



# **Milwaukee Brewers News Clips**

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## **Statcast: Nelson's pitch metrics improving**

Despite recent struggles, analysis digs deeper into pitcher's stats

By Adam McCalvy / MLB.com

June 20th, 2016

SAN FRANCISCO -- He's throwing more sinkers and fewer four-seamers. His most-used pitch -- the sinker -- is getting hit harder, but his slider hasn't been hit at all. Does Statcast™ provide any answers for Jimmy Nelson's June swoon?

"I don't think so. Not yet," said the Brewers' right-hander, who is back on the mound Tuesday night in Oakland. "It's not like when we get our stat pack about your next opponent, that it has a bunch of Statcast™ data in there. We don't have consistent records of the last couple of years of spin rates and other things.

"Right now, there's not much to compare it to."

With every passing day, that changes.

Statcast™ debuted across Major League Baseball in 2015 and is capable of gathering previously immeasurable aspects of the game with high-resolution optical cameras along with radar equipment. That equipment precisely tracks the location and movements of the ball and every player on the field at any given time.

As a result, we don't have to be satisfied saying that Chris Carter hits the ball hard; we know the ball leaves his bat at 94.25 mph on average, tops among current Brewers hitters. We don't just know that Tyler Thornburg has a good curveball; we know he spins it at 2,718 revolutions per minute, 14th-best among Major League pitchers who have thrown the pitch at least 100 times, right behind Stephen Strasburg. And we don't just know that Jonathan Villar is fast; we know he reached 21.77 mph stealing third base in an April 28 game at Wrigley Field, the top speed for a Brewer on the bases this season.

But what do we know about Nelson?

Before a look at the Statcast™ data, here is the context: In 11 starts in April and May, Nelson owned a 2.82 ERA, a .686 opponents' OPS and more than twice as many strikeouts (59) as walks (28). Sixty-four percent of his pitches were strikes.

In three abbreviated starts in June -- small-sample alert -- Nelson has a 9.69 ERA, a 1.105 opponents' OPS and just as many strikeouts as walks (eight apiece). His strike rate is down to 56 percent.

According to Statcast™, Nelson is throwing more sinkers (46 percent in May to 52 percent in June) and they are being hit harder (89.2 mph average exit velocity in May to 93.8 mph in June). But his spin rate has remained stable, actually dropping ever so slightly from 2,205 revolutions per minute in May to 2,193 in June, which is good. A lower spin rate on a two-seam fastball generally means more ground balls.

Nelson is throwing fewer four-seam fastballs (23 percent in May to 18 percent in June), and the spin rate has decreased slightly, from 2,382 rpm in April to 2,350 in May to 2,296 in June. On four-seam fastballs, spin is generally good, generating more swings and misses.

Here's the most contrary piece of information: Nelson's slider may be the best it's been all year. Its velocity is down slightly, to 86.4 mph, offsetting a similar dip on his four-seam fastball, and the spin rate is up, from 2,128 rpm in May to 2,351 in June. Statcast™ has recorded 36 Nelson sliders in his three June starts, none of which were put in play.

The spin rates are intriguing to Nelson.

"The thing I think is pretty cool is that different spin rates can make the ball do different things," Nelson said. "You would think a sinker is spinning more than a four-seam fastball, because [the sinker] is actually moving. But it's actually spinning way less. The same thing with a curveball versus a slider.

"I find that stuff interesting. But here's the thing: You can give us numbers, but there's still not a proven way to get the result you want. Showing those numbers is showing the end conclusion. It's not showing the process. For us, whether you're a pitcher or a position player, you're more interested in the process."

The process is up to pitching coach Derek Johnson, who is in his first year on the job. He is the conduit between the Brewers' growing research and development team, and players like Nelson.

"We try to use every piece of information to understand performance. That includes scouting information, coaching-staff observations, and when possible, more specified information from sources like Trackman or Statcast™," Brewers general manager David Stearns said. "The key, of course, is that we discuss any relevant findings with our coaches. Ultimately, they're the ones that decide what information is best shared with players and what information is best kept out of their minds."

