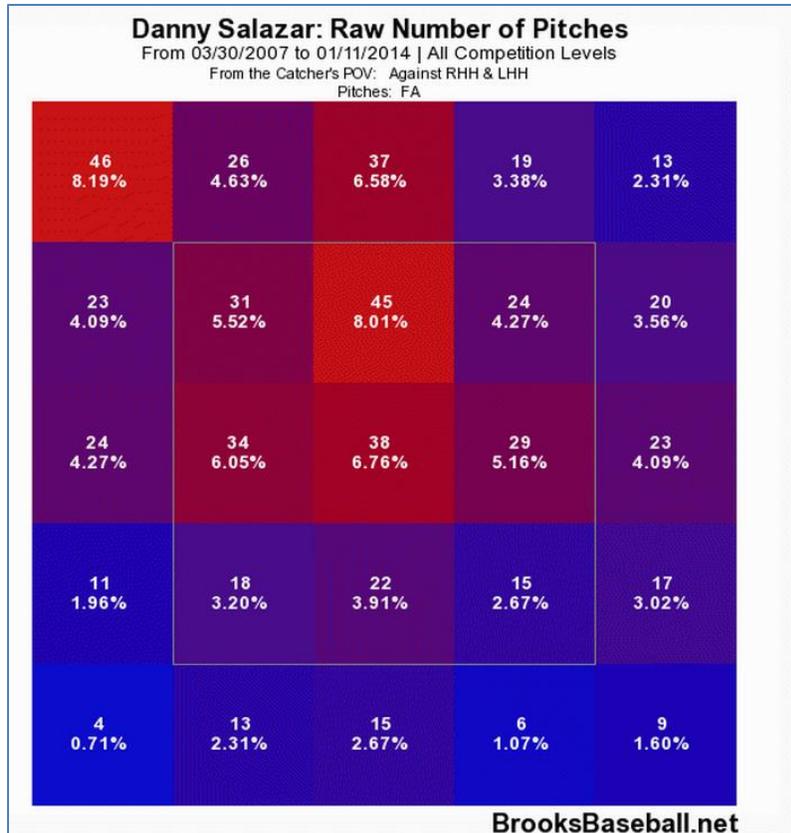
Danny Salazar

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	23	33.7	2	51	2.67	1.10	38.3%	7.5%	.000	75.8%	2013	AA	23
2013	AAA	23	59.3	4	78	2.73	0.98	33.9%	6.1%	.000	71.7%	2013	AAA	23
2013	MLB	23	52	2	65	3.12	1.13	30.8%	7.1%	.298	83.3%	2013	MLB	23
Proj.			180	13	189	3.45	1.21	27.0%				Proj.		

During the 2010 season Salazar had a TJ surgery. After the 2011 season, the Indians placed him on their 40-man roster even though he only made 15 starts the previous two seasons because of the TJ surgery and still haven’t gone beyond Single-A.

After the surgery, “According to multiple reports, post-surgery, Salazar actually has added some life on his fastball. Instead of just generally touching the mid-90s, he’s now hitting 98 and consistently reaching 94-96. This isn’t all that uncommon, as Jon actually [referenced an article yesterday](#) about relievers and their revitalization following a second UCL reconstruction.” (Source: [Jacob Rosen](#)). His fastball is extremely electric and it’s no surprise how aggressive he is when he throws it, primarily up in the zone (image below courtesy of [BrooksBaseball.net](#)).



Combine that information with two above average secondary offerings you begin to the makings of a four category stud and a top 10-15 fantasy pitcher (in terms of ultimate ceiling). There are questions if he can hold up to a starters workload, but he pitched 145 innings between the majors and minors last year and showed no signs of fatigue. Also with the pending loss **Ubaldo Jimenez** the Indians are going to give Salazar every opportunity to be successful as a starter. That said, if he doesn't work out as a starter he can be the best closer in baseball. Some fantasy owners may have concerns about the aggressiveness with the fastball or the injury history, but Salazar's ceiling is too high to pass up. According to Tristan H. Cockcroft's *initial* rankings at ESPN, he has him ranked 70th overall, just behind **Yovani Gallardo** and **Dan Straily**. To me that's crazy because of his ultimate ceiling and he should provide elite level strikeouts and a low walk rate, which will keep his WHIP down. I am going to target him in all of my drafts.

Chris Sale

Throws: L | Age: 25 | Team: White Sox | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (11), NFBC (12)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	71	2	79	2.79	1.11	27.4%	9.4%	.264	81.3%	14.3%	25.1%	55.7%
2012	MLB	23	192	17	192	3.05	1.14	24.9%	6.6%	.294	80.0%	14.7%	26.7%	49.3%
2013	MLB	24	214.3	11	226	3.07	1.07	26.1%	5.3%	.289	77.0%	16.5%	25.6%	50.4%
Proj.			190	14	191	3.10	1.11	25.9%						

In mid-May Sale [missed a couple of starts](#) (he did not go on the DL) with shoulder tendinitis / inflammation. Other than that injury he was fine the rest of the year, continuing to pitch like a top ten fantasy starting pitcher. If he got a little luckier in the win column he could have finished the year as a top five starting pitcher. Last year he made improvements in every foundation statistical category; the strikeout rate and ground ball rate increased one percentage point, the walk rate decreased one percentage point. Also, the White Sox have totally revamped offense, acquiring a lot of cost controlled players with upside, which means he will a better opportunity to earn 14-16 wins if everything rolls right.

The reason why his draft day value will be suppressed will be due to injury concerns that have yet to happen. He has one of the scariest looking mechanics in the majors and the heavy slider usage (he used it more often in 2013, specifically, three percentage points more) put a lot of fear that eventually he is eventually going to break. However, all pitchers get hurt and breakdown regardless of their mechanics. A pitcher can have perfect mechanics and get hurt each year while a pitcher with violent mechanics never gets hurt. If you never saw Sale pitch and only saw his stat line he would easily be a top ten pitcher. When you roster Sale you're very likely will get him at a discount. At the end of the day it all depends how concerned you are about the health risk.

Jeff Samardzija

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Cubs | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (95), NFBC (80)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	88	8	87	2.97	1.30	22.9%	13.2%	.253	75.0%	7.4%	32.7%	49.0%
2012	MLB	27	174.7	9	180	3.81	1.22	24.9%	7.7%	.296	73.0%	13.8%	31.7%	48.7%
2013	MLB	28	213.7	8	214	4.34	1.35	23.4%	8.5%	.314	71.6%	20.7%	21.2%	54.0%
Proj.			210	11	192	4.00	1.26	23.5%						

Samardzija's season can be characterized by a season of two halves, which the table below will show. You'll notice he was a top 30 fantasy starting pitcher for the first 17 starts of the year and after that he wasn't even a stream option.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First 18	3.54	1.26	.239	.308	24.6%	8.4%	9.5%
Next 15	5.34	1.46	.275	.326	21.9%	8.7%	16.5%

In general he will flash dominance in one start and in the next he'll have trouble throwing strikes consistently, which makes him maddening to own. In terms of raw stuff, he has a lot of bat missing ability. He has the third fastest fastball velocity among starting pitchers. In 2012 his splitter was among the best in the game, but last year it was barely average according to [FanGraphs](#). He increased the usage of the two-seam fastball, which increased the ground ball rate, but lowered the strikeout and walk rates. He has to improve upon the eight wins last year as **Starlin Castro** and **Anthony Rizzo** should be a lot

better and uber prospect **Jaiver Baez** is almost ready for the majors. He has the strikeout rate to be a number two fantasy starting pitcher, but the walk rate and high WHIP and ERA makes him number three starter, preferably a number four in shallow leagues. Its possible 2014 could be a breakout season, but there are narratives in favor and against this. The argument against the breakout is he is not a young buck, as he'll begin the season at 29 and if he was going to figure it out, he would have by now. The argument in favor is he has only had two years of being a starter and he's still learning the nuances of starting. I tend to believe the breakout is not coming, that he will tease fantasy owners with a few good starts in a row before blowing up.

