



The Hardball Times Graphical Report

August 3, 2010

Welcome to the Hardball Times Graphical Report. In these pages, you'll find division standings and graphs highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each team. First, though, here is one of this week's highlights

from THT Live. Be sure to check for new content daily at www.hardballtimes.com. (All stats courtesy of Fangraphs.com).

Into the fire: Domonic Brown gets promoted

by Brad Johnson (July 28)

It's not news to anyone following the NL East that the Phillies have been plagued with injuries this season. The latest, a strained oblique suffered by CF Shane Victorino, could significantly complicate Phillies' GM Ruben Amaro Jr's trade deadline plans. Amaro had previously been shopping star OF Jayson Werth with the hopes of acquiring a quality starting pitcher and permanently ousting Kyle Kendrick from the rotation. This strategy was made possible because the Phillies possessed an ace in the hole.

Domonic Brown (.327/.391/.589, 20 HR, 17 SB, 7 CS, 37 BB, 74K, 389 PA)—Brown has been called the best prospect remaining in the minors by multiple prospect watchers. Drafted in 2006 and signed out of a commitment to the University of Miami to play wide receiver, Brown entered the system as the typical Phillies prospect, full of tools but lacking polish. After a rough initial trial in rookie ball, he settled in and has improved consistently each season. Prior to 2010, Baseball America ranked Brown the 15th best major league prospect and Baseball Prospectus' Kevin Goldstein ranked him 24th. Scouts raved about Dom's athletic ability and bat control, but were beginning to wonder if his power would ever develop. Goldstein said as much in his pre-season review of the Phillies system:

While Brown's power has improved each year, he hit just three homers in 147 Double-A at-bats. Many scouts feel that the 30+ home-run projection some put on him is far too strong, based on a swing that is on more of a single plane than one that provides loft and backspin.

Brown has responded by popping 20 homeruns in 389 plate appearances split between the Eastern (AA) and International (AAA) Leagues, showcasing that 30+ homerun potential that some scouts thought would never materialize.

I was at this point in the article when the Phillies made things official by placing Shane Victorino on the DL and calling up Domonic Brown. According to an anonymous Phillies batboy, Brown will be batting 6th tonight between Werth and Carlos Ruiz. If he jumps out to a fast start, we might see him batting 2nd, 3rd, or 5th in the near future.

As always, it's tough to get a handle on what we should expect from Brown right now. As a left handed hitter in a very left handed lineup, he's certain to see his share of left-handed specialists. Thankfully for the Phillies, Brown hasn't shown much in way of a platoon split during his farm travels. He has both the arm and superior range necessary to make him a strong defender in RF or a palatable substitute in CF. Scouts do indicate that he is prone to circuitous routes at times.

Because his potential for power was only just realized in 2010, the few projection systems that have rated him are pessimistic about his power. Oliver expects a league average .334 wOBA. His Major League Equivalent line of .277/.333/.478 (.348 wOBA) more closely reflects my expectations. Assuming he gets sufficient time over the balance of 2010, I suspect we'll see good contact skills and decent power output mixed with occasionally questionable plate discipline.

Despite Victorino's injury, Phillies fans have a lot to be excited about tonight. Roy Halladay takes the hill opposed by Edwin Jackson in the hopes of extending a six game winning streak. That match-up has now been eclipsed because the system's most highly touted prospect since Chase Utley is getting the starting nod in RF. More intrigue may lay ahead for the Phillies as the deadline approaches.

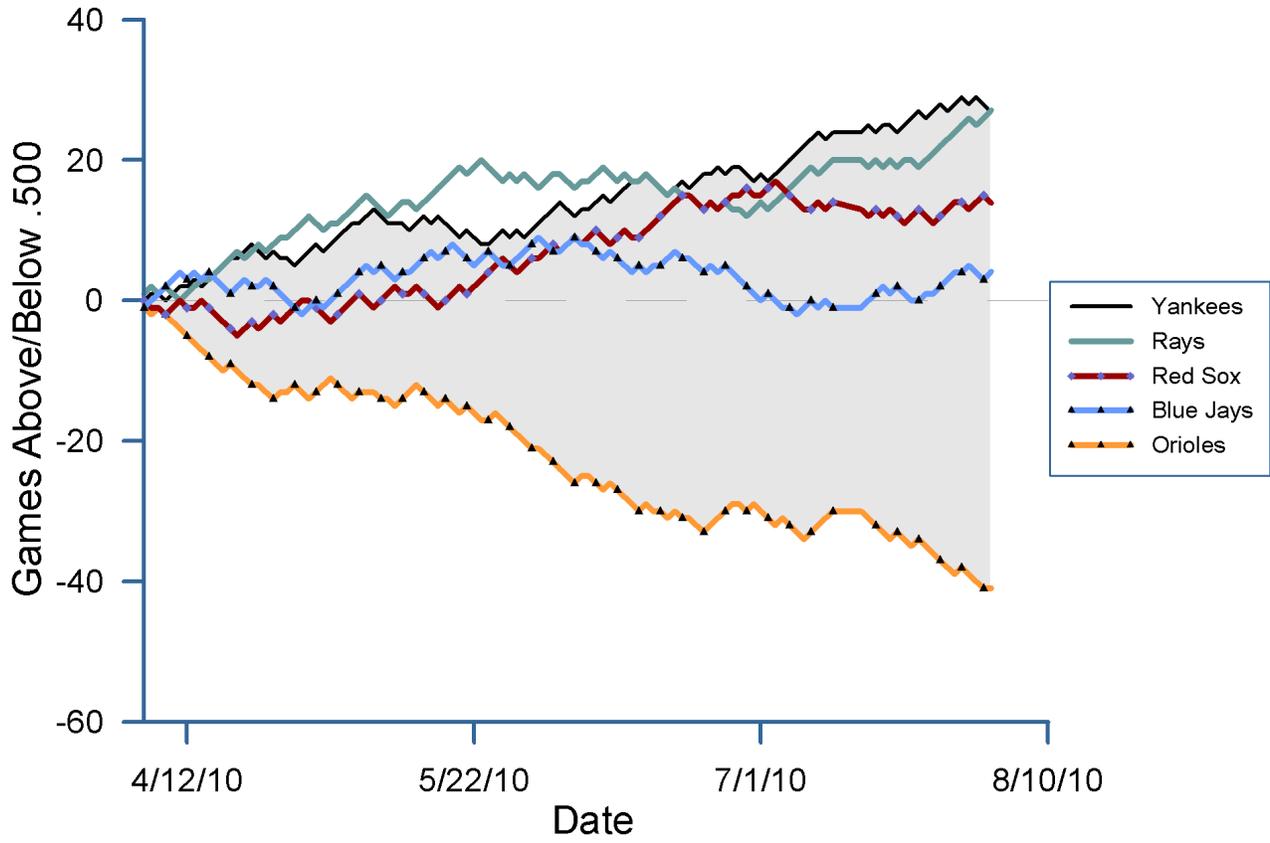
Footnote: About a year ago, Dom let it be known that media and analysts were misspelling his name. They were using the more popular Dominic rather than the correct Domonic.

