

# Drew Rucinski End of Season Report

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# Introduction

Vitals	Pitch Type	Avg MPH	Usg%
Throws: RHP	Sinker	90.6	43.6%
Age: 31	Cutter	85.7	25.9%
DOB: 12/30/1988	Curveball	79.8	12.0%
Height: 6' 2"	4-Seam	91.7	9.5%
Weight: 200 lbs	Splitter	84.3	9.0%

In his second season with the NC Dinos of the Korean Baseball Organization (KBO), Drew Rucinski cemented himself as one of the top pitchers in the league. With five different pitches, he attacks hitters in a variety of ways, showing the ability to get swings and misses as well as keeping the ball on the ground. Rucinski has been extremely durable as a starter for the NC Dinos, throwing 196 IP this season throughout the regular season and the playoffs after throwing 177.1 IP in 2019. His fastball velocity has dipped from the 94 MPH that he averaged in his last stint with the Miami Marlins (he was a reliever with Miami but has started in the KBO), but his secondary stuff remains around the MLB average velocity for each pitch type. He did come out of the bullpen for 39 pitches in Game 4 of the Korean Series (on 3 days rest), and his sinker velocity averaged 92 mph and his cutter around 87 mph, closer to his MLB velocity out of the pen.

His success with the Dinos in Korea looks very typical to the success that most Major League scouts and analysts find uninspiring, but while watching his 2020 season unfold and digging through the collected data, Rucinski has a resemblance to the most overlooked KBO pitcher who has transitioned back to MLB in 2020. His 2020 season and profile bear a striking resemblance to a right-handed version of former Lotte Giants' starter and current Houston Astros' reliever Brooks Raley.

Given the vertical and horizontal movement patterns of his fastball and cutter, as well as defined splits against RHH (0.298 slugging), I believe that Rucinski can provide value to an MLB club similarly to how Raley helped the Astros make a deep playoff run in 2020 as a back-end bullpen arm or one-time through the order opener. Although Rucinski had some struggles against LHH in the KBO, they are similar to the ones that Raley had against RHH in the KBO; there is reason to believe that if he increases his cutter usage, he should have success against LHH once through the order. His cutter has high vertical movement numbers, as well as a long extension and low release height. He is likely to throw his cutter above many MLB LHH's swing plane that looks to elevate and hit the ball in the air. Rucinski's cutter had the lowest exit velocity of any pitch that he threw against left-handed hitters and looks like a pitch that would present a unique and uncomfortable look to left-handed hitters in a limited dose.

# Brooks Raley Comp

Table 2: Stats from FanGraphs for Brooks Raley (2015-2019 KBO and 2020 CIN/HOU)

Season	Team	IP	HR/9	K%	BB%	K-BB%	AVG	WHIP	BABIP	LOB%	ERA	FIP
2015	Giants	179.1	1.00	17.4	7.4	10.0	0.261	1.33	0.299	71.2	3.91	4.73
2016	Giants	184.2	1.02	18.2	6.3	11.9	0.280	1.40	0.325	69.2	4.34	4.75
2017	Giants	187.0	0.91	19.5	5.5	14.0	0.270	1.30	0.320	74.1	3.80	4.32
2018	Giants	178.1	1.21	23.0	7.0	16.0	0.256	1.31	0.311	66.8	4.74	4.76
2019	Giants	181.0	0.50	17.7	8.2	9.5	0.266	1.41	0.319	70.4	3.88	3.75
2020	MLB	20.0	1.35	32.1	7.1	25.0	0.176	0.95	0.227	58.5	4.95	3.94

Table 3: Stats from FanGraphs for Drew Rucinski (2019-2020 KBO)

Season	Team	IP	HR/9	K%	BB%	K-BB%	AVG	WHIP	BABIP	LOB%	ERA	FIP
2019	Dinos	177.1	0.66	16.3	6.2	10.1	0.243	1.18	0.278	75.3	3.05	3.92
2020	Dinos	183.0	0.69	21.7	7.4	14.3	0.246	1.26	0.305	78.6	3.05	3.79

Brooks Raley pitched for the Lotte Giants in the KBO for five seasons, from 2015 through 2019 before he returned to MLB with the Cincinnati Reds at 31 years old on a 2-year, \$3 million deal. Shortly after the 2020 season began, Raley was traded to the Houston Astros, who have exercised Raley's \$2 million club option for the 2021 season.

In the KBO, Raley's success as a starter was uninspiring, with a 4.13 ERA and a 4.46 FIP over his five seasons. But after returning to MLB, Raley turned in a successful 2020 season, appearing out of the bullpen for the Cincinnati Reds and Houston Astros. He threw 20 regular-season innings, with a K% of 32.1%, a BB% of 7.1%, and an HR/9 of 1.35 while allowing the lowest average Exit Velocity in MLB at 81.7 MPH, resulting in a regular-season FIP of 3.94. He continued to pitch well out of the bullpen as the Astros made a run to the ALCS, throwing 5.2 IP with a 3.18 ERA and a K% of 34.6%. Raley's successful MLB return has opened the door for another MLB reliever turned KBO starter to return in that bullpen/opener role.

Drew Rucinski's two seasons with the NC Dinos (2019 & 2020), where he posted an overall 3.05 ERA, a 3.85 FIP, and a 1.22 WHIP, are better than the seasons that Raley turned in. He struck out more batters in 2020 (K% of 21.7%) than Raley did in all but one season (2018 when he had a 23% K% and a 4.76 FIP). Rucinski posted lower ERA and FIPs than Raley did while allowing only 0.66 and 0.69 HR/9, a mark that Raley bettered only once, in 2019 when he allowed 0.50 HR/9.

Table 4: Brooks Raley MLB Pitch Usage

Pitch	MPH	Usg%	RHH Usg%	LHH Usg%
Cutter	86.8	44.3	54.3	32.2
Slider	82.1	18.8	2.2	38.8
4-Seam	90.1	11.6	17.9	3.9
Sinker	90.1	11.3	4.3	19.7
Curveball	78.5	10.7	15.2	5.3
Changeup	84.4	3.3	6	0

Raley did do a slightly better job of inducing ground balls than Rucinski in the KBO, posting a 1.61 GO/FO in 2019 while Rucinski had a 1.34 GO/FO in 2019 and a 1.12 GO/FO in 2020 (Numbers pulled from Statiz; Rucinski's charted stats from 67% of his season have him at a 1.23 GO/FO ratio). However, some of this difference is offset by Rucinski's 11% pop-up%, which was one of the top marks in the KBO.

Raley has drastic splits against left-handed hitters and right-handed hitters in MLB which was a problem he struggled with in the KBO as well, which is partly responsible for his high ERA/FIP results. Raley's breaking pitches (cutter, slider, and curveball) have an above-average amount of horizontal break, which plays well against major league left-handed hitters. But KBO hitters tend to be more patient and let those pitches drift out of the zone; he had a swing% of 46.6% in 2019 versus 49.7% in 2020 in MLB. Rucinski had a slightly higher swing%, at 48.8% which led to a higher SwStr% and more strikeouts than Raley netted.

As an LHP who gets an above-average amount of horizontal break on his slider, curveball, and cutter, Raley fared extremely well against MLB left-handed hitters in 2020. Against LHH, he posted a K% of 39% with a wOBA of 0.188 and a 2.55 FIP. He struggled more against right-handed hitters, allowing a K% of 27%, a wOBA of 0.352, and a FIP of 5.16. Interestingly, Raley was worst against RHH at home, allowing a 0.468 wOBA and 0.682 SLG.

Against RHH, Raley throws his cutter (54%), and his 4-seam (18%) the most and his 4-seam got demolished in 2020, allowing an Exit Velocity of 95.7 MPH at an average Launch Angle of 24 degrees with an xwOBA of 0.596. He kept his 4-seam up in the zone, and it got hit hard by MLB hitters. He does have a Pull% allowed of 44.7% that is way above the MLB average of 36.6% and does not play well with Minute Maid Park's short left-field porch if righties are pulling hard line drives off of him. His cutter fares pretty well against right-handed hitters, with an xwOBA of 0.221 and a whiff% of 25.9%.

Against lefties, Raley throws a lot of sliders (39%) and cutters (32%), both of which break away from LHH and have excellent whiff rates of 44.1% and 39.3%, respectively. Most of his exit velocity suppression comes against those same left-handed hitters, with an average EV of 81.4 mph on his slider and an 82.5 mph EV on his cutter.

Why are Raley's LHH versus RHH splits relevant to Drew Rucinski? Because Rucinski is close to a mirror image of Raley from the right side of the mound. Like Raley, Rucinski had some drastic RHH/LHH splits in the KBO. Against right-handed hitters in the KBO, Rucinski allowed a wOBA of 0.309 and had an SwStr% of 13.5%. Against left-handed hitters, he allowed a wOBA of 0.349 and an SwStr% of 9.1%. He holds RHH to a 61% GB% while LHH had a GB% of 50% against him.

Rucinski can attack RHH with his best two pitches, his cutter and curveball, while he throws his sinker, cutter, and splitter more against LHH. When Rucinski left MLB to transition to the KBO, he transitioned from bullpen duties to the starting rotation. As he did so, his overall velocity dipped, but he still showed flashes of his ability to touch 93-94; he entered Game 4 of the Korean Series on three days rest and threw 39 pitches over 2.2 IP (entering with one out), and his fastball velocity was about 92 mph. That was on three days rest after throwing about 3000 pitches over the course of the season; I think he's still got the gas to run up his average velocity closer to 94 mph like he did in his 2018 MLB stint with the Miami Marlins.

Rucinski lacks the typical splitter or changeup type pitch that works well against left-handed hitters as a RHP, which makes a return to starting in MLB unlikely. However, out of the bullpen or in an opener role for 2-3 IP, Rucinski can attack hitters with his cutter, curveball, and sinker/4-seam. Against LHH, his sinker was effective at limiting hard contact when he threw it at the top of the zone, using its vertical drop to dip below a typical swing plane. His cutter plays well off of that, both in inducing weak contact up-and-in on the hands and as a swing-and-miss pitch down-and-inside. His curveball was effective for inducing groundballs at the bottom edge of the zone and getting whiffs below the zone. This is similar to how Raley has begun to attack right-handed hitters in MLB, throwing his cutter and curveball inside to get underneath or stay above a typical swing plane.

# Stats and Graphics

Table 5: Stats from FanGraphs for Drew Rucinski

Season	Team	IP	HR/9	K%	BB%	K-BB%	AVG	WHIP	BABIP	LOB%	ERA	FIP
2019	Dinos	177.1	0.66	16.3	6.2	10.1	0.243	1.18	0.278	75.3	3.05	3.92
2020	Dinos	183.0	0.69	21.7	7.4	14.3	0.246	1.26	0.305	78.6	3.05	3.79

Pitch locations for Drew Rucinski. Data for pitches from starts was manually charted from ESPN/Twitch broadcasts for Rucinski's June 28th, July 16th, and July 31st through Playoffs appearances.

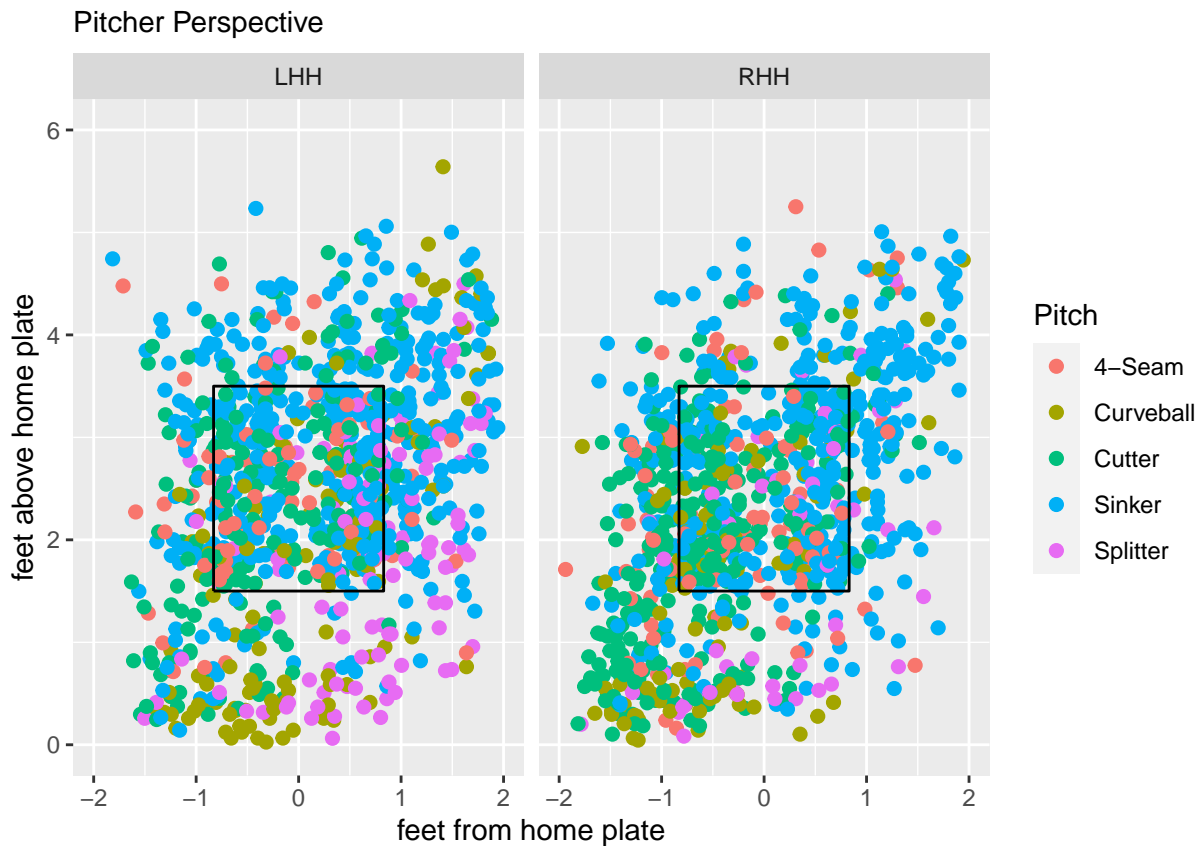


Table 6: Overall Charted Stats for Drew Rucinski

Pitcher	Pitches	wOBA	ExwOBA	ExwOBACON	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
Rucinski	2001	0.329	0.318	0.336	27.7	11.3	23.2	16.4	48.8	76.8
KBO	29734	0.337	0.338	0.361	27.6	10.4	22.2	17.2	47.1	77.8

Table 7: Overall Charted Batted Ball Event Data for Drew Rucinski

Pitcher	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Medium%	Hard%	Pull%	Straight%	Oppo%
Rucinski	363	55.4	20.9	12.7	11.0	36.6	37.2	26.2	36.9	40.5	22.6
KBO		51.2	26.0	14.0	8.7	30.4	40.8	28.7	34.1	42.8	23.1

