

2010: YEAR OF THE PITCHER

Free agent Cliff Lee threw first-pitch strikes at a 69.7-percent clip in 2010, the highest percentage among ERA qualifiers. Opposing hitters hacked at 37.2 percent of Lee's first pitches, also the highest percentage by a significant margin, and they were successful against him. Hitters batted .348 and slugged .504 on his first-pitch offerings. In all other counts, Lee limited opponents to a .222 average and .340 slugging percentage.



Cliff Lee

Lee didn't call on the curveball to end many at-bats -- less than half as many as the others on the leader board -- but it was an effective pitch when he did. The same is true with the slider of Detroit's Justin Verlander. On the flip side, Seattle's Doug Fister wasn't hurt by his slider nearly as often as his peers on the leader board.

Fastball Still a Favorite

According to STATS' pitch data for 2010, hitters still prefer the fastball as a home-run pitch, and numerous big league hurlers rely on the slider as their strikeout pitch:

Percentage of Pitches Thrown, MLB 2010

| | All Pitches | Hit for HR | Strike 3 |
|-----------|-------------|------------|----------|
| Fastball | 58.4 | 60.2 | 41.9 |
| Slider | 14.5 | 13.9 | 23.6 |
| Changeup | 9.8 | 11.1 | 11.1 |
| Curveball | 9.4 | 7.5 | 14.7 |
| Other | 7.9 | 7.3 | 8.7 |

Pitches Thrown

Mets knuckleballer R.A. Dickey seldom called on the fastball in 2010, but when an at-bat ended with the heater, opposing hitters batted .374 against him. The chart below features the highest and lowest opponent batting averages allowed by pitch, among ERA qualifiers. A pitcher must have at least 60 at-bats end with a particular pitch to qualify. The at-bats include third strikes.

Highest & Lowest BA Allowed by Pitch, 2010

| Pitch Type | Highest | OBA | Lowest | OBA |
|------------|----------------------|------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Fastball | R.A. Dickey, NYM | .374 | Ted Lilly, ChC-LAD | .208 |
| | James Shields, TB | .348 | Jonothan Sanchez, SF | .208 |
| | Gavin Floyd, CWS | .331 | David Price, TB | .220 |
| Curveball | Zack Greinke, KC | .365 | Jon Lester, Bos | .133 |
| | Randy Wolf, Mil | .333 | Cliff Lee, Sea-Tex | .133 |
| | James Shields, TB | .295 | Roy Oswalt, Hou-Phi | .143 |
| Slider | Kevin Milwood, Bal | .333 | CC Sabathia, NYY | .099 |
| | Doug Fister, Sea | .317 | Clayton Kershaw, LAD | .107 |
| | Livan Hernandez, Was | .295 | Justin Verlander, Det | .136 |
| Changeup | Zack Greinke, KC | .336 | Ian Kennedy, Ari | .117 |
| | Livan Hernandez | .321 | Felix Hernandez, Sea | .133 |
| | Kyle Kendrick, Phi | .320 | C.J. Wilson, Tex | .151 |