Division Standings

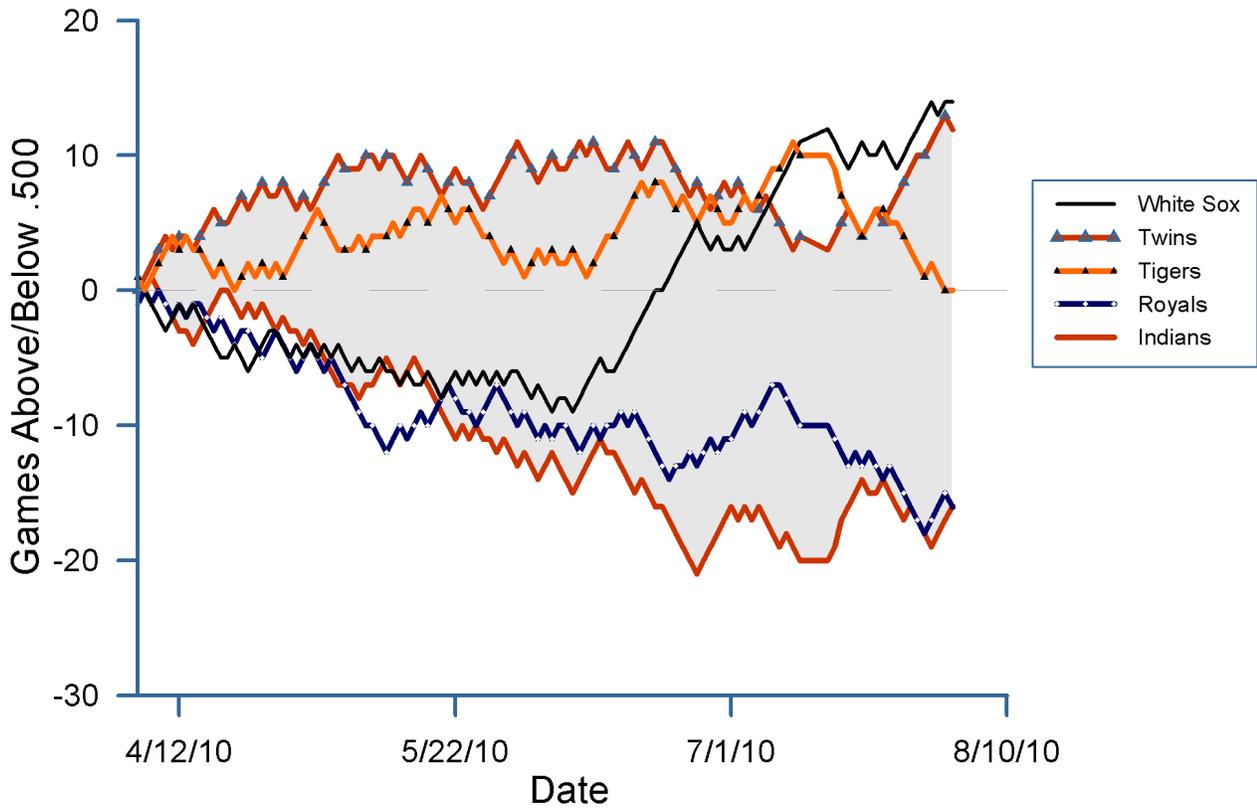
8/3/2010									Win Probability Added		
American League East			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
TBR	66	39	.629	530	399	66	-0	30-22	0.72	5.44	7.34
NYN	66	39	.629	569	433	66	0	25-17	4.78	5.47	3.25
BOS	60	46	.566	551	484	60	0	30-28	0.32	3.85	2.82
TOR	55	51	.519	498	460	57	-2	20-28	-0.17	2.78	-0.61
BAL	32	73	.305	379	573	33	-1	20-30	-11.89	-6.55	-2.06
American League Central			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
CHW	59	45	.567	479	426	58	1	26-25	-1.13	4.81	3.32
MIN	59	47	.557	520	429	62	-3	23-22	-0.20	3.14	3.06
DET	52	52	.500	456	476	50	2	23-25	-0.58	-1.65	2.23
CLE	45	61	.425	427	513	44	1	23-24	-6.58	-2.34	0.91
KCR	45	61	.425	454	569	42	3	25-27	-6.02	-3.66	1.69
American League West			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
TEX	61	44	.581	524	434	62	-1	32-23	1.23	2.26	5.01
OAK	53	52	.505	440	421	55	-2	24-22	-5.96	4.40	2.05
LAA	54	53	.505	481	500	52	2	27-22	-6.11	3.87	2.75
SEA	39	67	.368	344	465	39	-0	22-31	-11.46	1.78	-4.32
									Win Probability Added		
National League East			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
ATL	60	45	.571	480	404	61	-1	25-25	4.85	-0.07	2.72
PHI	57	48	.543	493	446	57	-0	26-18	0.69	3.05	0.76
FLA	53	52	.505	477	459	54	-1	31-28	-1.59	3.51	-1.42
NYM	53	53	.500	451	429	55	-2	21-36	-5.87	4.83	1.04
WSN	47	59	.443	436	480	48	-1	29-31	-5.79	-0.60	0.39
National League Central			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
CIN	60	47	.561	521	446	61	-1	32-26	4.88	1.16	0.47
STL	59	47	.557	477	393	62	-3	26-24	-0.57	4.66	1.91
MIL	49	58	.458	506	572	47	2	25-18	1.10	-3.20	-2.40
HOU	46	59	.438	389	501	41	5	18-19	-3.73	-2.43	-0.34
CHC	46	60	.434	445	519	45	1	20-34	-8.19	1.44	-0.25
PIT	36	69	.343	359	565	32	4	25-27	-9.66	-8.42	1.58
National League West			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
SDP	62	42	.596	458	362	63	-1	32-22	-0.13	2.60	7.53
SFG	61	45	.575	469	385	62	-1	25-25	0.20	6.16	1.64
COL	55	50	.524	509	465	57	-2	26-27	-2.77	1.86	3.40
LAD	54	52	.509	464	464	53	1	28-24	-0.73	0.48	1.26
ARI	39	67	.368	480	594	42	-3	20-29	-5.16	-1.69	-7.15

Notes: "PWins" stands for Pythagorean Wins (based on each team's runs scored and allowed). "Diff" is the difference between actual and Pythagorean wins. "Close" is each team's records in games decided by two runs or less.