### Drew Rucinski Velocity Distribution

Sinker ~ 90.6, Cutter ~ 85.7, Curve ~ 79.8, Split ~ 84.3, 4-Seam ~ 91.7

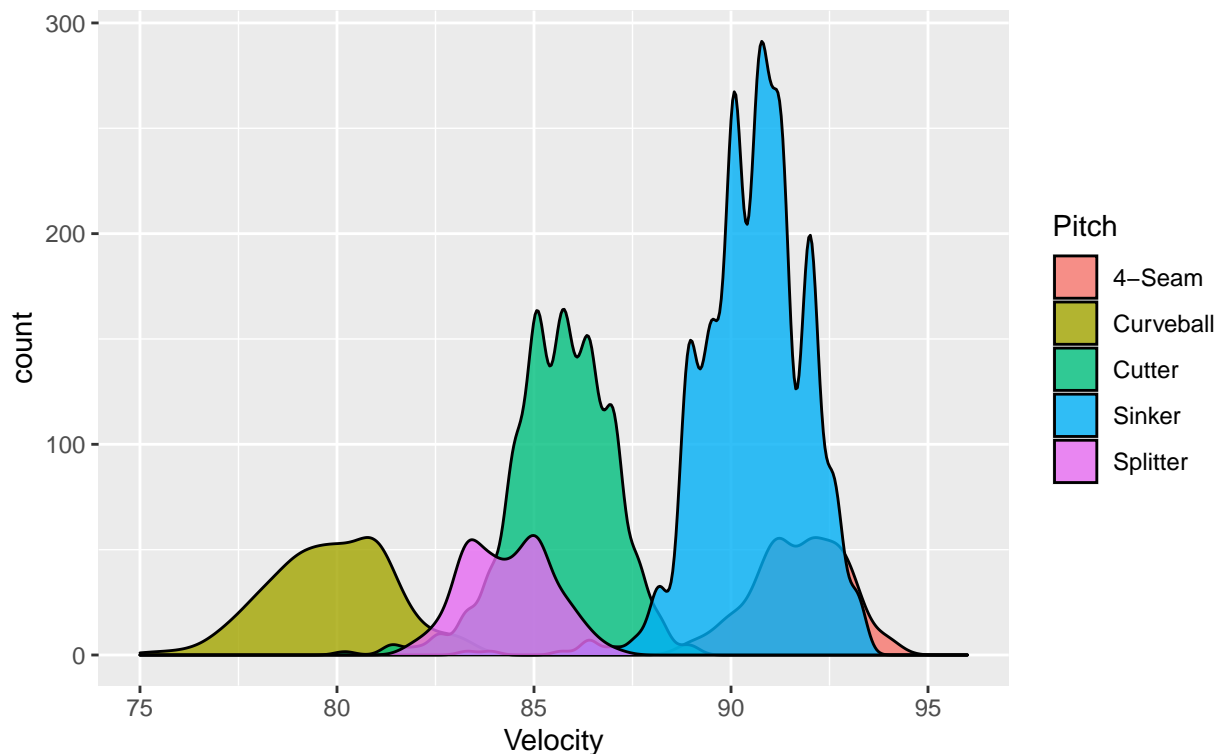


Table 8: Drew Rucinski Pitch Usage by Batter Handedness

Bats	Pitches	Sinker%	Cutter%	Curveball%	Splitter%	4-Seam%
RHH	1002	41.6	31.0	11	6	10.4
LHH	999	45.5	20.8	13	12	8.6

Table 9: Drew Rucinski Overall Charted Stats by Batter Handedness

Bats	wOBA	ExwOBA	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%	Strike%
RHH	0.309	0.307	30.7	13.5	27.3	17.3	49.4	72.7	66.7
LHH	0.349	0.330	24.7	9.1	18.9	15.6	48.1	81.1	63.8

Table 10: Drew Rucinski Overall Batted Ball Stats by Batter Handedness

Bats	BBEs	ExwOBACON	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%
RHH	184	0.319	60.9	16.3	10.9	12.0	41.8	34.8	23.4
LHH	179	0.353	49.7	25.7	14.5	10.1	31.3	39.7	29.1

Table 11: Pitch Type Charted Stats for Drew Rucinski

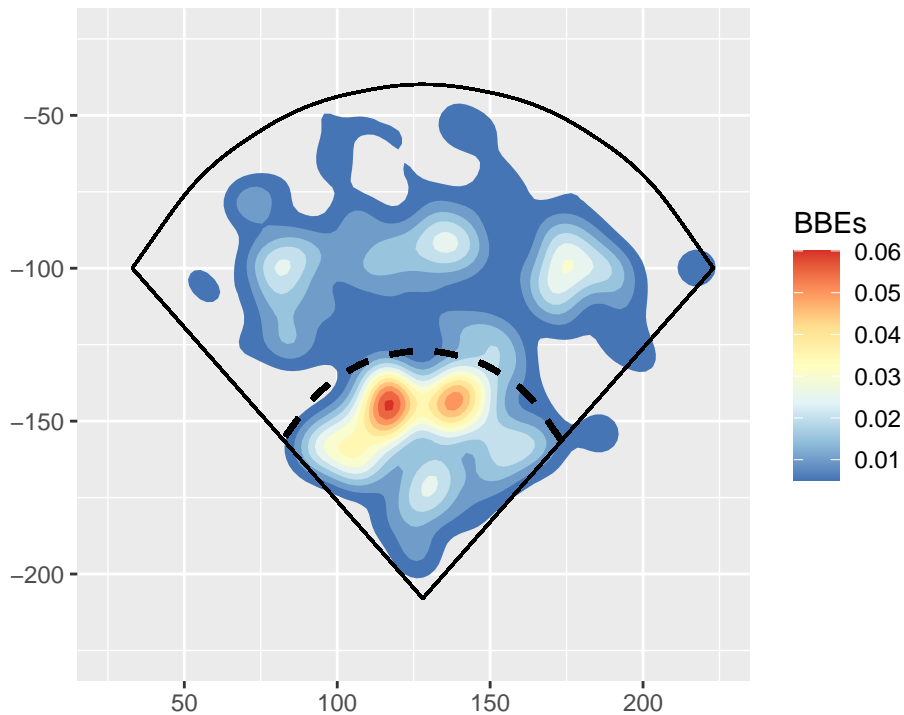
Pitch	Velo	Usg %	Pitches	wOBA	ExwOBA	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
Sinker	90.6	43.6	872	0.353	0.336	26.1	8.5	17.8	17.7	47.7	82.2
Cutter	85.7	25.9	519	0.315	0.296	34.5	17.7	33.6	16.8	52.8	66.4
Curveball	79.8	12.0	240	0.313	0.251	30.4	15.8	30.9	14.6	51.2	69.1
4-Seam	91.7	9.5	190	0.409	0.393	25.3	4.7	10.5	20.5	45.3	89.5
Splitter	84.3	9.0	180	0.153	0.288	15.0	7.2	16.9	7.8	42.8	83.1

Table 12: Pitch Type Charted Batted Ball Data for Drew Rucinski

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	ExwOBACON	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%
Sinker	90.6	43.6	0.318	157	53.5	20.4	12.1	14.0	43.3	30.6	26.1
Cutter	85.7	25.9	0.340	90	54.4	16.7	14.4	14.4	36.7	38.9	24.4
4-Seam	91.7	9.5	0.423	42	54.8	21.4	16.7	7.1	19.0	42.9	38.1
Curveball	79.8	12.0	0.330	41	58.5	31.7	7.3	2.4	29.3	48.8	22.0
Splitter	84.3	9.0	0.304	33	63.6	21.2	12.1	3.0	36.4	42.4	21.2

### Drew Rucinski Charted BBE Plot

Data for charted BBEs from ~ 9/03 to Present



Drew Rucinski, a 31-year-old RHP who has thrown 54 MLB innings split between the Angels, Twins, and Marlins, has been pitching in the Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) for the past two seasons and has been very successful. He made 30 starts both years, throwing 183 IPs in 2020 plus 13 more IP in the playoffs (a professional career-high in IP), and has not missed anytime due to injury. He pitches exclusively out of the stretch and throws from a three-quarters arm slot as he sinks into his delivery.

He had a strong season for the NC Dinos, anchoring their rotation to the Korean Series and the franchise's first title. In the Korean Series against Doosan, he threw 13 IP, allowing just one run, earning two wins and a save. He started Games 1 and 6 and got the save in Game 4 by pitching 2.2 shutout innings. It was a gutsy and impressive week for Rucinski to potentially close out his time with the Dinos.

Rucinski posted a 3.05 ERA in the KBO for both the 2019 and 2020 seasons, and his combined 3.05 ERA is the third-lowest mark in the KBO over that span (minimum 250 IP). His 2020 season was the better of the two, as he posted a 3.72 FIP (seventh in the KBO in 2020) with a K% of 21.7% that was a significant increase over his 16.3% mark in 2019. He's done a good job of limiting damage when runners get on base, with a 78.6% left-on-base% (LOB%) in 2020, which came despite an increased WHIP of 1.26. The biggest culprit there was his BABIP, as he went from the fifth-lowest BABIP in the KBO in 2019 with his 0.278 to a 0.305 mark that was middle of the pack.

That may indicate that Rucinski allowed lots of hard-contact or favorable batted balls, but that's not quite true either. When we compare his wOBA of 0.329 and Estimated xwOBA (ExwOBA; see resources) of 0.318, Rucinski's actual results were a little bit of bad luck. His 0.329 wOBA is the 11th-lowest KBO mark, but his ExwOBA of 0.318 comes in at eighth. His Estimated xwOBA on Contact (ExwOBACON) of 0.336 is the fifth-lowest mark in the KBO and represents his ability to induce favorable contact.

Rucinski had a season-long groundball% of 55.4%, a fly-ball% of 20.9%, and a line-drive% of 12.7%, all of which were better than the KBO average. He induced a 36.6% soft-contact% while both his medium-contact% of 37.2% and hard-contact% of 26.2% were better than the KBO average marks. There are not any huge differences in batted ball profile between Rucinski's pitches.

Those are pretty good results, especially his ExwOBACON, which recognizes his good batted ball profile, but this circles around to one of Rucinski's weaknesses. He's an emotional pitcher and tends to be animated on the mound. When he's going well, and his stuff is working, it's an advantage, and he gets fired up. However, when something starts to slip or goes wrong, it can be a slippery slope, turning a promising start into a mediocre one. What really gets to him is that most of the mistakes that lead to these bad innings aren't necessarily his fault.

One of the best examples of this was his October 10th start against the LG Twins (fourth in Runs/G in the regular season). He threw 103 pitches over 6.1 IP, allowing four earned runs, six hits, two walks, a hit batter, and five strikeouts for a middling game score of 47. But the final stat line misses what happened in that start. Rucinski cruised through 6.1 scoreless IP on 93 pitches. Then he gave up a bloop single with an ExwOBA of 0.167 then a ground ball single that kicked off the mound, and all of a sudden, two runners were on base on back-to-back pitches. He hit the next batter, which loaded the bases, and then promptly gave up another single before getting pulled. The bullpen let in the next three runs, and an excellent start was spoiled, even as he had 20 called strikes and 13 whiffs for a 32% Called Strike + Whiff% (CSW%), a sign of a good start.

It's a story that repeated itself throughout the season. Something small would happen, whether it was an error by the defense, walking a batter on four pitches, or giving up a hit, and then things would start to slip out of control. Rucinski is best suited to an MLB role where he doesn't have to and isn't expected to go three times through the order. If he can attack hitters with all of his stuff straight out of the gate without worrying about facing them a third time, I believe he can have solid, repeatable outings every five days against MLB hitters (a higher-caliber of defense also won't hurt).

One red flag is his drastic split in performance against RHH and LHH. Rucinski fared much better against



RHH than LHH, with more strikeouts against RHH and a batting average allowed of just 0.237. Against LHH, he allowed a batting average of 0.266 and more HRs. I think that his splitter being a middling offering is a cause of that drastic split. He allowed an ExwOBA of 0.307 to RHH versus a 0.330 mark to LHH, with a substantially better CSW% of 30.7% against RHH versus 24.7% against LHH. He struck out more RHH on the season and had an SwStr% of 13.5% against RHH versus a 9.1% SwStr% against LHH. That's the difference between Aaron Nola and Kyle Gibson in the 2020 MLB season.

He did a much better of limiting batted ball damage against RHH as well, with an ExwOBACON of 0.319 against RHH and a 0.353 mark against LHH. His FB%, LD%, and hard-hit% were all lower against RHH than LHH, and his soft-contact% against RHH was 41.8% versus 31.3% against LHH. Rucinski lacks a good pitch against LHH, which may make an MLB rotation turn tough or more of a lineup decision.

Table 13: Drew Rucinski Pitch Usage by Count vs RHH

Side	Count	Pitches	Sinker%	4-Seam%	Cutter%	Splitter%	Curveball%
RHH	00	265	46.0	13.6	27.9	4.9	7.5
RHH	01	153	41.2	9.2	26.1	7.2	16.3
RHH	02	72	22.2	11.1	36.1	9.7	20.8
RHH	10	81	45.7	8.6	43.2	1.2	1.2
RHH	11	113	38.1	8.0	32.7	8.8	12.4
RHH	12	112	29.5	9.8	34.8	8.0	17.9
RHH	20	23	65.2	4.3	30.4	0.0	0.0
RHH	21	46	39.1	6.5	45.7	4.3	4.3
RHH	22	79	38.0	10.1	29.1	7.6	15.2
RHH	30	8	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
RHH	31	15	73.3	6.7	13.3	0.0	6.7
RHH	32	35	60.0	17.1	20.0	2.9	0.0

Table 14: Drew Rucinski Pitch Usage by Count vs LHH

Side	Count	Pitches	Sinker%	4-Seam%	Cutter%	Splitter%	Curveball%
LHH	00	253	45.5	9.5	28.9	8.3	7.9
LHH	01	108	41.7	6.5	14.8	16.7	20.4
LHH	02	59	42.4	16.9	6.8	16.9	16.9
LHH	10	110	48.2	8.2	28.2	11.8	3.6
LHH	11	99	35.4	7.1	19.2	17.2	21.2
LHH	12	87	39.1	9.2	10.3	18.4	23.0
LHH	20	33	60.6	3.0	33.3	0.0	3.0
LHH	21	54	44.4	11.1	31.5	9.3	3.7
LHH	22	87	40.2	4.6	12.6	18.4	24.1
LHH	30	15	80.0	13.3	0.0	6.7	0.0
LHH	31	23	73.9	4.3	13.0	0.0	8.7
LHH	32	71	56.3	9.9	19.7	4.2	9.9

Drew Rucinski threw five pitches during his time with the NC Dinos, rather than the six he threw in MLB while changing his usage numbers of some of his secondary pitches. He's still a fastball-heavy pitcher, with about 53% of pitches being fastballs. But he's shifted more away from his 4-seam, only throwing it 9.5% of the time, and throwing his sinker more, about 43.6% of the time around 90.6 mph. His 4-seam averages about 91.7 mph, which is a decrease from the 93.6 mph that he was averaging in 2018, although he did show the ability to throw that fast when needed.