Anibal Sanchez

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Tigers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (12), NFBC (10)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	196.3	8	202	3.67	1.28	24.3%	7.7%	.310	75.0%	14.6%	26.7%	50.2%
2012	MLB	28	195.7	9	167	3.86	1.27	20.4%	5.9%	.310	70.2%	13.5%	26.5%	52.0%
2013	MLB	29	182	14	202	2.57	1.15	27.1%	7.2%	.307	78.2%	8.6%	23.3%	51.9%
Proj.			185	14	187	3.25	1.20	26.0%						

Despite pitching extremely well the past four years Sanchez has never thrown more than 200 innings. That said, he's averaged 192 innings pitched during that same time. Last year he pitched the fewest number of regular season innings since 2010 due to a [shoulder strain](#); he missed a month of the season. He's dealt with shoulder issues various times in his career. In 2009 he missed two and half months of the season with a shoulder strain. In 2008 he had surgery on his labrum and missed four months of the season. To recap, he was healthy for three seasons before getting hurt last year. My fear of injury may be irrational, but I wanted to bring this up.

Let's talk about his performance last year in which he provided elite level production in four categories. He led the AL in ERA and FIP while adding one mph to his fastball and his swing and miss rates increased on all of his pitches. The strikeout rate reached elite levels and appears to be sustainable because of swing and miss rates of all of his pitches. Lastly, as a ground ball pitcher, the addition of **Ian Kinsler** and **Jose Iglesias** are dramatic improvements over **Joel Peralta** and **Omar Infante** defensively, which only enhance Sanchez's opportunities to maintain his 2013 performance.

That said, expectations for next year must be tempered. Last year it was almost the perfect storm in terms of the luck he had. First, he got fairly lucky with the HR/FB rate; from 2008-12 he had a career 8.5 percent HR/FB rate. The 78 percent LOB rate should regress, but not as much as you would think. Overall, if it wasn't for the injury concerns he would easily be a top ten starting pitcher

Ervin Santana

Throws: R | Age: 31 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (35), NFBC (38)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	228.7	11	178	3.38	1.22	18.8%	7.6%	.272	76.6%	11.5%	34.9%	48.5%
2012	MLB	29	178	9	133	5.16	1.27	17.4%	8.0%	.241	69.8%	21.8%	34.6%	49.1%
2013	MLB	30	211	9	161	3.24	1.14	18.7%	5.9%	.267	76.9%	16.7%	25.9%	49.8%
Proj.			205	11	149	3.65	1.20	18.7%						

Last year, in [early April I recommended to pick up Santana](#) because he looked like vintage Santana. Santana fits into a weird box of pitcher. He's a power pitcher who doesn't miss a lot of bats and is more home run prone than what his stuff suggests (complete aside, but this is going to be **Kyle Zimmer's** future). There are signs he may be less home run prone as he had the highest ground ball rate of his career. The jump in ground ball rate came primarily against right handed hitters (from 41 percent to 47 percent). The big adjustment he made was he stopped throwing it up in the zone; in fact, it was the lowest of his career (as of 2008). Santana will most likely take a hit as he'll no longer be playing in one of the best defenses in the majors and one of the best pitcher's parks, but I expect his numbers to be a blend of the 2013, 2011 and 2010 seasons as long he doesn't go to a bam box (i.e. Toronto).

Hector Santiago

Throws: L | Age: 26 | Team: Angels | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (126), NFBC (106)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	14.7	1	13	0.00	1.02	24.1%	11.1%	.257	100.0%	0.0%	18.8%	56.3%
2012	MLB	24	70.3	4	79	3.33	1.34	25.8%	13.1%	.259	86.2%	17.2%	35.6%	42.9%
2013	MLB	25	149	4	137	3.56	1.40	20.9%	11.0%	.289	77.4%	13.1%	33.8%	43.9%
Proj.			185	12	144	4.20	1.40	20.0%						

Before being traded to the Angels there are questions whether Santiago can stick in the starting rotation because he doesn't have any overpowering pitches. What he lacks in pure stuff he has in the variety of pitches he can throw as he features a fastball (four and two-seam), changeup, slider, cutter and screwball. In addition, his delivery is slightly deceptive which allows his stuff to play up. With average stuff he needs to be perfect in order get outs consistently, but if he's not batters will make a lot of hard contact. It's no surprise that he's allowed 27 home runs in 224 innings the past two years. It's easy to say Cellular Field heavily contributed to those totals, but 14 home runs came at home and 13 on the road—10.1 percent and 10.5 percent HR/FB rates respectively. Maybe one or two less balls leave the ballpark next year, but I don't see a major regression in the home runs he allows. For two years in a row his ERA has been lower than his FIP and xFIP; usually I don't pay much attention to those stats, but if you combine that fact with he had a 1.40 WHIP last year tells me a regression in the ERA is bound to happen. The Angels need starting pitching so the leash with Santiago is going to be really long so even if he struggles to throw strikes he'll keep his rotation spot. Also, do not underestimate how good the Angels outfield is going to be defensively; they're going to be able to get to a lot of balls and that will help Santiago a lot since he's a fly ball pitcher.

Max Scherzer

Throws: R | Age: 29 | Team: Tigers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (2), NFBC (2)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	26	195	15	174	4.43	1.35	20.9%	6.7%	.314	73.7%	15.9%	33.4%	45.7%
2012	MLB	27	187.7	16	231	3.74	1.27	29.4%	7.6%	.333	76.5%	14.6%	35.7%	42.8%
2013	MLB	28	214.3	21	240	2.90	0.97	28.7%	6.7%	.259	74.4%	10.0%	37.0%	42.2%
Proj.			210	15	234	3.35	1.16	28.6%						

Scherzer is one of the five pitchers in baseball, but there are some minor red flags. First, he was able to achieve the numbers in 2013 with a .259 BABIP and 7.6 percent HR/FB rate, both career lows (or bests, whichever you prefer). Even the biggest Scherzer pundits have to believe some regression is going to occur next year. A lot of his fantasy value was also built on winning 21 games and as we all know wins are highly inconsistent and unpredictable. Also, he pitched a career high 236 innings last year and I'm always a little weary of hangover effect the following year; I do not have data to back this up as this is more a hunch; that was one of the reasons why I ranked **Justin Verlander** as low as I did last year. That said, he's still going to be a four category stud next year.

James Shields

Throws: R | Age: 32 | Team: Royals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (26), NFBC (23)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	29	249.3	16	225	2.82	1.04	23.1%	6.7%	.258	79.6%	13.2%	31.3%	50.6%
2012	MLB	30	227.7	15	223	3.52	1.17	23.6%	6.1%	.292	71.9%	16.4%	24.8%	56.5%
2013	MLB	31	228.7	13	196	3.15	1.24	20.7%	7.2%	.298	79.5%	10.6%	29.8%	45.8%
Proj.			220	15	171	3.51	1.20	20.0%						

Before I started writing Shields' player capsule I was expecting this to be a fairly easy capsule to write because Shields has been one of the best and most consistent starting pitchers since 2009. However, the more I looked at his stats the more concerned I got. First, he had the lowest HR/FB rate of his career, which could be do Kaufman Stadium, but Shields pitched in another pitcher friendly park in Tampa Bay. When you look at the home-road HR/FB splits the low home run rate was driven by his performance on the road. For example, he had a seven percent HR/FB rate on the road compared to 10.2 percent at home. Second, the ground ball rate was the lowest it's been since 2010. He also had a career high walk rate the lowest strikeout rate since 2009. He's thrown 1,683 innings in the major leagues and last year could be a sign that he's about to start his decline phrase or it could be a season similar to 2010 where he had a down year and had an even better year. I fall more into the latter, but he's not the slam dunk I thought he was when I first began the writing process.

Tyler Skaggs**Throws: L | Age: 22 | Team: Angels | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	20	29.3	1	21	5.83	1.47	15.8%	9.8%	.264	68.3%	18.2%	38.8%	41.2%
2013	AAA	21	104	6	107	4.59	1.47	23.0%	8.4%	.000	63.8%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	21	38.7	2	36	5.12	1.37	21.2%	8.8%	.282	70.8%	25.9%	25.2%	49.5%
Proj.			165	10	122	4.82	1.42	19.0%						

In the preseason I wasn't a believer in Skaggs because the stuff was still a work in progress and he was basically a two-pitch pitcher (fastball and curveball). When I saw him this past June he still had to work on refining his repertoire. Last year he shortened his stride in attempt to get the changeup to be more consistent, but the velocity decreased. This was a developmental adjustment as the Diamondbacks had to find a way to refine the changeup if he was going to be a consistent starting pitcher. That said, his fastball only sits in the 88-92 mph range and every time I've seen him pitch the command of the pitch got loose randomly. He has a beautiful 12-to-6 curveball with great shape and break, which can be a true bat misser. The question is will he have the fastball command to set up hitters for the curveball? Will the changeup develop and become another weapon he can consistently throw to keep hitters off his average fastball? These are all possible, but when I've seen him, all I've seen is a soft tossing lefty who will not get hitters consistently out because the lack of a third pitch and poor fastball command. Skaggs will get every opportunity to start for the Angels because they're in desperate need of pitching, but I'm still not sold on Skaggs.

