The TBL
Baseball Annual

A publication of the Transcontinental Baseball League

Team Building
By The Numbers

2025 Edition

Walter H. Hunt

Robert Jordan

Mark H. Bloom

Darrell Skogen

**All 24 Teams Analyzed
Using the T.Q. System**

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by

Walter H. Hunt
Robert Jordan
Mark H. Bloom
Darrell Skogen

with contributions from TBL's managers,
including
Paul Montague, Joe Auletta, and Clay Beard

and extra help from Rich Meyer and Ray Murphy

the TBL baseball annual

Welcome to the 2025 *TBL Baseball Annual*. This is the thirty-first year of the *Annual* in the book format, and TBL's forty-fourth year – the forty-second that we have on record. Our editorial team from 2024 is back for the new book, though the Guru is unable to provide more than consultation and moral support. We expect a full and energetic recovery, Darrell, and you have a space on our masthead!

We're focusing on data gathering and number crunching this year, with an eye toward gaining an understanding of the work of TBL's best scouts. We have articles to support this theme, along with many of our usual features. It's possible that some secrets and some techniques may be revealed, but in any case the insights are valuable and well worth reading.

As always, we are pleased to bring this product to you.

Enjoy the *Annual* and enjoy the season.

Walter, Robert, Mark, Darrell
May, 2025

The T.Q. System

Shamelessly stolen from the Mazeroski annual, the T.Q. System assigns points to each area of the team's expected performance and totals the result. The maximum score under the T.Q. System is **50**, divided as follows:

Pitching:	20 points
Offense:	17 points
Defense:	8 points
Bench:	5 points

The T.Q. System does not take age or prospect value into account, only present capability. It does, however, consider usage (available games, at bats and innings).

table of contents

future drafts

In many cases, what's on the field isn't the whole story. Some of our teams have quite a bit to say in future drafts, and any evaluation should properly take that into account.

The graphical displays below show how much each team has in the tank. The middle mark on the thermometer (9) represents a full draft (picks #1-#3) in 2026; above the middle line is excess, while below means something's missing. No new graphics this year.
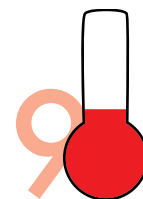
base

haves

BROBDINGNAG. Two #1s, including a high one; three #2s; two #3s.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN. Their own high #1; three #2s; three #3s.

WHITMAN. When was the last time they had this much in the draft? A high #1, three #2s, a #3.

WARRENTON.. Two high #1s, a #2 and #3.

CALUSA. Two #1s (theirs and Rye's), a #2 and a #3.

MELROSE. A #1 and #2 and two #3s.

balanced

ZION, KANSAS, RIVERWOOLF. Their own drafts, with higher #1s.

GOTHAM CITY, **HOBOKEN**, **HUDSON**, **MUNICH**, **NORTHBORO**, **BLUE HILL**, **COLUMBUS**, **KNOXVILLE**. Their own drafts; Munich has a high #1 and a #2.

have nots

MARACAIBO. Two #1s, but no other picks before a #7.

RYE, MIDWEST. No #1, but a #2 and a #3.

NEW WESTMINSTER. A #3.

all in

GRAND CAYMAN. Pick in the 5th.
VEGAS. Pick in the 6th.
STRONG CITY. Pick in the 7th.

These indicators also appear
at the bottom
of each team article,
for your convenience.

t.q. summary

TEAM (DIVISION)	OFFENSE	DEFENSE	PITCHING	BENCH	TOTAL

The Cream of the Crop

Grand Cayman (Williams)	12.5	5.0	13.0	3.5	34.0
Munich (Mantle)	11.5	5.5	11.0	3.5	31.5
New Westminster (Mays)	10.0	5.5	12.5	3.0	31.0

The Solid Performers

Northboro (Williams)	9.5	6.0	9.5	3.5	28.5
Hoboken (Ruth)	11.5	4.5	8.5	2.5	28.0
Strong City (Clemente)	7.5	4.0	14.5	2.0	28.0
Blue Hill (Clemente)	11.0	4.0	10.0	2.5	27.5
Rye (Mays)	6.5	6.0	10.5	2.0	27.5
Hudson (Mantle)	8.5	4.0	11.5	3.0	27.0
Melrose (Aaron)	12.0	5.0	7.0	3.0	27.0
Knoxville (Ruth)	8.0	6.0	10.0	2.5	26.5
Gotham City (Mays)	9.0	4.0	10.0	2.5	25.5
Maracaibo (Mays)	6.5	6.0	10.5	2.0	25.0

The Transitional Teams

Columbus (Mantle)	7.5	4.5	10.0	2.5	24.5
Vegas (Aaron)	7.5	4.0	8.0	2.0	21.5
Zion (Williams)	7.0	4.5	6.0	2.5	20.0
Brobdingnag (Ruth)	7.0	3.5	7.0	2.0	19.5

The Rebuilders

Whitman (Clemente)	5.5	4.0	5.0	2.5	17.5
Calusa (Aaron)	5.0	4.0	6.5	2.5	17.0
Midwest (Ruth)	6.0	4.5	4.0	2.0	16.5
Warrenton (Williams)	5.0	4.5	4.5	2.0	16.0
Rocky Mountain (Mantle)	5.0	3.5	4.5	2.5	15.5
Riverwoolf (Clemente)	4.5	4.0	4.5	2.5	15.5
Kansas (Aaron)	4.0	4.0	4.5	2.0	14.5

International	287.5 (23.9 average)
National	277.0 (23.1 average)

Division Totals

Mays (IC)	109.0	Ruth (IC)	90.5
Mantle (NC)	98.5	Clemente (IC)	88.0
Williams (NC)	98.5	Aaron (NC)	80.0

manager roll call

Team	Division	Manager	Year
Munich Marauders	Mantle Division	*Paul Montague*	42nd year
Hudson Generals	Mantle Division	*Clay Beard*	41st year
Elders of Zion	Williams Division	*Richard Meyer*	41st year
Gotham City Batmen	Mays Division	*Anton Greenwald*	40th year
Knoxville Outlaws	Ruth Division	Pat Martin	39th year
Maracaibo Rumrunners	Mays Division	*Walter Hunt*	39th year
Brobdingnag Barbarians	Ruth Division	*Joe Auletta*	37th year
Hoboken Zephyrs	Ruth Division	Steve Powell	36th year
Grand Cayman Havens	Williams Division	Mark Bloom	35th year
Melrose Avengers	Aaron Division	Mark Freedman	32nd year
Warrenton Giants	Williams Division	Ray Murphy	31st year
Blue Hill Mudslides	Clemente Division	Mark Ludwig	30th year
Whitman River Rats	Clemente Division	Brian Hanley	30th year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Robert Jordan	26th year
Midwest Mongrels	Ruth Division	Darrell Skogen	24th year
Northboro Phoenix	Williams Division	Steve Stein	23rd year
Strong City Statesmen	Clemente Division	Eric Sheffler	22nd year
Rye Herons	Mays Division	Craig Musselman	21st year
New West Whiskeyjacks	Mays Division	Jim Jeatt	21st year
Columbus Jets	Mantle Division	Vic Vaughn	19th year
Kansas Koyotes	Aaron Division	Bill Schwartz	18th year
Rocky Mountain Dragons	Mantle Division	Dave Jaskot	14th year
Calusa Indians	Aaron Division	Gordon Rodell	11th year
Riverwoolf Sharks	Clemente Division	Daniel Dumont	9th year
Vegas Gamblers	Aaron Division	Rob Skogen	3rd year

Ray Murphy is serving his twelfth year as our Commissioner.
Hall of Fame managers in ***Bold Italic***.

*

*This summer I received a letter from Linda Chapman, our late friend Jack's widow. I sent her a copy of the 2024 **Annual**, and she wrote to thank the league – and especially Craig Musselman – for the memorial that appeared in that book. "Our family just wanted to express our heartfelt thanks to you, Craig and to the entire TBL for giving Jack so many years of friendship, joy and challenges . . . Special thanks to Craig Musselman for writing such a wonderful memorial for Jack. . . and thanks for including the Dylan Thomas poem (another of Jack's many loves – baseball of course his favorite, fishing, history and poetry!!!) And most of all, thank you all for sharing your great love of baseball and your lives with Jack for so many years – it meant the world to him!!!" – Ed.*

2025 computer pre-play by Clay Beard

Buck Miller II returns to the dugout for all 24 teams. He's been probably the most realistic manager so far.

Here's the setup again. I checked *Fatigue Only* under Fatigue and Injury Rules. I also checked all four of the options at the bottom; *Automatic AIM Subs*, *Automatic AIM Sub Platoon*, *Enforce BFP*, and that *No PR > 930* thing, which provides some innocuous usage. All players were active for the whole season. These settings basically allow the season to be played with usage similar to that of the MLB season with some innocuous help.

Then I just pushed the button and played the season 10 times. The won/loss records below indicate the average of the 10 seasons. This exercise is for entertainment only. I don't take much stock in it and neither should you. Don't run to Fangraphs with this.

This pre-play actually shows considerable parity in TBL. For the first time since I've been doing this, there are no dominant teams …

PSYCH! The above paragraph is last season's article. No blissful 2024 parity this year. This is a full-blown return to our boom-and-bust ways. Dominant teams and doormats abound. Those extremes are illustrated by a 118-win season from Hoboken and a 127-loss season from Riverwoolf. Someone is going to lose 100 games so they can pick sixth.

There are eight teams that didn't make the playoffs in any of the 10 seasons and another four that only cracked it once or tied.

Almost half the league will be playing to empty stadiums by July. There are, however a couple of good division races. Blue Hill will challenge Strong City in the Clemente, but the loser should easily grab a wild card. Rye likewise will push New West. Kudos to the Mays, as the entire division played .500 and above. The tightest race is in the Aaron, where Vegas ekes out a two-game win. There should be a 3-way race for the second National wild-card between the Aaron loser, Columbus and Hudson. It's still March as of this writing, but let me be the first to congratulate Hoboken, Munich, and Grand Cayman on their division championships.

International Conference
TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Clemente	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
STRONG CITY	101	61	--	110	93	7	3
BLUE HILL	95	67	6	100	87	3	7
WHITMAN	58	104	43	71	47	0	0
RIVERWOOLF	51	111	50	62	35	0	0

Mays	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
NEW WESTMINSTER	95	67	--	105	88	8.5	0.5
RYE	89	73	6	97	80	1.5	7
MARACAIBO	82	80	13	89	75	0	0.5
GOTHAM CITY	81	81	14	90	69	0	1

Ruth	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
HOBOKEN	101	61	--	118	94	10	0
KNOXVILLE	79	83	22	89	68	0	1
BROBDINGNAG	70	92	31	75	65	0	0.5
MIDWEST	63	99	38	72	51	0	0

National Conference
TYPICAL SEASON (rounded off)

Aaron	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
VEGAS	91	71	--	99	84	7	1.5
MELROSE	89	73	2	95	81	3	1
KANSAS	68	94	23	76	61	0	0
CALUSA	62	100	29	67	57	0	0

Mantle	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
MUNICH	104	58	--	113	93	10	0
COLUMBUS	87	75	17	95	82	0	3.5
HUDSON	86	76	18	96	77	0	4
ROCKY MOUNTAIN	57	105	47	69	50	0	0

Williams	W	L	GB	Hi*	Lo†	Div‡	WC§
GRAND CAYMAN	104	58	--	109	95	10	0
NORTHBORO	94	68	10	102	86	0	9
ZION	82	80	22	92	72	0	1
WARRENTON	55	107	49	66	47	0	0

fractions reflect ties.

* Highest number of wins recorded ‡ Division Championships (in 10 seasons)
† Lowest number of wins recorded § Wild Card appearances (in 10 seasons)

Albert Pujols, 1B   *2002-2023*

Richmond/Taylorville, Warrenton, Strong City, Columbus, Calusa

One of the great hitters of the modern era, Albert Pujols was a key part of the Richmond (later Taylorville) lineup for fifteen years. He hit .300 eight times, and hit 30 homers twelve times. His rookie year – .338-59-177 – was one of the greatest in TBL history. He hit .277/.353/.521 lifetime, with 3,062 hits, 1,998 RBI, and 662 homers. He was elected nearly unanimously last year on his first ballot.

for your consideration

Andy Pettitte, SP   *1990-2010*
Amherst/Melrose, Richmond, Northboro, Mahopac/Kansas

A steady performer for eighteen years, he was the cornerstone of rotations for a decade and a half. He won 198 games in TBL, second among retired pitchers not already enshrined. He struck out 2,574 batters, currently 13th all-time. In 2006 he led the league in wins, going 20-10, 2.88 for Northboro.

This is his thirteenth year of eligibility. He appeared on 10 ballots in 2024, and fell one vote short of election in 2023 and three in 2024.

Cole Hamels, SP   *2007-2020*
Maracaibo

The ace of the Rumrunner rotation for his entire career, he was usually among the league leaders in starts, complete games and innings. He had an outstanding year in 2009, with an 18-7, 3.11 record. His best season was 2013, when he had a 19-3, 2.83 season with 5 CG. He struck out 2,816 in 2,786 innings, recording 200 or more strikeouts in 7 seasons.

This is his third year of eligibility. He appeared on 4 ballots in 2024.

Miguel Cabrera, 1B   *2004-2023*
Greater Ohio, Munich

One of the dominant hitters of his era, he hit 40 homers four times, 476 in all, and slashed .291/.364/.508 overall. He walked 1,085 times and had 2,822 hits. He also hit 40 or more doubles eight times. His best year was 2013, when he had a Triple Crown – .341-49-133.

This is his second year of eligibility. He fell two votes short of eligibility in 2024.

Zack Greinke, P   *2005-2022*
Rye, Munich, Warrenton

A solid starter for eighteen years, Greinke notched 220 wins, winning 15 or more games five times. He had an outstanding 2020, going 18-7 with 5 shutouts, leading TBL with a 2.44 ERA. He struck out 3,226 batters in 3,469 innings. His best season was in 2010 with Rye, when he went 20-8 with 14 CG and 7 shutouts, leading the league in these categories, as well as in ERA with a 2.21 mark.

This is his second year of eligibility.

Buster Posey, C   *2011-2022*
Munich, Warrenton

One of the top catchers in the league, he was an excellent defender and an outstanding hitter. In 11 seasons he had 1,590 hits and 173 homers. He hit .300 six times; his best year was 2015, when he led TBL with a .348 average.

This is his second year of eligibility. He appeared on 10 ballots in 2024.

Trevor Hoffman, RP *2002-2020*
Munich, Brobdingnag, Rochester, Las Vegas, Portland

A closer for many teams and setup man for others, he was a lights-out reliever for most of his career, pitching for contenders. He recorded a sub-2.00 ERA five times, and recorded 30 or more saves three times. His best season was in 1998 for Munich, when he had 38 saves, a 1.40 ERA, and 78 Ks and only 13 walks in 71 innings.

This is his fourth year of eligibility. He appeared on 11 ballots in 2024.

Players with carryover votes: *Andy Pettitte 8, Miguel Cabrera 8, Don Mattingly 6, Trevor Hoffman 5, Buster Posey 5, Sammy Sosa 3, Will Clark 3, Jake Peavy 3, Jason Giambi 3, Albert Belle 3, Dennis Eckersley 2, Roy Halladay 2, Tim Hudson 2, Jamie Moyer 2, Juan Gonzalez 2, Cole Hamels 2, Troy Percival 2, Andruw Jones 2, Jeff Kent 2, thirty-four players with 1.*

tbl in the age of data

by Robert Jordan

Welcome to the 2025 TBL *Annual*! We're back to celebrate TBL's 44th year, with all the usual clairvoyance and linguistic brilliance for which we are well known. We're very happy to welcome back all of our managers – we've had some abrupt departures in recent seasons – we all miss Jack and Paul – but we're delighted to roll into 2025 with a full roster.

It takes contributions from many folks to keep a league like ours alive and vibrant over 44 years, so we should start by acknowledging a few heavy contributors. First, thanks go to Commissioner Ray Murphy for making a very difficult (and unpaid) job look pretty effortless. Ray is also the manager of the Warrenton Giants in his copious spare time.

Hats off to our incredible webmaster and wizard of all things techy – Mr. Steve Stein. Steve probably thought a comfortable retirement meant that his days of making code fixes under time pressure were behind him, but I sat next to him on draft day and I know that's not true. TBL has the best web site of any fantasy league in the country – and that's all Steve's work.

Thanks to Clay Beard for his behind-the-scenes work on our league constitution, his management of the legacy ratings, and his cool Computer pre-play that is an entertaining contribution to this volume every year. Clay is part of this excellent league's bone structure, and he has the TBL Hall of Fame accolades to prove it.

Frequent *Annual* contributor Richard Meyer does our post-draft snap evaluations, which are the foundation of this document. Darrell Skogen and team helped with instructions review last year. (An early tip of the fedora to Eric Sheffler for his efforts this year!) And writing for the 2024 TBL *Annual* came from all over the league, starting with Joe Auletta. We have more from him, as well as Rich Meyer and Paul Montague this year.

It takes a village to keep all this going, and we are fortunate to have an honest-to-Pete historian to help us capture events and write it all down for posterity. Thanks once again go to the amazing Walter Hunt, our editor and taskmaster. Walter retired last year, ostensibly to do more of his own writing and some traveling, but we all know it's all about the *Annual* for the next two months. He was also the organizing force behind our successful league draft in Natick, Massachusetts in February.

Umm…About Last Year

Last year, the *Annual* staff experienced something new. We evaluated the teams, set the TQs, made our bold predictions – and completely whiffed on the 2024 TBL Champion Rocky Mountain Dragons. Manager Dave Jaskot saw our third place evaluation, shrugged, and proceeded to crush the Mantle division by 13 games over second place Hudson. Dave finished the season with 100 wins for the second straight year, and rolled through the playoffs with wins over Calusa and Melrose to face a frightening Hoboken team in the 2024 World Series.

The World Series was a classic. Rocky Mountain won in 7 games, and Mr. Jaskot earned his first TBL title. Congratulations to the Head Dragon!

We Got Numbers – Lots of Numbers

This is my 26th year in TBL. In many leagues, I'd be a grizzled veteran, but in this group I am 14th in seniority – not even in the top half! When I started playing APBA in 2000, I was a roto player, and the *Bill James Baseball Abstract* was my bible. Access to advanced metrics was limited in those days. The Internet had information if you knew where to look, but resources like *Baseball Reference* and *Fangraphs* were still years away. In the last twenty-six years, we have seen an

explosion of information. New metrics are being invented to measure player performance almost every year. *Fangraphs* has given us insight into how certain numbers were accumulated, and allow us to project performances forward. This offseason, a new predictive tool (OOPSY) was added to websites. OOPSY takes into account performances at different levels, the age of the players, swing speed data for hitters (available at *Baseball Savant* – another important tool for the irrationally addicted) and STUFF+ data for pitchers. STUFF+ analyzes the effectiveness of each pitch in a pitcher's arsenal.

Each TBL manager will consume this information at his own level. Before writing this article, I did a quick survey on *HeyTBL*, asking managers what sources they used to prepare for the TBL draft. Guys were all over the map. *Fangraphs* and *BaseballHQ* – Ray Murphy's website – were mentioned several times. **Baseball America**, which has been tracking and rating baseball prospects for decades, is still a go-to source for information on guys who haven't cracked the majors yet. Darrell Skogen said that he watched a lot of baseball. The Guru trusts his eyes, and that seems to work.

Last year, I joined a head-to-head 10 category league. I had about six weeks to prepare for a fairly shallow draft – about 250 players deep. I used a new information source – *Podcasts*. I quickly discovered The *Sleeper and the Bust*, and *Rates and Barrells*. There are dozens of them, and they serve up in-depth information on dozens of players every week. I made it to the World Series in my first year in the league.

Stats with Benefits

We have access to more information than ever. Has this fundamentally changed TBL? I see several changes in the league that can be attributed to better access to data.

- *It is far more difficult to outhustle the league at the draft.* It has always been the case that some managers are more casual about their participation in the league than others. Managers that approach their teams with more intensity – researching players, playing in other leagues, thinking about baseball when there's snow on the ground – had a distinct advantage when they sat down to draft or when they negotiated a trade. But that was more true twenty years ago than it is today. (*"You guys don't make as many mistakes as you used to."* – Ray Murphy at the 2025 draft.)

- *Competition is spread out further.* In the last 16 years, seven teams won their first – and only – TBL title. As a group, TBL managers know more than they did ten years ago. This is now a more competitive league, and access to information has leveled the league's playing field.

- *Deep drafting is now an important rebuilding tool.* In round 8 of the 2022 TBL Draft, Boomer selected a young Red Sox outfielder named Jarren Duran. Duran had a good track record in the minors – 28 homers and 36 steals in 136 AAA games. His 2023 card had nothing on it, but Boomer hung onto Duran while he got acclimated to the majors. He finished 8th in the AL MVP voting last year.

  Two rounds earlier, Clay Beard drafted an Oakland A's outfielder named Lawrence Butler. Butler's 42-game card was so impressive that he spent the entire 2024 season growing potatoes in the Hudson bullpen. But Mr. Beard had done his homework, and Butler emerged as a force last year for Oakland. His days of leisure are over – he's in the middle of every Hudson lineup for 2025. And at age 23, he will be around for quite a while.

The point here is that late draft picks matter if you have enough research behind you. Picks in the late part of the draft typically have little present value. All of their value is buried on *FanGraphs* or *BaseballHQ*. And when you hit on one of these guys, it can be a game changer for your team.

Just for fun, here's some late round picks from this year's draft to keep an eye on. Victor Scott (Hudson, Round 6). Ben Rice (Melrose, Round 6). Zach Dezenzo (Whitman, Round 7). Addison Barger (Riverwolf, Round 8). Zack Kelly (Northboro, Round 8).

Notes from Other Leagues

Gordon Rodell sent an email to *HeyTBL* in January that included the draft results of the BBA – a league very similar to TBL. This was valuable information, particularly when combined with draft analysis from our own managers, which also was published on *HeyTBL*. (Steve Stein, Boomer Bloom, Joe Auletta – great writing!) Having a consensus on where a player should go is good insight. And draft results from other APBA leagues is available from APBA chat rooms during the offseason.

Looking ahead

The mandate to *Play Ball* arrived from Ray Murphy this morning, so the 2025 season is at last upon us. Before a single die is cast, here's a quick look at how the *Annual* staff sees this season's results.

In the International Conference, The Statesmen will ride a lock down pitching staff to the Clemente Division title, with Blue Hill hard on their heels. Notable is the fact that rebuilding Whitman will not be a factor for the first time since the invention of cardboard and dice. In the Mays Division, New West will cruise to the title over Rye. Hoboken will try to recreate their 2024 World Series run by winning the Ruth. We all have another one of those Aaron Judge cards to deal with.

The National Conference sports the best team in the league, according to our ratings – The Grand Cayman Havens. The Havens will enjoy stomping second place Northboro in the Clemente.

The Mantle delivered a shocking result last year, with Rocky Mountain winning the Big Cup. (Why doesn't this league have a trophy?) This year is the first in a long run for Munich, who has been stockpiling talent since their last division title in 2020. Melrose will once again win the Aaron Division, where most of the teams are off their highs this year.

The *Annual* is back! It's a labor of love for those of us that participate. We hope this work continues to be a source of pride for League owners. We wish you all good luck and good health this season.

in search of a metaphor

by Walter Hunt

The state of the art in analysis – that is to say, the TBL equivalent of the stuff Mr. Murphy and friends (and competitors) do every year – is a moving target. Actually, it seems like it keeps getting further and further out of reach.

We use thermometers for draft capacity, which is pretty solid, because it corresponds to a quantified value. First round picks are worth 4 points with 1 extra if that pick is likely to be in the top 10; second rounders are worth 3; third rounders are worth 2. We assign no value to picks beyond the first three rounds, which is often where the best bargains and the most likely busts are taken. There should be something to quantify that, but at least the current analysis is acceptable.

Each team's roster is now listed by age, based on July 1 of the season to be played. It tells us something about the maturity of the roster – if the key guys are in their mid- to late 20s the team is likely to be solid for some time to come, even if it's not quite a contender. Conversely a team whose key players are in their low 30s may be a solid performer now but the cliff is not far away.

We also base our whole book on the T.Q. system, devised by the *Mazeroski* baseball magazine that was published when the earth was young(er). The raw numbers are derived from an analysis done by the Sensei and myself right after the Saturday night dinner at the TBL Draft. Over the course of many years we've gotten pretty good at it, and it produces good results (except for Hudson, but that's an old self-fulfilling problem). We are at the whim of the Dice Gods, but good rated teams usually perform well and poorly rated ones do badly.

But we'd like to identify the elusive quality of *momentum*. Is a team at the peak of its evolution when it runs to contention? Is it rebuilding and improving, scuffling and restructuring, or somewhere in between? We'd like to say, "this is a one year wonder," or "this is a team in the middle of a dynasty," or "hoo boy." Putting up a clock face or a moon phase have both been tried, and we are doing neither this year as we search for a better metaphor.

At the moment it's still an open question. But stay tuned: we'll come up with something, and it may actually work.

– Ed.

who ya gonna call?

by Paul Montague

Ray made a comment during the 2025 draft something like: "Back in the day, you could count on mistakes during the draft. Today, y'all aren't missing on any picks!" (And the room took a collective bow.) Indeed, those of us whose TBL tenure is counted in decades rather than years can affirm that we seem to be collectively savvier than we used to be. What are we doing differently?

The Good Old Days

Back in the "Good Old Days", baseball information that went beyond a surface level was very limited. There was no Internet when TBL got started (well, technically, it existed – but it was very very far from what it is today). There were no analytics (well, technically, Bill James had started the ball rolling – but nobody was paying a whole lot of attention, and even James' methodology was pretty basic by today's standards).

Baseball America was the gold standard, although pricey (well, I guess a "gold standard" should cost you something?) Its focus was on real-life baseball, not fantasy, but it gave us a look at real-life scouts' information and prospect values. Basically, if you paid for it, you were ensured a leg up on the competition in a league like TBL.

Beyond that, there wasn't much. The annual magazines (*Street and Smith*, *Mazeroski's*, etc.) had the virtue of being inexpensive. Bill James' annual *Handbooks* provided a key resource – career stats, year by year, for (almost) all active players. There wasn't a lot of text or 'analysis', but if you knew how to interpret the numbers, they were very useful. That was pretty much it. So we all used pretty much the same ones (plus or minus the BA subscription).

The Better New Days

How much has changed in 40 years! *Baseball America* is still around – but oh, so much more has emerged.

There are abundant web sites, of course. Pre-eminent (especially for TBLdom) is *Baseball HQ*, with a team of analysts and writers presided over by our own Ray Murphy. (The irony: Ray himself is responsible for much of the improved draft acumen he bemoaned on draft day!) But *BBHQ* is far from alone – search on "fantasy baseball draft information" and you'll get more than 6 million 'hits'; some of these are old-time sports sources (*ESPN, CBS Sports*), but most are relatively new, reflecting the growing popularity of fantasy / rotisserie leagues.

Many of these sites provide data and analysis for free. Some put some of their information behind a paywall; Patreon is one of the most prominent hosts for those. So, there is still a bit of class division in the industry – but if you don't want to pay, you still have access to way more and way better baseball knowledge at your fingertips than much-younger you could get previously.

If you prefer to absorb knowledge without reading, there are podcasts and videos aplenty. *BBHQ* has a podcast, for example, that is founded on what the website provides but goes beyond it by talking to industry experts ("touts"). *YouTube* (and other places) provide a seemingly-infinite number of videos (of varying value – viewer beware!)

Not only is there more information, but the nature of the information has also changed. In the 1980s, the term "analytics" hadn't even been coined. Today, it's all analytics all the time. We have access to detailed assessments of every

pitcher's arsenal – not just speed, but spin, release point, "tunneling", and more. Similarly for hitters – you can easily find any hitter's average (or maximum) exit velocity, bat speed (the latest stats-man's shiny new toy), etc. Some of this data goes beyond what even professional scouts and coaches had available when TBL was a baby.

Nowadays, you can get the raw data (from a site like *Baseball Reference*) and then slice and dice it yourself, as in time past. But you can also find expert analysis from almost any angle you can imagine – and in more depth: Where we once thought it nirvana to get BA's "Top 10" prospect lists for each organization, now it's easy to find dozens of lists that go 20, 30, or even deeper.

And, if you don't feel you have the time or talent to assess the data for yourself – there are plenty of places to turn that will save you that work. Many websites have draft-oriented tools that let you enter league parameters and crank out a draft list tailored to your needs.

TMI? Or Not TMI?

So while in the past we had to find enough information to draft or team-build intelligently, now we may have a problem with Too Much Information (TMI). We need to know how to tell sh*t from Shinola, to borrow a really old phrase. Which 'touts' do we trust, since we can't possibly absorb all the info from all of them?

To give an idea of the magnitude of this question, here is the list of sites/teams that are taking part in the Tout Leagues 2025 mixed-league auction event (only one of several Tout Leagues leagues): *Fangraphs, FantasyBaseballSherpa, Roto-Experts, Pitcher List, Mastersball, The Game Day, Baseball HQ, Yahoo Fantasy Sports, Fantasy Baseball Auctioneer, Baseball Prospectus, FanGraphs, Fantasy Pros, Fantrax*, and *Friends with Fantasy Benefits*. That's fourteen of the more well-

known in today's infoscape; there are plenty more.

One of the filters we have to apply is the Rotisserie ("fantasy") versus APBA (or more generally "simulation") filter. Roto leagues rely to some extent on stats that don't matter in APBA – notably pitcher wins and saves, and hitter runs and RBI. They also weigh some stats (e.g., stolen bases) more heavily than we would prefer. So, we must discount those aspects of what the touts say.

Another filter that is needed is the one-year ("redraft" in Roto terms) versus dynasty/keeper viewpoint. Most touts are mostly about redraft advice, although some do provide a dynasty look – but usually as a secondary element. So, for TBL purposes, we need to learn how to apply what they say about redraft values in our dynasty setting.

One question that Walter asked me is interesting here: *Does being in multiple leagues help?* Yes and No. *Yes*, in that the research you do can be applied in more than one league. I'm in three APBA leagues this year (plus one *Scoresheet* league), and was able to borrow the data I collected for the TBL draft (which will always be my primary one) to re-use at least in part for the other two APBA leagues. But also *No*, in that no two leagues have the same rules, number of teams, or draft pools, so you can't just take work you do for one draft and apply it to another one without at least some adjustment. You'll save some time and effort; but you can't escape prepping for each league to some degree.

The Sum of All Wisdom

So, then, what does all this background mean? What have I learned about how to do general managing (drafting, trading, team building) in an APBA league, over the last four decades?

The most basic lesson is this: *It's about the process, not the production*. (That's something I hear

several times a year on the podcasts I listen to, so it's not original. But I definitely agree.) We need to develop a process that we can apply year after year, that guides us in sifting the information that's available, and that helps boil it down to key decisions for our teams in TBL Sometimes, we won't get an optimal outcome – Stephen Strasburg will get injured, and that's a shame, but it doesn't mean that Joe was wrong to draft him when he did; or Kris Bryant may decline after a couple of terrific seasons, but it doesn't mean that Paul Harrington shouldn't have taken him number one. That is, some individual decisions coming out of our process may turn out badly in the long run, but that doesn't mean the process is faulty. It just means there are factors not under our control, and we should not fault the process.

At the same time, we should analyze our process from time to time (say once a year). We need to be honest when we find flaws in the process. We should in fact always look at the bad outcomes: especially if we notice patterns in bad production – maybe we tend to view players we own more favorably than they deserve (the bird in hand effect) which keeps us from making some useful trades; or perhaps we overvalue pitchers relative to hitters, which can lead to more draft pick 'busts' due to the inherent volatility of pitchers. When we see such a pattern, we need to adjust our process – add an extra 'look' at each trade to check available rankings or scouting of the players to be sure we aren't trying to get more than we can for "our" guys; or adjust our draft ranking steps to discount pitchers a bit. Whatever the pattern that may be causing the non-optimal results, identify it and reduce or remove it through process changes. Over time, this process improvement should lead to better production – we can't control every factor, but we can learn how to account for every factor's effects on our process.

So all that being said, what is my process? Well, it's certainly different now than it used to be! In fact, I'm still making some significant changes year over year, so it won't be exactly the same next off-season. Therefore, I won't try to give a huge amount of "weed level" detail here. (Not being coy, just that I'm trying to focus at a level that may be generally useful or at least hopefully interesting.)

In a few words, my process amounts to four stages:
- Collect
- Organize
- Assess
- Summarize

This is speaking of draft preparation, as that is the most intensive and perhaps fun part of the TBL general manager's job. But the process applies in general to how I make trade decisions, how I construct my roster, etc.

Collect

Gather the information you need from the sources you use. I mentioned the "TMI" factor, so part of this involves stripping down your info sources. In the previous section, I listed the 14 participants in the 2025 Tout League mixed auction. Of these, I've consulted all but four to some extent at some time over the last couple decades. Each year, I tend to settle on three or four of them. *BB HQ* is always one of these, but the others can change over time as sources depart the industry, or new ones emerge, or free ones decide to go behind pay walls, or I find ones I trust more.

Basically, you need to find ones you "like" – you value their kind and level of information and believe you can use it. The best info in the baseball world won't help you in TBL if you can't understand it or reduce it to a short form that makes sense to you. (Example – some of us are better equipped than others to actually use detailed scouting about pitch types, "shapes", spin rates, and such. If you can efficiently absorb all that, great! It can be very helpful. But if it's over your head, or you just don't have time to plow through 2500 words plus charts and video – on each and every pitcher – then be honest with yourself and set that

source aside. I'll admit, my eyes tend to glaze over on this sort of thing; but if it works for you, go with it.) Having decided what your sources are going to be for 'now' (whether that's one off-season or several years), start pulling the data. This may include bookmarking pages on websites, saving copies of files or podcasts or videos, and taking notes (in whatever format is easiest for you). I tend to start the collection process during each MLB season, as I come across items that hold information I know will be useful come the off-season. At this stage, this is just setting "stuff" aside, not trying to analyze it or make use of it yet.

This step actually extends into the off-season. This is because part of the data I use in draft prep involves prospect and player rankings that aren't available until well after the MLB season. (This off-season, I bugged Ray to find out when the BABS data would be published on *BBHQ* (which just arranged to 'merge' Ron Shandler's work on BABS into the HQ site), whether it would be in time for the TBL draft, etc. It was published about a week before the draft, so I had to do a really quick turn to incorporate it into my draft charts. If you haven't used BABS yet, check it out. It does have the advantage of stepping back from outcome stats to try to capture information about skills, in a compact form.)

Organize

Usually, as the MLB season winds down, I start to try to make sense of what I've collected, in aggregate. Whatever files or notes I've made up to this point, I review and do a sort of triage – this bit will definitely be useful (save or move it to where I keep the Good Stuff), a second bit will definitely not be (trash it), and a third bit may or may not be once I'm ready to deep dive (so put it in the 'maybe' pile).

This is the point where if I have some non-written source material, I try to reduce it to my own written form. The podcasts or videos I may have saved in passing, I now listen to and take notes from. I

prefer written notes when it comes to actual draft prep, so I impose a strict "listen once" discipline on myself here. Some podcasts result in zero useful info, some have a lot, but either way, I deal with each one exactly one time, capture what I want to save, and then erase the audio/video.

When I'm done with this stage (which takes weeks to months), I have one folder on my PC with the notes I've culled. There may be several files in that folder, usually by source and with some indication of what is the 'definite' pile versus the 'maybe' pile, but I've reduced what can be a fairly sizable body of raw data into a manageable form.

Assess

Now comes the fun part! This is where the organized – but still basically raw – data gets reduced to useful observations in APBA/TBL terms. (This is also the stage where I start to apply pitcher grade and APBA card info to the process. Especially for a team that is contending, this 'current' info can trump what one gets from industry sources. It doesn't mean we want to draft a lot of one-year wonders, just that we need to figure out where they fit in our draft/trade scheme.)

This stage overlaps the 'organize' and 'summarize' ones. That is, I iterate back and forth depending on when various sources publish various pieces of stuff. And sometimes I iterate based on what I feel like doing at a given time; hey, no point making this overly rigid – that's too much like work!

I set up two spreadsheets – one for Munich team info, one for draft info. The team spreadsheet is where I save charts for batters, for pitchers, for trades (possible or completed), and eventually for rotation and lineup construction; so much of this file ends up as part of Munich's instructions for the upcoming season. This file isn't 'created' from scratch; it's modified from the previous year's.

The draft spreadsheet has tabs for each position's rookies by position group (C, SP, RP, INF,

OF), and for whatever notes I record about the current year's process specifics (sources, shape of the draft, etc.). I tend to leave the draft sheet pretty loose until the TBL draft list is published. When it is, I try to pump in the rookie names and basic info (handedness, age, etc.) as soon as possible, because from this point on I don't want to have to re-organize or re-enter bits of info any more than absolutely necessary.

This is when I start to reduce verbal scouting notes to a sort of shorthand form (example: a *BBHQ* player paragraph from the Analyst book may turn into something like "P++, d-" to tell me this batter has top-level power but weak defense), and getting that into the spreadsheet. This is also when I enter prospect ranking and 'values', using one column per source (or sometimes two columns). Any prospect that gets ranked by *BBHQ*, for example, gets a cell in one HQ column to record his HQ letter/number prospect rating, and another cell for his ranking (in the Top 100 prospects if he makes that list, or his team rank if not).

Similarly, for the other sources I'm using for the current year that do rankings, whether prospect ranking or overall ones (finding a source I trust that does dynasty rankings is gold). These entries are 'quantitative' if you will, while the scouting notes are 'qualitative' – more about how I use those two dimensions in the next stage. The process of entering these bits of info lasts most of the off-season, because the different sources rudely fail to coordinate their publication dates to make it easier for us to get everything at once. (*Note: It takes discipline to apply this stage of the process all the way down to the cruft that will populate the last few rounds. But it's worth it!*)

This is also the stage where I do most of my strategic thinking about Munich's roster, the five-year plan (or whatever my longer-term-than-just-this-season threshold is at the moment), weaknesses that need to be addressed, etc. Some of this goes on throughout the year, of course, but it's at this stage of the process that it tends to become concrete. It was this sort of honest team assessment three years ago that resulted in the Darvish/deGrom/Verlander sequence of trades that springboarded the overhaul of the Munich roster that appears to be coming to fruition.

Summarize

The final stage is to boil down the assessed information to a form that can be used readily on draft day. The goal is to have a relatively minimal-size reference to guide one's draft decisions.

Some of this means just internalizing information as you process it. Going over enough scouting and analytic information about players will result in at least some of it getting into your brain. But, unless you have a photographic memory, you can't rely on this completely. So, you need to develop a "cheatsheet" (to use the roto industry term) that captures all that info in as close to an 'at a glance' form as possible.

As I mentioned, I use spreadsheets to gather player information. I also use the draft spreadsheet as my "cheatsheet", with some additional massaging. Up until a couple of years ago, that massaging was pretty minimal – basically just manually arranging the rows in each tab into the order that I thought those players belonged in.

But recently it occurred to me that I had the makings of a "formula" that could take the qualitative scouting info and the quantitative rankings, and apply some numeric valuations to arrive at one number for each player, representing his value (for Munich) relative to the other players in the draft.

So I spent some time over the last couple of seasons figuring out some numeric values to apply to each piece of player information, and then how to weight those values relative to each other. For example, for scouting sources that provide rankings of the "Top 100" prospects, I give a value of 3 for rankings in the top 10, value of 2 to rankings from 11-25, value of 1 to rankings of 26-50, and value of 0 to the rest (but with the ranking itself still in the spreadsheet

column for reference). For sources that give non-ranking data, such as the *BBHQ* number+letter prospect ratings, I assign a single numeric value to each rating combo; in this case, my numbers range from 10 down to 0.

Present card value comes into this operation, too. I record the APBA hitting card info in a short-hand form (if you've looked at the spreadsheet I send out with basic rookie info, you've seen this), along with defense, pitching grades, etc. The card info gets a color and font code based on the in-game value. For example, a batter with 14 or more on-base numbers gets a blue background, if he has four or more power numbers, that cell gets bold font, and so on. Similarly for pitchers. Then each color/font is assigned a numeric value.

Next, I decide how much weight to place on each of these numerics; in other words, how much emphasis to put on each source (maybe I give full weight to *BBHQ*'s prospect ratings, but only half as much to another website's). This set of weights gets tweaked each off-season, as some sources get added or removed from the process, or as I decide the previous set of weights were skewed in some way.

These values and weights get rolled into an over-all formula that spits out totals for present value (from the card numerics) and projected career value (from the scouting numerics). Assign each of those a weight, add the weighted values together, and *voilà* – a total draft value number for each player! The weights of present versus career value will change from year to year – the closer to contention, the more weight I give to present value.

I sort each position group tab by the total draft value. The final step is to build a summary tab that is my actual cheatsheet, where I can view the over-all info in a semi-graphical form. Each position group gets a set of three columns – player name, player total value, and player age. In each position group, players obviously appear in order by total

value. But I also use vertical spacing to indicate visually how players from different position groups are valued – where there is a gap between total values, there will be a few extra cells (rows) left between the players with those values. This provides a visual cue that while Smith may be the next highest valued outfielder, his value is notably less than Jones, who is the next highest valued starting pitcher. (It's significantly faster to be able to see the gap visually; and we all know that time matters during the draft. It's also more accurate, and that may matter even more!)

I've spared you a lot of detail – partly for reasons of space, but mainly because my detailed process may not work for everyone else. (Maybe not for anyone else!) As I said, I use spreadsheets on a laptop as my primary tool. But perhaps you just can't stand using computers – so your process will rely on paper notes but it can do the same 'magic' for you if it is methodical and fits your baseball worldview. Conversely, perhaps you're an übergeek who can use AI bots to do automated searching for you, to streamline my mostly-manual collect and organize stages – more power to you (literally)!

But in some fashion, we all need a process that works for us. Hopefully, this discussion of my general process will have spurred some ideas in your minds, so you can refine your own process a bit more. Maybe you can borrow parts of mine, maybe not. If you got nothing out of this, I apologize – but if nothing else, you can line the bird-cage with these pages.

As I started with Ray's comment during the draft, I'll conclude there as well. Each of us should have the goal of "not missing on any picks". I believe that the best way to do this is to:

Trust the (YOUR) process!

historical insight

by Joe Auletta

This year's devious *Annual* topic turned out to be trivial: *What tools do you use to do your draft prep?* Bob and Walter can't really mean it, why, it will take about five minutes to make my list, send it to them, and off to something more challenging. Making a cup of tea perhaps. Or taking a nap — no, taking a nap is hard, that's why it rarely happens. Yes, a cup of tea! As soon as I have the article done I will reward myself with some peppermint tea . . .

Or so I foolishly thought.

Making the list was easy. But did that really answer the question? Did it answer any question? Upon reflecting even a brief time, the honest answer was clearly "No". To answer the question required by giving context to the items on the list. What information did I use? Why did I add a new source to the tried and true earlier ones?

The Start. We begin back in the mid '70s when I was introduced to APBA (and had no idea what I was doing).

It was 1976, and I took over a team that wasn't very good in a league of sharks. I knew I should look at the stats, but understood baseball more than APBA. I don't remember all the details of how many players we kept, of how the draft pool was populated but I remember clearly enough that I focused on games played and batting average to build my batter draft list. Starts and ERA for my pitching list.

With that awesome preparation I succeeded in drafting the amazing Larry Biittner, a seasoned 28 year old with a gaudy .315 BA for three quarters of a season. He hit second all year behind 162 games of Dave Cash and his .305 average. This was going to be a devastating offensive juggernaut! As the reader might suspect at this point, I was amazingly naive about APBA. Between them, they had

five *(FIVE!)* home runs in over 1100 real life plate appearances. My unstoppable offense never started. We were crushed.

The other managers told me it was just bad luck. I had the right strategy, the dice gods just didn't smile upon me as a rookie manager. Just keep on keeping on and I'd be fine! And to help me, they tried to push a few of their other slap hitting high average losers on me in exchange for Randy Jones and his 40 starts as a Basic Game Grade A starter. Back then since I was younger and learned a little quicker, so one season into this alternate universe I realized two things: I needed to totally revise my draft strategy, and I needed some heavy duty shark repellant.

The Revised Plan. Part one, get more data. Not the easiest thing to do prior to the internet. I found a few large books with data. I don't remember the names, but one looked like a phone book—the pages were 8x11 and made from that same thin, flimsy paper that didn't hold the news print well so any time I handled it my fingers turned black, and if my fingers were damp the pages quickly became unreadable. I had data. Too much data. But what data to focus on?

Part two, make a few phone calls to my uncle who was the doctor for Yogi Berra and a few other players from the 1960s era Yankee teams. From him he gave me an introduction to a Yankee scout. I called and picked his brain about what mattered — what to look for when evaluating rookies and young players. Some of the factors weren't useful because I had no access to them: sprint speed from home to first, his balance as he swung, does he make the right decisions in the field and on the bases . . . But some did, and he emphasized K/BB ratio, and extra base hits per at bat. For pitchers, Hits per

inning and K/BB ratio. That led to long hours of looking up those numbers, doing the division by hand, and taping together many sheets of ledger paper.

The last adjustment was to take a contrarian perspective: feed the sharks as much as they wanted, with the end goal of starving them to death. Vlad didn't exist back then, but if he had, he would have recognized it. All the short term talent was traded away in the winter of 76/77 and I had in my account 12 first round picks for the 1977 & 1978 drafts!

Just one small problem. The league folded in December 1976. Oh well.

The First Industrial Revolution. 1980. The whole outlook on draft prep changed when *USA TODAY* showed up, because now the day after the MLB season ended they printed The Page. Every player, every team, lots and lots of stats. It was the first opportunity to take the step from time-consuming searching for data to thinking about what the data means.

BU — Before USA TODAY — I would spend October to January trying to guess who would get a card, create the list of players likely in the draft, and then compile data on those players. Easier said than done, because the few reference books did not come out for weeks after the season ended. Based upon the names I guessed and the data I could find, I would identify about 100 or so players to analyze. One by one. Put them into the ledger and hope I copied the information correctly, and though I was reasonably competent in transcribing (after all, I had gotten a B+ in *How To Transcribe Like A Cloistered Monk* in school) there were still some mistakes. One year I drafted a very pedestrian Micky Mahler (26 games of a 5.85 ERA) because I had written in some other player's stats onto his line in my ledger.

