

## The book on ... **Bobby Abreu**

Phillies, OF 6-0 / 186

Mention **Bobby** Abreu's name around the Phillies' clubhouse and the recurring comparison is Tony Gwynn.

Considering they both play right field and bat lefthanded, **Abreu** is worthy of the analogy.

"To me, Bobby's Tony Gwynn with power," says hitting instructor Hal McRae.

Through September 4, Abreu's .348 batting average trailed only Larry Walker's .369 among N.L. hitters.

As Walker monitors Abreu's average—and watches him spray batting-practice balls to all portions of the field—he

knows Abreu, 25, can be a fixture in the batting chase. "When you hit .350, that's Hall of Fame material," Walker says. "He's going to be a great player."

**Abreu** became the Phillies' everyday right fielder after he was acquired from Houston through Tampa Bay in the 1997 Expansion Draft. The Astros left him unprotected, and the Devil Rays picked him and then traded him to Philadelphia for shortstop Kevin Stocker.

Nearly two years later, there's little question which team came out best.

During his first full season as a regular in '98, **Abreu** compiled a .312 average with 68 runs, 29 doubles, six triples, 17 home runs and 74 RBIs.

After he opened the '99 season in the No. 6 slot, manager Terry Francona bumped him up to No. 3 (his likely long-term home). And now **Abreu** could become the first Phillies right fielder in 35 years to score 100-plus runs.

His 10 triples led all N.L. hitters, and his 101 runs, 18 homers and 81 RBIs represent maturity as a player. He runs the bases as well as any young player in the game, particularly from first to third.

Left fielder Ron Gant is convinced **Abreu** is one of those special players with a gift for finding holes in the opposing defense. Says Gant, "He's probably the most natural hitter I've ever seen." —Chris Edwards



DILIP VISHWANATH / TSN

## TSN's Power Poll

Rk.	Team	W-L	Comment (The nerd edition)
1.	Atlanta	86-51	Best team since Lambda Lambda Lambda joined with Omega Mu.
2.	N.Y. Yankees	83-52	Forget the pocket: Team needs a Rocket protector.
3.	Cleveland	84-51	On a roll, Indians have reached a state of "Nerd-vana".
4.	N.Y. Mets	82-54	Like a nerd in science class, they're earning good grades.
5.	Texas	81-56	Texan bullies shake down A.L. West nerds for lunch money.
6.	Arizona	80-56	Skinny dweeb suddenly has lots of power—Bell is baseball's Bill Gates.
7.	Houston	81-56	Unable to shake them, team tapes a "Kick Me" sign on the Reds.
8.	Cincinnati	77-57	With 120 strikeouts, Cameron is still a hacker.
9.	San Francisco	75-61	Team hanging on like toilet paper on the bottom of a nerd's shoe.
10.	Boston	76-60	Beck, Mercker have upgraded staff with a few megabytes of RAM.
11.	Oakland	75-61	Playoffs? Team looks as out of place as a nerd on a date.
12.	Toronto	74-64	Wild-card hopes look as bleak as a nerd seeking a prom date.
13.	Seattle	68-67	Griffey, A-Rod in Seattle are like nerds in a remedial computer class.
14.	Philadelphia	68-67	Up-and-coming team's Y2K plan seems to be right on track.
15.	Pittsburgh	67-69	Giles may not look tough, but he's all Ogre on the inside.
16.	Los Angeles	64-71	More duds on this team than at a Star Trek convention.
17.	St. Louis	66-71	Micro. Soft. The best way to describe team's pitching staff.
18.	Chi. White Sox	63-73	Big, unwieldy and useless: Thomas is like the band's tuba player.
19.	San Diego	62-74	Team has as many soft spots as a nerd has allergies.
20.	Baltimore	61-74	MIT research team produces results of scientific study: The O's stink.
21.	Tampa Bay	61-75	Injury gives Boggs more time for his favorite hobby: Internet chat rooms.
22.	Colorado	61-76	Leyland seems ready to go the way of the Beanie Baby.
23.	Milwaukee	60-75	These guys are as shorthanded as a nerd with an Apple II.
24.	Montreal	57-78	League's jocks beating up on these poor foreign-exchange students.
25.	Minnesota	56-78	Watching this is as thrilling as a Dungeons and Dragons marathon.
26.	Chi. Cubs	55-79	Sosa wonders, "Who still uses a Mac, anyway?"
27.	Florida	54-81	You don't need Coke-bottle lenses to see this team's problems.
28.	Detroit	54-81	NASA scientists have set up an algorithmic formula to calculate ERA.
29.	Anaheim	52-83	Erstad has played more like Urkel this year.
30.	Kansas City	52-84	Team has to wear flood pants to keep from getting dirty in the cellar.

