**The 2015 MLB All-Star Game, Moneyball Style**

**By: Jake Price**

It’s the Midsummer Classic, the highest-rated all-star game in sports; in just 24 hours the American League and National League will faceoff in the greatest nine-inning exhibition of the year. The best of the best will be there. Perennial favorites like Albert Pujols, Miguel Cabrera, and Prince Fielder, among others, made the cut yet again. Reigning MVP, Mike Trout, will be making his 4th consecutive appearance and 3rd straight start this year. Fellow superstars, Bryce Harper and Giancarlo Stanton, were each selected for their 3rd game as well. Josh Donaldson smashed the all-star vote record, receiving an unprecedented 14 million of them, and his 2nd straight appearance. 29 guys will be making just their first all-star appearance as well. It will certainly be an incredible night for baseball, and always an important one (the winning league receives home-field advantage in the World Series).

So many articles are written every year on the all-star game, that with this one, I wanted to take a different approach. I won’t be discussing which team will win, which guys were snubbed or any of the typical stuff. Even though the answers are the AL (at least in my heart), and Brian McCann, Justin Turner, Arod (yeah you can hate him, but it doesn’t change the comeback he’s having), Clay Buchholz, Adam Lind and others. Instead, I will be looking at each of the position players on both all-star teams (as of July 10th) to determine which of them is the best of the best. Using sabermetric statistics and equations (yeah, I’m talking about Moneyball stuff here), I will attempt to determine the best batter in the game today. At the end of the season, I’ll be exploring a similar topic, but with both batters and pitchers included.

Of course, when judging batters, the most common stats to look at are batting average, runs, homeruns, RBIs (runs batted in), and stolen bases. For most people in the sporting world, these five stats are enough to judge players. Though no player is on track to break any of the single season records associated with these statistics, the all-stars by no means disappoint. Miguel Cabrera’s monster .350 average, Donaldson’s 65 runs (he was the leading all-star vote recipient for a reason), Stanton’s 27 homers, Paul Goldschmidt’s 69 RBIs and Billy Hamilton’s 44 stolen bases are all quite impressive. But these stats are really just the beginning. In this article, I will look at a lot more.

Of the all-stars, how can we truly determine the best batter? Do we go by average or homers? Should we look at RBIs or runs? Do we factor in MVP Awards? Well, Trout most recently took home the AL’s top award, and it’s easy to make a case for him being the best batter again (His .304 average and 26 homers speak for themselves). But what about the NL’s top prize? That most recently went to Clayton Kershaw of the Dodgers, who had one of the most legendary pitching seasons of all time in 2014. But he wasn’t even initially selected as an all-star this season (he’s now a replacement). Either way, Kershaw is a pitcher, and we’re only talking about batters here.

All of this aside, there may not be one definitive way to determine the best batter in the game, at least from basic statistics or prior awards. But a more advanced sabermetric analysis might certainly lend some real insights (and make Billy Beane proud – look up Moneyball if you don’t get this reference).

**Batters – The Basics**

Before we launch into some sabermetric equations, let’s start with the basics. When it comes to batters, four things matter. In other words, four things help score runs. And runs win games. Those four are hitting for contact, hitting for power, having speed, and having plate discipline.

If one were to take just a simple look at hitting for contact, they would quickly realize that a few all-stars rise above the rest. Miguel Cabrera has the highest batting average in the game, currently sporting a .350. Dee Gordon possesses 119 hits as of July 11, putting him on pace for 221 total. And the National’s golden boy, Bryce Harper, has an unreal 1.171 OPS. In other words, he’s getting on-base (making contact) and making hard contact… a lot. All three of these guys, Cabrera, Gordon, and Harper, are all-stars, and rightfully so. But leading in just these three categories doesn’t necessarily make them more valuable batters than other all-stars. In taking a sabermetric approach to determining the best batter, I’ll be counting a lot of different statistics (more on those to come).