AU — After USA TODAY — I had every bit of that data in my hands, and for all the players, by early October. I took a vacation day on the next Friday, and over the weekend I had 200+ names entered into the ledger with more data and far fewer mistakes. The hitter parameters now had games, OBP, SLG, number of steals, and ratios for BB/K. extra base hits, and SB percentage. Pitchers had starts, RIP, and ratios for BB/K, hits/IP, and a guess at their grade (obviously not in the data, but with a little help from a friend who wasn't in the league but was a long time APBA player). This is when I first started doing weighted averages of the data categories because there were too many categories—and players—to keep track of in my head. The weighted averages were still done manually (with calculator), and were only possible because of the time saved by *USA TODAY*.

Things were not perfect. I still had to wait before I got data on minor league stats for rookies and other young players. But I was now able to do the first triage as I took an ax — not a scalpel — and divided the 200 names into three piles: "I want This Guy", "I wouldn't Mind This Guy", and "Yuck!". Without minor league data, reliable scouting reports, or other under the surface knowledge it was crude by 2025 standards, but a world ahead of 1976. The Yankee scout source was no more, but I would call people I knew in other cities, watch players come through Denver – and later Norfolk & Newport News — and get whatever other scouting info I could. Watching Tim Raines in person rocketed him to the top of my list the year he was available, data not needed, he passed the eye test and then some. Ozzie Virgil was another one I lusted after because I saw him in Newport News, but that was a bit of an overreaction.

The draft results improved significantly, but there were still too many missed opportunities and too many bad picks.

The Other Shoe Drops. 1983. Teaching at the Air Force Academy we got an early version of Lotus Notes. It was purchased for keeping grades and helping with some of the faculty doing research.

But the Department Head was convinced it had far more potential uses than those, and encouraged all of us in the Physics Department to play with it. It took a few seconds for me to start drooling. I prepped for my 1984 draft by spending more than a few weekend afternoons entering data into Lotus. Long, finger numbing afternoons. I got into a rhythm of the various entry and positioning keystrokes until it became trance like. There were no windows in the room, and one day I arrived about 1 PM and when I stood up I found to my surprise it was almost 10 PM.

But data entry time was worth it. The three big changes were:
• automating the computation of the weights
• which allowed sensitivity analysis
• which greatly improved the triage

– which further shifted where the draft prep time was spent. The top tier players were solidified in their stature as 1st round picks and 2nd round picks. The bottom 100 were solidified in their stature as "band-aid for a specific need", or "radioactive, don't touch". The time previously spent on 120 or so players could be concentrated on the key 60 or so players—the 3rd and 4th rounds-- that would be the difference between draft success and draft failure.

So from the mid '80s on I could relatively quickly focus on where I wanted to focus — but there was still difficulty figuring out how to properly do that focused evaluation.

Attitude Adjustment. The third big change to my draft prep happened in March 1985, but I didn't realize it until a year later. I had moved to Florida and joined a local face-to-face league. I had an expansion franchise, and the third pick in the draft. The four expansion teams had the top four picks and would be in one division together for the first year. I forget who I selected, but it was a good bat who helped me win the Division on the last game of the year with a 82-80 record, one game ahead of the second and third place

teams, and two games ahead of the 80-82 4th place team. An awesome race, and a great high that lasted one week until I got pummeled in the playoffs and looked at being a bottom dweller going forward.

Jump back 8 months to that draft day. The fourth pick had been Roger Clemens. At the time he was some young guy on Boston. His numbers didn't stand out — 21 starts of a 4.32 ERA, though his K/BB number was very nice. Clearly a 1st rounder, but didn't look like a top-3.

Eight months later I was aware of the error. *(NOTE: and that is why Clemens has hated me all this time, blowing the WS game seven to Melrose just to get his revenge.)*

At that point I knew I had to change my emphasis for draft prep — I was sorely missing 50% of the problem. Unfortunately, that 50% was not readily available.

The Long, Slow Trek Up The Mountain. So where were we? The numerical part I was pretty happy with. Five years post *USA TODAY* the hitting and pitching parameters were holding good—and still seem to work for me in 2025. I tweak the weights, and I add some low-weight second order variables, but nothing major. However the more subjective piece was near paleolithic level of maturity.

I was not looking to identify the .250 hitter with 10 homers who would was a safe bet to grow into a consistent .275/20 homer guy. I wanted to increase my odds at finding the .200/5 youngster who had a chance to become a .300/30 guy or more — but was currently overmatched. Alex Rodriguez, Mike Trout, Jackson Holliday(?). And willing to fail half the time with the Wladimir Balentines of baseball.

For the last 40 years since 1985 I have focused the "improvement" part of my prep looking for "good" sources to help improve those odds.

Baseball America Prospect Handbook, Baseball Prospectus, and the *Forecaster* obviously – these three survived while others were tried and discarded. I do not think any of the "new and improved" sites that fixate on the next season's projections will replace them in my tool box, though some are becoming specialty niche tools. Yes, I know, that is supposed to be the theme of this article and I am finally getting to it now. But the more I tried to lay out this piece, the more I kept coming to the answer, "I haven't really changed it much."

What New Tools Do I use? The reality is I am still experimenting.

Fangraphs.com: I use the depth charts, and the projections as flags for outliers as well as for a different opinion of how a young player might grow. Or flop. And I certainly don't take their projections as remotely definitive. Not when they are projecting Mike Trout playing over 100 games in 2025. Or Wander Franco playing at all.

Steamer: Maybe it's me, but I tried it a couple winters, and didn't find it added a lot of usefulness. Maybe I am not using it right. Or maybe it is duplicative of other sources I was already using.

MLB.com: A useful starting list of prospects, but not updated as often as I might like, and seems to let hype creep in over substance sometimes. But their Top 100 Prospects I find a useful way to jump start by 2026 and 2027 draft worksheets.

Baseball Reference: I mentioned them earlier for their stats, but here I am referring to their links to "news". I keep hoping their algorithm on what stories to link will improve, but sadly it really hasn't. It has been dropping on my priority list of tools.

The Millions of Bloggers, Posters, and Self Proclaimed Experts: There certainly are a lot of them. I keep looking, reading, and searching for just a few who are consistently providing useful,

accurate insights. So far, not much luck. I do look for patterns and consistency across a number of these folks about a player, but this is time intensive and still very experimental for me. Way too much of this is short term fantasy focused and too difficult to assess pedigree.

The Mind Numbing Mega Numbers: The newest wave of sites (or at least new to me) that show plots of velocity change between a pitcher's offerings, amount of movement horizontally & vertically, how often a pitcher throws a certain pitch, etc., etc. I keep telling myself this information should be helpful. So far, it is decidedly *Yet To Be Determined.* I plan on delving into more of this for the 2nd/3rd/4th round pitchers for the 2026 draft. I might have a better opinion by 2027 or 2028 when I can look back and compare how that stuff tracks with a couple years of performance.

Rambling over. Some of these tools and others yet to be seen will, in time, likely become the state of the art for the Einsteinian Theory or Baseball Relativity. But I am content with the Newtonian Theory of Baseball because it is a good enough approximation for me.

apbametrics 2025

by Rich Meyer

2025 Pitching

The tables and text below summarize the state of each TBL team's pitching for the 2025 season. The methodology used is fairly straightforward. Starting pitching stats are calculated based on each team's 162 best available starts (with openers used as needed). Each pitcher's contribution to his team's overall grade, control and HR rating, and fatigue is estimated by multiplying each numerical equivalent (a control of +16 equates to a +6, a HR rating of -33 equates to -15, and so on) by that pitcher's number of starts, and then the totals are divided by 162.

For relief pitchers, in response to the continually dropping average fatigue of starting pitchers, I have included the best 500 relief innings (up from 450 in previous years) for each team. Each pitcher's contribution to his team's overall grade, control and HR rating is estimated by multiplying each numerical equivalent by that pitcher's number of relief innings, and then those totals are divided by 500.

It should be noted that in reality, the number of real life starting pitcher innings that each TBL possesses is falling annually, suggesting that teams really need to have more than 500 relief innings available. Obviously those teams with deeper pens should have additional advantages over their opponents that will not be directly reflected here.

Starting Pitching

According to the statistical analysis, the average grade of the pitchers who will be making the 3,888 starts of the current season will be 9.4, with a control rating of +12, a HR rating of +11, and an average fatigue of 23.5 batters

(likely to expire in most games prior to the end of the sixth inning). Less than 1% of the league's starts will be made by pitchers with grades of 18 or more, with another 18.4% made by pitchers with Grades of 13 to 17. Compared to this combined total of 19.3% of Grade 13+ starts, over 26% of this year's starts will fall to pitchers graded 1-7.

The attached table displays how each team's starters grade out. Compared to the grade 9.4 average, the highest rated team (the Statesmen) recorded an average starter grade of 14.7, with 118 starts 13 or above leading the way by over two full points. Three other teams report in with average grades of 12 or more (New West at 12.5, Grand Cayman at 12.3, and Maracaibo at 12.0). The top ten is filled out by Hoboken (11.2), Gotham City (11.0), Hudson (10.8), Munich (10.6), Las Vegas (10.5), and Columbus (10.4). At the opposite end of the spectrum are Midwest at 5.3, Riverwoolf at 5.6, Whitman at 6.2, Rocky Mountain at 6.3, Brobdingnag at 6.5, and Zion at 6.8.

Although the average starter and control ratings are just slightly positive overall, fifteen of the league's 24 starting staffs have positive control against only eight negatives. Four teams (New West +24, and Columbus, Munich, and Rye at +22) have control ratings higher than +16, and the worst team control rating is Grand Cayman at -21. Similarly, 15 TBL rotations recorded positive HR ratings, compared to only seven with negative HRs. Only two teams (Maracaibo at +22 and Melrose at +21) have HR ratings higher than +16, and only one (Blue Hill, at -21) a rate below -16.

Average starter fatigue ratings range from a scarily low 21.1 (Northboro) to a high of 25.1

(Riverwoolf), but given our rating system a higher than average fatigue rating generally means that your starting staff sucks gradewise, and is getting fatigue adds to help compensate for lower performance levels. The exceptions to this rule (good staffs with average fatigue of 24 or more) appear to be Columbus and Las Vegas.

Considering the relative appeal of rotations division by division:

Clemente Division: The most starting pitching challenged division in TBL, with an overall average grade of just over 9, even though the league leading Statesmen reside here. The five point gap between Strong City's 14.7 and Blue Hill's 9.6 suggest that Strong City will be printing their playoff tickets in September. Whitman and Riverwoolf are both among the league's also-rans, with grades of only 6.2 and 5.6.

Mays Division: The jewel of the IC rotation-wise, all four teams have average starting grades above 10. New West, at 12.5 with good peripherals and two full season 13+ starters, has some edge, but Maracaibo (12.0) has 3+ grade 13 starters as a counterbalance. Gotham's 11.0 would lead two other divisions, but is a solid third here, while Rye's 10.3 is still almost a point above the league average.

Ruth Division: Two haves (Hoboken at 11.1, and Knoxville at 10.1) appear to be in the playoff hunt, while their two division counterparts (Brobdingnag at 6.5 and Midwest at 5.3) are racing toward the bottom of the league and a premium draft pack. Hoboken has a full grade point edge on KNX, and the clearest shot to the division crown, but the Outlaws playoff chances should also be aided by the weak in division opposition.

Aaron Division: This division has the league's worst group of starters, with only one team (Las Vegas) grading out above 10 (10.5). Vegas also has 63 of the 72 overall starts rated Grade 13 or over. Calusa and Kansas both have low average starter groups with average grades of 8.7 each, while Melrose checks in at only 7.7, but has better peripherals than either the Indians or Koyotes.

Mantle Division: This division has three staffs at Grade 10 or more, and that three (Hudson, Munich and Columbus) are closely grouped together. Hudson has the highest average grade, but Munich has better control and HRs. Munich also has the best single starter in Gilbert's full season 14. Rocky Mountain is the odd man out with an average starter grade of only 6.3.

Williams Division: As of draft day, this division had the widest separation of grades from top to bottom. Boomer's staff has a full 2 point (12.3 to 10.3) grade edge over second place Northboro, who in turn has a 2.4 grade edge on Warrenton, and a 3.5 grade edge on Zion. Grand Cayman also has 58 starts of Grade 13+ starters, while the other three teams have only 18 such starts between them.

Relief Pitching

According to the statistical analysis displayed in the attached table, the average grade of the TBL pitchers performing bullpen duty in 2023 rounds out to 12.5 or slightly more than three points higher than the average starting grade. Relievers as a whole differ from starting pitchers, who have both control and HR ratings just above the league average. Relievers, on the other hand, are generically wild (-12 CTL), but stingy with the longball (+16 HR).

Only 9 of the 24 TBL relief staffs have net positive control – but only one of them could muster a team average higher than +16 (Munich at +22). Conversely, the 14 relief staffs with negative control recorded team averages as low as -36 (Melrose), with three other teams (Northboro, Kansas, and Hoboken) managing teamwide averages of -23 to -26.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, 21 of 24 teams reported positive average reliever HR ratings, with the worst rating falling to Hoboken at -23. The best staff-wide HR rating this year is only +26 (Gotham, Munich, and Zion) but 11 other teams recorded HR ratings from +21 to +25.

One statistic unique to the reliever chart is the grade differential between the average relief inning and the average starter inning. The average difference was just over 3 grade points. Those teams with the highest starter-reliever spread will gain the most advantage when these pitchers enter the game.

Conversely, the lower this differential, the more likely it is that the back end of a team's staff will not be able to properly close out what its starters have begun. The largest starter relief spread in TBL in 2025 (7.2) is held by the Avengers, whose 14.9 average bullpen (fourth best in the league) is paired with a weak 7.7 point average rotation grade (18th overall). The biggest starter/relief gap of the contenders belongs to Hudson (5.6), due to their league-best 16.4 average relief grade. Conversely, Strong City (0.3 grade points), New West (0.5 grade points), and Maracaibo (-0.4 grade points) all show little bullpen edge over their starters.

The top rated bullpens, from one to eight –

Hudson. Average Grade 16.4, CTL -15 HR +16. The Generals have 112 closer grade (18+) innings, 8th highest in the league, but couple that with another 267 innings of Grade 13+ relief. That 379 innings 13+ is second highest in TBL, trailing only –

Grand Cayman. Average Grade 16.1, CTL +14 HR +24 – The Havens have the highest number of closer grade innings (176) and 446 innings that are 13 and higher. Hudson's one edge is that its pen is topped by Grade 27*

and 21* pitchers, while Grand Cayman has a 23*, 19*, 18* at their back end.

Strong City. Average Grade 15.0, CTL -15 HR +24. 145 Closer innings, including the monster that is Emmanual Clase (28* C+43 HR+53). Only 317 total innings Grade 13* or more, due to the team's lack of picks in the 2025 draft.

Melrose. Average Grade 14.9, CTL -36 HR+22. 159 Closer innings, including Grade 30* Kirby Yates. However, it is worthy of note that every one of the first nine relievers in the pen has a control rating of -31 or worse.

Columbus. Average Grade 14.8, CTL -11 HR +15. 136 Closer grade innings, 304 total innings Grade 13 or more. Closer Jason Adam is a 22* with plus CTL and HR, and Bryan Hudson is a peripheral neutral 26*.

Northboro. Average Grade 14.8, CTL -26 HR +23. 149 Closer grade innings, 311 total innings Grade 13+ or more. Second worst average bullpen control hurts, but HR rating is strong. Top end of 26*, 24*, 18*.

Hoboken. Average Grade 14.3, CTL -23 HR -23. 126 Closer grade innings, 277 total innings. Peripherally challenged in both control and HRs. Good, but definitely below the top six.

Blue Hill. Average Grade 14.1, CTL -13 HR +13. Only 113 closer grade innings (7th), but 358 total innings Grade 13*+ (third best in TBL). Top end of 18*/18*/17* are not strong peripherally.

RIVERWOOLF — Starters

	Th	Starts	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR			
Morton	R	30	165	9	270	-8	-240	-2	-60	25	750
Rea	R	27	168	7	189	9	243	9	243	25	675
Blackburn	R	14	75	6	84	6	84	-7	-98	25	350
Blackburn	R	21	111	7	147	9	189	-3	-63	24	504
Flexen	R	30	160	4	120	-6	-180	-3	-90	25	750
Sandoval	L	18	80	4	72	-10	-180	9	162	25	450
Winn	R	22	110	1	22	-3	-66	-7	-154	27	594
	R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		162	869		904		-150		-60		4073
					5.6		-1		0		25.1

RIVERWOOLF — Relievers

	Th	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR	
Ellard	R	25	24	600	-8	-200	-1	-25
Vest	R	70	12	840	11	770	23	1610
Faucher	R	54	11	594	-13	-702	32	1728
Bivens	R	49	10	490	13	637	-12	-588
Garabito	R	26	9	234	-16	-416	-4	-104
Liberatore	L	86	8	688	4	344	-1	-86
Pearson	R	66	7	462	3	198	-10	-660
Martin, Chris	R	44	7	308	31	1364	2	88
Anderson, Chase	R	13	6	78	0	0	-15	-195
Hill, Tim	L	67	6	402	9	603	28	1876
		500		4696		2598		3644
				9.2		5		8

STATESMEN — Starters

	Th	Starts	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR			
Junis	R	7	29	26	182	22	154	-1	-7	17	119
Turnbull	R	7	54	17	119	-7	-49	4	28	20	140
Lopez, Reyn.	R	25	136	16	400	1	25	14	350	22	550
Wheeler	R	32	200	16	512	6	192	5	160	25	800
Manaea	L	32	182	14	448	-4	-128	2	64	23	736
Ortiz, Luis	R	15	87	14	210	4	60	1	15	23	345
Darvish	R	16	82	13	208	6	96	-5	-80	21	336
Quintana	L	28	170	11	308	-6	-168	-1	-28	23	644
Spencer Howard	R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		162	940		2387		182		502		3670
					14.7		1		3		22.7

STATESMEN — Relievers

	Th	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR	
Clase	R	74	28	2072	21	1554	27	1998
Scott, Tayler	R	69	19	1311	-27	-1863	6	414
Chapman	L	62	14	868	-32	-1984	13	806
Alexander, Scott	L	39	14	546	12	468	12	468
Farmer, Buck	R	71	13	923	0	0	7	497
Saucedo	L	39	11	429	-8	-312	14	546
Kimbrel	R	52	10	520	-32	-1664	0	0
Ortiz, L	R	49	10	490	9	441	2	98
Junis	R	38	9	342	22	836	-1	-38
Loaisiga	R	7	4	28	13	182	32	224
		500		7529		-2433		5013
				15.0		-5		10

BLUE HILL — Starters

	Th	Starts	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR		Fat	
Williams, Trevor	R	13	67	16	208	5	65	11	143	20	260
Flaherty	R	18	162	12	216	9	162	-6	-108	23	414
Berrios	R	32	192	11	352	5	160	-8	-256	25	800
Kremer	R	24	130	11	264	-8	-192	-2	-48	24	576
Rodon	L	32	175	10	320	1	32	-10	-320	24	768
Stone	R	25	140	10	250	7	175	-1	-25	23	575
Belozo	R	13	59	9	117	5	65	-18	-234	23	299
Wilson, Bryse	R	5	30	7	35	4	20	-13	-65	23	115
Berrios	R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		162	888		1554		597		-1056		3547
					9.6		4		-7		21.9

BLUE HILL — Relievers

	Th	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR	
Miller, Tyson	R	62	18	1116	15	930	0	0
Weaver, Luke	R	84	17	1428	0	0	0	0
Ferguson, T	R	51	18	918	-18	-918	13	663
Long, S	L	43	14	602	-8	-344	2	86
Lopez, Jorge	R	53	13	689	-3	-159	2	159
Urena	R	65	13	845	-1	-65	2	130
Brieske	R	68	12	816	-13	-884	15	1020
Wilson, Bryse	R	63	9	567	4	252	-13	-819
Shuster	L	11	7	77	-15	-165	2	22
		500						
			14.1		-3		3	

WHITMAN — Starters

	Th	Starts	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR		Fat	
Snell	L	20	104	17	340	-17	-340	1	20	23	460
Pepiot	R	26	130	13	338	-6	-156	-1	-26	21	546
Williams, G	R	16	76	7	112	-11	-176	11	176	24	384
Dunning	R	15	95	5	75	-9	-135	-11	-165	24	360
Lucchesi	L	2	10	9	18	-32	-64	10	20	27	54
Vasquez, R	R	28	140	2	56	6	168	0	0	24	672
Stripling	R	25	125	1	25	12	300	14	350	28	700
Hendricks, K	R	23	135	1	23	2	46	-6	-138	27	621
Kershaw	L	7	30	3	21	8	56	18	126	31	217
		162	845		1008		-301		363		4014
					6.2		-2		2		24.8

WHITMAN — Relievers

	Th	IP	Gr		Ctl		HR	
Strahm	L	63	21	1323	17	1071	16	1008
Jax	R	71	17	1207	13	923	19	1349
Suarez, Robert	R	65	14	910	9	585	3	195
Johnson, P	R	56	12	672	-14	-784	5	280
Rasmussen	R	29	11	319	13	377	32	928
Martinez, S	R	53	10	530	1	53	-1	-53
Jimenez	R	26	10	260	-32	-832	-18	-468
Diekman	L	32	9	288	-32	-1024	-15	-480
Hendricks	R	33	1	33	2	66	-5	-165
Pagan/Lovelady	R/L	72	6	432	4	288	6	432
		500		5974		723		3026
				11.3		3		7

2025 Batting: Power Rankings

The attached table summarizes the unadjusted base values of all owned players (other than XCs) in TBL. This is a simplified format that does not attempt to deduct for stolen hits, walks, or HRs. It simply adds up the bases generated by the 36 results on each APBA card. Singles, walks, and HBP are all valued at 1.00 bases. 22s are valued at 0.25 bases (based on the likelihood they produce a HBP rather than an error roll). 1s are valued at 4 bases, triples at 3, and doubles at 2. Based on some older APBA Journals, I split single column results 2-6 into their estimated distribution of HRs, triples, and doubles.

In a previous iteration, I tried to funnel stolen bases into the base count, by estimating the net steals (SB-CS) for each player, and then dividing the net by the total number of 36 plate appearances each generated during the year. The idea seemed sound, but added way too much value to the Dairon Blancos of the world. So this time around only the raw SB-CS for each player with a +4 or better is shown. Players with a high net SB total will be worth more than the raw number shown here – y'all can decide what to make of that.

I've sent Walter the entire list of rankings, but suspect it would take up far too many pages to be included in its entirety. I've based the body of the article on the cards that made the top 101 (there's a tie for 100th place), so hopefully that much of the list makes it into print.

Team offense rankings are subjective, and solely the views of the author.

Group 1 – Monsters of the Midway

Grand Cayman. Boomer's team is the only one to own three of the top 20 cards – regulars Yordan Alvarez (#6 at 23.00 bases) and Tyler O'Neill (#19, 21.64) and PH toy Alex Call (#11). They also own 10 of the overall top 101, including regulars Jarren Duran (#35), Matt Olson (#45), Brandon Lowe (#51), and Clay Bellinger (#77). A clear #1 offense.

Hoboken. The Zephyrs have only six top 100s, but they include the card that is #1 by a wide margin – Aaron Judge and his incredible 28.25 bases per 36 output, plus another top ten card (platoon OF Kerry Carpenter, #7 at 22.92). Three other everyday starters are also highly placed – SS Francisco Lindor (#26, 21.08), 1B Josh Naylor (#61, 19.08), and C William Contreras (#67, 19.0). Again, a pretty clear #2.

Group 2 – Cream of the Crop

These teams make up the clear next tier, but your mileage may vary on who's got the actual #3 offense.

Melrose. Two top 20s led by NL MVP Shohei Ohtani (#2, 24.59) and SS Carlos Correa (#18, 21.67). Three more bats in the top 80, including Mookie Betts (#36, 20.17), Ian Happ (#60), and Vinny Pasquantino (#76).

Hudson. Two top 20s that I wouldn't have necessarily guessed were top 20 ranked -- #13 Laurence Butler (22.00) and Randal Grichuk (#17, 21.69). They are backed with four other top 80 bats in Max Muncy (#21), Riley Greene (#48), part timer Triston Casas (#59), and part time C Ivan Herrera (#61).

Munich. The Marauders also have two top 20 cards, though one of them is part timer Pavin Smith (#10, 22.5). SS Bobby Witt is a strong offensive anchor with the #5 card (23.47 bases), and he is supported by three other top 80 regulars – corner IF Mark Vientos (#27), OF Seiya Suzuki (#45), and 3B Austin Riley (#61).

Strong City. The Statesmen have only one top 20 bat in 1B Vlad Guerrero (#14, 21.91), but are tied for the second most hitters in the top 100 with six other hitters including #41 C Willson Contreras, 1B Christian Walker (#45), OF Mike Conforto (#61) and three others in the 81-100 bracket (Jacob Stallings, Randy Arozarena, and David Peralta). **Columbus.** Like the Statesmen, Vic's got one superstar regular bat in Ketel Marte (#12, 22.22).

backstopped by six other top 100 bats, including #44 OF Luke Raley, IF Tyler Fitzgerald (#50), OF Jorge Soler and 3B Eugenio Suarez (both tied for #55), #92 Rhys Hoskins, and #95 Connor Norby.

Group 3 – Still Representing

Blue Hill. No top 20s, but two guys just outside the cutoff – 1B Bryce Harper and 3B Raffy Devers, both tied for #21. They are supported by three strong OF bats – Christian Yelich at #32, Jackson Merrill at #76, and Stephen Kwan at #100.

Northboro. Very similar to Blue Hill, with three guys in the 21-40 group (#24 Joc Pederson, #29 Jurickson Profar, and #34 Teoscar Hernandez). Two other top 100 hitters in Jordan Westburg (#57) and C Will Smith (#82) round out a strong quintet.

Las Vegas. Vegas has two top 20 representatives in OF Kyle Tucker (#4, 24.39) and Matt Wallner (#20, 21.58), but due to injuries the pair combine for one full season. Other top 100 bats include 1B Pete Alonso (#58), Mike Toglia (#61), and Trea Turner (#71).

Brobdingnag. Only four Barbarians in the top 100, but they do have the #3 (Juan Soto, 24.50) and #39 bat in SS Elly de la Cruz. C Joey Bart (#82) and 3B Manny Machado (#93) round out the premium bats.

Group 4 – Middle of the Road

Rye. Five top 100 bats led by #9 Marcell Ozune (22.58), but the other four are all in the #61-#100 range – C-1B David Fry (#67), 3B Alex Bregman (#71), and 1B Michael Busch and OF Brenton Doyle (both tied for #82).

New Westminster. One top 20 bat (Brett Rooker #8), one other top bat (Fernando Tatis Jr. at #34), and then only one other top 100 hitter in Colton Cowser (#78).

Zion. A slightly poorer version of New West, with 3B Gunnar Henderson as the top 20 bat (#16), SS Corey Seager as the second fiddle (#32), and one other top 100 bat in #82 Travis D'Arnaud.

Gotham City. Gotham has four top 100 bats, led by Anthony Santander (#28), Giancarlo Stanton (#43), SS Willy Adames (#51), and 1B Carlos Santana (#71).

Group 5 – I'm Contributing

Warrenton. The Giants actually have five top 100 cards, but the two highest ranked barely play (#15 Mike Trout and #49 Erik Haase). #67 Spencer Horwitz is a half timer at first, Mike Yastrzemski is the one regular at #72, and 1B-OF Jhonkensy Noel comes in tied for #82 for another 60 games.

Midwest. One top 40 regular in Kyle Schwarber (#28), one frustratingly over-injured former #1 draft pick (#61 Royce Lewis), and OF Trevor Larnach (#82) give this offense some high spots. RCK – Only one low use card (#31 Sam Hilliard) in the top 75, but three other top 100 bats in C Cal Raleigh (#80), Tommy Edman (#94), and Lars Nootbaar (#95) will give a little kick to this offense.

Knoxville. Three top 100 cards including 3B Matt Chapman (#39, 19.92), OF Bryan Buxton (#51), and OF Victor Robles (#82).

Group 6 – And A Nice Participation Trophy for You

Whitman. They have two (barely) top 100s – one real bat in Jose Ramirez (#30, 20.58) and OF Jesse Winker (tied for #100).

Calusa. Their only top 100 rep is at least a good one – 1B Freddie Freeman (#36, 20.17).

Kansas. The top Koyote bat holds down the #67 spot – OF JJ Bleday, which is at least better than

Maracaibo. The top Rumrunner bat holds down the #82 spot – C Santiago Perez, which is at least better than

Riverwoolf. The top bat, Ryan O'Hearn, checks in at #96.

#	TEAM	NAME		B	G	AB	SHIFT	H	BB+	22	2B	3B	HR	BASE	SB-CS
1	HOB	Judge	OF3/36	R	158	559	+2/-3	11	6	1	2.00		3.00	28.25	10
2	MLR	Ohtani	OF1/31	L	159	636	-8/+2	11	3	1	2.33		2.67	24.59	54
3	BRO	Soto	OF2/31	L	157	576	-2/-1	10	6		1.65	0.20	2.15	24.50	3
4	LVG	Tucker	OF3/32	L	78	277	-7/+2	10	6		1.28	0.06	2.33	24.39	11
5	MUN	Witt	SS9	R	161	636	-7/0	12	3	1	2.22	0.67	1.56	23.47	19
6	CAY	Alvarez, Y.	OF1/30	L	147	552	+2/-3	11	4		2.00		2.00	23.00	6
7	HOB	Carpenter, K.	OF2/30	L	87	264	-17/+2	10	3	1	2.00	0.58	2.17	22.92	
8	NW	Rooker	OF1/33	R	145	546	0/-2	11	3	1	1.67		2.33	22.91	8
9	RYE	Ozuna	OF1/27	R	162	606	0/-2	11	4		1.58		2.00	22.58	
10	MUN	Smith, P.	1B3	L	60	137	-7/0	10	4		2.50		2.00	22.50	
11	CAY	Call	OF3/29	R	30	99	=2/+1	12	5		2.78		0.89	22.44	4
12	COL	Marte, K.	2B9	B	136	504	+4/-4	10	4		1.39	0.17	2.17	22.22	7
13	HUD	Butler	OF2/30	L	125	412	0/-2	10	3		1.83	0.25	2.22	22.00	17
14	STM	Guerrero	1B4	R	159	618	0/-2	12	3	1	2.67		1.33	21.91	
15	WAR	Trout	OF3/33	R	29	209	-3/+1	8	4		0.28	0.56	2.83	21.89	6
16	ZIO	Henderson, G.	SS8	L	159	630	-4/0	10	4		1.58	0.33	1.83	21.75	17
17	HUD	Grichuk	OF2./31	R	106	254	+1/-6	11	3	1	2.44	0.33	1.44	21.69	
18	MLR	Correa	SS9	R	86	315	0/-2	11	4	1	1.92	0.25	1.33	21.67	
19	CAY	O'Neill	OF3/30	R	113	411	+13/-8	9	4	1	1.39		2.33	21.64	4
20	LVG	Wallner	OF1/36	L	76	220	-11/+1	9	5	1	2.33		1.67	21.59	
21	BH	Harper	1B4	L	145	550	0/-2	10	4		2.33		1.67	21.34	3
22	BH	Devers	3B4	L	138	525	-9/+4	10	4		2.33		1.67	21.34	
23	HUD	Muncy	3B4	L	73	237	-10/+2	8	6		2.33		1.67	21.34	
24	NBO	Pederson	OF1/31	L	132	387	-7/-1	9	5	1	1.42	0.08	1.83	21.33	3
25	MID	Schwarber	OF1/32	L	150	573	+1/-2	9	5	1	1.00		2.00	21.25	
26	HOB	Lindor	SS9	B	152	618	-1/-1	10	4		1.92	0.08	1.67	21.08	27
27	MUN	Vientos	3B4 1B3	R	111	413	+2/-3	10	3		2.00		2.00	21.00	
28	GC	Santander	OF2/30	B	155	595	-2/-1	9	3	1	1.67		2.33	20.91	
29	NBO	Profar	OF2/33	B	158	564	+1/-2	10	5		1.67		1.33	20.66	7
30	WHT	Ramirez, J.	3B5	B	158	620	+8/-5	10	2		2.17	0.08	2.08	20.58	34
31	RCK	Hilliard	OF2/33	L	58	138	+4/-4	9	3		1.17	0.28	2.28	20.56	3
32	ZIO	Seager	SS9	L	123	475	-10/+2	10	3		1.39	0.06	2.00	20.50	
33	BH	Yelich	OF3/31	L	73	270	-2/-1	11	4		1.65	0.20	1.15	20.50	21
34	NBO	Hernandez, T.	OF2/33	R	154	589	+2/-3	10	3		1.67	0.25	1.75	20.42	9
35	CAY	Duran	OF3/34	L	160	671	-9/+2	11	2	1	2.00	1.00	1.00	20.25	31
36	MLR	Betts	2B9	R	116	450	-1/-1	10	4		1.58	0.42	1.25	20.17	15
37	IND	Freeman, F.	1B5	L	147	542	-6/+1	10	4	1	2.00	0.08	1.25	20.17	7
38	NW	Tatis, Jr.	OF3/36	R	102	398	-6/0	10	3	1	1.75	0.08	1.67	20.17	8
39	KNX	Chapman, M.	3B5	R	154	575	+1/-2	9	4	1	2.08	0.17	1.42	19.92	13
40	BRO	De la Cruz, E.	SS8	B	160	618	;-8/+2	9	4	1	1.92	0.50	1.25	19.92	50
41	STM	Contreras, Wi.	C8/+2	R	84	301	+2/-2	9	5	1	1.67		1.33	19.91	3
42	HOB	Bride	1B2	R	71	232	8/+2	10	4	1	1.67		1.33	19.91	
43	GC	Stanton	OF1/30	R	114	417	-3/0	9	3		1.56		2.11	19.90	
44	COL	Raley	OF2/30	L	137	404	-9/+1	9	4		1.50	0.17	1.67	19.83	9
45	CAY	Olson, M.	1B5	L	162	600	0/-2	9	4	1	1.83	0.08	1.50	19.75	
46	STM	Walker, C.	1B5	R	130	479	-2/-1	9	4		1.75		1.67	19.75	
47	MUN	Suzuki	OF2/32	R	132	512	-1/-1	10	4	1	1.65	0.20	1.15	19.75	10
48	HUD	Greene, R.	OF3/30	L	137	512	-8/+1	9	4		1.58	0.42	1.42	19.67	
49	WAR	Haase	C6/-4	R	30	66	+6/-6	10	2		0.67		2.33	19.66	
50	COL	Fitzgerald, T.	SS8 2B7	R	95	314	+3/-4	10	2	1	2.33		1.67	19.59	13

The 2025 TBL Annual

	TEAM	NAME		B	G	AB	SHIFT	H	BB+HB	22	2B	3B	HR	BAS
51	CAY	Lowe, B	2B7	L	107	365	+1/-2	9	3	1	1.58	0.25	1.75	19.
52	CAY	Mitchell, Garrett	OF2/32	L	69	196	-6/0	9	4		1.83	0.50	1.25	19.
53	KNX	Buxton, Byron	OF3/36	R	102	355	0/-2	**10**	**3**		**1.83**	**0.25**	**1.42**	19.
54	GC	Adames, Willy	SS8	R	161	610	-7/+1	9	4		1.67	0.08	1.58	19.
55	COL	Soler, Jorge	OF1/31	R	142	493	+4/-3	9	4	1	**2.08**	**0.17**	**1.25**	19.4
56	COL	Suarez, Eugenio	3B4	R	158	571	-1/-2	9	3	1	1.67	0.25	1.67	19.4
57	NBO	Westburg	3B5	R	107	416	-3/-1	10	2	1	**2.32**	**0.20**	**1.48**	19.
58	VGA	Alonso, P	1B4	R	162	608	-1/-1	8	5		1.33		1.67	19.
59	HUD	Casas, Triston	1B3	L	63	213	-3/-1	9	4		1.33		1.67	19.
60	MLR	Happ	OF3/32	B	153	589	-5/0	9	4	1	**1.92**	**0.08**	**1.33**	19.
61	STM	Conforto	OF2/30	L	130	438	+5/-3	9	3	1	**1.92**	**0.33**	**1.42**	19.0
62	VGA	Toglia, M	1B4	B	116	399	+2/-3	8	4		**0.83**	**0.25**	**1.92**	19.0
63	HOB	Naylor, Josh	1B4	L	152	563	;-4/0	9	3	1	**1.58**		**1.75**	19.0
64	MID	Lewis, Royce	2B4 2B8	R	82	292	+1/-2	9	3		**1.83**		**1.75**	19.0
65	MUN	Riley, Austin	3B4	R	110	425	-1/-1	9	3	2	2.00	0.17	1.42	19.0
66	HUD	Herrera, Ivan	C7/-4	R	72	229	-7/+2	**11**	**4**	1	1.50	0.17	0.67	19.0
67	WAR	Horwitz	1B3 2B7	L	97	328	-13/+2	9	5		2.00		1.00	19.0
68	KAN	Bleday, JJ	OF2/33	L	159	672	-5/0	9	4		**2.25**	**0.25**	**1.08**	19.0
69	HOB	Contreras. William	C8/+5	R	155	595	+3/-3	**10**	**4**		2.00		1.00	19.0
70	RYE	Fry, David	C6/0 1B3	R	122	335	+8/-7	9	5		2.00		1.00	19.0
71	CAY	Refsnyder	PF2/31	R	93	272	+3/-5	**10**	**3**	1	**1.83**	**0.17**	**1.17**	18.9
72	WAR	Yaz	OF3/30	L	140	428	-5/0	9	3	1	0.67	1.00	1.33	18.9
73	VGA	Turner, Trea	SS8	R	121	505	+3/-3	**11**	**2**	1	1.67		1.33	18.9
74	GC	Santana, Carlos	1B5	B	150	521	+6/-4	9	4	1	1.67		1.33	18.9
75	RYE	Bregman, Alex	3B5	R	145	581	-4/0	**10**	**3**	1	1.67		1.33	18.9
76	BH	Merrill	OF3/33	L	156	554	-9/+2	10	2		**1.92**	**0.33**	**1.42**	18.8
77	CAY	Bellinger	OF3/34	L	130	516	-2/-1	**10**	**3**	1	1.65	0.20	1.15	18.7
78	MLR	Pasquantino	1B4	L	131	496	-6/0	**10**	**3**		**1.92**	**0.17**	**1.17**	18.
79	NW	Conser, Colton	OF3/33	L	153	499	-6/+1	9	3	1	**1.50**	**0.25**	**1.50**	18.5
80	RCK	Raleigh, Cal	C9/+3	B	153	546	-5/0	8	4	1	0.83	0.06	1.83	18.6
81	STM	Stallings	C9/-1	R	82	243	+4/-4	9	4		**2.25**	**0.08**	**1.08**	18.6
82	NBO	Smith, Will	C8/+6	R	128	476	+4/-3	9	4		1.67		1.33	18.6
83	ZIO	D'Arnaud	C7/+3	R	99	307	+5/-3	9	4		1.67		1.33	18.6
84	WAR	Noel	OF1/30	R	67	179	+6/-5	8	3		**0.67**		**2.33**	18.6
85	STM	Arozarena	OF3/31	R	154	549	+3/-3	8	5		1.67		1.33	18.6
86	BRO	Bart, Joey	C8/-2	R	80	253	+7/-4	9	4		1.67		1.33	18.6
87	MID	Larnach,, T	OF2/36	L	112	355	'-9/-1	9	4		1.67		1.33	18.6
88	KNX	Robles, Victor	OF3/37	R	91	254	-8/+3	**11**	**4**		2.67		0.33	18.6
89	MAR	Perez, Salvatore	C9/+5	R	158	590	+1/-2	**10**	**3**		1.67		1.33	18.6
90	RYE	Busch, Michael	1B3	L	152	496	-4/-1	9	4		1.67		1.33	18.6
91	RYE	Doyle, Brenton	OF3/35	R	149	542	-3/-1	**10**	**3**		1.67		1.33	18.6
92	COL	Hoskins, Rhys	1B3	R	131	449	+1/-2	8	4	1	1.33		1.67	18.
93	BRO	Machado	3B5	R	152	593	-1/-1	10	2		**1.67**	**0.08**	**1.58**	18.
94	RCK	Edman, Tommy	SS9 2B8	B	47	136	+16/-9	9	3	1	1.27	0.20	1.53	18.
95	CAY	Wilson, Weston	OF2/30	R	41	88	+7/-9	**10**	**3**		1.65	0.20	1.15	18.
96	RIV	O'Hearn	1B3	L	142	443	-7/-1	**10**	**3**		1.65	0.20	1.15	18.
97	COL	Norby, Connor	3B3	R	45	176	-4/0	9	3		**1.58**	**0.08**	**1.58**	18.
98	RCK	Nootbaar, Lars	OF2/31	L	109	348	+1/-2	8	5		1.65	0.20	1.15	18.
99	STM	Peralta, David	OF3/32	L	91	238	-6/-1	**10**	**3**		**2.17**	**0.06**	**1.06**	18.4
100	BH	Kwan	OF3/29	L	122	480	+1/-2	**11**	**3**	1	1.08	0.17	0.92	18.
101	WHT	Winker	OF1/30	L	145	430	-5/0	9	5		1.50	0.08	0.92	18.4

SNTs

SNTs, or Shiny New Things, are players that have newly arrived on a team's roster. Each should be a major contributor to that team's success, and is highlighted on the first page of the team article.

The following players are the SNTs for 2025.

Blue Hill Mudslides:	Jackson Merrill, OF	*Columbus Jets:*	Shota Imanaga, P
Brobdingnag Barbarians:	Junior Caminero, 3B	*Gotham City Batmen:*	Andy Pages, OF
Calusa Indians:	Jose Tena, 3B	*Grand Cayman Havens:*	Ronel Blanco, P

Hoboken Zephyrs:	Luis Gil, P	*Knoxville Blue Thunder:*	Simeon Woods Richardson, P
Hudson Generals:	Ivan Herrera, C	*Vegas Gamblers:*	Orion Kerkering, P
Kansas Koyotes:	Austin Wells, C	*Maracaibo Rumrunners:*	Framber Valdez, P

Melrose Avengers:	Tanner Houck, P	*New West. Whiskeyjacks:*	Paul Skenes, P
Midwest Mongrels:	Masyn Winn, SS	*Northboro Phoenix:*	James Wood, OF
Munich Marauders:	Spencer Schwellenbach, P	*Riverwoolf Sharks:*	Joe Boyle, P

Rocky Mountain Dragons:	Jung-hoo Lee, OF	*Warrenton Giants:*	Jackson Chourio, OF
Rye Herons:	Michael Busch, 1B	*Whitman River Rats:*	Ryan Pepiot, P
Strong City Statesmen:	Luis V. Garcia, 2B	*Elders of Zion:*	Joey Ortiz, SS

commissioner's report
by Ray Murphy

When I rejoined the ranks of TBL's active managers for last season, I knew what I was getting into: after all, despite a decade or so away, I have over 20 years of experience managing in this league. I thought I knew what I was getting into.

That said, I was somewhat apprehensive about the commitment involved in that return. The factors that led me to give up my franchise have eased, but not completely abated: twin teenage daughters are a different kind of headache from twin newborns, but you need Tylenol handy in both scenarios.

I really wanted back into the league, so I decided I'd make it work. You guys were all very supportive, expressing willingness to help out when needed.

I'll be honest: the transition was worse than I expected. And even though everyone had expressed that willingness to help, I … did not avail myself of that help.

2024 was not a great year for the league. Regrettably, I was a contributor to that, though certainly not the only one. My overscheduled family life was a relatively minor impediment to the season; others dealt far more deftly with infinitely more disruptive situations, like Boomer with the hurricane that wrecked Asheville but barely registered a blip on his own league timeliness.

Despite the problems that plagued the season, the thing I appreciated the most was the tenor of the followup discussion. It wasn't sugarcoated, multiple people voiced their concerns with the situation and expressed a pointed desire to not have a repeat in 2025. But it wasn't accusatory, either: everyone is just intrinsically aware that the 24* *(h/t Bob/Steve)* of us have 24* different life circumstances, with varying demands on our time. And that's just the stuff we can plan for: last year we had an unplanned natural disaster, this year we already have an unplanned rehab visit for Darrell… and it's only May. More wrinkles undoubtedly lurk ahead.

Right from the start, the discussion started constructively, with a tone of problem-solving and a healthy dose of collaboration. The in-person extension of that discussion at the draft stayed just as positive and forward-looking. One thing that struck me along the way was that not one single person ever questioned anyone else's priorities. We all know this league is a commitment, and we all know that we're making that commitment around what's going on in the rest of our lives. Nobody suggested that anyone else was lacking a commitment. Nobody's making this league more important than it is. We all have other things that come first, and nobody forgot that for even a minute. As an offender, I appreciated that.

We're already off to a better start in 2025, and I'm optimistic we've all learned some lessons that will lead us to a better outcome. As a reminder, the two key takeaways from those offseason discussions were a) communicate, and b) ask for help. I know I'm already trying to do a better job in both of those areas this season. If we all check those two boxes, we'll certainly end up in a better place once this season rolls into the fourth quarter this fall.

*

Besides adhering to deadlines, the other big thing about being an active manager again is having actual players to root for. My roster last year was basically just the guys I couldn't sell off for draft picks; I had no particular attachment to them. (To be honest, playing the games was such a joyless experience with that group, that sure didn't help in the timeliness battle.)

Now, after a big haul of draft picks this past winter, I have guys that I'm actually attached to! It's legitimately fun to keep tabs on Jackson Chourio and Pete Crow-Armstrong. It's less fun to ruminate on the "Jared Jones or Spencer Schwellenbach?" decision from February that seems to be going wrong so far. But at least, I have the beginnings of a roster that I can dream on, start planning around, wondering which guys will eventually be part of the next contending roster in Warrenton or wherever we settle for the long term. The games are already a little more fun this year because of that, and that will only continue.

Let's have a great season!

– Commish

All In Versus Almost There

In order to contend – particularly when it looks like time and entropy will take apart the team – a manager sometimes needs to go all in. This is clearly the case for *Eric Sheffler*'s **Strong City Statesmen.**

There was no draft this year and there will be no draft next year: but there is a great deal of pitching and some amount of offense to go with it. Most of the regulars are here and the offense is adequate, but is it enough?