Drew Smyly**Throws: L | Age: 24 | Team: Tigers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	23	17.7	0	25	6.11	1.70	30.1%	9.6%	.413	67.2%	23.1%	28.9%	37.8%
2012	MLB	23	99.3	4	94	3.99	1.27	22.6%	7.9%	.295	71.0%	12.6%	37.0%	46.7%
2013	MLB	24	76	6	81	2.37	1.04	26.7%	5.6%	.291	80.6%	6.8%	31.7%	47.3%
Proj.			170	12	149	3.75	1.27	22.5%						

Let's begin with the scouting report from R.J. Anderson at [Baseball Prospectus](#), "including a low-90s fastball, cutter, curveball, and changeup. He leverages his tall, lanky body well—allowing him to deliver the ball on a steep downward plane—while repeating his actions well enough to maintain good control. Smyly receives high marks for his feel and poise on the mound, and in a perfect world he flowers into a middle-of-the-rotation starter."

The biggest question I have is will he be able to get righties out consistently? For his career (in 479 plate appearances) they're hitting .247 with a 22.5 percent strikeout rate compared to only a .204 batting average and 27.4 percent strikeout rate against lefties. The strikeout rate is great, but it's a mistake to automatically assume the results as a reliever will replicated as a starter. The mindset between being a reliever and starter is completely different. For example, a reliever knows he'll pitch at most two innings

so he doesn't have to worry about sequencing and setting up his secondary pitches. Smyly used to be a starter for the most part of 2012 and he struggled with sequencing back then. In some circles he's emerging as trendy sleeper, but I'm not totally buying in. He pitches on a team that should generate a lot of win opportunities and he's shown he can miss bats as a starter and a reliever, but the biggest concern I have is how many innings is he going to pitch next year? The most innings he's thrown in his professional career is 121 back in 2012. I have to believe he's going to have an innings cap that doesn't exceed 170. If that's true he's going to be shut down sometime during the season or at least skipped a start once or twice.

Dan Straily

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Athletics | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (83), NFBC (67)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	23	39.3	2	32	3.89	1.32	18.6%	9.3%	.225	90.7%	26.2%	40.8%	36.9%
2013	AAA	24	31.7	3	33	1.14	1.04	25.4%	6.9%	.000	69.6%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	24	152.3	10	124	3.96	1.24	19.4%	8.9%	.266	70.3%	12.3%	32.3%	43.2%
Proj.			200	14	153	3.80	1.26	19.7%						

When I look at Straily's stat line all of the foundational stats are trending in the right direction. The strikeout increased last year while the walk rate decreased; the home run totals, which was one of the biggest hurdles for him in his rookie year, decreased substantially; the ground ball rate increased to the point where he was no longer an extreme fly ball pitcher. There's a lot of talk about how his numbers benefitted from playing in Oakland, but in fact he has a 4.26 ERA at home compared to a 3.73 ERA on the road. Having watched a lot of his starts his biggest problem has been consistency; specifically getting loose in the zone with his pitches. When that happens he tends to get hit hard because he doesn't have the stuff to get by on "stuff" alone.

Contrary to what the minor league strikeout rate indicates Straily doesn't have overpowering stuff (it's solid average for the record). Instead, he relied on feel and sequencing to get outs, which works great in the minors even if he was loose in the zone, but that doesn't work in the majors. Last year he took a step forward and the A's are hoping (probably secretly expecting) Straily to take another step forward in 2014. That said, his upside is a 3.50 ERA and 21 percent strikeout rate so expectations must be tempered.

Stephen Strasburg

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Nationals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (19), NFBC (18)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	22	24	1	24	1.50	0.71	27.3%	2.3%	.242	70.6%	0.0%	35.1%	45.6%
2012	MLB	23	159.3	15	197	3.16	1.15	30.2%	7.4%	.311	75.4%	13.8%	28.7%	46.8%
2013	MLB	24	183	8	191	3.00	1.05	26.2%	7.7%	.263	73.2%	15.8%	22.5%	54.9%
Proj.			170	13	172	3.05	1.07	26.0%						

In mid-September Strasburg was scratched for two starts with [forearm tightness](#), but ultimately came back and pitched in two starts before the season ended. Later in the offseason he had surgery to [remove bone chips](#) from his right elbow, which is considered a routine operation. Also, he missed some time last year due to an oblique injury. Basically, he has dealt with injuries his entire major league career, which makes this a make or break year in terms of his fantasy value

Other than injury, Strasburg had an excellent year. The strikeout rate decreased four percentage points, but it's possible this was intentional in an attempt to make the pitch count more efficient and to pitch deeper into games. Also, his ground ball rate increased seven percentage points. Therefore, I'm not overly concerned about the decrease in strikeout rate. Another aspect of his game that he needs to improve upon is his batting average against with men on base as hitters hit .245 against him compared to a .185 batting average with the bases empty.

Overall, Strasburg is a high risk, high reward player who literally could be the best fantasy pitcher in baseball, but the lengthy injury history is extremely concerning. He'll likely be a top ten pitcher if he pitches in 190 innings, but unless he slips to the 15th starting pitcher range, I'm not going to own him. I don't want to pay full value on draft day to see if he does do that.

Eric Stults

Throws: R | Age: 34 | Team: Padres | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (81), NFBC (75)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	32	35.3	1	36	2.80	1.30	24.2%	9.4%	.327	73.9%	0.0%	28.9%	45.6%
2012	MLB	32	99	8	55	2.91	1.20	13.3%	6.5%	.264	74.6%	9.2%	25.4%	46.5%
2013	MLB	33	203.7	11	131	3.93	1.27	15.3%	4.7%	.302	69.6%	10.3%	28.0%	46.0%
Proj.			75	4	52	3.25	1.08	18.0%						

Stults was a dreamer's delight last year as he performed as he performed as a number three fantasy starter (table below).

Split	GS	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	LOB%	HR/FB%
Home	15	3.06	1.05	.233	.266	18.7%	4.5%	72.8%	8.2%
Away	18	4.77	1.49	.311	.339	12.3%	4.8%	67.4%	6.0%

Even though he pitched well in 203 innings and started 33 games for the Padres he may begin the year in the bullpen because his stuff isn't overpowering and has dramatic platoon splits; lefties are hitting .199 while righties are hitting .284 since 2008. Stults is competing against **Cory Luebke**, **Robbie Erlin** and **Matt Wisler** for the fifth spot in suddenly crowded rotation. Luebke is a big wild card as he's unable to take the mound since his TJ surgery in May of 2012. As of right now (January), I bet Erlin earns the fifth spot and Stults begins the year in the bullpen and joins the rotation when **Josh Johnson** eventually gets hurt. At this point, I expect Stults to make about 20 starts with ten of them coming at home; when he does make those starts he'll almost be a must start.

Masahiro Tanaka

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Yankees | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	JPPL	21	155	11	119	2.50	1.232							
2011	JPPL	22	226.1	19	241	1.27	.875							
2012	JPPL	23	173	10	169	1.87	1.035							
2013	JPPL	24	212	24	183	1.27	.943							

Considering the success of **Yu Darvish**, **Hisashi Iwakuma** and **Hiroki Kuroda** -- expectations are certainly high for the 25 year old. I have not seen him pitch and therefore I'm basing my fantasy evaluation from other talent evaluators. [Keith Law](#) projects him to be a top 20-25 pitcher in the majors. [R.J. Anderson](#) recommends to proceed with caution. [Ben Badler](#) has more hesitation than Law, still projects him to be a number two starting pitcher, which is around what Law projects. [David Schoenfield](#) provides a fairly substantial scouting report too. When I do my projections and rankings I'm going to have a more conservative projection because I haven't seen him pitch and considering the team he plays for and the hype surrounding him grows by the day he's going to cost full value on draft day, which is something I do not want to do. And if turns out to be a top 20-25, which very well could happen, I'll draft him in 2015.

