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Making the case for Francisco Lindor

by [Cameron Ellis \(http://www.outsidepitchmlb.com/author/cam_ellis\)](http://www.outsidepitchmlb.com/author/cam_ellis)

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As the end of September nears, so comes the time for some of autumn's time-honored traditions: drinking Pumpkin Spice Lattes, complaining about people who drink Pumpkin Spice Lattes, and debating MLB awards. There might be other traditions, but they are indisputably less important. Seeing as this is a baseball website, I'll

refrain from any more PSL talk and focus on the awards discussion. To be honest, I'm not really sure why this was ever a discussion about coffee in the first place.

The general consensus so far is that Houston Astros all-world shortstop **Carlos Correa** (http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/c/correca01.shtml?utm_campaign=Linker&utm_source=direct&utm_medium=linker-www.outsidepitchmlb.com) will run away with the Rookie of the Year award, and with good reason. Slashing .278/.345/.570 with a 132 OPS+ as a 21-year old rookie will usually garner some attention from the voters. Correa has been at the heart of the Astros' dramatic and well-documented turnaround, and it's no secret that postseason success plays into the decision-making.

There is, however, a fascinating – relatively speaking – competition for AL ROY taking place. Called up only six days after Correa, Cleveland Indians shortstop **Francisco Lindor** (http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/l/lindofr01.shtml?utm_campaign=Linker&utm_source=direct&utm_medium=linker-www.outsidepitchmlb.com) has made a compelling case of his own.

Lindor's calling card has always been his glove, which Baseball America projected at 70 on the 20-80 scale. What's been equally impressive, however, is his play at the plate. As of Wednesday night, Lindor, who has exactly as many plate appearances as Correa (385), has been hitting [.315/.352/.475](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/l/lindofr01-bat.shtml) (<http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/l/lindofr01-bat.shtml>) with a 132+ OPS. While the two Puerto Rican shortstops have strikingly similar offensive numbers, the biggest gap lies in their power: Correa (19 HR, .229 ISO) holds a substantial advantage over Lindor (10 HR, .160 ISO) in that category. That's not a knock on Lindor's power either – .160 ISO is still ten points higher than the league average this year – but more of a comment on the absurd power that Correa already possess.

Correa walks more, boasting a 9.4 BB% rate to Lindor's 5.7 BB%, but Lindor (14.8% K rate) strikes out less than Correa (17.4%). They even have a similar wRC+, with Correa at 133 and Lindor at 127. Just to make things more difficult, taking a look at their overall value doesn't provide a definitive answer either. Of shortstops with at least 300 PA's, both are in the top five in WAR, as Lindor ranks 4th with a 3.7 while Correa is one spot below him at 3.1.

Lindor's biggest advantage, unsurprisingly, is in his defense. Defensive stats are the new kids at the sabermetric party, so the numbers can still be a little wonky. With this being rookie years for both of them, the numbers will need a little time to catch up; FanGraphs suggests using three year's worth of UZR numbers – one of their more popular defensive ratings – before making a definitive decision. Even with relative uncertainty, Lindor's field prowess is undisputed. Lindor's [UZR this year sits at 7.2](http://www.fangraphs.com/statss.aspx?playerid=12916&position=SS#fielding) (<http://www.fangraphs.com/statss.aspx?playerid=12916&position=SS#fielding>) which, by FanGraphs metrics, is right between 'above average' and 'great'. In comparison, Correa's UZR sits at -3.9. With 0 being the average, that alone would suggest that Correa is a below average fielder – something most people would disagree with.

From hitting and fielding standpoint, Lindor actually holds a slight advantage over Correa in what is shaping up to be a tight race. Correa has the power and will presumably be on national television at least a couple of times this fall, which holds some weight, unfairly or not (hint: unfairly), in the voting process. There's not a bad choice between the two, as I'm sure 28 other MLB executives would tell you.

Cam Ellis is a staff writer for Outside Pitch MLB. He can be found on Twitter [here](https://twitter.com/KingsleyEllis). (<https://twitter.com/KingsleyEllis>)

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