Maybe not. The **Blue Hill Mudslides** have taken a much more careful and deliberate approach. *Mark Ludwig* has waited four seasons to get another try at the post season, using the more traditional method of a slow build. They may be almost there with the addition of Jackson Merrill to an already capable roster. The pitching isn't quite as good as Strong City's, but they should be able to stay with their division rival. And they can even make a late season move – which the Statesmen certainly can not. In any case, it's a conflict of styles playing out in real time.

Meanwhile, the perennial contenders down in **Whitman** have fallen to earth.

The **River Rats** have had a longer run of success than anyone could want or expect, but it appears to be over at least for this year. *Brian Hanley* has a solid position in the 2026 draft but it may take more than one year to recover.

Daniel Dumont's **Riverwoolf Sharks** are one year out from a brief jump into the playoffs. They have their draft for next year, and will need it, as a number of the carriages have turned back into pumpkins. This is going to be another long year up in Rivière-du-Loup (or New Brunswick, for that matter).

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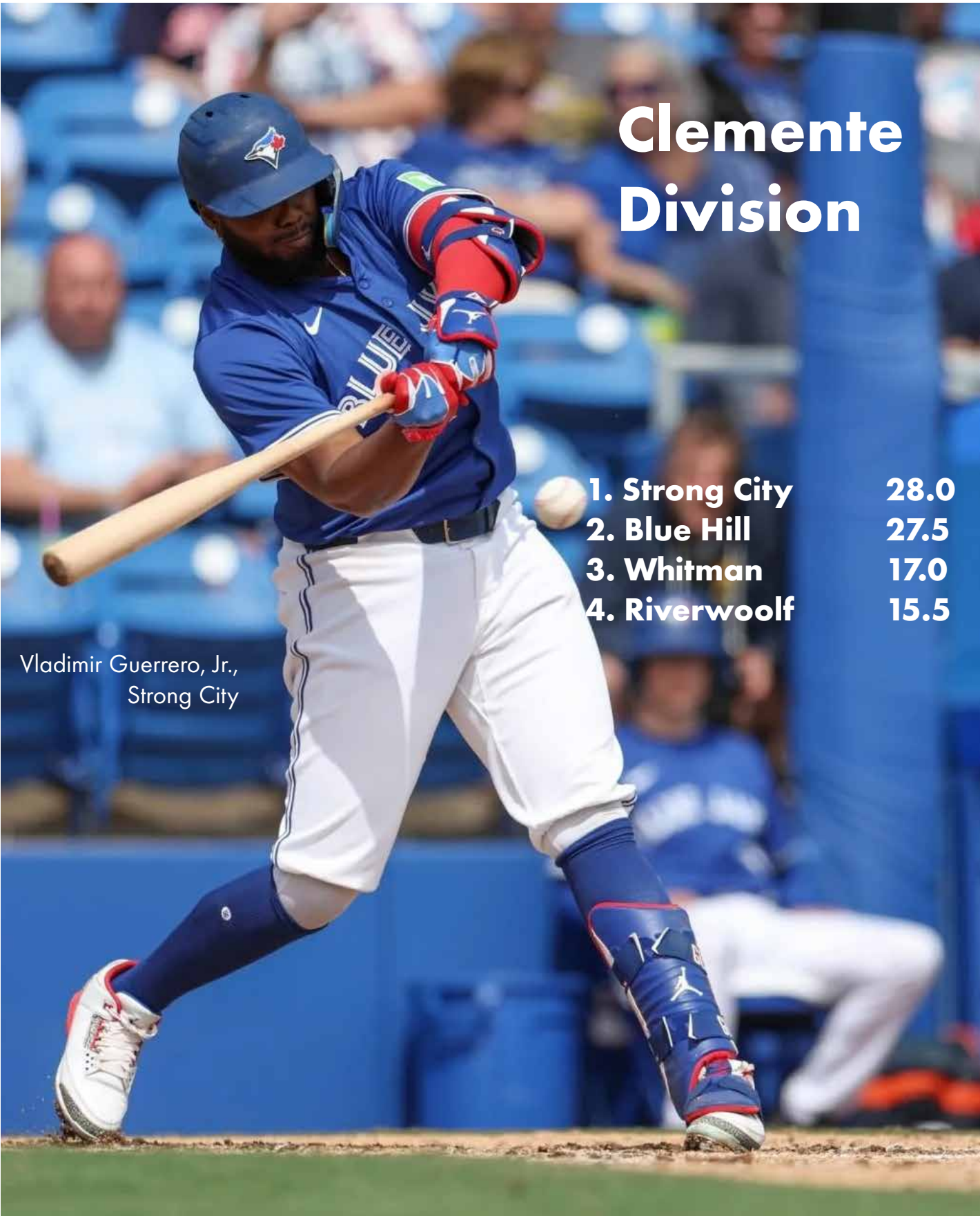
Clemente Division

1. Strong City	28.0
2. Blue Hill	27.5
3. Whitman	17.0
4. Riverwoolf	15.5

Vladimir Guerrero, Jr.,
Strong City

2024 strong city STATESMEN in review

This is probably it.

by Eric Sheffler

2024 in Review
Final Record: 80-82 (3rd, Clemente)

The season started with high hopes for another playoff run but ended in a whimper of a losing season. The road record showed playoff promise at 43-38 but the home record was a disappointing 37-44. It's easy to see why this occurred: the road went right and home went wrong. Hitting 14 points, an OPS of 43 points higher, and 23 more HR gave the club more opportunities to win for which they took advantage. The pitchers threw to a 0.30 less ERA from foreign mounds.

What went right?

The team was above the middle on the mound, with a 3.77 ERA. Zack Wheeler was the ace (13-9, 2.90, 224 Ks in 223 IP, with 4 CG and 4 shutouts). The bullpen was strong: Tayler Saucedo was great in middle relief (4-1, 0.99) and the two closers were very solid – Jesse Chavez went 2-0, 2.32, with 21 saves, while Aroldis Chapman had a 5-4 record with 15 saves and a 3.06 ERA, with 70 strikeouts in 53 innings.

Wheeler: Ace

Bo Bichette was the offensive leader, hitting .274 with 18 homers. Three players hit 27 homers: Christian Walker, Randy Arozerena, and Nick Castellanos. Arozerena led the team with 22 steals.

What went wrong?

The home/road split really showed in the line-up. For example, Nolan Arenado hit nearly 100 points less on home turf, though pitchers were more balanced with fairly normal splits.

The team hit only .235/.294/.398, which was below the middle of the league. They struck out a lot: seven regulars whiffed more than 100 times, led by Castellanos at 161. Contreras hit .213; Peralta .213; Arenado .224; Arozarena .239; Walker .242.

While the ERAs weren't terrible, the starting pitchers were generally ineffective other than Wheeler. Bassitt went 7-11, Darvish 8-12, Houck 3-9. They outhomered their opponents 189-188, but that more reflected the inferior lineup than a superior pitching staff.

3 Things

What hope does 2025 bring?

1. The potential of another playoff run. Strong City has emptied the bank to build up the roster. The club has a serious challenger, but they're a nose ahead of them.

2. A better break at home. The split was another intervention by the Dice Gods, and the hope is that it corrects to the mean.

3. This is probably it. We're under no illusions that this club is too old to last beyond this year. So, no matter what occurs, it appears that the future will hold movement downward in order to build a younger foundation.

strong city STATESMEN

Eric Sheffler (22nd year)

There will be a pennant race in the Clemente this year.

In 2016, the Munich Marauders won the TBL championship with a team that finished ninth in the league in runs, with a very modest 742. That's the fewest runs scored by a TBL champion in a 162 game season. Paul Montague did this by suffocating his opponents with a lock-down pitching staff. Paul's pitchers allowed only 429 runs all season. The team ERA for the season was 2.51.

Eric Sheffler is trying to follow that template with his 2025 Strong City Statesmen. They have all the pitching they could possibly want. They have good – but not overwhelming – hitting. Other teams that have pulled this off: the 2023 Maracaibo Rumrunners and the legendary 2009 Midwest Mongrels, wielders of the Dead Ball Dice. Can the 2025 Statesmen do it too?

Turnover Rate: 39%

Arrived: Scott ALEXANDER, Dairon BLANCO, Michael CONFORTO, Luis V. GARCIA, Kyle HIGASHIOKA, Jakob JUNIS, Craig KIMBREL, Sean MANAEA, Tayler SCOTT, Jacob STALLINGS, Ryne STANEK, Michael A. TAYLOR, Spencer TURNBULL, Tyler WELLS

Departed: Chase ANDERSON, Austin BARNES, Jesse CHAVEZ, Austin HEDGES, Tanner HOUCK, Jarred KELENIC, Craig KIMBRELL, Nick MADRIGAL, Trevor MAY, Kevin NEWMAN, Will M. SMITH, Jose TREVINO, Ryan YARBROUGH

SNT: Luis V. Garcia.
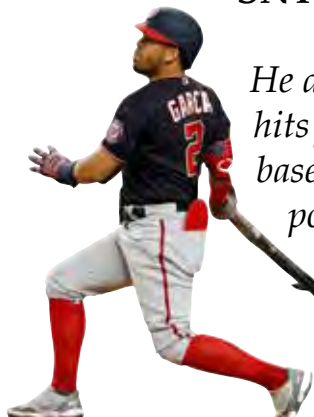
He does everything: he hits for power, runs the bases, and can field his position well. He's the youngest man on the roster and will be here for the rebuild too.

Pitching: 14.5
This crew will get the job done.

ROTATION. The rotation is led by Zack Wheeler (Grade 16 C+16 HR+15, 32 starts). Wheeler will be 35 this year, but seems to be getting better as he gets older. Last year, Zack finished second for the National League Cy Young award. Reynaldo Lopez (Grade 16 HR+32, 25 starts), Atlanta's ace, posted a 1.99 ERA with the Braves last year. Those monsters do not have the highest grades on this club. That distinction belongs to Jake Junis (Grade 26 C+44, 6 starts). Junis does not pitch enough to earn a playoff start, so his acquisition from Brobdingnag must be seen as decadence.

After the top three grades, the Statesmen will have to endure the indignity of 47 starts of mere Grade 14 between Luis Ortiz (Grade 14 C+14, 15 starts) and Sean Manaea (Grade 14 C+14, 32 starts). Yu Darvish (Grade 13 C+16 HR-15, 16 starts) will start for four months. Buck Farmer (Grade 13* HR+21, 1 start, 71 RIP) makes a single appearance as an opener.

There are 127 starts of Grade 13 and above. Jose Quintana (Grade 11 C-16, 31 starts) takes almost all the remaining starts.

They're awesome. This is the best starting rotation in the league by a good margin.

Wheeler, Lopez: This year's one, two

On those rare occasions when Mr. Sheffler needs to remove one of his excellent starters, he will find a few nice assets in the bullpen. How about Emmanuel Clase (Grade 28* C+46 HR+53, 74 IP), he of the 0.61 ERA last season for the Guardians? Eric is very conservative in his usage of Mr. Clase, limiting him to one out save situations but allowing him to go longer if necessary. With this grade and 74 innings to work with, the 8th and 9th will be well taken care of.

Tayler Scott (Grade 19* C-53 HR+16, 69 IP) and Spencer Turnbull (Grade 17 C-21 HR+14, 54 IP) get the call in late innings when Strong City has a lead. The three top end relievers have 197 innings between them. With this starting rotation, that should be enough.

There are three middle relievers who steal 8s. Scott Alexander (Grade 14* C+26 HR+26, 39 IP) and Aroldis Chapman (Grade 14* C-62 HR-31, 62 RIP) are the bridge crew. With starters this good, they may not have much to do. Buck Farmer (Grade 13* HR+21, 1 start, 71 RIP) and Michel

Clase: Monster

Otanez (Grade 14* C-62 HR+42 34 RIP) also help out here. The Statesmen have 403 innings of Grade 13+ relief – a good total.

There's a little more. Luis Ortiz (Grade 10* C+14, 49 IP), Taylor Saucedo (Grade 11* C-22 HR+32, 39 IP) and Ryne Stanek (Grade 9* C-25, 55 IP) are around to help any starter that gets beat up. Jacob Junis (Grade 9*, C+44, 38 IP) has a side hustle as a reliever when he's not starting. This crew will get the job done. Clase is a Monster.

Offense: 7.5
Enough, but an interesting challenge.

Walker: Nice power

If you're going for it, you need to go get one of these: Vladimir Guerrero (1-5-6-6, 12 hits, 3 walks, no shift). Vlad did everything but sweep out the stands last year for the Blue Jays, and was rewarded with a 50 year contract that doubled the Canadian national debt. Christian Walker (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) is a nice power card as well. Can't have too many first basemen. These two bat third and fourth in most lineups.

The next best card in the envelope belongs to Randy Arozarena (1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, 26 SSN for 30 SBA, R-3), who does a little of everything, including batting leadoff against right-handers on the boards. Willson Contreras (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 84 games) has a very nice card as the starting catcher, and gives way to Jacob Stallings (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+4 R-4) for half the season. Michael Conforto (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L+5) is a nice player, and had a surprisingly good year for San Francisco. He will punish lefties. Luis Garcia (1-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks, L-6) is the strong side platoon second baseman. Mauricio Dubon (3 0s, 10 hits) steps in against left-handers.

The lineup thins out after that. Shortstop Bo Bichette (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-11, 81 games) and third baseman Nolan Arenado (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-6) are way off their highs. Nick Castellanos (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 162 games) plays every day and bats lower in the lineup.

Strong City is not overwhelming at the plate. Blue Hill is a significantly better hitting team. The *Annual* is betting there's enough offense here to win the division. The playoffs – where they will face good pitching – will be an interesting challenge.

Defense: 4.0
Pretty rock solid.

Mr. Sheffler always has a good fielding team, even when he's rebuilding. This year, Eric is all in – his 2026 draft is already invested in this club. So, one would expect excellence with the leather, and that's exactly what Strong City is packing. But there are a few soft spots.

Bo Bichette (SS8) is an average defender at a key position. He has Nick Ahmed (SS9) to back him up when games are close and late. Both Mauricio Dubon (2B8, SS8) and Luis Garcia (2B8) are excellent at the keystone. Nolan Arenado (3B5) did not slump in the field last year. Christian Walker (1B5) is as good as they come at first. The catchers are all excellent. Willson Contreras (C8 Th+2) sees the most playing time and has the best arm. His platoon mate is Jacob Stallings (C9

Arenado: Still solid gold

Th-1) who is excellent back there. The outfield has one exceptional glove man – center fielder Randy Arozarena (OF3, 31 arm). Corner outfielders Nick Castellanos (OF2, 31 arm) and Michael Conforto (OF2, 30 arm) are average defenders.

They're rock solid in the field, and they can ramp it up at short and in the outfield when they need to.

Bench: 2.0
OSOTBG, and a few others.

There's one interesting hitting thingy on the bench: Kyle Higashioka (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks, 84 games). Eric's instructions describe him as a One Swing of the Bat Guy. (OSOTBG). There aren't a lot of double-1 cards who don't see regular playing time in this league, but this just shows how committed Strong City is to the title chase this year.

Other than Kyle, there's a nice defensive card on the bench in Nick Ahmed and Michael Taylor, but not much else.
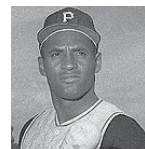
1st They are not far ahead of Blue Hill in this division. There is no doubt the pitching will get them into the playoffs, and they are going to be a very dangerous playoff opponent. There will be a pennant race in the Clemente this year, though, due to the somewhat muted offense. Beyond 2025, the Statesmen are looking at a rebuild. They have no 2026 draft. This is it.

strong city STATESMEN

TQ: **28.0**

2024 blue hill MUDSLIDES in review

The team needs to get off to a quick start.

2024 in Review
Final Record: 60-102 (4th, Clemente)

Blue Hill is going through a transition period and managed to win only 60 games to finish in the cellar of the Clemente, which was our lowest win total in 7 years. The decision was made to move some assets and focus on draft picks for 2025, which probably contributed to 10 less wins then predicted in last year's *Annual*.

What went right?

Christian Yelich appears to be back in form, leading the team in BA (.254), doubles (43), stolen bases (23), and tying Rafael Devers with 142 hits. Devers had another solid year, besides the 142 hits he led the team in HR (31), RBI (86), OBP (.348), and SLG (.483).

On the pitching side, Berrios and Elder tied for 12 wins with Elder leading the team with a 3.08 ERA. Hector Neris still led the team with 23 saves even though he was shipped off at the trading deadline.

Yelich: He's back

What went wrong?

The team batting average was .219, which is the worst it has been in fourteen years, and the 167 team homers were the fewest in eight years. Two of our most reliable players had down years.

Steven Kwan batted a terrible .215 with 3 measly home runs, and Bryce Harper only managed to hit .222.

The pitching wasn't much better, giving up 219 homeruns, third most in team history, and a 4.46 ERA. No qualified starter had a winning record. Berrios & Kremer each lost 15 games.

3 Things

1. The offense and defense is much improved. The lineup should be able to compete in the Clemente Division. First pick Jackson Merrill should fit in nicely with Devers, Harper and Yelich (although Christian is limited to half a season). The defense is solid and the bench has some useful pieces.

2. The pitching staff is much improved. It's not an elite group and nowhere near the Statesmen, but I think combined with the offense and improved defense we will have a chance to get back to the playoffs.

3. The Clemente Division appears to be a 2 team race this year. The head to head battles with the Statesmen are going to be important games. The team needs to get off to a quick start as the limited players such as Yelich and Williams will get most of their playing time against division rivals!

blue hill MUDSLIDES

Mark Ludwig (30th year)

Moving forward.

After three years of rebuilding, Mark Ludwig kicks off his fourth decade in TBL with a strong, well-balanced clu that is a sneaky threat to win the International Conference this year. In their division, they face a Statesmen club that has all the pitching on earth, but is not a great offensive team. Mark is moving forward with a terrific pitching staff and some of the best hitting cardboard in the league. And Blue Hill still owns all their 2026 draft picks. The Mudslides are young and are going to be a factor in this division for years.

This is going to be a ferocious race.

Pitching: 10.0
Good starters, solid bullpen.

ROTATION. The Mudslide starting rotation starts with Trevor Williams (Grade 16 C+15 HR+44, 13 starts). He pitches enough to get one playoff start. He is the only starting pitcher Blue Hill has that steals 8s without help.

Flaherty: Mob boss

The good news is that the remaining 149 starts are taken by a mob of guys who are all Grade 9 and above, starting with Jack Flaherty (Grade 12 C+23 HR+16, 28 starts). The Dodgers enjoyed their summer with the fire-balling righthander. He went 13-7, 3.17 with 194 strikeouts in 162 innings for the World Champions.

Flaherty is capably followed by Toronto righthander Jose Berrios (Grade 11 C+15 HR-22, 32 starts) and New York Yankees power lefty Carlos Rodon (Grade 10 HR-24, 32 starts). The

Turnover Rate: 33%

Arrived: Valente BELLOZO, Dylan CARLSON, Jesse CHAVEZ, Tyler FERGUSON, Jack FLAHERTY, Sam LONG, Jackson MERRILL, Tyson MILLER, Blake PERKINS, Carlos RODON, Miguel ROJAS, Daniel SCHNEEMANN, Gavin STONE

Departed: Jonathan DAVIS, Michael FULMER, Marco GONZALES, James KAPRIELIAN, Dominic LEONE, Scott MCGOUGH, Zach REMILLARD, Gavin SHEETS, Zack SHORT, Jared SHUSTER, Dillon TATE, Patrick WISDOM

32 year old Rodon was acquired in a nice preseason deal with Hoboken. Then comes Dean Kremer (Grade 11 C-22 HR-12, 24 starts) and YOLO draft pick Gavin Stone (Grade 10 C+21, 25 starts). Stone will miss 2025 while recovering from Tommy John surgery, but Mr. Ludwig is living for today.

The rest of the starts are endured by Valente Bellozo (Grade 9 C+15 HR-36, 13 starts) and opener Beau Brieske (Grade 12* C-31 HR+33, 12 starts, 6 fatigue).

Blue Hill has solid starting pitching. It's only the presence of Strong City's ludicrous starting staff

SNT: Jackson Merrill.

He won a job out of spring training on a team that was ready to leave him in the minors. He made the All Star team and was second in the NL for rookie of the year. At 23, the future is unlimited.

Miller: Top ender

blue hill MUDSLIDES

that make this group pale by comparison.

BULLPEN. The Blue Hill relievers augment the solid starters very nicely. The top end of the bullpen includes closer Tyson Miller (Grade 18* C+33, 62 IP), the wonderfully talented Luke Weaver (Grade 17*, 84 IP), and Oakland veteran Tyler Ferguson (Grade 16* C-36 HR+31, 51 IP). They are all right-handed, so you can leave your left killers on the bench over there. There are 197 innings here, which is an adequate total for a contender.

There are three middle relievers who steal 8s. Lefty Sammy Long (Grade 14* C-22, 43 IP) is one of only 2 lefties in the pen. Jorge "Lucky" Lopez (Grade 13* C-13 HR+13, 53 IP) will defy any triskaidekaphobia during his outings. Jose Urena (Grade 13*, 64 RIP) also helps here. These three bring Blue Hill's total to 357 innings of Grade 13* and above.

Beyond that, Beau Brieske (Grade 12* C-31 HR+33, 51 RIP) will pitch in relief in months when he's not starting. Jesse Chavez (Grade 11* C+15 HR+21, 63 IP) will put his firm grade and nice peripherals to work in the middle innings. Bryse Wilson (Grade 9* C+14 HR-31, 63 RIP) pitches only when the wind is blowing out. Gregory Soto (Grade 6* C-31 HR+34, 53 IP) is the second lefty in the pen.

There are 580 innings here – enough to cover all situations all season. Blue Hill can afford to be very aggressive with the bullpen. This will help the starters.

Offense: 11.0
It's come together.

It's took a few years for the team to construct this hitting attack. Blue Hill added 23-year-old Jackson Merrill (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 19 SBA, L-9 R+2) to the stack with the #3 pick in the 2025 TBL draft. Merrill pretty much has everything you'd want in a first round pick. He's ridiculously young, has significant and developing power, runs, and plays terrific defense. He occupies the #3 slot in the lineup and will probably be there for years to come.

Merrill: Everything

There are three all-star caliber players right beside Merrill. Brian Harper (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, 16 speed) has been a deluxe middle of the order bat for Blue Hill since 2013, when he was a first round selection. Rafael Devers (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-9 R+4) is one of the best power hitters at his position in all of baseball. The Red Sox tried to mess him up by making him a full-time DH but he keeps pounding the ball. Steven Kwan (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 walks, 122 games) had a nice year for the Guardians. He bats either leadoff or second in most lineups.

There are two half-season cards that should make an impact. Christian Yelich (1-4-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, 35 SSN for 22 attempts, 73 games) was on his way to a huge year when he was felled by a back injury. Miguel Rojas (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 31 SSN for 10 SBA, 103 games) will play every one of his games against right-handed pitching.

Harper: Deluxe

The outstanding Yanier Diaz (3 0s, 11 hits, 3 24s, 148 games) would play all season long for most teams, but here he is the strong side platoon. Connor Wong (3 0s, 10 hits, 2

walks + 42, L+5, R-4) catches against lefties. The outfield has some regulars who are out there to catch the ball, like Sal Frelick (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 33 SSN for 21 SBA, 17 speed) and Will Brennan (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-14). Blake Perkins (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 28 SBA) is also around.

This is one of the top 5 offenses in the league this season.

Defense: 4.0
More functional than exceptional.

This conference has some excellent defensive team. Blue Hill has a good defense, but it's more functional than exceptional. The biggest problem is at shortstop. Miguel Rojas (SS9, 2B8) is excellent, but only plays 103 games. His backup is Daniel Schneeman (SS7, 73 games). Not good. Trevor Story (SS8) would be the correct solution, but he's limited to 106 at bats. Maikel Garcia (2B7) is the second baseman every day. He's dead average. The corner infielders are Rafael Devers (3B4) and Brian Harper (1B4). Both are good, but not top tier.

Wong: Useful arm

Beyond that, there are very strong defenders at catcher and in the outfield. The backstops are Yainer Diaz (C8 Th-1) and Connor Wong (C8 Th+4). This has to be the best set of catchers in the league, all around. Wong's arm will be very useful in the playoffs.

The outfield has six players, all OF3s, which has to be some kind of a record. Jackson Merrill (OF3, 33 arm) has the best arm. Steven Kwan (OF3, 29 arm) needs to call DoorDash to deliver the ball home. Sal Frelick (OF3, 31 arm), Blake Perkins (OF3, 31 arm), Christian Yelich (OF3, 31 arm) and Will Brennan (OF3, 31 arm) are all great at catching it, but very ordinary at throwing it. Still, the outfield is kind of amazing.

Bench: 2.5
No hitting toy, but some help.

There are OF3 defenders on the bench, but they will never be needed because everyone is an OF3. Trevor Story (0-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 106 PA) only has a few at bats. Wong and Diaz can back each other up. Wong may be useful as a defensive replacement against a team with good base stealers. There is no defensive help for the infield. There is no hitting toy.
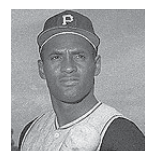
blue hill MUDSLIDES

Ages of players on the Blue Hill roster, as of 07/01/2025:

41: Chavez
36: M. Rojas
33: Urena, T. Williams, Yelich
32: Harper, J. Lopez, Rodon, Story
31: Berrios, Ferguson, McCullers, L. Weaver
30: Mahle, G. Soto
29: Devers, Flaherty, Kremer, Long, Ty. Miller, Wong
28: Perkins, Schneemann
27: Brennan, Brieske, Kwan, B. Wilson
26: Carlson, Ya. Diaz, Elder, G. Stone
25: Bellozo, Frelick, M. Garcia
23: N. Marte
22: Merrill

2nd They are a step behind Strong City, both on the mound and in the lineup, but there's definitely a real pennant race this year. The Mudslides have one key advantage: they can improve themselves down the stretch. It might make a difference.

TQ: **27.5**

2024 whitman RIVER RATS in review

Stay the course.

by Walter Hunt

2024 in Review
Final Record: 105-57 (1st, Clemente)

2024 was the sixth straight Clemente pennant for the River Rats, as they cruised to a 105-57 record. Four of the previous five years the club had won more than 100 games (and 99 in 2020, the year they missed). Built around a small number of superstar bats and a large number of strong arms, Whitman was the very definition of a perennial winner, though they only came away once with a ring (in 2019). They had a very good chance in 2024, but were stopped cold by the Hoboken Zephyrs in the championship series.

What went right?

As always, Whitman's pitching was impressive. Future Hall of Famer Clayton Kershaw went 11-4, 2.72 with 179 Ks in 182 innings, but it was Blake Snell who was utterly dominant (22-3, 2.11, 291 Ks in 230 innings). Gavin Williams went 7-1, 2.21 in 16 starts, and the bullpen delivered 28 relief wins. Robert Suarez, the closer, was lights out in short innings (2-1, 1.86, 26 saves).

Snell: Dominant

Jose Ramirez led the offense with a .278/.332/.501 slash line and 28 HR, 97 RBI. Alex Verdugo hit .272 with 50 doubles. Paul Goldschmidt contributed 28 homers and 32 doubles.

What went wrong?

The pitching was powerful, but the lineup – beyond the few big bats – was simply not very strong. They only scored 681 runs, and the team hit only .244 as a team. Too many batters really underperformed: Hunter Renfroe hit only 15 homers and struck out 162 times, hitting .211. Goldschmidt struck out 169; Aaron Hicks 157 (in only 292 at-bats; that's Joey Gallo / Rob Deer territory). The team slugged barely .400. As good as the arms were, they simply couldn't stop the explosive bats of Hoboken when it came to the conference finals.

3 Things

1. The Clayton Kershaw era is probably over. Every team has to face up to the aging and retirement of key players, and Kershaw has been so good (260-97, 114 CG, 2.54 ERA, 3527 Ks in 16 seasons) that it will be strange for him not to be around. But he, and Goldschmidt, and eventually Ramirez will have to yield to younger players.

2. Young picks bear a heavy load. In any rebuild, there has to be something to rebuild around. This time it's Freddy Fermin, Ryan Pepiot, and – perhaps – Alex Verdugo and Gavin Williams. But guys like Edouard Julien and Zack Dezenzo and, even more importantly, the picks from the 2026 draft (where Whitman is strong) will have to create a new core.

3. Stay the course. Whitman is an incredibly successful franchise. Since the creation of the division in 1999, Whitman has won fourteen pennants and has won 100+ games thirteen times. They've reached the playoffs twenty-one times. They've been highly competitive and have had excellent management. They certainly know what to do – and now it's time to do it, using a formula that has clearly worked.

whitman RIVER RATS

Brian Hanley (30th year)

It's rebuilding time for the Rats.

About that Whitman rebuild…

In 2024, the *Annual* looked at the Whitman River Rats, rolled their eyes at the underpowered offense, and spilled a lot of ink heaping praise on division rival Riverwoolf. All that was fine until Brian Hanley started rolling dice.

162 games later, Whitman had its twelfth Clemente Division championship in the last 16 years, and a regular season record of 105–57 – the best record in the league. They got clubbed 4-0 in the conference championship by Hoboken, which was another big surprise. That's why we play the games, boys.

This year, the *Annual* is serious about this Whitman rebuilding thing. Brian's instructions point in that direction, and many of the great players that have made this franchise so dominant for so long are past their expiration date. It's rebuilding time for the Rats, and in Mr. Hanley they have one of the best roster technicians on the planet on the job.

Pitching: 5.0
A few strong performers, but . . .

ROTATION. Pitching has long been a Whitman calling card, and there are still some strong per-
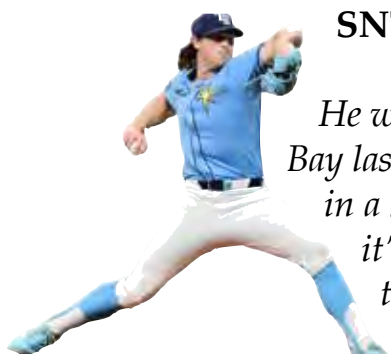
SNT: Ryan Pepiot.

He was terrific for Tampa Bay last year, but he pitches in a hitter's park. But it's a terrific start for the next Whitman rotation.

Turnover Rate: 44%

Arrived: Justin ANDERSON, Brooks BALDWIN, Austin BARNES, Zach DEZENZO, Dane DUNNING, Nick GONZALES, Kyle HENDRICKS, Edouard JULIEN, Tyler KINLEY, Jordan LEASURE, Joey LOPERFIDO, Austin MARTIN, Miles MASTROBUONI, Ryan PEPIOT, Ross STRIPLING, Randy VASQUEZ.

Departed: Tim ANDERSON, Willie CALHOUN, Harold CASTRO, Jake DIEKMAN, Kendall GRAVEMAN, Aaron HICKS, Dany JIMENEZ, Michael LORENZEN, Richard LOVELADY, Joey LUCCHESI, Lance LYNN, Miguel ROJAS, Eddie ROSARIO, Jacob STALLINGS, Matt STRAHM, Jose URQUIDY.

formers here. Blake Snell (Grade 17 C-31 HR+41, 20 starts) has about half a season. The two-time Cy Young award winner had some soft tissue injuries early last year for the Giants, but was excellent after recovering his health. He's pitching for the Dodgers this year. Ryan Pepiot (Grade 13 C-16, 26 starts) was drafted in the first round of the 2025 draft. These two give Whitman 46 starts of Grade 13+.

Snell: Half a season strong

Then comes the steep drop off to the other 116 starts, starting with Gavin Williams (Grade 7 C-25 HR+25, 16 starts). Williams is 26, so he may be part of the solution long-term, but this year, he's got 4 months of mediocre starts to offer.

And Whitman fans had better enjoy those pleasant afternoons, because behind Williams is a parade of dreck. Dane Dunning (Grade 5 C-23 HR-25, 15 starts, 23 RIP) leads it off. Clayton

Kershaw (Grade 3 C+22 HR+36, 7 starts) is off his highs (to put it mildly). Randy Vasquez (Grade 2 C+16, 28 starts) has close to a full season to embarrass himself. Kyle Hendricks (Grade 1 HR-16, 30 starts, 14 IP) and Ross Stripling (Grade 1, C+26 HR+32, 25 starts, 13 RIP) pitch way too much. The remnants of championships past are here, and the Pepiot selection shows Brian is completely aware that this mess won't fix itself.

BULLPEN. With a starting rotation like that, the bullpen will not be idle. The closer is the super talented Griffin Jax (Grade 17* C+31 HR+41, 71 IP). Jax is overshadowed in Minnesota by his bullpen mate Jarren Duran, who throws 100+ and has great walkup music. The 30 year old Jax is not as flashy but just as effective, as his grade and peripherals would indicate.

Jax: Talented

Jax gets some help from San Diego closer Robert Suarez (Grade 14* C+23, 65 RIP), Drew Rasmussen (Grade 11* C+31 HR+62, 4 starts, 22 RIP) and Pierce Johnson (Grade 12* C-33 HR+15, 56 RIP). Rasmussen has 4 starts as an opener, so he'll be intermittently available. The top 4 have 214 innings. The bridge crew consists of Justin Anderson (Grade 10* C-62 HR+25, 53 IP), Seth Martinez (Grade 10*, 53 IP), Emilio Pagan (Grade 6* C+14 HR-21, 1 start, 38 RIP) and Jordan Leasure (Grade 4* C-61 HR-24, 31 IP). There are 175 innings here. These guys are tasked with helping the weak starters as well as holding the game close in the middle innings. They will be overworked.

There's enough at the top end of the pen to make Whitman annoying if they are leading late. Getting there will be a year-long challenge.

Offense: 5.5
In need of refreshing.

Whitman has one bona fide superstar in the middle of their lineup: Jose Ramirez (1-1-0-0-0, 2 walks, 33 SSN for 48 SBA, L+8 R-5). He's close to having the best card in TBL, if you combine the power, the speed and his defense at a key position. Ramirez will be 33 in September, so he has a few years left.

Ramirez: Superstar

The other cornerstone of the Whitman dynasty is first baseman Paul Goldschmidt (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, E35 for 11 SBA, R-3, L+5). Goldy is 37 and showed some signs of slowing down last year. He bats fifth in all lineups. Goldy is good enough defensively to relegate Ryan Mountcastle (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+3) to the DH spot. Mountcastle is the #3 hitter against southpaws. The #3 hitter against righties is catcher Freddy Fermin (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 111 games). Fermin is a decent hitter for a catcher, but the fact that a guy with this little power is batting third is a red flag – this team will not contend with this lineup. He platoons at catcher all season with Austin Barnes (0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+8, 54 games). The leadoff hitter against righties is Jesse Winker (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks + 42, 30 SSN for 18 SBA, L-5), who had a quietly effective year for the Mets last season.

The rest of the lineup is down a level. Whitman will run out Hunter Renfroe (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) every day as the #6 hitter. Ildemaro Vargas (6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) is the primary SS, batting ninth. Alex Verdugo (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) plays every day and bats all over the lineup. He is the everyday center fielder. MJ Melendez (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, R+1) has a little pop but is not usable against lefties (L-14). Nick Gonzales (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+4) and Enmanuel Valdez (1-6-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) share second base.

It's not awful but the guys who are good are older players. This lineup needs to get refreshed, and it will probably take a couple of years to do that.

Defense: **4.0**
Some outstanding defenders, but. . .

Quick now – who is the best defensive catcher in baseball? If you said "Freddy Fermin" (C9 Th+6) you either cheated by checking out his APBA card or you're spend *way* too much time studying defensive statistics on FanGraphs. Fermin is one of a number of outstanding defenders that

Fermin: Best defense

Whitman will use in the field this year. Paul Goldschmidt (1B5) and Ryan Mountcastle (1B5) are both stellar at first. Jose Ramirez (3B5) is exceptional at the hot corner. Rookie Nick Gonzales (2B8) is solid at second as is utility dude Ildemaro Vargas (3B4, 2B8, SS7, 1B2, OF1, 31 arm). Alex Verdugo (OF3, 35 arm) and Hunter Renfroe (OF3, 36 arm) are exceptional outfielders with good throwing arms.

The big issue with this defense is at shortstop. Enmanuel Valdez (2B7, 3B3) and Tim Anderson (SS7) will extend some innings for this team that really can't afford errors. One corner outfield spot is also a bit soft. MJ Melendez (OF2, 30 arm) is tolerable but Jesse Winker (OF1, 30 arm) sneaks into the outfield against some lefties.

Bench: **2.5**
Lots of platooning.

Whitman platoons very heavily, so half the hitters are waiting to be unleashed in situations late in the game when the pitching matchups are favorable.

The bench – the guys that aren't actually listed in the lineups – has a lot of young guys who are interest bearing accounts. In upcoming seasons, we'll write more about guys like Zach Dezenzo (1-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, R+4, 5 24s), Austin Martin (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks), and Brooks Baldwin (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks). But not this year. There's no freaky hitting toy, but there's a lot to like here.

3rd They will finish in front of Riverwoolf, but this team is a shadow of the team that dominated so completely for the last dozen years. They've added two extra picks in round 2 and a pick in round 5. The problems are being addressed.

Ages of players on the Whitman roster, as of 07/01/2025:

38: Kershaw
37: Goldschmidt
35: A. Barnes, Hendricks, Stripling
34: P. Johnson, Kinley, Pagan, Ro. Suarez
33: Vargas
32: J. Anderson, J. Ramirez, Renfroe, Snell
31: Winker
30: Dunning, Fermin, Jax, S. Martinez
29: R. Adams, Mastrobuoni, Rasmussen, Verdugo
28: Mountcastle
27: Pepiot
26: N. Gonzales, Julien, Leasure, Loperfido, C. Martin, Melendez, E. Valdez, Vasquez
25: Dezenzo, G. Williams
24: Baldwin
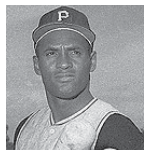
TQ: **17.0**

2024 riverwoolf SHARKS in review

Oh oh.

by Daniel Dumont

2024 in Review
Final Record: 89-73 (2nd, Clemente)

It was a largely successful season in Riverwoolf; the Sharks had a winning record and made it to the playoffs, though there was an amazing run that got the team into the post season. Still, it was good to be a contender.

What went right?

In 2024, Sharks pitching was very good: the team ERA was 3.55, fourth overall in TBL. Gerrit Cole was the ace, going 17-5, 3.19. In 19 starts, Paul Blackburn had a 10-4, 3.21 mark. Yusei Kukichi won 11 and Mike Clevinger won 10. Chris Martin was excellent as the closer, with 6 wins and 28 saves, walking only 6 in 50 innings, and was supported by Robert Stephenson (1.05 ERA), Jeff Hoffman (1.07), Shawn Armstrong (1.87), Adbert Alzolay (6 wins, 2.02) and Miguel Castro (2.14).

Part time player Stone Garrett was excellent, hitting .337-14-51. Harold Ramirez hit .313 with 44 RBI; Cody Bellinger hit .261-27-74. Wander Franco hit .280, but is gone – for well-known reasons.

What went wrong?

The Sharks went 89-73 which was not bad; but the team needed a run of 15-0 in October to end with this record.

Riverwoolf made the playoffs, but after winning the first two games of the series they lost the next four.

Cole: Ace

3 Things

1. The lineup isn't bad. Losing Wander Franco will hurt for sure; his replacement is Taylor Walls, who has good defense but is a poor hitter with backup Ezequiel Duran. Duran will also play some OF also play some outfield. Max Schuemann will see action all around; Justin Turner, the very model of a veteran, can still hit, and Otto Lopez is a good addition who will steal some bases. Daulton Varsho will patrol CF.

Ryan O'Hearn will be the principal first baseman; James McCann and Korey Lee will catch; Manuel Margot and Garrett Hampson, as well as rookie Wenceel Perez, will be in the outfield. J. D. Martinez and Mitch Garver will play.

2. 2025 will be very tough season in the rotation. Oh Oh. Mikolas, Morton, Rea, Blackburn, Sandoval, Flexen and likely others will not be getting many people out. Consistent pitching from year to year is always a problem, and some of the good arms have been traded away. The Sharks will be quite active in the 26 Draft, which seems pretty far away right now.

3. The bullpen won't help either. Oh Oh. Vest, Faucher, Bivens, Liberatore, Beeks, Armstrong, Hill, Ferguson, Pearson. . . Wow.

It's going to be a very very long season north of the border, but as noted we have the draft to look forward to.

riverwoolf SHARKS

Daniel Dumont (10th year)

The unmerciful pounding that they receive this year will pay off in some nice young players.

The 2024 *TBL Annual* loved the Riverwoolf Sharks, and picked them to win the Clemente comfortably. At the end of August, that prediction looks like a bust – Daniel Dumont's club was 62-58 and struggling.

So Monsieur Dumont did what he does – he made some trades in September for the stretch run. In came a Grade 22* reliever – Jhony Brito. In came a Grade 10 starter – Hyun Ryu. The boys responded. Riverwoolf tore through October with a 17-5 record to reach the playoffs for the first time since 2018.

The flip side of that success is that it did not come without cost – several draft picks and one very promising young outfielder (Brenton Doyle) were shipped off for reinforcements. Riverwoolf returns to their more accustomed role as a rebuilder this year.

Pitching: 4.5
Low expectations.

ROTATION. If you're going to rebuild, you want guys that have low grades but lots of starts. Riverwoolf has four of those guys. Charlie Morton (Grade 9 C-22, 30 starts) is a little too good to be here, but he's 42, so the market for him was probably pretty thin. Ditto 37 year old righty Miles Mikolas (Grade 2 C-16 HR+26, 32 starts). Colin Rea (Grade 7 C+23 HR-23, 27 starts) is only 35, so he's a little young for this rotation.

Morton: A little too good

Chris Flexen (Grade 4 C-16, 30 starts) and Patrick Sandoval (Grade 4 C-24 HR+23, 16 starts) start the parade of Grade 4 starters. Joe Boyle (Grade 4 C-62 HR+33, 10 starts) ends it. Boyle is like a clown on a beach in this list – a hard-throwing 26 year old with a very high ceiling.

That gets us to start 145. The rest of the learning opportunities go to Paul Blackburn (Grade 6 C+16 HR-21, 14 starts) and Matthew Liberatore (Grade 8* C+14, 6 starts, 63 IP, 18 fatigue). They're awful. Boyle and Liberatore are good pitchers. The rest of these guys get replaced with youngsters over the next two years.

Turnover Rate: 58%

Arrived: Tyler ALEXANDER, Addison BARGER, Jalen BEEKS, Spencer BIVENS, Joe BOYLE, Calvin FAUCHER, Caleb FERGUSON, Tim HILL, Niko KAVADAS, Korey LEE, Matthew LIBERATORE, Otto LOPEZ, Miles MIKOLAS, Wenceel PEREZ, Colin REA, Patrick SANDOVAL, Max SCHUEMANN, Jon SINGLETON, Daulton VARSHO, Will WAGNER, Taylor WALLS

Departed: Adbert ALZOLAY, Christian ARROYO, Cody BELLINGER, Jon BERTI, Jhony BRITO, Miguel CASTRO, Mike CLEVINGER, Gerrit COLE, Wander FRANCO, Stone GARRETT, Robbie GROSSMAN, Kyle HIGASHIOKA, Jeff HOFFMAN, Yusei KIKUCHI, Chris MARTIN, Owen MILLER, Hoby MILNER, Esteury RUIZ, Hyun-Jin RYU, Robert STEPHENSON, Caleb THIELBAR, Vince VELASQUEZ

SNT: Joe Boyle.

Boyle is a 26-year-old flamethrowing right hander with Tampa Bay. He has control issues but has struck out 443 batters in 291 minor league innings. He could lead the staff next year.

riverwoolf SHARKS

BULLPEN. Daniel does not waste a lot of ink delineating clever tactics for his relief staff. Will Vest (Grade 12* C+25 HR+45, 70 IP) is the closer, and is by far the best pitcher among the relievers. Shawn Armstrong (Grade 3* C-26 HR+26, 67 IP) is designated as "The Mop."

Everyone else is just here for the ride. Spencer Bivens (Grade 10* C+31 HR-26, 2 starts, 39 RIP) and Calvin Faucher (Grade 11* C-31, 54 IP) will steal the occasional hit. Jalen Beeks (Grade 5 HR+31, 70 IP) and Matthew Liberatore (Grade 8* C+14, 63 IP) give road managers some lefthanded options. Northboro refugee Caleb Ferguson (Grade 6* C-25 HR+21, 54 IP) also throws from the left side. Tim Hill (Grade 6* C+23 HR+54, 67 IP), Tyler Alexander (Grade 2* C+31 HR-35, 62 RIP) and Nate Pearson (Grade 7* HR-24, 65 IP) are around for bulk, as is the entire pitching staff.

They are just trying to get through the year and make their 2026 draft picks. There are 611 relief innings, and that will be enough considering how low expectations are around here. This is one of the 3 worst pitching staffs in TBL this year.

Offense: 4.5
Won't score a lot of runs.

There's not a lot of help on the hitting side. Daulton Varsho (1-4-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, L+5 R-3, 136 games) is the cleanup hitter. Not the type of card that would strike fear into the hearts of TBL's managers, but Varsho is a source of power who is under 30, so he'll be a factor here for the next few years. The 26-year-old rookie Wenceel Perez (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-5) bats third against right-handers. Justin Turner (3 0s, 9 hits,

Varsho: Cleanup

4 walks+42), on the other hand, is 41. And another stalwart in this lineup, JD Martinez (1-6-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, 120 games), is 38. Jon Singleton (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, L-14 R+2, 119 games) plays first and bats second in the right-handed lineups. He'll be 34 this year. There

Turner: He's 41

are two catchers who play regularly - James McCann (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks, 66 games) and Mitch Garver (1-0-0, 6 hits, 4 walks + 42, L+5) who are 35 and 34 years old respectively. These geriatrics are placeholders for the youngsters who have yet to be drafted.

Several starters are not quite ready for retirement. Otto Lopez (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 24 SBA, R+2) is the leadoff man against righties. Ryan O'Hearn (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks) has a pretty good card for 142 games. Shortstop Max Schuemann (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, 35 SSN for 15 attempts) shares the position with glove guy Taylor Walls (2 0s, 7 hits, 5 walks, 31 SSN for 20 SBA).