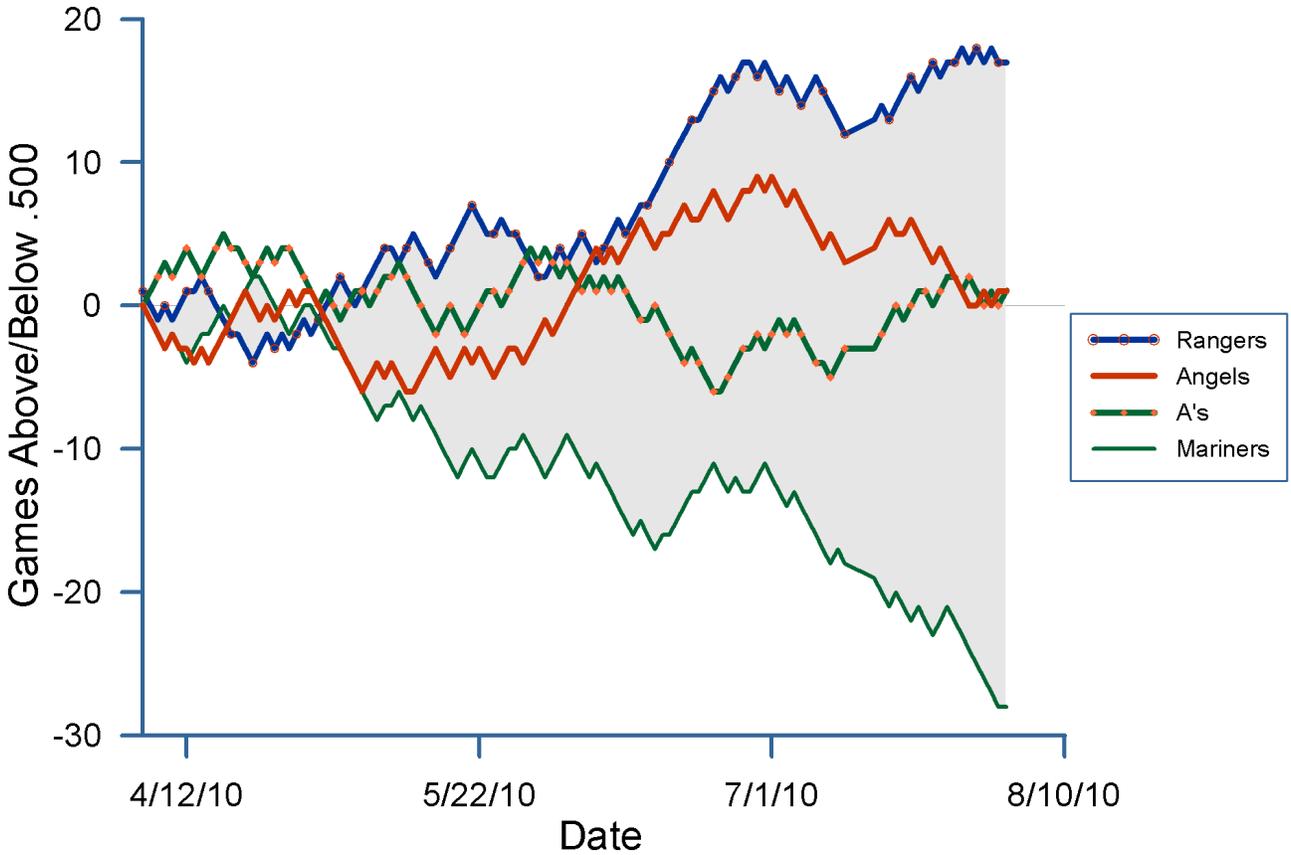
American League East



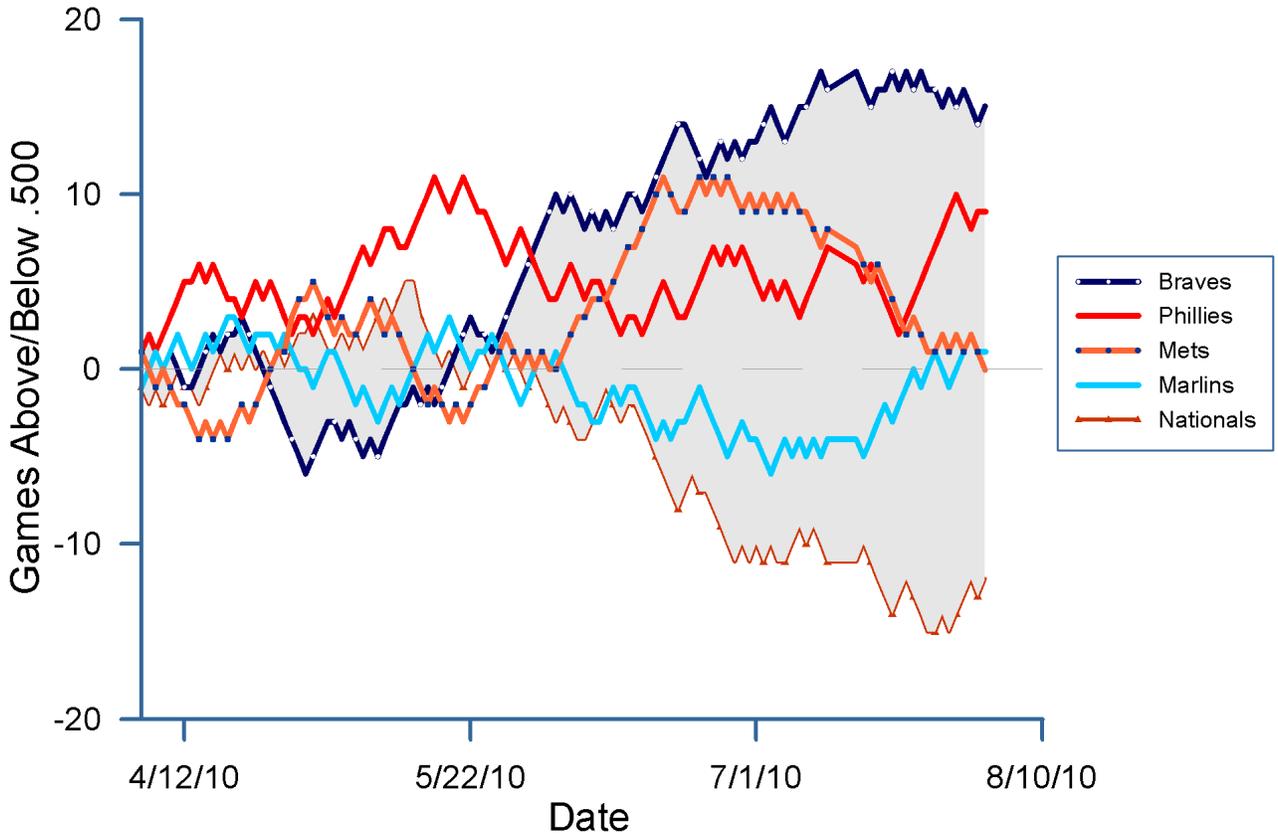
American League Central



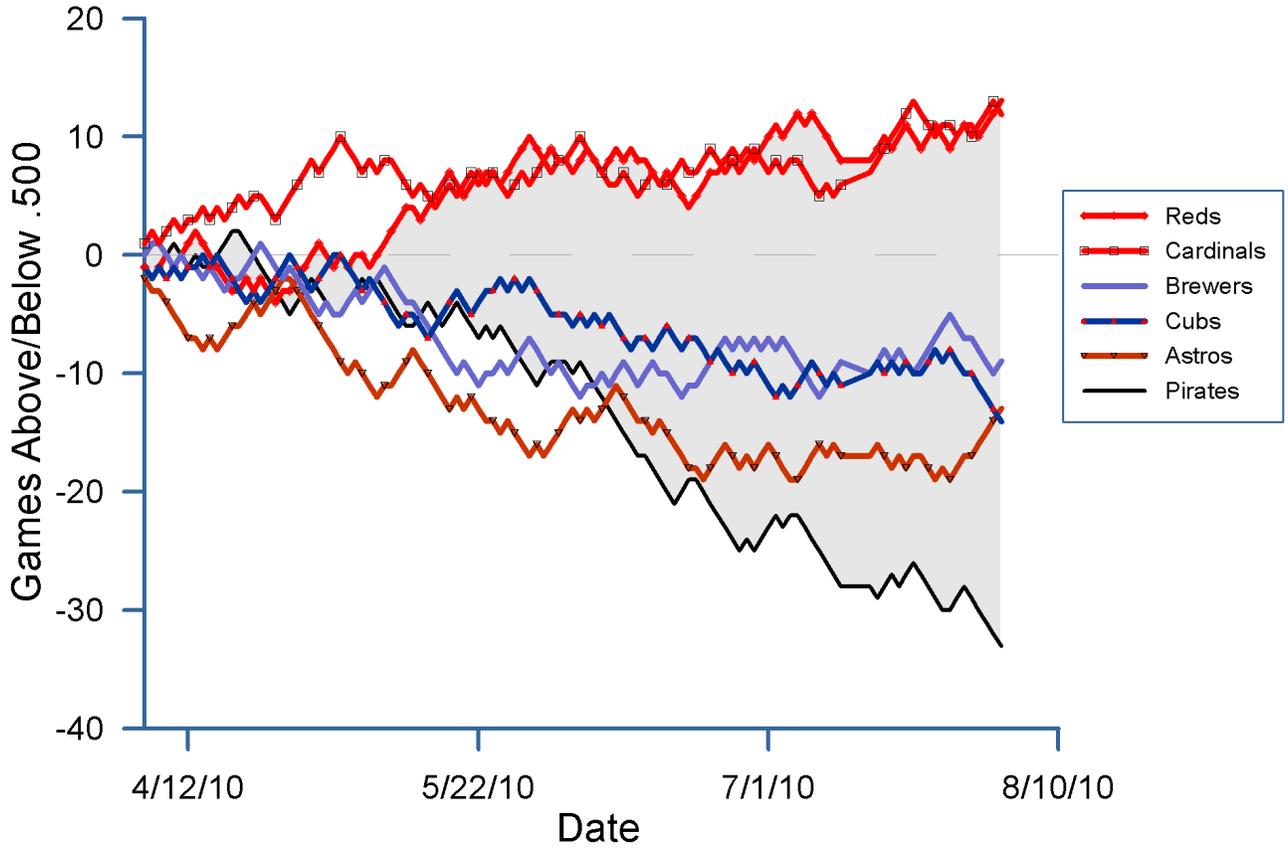
American League West



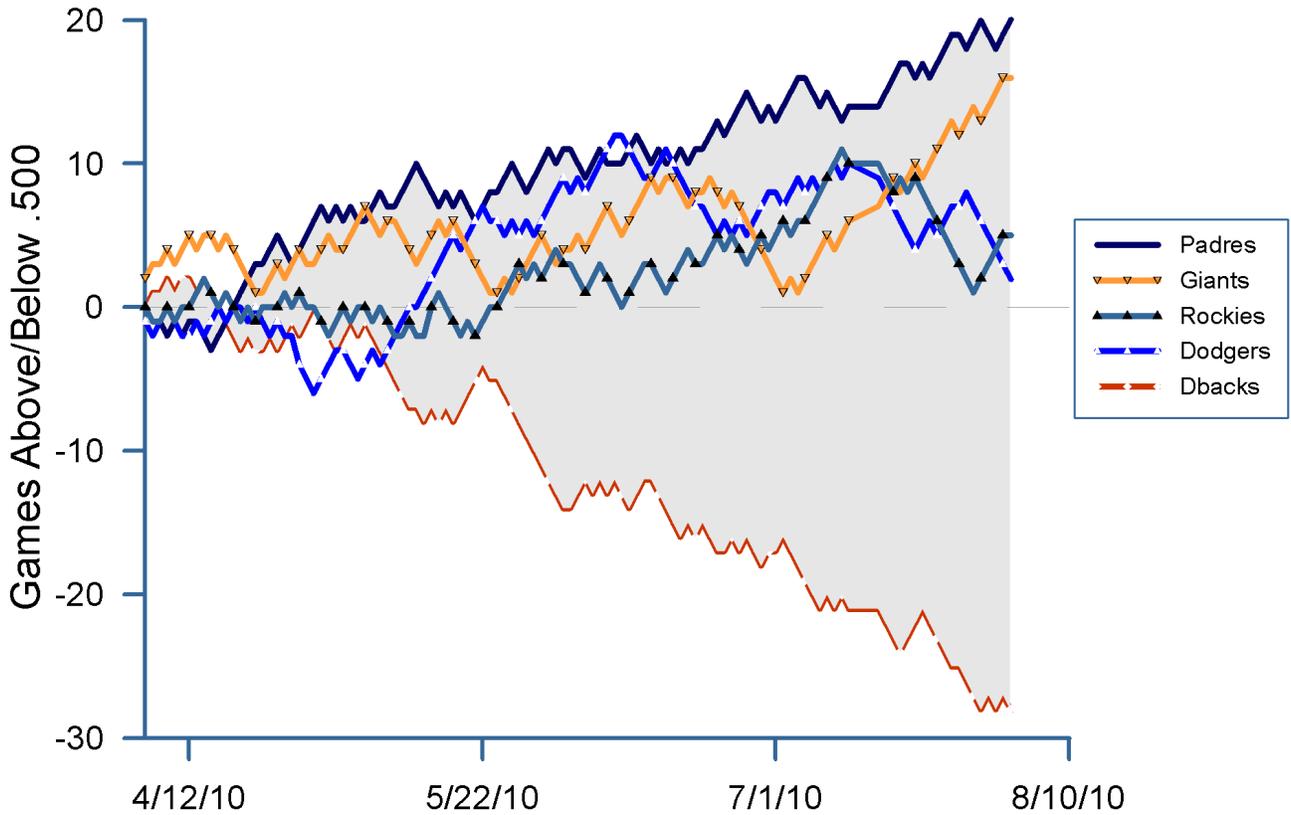
National League East



National League Central



National League West



American League Diagnostic Graphs

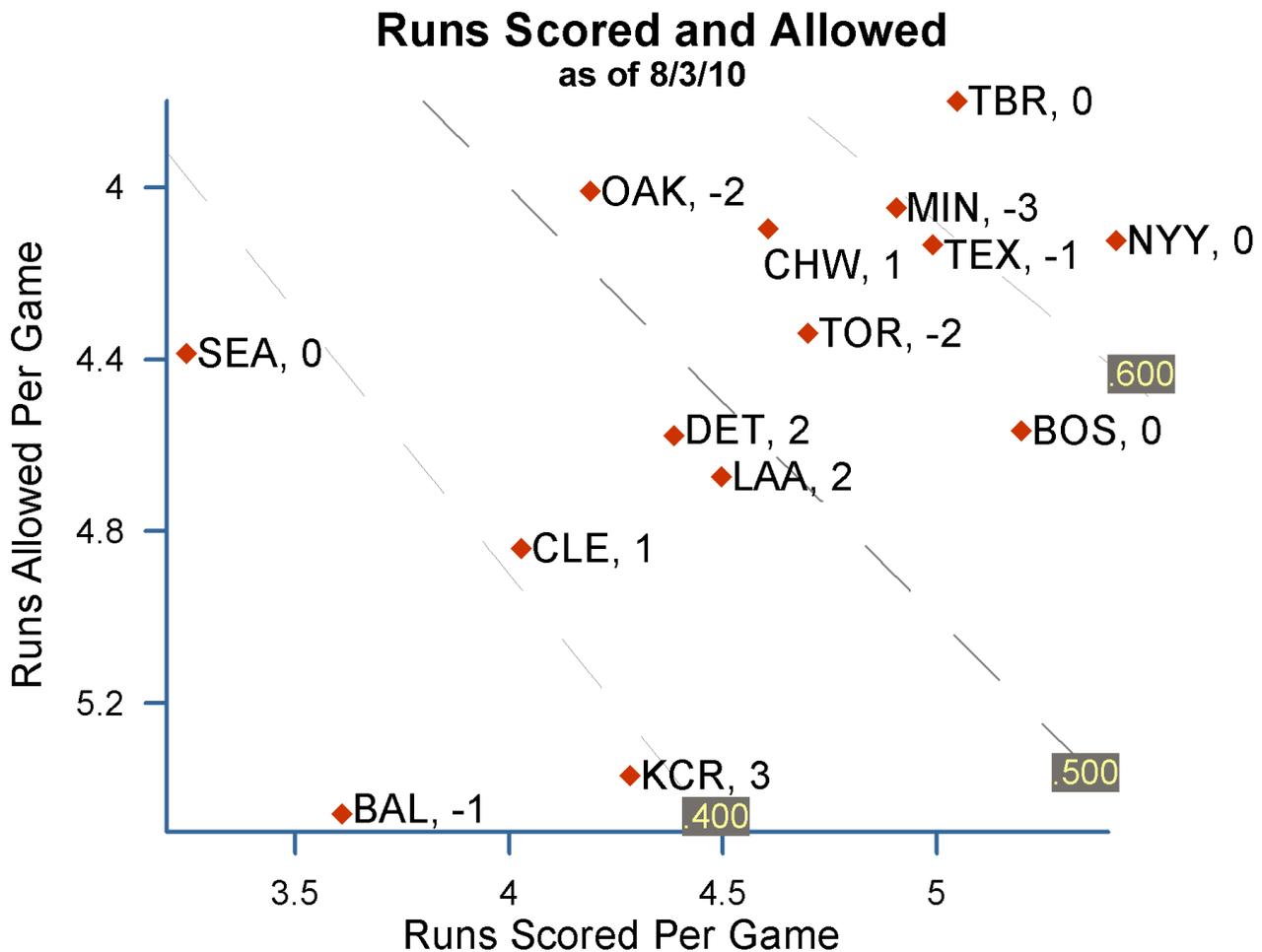
There are three graphs we like to use to get a handle on each team's strengths and weaknesses. Below is a graph of the average number of runs scored and