The same goes for power, in that one can take a quick glance, and see some players clearly rise above the others. The currently-injured Giancarlo Stanton leads the MLB with 27 homeruns, while a pair of Angels, Mike Trout and Albert Pujols, have 26. Not too far behind, are three more all-stars, each having knocked 25 out of the park (Bryce Harper, Todd Frazier and JD Martinez). In terms of slugging percentage (the measure of power for a hitter), three all-stars currently lead all of baseball (Harper, Trout and Paul Goldschmidt). Yet, having more homeruns or a higher slugging percentage than other players, does not automatically make them better batters, at least sabermetrically speaking.

The only basic statistic one can really rely upon to determine speed, is stolen bases. You could look to see who has the most runs scored (All-star Brian Dozier of the Twins), or examine who has the most doubles (All-star Jason Kipnis of the Indians) or triples (Kevin Kiermaier of the Rays), as it does take speed to score a run or reach extra bases. However, other factors besides speed come into play when talking about runs or extra-base hits. For starters, how hard the ball was hit, whether the defense fielded it well, and how many bases the player needs to run on a given play. Coming back to steals though, it truly does take speed to swipe a base. The opposing team’s catcher will be trying to throw you out, and oftentimes you’ll have just mere seconds to run 80 or so feet (after the runner leads-off). All-stars Billy Hamilton, Dee Gordon and Jose Altuve lead the MLB in steals. They have a lot of them and it’s pretty impressive. But it’s a hard argument to make, that the guy with just the most steals, is the best batter in the game. It wouldn’t hold sabermetrically.

Finally, we’ve arrived at plate discipline. I’ll keep this one short. Discipline comes down to a few things. Are you swinging the bat at the best pitches? Are you making solid contact? Are you striking out or drawing walks at a more frequent rate? Without going into dozens of extra pages of analysis, it’s hard to discuss plate discipline in depth. So for the purposes of this article, I’ll mostly be discussing walks and strikeouts. Of the all-stars, Arizona’s slugger Paul Goldschmidt has drawn the most walks (68). When it comes to strikeouts, the Tiger’s Jose Iglesias, has the fewest (27). Even though it certainly helps, having just the most walks or just the fewest strikeouts, does not make a batter the best.

At this point, you’re probably thinking, well if we can’t rely on just batting average, or just homers, or just steals, or just walks, how should we determine the best batter? Well, now I turn it over to the numbers. Let’s take a look at some real-life, Moneyball type, sabermetric equations.

**The Best Sabermetric Batter**

In this part of the article, we’ll take a look at several sabermetric statistics in five different categories: walks and strikeouts (plate discipline), speed, power, scoring runs and contact. I’ll explain how each stat is found, their meanings, tell you which all-stars rank the highest, and then wrap it up by determining the best sabermetric batter in baseball.

**Walk and Strikeout Sabermetrics:**

1) BB% (The percentage of plate appearances drawing a walk)

Equation: BB (Walks) / PA (Plate Appearances)

Why It Matters: BB%, as well a K% (the next stat), tells us about a batter’s plate discipline; it tells us how well a batter distinguishes between balls and strikes. If a batter is receiving a lot of walks, they are essentially getting on-base for free, and will likely make better/more contact with pitches.

Top 3 All-Stars: Bryce Harper and Jose Bautista (Tied), Paul Goldschmidt

2) K% (The percentage of plate appearances striking out)

Equation: K (Strikeouts) / PA (Plate Appearances)

Why It Matters: K%, like BB%, tells us about a batter’s plate discipline. If a batter is striking out a lot, they are typically not very disciplined. However, a strikeout isn’t necessarily worse than another type of out. If a player is still drawing walks and getting hits, they can be valuable even with a lot of strikeouts.

Top 3 All-Stars (With the lowest strikeout percentages): Buster Posey, Jose Altuve, Jose Iglesias

3) BB/K (The ratio of walks to strikeouts)

Equation: BB (Walks) / K (Strikeouts)

Why It Matters: This tells us how many walks compared to strikeouts a player is receiving, and we of course want more of the first than the latter. If this number is high, that means the player has great plate discipline. If it’s low, the player should start waiting on pitches for something better to swing at.

