



TRACKMAN  
BASEBALL



## Pioneer League by the Numbers

by Nick Lukowsky

The PBL's partnership with TrackMan and Baseball Cloud has allowed the league's clubs and players to evaluate their game like never before. With access to advanced ball-tracking data, pitch-by-pitch events and summary reports, seeing the league behind the numbers has never been more accessible. As the 2023 season moves into the Second Half, the League Office has selected a few key metrics that clubs utilize in the baseball world to highlight its standout players and teams. All data mentioned in this article is from the First Half of the season, and leaderboards include qualifying players only.

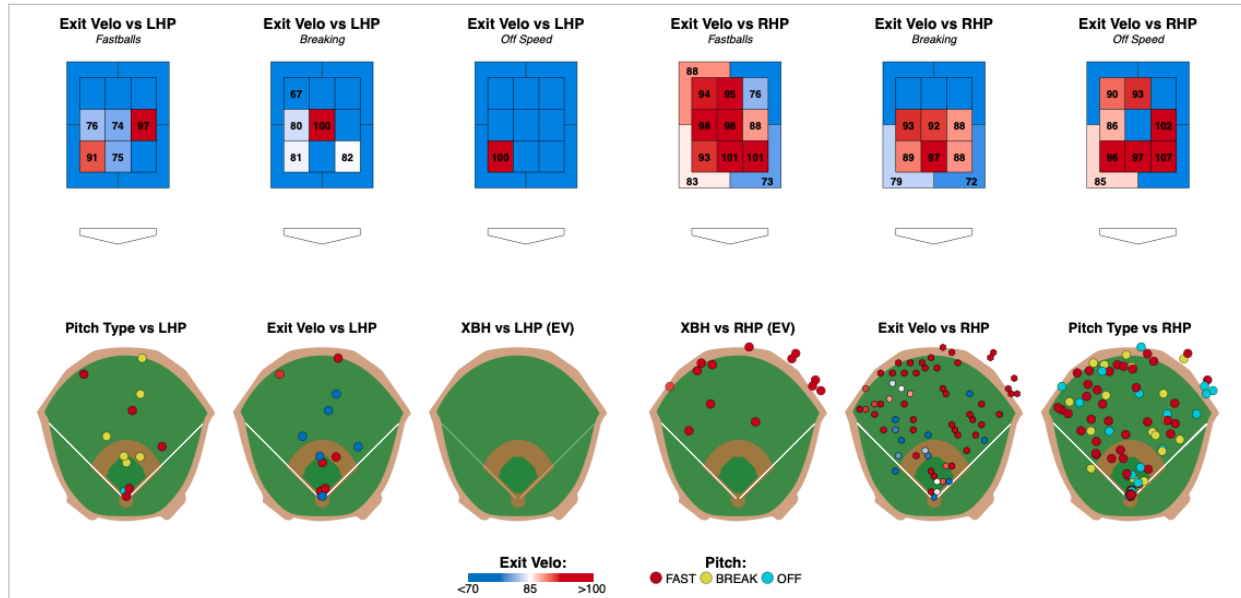


## Alex Baeza – Hitter Scouting Report

LHP		RHP	
PA	AB	PA	AB
26	24	154	120

Swing Decision & Results vs LHP						
Pitch	Swing %	BIP %	GB %	Pull %	Oppo %	Hard Hit %
FAST	31.6%	41.7%	40.0%	80.0%	20.0%	40.0%
BREAK	44.4%	45.0%	44.4%	55.6%	44.4%	44.4%
OFF	55.6%	40.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%	50.0%