Julio Teheran

Throws: R | Age: 23 | Team: Braves | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (25), NFBC (20)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	21	131	7	97	5.08	1.44	16.8%	7.5%	.318	68.8%	13.6%	35.2%	42.1%
2012	MLB	21	6.3	0	5	5.68	0.95	20.8%	4.2%	.278	33.3%	0.0%	37.5%	25.0%
2013	MLB	22	185.7	14	170	3.20	1.17	22.0%	5.8%	.288	80.9%	14.4%	31.3%	44.0%
Proj.			200	13	171	3.80	1.21	22.0%						

The fact that an awful spring training relegated Teheran to the waiver after most drafts was an injustice by the fantasy community as he finished the year as a top 20 starting pitcher. That said, he did have a 5.08 ERA at the end of April. After April he went on to have a 2.86 ERA, 1.09 WHIP, 23.3 percent strikeout rate and a 5.7 percent walk rate.

There are some red flags heading into the 2014 season. First, he doesn't have a pitch to get lefties out consistently. He primarily throws a curveball and slider as secondary pitches both of which are better suited for right handed batters. Last year lefties had a .289 batting average against Teheran last year. He does throw a changeup, but that's still a work in progress. If the pitch takes a step forward then he can easily see a repeat in his performance. Second, as an extreme fly ball pitcher he could be more susceptible to the long ball. Also, it's tougher for fly ball pitchers to maintain a 81 percent LOB% rate. I believe a regression, albeit a fairly minor one, is coming because opposing teams will stack the lineup more with lefties and the LOB rate will sustain itself.

Lastly, I will end this capsule with a quote from a scout courtesy of [Baseball Prospectus](#), "Teheran is tough to fall in love with unless you catch him on the right day. I've seen him for a few years now and one day I will see him dominate and the next time I see him have no idea where the strike zone is. He has weapons and can attack hitters but I'm still not convinced how reliable he is from start to start."

Tyler Thornburg

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Brewers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	23	22	0	20	4.50	1.41	21.1%	7.4%	.271	101.0%	42.1%	30.2%	47.6%
2013	AAA	24	74.7	0	87	5.79	1.59	25.7%	8.6%	.000	64.1%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	24	66.7	3	48	2.03	1.19	17.8%	9.6%	.271	80.6%	1.8%	31.8%	41.3%
Proj.			100	5	73	3.61	1.25	18.7%						

Thornburg has a really interesting scouting report as he has plus fastball with two average pitches (curveball and changeup) that can attack lefties and righties. Because of his small frame (5'11) and his ability to throw strikes consistently with unorthodox mechanics, pinwheeling the ball to plate a la **Tim Lincecum**, the scouting community has mixed opinions in terms of his ultimate role (i.e. bullpen or starter). In his brief call up in 2012 he was very homer prone giving up eight in 22 innings. Last year he only gave up one in 66 innings. If I were to bet, I would summarize both years and expect a HR/FB rate in the 8-10 percent range; combine that with regression to the 80 percent LOB% rate tells me the 2.03 ERA will most likely regress to the mid-3s. That said, he still has pretty good upside for a player that will likely go undrafted in 12-team mixed leagues. As a starter he had an 18.8 percent strikeout rate and 8.7 percent walk rate, which were better than his aggregated totals. Heading into 2014 Thornburg will have an outside chance taking away the fifth starter spot from **Wily Peralta** (Brewers management probably will give it to him unless his spring is extremely poor), but his ultimate role be as a reliever. If there's an injury to the rotation Thornburg will be the first person they call.

Chris Tillman

Throws: R | Age: 25 | Team: Orioles | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (32), NFBC (27)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	24	89.3	8	92	3.63	1.29	24.3%	7.9%	.323	73.9%	7.7%	27.3%	53.8%
2012	MLB	24	86	9	66	2.93	1.05	19.0%	6.9%	.221	71.4%	12.6%	41.5%	39.7%
2013	MLB	25	206.3	16	179	3.71	1.22	21.2%	8.0%	.269	80.5%	18.6%	32.2%	43.9%
Proj.			201	13	172	3.55	1.20	22.0%						

Last year I wasn't buying Tillman not because of the advanced stats, but for the lack of pure stuff. Every time I saw him pitch I never understood how he was able to generate weak contact and miss bats. He features above average stuff, but nothing overpowering, which is extremely odd as his strikeout rate increased three percentage points.

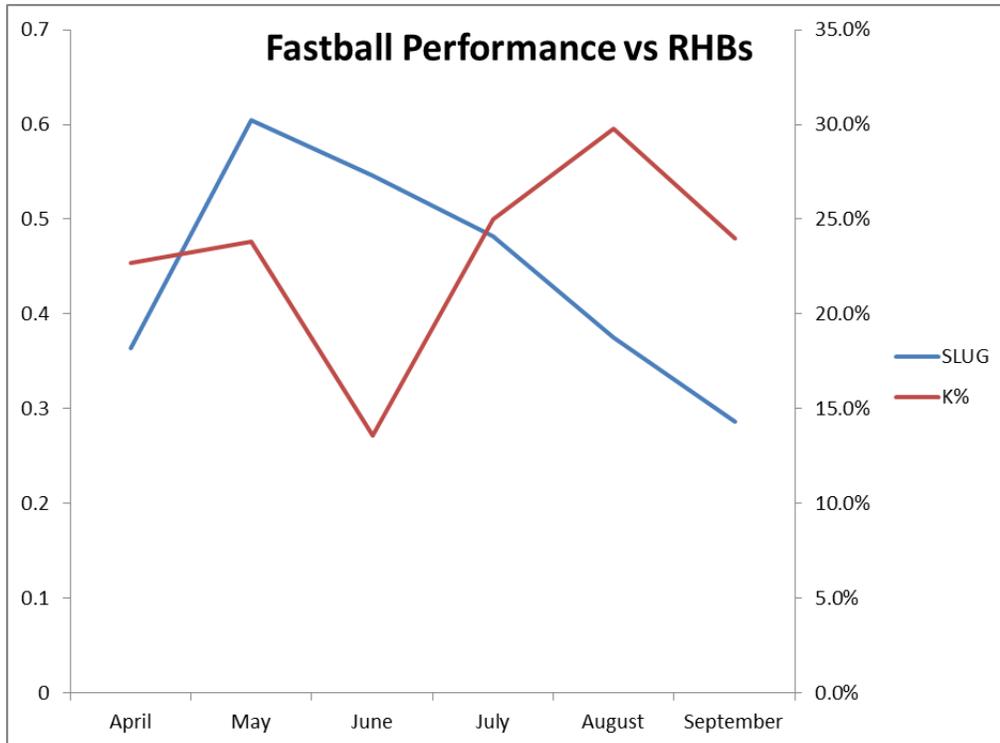
Tillman’s 2013 season was a tale of two halves where he performed much better the second half of the year. The table below shows that performance.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	3.95	1.35	.263	.288	19.0%	8.8%	16.0%
2nd Half	3.42	1.07	.214	.249	23.9%	7.2%	12.5%

The biggest improvement in the second half came against right handers. The table below provides a breakdown how right handers fared against Tillman last year.

Split	AVG	OPS	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
1st Half	.276	.818	.310	21.4%	8.2%	18.8%
2nd Half	.181	.585	.220	27.3%	7.5%	10.6%

That’s a pretty stark contrast in performance, which means there must have been an adjustment. The performance of his secondary pitches were fairly uniform, but the performance against the fastball was another matter. The image below shows how batters made fewer and fewer hard contact against the fastball as the year wore on (data courtesy of BrooksBaseball.net). It’s no surprise the usage of the fastball steadily climbed as the year progressed; he was throwing it 60 percent of the time in June but it was nearly 64 percent in September. Despite the lack of above average velocity, his fastball works best when it’s thrown up in the zone; this is because change in sight lines between the fastball and curveball.



Overall, I'm buying more into his second half performance than the first half and I believe he'll have a sub-3.50 ERA with 22 percent strikeout rate. He'll always be susceptible due to throwing the fastball up in the zone, but if he can maintain a walk rate below eight percent I like his chances of providing a sub-1.15 WHIP.