Top 3 All-Stars: Jose Bautista, Buster Posey, Anthony Rizzo

4) IBB% (The percentage of plate appearances intentionally walked)

Equation: IBB (Intentional Walks) / PA (Plate Appearances)

Why It Matters: Batters are intentionally walked when they are feared by pitchers. IBB% shows the percentage of a batter’s plate appearances that end in intentional walks, typically a testament to their power and run-scoring abilities.

Top 3 All-Stars: Paul Goldschmidt, Miguel Cabrera, Mike Trout

**Speed Sabermetrics:**

5) wSB (Weighted stolen base runs)

Equation: *(SB \* runSB) + (CS \* runCS) – (lgwSB \* (1B + BB + HBP – IBB))*

Methodology: This equation compares a player’s stolen base runs created (in other words the number of runs a player scores, on average, per stolen base) to the league average for stolen base runs created.

SB = Stolen Bases

runSB = the run value of a stolen base (always set at 0.2)

CS = Number of Times Caught Stealing

runCS = the run value of a caught stealing (changes year over year, but is based on the runs scored in a season divided by the number of outs. (-0.377 most recently)

lgwSB = league-wide stolen base runs (0.00377 most recently)

1B = singles

BB = walks

HBP = hit by pitches

IBB = intentional walks

Why It Matters: The value of advancing a base (0.2) is smaller in magnitude than the value of getting caught stealing (-0.377). This statistic tells us which players have the most runs created based on both stealing a base and getting caught. In other words, this stat tells us which players are the most successful on the base paths (and have a lot of speed).

Top 3 All-Stars: Justin Upton, Lorenzo Cain, Dee Gordon

6) SB Rate (How often a player successfully steals a base after getting on-base)

Equation: (SB – CS) / (H + BB – HR)

SB = Stolen Bases

CS = Caught Stealing

H = Hits

BB = Walks

HR = Homeruns

Methodology: The numerator is the number of stolen-bases a player has minus the times they were caught stealing. The denominator counts the number of times a player has a hit or walk, and subtracts homeruns (a player doesn’t have an opportunity to steal a base after hitting a homerun). The equation as a whole tells us how often a player successfully steals a base after getting on-base.

Why It Matters: This stat tells us how successful players are at stealing bases (which requires a lot of speed). Stolen bases by themselves can tell us a lot about speed, but almost nothing about success rate (in other words does the player have enough speed).

Top 3 All-Stars: Dee Gordon, Jose Altuve, Justin Upton

7) GDP% (The percentage of plate appearances grounding into a double play)

Equation: GDP (Double Plays Grounded Into) / PA (Plate Appearances)

Why It Matters: Grounding into a double play is the bane of every batter’s existence. Not only are you out, but you got another teammate out as well. If you’re up and there’s a runner on first, a grounder to the infield can be deadly… unless you’re really fast. The lower this number (GDP%) is, the faster the player typically will be. To escape a double play, it truly takes speed.

Top 3 All-Stars: Adam Jones, Adrian Gonzalez, Salvador Perez

**Speed/Power Sabermetric:**

8) Extra Base Hit % (The percentage of plate appearances yielding extra bases)

Equation: (2B + 3B + HR) / PA

2B = Doubles

3B = Triples

HR = Homeruns

PA = Plate Appearances

Why It Matters: First, I included this stat under both power and speed, because to get an extra-base hit, it typically requires both (but can require one or the other depending on the play). An extra-base hit can be because you hit the ball very hard and have time to get to second or third (power) or because you’re just very fast in the first place. As for why it matters, the more bases you get, the closer you are to scoring a run. And runs win games.

