



The Hardball Times Graphical Report

September 1, 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).

Welcome to Chapmania

by Jeff Moore (September 1)

Can we please come up with a new nickname? It reminds me too much of Newmanium.

Aroldis Champan's debut was the talk of not just the prospect world, but the entire baseball world as well, and the Reds' Cuban prodigy did not disappoint.

The outing was as brief as his fastball's trip to the plate, but it was just as exhilarating. Between the excitement in the stadium and the transparent helplessness of the Brewers' hitters, Chapman's debut was everything that both Reds' fans and baseball fans could have hoped for.

But gushing aside, it's time to see exactly how Chapman performed. We know he threw hard. We know he dominated Jonathan Lucroy, Craig Counsell and Carlos Gomez, which may say more about the Brewers' ineptitude this season than anything about Chapman. And Pitch f/x data is as wonderful of a baseball invention as we've had in decades, but it alone doesn't tell the entire story.

Watching Chapman (and part of me wishes he had to work a little harder just so he would have thrown more than eight pitches), I was looking for one thing and one thing only—was Chapman hitting his target? Throwing strikes is one thing, but throwing the right strikes is another all together. Chapman, more than almost any other pitcher, will be able to get away with missing his target over the plate, simply because of his velocity. But the main difference between big league hitters and minor league hitters is their ability to punish mistakes, no matter how fast they're coming in. Even at first, Chapman will be able to get away with fastballs over the middle, but once the league gets a book on him (which may not be this year if he's only relieving), hitters will know if he's compensating for a lack of control by throwing it down the middle, and will be able to tee off (relatively speaking) even at 105 mph.

But eight pitches into his major league career, Chapman showed no intention of falling into this trap. Of his six fastballs, Chapman hit his catcher's target with three of them (which is plenty when you throw 100+ mph), and two of his misses were triple-digit offerings down the middle to Counsell, which, given Counsell's complete lack of power, may have actually been the plan. Both of the sliders Chapman threw (which were both to Lucroy, a righty) were exactly where his catcher called for them—down and in—and the final one on which Lucroy swung through was buried at the hitter's feet, which is exactly where an 0-2 slider should be.

It's way too early to make any sort of conclusion about Chapman's command based on our extremely small sample size, but when compared to the scouting report I wrote up on him after his first minor league start, I found some consistencies and some improvements.

In his first minor league start (on April 10 against Toledo in Double-A), Chapman threw 63 fastballs (of 85 pitches) and hit his location with 37 of them (59%). When he missed, he missed up in the zone. This was consistent with his brief outing on Tuesday. His slider, however, was another story, as the two he threw to Lucroy were two of the better sliders I've seen him throw. In April, he hit his target with just 5 of 17 pitches (29%), repeatedly missing up and over the plate. These are the pitches that major leaguers will hit. The best sign of Chapman's improvement was the fact that he kept both sliders down, especially given that his off-speed offerings were the biggest question mark surrounding him when he signed.

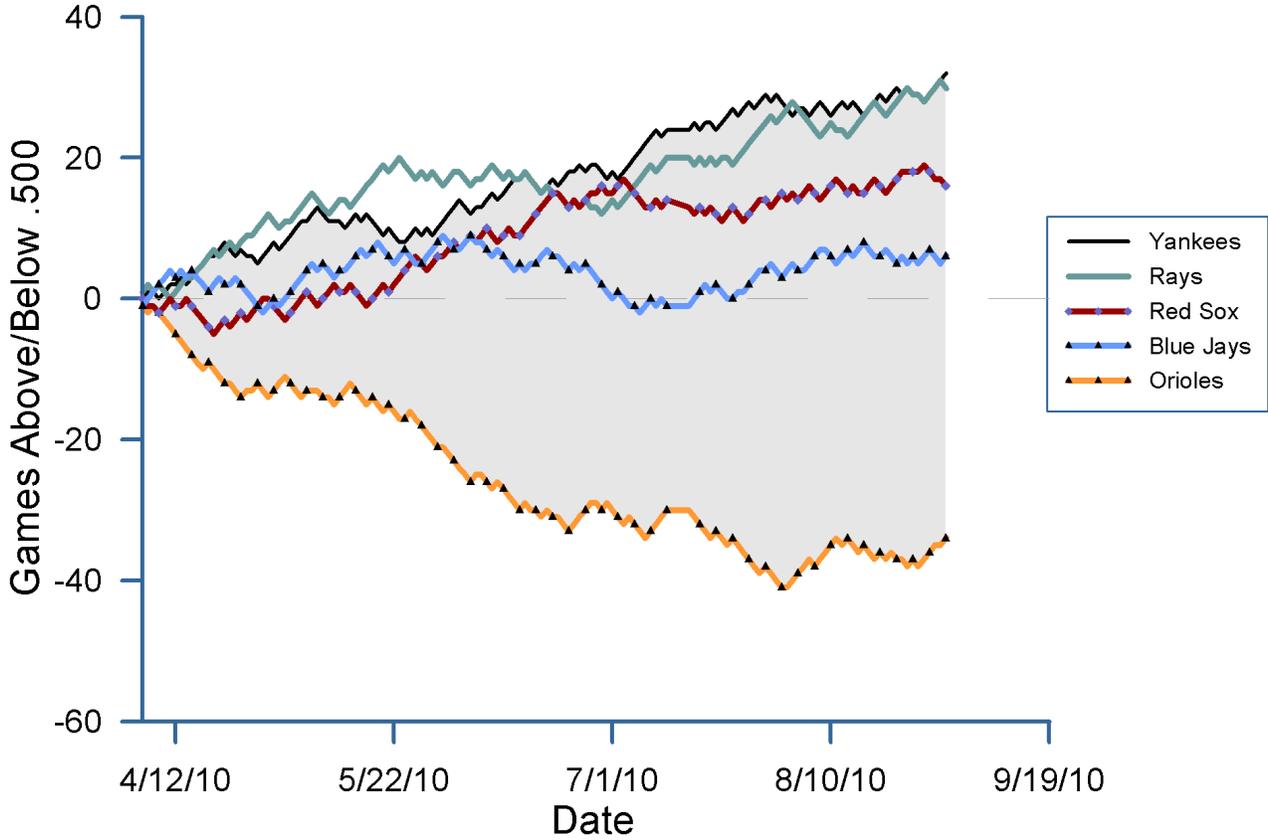
Chapman should get multiple opportunities over the next month to put his arsenal on display, and I'll continue to monitor the movement of his catcher's mitt as it happens. It may be early, but what's wrong with getting a little excited about some dominant prospect action?