Carlos Torres

Throws: R | Age: 31 | Team: Mets | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	29	53	5	42	5.26	1.42	18.2%	11.3%	.299	63.0%	6.9%	20.0%	50.3%
2013	AAA	30	71.7	6	67	3.89	1.26	22.1%	6.3%	.000	68.1%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	30	86.3	4	75	3.44	1.11	21.3%	4.8%	.266	83.5%	20.5%	29.9%	47.1%
Proj.			100	5	71	4.00	1.23	18.2%						

When I looked at Torres' strikeout rate last year I took notice and watched a couple of his outings. Despite the strikeout rate he doesn't have overwhelming stuff; the fastball sits 90-91 mph and the secondary stuff is passable. He relies on changing speeds and keeping the hitter off balance as he throws any pitch in any given situation. Torres will likely be the long man and have spot starts here and there. He's a NL-only play at this point.

Jacob Turner

Throws: R | Age: 22 | Team: Marlins | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (174), NFBC (151)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	MLB	21	55	2	36	4.42	1.20	15.6%	6.9%	.241	63.7%	17.0%	31.4%	49.7%
2013	AAA	22	56.3	3	35	4.47	1.30	14.5%	5.8%	.000	61.9%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	22	118	3	77	3.74	1.44	15.0%	10.5%	.285	75.0%	12.9%	23.5%	50.7%
Proj.			190	10	115	4.25	1.41	15.5%						

When Turner was drafted by the Tigers in 2009 he was seen by some as the best high school pitcher in the draft and led some scouts to believe he could be a future ace. Fast forward five years and most talent evaluators see Turner as a mid-rotation starter because the fastball and arm action are not as quick as they used to be. That said, he has very solid pitches, but none of them are above average, which means he is going to have to rely on sequencing, changing speeds and solid command to get hitters out. It is because of that profile I don't see the strikeout rate increasing past 16 percent next year. If he's not going to miss a lot of bats he is going to need to provide superior ERA and WHIP totals in order to be rosterable in mid to shallow leagues and the odds of that happening are low considering the high walk totals in 2013. I believe Turner can carve a nice long career because he does have a good compliment of pitches and generates a lot of ground balls, but he should not be on your roster after your draft.

Yordano Ventura

Throws: R | Age: 22 | Team: Royals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	22	57.7	3	74	2.34	1.02	32.2%	8.7%	.000	78.2%	-	-	-
2013	AAA	22	77	5	81	3.74	1.47	24.3%	9.9%	.000	73.4%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	22	15.3	0	11	3.52	1.24	17.2%	9.4%	.227	87.8%	23.1%	30.2%	55.8%
Proj.			175	15	160	3.79	1.31	23.5%						

If you're looking for the next **Matt Harvey / Shelby Miller / Jose Fernandez** then Ventura is the pitcher you should be aware of. His fastball is 80 grade; it sits in the mid-90s and touch triple digits. He also features a knockout curveball and a changeup that is a little better than "show-me", but is likely to improve. When you look at him you don't see a pitcher who can log 200-plus innings over and over again because he's only 5'11 and 160 pounds. However, last year he logged a career high in innings (150) between the majors and minors, which was a 40 inning jump from 2012. In his brief stint in the majors (three starts) he provided a glimpse of how good he can be. With pitchers of that size it's common to think he wouldn't be able to hold velocity the second and third time through the order, but not only did he hold velocity it looked as though he was getting stronger. He needs to take one more step forward, specifically throwing 170 innings, continuing the refinement of the changeup and using his legs more in the delivery. Even if he begins the year in the minors he should be up by the end of May because **Wade Davis** is not a starting pitcher and the Royals have to realize that; once he's up he'll be a solid four category fantasy pitcher and could be a top 20 fantasy starting pitcher if he begins the year in the rotation.

Jason Vargas

Throws: L | Age: 31 | Team: Royals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (122), NFBC (78)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	201	10	131	4.25	1.31	15.3%	6.9%	.285	68.7%	11.2%	33.3%	43.7%
2012	MLB	29	217.3	14	141	3.85	1.18	15.9%	6.2%	.254	78.6%	16.4%	34.0%	45.8%
2013	MLB	30	150	9	109	4.02	1.39	16.9%	7.1%	.310	76.6%	13.7%	28.4%	46.2%
Proj.			188	11	118	4.05	1.35	16.1%						

Vargas is a fly ball pitcher without good stuff, but he generates outs by throwing his changeup a lot in all counts in an attempt to keep hitters off his 87 mph fastball. He's been able to carve out a major league career by pitching in cavernous ballparks that kill fly balls in the same vein as how Adam Sandler contributes to the betterment of the film industry. Before going on the DL (this past June) with a [blood clot](#) in his shoulder, he had not missed time due to injury since 2007 so he will take the ball every fifth day. What's most interesting about Vargas is he'll pitch in another pitcher friendly ballpark, but in front of a better defense than last year. Overall, he'll provide double digit wins with a mediocre ERA with a below average WHIP and strikeout rate. Other than deep mixed leagues Vargas should not be owned because he does not have any major upside.

Justin Verlander**Throws: R | Age: 31 | Team: Tigers | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (42), NFBC (32)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	251	24	250	2.40	0.92	25.8%	5.9%	.236	80.3%	11.3%	35.5%	45.7%
2012	MLB	29	238.3	17	239	2.64	1.06	25.0%	6.3%	.273	76.4%	10.7%	30.3%	48.0%
2013	MLB	30	218.3	13	217	3.46	1.31	23.5%	8.1%	.316	74.5%	11.2%	29.7%	43.9%
Proj.			200	15	183	3.40	1.28	23.5%						

In early January Verlander underwent [muscle repair surgery](#) Thursday after injuring himself last month during offseason conditioning. He is expected to need six weeks of rehab before being evaluated again. The Tigers are saying he will be ready for spring training and do not expect any hiccups. Buster Olney writes in his Friday blog, the mere fact this surgery changes the pitcher's regular routine [bears watching](#). A change to Verlander's offseason could have a minimal effect on his 2014 season, but it certainly doesn't help his chances to have a rebound season in 2014.

Last year Verlander was "bad" for fantasy owners who used a top 20 pick on him. His strikeout rate, ERA, walk rate and WHIP all trended dramatically in a negative direction. [Eno Sarris](#) at FanGraphs suggests a mechanical flaw, specifically his release point, heavily contributed to his poor season. And when this was corrected in September he returned to form. [Chris Lott](#) cites a different mechanical adjustment Verlander made in early August. Obviously anyone who watched Verlander pitch a lot last year knew what the major problem was; it was a lack of fastball command; in 2013 his walk rate was 12.75 percent while in 2012 it was 9.5 percent and 10 percent in 2011.

One of Verlander's biggest assets is his durability as he has pitched at least 200 innings in seven consecutive seasons for 1,373 innings and not including the 93 additional postseason innings. That said, there's a lot of mileage on that arm and this latest injury cements why he will not be on any of my fantasy teams next year. Suppose Eno Sarris and Chris Lott are correct, that the mechanical adjustments have been made and Verlander is going to improve in 2014; how much will he improve? I believe he will improve, but he has passed his peak as the 2011-12 version is not coming back. This is a more gut feeling than anything else. I will say that after Lott's article Verlander pitched like vintage Verlander the rest of the year (including the playoffs); to be specific the start date for the table below is August 6.

Innings	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
97.7	2.49	1.00	.211	.280	28.4%	5.7%	6.8%

Ryan Vogelsong

Throws: R | Age: 36 | Team: Giants | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	33	179.7	13	139	2.71	1.25	18.5%	8.1%	.280	80.4%	10.7%	27.8%	52.3%
2012	MLB	34	189.7	14	158	3.37	1.23	20.1%	7.9%	.284	76.0%	10.1%	32.8%	48.4%
2013	MLB	35	103.7	4	67	5.73	1.56	14.3%	8.1%	.320	64.6%	19.5%	23.1%	44.7%
Proj.			185	13	126	3.69	1.25	17.5%						

Before I evaluate Vogelsong's performance in 2013 I want to discuss what led up to the 2013 season. He pitched 24 more innings in the postseason, bringing his total innings to 213, by far the most he's thrown in his career. Also, he pitched in the World Baseball Classic. During the season he suffered a fluke injury where he broke his pinky finger on a bunt attempt and missed nearly three months of the season.