In Nelson's last outing in San Francisco, he was charged with eight runs (six earned) on eight hits, but the Brewers committed all four of their errors with Nelson on the mound, including one charged to Nelson himself.

"It wasn't like it was gapper after gapper," Nelson said.

He will work opposite A's right-hander Sonny Gray on Tuesday, with first pitch scheduled for 9:05 p.m. CT.

<http://www.jsonline.com/sports/brewers/ramon-flores-recovering-from-poor-start-with-brewers-b99747428z1-383673081.html>

## **Ramon Flores recovering from poor start with Brewers**

By Tom Haudricourt of the Journal Sentinel  
June 20, 2016

Oakland, Calif. – As the Milwaukee Brewers inch closer to the midpoint of this transitional season of their rebuilding process, they continue to assess which players might be keepers moving forward.

Ramon Flores is getting the chance to show he should be a keeper.

It hasn't been easy for the 24-year-old Venezuelan outfielder, who is trying to recover from an awful start to the season. In 19 games in April, Flores batted .149 with a .216 on-base percentage and .170 slugging percentage.

Not the way Flores wanted to get started with his new club but he has been making slow, steady progress since that first month with hopes of carving a niche for himself.

"It is more difficult when you are struggling but we are playing a game that is going to be up and down," said Flores, acquired from Seattle last November in a trade for infielder Luis Sardinas. "This is not the first time I have started off the season slow. I just try to go out and compete and do my job."

Flores made considerable improvement in May, batting .276 with a .371 OBP. In 16 games this month, he is hitting .286 with a .347 OBP. The Brewers are keeping a close eye on Flores' on-base percentage because it is that one particular skill that prompted them to deal for him.

In 675 minor-league games, Flores compiled a .363 OBP. That figure was boosted by his .401 OBP last year in 87 games at the Class AAA level, split between Scranton/Wilkes-Barre of the New York Yankees' system and Tacoma of Seattle's system (Flores was traded on July 30).

"His strength is his hand-eye coordination and ball/strike discernment," Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "He's not going to be a prototype corner outfielder but if you combine some on-base skills with some more slugging, that's a quality outfielder."

With Domingo Santana on the disabled list with shoulder and elbow issues for much of the first half, Flores has seen more action in right field than he could have envisioned. He had a solid weekend series in Los Angeles, going 3-for-7 with a couple of runs batted in and turning in some stellar defensive work, including a terrific throw from deep right to catch a runner trying to go first-to-third.

"I have been trying to stay positive and keep working hard," Flores said. "If I do that, I think things are going to turn around. I have been looking for good pitches to hit and trying not to waste at-bats."

Flores knows there is still much work to be done to prove he belongs in the big leagues. His batting average has crept up to .238 with a .318 OBP, figures that remain low due to the horrid April.

The major issue Flores faces is that he has not shown enough pop to profile as an everyday corner outfielder. He has one home run in 171 plate appearances, a line-drive shot to right in New York on May 21 against Mets right-hander Jacob deGrom.

Flores is not the prototypical speedy centerfielder, either, so at present he projects to be an extra outfielder in the majors, a role that still could provide playing time, especially in the National League. To do that, Flores knows he must do better off the bench than his current .167 (3 for 18) batting average as a pinch-hitter.

Accustomed to playing every day in the minors, young hitters often struggle with infrequent at-bats off the bench but Flores remains determined to improve.

"It makes it more difficult but I don't want to use that as an excuse," Flores said. "It's tough and it's something that is new for me. This is my first year in the National League. But everybody is here to do the same job and contribute to the team.

"I try to work hard on my swing but the mental (part) is more important. Sometimes, (struggling) hurts your confidence. But you need to stay mentally strong and see what happens. If I keep working hard and stay positive, I'm going to have success."

So, the process continues. As the team's decision-makers divide personnel into the categories of keepers and non-keepers, Flores seeks to land in the former.

"He's 24. We're 150 at-bats into seeing him play," Counsell said. "We don't have to have an answer on that today. We've got to let a young player play and figure it out and get better as he goes.