Division Standings

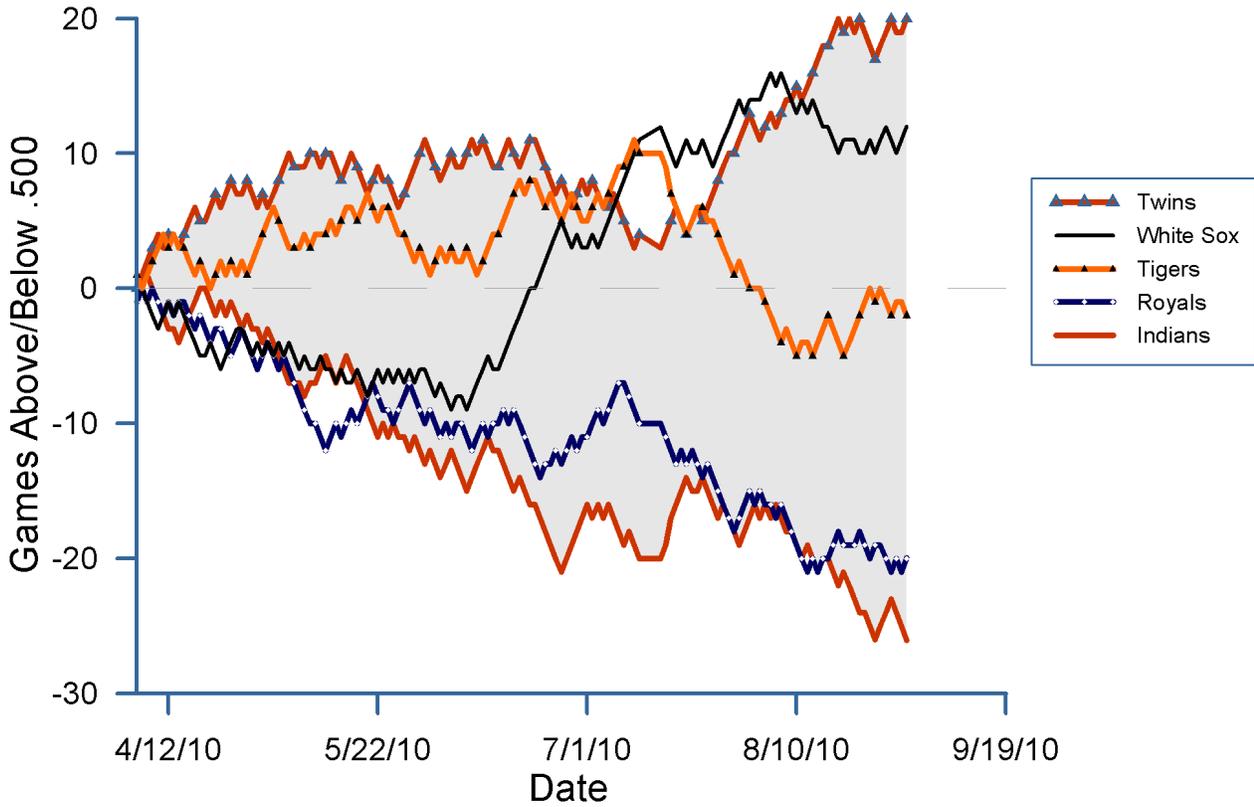
9/1/2010		Win Probability Added									
American League East			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
NY Yankees	82	50	.621	717	542	83	-1	28-23	5.11	5.35	5.53
Tampa Bay Rays	81	51	.614	657	516	81	0	39-30	0.00	6.50	8.50
Boston Red Sox	74	58	.561	660	598	72	2	38-33	-1.08	5.63	3.46
Toronto Blue Jays	69	63	.523	619	583	70	-1	27-31	-0.65	3.75	-0.09
Baltimore Orioles	49	83	.371	487	668	47	2	31-36	-13.97	-2.87	-0.16
American League Central			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
Minnesota Twins	76	56	.576	633	531	77	-1	34-27	0.28	5.55	4.17
Chicago White Sox	72	60	.545	630	555	74	-2	31-35	-1.31	6.11	1.19
Detroit Tigers	65	67	.492	592	606	65	0	26-31	-1.62	-1.00	1.62
Kansas City Royals	56	76	.424	542	698	50	6	35-35	-9.95	-4.22	4.17
Cleveland Indians	53	79	.402	531	645	54	-1	26-31	-9.45	-4.93	1.37
American League West			RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen	
Texas Rangers	74	58	.561	642	556	75	-1	38-32	0.11	2.15	5.74
Oakland Athletics	65	66	.496	531	509	68	-3	29-32	-8.41	6.06	1.84
Los Angeles Angels	64	69	.481	580	608	64	0	32-29	-10.05	4.97	2.58
Seattle Mariners	52	80	.394	429	565	50	2	31-36	-14.23	2.92	-2.68
National League East		RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen		
Atlanta Braves	77	55	.583	633	504	80	-3	32-31	8.40	1.03	1.57
Philadelphia Phillies	74	58	.561	605	533	74	0	35-23	-1.07	6.47	2.61
Florida Marlins	66	65	.504	588	568	68	-2	36-34	-1.46	4.16	-2.20
New York Mets	65	67	.492	528	525	66	-1	29-43	-8.27	5.31	1.96
Washington Nationals	57	76	.429	540	612	59	-2	33-37	-8.50	-1.63	0.62
National League Central		RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen		
Cincinnati Reds	77	55	.583	663	571	75	2	39-28	8.20	0.81	1.99
St. Louis Cardinals	69	61	.531	593	504	75	-6	27-32	-0.84	3.37	1.47
Milwaukee Brewers	62	70	.470	628	704	59	3	32-24	2.79	-5.75	-1.03
Houston Astros	61	71	.462	495	598	55	6	25-24	-5.06	-0.71	0.77
Chicago Cubs	56	77	.421	577	664	58	-2	26-43	-9.88	0.77	-1.39
Pittsburgh Pirates	44	88	.333	457	718	40	4	29-31	-11.87	-10.10	-0.03
National League West		RS	RA	PWINS	DIFF	Close	Bat	Starters	Bullpen		
San Diego Padres	76	55	.580	574	462	78	-2	35-29	-1.44	3.95	7.99
San Francisco Giants	73	60	.549	591	523	74	-1	31-30	0.88	3.48	2.14
Colorado Rockies	69	62	.527	609	570	70	-1	34-33	-3.17	3.19	3.47
Los Angeles Dodgers	68	65	.511	578	570	67	1	34-31	-2.13	2.29	1.35
Arizona Diamondbacks	54	79	.406	613	716	57	-3	25-33	-3.90	-1.48	-7.12

