

MLB Showdown Take It to the Top

The Captain, the flex, and the single-game secrets the sharks use to ship a Showdown — single-entry or 150-max.

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PREMIUM GUIDE

Showdown is a different sport

One game. Six roster spots. A Captain worth 1.5×. Everything you know about Classic changes here.

DraftKings MLB Showdown is a single game: you roster **one Captain (CPT)** and **five FLEX** under a \$50,000 cap. The Captain scores **1.5× the points** — and costs **1.5× the salary**. That one multiplier is the entire game. Get it right and you're playing for the top of the leaderboard; get it wrong and no flex build saves you.

Because everyone is drawing from the same 18–26 players in one game, two things dominate that barely matter in Classic: **correlation** and **duplication**. Correlation, because in a single game the runs, RBIs, and the pitcher's line are all tied to how *this one game* unfolds. Duplication, because with only two teams to pick from, thousands of entries will look alike — so being *different* in the right spot is how you separate.

Showdown isn't "pick the six best players." It's "picture how this game ends — then own that ending better than anyone else."

My entire process is built on that idea. Before I roster a single player, I answer one question: **what does the winning version of this game look like?** A blowout? A shootout? A pitcher's duel that turns on one swing? The lineup that wins is the one built for a specific, plausible ending — and captained by the player who benefits most when that ending happens. Here's how I get there.

The Captain decision is everything

1.5× points. It's where every Showdown is won or lost — and where the field gives you the most room.

Everyone can flex the obvious studs. The Captain slot is the one lever that actually separates lineups, because it changes both a player's **ceiling** (1.5× points) and your **uniqueness** (few others will have that exact Captain at 1.5×). This is the single highest-leverage decision in all of DFS.

Here's the trap that sinks casuals: they Captain the *chalk* — the obvious best player everyone else is also captaining. Even when that player pops, they split the prize with a wall of identical lineups. A correct read on the obvious Captain doesn't win a big Showdown; it min-cashes it.

I evaluate a Captain on three things, in order:

- ▶ **Ceiling, not floor.** The Captain slot is a ceiling bet — you want the player who can post a monster line (a multi-hit, multi-RBI, HR game, or a pitcher with a double-digit-K gem), not the safe 8-point guy.
- ▶ **Correlation to the winning game script.** If your read is a shootout, Captain a bat in the middle of the order that erupts. If it's a pitcher's duel, Captain the ace. The Captain must be the player who benefits *most* from the ending you're betting on.
- ▶ **Ownership leverage.** How many others will be on this exact Captain? In a big field, a lower-owned Captain who hits is how you take the whole thing down.

Pick the ending first. Then Captain the player who wins that ending. Never the other way around.

The three Captain archetypes

Every winning Showdown Captain is one of these. Match it to your game-script read.

- ▶ **The Bat (shootout script).** When the total is high and both offenses profile to score, Captain a middle-of-the-order bat — the 3, 4, or 5 hitter with home-run upside. In a slugfest, one swing can be 20+ raw points, which becomes 30+ at 1.5×. This is the most common winning Captain in high-total games.
- ▶ **The Ace (duel or blowout-for-your-team script).** When one starter is elite and the opposing total is low, Captain the pitcher. A dominant SP line (7 IP, 10 K, 0 ER) is one of the highest and most *predictable* ceilings on the slate — and pitchers are frequently under-captained because bats feel sexier. Quietly one of the sharpest leverage plays in Showdown.
- ▶ **The Leadoff / Table-Setter (leverage bat).** A top-of-the-order hitter who scores runs, steals bases, and gets extra plate appearances. Often lower-owned than the middle-order chalk, and in a big game he racks points through volume. A favorite low-owned Captain pivot.

What I avoid at Captain: **low-in-the-order bats** (7-8-9 hitters — fewer plate appearances, weaker context) and **pure punts**. The Captain slot is not where you save salary; it's where you spend leverage. A min-priced Captain almost never wins.