Much has been said about the decrease in fastball velocity, which was nearly down 2 mph last year, but I want to focus on his two-seam fastball, which had a 9.5 score in 2012, but had a -9.4 in 2013 (per [FanGraphs](#)). For a drop in effectiveness to be that dramatic there had to be something wrong besides a drop in velocity. I'll also note the fastball score in 2012 (9.5) decreased from 16.3 in 2011 so there was a fairly substantial drop before. Given his age and the workload in the playoffs and before the season he could have been suffering from fatigue before the season began.

Most of the damage imposed on him came from right handed batters; from 2011-12 they hit .231 (with a .272 BABIP) against him, but last year they hit .327 (with a .348 BABIP). He was also unlucky when first pitching to batters. On 0-0 counts he had a .449 batting average against with .396 BABIP and 63 percent ground ball rate, which indicates he was extremely unlucky. Also, with men on base he had .357 batting average against with a .373 BABIP, which is another indicator he was unlucky last year. It's possible he these numbers were inflated due to poor performance and pitch location, but with the majority of fantasy community quickly writing him off means he could be a great buy low candidate.

Some fantasy owners will simply write him off as a pitcher with limited upside because of the age, decline in velocity and overall mediocre stuff, but for two years he was a top 30 starting pitcher. If I told you could potentially acquire a top 30 starting pitcher for one dollar or in the late part of your draft you would jump at the opportunity. I'm going to target him in all my drafts because I believe he suffered from bad luck and I'm not convinced it's impossible he cannot return to his former self. And if he does not revert back to form, then it's an easy drop.

Edinson Volquez

Throws: R | Age: 30 | Team: Pirates | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	27	108.7	5	104	5.71	1.57	21.3%	13.3%	.293	69.4%	24.7%	25.6%	57.1%
2012	MLB	28	182.7	11	174	4.14	1.45	21.7%	13.1%	.292	73.1%	11.4%	25.4%	55.1%
2013	MLB	29	170.3	9	142	5.71	1.59	18.3%	9.9%	.325	64.5%	16.1%	22.1%	50.9%
Proj.			170	10	122	4.25	1.45	18.5%						

It doesn't take a scout to know why Volquez has struggled for most of his career; it's the walks and the fact he doesn't know where the ball is going the majority of time. That said, there is room for optimism as he does have electric stuff and he showed signs of increased control last year as the walk rate decreased a little more than three percentage points. The decreased walk rate is great, but it came at the expense of the strikeout rate as it decreased three percentage points.

He also performs much better in pitcher friendly parks (as most pitchers do). The table below provides a breakdown of his performance in favorable ballparks (i.e. pitcher friendly) versus non-favorable ballparks. Favorable ballparks are defined as: San Francisco, Oakland, San Diego, Houston, Miami, Tampa Bay, Los Angeles (both AL & NL) and last, but not least Pittsburgh.

Splits	ERA	WHIP	AVG	K%	BB%
Favorable	4.03	1.43	.242	21.4%	11.9%
Non-Favorable	5.27	1.56	.266	20.8%	11.9%

The guy we saw in 2008 who posted a 3.21 ERA and 24.6 percent strikeout rate is not coming back, but I believe Volquez does have fantasy value as a streaming option when he pitches at home. That said, every time you start him you're playing with fire, but last year the Pirates turned around another similar pitcher with electric stuff and control issues (Francisco Liriano). Why can't they do the same for Volquez?

Michael Wacha

Throws: R | Age: 22 | Team: | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AA	20	8	0	17	1.13	0.75	56.7%	10.0%	.300	83.3%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%
2013	AAA	21	85	5	73	2.65	0.99	21.9%	5.7%	.000	81.2%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	21	64.7	4	65	2.78	1.10	25.0%	7.3%	.275	79.7%	11.9%	25.5%	49.1%
Proj.			195	13	174	3.55	1.21	23.0%						

The table provides an aggregate totals of Wacha's entire 2013 season in the majors (regular season plus playoffs for a total of 95.3 innings).

Innings	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
95.3	2.74	1.04	.198	.250	25.9%	8.2%	7.7%

He’s primarily a two-pitch pitcher (fastball and changeup) who relied on fastball command to get outs. Even though he only throws two pitches both of them are extremely good. His fastball sits in the 93-95 mph range and can touch 98 mph. Since he’s so tall he has an extremely high release point and gives him a big stride. When you combine these two facts when he throws the fastball (or any pitch) the pitch is going to look two to three mph faster than what it really is because of the downward plane and the deep release point (where he lets go of the ball). He throws a circle changeup with a lot of deception and late fade that is the perfect companion to the fastball.

Don’t get me wrong, Wacha looked really good, but there are red flags. If it wasn’t for the .250 BABIP the 1.04 WHIP would have been much higher. In general I’m not a fan of two-pitch pitchers sustaining elite level numbers because it’s only a matter of time hitters will figure him out. When a pitcher only throws two pitches hitters will have a 50 percent chance of guessing correctly which pitch will be thrown. The biggest red flag is Wacha’s great performance down the stretch and during the playoffs was seen by everyone, which means you’ll probably have to pay full price to acquire him because the hype surrounding him will be a lot higher compared to his young contemporaries (**Danny Salazar** and **Yordano Ventura**). That means he will have to hit those lofty expectations in order to get any sort of profit.

Adam Wainwright

Throws: R | Age: 32 | Team: Cardinals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (3), NFBC (3)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2010	MLB	28	230.3	20	213	2.42	1.05	23.4%	6.2%	.275	79.1%	10.2%	24.6%	57.1%
2012	MLB	30	198.7	14	184	3.94	1.25	22.1%	6.3%	.315	67.8%	12.0%	22.7%	55.6%
2013	MLB	31	241.7	19	219	2.94	1.07	22.9%	3.7%	.305	74.5%	13.5%	17.1%	53.8%
Proj.			215	16	190	2.99	1.07	22.7%						

Despite being 32 years old Wainwright only has 1,314 major league innings under his belt; for a comparison, albeit an extreme one, **Felix Hernandez** is 27 has pitched 1,824 major innings. I can’t find any statistical evidence to suggest regression is coming; his strikeout rate was the same while his walk rate decreased nearly 50 percent; the GB/FB rates were the same. Overall, Wainwright is one of the safest pitchers around and has the ability to provide elite level production in three and possibly four categories next year because he pitches for the best team in the National League that added massive defensive upgrades at the two most premium positions on defense (shortstop and center field); also, don’t forget how good the bullpen is going to be with **Carlos Martinez** and **Trevor Rosenthal**.

Taijuan Walker

Throws: R | Age: 22 | Team: Mariners | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	20	84	4	96	2.46	1.05	28.3%	8.8%	.000	73.6%	-	-	-
2013	AAA	20	57.3	5	64	3.61	1.41	26.0%	11.0%	.000	76.3%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	20	15	1	12	3.60	1.00	20.0%	6.7%	.250	53.3%	0.0%	27.0%	45.9%
Proj.			175	12	150	3.68	1.38	22.1%						

This could be a make or break year for the Mariners GM, **Jack Zduriencik**, who is in the last year of deal and has already [come under fire](#). I mention this because it increases the likelihood Walker will begin the season on the opening day roster. His primary competition for the last two spots in the rotation will be **James Paxton**, **Erasmus Ramirez** and **Brandon Maurer**. As of early January other than a big spring from Maurer, which probably won't happen because his AFL (Arizona Fall League) numbers were really bad, I believe Walker will begin the year in the majors. This player capsule assumes he is on the opening day roster.

Based on the [scouting report](#) from Jason Parks Walker can pitch in the big leagues right now, but he is far from a finished product as his command is below average and his secondary offerings are still a work in progress. In terms of the lack of command he had a walk rate of 11 percent in triple-A last year (11 starts). His electric fastball sits in the 94-96 mph range, which will allow him to make a ton of mistakes and to be loose in the zone with his developing secondary pitches (curveball and changeup). In 2014 he'll provide above average numbers in three categories, but could be a WHIP killer with the lack of command so expectations should be tempered. Walker is a sleeper pick, but everyone in your league knows about him so you're going to have to pay near full price to acquire him, which means he'll have hit your projections in order to provide any sort of profit.

