

The Breakout of Geraldo Perdomo

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Introduction

Geraldo Perdomo is having a stellar start to the 2023 season: His slash line is .297/.398/.477 with a 139 wRC+, 2.3 fWAR. Combine his offensive output with his defensive contributions, Perdomo is genuinely in the All-Star conversation. This scorching start seemingly came out of nowhere; after a solid trial run in 2021, Perdomo's offense flatlined in 2022. His wRC+ (59) was second worst in the MLB among players with 500 plate appearances¹. Perdomo was still drawing walks and playing good defense at short, but that was it. Compare that to where he is now, breaking out and playing a great shortstop for a surging young Diamondbacks team. However, there's more to it and it's curious to wonder if a regression is coming.

New Season, New Geraldo

Perdomo's prospect profile was solid all-around: he plays great defense, has great plate discipline, has good speed, but lacks real power. After a pretty successful cup of coffee at the majors in 2021, Perdomo's 2022 season, spent entirely at the MLB level, was a gut punch to any optimism. He slashed .195/.285/.262 with a 58 wRC+ and posted 0.6 fWAR, which speaks to how good his defense was. He had -3 DRS and 0 OAA at SS, but you don't have a positive fWAR (0.7 bWAR too) with a .547 OPS unless you're doing something very right on defense. So far, this year has been a rousing success. Perdomo slashed .390/.455/.627 in April. He slowed down in May with a .190/.311/.365 line, but he's hot again, slashing .344/.462/.438 in June through 10 games. His offense has taken a step forward, but not at the expense of his defense; his defensive metrics are starting to show the good defense that he plays. Perdomo has 2 DRS at 2B and SS combined, and 3 OAA at SS alone. That's good for 11th in the majors among SS with 350+ innings played, he's behind Trea Turner and ahead of Jorge Mateo and Jeremy Peña. I wouldn't claim Perdomo is better at short than those two, but he has a better bat than those two. He didn't totally drop off after a hot April, but I fear that these numbers are still a little inflated. So he's outperforming all three

Stat	2022	2023
BA	0.195	0.297
xBA	0.213	0.204
DIFF	-0.018	+0.093

Stat	2022	2023
SLG	0.262	0.477
xSLG	0.282	0.286
DIFF	-0.02	+0.191

Stat	2022	2023
wOBA	0.253	0.382
xwOBA	0.269	0.279
DIFF	-0.016	+0.103

¹Behind Jonathan Schoop

expected metrics by an incredible margin; is it safe to assume an unforgiving regression is soon to come? Maybe. The slugging is most likely going to decrease. His .477 SLG% is even with Bryan Reynolds and Marcus Semien, and his .181 ISO is higher than that of Wander Franco, Austin Riley and Vladdy Jr.

Perdomo's batted ball metrics tell the real story about his power. Besides his above average launch angle, the other three statistics are quite low. Among qualified hitters, he has the 9th-lowest Barrel % in the league, sandwiched in between Nico Hoerner and Amed Rosario.

Stat	2022	2023
Exit Velo	85	85.1
Launch Ang	12.4	15.3
Barrel %	2	2.4
Hard Hit %	24.9	20.6

His average exit velocity is 5th-lowest in between Kwan and On-Base Jace Peterson. And his hard-hit % is lowest in the majors. He's behind guys like Kwan, Esteury Ruiz, Andres Gimenez, and Myles Straw. That's likely why his expected metrics are so low, Perdomo just doesn't hit the ball hard, but we knew that coming into the league; he doesn't have a lot of power, but maybe that's ok.

Most of his hitting value comes from his ability to work the count (0.7 BB/K ratio) and his weird god-like ability to hit with RISP (1.296 OPS in 60 PA). So his power numbers are likely going to dip, but maybe Perdomo doesn't need power to be effective. If he keeps providing his great defense, great eye at the plate, and perhaps league-average, sustainable hitting, then the D-Backs have no reason to worry about his production.

Epilogue

The first section included statistics from 2023 up to June 15, and unfortunately, the fear of regression came true. Perdomo was in fact an All-Star in 2023, but his hitting declined almost immediately after the first half of this piece was written:

When	PA	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	ISO	BB/K	K-rate	BABIP
Up to June 15	185	.297	.398	.477	.875	.180	0.70	17.8%	.350
Rest of the season	310	.214	.327	.286	.612	.072	0.77	17.1%	.262

His offensive production cratered while his walk and strikeout rates remained largely the same. The two biggest changes were Perdomo's power stroke and his BABIP. His first half BABIP wasn't necessarily unsustainable, but a decrease by nearly 100 points will certainly contribute to a step back offensively. His power predictably fell off; his ISO falling to single digits combined with his batting average dropping 83 points line up with the unfortunate gap between expected and actual numbers from the first half.

So what kind of hitter is Geraldo Perdomo. The first stretch? The second? Which one is the real Geraldo. Since both demonstrate extremes, hopefully it's somewhere in the middle. 2024 was Geraldo's opportunity to clear up what kind of hitter he is:

Season	PA	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	wRC+	BB/K	K-rate	BABIP
2024	388	.273	.344	.374	.718	101	0.62	14.9%	.317

Somewhere in the middle. His wRC+ was barely above average, he was still playing good defense, avoiding strikeouts, and finding ways to get on base (his 14.9% walk rate was among the top 10% in the MLB). How did those expected stats look?

BA	xBA	Diff	SLG	xSLG	Diff	wOBA	xwOBA	Diff
.273	.231	+.042	.374	.314	+.060	.317	.281	+.036

With Perdomo's lacking power stroke, this is likely to be a theme throughout his whole career. Perdomo is able to outperform his expected metrics by drawing walks, putting balls in play, and still managing decent gap power (over 20 doubles the last two seasons). Long story short, saber-metrics won't sing Perdomo's praises, but he still finds ways to be productive.

References

- [1] Statistics taken from Baseball-Reference, Baseball Savant, and FanGraphs
- [2] Data manipulation and visualization was done in Excel