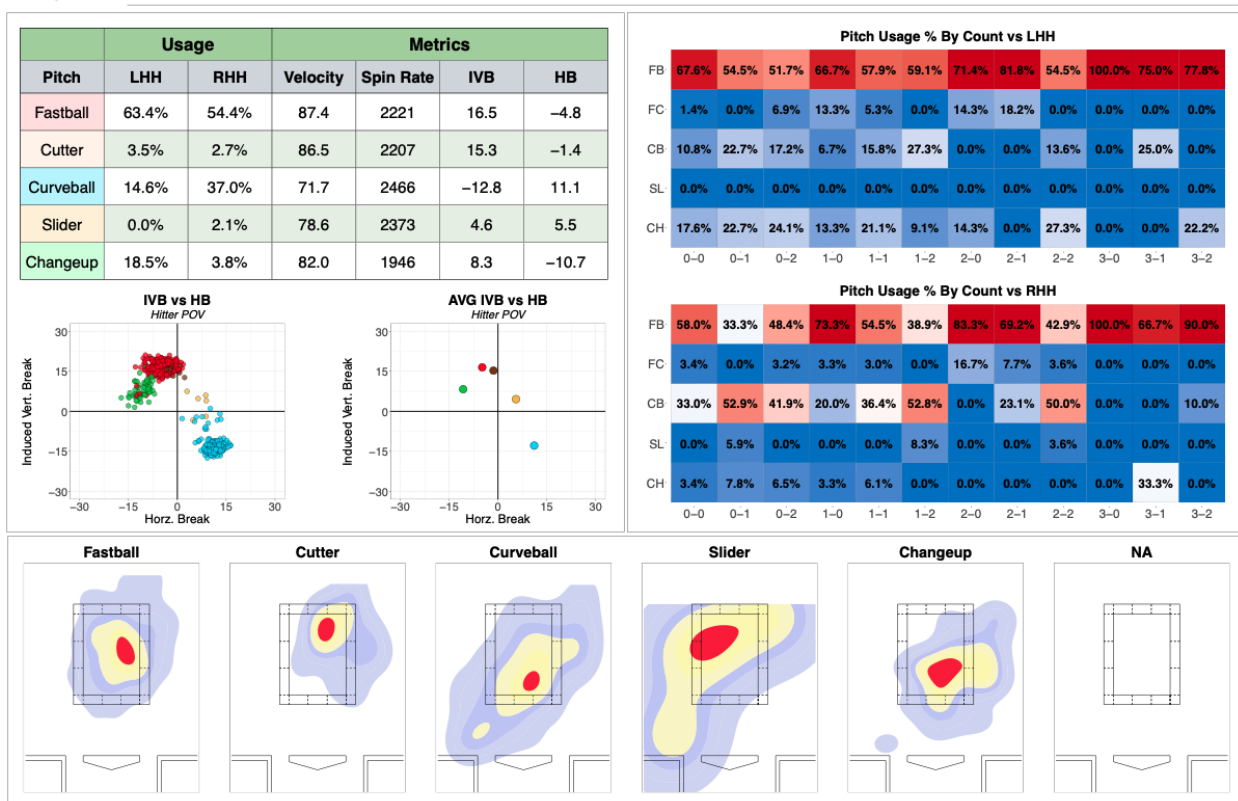
Swing Decision & Results vs RHP						
Pitch	Swing %	BIP %	GB %	Pull %	Oppo %	Hard Hit %
FAST	37.8%	41.9%	42.6%	54.7%	45.3%	63.0%
BREAK	28.8%	47.1%	33.3%	58.3%	41.7%	54.2%
OFF	36.0%	42.2%	47.4%	68.4%	31.6%	78.9%



Boise's Alex Baeza has been mashing the ball –he's near the top of the league's leaderboards in average Exit Velocity, Sweet Spots, Hard Hits, and Barrels. To him, this level of success goes deeper than just developing a powerful swing. He describes himself as "selectively aggressive when hitting, especially early in the count. I'm not afraid to take strike one if it's a borderline strike or just a good pitcher's pitch." This approach allows him to focus on his "hot zones" and marks an area of growth since the early stages of his college career. "I tried to ambush and get the first good pitch... you swing at a pitcher's pitch and your at-bat is over." His emphasis on this approach contributes to his low 15% chase rate, and it beats him up when he strays from it. "I don't necessarily get upset when I get out in a game, what really eats at me is when I get out because I expanded out of the strike zone." Along with a strong core of teammates that can bounce ideas off one another and an innovative coaching staff that focuses on body health and preparation for whatever is thrown their way, Baeza is primed to continue hitting the ball hard in the latter stages of this PBL season and looks forward to each upcoming opportunity. "Nobody cares what you did yesterday, rent is due today."






## McLain Harris – Pitcher Scouting Report






Second-year PBL vet McLain Harris of Billings describes the mind games happening 60'6" away from the plate. The numbers see him as a zone-pounder – his 73% first pitch strike percentage is by far the highest in the league – and he echoes this with his approach. “There’s a lot of great hitters in this league and if you can start off 73% of the hitters you face 0-1, that opens the door and gives you an opportunity to throw whatever pitch you want... if you can flip in a curveball first pitch, a lot of guys aren’t gonna be looking for that.” Harris enjoys keeping hitters on their heels early by mixing it up, and knows that it’s only part of the equation – it has helped him to force hitters into a 30% chase rate on pitches out of the zone. “When you’re filling up the zone, they’re thinking ‘alright, I gotta swing’... you’ve been flipping curveballs in, then it’s below the zone and they’re swinging over the top of it.” Whether he’s coming out of the bullpen or getting the nod to start, his mindset is the same: “being able to fill up the zone and having the aggressive mindset to put the pressure on the hitter.” Harris’ focus on execution is something he hopes to continue building upon as the season rolls on.