Lopez: Leads off

There is one four power number card in the stack. And there is one 11 hit card in the stack. They're the same card - Will Wagner (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, R+3, 86 PA). Yep – he's a pinch hitter.

They won't score a lot of runs. This group, combined with the underpowered pitching staff, makes Riverwoolf the pole sitter for the Kristian Campbell sweepstakes.

Defense: 4.0
Adequate, at least.

On defense, there are a couple guys that are pretty good. Taylor Walls (SS9, 84 games) is a solid shortstop, but only for half a season. Max

Schuemann (SS8) plays most of the year and is about average. There's better news at second, where Otto Lopez (2B8) will be sublime all year. The regular catcher is James McCann (C8 Th+4), who is excellent defensively. Unfortunately, he gives way to Mitch Garver (C7 Th-2) against lefties. Daulton Varsho (OF3, 31 arm) plays every day in centerfield.

Walls: Solid glove

The bad news starts at the infield corners. Jon Singleton (1B3) and Justin Turner (3B3) will be looking at their watches wondering when it's their turn to bat. In the outfield, Wenceel Perez (OF2, 30 arm) and Manuel Margot (OF2, 32 arm) see regular time. However, Ryan O'Hearn (1B3, OF1) also plays regularly out there, and that's not good. The defense is adequate, but it won't help much.

Bench: **2.5**
Useful, but not much impact.

Let's be clear on one thing: No one on Riverwoolf's bench will have an impact on the performance of the team this year. If they were good, they would certainly be starting. The more interesting question is – will these guys be part of the foundation of a good team later on?

There are a couple of Guys We Like™ . Korey Lee (1-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks, 125 games), a 27 year old catcher for the White Sox, has a little power and is a good defensive player (C8, Th+0). Will Wagner (4 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, R+3, 86 PA) has a terrific short-season card and an intriguing minor league profile. He had a .297/.402/.441 slash line over 290 games. He made the Blue Jays out of spring training. We'll see what we have here.

Also interesting is Addison Barger (1-6-6, 8 hits, 2 walks), who could emerge as an effective super-utility player. Then there's Niko Kavadas

(1-5, 7 hits, 4 walks + 42), who has an .893 minor league OPS and serious power.

This could be a nice group of players in a year or three. Just add a dash of patience.

4th   Daniel still has all his 2026 draft picks. So, the unmerciful pounding that they receive this year will pay off in some nice young players. They could be bad enough to pick #1 in 2026.
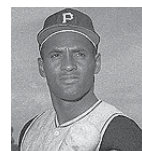
riverwoolf SHARKS

Ages of players on the Riverwoolf roster, as of 07/01/2025:

41: Morton, J. Turner
37: J. D. Martinez, Mikolas
36: T. Hill
35: McCann, Rea
34: Armstrong, Garver
33: Singleton
31: Beeks, Bivens, Blackburn, Flexen, Hampson, O'Hearn, H. Ramirez
30: Ty. Alexander, Margot, Vest
29: Faucher
28: Pearson, Sandoval, Schuemann, Varsho, Walls
26: E. Duran, Kavadas, K. Lee, O. Lopez, Wagner
25: Barger, Boyle, Liberatore, W. Perez

TQ: **15.5**

One Steps Forward, Three Step Back

2024 Mays Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Gotham City*	96	66	.593	—
Rye	81	81	.500	15
Maracaibo	75	87	.463	21
New Westminster	71	91	.438	25

Lost to Hoboken in the Conference Semi-Final.

Jim Jeatt's **New Westminster Whiskeyjacks** are having a moment. We are not usually accustomed to seeing the boys from Alberta in contention, but here they are, and here we are. They have a good lineup and a very good pitching staff, and have put it all on the line to win the Mays and even more. They're going to give Hoboken and Strong City a run for their money.

Meanwhile, *Craig Musselman*'s **Rye Herons** may have something to say about it, though we think they're a step or two behind. As with other teams in TBL, the decision to contend or rebuild was made at the last minute: in their case, it was done at the moment they were on the clock in the first round of the 2025 draft: when Maracaibo made a rebuild pick, Rye decided to go for it by selecting Wilyer Abreu (thus maintaining the balance of Abreus, always a good thing.)

Then there are the **Gotham City Batmen**. *Anton Greenwald*'s club is in a bit of a transition, possibly in reach of the playoffs, possibly scuffling following a good campaign in 2024 that was cut short by the eventual conference champ. Along with everyone else in the Mays that doesn't call Canada home, they can keep in the playoff hunt or not, depending on the way the dice fall. For this version of the team, it might be the last shot.

Speaking of **Maracaibo,** the **Rumrunners** are neither fish nor fowl: they have a very solid starting rotation, a bit of a bullpen, and a rock solid defense – but the lineup doesn't really measure up to the expectations that we generally have for a contender. Both last year and this year they've added younger players, but it's not clear whether *Walter Hunt* is trying to get to a wild card spot or to an advantageous draft position. It may be June or July before he, or anyone else in TBL, is sure.

Mays Division

Brent Rooker,
New Westminster

1. New Westminster	31.0
2. Rye	27.5
3. Gotham City	25.5
1. Maracaibo	25.0

2024 new westminster WHISKEYJACKS in review

A window of opportunity has opened.

by Jim Jeatt

2024 in Review
Final Record: 71-91 (4th, Mays)

New West posted a 28 game improvement on a woeful 2023 season. That is two 70 win seasons in the last three years. Pitching and offense statistics were in line with the 75 win 2022 season. The club was still challenged with a weak offense finishing in the bottom six in average, clearing the 600 run total at 645. The pitching was stronger finishing right in the middle (11th), .27 runs below the average ERA. Expected wins were missed by around 10% so management is considering a field boss change. New West hung around during the 2024 season and had dreams of making some moves at the trade deadline to make a run. August found us 9 behind Gotham in the division and just 4 behind Riverwoolf in the wildcard. A tough September saw the clubs we were chasing explode into another gear: suddenly we were 16 back in the division and 7 in the wild card with teams moving past us.

What went right?

Pitching was the strength of the team. Kirby led the way with 12 wins, 3.07 ERA, 7 CG and 3 ShO. Bradish won 11 with an ERA of 3.25. It was a bullpen of many arms that helped out a starting staff that was weak after the first two. Five relievers had a WHIP of less than 1. Tommy Kahnle was the closer with a modest 18 saves a record of 5-5, 2.49 and WHIP of 0.923.

2025 offers hope of a playoff run, decent pitching prospects and a challenge to our medical staff.

What went wrong?

Individual batting was spotty. No player playing 100 games hit above .270. The backup catchers had good seasons: Rene Pinto rocked 11 homers in 35 games and slashed .291/.328/.606 while Andrew Knizner hit 14 homers in 57 games slashing .282/.328/.569. Christian Vazquez, the regular catcher, played 100

games and slashed .181/.264/.281 with 6 home runs. Fernando Tatis in a bit of a comeback season hit 23 HR and drove in 75. Brent Rooker had a great first season with the club with 32 HR and 83 RBI. The season was about giving some work to prospects, with some lowered expectations: Cowser, Burleson and Neto. Cowser was mainly a defensive replacement over 22 games. Burleson played 71 games and hit just one home run and slashed .202/.245/.266. Neto had a strong debut: 9 HR, 33 RBI in 80 games but also led the team with 14 errors.

3 Things

Kirby: Led the way

1. Players selected in the 2024 draft have blossomed quickly, and trades helped a lot. Brent Rooker, Alec Burleson, Zach Neto and Colton Cowser are developing into solid players. Trades brought in draft picks as well as Nick Martinez, Erick Fedde, and Tyler Stephenson. Holdovers on the roster Fernando Tatis and Andrew Vaughn are still not at their best but Alec Bohm gives the team some options.

2. The 2025 draft was huge. We added pitchers Paul Skenes, Yoshinubo Yakamoto, and Hunter Gaddis plus hitters Heliot Ramos and Jose Iglesias who give us a good middle infielder and leadoff hitter.

3. A window of opportunity has opened for the Whiskey boys. This is the best team we have put on the field in a long time. By the time of the draft youngsters occupied six starting positions, so we could concentrate on the rotation. Skenes and Yamamoto were taken with two of the top 6 picks. Martinez and Fedde were added to the roster by trades. Miller from the 2024 draft has become a solid mid rotation pitcher. Kirby is still looking to build consistency. The clubs history of pitching injuries with Bradish, Means and L.H. Garcia and recent 2026 injury reports of Kirby puts some pressure on the medical staff. The injury epidemic seems to be hitting this team hard.

new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

Jim Jeatt (21st year)

This could be his year.

Y'know, there was a time when you could count on certain things. One of those was Jim Jeatt and his New West Whiskeyjacks finishing under .500. This has happened 10 times in the last 12 years, the exceptions being 2017 and 2018, when Jim finished with 86 and 85 wins.

Last year, the club finished dead last in the Mays with 71 wins. That modest win total was 28 games better than 2023. Then came the 2025 TBL draft. New West, flush with draft picks, took Paul Skenes, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and closer Hunter Gaddis in the first round – one of the most impressive first round pitcher hauls in the history of the TBL draft. All of a sudden, New West is a contender – one of the top 3 teams in TBL according to the TQs, and the best team in the International Conference.

Pitching: 12.5
A nightmare in the playoffs.

If the Gods are with us, for the next ten years or so, this publication will be issuing its annual Paul Skenes (Grade 17 C+22 HR+31, 23 starts) update. We're here to tell you in Year 1 that things are looking just fine, thank you very much.

He is so operatically talented that watching a five minute clip of the man on YouTube will convince you that if you have a chance to go get this guy, you do that. He sits at 99. He throws five different pitches, including a splinker at 93. He'll turn 23 years old on May 29. Jim got him with the #2 overall pick.

Most people would consider Paul Skenes and a box of donuts from Tim Horton's to be a pretty good draft, but Jim grabbed Japanese superstar Yoshinobu Yamamoto (Grade 12 C+23 HR+31,

18 starts) with pick #4. Bryce Miller (Grade 15 C+22, 31 starts) has turned into a great pitcher for the Whiskeyjacks. Kyle Bradish (Grade 16 C-22 HR+43, 8 starts) adds two months of outstanding starts.

Yamamoto: Superstar

The gifted George Kirby (Grade 9 C+45, 33 starts) is here for a full season as well. Erick Fedde (Grade 12, 31 starts) came over from Warrenton in an offseason deal. The top 6 rotation dudes will eat up 144 starts. After that, some combination of Xzavion Curry (Grade 8 C+42

Turnover Rate: 50%

Arrived: Xzavion CURRY, Erick FEDDE, Hunter GADDIS, Emerson HANCOCK, Sean HJELLE, Daniel HUDSON, Jose IGLESIAS, Michael KELLY, Jake LATZ, Nick MARTINEZ, Hoby MILNER, Dane MYERS, Adam OTTAVINO, Kevin PILLAR, Heliot RAMOS, Paul SKENES, Tyler STEPHENSON, Yoshinobu YAMAMOTO.

Departed: Javier BAEZ, Oneil CRUZ, Kyle FREELAND, Luis H. GARCIA, Domingo GERMAN, Jordan HICKS, Ray KERR, Andrew KNIZNER, Alec MARSH, Yoan MONCADA, Rene PINTO, Austin PRUITT, Colin REA, Jonathan SCHOOP, Jose SIRI, Chris STRATTON, Drew VERHAGEN, Ken WALDICHUK.

SNT:
Paul Skenes.

It's his world; we're just living in it. He's cool and professional on the mound and has ludicrous talent.

HR-32, 5 starts, 21 RIP), Nicholas Martinez (Grade 7/17* C+44 HR+23, 16 starts, 53 RIP), and John Means (Grade 13 C+51 HR+16, 4 starts) take the last 18 starts.

There's only one team in TBL with a starting rotation to rival this one – and that's Strong City. A collision between these two teams will be required watching at playoff time.

Gaddis: Big beard energy

BULLPEN. Hunter Gaddis (Grade 22* C+33 HR+41, 75 IP) was just about the best closer available in this year's draft, and has big beard energy. So of course, Jim snapped him up to anchor his bullpen.

Gaddis has help. Elijah Morgan (Grade 18* C+23 HR+21, 42 IP) and Tommy Kahnle (Grade 18* C-32, 43 IP) give New West 160 innings of Grade 18*+ relief.

Three guys will help set up the late staff. Daniel Hudson (Grade 15* C+14 HR-22, 63 IP) and Michael Kelly (Grade 13* C+14 HR+35, 31 IP) steal 8s without help. Jake Latz (Grade 12* C-61, 44 IP) and Colin Poche (Grade 12* HR-32, 37 IP) are a bit wild, so care will have to be taken in the middle innings.

There's 335 innings pitched of Grade 12 and above, and there are some mops as well. With the strength of the starting staff, that will probably be enough, although a September trade for another playoff ready bullpen arm may be in the cards.

This is the best pitching staff in the division, and pretty close to the best in the league. They will be a nightmare in the playoffs.

Offense: 10.0
Delivering the pain.

If you're going to take a run at a conference championship, you have to hit. A lot. Last year, Rocky Mountain scored 861 runs and hit 258 homers.

Luckily for WhiskeyJack fans, while management was maneuvering the club into position to acquire an entire top end pitching staff in less than an hour, lightning was striking the offense. Check out Brent Rooker (1-1-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks, R-2). The 47th pick in the 2024 draft exploded for 39 homers last year with the hapless Oakland A's. The guy we all expected to shine was Fernando Tatis, Jr. (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 30 SSN for 16 attempts, L-6, 102 games). He was fine in an injury-shortened campaign.

Twenty-five year old Colton Cowser (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, R+1) had a very nice year for the Orioles, and he'll play center field all season for New West. In Natick, Jim took a breath in the first round from collecting terrific pitchers to add Heliot Ramos (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walk, L+16 R-6) – a gorilla from San Francisco who managed to hit 22 homers in Oracle Park. Ramos has a savage righty shift that keeps him on the bench against righty starters on the boards. Other than that, he bats cleanup.

Cowser: Nice year

There's more! Zach Neto (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 29 SSN for 40 SBA, R-4, L+12) was selected early in the third round in 2024, and turned out to be a terrific draft pick. Alec Bohm (4 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) plays third all year. And you know you're feeling good about your team when you reach for a guy like Jose Iglesias (3 0s, 12 hits, 1 walks + 42, 3 7s, L+7 R-5, 85 games).

A turbo-charged hitting toy, Iglesias is 35 years old and will never again have a card like this one. Tyler Stephenson (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 138 games) finally arrived to give the team an All-Star behind the plate for the next five years at least. Andrew Vaughn (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) is the everyday first baseman, and brings a bit of pop to the lineup from his #9 slot in the order. Ditto Alec Burleson (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, R+2, L-11) who plays right field against righties. These guys will deliver the pain in a season where hitting is at a premium all over the league.

Defense: 5.5
A fine defensive team.

The core of the defense is a little above average. Zach Neto (SS8) and Jose Iglesias (2B8) will be acceptable when they play together. When either of them needs some time off, either of two defensive wizards are available: Edmundo Sosa (SS9 3B5 2B8) and Nick Lopez (2B9 SS9).

Stephenson: Terrific

Tyler Stephenson (C8 Th+1) is terrific behind the dish. His backup is Christian Vasquez (C8 Th+1), who is rock solid defensively. The outfield has two stellar performers – Colton Cowser (OF3, 33 arm) and Fernando Tatis, Jr. (OF3, 36 arm). Heliot Ramos (OF2, 30 arm) is not bad out there either. Alec Burleson (OF2, 29 arm) needs a courier to get the ball back to the infield. At the infield corners, Alec Bohm (3B4) and Andrew Vaughn (1B4) are very good. This is a fine defensive team, with outstanding options for late defense sitting on the bench.

Bench: 3.0
Some good options.

Most of the good hitters are in the lineups, but Dane Myers (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, R-5, 44 games) is a nice option, particularly against

Ages of players on the New Westminster roster, as of 07/01/2025:

39: Ottavino
38: D. Hudson
36: Pillar
35: J. Iglesias, Kahnle
34: N. Martinez, Milner, Vazquez
32: Fedde, M. Kelly, Means
31: Poche
30: N. Lopez, C. McCormick, Rooker
29: Bohm, Latz, Morgan, D. Myers, Sosa
28: Bradish,Hjelle, T. Stephenson
27: Gaddis, Kirby, Vaughn
26: Burleson, Curry, Hancock, B. Miller, Tatis, Yamamoto
25: Cowser, Ramos
24: Neto
23: Skenes

lefties (L+2). Edmundo Sosa and Nick Lopez are exceptional defenders in the middle infield and Sosa can steal a few bases (34 SSN for 8 attempts). Finally, Kevin Pillar (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks + 42, L+8, R-8, 31 SSN for 15 attempts) would be starting for a team that wasn't so loaded in the outfield. He should see some time against left-handed pitching.

1st Several outstanding drafts in succession have brought us this beautifully constructed, young, and balanced club. They should roll in this division that has some decent teams with major flaws. Jim Jeatt has never won a TBL title, or even made a World Series appearance. This could be his year.

TQ: **31.0**
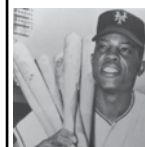
new westminster WHISKEYJACKS

2024 rye HERONS in review

More mediocrity.

by Craig Musselman

2024 in Review
Final Record: 81-81 (2nd, Mays)

The Rye Herons did not expect to make the play-offs in 2024, but hoped to have a halfway decent season, and the team's braintrust had not made offseason moves to either improve significantly or to trade away veterans to get worse. Per usual. The team performed as expected, had a decent year, and wound up 81-81, seven games out of the playoffs. The Herons' fans enjoyed the year – competitive even if not of playoff caliber.

What went right?

Things went about as right as could be expected. The team's pitching was precisely league average in ERA and WHIP. Four starters had 10-11 wins – none stellar, but all of them competing. Kevin Kelly was steady out of the bullpen with a 2.24 ERA, and recorded 10 saves after Jhonny Brito was shipped out of town at the trade deadline. In terms of a pitching highlight, that was about it. League average.

Yoshida: Good first year

The Herons offense was interesting. The team led the TBL with 146 stolen bases. Its batting average was sixth best of 24, not bad, and OBP was slightly above average. The slugging percentage was below average and the team had the third lowest home run total in TBL. Making contact, getting on base and running worked, but there was a power outage.

Masataka Yoshida had a good first TBL year, hitting .297 with 46 doubles and tied for the team lead with Alex Bregman with 87. JT Realmuto had an outstanding year. He was available for only 125 games, but he led the team with 97 RBI's and had 25 home runs. He was clutch.

What went wrong?

Nothing went wrong. Rye scored 718 runs and gave up 730 runs, and managed to play .500 ball. As a team, Rye was as expected. As individuals, it's hard to find someone who grossly underperformed. Ty France in 158 games hit an empty .215, and Jameson Taillon had a 4.89 ERA, a run higher than expected.

3 Things

1. The Herons have only two great assets in 2025 – Ozuna and Sale. The Herons seemed to go off the cliff and continue to fly: there is not too much strength, but no big weakness. The draft additions added pieces to build around them – Abreu, Busch, Estrada.

2. I like this team. What could possibly be more important than that? Rye's regular lineup has a weak #9 hitter with a 155 card, and the eight guys in front of him are all wall-bangers. The offense will be better than it looks. It has an interesting bench with multiple, regularly usable pieces. Both the hitting and pitching should be better than league average. Playoff competitive, without a championship pedigree. But fun to manage. And better than the last three years. Things are looking up, despite weak starting pitching looking ahead

3. Consistency is good, maybe. For three straight years now, Rye has finished with identical 81-81 records. Rye's feeble braintrust is excited about breaking that string in 2025 on the positive side.

rye HERONS

Craig Musselman (21st year)

Our hats are off to Craig.

Craig Musselman's successful TBL career has featured one TBL title in 2010 and six division titles, the last one coming in 2022. In the last couple years, the Rye Herons have floated along, collecting kids at the draft and hoping for the best. This year, Craig had a fantastic offseason, adding three impact hitters and resisting all offers for Chris Sale, who somehow got through the 2024 season without injury. Miracles are regular occurrences in baseball. Management was even able to maintain the Abreu balance for the club, no mean feat.

Pitching: 9.5
Compete in every game.

ROTATION. Chris Sale (Grade 14 C+25 HR+43, 29 starts) has been on this club since 2016 when Rye acquired him from Munich in an offseason trade. He's been injured a lot, but he also went 19-4 in 2019, leading Rye to their last 100-win season. There must have been many moments in the last few years when Craig looked at his broken superstar and wondered if selling him was an option. He resisted – unlike the Red Sox – and last year Sale won the National League Cy Young award. Sale's re-emergence as force at the age of 35 makes this Rye team a playoff contender.

Sale: Re-emerged

The rest of the rotation is solid, and all right-handed, which helps. Jameson Taillon (Grade 10 C+32) and Kutter Crawford (Grade 10 C+15 HR-26) have the best grades, and 61 starts between them. Then come three almost identi-

cal Grade 9s – Brady Singer (Grade 9 C+14, 32 starts), Joe Musgrove (Grade 9 C+25 HR-14, 19 starts), and 36 year old Albert Suarez (Grade 9, 24 starts). Albert got added in round 4 of the 2025 TBL draft – a sign that management was feeling good about the team's playoff chances.

This rotation has no tail – every start is Grade 9 or better. Rye should contend for a playoff spot with this foundation.

BULLPEN. The closer is JT Chargois (Grade 18* HR-24, 36 IP). He's a little wild and little short of innings, but how many closers In MLB are switch hitters? JT gets help from Jeremiah Estrada (Grade 15* C-15 HR+35, 61 IP) and

Turnover Rate: 39%

Arrived: Wilyer ABREU, Miguel ANDUJAR, Cam BOOSER, Michael BUSCH, Jeremiah ESTRADA, Kyle FARMER, David HAMILTON, Brendon LITTLE, Tomas NIDO, Marcell OZUNA, Albert SUAREZ, Brent SUTER, Jose TREVINO, Austin VOTH, Tyler WADE.

Departed: Jose ABREU, Matthew BATTEN, Connor BROGDON, Dylan COVEY, Yerry DE LOS SANTOS, Chris DEVENSKI, Braxton GARRETT, Alex LANGE, Cade MARLOWE, Ronny MAURICIO, Edward OLIVARES, Trevor STEPHAN, Raimel TAPIA, Masataka YOSHIDA.

SNT:
Michael Busch

He slipped into the second round in the draft, and Rye snapped him up at pick 35. The Herons (and the Cubs) hope his minor league power will translate to major league success.

Carlos Estevez (Grade 15* C+41 HR+21, 55 IP) in close and late situations. Austin Voth (Grade 13* HR-15, 61 IP) also steals 8s without help. The top 4 in the bullpen have 212 innings of Grade 13* and above.

In middle relief, there is the underrated Kevin Kelly (Grade 12* C+45 HR+16, 71 IP) – a durable control specialist from Tampa. Then there are three lefties - Brent Suter (Grade 10* C+34 HR-16, 3 starts, 66 RIP), Cameron Booser (Grade 10*, 43 IP) and Brendon Little (Grade 11* C-16 HR-16, 46 IP). These four provide 234 innings of competence. Alex Lange (Grade 8* C-62 HR+62, 19 IP) and Adrian Houser (Grade 11* C-45 HR+15, 35 IP) are the mops.

Like the starting rotation, they're giving nothing away here. Every guy in the envelope is at least a grade 8*. Rye will compete in every game they play.

Offense: 10.0
Turbocharged offseason results.

Craig is good at squeezing maximum value out of guys in their 30s. Marcel Ozuna (1-1-6-0, 11 hits, 4 walks), who will be 35 this year, had a monster season for Atlanta. If you're hoping to catch Rye on one of his rest days, fergit it…he plays all 162. Leadoff man Mike Tauchman (0-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, 109 games) is also 35 years old. The regular catcher is 34 year old JT Realmuto (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 99 games). Realmuto's days as a position unicorn stealing 20+ bases as a catcher are over, but he's still a much better hitter than most catchers in the league.

Then there's perennial all-star Alex Bregman (1-5-6,

Ozuna: Monster

10 hits, 3 walks) who is now 31. He was drafted in the first round by Rye in 2017 and has been a cornerstone here.

Rye management has been adding hitters to the lineup over the last few years, so the lineup has a pile of young talent. Last year's draft netted 24 year old shortstop CJ Abrams (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 28 SSN for 43 SBA).

In this year's draft, the team collected corner guy Michael Busch (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 4 8s) and promising outfielder Wilyer Abreu (1-4-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 28 SSN for 12 SBA, L-13 R+1).

A trade with Riverwoolf brought home Colorado's Brenton Doyle (1-5-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, 33 SSN for 35 SBA), one of the surprise breakout stars from last season. Blazing fast Red Sox second baseman David Hamilton (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 19 speed number, 34 SSN for 37 SBA) will play regularly against righthanded starters. He was a 2025 #5 draft pick.

Abreu: Promising

There are a few guys that play against lefty starters. Paul DeJong (1-5-5, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, 9 13s, 139 games) will spell Hamilton when Rye is facing a southpaw. David Fry (1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, L+8, R-7) is a very nice lefty killer at catcher. Miguel Andujar (3 0s, 11 hits, 1 walk, L+14 R-5) and Jake Meyers (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, 30 SSN for 16 attempts, L+4) also get chances to play in the lefty lineups.

This a pretty decent hitting team, thank to the turbocharged offseason and draft that Craig put together. Offensively, Rye is as good as any team in the division.

Defense: 4.5
Average, but can amp up.

Rye is a good defensive team when they are playing their regular lineups, but they can amp up the defense in close and late situations. Several regulars require no help with the leather, like center fielder Brenton Doyle (OF3, 35 arm), elite third baseman Alex Bregman (3B5), catcher JT Realmuto (C8 Th+0), and left fielder Wilyer Abreu (OF3, 30 arm).

Up the middle, Rye opens with David Hamilton (2B7, SS8) and CJ Abrams (SS8), who are average out there. They do have Paul Dejong (SS9) on the bench to tighten things up in a close game. Similarly, David Fry (C6 Th+0) is not a glove man but backup Jose Trevino (C9 Th-2) certainly is. Michael Busch (1B3) plays first all year, and Ty France (1B4) backs him up.

Mike Tauchman (OF2, 30 arm) is out there because he has 14 on base numbers, but Craig can slot in any of three OF3s – Jake Meyers, Austin Slater, and young Evan Carter. They are good when they need to be, but this defense does not compare to Maracaibo or New West.

Bench: 3.5
Lots of goodies.

There are lots of goodies on the bench. As described above, there's almost an entire lineup of left killers that can be used in late game situations. Utility guy Whit Merrifield (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, 33 SSN for 20 attempts) plays five positions, can run, and has no batting shift – a terrific bench asset. If heartburn from having David Fry and his C6 defensive rating sets in, Jose Trevino (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, 74 games), who is a C9, is available.

This is a deep bench, and they will make Rye difficult to manage against.

Bregman: Elite glove

rye HERONS

Ages of players on the Rye roster, as of 07/01/2025:

37: Sale
36: Merrifield
35: A. Suarez, Suter
34: Chargois, Farmer, Ozuna, Realmuto, Tauchman
33: Booser, Estevez, Taillon, Voth
32: Houser, Musgrove, Nido, Slater, Trevino
31: Bregman, DeJong
30: Andujar, T. France, Wade
29: K. Crawford, Fry, Little, Meyers, Singer
27: Busch, Doyle, D. Hamilton, K. Kelly
26: W. Abreu, J. Estrada
24: Abrams

2nd New West is having a moment, but our hats are off to Craig for the quick pivot he made on draft day, adding some slightly older players who will contribute big to this playoff run. This team will benefit from the strong draft and the opportunistic addition of Brenton Doyle this offseason. They need Sale to stay healthy for another year. Hope springs eternal here in Rye.

TQ: **27.5**

2024 gotham city BATMEN in review

"Best" did not include anybody in my division.

by Anton Greenwald

2024 in Review
Final Record: 96-66 (1st, Mays)

Gotham City entered the 2024 season ranked very high but uncertain about ability to beat the best teams. However, "best" did not include anybody in my division. The result was an easy division win.

What went right?

The team's greatest strength was the pitching staff, which recorded the best ERA in the league at 3.14. Nathan Eovaldi was the top starter at 12-7, 3.10, and Hunter Greene was 8-5 in 19 starts; Eduardo Rodriguez went 9-6 with a 2.52 ERA. The top stars were in the bullpen – Ryan Helsley (23 saves, 1.13 ERA), Sam Moll (5-3, 1.53), and especially relief ace Tyler Holton (8-2, 26 saves, 2.22 ERA). The club only allowed 544 runs (505 earned) all season.

The lineup was overall less productive, but Luis Arraez hit .360 to lead the league, and rookie Josh Jung hit 19 homers.

What went wrong?

The team rode its pitching to the playoffs, but its offense really didn't deliver. Six regulars struck out more than 100 times, led by Anthony Santander at 171 and Willy Adames at 166. Other than Arraez, no regular hit more than .262, and the team slashed .228/.296/.388.

Gotham City made one grievous managerial error – we did not try to improve our post-season lineup. One extra major bat might have made a major impact. Our pitching was top-of-the-line. Offense, less so.

Our division win was followed by an immediate post-season crash. Stanton, for many years the team's driving force, was injured in MLB and played too little, and badly. We tried to get a major deal but received only one offer that was not quite sufficient for our needs. And thus Gotham City went down in our only playoff series.

Holton: Relief ace

3 Things

1. MLB injuries in 2024 wrecked our pitching staff. We were able to fix it to "almost" respectable for the coming year, but do not expect play in any post-season fun.

2. The 2025 team looks to be the opposite of last year – decent offense but weaker pitching. This means more work in the 2026 draft to address that. Some of the previous staff is still here – Greene, Eovaldi, Holton, Helsley – but other than Greene it's getting a little old.

3. Thanks for the memories. To my division, thank you for 2024 and enjoy pounding Gotham City in 2025.

gotham city BATMEN

Anton Greenwald (40th year, Hall of Famer)

The Batmen may have something to say.

TBL Hall of Famer Anton Greenwald delivered everything the *Annual* expected in 2024, racking up 96 wins and his tenth division title. The *Annual* had them tied for the highest TQ in the league going into last year, and Clay Beard's pre-play had them comfortably ahead in the Mays as well.

This year, Gotham City takes a step back as New West steps forward. The Mays has three teams that will compete for second place and the Batmen may have something to say in that contest.

Pitching: 10.0
Some fine pitchers, but not enough.

Anton drafted 70 starts, many of them lower grade bulk starters designed to get the team legal. That's an indication that Gotham City is having a bit of a rebound. Still, there are some pitchers with talent on the roster.

ROTATION. There are still some terrific starters here, like Hunter Greene (Grade 17 C-23 HR+26, 26 starts). Greene is 26 years old. He was Dr. Greenwald's #1 draft pick in 2023. He's the only starter in the envelope who steals 8s without help. This guy is the kind of stud you can build a championship rotation around.

There are 67 more competent starts. Left-handed swing man Hogan Harris (Grade 12/15* C-41 HR+22, 9 starts) has the best grade among these guys, but is only a starter in May, July

Greene: Stud

SNT: Andrew Pages.

Pages is a favorite of the fantasy baseball illuminati, who point to his athleticism, and minor league performance. He can play. We are all just waiting for the talent to show up on the field on game day.
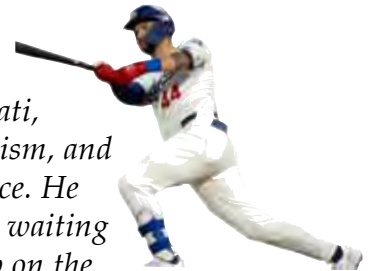
Turnover Rate: 28%

Arrived: Anthony BENDER, Jonathan CANNON, Justin LAWRENCE, Carson FULMER, Hogan HARRIS, Leo JIMENEZ, Andy PAGES, Pedro PAGES, Mitchell PARKER, Mike SIANI.

Departed: Yonny CHIRINOS, Bobby DALBEC, Carl Jr. EDWARDS, Mike FORD, Tommy HENRY, Yunior MARTE, Keynan MIDDLETON, Jordan MONTGOMERY, Daniel VOGELBACH, Jordan WEEMS.

and October. Thirty-five year old Nathan Eovaldi (Grade 10 C+23, 29 starts) and thirty-four year old Michael Wacha (Grade 10 C+21 HR+16, 29 starts) are both solid. The ages of these two may be another reason for the influx of youth this year.

Things start to get a little sketchy after that. Edward Cabrera (Grade 10 C-52 HR-15, 19 starts) goes to the mound for nineteen days of adventure. Peripherals like this are typically abused in TBL. The come the lucky sevens - Mitchell Parker (Grade 7 C+16 HR+13, 29 starts) and Joe Cannon (Grade 7 HR-14, 21 starts). If either of them breaks 90 with a fastball, it will be news. However, they will eat up three months of starts, which is why they were drafted.

Holton, Helsley: Closer and helper

gotham city BATMEN

58 IP) was the worst closer in baseball a year ago.

There's almost 600 innings of relief here. This group will be busy.

This is a cleverly constructed rotation. Clearly, Gotham City is rebuilding, but they allocate only 7 slots on the team to starters, covering all 162 games for 2025. That means more roster space for kids and lottery tickets. This is why Anton has won ten division titles.

BULLPEN. Tyler Holton (Grade 18* C+35 HR+26, 94 IP) was selected with Gotham City's #2 pick in the 2024 draft. That pick paid off immediately with a dominant season last year and this card – a whopping 94 innings of door-slamming goodness. Holton gets significant help from Ryan Helsley (Grade 16* HR+44, 66 IP), who had 49 saves for the Cardinals last year but will set up here. The only other reliever with a grade 13 and above is lefty Sam Moll (Grade 14* HR+26, 38 IP). There are 198 innings here of relievers who steal 8s.

There is a big mash of pitchers with lesser grades or bad peripherals. Jeff Criswell (Grade 12* C-34 HR-31, 20 IP) is one of the latter. Carson Fulmer (Grade 9* C-25, 87 IP) has a big number of usable innings. Clay Holmes (Grade 10* HR+36, 63 IP) is a decent reliever this season, and bears watching as the Mets give him a try as a starter in 2025.

Then there's Anthony Bender (Grade 8* HR+42, 53 IP) who will steal 9s and defeat the homer. Mark Leiter (Grade 8, 58 IP) and Brennan Bernardino (Grade 8*, 51 IP) provide some bulk and will help out the lesser starters when thing get rocky. David Bednar (Grade 5* C-25 HR-14,

Offense: **9.0**
Top-heavy and aging, but productive.

We like power hitters here at the *Annual*, and yessir – we got some. Anthony Santander (1-1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) knocked the stuffing out of the ball all year for Baltimore. He will sit in the cleanup spot in all lineups like Buddha with a bat. Shortstop Willy Adames (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 32 SSN for 25 SBA, R+1) pounded his way to a new contract last year. He bats third in most lineups. Giancarlo Stanton (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 4 speed, 114 games) has aged rapidly in the last few years, but he still hits it out of sight. He plays only against right-handed starters, and only as a DH. Carlos Santana (1-5-6,

Arraez: Unicorn

9 hits, 4 walks, L+6 R-4) plays first base all year and is still putting up nice cards at the tender age of 39.

Then there's Luis Arraez (3 0s, 12 hits, 1 walk, 3 31s, L-6 R+1). This guy is really a purple unicorn. He hits for a ridiculous average, very little power, doesn't run. On podcasts they burn 30 minutes trying to figure out what to do with this guy. Anton's figured it out – bat him second all year and leverage those 31s.

That's five plus hitters. Then there are several guys with average cards. Mark Canha (0-6, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, L+3 R-3) leads off and DHs against lefties when Stanton is out of the lineup. Jake Fraley (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-10, 18 speed number, 31 SSN for 26 SBA) leads off against

righties. Gio Urshela (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, R+1, L-9) plays third in the right-handed lineups. Tommy Pham (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks) – another geezer at age 37 – is a regular outfielder with an unspectacular card. Keibert Ruiz (3 0s, 9 hits, 127 games) and Luke Maile (2 0s, 7 hits, 3 walks+42) do the catching – but not the hitting part.

This is a top-heavy lineup that is carrying a scary amount of age. But they will score some runs this year.

Defense: 4.0
They'll catch the ball.

Gotham City is a very good defensive team in a division with exceptional defensive teams. Up the middle, Willy Adames (SS8) and Luis Arraez (2B8) will make most of the plays. There is no SS9 off the bench to bolster the defense, so Anton will just have to manage around the errors. At catcher, 27 year old Keibert Ruiz (C8, Th+0) does most of the glove work. Luke Maile (C8 Th+2) is his platoon partner and has a decent throwing arm. There is strength at the infield corners with Carlos Santana (1B5) and Gio Urshela (3B4) out there. Josh Jung (3B5, 48 games) plays against lefty starters and is very good.

The outfield is relentlessly average. Anthony Santander (OF2, 30 arm), Tommy Pham (OF2, 32 arm) and Jake Fraley (OF2, 31 arm) get regular time. The best outfielder on the club is Cristian

Santana: Strength

Pache (OF3, 36 arm), but he rarely plays. The up-and-coming Andy Pages (OF2, 31 arm) also logs innings.

It's all solid. Gotham loses some ground to teams like Maracaibo and New West, who have defensive wizards at every position. However, Gotham should catch the ball.

Bench: 2.5
Some options

Almost every player in the regular lineups is a platoon player. This means that half the roster is waiting for a lefty (or righty) reliever to show up. There is no hitting toy. Cristian Pache can help as a defensive replacement and a pinch runner; just don't ask him to pick up a bat. Jared Triolo (3B5, 2B9) is a really nice infielder and has some speed but is not much of a hitter. The bench has some options, but depth is not a team strength.

3rd The only thing we know for certain is that New West will win the division without breaking a sweat. The other three teams are very close. So this could be 2nd or 4th.

Ages of players on the Gotham City roster, as of 07/01/2025:

39: C. Santana
37: Pham
36: Canha
35: Eovaldi, Stanton
34: Leiter, Maile, Wacha
33: Bernardino, Moll, Urshela
32: Holmes, E. Rodriguez
31: Fulmer
30: Bednar, Bender, Fraley, Helsley, Lawrence, Santander
29: Adames, Holton
28: Arraez, Harris
27: E. Cabrera, Jo. Jung, Triolo
26: Pache, P. Pages, K. Ruiz
25: H. Greene, Parker, Siani
24: Cannon, L. Jimenez, A. Pages
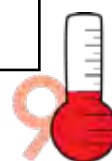
TQ: **25.5**

2024 maracaibo RUMRUNNERS in review

Something to root for.

by Walter Hunt

2024 in Review
Final Record: 75-87 (3rd, Mays)

A year ago, the Rumrunners were coming off the high of capturing the TBL championship. They were predicted to do well, but were no one's top choice to go all the way: there were some very good teams in the league, including the Series opponent Kansas Koyotes. When the dust had settled, however, it was clear that there was no chance of repeat. The infield was a mess; the pitching staff was diminished. Management had a lot of work to do.

Maracaibo is the only remaining team to never lose 100 games in a season. When the club isn't a contender, some effort is put in to make sure that doesn't happen. It means that the big high-draft payoff rarely happens, and that the club doesn't pursue a real boom-and-bust strategy. But it's at least something to root for.

What went right?

It was a long season, and after the championship year it was a letdown for Rumrunner fans. Still, there were some players providing positive impact. Brandon Marsh (.297-16-67, 38 doubles) came through in the middle of the order, and the new DP combination was solid: Bryson Stott hit .268 with 19 homers and 24 doubles, and rookie Ezequiel Tovar had 19 homers and 41 doubles. They made 15 errors between them.

On the mound, Alexis Diaz had 32 saves, Dylan Cease managed to go 12-12, 4.20, and Matt Manning won 9 games in 15 starts. The pitching staff struck out 1,388 batters in 1,430 innings, which helped the team to 75 wins.

Marsh: Came through

What went wrong?

The team struck out. A lot. No, really. Five regulars struck out 100 or more times, led by Tovar's 192 (with only 19 walks) and Marsh's 160. No player hit more than 19 homers, and the team hit only 157 overall (23rd in the league). Maracaibo slashed .238/.308/.411. The 4.23 team ERA was solidly in the bottom half, and that was the best news. Other than Cease, no pitcher won more than 9 games, and there was a lot of backing and filling on the mound, making management work hard to get through the season.

3 Things

1. Don't look back. In the department of "count your blessings," getting deep into the postseason is its own reward. Maracaibo in 2024 (and, indeed, Rocky Mountain in 2025) get to pay the bill for going all the way. But they both went all the way, so smile and move on.

2. Pitching is fickle. And fragile. After having two outstanding aces in 2023, the 2024 staff scuffled and had to be patched. As soon as the season got underway, one of the aces went down for season ending surgery. Yet hope springs eternal: some acquisitions for last year and for this year help make the team whole again. Ride the wave.

3. The clock is ticking. No player ever gets younger. It always pays to look a few years ahead to see whether the core players will still be there. Taking youth is always recommended, even though some of them just don't work out.

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

Walter Hunt (39th year); Hall of Famer

Maracaibo could very easily finish second this year, if they get some decent dice.

In 2024, the Rumrunners won 75 games, largely on the strength of their pitching staff. The hitters, despite some encouragement from Run Production Coach Tim Raines, scored an anemic 675 runs. In the 2024 off-season, there was much discussion of whether Mr Hunt would take some cardboard to augment the suddenly reinvigorated pitching staff. Or …would he grab some youngsters and wait a year? The answer came in the form of 2025 first round pick Dylan Crews – all 31 games of him. The future ain't now.

What's left is a team that's rebuilding upside down. The pitching staff is excellent. The hitting is definitely a work in progress. The inevitable re-emergence all depends on the kids.

Pitching: 10.5
Stacked and functional.

ROTATION. It's stacked, thanks to some intense drafting over the last five years, and the opportunistic acquisition of Framber Valdez (Grade 13 HR+32, 28 starts) from Rocky Mountain this off-season. Framber's uniform number is 'H', which stands for Horse: appropriate for a guy who has gone to the mound 90 times in the last 3 seasons.

Framber's not even the ace this year. The uniform numbered 'A' goes to Dylan Cease (Grade 14 C-14, HR+22, 33 starts) whose escape from the South Side of Chicago to the spacious and sunny fields of San Diego must have made Mr. Hunt's day.

There are two other starters that steal 8s without help. Michael King

Cease: The Ace, again

(Grade 13 HR+22, 30 starts) converted from a reliever to a starter last year, and it turned out rather well. Clark Schmidt (Grade 13 C-14 HR+23, 16 starts) managed to have a great half-year despite pitching in the tool shed in New York. The top 4 starters have 107 starts of grade 13 and above.

There are another 48 solid starts between Andrew Abbott (Grade 10 C-15 HR-25, 25 starts) and 87 year old Lance Lynn (Grade 9 C-14, 23 starts). The club drafted 23 year old Hayden Birdsong (Grade 11 C-62 HR-14, 16 starts) who has electric stuff and the advantage of pitching in San Francisco. This is one to watch.

Turnover Rate: 44%

Arrived: Javier BAEZ, Josh BELL, Hayden BIRDSONG, Angel CHIVILLI, Dylan CREWS, Jerar ENCARNACION, Ryan FERNANDEZ, Robert GARCIA, Kyle ISBEL, Jace JUNG, Lance LYNN, Chris MARTIN, Yuki MATSUI, Collin SNIDER, Edwin UCETA, Framber VALDEZ.

Departed: Yency ALMONTE, Orlando ARCIA, Matt CARPENTER, Austin GOMBER, Luis GUILLORME, Sam HAGGERTY, Travis JANKOWSKI, Joe KELLY, German MARQUEZ, Ron MARINACCIO, Luis MEDINA, Andruw MONASTERIO, Josh PALACIOS, Sixto SANCHEZ, Dominic SMITH, Andrew VASQUEZ.

SNT: Framber Valdez.

He's the horse – he came over from the champs, and even though he wasn't the top need, the opportunity to get him was too good to pass up.

maracaibo RUMRUNNERS

It's a beautiful starting rotation. Aside from Lynn, they're young enough to be around for a few years.

BULLPEN. The relief staff has not received the love that the starting rotation has enjoyed the last few years. But there is a legitimate closer on board: Edwin Uceta (Grade 21* C+31 HR+43, 42 IP). The peripherals make him a beast.

Getting to Uceta will be interesting. Collin Snyder (Grade 15* C+16, 42 IP) is the best reliever on the club that's not named Edwin. He will be capably assisted by Alexis Diaz (Grade 13* C-55 HR+16, 56 IP) and Yuki Matsui (Grade 13* C-22, 63 IP). The top 4 in the bullpen have 203 innings of Grade 13* and above. This is light, but the strong starters should help on some days. Last year, Maracaibo recorded 18 complete games.

Almost everyone in the bullpen steals 9s without help. Ryan Fernandez (Grade 11* C-25 HR+41, 67 IP) is a nice asset, with the patented Hunt Big Homer number to augment his other charms. Seranthony Dominguez (Grade 9* HR-32, 59 IP) and 37 year old Ryan Pressly (Grade 8* HR+34, 57 IP) help from the right side. There are two lefties - the very useful Robert Garcia (Grade 8* C+23 HR+35, 60 IP) and Tanner Banks (Grade 8* HR+31, 72 IP). If the bases are loaded, Chris Martin (Grade 7* C+61, 44 IP) is your guy.

Overall, this is not what the bullpen looks like when Mr. Hunt is going for it. However, it is functional.

Offense: 6.5
Speed, but a lack of power.

Last year, Maracaibo finished 16th in TBL in runs scored. They added several kiddos in the draft

Uceta: Named Edwin

that should develop into outstanding hitters (Dylan Crews – hello!), but the guys they added have light cards for this season. We're looking at another year of scuffling at the dish.

Salvador Perez (1-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 158 games) is still here for almost the entire season. Sal is 35 in May, but he'll be playing until he's 80 if he keeps hitting like this. Brandon Marsh (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-10 R+1, 33 SSN for 22 attempts) can't hit lefties (L-10) but he may help teach some of the other kids how to take a walk.

Maracaibo management is very happy about the quick emergence of shortstop Ezequiel Tovar (1-5-6-6, 10 hits, 1 walk). Tovar was Maracaibo's #1 draft pick in the 2024 draft. He had 63 XBH last year for the Rockies. He won't be 24 until August. He is the only hitter in the lineup with 4 power numbers. Also a source of joy is 26 year old catcher Patrick Bailey (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-10 R+1, 121 games), who established himself nicely with the San Francisco Giants last year.

