



Baseball Info Solutions has recently concluded an investigation into the effect of the Ted Williams shift on the Plus/Minus system and Defensive Runs Saved (Runs Saved or DRS for short) numbers. The tremendous increase in the frequency and variety of shift defenses had skewed individual player numbers, most notably Toronto third baseman Brett Lawrie's.

As recently as the All-Star Break, we were reporting that Lawrie had saved 30 runs with his defense in about a half-season thus far. Given that the best third baseman in our system has never registered even as many as 30 defensive runs saved in a **full** season since we started keeping this stat ten years ago, this number stood out like a sore thumb. How did it get so big?

While there have been a few other isolated uses of similar alignments, the Toronto Blue Jays have created a shift defense that they use against left-handed pull hitters very frequently. We'll call it the "Lawrie Defense". As reported by Baseball Info Solutions earlier this year, major league teams are shifting more often in 2012 than ever before. The Blue Jays have employed the third-most defensive shifts in baseball in 2012, but the Lawrie Defense is a Toronto specialty. The Lawrie Defense is like a normal Ted Williams Shift (three infielders on one side) against a lefty swinger, but the unique aspect is that the third baseman moves all the way over to short right field where other teams usually position their second baseman in a shift.

As a result of the unique alignment, Brett Lawrie has been making plays in short right field that no other third baseman was making, simply because he was positioned there and they weren't. Our system was making Lawrie look incredibly good—too good—so we adjusted our system. Our Defensive Runs Saved System now removes all shift plays from the calculation for individual players. Ironically, Brett Lawrie is still the best third baseman in MLB making plays closer to the normal third base position. Here are the best third basemen defensively thus far in 2012:

Most Defensive Runs Saved at Third Base (2012)

Player, Team	Runs Saved
Brett Lawrie, Tor	15
David Wright, NYM	9
Mike Moustakas, KC	9
Chipper Jones, Atl	7
Alberto Callaspo, LAA	7

In addition, we have created a separate calculation to measure the team's collective performance with shifts. Treating the entire infield as one unit, we devised a Plus/Minus-like system to estimate how many hits and runs each infield has saved as a result of shifts. The Blue Jays currently lead the league with 13 Shift Runs Saved through games of July 25.

Team Shift Runs Saved (2012)

Team	Shift Runs Saved
Blue Jays	13
Rays	9
Red Sox	7
Orioles	6
Cubs	5

We are confident that our resulting system for evaluating individual and team defense will continue its reign as the best defensive metric in existence, thanks in large part to our batted ball timer data, Good Plays/Misplays information, and this new handling of "The Shift". The updated numbers have already been provided to BIS clients, both public and private. For further information about the Plus/Minus and Defensive Runs Saved Systems, please see *The Fielding Bible—Volume III* from ACTA Sports or FieldingBible.com.