Through last Saturday's games.

TSN's Power Poll is produced by TSN editors and writers. Comments by Sean Deveney.

# inside dish

FRONT OFFICE  
RUMBLINGS  
AND LOCKER  
ROOM  
WHISPERS BY  
JON HEYMAN

Baseball might bring back a few of the ousted umpires next year (though not at the expense of the new hires), and maybe a few more than that if capable agent **Ron Shapiro** replaces the misguided, combative union head **Richie Phillips**. Phillips' departure is inevitable with almost half the umpires now opposing him. But he still seems determined to fight hard for himself after losing 22 umpiring jobs without much of a fight. ... The Yankees took a gamble by claiming **Frank Thomas**. They figured—correctly, as it turned out—that the White Sox couldn't let Thomas go for the \$20,000 claiming price only two years after their public relations nightmare with the trades of **Roberto Hernandez** and **Wilson Alvarez**,

even though that trade turned out to be a good one. Thomas makes \$10 million annually and is signed through 2006. It's not a bad contract by today's standards, but he doesn't fit into the Yankees' plans. What would the Yankees have done if their claim had been accepted by Chicago? "We would have had one hell of a DH," one Yankees person said. ... The Red Sox couldn't work out a deal with Tampa Bay after claiming **Hernandez**, so they gambled on **Rod Beck**, who probably will, pitch better in a new league than he did with the Cubs. ...



DILIP VISHWANATH / TSN

**COURTING FRANK:** Thomas' power has dropped off recently, but he's still drawing interest from other teams.

Now that **Terry Collins** is out as the Angels' manager, Dodgers hitting coach **Rick Down** (the man Collins beat out for the job in 1997) would be a fine choice as his replacement. As would either of two Yankees coaches, **Willie Randolph** or **Chris Chambliss**. ... Brewers president **Wendy Selig-Prieb** is off to a fast start in her G.M. search. She is way ahead of the Rockies, who seem to be falling into an abyss. Selig-Prieb already has done three interviews—White Sox assistant G.M. **Dan Evans**, ex-Indians assistant G.M. **Dan O'Dowd** and Blue Jays assistant G.M. **Dave Stewart**—and she was expected to meet with Braves assistant G.M. **Dean Taylor** and Mets assistant **Omar Minaya**. Meanwhile, the Rockies, who likely will lose manager **Jim Leyland** as well, were just getting started with their interviews. ... Another Colorado problem, people believe, is that two overbulked statues man the right side of the infield, with **Mike Lansing** at second and **Todd Helton** at first. Helton was even worse before former Rockies manager **Don Baylor** told him to cut down on Creatine.

# Montreal

29-46: 5th

## Irabu's elbow problem could necessitate surgery



The MRI performed on RHP **Hideki Irabu's** right elbow revealed a small tear of the ulnar collateral ligament. Irabu will take that well-worn path to Birmingham, Ala., to be examined by noted orthopedic surgeon **Dr. James Andrews** on Monday. Manager **Jeff Torborg** even used those three dreaded words—"Tommy John surgery"—in discussing Irabu last Saturday, although it hasn't come to that yet. ...With RHP **Mike Thurman's** addition to the rotation, LHP **Matt Blank** will be the odd man out. ...

JUNE GRADES	
OFFENSE	F
There is almost no clutch hitting, and big innings are a rarity.	
PITCHING	B
The starters almost have to shut out the opposition to get the victory.	
DEFENSE	B
The team is catching the ball, but it's having some trouble controlling the running game.	

The club is considering moving RHP **Masato Yoshii** back to the bullpen. Torborg thinks he is ideally suited to be a middle reliever, something the club lacks.

