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# BASEBALL

BETTING GUIDE

PRO EDITION



## INCLUDES:

- REGIONAL TEAM COVERAGE
- BASEBALL BETTING BASICS
- FULL STATS GLOSSARY



# BASICS OF BETTING BASEBALL

By Adam Burke

There are some fundamental differences between baseball and other sports that are worth discussing, along with some higher-level thoughts to keep in mind as the season draws near.

Let's start with the differences and then get into the strategy.

## MLB BETTING UNIQUENESS

### BASEBALL IS A MONEYLINE SPORT

Instead of having a spread like football and basketball, baseball is a moneyline sport. In nearly all cases, there will be a plus-money line on the underdog and a minus-money line on the favorite, something like -140 and +120.

The moneyline odds, much like in other sports, convert to an implied win probability, which is how the sportsbooks set the odds and how bettors analyze which side they want to bet.

You can bet a version of a spread called the "run line", which is traditionally listed at -1.5, but there are "alternate run lines" out there like -2.5, -3.5, +2.5, etc., but moneylines are the most common bet type.

### STARTING PITCHERS DETERMINE THE ODDS

The strength of the team and the lineup are absolutely factors, but the starting pitcher is the most important part of the handicap and they are actually listed by the odds for the game. That is obviously different from something like the NFL or NHL, where the quarterback and goaltender are extremely important, but aren't specifically listed.

A really bad offensive team may have its best starting pitcher on the mound and they won't be nearly as much of an underdog as they would be with somebody else in line for the start.

### 1ST 5 VS. FULL GAME

Bettors have the option to bet on the 1st 5 Innings (think 1st Half) or full game. A lot of bettors will shy away from full-game betting in baseball because of the volatility of bullpens and relief pitchers. Also, you've handicapped the game based on the starting pitchers. What happens when they leave the game is open to a lot of interpretation.

It's not like the QB suddenly gets replaced for somebody with a fresher arm in the third quarter or a goaltender gets pulled because he's tired in the third period. Relative to baseball, other sports operate under a "the game is the game" type of premise. In baseball, the guy with the biggest impact on the game is typically pitching five or six innings of a nine-inning game.

### 1ST INNING BETS

A lot of bettors love to play "Yes/No 1st Inning Run" props. You could think of this as a 1st Quarter or "Race to X Points" prop if you want, but these are growing in popularity, especially because there are a lot of people out there who find baseball boring and would rather have an instant gratification bet in play. These odds will obviously be set based on the starting pitchers and the top of each batting order.

These are the four main differences. There are other nuances, but I'll touch on those as part of the strategy elements.

## MLB BETTING STRATEGIES

### SHOP AROUND FOR THE BEST ODDS

Baseball used to have a standard called "Dime Lines", which are still used in faraway places at some sportsbooks, but most of the market now uses a 20-cent line or sometimes higher.

You want to find a sportsbook that offers fair MLB odds. A "20-cent line" would be like the above example of an underdog at +120 and a favorite at -140. A "dime line" or "10-cent line" would be more like +120 and -130 or +125 and -135. The type of line is defined by the difference between the two odds.

It is always in your best interest to shop around for the best odds and moneyline sports make that concept even more vital. Don't take -140 when you can have -135. If you are betting \$100 per unit, it is a five-dollar difference to bet \$140 to win \$100 as opposed to \$135 to win \$100. Those differences add up. More often than not, spreads are very similar across the board. Moneyline sports can have more variance from sportsbook to sportsbook with the odds.

### ANALYZE THE WEATHER AND THE BALLPARK

Basketball courts are pretty much all the same. Football fields have different playing surfaces, but are still 100 yards with two end zones. Baseball stadiums vary greatly and play to different strengths and weaknesses.

Home teams across sports have advantages based on the crowd, familiarity, and sometimes the weather, but all 30 Major League stadiums are different. Every stadium stores the baseballs to be used in the game in a humidifier to try and account for the atmospheric differences in an effort to standardize the ball.