Tovar: Power source

Zeke's double play partner is Bryson Stott (0-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 35 SSN for 35 attempts). Stott walks a bit and is blazing fast, but doesn't hit for much power. The immortal baseball question (and answer) 'Who's on first?' has a number of answers. Sal Perez plays there, as does trade acquisition Josh Bell (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 3 24s). Bell came over from Hoboken for a 2026 #4.

Luis Rengifo (3 0s, 11 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 31 attempts, 78 games) is a sneaky-good hitter who is buried on a lackluster Angels team. He only has 78 games, but he's listed as the starting 3B in most lineups. Lenyn Sosa (0-6, 10 hits, 1 walk, R-4) plays the other half of the year at

third. Starling Marte (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 35 SSM for 17 SBA, L+5, R-4) is entering his age 37 season. He's still effective against lefties, and his speed is helpful. Two other outfielders have lesser cards. Kyle Isbel (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 13 attempts), acquired from Northboro this offseason, plays against righties. Dylan Moore (3 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks+42, 32 SSN for 38 attempts, L+3) plays against lefties. Three guys get work at DH. Rookie Dylan Crews (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, 31 SSN for 15 SBA), rookie Jerar Encarnacion (1-5-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, 35 games) and Eloy Jimenez (0-6, 9 hits, 2 walks). None will overwhelm. There is a lot of speed here, but the lack of power probably bodes ill for this attack.

Defense: 6.0
Excellent where it counts the most.

This year, the Maracaibo defense is excellent where it counts the most. In the middle infield, Ezequiel Tovar (SS9) and Bryson Stott (2B9) catch everything that bounces in their direction. The

Bailey: Top catcher   Tovar: Top shortstop

catchers are Salvador Perez (C9 Th+5) and Patrick Bailey (C9 Th+4). It does not get better than this. The infield corners are Mr. Perez (1B3) and Josh Bell (1B3). Luis Rengifo (2B8, 3B4) is a good third baseman for half a year. For the other half, Lenyn Sosa (2B8, 3B3) will be less good. The regular outfielders are Brandon Marsh (OF3, 31 arm), Starling Marte (OF3, 34 arm), and Kyle Isbel (OF3, 30 arm). They will catch everything that flies. Dylan Crews (OF2, 31 arm) is about average on the days he plays.

This defense will help the pitching staff. The Maracaibo may be the best defensive team in TBL.

Bench: 2.0
Not much happening.

There are almost no instructions directing the use of players off the bench. Isbel and Josh Bell could be brought in in situations where someone pinch runs for a catcher and Sal Perez moves to catcher from first. There are no hitting toys. There's not much happening here.

4th Fourth in the Mays. Gotham City and Rye are better, but just barely. Maracaibo could very easily finish second this year, if they get some decent dice.

Ages of players on the Maracaibo roster, as of 07/01/2025:

39: C. Martin
38: Lynn
36: S. Marte, Pressly
35: S. Perez
33: Banks
32: Baez, J. Bell, D. Moore
31: F. Valdez
30: Dominguez, M. King
29: Alcantara, Cease, A. Diaz,
    R. Garcia, Matsui, Schmidt, Snider
28: Isbel, E. Jimenez, Rengifo
27: J. Encarnacion, Fernandez,
    Manning, B. Marsh, Stott, Uceta
26: Abbott, Bailey
25: L. Sosa
24: Ja. Jung
23: Birdsong, Crews, Tovar
22: Chivilli

TQ: **25.0**

Two Up, Two Down

After going to the World Series and coming up just short, the **Hoboken Zephyrs** have some more work to do. *Steve Powell* has put together a very serious team for the coming year. There's going to be quite a pennant race, but at the *Annual* thinks they have the edge. If for no other reason, there's this monster named Aaron Judge that, all on his own, may make the difference as the season goes on.

Meanwhile, out in the Midwest, *Pat Martin*'s **Knoxville Blue Thunder** are in the hunt, and have some very serious pitching. Their lineup doesn't match up with Hoboken, but there'll be a pennant race all summer. We think that both teams make the playoffs in any case, as they both did last year, but there are far fewer competitors in the conference. Both teams have some presence in the 2026 draft, and there may be moves to be made during the trading period.

We never take our eyes off *Joe Auletta*; meanwhile, he never takes his own eyes off the future. And that doesn't mean 2026: it means 2027 and beyond. The **Brobdingnag Barbarians** have a huge position in the next draft, as well as a serious handful of prospects who won't do much for them this year but are likely to blossom into, well, Barbarians in the near future.

Darrell Skogen's **Midwest Mongrels** were contenders just two years ago, but it's going to be a while before they are back there again. Things have largely fallen apart up in Minnesota: they have very little pitching (the Guru's favorite part) and a very modest lineup. Next year's draft isn't going to help, so the future seems quite far away.

Ruth Division

1. **Hoboken**   **28.0**
2. **Knoxville**   **26.5**
3. **Brobdingnag**   **19.5**
4. **Midwest**   **16.5**

Francisco Lindor,,
Hoboken

2024 hoboken ZEPHYRS in review
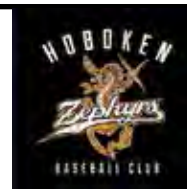
We're not printing playoff tickets yet.

by Steve Powell

2024 in Review
Final Record: 90-72 (1st, Ruth)

It was a very successful season in Hoboken, and this time it wasn't just a division: the Zephyrs took a close series against a tough Gotham City club, and swept an even tougher Whitman team that won 105. There was only one team they couldn't outlast.

What went right?

The season amounted to grabbing an early lead and hanging on. A 53-27 first half fueled by a 17-4 May (nice little 14-game win streak in there) offset a 37-45 second half. The end result was barely holding off Knoxville for a division title by only two games. It appears that Pat's team has replaced Whitman as our nemesis as we lost 11 of 14 games against the boys from Brooklyn Park.

Phillips: Locked down

Having two legitimate closer was bigger than you know who's 1s. Middle relief continued to be a problem (and still is) but Devin Williams and Evan Phillips locked down many tight contests as evidenced by the 25-13 record in 1-run games.

In spite of middling grades, Shane Bieber (12-7 2.96), Seth Lugo (15-3 2.46) and Bailey Ober (11-6 3.19) outperformed expectations and were more than just 5-inning starters.

What went wrong?

They struck out a lot, and only hit .238 as a team. Eight players struck out more than 100 times.

But these were merely annoyances – truly there was only one thing that went wrong: not winning game #180.

3 Things

1. Is another triple crown in store for Mr. Judge? He will get every opportunity to dominate the league as he will not miss many games in 2025.

2. Top heavy lineup, part 2. We ended 2024 with a -4 run differential (671-675)and 2025 should be no different. Will the lineup's bottom 3rd be a black hole on an otherwise solid offense?

3. We could get there again. A third consecutive post season appearance is a possibility, but we're not printing playoff tickets yet. (See the '64 Phillies for example.) We expect to be battling Knoxville right out of the gate and all season.

hoboken ZEPHYRS

Steve Powell (36th year)

Hoboken will be a nasty playoff matchup.
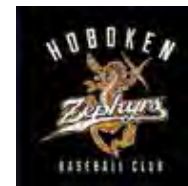
Gentlemen - say hello to your defending International Conference Champions! Steve Powell won a rugged pennant race in the Ruth Division, winning 90 and squeezing by Knoxville by 2 games. They survived a brutal series against Dr Greenwald's Gotham City Batmen before stunning a 105-win Whitman team 4-0 to make it to their first TBL World Series. They lost to Rocky Mountain in seven games, but 2024 was a terrific year for the Zephyrs.

There's more to come. The *Annual* is predicting another knock-down drag-out affair with Knoxville for the Ruth Division title in 2025. Hoboken has Aaron Judge, so we're picking Hoboken again.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Jonah BRIDE, Jake COUSINS, Reed GARRETT, Luis GIL, Darell HERNAIZ, Jose HERRERA, Tim HERRIN, Landon KNACK, Zach MCKINSTRY, Yariel RODRIGUEZ, Juan YEPEZ.

Departed: Brian W. ANDERSON, Josh BELL, Luis FRIAS, Oscar GONZALEZ, Kyle NELSON, Sammy PERALTA, Carlos E. PEREZ, Carlos RODON, Drew SMITH, Ross STRIPLING, Julio TEHERAN.

SNT: Luis Gil.

He won the AL Rookie of the year in 2024, and throws in the high 90s. He helps turn a very good Hoboken team into a serious threat to win the conference again.

Lugo, Ober: Two, Three

Pitching: **9.5**
Strong rotation; no solace in the pen.

ROTATION: Hoboken came into the 2025 TBL draft needing a staff leader for their rotation. Steve Powell sat patiently with the #18 pick and Luis Gil (Grade 16 C-53, 29 starts) fell right into his lap. He'll bring the heat all season, and match up with some of the best starters in the league.

The best news, though, is that the next 64 starts are taken by Seth Lugo (Grade 12 C+24 HR+31, 33 starts) and Bailey Ober (Grade 12 C+22 HR-21, 31 starts). These two are rock solid starters. Lugo is 35 this year, but has only been a starter for 2 years. He converted to starting with San Diego in 2023, and was spectacular last season for Kansas City.

There's more quality starts behind the top 3, but there are problems as well. Cody Bradford (Grade 11 C+35, 13 starts) brings a sweet 70:13 K/W ratio to his three months of starts. Landon Knack (Grade 11 C+21 HR-34, 12 starts) will pitch on days when gale force winds are blowing out. Yariel Rodriguez (Grade 10 C-41, 21 starts, 19 Fatigue) combines poor control with a short fatigue number, so the bullpen should be warming up early. Hayden Wesneski (Grade 9 HR-25, 7 starts) is around for only two months. Bryan Hoeing (Grade 15* C+22 HR+31) and Trevor

Richards (Grade 13* C-61 HR+16) will open 5 bullpen games in April and May.

Kenta Maeda (Grade 1, C+21 HR-31, 12 starts) is scheduled for a dozen starts, 11 of which come at home, where Steve can give him the quick hook. There 150 starts of Grade 9 and above. This is just behind Knoxville for the best starting pitching in the division.

BULLPEN. If you have a strong team, you need to be able to close. Unfortunately, Devin Williams (Grade 21* C-45 HR+44, 22 IP) battled injuries last year, so Steve had to cobble together a three-headed closer. He added left-hander Tim Herrin (Grade 21* C-23 HR+53, 66 IP) and Jake Cousins (Grade 23* C-55, 38 IP) on draft day. The top three have 126 innings of door-slamming termination between them.

Bryan Hoeing (Grade 15* C+22 HR+31, 54 IP) and Trevor Richards (Grade 13* C-61 HR+16, 61 IP) join Hayden Wesneski (Grade 14* HR-25, 32 IP) as the strong part of the setup crew. There are 147 innings here when 8s are not welcome.

There are another 214 competent middle relief innings as well. Reed Garrett (Grade 12* C-51 HR+21, 57 IP) has the best grade. Kenta Maeda (Grade 10*, C+21 HR-31, 42 IP) and Evan Phillips (Grade 10* C+14 HR+14, 55 IP) are the other right-handers. John King (Grade 10* C+26 HR+26, 60 IP) is a nice left-handed option with positive peripherals. Aaron Bummer (Grade 6* C+16 HR+52, 55 IP) is the mop.

Add it up, and Hoboken has 487 innings of Grade 10* or higher. Opponents will find no solace here.

Offense: Records may fall.

11.5

The reason the Zephyrs have been such a handful in the last few years is this guy - Aaron Judge (1-1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 6 walks, 35 SSN for 10 SBA). We have not seen cards like this since Barry Bonds was juicing in the early 2000s. Last year, Steve came up with the sociopathic idea of leading this card off, maximizing the number of plate appearances he got from Judge's card over 106 games. That worked. Aaron slashed .274/.420/.596 with 34 homers and 99 walks. This year, Steve's going to try that again for 158 games. Records may fall.

Judge: This guy

Judge has some help. Kerry Carpenter (1-1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, R+2, L-17, 87 games) is only around for half a season, but he'll leave a mark and turn this club into a nightmare playoff matchup. At least he can't hit lefties. William Contreras (1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 11 SBA) is one of the best hitting catchers in the majors, and suits up for a ridiculous 155 games at catcher. Francisco Lindor (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 34 SSN for 33 SBA, no shift) might be the best shortstop in baseball.

Carpenter: Help

There are three other excellent hitting cards. Jonah Bride (1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, R+2, 71 games) plays DH against right-handers. Josh Naylor (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks) brings the type of power you like to see at first base. Spencer Steer (1-4-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, 34 SSN for 28 SBA) – a super utility guy with both power and speed bats in the lower part of the order and plays left field all year.

Three other regulars have lesser cards. Donovan Solano (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks, 96 games) is the everyday third baseman. Thairo Estrada (3 0s, 9 hits, 1 walk) is the second baseman. He bats ninth. This hitting attack is well ahead of the rest of the division.

Defense: 4.5
Very solid.

Hoboken is very solid on defense as well. Francisco Lindor (SS9) and Thairo Estrada (2B8) make a nice double play combination. William Contreras (C8, TH+5) is not only a star defensively, but plays 155 games. There's never a reason to take this man out of the lineup. Aaron Judge (OF3, 36 arm) is extraordinary

Contereras: Star

in the field, because of course he is.

Josh Naylor (1B4) and Donovan Solano (3B4) capably man the hot and cold corners. The regular corner outfielders are Kerry Carpenter (OF2, 30 arm) and Spencer Steer (1B4, OF2, 30 arm). Both

are average with poor throwing arms. There's no defensive whiz sitting on the bench to help in the late innings. Still, Hoboken should be solid defensively. They are not quite Knoxville in this area, but they are good enough.

Bench: 2.5
Could use more.

In Steve's instructions, he calls out Joe Adell (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, 18 speed, L+7) as a hitting option against left-handers and as a pinch runner. Juan Yepez (0-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+1, 62 games) has a decent card and none of the issues against left-handers that some of the starters have. (We're looking at you, Kerry Carpenter.) Zach McKinstry (SS8, 3B3, 2B7, OF2, 32 arm) can't hit, but backs up all over the field.

Not the worst bench, but there's no hitting toy and they could use a defensive glove for the outfield.

hoboken ZEPHYRS

1st There's just too much hitting here. Knoxville is very close to Hoboken on paper, but Judge and Lindor should push Hoboken over the finish line in this division.

Hoboken will be a nasty playoff matchup too. Gil is a difference maker in the postseason.

Ages of players on the Hoboken roster, as of 07/01/2025:

37: Maeda, Solano
35: Lugo
33: Judge
32: Garrett, T. Richards
31: Bummer, Lindor
30: Bieber, Cousins, J. King, McKinstry, E. Phillips, D. Williams
29: Bride, T. Estrada, Ober
28: J. Herrera, Herrin, Hoeing, J. Naylor, Y. Rodriguez
27: Bradford, K. Carpenter, Contreras, Gil, Knack, Steer, Wesneski, Williamson, Yepez
26: Adell
25: Encarnacion-Strand
23: Hernaiz, L. Matos

TQ: **28.0**

2024 knoxville BLUE THUNDER in review

When you finally return to the playoffs, there isn't much to complain about.   by Pat Martin

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2024 in Review
Final Record: 88-74 (2nd, Ruth)

It was a pretty good season for the Outlaws, another even-numbered year where the team was in the playoff hunt. They turned in an 88-win campaign and went to the International Conference Final; and when you finally return to the playoffs, there isn't much to complain about.

What went right?

The team had a pretty solid lineup. Alex Kiriloff led all batters with a .291 average; Max Kepler hit 31 homers (the team had 207 overall), and Ozzie Albies was good all around (.285-33-92, 10 for 10 stealing.)

Albies: All around

On the mound, the bullpen was very effective. Shelby Miller (27 saves, 1.80 ERA) was a lights out closer, and he had lots of help from other members of a deep supporting cast.

Overall, the youth of the past three drafts have stepped up to form a solid core that helped return the Blue Thunder to relevance. The young starting pitching finally came through with consistency and the offense finally performed up to expectations.

What went wrong?

The offense generated 757 runs, which wasn't as solid as other playoff contenders, and the team hit only .237 overall. The starting pitching was solid enough, but no starter won more than 11 games. Finally, after getting by a surging Riverwoolf team, they dropped a semi-final series to Whitman in six games, leaving them on the outside looking in.

3 Things

1. PLAYOFFS!! After wandering through the desert of injuries and failed trade attempts, the Blue Thunder settled down and let the draft fill the roster spots.

2. Youth and trades are finally paying off The last few drafts have seen the focus shift from immediate need to what can we use to build for long term consistency. That's a major move toward having a winning club for years to come, with the young players leading the way.

3. A change in philosophy. This year the off season focus was on building the team internally, and reducing the need for what is lovingly called "roster churn". Not having to do that is very much a step in the right direction.

knoxville BLUE THUNDER

Pat Martin (39th year)

They need to stay healthy.

The Knoxville Blue Thunder have been riding the seesaw since 2020, when Pat Martin emerged from four straight losing seasons to go 87-75. Since then, Knoxville has fielded strong teams in alternate years (2022, 2024) interspersed with reloading seasons (2021, 2023).

We here at the *Annual* think that pattern ends this year. In 2025, Knoxville is good. And if they catch a break or two with the young players they've been stockpiling, there's a chance that this team may be contending for years to come.

Pitching: 10.0
Durable pitchers.

Pat Martin has been at this a while, and he knows that TBL has one eternal, unbending constraint that defines every pick you make on draft day – you must have 162 starts. If you do not, you get to burn resources – draft picks mostly – to acquire those starts.

ROTATION. Pitchers – regardless of grade – that have jobs and are durable are incredibly valuable in our league. Knoxville has been building a collection of nice, durable starters using 5 draft picks and 2 trades. The 2025 Blue Thunder covers all 162 starts with seven pitchers.

Turnover Rate: 31%

Arrived: Jorge ALCALA, Pedro AVILA, Jacob BARNES, Vidal BRUJAN, Sean GUENTHER, Andrew KITTREDGE, Kyle LEAHY, Victor ROBLES, Josh ROJAS, Keegan THOMPSON, Simeon WOODS RICHARDSON.

Departed: Logan T. ALLEN, Nick ALLEN, Garrett COOPER, Patrick CORBIN, Ryan MCKENNA, Julian MERRYWEATHER, Jovani MORAN, Bryan SHAW, Chase SILSETH, Justin TOPA, Ramon URIAS.

The Guy We All Want™ is 28 year old Cole Ragans (Grade 13 C-15 HR+26, 32 starts). Ragans fanned 223 helpless batters last year,

Ragans: Guy we all want™

good for fifth in the majors. This is his second year in a row posting a Grade that steals 8s. He was a Grade 15 last year.

The other 130 starts are taken by starters with Grades 9 and 10. Nick Pivetta (Grade 10 C+23 HR-32, 26 starts) and Taj Bradley (Grade 10 HR-21, 25 starts) have the double digit grades. Pivetta is now plying his trade in pitcher friendly San Diego after having his deliveries ricochet off the Green Monster at Fenway Park for several years. Those two are followed by Kyle Gibson (Grade 9 C-23, 30 starts), rookie Simeon Woods Richardson (Grade 9, 28 starts) and Grayson Rodriguez (Grade 9, 20 starts). The only sketchy name in the stack is Triston McKenzie (Grade 9 C-62 HR-44, 3 starts) whose peripherals will make for some entertaining baseball.

SNT: Simeon Woods Richardson.
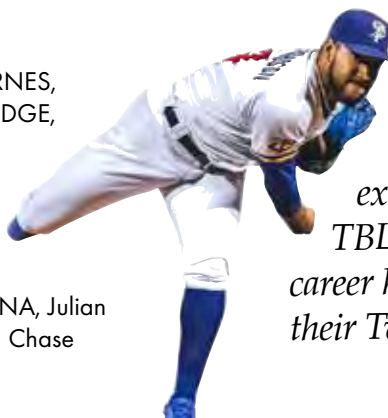
He is a durable, middle-of-the-rotation workhorse. He's a doesn't throw hard, but durability is an extremely valuable commodity on a TBL pitching staff. He'll have a long career here in Knoxville, where they love their Twins.

knoxville BLUE THUNDER

It's a good group. Knoxville gives nothing away here.

BULLPEN. Pat built a Frankenstein closer for 2025 using late draft picks and partial season cards. Sean Guenther (Grade 21* C+46 HR+62, 21 IP) – an XC! – is the best of the group. He'll get help in the ninth from Baltimore left-hander Daniel Coulombe (Grade 22* C+33, 30 IP) and Keegan Thompson (Grade 18* C-62 HR+22, 30 IP). The committee has 81 innings of Grade 18*+.

There's a nice setup crew here as well. Jorge Alcala (Grade 15* HR-14, 58 IP), Colin Holderman (Grade 14* C-43 HR+14, 51 IP) and Andrew Kittredge (Grade 13* C+21 HR-14, 71 IP) steal 8s without help. There are 180 innings here.

Behind those guys is a parade of competent middle relievers. Pedro Avila (Grade 11* C-31 HR+23, 83 IP) will probably pitch in every series. Andrew Chafin (Grade 11* C-43 HR+25, 56 IP), Shelby Miller (Grade 11* C+24 HR-22, 56 IP) and Elvis Peguero (Grade 11* C-36 HR+33, 51 IP) combine to build a bridge to the late relievers and help out the starters if they have a bad night. Kyle Leahy (Grade 10* C+26 HR+25, 49 IP) is also useful here, with nice peripherals to go with the decent grade. Jacob Barnes (Grade 7* C+16 HR-15, 66 IP) is the mop. That's a pretty good mop.

There are 622 innings in this bullpen. Used aggressively, this will win Knoxville some games.

Offense: 8.0
Missing games slow them down.

There's good news and bad news for Knoxville fans on offense. The good news is that there are some juicy cards here. The bad news is that most of the top-tier hitters are missing games. One guy who's not taking months off is Matt Chapman (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks). Chapman is 32 this season. He's putting up respectable numbers and great cards despite hitting in a tough home park in San Francisco. He bats fourth all summer long.

Every year we get to stare lovingly at Byron Buxton (1-0-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 18 speed, 102 games) and wonder what would happen if he ever stayed healthy for a full season. Didn't happen last year, but this generation's Eric Davis made the most of his time on the field. He leads off for Knoxville, health permitting.

Chapman: Full time

Max Kepler (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks) hits third in all lineups, and that's not good news. He checks in for 105 games this year before heading for the training room. Victor Robles (5-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+42, 35 SSN for 36 BA, R+3, 91 games), who has to be one of the most underrated players in baseball, has four months of games with a terrific card that is not even mentioned in Pat's instructions. He'll play all 91.

There are several regulars with lesser cards. Jorge Polanco (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks) bats second in all lineups. Josh Rojas (3 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks, L-14 R+1)

Polanco: Bats second

is listed as the regular second baseman, but Ozzie Albies (4 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 34 SSN for 9 SBA, L+5, 99 games) will play all his games this season because of his defensive rating. Gabriel Moreno (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, 97 games) and Ryan Jeffers (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, 122 games) are the catchers. Geraldo Perdomo (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 34 SSN for 10 SBA, 98 games) is the regular shortstop, and is missing 60 games. Harrison Bader (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 18

speed) plays left field in all the lineups and bats eighth.

If everyone played a full season, this would be a very good lineup. But Pat will be sitting good cards all year to meet game limitations. They're well behind Hoboken offensively.

Defense: 6.0
Exceptional when the best are playing.

When the best players are playing, Knoxville is an exceptional defensive team. Ozzie Albies (2B9) and Geraldo Perdomo (SS9) will vacuum up everything hit to the middle infield. Matt Chapman (3B5) is as good with the leather as he is with the wood. Gabriel Moreno (C9 Th+5) is a defensive star and platoon mate Ryan Jeffers (C8 Th-1) is solid as well.

Moreno: Star

Knoxville has the best defensive outfield in TBL. Harrison Bader (OF3, 35 arm), Byron Buxton (OF3, 36 arm), and Victor Robles (OF3, 37 arm) are all outstanding with exceptional throwing arms. Max Kepler (OF3, 34 arm) is also a standout. Connor Joe (1B4) and Alexi Kirilloff (1B3) share first base.

The backups – who are out there for several months due to game limitations – are good defenders as well. Jorge Polanco (2B8) and Vidal Brujan (2B8, SS8, 3B3) back up Albies at second. The top 4 outfielders cover all but 45 starts. Those go to Nolan Jones (OF2, 36 arm) who is very competent. This is one of the best defensive teams in the league

Bench: 2.5
Lots of platoons.

Almost every player in the starting lineups has a platoon partner, which makes the team very flexible; that's why the rating is what it is. But there is no pinch hitting or pinch running

Ages of players on the Knoxville roster, as of 07/01/2025:

37: Gibson
35: J. Barnes, Chafin, Coulombe, Kittredge
34: S. Miller
33: Bethancourt
32: M. Chapman, Joe, Kepler, Pivetta
31: Bader, Buxton, Polanco, J. Rojas
30: K. Thompson
29: Alcala, T. Beck, Guenther, Holderman
28: Albies, Avila, Jeffers, Leahy, Peguero, Robles
27: Brujan, N. Jones, Kiriloff, McKenzie, Ragans
25: Moreno, Perdomo, G. Rodriguez
24: Bradley, Woods Richardson
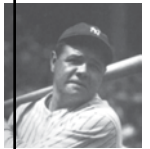
Knoxville BLUE THUNDER

called out in the instructions. Christian Bethancourt (C7 Th+4) can play a little defense. Nolan Jones (5-6, 8 hits, 4 walks, R+1, 79 games) can play a little.

2nd The Blue Thunder are breathing down Hoboken's neck in this division race.

It comes down to the fact that Aaron Judge plays over there, not over here. Pat Martin's drafting has improved the foundation of this team significantly over the last three years. They need to stay healthy.

TQ: **26.5**

2024 brobdingnag BARBARIANS in review

Vlad doesn't do half-hearted purges.

by Joe Auletta

2024 in Review
Final Record: 65-97 (3rd, Ruth)

This was supposed to be Year 2 of the five year plan, the year of laying the cornerstone pieces for he next upswing. And it sort of was. Five new SNTs were added to the three retained ones (Acuna, Soo, Machado), but the results were decidedly murky. The 65-97 record was a definite disappointment, and wasted an MVP-quality performance by Ronald Acuna. The result was not a surprise: major purge. Vlad doesn't do half-hearted purges. The pitching staff took he majority of the blame — 9 pitchers had an ERA of 4.39+ for a dozen innings or more, and only one remains. It is yet to be seen if he net result is a change from a five year rebuild to a six year one.

Acuna: MVP

What went right?

The middle of the lineup did their part, built around a full season .316/.404/.629, 47 HR and 54 steal year from center fielder Ronald Acuna. Juan Soto (.918 OPS wih 34 HRS and 116 runs scored) was a quality accomplice. It was harder to find positive highlights from the pitching staff, though Tyler Glasnow (12-7, 3.84 ERA) was quality even if limited to 21 starts.

An honorable mention is needed for the year Miles Mikolas had—yes, he was 4-24 with a 5.54 ERA, but he took the ball for 35 starts, pitched 224 "memorable" innings, and without him the Barbarians would have had to forfeit the season in light of the multitude of injuries.

What went wrong?

The young quartet drafted in the first round of the 2024 draft failed to establish themselves as cornerstone players. Elly de la Cruz and Bobby Miller were fine, but Francisco Alvarez (.599 OPS in 120 games), Jordan Walker (.569 in 116 games) left much to be desired, and have questions to answer going forward.

The pitching in particular was not major league quality: while he offence was overall middle of the pack, the pitching staff was a bottom-3 with a team ERA of 4.66.

3 Things

1. How much of a much acclaimed future lineup is legitimate? After the 2024 and 2025 drafts Brobdingnag has assembled a future lineup made up of 8 first round picks, none older than 27. Can that potential show enough performance to justify he signing bonuses and keep the fans optimistic?

2. Is there enough pitching? There are seven draftees breaking camp, two returning from season long 2024 injuries, and three veterans added in trades. That is a lot to absorb, and many of the rookies should really be in the minors for now.

3. How will the team respond to being thrown into the crucible? This is especially true in the pen, where almost everyone is inexperienced and are not used to throwing a lot of innings.

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Joe Auletta (37th year; Hall of Famer)

Joe knows.

Consider this: *Joe Auletta is thinking about 2027.*

Most of us start our serious draft consideration late in the season, perhaps during the trading period, or even at the end of the MLB season when the stats are in the books and the draft list is pretty stable. We are two months behind the Prince of Darkness in that arena, and at least a year behind the overall scope of team-building. He's thinking about where the club will be two years out. And he's been doing that since 1989, when he took a team that was exactly at .500, disassembled it, and put it back together in the intended image. Everyone except Eric Davis left town: Don Mattingly, Bill Doran, Bobby Bonilla, Andree Dawson, Ellis Burks, Jack Morris, Mark Langston – it was a decent team, but it had never really gone anywhere. Greg Wells left the league, Joe Auletta arrived, and in short order he earned his nickname as the *Prince of Darkness*. Not for being a shark: for sticking to the idea that any player, every player, could be had for the right price, usually draft picks.

Over the next two years the team was a door-mat (36-126 twice), then they won 76, 83, 93, 115 and 108. 1996 was the off year, then four straight 100-win seasons… and so on. During his tenure the team has won 100 or more sixteen times, and lost 100 or more six times. Eight championships, eight last place finishes, always considering the season two years out. We remember the 1990 draft at West Point when, just as the first round began, a copter landed nearby. "Here comes Ken Griffey," someone quipped. Step by step he built dominance. It's happening again: look at the breakthrough list later on – Caminero, Dominguez, Holliday, Soderstrom – added to Machado, De la Cruz, Acuna, Soto and others. And by 2027 . . . who knows? Take it from us: *Joe knows.*

SNT: Junior Caminero.

An outstanding young prospect, he was a perfect Barbarian pick for the 2025 draft. His raw power made him the #1 on MLB Pipeline last year.

Turnover Rate: 44%

Arrived: Junior CAMINERO, Gerrit COLE, Jasson DOMINGUEZ, Jose FERRER, David FESTA, Dakota HUDSON, Jackson HOLLIDAY, Ronny MAURICIO, Roddery MUNOZ, Kevin NEWMAN, Tony SANTILLAN, Gavin SHEETS, Cade SMITH, Drew THORPE, Jordan WICKS, Ryan YARBROUGH.

Departed: Jack FLAHERTY, Wilmer FLORES, Giovanny GALLEGOS, Luis V. GARCIA, Chad GREEN, Hunter HARVEY, Jakob JUNIS, Craig KIMBREL, Peter LAMBERT, Korey LEE, Miles MIKOLAS, Omar NARVAEZ, Gregory SANTOS, Ryne STANEK, Ranger SUAREZ, Abraham TORO.

Pitching: 7.0
Half the time helpful.

There are some positive things on the pitching staff, but overall the group is not here to be dominant. There is half a season of solid starts and the other half is set up to lose. The bullpen isn't super strong, but there's a serious closer. What we believe is that there will be games they can definitely win, and games they should probably lose, and you'll know the difference.

ROTATION. Let's consider the top half. Tyler Glasnow (Grade 14 C+16) is the #1 again:

Glasnow: #1, again

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

along with Brian Woo (Grade 13 C+45) there are 44 top starts. Gerrit Cole (Grade 12 C+13) has half a season but will be missing next year, an unfortunate outcome. Rookies Drew Thorpe (Grade 9 C-42 HR-24) and David Festa (Grade 7) have another 22 usable starts.

Then . . . it's Roddery Munoz (Grade 3 C-42 HR-62), Walker Buehler (Grade 2 HR-32), Jordan Wicks (Grade 2 C-24 HR-25) and Dakota Hudson (Grade 2 C-55). That half of the rotation will be brutally beaten, and the instructions only replace them in the sixth unless they've been forced out.

Smith: Serious closer

BULLPEN. There simply aren't enough innings to cover the many bad starts, but the relief corps does have some upside. Cade Smith (Grade 17* C+23 HR+62) and Ben Joyce (Grade 17* C-31 HR+54) have 110 innings of serious closer, and Ryan Yarborough (lefty Grade 14* C+13 HR+13) and Tony Santillan (Grade 15*) have another 129 setup innings. Kris Bubic (Grade 12* C+54 HR+34), Jhoan Duran (Grade 10* C+24 HR+33) and Jose Ferrer (Grade 10* C+33 HR+53) add 116 more.

And that's it. The remainder of the innings will be filled by bad starters, presumably. Again, the games where the lineup keeps the team in the game, the pitching would help. Otherwise – it'll be a bit of a problem.

Offense: 7.0
It'll deliver . . . sometimes.

There are some good offensive cards in the stack for Brobdingnag. The lineup is built around All-World Juan Soto (1-1-4-6, 10 hits, 6 walks, 25 SSN for 11 SBA). His tag-team partner is Manny Machado (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 19 SBA). Elly De La Cruz (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN, 83 SBA) will be a force when he gets on base.

Soto: All-world

The next tier of batters is much more pedestrian. Gleyber Torres (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks), Nolan Schanuel (2 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks) and Gavin Sheets (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-6) all get a lot of playing time, as do catchers Joey Bart (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+7 R-4), Francisco Alvarez (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks) and Luis Campusano (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-10 R+2). Ronald Acuna (0-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 32 SSN for 19 SBA) is well off his peak. Tyler Soderstrom (1-5-6, 9 hits), Oswaldo Cabrera (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks), Jordan Walker (1-6-6, 8 hits, 2 walks), and rookie Caminero (1-4-6, 9 hits, 2 walks) will all get to play.

This is a fine group of names, but the overall impact of the actual cards isn't especially what you'd expect from a serious Brobdingnag offense. There'll be some empty innings with occasional explosions. Like the pitching staff it'll deliver . . . sometimes.

Defense: 3.5
Sometimes helpful, but not always.

The Barbarians are not especially strong in the field. There are two Fielding One positions: Manny Machado (3B5), who is a top glove at the hot corner, and Gleyber Torres (2B8), who is very solid in the middle. They'll both play every day. Ronald Acuna is an OF3, but is limited to about a third of the season.

The catchers are all C8s; unfortunately, Alvarez and Campusano are Th-0s, and Bart is a Th-2.

Sadler: Stands out

Machado: Top glove

The majority of positions are occupied by Fielding Two players. Juan Soto, Oswaldo Cabrera, Jasson Dominguez and Jordan Walker are all OF2s; Nolan Schanuel and Tyler Soderstrom are 1B3s; Elly De La Cruz is an SS8, as is Jackson Holliday (he's also a 2B8). Junior Caminero is a 3B3, though Cabrera (3B4) can replace him. Gavin Sheets is an OF1 and he'll be out there sometimes.

Overall, the defense will usually not hurt that much, but it'll only be helpful in certain places and in some games.

Bench: **2.0**
Very limited.

As usual when the Barbarians are rebuilding rather than contending, there isn't a lot on the bench to help. Kevin Newman (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 34 SSN for 9 SBA) plays everywhere, and rookies Jackson Holliday and Jasson Dominguez, a big part of the Brobdingnag future, don't have terribly helpful cards now, but can run and field. The three catchers provide some flexibility, and there are some platoon options, which makes the team better than when Brobdingnag is awful. Still, it's all very limited.

Holliday, Dominguez: The future

3rd The presence of the Midwest train wreck puts the Barbarians in this position. Both Hoboken and Knoxville are significantly better, and Midwest is arguably worse.

The club has a huge impact in the 2026 draft, has some very talented veterans and some extraordinary young players that haven't arrived yet.

Are they good enough to contend in 2026? That's very dependent on the performance of the players in MLB. Meanwhile . . . *he's thinking about 2027.*

brobdingnag BARBARIANS

Ages of players on the Brobdingnag roster, as of 07/01/2025:

34: Cole
33: Yarbrough
32: Machado, Woodruff
31: Glasnow, Newman
30: Buehler, D. Hudson
29: Sheets
28: Bart, Santillan, Torres
27: Acuna, Bubic, Jh. Duran
26: O. Cabrera, Campusano, B. Miller,
    C. Smith, J. Soto
25: Ferrer, D. Festa, R. Munoz,
    Wicks, Woo
24: Joyce, Mauricio, Thorpe
23: F. Alvarez, E. De La Cruz, Schanuel,
    Soderstrom, J. Walker
22: J. Dominguez
21: Caminero, Holliday

TQ: **19.5**

2024 midwest MONGRELS in review

What they want is for things to break right.

by Walter Hunt

2024 in Review
Final Record: 56-106 (4th, Ruth)

The season outcome wasn't really ever in doubt. The Mongrels were bad, top to bottom, start to finish; even the best parts of the team weren't very good. Kyle Schwarber was the best power source and hit .198/.293/.389, only marginally acceptable because of his 101 walks to go with 217 Ks. The team did hit more than 200 home runs, and 650 runs for a 56-win team isn't nothin' – but the pitching was awful as expected. It becomes a question of where the team goes now.

What went right?

Schwarber's three true outcomes was a bit entertaining, and there was some offense: Elias Diaz hit .281 with 18 homers; Julio Rodriguez was capable (30 homers, 33 doubles); J. P. Crawford hit .265 with 88 walks. Royce Lewis, the player Midwest turned the 2024 draft upside down to get, hit .301 with 13 homers in 57 games. Two players stole 20 bases.

Rodriguez: Capable

There wasn't much interesting on the mound, though Javier Assad was a workhorse (11-7, 10 saves, 3.08 in 108 innings). Cionel Perez, Brooks Raley and A. J. Puk pitched a lot and helped the team to its win total.

What went wrong?

Everything, pretty much. Eight players struck out more than 100 times, led by Schwarber (who might as well count as two guys). The team hit .236, but even with some modest power, there wasn't anything scary in the lineup. They were outscored 932-679.

On the mound it was pretty much bombs away. Aside from Assad and some of the relievers, the club gave up runs in buckets. The starters were a bunch: Shane McClanahan (5-10, 5.04), Tony Gonsolin (5-9, 5.34), Garrett Whitlock (3-13, 5.78), Kyle Muller (4-7, 6.08), Zach Davies (3-11, 6.32) and Joan Adon (2-15, 8.77) were everything they had been advertised to be.

3 Things

1. There is no point in looking back. The 56-106 team has been put back on the shelf and they won't be reassembled, even in fond memory. Mr. Skogen is sentimental and a true baseball fan as well as an experienced APBA player. He's been blessed and cursed by the Dice Gods, but the 2024 Midwest club wasn't a team that either needed the blessing or suffered the curse. It was just a Year in the Life, and it's over.

2. Sentimentality prevails. Skogen is a Twins fan and that contributes to the decision-making. There are only a few Minnesota boys on the roster this year, and now there are two other Minnesota boys among the TBL management, so things are more complicated.

3. This hasn't gotten better; and it's not going to get better for more than a year. If the relatively young players on the roster have good years, the team will be in position to be a rebuilder. The draft doesn't help nearly enough: they pick starting in the second round. (Munich has their no doubt early first rounder.) What they want is for things to break right, but that means a productive 2025 and more than 57 games of Royce Lewis.

midwest MONGRELS

Darrell Skogen (24th year)

This is going to take a while.

The Midwest Mongrels pushed all their chips into the middle of the table in 2023, winning 112 games, their fifth division crown, and a playoff series win against Strong City. They face planted against eventual TBL champion Maracaibo in the International Conference championship, but it was a special year.

The whistling sound we heard in 2024 was Midwest going off a high cliff, Wile E. Coyote style. The Mongrels landed hard – a 56-106 record and a last place finish in the Ruth. The pain continued on draft day – the Dawgs didn't have a pick until the fourth round. They paid for the party that day.

Turnover Rate: 39%

Arrived: Logan T. ALLEN, Mike BAUMANN, Patrick CORBIN, Henry DAVIS, Jack KOCHANOWICZ, Zack LITTELL, Keider MONTERO, Caleb THIELBAR, Ramon URIAS, Victor VODNIK, Taijuan WALKER, Greg WEISSERT, Masyn WINN, Jacob YOUNG.

Departed: Joan ADON, Jaime BARRIA, Zach DAVIES, Eduardo ESCOBAR, Shintaro FUJINAMI, Rich HILL, Luis PATINO, A.J. PUK, Brooks RALEY, Victor ROBLES, Casey SCHMITT, Connor SEABOLD, Michael A. TAYLOR, Garrett WHITLOCK.

SNT: Masyn Winn.

A young defensive shortstop who surprised by hitting 15 HR. He slashed .268/.314/.416 for a full season. Winn has plus speed, moderate power and a gold glove. Mr. Skogen acquired Winn from Munich for MID 2026 #1.

What's left is a team that currently resides at the bottom of the heap – they have the lowest TQ in the Ruth, and their first-round pick in 2026 is owned by Munich. This is going to take a while.

Pitching: 4.0
Midwest will play 162 games.

Midwest won a TBL title in 2009 on the strength of a suffocating pitching staff. So The Guru knows he needs to build another one – from scratch – if he's going to take another run at the brass ring.

ROTATION. There is one starter with a double-digit grade - Javier Assad (Grade 10 C-31, 29 starts). For a little over a month, Midwest will have a chance to compete.

Assad: Best there is

The next highest grade in the stack is Zack Littell (Grade 7 C+33, 29 starts). Littell is not related to Kansas City closer Mark Littell, inventor of the anatomically-correct athletic cup called the Nutty Buddy. (You don't get information like that in every publication.)
There are 27 starts of grade 6 - Jack Kochanowicz (Grade 6 C+43 HR+14, 11 starts) and Keider Montero (Grade 6 HR-32, 16 starts), taken with Midwest's first pick in the 2025 TBL draft. Kochanowicz struck out 25 batters in 65 innings for the Angels last season. After that, there are 77 innocuous starts,

which should mean that Midwest will be out of the playoff race by Tax Day. Logan Allen (Grade 2 C-24 HR-36, 20 starts), Tyson Blach (Grade 1 C+25 HR-36, 24 starts), Patrick Corbin (Grade 1 C+14, 4 starts, 174 IP) and promising Detroit starter Casey Mize (Grade 3 C+21 HR+21, 28 starts) will show up for every game. This action will be rated PG-13.

Patrick Corbin – he of the 174 innocuous inning pitched - is used as a Super Valet. He starts only 4 games and is available anytime one of the woeful starters gets clubbed. He will be a busy man.

BULLPEN. Since half the starts are by guys rated Grade 3 or less, there is no question that this set of relievers will be an improvement on the starters. That's not the same as saying that they are any good, though.

Diaz: Stuff

Edwin Diaz (Grade 15* C-23, 54 IP) is the closer. Now 31 years old, Diaz still has excellent stuff (84 Ks in 54 innings). He's the ninth inning closer. Darrell has a LOOGIE - Sam Hentges (Grade 14* C+25, 24 IP). He is the only reliever on the team besides Diaz that steals 8s.

The setup men are Greg Weissert (Grade 9* C+22 HR+14, 63 IP) and Kyle Muller (Grade 7* C+42, 49 IP). The middle relievers – called to get Midwest through innings 6 and 7 – are Victor Vodnik (Grade 8* C-44 HR+24, 74 IP) and Cionel Perez (Grade 9* C-51 HR+62, 54 IP). Then there's Pat Corbin – all day every day, and some combination of Mike Bauman (Grade 5* C-33 HR-14, 58 IP), Enyel De Los Santos (Grade 6* C-15 HR-52, 64 IP) and Caleb Thielbar (Grade 5* C-33, 47 IP).

Counting Corbin's innocuous innings pitched total, there are 661 relief innings here – an amazing total. Midwest will play all 162 games this season.

Offense: 6.0
Not completely awful.

Strange things are afoot with this offense. The two marquee selections in recent drafts are Royce Lewis (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 82 games) and Julio Rodriguez (1-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 32 SSN for 29 SBA). Both will thrive eventually, but Lewis has been tortured with injuries and Rodriguez had a mysterious power outage last year. There's the core of a very good lineup here somewhere.
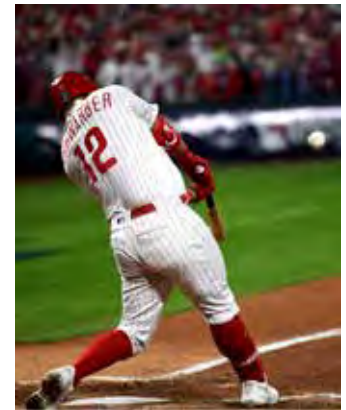
Schwarber: Three outcomes

The man in the middle of the 2025 lineups is Kyle Schwarber (1-1-6, 9 hits, 5 walks, 150 games). Schwarber bats third all season. You won't find a better Three True Outcomes hitter anywhere. Despite being slow (6 speed), Kyle has no 24s on his card. He's joined at the top of the lineup by Cedric Mullins (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 38 SBA, R+1, L-11). People have been waiting for Mullins to lose his job to the wave of talented kids coming up in Baltimore, but he keeps playing and keeps producing.

Trevor Larnach (1-5-6, 9 hits, 4 walks, 112 games) provides some pop against righthanded starters. Second baseman Michael Massey (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 1 walk, 100 games) has some sweet power numbers but needs to learn to take a walk. Twenty-three year old Masyn Wynn (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 18 speed) is developing into a very solid player. His bat has come along faster than many analysts expected. First base is split between Joey Meneses (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks +42, R+2) and Ramon Urias (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks + 42). Meneses starts against righthanders. Yasmani

Grandal (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks) and Elias Diaz (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 4 24s, 96 games) split the catching duties.

It's not completely awful. There is some power and the lineup is fairly deep. If the kids can get through a healthy season, this hitting attack will look completely different in a year.

Defense: **4.5**

Good defensively.

Massey: Strong glove

Midwest is very good defensively. In the middle of the infield, they have Masyn Wynn (SS9) and Michael Massey (2B9). Behind these excellent glove men are JP Crawford (SS9) and super sub Ernie Clement (3B5, SS8). Elias Diaz (C8, Th+3) is the best of the catchers, but Yasmani Grandal (C7, TH-4) is a regular. After a career as a plus defender, Gandal has one of the worst defensive ratings in the league.