He locates his 4-seam in the zone and it tends to get hit pretty hard, with an LD% of 16.7% and a hard-hit% of 38.1%, both the highest on an individual pitch that Rucinski throws. Rucinski was a starter in the KBO, averaging 6+ IP per start while he was primarily a reliever in MLB, which likely accounts for the velocity differences seen here.

In terms of secondary pitches, he's thrown a cutter the most, accounting for 25.9% of his pitches, and is used especially against right-handed hitters (RHH) with a 31% usage%. At about 86 mph, his cutter comes in pretty flat with good late movement away from RHH. While Rucinski did throw a slider in MLB, he did not appear to do so in the KBO, which makes sense as he only threw his slider 4.5% of the time in MLB.

Rucinski upped his curveball usage in the KBO, throwing his curveball about 12% of the time, a significant increase from his 3.9% usage in MLB. The velocity on that pitch has stayed fairly stable, averaging 79.8 mph in the KBO versus 80.3 mph in MLB. His cutter and curveball were his main swing and miss pitches in 2020, with swinging strike% (SwStr%) of 17.7% and 15.8%, respectively. It's hard to confirm without more data from 2019, but I wouldn't be surprised if his increased K% in 2020 was partially a result of upping his curveball usage given how rarely he threw it in MLB. His highest CU% against hitters came in 2-strike counts, which lends some more credence to that theory.

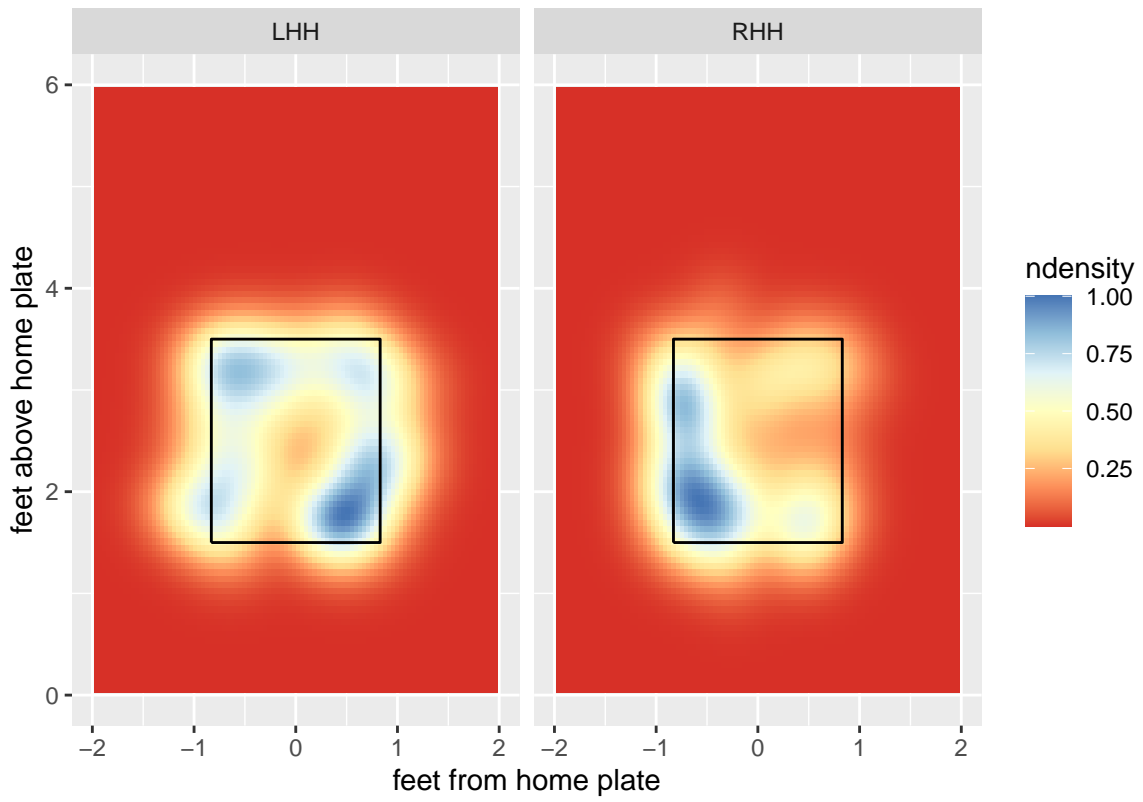
Rucinski throws his splitter the least of all of his pitches, only using it about 9% of the time, breaking down to 12% of the time against LHH and 6% of the time against RHH. He throws it around 84.3 mph, using a wide splitter grip. He tends to locate it down and away, which leads to a lot of ground balls and a low ExwOBA, but it's not very effective otherwise, with a CSW% of just 15% and the lowest swing% of all of his pitches at 42.8%.

Drew Rucinski works side-to-side in the zone, using the horizontal movement of his sinker and cutter to work together. He complements the two with a curveball that almost exclusively lands out of the strike zone, drawing whiffs in 2-strike counts. He occasionally throws his 4-seam fastball, keeping it in the zone and letting its velocity serve as a different look to most hitters. His 4-seam should be used sparingly as MLB hitters may tee off against it, but it may be more effective if used against LHH while he uses his sinker against RHH. If his splitter were a more reliable option, I'd feel better about his chances to be a full-time starter in MLB, but Rucinski's cutter and curveball base give him a solid foundation to attack MLB hitters. Right now, Rucinski's best pitch against LHH is his cutter, and his best approach is to mix-and-match his pitches to keep LHH from sitting on his curveball or either fastball. His cutter/curveball/sinker trio is effective against RHH, and he should continue to attack hitters as he has.

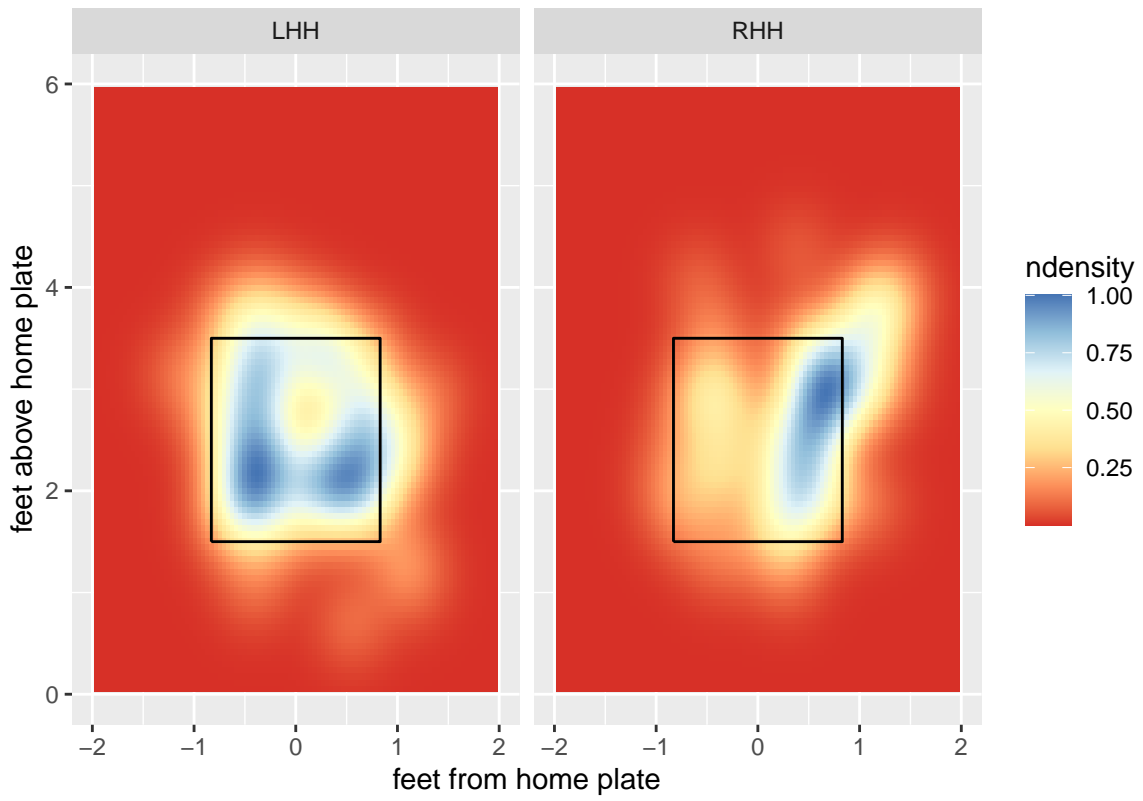
# Drew Rucinski Sinker



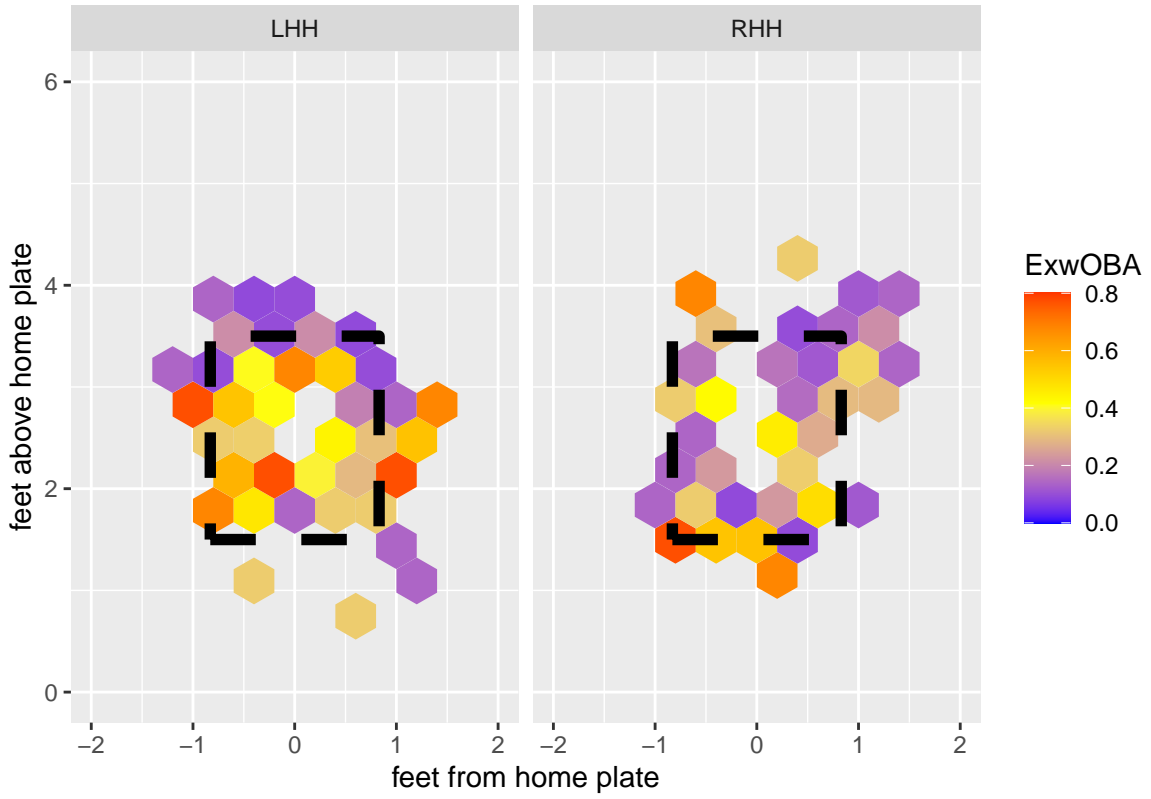
### Called Strikes



### Balls in Play



### ExwOBA on Balls in Play by Pitch Location



### Sinker Velocity

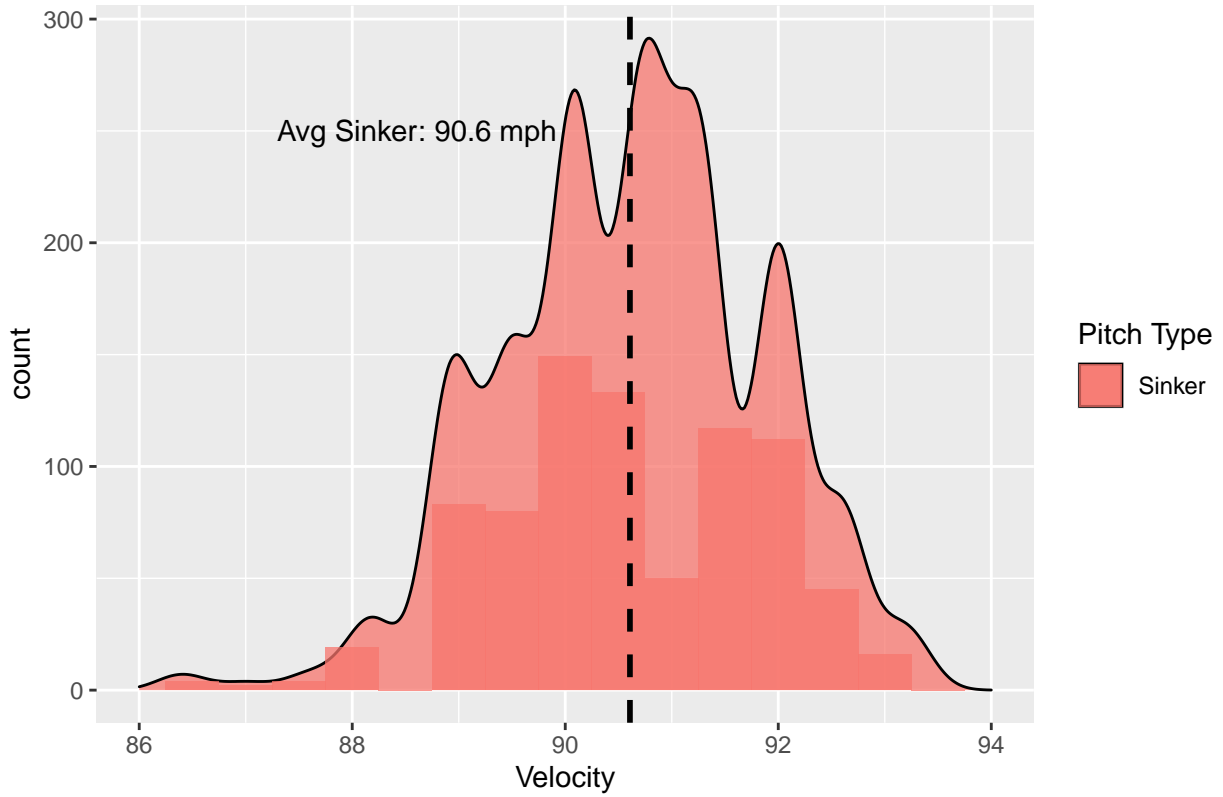


Table 15: Drew Rucinski Sinker Stats

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	wOBA	ExwOBA	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
Sinker	90.6	43.6	0.353	0.336	26.1	8.5	17.8	17.7	47.7	82.2

Table 16: Sinker Stats by Batter Handedness

Bats	Usg%	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%	Strike%
LHH	45.5	24.4	7.3	16.7	17.1	43.5	83.3	60.7
RHH	41.6	28.1	9.8	18.8	18.2	52.3	81.2	70.5

Table 17: Drew Rucinski Sinker BBEs

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	ExwOBACON	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%
Sinker	90.6	43.6	0.318	157	53.5	20.4	12.1	14	43.3	30.6	26.1

Drew Rucinski throws his sinker 43.6% of the time, averaging 90.6 mph while occasionally touching 92-93 mph. He throws it in all situations (with his lowest usage% coming in 0-2 and 1-2 counts) and against both LHH and RHH, throwing it 45.5% and 41.6% of the time respectively. In his last MLB stint with the Marlins, his sinker averaged about 18.6 inches of drop and 13.8 inches of horizontal break, both of which were below-average marks in MLB.