But, all ballparks and environments are different. In hotter weather, a team that hits for

more power may have a big advantage over a team that does not. Teams without power bats may fare better in the cooler months in April and early May than they will in the summertime because the other team's offensive output will be diminished. Ballparks with deeper dimensions may hurt left-handed hitters or right-handed hitters based on how far away the wall is from home plate.

Some ballparks also play differently based on the wind. Wrigley Field is a prime example, where totals with the wind blowing in might be 6.5 or 7 and totals with the wind blowing out might be 12 or 12.5. All of these things have to be factored into your handicap. Temperature and wind are two very big factors when betting totals.

Remember, MLB teams play 81 games at home (with the exception of international games or extreme circumstances), so they can tailor their rosters and skill sets to their specific ballpark in hopes of having more success.

### PICKING OUT PROPS

Prop betting is really popular in baseball. Bets like "Will [Player] hit a home run?" or "Total Bases" or "Pitcher Strikeouts" are among the most common, but there are plenty of others. The individual battles in baseball make these enticing handicaps because it is batter vs. pitcher or pitcher vs. team for most of those stats.

You don't have to worry about other players on the floor or on the field. It also allows you to focus on one particular element of the game instead of the game as a whole. With the immense amount of publicly-available data, you can look at everything about a pitcher vs. batter matchup and confidently take a position. A lot of people will only bet props as a result.

### BE PREPARED FOR THE GRIND

The last, and probably most important, "strategy" element I will leave you with is that the MLB season is long. It is 187 days and every team plays 162 games. The only days with no games will be during the All-Star Break. Most days will have 15 games, with lighter travel days on Monday and Thursday. You might get 15 games a couple times per season in the NBA/NHL and football teams only play once a week.

It is a very different beast and one that can absolutely get overwhelming, especially during the days and weeks when it seems like nothing is going right. Try to keep a level head and the right perspective. Take a day off when you need to. Focus on your strengths and work on your weaknesses as time permits. Find what works for you and try to stick to that routine.



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# MLB STATS TO KNOW

By Adam Burke

My go-to line when explaining baseball stats and analytics to people is to say that “they quantify what the eyes can see.” Advanced MLB stats simply paint a better picture than the traditional stats and provide more layers of context to help explain how much a player is helping or hurting his team.

You may watch a game and notice that the center fielder isn’t very good defensively. He’s getting a late read on fly balls and doesn’t have the speed to compensate. He’s got a “noodle arm”. Well, the advanced metrics can look at things like “Outs Above Average” or “Defensive Runs Above Average” to show how much worse than “average” fielder that player is.

A lot of traditional metrics fall short. Think about on-base percentage, which is walks plus hits divided by plate appearances  $((BB + H) / PA)$ . That stat really came to prominence around the time that the Michael Lewis book Moneyball was released in 2003. Batting average had always been the go-to stat, but the whole goal as a hitter is not to make an out. Walks are a big part of that equation, thus OBP became a better indicator of offensive output than BA.

But, let’s think more about OBP. Should a home run count the same as a single? Should a double count the same as a walk? With OBP, there is no distinction between the ways of reaching base. Enter wOBA, or weighted on-base average, which is an OBP variant that assigns run values to the manner in which a hitter reaches base. For example, in 2024, a single was worth .882 runs, while a home run was worth 2.050 runs in the formula for wOBA. A walk was worth .689 runs, but a double was worth 1.254. Why? Because doubles increase the chances of scoring a run or driving in a run more than a walk does.

The way I analyze baseball is to utilize the metrics and the statistics to try and find betting opportunities. I don’t want readers or listeners to be overwhelmed by the numbers. It’s my job to explain what they mean, why they are important and how we can use them in our handicapping to find smart bets to make.

I know these stats and abbreviations can be daunting. My only request is that you keep an open mind throughout the season.