At third base, Ramon Urias (3B5, 2B8) gets regular playing time. So does Royce Lewis (3B4, 82 games), but he's still solid. Joey Meneses (1B3) and Urias (1B3) are the display first basemen. In the outfield, there's better news. Cedric Mullins (OF3, 33 arm) and Julio Rodriguez (OF3, 33 arm) are excellent. Trenton Grisham (OF3, 30 arm) can't throw, but he's sure handed. Trevor Larnach (OF2, 36 arm) is solid and has an excellent throwing arm. Jacob Young (OF3, 30 arm) is the defensive replacement in the outfield.

Bench: **2.0**

Some options.

There are some nice defensive assets on the pine. Ernie Clement (3 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk) plays four positions and is the best third baseman on the team. JP Crawford (3 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks, 105 games) is a spare SS9. Jacob Young (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 30 SSN for 43 SBA) is the leadoff man against left-handers, and is a blazing fast runner off the bench when he's not starting. There are no 12 hit freak show cards here, but this bench does offer some options.

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midwest MONGRELS

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Ages of players on the Midwest roster, as of 07/01/2025:

38: Thielbar
36: Grandal
35: Corbin, T. Walker
34: Blach, El. Diaz
33: Meneses, Schwarber
31: Ed. Diaz, Gonsolin, Urias
30: J. P. Crawford, Mullins, Weissert
29: Baumann, Clement, De Los Santos, Littell, C. Perez
28: Grisham, Hentges, Larnach, McClanahan, Mize
27: Assad, Massey, Muller
26: L. T. Allen, Lewis
25: H. Davis, Vodnik, J. Young
24: Kochanowicz, Montero, Ju. Rodriguez
23: Winn

4th

There's no way that this team will catch Brobdingnag for third place, there simply isn't enough pitching. Their 2026 #1 is already in the envelope. The Guru has work to do here.

TQ: **16.5**

2024 world series

Rocky Mountain vs. Hoboken
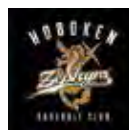
by Walter Hunt
based on accounts from
Dave Jaskot and
Steve Powell

The 2024 postseason featured a number of teams that hadn't been there for a while. In the National Conference the Calusa Indians made it past Hudson, but fell to Rocky Mountain, as did Melrose in the championship round. Knoxville got back to the playoffs and got past the Riverwoolf Sharks, but were unable to stay with Whitman. The River Rats were swept by Hoboken, though, setting up a World Series between two teams that had never won. One of them would come out with their first championship.

Game 1 at Rocky Mountain
Ober vs. Verlander

The Zephyrs scored first on a double by Naylor and a Carpenter base hit, but a Josh Lowe 3-run homer gave the Dragons the lead. Two solo homers by Contreras and Judge tied it up. By

Lowe

the sixth the Dragons led 6-4, and Verlander went to the showers, leaving it to the bullpen. Five relievers finished the game, ending with Bautista, who gave up one run but closed it out.

Rocky Mountain 7, Hoboken 5
W: Gallen   L: Oben   S: Bautista

Game 2 at Rocky Mountain
Maeda vs. Valdez

Josh Lowe struck again in the third inning with a two-run homer giving Rocky Mountain the early lead. Back to back doubles by Outman and De La Cruz made it 3-0. A two-run homer by Lindor off Valdez in the 5th made it 3-2. The score stayed that way until Estrada led off the 9th with a solo homer off Rocky Mountain's

third reliever Borucki to tie the game and send it into extra innings. It stayed that way until two outs in the bottom of the 12th when Dragon replacement second baseman Ryan McMahon ended it with a solo homer off Hoboken's seventh pitcher, Maeda.

McMahon

Rocky Mountain 4, Hoboken 3 (12 innings)
W: Payamps   L: Maeda

Game 3 at Hoboken
Miley vs. Lugo

Lowe was at it again in Game 3, with a first inning double, scoring on an Isaac Paredes double, the first of four extra-base hits. Nate Lowe homered in the second, but small ball by Hoboken tied the game. Rocky Mountain scored two in the fifth by solo shots by Paredes and Tommy Edman. Hoboken tied it with a run in the fifth and a solo shot by Josh Bell off rookie Yennier Cano in the sixth. A two-run homer by Paredes (again!) untied the game, and the Dragons' monster bullpen looked poised to close it out. Ryan Brasier was handed the ball to start the 7th and he exited 3 batters later without recording an out. After a walk to Aaron Judge and a Francisco Lindor single putting runners on 1st and 2nd, Brasier tried to initiate a DP on Naylor's come-backer but his throw sailed into center field while Judge came home with the 5th run and Lindor sprinted to 3rd.

Paredes

Brasier gave way to Brusdar Graterol who got William Contreras to hit a slow infield tapper back to the mound that enabled Lindor to score. Paredes led off the Dragon 10th with a

double off Evans Phillips, but was left stranded when Phillips retired Brandon Belt, James Outman, and Nate Lowe in order. In the bottom of the 10th, Donovan Solano ended it with a sac fly ensuring this would not be a series sweep.

Hoboken 7, Rocky Mountain 6
W: Phillips   L: Payamps

Game 4 at Hoboken
Gallen vs. Bieber

Bieber

Still down, Hoboken needed a good performance from the club and got it. They hit three homers, the crucial one a three-run jack by Thairo Estrada in the fifth. Shane Bieber pitched into the eighth, and Hoboken cruised to the first blowout of the series.

Hoboken 8, Rocky Mountain 1
W: Bieber   L: Gallen

Game 5 at Hoboken
Verlander vs. Ober

After two scoreless innings Brandon Belt, who had been quiet thus far, hammered a two run homer off Ober to give Verlander a lead. Judge

Bell

cut the lead in half with a solo homer, his only hit of the series. Josh Bell's double in the 7th tied the game, and Donovan Solano's double put Hoboken in the lead, which determined the game's outcome and sent the series back to Colorado with Hoboken up 3 games to 2.

Hoboken 3, Rocky Mountain 2
W: Ober   L: Cano   S: Williams

Game 6 at Rocky Mountain
Williamson vs. Valdez

Valdez was on his game with the series on the line, as he was given a five-run lead and ran with it. In the seventh he was finally driven from the game as Hoboken plated two runs. In

the eighth a Nate Lowe triple extended the lead to 7-2, and though the Zephyrs were able to put up four hits off Perez in the ninth, it only led to two runs, and Yennier Cano shut the door and the Series was tied at three games apiece.

Valdez

Rocky Mountain 7, Hoboken 4
W: Valdez   L: Williamson   S: Cano

Game 7 at Rocky Mountain
Miley vs. Lugo

After the first scoreless inning the Dragons burst out in the second with four runs on just one hit – a Cal Raleigh home run, along with three walks and a hit batsman. Hoboken threatened in the third, loading the bases against Miley, but he struck out Spencer Steer to end the threat. Meanwhile, the Rocky Mountain offense was pouring it on: a leadoff single by Nate Lowe and a two-run homer by rookie Josh Outman gave Rocky Mountain a 6-0 lead. The Dragons bullpen swung into action, holding the powerful Hoboken offense

Cano

to five singles and five walks, and ultimately no runs. With this victory, the Dragons brought home the first World Series championship in the franchise's history (in all ten of its incarnations!) four games to three, and the first World Series ring for manager Dave Jaskot.

Rocky Mountain 6, Hoboken 0
W: Cano   L: Lugo

Lots of Rebuilding

The Aaron has traditionally been a tough scramble; it certainly was last year, with three plus-.500 teams and a race up to the end. It'll be less of a race in 2025, unless one of the three rebuilders decides to expend draft capital to try and make it one.

Mark Freedman's **Melrose Avengers** have found their way to the top of the division for another year. There's a top grade closer, a fairly solid set of starters, and Shohei Freaking Ohtani. Even in a tight race, it would be unwise to bet against them. The *Annual* needs to know: when is Mr. Freedman going to get a nickname?

Rob Skogen returns for another shot at the TBL post season with his *Las Vegas Gamblers*. Rob was very active before and during the draft, trying to retool his team to compete. Unlike his Aaron Division rivals, though, he has spent all of his draft capital to get here. There's nothing before the 2026 6th round to fix it, either.

The **Calusa Indians** got to the National Conference final, but lost in 7 to the eventual champions. *Gordon Rodell*'s only consolation may be that Rocky Mountain is even more cratered.

But the club has gotten older and isn't as overpowering. This may be the beginning of the next rebuild cycle – and it make more than one year to get back to contention, no matter what Madame Rue says.

Then we come to the **Kansas Koyotes**. *Bill Schwartz* was in the World Series in 2023, and was in line for a Wild Card spot in 2024, but this season will be much more of a slog. As noted, Mr. Schwartz is a "build from within" guy, not a big trades guy; that means he largely stood pat and added only through the draft. This is an atypical Koyote roster – the pitching is simply not the same.

Aaron Division

Shohei Ohtani,
Melrose

1. Melrose	27.0
2. Las Vegas	21.5
3. Calusa	17.0
4. Kansas	14.5

2024 melrose AVENGERS in review

Apparently good enough to win the division.

by Mark Freedman

2024 in Review
Final Record: 98-64 (1st, Aaron)

Surprise. In one of the deepest drafts I've seen in years, 2024 was about adding more talent to the team, not wins. To our surprise we won 98 games and defeated Zion in the first round.

What went right?

98 Wins – and we won our semi-finals against Zion. We expected about 75 wins so this was a much better showing than I expected. It was driven by Betts, Ohtani and a strong bullpen. Wasn't a very strong or deep team, but apparently good enough to win the division.

The draft – With five picks in the top 43 we picked Tanner Bibee, Logan O'Hoppe, Louis Varland, Chris Sanchez and Will Benson. Even with Varland in the pen and Benson in the minors it was a good haul. Throw in Johan Rojas, who is starting to look like a hitter, and elders Kirby Yates *(raise your hand if you thought he'd be a Grade 30*)* and Jacob Webb and we had a very successful and productive draft.

What went wrong?

Still some growing pains. Vinnie Pasquatinto got injured and only played 61 games. In real life, Chris Morel seemed to make some hitting adjustments but the results didn't translate to bottom line.

The team was too left-handed and performed poorly against better teams, as result of facing better pitching and having an offense too focused on too few bats. Against good teams and better pitching the lack of walks and extra base hits limited the offense.

But Betts had a season. 59 homers, 41 doubles, 132 RBIs and 156 runs. Ohtani wasn't far behind going 11-6 in 23 starts and hitting .305 with 44 homers, 105 runs, 133 RBI and for good measure was 17-18 stealing.

3 Things

1. How good will the pitching be? Bibee and Sanchez look like studs, Houk should be a nice #3. How will the rest fill out? What will the pen look like? Who will man third?

2. With no real draft, Ray and Joe did better than I could hope. Some nice prospects were added. Will Ben Rice find a home and can he be my #2 catcher? Some young hard throwing relivers were added. Hopefully they'll do well enough to turn over the aging pen.

3. Lots of talent was brought in over the last couple of years. How Pasquntino, Morel, Sanchez, Bibee, O'Hoppe, Chisholm and Rice develop along with the health of Correa, Ohtani, and Betts will determine the future of the team.

Betts: Drove the offense

melrose AVENGERS

Mark Freedman (32nd year)

The Avengers are back for another opportunity to reach the postseason.

Mr. Freedman's Melrose team surprised (well, a little) the *Annual*'s second-place prediction, powering their way to the 2024 Aaron Division crown, winning 98 games in what was supposed to be a transition year. They got to the Conference Championship Series before losing to the eventual league champions in Rocky Mountain. By all counts, it was a successful season.

Now they're back. This is supposed to be another year of growth, as Mr. Freedman didn't have a draft pick this year until the fifth round. While there are some obvious weaknesses in the pitching staff, the offense is back and ready to do lots of damage. With Calusa and Kansas taking a step back and Vegas not quite there, this Avengers team has another opportunity to reach the postseason.

Pitching: 7.0
A top-heavy staff.

Melrose has some solid pitchers this year – there just aren't enough of them. The pitching staff is top-heavy. The rotation features three full-season studs, and the bullpen includes three relievers with closer grades. These six pitchers alone give the Avengers an advantage over their division rivals. Unfortunately, the team requires other pitchers to fill out the season.
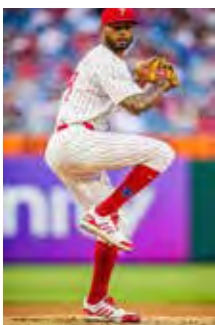
Sanchez, Bibee: Arms, at least

Turnover Rate: 25%

Arrived: Austin L. ADAMS, Slade CECCONI, Hans CROUSE, Tanner HOUCK, Jarred KELENIC, Luke LITTLE, Yoan MONCADA, Steven OKERT, Ben RICE, George SORIANO.

Departed: Austin ADAMS, Michael CONFORTO, Corey JULKS, Sean MANAEA, Billy MCKINNEY, Rafael MONTERO, Steven OKERT, Nick SENZEL, Alex WOOD, Austin WYNNS.

While a midseason trade or two may provide some help, as it stands, the team has to run out four starters who don't steal hits without help to complete the rotation. This is a weakness which will stress the bullpen, which isn't that deep to begin with. Add in an opener start, and Mr. Freedman will have to manage his relief innings carefully, which may mean letting some starters "take one for the team."

ROTATION. Last season, Mr. Freedman collected a bunch of starting pitchers because he anticipated a need for 2025. This year, he has the arms, but they're not really what he wanted. The three rotation studs are this year's SNT Tanner Houck (Grade 11 C+21 HR+36, 30 starts), last year's

SNT: Tanner Houck

For the second year in a row, Mr. Freedman's SNT is a starting pitcher with the first name Tanner. Last year's was Bibee. This year's arrived via a big pre-season trade with Strong City.
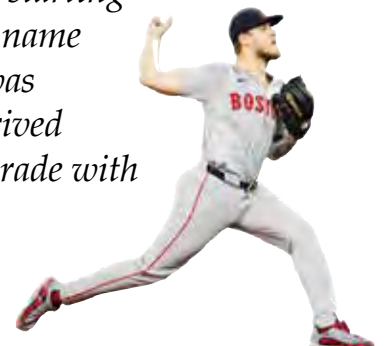
SNT Tanner Bibee (Grade 11 C+22, 31 starts), and lefty Cristopher Sanchez (Grade 9 C+23 HR+36, 31 starts). Luke Little (Grade 17 C-62 HR+51) opens a doubleheader. That's 93 solid starts.

Then the bottom drops out. Marcus Stroman (Grade 6 C-16, 28 of 29 possible starts), along with lefties Trevor Rogers (Grade 4 C-25 HR+16, 25 starts) and Steven Matz (Grade 4 HR-16, 7 starts), bring the total to 153 non-innocuous starts. That leaves innocuous rookie Slade Cecconi (Grade 1 C+32 HR-33) to finish it off, for better or, more likely, for worse. When the top half of the rotation is on the mound, they'll be competitive. Otherwise, they'll have to get lucky or rely on the bullpen.

BULLPEN. The Avengers' 2025 pen is nicely balanced gradewise, but it's very wild and a bit light. It starts with

Yates: Best grade

the best grade in TBL: closer Kirby Yates (Grade 30* C-31 HR+42, 62 IP). He's set up by lefty Tanner Scott (Grade 21* C-42 HR+46, 72 IP), and righty Hans Crouse (Grade 20* C-62 HR+31, 25 IP). The next level includes short-inning Little (25 IP) and Jacob Webb (Grade 16* C-42 HR+34, 57 IP), who seems like a vital cog. That's 241 important innings.

The middle relief crew is woefully understaffed, but they can best rescue the starters at the bottom of the rotation. Lucas Sims (Grade 11* C-62), and Hector Neris (Grade 10* C-32), provide only about 110 innings between them. That means George Soriano (Grade 4* C-31 HR-42, 65 IP), XC-carded Daniel Palencia (Grade 3* C-62

+62, 15 IP), and starters Cecconi and Matz and waiver pick Okert will have to pitch way more than Mr. Freedman wants.

Offense: Big bats.   12.0

A year ago, the offense carried this team to the playoffs. This year, it may be even better. It starts, as it did last year, with the sublime Shohei Ohtani (1-1-5-5-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, 35 SSN for 63 SBA!, L-8). Talk about a power/speed combination.

Ohtani: Sublime

Ohtani is among the best hitters in the league, and he can create wins all by himself, even if the opposition intentionally walks him.

The next two big bats platoon, but they'll make noise when they play: Carlos Correa (1-0-0-0, 11 hits, 4 walks+22, only 86 games) and Mookie Betts (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, 34 SSN for 18 SBA, 116 games). Neither has much of a shift.

The lineup flashes more power with Vinny Pasquantino (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-6) and Ian Happ (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, 33 SSN for 15 SBA, L-5). And the Avengers aren't done. Jazz Chisholm (1-4-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 31 SSN for 50 SBA, L-4), Jarred Kelenic (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-8), and Logan O'Hoppe (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-6) add power when the dice are rolling right.

Happ: Flashes power

The lead-off man extraordinaire is Jonathan India (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 33 SSN for 15 SBA, L+3 R-3). He gets it started and has some speed too.

The number nine hitter is Santiago Espinal (2 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 35 SSN for 12 SBA, L+7 R-5, 118 games). Except for a weakness vs. LHPs, this is a solid offense that has it all: lots of power, lots of speed, and many hits at the top. They'll score a lot. They'll need to.

Defense: 5.0
Still strong up the middle.

The Avengers are still strong up the middle, but average almost everywhere else. Happ (OF3), Correa (SS9) or Betts (SS8), India (2B8), and O'Hoppe (C7, Th+2). Pasquantino (1B4) catches everything he can get to. Espino (3B4) is just average at the hot corner, as are the corner outfielders Kelenic and Chisholm (OF2s). There's help on the bench with Johan Rojas (OF3), and there are no weaknesses.

Bench: 3.0
Weak against lefties.

The bench has some useful pieces besides Rojas (2 0s, 9 hits, a walk+22, 33 SSN for 29 SBA, L-5), although with diminishing returns. Rowdy Tellez (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 1B4) has a role. Will Benson (1-5-6, 7 hits, 4 walks, but 12 13s, 27 SSN for 23 SBA, L-6, OF2) and Christopher Morel (1-0,7 hits, 4 walks+22, 8 13s, 21 SSN for 15 SBA, L-5) provide entertainment and air conditioning.

Reese McGuire (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7, C7, Th+3, 53 games) is the backup catcher. Rookie Ben Rice drives the team bus, despite 1-0-0 power. The entire bench is weak against LHPs, offering little platoon help.
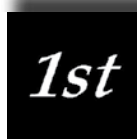
1st Someone has to win this division, and the *Annual* prognosticators think it will be Mr. Freedman's Melrose team.
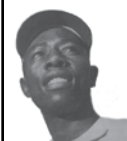
melrose AVENGERS

Despite the weaknesses in the pitching staff and the shifts against LHPs, this is too solid an offense to ignore. It may be the second best in the entire league behind Grand Cayman's. This team will bludgeon mediocre pitching, winning more than a few games all by itself, regardless who's on the mound for the Avengers.

This team does have some youth, but of the 19 players born after 1995 on the team, only 10 are starters. Most are lottery tickets with some upside. That speaks to Mr. Freedman's eye for young talent. While he likes to trade, as 14 of the 36 players on the roster arrived that way, he does his homework and often drafts players with power, speed, or both. His past success speaks for itself.

TQ: **27.0**

11

2024 las vegas GAMBLERS in review

We have tirelessly worked the plan.

by Rob Skogen

2024 in Review
Final Record: 71-91 (4th, Aaron)

Well, we expected to drop back to reality in '24 and that's what happened. Our Analytics Department had us pegged for a 74 win season and we ended up within their margin of error at 71 wins. That performance captured sole occupancy of the Aaron Division cellar – by 15 games.

What went right?

The Gamblers' big 3 (Pedro Alonso, Trea Turner, Kyle Tucker) held up their end of things -- accounting for nearly half of the team's offensive output. Alonso paced the team in the power categories again, mashing 44 homers and driving in 95. Turner and team MVP Tucker each scored 90+ runs, while collecting 43 and 52 doubles respectively. Young slugger Nolan Gorman gave us glimpses of the possible future with 30 bombs in part time duty and Brice Turang flashed plus plus speed as he led the squad with 20 steals.

Alonso: Paced the team

There were signs of progress on the other side of the ledger. The pitching staff posted a respectable team ERA of 3.86, WHIP of 1.28, and allowed south of 200 homers (1.06 HR9) as a unit. Corbin Burnes was the only hurler to win double digit games (13) and Tarik Skubal was the ERA leader (2.35) in limited action. The relief corps did an admirable job, working to a 3.20 ERA, 9.27 K/9, and a sub-1 HR9. Tim Mayza led the way with a sparkling 1.42 ERA and 23 saves.

What went wrong?

Overall, though, the hitting was simply not good. It's tough to win games when your offense averages a paltry 3.85 runs per game.

3 Things

In this space last year, we set a vision and *planned the work* – pitching first and the hitting will follow. This year we remain committed to that mission and have tirelessly *worked the plan.* We believe our offseason maneuverings have put us in a great spot. Our Analytics Department is forecasting a 90 win season and a battle with Melrose for the Aaron Division crown.

1. A continued focus on pitching. The rotation is solid behind Burnes and Skubal with offseason trades for Yusei Kikuchi and Ranger Suarez. Bryan Bello becomes our fifth starter and buys him time to develop properly. We also stabilized the relief corps. We added a future closer in Orion Kerkering and a promising righty-lefty combo of Cole Sands and Keegan Akin.

2. Weathering key injuries. Core players such as Turner, Tucker, and Alek Thomas – and a subpar season from our main masher (Alonso) has the team a little worried, but not to the point of panic. The draft day acquisition of Matt Vierling should help tremendously.

3. Staying the course with the hitters. Tremendous patience is required. We have faith in this group and resisted drastic moves. The young supporting cast should be better with a year of experience. If they can put up better results as expected, this should be a fun year for the Vegas faithful!

las vegas GAMBLERS

Rob Skogen (3rd year)

Rob Skogen will keep this team on the upswing.

It's like that old Beatles lyric: "It's getting better all the time. Better, better, better." Under Young Mr. Skogen's guidance, the Gamblers have become respectable again. If last season's 71-win total turns out to be nadir of the team's performance, that's a remarkable feat. Of course, this turnaround came with a price, but we at the *Annual* don't look ahead (except for the thermometers); we concentrate on what's here now.

And what's here now isn't bad. In a division grown mostly soft and squishy — we're looking at you, Calusa and Kansas — the Gamblers are in position to at least stay in the Wild Card hunt. Ultimately, making the playoffs may be too big an expectation for this version of the team, but a .500 finish isn't. You can guarantee that Rob Skogen will use all his skills, whether trading or drafting, to keep this team on the upswing.

Pitching: 8.0
Best in the division.

Once again, this team features a two-headed monster at the top of the rotation, and it's the same two pitchers as last year — and years to come, probably. While the following group isn't as good, there are now Guys We Like. When the bullpen is as stacked as it can be in November, the team trots out several openers for something

Skubal: Now First head

Burnes: Now Second head

SNT: Orion Kerkering.

With his first pick in the second round of the 2025 TBL Rookie Draft, Mr. Skogen took a promising reliever. Expectations are high for this youngster.

different. It all adds up to a deeper rotation than a year ago.

Las Vegas still doesn't have a traditional closer, but they have more relievers who can strike hitters out. There's also no need for any innocuousness *(is that even a word?)*. The bullpen comes at the opposition in waves, partly to take advantage of the +5 bonus and partly because so few of these relievers can stop both walks and homers. Used effectively, this bullpen can succeed even without a closer grade.

ROTATION. Two pitchers reprise their roles as aces: lefty Tarik Skubal (Grade 15 C+33 HR+26, using 30 of his 31 starts, likely by mistake) and righty Corbin Burnes (Grade 13 C+22, using 31 of his 32 starts, ditto). Trade acquisition Ranger Suarez (Grade 10 C+21 HR+23, 27 starts), a lefty, slots in behind. Lefty Yusei Kikuchi (Grade

Turnover Rate: 25%

Arrived: Keegan AKIN, TJ FRIEDL, Chad GREEN, Orion KERKERING, Yusei KIKUCHI, Cole SANDS, Gregory SANTOS, Ranger SUAREZ, Matt VIERLING.

Departed: Albert ABREU, Tucker DAVIDSON, Carson KELLY, Justin LAWRENCE, Matthew LIBERATORE, Tim MAYZA, Elehuris MONTERO, Nick PRATTO, Patrick SANDOVAL.

las vegas GAMBLERS

8 C+23, using 30 of 32 starts) and Brayan Bello (Grade 8 C-22, using 29 of 30 starts) follow, bringing the total to 147 of 152 possible starts. If you're confused, so are we.

Another lefty, Cole Irvin (Grade 6 C+24 HR-16), uses only 8 of his 16 starts, which is actually a good thing. Lefty Aaron Ashby (Grade 15 HR+34, 2 starts, 22 fatigue), SNT Orion Kerkering (Grade 14 C+16 HR+53, 2 starts), and Roansy Contreras (Grade 9 HR-16, 3 starts, 15 fatigue) chip in the rest. Graham Ashcraft pitches BP.

BULLPEN. The erstwhile closer this year is Joe Jimenez (Grade 16* HR+53, 69 IP). He'd apparently rather be pecked to death than give up a big blast. He's ably set up by Ashby (for about a month), lefty Keegan Akin (Grade 14* C+24), and SNT Kerkering (61 IP). That's 228 innings of creamy goodness, which help all the starters except Skubal, until he fatigues.

The middle relief corps includes Scott Barlow (Grade 12* C-56 HR+16, 55 IP), Cole Sands (Grade 11* C+35 HR+25, 71 IP), and lefty JoJo Romero (Grade 11* C+16, 59 IP), adding 185 more innings. The mop innings are left for Chad Green (Grade 13* C+26 HR-21, 53 IP), Contreras (61 IP), and lefty Gabe Speier (Grade 8* C-56 HR+31, 24 IP). While not always overpowering, it's the best pitching staff in the division.

Offense: 7.5
Notice the missing games.

The two best cards on the team — and in fact, the only hitters on the team with more than 9 hits — are Trea Turner (1-5-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 32 SSN for 23 SBA, L+3 R-3, 121 games) and Kyle Tucker (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 6 walks, 35 SSN for 11 SBA, L-7, just 78 games).

Turner, Tucker: Two best

These guys are a strength … and a weakness, when you notice the missing games.

Other power hitters in the lineup include Matt Wallner (1-5-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+2 42s, L-11, for 75 games), Pete Alonso (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, no shift, for all 162 games), and Michael Toglia (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks but 10 13s, 35 SSN for 11 SBA, L+2 R-3, 116 games). If all five of these hitters played as much as Alonso, this would be a hell of a team.

The sneaky good Willi Castro (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42+22, 24 SSN for 23 SBA, L-3) and Brice Turang (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 34 SSN for 56 SBA!, L-5) are the table setters all season. The next level includes Taylor Ward (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L+5 R-3) and Matt Vierling (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, no shift) who have to take up the slack when the injured have to rest.

Terry Friedl (1-5, 8 hits, 3 walks+42+22, 34 SSN for 10 SBA, L-3 for half a season), Shea Langeliers (1-5-5, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, no shift), and Nolan Gorman (1-5-5, 8 hits, 3 walks, but 11 13s, L-3, 107 games) will deliver both good and bad news for the offense. That leaves Alek Thomas (1-4-6, 7 hits, 3 walks, 7 24s, L-7) who mercifully has just 103 plate appearances to sink or swim.

Defense: 4.0
Injuries hurt.

This is a fairly strong defensive team up the middle. Langeliers (C8, Th+5) is outstanding.

Turang (2B9) is excellent, although Turner (SS8) is just average. Friedl and Thomas are both OF3s in CF. Tucker (OF3), when he plays, is also great. Alonso (1B4) and Ward (OF2) make most of the plays, but playing Vierling (3B4, but OF3) at third isn't ideal. Gorman (2B7, 3B3) doesn't really help anywhere. And Castro (3B3, SS7) and Wallner (OF1) have to play the field more than desired, although there may be help for both in the late innings. Still, injuries have hurt this defense.

Bench: 2.0

Not very tasty.

Gorman and Friedl ride the pine some months, providing some flexibility. Thomas is slated to play defense when the team leads. That may not last long. That leaves George Arias (3 0s, 9 hits, a walk+22, 20 13s, L+3 R-4, SS8), Brett Baty (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-8, 3B4), and backup catcher Matt Thaiss (6-0, 7 hits, 5 walks, L-9, C7, Th+3) as the leftovers. Not a very tasty meal.

2nd The injuries and limited playing time really hurt this club. Assuming everyone comes back to health, Las Vegas can continue to improve, despite missing their top draft picks in the 2026 draft (see the thermometer). Young Mr. Skogen has shown an aptitude for trading, a skill not everyone possesses upon entry.

The Gamblers have a solid core of players, but they'll have to rely on those stars while filling the positions that are still weak at the moment.

Fortunately, this is still quite a young team, with many of the key players still on the right side of 30. Did you know that Kyle Tucker just turned 28 and that Brice Turang just turned 24? Maybe management is right to rely on these guys. The young players bounce back much more quickly and completely from injury than the older guys. There's a lesson there for all of us.

Turang: Excellent

las vegas GAMBLERS

Ages of players on the Las Vegas roster, as of 07/01/2025:

34: Green, Kikuchi
32: S. Barlow, T. Turner
31: C. Irvin, T. Ward
30: Akin, Alonso, Burnes, J. Jimenez, Speier, Thaiss
29: Friedl, Ra. Suarez
28: W. Castro, Romero, Skubal, Tucker, Vierling
27: Ashby, Ashcraft, Brash, Langeliers, Sands, Wallner
26: Bello, Montero, Toglia
25: Arias, Baty, R. Contreras, Gorman, O. Peraza, Santos, Thomas, Turang
24: Kerkering

TQ: **21.5**

2024 calusa INDIANS in review

As Madame Rue cautioned, it only works for one season.

by Gordon Rodell

2024 in Review
Final Record: 93-69 (2nd, Aaron)

We always get something . . . creative . . . from Gordon. – Ed.

YEAR of the *MUSSELS*

We took our hitting woes down to Madame Rue
You know that gypsy with the gold-capped tooth
We told her we been a flop with our swings
Been this way since '22 and it really stings
She looked at our bats and she made a magic sign
She said, "What you need is Hitting Potion No. 9
"I'm gonna mix it up right here in the sink."
It smelled like turpentine, it looked like Indian ink
We held our nose, we closed our eyes and took a drink
We didn't know if it was day or night
We just started hitting every ball in sight!!

What went right?

Quite a bit actually. Led the league in home runs with 284, doubles 379, and slugging .484. We were third in runs scored with 852.

Freddie had a very good year: BA .336, total bases 433, and doubles 78. Doubles set a new TBL single season record.

Other guys who did good: Marcell Ozuna, 48 home runs; Luis Robert .266/.350/.536; Mickey Moniak .314/.350/.563.

Pitching: Zach Eflin went 18-8; Chris Bassitt 5-1, 5 CG, 4 ShO in 9 starts; Fairbanks 23 saves and a 2.11 ERA; Erceg 3-0 and a 1.40 ERA; and Suter 8-1, 2 saves, 2.30 ERA.

Madame Rue, Apparently

Freeman: Team leader

What went wrong?

We didn't win the big one. Enuff said. Contributing factors: not enough pitching, i. e., David Peterson 2-10, 6.69 ERA; Cal Quantrill 3-8, 4.73 ERA; Team ERA 4.13. The usual dismal production from the catchers .206/.330/.374. Defense slipped, committing 69 errors.

3 Things

1. Regression. Today's word of the day, class, is REGRESSION. Can you spell REGRESSION? Defined as: "The return to a former or less developed state." As in: *The 2025 Indians will experience regression hitting much less than 2024.* Same names, different PRNs.

2. Hitting Potion #9. As Madame Rue cautioned, it only works for one season. So 2025 will be *Not So Good*. Here's hoping for a REBOUND in 2026.

3. Not all doom and gloom. For the first time since 2018, the Indians will have not one, but TWO 1st round draft picks in the 2026 Draft. So this season will be spent lying on the beach, drinking beer, and looking forward to the aforementioned REBOUND!!

YEAH BABY.

calusa INDIANS

Gordon Rodell (11th year)

Back to the drawing board.

2024 was a banner year for the Indians, maybe not in terms of wins (they won more just three years ago) or playoff success (the team lost in the Semi-Finals for the fourth time), but definitely in terms of on-field heroics. The team slugged 284 homeruns, the most in franchise history — by 47! The total also placed eighth best overall in TBL history, a remarkable feat.

But for some reason (bad luck, maybe?) the homers and the 379 doubles (also eighth best in TBL history) didn't help when it counted. While Calusa's 93 wins meant they were the best Wild Card team in the league, they couldn't get past eventual TBL Champion Rocky Mountain. In other words, it was much ado about nothing. And now, it's back to the drawing board.

Pitching: 6.5
Flip-flopped, for the worse.

Last season, the *Annual* predicted an Aaron Division crown for Calusa, based on a strong offense and a strong bullpen that could make up for a weaker rotation. This year, the pitching staff has flip-flopped, for the worse. In 2025, it's the starting rotation that's the strength, while the bullpen has become a weakness. Many of

SNT: Jose Tena.
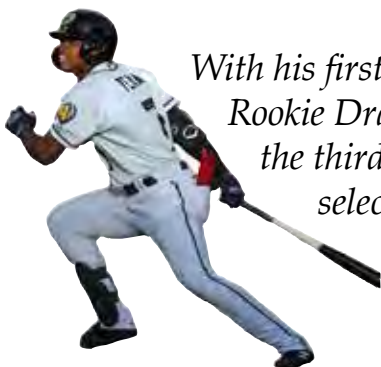
With his first pick in the 2025 TBL Rookie Draft, at the very end of the third round, Mr. Rodell selected this lottery ticket as the best available player.

Turnover Rate: 44%

Arrived: Blaze ALEXANDER, Cooper CRISWELL, Jonny DELUCA, Oliver DUNN, Austin HEDGES, Derek HILL, Grant HOLMES, Luke JACKSON, Carson KELLY, Kyle MCCANN, Nick MEARS, Casey SCHMITT, Jared SHUSTER, Jose SIRI, Jose TENA, Masataka YOSHIDA.

Departed: Scott ALEXANDER, Dairon BLANCO, Adam DUVALL, Kyle FINNEGAN, TJ FRIEDL, Victor GONZALEZ, D.J. LEMAHIEU, Tim LOCASTRO, Martin MALDONADO, Tom MURPHY, Adam OTTAVINO, Marcell OZUNA, Cal QUANTRILL, Brent SUTER, Taijuan WALKER.

the names are the same, but the performances are not.

There are some bright spots, as several starters resurrected their careers, but this is really a 30-year-old staff, on average. There are no aces in waiting. Yes, many of the relievers have seen better grades, but that doesn't always mean they'll earn better grades in the future. This is a staff that needs to think seriously about who'll still be here in five, or even three, years.

Eflin: Former ace

ROTATION. The best grade belongs to XC-carded Osvaldo Bido (Grade 14 C-25 HR+44), but he provides only nine starts. Lefty David Peterson (Grade 12 C-21 HR+35, 21 starts) and righty Tylor Megill (Grade 10 C-24 HR+21, 15 starts) are fine, but far from aces.

Back-from-the-dead Frankie Montas (Grade 8 C-32 HR-16, 30 starts) and former ace Zach Eflin (Grade 8 C+42, 28 starts) are the real workhorses of the rotation. They bring the total of pitchers who can steal hits without help to 103. They're
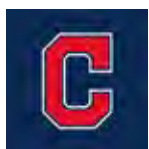
backed by Chris Bassitt (Grade 7 C-21 HR+21, 31 starts), Cooper Criswell (Grade 7 HR+22, 18 starts), and Grant Holmes (Grade 7 C+33 HR+16, 7 starts). Paul Quantrill (Grade 6 C-35) chips in a few more. All in all, this is quite a serviceable rotation.

BULLPEN. And then comes the bad news. This team has no closer, and the bullpen is a self-proclaimed "cookie jar" of mix-and-match treats. Bido contributes for a month, but the best of the rest, at least by grades, are Lucas Erceg (Grade 12* C+25 HR+44, 62 IP), Jason Foley (Grade 12* HR+26, 60 IP), and Peter Fairbanks (Grade 12* HR+24, 45 IP). They provide about 185 innings, which help on some days, especially with the positive HR numbers. But to close?

A jar-full of middle relievers follow: Jose Leclerc (Grade 11* C-41 HR+21, 67 IP), Holmes (Grade 10*, 35 IP), lefty Joe Mantiply (Grade 9* C+33 HR+61, 58 IP), and Camilo Doval (Grade 8* C-62 HR+32, 59 IP). They add 218 more innings. At the bottom of the jar is lefty Jared Shuster (Grade 7* C-33, 64 IP). Nick Mears is around for batting practice. Yummy. It starts, as it does every year, with Freddie Freeman (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 31 SSN for

Offense: 5.0
A lineup in transition.

11 SBA, L-6). He's somewhat diminished from his 2024 brilliance, but his is still the best card on the team. Jake Burger (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-5) and Marcus Semien (1-0-0, 9 hits 3 walks, 28 SSN for 11 SBA) add some muscle to the lineup.

Freeman: Starts

Masataka Yoshida (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, L-10, but just 108 games) helps vs. RHPs, while

Isiah Kiner-Falefa (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk+42, 32 SSN for 13 SBA, L-6) is the everyday shortstop. Last year's SNT, Xander Bogaerts (6-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 31 SSN for 16 attempts, 111 games) has become a short-side DH platoon, a situation no one saw coming. Calusa has to depend on these bats to get on base.

Isolated power belongs to Luis Robert (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, 31 SSN for 29 SBA, 100 games) in an off-year, rookie Derek Hill (1-4-5, 9 hits, a walk+22, L+12 R-10, 53 games), Mickey Moniak (1-4-6, 8 hits, 2 walks+22, 26 SSN for 12 SBA, L-9), and everyday outfielder Jose Siri (1-5-6, 7 hits, 3 walks+22, 26 SSN for 21 SBA). As a group, these players have power and speed, but they'll need luck to contribute.

That leaves new acquisition Carson Kelly (2 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+6 R-3, 91 games), who should surpass all by himself the offensive output of last year's catchers. As a group, however, this offense won't scare many teams, although it'll connect enough to rally against lesser and especially right-handed pitching. At the Annual, we'd call this a lineup in transition. Except for a few mainstays, it could look very different in five, or even three, years.

With a defensive alignment that features

Defense: 4.0
Always a team strength.

Freeman (1B5), Semien (2B9), Kiner-Falefa (SS9), Luis Robert (OF3), and Siri (OF3), the Indians have a strong representation in the field. Kelly (C8, Th+1) is also a strength. Hill and Moniak are both competent (OF2s), and Hill has an above average arm (33) when he plays.

Burger (3B3) is the only weakness at the hot corner, and there's no one really to spell him. Despite that, defense has always been a team strength, and that trend continues into 2025.

There are several useful bench players, like XC-carded Casey Schmitt (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, a

Bench: 2.5
Several useful players.

walk+22, L+8 R-8, SS8), SNT Jose Tena (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-10, but alas, a 3B3), and Kyle McCann (1-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L-9, C6, Th-3). Blaze Alexander (9 hits, 3 walks, L+6 R-7) can pinch hit or pinch run.

None of these players play more than a third of a season. Austin Hedges can't hit a lick, but he's a C9, Th+3. Jonny Deluca (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+22, 28 SSN for 22 SBA) can pinch-run,

Schmitt: Useful

and Oliver Dunn (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, L-8) is a 3B4, but he may not be on the active roster until November. Vaughn Grissom is still waiting to become a major leaguer. Most of these guys are lottery tickets hoping to be better in the future.

calusa INDIANS

That kind of strategy self-perpetuates. This is a team in transition.

3rd

The current roster has sunk into mediocrity, at least in the short-term. While there are some promising pieces, the core of the team continues to age. There are 14 players born after 1995 on the roster, including SNT Tena, but only Robert and Burger are regulars.

Getting younger — with players who contribute meaningfully — may be the next big hurdle, which means the next year of playoff contention may be further out than Mr. Rodell realizes.

Mr. Rodell likes to trade, as 15 players on the roster arrived that way. But as a result, he didn't get to say a name in the most recent draft until pick #72. Next year, he's added a first-round pick, but traded away most of his middle-round picks. That may force him to dip into the 2027 draft, once it becomes available, to fill in gaps.

Here every year

TQ: **17.0**

14

2024 kansas KOYOTES in review

The biggest "went wrong" was the total collapse in November.

by Bill Schwartz

2024 in Review
Final Record: 86-76 (3rd, Aaron)

Last year's computer pre-play had the Koyotes finishing 81-81 in third place in the Aaron, which basically matched management's prediction of a probable .500 season. Much to the delight of Koyote fans they exceeded expectations by 5 games, finishing at 86-76, and but for a monumental collapse in November would have earned a wildcard spot in the playoffs.

What went right?

Once again, Kansas was a starting pitcher-led team, with the Big 4, Kodai Senga (13-10, 3.38), Sonny Gray (13-10, 2.82), Max Scherzer (10-10, 3.69) & Aaron Civale (14-4, 2.76) leading the way. Civale's 14-4 from a Grade 11 was a pleasant surprise.

The offense was actually a little surprising, scoring 732 runs, outscoring last year's World Series team by 66 runs while hitting 220 HR's in the process. Long ball production was led by Brandon Drury's 34, followed by Adolis Garcia's 27, George Springer's 24, Jason Heyward's 23, and Chris Taylor's 22. Drury also drove in 97 runs to lead the team.

Superb up the middle defense from Jeff McNeil (2B8), Jeremy Pena (SS9), Yan Gomes (C8 Th+2), and a host of OF3s rescued the pitching staff numerous times.

What went wrong?

No less than six regulars or semi-regulars hit under .230; therefore, too many of those 220 HR were solo shots.

Drury: Team leader

After the "Big 4" and their 110 starts, the #5 and #6 starters did not live up to expectations. Grade 10 Cristian Javier (9-13, 6.17) and Grade 9 Michael Kopech (3-11, 7.97) were lit up often.

But the biggest "went wrong" was the total collapse in November (see below).

3 Things

1. Draft results. A rash of real-life injuries led to significant shortages at several positions and on the mound. All of this led to a crucial draft. When Austin Wells was still there at #13, one big need was filled. D.J. Herz, Hunter Strickland, Brett Wisely, Mike Soroka, Matt Waldron, Kody Clemens and Ryan Burr will each fulfill needs for the team.

2. November collapse. Kansas was in position all year to at least claim a wildcard spot, never leading the Aaron but within a game of the wildcard at the end of each month. But the Koyotes, in a classic collapse, went 7-13 in November, including 1-10 in the final 11 games, and finished one game behind Hudson for the final spot.

3. Scherzer watch. 40 year old Max Scherzer continued to march up the leaderboards to a potential Hall of Fame induction. He currently sits at #4 all-time in K with 3693, #7 in ShO with 45, #11 in games started with 467, #11 in innings pitched with 3251.3, #14 in CG with 98, and #16 in wins with 202. Although his consecutive string of years of 200+ K was halted at 10 a year ago, his 10 wins in 2024 extended his streak of consecutive years of double digit wins to 11.

kansas KOYOTES

Bill Schwartz (18th year)

This team won't win many games on pitching alone.

Where last year's team was fairly solid with some weak spots, you could say with some confidence that this team is fairly weak with some solid spots. While this is essentially the same team that went to the TBL World Series not long ago, the process of plugging holes since has left this team with weaknesses across the board. Meanwhile, the core of the team is now another year older.

One thing you can say about Bill Schwartz: he doesn't trade much. Only two players on the current roster were acquired by trade: Jeff McNeil, who arrived mid-season and went on to star in the 2023 post-season, and Weston Wilson, a late post-draft trade. Drafting and holding is a viable team-building strategy, but it does progress more slowly than others. That's something for Mr. Schwartz to bear in mind as he works to transition his team back into a contender.

Pitching: 4.5
Not the usual Kansas staff.

Well, this is new. Mr. Schwartz loves pitching, and his teams often feature a dominant staff. Just last year, the *Annual* touted the Koyotes as having "one of the best starting rotations in TBL."

That compliment no longer applies. Whether Mr. Schwartz decided to focus on other areas of the team or whether he liked the names he had, if not the grades, only he can say for sure. As a result, though, this version of the Koyotes won't win many games on pitching alone.

Gray: Ace

SNT: Austin Wells

The Kansas first-round pick was almost Luis Gil (another Yankee), but Bill quickly changed his mind to grab this catcher, who'll be in his lineup for years to come.

Turnover Rate: 28%

Arrived: Ryan BURR, Kody CLEMENS, Shawn DUBIN, DJ HERZ, Mike SOROKA, Hunter STRICKLAND, Matt WALDRON, Austin WELLS, Weston WILSON, Brett WISELY.

Departed: Jose CUAS, Darick HALL, Yan GOMES, Brad HAND, Zach JACKSON, Mike MOUSTAKAS, Jesse SCHOLTENS, Jean SEGURA, Chasen SHREVE, Jared WALSH.

And it's not because the rotation simply imploded, although a number of key injuries didn't help. The bullpen likewise didn't live up to expectations. So there's no real ace to head up the rotation and no real closer to nail it down at the end. What's left is a patchwork of mostly peripheral-neutral to peripheral-poor pitchers that are here in place of the dominant pitchers of the past. (Even alliteration doesn't make poetry of this staff.)

ROTATION. Given the season-long injury to last year's ace Kodai Senga, the best grade left standing belongs to XC-carded Cristian Javier (Grade 12 C-61), but for just seven starts. The real meat of the staff, so to speak, is composed of Sonny Gray (Grade 10 C+24, 28 starts), rookie lefty D. J. Herz (Grade 10 C-24, 19 starts), and Luis Severino (Grade 10, 31 starts). Add in a couple starts of Ryan Burr

(another Grade 10), and Kansas has 87 starts of Grade 10+.

Max Scherzer (Grade 9 C+24 HR-22) managed just nine starts, but Aaron Civale (Grade 8 HR-24, 31 starts) contributes valuable innings. That brings the total to 127 starts that steal hits by themselves. Unfortunately, someone has to start the remaining 35 games. Say hello to rookies Matt Waldron (Grade 6 C+21, 26 starts) and Mike Soroka (Grade 4, C-55, 9 starts). It wouldn't hurt as much if the bullpen were better.

