**Chris Archer SP**

Jacob Ellsbury is 16 for 24 against Archer. Current Miami Marlins players are 8 for 50.

**Nolan Arenado 3B**

Gets the typical Coors Field boost to his stats, but slugged 539 on the road. Coors OPS was 960; away was 835.

Needs to learn to draw a walk. He was third in the majors in slugging average, 44th in batting average, 85th in OBA.

**Jake Arrieta SP**

"This is the highest level of professional sports," Arrieta said. "Why wouldn't you put all your time and energy into being as strong and healthy and mobile and flexible and explosive as you can? It's part of my lifestyle, so it's kind of an easy thing for me to do." <http://espn.go.com/mlb/story/_/id/13785255/jake-arrieta-chicago-cubs-all-perseverance-determination>

Arrieta was 16-1 in his last 17 starts of the MLB regular season. In his last seven starts, he averaged 33.1 points per game. He had an away ERA of 1.60.

**José Bautista OF**

Bautista’s stats over the years beg for an investigation into PED use, but he’s never tested positive and seems unworried about the scrutiny he’s received.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Age** | **OPS+** |
| 2006 | 25 | 94 |
| 2007 | 26 | 96 |
| 2008 | 27 | 91 |
| 2009 | 28 | 99 |
| 2010 | 29 | 164 |
| 2011 | 30 | 182 |
| 2012 | 31 | 138 |
| 2013 | 32 | 132 |
| 2014 | 33 | 161 |
| 2015 | 34 | 149 |

Almost no one makes the kind of improvement that Bautista made at age 29 in any sport without the benefit of chemistry. You can posit other causes, some freak physical lag in development, laser eye surgery, better sleep habits, but I know of no good explanation.

The best match I can think of in baseball where there was no foul play involved is Sandy Koufax, and that transition occurred at an earlier age:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Age** | **ERA+** |
| 1958 | 22 | 93 |
| 1959 | 23 | 105 |
| 1960 | 24 | 101 |
| 1961 | 25 | 122 |
| 1962 | 26 | 143 |
| 1963 | 27 | 159 |
| 1964 | 28 | 186 |
| 1965 | 29 | 160 |
| 1966 | 30 | 190 |

In football, Kurt Warner became a star at age 28, but we don’t know what he would have done if he’d had a chance to start in the NFL in the mid 90s:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Age** | **League** | **Team** | **QB Rating** |
| 1995 | 24 | Arena Football League | Iowa | 94.7 |
| 1996 | 25 | Arena Football League | Iowa | 107.5 |
| 1997 | 26 | Arena Football League | Iowa | 118.6 |
| 1998 | 27 | NFL | Rams (3rd string) | 47.2 |
| 1999 | 28 | NFL | Rams | 109.2 |
| 2000 | 29 | NFL | Rams | 98.3 |
| 2001 | 30 | NFL | Rams | 101.4 |



**Ryan Braun OF**

Despite the 2013 PED suspension—and the admitted lies that preceded it, he’s smarter than the average bear, getting only one B in high school.

Projecting the statistics from his 2013 suspension-reduced season to equal the number of games he’s averaged in his other seasons, his record looks like this:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Age** | **H** | **HR** | **SB** | **AVG** | **OBP** | **SLG** | **OPS** | **WAR** | **Pts/G** |
| 2007 | 23 | 146 | 34 | 15 | 0.324 | 0.370 | 0.634 | 1.004 | 1.8 | 4.8 |
| 2008 | 24 | 174 | 37 | 14 | 0.285 | 0.335 | 0.553 | 0.888 | 4.3 | 4.2 |
| 2009 | 25 | 203 | 32 | 20 | 0.32 | 0.386 | 0.551 | 0.937 | 5.9 | 4.7 |
| 2010 | 26 | 188 | 25 | 14 | 0.304 | 0.365 | 0.501 | 0.866 | 5.5 | 4.2 |
| 2011 | 27 | 187 | 33 | 33 | 0.332 | 0.397 | 0.597 | 0.994 | 7.7 | 4.9 |
| 2012 | 28 | 191 | 41 | 30 | 0.319 | 0.391 | 0.595 | 0.986 | 6.8 | 4.8 |
| 2013 | 29 | 159 | 21 | 9 | 0.298 | 0.372 | 0.498 | 0.87 | 4.7 | 3.5 |
| 2014 | 30 | 141 | 19 | 11 | 0.266 | 0.324 | 0.453 | 0.777 | 1.0 | 3.4 |
| 2015 | 31 | 144 | 25 | 24 | 0.285 | 0.356 | 0.498 | 0.854 | 3.8 | 3.7 |

