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# Stars liable to bounce back, or to continue dreadful seasons



**BY KYLE STACK** • Special to amNewYork

It might seem like a no-brainer for fantasy baseball owners to give up on struggling players almost two months into the season. Yet while some players will remain cold, others can experience a bounceback. These players — at three different positions — are going in opposite directions:

**STARTING PITCHERS**

**Bouncing back**  
**Wandy Rodriguez, Houston**  
2-5, 4.30 ERA, 1.52 WHIP

Two key areas are in good shape. W-Rod's 2.7 BB/9 rate is actually a career-low, and he permitted only three homers through his first 46 innings. One glaring detriment is a 5.3 K/9 rate after consecutive seasons with an 8.5 mark. Rodriguez has a 7.9 K/9 rate at home and just a 4.4 rate on the road, the latter of which might be fluky given that he holds a career 7.4 K/9 away from Houston.

**Getting colder**  
**Josh Beckett, Boston**  
1-1, 7.46 ERA, 1.66 WHIP

Where to begin with Beckett? He has a 7.5 K/9 rate, his lowest since 2006, which stems from a fastball that is averaging less than 94 mph for the first time since 2005. As a result, he's throwing his heater less than 60 percent of the time — seven-year low. Hitters have taken advantage by batting .311 off Beckett, their highest average against him during his career by 50 points.

**SECOND BASEMEN**

**Bouncing back**  
**Chone Figgins, Seattle**  
.185 AVG, 0 HR, 9 RBIs

Figgins is on the right track. He can hang his hat on the .300 batting average he's sporting against left-handers, as well as his improved plate patience. The switch hitter has drawn a walk in nearly 16 percent of his plate appearances, a career-high mark that explains why he's swung at a career-low 33 percent of pitches seen. Take comfort in knowing Figgins is still running (eight steals) and that he traditionally hits well in June and July.

**Getting colder**  
**Gordon Beckham, ChiSox**  
.188 AVG, 1 HR, 6 RBIs

Beckham has been bitten by the dreaded Sophomore Curse after a solid rookie year. He's hit second in all but three games, but a six-point spike in his strikeout percentage (23.4 percent) means he might not be ready for the No. 2 hitter's job. He also might be putting more pressure on himself to get hits, not a good situation for a player with barely more than two seasons of professional baseball experience.

**OUTFIELDERS**

**Getting colder**  
**Grady Sizemore, Cleveland**  
.211 AVG, 0 HR, 13 RBIs

After returning from left elbow and lower abdominal surgeries, Sizemore lost his plate discipline. The 27-year-old has taken a walk in a career-low 6 percent of his plate appearances while striking out in 27 percent of his at-bats, a career-high. He's also swinging at an astonishing 33 percent of pitches outside the strike zone.

**Bouncing back**  
**Raul Ibanez, Philadelphia**  
.238 AVG, 3 HR, 18 RBIs

All signs point to a rebound. Ibanez has walked in nearly 15 percent of his at-bats, a career high, and more than 21 percent of the balls he's put in play have been line drives, a six-year high. His 82 percent contact rate (the total percentage of contact made when swinging at all pitches) is in line with his career norm.



(PHOTOS: GETTY)

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