The following are some of the stats that I use in my team previews and will use throughout my daily article and my on-air appearances over the course of the season:

## ALTERNATE TEAM STANDINGS METRICS

### BASERUNS

In my season previews, I talk about the BaseRuns record. BaseRuns is a “context-neutral environment” that takes all of the individual outcomes, puts them together and spits out expected runs for and against.

Think about these six events in an inning: HR, 1B, 1B, K, K, K. Depending on the order, a team might score three runs (1B, 1B, K, K, HR, K), two runs (1B, HR, K, 1B, K, K), one run (HR, 1B, 1B, K, K, K). The same six outcomes, just in different orders. BaseRuns removes “sequencing”, which is largely random. This also eliminates the randomness of hitting or defending with runners in scoring position. A big disparity between actual record and BaseRuns record might show that a team got lucky or won a lot of close games.

### PYTHAGOREAN WIN-LOSS

Pythagorean Win-Loss is a standings metric based on run differential. A team’s runs scored and runs against are put into a formula and an expected record is produced. This concept is used across all sports and is sometimes just labeled “Expected W-L”.

## TEAM AND PLAYER MLB STATS

### FANGRAPHS WINS ABOVE REPLACEMENT PLAYER (fWAR)

Wins Above Replacement Player (WAR) is one of the most comprehensive individual player statistics available. It shows how much value a player has provided relative to his peers. The “f” stands for FanGraphs, which is where I pull my player WAR data from, since I think they do the best job of calculating it.

A player with a fWAR under 1.0 is a replacement-level player, or not a very good one. A player with a 1-2 fWAR is a decent role player or a platoon type of guy. A player with a 2-3 fWAR is a solid player that any team would be happy to have. The scale goes up from there and separates the bad players from the good players and the good players from the great players.

### WEIGHTED ON-BASE AVERAGE (wOBA)

wOBA is one of my favorite stats because it does add more context than on-base percentage (OBP). Much like OBP, a high wOBA is good and a low wOBA is bad for hitters. On the flip side, a low wOBA is good and a high wOBA is bad for pitchers. Once again, it just adds another layer of context where the outcomes of reaching base are weighted differently based on their importance.

### WEIGHTED RUNS CREATED PLUS (wRC+)

Using wOBA, we can get to a stat called wRC+. With this stat, a player that has a 100 wRC+ is exactly league average. A player with a 120 wRC+ is 20% more productive than a league average player. A player with an 80 wRC+ is 20% less productive than a league average player. Anything over 100 is good, anything under 100 is bad.

The “Plus” means that the stat is park-adjusted and league-adjusted for the run environment. “Park-adjusted” means that there are factors within the formula that account for the way that Coors Field is a better hitter’s park than Miller Park or that Fenway Park is a better hitter’s park than Tropicana Field.

“League-adjusted” basically means grading on a curve. If a lot of runs are being scored, batters have to be that much productive to be above average. If it is a low run environment, then great hitters will stand out that much more.

### K% AND BB%

I don’t like using raw strikeout and walk numbers or strikeouts per nine innings (K/9) or walks per nine innings (BB/9). I prefer to use K% and BB%, which is simply the percentage of plate appearances that end in a strikeout (K%) or a walk (BB%). This can be used for both pitchers and hitters.

Last season, the league average K% was 22.6% and the league average BB% was 8.1%.

## FIELDING INDEPENDENT PITCHING (FIP)

ERA is subject to a lot of things that a pitcher can't necessarily control, like batted ball luck and sequencing (the timing of hits, are there runners on base, etc.). FIP takes fielders and balls in play out of the equation by producing a pitcher metric using strikeouts, walks, hit by pitches and home runs, which are believed to be things a pitcher can control.

There is a follow-up metric called **xFIP**, which stands for "Expected Fielding Independent Pitching", which is calculated by assuming a pitcher has a league average home run rate per fly ball rate (HR/FB%). This is an indicator used by a lot of bettors that move lines. The idea is that a pitcher with a low ERA and a high xFIP is overperforming and is in line for "Negative Regression" and a pitcher with a high ERA and a low xFIP is underperforming and is in line for "Positive Regression".