allowed by each team. The graph is built so that the best teams are in the upper right-hand corner (lots of runs scored, fewer allowed) and the worst teams are in the lower left. High offense/bad pitching teams are in the lower right and low offense/good pitching teams are in the upper left. The dotted lines are "isotopes" and signify three different levels of winning percentage based on a number of runs scored and allowed anywhere on the graph. The number next to the team's label

is its pythagorean variance—the number of wins it actually falls above or below its indicated place on the graph.

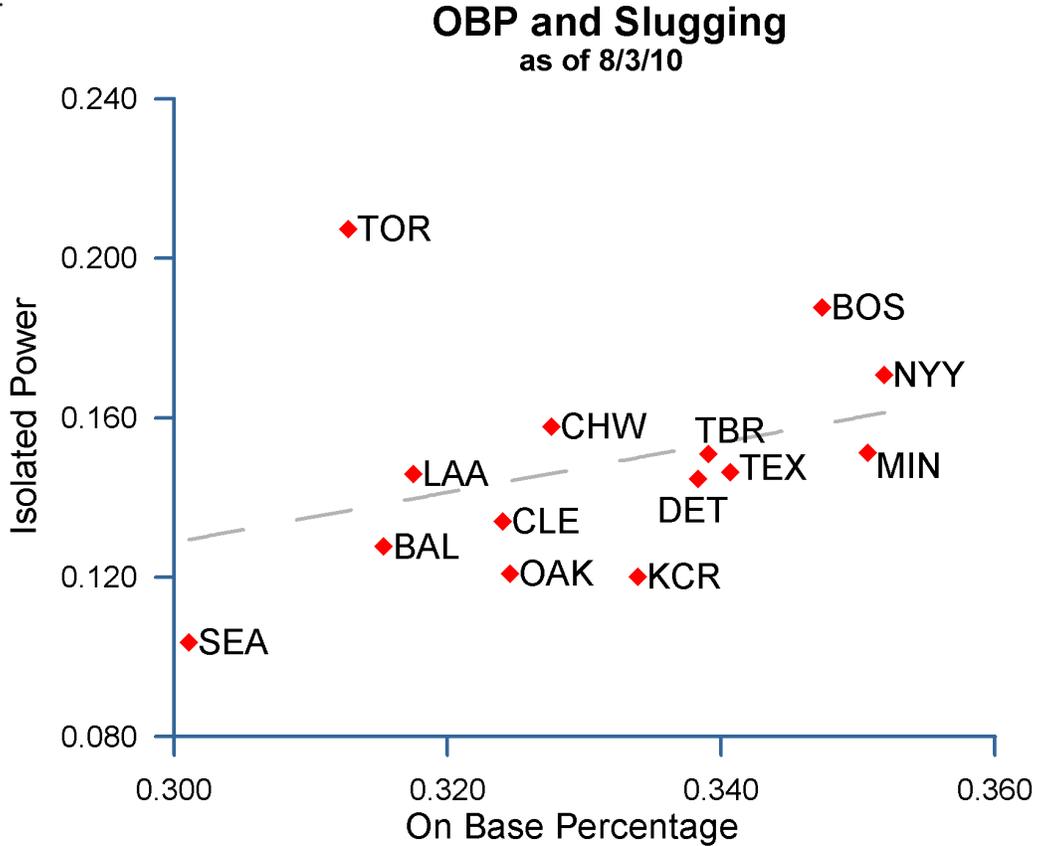
On the next page, you'll find two graphs. One breaks down each team's offensive strength by on-base percentage (OBP) and power (ISO, or slugging percentage minus batting average). The second graph breaks each team's defensive strength into pitching (FIP, which is based solely on strikeouts, walks and home runs allowed) and fielding (DER, which is the proportion of batted balls in play that have been turned into outs by the defense)..