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.

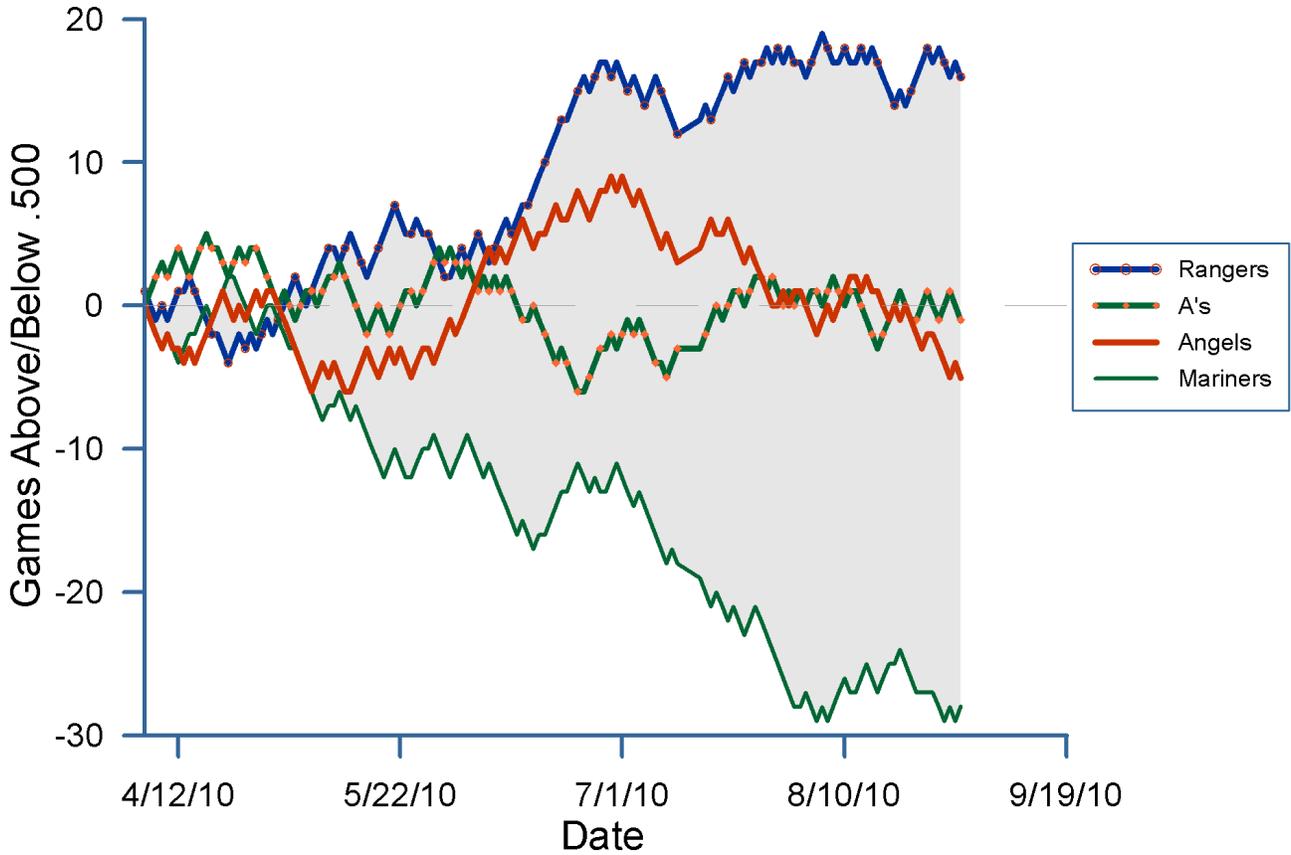
American League East



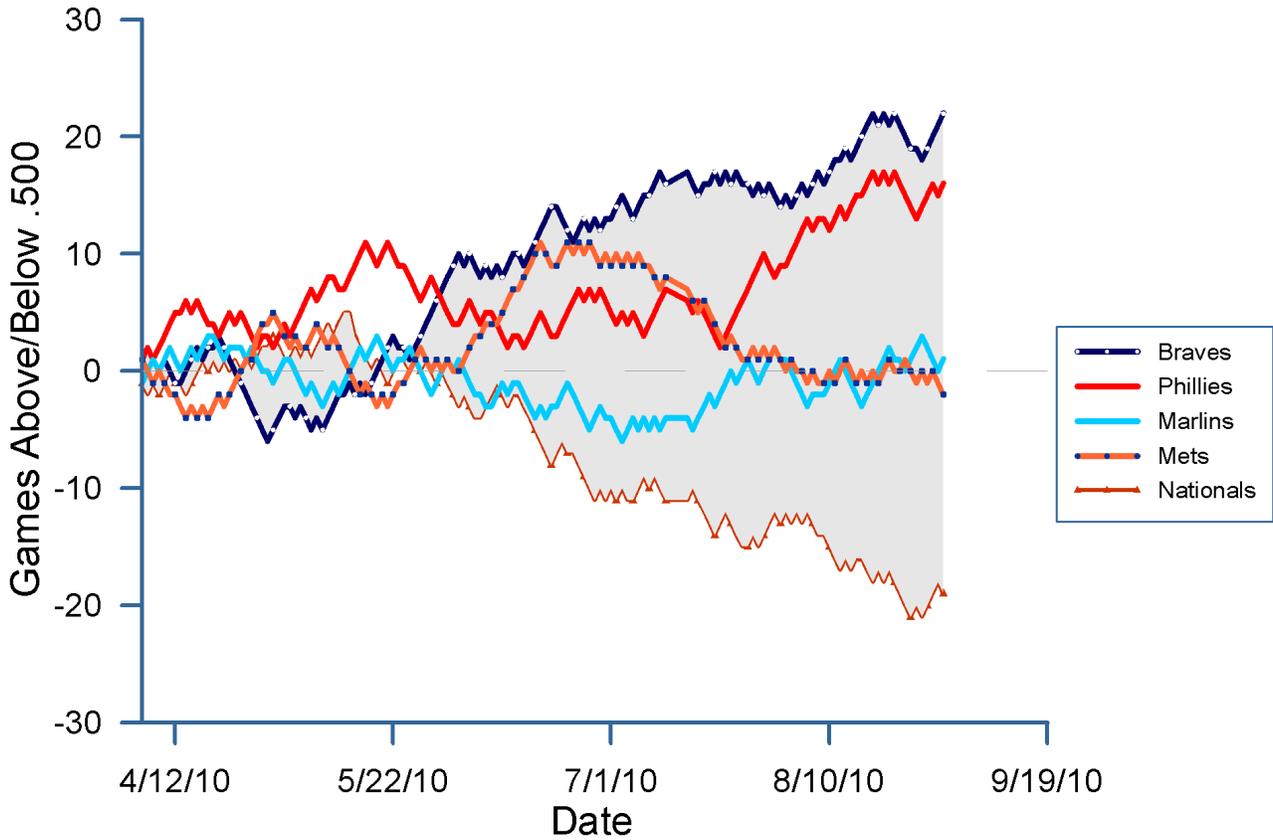
American League Central



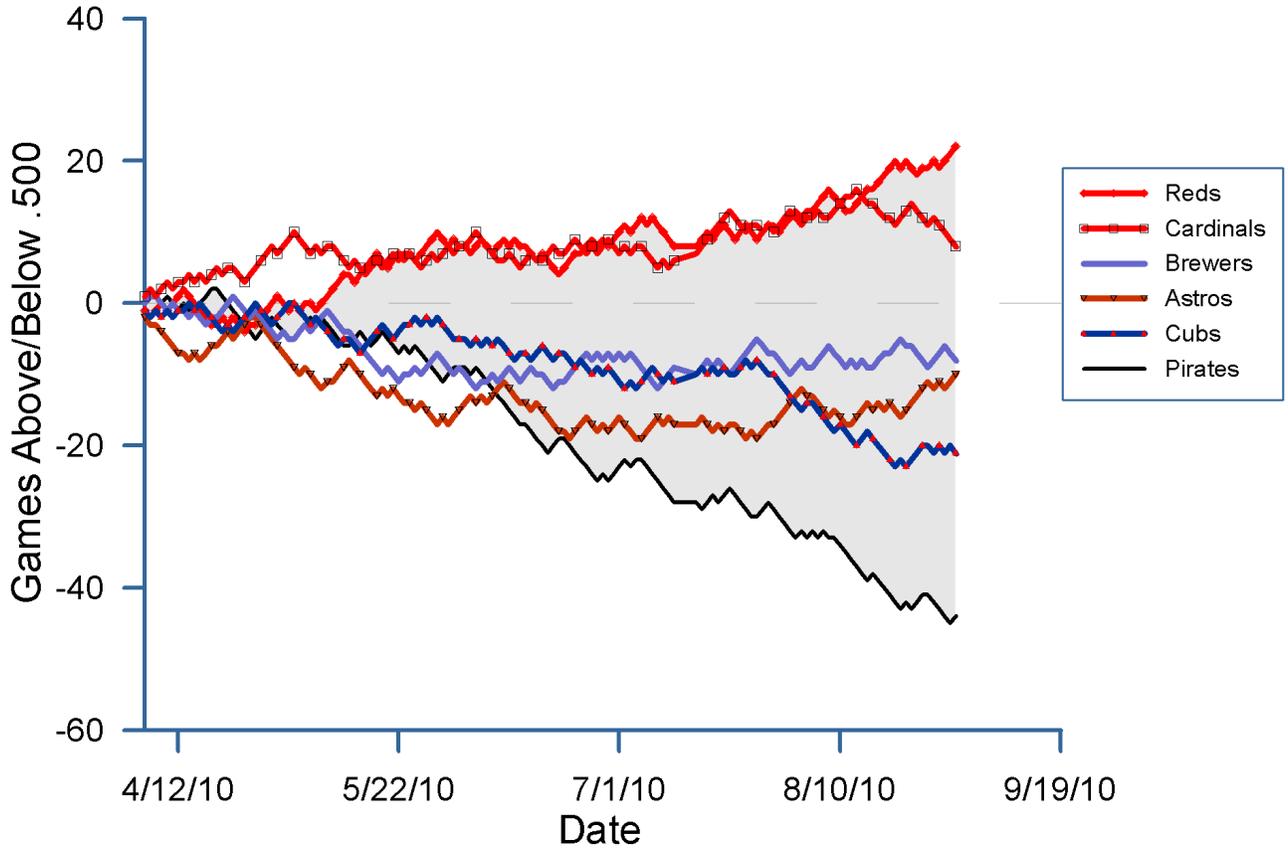
American League West



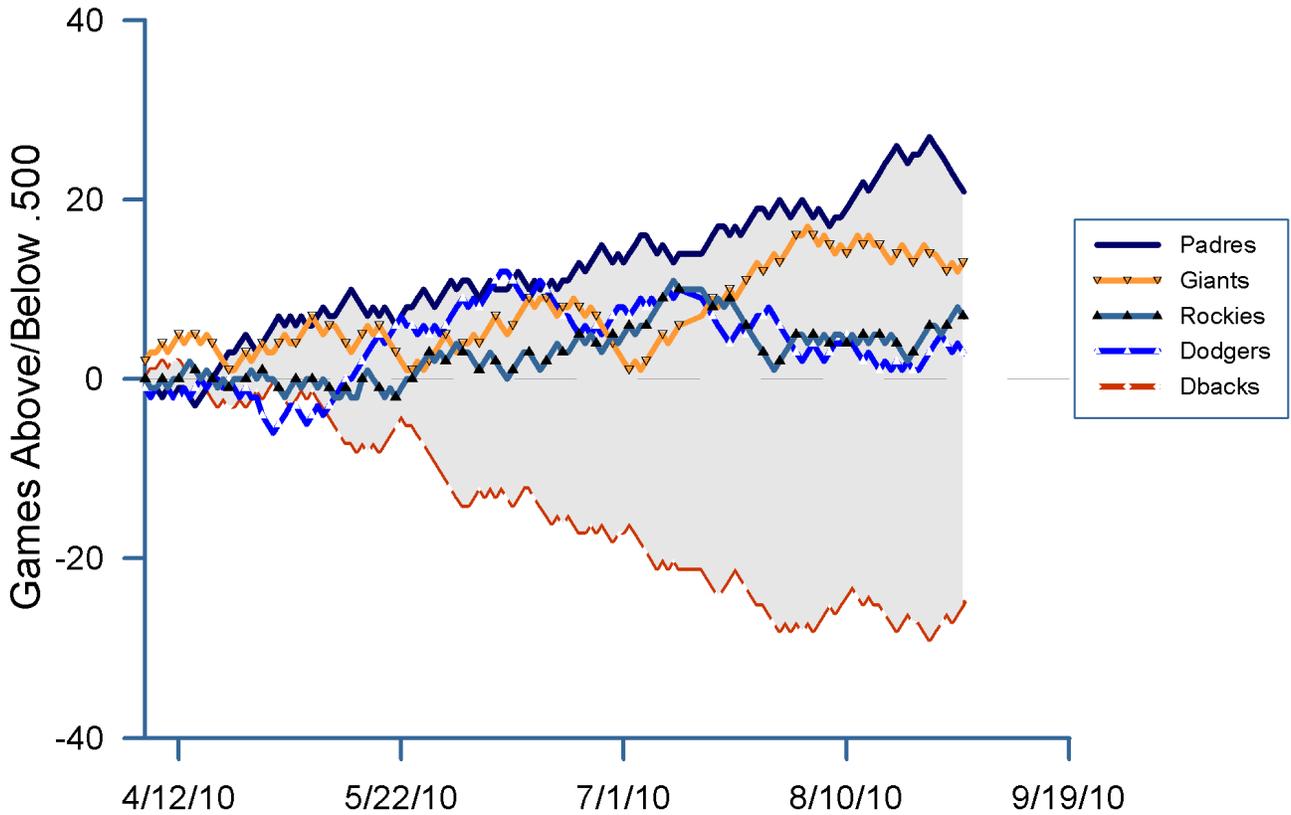
National League East