"I do think he has made improvements. There is some room for growth. There are some things he has to get better at, certainly. I think there are reasons to think he can get better."

<http://www.jsonline.com/sports/brewers/series-preview-brewers-vs-athletics-b99747434z1-383732131.html>

## **Series preview: Brewers vs. Athletics**

By Tom Haudricourt of the Journal Sentinel  
June 20, 2016

WHO: Milwaukee Brewers (31-39) at Oakland Athletics (28-41).

WHEN: 9:05 p.m. Tuesday.

WHERE: o.Co Coliseum.

BROADCASTS: TV — FS Wisconsin. Radio — 620-AM.

STARTING PITCHERS: Milwaukee RHP Jimmy Nelson (5-6, 3.92) vs. Oakland RHP Sonny Gray (3-6, 5.54).

SCOUTING REPORT: The Brewers are playing in Oakland for the first time since 2002. Their last game there was an 8-0 loss on June 12 of that season, and this marks the team's longest current stretch between visits to a city. Nelson is trying to escape a June swoon that has seen him go 0-3, 9.69 in three starts this month. Gray has made three starts since coming off the DL (strained trapezius) and was roughed up last time out by Texas (six innings, eight hits, five runs).

MORE DRAFT SIGNINGS: The Brewers announced the signings of four more draft picks, including eighth-rounder Francisco Thomas, a shortstop from Osceola (Fla.) High School. The other signings: RHP Emerson Gibbs (33rd round), Tulane; shortstop Jomar Cortes (37th), Carlos Beltran Academy, Puerto Rico; centerfielder Jose Gomez (39th), St. Thomas University.

### COMING UP

WEDNESDAY: 2:35 p.m. at o.CO Coliseum. Milwaukee RHP Junior Guerra (3-1, 3.81) vs. Oakland RHP Daniel Mengden (0-2, 2.25). TV — FS Wisconsin. Radio — 620-AM.

## IN THE MINORS

COLORADO SPRINGS (AAA): Josmil Pinto hit a two-run homer in the second inning and Andy Wilkins added a two-run blast of his own in the third as the Sky Sox beat the Omaha Storm Chasers, 4-2, in a game called after five innings due to rain.

BREVARD COUNTY (A): Elvis Rubio had a pair of hits and scored a run for the Manatees, who fell 3-2 when the Dunedin Blue Jays pushed across a run in the bottom of the ninth.

<http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/sports/383645411.html>

### **Brewers sign four more draft picks**

By Tom Haudricourt of the Journal Sentinel  
June 20, 2016

Oakland, Calif. - The Brewers announced the signings of four additional draft picks on Monday, bringing to 24 the total number of selections under contract.

With the signing of their eighth-round draft pick, shortstop Francisco Thomas of Osceola (Fla.) High School, the Brewers have signed all of their top 11 picks with the exception of first-rounder Corey Ray, an outfielder from University of Louisville. And the latest word I had is that negotiations with Ray were moving forward.

Here are the newest signings:

8th round: SS Francisco Thomas, Osceola (Fla.) HS.

33rd round: RHP Emerson Gibbs, Tulane.

37th round: SS Jomar Cortes, Carlos Beltran Academy, P.R.

39th round: CF Jose Gomez, St. Thomas U.

<http://www.foxsports.com/wisconsin/story/milwaukee-brewers-oakland-athletics-preview-jimmy-nelson-sonny-gray-062116>

## **Preview: Brewers at A's**

The Milwaukee Brewers go for a win in Oakland after sweeping the A's earlier at Miller Park earlier this month

The Sports Xchange  
Jun 21, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Oakland A's will have payback on their minds Tuesday night when they open a two-game interleague series against the Milwaukee Brewers at the Oakland Coliseum.

The Brewers swept a two-game series against the A's on June 7-8 at Miller Park. Milwaukee won the opener 5-4 and the finale 4-0.

"I think obviously we went there and they had two good pitching performances against us," A's catcher Stephen Vogt said Sunday. "We also had (Danny) Valencia and Khris Davis out of the lineup both those games. So looking ahead to this next series, we're hoping to take two from them. Hopefully we're healthy and ready to go."