He locates it in the zone and is most effective when he's working to his arm side to maximize that horizontal break. Most of his swinging strikes on his sinker have come on pitches inside to RHH or up and away against LHH. For called strikes, he works away from RHH, using the horizontal break of the sinker to catch the outside edge of the zone for a strike after the pitch starts as a ball. Against LHH, he'll work all over the edges of the zone, but mostly works down and away, catching the bottom right corner of the strike zone; higher up on that outer edge is where he gets more of his LHH whiffs.

His sinker does fare better against RHH than LHH, with a 28.1% CSW%, along with a 9.8% SwStr% and 18.2% CS% that are both higher than his marks against LHH. The drop of his sinker plays into this when he locates inside and hitters end up swinging over the top of his sinker or it drops and clips the edge of the zone.

Rucinski's sinker allowed a wOBA of 0.353 on the season and an ExwOBA of 0.336, but an ExwOBACON of just 0.318. Why such a drastic difference? Rucinski throws his sinker the most of any pitch in 3-0, 3-1, and 3-2 counts so when he walks a batter on a sinker, that hurts his wOBA/ExwOBA but not his ExwOBACON. That's not an excuse, but context and something that should be kept in mind when looking at those wOBA/ExwOBA numbers for his sinker (but his 0.336 ExwOBA is still the third-lowest sinker mark in the KBO).

His ExwOBACON is much indicative of how his sinker performed on batted balls this season. At 0.318, his ExwOBACON is the second-lowest mark on any fastball (sinker or 4-seam) from the KBO, only behind Aaron Brooks' sinker, and third-place comes in at 0.335. His sinker induced a GB% of 53.5% that was the sixth-highest, an FB% of 20.4% that was the second-lowest, an LD% of 12.1% that was the fourth-lowest, and a PU% of 14% that was the second-highest mark of sinkers in the KBO. He did a good job of inducing soft-contact as well, with a soft-contact% of 43.3% that was barely second to Aaron Brooks' 44.3% mark.

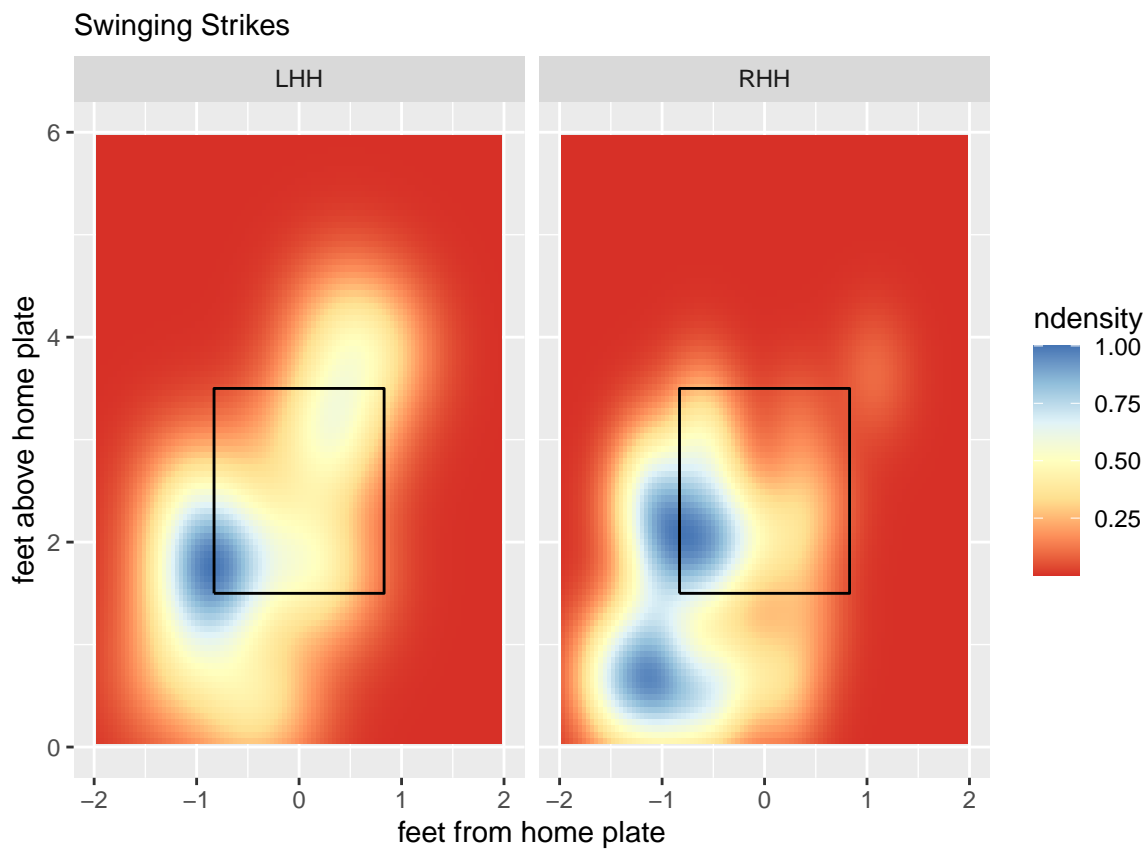
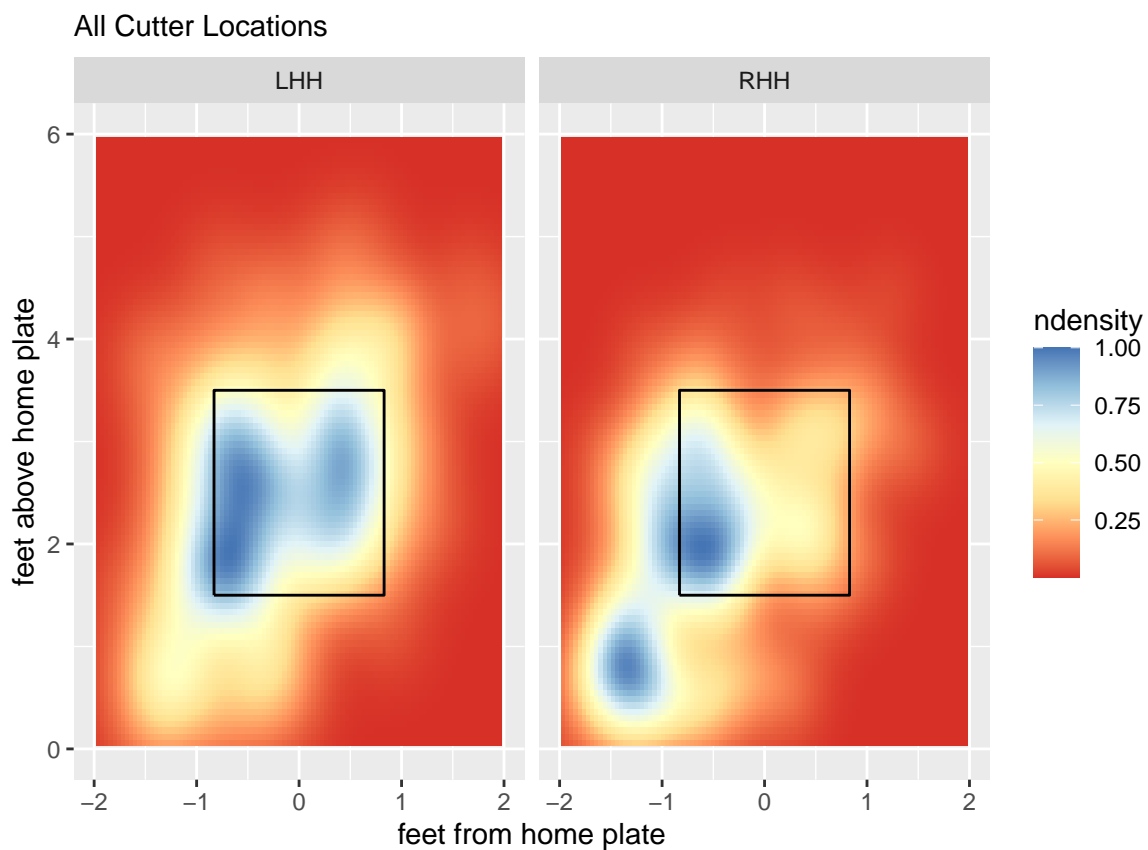
The GB% of 53.5% and soft-contact% of 43.3% are stellar marks for his sinker and looks like a result of where he's throwing his sinker. Against LHH, his balls in play allowed are located in the lower half of the

strike zone, which leads to a lot of those ground balls. His balls in play against RHH are interesting as they come off of pitches inside, which is where he mostly throws his sinker against RHH. Some of those batted balls go for grounders, but this is where I think his high PU% of 14% comes from. Locating up and in against RHH with a sinker is an awkward pitch to hit, especially if you thought you were getting a fastball over the middle of the plate and it's all of a sudden in on your hands.

You can see that this is matched on the ExwOBA on Balls in Play plot that shows ExwOBA as a function of pitch location. The bluest spots are up and in against both RHH and LHH while there's much more red and yellow in the heart of the zone against LHH.

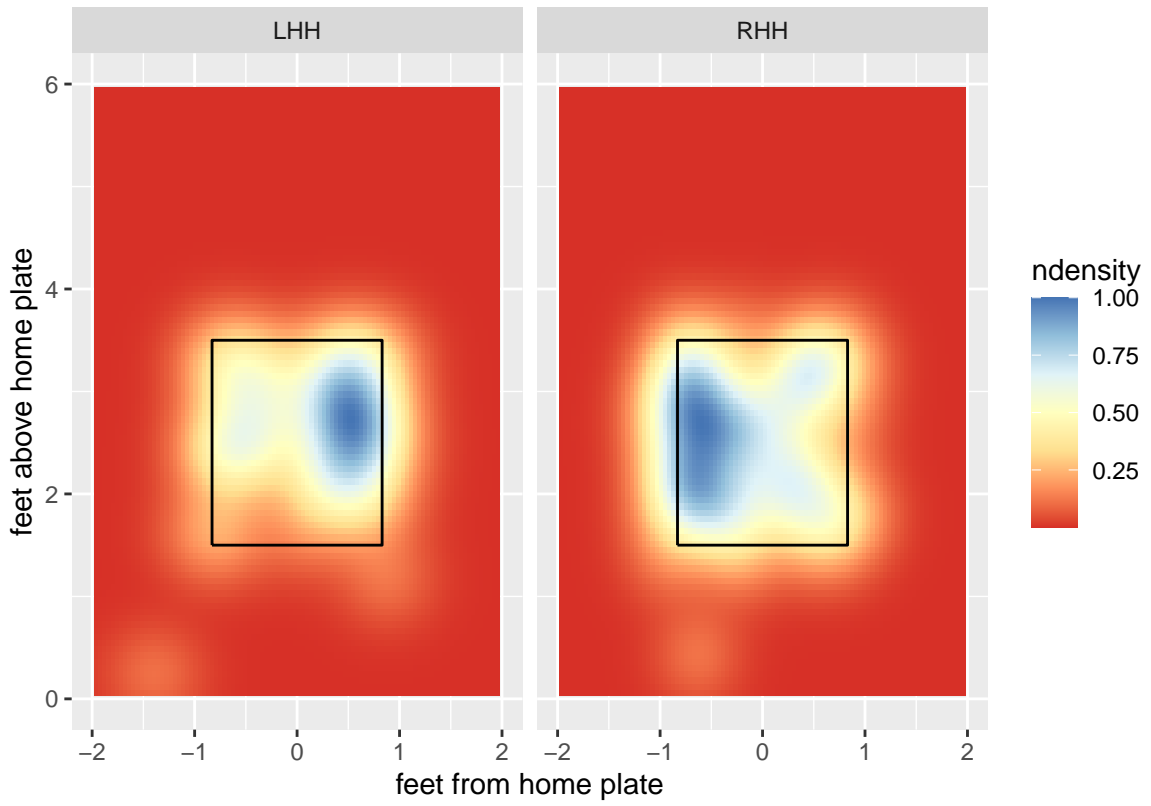
Rucinski's sinker fared well against KBO hitters as a ground ball and soft-contact inducing pitch. In 2018, it performed similarly against MLB hitters, allowing an xwOBA of 0.363 with an average Exit Velocity of 83.9 mph and an average launch angle of 6 degrees. He should continue to work his sinker down in the zone as a whole, especially against LHH. Against RHH, his sinker has been and should continue to be effective as an inside pitch.