**SCOUTING REPORT:** OF **Peter Bergeron** was just recalled to the big club after a two-month stint in the minors in which he tried to clean up his swing. He's being counted on to be the leadoff man of the present and future. Because the team has lacked a player to assume that role in the majors, he might have been recalled before he was ready. Bergeron has speed, not burning speed, but enough that the club expects a decent number of stolen bases from him. At the plate, he's missing an aggressive approach, which would allow him to go deep into counts to find a pitch to drive, not necessarily to walk. That's a distinction he's slowly learning. He has worked to eliminate unnecessary movement from his stance and to get his weight in the right places at the right time.

**SEE A DIFFERENT GAME:** Why the club sat OF **Milton Bradley** on the bench for three days before sending him to Class AAA is unclear. Perhaps it wanted to teach him a lesson by making him see what he was missing. If Bradley isn't able to control a penchant for being negative, he could damage his career. He had a reputation for being difficult in the minors, and he hasn't put it behind him. Ultimately, he has to decide if the "everybody's against me" anger that fueled his rise to the big leagues might hurt him more than help him as he tries to establish himself as a big-league player. —Stephanie Myles

BATTERS	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SB	K	BB	E
Guerrero	.312	73	276	53	86	17	48	.372	10	41	24	4
Vidro#	.308	54	214	33	66	9	26	.365	2	31	14	4
Cabrera	.264	75	288	25	76	4	35	.312	8	26	19	6
Knorr	.260	19	50	11	13	3	9	.356	0	11	7	2
Stevens+	.247	73	275	36	68	12	46	.300	1	69	21	6
Ducey+	.245	39	49	7	12	2	9	.406	0	17	13	0
Barrett	.243	62	214	22	52	4	14	.291	0	22	14	4
Smith	.237	21	38	7	9	1	4	.362	0	11	7	0
Blum#	.228	67	184	28	42	3	17	.321	5	44	21	3
Mordecai	.227	40	97	9	22	2	11	.269	1	22	6	0
Minor	.186	21	43	5	8	1	8	.280	0	20	5	2
Bergeron+	.116	21	69	10	8	1	1	.208	1	21	7	0
Schneider+	.000	3	2	0	0	0	0	.333	0	0	1	0
GRAND SLAMS: None												
PITCHERS	ERA	W-L	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	AVG.	
*Mattes	0.00	0-0	7.0	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	.091	
Lloyd+	2.60	4-1	34.2	26	11	10	1	18	12	1	.210	
Armas Jr.	3.03	7-5	98.0	81	39	33	9	83	43	0	.229	
Cubillan	3.48	0-0	10.1	9	4	4	1	7	3	0	.243	
Strickland	3.49	1-3	38.2	36	18	15	2	34	21	0	.248	
Mota	3.50	1-1	36.0	27	15	14	6	21	9	0	.211	
Urbina	4.32	0-1	33.1	27	18	16	7	41	16	9	.218	
Yoshii	4.55	2-5	57.1	62	32	29	8	30	19	0	.271	
Vazquez	4.96	5-9	101.2	107	60	56	12	96	26	0	.272	
Blank+	5.16	2-2	22.2	23	14	13	5	11	13	0	.267	
Scanlan	5.82	0-0	17.0	21	11	11	0	3	7	0	.318	
*Stewart+	5.95	0-0	19.2	23	13	13	2	11	5	0	.303	
SHUTOUTS: Vazquez (1)												
COMPLETE GAMES: Vazquez (2)												

# New York

33-42: 4th

## Escobar will get to play more if playoff hopes fade away



Highly promoted as the team's five-tool future star, OF **Alex Escobar** will stay with the club as long as injuries create a need for his services. Still,

JUNE GRADES	
OFFENSE	D
The lineup was weakened by injuries, but let's face it: Piazza is the only scary presence.	
PITCHING	C+
Leter has helped the starting rotation. The bullpen is, for the most part, inconsistent.	
DEFENSE	D
Statistically, the club is doing pretty well, but fundamentally it must do better.	

