

A Stat-Drunk look at the TBL Draft – 2015 Edition

I'm So Confused!

Blue Hill has a decent shot to make the playoffs.

The road to Fishkill goes through Edmonton.

Up is down, black is white, we have always been at war with Eastasia!

TBL: The good, the meh and the ugly

There are 8 very good teams in the league – 4 per conference. Knoxville is the beast this year – the best offense by a wide margin (almost 1000 runs scored) and the 4th best pitching. The downside - their first pick in this draft is #109. Can their competitors become good enough to mount a challenge?

There aren't very many very bad teams this year. New Westminster, Columbus, and maybe Kansas and Las Vegas have a shot to lose 100 games but no one will lose 110.

The other 12 teams could all be just under .500. This will set up 2 very different races for the last wildcard spots in each conference.

The National Conference's 4 very good (100+ wins) teams are Knoxville, Berkshire (formerly Portland), Munich and Melrose. Who will snag the last playoff spot? Midwest has the inside track, but Maracaibo, Hudson, Taylorville and even Northboro may have a shot. Count no one out. Getting to 81 wins might not even be required. In a conference where 4 teams win more than 100 games, no team might lose 100.

In the International, there are 3 teams looking better than 90 wins – Grand Cayman, Gotham City and Brobdingnag, with Rye close on their heels. No other teams in the conference project to 81 wins at the moment. Three of the leaders are in the Mays Division, which means the winner of the Clemente will make the conference semi-finals. Who will that be? Blue Hill and Warrenton (formerly the FOG, now just the fog of WAR) are at the top with mid-70s win totals and similar draft positions. Whitman is a little behind with a worse draft position. Columbus is far back, but with slightly better draft prospects.

The team with the most draft picks in the top 4 rounds is, for once, NOT Brobdingnag! As of this writing, New Westminster has 9 of the first 91 draft picks. Of the eight leaders mentioned above, Brobdingnag has 8 picks in the first 4 rounds, and Gotham City has 5. Of the contenders, Hudson has 6 picks in the first 4 rounds. Midwest has only 3, but two of them are #2 and #3. On the flip side, Melrose has only one early pick and Knoxville has none.

Feast and Famine in the draft

What's on offer this draft? Fewer players for one – 218 available (compared to 232 last year, 237 in 2013) What's missing? Relievers mostly (14 fewer relievers, 1000 fewer innings than last year). There are only 5 grade 13+ starters (compared to 10 last year). There are 10 closer-grade relievers available.

Year	2015	2014	2013
SP	47	50	47
RP	62	76	79
Total Pitchers	109	126	126
Starts	778	705	859
RIP	2607	3576.7	3661
Grade 13+ Starters	5	10	6
Grade 13+ Starts	79	124	79
Grade 8-12 Starters	18	19	18
Grade 8-12 Starts	338	328	369
Grade 18+ Relievers	10	11	5
Grade 13-17 Relievers	17	13	25
Grade 8-12 Relievers	17	31	28

How about position players? The story is a bit better there if you're looking for catchers or 1B/DH types. Fewer OF than last year, about the same number of IFers.

Year	2015	2014	2013
C	20	13	17
1B/DH	13	6	14
IF	39	41	48
OF	37	46	32
Total	109	106	111

There is one thing in this draft we haven't seen recently – a card like Jose Abreu's. 12 hits, 2 walks plus a 42, 145 games. Oh, and did I mention 1-1-6-6? This card represents at least 30% more offense than any card in the drafts of the last 3 years. There are a couple of other cards that are as good as the best in previous years – JD Martinez and Josh Harrison. All of these guys will turn 28 this year, but that's a lot of present value. Then there's Casey McGehee – 32 years old, but 160 games of 11 hits, 3 walks. Then there are the usual raft of promising prospects, especially in the infield, with much more promise than current value indicates.

The flip side of having fewer players available is that there are more carded players already owned. Fewer teams have urgent holes to patch.