I do a lot of regression analysis handicapping, looking for stats and metrics that focus on pitchers that are seemingly getting lucky or unlucky.

## BATTING AVERAGE ON BALLS IN PLAY (BABIP)

This is a really strong indicator of luck. Think of this as batting average minus strikeouts and home runs. A strikeout is not a ball in play and a home run cannot be fielded, thus it is not a ball in play. The league average BABIP last season was .291. Extremes one way or the other are likely to "regress to the mean".

## LEFT ON BASE PERCENTAGE (LOB%)

This is different from LOB in the box score. This is calculated using a pitcher's actual hits, walks and runs allowed and the percentage of runners that they have stranded. Think about ERA and how subjective it can be to something like this. The timing of hits (sequencing) matters a lot. LOB% can be a really good stat to use for positive or negative regression.

League average was 72.1% last season. Like BABIP, extremes one way or the other are likely to regress. High-strikeout pitchers typically carry higher LOB% marks because they are going to strand more runners than guys that allow more balls in play.

## GB%/FB%/LD%

These are batted ball types, with ground ball percentage (GB%), fly ball percentage (FB%) and line drive percentage (LD%). These are the percentages of balls in play and the distribution of each type. Guys with a high GB% are likely to give up more hits, but fewer home runs. Guys with a high FB% will give up more home runs, but fewer hits, because more ground balls go for hits than fly balls. Line drives are bad for pitchers to give up because they are harder to field.

The league average GB% last season was 42.2%.

## HR/FB%

As mentioned with xFIP, HR/FB% is home run per fly ball percentage - How often does a fly ball become a home run? The league average last season was 11.6%. Anything on the high end is likely to come down and anything on the low end is likely to go up.

There are major exceptions. Pitchers with a high GB% could have a higher HR/FB% because they don't have the sample size of fly balls needed to lower the rate. Similarly, pitchers with a high FB% may give up a lot of homers, but have a lower HR/FB% because they have a larger sample size of fly balls.

You can see most or all of these stats at places like FanGraphs (for a library with more detailed explanations - <https://library.fangraphs.com/>) or Baseball-Reference.

## MLB STATS - STATCAST DATA

In recent years, more and more data has been posted for public consumption. Statcast data falls under that category. Housed at BaseballSavant.com, you can see a lot of really detailed statistics for both pitchers and hitters.

I won't hit on them all, but here are several that I use:

## AVERAGE EXIT VELOCITY (EV OR EXIT VELO)

This is a measure in miles per hour of how hard the average batted ball is hit. League average last season was 88.8 mph. Pitchers that are 90 mph or higher give up a lot of hard contact, which is harder to field and often much more damaging. Pitchers that are 87 mph or lower tend to give up softer contact, which is easier to field and less damaging.

## HARD HIT%

This is one of my favorite indicators for pitchers. Hard Hit% is the percentage of batted balls hit at least 95 mph. With each mile per hour increase in exit velocity, a batted ball has a higher batting average and a higher slugging percentage.

For example, batted balls hit at least 95 mph last season led to a batting average of .490 with a SLG of .966. Batted balls hit at least 94 mph led to a batting average of .473 and a SLG of .921. Batted balls hit at least 93 mph led to a batting average of .459 and a SLG of .882.

As you can see, with each mph you go down, the numbers start to get better for pitchers. On the flip side, the higher you go, the worse the numbers get. This is a good indicator of pitchers that are commanding their pitches well. The less hard contact, the better a pitcher's chances of limiting hits and runs.

Of course, you can also look at this for hitters or teams and see teams that make more hard contact than others. The top teams in Hard Hit% last season? Braves, Yankees, Orioles, Mets, Dodgers. Some pretty good offenses there. There is a high correlation between contact quality and success.