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

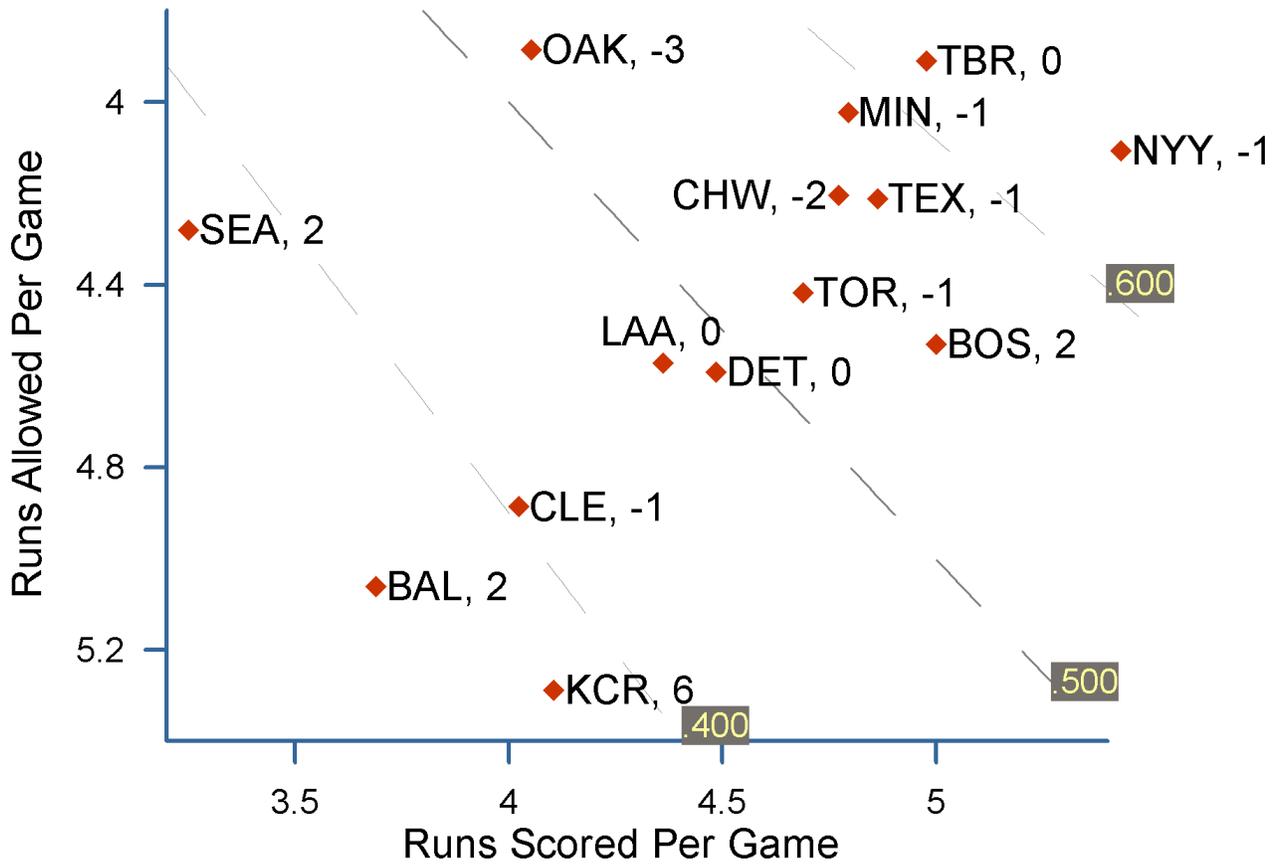
is its pythagorean variance—the number of wins it actually falls above or below its indicated place on the graph.

On the next page, you'll find two graphs. One breaks down each team's offensive strength into three categories: