

This is the first of two write-ups required to complete Level One of the SABR Analytics Certification Course. I was given data from four seasons of two anonymous position players and was tasked with determining which player I would rather have on my team for the next few years. Player A was the age 23-26 seasons of Anthony Rizzo, while Player B was the age 29-32 seasons of Jose Abreu.

After analyzing both Player A's and Player B's statistics from the previous four years, I believe that Player A would be the superior choice to fill the open roster spot. Before diving into their numbers, Player A can already be seen as a better option due to his younger age of 26 and the fact that he is a left-handed hitter. The latter will give Player A the platoon advantage over the right-handed pitchers that make up the majority of pitching staffs. On the other hand, Player B is more likely to decline in the following seasons due to his more advanced age of 32.

To start off with each player's triple slash, Player B has a decent advantage in batting average, but Player A more than makes up for it with his superior on-base percentage. This immediately tells me that Player A is more efficient at drawing walks than Player B. This hypothesis is proven correct when looking at their counting stats, as Player A's total of 301 walks nearly doubles that of Player B, who had only 155. Although both players' counting stats are very similar in a lot of categories, their walk totals create the largest discrepancy between the two players. The ability to draw walks is a relatively immutable skill that can still persist even when a player is in a hitting slump. This is also why Player A had a higher wOBA as well, which resulted in Player A creating significantly more runs than Player B. Also, Player A's 137 wRC+ still beats out Player B's 123 wRC+, proving that Player A's numbers are not simply inflated from playing in a hitter's ballpark. It can also be said that Player B's higher batting average may be due for regression since his BABIP is about 31 points higher than his batting average.

Of course, looking at simply a player's statistics from past seasons may not indicate how he will perform in the future. When looking at both players' "expected" statistics, we see that Player B is superior in both expected batting average and expected slugging by about 10 points each. However, expected wOBA is a more encompassing statistic that considers each type of plate appearance outcome

and gives them appropriate weights. Given that we have already established that Player A draws a lot more walks than Player B, it is no surprise that Player A had posted a higher xwOBA of .367 over the past four years, compared to Player B's .352. It is important to note that Player A's xwOBA data only comes from the previous two seasons, but I still feel that it is a healthy and replicable sample size.

Looking at the defensive side of the ball, it is also clear that Player A has been a better defender than Player B over the previous four seasons. Both players have shown similar range during this timeframe, equating to similar range factor outputs of around 9.0. Two of the more advanced defensive metrics, Defensive Runs Saved and Ultimate Zone Rating, tell a different story. While Player A's totals in the two aforementioned statistics signify an elite defender, with 44 defensive runs saved and a 15.4 Ultimate Zone Rating, Player B can be seen as a below-average first baseman, with negative values for both DRS and UZR. Even Player B's team has taken note of this, as Player B has made more and more starts as a designated hitter each year. This projects Player B as a full-time DH in the future, which further lessens my willingness to acquire him. Of course, the defensive value of a good first baseman is significantly less than the defensive value of a good shortstop or center fielder, but Player A's excellent defensive numbers can still be seen as an added bonus on top of his offensive production.

When putting it all together, Player A comfortably surpasses Player B in all of bWAR, fWAR, and WARP from the past four years. The discrepancy in fWAR is the most notable, as Player A nearly doubles Player B's total, 17.2 to 9.2. It is also important to note that Player A had played at least 140 games in each of the past four seasons. Although injuries can be unpredictable, Player A has shown the capability of being a true everyday player. From the offensive output to the defensive value to the clean bill of health, Player A appears to be the correct choice in every aspect of the game.