Valencia, who is batting .326 with 10 home runs and 27 RBIs, missed both games against the Brewers with an illness. Davis, a former Brewer, was out with an elbow injury. Davis, who leads the A's in home runs (16) and RBIs (45), came out after the seventh inning Saturday against the Angels with a sore calf, and he didn't play Sunday.

A's manager Bob Melvin said the injury was "minor" and is hopeful that Davis will be able to play on Tuesday after an off day Monday.

The A's acquired Davis on Feb. 12 from the Brewers in exchange for two minor leaguers, catcher Jacob Nottingham and pitcher Bubba Derby.

A's right-hander Sonny Gray (strained right trapezius) will make his fourth start since coming off the disabled list June 5. He is 0-1 with a 3.86 ERA and a .257 opponents batting average in his past three starts. He went 3-5 with a 6.19 ERA and .285 opponents batting average in nine starts before going on the DL.

"Since he's come back from the injury his stuff's been really, really good," Vogt said.

In his previous start, Gray blanked the Rangers for five innings but gave up five runs in the sixth and got a no-decision in a 7-5 loss.

"I just started leaving the ball up and they really put some good swings on it and hit it really hard," Gray said. "I've got to try and stay down in the zone and continue to make pitches throughout the game. Just try to stay locked in the whole game."

Brewers right-hander Jimmy Nelson will face Gray and try to get back on track. He has gone 0-3 with a 9.69 ERA in his past three starts, allowing 23 hit in 13 innings. In his first 11 starts, Nelson went 7-4 with a 2.88 ERA.

Nelson is coming off a nightmare start in a 10-1 loss to the San Francisco Giants at AT&T Park in San Francisco. He gave up eight runs (six earned) on eight hits over 3 2/3 innings. He walked three and struck out two.

"It's very frustrating for me," Nelson said after the loss to San Francisco on Wednesday. "The last three have been completely unacceptable to me. It's just been brutal. I have to move on from that."

The A's and Brewers are both struggling. Milwaukee has lost six of its first seven games on a nine-game road trip, including a 2-1 defeat to the Los Angeles Dodgers on Sunday.

Oakland fell to 2-5 on its nine-game home stand with a 2-0 loss Sunday to the Angels. The A's scored four runs in the three-game series.

<http://www.brewcrewball.com/2016/6/20/11975678/matt-garza-s-return-to-the-brewers-has-been-encouraging>

## **Matt Garza's Return to the Brewers Has Been Encouraging**

By Kyle Lesniewski  
Jun 20, 2016

When Matt Garza returned from the disabled list to begin his season with the Brewers last week, there was a collective groan from a large segment of the fan base. The (relatively) high-priced hurler has had a nice career and was actually a strong contributor during his first season in Milwaukee in 2014, when he posted a 3.64 ERA in 163.1 innings. But Garza killed just about any goodwill he had with fans during 2015 while he struggled through the worst statistical season of his career (148.1 innings, 5.63 ERA) and left the team during September to be with his wife during a complicated pregnancy rather than pitch out the Brewers' bullpen.

Expectations were pretty minimal for Garza in 2016, especially given that he missed the season's first two months with a balky shoulder and was replacing the worst starting pitcher in the majors in Wily Peralta in the rotation upon his return. That makes Garza's solid start even more of a pleasant surprise. "The Count" has pitched 10.0 innings across his first two starts, allowing just one earned run for a 0.90 ERA with seven strikeouts and just one walk.

Though it's obviously a small sample, there are some reasons to be encouraged by Matt's work to this point. His average fastball velocity has remained relatively steady, coming in at 92.3 MPH after averaging about 92.6 MPH during his first two seasons in Milwaukee, according to Pitch F/X data from Fangraphs. After walking 3.45 batters per nine innings last year (his highest mark since 2009), he's allowed only one free pass thus far. If Garza can maintain his current 48.5% ground ball rate, it would be the best mark of his career. He's been able to work out of some jams, too, and his 1.40 WHIP can be attributed to a high .382 BABIP against despite allowing a low 23.5% hard-hit rate.