BULLPEN. Someone has to close, so Soroka (Grade 18*, 36 IP) and Yimi Garcia (Grade 17* C+23 HR-22, 39 IP) get the call. On the surface, they don't appear promising, either in quality or quantity. These co-closers are supported by Michael Kopech (Grade 16* C-46, 68 IP) and the ageless Hunter Strickland (Grade 14*, 73 IP). All told, this team has 216 IP to steal 8s unassisted. Given the starters, it may be inadequate.

Soroka: Someone

The rest of the pen is made up of mostly Grade 10s, like the rotation. Michael Tonkin (Grade 10* HR+33, 79 IP), lefty Matt Moore (Grade 10* C-45 HR-41, 48 IP), Burr (Grade 10*, 27 IP), Drew Smyly (Grade 9* HR-22, 59 IP), and Shawn Dubin (Grade 9* C-56 HR+41) add 59 more innings of various utility. Erik Swanson (Grade 8* HR-56, 39 IP) and XC-carded Brock Stewart (Grade 7* C-52, 16 IP) add some excitement for

Offense: 4.0
Good luck with that.

a few more innings. Not the usual Kansas staff. The best card on the team belongs to trade acquisition Weston Wilson (1-4-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, L+7 R-9), but he only plays vs. LHP and is limited to 98 PAs. J.J. Bleday (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-5), Tyrone Taylor (4 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22), and Jason Heyward (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, L-9, just 87 games) are the only other hitters with four power numbers.

Heyward: Back again

The other power sources come with some warts. Seth Brown (1-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks), SNT Austin Wells (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-9, for 115 games), Adolis Garcia (1-5-6, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, 27 SSN for 16 SBA), Kike Hernandez (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, 3 24s), and the funky Cody Clemens (1-0-0-0-0, 8 hits, 2 walks+22 for just 44 games) provide punch when the dice roll their way.

The most complete player on the team may be Jeremy Pena (3 0s, 10 hits, a walk+42, L+4 R-3, 30 SSN for 26 SBA). He leads off regardless who's pitching. Jeff McNeil (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42) can also get on base at a decent clip.

That leaves innocuous Miguel Amaya (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L-10), who's actually slated to start vs. LHPs, rookie Brett Wisely (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+7 R-4, 91 games), who platoons with McNeil, and George Springer (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+22, 3 24s, 35 SSN for 17 SBA), who's a shell of his former self. While the lineup has some bright spots, it has only two players with 10 hits, and one is PA-limited. Good luck with that.

Defense: 4.0
There are some strengths.

The good news is obvious: Pena at short (SS9), Wisely and McNeil at second (2B8s), and four OF3s: Springer, Heyward, Taylor, and Garcia. Three of these have above average arms, as well. SNT Wells is only a C7, but he's got a cannon (Th+6).

Brown and Clemens (1B3) are both average, as is Amaya (C7, Th-1). And while Hernandez (3B4) is adequate at the hot corner, Wilson (3B3) is an adventure waiting to happen when he plays. There are some strengths, at least.

Pena: Good news

Bench: **2.0**

Not a lot of there there.

There's just not a lot of there there. Despite several platoons, some of those involved (Wilson and Clemens, for example) are limited in playing time. That leaves Chris Taylor (2 0s, 7 hits, 4 walks, OF2, 3B4, 2B7) for a half season. He has some utility, as long as he doesn't have to bat.

Wilson: Power and adventure

Brandon Drury (0 7 hits, 3 walks, 3 24s) should never have a bat put in his hands, but he can help the infield, if needed.

4th By the *Annual*'s ratings, this is one of the worst teams in the league this year. Granted, injuries hurt the usually strong pitching staff, but this was never an offensive powerhouse team, even when it went to the TBL World Series. And with only 11 players on the roster born after 1995 (including Clemens and Wisely), this isn't exactly a young team, either.

To get back to the top of a tough Aaron Division, Mr. Schwartz will face some tough decisions ahead. That may mean starting to col-

lect younger players in the draft, the team-building strategy he tends to favor. He started that trend this year by taking SNT Wells instead of Luis Gil. We'll have to wait to see if he continues. Meanwhile, 2025 will be a long season in Kansas.

kansas KOYOTES

Ages of players on the Kansas roster, as of 07/01/2025:

41: Scherzer
36: M. Moore, Smyly, Strickland
35: S. Gray, Heyward, Springer, Tonkin
34: Y. Garcia, C. A. Taylor
33: E. Hernandez, McNeil
32: S. Brown, Drury, A. Garcia, Senga
31: Burr, Severino, Swanson, T. Taylor
30: Civale, W. Wilson
29: Clemens, Dubin, Kopech, Mejia
28: Javier, Waldron
27: Bleday, J. Pena, Soroka
26: Amaya, Wisely
25: A. Wells
24: Herz

TQ: **14.5**

It's Elbows Up in the Mantle

2024 Mantle Division
Final Standings

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Rocky Mountain*	100	62	.617	—
Hudson†	87	75	.537	13
Munich	86	76	.531	14
Columbus	77	85	.475	23

2024 TBL Champions.
† Lost to Calusa in the Wildcard.

Last year was successful, but the **Munich Marauders** have returned to contention. *Paul Montague* is pleased with the way in which the juggernaut has come together, and now has a roster well-stocked with Guys We Like.

This comes as no surprise: our senior member is a master at this sort of thing, and it's been a minute since the club has been a force. It may be a while before there's any need to return to the rebuild. Still, the Mantle is always competitive, so it'll mostly be elbows up as the season progresses.

Clay Beard's **Hudson Generals** made it to the postseason last year, just acing out the 2023 runner-up in Kansas. This year's club is well put together, especially on the mound, and we know that they always get maximum effect from their roster – 26 guys (formerly "25 guys") have a chance to contribute. It should be an interesting summer, even if we think Munich has a better shot to capture the division crown. Don't count out the Generals, though.

The **Columbus Jets** were in contention for a good part of the 2024 campaign, but the air went out of the tires and the closer was dealt away, leading to a late season skid that took them from 40-41 at the half to 77-85 at the end. Not catastrophic, but a fourth-place finish in the Mantle. There was a lot of patching, mostly through the draft, but their ability to contend will be tested during the season.

Then there are the **Rocky Mountain Dragons**. *Dave Jaskot* put everything on the line to get to the World Series, and came away with a championship – which will be a good thing to think about during what will be a long and arduous season. This is, of course, a very traditional outcome in TBL: a one year dynasty. But with a lot of weight in the 2026 draft, the team will look very different in a year.

Mantle Division

Bobby Witt, Jr.,
Munich

1. Munich	31.5
2. Hudson	27.0
3. Columbus	24.5
4. Rocky Mountain	15.5

2024 munich MARAUDERS in review

Munich should make some playoff noise. Finally.

by Paul Montague

2024 in Review
Final Record: 86-76 (3rd, Mantle)

Last year's version of this article concluding by saying "In fact, fans should be looking forward to better results overall in 2024 (perhaps maybe possibly please even borderline playoff contention?)…" That merits the Crystal Ball Award – Munich's record improved by a whopping 32 games, from 54-108 in 2023 to 86-76, and the Marauders found themselves in the playoff race right down to the final games of November, only to fall just short of a wildcard spot (tying with Kansas a game behind Hudson).

What went right?

The pitching staff, led by The Logans (Gilbert and Webb) recorded an ERA well below 4.00 (3.67). Webb pitched 237 IP with a 3.30 ERA and 18-8 record, while Gilbert worked 208 innings with ERA of 3.25 and 17-12 record. Both notched over 200 strikeouts. In the bullpen, Phil Maton stepped into the closer's role and was unexpectedly effective, saving 28 games with a stellar 1.32 ERA. The pitching was aided by a defense that recorded only 86 errors.

Webb: Leader

On the offensive side, Austin Riley (who had been acquired to fill the hole at 3B that had existed since basically forever) socked 38 home runs and drove in 114 runs – mission accomplished. Sophomore Bobby Witt Jr. contributed 30 home runs and six other hitters knocked at least 10 as the team totaled 221 long balls. Mandated to run more, the Marauders put up 133 stolen bases led by Corbin Carroll with 36, Nico Hoerner with 33, and Witt with 25. The Runnin' 'Rauders were caught only 19 times. The combination of long balls and steals led to 777 runs scored.

What went wrong?

The back of the rotation, Hunter Brown and Julio Urias, combined for 21 losses – even a slightly more effective performance would have gotten Munich into the playoffs.

Anthony Rizzo finally showed he is mortal, as a combination of injuries and declining skills removed him from the team leaderboards. First-round rookie catcher Bo Naylor did not seem ready for the bright lights of TBL, with a slashline of only .180/.293/.316.

3 Things

1. Contention! Between Bobby Witt Jr., Mark Vientos' development, and the draft acquisition of Pavin Smith, the middle of the lineup is officially worrisome for opposing pitchers. On the mound, Logan Gilbert is turning into a true ace, Garrett Crochet seems finally over his injury issues, and drafting Spencer Schwellenbach rounded out a deep and talented rotation, while the bullpen gained several good young arms. So Munich should make some playoff noise. Finally.

2. More future! Unlike previous rebuilds, Munich has not drained its draft bank, having an extra first-rounder in hand for the 2026 draft. Eury Perez will hopefully be ready to start contributing in 2026. Mason Miller offers a bullpen anchor for some time to come, so maybe this contending cycle will be longer.

3. But what about? ….the catching situation. With Naylor perhaps not panning out, and no significant move on the catching front this off-season, the position remains a major concern. How will team management address this, fans are wondering?

munich MARAUDERS

Paul Montague (42nd year); Hall of Famer

Making the playoffs seems assured, even though no team will look past Munich this year.

2025 marked the turning point for the Munich franchise. After three straight 100-loss seasons, the Marauders came within a win of making the playoffs. The team banged out 221 homeruns and stole 133 bases, while two starters won 17 or more games. The team ERA, 3.68, was a full run better than the year before. Nice.

Now comes the hard part: living up to expectations. The Marauders enter the season with high hopes and a loaded roster. Making the playoffs seem assured, even though no team will look past Munich this year. The current team is a testament to Mr. Montague's drafting and trading prowess, as 13 players on the roster were first-round picks. Two more were second-round picks. Nine arrived through trades, and one was scooped off the waiver wire. That's impressive.

Pitching: 11.0
Continues to mature.

This staff is so full of youth that you have to dig deep to find its elder statesman, who came by trade (of course). This highlights just how difficult a decision it must have been for Mr. Montague to veer from his plan to pick up a pitcher who's as old as 33. This staff took a big step forward last year and continues to mature into the beast it will surely become.

SNT:
Spencer Schwellenbach.

This first-round pick enjoyed a nice rookie year, and with some growth, he could become another weapon for Mr. Montague's emerging monster of a pitching staff.

Turnover Rate: 42%

Arrived: Dillon DINGLER, Wyatt LANGFORD, Max LAZAR, Nate LOWE, Justin MARTINEZ, Erik MILLER, Mason MILLER, Adrian MOREJON, Joel PAYAMPS, A.J. PUK, Brayan ROCCHIO, Spencer SCHWELLENBACH, Pavin SMITH, Matt STRAHM, Garrett WHITLOCK.

Departed: Isaiah CAMPBELL, Henry DAVIS, Josiah GRAY, Kyle HENDRICKS, Sam HUFF, Edouard JULIEN, Zack LITTELL, Lars NOOTBAAR, Emmanuel RIVERA, Josh ROJAS, Julio URIAS, Masyn WINN, Alex YOUNG, Jacob YOUNG.

The rotation has an ace who's a control freak, followed by some of the best names in the business. None has probably reached his career peak yet, but taken together, they aren't too bad right now. The bullpen features righty-lefty dual closers, six capable, if somewhat wild, set-up relievers, and a few mops, who aren't just throwaway arms, either: they too have promise.

ROTATION. The ace of the staff is Logan Gilbert (Grade 14 C+34, 33 starts). This will be his third consecutive season with 31-plus starts. He's followed by the poster boy for potential: lefty Garrett Crochet (Grade 11 C+25 with a K strikeout letter, 32 starts) for his first full season in the rotation. SNT Spencer Schellenbach (Grade 11 C+34, 21 starts) adds to the rotation's reputation for base-on-balls stinginess.

Crochet: Poster boy

Hunter Brown (Grade 10 HR+16, 30 starts) seems merely human by comparison, but he's a Guy We Like. He's followed by team leader

(and former sixth-round pick) Logan Webb (Grade 8 C+25 HR+42, 33 starts), who had a bit of a down year, but must be one of the best Grade 8s in the league. Garrett Whitlock (Grade 17 C-23 HR+42) chips in 4 starts, mostly in November, leaving lefty Nick Lodolo (Grade 8), who needs only 9 of his 21 starts. Boy howdy.

BULLPEN. The co-closers are rookie righty Mason Miller

Miller: Rookie closer

(Grade 20* HR+21, 65 IP) and lefty veteran Matt Strahm (Grade 21* C+35 HR+34, 63 IP). The deep set-up crew includes righties Joel Payamps (Grade 15* C+22, 59 IP), rookie Justin Martinez (Grade 14* C-31 HR+54, 73 IP), Phil Maton (Grade 13*, 64 IP), and Carlos Hernandez (Grade 13* C-55 HR+53, 30 IP). The lefties are A.J. Puk (Grade 14* C-16 HR+33, 71 IP) and Erik Miller (Grade 14* C-62 HR+16, 67 IP).

That's an incredible 492 innings of relief that steal 8s and more. The bulk innings belong to lefties Adrian Morejon (Grade 10* HR+36, 64 IP), Andrew Nardi (Grade 7*, 50 IP), and whatever Lodolo can provide without the +5 bonus. Poor Max Lazar, a rare tenth-round pick to make the team, is around to toss batting practice. This pen matches up well with the starters. And with Mr. Montague's deft hand, they'll figure into many of the team's wins.

Offense: 11.5
They'll run. A lot.

Last year, the *Annual* led off this section by singing the praises of Corbin Carroll (1-4-4, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, 31 SSN for 48 SBA, L-4). He's taken a step back, but still plays every day. The new leader of the offense is all-around superstar Bobby Witt, Jr. (1-0-0-0-0, 12 hits, 3 walks+22, 28 SSN for 48 SBA, L-7). Yes, they'll run. A lot.

More power comes from Pavin Smith (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 4 walks, L-7, just 60 games) and astute 2024 seventh-round pick Mark Vientos (1-1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks, but 9 13s, R-3, 111 games). They don't officially platoon, but they take each other's spot in the lineup, depending on the opposing pitcher. Seiya Suzuki (1-4-5, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, 28 SSN for 25 SBA, no shift) also plays every day.

From there, the lineup gets a little more pedestrian. Victor Caratini (1-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+4 R-3, 87 games), Nate Lowe (1-6, 9 hits, 5 walks+22), Austin Riley (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, no shift, 110 games), rookie Wyatt Langford (1-4-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 33 SSN for 25 SBA, L+4 R-3), Parker Meadows (1-3-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 27 SSN for 15 SBA, 82 games) and Lane Thomas (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, 27 SSN for 51 SBA, L+7 R-4), all fill part-time roles.

Langford: Rookie

Then there's lead-off man extraordinaire Nico Hoerner (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, 32 SSN for 41 SBA, L+3), whose job it is to get on base in front of the big bats. That leaves part-time catcher and main weakness in the lineup vs. RHP: Bo Naylor (1-6, 8 hits, 3 walks, 10 13s, L-4, 123 games). He's still learning, but boy that card hurts. This is a fast, young team with decent pop. They'll score runs even on a bad day.

Defense: 5.5
When the best are in...

When the best are in the field, it's one of the strongest in the league. Witt (SS9) and Hoerner

(2B9) play almost every day. Lowe (1B5), Carroll, Thomas, and Meadows (all OF3s) are highlight-reel caliber. Caratini (C8, Th-2) and Naylor (C8, Th+2) show why they're in the lineup.

Suzuki and Langford (OF2s) platoon average gloves in LF. Riley and Vientos (3B4s) make the ordinary plays at the hot corner. The weakness is Vientos (1B2) when he plays at the cold corner, but Lowe can cover for him.

Bench: 3.5
Many platoon bats.

The good news is there are many platoon bats to mix and match, even if the instructions don't expressly direct it. In addition, there's "injury Swiss army knife" Brayan Rocchio (6-0, 7 hits, 4 walks+42, no shift, 25 SSN for 18 SBA, SS9) and Anthony Rizzo (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-6, 1B5, 92 games). Spencer Torkelson and Dillon Dingler are biding their time for better seasons to come.

1st This is the second-highest TQ rating in the league, according to the *Annual*'s imperfect rating system. Unfortunately, the team with the highest T.Q. (Grand Cayman) is in the same conference. These two teams play each other nine times during the season and potentially seven more if they meet in the playoffs.

If needed, Mr. Montague has capital in the 2026 Rookie Draft, not to mention young players already on the roster, to make a move during the midseason trading period.

But he may be content to wait. This is not a one-and-done team. It's full of youth and promise, carefully built up with astute trades and keen picks. If you think it's easy to build a team with that many first-round picks, you're missing the

point. First of all, not all first-round picks become keepers. Second of all, accumulating those picks took skill. There's no reason to think that this team won't be in contention for the foreseeable future.

Ages of players on the Munich roster, as of 07/01/2025:

35: Rizzo
34: Strahm
32: Maton
31: Caratini, Payamps
30: Puk, Suzuki
29: N. Lowe, P. Smith, L. Thomas, Webb, Whitlock
28: Gilbert, C. Hernandez, Hoerner, Lazar, Riley
27: Lodolo, E. Miller
26: H. Brown, Crochet, Dingler, M. Miller, Morejon, Nardi
25: Meadows, B. Naylor, Schwellenbach, Torkelson, Vientos, Witt
24: Carroll, J. Martinez, Rocchio
23: Langford

munich MARAUDERS

Torkelson: Biding his time

TQ: **31.5**

(2B9) play almost every day. Lowe (1B5), Carroll, Thomas, and Meadows (all OF3s) are highlight-reel caliber. Caratini (C8, Th-2) and Naylor (C8, Th+2) show why they're in the lineup.

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24: Carroll, J. Martinez, Rocchio
23: Langford

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Torkelson: Biding his time

TQ: **31.5**

(2B9) play almost every day. Lowe (1B5), Carroll, Thomas, and Meadows (all OF3s) are highlight-reel caliber. Caratini (C8, Th-2) and Naylor (C8, Th+2) show why they're in the lineup.

Suzuki and Langford (OF2s) platoon average gloves in LF. Riley and Vientos (3B4s) make the ordinary plays at the hot corner. The weakness is Vientos (1B2) when he plays at the cold corner, but Lowe can cover for him.

Bench: 3.5
Many platoon bats.

The good news is there are many platoon bats to mix and match, even if the instructions don't expressly direct it. In addition, there's "injury Swiss army knife" Brayan Rocchio (6-0, 7 hits, 4 walks+42, no shift, 25 SSN for 18 SBA, SS9) and Anthony Rizzo (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, L-6, 1B5, 92 games). Spencer Torkelson and Dillon Dingler are biding their time for better seasons to come.

1st This is the second-highest TQ rating in the league, according to the *Annual*'s imperfect rating system. Unfortunately, the team with the highest T.Q. (Grand Cayman) is in the same conference. These two teams play each other nine times during the season and potentially seven more if they meet in the playoffs.

If needed, Mr. Montague has capital in the 2026 Rookie Draft, not to mention young players already on the roster, to make a move during the midseason trading period.

But he may be content to wait. This is not a one-and-done team. It's full of youth and promise, carefully built up with astute trades and keen picks. If you think it's easy to build a team with that many first-round picks, you're missing the

point. First of all, not all first-round picks become keepers. Second of all, accumulating those picks took skill. There's no reason to think that this team won't be in contention for the foreseeable future.

Ages of players on the Munich roster, as of 07/01/2025:

35: Rizzo
34: Strahm
32: Maton
31: Caratini, Payamps
30: Puk, Suzuki
29: N. Lowe, P. Smith, L. Thomas, Webb, Whitlock
28: Gilbert, C. Hernandez, Hoerner, Lazar, Riley
27: Lodolo, E. Miller
26: H. Brown, Crochet, Dingler, M. Miller, Morejon, Nardi
25: Meadows, B. Naylor, Schwellenbach, Torkelson, Vientos, Witt
24: Carroll, J. Martinez, Rocchio
23: Langford

munich MARAUDERS

Torkelson: Biding his time

TQ: **31.5**

2024 hudson GENERALS in review

We did it again.

by Walter Hunt

2024 in Review
Final Record: 87-75 (2nd, Mantle)

We did it again: the *Annual* picked Hudson to win the Mantle and go deep into the playoffs. Usually when we do this, the Magic 8-Ball turns up a different result. So it was in 2024: instead of our prediction, the Generals won 87, thirteen games behind the eventual champs from Rocky Mountain, and bowed to Calusa in the wild card round.

What went right?

The Hudson pitching was solid, and struck out a lot of opposing batters (1,584, most in TBL, and almost 200 more than the Generals lineup). Josh Hader was once again a bullpen kingpin: he saved 36, giving up only 32 hits and striking out 69 in 55 innings. Tom Cosgrove, Bryan Abreu, Raisel Iglesias, and Jose Soriano all worked hard to keep the team in the game. Kevin Gausman went 14-8, and Pablo Lopez 16-8, both with ERAs in the mid 3s.

Sean Murphy (.275-18-58) and Tristan Casas (.260-21-65) were the offensive stars. In part time use, Tony Kemp was outstanding (.327, 15 steals), as was Randal Grichuk (.289-8-40). The club hit 198 homers and walked 639 times.

What went wrong?

There was really no impact hitter, and far too many batters generated far too many empty at-bats. Six players struck out more than 100 times, led by Brandon Nimmo's 151. Max

Hader: Bullpen kingpin

Muncy's 31 homers came with 144 strikeouts and a .189/.307/.298 slash line. The team hit only .234 as a team, with six regulars or semi-regulars hitting under .240.

On the pitching side, even though the staff struck out a lot of opposing batters, the lower half of the rotation took a bit of a beating. Freddy Perlata went 11-15, 4.74; Andrew Heaney, 9-12, 5.13; and Reese Olson 6-7, 5.47.

3 Things

1. Fix the catcher position. We knew that going in, and the selection of Ivan Herrera was the logical choice. He's got a little to learn at the position, but he comes with a fine major league bat.

2. The lineup should produce more than last year's. What a relief. Riley Greene, Lawrence Butler, Randall Grichuk, Herrera and a few others should produce more impact than last year's. It's good to see some younger players in the mix, with hope for better in the future.

3. 26 players. Everyone gets to play; Mr. Beard has emphasized that for years. It's important for the away managers to look over the instructions before rolling the dice, because he means it: everyone who is on the roster does something. Let them do it.

hudson GENERALS

Clay Beard (41st year); Hall of Famer

Mr. Beard has his team back in contention.

The *Annual* prognosticators predicted a Mantle Division crown for the Generals last season. They won 87, finishing second to eventual TBL champs Rocky Mountain and bowing out in the first round of the playoffs, although it went the full seven games. It's possible Mr. Beard could have sprung for a mid-season deal to shore up the roster, but that's not his style.

On the bright side, with his characteristic full draft, Mr. Beard has his team right back in contention, despite several off-years and injuries from his players. Led by a solid rotation, a very deep bullpen, and a lineup littered with power or speed (but rarely both at the same time), the Generals are once again expected to be one of the top teams in the National Conference.

Pitching: 11.5
A good thing.

This is the second-best pitching staff in the conference and the fourth best in the league, by the *Annual*'s imperfect ratings system. The rotation has a full season ace, and although these starts are filled by two pitchers, one is among the best starting grades in the league. The rest of the rotation is mostly Grade 12s and 10s with decent if rarely overpowering peripherals. It bottoms out with a handful of starts by a competent Grade 7. It's also mostly young.

The bullpen is top-heavy, which is a good thing. It has a nice balance of righties and lefties, and the grades will definitely help the starters whenever they need it. The peripherals are a mixed bag, but they have guys to stop the homers, guys to stop the walks, and guys to stop the hits. It's a formidable staff.

ROTATION. When Bowden Francis (Grade 18 C+26 HR-24, only 13 starts) dropped into the third round of the TBL Rookie Draft,

Peralta: Consistent

Mr. Beard jumped on him. He and Jose Soriano (Grade 13 C-24 HR+33) provide 33 starts. That's like an ace. They're followed by consistent Freddy Peralta (Grade 12 C-23, 32 starts) and rookie Landen Roupp (Grade 12 C-51 HR+51, 4 starts), who, with a 20 fatigue, isn't really an opener.

Veteran Kevin Gausman (Grade 10, 31 starts) is back from the dead. Reese Olson (Grade 10 HR+36, 22 starts) is proving to be an astute 2024

Turnover Rate: **28%**

Arrived: Mason ENGLERT, Bowden FRANCIS, Romy GONZALEZ, Ivan HERRERA, Porter HODGE, Justyn-Henry MALLOY, Luis PERALTA, Manuel RODRIGUEZ, Landen ROUPP, Victor SCOTT.

Departed: Bryan BAKER, Tom COSGROVE, J.D. DAVIS, Tyler FREEMAN, Tony KEMP, Tucupita MARCANO, Josh SBORZ, Miguel VARGAS, Andrew WANTZ. Tyler WELLS.

SNT: Ivan Herrera.

The second catcher taken in the 2025 TBL Rookie Draft, Herrera wields the better bat. No matter where he ends up playing, he'll contribute as a middle-of-the-lineup hitter.

draft pick. Last year's 16-game winner Pablo Lopez (Grade 8 C+26, 32 starts) had a down year, but will still contribute his share of decent starts. The rotation finishes up with just eight starts of lefty Andrew Heaney (Grade 7 C+24), despite a full season of usage. That's also a good thing.

BULLPEN. In TBL, it's a luxury to have a consistently good reliever, especially if that reliever is a closer. That describes Raisel Iglesias (Grade 21* +36 HR+35, 69 IP) to a T. This year, he's joined by youngster Porter Hodge (Grade 27* C-46 HR+43, 43 IP), who can also put out fires as early as the 6th inning. That's a good thing, too.

Iglesias: Consistent

The deep set-up crew includes lefty Josh Hader (Grade 16* C-21 HR-25, 71 IP), Bryan Abreu (Grade 15* C-26, 78 IP), lefty Dylan Lee (Grade 15* C+25, 60 IP), and Manuel Rodriguez (Grade 15* C+21 HR+31, 38 IP). That's 359 innings, so far. The bulk innings belong to Nick Sandlin (Grade 13* C-33 HR-34, 57 IP), Roupp (32 IP), Luis Peralta (Grade 12* C-33 HR+62, 12 IP), and possibly Josh Winckowski (Grade 6*, 54 IP), Heaney, or even Francis (Grade 5*, 63 IP). This is a deep pen.

Offense: 8.5
Some power and some speed.

The best card on the team this year is part-timer Randal Grichuk (1-0-0-0-0, 11 hits, 3 walks+22, R-6, 106 games). He plays vs. LHPs on the boards and all the time on the computer. SNT Ivan Herrera (3 0s, 11 hits, 4 walks+22, L-7, 72 games) is the only other hitter with 11 hits. Last year's sixth-round pick Lawrence Butler (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 35 SSN for 18 SBA, no shift, 125 games) is a diamond in the rough.

Grichuk: Best card

Bryan Reynolds (1-6-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 32 SSN for 12 SBA, L-4) is still a presence, and fourth-round pick Romy Gonzalez (1-6-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 30 SSN for 14 SBA, L+6 R-11, 89 games) plays a role. Riley Greene (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-8) is just coming into his own. Power also comes from Tristan Casas (1-5-5, 9 hits, 4 walks, but 10 13s and 2 24s, 63 games) and Max Muncy (1-5-5, 8 hits, 5 walks+42, L-10, 73 games), but the limitations from injuries is apparent.

Other contributors include table-setter Josh Smith (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, 32 SSN for 13 SBA). Jake Cronenworth (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L-9), Brandon Nimmo (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, 35 SSN for 15 SBA), Andrew McCutchen (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-4, 120 games), and Ha-Seong Kim (3 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks, 31 SSN for 27 SBA) fill out the bottom part of the lineup. They have some power and some speed.

The last three cards in the offense make up the number 8 and 9 hitters: speedster Jose Caballero (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+42, 28 SSN for 60 SBA!) and catchers Jonah Heim (2 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+22) and Sean Murphy (1-5, 7 hits, 4 walks+22, 72 games). They reflect some of the off-years the Generals have to suffer through.

Defense: 4.0
Some highlights … and some weaknesses.

The team has some highlights … and some weaknesses. Kim (SS9), Caballero (SS9, 2B8) and Cronenworth (2B8) provide middle infield defense. Greene, Nimmo, and Reynolds (all OF3s) provide highlight reel plays, and Reynolds has a 34 arm. Only Reynolds plays every day. Butler and Grichuk (OF2s) also have to play.

Smith (3B4) makes the plays he can, but there are no stars at the cold corner, as Casas and Gonzalez are 1B3s, and Muncy is only a 1B2. That leaves the catching, where Murphy and Heim (C8s) are solid and SNT Herrera (C7) is just average. But none of the catchers can throw out a base stealer, as Murphy's Th-3 is the best of the lot.

Bench: 3.0
All 26 active players.

There's not much beyond the extra platoon usage, but while there is some of that available — and Mr. Beard famously plays with all 26 active players — the team has quite a few game-limited hitters. Otherwise, rookie Justyn-Henry Malloy (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L+10 R-5, 71 games) can PH vs. LHP. Miguel Vargas and rookie Victor Scott are both waiting to blossom.

2nd Do the T.Q. ratings lie? This is the exact same rating the Generals received last year, but instead of a division crown, the *Annual*'s experts are now predicting a second-place finish.

Like last year, the pitching staff needs to carry the team. The offense has some promise, but it may suffer against lefties, despite the several awesome lefty-killers on the roster. The bullpen, in particular, will likely play a huge role in the team's success.

But Mr. Beard has done something quite remarkable, in terms of TBL team-building:

Still fickle, but we live in hope

make the team younger while still being competitive year after year. An amazing 22 of the 36 players on its roster were born after 1995. This is a very young team by league standards. That's a nod to Mr. Beard's drafting skills.

Butler: Diamond in the rough

TQ: **27.0**

2024 columbus JETS in review

The Mantle Division will be tough.

by Vic Vaughn

2024 in Review
Final Record: 77-85 (4th, Mantle)

Coming off a 92-win season in 2023, the Jets began the 2024 campaign expecting to compete in a very tough Mantle division and contend for a National Conference wild card spot. Those dreams quickly evaporated when we stumbled out of the gate and found ourselves nine games out of first place by the end of May. Despite rallying to reach .500 by August, the season outcome was clear and after trading our best reliever away at the deadline we faded to a 77-85 record, finishing last in the division.

What went right?

Jorge Soler had himself a nice season putting up a .272/.328/.511 slash line and led the team with 80 RBI. Ketel Marte and Eugenio Suarez both hit 29 home runs each and Ketel led the team in hits with 154, total bases with 275 and runs scored with 86. Luke Raley contributed by sticking his elbow out and leading TBL with 31 HBP.

Marte: Leader

On the mound Merrill Kelly had a team high 16 wins with a 3.59 ERA and 216 strikeouts in 205 innings. Spencer Strider contributed 11 wins and 240 strikeouts, but with a disappointing 4.26 ERA. Aaron Nola was the only other pitcher to reach double digit wins with 10. The bullpen was anchored by Felix Bautista, traded away at the deadline, who posted 26 saves with 63 strikeouts in only 36 innings with Columbus.

What went wrong?

The pitching staff was disappointing. We didn't have a starter lower than a Grade 9 yet the staff compiled a 4.37 ERA, placing in the bottom third of the league. J.P. France managed a 5.99 ERA in his 21 starts with Aaron Nola and Mitch Keller not far behind with ERAs of 5.07 and 4.78 respectively. The bullpen had a tough time in close games reflected in our 20-32 record in one-run contests.

The offense was pedestrian averaging a little over 4 runs per game. The main underperformers were LaMonte Wade who had a tough year only hitting .195 with a .301 OBP batting leadoff most of the season and Anthony Volpe who "produced" a .187/.253/.309 slash line while playing almost every game at shortstop.

3 Things

1. Bolstering the pitching staff. It wasn't the plan going into the draft, but the first three picks were starters Shane Baz and Shota Imanaga along with Grade 26* reliever Bryan Hudson. We're crossing our fingers that their UCLs hold up.

2. The Mantle Division will be tough. Rocky Mountain will be taking a step back, but Hudson has a good team, and Munich looks very strong. To compete, we'll need everyone to perform to their potential.

3. Catching continues to be held together with duct tape. After we missed out on Austin Wells and Ivan Herrera in the first round, we settled for Ben Rortvedt in the seventh. He joins Gary Sanchez and Nick Fortes in probably the worst catching team in the league.

columbus JETS

Vic Vaughn (19th year)

Will this be a growth year or a side-step?

Is Mr. Vaughn becoming a pitching-first team-builder? His first three picks in the most recent TBL Rookie Draft were pitchers. In fact, seven of his 10 picks went to pitchers. As a result, he's revamped his staff. To his credit, he also selected several young lottery tickets to bolster his infield. Whether or not this strategy eventually pays off can't be known at the moment.

What is known is that this team has some talent. They have a chance to make the play-offs if everything comes together or another team collapses. Its pitching staff is a strength, thanks in part to the draft, and its offense certainly has some power, but getting all the pieces to work together will be the Columbus challenge. Last year, the Annual pundits choose Columbus to finish second in the Mantle Division. They finished last. Will this be a growth year or a side-step?

Turnover Rate: 33%

Arrived: Shane BAZ, Kyle FINNEGAN, Tyler FITZGERALD, Bryan HUDSON, Shota IMANAGA, Connor NORBY, Ben RORTVEDT, Jose RUIZ, Hunter STRATTON, Jesus TINOCO.

Departed: Dylan CARLSON, Jay JACKSON, Luke JACKSON, Kevin KIERMAIER, Zach MCKINSTRY, Angel PERDOMO, DJ STEWART, Joey VOTTO, Alika WILLIAMS.

SNT: Shota Imanaga.

Mr. Vaughn took Shane Baz with a first-rounder, but Imanaga, an older rookie taken in the second round, will be much more valuable in the coming season.

Pitching: 10.0
Enough here to surprise?

This team has a strong starting staff, even though injuries have hurt it. A lot. Remember star Spencer Strider? He's gone for the year. Others have been limited almost to the point of being irrelevant. But the current crop of carded pitchers isn't too shabby. The peripherals are mostly positive, too, at least in terms of control.

The bullpen has a two-headed closer at the top end, including a lefty and a righty. This flexibility will allow Mr. Vaughn the pleasure of mixing and matching to close out the games the Jets lead. It's a fairly deep pen with loose rules about usage that's conducive to his mix-and-match approach. It's a staff geared to win as many games as possible, and there just may be enough here to surprise teams that take it for granted.

Baz: Limited

ROTATION. Limitations have hurt this staff. Rookie Shane Baz (Grade 15, 14 starts) is active for only half the season. Veteran Matt Boyd (Grade 14 HR+21) contributes only 8 starts. That's a shame. In addition, former studs Merrill Kelly (Grade 9 C+21 HR-16) and Jeffrey Springs (Grade 9) add only 20 more starts. Just think if they were all healthy for a full season.

The rest of the rotation isn't bad, but not exactly overpowering. SNT Shota Imanaga (Grade 12 C+36 HR-22, 29 starts), Aaron Nola (Grade 10

columbus JETS

Adam, Hudson: Co-closers

C+22 HR-16, 33 starts), lefty J.P. Sears (Grade 8 C+21 HR-16, 31 of 32 starts), and Mitch Keller (Grade 7 C+21, 26 of 31 starts) bring the total to 161 starts. Alex Faedo (Grade 13 C-44 HR-16) contributes one start of a doubleheader.

BULLPEN. The two closers on the roster are rookie lefty Bryan Hudson (Grade 26*, 62 IP) and veteran Jason Adam (Grade 22* HR+32, 74 IP). They have enough to put away any game the Jets lead in the 8th. The set-up crew has lefty Taylor Rogers (Grade 14*, 60 IP), Jesus Tinoco (Grade 14* HR+32, 41 IP), and Faedo (about 50 IP). That's 280-plus innings of stealing 8s and more.

The bottom of the pen won't be as helpful to the better starters, but add some depth and flexibility. Kyle Finnegan (Grade 9*, 64 IP), Jose Ruiz (Grade 9* HR-16, 51 IP), and Hunter Stratton (Grade 8* C+34 HR+31, 38 IP) are all righties and all OK. Stratton somehow made it into the tenth round of the TBL Rookie Draft before Mr. Vaughn scooped him up. Erstwhile starter Brandon Pfaadt (Grade 6 C+25) has mop-up duty this year.

Offense: 7.5
Mostly solid, but needs luck.

Possibly the best second baseman in the league this year is Ketel Marte (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks+22, L+4 R-4). While the shift vs. RHP may hurt his average, he's got a 7 on 44. Nice. Rookie Tyler Fitzgerald (1-5-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, 31 SSN for 21 SBA, L+3 R-4, 96 games) DHs against lefties. Lourdes Gurriel (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks+22, L+5 R-4) plays every day despite his shift.

Lead-off hitter LaMonte Wade (3 0s, 9 hits, 5 walks+22, 117 games) is an on-base machine. Jorge Soler (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22, L+4 R-3) is a middle-of-the-order presence, while Luke Raley (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks+2 42s, L-9) plays only against RHPs. So far, this is a mostly solid offense.

Soler: On-base machine

Unfortunately, what follows is a more-or-less 9-hit/3-walk parade, with some power and some speed. Eugenio Suarez (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks+22) takes his cuts nearly every single day. Meanwhile, Jesus Sanchez (1-6-6, 9 hits, 3 walks, 34 SSN for 18 SBA, L-13) and Jorge Mateo (4 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 33 SSN for 15 SBA, L+4 R-6, 68 games) platoon, but not with each other.

Anthony Volpe (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks, 31 SSN for 35 SBA, no shift) and Rhys Hoskins (1-5-5, 8 hits, 4 walks+22) will need luck to help the lineup. That leaves Gary Sanchez (1-5, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, but 3 24s, no shift, 89 games) and innocuous Ben Rortvedt (2 0s, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-5) to bat last every day. They'll score runs when the power clicks, but there are many outs at the bottom of the order.

Defense: 4.5
A lot of average.

Volpe (SS9), Mateo (SS9), and Marte (2B9) cement a stellar middle infield. OF3s Gurriel and Wade, when out there, are also excellent. Then there's a lot of average. Raley (OF2), Suarez (3B4), Hoskins (1B3), and Rortvedt (C7, Th-0) make the easy plays. Wade (1B4) can help out at the cold corner, but Soler (OF1) and Sanchez (C6, but Th+1) play against lefties, making the defense a little creaky if the fielding roles don't go to the right places.

Volpe: Superb glove

Bench: 2.5
It doesn't help enough.

The Jets have some flexibility within the platoons, which definitely helps. The best of the rest is Andres Gimenez (2 0s, 10 hits, a walk+42, 3 SSN for 35 SBA, L-5, 2B9). Because of Marte, he never has to play the field, but he does have an advantageous shift vs. RHPs.

Rookie Connor Norby (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-4, just 45 games) also doesn't add much to the current version of the team, except a little power. Third catcher Nick Fortes (3 0s, 9 hits, a walks+22, C7, Th-1) is innocuous. The bench doesn't suck, but it doesn't help enough.

Ages of players on the Columbus
roster, as of 07/01/2025:

36: Me. Kelly
34: Boyd, Law, Ta. Rogers
33: Adam, Jackson, Soler, E. Suarez
32: Hoskins, Nola, G. Sanchez, Springs
31: L. Gurriel, Imanaga, K. Marte, L. Wade
30: J. Mateo, L. Raley, J. Ruiz, Tinoco
29: Faedo, M. Keller, Sears
28: Fortes, B. Hudson, Stratton
27: Fitzgerald, Rortvedt, J. Sanchez
26: Baz, Gimenez, Pfaadt, Strider
25: Norby
24: Volpe

It's a bit ironic, but the *Annual* had Columbus at that exact T.Q. number last year, which predicted a second-place finish. We all know how that turned out. This year, the same T.Q. yields a third-place finish in a stronger division. But in the first year of the post-Joey Votto phase of this franchise, the team is noticeably younger, with 14 players born after 1995. They're not all regulars yet, but they have promise. It's likely a conscious effort by Mr. Vaughn to get younger while still competing.

columbus JETS

Gimenez: Again, helpful

They may threaten for a playoff spot. Meanwhile, Mr. Vaughn has nearly all of his draft in 2026. That translates to a flexible team that should continue to improve. In Mr. Vaughn's tenure, the team has lost 100 games only once, but their high in wins is 97.

It's been many years since this franchise was located in Rochester, so it's on Mr. Vaughn to build a team that can outpace the likes of Munich (3 World Series wins), Hudson (4 World Series appearances), and Rocky Mountain (the reigning TBL Champions).

TQ: **24.5**

2024 rocky mountain DRAGONS in review

Runs will be hard to come by. The pitching will be worse!

by Dave Jaskot

2024 in Review
Final Record: 100-62 (1st, Mantle)
2024 TBL Champions

The Dragons were the 2024 TBL World Series Champions after finishing first in the Mantle Division during the regular season. Their won-loss record of 100-62 was the best in the National Conference. In the playoffs the Dragons defeated the Calusa Indians 4 games to 3 and the Melrose Avengers 4 games to 1 before facing the International Conference winners, the Hoboken Zephyrs. The series went back and forth with the home team winning all seven games and the Dragons finally coming out on top, 4 games to 3.

What went right?

Much went well in 2024. The Dragons finished first in the Mantle at 100-62, one win less than 2023 where they lost early in the playoffs to Columbus. Only Whitman with 105 regular season wins in the International Conference finished with a better record Dragon Starters Zac Gallen and Justin Verlander won 13 each. Framber Valdez added 12 and Wade Miley finished with 11. Miley led all starters with an ERA of 3.10 over his 23 starts. Yennier Cano led the staff with 13 saves followed by Borucki with 12. Borucki and Wilson had the low relief ERAs of 1.60 and 1.63.

The offense produced 861 runs, an increase of 135 runs over 2023, while the pitching staff surrendered 653 (602 earned). The team hit 258 HR led by Isaac Paredes with 38 and Brandon Belt 32. Nine additional batters hit home runs in the double digits. A true team effort. The team finished with a .248/.330 /.448 batting line. Team MVP was Brandon Belt with a .277/.372/.605 line, 32 HR, 96 RBI, 108 hits and 71 runs scored over his 450 PA. Isaac Paredes was close behind in the team MVP voting slashing .263/.375/.530 over 629 PA.

What went wrong?

Although 2024 was a dreamlike championship season for the Dragons, there were some lowlights during the season. The Rocky Mountain offense hit into 88 DPs. The Dragons also struck out 1,592 times compared to drawing 634 walks. With a better OBA the runs scored could have increased significantly. Several of the starting staff ERA's were higher than what the team hoped for at 4.79, 4.66, 4.36 and 4.22 over their 112 starts. Management was also forced to trade future draft picks and players in order to make late season acquisitions of Brusdar Graterol and Felix Bautista (both uncarded for 2025) to bolster the weak relief staff for the playoffs.

3 Things

1. Complete rebuild. Newly drafted players will be playing when they should be riding the bench or remaining in the minors, honing their skills for the 2026 season. Nothing more than a .333 season is expected. The depleted draft position concentrated on pitching youth and best available including future potential.

2. Runs will be hard to come by. The pitching will be worse! MVP Brandon Belt has retired. Newly drafted hitters Jung Ho Lee and Jacob Stowers will join a group of underperforming regulars and newly acquired Lars Nootbar and Oneil Cruz for the 2025 campaign but with all eyes looking forward to 2026 and beyond. Projections for the 2025 offense are for a slash line of .240/.310/.407.

3. Starting pitching will be a struggle. Zac Gallen will lead the staff with his Grade 10X. The remaining starts will be low Graded 3, 4, 5, 5, and 6. Relievers will be a well below average staff Grade 6 thru 11 with only 88 innings of Grade 12. Oh my! But there is hope that among this crew there are some young arms that will be better in 2026.

Belt: Team MVP

rocky mountain DRAGONS

Dave Jaskot (14th year)

Just like Sisyphus, Rocky Mountain will spend the year pushing the boulder up the mountain in a futile effort to avoid embarrassment.

Nearly every TBL manager would gladly trade away a future draft to win the league championship now. The trouble is that it doesn't always work. This is a competitive league, and as Mr. Jaskot discovered in 2023, even having the best record in the conference guarantees nothing. But in 2024, everything clicked, and the Dragons grabbed the brass ring. Congratulations.

Savoring that victory, in seven tense games, will make the crash that is coming this year easier to take. Being the defending champs brings personal satisfaction, but it does nothing to help win games the following season. So now comes The Reckoning. Just like Sisyphus, Rocky Mountain will spend the year pushing the boulder up the mountain in a futile effort to avoid embarrassment. But hey, they're TBL Champions.

Turnover Rate: 36%

Arrived: Oneil CRUZ, Austin GOMBER, Hunter HARVEY, Jung Hoo LEE, Davis MARTIN, Lars NOOTBAAR, Randy RODRIGUEZ, Mitch SPENCE, Carson SPIERS, Kyle STOWERS, Chris STRATTON, Angel ZERPA.

Departed: Brandon BELT, Ryan BORUCKI, Anthony DESCLAFANI, Robert GARCIA, Ian GIBAUT, Nate LOWE, Nick MARTINEZ, Wade MILEY, Joel PAYAMPS, Tyler STEPHENSON, Framber VALDEZ, Steven WILSON.

SNT: Jung-hoo Lee.

With his first pick in the draft in the third round, Mr. Jaskot picked this BAP (best available player), hoping for a rebound season. It's a good gamble.

Pitching: 4.5
Want fries with that?

Well, this is a mess. Some of it is by design, as Mr. Jaskot dealt away (or lost to injury) many of the pitchers who excelled in the championship run. As a result, this pitching staff more closely resembles a deep rebuilder than a defending champ. Some veterans are returning, but without the success they showed in the past. Joining them are several cast-offs and late draft picks. That's what happens when you have only one pick before the sixth round.

