

# Mel Rojas Jr. Offensive Evaluation

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# Introduction

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Mel Rojas Jr.		
OF	Bats: Switch	Throws: R
6'2, 224 lbs	5/24/1990	Age: 30

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Mel Rojas Jr. has been with the KT Wiz for most of the last four years + one half-season stint with the Atlanta Braves AAA-squad in 2017. He was drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2010 but never reached their big-league roster. He joined the KT Wiz in 2017 and has seen an incredible amount of success, culminating in a KBO MVP award for his near-Triple Crown 2020 season, the best year of his KBO career, posting a 179 wRC+ in 2020.

Rojas Jr. proved to be a consistent power hitter with a propensity to hit the ball in the air to all fields from both sides of the plate. He does have a tendency to pull groundballs as an LHH; I was unable to gather enough data to make a similar observation for Rojas Jr. as an RHH. In 2020, Rojas posted the second-highest BB% of his KBO career and kept his SwStr% around the KBO average. His K% is higher than the KBO average but is not at a point where he's likely to strike out too much against MLB pitching to be effective.

Rojas Jr. has reinvented himself in the KBO where he's found consistent playing time and turned into one of the best power hitters in recent KBO history. He's never received a single MLB at-bat, but I believe that his success the last few seasons warrants a look for Rojas on an MLB roster. He hits the ball incredibly hard, recording a max exit velocity of at least 180.8 km/h or 112.3 mph, which would have tied for 54th in MLB last season. Rojas' combination of strength and consistent fly ball batted ball profile are excellent attributes and a good sign for his MLB potential. He has played all over the outfield, mostly in RF and CF in the KBO (likely LF/RF in MLB), and, with his ability to hit well as an RHH and an LHH, should be capable of playing every day.

# Stats & Graphics

Table 2: Stats from FanGraphs for Mel Rojas Jr.

Season	Team	PA	BB%	K%	BB/K	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	BABIP	wOBA	wRC+
2017	Wiz	367	6.3	22.1	0.28	0.301	0.351	0.560	0.911	0.346	0.389	125
2017	AAA	236	7.6	21.2	0.36	0.259	0.318	0.406	0.723	0.306	0.321	99
2018	Wiz	645	11	22	0.5	0.305	0.388	0.590	0.979	0.339	0.412	139
2019	Wiz	578	8.5	20.8	0.41	0.322	0.381	0.530	0.910	0.377	0.408	148
2020	Wiz	628	10.4	21	0.49	0.349	0.417	0.680	1.097	0.383	0.470	179

Table 3: Mel Rojas Jr. Charted Stats

Hitter	Pitches	wOBA	ExwOBA	ExwOBACON	SwStr%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
RHH	105	0.433	0.479	0.550	9.5	15.2	43.8	78.3
LHH	261	0.483	0.402	0.452	11.1	14.2	48.7	77.2
KBO	29734	0.337	0.338	0.361	10.4	17.2	47.1	77.8

Table 4: Mel Rojas Jr. Batted Ball Profile

Hitter	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Medium%	Hard%	Pull%	Straight%	Oppo%
RHH	11	36.4	27.3	36.4	0.0	18.2	18.2	63.6	36.4	36.4	27.3
LHH	47	34.0	36.2	25.5	4.3	14.9	36.2	48.9	36.2	31.9	31.9
KBO		51.2	26.0	14.0	8.7	30.4	40.8	28.7	34.1	42.8	23.1

