


# Total Base props: How to find an edge, like Austin Riley's upcoming matchup with Patrick Corbin



By **John Laghezza**  
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The first half of the 2022 [MLB](#) season is coming to a close, and I'm doing my very best to fight back any cliches regarding time and how there just never seems to be enough of it. Welcome back, one and all, to my MLB notebook. In this edition, I'll be combining a bunch of the stuff we've been discussing these past few months and applying it to the newest profitable trend at the MLB Moving Averages war room.



Much like life, success in betting often comes with the right mix of humility and flexibility. As hard as we work on a model, style, or strategy, we must understand the determinant factor in our final decision is still the price; which unregulated providers unilaterally control. I'm not complaining. I can take the heat in the kitchen and have burn marks on top of my burn marks to prove it. However, the fact remains there is an ongoing push and pull between bettors and books, ensuring cappers can never get too comfortable. We must constantly adjust, sometimes even on the fly.

To quote one of the greatest to ever do anything, "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been." Books have recently countered my particular style of First Five betting early in the day to jump on line movements and any perceived edge. We have now seen major bookmakers from coast to coast not only widen the difference in Money and Run Line prices but simply not post F5MLs in the morning at all. We know why they're doing it after all — to avoid the very same push that we were focused on optimizing. Bookies consider those pushes a loss, and these two actions have stressed a major source of edge. So rather than be stubborn, I feel I've made a successful pivot I'd like to share with everyone.

**Total Base (TB)** props are pretty simple to understand — they are the number of bases a hitter achieves through HITS ONLY. Sorry to raise an already loud voice, but it's very important to understand that neither walks nor advancing as a baserunner count. I'll explain a little later how to deal with this aspect of hitter analysis when I show you my method of bet building. The standard betting line is over/under 1.5 total bases, and they usually are initially listed between (+100) and (+140). Remember a hitter needs two singles, one double, one triple, or one home run to be scored as a winner. As always, price is at the fore of our sustainable strategy. If you are betting a pair of these props daily at a 50% win rate, you'll end up with a wildly successful venture in terms of your percentage gained.

Savant, as well as other available split tools, provide a pathway to an edge by making accessible an otherwise impossible perspective. I can show you a bit about how I build my analysis and then even lay out a play for this coming Friday. I know printed betting content struggles to keep up with the speed of oscillating markets but this should allow more than enough time for people to read, digest, and react. If you're interested in learning more about the advanced processes, I do provide picks daily for free on my [daily MayoMediaNet podcast](#) Monday through Friday.

Fifteen games are happening most every night, with eighteen hitters starting in each, and there's no way to apply the necessary detail to all 270 hitters. I know we have some beginners reading so, as always, we'll start at square one with the macro perspective and continually zoom in. We want to lock onto a strong offense that's also facing a weak pitcher, and then look to apply the things we've learned. For example, our understanding of targeted approaches is extremely useful to zero in on inefficiencies within a specific arsenal. This will play a crucial role in capitalizing on our highest probability play. Some pitchers are particularly vulnerable to certain-handed splits, either due to limited arsenals, erratic control, or sub-optimal movement profiles. Using the different available technology and tools at our disposal can help us identify exactly which ones to go after. We'll then invert our analysis to the hitter side and hopefully identify a quality hitter in a plus matchup that fits perfectly into our puzzle.

This Friday, July 15, the [Atlanta Braves](#) (good offense, check) will be hosting [Patrick Corbin](#) and the [Nationals](#) (bad pitcher, check). Since we are skipping steps, let's stop

that we're seeking out in combinations (or ideally, altogether). Part of my daily routine includes scraping stats from different time frames on the pitching side, looking for any changes in velocity/pitch mix that may weaken our position. Once we have a feel for who the starting pitcher "is," these attack metrics will help light the way. For reference, as a guide, let's call it a +5.00 ERA, +1.40 WHIP, +.800 OPS,  $\leq 10\%$  K-BB, +40% HH, +88% Zone Contact, and a +1.40 HR/9. Looking at them all at once it seems like a lot, but we are going to be putting down very hard-earned American currency on just a small handful of opportunities, so I want all the confidence possible going in.