# Drew Rucinski Cutter

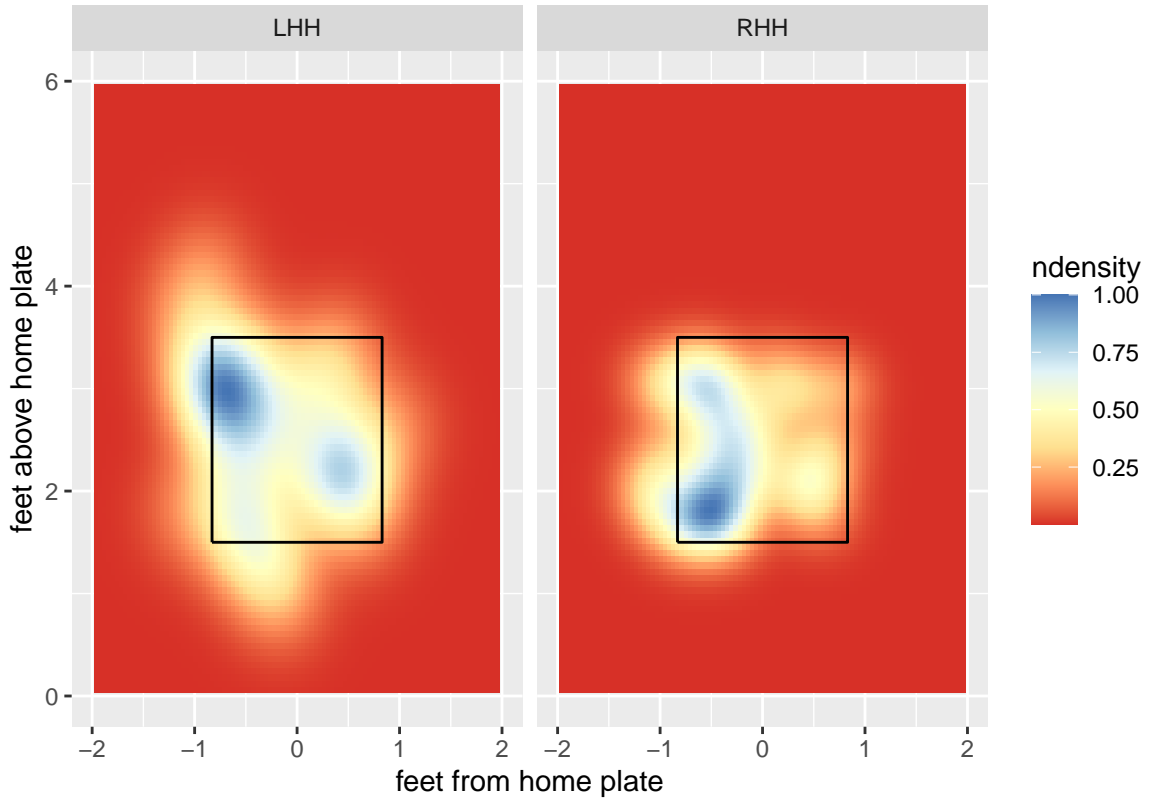




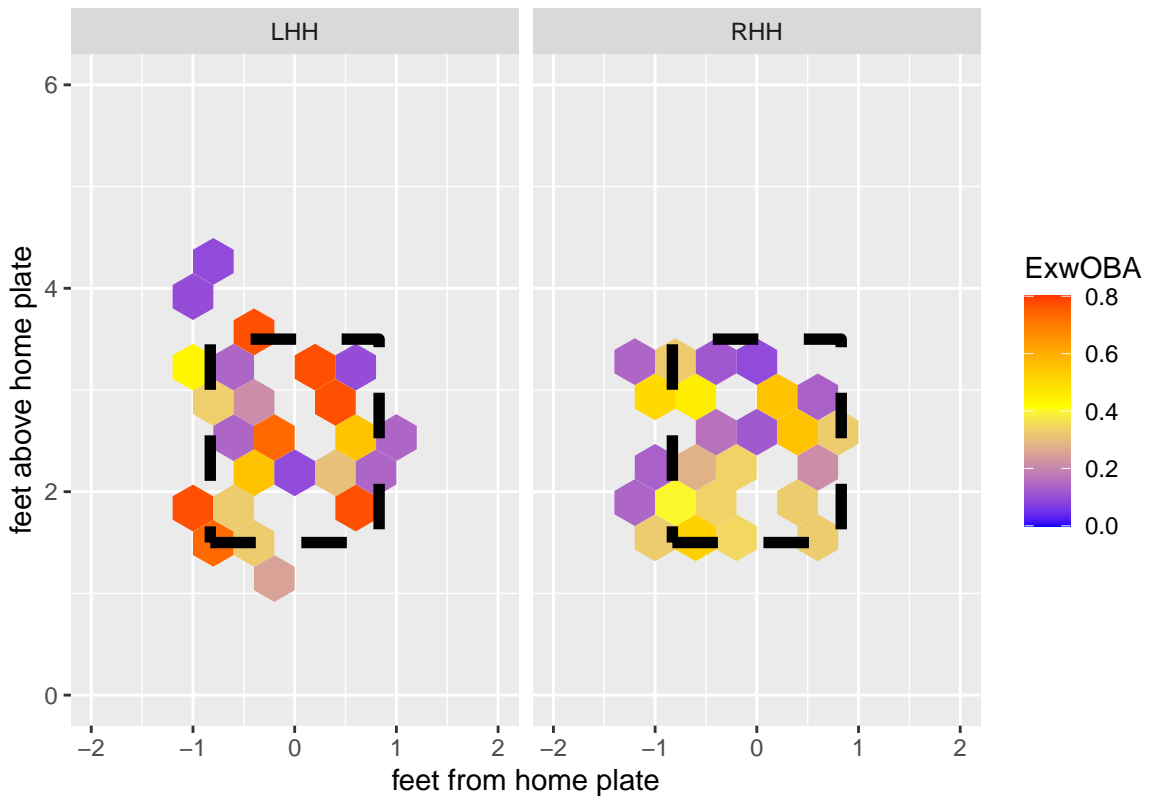
### Called Strikes



### Balls in Play



### ExwOBA on Balls in Play by Pitch Location



### Cutter Velocity

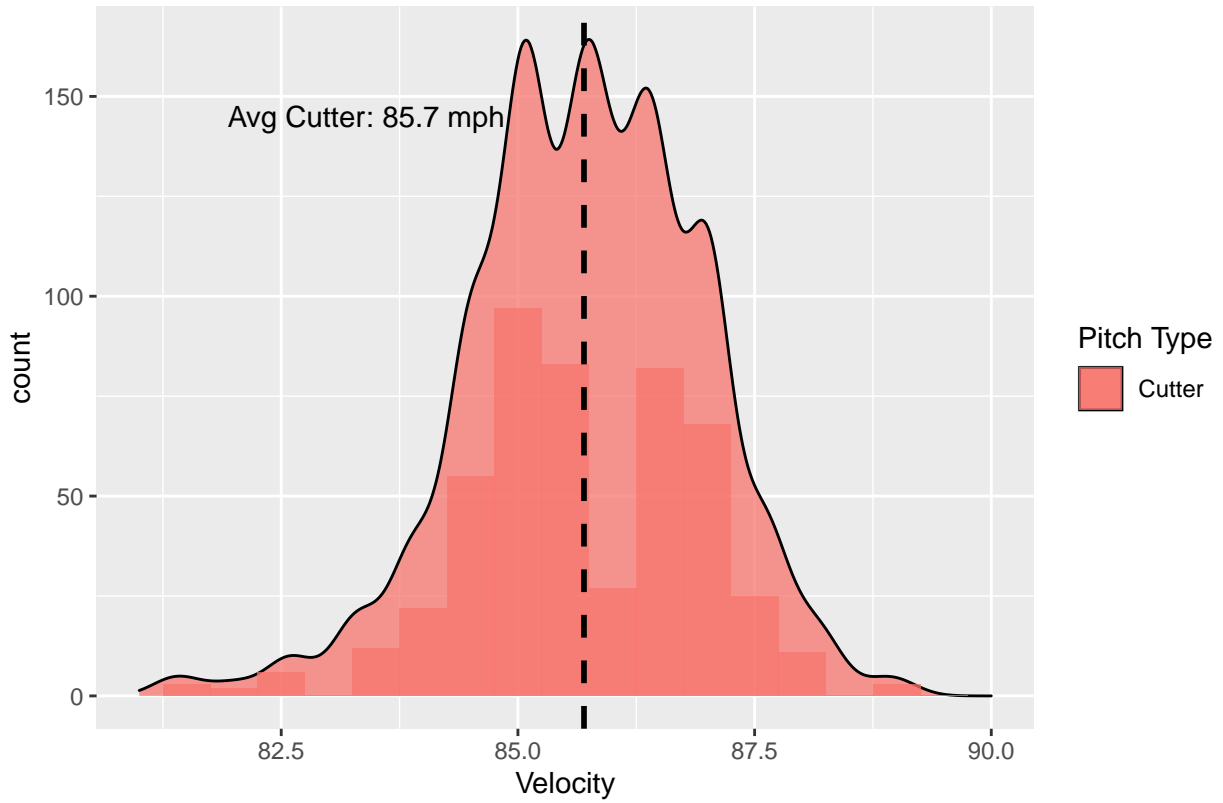


Table 18: Drew Rucinski Cutter Stats

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	wOBA	ExwOBA	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
Cutter	85.7	25.9	0.315	0.296	34.5	17.7	33.6	16.8	52.8	66.4

Table 19: Drew Rucinski Cutter Stats by Batter Handedness

Bats	Usg%	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%	Strike%
RHH	30.9	36.5	20.6	39.8	15.8	51.9	60.2	67.7
LHH	20.5	32.2	13.7	25.7	18.5	53.2	74.3	71.7

Table 20: Drew Rucinski Cutter BBEs

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	ExwOBACON	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%
Cutter	85.7	25.9	0.34	90	54.4	16.7	14.4	14.4	36.7	38.9	24.4

Drew Rucinski throws his cutter about 25.9% of the time, averaging 85.7 mph, and it is his best pitch. He throws it more against RHH than LHH, with a 30.9% and 20.5% usage split respectively. His cutter's 34.5% CSW% ranks as the eighth-best mark in the KBO on an individual pitch, and the pitch had an 0.296 ExwOBA. His cutter's 17.7% SwStr% was the 11th-highest in the KBO and Rucinski's best swing and miss pitch. Rucinski's cutter has a flatter shape and has good horizontal movement to his glove side and away from RHH.

He locates it effectively, keeping it in the zone against LHH and working down-and-away from RHH. Most of the swings and misses that he gets come on those cutters that dive down-and-away from RHH while he gets whiffs on pitches that are down-and-in against LHH. He does locate his cutter in the zone for called strikes, as his 16.8 CS% is the ninth-highest on a cutter in the KBO. Against LHH, he locates in the strike zone and away, using the horizontal movement of his cutter to creep back over the outside corner for a strike. Against RHH, Rucinski locates his cutter away, but a little more up in the strike zone, which helps set up both the down-and-away cutter as well as his curveball for whiffs.

His cutter profiles better as a weapon against RHH and the results back that up. His CSW% of 36.5% against RHH is spectacular, as is his SwStr% of 20.6%. With the nature of his cutter diving away from RHH, it makes more sense that it would fare better against RHH. We do see that his cutter has a CS% of 18.5% against LHH, which is higher than his mark against RHH, all of which speaks to his approach.

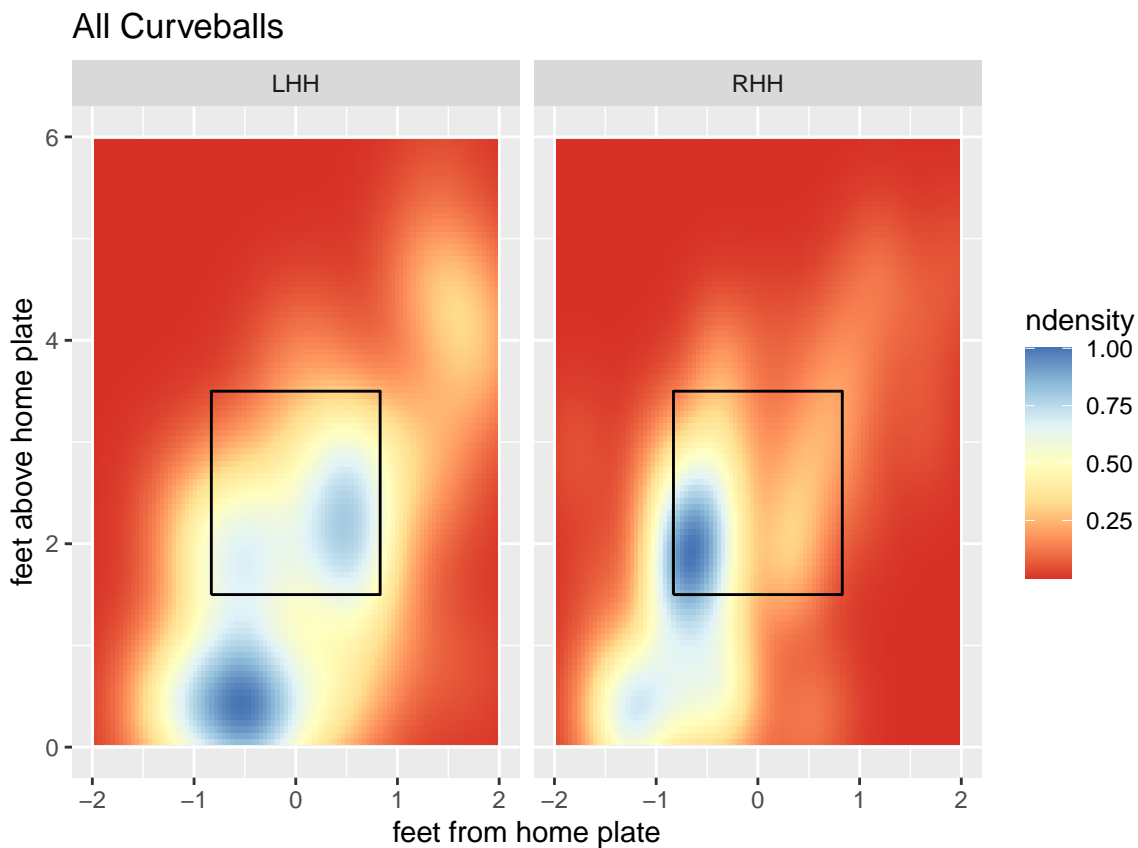
Rucinski throws his cutter a lot against RHH, throwing it 45.7% of the time in 2-1 counts, 43.2% in 1-0 counts, 36.1% in 0-2, and 34.8% in 1-2 counts. Against LHH, he throws it 33.3% of the time in 2-0 counts, 31.5% in 2-1 counts, and 28.2% in 1-0 counts. Interestingly, he throws it about 28% of the time in 0-0 counts, regardless of if he's facing an RHH or LHH. He's comfortable using his cutter for swings and misses, but also when he needs a strike and down in the count.

Despite his wOBA of 0.315 and ExwOBA of 0.296, Rucinski's cutters have allowed an ExwOBACON of 0.340, which is still better than the KBO average of 0.361. His batted ball profile is similar to that of his sinker. He's induced a good GB% of 54.4% and a lot of pop-ups, with a PU% of 14.4. The differences are that his cutter allowed an LD% of 14.4%, a few ticks above the KBO average of 14% and that he only induced a soft-contact% of 36.7% and allowed a medium-contact% of 38.6% (which is still better than the KBO average of 40.8%).