How risky is an investment in a 31-year old player? Here’s some indication, using a point system from my ESPN fantasy league:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Player** | **Points 2014** | **Points 2015** |
| [Hunter Pence](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/p/pencehu01.shtml) | 571 | 190 |
| [Casey McGehee](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/m/mcgehca01.shtml) | 469 | 101 |
| [Miguel Cabrera](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/c/cabremi01.shtml) | 656 | 508 |
| [Robinson Cano](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/c/canoro01.shtml) | 623 | 532 |
| [Will Venable](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/v/venabwi01.shtml) | 234 | 235 |
| [Jose Reyes](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/r/reyesjo01.shtml) | 554 | 400 |
| [J.J. Hardy](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/hardyjj01.shtml) | 366 | 221 |
| [Yunel Escobar](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/e/escobyu01.shtml) | 332 | 480 |
| [Seth Smith](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/s/smithse01.shtml) | 396 | 310 |
| [David Freese](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/freesda01.shtml) | 313 | 320 |
| [David Wright](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/w/wrighda03.shtml) | 380 | 134 |
| **Average** | **445** | **312** |
| Players aged 31 in 2014 with 130 or more games played |
|
|

I would expect Braun to remain in the 470 to 500 point range next year, with a 3% chance of exceeding 600, but players his age seem prone to injuries.

**Kris Bryant 3B**

Had a bigger home/road split than the Rockies’ Arenado, with an amazing 1037 Wrigley OPS paired with an away OPS of 693.

Kyle Seager had a large split, but hit much better **away** from Seattle.

Here’s a ranking of select third basemen by their away OPS:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPS** | **Home** | **Away** |
| Donaldson | 1071 | 942 |
| K Seager | 678 | 876 |
| Carpenter | 866 | 876 |
| Arenado | 960 | 835 |
| C Davis | 1026 | 830 |
| Franco | 865 | 816 |
| Machado | 915 | 809 |
| Moustakas | 828 | 809 |
| A Rodriguez | 893 | 789 |
| Frazier | 883 | 733 |
| Bogaerts | 846 | 702 |
| Bryant | 1037 | 693 |

The younger players (and there are several) on this list may make adjustments to reduce the spread, even if their home park punishes their stats. Bryant needs to get his away OPS above 800 to become one of the top players at the position.

**Madison Bumgarner SP**

“Madison Bumgarner is many things: playoff ace, All-Star starting pitcher, beer guzzler, pants salesman. As you may have heard, he's also a damn fine hitter ... especially for a pitcher. He led baseball with five home runs this season, and his .468 slugging percentage is higher than Prince Fielder's (.463).“ -- Bryan Grosnick[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Jacob deGrom SP Mounties**

Has pitched much better at home and, less understandably, during day games.

deGrom converted from shortstop to pitching as a college junior in 2009 and learned to throw a curveball after the end of his 2013 minor league season.

**Paul Goldschmidt 1B**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **G** | **PA** | **AB** | **R** | **H** | **2B** | **3B** | **HR** | **RBI** | **SB** | **CS** | **BB** | **SO** |
| 621 | 2648 | 2245 | 391 | 672 | 165 | 8 | 116 | 412 | 67 | 18 | 361 | 589 |
| 625 | 2548 | 2115 | 358 | 532 | 104 | 14 | 131 | 373 | 74 | 35 | 374 | 618 |

One of the above lines shows Goldschmidt’s MLB counting stats through 2015. The other shows Mike Schmidt’s through 1976. Schmidt started a year earlier, playing a few games at age 22. Can you tell the difference?