Table 5: Mel Rojas Jr. Stats by Pitch Type

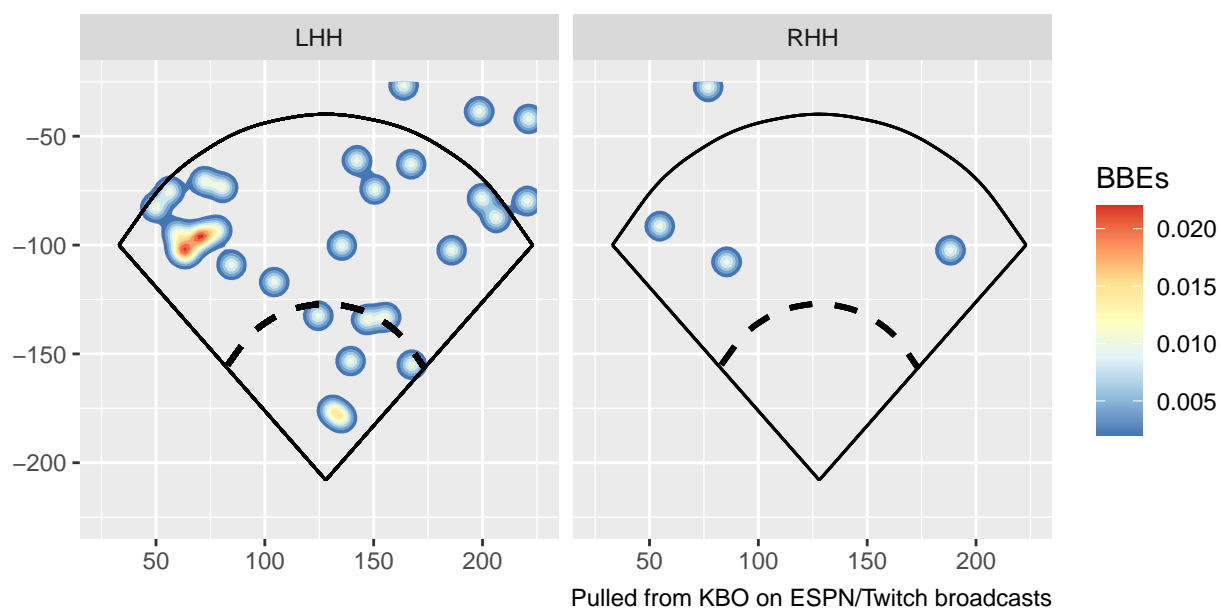
Bats	Pitch Type	Pitches	wOBA	ExwOBA	ExwOBACON	SwStr%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
LHH	Fastball	148	0.431	0.411	0.417	7.4	13.5	49.3	84.9
LHH	Breaking	77	0.465	0.348	0.485	16.9	19.5	46.8	63.9
RHH	Fastball	54	0.578	0.607	0.740	5.6	16.7	44.4	87.5
LHH	Offspeed	35	0.700	0.529	0.501	14.3	5.7	48.6	70.6
RHH	Breaking	34	0.335	0.243	0.233	14.7	17.6	41.2	64.3
RHH	Offspeed	17	0.249	0.440	0.381	11.8	5.9	47.1	75.0

Table 6: Mel Rojas Jr. Batted Ball Profile by Pitch Type

Bats	Pitch	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%	Pull%	Strght%	Oppo%
LHH	Fastball	25	36.0	36.0	20.0	8	20.0	36.0	44.0	16.0	36.0	48.0
LHH	Breaking	14	28.6	35.7	35.7	0	7.1	42.9	50.0	64.3	14.3	21.4
LHH	Offspeed	8	37.5	37.5	25.0	0	12.5	25.0	62.5	50.0	50.0	0.0
RHH	Fastball	6	0.0	33.3	66.7	0	0.0	0.0	100.0	33.3	50.0	16.7
RHH	Offspeed	3	66.7	33.3	0.0	0	33.3	33.3	33.3	33.3	0.0	66.7
RHH	Breaking	2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0

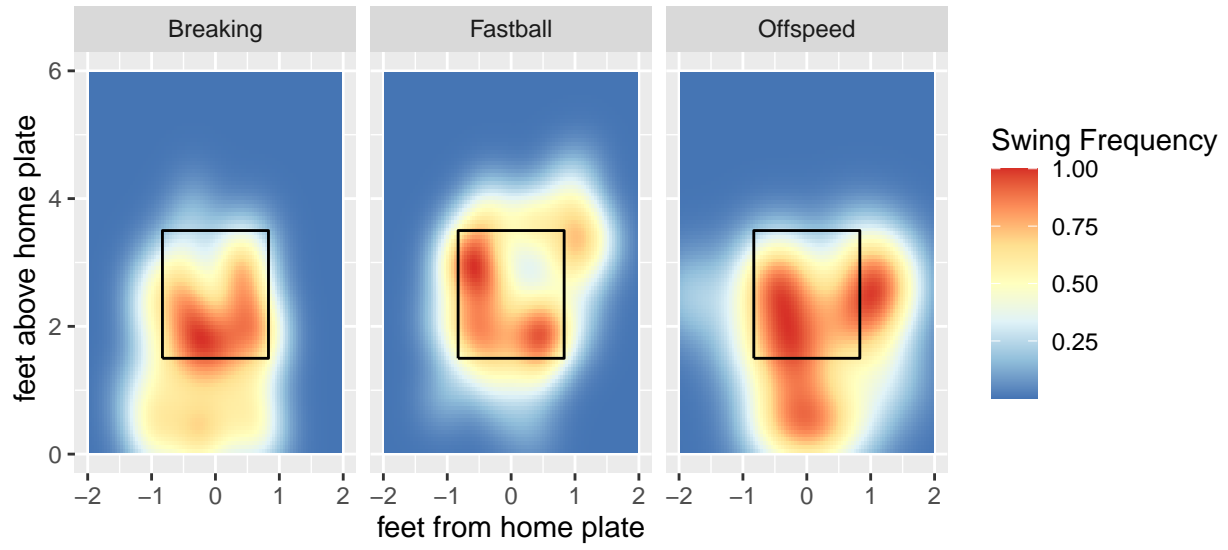
### Batted Ball Data for Mel Rojas Jr.