The 2015 Draft

Here's how I think the February Festivities will go. First, a little guide to the format:

Playoff chances:

no shot	slim	Fair	good	lock
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Team analyses:

TEAM	OFFENSE (% better than average)	PITCHING (% better than average)	DRAFT PICKS in the first 100	NEEDS
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And the picks:

Northboro Phoenix	+3	-13	1,13,49,73,84	30+ starts, 200+ RIP, infielder
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1. Jose Abreu

The new Frank Thomas. Bob and Steve can't resist this card. Although they got unexpectedly good seasons from some players in 2014, they've only got an outside shot at the postseason. But the pitching staff can wait – Abreu makes this lineup genuinely scary.

Midwest Mongrels	-6	+7	2,3,75	Catcher, infielder
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2. Rougned Odor

3. Danny Santana

Midwest is in a slightly different position than Northboro. They are probably the front-runner for the last playoff slot, but their only shot for difference-makers is right now. Darrell has a tough call it's also their only chance to grab Santana - though it might be a tad high in the draft, he won't be there at 75.

Blue Hill Mudslides	+2	-13	4, 28, 87, 97, 99	29 starts, 100+ RIP
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4. Yordano Ventura

The class of this year's pitchers. Blue Hill is now probably the favorite in the Clemente.

Taylorville Red Raiders	-6	+1	5,29,53,56,76,100	Real SS, 100+ RIP
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5. Xander Bogaerts

The Taylor boys should be pleasantly surprised to have a shot at Xander.

New Westminster Whiskeyjacks	-27	-17	6, 30, 32, 47, 54, 77, 80, 90, 91	40+ starts, infielder, catcher
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6. Josh Harrison

Jim has lots of holes, but lots of picks. Harrison makes a good start at filling the holes with quality.

Las Vegas Gamblers	-11	-5	7, 31, 44, 55, 78	50+ RIP
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7. Jorge Soler

The new Vlad?

Brobdingnag Barbarians	+4	+8	8, 24, 37, 38, 62, 71, 83, 95	nothing
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8. Javier Baez

Joe could be said to be rebuilding. Though he's traded away a lot of bullpen, and Betances is on the board, Baez is a prime prospect.

Grand Cayman Havens	+17	+6	9, 33, 57, 68	nothing
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9. Dellin Betances

Boomer is overjoyed to get Betances here. He'll make a great setup man for Wade Davis – 160+ innings of 26*+ in the pen is an intimidating thing to face.

Kansas Koyotes	-7	-10	10,34,58,81	35+ starts
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10. Masahiro Tanaka

Bill needs starts. Bill likes the Yankees. Tanaka is the obvious choice and Bill is happy.

Columbus Jets	-29	-3	11,35,59,82	25 starts, catcher, any bat at all
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11. Nick Castellanos

Vic needs a real thirdbaseman, and Castellanos is tailor-made whether Vic is a Tiger fan or not.

Hoboken Zephyrs	-9	-14	12,22,27,51,74,79	19 starts, some 3B and C games
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12. Drew Hutchinson

Steve really wishes Betances would have fallen this far, but Hutchinson gives him a much-improved rotation.

Northboro Phoenix	+3	-13	1,13,49,73,84	30+ starts, 200+ RIP, infielder
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13. Jake Odorizzi

It's time for the Phoenix to be seeing to their rotation as well. Odorizzi is only one of many good options here.

Melrose Avengers	+10	+17	14	Infielder, some C games
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14. George Springer

Mark has this one pick in the first 100 to step up to the challenges posed by Munich, Knoxville and Berkshire. Even though he fills no needs, Springer is a huge talent to find at this pick.

Hudson Generals	+1	-5	15, 39, 52, 63, 69, 86	15 starts, infielder
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15. Marcus Stroman

The Generals need pitching, and Stroman becomes the 5th starter to go in the round (with more to come).

Warrenton Giants	-3	-3	16, 25, 40, 46, 98	100+ RIP, infielder
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16. Joe Panik

This is as close to a lock as any prediction I've ever made. Jack has 8 SF Giants on his roster, and if Panik is available here, the Giants' starting secondbaseman will be number 9.

