

# WOOD AND ALUMINUM BAT STATISTICAL ANALYSIS FOR THE 2007 MLB AMATEUR DRAFT

## ABSTRACT

IMPORTANCE OF DRAFT, UNCERTAINTY OF DRAFT, PROJECT DESCRIPTION



*Padres 1999 15<sup>th</sup> round pick, All-star Jake Peavy*

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## **IMPORTANCE OF DRAFT**

Major League Baseball's Rule 4 Amateur draft has been held since 1965 as a tool to give all teams the opportunity to sign amateur players. Prior to the draft, amateur players were essentially free agents and the richer teams held a distinct advantage. Now, the draft picks are in order of the previous seasons least successful teams, and teams that lose free agents are awarded compensatory picks. In order for a player to be eligible he has to be a resident of the U.S. (including territories like Puerto Rico) or Canada and have never signed a major or minor league contract before. High school players are eligible after graduation if they have not attended college, college players are eligible after their junior year or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and players at Division III, community, and junior colleges can be drafted anytime.

The June 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 2007 MLB Amateur draft is an especially important one for the San Diego Padres. Although their big league club has had recent success winning the NL West the last two years, the strength of the current team comes from players acquired through trades and free agency, not recent homegrown prospects. Their farm system was ranked 29<sup>th</sup> out of 30 in Baseball America's 2007 organizational talent rankings.<sup>1</sup> The size of the San Diego market confines the Padres to a lower-to-middle level payroll, limiting the team's ability to pursue big-name free agents and emphasizing the need to develop young talent—namely, through the draft. In addition to owning six of the first 64 picks as compensation for lost free agents, GM Kevin Towers has already allotted a franchise record \$10 million to sign the draft picks.<sup>2</sup> The Padres Scout.com/Foxsports.com website aptly forecasts “the 2007 draft [as being] the most important draft for the Padres since 1999.”<sup>3</sup>

## **UNCERTAINTY OF DRAFT**

The MLB Amateur draft is anything but a sure thing. Unlike the NFL and NBA drafts, an MLB selection is expected to spend multiple years in the minor leagues before contributing to the major league team. Of the Padres six first round selections in 1999, only one played an inning in the majors. None of the top 10 overall pitchers selected in 2000-2001 are currently on a big league roster, and hitters are only slightly less risky. A good portion of the uncertainty can be attributed to injury—of the 35 overall top pitchers drafted from 2000-2006, 14 have already had shoulder or elbow surgery.<sup>4</sup> The rest of the uncertainty can be attributed to the transition to professional baseball: different competition, different ballparks, and, most importantly, the switch from aluminum to wooden bats. When told “the baseball draft is the most inexact of all the drafts,” Padres director of scouting Bill “Chief” Gayton responded with the following:

“We're the only sport drafting during the season. We're the only sport with limited looks; for instance, hitters swinging a wooden bat. The conditions aren't always conducive to making an accurate evaluation. There's a lot of room for error. We're just trying to minimize the errors we make and bring as many big leaguers into the system as possible.”<sup>5</sup>

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

My project will consist of three parts with the goal to predict how the top college draft prospects will perform with wooden bats. I am focusing exclusively on college players because there are many more sources for uncertainty in high school statistics due to shorter schedules and uneven competition. Part I will examine the physical differences in wood and aluminum bats and predict how these differences play out in real life and in the statistics of college hitters and pitchers. Part II will look at previous articles written on this subject and then examine the overall statistics for the NCAA in 2006 and 2007, the Cape League in 2006, and Rookie/Short Season A-ball minor leagues in 2006. These data will then be used to make a wooden bat conversion factor. Part III will use this factor along with park and strength of schedule factors to translate and evaluate the performance of top draft prospects.

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Callis, "2007 Organization Talent Rankings," Baseball America (April 5, 2007), viewed May 7, 2007.

<<http://www.baseballamerica.com/online/prospects/features/263636.html>>

<sup>2</sup> Tom Krasovic and Bill Center, "Padres sign Latos for \$1.2 million," San Diego Union-Tribune (May 31, 2007), viewed May 31, 2007.

<<http://www.signonsandiego.com/sports/padres/20070531-9999-1s31padnotes.html>>

<sup>3</sup> John Conniff, "Broward coach Bob Deutschman on Mat Latos," Madfriars.com (May 2, 2007), viewed May 7, 2007. <<http://padres.scout.com/2/647952.html>>

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Goldstein, "Future Shock: Unpaid Hazards," Baseball Prospectus (May 3, 2007), viewed May 7, 2007. <<http://www.baseballprospectus.com/article.php?articleid=6183>>

<sup>5</sup> Tom Krasovic, "Q&A with Bill Gayton," San Diego Union-Tribune (June 4 2007), viewed June 4 2007. <<http://www.signonsandiego.com/sports/padres/20070604-9999-lz1s4gayton.html>>