Gold-Schmidt’s stats are on the first line. The real distinguishing feature is in the averages, where he has a BA/OBA/SA of 299/395/535 and Mike Schmidt had a 252/320/500. Mike, of course, was excellent on defense, while Goldy is no Gold Glove.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Through age 27, Mike Schmidt had 36.2 WAR and Goldschmidt has “only” 24.1.

**Carlos Gomez OF**

Before the 2015 season, Fantasypros.com rated Gomez as the number 10 player. USA Today ranked him seventh. The Sporting News listed him as their number five outfielder.

Reviewingthebrew.com predicted: .279 BA .341 OBP .505 SLG

I gave Mr. Gomez some grief during the season, beginning with the first matchup:

**Me (Mar 31 6:20 PM):** Carlos Gomez -- Am I the only one who think he's greatly overrated? He's 29. Here's the three most similar batters through his current age (according to BaseballReference.com) and their age 29 performances:

Tommy Agee: BA 227, HR 13, OPS 692; Corey Patterson 103, 0, 207 (he only had 30 plate appearances); Ken Anderson 251, 9, 702.

He put together five good half seasons, starting after the 2012 All-Star Break, but showed signs of fading the second half of last season. I'm not saying he's a bad player or even that he's not a keeper, but some commentators have him as a top ten pick and I just can't see it.

**Response (Mar 31 8:03 PM):** The deal with Gomez is from 2007-2012 he was very ordinary, stole a few bases, never hit for power and was essentially a replacement level player. In the last two years he has hit the 20-30 mark both seasons in homers and stolen bases. He is almost a lock at the rate of production to score 95+ runs a year, falls a bit in RBI's because Roenicke bats him leadoff. I am basically betting the last two years are his norm and not the first 6 of Tommie Agee like production

Gomez missed some time in 2015, but the stats when he did play aren’t impressive. He would have ranked 97th among MLB position players in OPS if he’d qualified. His 2015 performance should not be a huge surprise. His last two seasons notwithstanding, his stats from this year are right in line with his career marks (through 2015):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **AB** | **R** | **H** | **HR** | **RBI** | **SB** | **CS** | **BB** | **SO** |
| **Career** | 522 | 79 | 135 | 15 | 60 | 33 | 9 | 33 | 129 |
| **2015** | 435 | 61 | 111 | 12 | 56 | 17 | 9 | 31 | 101 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Career counting stats are based on Gomez's career average for a 162-game season. |
|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **BA** | **OBP** | **SLG** | **OPS** | **OPS+** |
| **Career** | 0.260 | 0.314 | 0.418 | 0.732 | 97 |
| **2015** | 0.255 | 0.314 | 0.409 | 0.724 | 97 |

And, according to BaseballReference.com, he’s even more similar to Tommy Agee than he was before.

In his defense, he’s played hurt and was in only 115 regular season games. Most crucially, of course, the statistics don’t reflect that he’s one of MLB’s two best bat flippers.

He was a rare double-reverse platoon player in 2015, hitting RHPs better than when he had the platoon advantage and hitting better away than at home. Both of these quirks are likely one-year aberrations.

**Sonny Gray SP**

Gerrit Cole’s twin, in 2015:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Age** | **ERA** | **GS** | **IP** | **R** | **ER** | **BF** | **ERA+** |
| [Sonny Gray](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/g/grayso01.shtml) | 25 | 2.73 | 31 | 208 | 71 | 63 | 831 | 148 |
| [Gerrit Cole](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/c/colege01.shtml) | 24 | 2.60 | 32 | 208 | 71 | 60 | 832 | 148 |

**Zack Greinke SP**

Among MLB pitchers who hurled at least 100 innings, Greinke had the lowest ratio of ERA to FIP. As you likely know, FIP, or Fielding Independent Pitching, seeks to isolate a pitcher’s contribute to run prevention from that of the defense. One view of FIP is that it is less random than ERA, and that a pitcher with an ERA that differs radically from his FIP will likely find his ERA come into line over the long run.

Something worth looking into is whether some pitchers consistently outperform or underperform their FIP or whether it’s a team phenomenon. In my intensive five minutes of research, I found that Greinke has, over his career, slightly **underperformed** compared to his FIP and that the Dodgers, in 2015, also were slightly worse in ERA than the FIP would predict. There’s two hypotheses that don’t appear worth further investigation, but I wonder if pitchers perform better against the FIP standard as they age? O.K., I checked that, and found a weak correlation using 2015 data.