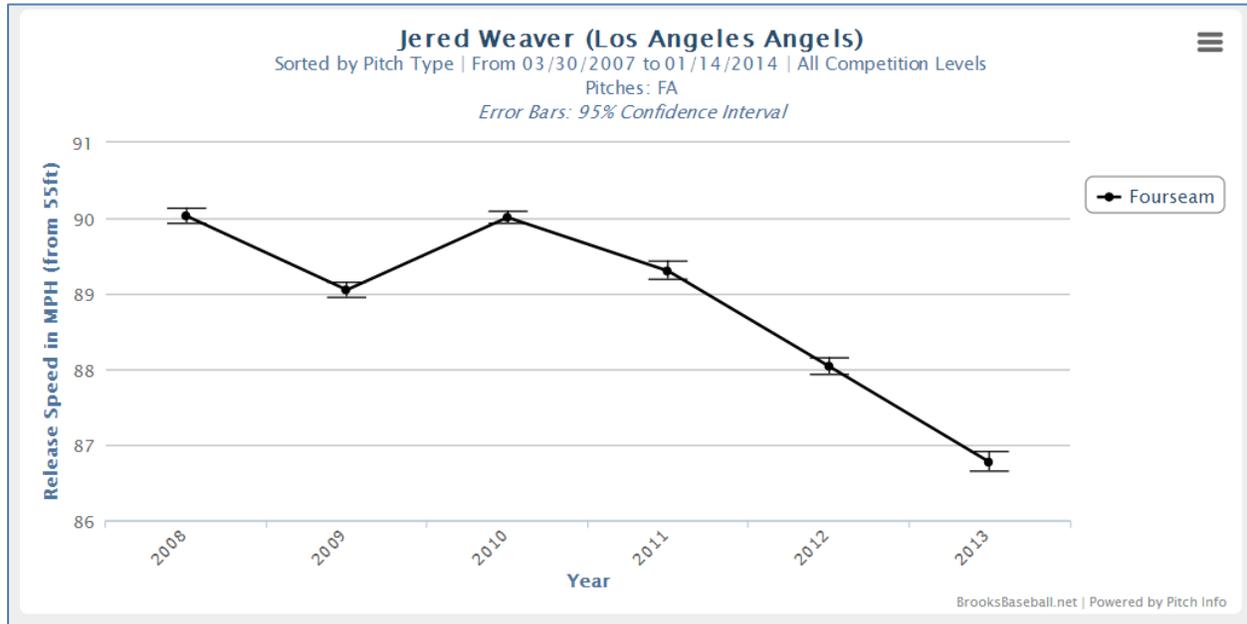
Jered Weaver

Throws: R | Age: 31 | Team: Angels | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (52), NFBC (66)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	28	235.7	18	198	2.41	1.01	21.4%	6.0%	.250	82.6%	8.4%	41.8%	39.9%
2012	MLB	29	188.7	20	142	2.81	1.02	19.2%	6.1%	.241	79.2%	10.4%	39.1%	41.4%
2013	MLB	30	154.3	11	117	3.27	1.14	18.5%	5.8%	.268	78.5%	11.5%	35.8%	36.8%
Proj.			190	14	133	3.39	1.09	18.0%						

Last year I predicted Weaver would provide a negative ROI based on where he was going in drafts (his 20 wins in 2012 greatly influenced his draft day value) because of the declining velocity along with the decreased strikeout rate. Also, the fact that he missed seven weeks with a fractured left elbow also could have contributed to his down 2013 season. If I were to put a player comp on Weaver it's **Jordan Zimmeran**, as they have below average strikeout rates but will provide good to great ERAs, WHIP and possibly wins. The only difference between the two is Zimmeran provides more upside because he's younger and his stuff is not diminishing.

By now you should be aware of the decline of his fastball velocity, but that is not necessarily a bad thing as **Felix Hernandez** has had declining velocity and last year he had the highest strikeout rate of his career (image source: BrooksBaseball.net). Last year Weaver's velocity was basically 87 mph and his numbers didn't deviate that much from his 2010-12 peak years. Overall, if you draft him as your third or fourth starter you'll be fine, but do not draft him as the ace of your staff. Lastly, if the Angels outfield stays healthy they could have one of the better defensive outfielders in the majors, which only benefits Weaver as he's an extreme fly ball pitcher.



Zack Wheeler

Throws: R | Age: 24 | Team: Mets | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (-), NFBC (-)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2012	AAA	22	33	2	31	3.27	1.18	23.1%	11.9%	.250	72.6%	8.0%	32.9%	53.9%
2013	AAA	23	68.7	4	73	3.93	1.28	25.1%	9.3%	.000	71.1%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	23	100	7	84	3.42	1.36	19.5%	10.7%	.279	77.8%	14.3%	25.9%	49.6%
Proj.			170	11	136	4.00	1.30	20.5%						

Similar to **Gerrit Cole**, Wheeler started off slowly, but gained steam as the season wore on. The table below compares his first nine starts to his last eight starts. Despite being ranked very close to Cole in Baseball Prospectus' top 101 [in late February](#) (Cole was ranked third and Wheeler was ranked fifth), Wheeler's season was not nearly as impressive. He was [tipping his pitches](#) and most importantly, struggled to throw strikes consistently. Another potential red flag was he shut down in September with [shoulder stiffness](#). The Mets stated at the time the move was a precautionary one and they expect him to be 100 percent at the start of spring training.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
First 9	3.91	1.44	.238	.259	18.3%	12.5%	12.5%
Last 8	2.92	1.28	.247	.305	20.8%	8.7%	5.3%

This is a quote from a scout about Wheeler [on August 29](#), “Wheeler has front-of-the-rotation potential, but I think it's a bit tall to expect him to step up and fill **Matt Harvey's** shoes in the event that Harvey needs Tommy John. Wheeler's got an explosive FB, but his command isn't in the same class as Harvey's. His slider is his only consistent plus secondary pitch, though both his curveball and his changeup have plus potential, but his biggest bugaboo is his inability to throw consistent strikes. Harvey is an ace not just because of his great arsenal, but his ability to pound the zone with it.” To piggy back on this quote, in Wheeler’s last eight starts he was throwing the slider and curveball for more strikes and the command looked a lot better.

Overall, even as the command got better as the season wore on, it still wasn’t at the level necessary to sustain a high level of performance in 2014. He’ll probably be inconsistent a lot which could be maddening for his owners. Combine the control issues with a potential shoulder problems makes me hesitant to roster him on draft day.

C.J. Wilson

Throws: L | Age: 33 | Team: Angels | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (37), NFBC (28)

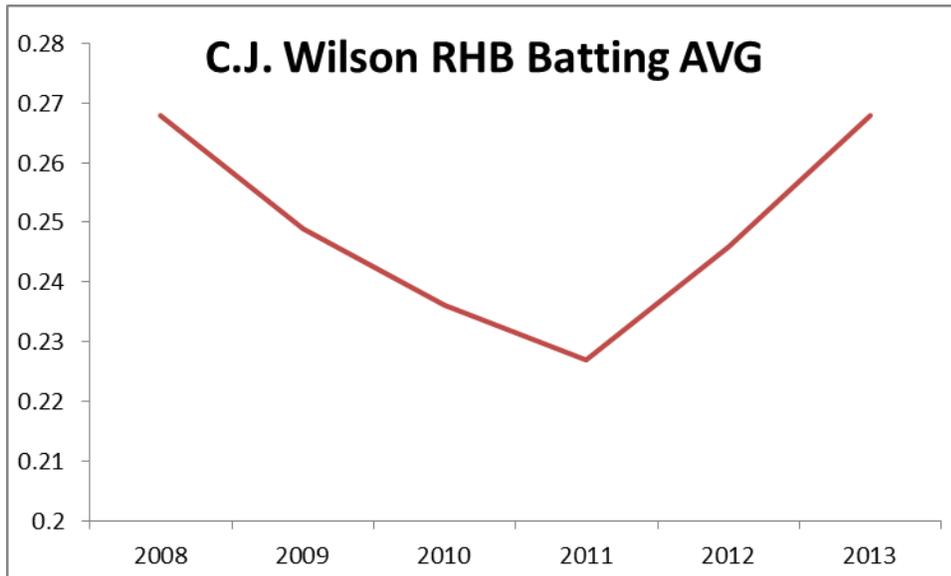
YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	30	223.3	16	206	2.94	1.19	22.5%	8.1%	.287	73.6%	9.4%	28.6%	53.5%
2012	MLB	31	202.3	13	173	3.83	1.34	20.0%	10.5%	.281	70.0%	12.5%	27.0%	53.3%
2013	MLB	32	212.3	17	188	3.39	1.34	20.6%	9.3%	.300	73.5%	9.6%	26.4%	48.5%
Proj.			205	15	163	3.75	1.34	20.5%						

Historically, Wilson has been an enigma in that you never know for sure what you’re getting from start to start. In the past you would know if he had his release by the end of the first inning. However, it appears he turned the corner last year as he had a career high in quality starts with 24. There’s not much to quibble with because he’s pitched more than 200 innings for four years in a row and in three of those four years had an ERA under 3.40 while averaging 15 wins. But there are some red flags. First of all are his home-road splits. The table below shows his home-road splits since he joined the Angels.