Top 3 All-Stars: Nolan Arenado, Bryce Harper, Todd Frazier

**Power Sabermetrics:**

9) HR% (The percentage of plate appearances yielding a homerun)

Equation: HR (Homeruns) / PA (Plate Appearances)

Why It Matters: Homeruns automatically get you one run, and sometimes even more. They are the definition of instant offense in baseball and widely regarded as one of the most difficult feats in all of sports. They take a large amount of power and tremendous precision when making contact. The higher this number, the more homers a player has per plate appearance.

Top 3 All-Stars: Giancarlo Stanton, Bryce Harper, Albert Pujols

10) RBI % (The percentage of plate appearances yielding an RBI)

Equation: RBI (Runs Batted In) / PA (Plate Appearances)

Why It Matters: Runs win games. Period. Someone has to score that run (get the RBI). The higher this number, the more RBIs the player has per plate appearance. The more RBIs they have, the more they are directly contributing to their team winning.

Top 3 All-Stars: Giancarlo Stanton, Nolan Arenado, Mark Teixeira

11) ISO (Isolated Power)

Equation: SLG (Slugging Percentage) – BA (Batting Average)

Methodology: Slugging percentage, a measure of a hitter’s power, naturally gives more weight to double than singles, triples than doubles and homeruns than triples. By subtracting batting average (which weighs all hits equally) from slugging percentage, you arrive at ISO. In other words, ISO tells us which players are getting extra-base heights and therefore total bases more often.

Why It Matters: There’s a simple answer. You want a double more than you want a single. You want a triple more than you want a double. And you want a homerun more than you want a triple. ISO gives those players hitting the most homeruns an edge. It gives those hitting the most triples the next highest advantage and then doubles the third highest advantage. This stat is a true way to really look at power and gives credit to those players getting the biggest hits.

Top 3 All-Stars: Bryce Harper, Giancarlo Stanton, Nolan Arenado and Mike Trout tied for 3rd

**Runs Sabermetrics:**

12) Run Rate (The number of runs a player averages per game)

Equation: R (Runs) / G (Games)

Why it Matters: Does any team not like runs? This stat is just telling us which players are crossing home-plate most frequently. The more you do it, the more your team wins.

Top 3 All-Stars: Brett Gardner, Mike Trout, Josh Donaldson

13) wRC (Weighted runs created)

Equation: *(((wOBA-League wOBA)/wOBA Scale)+(League R/PA))\*PA*

wOBA = Weighted On-Base Average (#15 below)

League wOBA = League Average wOBA (Now 0.310)

wOBA Scale = Scale used to weight runs created (Now 1.279)

Leauge R/PA = Average runs per plate appearance (Now 0.109)

PA = Plate appearances

Methodology: wRC is showing us a quantified version of a player’s total offensive value. In other words, you can think of wRC as a stat saying “player x was worth y runs to his team.” It should be noted that at the end of the season, these numbers should be roughly double as we were only halfway through the season at the time of data collection. I’ll be conducting another full analysis at the season’s end which will include this stat.

Why It Matters: This stat is the most powerful there is when it comes to quantifying a player’s worth to his team. It literally says how many runs a player was worth, and as I’ve said several times by now, runs are what win games.

Top 3 All-Stars: Paul Goldschmidt, Bryce Harper, Mike Trout

Note: Unlike other stats where the top 3 all-stars have been pretty close to one another, Goldschmidt is currently leading with a 92.4 wRC. He is followed by Harper at 87.22 and Trout at only 79.98. That is a substantial 12 run difference between first and third place.

14) wRAA (Weighted runs above average)

Equation: ((wOBA – league wOBA) / wOBA scale) × PA

wOBA = Weighted On-Base Average (#15 below)

League wOBA = League average wOBA (Now 0.310)

wOBA scale = Scale used to weight runs created (Now 1.279)

PA = Plate Appearances

Methodology: Yes, this should look pretty similar to wRC (discussed in #13 above). But there is a difference. While wRC was looking at how many runs a given player is worth to their team, this stat, wRAA, looks at the number of runs a player contributes to their team as compared to the average player in the MLB.