**Bryce Harper OF**

I’m jumping on the Bryce Harper bandwagon. Not just because of his MLB-leading OPS and OPS+ numbers, as amazing as they are for a 22-year-old not playing in Colorado, but because of his ability to draw walks. Generally, that’s a skill that improves with age, but look at the following results from this MLB season:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Players with OPS+ over 110 and 400 Plate Appearances Aged** | **BB/PA** | **Non-IBB/PA** |
| 20 to 24 | 0.100 | 0.093 |
| 25 to 28 | 0.090 | 0.082 |
| 29 to 32 | 0.097 | 0.088 |
| 33 to 39 | 0.101 | 0.093 |

The pattern for players 25 and older is what you would expect, but the younger players are walking at a rate more typical of players just past their prime.

Out of the 90 players meeting the 400 PA and 110 OPS+ cutoff, the youngsters do very well:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Player** | **Age** | **BB/PA** | **Non-IBB/PA** | **Non-IBB/PA Rank** |
| [Bryce Harper\*](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/harpebr03.shtml) | 22 | 0.190 | 0.167 | 2 |
| [Joc Pederson\*](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/p/pederjo01.shtml) | 23 | 0.157 | 0.147 | 5 |
| [Kris Bryant](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/b/bryankr01.shtml) | 23 | 0.118 | 0.118 | 11 |
| [Mike Trout](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/t/troutmi01.shtml) | 23 | 0.135 | 0.114 | 16 |
| [Manny Machado](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/m/machama01.shtml) | 22 | 0.098 | 0.095 | 35 |
| [Carlos Correa](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/c/correca01.shtml) | 20 | 0.093 | 0.088 | 40 |
| [Joe Panik\*](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/p/panikjo01.shtml) | 24 | 0.088 | 0.088 | 41 |
| Average 110 OPS+ hitter | 28.8 | 0.096 | 0.087 |   |
| [Christian Yelich\*](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/y/yelicch01.shtml) | 23 | 0.090 | 0.086 | 46 |
| [Mookie Betts](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/b/bettsmo01.shtml) | 22 | 0.070 | 0.069 | 66 |
| [Francisco Lindor#](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/l/lindofr01.shtml) | 21 | 0.062 | 0.062 | 71 |
| [Matt Duffy](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/d/duffyma01.shtml) | 24 | 0.049 | 0.049 | 81 |
| [Nolan Arenado](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/a/arenano01.shtml) | 24 | 0.051 | 0.032 | 90 |

Arenado and Duffy are the only real underachievers in this category, given their ages.

**Felix Hernandez**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Seasons** | **ERA** | **IP** | **ERA+** | **FIP** | **WHIP** | **H9** | **HR9** | **BB9** | **SO9** | **SO/W** |
| 2009-14 | 2.73 | 232 | 146 | 2.89 | 1.099 | 7.6 | 0.6 | 2.3 | 8.8 | 3.81 |
| 2015 | 3.53 | 202 | 107 | 3.72 | 1.180 | 8.0 | 1.0 | 2.6 | 8.5 | 3.29 |

From age 23 (2009) until last year, King Felix had five very good years and one year, 2011 with an ERA of 3.47, similar to 2015. In 2011, his hits per inning were up but his FIP of 3.11 implied that his ERA bump was mostly a fluke. This past season, the problem seems more general and more real.

From looking at velocity data, it seems to me that Hernandez may not only be losing a little velocity but, more importantly, failing to vary velocity between pitches as much as he has in past seasons.

**Dallas Keuchel SP**

The product of Tulsa Bishop Kelley and the University of Arkansas broke a pattern when he only won 20 games in 2015. As a rookie in 2012, he won 3 games, doubled that in 2013, and doubled that again to twelve in 2014.

In 2015, including the MLB post-season, he was 16-0 at home with a 1.45 ERA. His regular season record was 15-0 at home with an ERA of 1.46 and 5-8 in away games with an ERA of 3.77. His 2014 splits show a more normal ERA pattern: Home/Away 2.79/3.04. He was 4-5 at home and 8-4 on the road.