THE QUICK CAPTAIN TEST

- ▶ Can this player realistically post a top-3 raw score in the game? (If no → not a Captain.)
- ▶ Does he win the game script I'm betting on?
- ▶ Is he differentiated enough that hitting him puts me ahead of the field?

Build the flex **around** the Captain

Five flex spots. They aren't five separate picks — they're the supporting cast for the ending you chose.

Once my Captain and game script are set, the five flex spots aren't independent — they're correlation. I fill them to reinforce the exact ending I'm betting on, and to protect against the one way it can flip.

- ▶ **Correlate to your Captain.** If you captained a bat, roster the hitters around him in the order — the guys who get on base in front of him and drive him in behind him. When his team's inning explodes, your whole side scores together.
- ▶ **Add a bring-back.** Roster at least **one player from the other team** — a "bring-back." Showdowns are frequently won by high-scoring games, and a bring-back means a back-and-forth shootout pays you on *both* sides instead of capping your ceiling at one team's runs.
- ▶ **Include the run-scoring context, not just names.** A cheap leadoff man in a great spot beats an expensive bat hitting eighth. Plate appearances and lineup position matter more than salary in a single game.
- ▶ **Max the cap.** Land at \$49,500–\$50,000. Leftover salary in a six-man roster is leftover ceiling.

A great flex build tells a story: "this game turns into a 9–6 track meet, and I own the big innings on both sides." If your six players don't tell one story, you don't have a lineup — you have a list.

The pitcher decision in a single game

The SP is the highest-variance, highest-leverage bat-or-fade call on the slate.

In Showdown there are only one or two starters to consider, and how you treat them defines your build. I think about it as a fork in the road:

- ▶ **Duel / low-total script → Captain or roster the ace.** If a great arm faces a weak, low-implied-total lineup, the SP is your highest-floor ceiling. Captaining a strikeout ace in a spot he can dominate is one of the most reliable ways to post a top score — and it's usually lower-owned than the bat chalk.
- ▶ **Shootout / high-total script → fade or minimize the starters.** If the game projects as a track meet, both starters are liabilities. Go bat-heavy and let the offenses carry you. Rostering a pitcher who gets shelled in a 10-run game is how a Showdown dies.
- ▶ **Never captain a pitcher against the bats you're stacking.** If you're heavy on Team A's offense, captaining Team B's pitcher is betting against yourself — negative correlation. Your bats scoring actively tanks your Captain. This is the most common self-inflicted Showdown mistake.

Here's the tell that took me years to learn: I decide **pitcher-in or pitcher-out first**, because that single call flows from the game script and dictates the entire rest of the roster. Casuals pick players they like and hope it fits. I pick the script, then the pitcher stance, then everything else falls in line.

Being different — on purpose

Short rosters + two teams = massive duplication. The Captain is your weapon against it.

Here's the math that makes Showdown unique: with only ~20 players and six spots, thousands of entries end up nearly identical. If your lineup is the same as 3,000 others, even a perfect night splits the prize 3,000 ways. Uniqueness isn't a nice-to-have in Showdown — it's the whole ballgame at the top.

Your Captain is the primary lever. Two lineups with the same six players but *different* Captains are completely different tickets. So the leverage move is simple: when your read points to a chalk Captain everyone's on, ask whether the **second-best Captain** — the one at a fraction of the ownership — can win the same game script. If yes, that's your ticket to being alone at the top.

Same six players, different Captain, a tenth of the ownership. That's how I turn a common lineup into a winning one.

The balance, same as everywhere in DFS: **never fully chalk, never fully contrarian**. A little of the obvious keeps you live; one well-chosen leverage swing (usually at Captain, sometimes a low-owned flex bat) wins you the tournament. In a single game you don't need five contrarian pieces — you need *one* that's both defensible and different.

Single-entry vs 150-max

Same game, two completely different jobs. Don't build them the same way.