Why It Matters: Baseball is all about runs. I’m sorry, this probably won’t be the last time I say it, but it’s just that important. If you don’t score, you don’t win. So this stat is huge. As an example, Mike Trout has a wRAA of 39.76. This means he is worth that many more runs to his team (The Angels) than the average MLB player is to their team. It’s pretty easy to see how a team with several players high on the wRAA list, is going to do pretty well.

Top 3 All-Stars: Paul Goldschmidt, Bryce Harper, Miguel Cabrera

**Contact Sabermetrics:**

15) wOBA (Weighted on-base average)

Equation: ((.685\*BB) + (.717\*HBP) + (.883\*1B) + (1.267\*2B) + (1.612\*3B) + (2.101\*HR)) / (AB + BB –IBB + SF + HBP)

Yes, this equation is a mouthful. And yes, it combines a lot of other stats. And yes, that’s why it’s so valuable to sabermetrics.

The constants (.69, .72, .89, etc…) = proportional weights to the run value of BB, HBP, 1B, 2B, 3B, and HR. In other words, constants weight them based on how valuable they are (much like slugging percentage weights homeruns higher than triples, etc…)

BB = Walks

HBP = Hit by Pitch

1B = Singles

2B = Doubles

3B = Triples

HR = Homeruns

AB = At-Bats

IBB = Intentional Walks

SF = Sacrifice Flies

Methodology: Batting average and on-base percentage assume that all hits are created equal (singles, double, triples, and homeruns). But clearly, we see this isn’t the case. Slugging percentage minus batting average (ISO – discussed in #11) is a good measure for how many extra-base hits a player gets, but doesn’t include singles, walks, hit by pitches or sacrifice flies. So the gist of it is, wOBA is the ultimate stat – it includes everything. wOBA combines every aspect of hitting and weights them in just one concise number.

Why It Matters: The entire point of this article is to say that one can’t determine the best batter simply by who has the most homeruns or RBIs, the highest average, etc… This stat allows us to apply the proper weights to each aspect of hitting and tells us which players are providing the most offensive value to their team by getting on-base in the most productive ways possible.

Top 3 All-Stars: Bryce Harper, Paul Goldschmidt, Miguel Cabrera

16) Contact Rate (The percentage of plate appearances with ball contact)

Equation: (PA – K) / PA

PA = Plate Appearances

K = Strikeouts

Why It Matters: This statistic tells us what percentage of plate appearances end in the batter making contact. If you look carefully, the equation factors in walks, intentional walks and hit by pitches (all of which happen without contact). I intentionally chose to do this, because I don’t believe a batter should be penalized for getting onto first base, or the equivalent of making contact. Another thing to realize is that this equation also factors in groundouts, line-outs, and fly-outs. I chose to keep these in the equation, as they still represent contact. After all, if the defense makes an error or fields the ball poorly, the batter could still get on first base. If you strikeout though, you’re done (hence why strikeouts aren’t included). In other words, teams should much rather have contact and have a line-out, then have no contact at all.

Top 3 All-Stars: Buster Posey, Jose Altuve, Jose Iglesias

17) OPS (On-base plus slugging percentage)

Equation: OBP (On-Base Percentage) + SLG (Slugging Percentage)

Why It Matters: This shows a player’s ability to not only get on-base, but to get extra bases. In other words, this stat captures exactly what hitters should be trying to do. It is a measure of which hitters are being the most productive.

Top 3 All-Stars: Bryce Harper, Paul Goldschmidt, Miguel Cabrera

18) SO/H Ratio (The ratio of strikeouts to hits)

Equation: SO (Strikeouts) / H (Hits)

Why It Matters: Strikeouts provide no possibility for runners to advance on the bases. Hits are the exact opposite, in that they are the catalyst for runners advancing, and for scoring runs. And for probably the last time now, runs win games. In short, this stat gives us the ratio of the worst thing a hitter can do to the best thing. The lower this number is, the better.