Tampa Bay may be the hottest team in baseball right now. Pitching has led the way for the Rays; their starters have added a full win in WPA since our last Graphical Report on July 21, and their relievers have added

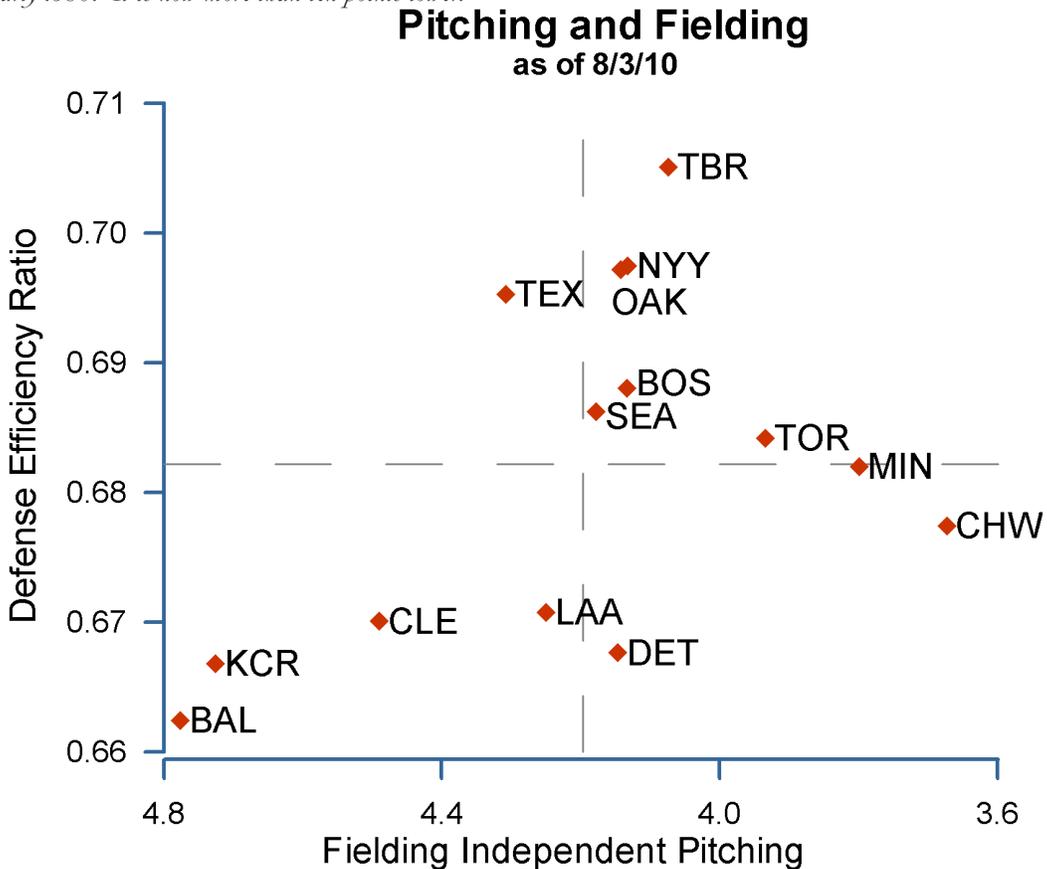
more than two WPA wins. They now clearly sit on the top of this chart, a place reserved for the best pitching/fielding team in the league.



Minnesota has also been on a roll lately—the key to their surge has been offense. Their OBP is now second to the Yankees and their slugging has improved a bit, too.



The Twins and Rays have also improved their fielding (their DER is up at least five points) but Kansas City's gloves have crashed. On July 21, their team DER was nearly .680. It is now more than ten points lower.



National League Diagnostic Graphs

There are three graphs we like to use to get a handle on each team's strengths and weaknesses. Below is a graph of the average number of runs scored and allowed by each team. The graph is built so that the best teams are in the upper right-hand corner (lots of runs scored, fewer allowed) and the worst teams are in the lower left. High offense/bad pitching teams are in the lower right and low offense/good pitching teams are in the upper left. The dotted lines are "isotopes" and signify three different levels of winning percentage based on a number of runs scored and allowed anywhere on the graph. The number next to the team's label