The lowest teams in Hard Hit% last season? Guardians, White Sox, Reds, Angels, Rays. Some bad teams and offenses in that bunch.

## BARREL (BARREL%)

A "barrel" is a batted ball hit at least 95 mph with an optimized range of launch angle. All you need to know is that a barreled ball has an expected batting average of at least .500 and an expected slugging percentage 1.500, so think doubles and home runs.

There were 9,716 barreled balls last season, leading to a .719 BA and a 2.402 SLG. Pitchers that give up a lot of barrels are not in good shape.

Barrel% is the percentage of batted balls that are "barreled". Something around or above 9% is pretty concerning here.

## SPIN RATE

With starting pitchers, I'm always looking for decreases or increases in spin rate. A decrease in spin rate can be a good indicator of injury. When foreign substances were banned last season, we saw a lot of decreases in spin rate because pitchers didn't have sticky substances to stay on the ball later and create more friction and spin.

Spin rate matters because it affects the movement of a pitch. A fastball with a high spin rate will appear to "rise" because it isn't as affected by gravity on the way to the plate. Breaking balls with higher spin rates will move tighter and break later. There is a high correlation between pitcher spin rate and hitter success in terms of things like batting average and slugging percentage.

Decreases in spin rate will also affect control and command because pitchers are used to throwing in a certain spot. The ball won't move as much and won't do what the pitcher wants. It's why Coors Field is such a hard place to pitch. The thin air and elevation don't produce as much friction on the ball, so pitches move less, thus making them easier to hit.

Again, all I ask is that you keep an open mind and take the time to try to incorporate some of these metrics or at least read to understand what they mean and why they are important.

# 2025 SEATTLE MARINERS PREVIEW

By Adam Burke

A lot of fan bases are disappointed in their favorite team's offseason, but I would suggest that no fan base is more annoyed than the one rooting for the Seattle Mariners. This is a playoff-worthy starting rotation without the offense it deserves. With a group that finished 29th in batting average, 15th in on-base percentage, and 22nd in OPS, many expected to see Seattle get a little bit aggressive in the pursuit of some free agent hitters or maybe orchestrate a trade to send a starter out and bring a hitter in.

Well, that didn't happen, as the Mariners are basically going into the season with nearly all of the same offensive pieces that they had last season. The offense did add Randy Arozarena in July, so he'll be there for a full season this time around, and Donovan Solano in January. But, that's it. This was arguably the best starting staff in baseball last season and the Mariners will go into 2025 hoping that the offense finds a way to be better.

Seattle is not a small-market city, but the Mariners are treated like a small-market team by ownership. This is an organization that hasn't been in the top 10 in Opening Day payroll since 2008 and has been below the league median every year since 2019. Coincidentally, the Mariners have one playoff appearance since 2001 and haven't won a division title since that year, in which the Mariners went 116-46 and tied the all-time record for wins in a season.

The last two teams have finished better than their record, with the 88-74 Mariners in 2023 more like a 91-71 team by Pythagorean Win-Loss. Had that record come to fruition, the M's would have made the playoffs over the Rangers, who eventually won the World Series. The 2024 Mariners were 85-77, but 89-73 by Pythag W-L. That record, again, would have gotten them into the playoffs.

So, for GM Jerry Dipoto and the rest of the front office, those are positive signs for a team that has won 90, 90, 88, and 85 games the past four seasons. For a fan base that doesn't care about hypotheticals, it isn't good enough.

## 2025 SEATTLE MARINERS ODDS

(odds from DraftKings as of Feb. 24)

World Series: +2800

AL Pennant: +1100

AL West: +250

Win Total: 84.5 (-110/-110)

Make Playoffs: Yes -110 / No -110

## SEATTLE MARINERS PREVIEW: OFFENSE

After shedding a lot of the biggest culprits in the K% department from 2023, the Mariners...led the AL in K%. They were only percentage points behind the Rockies, who have to deal with the atmospheric and scientific impacts of the Coors Field Effect. Seattle hitters struck out nearly 27% of the time a year removed from striking out 25.9% of the time. Mike Ford (32.3%), Jarred Kelenic (31.7%), Teoscar Hernandez (31.1%), and Eugenio Suarez (30.8%) were all removed from the equation and the Mariners struck out even more.