Escobar's best chance of playing every day is if the team fades completely out of postseason contention. In the team's final 60 games, there's a great chance Escobar, 22, could be an everyday fixture in manager **Bobby Valentine's** lineup. And there's much the team needs to see from this raw talent. In his brief time in the major leagues, he has shown power to the opposite field, a quick bat and a fantastic arm. But Escobar has shown a penchant for strikeouts and has sailed some throws in an attempt to show off his powerful arm. Escobar was not flourishing in his first full season at Class AAA Norfolk, either.

**SCOUTING REPORT:** On a better team with more pop in the lineup, it would be easier to hide the offensive shortcomings of SS **Rey Ordonez**. Two years ago, Ordonez often was regarded as the best defensive shortstop in the league. He continues to excel at plays in the hole, charging the ball and coming across second base, and range is not a question. But Ordonez, 28, has made more than his share of throwing errors, leading to speculation about the health of his right shoulder. He has straightened up his stance at the plate, but the flashes he displayed in March have dimmed. Ordonez was hitting .229 with 22 RBIs, a .280 on-base average and a .289 slugging mark through last Saturday. His last extra-base hit was on May 30. His reputation as a rally killer is growing on the run-starved Mets.

**SEE A DIFFERENT GAME:** The team seldom cashes in on opponents' mistakes. Consider the unearned runs the Mets have received. Over a period of 39 games, the team scored 20 unearned runs, but its record during that span was only 19-20. In the Mets' first 75 games, opponents committed 13 more errors than the Mets. But the Mets were lopsided losers in key offensive categories such as batting average, runs, stolen bases, slugging percentage and home runs. —Pete Caldera

BATTERS	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SB	K	BB	E
Relaford#	.289	57	135	21	39	4	15	.353	4	36	12	6
McEwing	.288	47	80	16	23	3	9	.374	3	17	9	0
Agbayani	.283	49	173	16	49	4	17	.361	2	44	18	6
Ventura+	.280	71	232	48	65	15	37	.405	1	41	50	2
Zelle	.270	71	259	30	70	4	31	.357	1	42	33	7
Piazza	.261	68	253	38	66	19	43	.330	0	42	26	3
*Perez+	.260	50	154	17	40	2	15	.309	0	17	9	0
Johnson+	.257	19	35	6	9	2	7	.350	0	12	5	0
Harris+	.237	55	76	8	18	0	5	.293	3	3	6	1
Ordonez	.229	66	218	7	50	0	22	.280	2	22	16	9
Hamilton+	.223	49	121	15	27	1	5	.329	3	19	18	0
*Escobar	.212	9	33	1	7	1	4	.257	1	12	2	2
Pratt	.196	34	56	5	11	1	3	.324	1	25	9	1
Velandia	.000	3	3	0	0	0	0	.250	0	0	1	0
GRAND SLAMS: Ventura (1)												
PITCHERS	ERA	W-L	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	AVG.	
Benitez	2.62	3-2	34.1	25	10	10	6	42	18	13	.203	
Reed	2.96	7-3	109.1	88	37	36	10	77	12	0	.219	
Leter+	3.53	4-5	66.1	64	32	26	8	53	12	0	.249	
Wendell	3.62	3-2	37.1	30	16	15	6	31	16	1	.221	
Francisco+	3.77	3-1	28.2	33	13	12	3	27	6	2	.282	
Appier	4.42	4-7	89.2	85	46	44	10	79	30	0	.249	
White	5.00	1-1	27.0	33	21	15	2	11	10	1	.292	
Cook+	5.33	1-1	25.1	24	16	15	4	21	9	0	.240	
*Gonzalez	5.59	2-2	48.1	60	31	30	4	23	16	0	.311	
Rusch+	5.76	3-5	75.0	106	51	48	10	70	22	0	.337	
Trachsel	6.56	1-8	59.0	74	45	43	14	46	18	0	.310	
SHUTOUTS: Reed (1)												
COMPLETE GAMES: Reed (3)												

# Philadelphia

41-31: 1st

## With the rotation struggling, team starts talking trades



The rotation was a June disaster—the starters' combined ERA after the first 20 games was 6.69. The result has been a mounting load on the

JUNE GRADES	
OFFENSE	C+
Team scored 56 runs in a six-game span (June 15-21), but big guns continue to misfire.	
PITCHING	F
In 20 games, the staff allowed 234 hits over 170 innings, an alarming total.	
DEFENSE	C-
Averaging more than an error per game is not what Bowa envisioned—or will tolerate.	