He’s 27 and has only 41 wins (yes, he was with the Astros during a couple of their awful years, but his ERA was above 5.00 for both of them) and can only point to two good seasons. Still, I’d like to think that he can maintain or even improve on the level of performance he’s demonstrated in 2015 for several more years.

**Gerardo Parra OF**

ESPN projected that he would have a 691 OPS and a batting average of 263. At the time of a late July trade to Baltimore, however, he was hitting 328 with an OPS of 886. After the trade, he fell apart:

Milwaukee: WAR 2.1, BA 328, OBP 369, SA 517, one extra-base hit every 8.5 at bats

Baltimore: WAR -1.1, BA 237, OBP 268, SA 357, one extra-base hit every 13.2 at bats

**David Price SP**

Had an away ERA of 2.05. That’s much better than Kershaw’s (2.60), to give you some perspective.

**Albert Pujols 1B**

Pujols, even past his prime, still holds potential value, but his best days are behind him.



The Cardinals elected not to spend the money required to retain Pujols’ services after 2011.

Here’s a terribly unscientific analysis of the effect of his movement from St. Louis to Los Angeles/ Anaheim/California:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |   | **OPS** | **Wins** |   | **OPS** | **Wins** |
| 2010 | Cards | 100 | 86 | Angels | 94 | 80 |
| 2011 | Cards | 112 | 90 | Angels | 102 | 86 |
| 2012 | Cards | 107 | 88 | Angels | 114 | 89 |
| 2013 | Cards | 102 | 97 | Angels | 110 | 78 |

The Cardinals lost ground on offense, but won more games the two years after Pujols left. The Angels improved slightly in wins and dramatically on offense. Overall, here’s how the two teams fared from 2010 through 2013:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|   | **OPS** | **Wins** |
| With Pujols | 109 | 85.8 |
| Without Pujols | 101 | 87.8 |

I could claim this showed that the Cardinals were wise to save the money they could have spent on signing Albert and devote it to other purposes. But, since I’m not running for President, I’ll just stick to the facts and say that this lends a slender reed of support to that proposition.

**Trevor Rosenthal RP**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  **Leaders in Saves 2014-15** | **Saves** | **Blown** | **Holds** |
| Trevor Rosenthal, StL RP | 93 | 9 | 2 |
| Craig Kimbrel, SD RP | 86 | 8 | 0 |
| Mark Melancon, Pit RP | 84 | 6 | 15 |
| Francisco Rodriguez, Mil RP | 82 | 7 | 0 |
| Huston Street, LAA RP | 81 | 8 | 0 |
| Kenley Jansen, LAD RP | 80 | 7 | 1 |

**Max Scherzer SP**

Had a one-hitter to go along with the two no-nos. Five of his losses came when he had a game score of 60 or higher, which is a good outing, and only one of his wins when he had a score below 50. That helps explain his 14-12 record despite a 2.79 ERA. To put it another way, he had a losing record when he allowed more than one hit.

Whether you look at ERA, innings pitched, strikeouts, or WAR, 2015 was Scherzer’s best year and at age 31 he still has good velocity.



**Julio Teheran SP**

**The All Capital Team**

SP Julio Teheran (Iran)

SP Earl Hamilton (Bermuda)

SP Hector Santiago (Chile)

SP José Lima (Peru)

SP Joey Hamilton

RP Bob Stanley (Falklands)

C Benito Santiago (Chile)

1B/C Mike Stanley

2B Miguel Cairo

3B/SS Ramón Santiago

SS U.L. Washington

OF Billy Hamilton (19th century Phillies Hall of Famer)

OF Josh Hamilton

1. <http://www.beyondtheboxscore.com/2015/10/16/9543959/madison-bumgarner-shadow-mvp-candidate-composite-pitching-war> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Well, yes, actually he was. Goldschmidt received and quite possibly earned the 2013 NL Gold Glove for his defense at first base. Overall, he’s an adequate first baseman with the mitt, while Schmidt, at third, was one of the best defensive players of the 1970s. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)