Seattle was fourth in BB%, trailing only the Yankees among AL teams, so they were able to get back some of their lost plate appearances by drawing walks, but all the strikeouts, walks, and deep counts led to a .224 batting average that was only better than the White Sox. And Chicago lost 121 games. At least the Mariners were significantly better than the White Sox in all the other offensive categories.

There are so many things I can look at with the Mariners. The high K% is inexcusable and has to change. New hitting coach Kevin Seitzer was a pretty good MLB hitter and was most recently with the Atlanta Braves, who have had some hitting success. The Mariners also began hitting better late in the season when Scott Servais was fired and Dan Wilson was hired, along with the appointment of Edgar Martinez as temporary hitting coach. Martinez is now the Senior Director of Hitting Strategy.

The Mariners were third in wOBA and second in wRC+ in September with a K% of 23.1%.

They didn't really sacrifice their walk rate or their contact authority. They simply put more balls in play. That is a great sign going into this season and maybe a reason why Dipoto didn't go on a spending spree, instead opting to hope for the in-house personnel to continue on that trend line.

What concerns me is that the Braves were at the forefront of the launch angle craze and hitting the ball in the air at a high rate in T-Mobile Park doesn't really yield the same return it does in other venues. The Mariners batted just .214/.307/.358 at T-Mobile Park. Because all of the hitters know about what the conditions do to offensive numbers, they were excessively patient, leading to a 10.2% BB%, but also a 28.4% K% from having so many two-strike counts. Seattle was 12th in wOBA on the road, batting .234/.315/.392. Still not good enough, but better.



One of the biggest benefactors of the Wilson/Martinez tutelage was Julio Rodriguez, who has to be a superstar for the M's to get where they want to go. Over the final month of the season, he batted .328 and hit seven homers in 126 PA. Arozarena did not have the same spike, but he did post a 122 wRC+ in 239 PA after the trade from the Rays, due in large part to his high walk rate and a BABIP spike. Those are the two most important bats in this lineup by far. Several others need to be better, but these guys need to carry the load.

### **SEATTLE MARINERS PREVIEW: PITCHING**

Led by their starting staff, the Mariners had a top-10 set of arms. Seattle was second in ERA and third in FIP, but the starting pitchers really did do the bulk of the heavy lifting. The rotation accounted for 15.2 fWAR of the team's 16.9 fWAR. Starters posted a 3.38 ERA with a 3.64 FIP. Collectively, the rotation only issued a 4.9% BB% to lead the league by far and they also ranked sixth in K%.

Despite those numbers, Seattle starters only went 59-50 as the pitchers of record, another nod to the offense and how problematic it was. When the Mariners scored at least three runs at home last season, they were 43-7. That also means the Mariners scored fewer than three runs in 31 of their 81 home games. So, the starters did everything that they could, including the most innings pitched as a starting staff with 942.2, which was 31.2 more than any other rotation.

I always get scared with rotations that did what Seattle's did last season, though. Why? Because four starters made 30+ starts. In total, the Mariners only used seven starting pitchers and six of them had at least 12 starts. The only main guy to miss time was Bryan Woo and he made 22 starts over 121.1 innings. Having four starters throw at least 175 innings is so incredibly rare, let alone in this day and age of specialization and starters really only being conditioned to go five innings.

Being blessed like that on the health front doesn't happen often and, as I've already discussed, a drop-off from the pitching staff is going to hurt even more unless the offense can get things going in the right direction. Logan Gilbert, George Kirby, Bryce Miller, and Luis Castillo all had ERAs of 3.64 or lower and FIPs of 3.91 or lower. There were 29 starters total that qualified for the ERA title and had a 3.64 or lower and Seattle had four of them. That is extreme dominance, to say the least.