getting runners into scoring position, hitting with runners in scoring position, and hitting home runs (the circle size). 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).

Something interesting happened to both Los Angeles of Anaheim and Detroit since our last Graphical Report on August 19. They both stayed in roughly the same place on this graph (Detroit did improve their

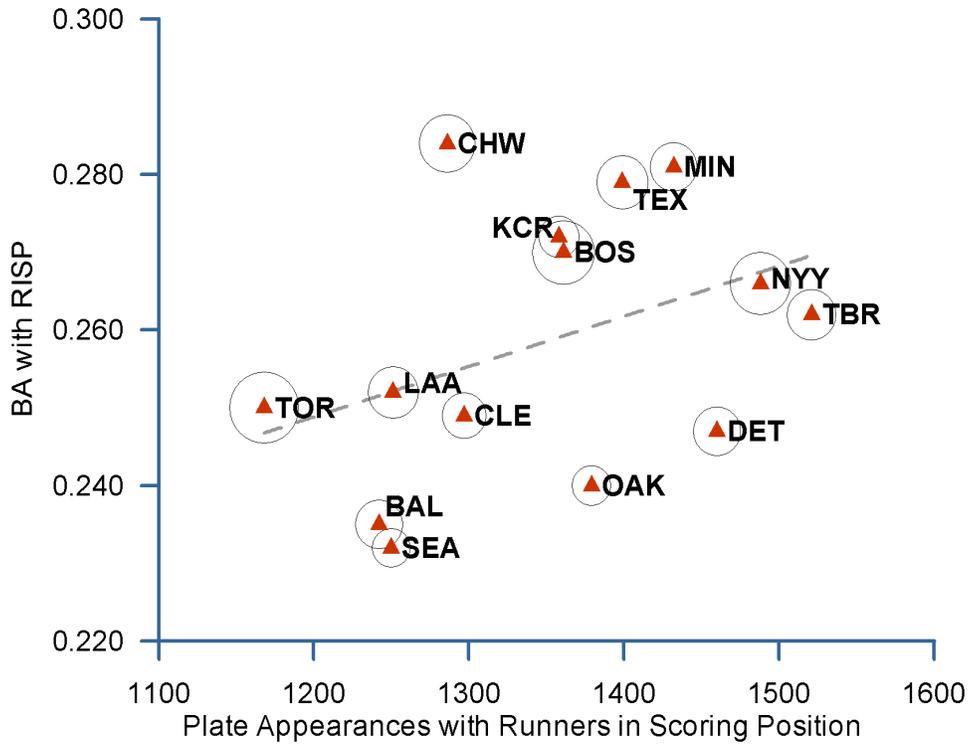
offense), but both teams lost two (Angels) and three (Tigers) games in their Pythagorean variances. As a result, the Angels lost ground in the standings and the Tigers didn't improve despite an uptick in offense.