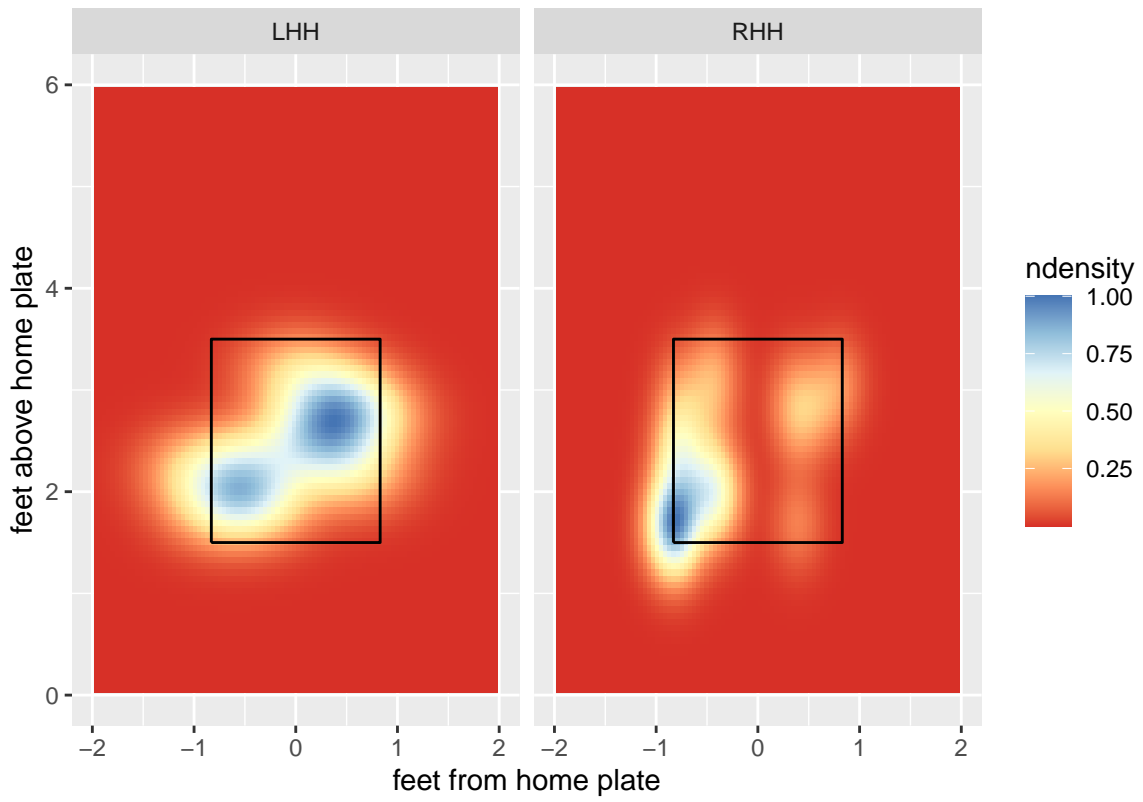
Many of the things that influenced the batted profile of his sinker continue to apply to Rucinski's sinker. He works down in the zone against RHH, and cutters up-and-in are tough for LHH to hit solidly. The LD% appears to be the result of pitches over the heart of the plate that didn't break the way that they were expected to.

Rucinski's cutter is an extremely effective swing-and-miss pitch against RHH and one that he's confident using at any time. The batted ball profile remains better than average and isn't something to worry about. His cutter was one of the best pitches in the KBO this season, and I believe it can remain effective against MLB hitters.

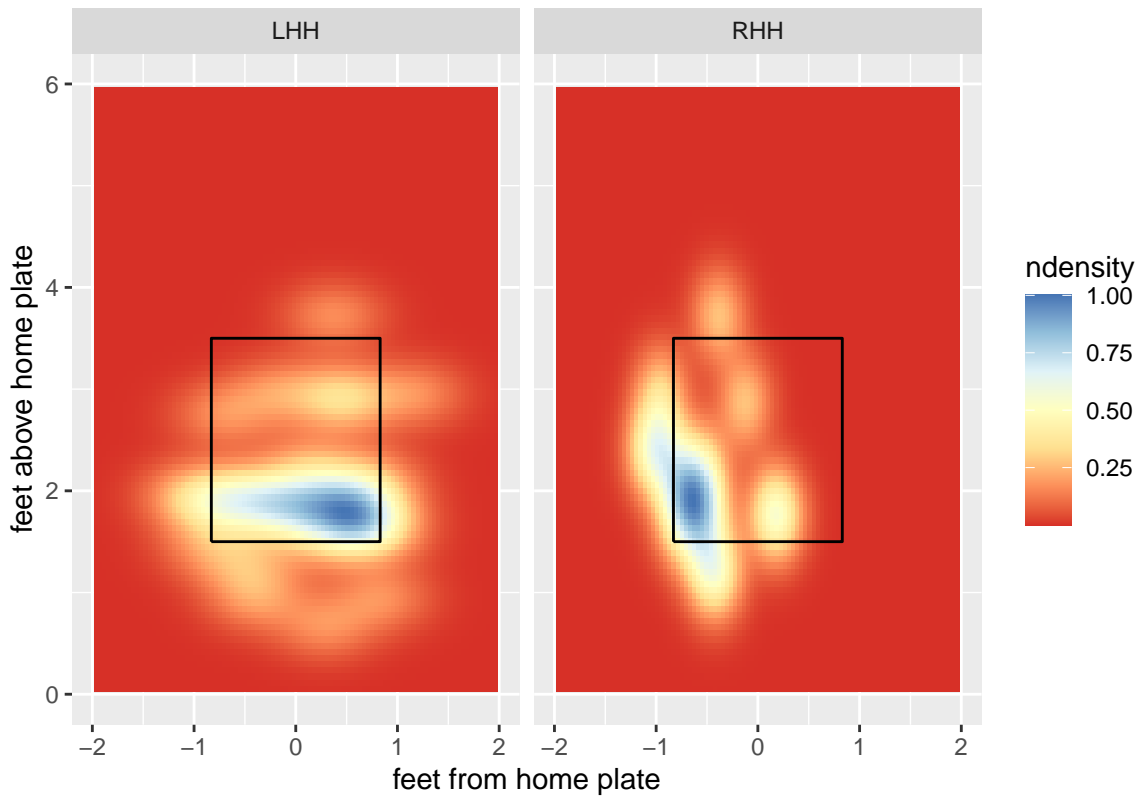
# Drew Rucinski Curveball



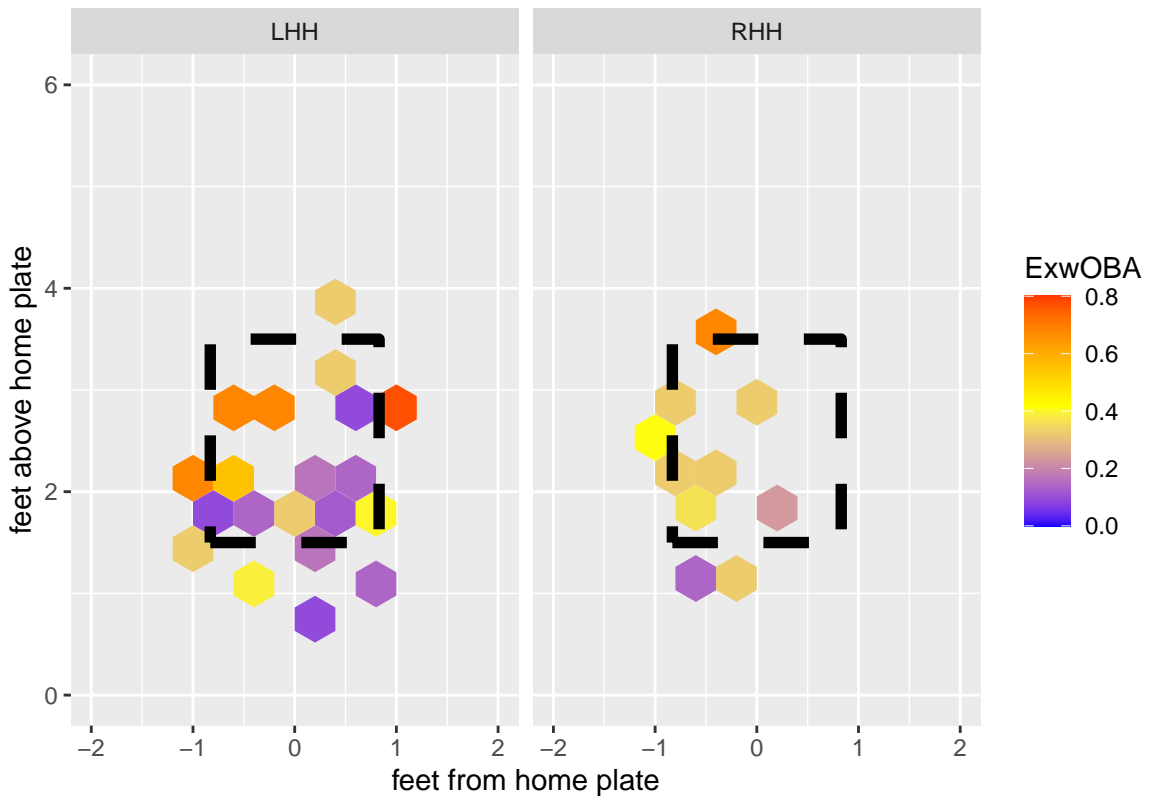
### Called Strikes



### Balls in Play



### ExwOBA on Balls in Play by Pitch Location



### Curveball Velocity

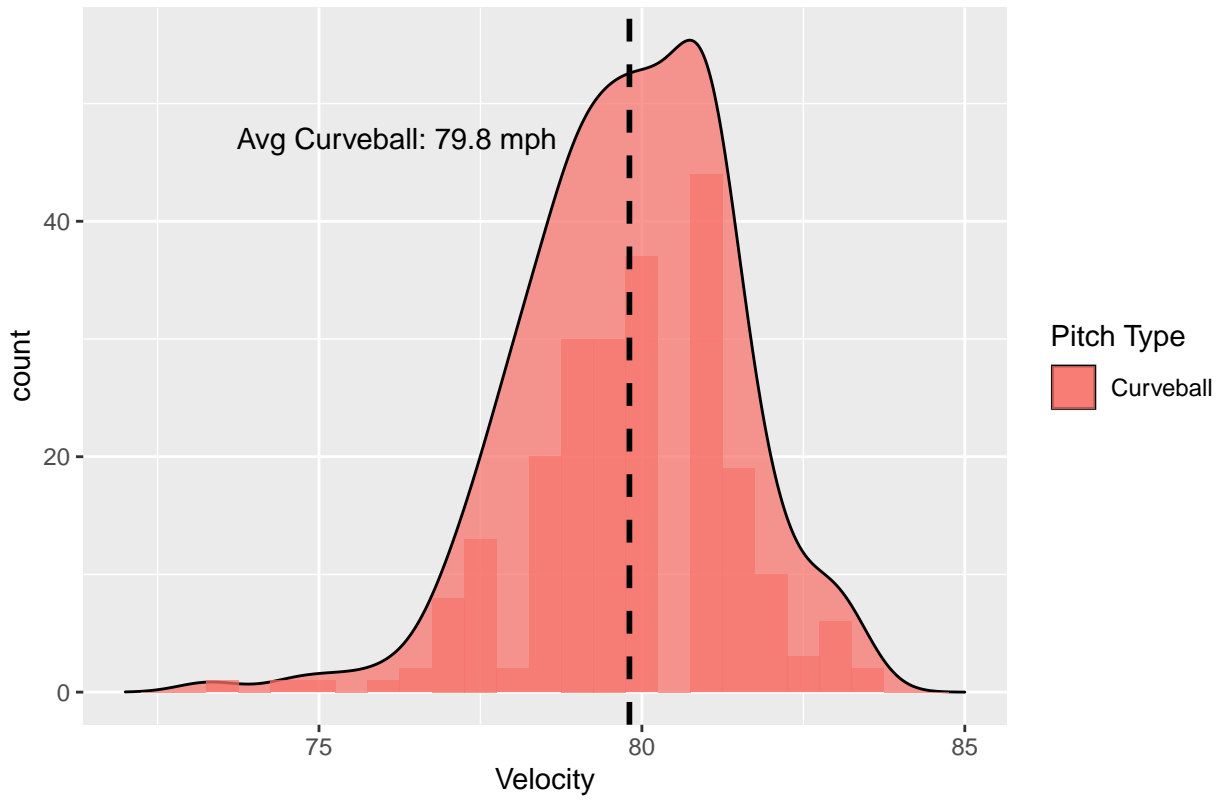


Table 21: Drew Rucinski Curveball Stats

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	wOBA	ExwOBA	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
Curveball	79.8	12	0.313	0.251	30.4	15.8	30.9	14.6	51.2	69.1

Table 22: Drew Rucinski Curveball Stats by Batter Handedness

Bats	Usg%	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%	Strike%
LHH	13	23.8	14.6	26	9.2	56.2	74	65.4
RHH	11	38.2	17.3	38	20.9	45.5	62	66.4

Table 23: Drew Rucinski Curveball BBEs

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	ExwOBACON	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%
Curveball	79.8	12	0.33	41	58.5	31.7	7.3	2.4	29.3	48.8	22

The biggest difference between Rucinski in the KBO and MLB has been the increased usage of his curveball and how effective it has been for him as his third-pitch. He throws his curveball about 12% of the time, averaging around 79.8 mph, right about the MLB average for curveball velocity. With MLB, Rucinski only threw his curveball 4% of the time, averaging 80.3 mph on it with a spin rate of 2202 rpm. He distributes his curveballs almost evenly against LHH and RHH, throwing it 13% and 11% of the time.

His curveball has been effective this season overall, with a 30.4% CSW% thanks to a 15.8% SwStr%, making it his second-best swing-and-miss pitch behind his cutter. His curveball's ExwOBA of 0.251 is the ninth-lowest mark in the KBO on an individual pitch, and his ExwOBACON of 0.330 is the 13th-lowest. His curveball has a GB% of 58.5% and an FB% of 31.7% with very few line-drives or pop-ups. His curveball has the highest medium-contact% of any of his pitches at 48.8% but also has the second-lowest hard-hit% of any of his pitches at just 22%.

Rucinski primarily locates his curveball in the lower half of the zone or below, because it functions as a swing-and-miss pitch for him. On batted balls down in the zone, his curveball has fared well, with quite a bit of blue lining the bottom edge of the strike zone. But on pitches up in the zone, hitters have hit fairly well, accounting for lots of ground balls and lots of fly balls. There's also a notable split in the number of batted balls by LHH versus RHH.

LHH have put more curveballs in play than RHH have and, on curveballs up in the zone, they've hit them harder. We see that borne out in Rucinski's curveball stats by batter handedness. Against RHH, his curveball had a CSW% of 38.2% (the highest individual pitch in the KBO was Dan Straily's cutter at a 38.1% CSW%), but against LHH, his curveball drops to a 23.8% CSW%. His SwStr% is 17.3% against RHH and 14.6% against LHH while his CS% plummets from 20.9% against RHH to just 9.2% against LHH. LHH have a 56.2% Swing% against Rucinski's curveball versus a 45.5% mark for RHH which seems to indicate that LHH see his curveball much better than RHH do.

It's hard to say exactly what might be behind this. Based on his Baseball Savant page, we can see that Rucinski's curveball averaged just 1.6 inches of horizontal break in 2018. But that is off of just 22 curveballs. The intended location of the pitch and where he likes to locate his curveball against KBO hitters is a more likely explanation.