Gotham City Batman	+8	+11	17, 65, 72, 85, 88	nothing
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17. J.D. Martinez

Anton likes big bats and he can not lie. He came into the draft with no real needs – he's got plus pitching and a solid team everywhere. Gotham lacks a special batman to join Stanton in the lineup and Martinez fills the bill. He's the most potent weapon on the board to battle Cayman and Brobdingnag.

Greater Ohio Chia Pets	-3	-1	18, 42, 66, 93	nothing
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18. Drew Pomeranz

Devlin has no real needs, but the Chia Pets are a very average team, which means no postseason shot in the Mays Division of the International. The pitching staff is showing a bit of age. Pomeranz is a talented young arm.

Berkshire Enigma	+14	+20	19, 43	some C games
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19. David Peralta

It will be interesting to see what draft style newcomer Mike brings to the table. Having no real needs, adding firepower is seldom wrong.

Maracaibo Rumrunners	+2	+3	20, 67, 89	nothing
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20. Jake Lamb

Walter has no real needs and they have the best chance to overtake Midwest for the postseason, but I think Maracaibo will look to the future with this pick.

Whitman River Rats	-12	-5	21, 45	27 starts, 75+ RIP
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21. Jacob deGrom

Brian has an outside shot in the Clemente. The River Rats need pitching, and this draft is deep in quality starters. Jacob deGrom will be a helpful addition to this staff.

Hoboken Zephyrs	-9	-14	12,22,27,51,74,79	some IF and C games
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22. Wilmer Flores

Steve needs an infielder. Wilmer Flores is a young talent with a starting job.

Elders of Zion	-3	+1	23, 70, 94	34 starts
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23. Trevor Bauer

Time for another starter! This time the choice is Trevor Bauer.

Brobdingnag Barbarians	+4	+8	8, 24, 37, 38, 62, 71, 83, 95	nothing
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24. Brad Boxberger

After Grand Cayman shored up their bullpen with Betances, Boxberger is an adequate answer for Joe.

Where do we stand now?

Knoxville is still a beast. Berkshire has closed the gap a little, Munich and Melrose still rate to win close to 100 games, and Midwest still has an edge on Northboro, Maracaibo, Zion and Hudson.

Blue Hill has a slim edge over Warrenton in the Clemente but Warrenton has the first pick of the round, Blue Hills the fourth, which will make it quite a battle. Grand Cayman and Gotham City may both win 100. Brobdingnag will win more than 90 and take the Ruth. Rye has fallen back close to .500 for the final playoff spot but they pick second in the round, giving them a comfortable margin over Greater Ohio and the second finisher in the Clemente.

The second round

Gaming out the second round to see how it affects some of the close races:

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 25. [WAR] Collin MCHUGH | 37. [BRO] Chris OWINGS |
| 26. [RYE] Roenis ELIAS | 38. [BRO] Kyle HENDRICKS |
| 27. [HOB] Christian VAZQUEZ | 39. [HUD] Chris TAYLOR |
| 28. [BH] Dominic LEONE | 40. [WAR] Kevin QUACKENBUSH |
| 29. [TAY] Shawn TOLLESON | 41. [MUN] Christian BETHANCOURT |
| 30. [NW] Jonathan SCHOOP | 42. [GOH] Carlos SANCHEZ |
| 31. [LV] Billy HAMILTON | 43. [BRK] Francisco CERVELLI |
| 32. [NW] Caleb JOSEPH | 44. [LV] Kyle CROCKETT |
| 33. [CAY] Michael FIERS | 45. [WHT] Mookie BETTS |
| 34. [KAN] Vance WORLEY | 46. [WAR] Aaron SANCHEZ |
| 35. [COL] Jon SINGLETON | 47. [NW] David BUCHANAN |
| 36. [MUN] Ken GILES | 48. [DET] T.J. HOUSE |

Warrenton gets the upper hand on Blue Hill, and Grand Cayman on Gotham City. Knoxville - still a beast, though Berkshire and Munich are closing the gap. Midwest remains a favorite for the last playoff slot in the National.