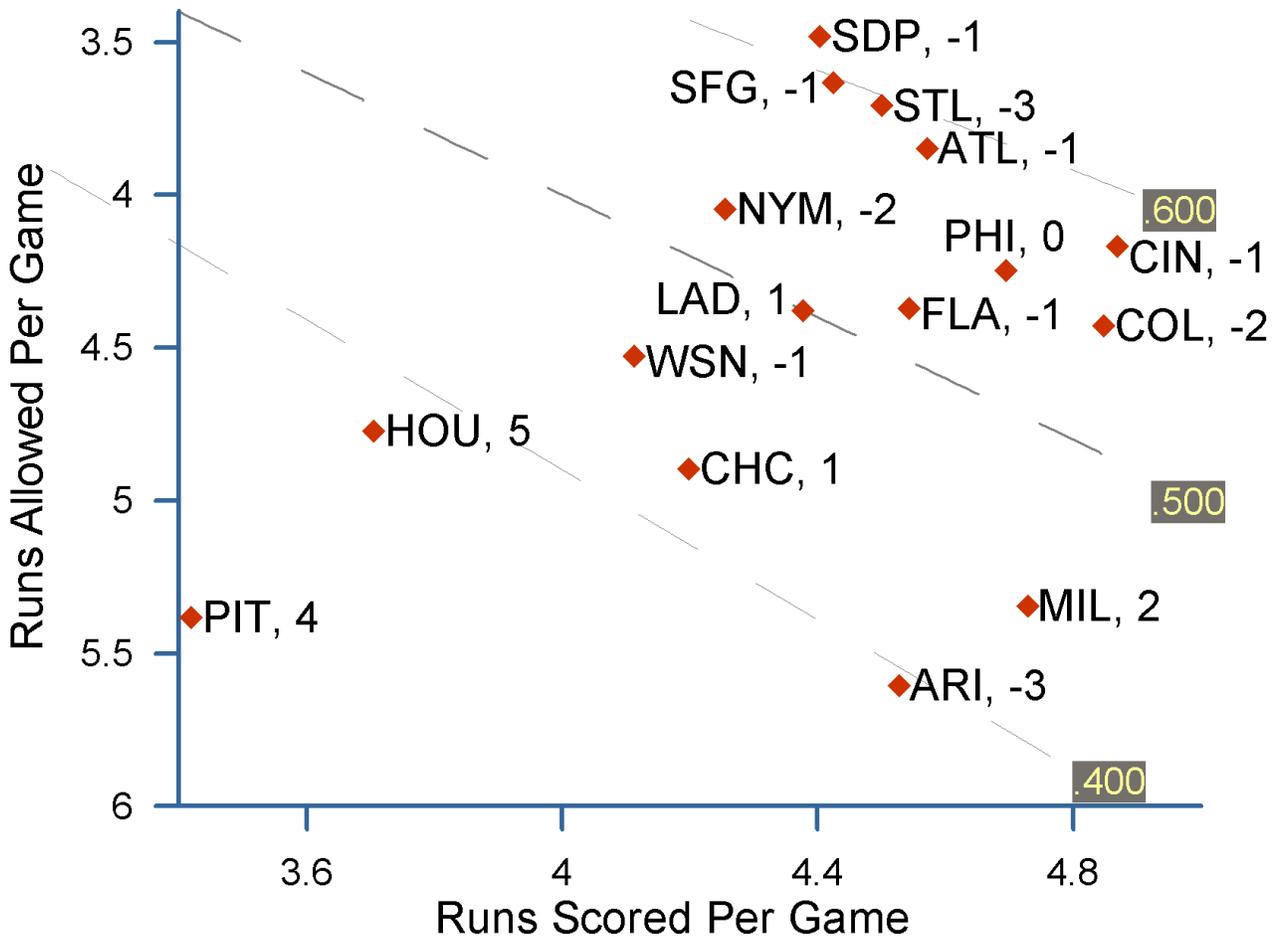
is its pythagorean variance—the number of wins it actually falls above or below its indicated place on the graph.

On the next page, you'll find two graphs. One breaks down each team's offensive strength by on-base percentage (OBP) and power (ISO, or slugging percentage minus batting average). The second graph breaks each team's defensive strength into pitching (FIP, which is based solely on strikeouts, walks and home runs allowed) and fielding (DER, which is the proportion of batted balls in play that have been turned into outs by the defense)..

The bats in New York, Los Angeles and Arizona have been in free fall, with more than 2.5 losses in WPA each since our last Graphical Report, while Florida's bats have gained over two WPA wins. But the

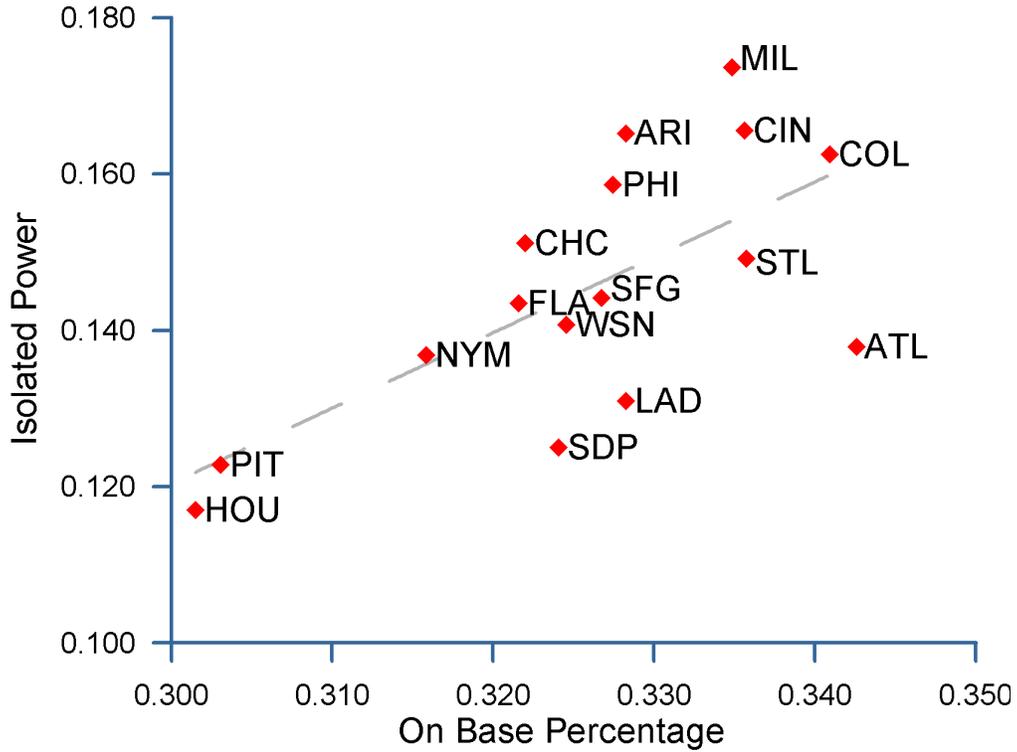
hottest team is probably San Francisco, where starting pitchers have added more than two WPA wins.

