

Bloomberg Sports Making Push to Be Heavy Weight in Baseball Analytics

Written by Maury Brown

Wednesday, 09 December 2009 11:05



Who throws what when? Image of pitch selections in a sequence (MLB only - Click to see in larger view)

UPDATE: Today (Sun., 1/31/10) Bloomberg Sports held a demonstration of their professional baseball analytics app they are working on. For those on Twitter, [search for #BBGSports](#)

**. We were fortunate to see the initial demonstration at the Baseball Winter Meetings in Indianapolis in Dec. We have bumped that review for today, given the interest in the application through the demo in New York -
*Maury Brown***

Touting a “killer app” for both professionals in MLB and consumers in fantasy baseball, Bloomberg Sport gave a presentation this morning to the media at the Baseball Winter Meetings that will undoubtedly be of interest to the likes of those that delve into sabermetrics. The product idea was hatched a year ago in Las Vegas during the winter meetings and has had input from players, most notably Jim Thome.

A Consumer Product

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Bloomberg is entering the analytics field on two fronts: a consumer piece that is geared toward those that engage in fantasy baseball, and a more in-depth product designed for MLB and agents. Both are web-based products that feature Bloomberg's signature dark gray and yellow interface touches.

Since the product is based around an agreement with MLBAM, player images, club logos, and stats are available in a slick design. For the fantasy consumer, you can purchase a Draft Kit, in-season tracking and analysis, or a package with both with a cost of \$20, \$25, or \$30 respectively for each season. The product will be available next week for pre-order at <http://mlb.com/bloombergsports/> and available for use in Feb.

Using metrics and analysis, the user can create their own custom draft kit with watch lists that display the best available players by position, or team. Tabs are provided for Rookies, Multi-Position eligible, "Rising", "Falling", "Sleepers", "Busts", or "Contract Year" with player images on the dashboard.

On the analysis side, the product leans heavily on Bloomberg's expertise in graphic representation with dynamic charts that allow users to dynamically add player, and track data points within each graph by mousing over them.

The product's look and design is exceptional, but those that are the hardcore fantasy fans will most likely have to augment with other data sources. In the demonstration, only standard metrics were available, with no advanced sabermetrics such as WHIP. Bloomberg has said that they will be working to add additional metrics in the future.

A Team Product

The more powerful side of the Bloomberg offering revolves around additional data, such as Pitch F/X. While Bloomberg did not demonstrate the functionality, defensive metrics through the SportsVision system that uses cameras to track the exact speed and location of the ball in relation to players on the field will be added, as well as the use of live video. Bloomberg has access to all of MLBAM's historical stats data and are pulling in older data through the likes of Retrosheet. Bloomberg said that they have historical data dating back to the early 1900s.

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While the pro-side demonstration showed the generic stats toolset (Avg, K, BB, etc), custom work is being done for each team that requests it. Should there be an analytics staff that knows a particular advanced metric formula, a pop-up window to write the stat and insert it along side the other sort able stats, is available.

The most interesting graphic shown revolved around pitching sequence. A circular chart was displayed showing a pitcher's tendency to throw certain pitches, based on inning in game, where they were in the count, who was at the plate, and with runners on-base. Mousing over each quadrant in the pie chart then game additional details.

Nuts and Bolts

The Bloomberg apps are visually stunning, but there are still some pieces missing, for those that want to really leverage the piece. The ability to do a CSV dump for tables was not yet available to allow users to use the likes of Excel or other spreadsheet tools. Bloomberg said that is in the works.

Those that are on-the-go will find that due to the Flash-like aspect of the design, the Bloomberg Sports offering is not yet supported on mobile platforms.

With the products both being web-based, Bloomberg was keen to note that they are using the same high-level of security protection that they apply to financial institutions. With clubs highly protective of their data, this was a concerned voiced in feedback with them.

The Future

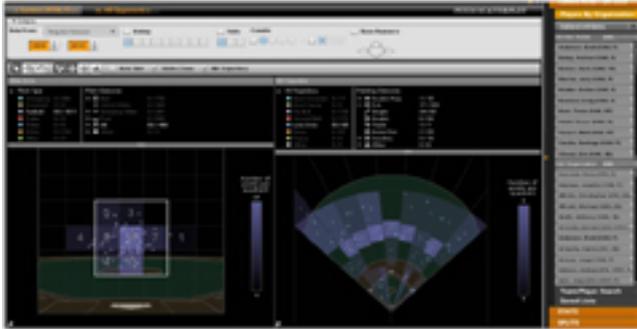
Bloomberg's large presence in the business and news world gives the application credibility on the MLB side. The consumer side will certainly draw customers through the direct ties to MLB.com, as well as through Bloomberg Sports online. While the data being provided for the hardcore fantasy player or manager is weak out of the gate, Bloomberg has made it clear that

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they will be adding more in the future. On the professional side, information such as contracts, agents, ML service time, etc. is being added in. Lastly, Bloomberg is looking for feedback from those that engage in the applications. On the consumer side, they will be doing a hands-on demonstration shortly in New York, and there are talks of taking it on the road, such as FanFests.

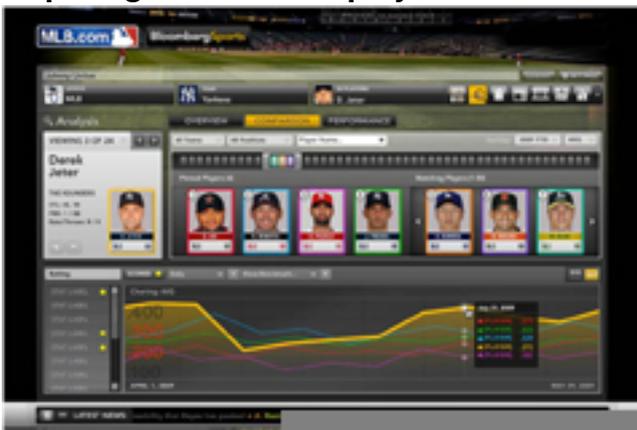
Select from the images below to see in high-resolution



Example of Bloomberg



Comparing one or more players



Example of in-season analysis (Consumer)

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Example of Draft Kit (Consumer)

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