**Runs Scored and Allowed
as of 9/1/10**



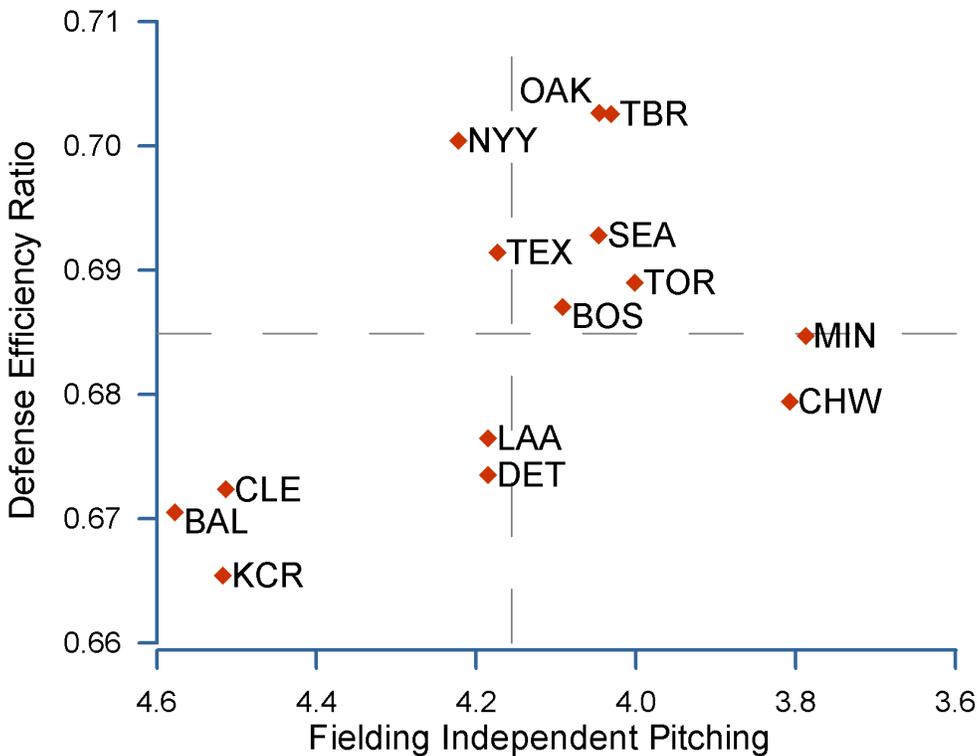
Mixed pair: the only difference between offense in Kansas City and Boston is power (same spot on graph/difference circle sizes). Detroit's improved offense the past week and a half was the result of getting more runners into scoring position--their circle was near Oakland's last time we checked.

American League Offenses (circle size indicates number of home runs)



There are six defensive groupings: great pitching (White Sox and Twins), great fielding (Yankees, A's, Rays), bad fielding (Angels and Tigers), terrible pitching and fielding (Orioles, Royals and Indians) and slightly better-than-average pitching and fielding (Mariners, Rangers, Rays and Red Sox).