I don't have much more to add here. The Mariners have Emerson Hancock, but that's really about it in terms of proven depth, so they'll have to stay healthy. For the sake of the season, those five guys above will have to stay healthy. Jackson Kowar could be an option in the summer after recovering from Tommy John surgery, but he has a 9.12 ERA and a 5.99 FIP in 74 MLB innings and hasn't started at the MLB level since 2021.

Seattle will have to thread the needle here. To this point, Gilbert, Castillo, and Kirby have been workhorses. Miller took the big leap in innings and production last season. Woo might be next. But, these five guys are collectively the most important starting pitchers in baseball, unless the offense can create some margin for error.

The Mariners bullpen was ninth in ERA and 15th in FIP, as a high walk rate cut into a high strikeout rate. They're basically running it back with the same group sans Austin Voth, who signed in Japan, and Ryne Stanek, who finished last season with the Mets anyway.

### **SEATTLE MARINERS PLAYER TO WATCH**

#### **OF Victor Robles**

The most pleasant surprise of the 2024 season for the Mariners was Robles. The Nationals got tired of waiting on him to blossom in June and released him. Seattle picked him up, and he proceeded to bat .328/.393/.467 with a .375 wOBA and a 154 wRC+. Prior to that, the only seasons in which Robles was an above-average hitter were 2018 (66 PA) and 2023 (126 PA). For his career, he's only a .247/.321/.370 hitter with a 90 wRC+. He was a top-10 prospect by Baseball Prospectus in 2017, 2018, and 2019, but never panned out...

Until he joined the Mariners. Obviously, everybody in the baseball community is very skeptical of the breakout. He ran a .370 BABIP, which is possible with his speed, as he stole 34 bases in 91 games. But, his contact quality is really poor. His sub-30% Hard Hit% and sub-7% Barrel% are well below league average. His average exit velocity of 86.7 mph was also poor. He did play well in the field, but I don't really see any reasons to buy into the offensive uptick.

The one caveat to that is that Robles slashed .389/.465/.528 in the final month of the season. His .459 BABIP was remarkably unsustainable, but that was a big chunk of time after Wilson and Martinez took over on the coaching staff. He did up his average exit velo to 89 mph and his Hard Hit% to 30.9% in that time. I still think it was an outlier, and I think the Mariners will find out the hard way.

### **SEATTLE MARINERS SEASON WIN TOTAL ODDS & PREDICTION**

I really want to believe in the Mariners. I have before. I've mostly been right in taking the pulse of this team. The pitching staff is exceptional. The offense is underwhelming. Lather, rinse, repeat. And the Mariners leave their rotation zero wiggle room for injury or any other hiccup.

The returns from the last month and a half of the 2024 season are encouraging, though. I like the Seitzer hire, and I like that Martinez is around more. Seattle went 21-13 on Wilson's watch, and the vibes around the team seemed better as more wins came. From the time Wilson took over (Aug. 23) until the end of the season, the only offenses with a higher wOBA were the Dodgers, Diamondbacks, Cubs, and Phillies. The Mariners were 18th in K% and second in BB%. Something clicked.

Can it click and stay throughout the season? Can the pitching staff hold up? This is the type of team I usually want to bet on for a win total because I think the range of outcomes is pretty wide. Given the same health, I think this team does better than 84.5 wins. Hardly a guarantee. Which is why I'd rather gamble on some markets. Mariners to be the No. 3 seed is +750. That's better than +250 to win the division. They're +800 to be the No. 2 seed. If you think the ceiling for this team is 90-something wins, the AL Central champ may not get that. I think those are two worthwhile ways to explore betting the Mariners with a lower-risk, higher-reward play.

**Lean: Over 84.5; Picks: Mariners No. 3 Seed (+750); No. 2 Seed (+800)**