### Average Exit Velocity

Exit Velocity is the speed in mph with which the ball leaves the bat on contact. A higher exit velocity for hitters gives a better chance of success, while a lower exit velocity allowed by pitchers helps their defense get more outs.

Batting Leaderboard			
Rk	Player	Team	Exit Velocity (mph)
1	Reese Alexiades		91.92
2	Jackson Coutts		90.12
3	Alex Baeza		90.05

Batting Team Leaderboard		
Rk	Team	Exit Velocity (mph)
1		85.36
2		85.17
3		84.67




Pitching Leaderboard			
Rk	Player	Team	Exit Velocity (mph)
1	John Natoli		76.64
2	John LaRossa		78.37
3	Brandon Kaminer		79.54




Pitching Team Leaderboard		
Rk	Team	Exit Velocity (mph)
1		82.86
2		83.61
3		83.98

As expected, three of the league's most productive hitters and three of its best offenses have been hitting the ball the hardest. On the other side, two quality relievers in Natoli and LaRossa stand out from the pack in inducing soft contact.

## Hard Hits, Sweet Spots and Barrels

Exit Velocity, combined with Launch Angle (simply, the angle at which the ball leaves the bat), can create some telling metrics. Starting with Hard Hits (batted balls at a speed of 95+) and Sweet Spots (angle between 8 and 32 degrees), we can also evaluate Barrels, a combination of the two. A Barrel is the most optimal contact possible at a given EV or LA.

Batting Leaderboard			
Rk	Player	Team	Barrel Percentage
1	Logan Williams		12.77%
2	Reese Alexiades		10.67%
3	Robb Paller		10.17%




Batting Team Leaderboard		
Rk	Team	Barrel Percentage
1		4.63%
2		4.32%
3		4.16%


Boise again stands out as a team, with two elite bats in Ogden topping the leaderboard individually – and Robb Paller has been quite a spark for the Chukars as well.




## Whiff Percentage

Whiff Rate is simple – when a batter swings, the percentage of the time he misses. This is a good indicator of the best in the game at making consistent contact – and for pitchers, the ones with some of the best stuff. For them, it is calculated at a rate of whiffs per total pitches.

Batting Leaderboard			
Rk	Player	Team	Whiff Rate
1	Jakob Guenther		9.04%
2	Riley Jepson		10.25%
3	Patrick Chung		11.73%

Batting Team Leaderboard		
Rk	Team	Whiff Rate
1		19.86%
2		21.56%
3		23.00%




Pitching Leaderboard			
Rk	Player	Team	Whiff Rate
1	Carter Linton		18.07%
2	Brady Held		17.01%
3	Alfredo Villa		16.84%




Pitching Team Leaderboard		
Rk	Team	Whiff Rate
1		13.44%
2		12.23%
3		11.22%

Ogden is clearly the best team overall at avoiding swings and misses, with Missoula not far behind – and two contact machines, Jakob Guenther and Patrick Chung, cracking the top three for them. Great Falls' Riley Jepson has also been impressive. Alfredo Villa has been a dominant starter this season, topping the list with a couple nasty relievers – the team leaders once again headlined by the champions, as well as NoCo's solid staff.

### First-Pitch Strike Percentage

This is the rate at which pitchers start their at bats with a strike get ahead in the count 0-1, giving themselves the best chance to attack hitters and get outs efficiently.

Pitching Leaderboard			
Rk	Player	Team	1st-Pitch Strike %
1	McLain Harris		73.03%
2	Foster Pace		70.11%
3	Connor Schultz		69.59%

Pitching Team Leaderboard		
Rk	Team	1st-Pitch Strike %
1		62.42%
2		60.27%
3		57.88%

Harris has clearly been the best in the league in this area. All three of these hurlers, including the only regular starter on the list, Connor Schultz, boast a solid strikeout to walk ratio as a result. The two division champions feature at the top of the team leaderboard again.