Pitching and Fielding as of 9/1/10



National League Diagnostic Graphs

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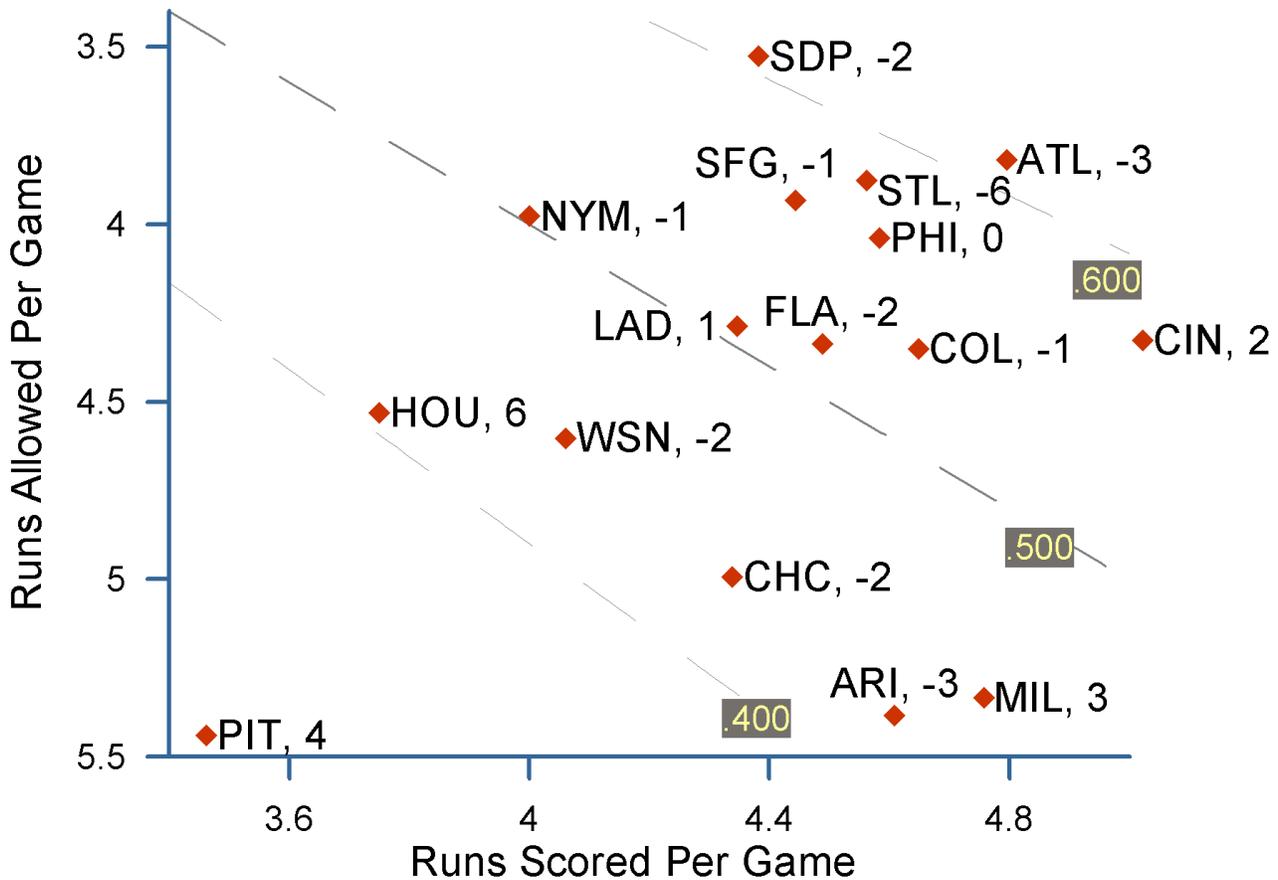
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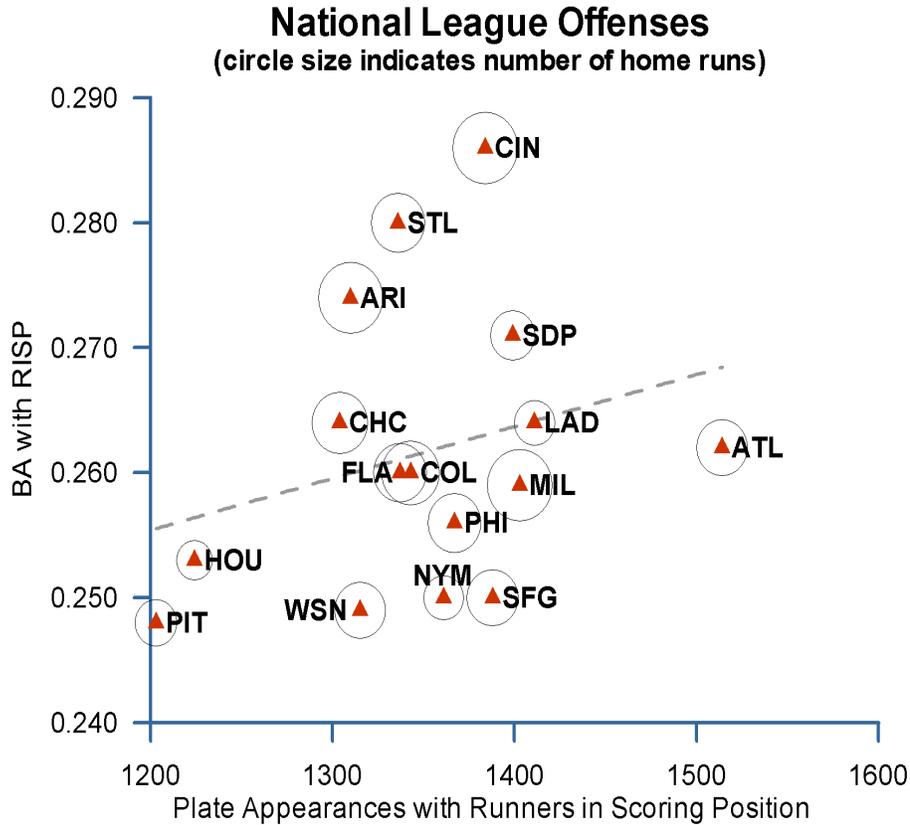
Notice how every team significantly above the .500 line has a negative Pythagorean variance except the Reds? In fact, Pythagoras accounts for the entire difference between them and the Cardinals. Houston has moved

up and to the left since August 18, meaning they've had better pitching/fielding and worse offense. And the Padres lost some ground because their pitching came back to earth a bit.

**Runs Scored and Allowed
as of 9/1/10**



The Braves continue to be the best in the league at getting runners into scoring position. The Cubs batted very well with runners in scoring position the last week and a half.



This is a funny graph. There are a lot of really good pitching teams bunched on the right side of the graph. It's the fielding (as in, what happens to batted balls after they're hit) that separates most of these teams. Padres on the top, Astros on the bottom.