relievers. Although the bullpen benefited from the acquisition of RHP **Jose Santiago** and RHP **Wayne Gomes'** return from the D.L., it still has been overused. The trade target preferably would be a ground-ball specialist because the pitchers have shown a troubling penchant for giving up home runs on high deliveries. Names that have surfaced as candidates include **Pedro Astacio**, **Sidney Ponson**, **Jason Johnson** and **Esteban Loaiza**. As for trade bait, the team has a surplus of starting talent in its system, including RHPs **Brandon Duckworth** and **David Coggin** at Class AAA and RHPs **Brett Myers** and **Carlos Silva** and LHP **Adam Walker** at Class AA. Myers might be the only untouchable prospect. Silva, the hardest-thrower of that group, is approaching that status.

**SCOUTING REPORT:** RF **Bobby Abreu's** batting average had dipped into the .220s before he started to turn things around by going 23-for-70 (.329) with 19 RBIs in 20 June games. But for **Abreu** to take the next step to superstardom, his defense must improve. **Abreu** continues to struggle catching fly balls at or near the outfield wall, and he frequently is caught out of position. His reluctance to sacrifice his body has cost the team several runs this season.

**SEE A DIFFERENT GAME:** In a game at Pittsburgh last week, the team was trailing by a run when a thunderstorm swept over PNC Park. With dust from the nearby Heinz Park construction site swirling in the air, **Abreu** and 3B **Scott Rolen** executed a timely double steal in the sixth. When **Abreu** broke for third, Pirates C **Jason Kendall** threw the ball into left field, allowing **Abreu** to score. Rolen later scored the go-ahead run. Both runners went on their own, a nifty bit of realization given the circumstances. Had umpires stopped play, it might not have been resumed—but it would have been an official game. —Chris Edwards

BATTERS	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SB	K	BB	E
Ward#	.500	6	6	0	3	0	2	.500	0	1	0	0
*Estrada#	.291	29	103	13	30	3	18	.321	0	9	3	3
*Rollins#	.278	70	295	37	82	7	30	.315	24	49	16	4
Abreu+	.277	72	260	53	72	12	47	.382	17	61	48	5
Perez#	.277	23	47	3	13	0	5	.333	0	6	2	0
Burrell	.276	71	250	33	69	8	36	.368	1	82	35	6
Anderson+	.264	65	212	24	56	7	33	.321	5	28	19	7
Glanville	.264	68	296	45	78	10	29	.290	13	47	10	3
Lee+	.263	69	243	43	64	12	43	.362	2	46	39	2
Rolen	.263	70	259	42	68	7	42	.353	7	59	36	8
Jordan	.254	35	63	5	16	1	10	.356	0	9	10	2
Hunter	.245	32	49	10	12	2	7	.373	5	12	10	0
Bennett	.184	18	49	3	9	0	3	.268	0	13	6	2
GRAND SLAMS: Jordan (1)												
PITCHERS	ERA	W-L	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	AVG.	
Santiago	0.84	0-0	10.2	10	1	1	0	3	1	0	.244	
Gomes	3.03	4-1	32.2	27	11	11	1	29	16	1	.225	
Mesa	3.30	1-1	30.0	28	11	11	3	29	14	18	.248	
Cormier+	3.33	3-1	24.1	28	11	9	1	19	7	1	.280	
Bottalico	3.62	2-4	37.1	34	16	15	5	28	15	2	.258	
Daal+	4.12	8-1	89.2	92	45	41	13	50	22	0	.264	
Person	4.71	5-5	91.2	82	50	48	16	81	38	0	.243	
Wolf+	4.72	4-8	82.0	91	48	43	10	86	34	0	.287	
Chen+	4.79	2-4	73.1	76	44	39	17	70	25	0	.262	
Padilla	4.91	3-1	22.0	28	13	12	0	18	9	0	.318	
Telemaco	5.36	5-4	80.2	86	52	48	14	54	27	0	.277	
Vosburg+	8.31	0-0	4.1	5	4	4	0	7	2	0	.294	
SHUTOUTS: Person (1)												
COMPLETE GAMES: Person (2), Telemaco, Wolf (1)												