Top 3 All-Stars: Buster Posey, Jose Iglesias, Prince Fielder

19) BABIP (Batting average on balls in play)

Equation: (H – HR) / (AB – K – HR + SF)

H = Hits

HR = Homeruns

AB = At-bats

K = Strikeouts

SF = Sacrifice Flies

Methodology: This tells us how often a ball goes in play for a hit.

Why It Matters: You can’t hit a homer every time up. If someone could, they would instantly be the greatest of all time. But they can’t. This stat tells us what’s happening when someone doesn’t strikeout or hit a homerun. In other words, when it isn’t a homer or a strikeout, how often is a player getting a hit, as opposed to grounding out, lining-out, flying-out or doing anything unproductive.

Top 3 All-Stars: Paul Goldschmidt, Dee Gordon, Miguel Cabrera

**The Best Sabermetric Batter**

So what does it all mean? There are a few ways to break down the final results. First, let’s take a look at category-by-category (walks/strikeout, speed, power, runs, contact).

When looking at the four walks/strikeout stats (the first section), we see that five different players are leading them. (BB% had a tie for first place). Those five are:

BB%: Jose Bautista and Bryce Harper

K%: Buster Posey

BB/K: Jose Bautista

IBB%: Paul Goldschmidt

The first conclusion we can make is that Jose Bautista must be the best player in the game… just kidding. But what we can say is that when it comes to drawing walks while keeping strikeout totals low, Bautista is King. And in fact, he has 66 walks and only 56 strikeouts. It doesn’t sound that great, but considering he is one of only two all-stars to have more walks than strikeouts (the other being Buster Posey), it’s a pretty big deal. It becomes even more special when you realize that several all-stars have double the number of strikeouts as they do walks (hint: see Justin Upton’s 95 strikeouts and only 36 walks, Salvador Perez’s 43 strikeouts compared to his anemic 5 walks, or JD Martinez at 93 and 25, just to name a few).

**Best Strikeout/Walk Sabermetric Player: Jose Bautista**

The next category was speed, with four different statistics. Each of those stats had a different player in first place:

wSB: Justin Upton

SB Rate: Dee Gordon

GDP%: Adam Jones

Extra Base Hit %: Nolan Arenado

These results were by far the most interesting. Of this list of four players, only one is noted for his speed, and that would be Dee Gordon. With the second most steals in baseball right now, the most last season, and the most triples last season, I think it’s a fair argument that he is the premier player when it comes to speed. These results also reveal that when it comes to these particular statistics I chose, we can’t produce incredibly accurate results regarding speed. They also show that Arenado (with 0 steals and 3 triples) gets his extra base-hits off of sheer power (something he is known for), while Adam Jones (3 steals and 3 triples) not grounding into double plays is due more to great contact, than speed.

**Best Speed Sabermetric Player: Dee Gordon**

The third category looked at was power, with another four statistics in play. The first, extra base hit % had an overlap in speed. I thought that extra base hits would be indicative of speed, however, that didn’t turn out to be the case. Here were all of the leaders though:

Extra Base Hit%: Nolan Arenado

HR%: Giancarlo Stanton

RBI%: Giancarlo Stanton

ISO: Bryce Harper

This tells us a few things, but none more obvious than Giancarlo Stanton is the winner. Not only does Stanton have the most homeruns and RBIs per plate appearance, but has the second highest ISO behind Harper. The guy is a beast. And sitting at 27 homers (1st in baseball) and 67 RBIs (3rd in baseball) only makes this clearer. Arenado and Harper are quite impressive themselves, but are just edged out by Stanton.

