Soto dealt to Yanks for promising crop of pitchers

12:55 AM CST

AJ Cassavell
@AJCassavell

Share

Comparing San Diego BEFORE with San Diego NOW:

02 August 2022: "Washington Nationals traded LF Juan Soto and 1B Josh Bell to San Diego Padres for 1B Luke Voit, LHP MacKenzie Gore, SS C.J. Abrams, OF Robert Hassell III, OF James Wood and RHP Jarlin Susana."

07 Dec 2023: "The 25-year-old star was sent to the Bronx along with outfielder Trent Grisham for five players: catcher Kyle Higashioka and right-handed pitchers Michael King, Drew Thorpe, Jhony Brito and Randy Vásquez."

San Diego Lost	San Diego Gained
1B Luke Voigt	C Kyle Higashioka
LHP Mackenzie Gore	RHP Michael King
SS C.J. Abrams	RHP Jhony Brito
OF Robert Hassell III	RHP Randy Vasquez
OF James Wood	RHP Drew Thorpe
RHP Jarlin Susana	
OF Trent Grisham	

How all the young players (especially the pitchers) turn out, and how soon, will determine the verdict on San Diego's "Juan Soto" venture. Is what the Padres ended up getting for Soto less than what they gave the Nationals because the Yankees get one less season of controllability with Juan? If the Yankees flounder again next season, and it becomes clear Soto won't be staying in New York, his trade value will be greatly reduced next summer.

Indeed, the Padres did get good service out of Juan Soto, but this past season was a disappointment. Soto never brought them quite the power and average they needed from him, and his postseason performance was forgettable the previous year. More than most power hitters, you can nullify him just by not pitching to him because he will only swing at strikes: no Vladdy Sr. golfing a bounced pitch over the fence. Josh Bell's time there amounted to very little in WAR terms.

I am always only 95% impressed by high OBP numbers, that "good eye at the plate." Barry Bonds epitomized this, all those walks beyond the intentional ones. It's safe to say that everything BB did on a diamond, he did it for Barry Bonds more than his team; even as his head ballooned on steroids, there still wasn't room for anyone but "Barry Bonds" in it. I believe there were plenty of times when Bonds could have swung at a marginal pitch, a ball, and done something with it (advanced a runner, a "Tony Gwynn single" the other way, a sac fly)—he was masterful with a bat—that his team needed more than another walk putting him on an empty first base. But Barry Bonds was too busy being "Barry Bonds."

A single does more than a walk: if there's a runner on first, a walk moves him up to second, outs now possible at all three bases with no chance of scoring a run; a single likely moves him to third, where he can score even on a no-outs double play. Walks are the weakest "successful outcome" in hitting.

Similarly, perhaps Juan takes too many walks too. But, maybe Juan hits the way he does because he isn't as good at hitting any other way, i.e. being more of a free-swinger. (If Vladdy Sr. had tried to hit like Juan, with more restraint and plate discipline, he likely would have been a flop; he swung so easily because that was the only way he could hit anything given his makeup.) And if he bats in front of Aaron Judge, then Giancarlo Stanton (if he's ever healthy and on-track), the value of a walk increases greatly. And Soto will get better pitches to hit.

No hitting stat is sufficient in itself: each adds something others miss or don't include properly. Even the old Batting AVG, neglected and downplayed now, includes things the likes of OBP and SLG, and therefore OPS, miss; AVG is still the best start to judging a hitter: hits in AB's that do something challenging the opposition defence. And WAR (Wins Above Replacement) may try to be the ultimate replacing all the rest, but no one can agree on how to definitively define it; it would seem each WAR still misses or misemphasizes

something. Such advanced stats that adjust for ballpark differences are a step forward, but like WAR, their utility declines the smaller the period of performance being examined. And, if you are going to spend your career at Coors Field or Yankee Stadium, you adjust your hitting approach to best match what your home stadium gives you (or takes away).

Just something to consider if you have nothing better to do!

Juan Soto #22 | LF — Summary · Stats · News · Charts · Awards · SHOP

Career Stats

Season	Team	LG	G	AB	R	H	TB	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	IBB	SO	SB	CS	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	GO/AO
2018	WSH	NL	116	414	77	121	214	25	1	22	70	79	10	99	5	2	.292	.406	.517	.923	1.79
2019	WSH	NL	150	542	110	153	297	32	5	34	110	108	3	132	12	1	.282	.401	.548	.949	0.99
2020	WSH	NL	47	154	39	54	107	14	0	13	37	41	12	28	6	2	.351	.490	.695	1.185	2.13
2021	WSH	NL	151	502	111	157	268	20	2	29	95	145	23	93	9	7	.313	.465	.534	.999	1.65
2022	2 teams	-	153	524	93	127	237	25	2	27	62	135	6	96	6	2	.242	.401	.452	.853	1.17
2022	WSH	NL	101	342	62	84	166	17	1	21	46	91	4	62	6	2	.246	.408	.485	.893	1.25
2022	SD	NL	52	182	31	43	71	8	1	6	16	44	2	34	0	0	.236	.388	.390	.778	1.02
2023	SD	NL	162	568	97	156	295	32	1	35	109	132	11	129	12	5	.275	.410	.519	.929	1.45
MLB Career	-	-	779	2704	527	768	1418	148	11	160	483	640	65	577	50	19	.284	.421	.524	.945	1.38

Juan Soto: 1+ seasons: 52/162 + 162/162 = 1.32 seasons

Josh Bell: 53/162 = 0.33 seasons

Josh Bell #9 | 1B — Summary · Stats · News · Charts · Awards · SHOP

MLB · Minors · Batting · Fielding · Regular Season ▾

Career Stats

Season	Team	LG	G	AB	R	H	TB	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	IBB	SO	SB	CS	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	GO/AO
2016	PIT	NL	45	128	18	35	52	8	0	3	19	21	0	19	0	1	.273	.368	.406	.774	1.41
2017	PIT	NL	159	549	75	140	256	26	6	26	90	66	4	117	2	4	.255	.334	.466	.800	1.47
2018	PIT	NL	148	501	74	131	206	31	4	12	62	77	2	104	2	5	.261	.357	.411	.768	1.13
2019	PIT	NL	143	527	94	146	300	37	3	37	116	74	13	118	0	1	.277	.367	.569	.936	1.18
2020	PIT	NL	57	195	22	44	71	3	0	8	22	22	4	59	0	0	.226	.305	.364	.669	1.40
2021	WSH	NL	144	498	75	130	237	24	1	27	88	65	2	101	0	0	.261	.347	.476	.823	1.84
2022	2 teams	-	156	552	78	147	233	29	3	17	71	81	4	102	0	1	.266	.362	.422	.784	1.36
2022	WSH	NL	103	375	52	113	185	24	3	14	57	49	4	61	0	1	.301	.384	.493	.877	1.25
2022	SD	NL	53	177	26	34	48	5	0	3	14	32	0	41	0	0	.192	.316	.271	.587	1.62
2023	2 teams	-	150	547	52	135	229	28	0	22	74	63	2	134	0	1	.247	.325	.419	.744	1.34
MLB Career	-	-	1002	3497	488	908	1584	186	17	152	542	469	31	754	4	13	.260	.347	.453	.800	1.37