Of course, there are some causes for concern as well. Garza's 6.3 K/9 matches his total from last year and is well below his career average in that department. He's gotten swings at just 29.4% of his pitches outside the zone, which would be his lowest total since 2010. His current swinging strike rate of 6.4% is far and away a career low. Batters are making contact with his pitches at an 85.9% rate this season, which would be the highest total that Garza has ever allowed. A 93.3% strand rate won't continue and neither will a 0% HR/FB ratio.

Overall though, we should consider the early returns on Matt Garza's small sample size to be encouraging, especially when considering the quality of his work last season. The 32 year old has pitched to a strong 2.33 FIP and a solid 4.04 Deserved Run Average, and with a cFIP of 96 he's projected to roughly 4% better than league average moving forward. Derek recently did an excellent job of illustrating the potential trade value that a revitalized Matt Garza and his contract could have for the Brewers during their rebuilding process. As he put it so eloquently while with Chicago, Garza could be pitching himself out of Milwaukee if he can continue to re-establish himself as a legitimate big league starting pitcher.



[http://helenair.com/sports/baseball/professional/minor/college-teammates-friends-reunite-in-brewers-organization/article\\_42e1a37f-3042-5155-b5c3-78d5c36dd43b.html](http://helenair.com/sports/baseball/professional/minor/college-teammates-friends-reunite-in-brewers-organization/article_42e1a37f-3042-5155-b5c3-78d5c36dd43b.html)

## College teammates, friends reunite in Brewers organization

RYAN COLLINGWOOD / Independent Record  
June 21, 2016

During a West Coast Conference road trip this past spring, catcher Cooper Hummel and outfielder Caleb Whalen -- then mainstays and travel roommates at the University of Portland -- tossed around hypotheticals.

Being selected in the forthcoming MLB Draft was a foregone conclusion for the two seniors, but they couldn't gauge in which of the 40 rounds they'd be taken.

Hummel had no inclination of where he'd end up, as a grip of organizations exhibited interest. Whalen, however, had already been picked once in the late rounds of the 2011 draft out of nearby Union High School in Vancouver, but opted for a collegiate career.

It was the Milwaukee Brewers, where his father, Shawn, is a junior scout, who took him in the 42nd round, the final year of the 50-round draft.

"Hey, what if somehow we were taken by the same organization?," Hummel asked Whalen, rhetorically.

On June 11, the third day of the 2016 draft, the Brewers selected Hummel in 18th round, making a next-level reunion a distinct possibility.

Hours after Whalen sent his friend a congratulatory text -- the two were in contact the duration of the draft -- he heard his own name called. This time, he was plucked in the 38th round, and it was surprisingly his father announcing the draft pick -- the Brewers had selected him again.

"As soon as I heard (the pick), I knew it was his voice and knew where I was going," said Whalen, whose younger brother, Brady, was selected in 12th round by the Cardinals in the same draft out of Union High. "A good memory I can look back on, for sure."

Hummel and Whalen are the only two draft picks out the University of Portland since 2014.

"I was beyond stoked we were both picked by the Brewers," said Hummel, who prepped in the Portland suburb of Lake Oswego. "On Day 2 of the draft, we were both talking to similar teams, so it was great it worked out this way."

The onset of their professional careers beginning in the Northwest also suited their pair.

Since being assigned to the Pioneer League's Helena Brewers, a club based a 10-hour drive from Portland, they've able to take in scenery and temperatures akin to home.

"This is similar to home," Whalen said. "There's trees and the weather is similar. I'm definitely happy to be here. "

In the third game of the Brewers' four-game series with the Great Falls Voyagers on Sunday, Hummel and Whalen made the most of their first professional starts.

Hummel went 1 for 3, roping a double in the second inning, had a run and gunned down a would-be base stealer and a potential tying run in a 5-4 win. Whalen knocked in a pair of RBIs.

The two batted back-to-back at the 3 and 4 spots in college. They batted in succession on Sunday, too, at 7 and 8.

"It was good to have each other's back, back each other up and hold each other accountable," Whalen said. "That was a good thing about keeping us both going."