Data for charted BBEs from ~ 9/03 to Present



# Mel Rojas Jr. Swing Profile

Pitcher Perspective



Data pulled from KBO on ESPN/Twitch Broadcasts

# Swinging Strikes

Pitcher Perspective

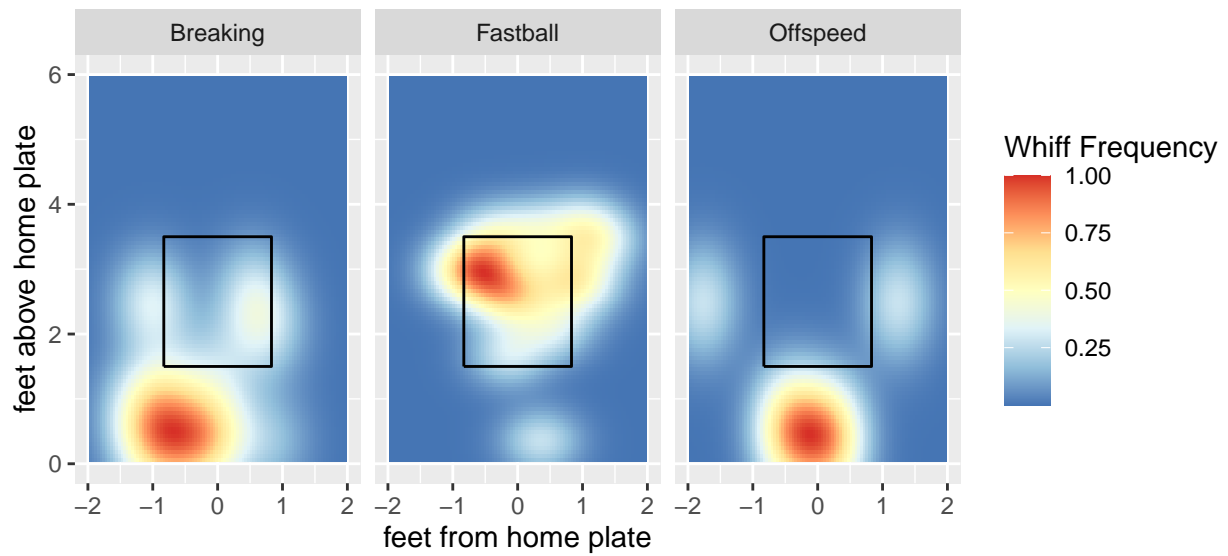


Table 7: Mel Rojas Jr. Plate Discipline Stats

Side	Region	Pitches	Swing%	Contact%	KBO Swing%	KBO Contact%
LHH	Shadow	108	60.2	86.2	57.0	83.3
LHH	Chase	97	35.1	55.9	29.0	54.5
LHH	Heart	40	70.0	82.1	72.2	87.4
LHH	Waste	15	0.0	NaN	4.4	25.9
RHH	Shadow	45	57.8	80.8	57.0	83.3
RHH	Chase	40	25.0	60.0	29.0	54.5
RHH	Heart	11	81.8	100.0	72.2	87.4
RHH	Waste	9	11.1	0.0	4.4	25.9

Table 8: Mel Rojas Jr. Baserunning Stats

Season	Team	G	PA	SB	CS	Spd	wSB
2017	Wiz	83	367	5	8	4.4	-2.6
2017	AAA	54	236	2	2	2.7	-0.5
2018	Wiz	144	645	18	13	4.4	-2.6
2019	Wiz	142	578	4	4	2.9	-1.1
2020	Wiz	142	628	0	1	2.2	-0.5

## Breakdown

Mel Rojas Jr. is a 30-year-old outfielder (primarily RF and CF) who has played for the KT Wiz over the last four seasons with one short stint with the Atlanta Braves AAA squad at the end of 2017. After being drafted in the 3rd round of the 2010 draft by the Pittsburgh Pirates, Rojas Jr. worked his way up to their AAA-level but never received a call-up to MLB from the Pirates or the Braves. He joined the KT Wiz for the 2017 season and, after posting a 125 wRC+ in 367 PAs, returned to the Braves AAA-affiliate for the remainder of the 2017 season. That did not pan out for Rojas Jr., and he returned to the KT Wiz, where he's played for the last three full seasons, accumulating 1851 PAs and playing 428 out of 432 possible games.

