

Who's hot, who's not and why it matters

BY KYLE STACK
Special to amNewYork

How a baseball player opens the season is less important than how he continues it. Making roster changes too early is often the fantasy owner's greatest vice — but there are player trends worth watching. Here are six of them:

Hot

Kelly Johnson, 2B, Arizona Diamondbacks

An 8-for-23 (.348) start with three homers makes it seem as if Johnson has recaptured his mojo after a dire 2009 campaign in which he hit .224. He batted .282 with an average of 14 homers and 10 steals from 2007-08, so talent isn't a question for the 28-year-old. A friendly hitter's home park and lower expectations hint at a revival.

Scott Podsednik, OF, Kansas City Royals

Age hasn't slowed Podsednik, who at 34 already has six steals and a pair of



Scott Podsednik (PHOTOS: GETTY)

four-hit games that have contributed to a 14-for-31 (.452) start. With no backup threatening his playing time, a second straight .300/30-steal season could be in store. His lack of name recognition and presence on a bad team mean Podsednik could be overlooked by other owners.

Matt Garza, RHP, Tampa Bay Rays

This could be the year the 26-year-old Garza turns the corner to become an elite starter. The right-hander's commanding 14-to-5 strikeout-to-walk ratio in 16 innings, with a 1.13 ERA, a 0.94 WHIP and a pair of wins in his first two starts, fills his fantasy owners with hope that he can be dominant this year.

Cold: Jake Peavy, RHP, Chicago White Sox

Struggles abound for Peavy, whose astronomical 8.44 ERA and 1.88 WHIP show that the 28-year-old is a mess. He's thrown a first-pitch strike to just 32 of the 55 batters he's faced (58 percent), which helps explain his lowly 7-to-5 strikeout-to-walk ratio in 10 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings. Remember that he owes much of his career success to former home field PETCO Park in San Diego, where he owns a 2.74 career ERA.



Cold

Chris Coghlan, OF, Florida Marlins

Last year's NL Rookie of the Year, who rode a .372 second-half batting average to finish at .321, can hardly buy a hit in 2010. His 5-for-38 (.132) start is atrocious for a leadoff batter, but he could just be a slow starter. He hit .212 through his first 21 games last year. Stay patient with the left-handed hitter, but don't hang on too long.

Jhonny Peralta, SS, Cleveland Indians

Peralta's 4-for-23 (.174) mark does nothing for owners discouraged by last year's .254 average. But this is par for the course for the 27-year-old, whose .220 career average in April is 20 points worse than his next lowest month (.240 in September/October). His No. 5 spot in a good top half of the Indians batting order leaves him in prime position to collect 80-plus RBIs for the third straight season.

Note: Statistics accurate through Tuesday.

Fins get Marshall, near \$47.5M extension

Three days after the Jets traded for Antonio Holmes, a high-maintenance, game-breaking receiver, the rival Dolphins acquired one of their own.

Denver traded Brandon Marshall to Miami yesterday for a second-round pick next week and another in 2011. A



Marshall

four-year, \$47.5 million contract extension was also in progress.

While the 26-year-old former UCF star returns to Florida having caught at least 100 passes each of the past three years, the Broncos were willing to deal Marshall because of his distracting behavior. (AP/AMNY)

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SNY Mets at Colorado, 3 p.m.
CH 9 L.A. Angels at Yankees, 7 p.m.
NHL
VERSUS Stanley Cup playoffs, quarterfinals: Montreal at Washington,

7 p.m.; L.A. at Vancouver, 10 p.m.
SOCCER
ESPN2 MLS, Philadelphia at Toronto, 7 p.m.
TENNIS
ESPN2 WTA Tour, Family Circle Cup, round of 16, Charleston, S.C., 1 p.m.