**Best Power Sabermetric Player: Giancarlo Stanton**

The next category examined was runs, with three more statistics. The leaders are:

Run Rate: Brett Gardner

wRC: Paul Goldschmidt

wRAA: Paul Goldschmidt

Brett Gardner? Who’s that? No, Gardner is not one of the biggest names in game. In fact, he wasn’t even initially selected as an all-star (he became a replacement). As a die-hard Yankee fan, I can tell you first-hand just how valuable this guy is to our team though. He’s been our unofficial captain this year (no, he doesn’t replace Jeter, and no one ever will), and one of the reasons the team has been doing so well. All this aside though, I have to give this category to Paul Goldschmidt. The guy is batting .340, with 21 homers, 70 RBIs, an OPS over 1.000 (which is incredible), and of course 60 runs. The stats don’t lie, and Goldschmidt, one of the best in game, is worth the most runs to his team.

**Best Runs Sabermetric Player: Paul Goldschmidt**

This brings us to the final category I looked at, contact. I chose five statistics here, more than any other category. The reasoning is simple. When I thought of the greatest batters of all time, Ruth, Mays, Aaron, Cobb, Gehrig and company, I realized that they all had different skill sets. Some had a lot of power, some had speed, others scored runs, and some drew a ton of walks. But one thing they all consistently did was make contact. No matter what the greatest batter’s skill set may be, they gotta make contact. Here were the results:

wOBA: Bryce Harper

Contact Rate: Buster Posey

OPS: Bryce Harper

SO/H: Buster Posey

BABIP: Paul Goldschmidt

So what do we do now? Harper and Posey are in a tie for the category, but most importantly, by definition (of BABIP), Goldschmidt puts the ball in play (makes contact) the most often. There is no clear-cut winner here and depending on which sabermetric stats you look at (those I chose vs. those I did not look into), any of these three guys could take the category. So the only fair way, in my opinion, to resolve this three-way tie, is to compare their basic stats to one another. When it comes to contact, we should look at batting average to see who’s getting the most hits (making the most contact) per at-bat, OPS (combining OBP and SLG) to see whose getting on-base and making the strongest contact, and hits which tell us who’s making contact in general.

Harper: .339 batting average, 1.168 OPS, 94 hits

Posey: .314 batting average, .880 OPS, 95 hits

Goldschmidt: .340 batting average, 1.064 OPS, 107 hits

It’s clear that Posey is not leading in any statistic. Sorry Buster, you didn’t win this one (his three world series in the last five years will probably console him though). So it comes down to Harper or Goldschmidt. The latter is leading in two of the three stats. When it comes to batting average, he just edges Harper (the difference doesn’t really mean anything). But he has almost 14% more hits than Harper. And that’s a big deal when it comes to contact. Harper, on the other hand, has an OPS just 9% higher than Goldschmidt. As OPS is indicative of power in addition to contact, and this category is really looking at contact, we’re going to give it to Goldschmidt yet again.

**Best Contact Sabermetric Player: Paul Goldschmidt**

**The Final Result – Paul Goldschmidt**

He leads two of the five sabermetric categories (the only player to lead more than one). But more than that, he leads 4 of the 19 sabermetric statistics examined and appears in the top 3 on 7 of them. With a .340 batting average, 21 homeruns, 70 RBIs, 107 hits, 60 runs, 16 stolen bases, 68 walks (with 19 of them intentional), and a 1.064 OPS, he literally does it all. And more than that, he’s a balanced player. He is incredible at drawing walks, stealing bases, having power, scoring runs and making contact. This is shaping up to be one of the greatest seasons of all time (both in terms of sabermetrics and basic stats). I’m going to predict right now that he wins the NL MVP and in my opinion he is the best batter among all of the all-stars. The final answer is Paul Goldschmidt.

Note: If you feel that your favorite player got snubbed here (Trout or Harper most likely), this note is for you. Trout is a phenomenal player, who will probably win more MVPs (and maybe even the AL MVP this year). But his stats really just don’t hold up to Goldschmidt’s as of July 10th (check for yourself if you don’t believe me). As for Harper, yeah, I could have picked him. When it comes to the contact category, he did lead more stats than Goldschmidt. I wrestled with that decision for awhile, but ultimately, contact is about hits when it comes down to it, and Goldschmidt had 13 more and a higher average. Harper may have more homers and a higher OPS, but those represent power more than anything.