With KT, Rojas has been arguably the best hitter in the KBO from 2018-2020 and was unquestionably the best hitter in 2020 as he took home the MVP award. He posted a 179 wRC+ and a 0.349/0.417/0.680 slash line with a 0.470 wOBA in 2020 while walking 10.4% of the time (his second-highest BB% in the KBO) and striking out 21% of the time (his second-lowest K% in the KBO). This comes after posting a wRC+ of 139 and 148 in the 2018 and 2019 seasons. In 2018, the KBO was dealing with a juiced ball, but de-juiced the ball in 2019 and presumably for 2020 as well; the changes in the baseball haven't affected Rojas much as he's gotten better every season that he's been in the KBO.

Rojas Jr. was one of the most consistent fly-ball, power hitters in the KBO this season. He posted a 0.402 ExwOBA as an LHH and a 0.479 ExwOBA as an RHH; as a measure of batted ball profile, he posted a 0.550 ExwOBACON as an RHH and a 0.452 ExwOBACON as an LHH, all marks that are close to the best in the KBO. From both sides of the plate, his GB% hovered around 35% and Rojas Jr. rarely popped out. As an RHH, he posted an FB% of 27% and an LD% of 36%; as an LHH, he posted a 36% FB% and a 26% LD%. His soft contact% was minuscule, at 18% as a right-handed hitter and 15% as a left-handed hitter. He also posted some of the highest hard-contact rates in the league, with a whopping 64% hard-hit% as an RHH (on 11 BBEs) and a 49% hard-hit% as an LHH; all of these marks are better than the KBO average. The max EV of 112.3 mph that he recorded on a HR is the highest mark that I saw posted for a KBO

hitter.

There is also more reason to believe that 2020 was Rojas' his best season yet of lifting the ball in the air (well, beyond the 39 doubles, 47 HRs, and 45% extra-base hit%). According to Statiz (which keeps unofficial play-by-play data for the KBO), Rojas posted a 1.4 fly-out/ground-out rate in 2020, an increase over his 0.92 FO/GO in 2018 and his 1.26 FO/GO in 2019 (I had Rojas at an 1.2 FO/GO in my limited sample). According to Statiz, Rojas also hit 70% of his batted balls to the outfield, a drastic jump from his 61% mark in 2019 and sub-60% marks prior. Everything, the data, and the eye test point to 2020 as Rojas' best power season yet.

One thing that can be a concern for hitters like Rojas is whether or not teams will be able to shift against him, taking away part of the field. I don't think that's going to be a huge issue for Rojas; he does hit to his pull side at a 36% rate, just above the KBO average, but he also hits consistently to center and the opposite fields. From taking a look at the locations of his batted balls, we can see that he hits the ball to all parts of the outfield. However, he did tend to pull groundballs as an LHH, which could be a worrying sign. I believe that with his fly-ball tendencies, pulling ground balls isn't something that most defenses are going to be able to count on against Rojas. Rojas grounded into 11 double-plays this season, tied for the 23rd-most among qualified (64) KBO hitters. Of those 22 hitters ahead of him, only two had more plate appearances than him.

While he did post a 21% K% in the KBO, it's the second-lowest mark of his KBO career and in line with much of his MiLB career to date, while his BB% of 10.4% is close to the best that he's ever posted. He swung at about a league-average rate, with a 44% swing% as an RHH and a 49% swing% as an LHH, and had a Swinging Strike% that likewise hovered around the KBO average of 10.4%. We can see that he is a little less patient than the average KBO hitter, with a Called Strike% against of 15% as an RHH and 14% as an LHH while the KBO average is around 17%.

Rojas' swings are heavily-concentrated in the strike zone on each pitch category. Most of his swings-and-misses, however, come on pitches down in the dirt on breaking/offspeed pitches while his fastball whiffs are up in the strike zone. It is mildly concerning that he has a 17% SwStr% against breaking pitches as an LHH and a 15% mark as an RHH, but he still hit breaking pitches hard as an LHH with a 0.485 ExwOBACON while it's hard to draw conclusions from his limited RHH sample. However, as a switch-hitter, that should help negate the frequency of breaking pitches that he sees as he lines up opposite of the pitcher. This is something where I'd want to see more data, both from his KBO stint and as a MiLB player, to draw an informed conclusion on his ability to his breaking/offspeed pitches. I don't think that adjusting to MLB velocity is going to be an issue for Rojas like it's a concern with someone like Kim Ha-seong.

Mel Rojas Jr. has developed into an incredible power hitter in the KBO, hitting for power and average while playing all three outfield positions. He's got a strong arm and should be able to provide league-average defense in the outfield, likely as an LF or RF in MLB. While he didn't quite hit the 216 wRC+ that Eric Thames peaked at in 2015, their profiles and success bear some definite similarities. Similar to Thames, I believe that Mel Rojas Jr. can be a successful MLB hitter for the next few seasons.

## Resources

- Check out Mel Rojas Jr.'s player page on the KBO Wizard
- Mel Rojas Jr. FanGraphs page
- Mel Rojas Jr. MyKBO page