Single-entry. One bullet, so it has to be *defensible*. Pick the single most likely winning game script, build the most correlated version of it, and lean your Captain a hair toward safety-with-upside — a bat with a real ceiling in the highest-total spot, or the clear ace in a duel. You still want a leverage edge (a slightly-off-chalk Captain), but you can't afford a full dart, because if your one lineup misses, your night is over. One correlated, differentiated, near-max build.

150-max (and other MME). Now it's a portfolio, and the job flips to *coverage plus leverage*:

- ▶ **Rotate your Captains.** Don't captain the same player 150 times. Spread across your top 4–6 Captain candidates so you have a winning ticket no matter who goes off.
- ▶ **Cover multiple game scripts.** Some builds for the shootout (bat-heavy, bring-backs), some for the duel (ace-captain, low-total). You don't know how the game ends — own several endings.
- ▶ **Push leverage harder.** With 150 shots you can afford low-owned Captains and contrarian bats that would be too risky in single-entry. This is where the tournament-winning uniqueness lives.
- ▶ **Keep a small repeated core.** A player or two you believe in appears across most builds; everything else rotates to differentiate.

Single-entry: one perfect story. 150-max: every plausible story, captained a different way, with the leverage cranked up.

How to **know** your lineup is strong

Before I lock, I run it through this filter. If it fails one of these, I fix it.

A strong Showdown lineup isn't a feeling — it's a set of boxes. I check every one before I lock:

- ▶ **It tells one story.** You can describe in a sentence how the game unfolds and why your six players win it. If you can't, it's a random list.
- ▶ **The Captain owns that story.** Your 1.5× player is the single biggest beneficiary of your game-script read — not just "a good player."
- ▶ **It's correlated.** Your bats connect through the batting order; you're not spraying uncorrelated names.
- ▶ **There's a bring-back.** At least one player from the other team, so a shootout pays both ways.
- ▶ **It's near-max salary.** \$49,500+. No dead money in a six-man roster.
- ▶ **It's differentiated at Captain.** You're not on the exact chalk Captain the entire field is on (unless you're deliberately playing safe in single-entry — and even then you've considered the pivot).
- ▶ **The pitcher stance fits.** Pitcher-in only if the script supports it, and never captained against your own stack.

Seven boxes. A lineup that checks all seven is a contender. One that misses two or three is a prayer.

Checklist + a sample build

Pick the script. Captain the winner. Correlate the flex. Lock.

- ☐ I've defined **one game script** (shootout / duel / blowout) and why it's likely.
- ☐ My **Captain** is the player who benefits most from that script — with real ceiling.
- ☐ My flex is **correlated** to the Captain through the batting order.
- ☐ I have at least **one bring-back** from the other team.
- ☐ My **pitcher stance** (in or out) matches the script — and no SP captained against my own bats.
- ☐ Salary is **\$49,500+**, no dead money.
- ☐ I have a **leverage edge** — a differentiated Captain or a low-owned flex.
- ☐ (SE) it's my single most defensible story · (MME) my Captains & scripts are **rotated** for coverage.

SLOT	ROLE — "9-6 SHOOTOUT" SCRIPT	NOTE
CPT	Middle-order bat, high-total team (1.5×)	ceiling + leverage
FLEX	Table-setter in front of your CPT	scores when CPT drives in
FLEX	Bat behind your CPT in the order	extends the rally
FLEX	Cheap leadoff bat, same team	volume + salary relief
FLEX	Bring-back bat, other team	pays if it's back-and-forth
FLEX	One low-owned differentiator	separation

Illustrative — a duel script would flip to an ace at Captain and a low-total build. The framework travels; the players change every game.

Do this in about a minute a slate

CourtEdge's MLB Showdown lab builds the correlated, cap-legal Captain-and-flex lineups for you — with ownership leverage baked in.

The lab, the sims & today's plays → courtedge.net

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