Against RHH, we see that Rucinski tends to locate his curveball down-and-away. He locates in a similar pattern against LHH, throwing to their back foot, but also leaving more curveballs over the plate and in

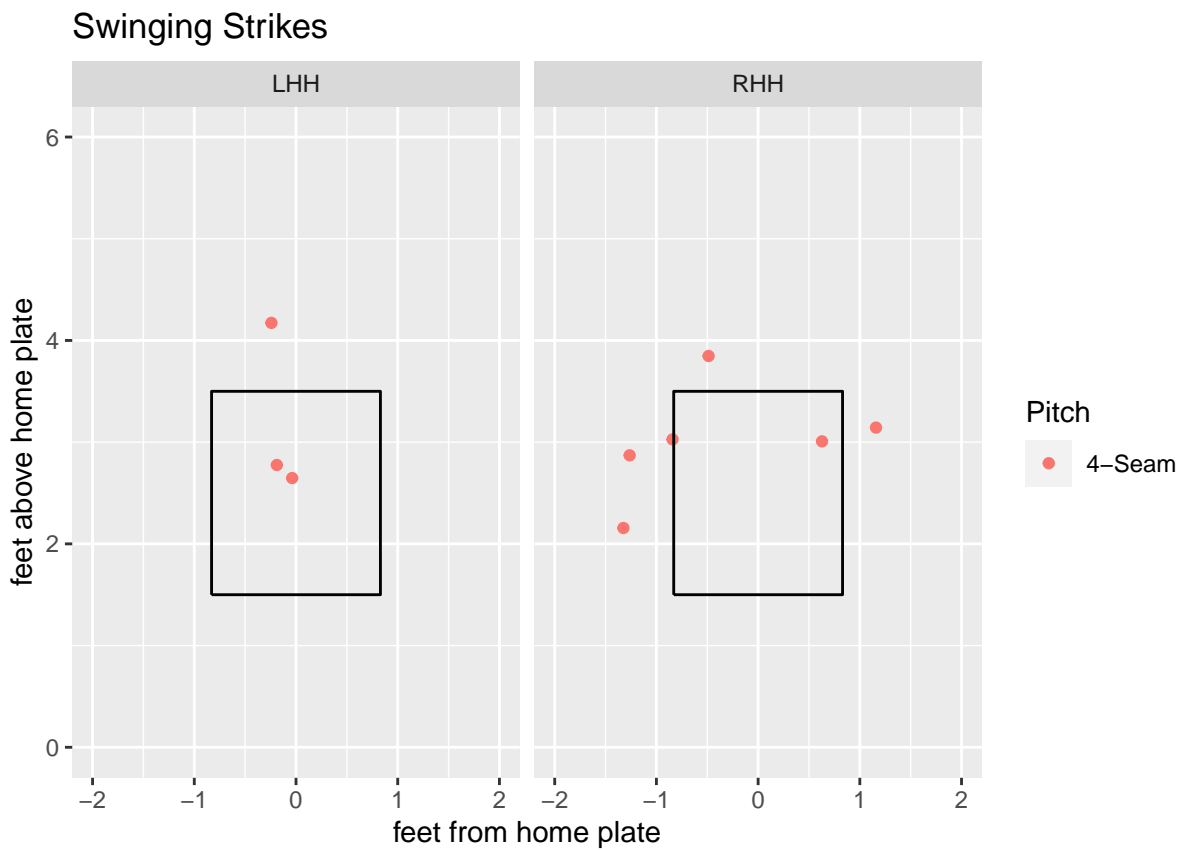
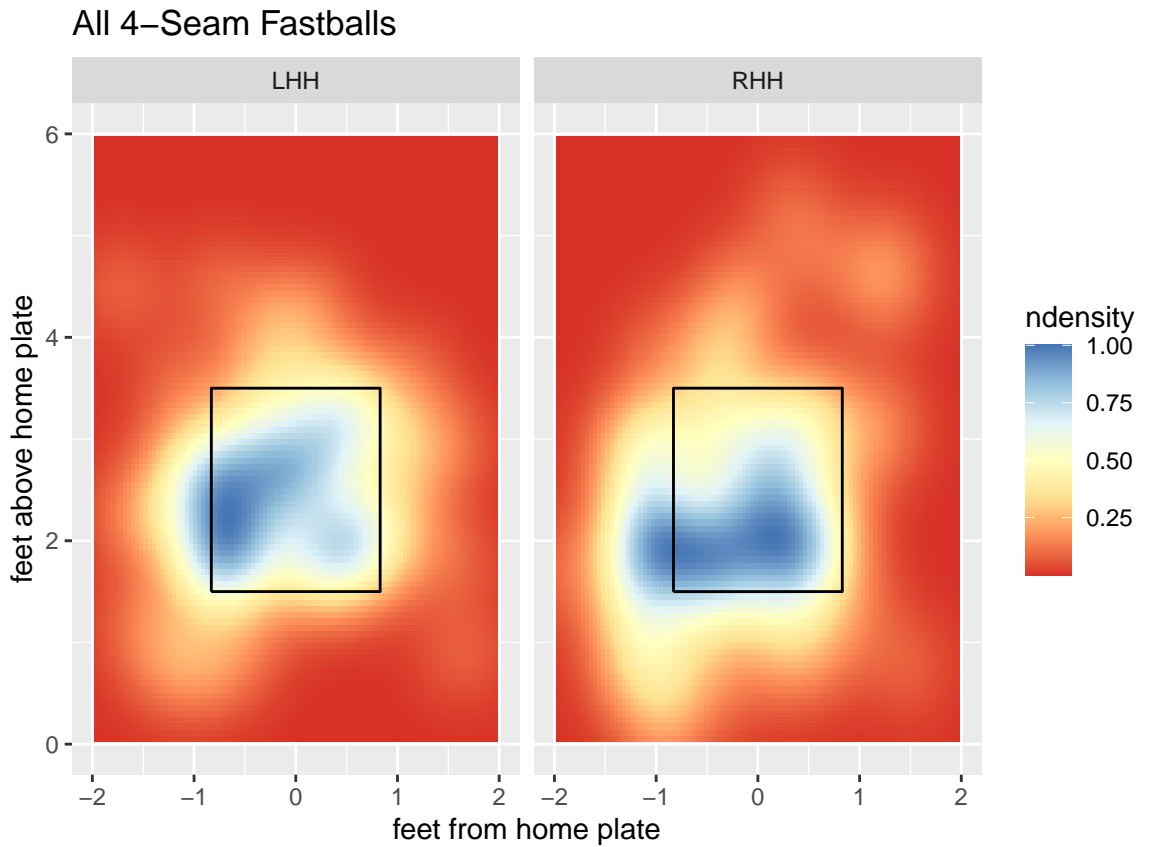


the strike zone. His swinging strikes occur where you'd expect them to, down-and-away from RHH and down-and-in against LHH. Most of the batted balls that Rucinski's curveball have given up to LHH have come on that bottom strip of the strike zone, with a few more elevated towards the top of the zone. Hitters have fared poorly on those batted balls at the bottom of the zone while they've hit the curves in the upper part of the zone much more solidly. It's a similar story for RHH, but they've just put much fewer balls in play off of Rucinski's curveball.

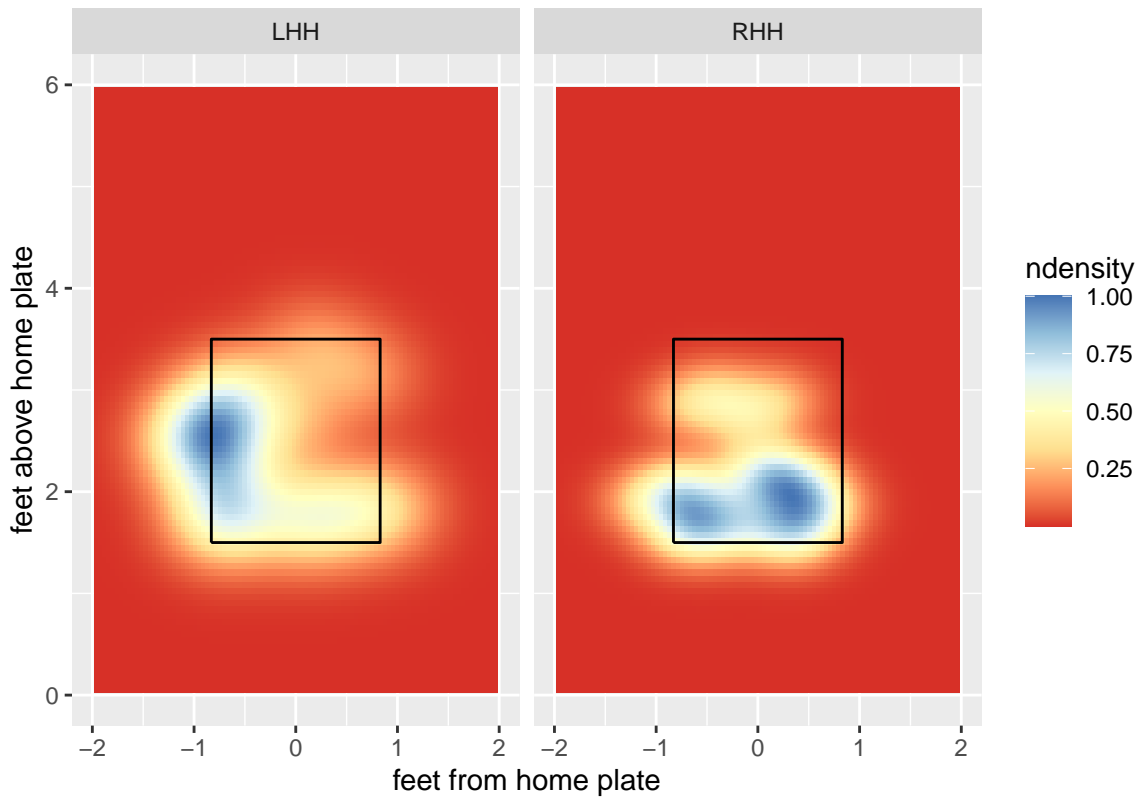
Rucinski throws his curveball the most in 0-2 (20.8%), 1-2 (17.9%), and 2-2 counts (15.2%) against RHH, indicating his confidence in his curveball as a swing-and-miss pitch. Against LHH, his usage overall ticks up and he throws his curveball in the same situations even if his curveball is nowhere near as effective against LHH as it is against RHH.

For Rucinski's curveball to be effective and limit hard contact, he needs to keep it down in the zone. When it starts to drift up in the zone, LHH in particular, have started to take advantage. His curveball is an effective weapon against RHH, but keeping it low against LHH will help keep the ball on the ground.

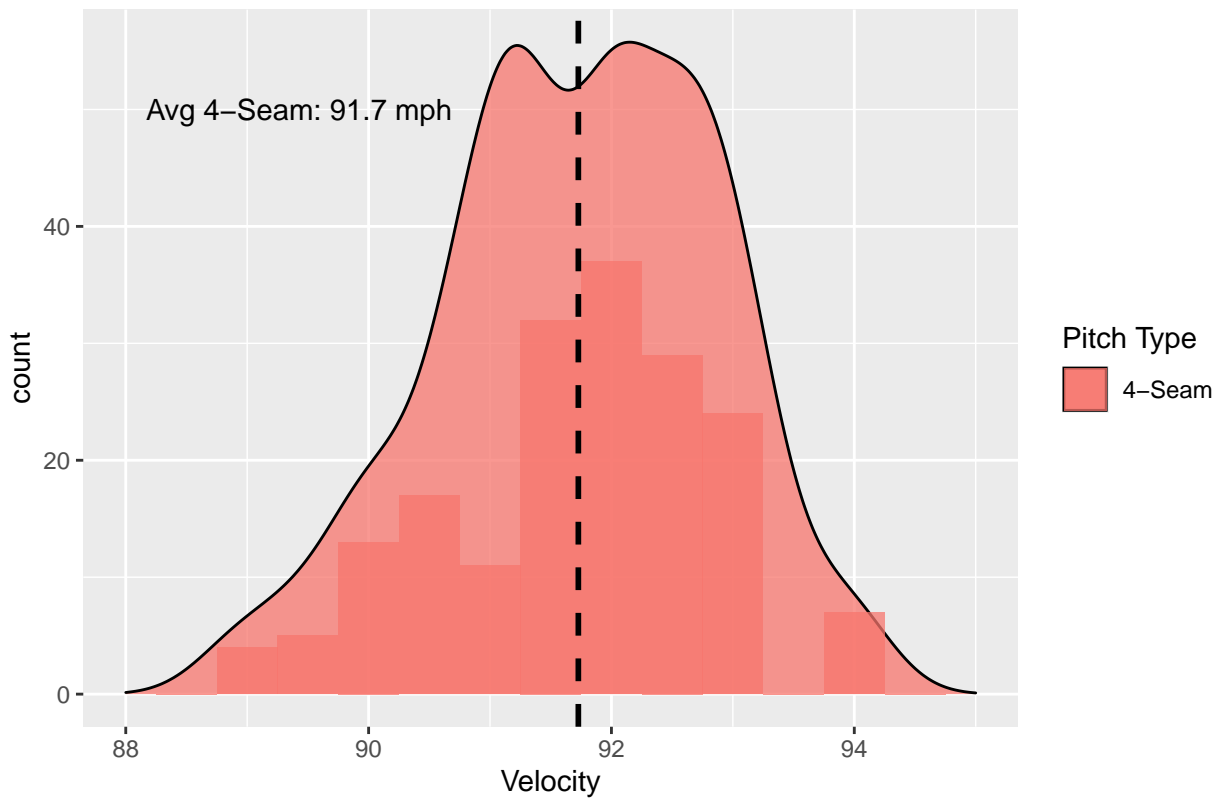
# Drew Rucinski 4-Seam Fastball



### Called Strikes



### 4-Seam Velocity



Drew Rucinski threw his 4-seam fastball about 9.5% of the time in 2020, averaging around 91.7 mph. In 2018 with the Marlins, his 4-seam velocity was closer to 94 mph, but he was coming out of the bullpen

Table 24: Drew Rucinski 4-Seam Stats

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	wOBA	ExwOBA	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
4-Seam	91.7	9.5	0.409	0.393	25.3	4.7	10.5	20.5	45.3	89.5

Table 25: 4-Seam Stats by Batter Handedness

Bats	Usg%	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%	Strike%
RHH	10.4	25.0	5.8	14	19.2	41.3	86	60.6
LHH	8.5	25.9	3.5	7	22.4	50.6	93	72.9

Table 26: Drew Rucinski 4-Seam BBEs

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	ExwOBACON	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%
4-Seam	91.7	9.5	0.423	42	54.8	21.4	16.7	7.1	19	42.9	38.1