Split	ERA	WHIP	AVG	BABIP	K%	BB%	HR/FB%
Home	3.13	1.22	.232	.275	19.7%	8.8%	8.2%
Road	4.00	1.44	.251	.308	20.8%	10.8%	9.3%

Based on the data he it looks as though he’s a great streaming option for shallow mixed leagues. Second, right handed hitters have been hitting Wilson harder as the years have progressed. Also, do not forget he became a starter in 2010 so the time before that he was a reliever and the batting averages were subject to a smaller sample size. Most importantly is the decrease in ground ball rate. From 2010-

12 the ground ball rate averaged between 46-50 percent, but last year it was only 44 percent. This could be a statistical blip that will regress in 2014, but if it doesn't his numbers could regress. His walk rates are above average but the ground ball rate helped mitigate the walks. Overall, Wilson is an above average strikeout guy with above average ground ball rate that is entering his mid-30s and did not generate the same ground ball rate as the past three seasons; tread lightly.



Alex Wood

Throws: L | Age: 23 | Team: Braves | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (123), NFBC (113)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2013	AA	22	57	4	57	1.26	0.98	25.1%	6.6%	.000	84.5%	-	-	-
2013	AAA	22	5	1	5	1.80	1.00	25.0%	10.0%	.000	85.7%	-	-	-
2013	MLB	22	77.7	3	77	3.13	1.33	23.5%	8.3%	.333	75.2%	7.1%	19.9%	53.1%
Proj.			160	12	128	3.45	1.29	20.5%						

Wood has a scary, violent and high-effort delivery, which begs the question how long can he last as a starting pitcher? The benefit to his delivery is it allows his stuff to play up because it's so deceptive. As a reliever his fastball sits in the 93-95 mph range, but as a starter, it only sits in the 92-93 range; even as a starter he was able to maintain at 21.5 percent strikeout rate. The table below shows his performance as a starter.

GS	ERA	WHIP	K%	BB%
11	3.34	1.36	21.5%	8.3%

He is very pitch inefficient averaging only five and half innings per 94 pitches an outing. If he can only go 5-6 innings his ability to win games will be left up to the bullpen to hold games on his behalf, assuming he has a lead. Also, he only threw 139 innings so fantasy owners shouldn't expect more than 170 next

year; don't forget that **Gavin Floyd**, who is recovering from TJ, should be back in during the second half of the season. When he came up to the majors he was primarily a two-pitch (fastball and changeup), but the curveball came around as a legitimate weapon (a strikeout rate of 44 percent). In the minors he had really good command, but while in the majors his walk rate was slightly above average, but his minor league track record he should be able to improve the walks. In general, I don't like pitchers who rely on deception to miss bats (i.e. **Mike Fiers**) because eventually they get found out and no longer become effective, but Wood has legitimate stuff and doesn't solely rely on deception.

Travis Wood

Throws: R | Age: 27 | Team: Cubs | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (39), NFBC (44)

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	24	106	6	76	4.84	1.49	16.4%	8.6%	.324	70.9%	9.3%	34.9%	40.1%
2012	MLB	25	156	6	119	4.27	1.20	18.3%	8.3%	.244	71.9%	15.8%	37.2%	41.2%
2013	MLB	26	200	9	144	3.11	1.15	17.5%	8.0%	.248	77.4%	10.6%	31.9%	40.0%
Proj.			200	10	140	3.78	1.18	18.0%						

Ok, I know what you're thinking; that [Wood got lucky last year](#), which I agree looks to be correct when you only look at his 2013s numbers. However, in three of his last four seasons (in the majors) he has BABIPs less than .260 and HR/FB rates less than seven percent. That said, last year's LOB% rate of 77.4 percent should regress as he has a 70 percent LOB% career rate. Despite being a fly ball pitcher he's shown that he's able to induce a lot of weak contact despite not having plus stuff, which consists of primarily two pitches: a fastball and cutter.

Wood began his career with the Reds, playing two seasons for them before being acquired by the Cubs. After doing a little digging I noticed his career stats are being held down due to playing Great American Ballpark (Cincinnati's ballpark). The table below compares his performance at Great American Ballpark (GAB) versus everywhere else; small sample size caveat as he has only thrown 97 innings at GAB.

Park	AVG	OBP	SLG	ERA	WHIP	K%	BB%
CIN	.290	.347	.470	5.20	1.44	19.90%	7.57%
Rest	.227	.318	.359	3.81	1.17	17.66%	9.17%

If you combine the advanced statistics with his performance away from GAB he becomes a sneaky draft day value because he will likely be overlooked because of his "lucky" 2013 season. His ERA will likely regress, but not as much as you think; probably to the 3.60-3.80 range. Also, he'll most likely have a sub-1.20 WHIP with a reasonable strikeout rate on a team that has a revamped bullpen and a team that should be better in general, which equates to a higher likelihood earning wins.

Jordan Zimmermann**Throws: R | Age: 28 | Team: Nationals | Position: SP | RK: () | Player Rater: ESPN (10), NFBC (11)**

YEAR	LVL	AGE	IP	W	SO	ERA	WHIP	SO%	BB%	BABIP	LOB%	HR/FB	FB%	GB%
2011	MLB	25	161.3	8	124	3.18	1.15	18.7%	4.7%	.292	74.2%	7.8%	33.6%	44.2%
2012	MLB	26	195.7	12	153	2.94	1.17	19.0%	5.3%	.288	79.3%	12.1%	26.8%	47.7%
2013	MLB	27	213.3	19	161	3.25	1.09	18.6%	4.6%	.271	74.4%	13.9%	22.5%	53.3%
Proj.			200	15	145	3.20	1.14	18.6%						

Last year Zimmerman set career highs in innings, wins and walk rate while maintaining his previous strikeout rates. In the last three seasons he's averaged a 3.12 ERA, 1.13 WHIP with a 18.8 percent strikeout rate and 4.9 percent walk rate; basically, he's been one of the best starting pitchers in baseball. However, I'm not buying the value ESPN's and NFBC's Player Raters suggest because those numbers were heavily influenced by the 19 wins. Wins are highly variable and unpredictable from year to year. If he only wins 15 games he's a fringe top 20 starting pitcher. The biggest hurdle with rostering Zimmerman is the low strikeout rate. With a strikeout threshold of [21.8 percent for all starting pitchers](#), rostering Zimmerman and his 19 percent strikeout rates puts your team in strikeouts hole if you don't already own one of the elite strikeout pitchers such as **Yu Darvish** or **Max Scherzer**.

Extremely Helpful Resources & Acknowledgements

I watch a good amount of baseball, but not nearly enough to watch every player. And frankly, other folks are smarter than me. I couldn't have written the fantasy guide without help from other extremely helpful resources. Below are the websites, books, and other source material that helped me create my fantasy guide.

Websites

BrooksBaseball.net
 BaseballProspectus.com
 FanGraphs.com
 Baseball-Reference.com
 BaseballAnalytics.org
 BaseballAmerica.com
 BaseballProf.com
 RotoWire.com
 ESPN.com
 MLB.tv
 Mastersball.com
 BaseballHQ.com
 NFBC.Stats.com
 MLBDepthCharts.com
 RotoPass.com
 MockDraftCentral.com
 BillJamesOnline.com
 ThroughTheFenceBaseball.com
 StatCorner.com
 HitTrackerOnline.com

Books/Written Material

Joe Sheehan's Newsletter
 Baseball America Prospect Handbook
 Larry Schechter's Winning Fantasy Baseball
 Baseball Prospectus Extra Inning

Podcasts

Up & In
 The Baseball Show with Rany and Joe
 Effectively Wild
 Baseball Today
 Fantasy Focus
 Behind the Dish
 Productive Outs
 Towers of Power
 Dear Mr. Fantasy Podcast
 Baseball America Podcasts
 Pine Tar Podcast