Runs Scored and Allowed
as of 8/3/10



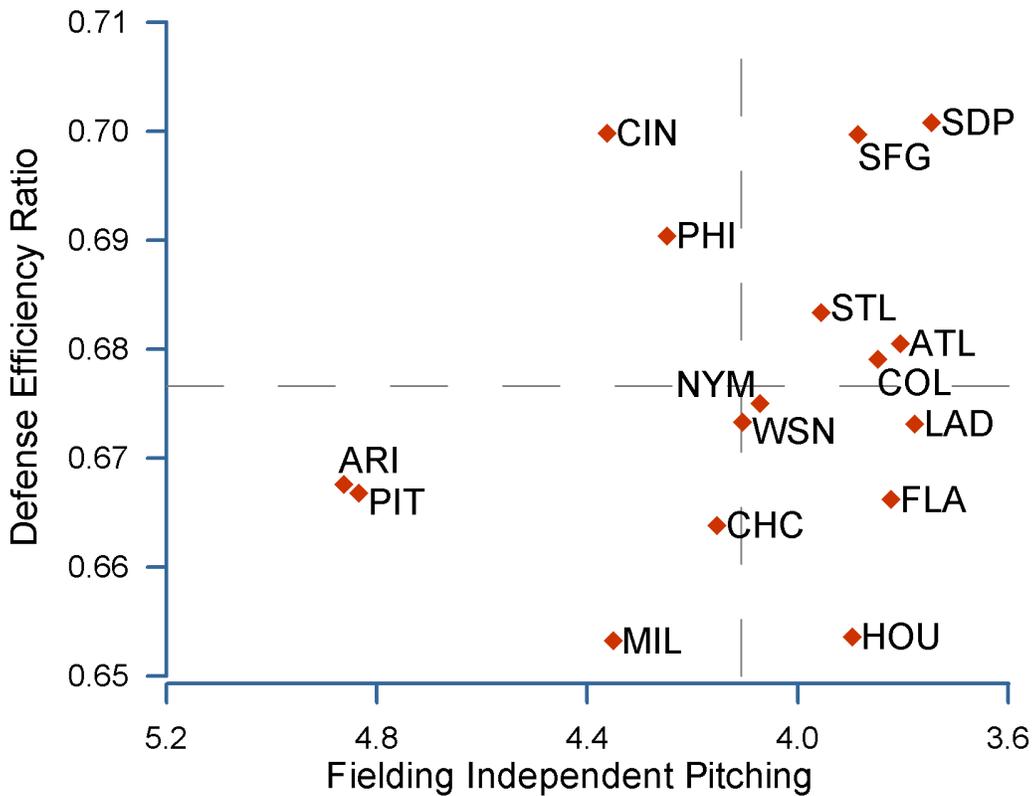
Houston has also been playing relatively well lately, and they no longer have the absolute worst offense in the league. Now it's just sort of the worst. The Cards and Reds have experienced a decline in power since our last Report.

OBP and Slugging as of 8/3/10



Balls have been falling in for hits against the Cubs. Their DER has declined more than ten points since our last Report

Pitching and Fielding as of 8/3/10



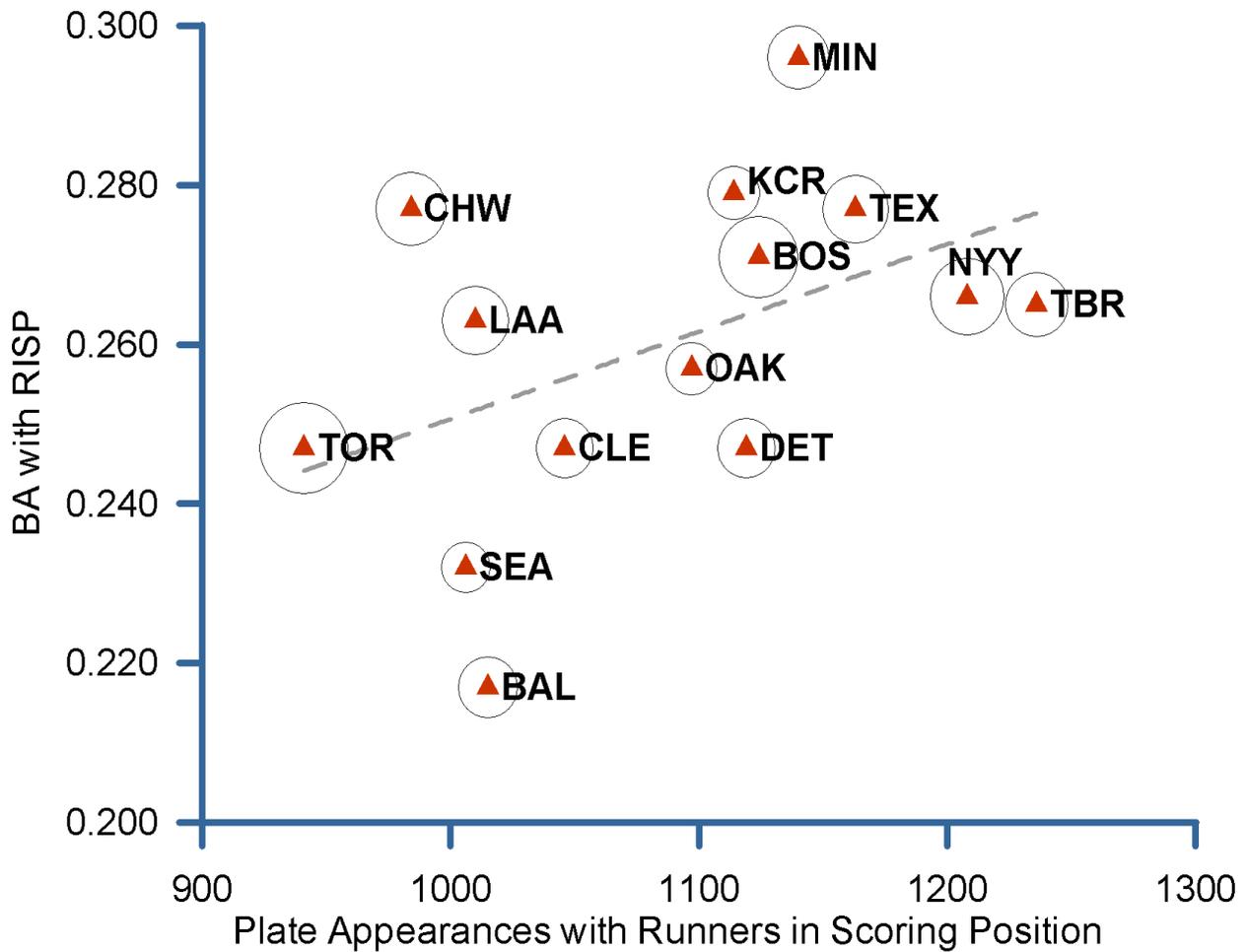
How Teams Score

There is another way to graph an offense. The following graphs show three things: the number of times each team came to bat with runners in scoring position (the “x” axis), their batting average with runners in scoring position (the

“y” axis) and the number of home runs they hit, regardless of the base situation (the circle sizes). In many ways, these three facts are all you need to know to judge an offense.

The Twins, for instance, have the highest batting average with runners in scoring position in the AL. The White Sox are also batting well with RISP, but are near the bottom in getting runners into scoring position.

Toronto is hitting lots of home runs, but they are last in getting runners into scoring position, while the Rays and Yankees have gotten runners in scoring position more often than any other AL team.



In the National League, the Reds, Padres and Diamondbacks have distinguished themselves by hitting with runners in scoring position. The Cubs and Giants have gotten runners into scoring position as often as

those first three clubs, but they are batting thirty points lower in those situations. The Braves are better than any other team at getting runners into scoring position, by far, but they are relatively poorer in batting them in.