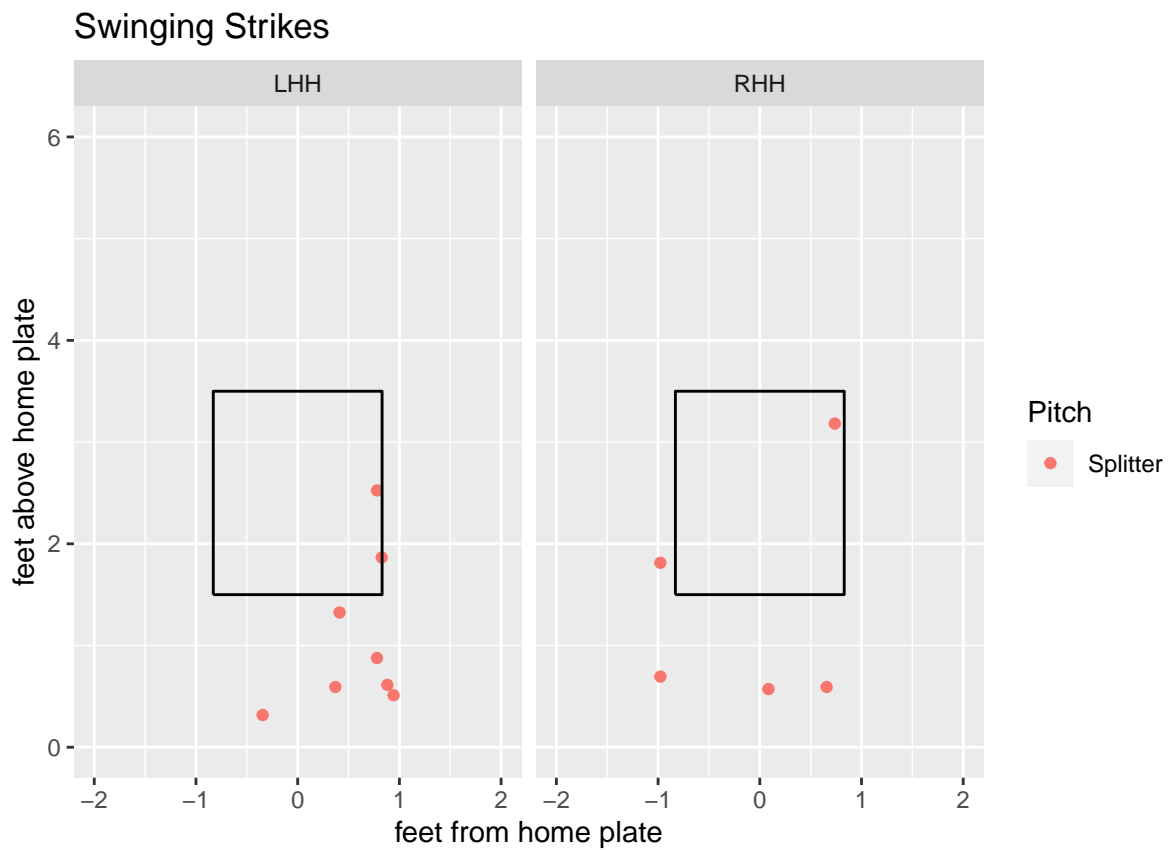
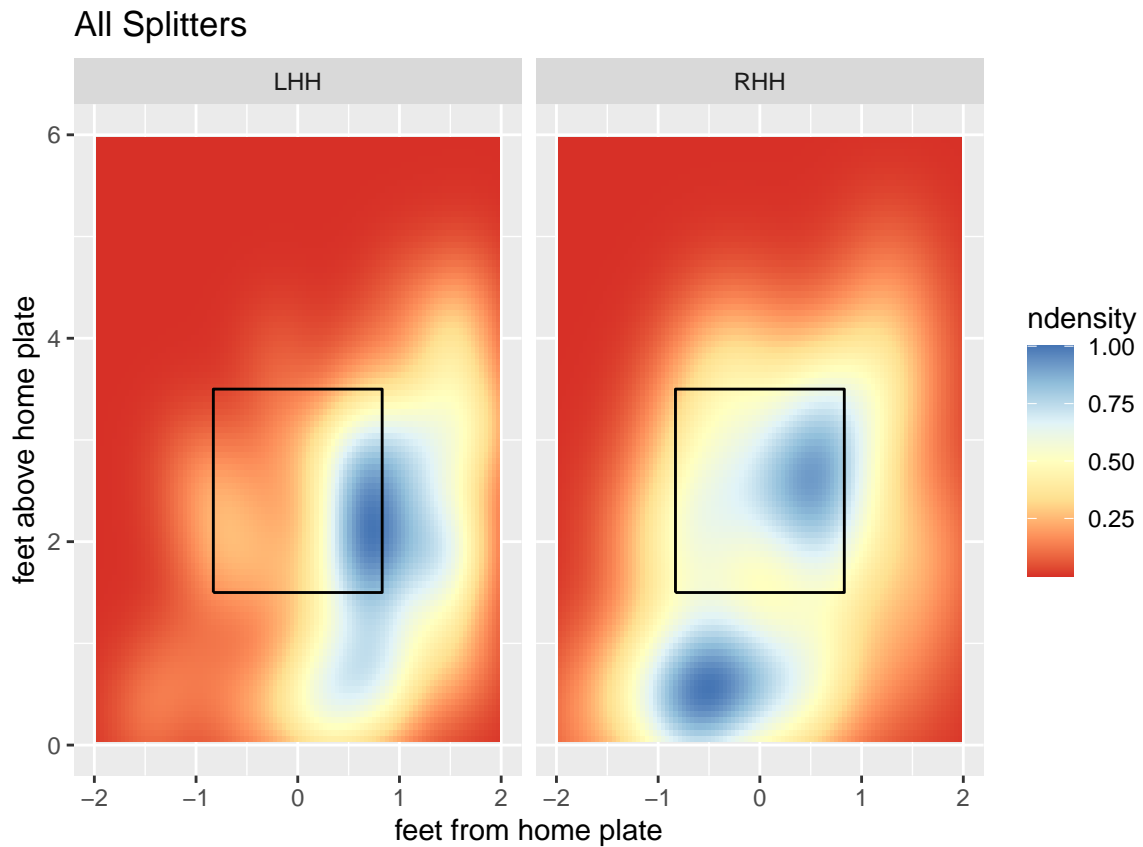
then, as opposed to starting as he has in the KBO. His 4-seam was his worst performing pitch in the KBO as hitters posted a 0.393 ExwOBA against it.

He primarily locates his 4-seam in the strike zone. He got a few whiffs on it up in the zone, but most of his called strikes came inside against LHH and low in the zone against RHH as he posted a CS% of 20.5% and an SwStr% of just 4.7%.

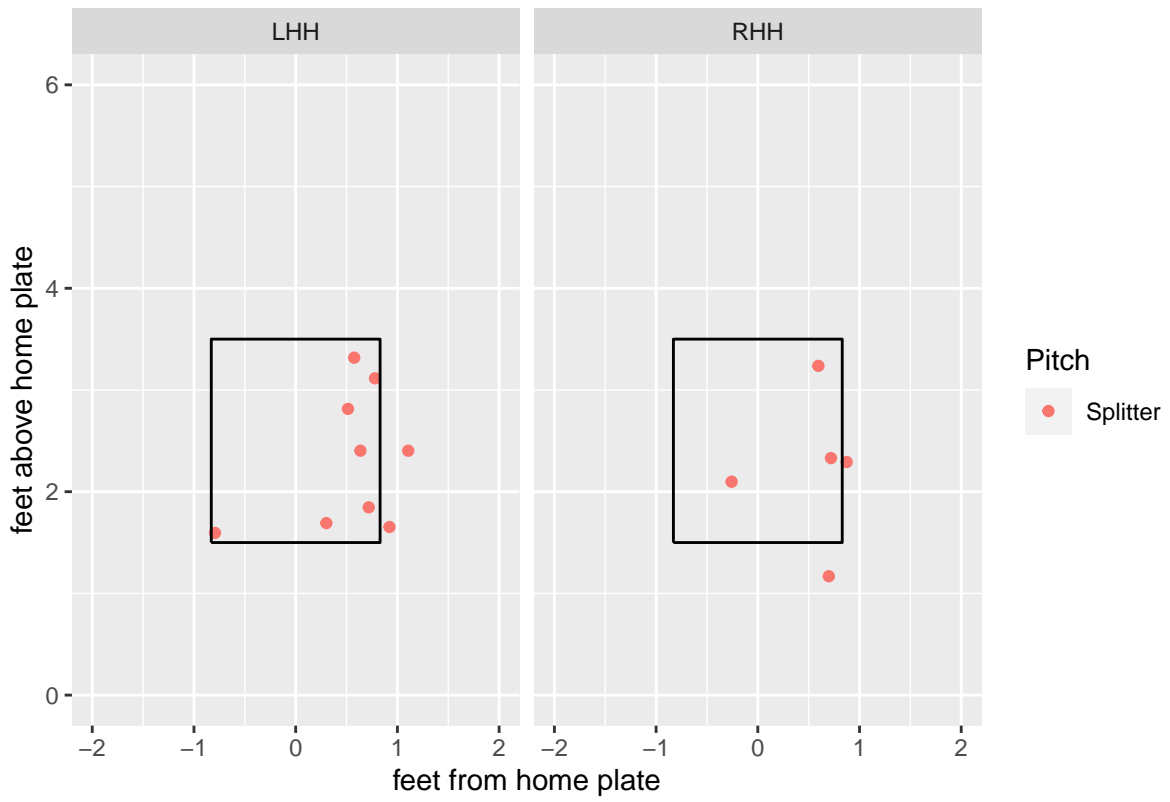
Hitters squared up his 4-seam fastball repeatedly in 2020, with a 0.423 ExwOBACON, easily his worst mark on a pitch and the fifth-worst mark in the KBO on an individual pitch. He still had a good GB% of 54.8% but allowed a 16.7% LD%. He gave up frequent hard-contact, with a hard-hit% of 38.1% that was the tenth-highest mark in the KBO and his soft-contact% of 19% was the sixth-lowest in the league. It's a continuation of how his 4-seam fared in 2018 when it allowed an xwOBA of 0.389 with an average exit velocity of 92 mph and a launch angle of 13 degrees, right in line drive territory.

If Rucinski transitioned back to a bullpen/reduced-role and was able to regain that 93-94 mph, I think his 4-seam could be a decent situational weapon, potentially against LHH. However, doing so would take away the benefit of his 2020 workload and ability to handle lots of innings in 2021.

# Drew Rucinski Splitter



### Called Strikes



### Splitter Velocity

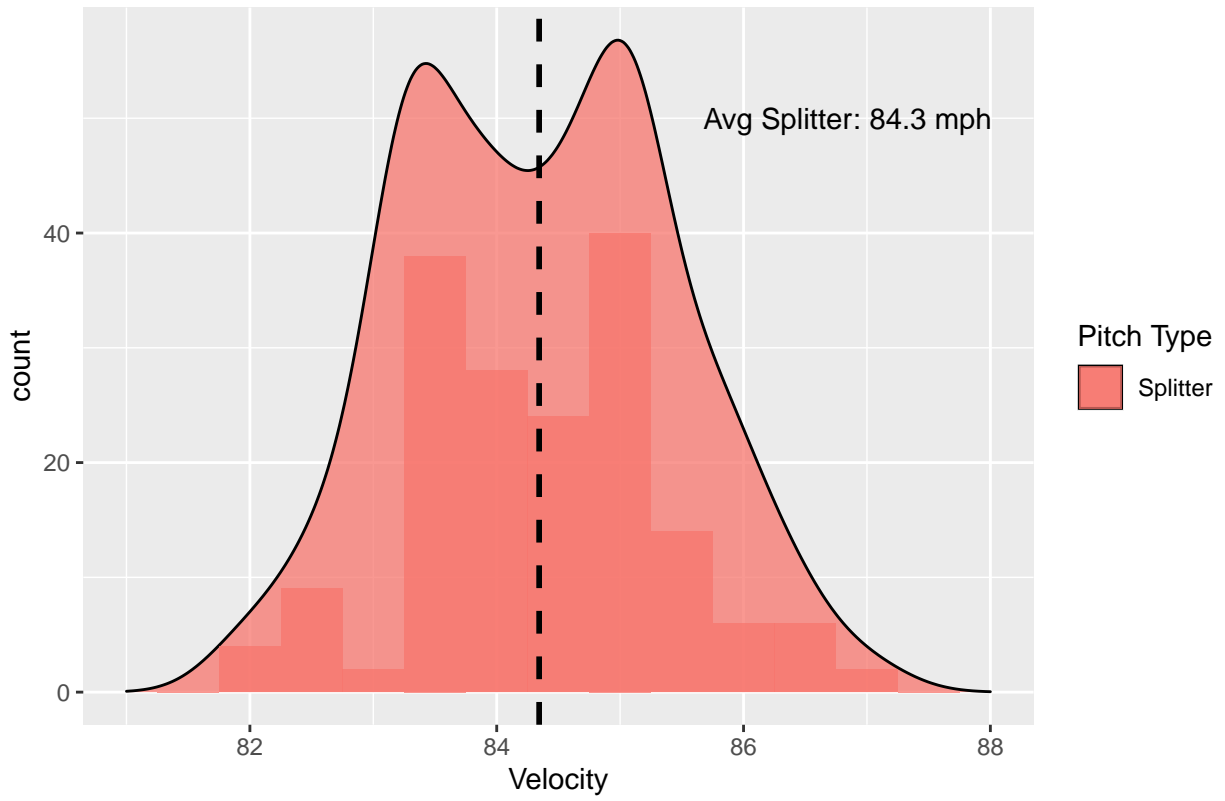


Table 27: Drew Rucinski Splitter Stats

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	wOBA	ExwOBA	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%
Splitter	84.3	9	0.153	0.288	15	7.2	16.9	7.8	42.8	83.1

Table 28: Drew Rucinski Splitter Stats by Batter Handedness

Bats	Usg%	CSW%	SwStr%	Whiff%	CS%	Swing%	Contact%	Strike%
LHH	12	14.2	6.7	14.5	7.5	45.8	85.5	53.3
RHH	6	16.7	8.3	22.7	8.3	36.7	77.3	45.0

Table 29: Drew Rucinski Splitter BBEs

Pitch	Velo	Usg %	ExwOBACON	BBEs	GB%	FB%	LD%	PU%	Soft%	Med%	Hard%
Splitter	84.3	9	0.304	33	63.6	21.2	12.1	3	36.4	42.4	21.2

Rucinski throws his splitter just 9% of the time, averaging 84.3 mph. His splitter usage is heavily thrown against LHH, with a 12% usage against LHH and 6% usage against RHH. The measure of its effectiveness varies depending on what kind of metric you look at. His splitter had a CSW% of 15% in 2020, the lowest mark on any pitch that had been thrown at least 125 times. But it also had a wOBA allowed of 0.153 (great!), an ExwOBA of 0.288 (the 19th-lowest mark, which is good!), and an ExwOBACON of 0.304 (tied for 10th, which is good!).

His splitter breaks to his arm side, and he throws it away from LHH, which is why the CSW% is poor since he's not getting called strikes at all. He gets a few whiffs, but still not many. It's not a deceptive pitch, with a Swing% of 42.8%, one of the lower marks in the KBO. However, when batters swing and make contact (which is most of their swings), the results have been favorable for Rucinski. His splitter has his highest GB% at 63.6% and lowest hard-hit% at 21.2%.

If his splitter can be an effective pitch that he throws ~ 20% of the time against LHH, with similar batted ball success as he's had in the KBO, I can see Rucinski in a starting rotation. But without an effective pitch, offspeed or otherwise, to use against LHH, it's hard for me to envision Rucinski finding MLB success in a starting role. Of course, his splitter won't be needed as much in an 2-3 IP opener/bullpen role where he can throw his cutter, curveball, and sinker.

## Resources

- KBO Wizard to host ~ 30,000 charted KBO pitches
- Drew Rucinski Baseball Savant page
- Drew Rucinski FanGraphs
- Mid-season article breaking looking at Rucinski's cutter (tagged as a slider)
- Breaking down Rucinski's start against the SK Wyverns
- Breaking down Rucinski's start against the Kiwoom Heroes
- See some of Rucinski's various pitches
- Brooks Raley Baseball Savant page
- Brooks Raley FanGraphs page