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# Deconstructing: Matt Holliday

By Kyle Stack, [RotoExperts.com](http://RotoExperts.com), Special to SI.com

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Surely you've heard the phrase "Good things come to those who wait." It's a line that **Matt Holliday** must have running in his head ad nauseam after his July 25 trade from the Oakland A's to the St. Louis Cardinals. Finally, he's escaped the offensive purgatory that is Oakland's McAfee Coliseum. At the rate Holliday was hitting at Northern California's version of The Coliseum, a stay at Alcatraz Island might've sounded more appealing.

Of course, Holliday's lack of pop with Oakland wasn't surprising. RotoExperts.com predicted his potential downfall numerous times during the preseason. From Bill Root's [Oakland A's preview](#) (Mar. 8, 2009): "Holliday's ADP is 13.62, but stay away this early as his numbers will plunge in a pitcher's paradise with limited lineup protection." Here's the [The Pick-up Artist](#) himself, Paul Bourdett, in his [Sleepers & Busts piece](#) (Feb. 1, 2009): "I don't think Holliday will be horrible, but a .290 BA, 25 home runs, 90 runs batted in ... are not worth the draft pick it will take to acquire him."

It didn't even seem as though Holliday would reach Bourdett's lowered expectations, as his 11 homers and 54 RBIs through July 23 for Oakland were to leave him perilously close to his worst season in five years. But now that he's in St. Louis, Holliday has become one of the most coveted names in fantasy baseball. How much did Oakland really affect his game and how will St. Louis help him regain his stardom? Time to grab the barbeque sauce and put this on the Deconstructing grill.

## Matt Holliday, OF, St. Louis Cardinals

**2009 stats: .297 AVG, .860 OPS, 11 HR, 58 RBIs, 55 R, 13 SB**

His impact since taking the cleanup role between **Albert Pujols** and **Ryan Ludwick** has been evident. He's hit safely in all four games as a Cardinal, batting at a .571 (8-for-14) clip with five doubles and four RBIs. Better yet, he's hit three line drives, five fly balls and only five grounders in that time span, according to FanGraphs.com's game log.

Those who were savvy enough to attempt a buy-low effort on Holliday prior to his trade have to be relieved



Matt Holliday's stats suffered at Oakland's McAfee Coliseum and should benefit from his new Busch Stadium home.

Chuck Solomon/SI

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with his career numbers at his new home ballpark -- Busch Stadium a/k/a Busch Stadium II. Before his home debut on July 27, Holliday held a .385 average (15-for-39) with five homers and seven RBIs in 11 contests at the '09 All-Star Game site. Despite a relatively minor sample size (39 at-bats), his .872 slugging percentage had to stand out as an eye-popping, slobber-inducing stat for Holliday owners deprived of his power wizardry in O-Town. (The real O-Town by the way, not the fake one in Florida. Take that Floridians.)

Another look at FanGraphs.com took a noticeable ride straight to Holliday's fly ball percentage. It's been decent -- actually, more than decent on the surface considering his 38.9 rate represents a career high. Amazing as it is, Holliday never swatted 40 percent of his batted balls in the thin Colorado air during his Rockies reign. What's deceiving about that rate, though, is that he also holds a career-high 12.7 infield fly ball percentage. This is what makes the 38.9 merely decent, if not even below-average. A man can't hit homers at his normal clip when over 10 percent of his fly balls never leave the infield.

This number could be due in part to Oakland's famously vast foul ball territory. Baseball-Reference.com shows that he's had 17 outs in foul territory, although it's not known how many were with Oakland and whether they counted technically as fly balls or liners. Still, it's clear that one of Oakland's treacherous features will no longer haunt a man who's surely happy to be back in Middle America.

What became ironic during Holliday's Oakland tenure is that his only true superstar-worthy game came toward the end of his ride with the squad. On July 20, he banged out pairs of doubles and home runs that drove in six runners. Amazingly, in his 90th game as an Athletic, it was his first multi-homer game, the first time he drove in more than three runners in a contest, the second time he hit multiple doubles and just the third time -- in 90 games -- that he accrued three or more hits. Read that sentence again to gain the full impact of his unimpressive run with the boys in green and yellow.

He ended up with a higher slugging percentage at home (.494) than on the road (.416), but you can chalk up that statistical comparison to the **David Wright** Theory. In other words, Holliday's home park possibly screwed him up so much that he couldn't even take advantage of road stadiums. (This theory has been created solely by friends of mine who ruin their lives by rooting for the Mets.)

Of course, Jeff Passan of Yahoo! Sports documented another hitch in Holliday's step in a July 18 column. In the story, Passan notes how Holliday tinkered with his swing, including going from a leg kick to a stride, during the offseason. After working through many mechanical troubles throughout the year (he sounds more like a car than a baseball player, doesn't he?), Holliday seems to have found the (leg) kick to jump start his Cardinals career.

As he grows more comfortable into his role, he should begin to receive a vast number of run-producing opportunities. With **Mark DeRosa** occasionally lodged into the No. 2 spot and Pujols set as the No. 3 man, Holliday might receive RBI opportunities like never before. His .282 batting average with runners in scoring position is decent, but even a slight uptick in that category should ensure he finishes with 85-plus RBIs for the fifth straight season. Whether he reaches 100 is another story.

He's had nine 20-plus RBI months in his career and could land a 10th if he knocks in two more runners with four days left in July '09. He surely will need another 20-RBI month to reach 100, but it's certainly fathomable that he could so. It's at least more likely than a 10-homer month, which is the low end of what he would need to reach 30 jacks.

Owners might have to settle for a relatively modest home run total this year, but the RBIs should be there. As will the batting average. Holliday is clearly set up to become a Top 40 fantasy player again. He could even slide into the Top 15 or 20 the rest of the way. With the game's best hitter batting just ahead of him, Holliday is in as good a position in a lineup as he's ever been. It doesn't matter that he doesn't have Coors Field to hit at again, although the Cardinals do play there Sept. 25-27. What's more important to Holliday's season is that he's erased from the pathetic Oakland A's lineup and the equally drought-provoking McAfee Coliseum.

Best of all, Holliday never complained about his horrific circumstances with the A's, never asked for a trade, never attempted to go **Ron Artest** on his teammates. Repeat it with me, good things come to those who wait.

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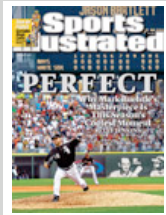
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