### **Patrick Corbin 2022, 94.2 IP**

- 5.70 ERA
- 1.67 WHIP
- .860 OPS
- 11.3% K-BB
- 44.1% Hard Hit
- 88.7% Zone Contact
- 1.43 HR/9

Outside of a single percentage point to the north side of his K-BB%, Corbin checks every single aforementioned box. This can only mean one thing — keep your powder dry, we're about to go on offense. Most handicappers would wrap up their analysis with a cool catchphrase like calling Corbin a gas can and leave it there. However, for our more focused purposes, I'd like to get out my trusty electron microscope one more time to scan splits for an advantage.

Right-handed hitters not only have a .858 OPS year to date, but have significantly higher Fly-Ball and Hard-Hit Rates, explaining why they're responsible for 12 of the 15 long balls allowed by Corbin this year. I would then generally dissect the given arsenal for any bad pitches with high usage rates, but in Corbin's case, both featured fastballs (sinker 39% usage, 4-seam 19% usage) have a sub-13 % Whiff Rate. He also doesn't have a single pitch that hasn't gone for a Home Run, or that has an expected SLG below .456.

Once the initial hurdles are cleared for takeoff and it's time to flip over to the hitting side, most of our equation is settled. Before going any further and letting stats, a name, or even a price sway you, please heed my experienced advice. Remember these

chance to garner extra plate appearances, the importance of which cannot be understated.

1. Lineup placement — Obviously the higher the better. I am almost exclusively looking to a hitter in the top four spots of the order.
2. Implied team totals — You can use the posted Las Vegas Team Total lines, or even better, custom totals like the ones I put out for free every day on Twitter **@MLBMovingAvg**. Target teams that have a team total starting at five runs.
3. Home or away — The most oft-overlooked of my critical elements, being on the road is **always** worth more because it guarantees that your side bats in the ninth frame. Think about it. We're highlighting hitters who we expect to produce against pitchers we don't think are any good. It stands to reason we could be ahead at home after eight innings and get sent to the showers with empty pockets and our hitter in the on-deck circle. The last point on home away... when my targeted hitter is playing at home, and I'm knowingly risking that ninth frame, I will usually compensate by tightening the lineup parameters to the top two spots (three max).

Since we are on the road in Washington (which has a 120 Park Factor for right-handed HR) we can look at the three righties batting in the top four slots: [Ronald Acuña Jr.](#), Dansby Swanson, and [Austin Riley](#). It doesn't take much investigating to see how strong Austin Riley's splits are against lefties year to date.

- 102 PA
- .314 BA
- .342 ISO (Keep this in mind!)
- 1.098 OPS
- 63.8% Hard Hit +95mph
- 20.7% Barrel
- 13.8% Blast
- 9 Doubles
- 7 Home Runs

No need to expand on that stat set, it's gaudy nature speaks for itself. The last thing I want to leave you with, however, is the application of Isolated Slugging (ISO). As per the Fangraphs glossary simply put  $ISO = \text{Extra Bases} / \text{At-Bats}$ . The reason we need to use ISO is that Total Base Props do not include walks. Therefore, OPS, which incorporates bases on balls, can be misleading. In regards to going over 1.5 Total Bases, there isn't a better measure than ISO because of the way it simplifies the math for us. In this case, Austin Riley and his current 34.2% extra-base rate getting three plate appearances against a left-handed pitcher has yielded two total bases the entire season. This bet will likely open at (+110) on Thursday night and move to (-130) by game time after I post it on my show.

**AUSTIN RILEY — OVER 1.5 TOTAL BASES** (*Friday, July 15, Atlanta at Washington*)

*(Top photo: Dale Zanine-USA TODAY Sports)*

John is a lifetime fan and longtime analyst who crossed into content creation with his integration of technical analysis in the MLB space. He's the man behind the @MLBMovingAvg handle on Twitter, launching the MLBMA algorithm in 2018 after having written several successful models, focused on creating the preeminent handicapping tool for fantasy baseball and sports betting. He's also the Director of MLB content at windailysports.com and will not rest until the Quality Start is fixed. Follow John on Twitter [@MLBMovingAvg](https://twitter.com/MLBMovingAvg)

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