The 2025 rotation features only one innocuous starter, but also only one starter who steals hits without help. The rotation will occasionally get lucky or be rescued by the bats or, less likely, the bullpen. Speaking of which, the bullpen is composed entirely of middle and bulk relievers (and one wayward starter). It has only two lefties of marginal use. It'll be a fun year … for the opposition's bats.

Gallen: Ace again

ROTATION. The good news is that the team has an ace: Zac Gallen (Grade 10 HR+25, 28 starts), even though he's not up to his usual standards. If only he got to pitch against other teams' fourth or fifth starters, he might be OK. If only. Ryan Feltner (Grade 6, 29 of his 30 starts, for some reason) at least has positive peripherals. Then it gets worse with lefties Austin Gomber (Grade 5 C+25 HR-25, 30 starts) and Martin Perez (Grade 5 HR-16, 26 starts). That's 113 starts.

rocky mountain DRAGONS

From there, rookie Mitch Spence (Grade 4, 23 of his 24 starts) and future Hall of Famer Justin Verlander (Grade 3 HR-21, 25 of his 27 innocuous starts) take their turns, for better or, more likely, worse. Brock Burke (Grade 2 C-22) gets one start in a doubleheader series. The instructions call for even the bad starters to go four innings. Do you want fries with that?

BULLPEN. Even the instructions admit this team has no closer, as if there were a doubt after surveying the grades. The best arms belong to Yennier Cano (Grade 12* C-23 HR+21, 60 IP) and Ryan Brasier (Grade 12* C+33, 28 IP). Dennis Santana (Grade 11* HR+41, 72 IP) and rookie Randy Rodriguez (Grade 9* HR+32, 52 IP) are real assets in this pen. Spence (Grade 10*, 25 IP) pitches more effectively out of the pen when he isn't starting.

Erstwhile starter Davis Martin (Grade 8 C-34 HR+23, 50 IP without the +5 bonus) joins the fun. That's 287 innings of stealing hits without help. The bottom of the pen includes Chris Stratton (Grade 7* C-56 HR+31, 58 IP), lefty Angel Zerpa (Grade 6*, 54 IP), and Hunter Harvey (Grade 6* C+21 HR+22, 51 IP). The innocuous relievers are Carson Spiers (Grade 4* C+16 HR-34, 70 IP) and lefty Burke (67 IP). That's another 300 innings, which Mr. Jaskot will have to use, probably too often.

Offense: 5.0
A lot of outs here.

Let's start with the three hitters with four power numbers: Oneil Cruz (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, but 9 13s, 35 SSN for 23 SBA, L-6), Sam Hilliard (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 11 13s, L+4 R-4, just 58 games), and funky Hunter Goodman (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, a walk+22, R-3, 70 games). Hilliard and Goodman face only LHP, and Cruz faces only RHP.

ONeil Cruz: He's back

Possibly the best overall card on the roster belongs to Brendan Donovan (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+42, L-4), who sets the table. He's joined by Ryan McMahon (1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, no shift) as an everyday player. Role players Tommy Edman (1-4-5, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L+16 R-9, just 37 games) and Lars Nootbar (1-4-6, 8 hits, 5 walks, 27 SSN for 10 SBA, 109 games) play as much as they can.

Isaac Paredes (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+42, L+4 R-3) provides some pop and OBP. Cal Raleigh (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks+22, L-6) will occasionally hit one out. Speedster Josh Lowe (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, but 9 13s, 35 SSN for 26 SBA, L-7) can run wild … when he gets on base.

That leaves Bryan De La Cruz 1-0-0, 9 hits 2 walks, L+3 R-3), who plays every day. Davis Schneider (1-0-0, 7 hits, 4 walks+22, L-6), and Andy Ibanez (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, L+6 R-13, 99 games) fill out the lineup. This offense won't scare many teams, even when the team makes the best use of the shifts. There are just a lot of outs here, and only one hitter with as many as 10 hits.

Defense: 3.5
A real mixed bag.

There are several leftover highlights from the championship run. Raleigh (C9, Th+3) is a defensive star. Edman (SS9) is a ball magnet when he plays, and McMahon (3B5) solidifies the hot corner. Donovan (2B8) will make most of the plays at the keystone.

All the outfielders are OF2s, with Hilliard (33) the only one with a slightly above-average arm.

Paredes (1B3) does the best he can, but Cruz (SS7) and Goodman (C6, Th-4) are weaknesses at key positions when they play. This is a real mixed bag.

Bench: **2.5**
Good luck.

There are some platoons, but usage appears tight. SNT Jung Hoo Lee (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L-7, OF2, 37 games) helps for a short time. Kris Bryant (2 0s, 8 hits, 3 walks+2 42s, but 4 24s and 9 13s, L-11 R+4, OF2, 100 innocuous games) is a trick-or-treat type of hitter this year. Jack Suwinski (1-6, 7 hits, 3 walks, 34 SSN for 10 SBA, 88 games) and Kyle Stowers (3 0s, 8 hits, 2 walks+22, L-5, OF2, 116 innocuous games) may be forced into action at some point. Let's hope the same isn't true of James Outman. Good luck.

4th Take heart; the Dragons are the reigning TBL champions. They will not, however, repeat. The only prize they're threatening to win is the first overall draft pick in the 2026 TBL Rookie Draft. Mr. Jaskot may be gladly taking several steps back with this team, not just after winning the championship, but after three straight seasons of winning 94, 101, and 100 games. It's been a great run.

Management knows when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em, apparently. Of Dave Jaskot's current 36-man roster, 13 have arrived via a trade. One came from last year's waiver wire. Only one player on his roster is a former first-round pick: cornerstone starter Zac Gallen.

Raleigh: Defensive star

Ages of players on the
Rocky Mountain roster, as of
07/01/2025:

42: Verlander
37: Brasier
34: M. Perez, C. Stratton
33: Bryant
32: Ibanez
31: Cano, Gomber, Hilliard
30: Bautista, Edman, Harvey, McMahon
29: Gallen, D. Santana
28: Burke, B. De La Cruz, Donovan, Feltner,
     D. Martin, Outman, Raleigh
27: J. Lowe, Nootbaar, Spence, Spiers,
     Stowers
26: O. Cruz, Graterol, J. Lee, Paredes,
     Schneider, Suwinski
25: Goodman, R. Rodriguez, Zerpa

Now he gets the challenge to rebuild a winner from what's left. It may take a few years.

rocky mountain DRAGONS

TQ: **15.5**

Another Chance

Mark Bloom's **Grand Cayman Havens** have put it all together for 2025, after disappointment last year. They have everything they need on the mound and in the lineup, and now have another chance to go deep into the play-offs. They've invested both the 2025 and 2026 draft in the effort, with nothing before Round 5 next year. Now it's time to roll the dice and put the boys to work. We think they have a pretty solid chance.

Meanwhile, the **Northboro Phoenix** are back from a tough 2024 with a solid pitching staff and a much improved lineup. *Robert Jordan* and *Steve Stein* have worked hard to make the team much better in the offseason and in the draft, and should expect to contend. Can they catch Grand Cayman? The numbers say no, but the *Annual* has been plenty wrong plenty of times. We're looking forward to a very exciting race all through 2025.

We don't think of the **Elders of Zion** as a Bounce team, but we are accustomed to the idea of them as a serious contender. To our surprise, *Rich Meyer*'s club has had very little of that in the last few years. They won 97 games last year, their best performance in some years, but it seems to have had little staying power. It's not exactly back to the drawing board, but 2025 is not going to be an easy year down below Lake Ingolstadt. There are signs of progress, but there are some miles to be covered before the Elders are once again *the Elders.*
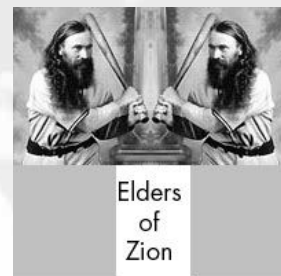
In the second year of *Ray Murphy*'s administration of the **Warrenton Giants**, the team has grown very young. There are lots of signs of future success, but there just won't be much of that this year.

Williams Division

1. **Grand Cayman**   34.0
2. **Northboro**   28.5
2. **Zion**   20.0
4. **Warrenton**   16.0

Jarren Duran,
Grand Cayman

**2024 in Review
Final Record: 84-78 (2nd, Williams)**

While the Havens finished just 3 games out of the National Conference playoffs, it wasn't really that close. The team didn't rise above .500 to stay until November. The offense flashed power, but too often couldn't find a clutch hit with a magnifying glass. Meanwhile, the cobbled-together rotation mostly imploded. All in all, it was a frustrating season.

What went right?

Matt Olson (.278/.355/.590) was a beast, leading the team in most categories. His 52 homers broke the franchise record, and he placed in the all-time franchise lists for RBIs and slugging. Yordan Alvarez (.289/.421/.531) hit 25 HR and contributed a 91/82 K/BB ratio. Ke'Bryan Hayes (.276, 31 doubles, 19 HR) had a breakout year. Jarren Duran stole 23 bases, only getting caught once (on a hit-and-run play 35 result, fielding 1). Marcus Stroman (while on the roster) went a remarkable 12-1, 3.23. The bullpen registered a solid 3.29 ERA, figuring in 82 of the team's 84 wins.

Olson: A beast

What went wrong?

The team had too many game-limited players like Alvarez (114 games) and Duran (102). Duran hit only .244 with a card that had 11 hits and 5 zeros. Too many 8-hit cards got too much playing time, and nine players hit under .230. The rotation basically sucked beyond Stroman and Max Fried, as we had to endure Tyler Anderson (5-10, 5.33), Jake Irvin (5-10, 5.74), Touki Toussaint (5-7, 6.30), and Zack Thompson (0-7, 7.49). Meanwhile, 26 opener starts drained the bullpen. The team led the league in walks surrendered … by 63. A porous defense (117 errors, 4th-worst in the league) led to 93 unearned runs, the league's most.

3 Things

1. *Postponing expectations.* The 2024 Havens were pre-season favorites to win the Williams Division. Everything listed in What Went Wrong sabotaged that expectation. After an 0-4 home series vs. Blue Hill in August dropped the team 11 games under .500, the Havens became sellers at the midseason trading period, which set the stage for this season's expectations.

2. *Keeping the power, but adding hits.* The 2024 team had one player with an 11-hit card, but 10 with 8 or fewer. Yes, the team drew walks (580, fourth in the league), but getting a clutch hit with those runners on base proved more difficult. The 2025 team has six players with 11+ hit cards and only two with 8. With good power up and down the lineup (9 players have 4 power numbers), this team should hit and score more.

3. *Going all in.* Trading away the top picks in the 2026 draft netted Cody Bellinger, Ronel Blanco, Jeff Hoffman, and Michael Lorenzen, none of whom are what you'd call youngsters. The win-now philosophy has finally infected Boomer Wells, and expectations are sky-high this year.

grand cayman HAVENS

Mark Bloom (35th year)

Another chance to excel.

We picked the Havens to win the Williams last year, with a caveat (Latin for "Get Out of Jail Free" for us analysts): "We shall see what the Dice Gods have to say." In the instance, the Dice Gods said some pretty unpleasant things, and the team skidded to 84-78. It left them outside the playoffs: certainly sending away Grossman, Graterol and Stroman to contenders helped make sure. It happens.

This year we're picking them again to win, with a bit more confidence; the team has had three straight winning years, and are clearly headed for a fourth. Mr. Bloom has pushed in all the chips for this season – there's nothing in the draft earlier than a middle #5 in 2026. The roster isn't particularly young (though Xavier Edwards is a good hedge), and things could fall apart. But in the meanwhile, it's another chance to excel – and hopefully propitiate those Dice Gods. Again.

Pitching: 13.0
They're stacked.

Fried: Lefty ace

If you're going to contend in TBL, you've got to have pitching. We rate only one staff higher than the Grand Cayman one; they're stacked both in the rotation and in the bullpen. There are some great grades, and some very nice names.

ROTATION. It begins with SNT Ronel Blanco (Grade 17 C-32, 29 starts). He's one of the best grades in the set. Max Fried (Grade 12 HR+32, 29 starts) returns as the lefty ace, while Michael Lorenzen (Grade 14 C-43, 24 starts) is solid, as is Alek Manoah (Grade 14, though with a scary HR-31, but only for five starts); the rest of the starters are adequate: Tyler Anderson (Grade 11 C-23), Ryan Weathers (Grade 10 C+21) and Jake Irvin (Grade 8 C+16 HR-21) fill out the rotation. There are no bad starts.

BULLPEN. Here is where the pitching staff really shines. As Cayman's instructions note, there are more than 600 innings of relief that take 9s or more, heavily weighted toward Grade 13* and higher. There are both lefties and righties, with all kinds of options for a skilled manager. Make no mistake: Boomer knows how to use a bullpen, and other than Blanco, it will swing into action in midgame every day.

Turnover Rate: **33%**

Arrived: Anthony BANDA, Cody BELLINGER, Ronel BLANCO, Alex CALL, Xavier EDWARDS, Brett HARRIS, Jeff HOFFMAN, Jared KOENIG, Michael LORENZEN, Martin MALDONADO, Garrett MITCHELL, Joe ROSS.

Departed: Nick ANDERSON, John BREBBIA, Dane DUNNING, Pablo REYES, Jordan ROMANO, Zack THOMPSON, Touki TOUSSAINT, Luis URIAS, Daulton VARSHO, Nelson VELAZQUEZ, Taylor WALLS, Drew WATERS.

SNT: Ronel Blanco.

It's not often that a full season starter with a top grade makes it to the middle of the second round. If Blanco has a couple of solid seasons, it'll be a steal of a pick.

At the top the pen has two very hard throwers: Andres Munoz (Grade 23* C-32 HR+15) and Ryan Walker (Grade 19* C+25 HR+34). They have about 140 innings between them. Walker's peripherals make him the closer, while Munoz is the best of the setup men. There are 50 innings of Joe Ross (Grade 18* C-15 HR+24) from the right side and Victor Gonzalez (Grade 18* C-62) from the left (already gone). That's a pretty solid top end.

There are five pitchers in the middle, led by Jeff Hoffman (Grade 16* C+24 HR+23, 66 innings). Alex Minter (Grade 16* C+12 HR-31) and Jared Koenig (Grade 13* HR+36) are the lefthanders, and Trevor Megill (Grade 15* C+25 HR+23) and 70-year-old David Robertson (Grade 14* HR+33) from the right. Along with Hoffman, there are 280 innings here. Anthony Banda (Grade 11* lefty C+23 HR+16), Wandy Peralta (Grade 10* lefty HR-16) and Kevin Ginkel (Grade 9* C+31 HR+25) have almost 160 innings in case the team gets behind.

This staff is what you expect to see on a contending roster.

Offense: 12.5
We like big bats, and cannot lie.

Having a solid pitching staff without a lineup to deliver runs is not a great strategy in TBL. (If you're a long veteran of the league, you may recognize this as the "Farmville Strategy"). So we have to make our position clear: we like big bats, and cannot lie.

Munoz, Walker: Hard throwers

The biggest of bats belongs to Yordan Alvarez (1-1-6-6, 11 hits, 3 walks+42, 35 SSN for 6 SBA). He gets to play every day this year. So does Jarren Duran (1-3-6-6, 11 hits, 2 walks+22, 32 SSN for 41 SBA, L-9 R+2). They are joined by Tyler O'Neill (1-1-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L+13 R-8), Matt Olson (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+22), and Cody Bellinger (1-4-6, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, 31 SSN for 11 SBA). Jose Miranda (4 0s, 11 hits, L-10 R+3), Brandon Lowe (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 32 SSN for 6 SBA), and the surprising Rob Refsnyder (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks+22, L+3 R-5) are all key contributors. SNT runner-up rookie Xavier Edwards also has a funky card (3-6, 11 hits, 4 walks, 34 SSN for 35 SBA, L-4), and Amed Rosario (3 0s, 11 hits, 28 SSN for 18 SBA) is helpful.

Edwards: Funky

The only deficiencies are third base, where Ke'Bryan Hayes is weak (2 0s, 9 hits, L+12 R-5) and behind the plate, with only a little power from Jake Rogers (1-6-6, 8 hits) and Danny Jansen (1-6-0, 8 hits). Fortunately they can catch.

As can be seen above, the MG batting splits will require careful usage on the boards. Things are a little easier on the computer. Even so, the four power number and 11 hit cards abound; there's plenty of speed, and that should all lead to big innings. No lie.

Defense: 5.0
See the ball, catch the ball.

Alvarez: Big bat

The Havens can catch the ball pretty well. They're solid on the corners with Olson and Bellinger (1B5) and Hayes (3B5), though when Hayes isn't in the

Hayes: Solid glove

lineup Miranda (3B3) is a liability, and Rosario (3B4) is only average. Brandon Lowe is Fielding Two (2B7), but Rosario and Lux are both 2B8s. Rosario is an SS8, as is Edwards.

In the outfield, Duran and Bellinger are OF3s with 34 arms, and O'Neill is an OF3 with a 30 arm. Call has limited use as an OF3 with a 29 arm. Refsnyder and Mitchell are OF2s, and Yordan Alvarez (OF1) shouldn't need to carry a glove. Behind the plate, Jake Rogers is superb (C9 Th+4), and Danny Jansen (C8 Th-1) is an adequate backup.

Overall the defense won't give up too many runs, and in some cases will help stop rallies. This is a nice addition to the lineup and the solid staff.

Bench: 3.5
There's plenty to do.

With the platoon shifts, the lineup will vary quite a bit, but there's plenty of usage so there will be frequent opportunities to maneuver during games.

There are a few other parts that will likely be available from the bench: Gavin Lux, back after a year of injury, can do some things (3 0s, 9 hits, 28 SSN, but L-15); Alex Call (4 0s, 12 hits, 4 walks+42) just gets over the 112 PA requirement to have by-game usage, and is a great hitting toy; and Garrett Mitchell (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-6) is useful for some situations. It looks like there is plenty to do, when the game state requires it.

1st

We think they're the best of the division. The excellent deep pitching staff, the bullpen in particular, is among the best in all of TBL. The lineup absolutely rakes, though it will require careful usage to get the best out of it. Expect the scoresheets, especially at home, to be pretty well marked up.

This is the highest TQ score in TBL this year, by a couple of points. It doesn't mean there's any guarantee and Mr. Bloom knows it. But he's thrown everything at this drive to contention.

We like his chances.

grand cayman HAVENS

Ages of players on the Grand Cayman roster, as of 07/01/2025:

40: Robertson
38: Maldonado
35: Ty. Anderson
34: Refsnyder
33: Lorenzen, W. Peralta
32: Hoffman, Ross
31: Banda, R. Blanco, Fried, Ginkel, Koenig, Tr. Megill, Minter, M. Olson
30: Call, Jansen, B. Lowe, O'Neill, J. Rogers
29: Bellinger, Rosario, R. Walker
28: Y. Alvarez, Ja. Duran, Hayes, J. Irvin
27: B. Harris, Lux, Manoah, Miranda
26: Mitchell, A. Munoz
25: Edwards, R. Weathers

TQ: **34.0**

Lux: Future prize

2024 northboro PHOENIX in review

Now is now.

by Steve Stein

2024 in Review
Final Record: 61-101 (3rd, Williams)

From last year's write-up: "2024 is going to be very thin." And boy was it ever! The Phoenix spent 2024 paying for the sins of recent transactions. The fruits of our big trades were bitter. Our first draft choice was at #71. In return, Altuve was gone for half the season, and deGrom for nearly all of it. We had major holes on offense and on the mound. 2024 wasn't going to be pretty. But perhaps we were well-positioned for the next few years? Who knows?

What went right?

Not a whole lot. Yandy Diaz put up a very nice season - .323/.401/.518 with 21 HR. Ryan Thompson notched 23 saves, putting up a 2.10 ERA.

There were glimmers of a brighter future - #71 pick Jordan Westburg put up a respectable rookie season with 68 games at third base. #87 pick Jose Butto went 5-1 with a 1.58 ERA.

Diaz: Nice season

What went wrong?

We were 23rd in offense, 22nd in pitching. We lost 101 games. Bailey Falter went 2-18. Joe Ryan gave up a franchise record 49 HR (while striking out 244, sixth best in franchise history.) Only two batters hit better than .250.

All that futility was good enough to only have a #4 draft position.

3 Things

Riffing off of last year's review…

1. The infield looks set? Westburg at third base cements the infield (only 106 games this year, but we'll take it). With Altuve getting many more games and a 2B-8 this year and Westburg a surprising 3B-5, our fielding will have a major upgrade. Offense is down across the league, but Yandy had a particularly disappointing season. Someone else will have to step up to shoulder the offensive load this year.

2. The pitching looks pretty good. Jacob deGrom didn't pitch much at all (but maybe next year?) but we expect decent seasons from Nestor Cortes, Justin Steele and Joe Ryan, and the staff will be bolstered by the arrival of Toby Myers and Andre Pallante. The bullpen will be headed by high-grade Alex Vesia and Jose Butto, with competent if not flashy support.

3. Power. In a down year for league offense, Jurickson Profar put up career numbers last year (very possibly from PED use that resulted in a half-year suspension, but now is now). Smith and Pederson were very good. Teoscar Hernandez and Joc Peterson had excellent seasons. Will Smith, Jose Altuve and Yandy Diaz all were mildly disappointing – good but not great. But there's a lot of that going around this year, and our offense should be among the league's best. On top of that, we're looking for great things from new toy James Wood and maybe Jordan Beck will pan out.

northboro PHOENIX

Bob Jordan (26th year) / Steve Stein (23rd year)

The fans in Northboro must be feeling whiplash.

A well-exercised theme is these pages is the idea of the Bounce, where a team goes from contender to deep rebuilder to contender in the course of three seasons. The absolute master of the Bounce is Mark Freedman, who has done it in extreme form a number of times. Our late friend Paul Harrington was also fond of the method.

As far as the *Annual* can tell, this is not a favorite method of Messrs. Stein and Jordan. They'd like to build to contention and stay there. Four years ago they went 93-69 and won the World Series after a 65-97 season the year before; then they suffered a 64-98 campaign, then went 86-76 and were just out of the playoffs; and last year was the lowest dip at 61-101. Conversations with the boys suggest that this wasn't their intention at all, but it looks like the Bounce to us. The fans in Northboro must be suffering whiplash.

This year is an up year, though there's some daylight between Northboro and Grand Cayman – enough that we're confident that Boomer's boys will win the division and the Phoenix will finish second. But there's an overall question: have the moves and, especially, the draft from recent years contributed to breaking the club from the pattern of the last few years, and will they have some sustained success? Here's hoping.

Pitching: 9.5
Solid.

We believe that offense makes teams competitive, and then pitching makes them contenders. Last year the team was poor on both sides of the ball, but the pitching was particularly painful. It will be lots better this season. There are no really bad starts, and the bullpen is deep and has a top notch closer. This group will be much more enjoyable to manage.

Steele: Ace, again

ROTATION. The top grade among the starters is the 7 starts of Jose Butto (Grade 19 C-62 HR+25; but the staff ace is lefty Justin Steele (Grade 12 C+16 HR+24). He has 24 starts.

Turnover Rate: 43%

Arrived: Jordan BECK, Garrett CLEAVINGER, Fraser ELLARD, Bryce JARVIS, Zack KELLY, T.J. MCFARLAND, Tobias MYERS, Andre PALLANTE, Chris PADDACK, Aaron SCHUNK, Luis TORRENS, Blake TREINEN, Luis URIAS, James WOOD, Danny YOUNG.

Departed: Daniel BARD, Phil BICKFORD, Brandon BIELAK, Cavan BIGGIO, Aledmys DIAZ, Caleb FERGUSON, Nick GORDON, Grant HARTWIG, Dakota HUDSON, Kyle ISBEL, James KARINCHAK, Blake SABOL, Garrett STUBBS, Adam WAINWRIGHT, Joey WIEMER.

SNT: James Wood.

The very tall and very young Wood is a five-tool player with enormous upside. He's the kind of guy you build a team around.

northboro PHOENIX

His tag team partner is righty Joe Ryan (Grade 11 C+35), who has 23 starts. Tobias Myers (Grade 11 C+21) and Andre Pallante (Grade 10 C-24 HR+35) join Nestor Cortes (9 lefty C+25) to pitch 75 games. Bailey Falter (Grade 7 lefty), and three starts each of Jacob DeGrom (Grade 10 C+52, 15 fatigue) and opener Zack Kelly (Grade 13 C-32 HR-24, 10 fatigue) round out the group.

This is a good group, though due to missing starts it requires some clever manipulation to mix and match starters during the season.

BULLPEN. The relief corps begins with a serious hammer: lefty Alex Vesia (Grade 26* C-45, 66 innings). Jose Butto chips in 36 innings as a Grade 24* Management has brought in a veteran setup man: Blake Treinen (Grade 18* C+23, 47 innings). That's a solid end game combo.

Vesia: The hammer

The setup crew has a similar feel: wild Grade 13* righties. Zack Kelly (C-32 HR-24), Bryce Jarvis (C-45 HR+22), Huascar Brazoban (C-45 HR+51) and Fraser Ellard (C-22) give the club about 150 innings of middle relief. They're joined by about a hundred innings of lefties Garrett Cleavinger (Grade 12* C-46 HR+23) and Danny Young (Grade 11* C-34 HR+32). Ryan Thompson (Grade 9* C+32 HR+32), Dylan Floro (Grade 8* C+22 HR+32) and lefty T. J. McFarland (Grade 8* C+26 HR+33) have about 190 innings to round out the bullpen.

The pitching staff is solid, but could really use one more middle relief guy to hold the line before the end game pitchers come in. Still, they should be able to stay in the game.

Offense: 9.5
Much better lineup.

Just as the pitching staff has improved, the club has a much better lineup than 2024. Let's start with one of the cornerstones of the offense: Jordan Westburg (1-4-5-6, 10 hits, 2 walks, 26 SSN for 9 SBA, 107 games). He's a nice guy to build a lineup around. So is Teoscar Hernandez (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, 31 SSN for 15 SBA), who has a real impact card (though it does have 9 13s). Joc Pederson turned in one of his best seasons (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, 25 SSN, 11 SBA, "only" 7 13s).

Among the best all-around cards belongs to Jose Altuve (1-0-0, 11 hits, 2 walks, 29 SSN for 19 SBA, L+7 R-4), who returns for a full season. Similarly, Jurickson Profar (1-5-6, 10 hits, 4 walks+42, 30 SSN for 13 SBA) has finally shown the talent that made him a #1 pick way back in 2014. Yandy Diaz (3 0s, 10 hits, 3 walks+22) is down a bit from last year but is still capable, as is rookie SNT James Wood (3 0s, 9 hits, 4 walks, L-7 R+2, 25 SSN for 22 SBA).

Hernandez: Impact

The only subpar positions are shortstop and catcher. Dansby Swanson (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, 33 SSN for 22 SBA, L+8 R-4) can hit a little, best against lefties, and principal catcher Will Smith (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+4 R-3) has some power.

They'll hit, especially against lesser pitching (which they'll have regular chances to face). It's a good offense.

Defense: 6.0
They can catch the ball.

The Phoenix can really catch the ball. Will Smith (C8 Th+6) and Luis Torrens (C8 Th+4) are excellent, and the infield is all Fielding One: Diaz

(1B4), Altuve (2B8), Swanson (SS9 again), and Westburg (3B5 – who is also a 2B8). Profar and Jonathan Aranda are both 1B3s. Aaron Schunk (2B7, 3B4, SS8) is relentlessly average.

Joc Pederson (OF1) shouldn't have to carry a glove this year; all the regular outfielders are OF2 (Hernandez, Profar, Wood, Laureano). Other than Laureano's great (37) arm, they're all average throwers, as is Jordan Beck. Jake McCarthy is an OF3 with a 31 arm.

They'll really help the pitching staff.

Bench: 3.5
Very useful.

The variety of choices in the lineup provides Northboro with some managing options. There are a few others who are available for use: Jake McCarthy (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks+42, 31 SSN for 31 SBA) is very good for defense and as a pinch-runner; Luis Urias (1-0-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+2 42s) has a bearded lady card that may be useful against better pitching. Jonathan Aranda (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+22, L-7) can hit a little. Luis Torrens (3 0s, 8 hits) is great defensively, but is here to play the 40 games Will Smith is missing. Aaron Schunk (2 0s, 9 hits) plays when Altuve, Swanson or Westburg is unavailable. Ramon Laureano (1-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks+42, 28 SSN for 11 SBA) has occasional power. Jordan Beck (2 0s, 7 hits) is old enough to drive the bus.

2nd They can't really catch Grand Cayman, but they'll compete in the league. However – and this is a key thing – despite the arrival of players like Westburg, Wood, Beck, Butto and Myers, this team is starting to get old. At the *Annual*, we're sure they will be good this year, and fairly confident they'll break the up-and-down bounce of the last few years and be good in 2026.

But the core of the team will be very different in three or four years as Father Time catches up

Swanson: Fielding One, again

Ages of players on the Northboro roster, as of 07/01/2025:

37: deGrom, Treinen
36: McFarland
35: Altuve, Brazoban
34: Floro
33: Y. Diaz, Pederson, R. Thompson
32: T. Hernandez, Profar
31: Cleavinger, Swanson, D. Young
30: Cortes, Z. Kelly, Laureano, W. Smith
29: Paddack, Ryan, Steele, Torrens, Vesia
28: Falter, Urias
27: Aranda, Butto, Ellard, Jarvis,
      McCarthy, Schunk
26: Myers, Pallante, Westburg
24: J. Beck
22: Wood

with them. That's a concern: their draft position will be lower-half in 2026 and possibly in 2027 as well, so no more James Wood cards will be added to the roster unless the draft is very deep. They may not, and truly should not, fall apart, but there'll be some challenging team-building exercises for Northboro management ahead.

TQ: **28.5**

2024 ELDERS of zion in review

2025's outlook is considerably bleaker.

by Richard Meyer

2024 in Review
Final Record: 97-65 (1st, Williams)

Post-draft, Zion management felt strongly that the ballclub was in its best position to make the post-season in 2 or 3 years. We expected a dogfight for the division crown with Cayman, with a likely wild card berth as a reward. But the Elders got out of the gate quickly, while the Havens struggled through an inexplicably pedestrian first half. Even though the two teams split evenly, Zion basically waltzed down the stretch to a division title. Unfortunately, in the postseason, we faced a Melrose team with a killer hitting and pitching ace in Ohtani, plus a bullpen that had been heavily upgraded during the September trading period. Zion fought hard, but fell in six.

2025's outlook is considerably bleaker. Injuries cost first round pick Matt McLain the entire 2024 MLB season, wiped out #2 starter Jesus Luzardo after a dozen starts, and stole playing time from others. Second rounder Zach Gelof started the spring as a dumpster fire and never really got it all going during 2024. Other than a remarkably useful performance from waiver wire pickup Ben Lively (surprisingly the #2 starter in 2025), most of the performance arrows are pointing down.

Seager: Elite

What went right?

Corey Seager continued to perform at an elite level with both the bat and glove. Like in 2024, he'll miss about 40 games due to injuries – unlike last year, however, his L-10 shift defines which games he'll be sitting. Meanwhile, Gunnar Henderson upped the ante on his promising rookie campaign, and stayed in the conversation for AL MVP throughout the MLB year. He will anchor the attack in 2025.

Jeimer Candelario batted in the 5 hole almost all year for the Elders, and with Henderson and Seager ahead of him, got a lot of pitches to hit – and turned in a very respectable year, with lots of doubles and RBI.

The starting pitching was up and down, with staff aces Castillo and Luzardo anchoring the staff, and back end lefties Mackenzie Gore and James Paxton adding 40 rocky starts to test the Elders bullpen. Co-closers Abner Uribe and Jose Alvarado made excellent use of their high grades to bring home the games we led entering the ninth.

What went wrong?

The McLain injury in March started the bad news (though Zion was hardly the only TBL club harmed by the injury bug.) Too many Elders batters collected just enough HBPs to earn a 22 on their 2025 cards – 22s that in several cases wound up dropping their hits from 10 to 9, or 9 to 8.

If 250 IP of early to middle relief was good, 400 innings of it must be better. Only one returning reliever (old hand Kenley Jansen) recorded stats to justify a Grade of 13* or higher. This was not the year to try to fix that problem. As a result, every game in 2025 will be a Sunday night pot luck dinner in Zion.

3 Things

1. Not much help in 2025. No #1 and a bad streak of picks before our first one, Zion is hoping that young lottery tickets Joey Ortiz, Kyle Manzardo, Max Meyer, and Justin Slaten can upgrade the roster in 2026 and beyond. Time will tell.

2. Return to form critical. Zion needs several key players – McLain, Gelof, Gore, Luzardo – to either return to form or continue maturing. Unfortunately, Gelof and Gray are both sidelined at year's start with broken hands, and McLain and Benintendi are already on the 10 day DL.

3. Farewell, Charlie. OF-DH standout Charlie Blackmon has played his whole TBL career with the Elders. And then there's the beard. An unsentimental manager would probably have traded Blackmon – but Zion would rather celebrate his last year letting him take his licks on the field he has loved. Enjoy your curtain call, Mr. B.

ELDERS of zion

Rich Meyer (41st year); Hall of Famer

It's not very Elders of them.

Absolutely no one in TBL doubts the acumen of the Sensei. A veteran of TBL and a number of other very competitive leagues, a true student of the game – both baseball and APBA – he's demonstrated skill and knowledge. Since 1988, when the Elders came into the league as an expansion team, the team has had some runs of absolute dominance, including six *(six!)* championships.

But not recently. The 2024 club won 97 games and made it to the playoffs, bowing to the Melrose Avengers in six games. But before that, they won 72, 84, 67, 70 and 83 games. That's not very, well, *Elders* of them. The 2025 club appears to be headed to yet another average or worse season. There's not very much change to the names on the roster: but they're a year older, and some are injured, and some had a tough year. As a result, the team is an also-ran in the Williams, and qualifies as a rebuilder.

It's not very *Elders* of them. But the *Annual* has a suspicion that there will be a change in the future.

Pitching   6.0
Not pretty . . . but interesting?

A lot of high grades and great names have worn Elder uniforms over the years. There are a few good names on the pitching staff this year, but there aren't the high grades to go with them.
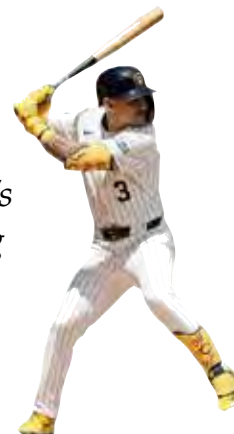
Only a few bad starts happen during the season, and the bullpen has lots of innings; but it's all pretty pedestrian.

ROTATION. The staff ace, once again, is Luis Castillo (Grade 10 C+21

Castillo: Staff ace, again

SNT: Joey Ortiz.

He's got all the tools, including an elite glove. It's a good fit for the rebuilding Elders.

Turnover Rate: 22%

Arrived: Stuart FAIRCHILD, Brenan HANIFEE, Kyle MANZARDO, Max MEYER, Joey ORTIZ, Bryan RAMOS, Leo RIVAS, Justin SLATEN.

Departed: Akil BADDOO, Luken BAKER, Genesis CABRERA, Kyle FARMER, Luis A. GARCIA, Mitch HANIGER, Alfonso RIVAS, Abner URIBE.

HR-14); he has Ben Lively (Grade 10 HR-15) and James Paxton (Grade 9 C-45) as his primary sidekicks. Add in MacKenzie Gore (Grade 8 C-16 HR+25) and three starts of Alex Cobb (Grade 12 C+32 HR+35) and three opener starts of Fernando Cruz (Grade 10 C-45) the Elders have 115 decent starts.

The rest of the games will belong to lefty Jesus Luzardo (Grade 7), Jonathan Gray (Grade 6 C+22 HR+16) and rookie Max Meyer (Grade 3 HR-44). Luzardo will suffer on the boards, and Meyer is there to get pounded.

Three-quarters of the season is not bad (but not especially good), and the lower part will exercise the bullpen quite a bit.

BULLPEN. There was a time that saying "Kenley Jansen is the closer" would have evoked the idea

Elders
of
Zion

of a lockdown ninth inning. Not so much this year. He's solid (Grade 14* C-13 HR+32) but would be a setup guy on a contender. Brenan Hanifee (Grade 14* C+31 HR+34) extends the "closer" role, and the two guys have 84 innings between them. Justin Slaten (Grade 12* C+36 HR+33, 55 innings) is a very good setup man, while lefty Jose Alvarado (Grade 12* C-35 HR+22) and righty Carmen Mlodzinski (Grade 12* C-15 HR+41) provide 113 less-reliable innings, but must serve.

The rest of the bullpen all takes 9s at various levels of skill. Tyler Rogers has great peripherals (Grade 10* C+56 HR+21); Fernando Cruz (Grade 9* C-45) throws very hard; John Schreiber (Grade 9* C-14 HR+61) stops homers, and Paul Sewald (Grade 9* C+25 HR-16) and Ian Hamilton (Grade 8* C-14 HR+43) throw pitches competently. There are about 260 innings (less whatever Cruz uses as an opener) among this group.

From the Zion instructions: "What if you created an entire bullpen year of middle relievers, with no real upper end but a decent amount of bulk . . . to pass the time? Well, you and I are about to find out what happens – I doubt it will be pretty, but it should prove interesting." We concur.

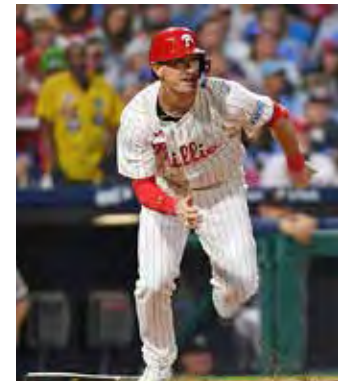## Offense: 7.0
Speed and a little power.
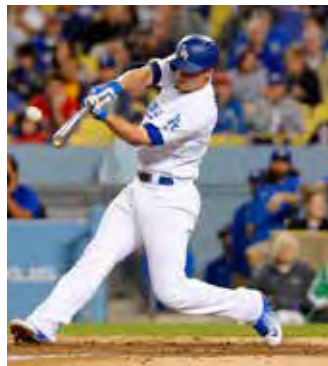
There is certainly a Guy We Like: Cory Seager (1-1-0-0, 10 hits, 3 walks, L-10 R+2). The split is a bit of a problem, but there is some help in Gunnar Henderson (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 4 walks, 32 SSN for 25 SBA, L-4). He'll likely DH when not in the field.

Seager, Guy we like

The third card belongs to Jeimer Candelario (1-0-0-0, 9 hits, 2 walks); he's not overpowering, but at least is starting to show the talent that had always been expected. He's the regular 1B. Second base belongs to Brendan Rodgers (3 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, L+4 R-3) and Zack Gelof (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks, 34 SSN for 28 SBA); rookie SNT Joey Ortiz (6-0-0, 9 hits, 4 walks, 25 SSN for 17 SBA) will be the third baseman.

In the outfield, there's half a season of a good platoon card in Austin Hays (4 0s, 10 hits, 1 walk+42, L+12 R-8); he'll share time with a revived Andrew Benitendi (1-0-0, 9 hits, 3 walks, L-5) and Leody Taveras (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 31 SSN for 29 SBA). Stuart Fairchild (1-0-0, 8 hits, 3 walks+42, 35 SSN for 14 SBA) and Richie Palacios (2 0s, 8 hits, 5 walks+22, 35 SSN for 20 SBA) will get playing time. Veteran Charlie Blackmon (3 0s, 9 hits, 3 walks, 29 SSN) won't have to use his glove – it'll be just the beard in his final year on the roster.

Hays: Useful card

Behind the plate, Alejandro Kirk (3 0s, 9 hits) and Travis d'Arnaud (1-5-6, 9 hits, 3 walks+42, L+5) will share time.

The club is fast and has a little power, but there's not an 11-hit card on the roster. They'll scramble for runs, but good management will bring out the best in them.

Defense: 4.5
Very capable.

The team can catch the ball at several places. Seager (SS9) will get most of the reps at shortstop, and Henderson is adequate (SS8). Both Rodgers (2B9) and Gelof (2B8) are Fielding One, and the catchers are both C8s with positive arms. The corner infielders, Ortiz (3B4) and

Candelario (1B3) are solidly Fielding Two.

The outfield has a group of OF3s with average arms: Hays, Fairchild, Benintendi and Taveras; Palacios is an OF2, and as noted, Blackmon (OF1) won't be getting any time in the field this year.

This is a very capable defensive team, which will help keep innings from being extended.

Bench: **2.5**
Functional.

The platoon capabilities make this a functional bench; there's even a bit of a hitting toy in Kyle Manzardo (1-6-6-6, 9 hits, 2 walks, L-6). Bryan Ramos (1-6-0, 8 hits) has "02" on his card, which is his best attribute; and Leo Rivas, added in the waiver draft, is . . . here. Again, the manager's ability will get the most out of the players that aren't starting.

It's not a very good team, though it does have some good names on the roster. Mr. Meyer is under no illusions on the team's capabilities or its prospects, and it would not be difficult to consider it a basement dweller: but the Williams Division has Warrenton in it, so there's a bit of a gap between third and fourth place.

But there's a much bigger gap between third and second, and the *Annual* is convinced that the difference won't be made up by this club. We wonder, though, what the masters of the All-Seeing Eye have in mind for the future. It cannot sit well with management that the team isn't characteristic of what the Sensei wants and likes. Future drafts, and future performance, may well remedy that.

Rodgers: Top defense

Ages of players on the Zion roster, as of 07/01/2025:

39: Blackmon
37: Cobb, K. Jansen
36: d'Arnaud, Paxton
35: F. Cruz, Sewald
34: Ty. Rogers
33: J. Gray, Lively
32: Castillo
31: Candelario, Schreiber, Seager
30: Alvarado, Benintendi, I. Hamilton
29: Fairchild, Hays
28: R. Palacios, Rodgers
27: Hanifee, Luzardo, Rivas, Slaten
26: Gore, Kirk, Meyer, Mlodzinski,
       J. Ortiz, Taveras
25: Gelof, McLain
24: G. Henderson, Manzardo
23: Ramos

TQ: **20.0**

2024 warrenton GIANTS in review

by Ray Murphy

Rebuild was necessary.

2024 in Review
Final Record: 48-114 (4th, Williams)

The Giants had a season very much like what was expected. We took charge of the team on very short notice after the loss of Mr. Chapman, and did the best we could.

What went right?

When you finish a season at 48-114, the "what went right" section has to be a brief one. Of course, this outcome was hardly a surprise, as anything that wasn't tied down was traded last offseason: Xander Bogaerts, Christian Walker, Gerrit Cole to name a few of the former stalwarts who were shipped out.

Of those who stuck around, there were some individual "highlights": Michael Harris hit .267 with 23 HR and 15 SB. Adley Rutschman chipped in 22 HR and 93 RBI from the catcher position. Left-hander Reid Detmers somehow managed a 12-8 record with a palatable 4.03 ERA.

Rutschman: Highlight

What went wrong?

The rules require that someone has to pitch. Many attempted to meet that requirement for Warrenton, none of them beyond Detmers could be classified as "effective", as evidenced by the ghastly team ERA of 5.84. Noah Syndergaard stood out even among a staff full of carnage, posting a 2-20 record, 8.11 ERA, and a stunning 55 HR allowed. In aggregate, the Giants were out-homered 286-165 on the season, which nicely underscores the depth of the rebuild ahead on both sides of the ball.

3 Things

1. Rebuild was necessary. To that end, manager Murphy decided that this crop of players was not part of the long-term future in Warrenton, as he turned over more than half the roster following this disastrous campaign.

2. The top-end talent is still lacking here. Still, the roster is now deeper and younger. There's some bench flexibility, even if it is best characterized as "filler" rather than "helpful". But the field has been seeded, it remains to be seen which sections will sprout.

3. Mike Trout. The one asset that really doesn't belong on this roster is Mike Trout. He hasn't been healthy long enough for Warrenton to dangle him in trade. Does that change this year?

warrenton GIANTS

Ray Murphy (31st year)

This isn't the Bounce.

Last year's *Annual* used a metaphor for team building using phases of the moon. We're not sure it was particularly useful and have dispensed with it in 2025; but the "New Moon" label placed on our late friend Jack Chapman's club was completely accurate. It was a mess, and it was going to get worse before it could ever get better. And it was pretty bad: .216/.290/.370, a 5.84 ERA, and being outscored 999-626. Somehow they didn't give up 1000 runs, a symbolic victory.

So now it's a year later. More than half of the 2024 team is gone, there was a big draft including the #1 overall pick (who couldn't legally drink until well after our winter meeting), and the creation of a roster that is heavily weighted toward youth. This isn't the Bounce: there are at least one or two seasons of rebuild ahead, including this one, but it's headed in the right direction. In short, it's exactly what we'd expect from Mr. Murphy.

Pitching: 4.5
Not very good, but very young.

Yes. Well. The draft helped Warrenton in various ways, but certainly on the mound. Four of the eight starters were added by draft, along with some of the bullpen innings (as everyone in TBL can claim). Overall, the staff is not very good, but it is very *young* – and that is the point.

ROTATION. The big pitching prize from the draft is Jared Jones (Grade 10 HR-15, 22 starts). Though overshadowed by Paul Skenes, Jones turned in a pretty solid season too. An early season injury is cause for concern, but as of this writing he appears to

be getting ready to return. He's joined by another rookie, Spencer Arrighetti (Grade 8 C-33), who provides a full season of starts. Returning veteran Jordan Hicks

Arrighetti: Full season rookie

(Grade 8 C-26 HR+16) goes to the hill 20 times; at age 29 he's the senior man among the starters. Robbie Ray gets 7 starts as a wild 14 XC. The rest of the starts belong to guys who don't take 9s. Lefty Kyle Harrison and righty Alec Marsh are

Turnover Rate: 56%

Arrived: Grant ANDERSON, Nick ANDERSON, Orlando ARCIA, Spencer ARRIGHETTI, John BREBBIA, Jackson CHOURIO, Declan CRONIN, Pete CROW-ARMSTRONG, Joey ESTES, Wilmer FLORES, Kyle HARRISON, Jordan HICKS, Spencer HORWITZ, Jared JONES, Colt KEITH, Alec MARSH, Curtis MEAD, Jhonkensy NOEL, Ceddanne RAFAELA, Trey SWEENEY, Steven WILSON.
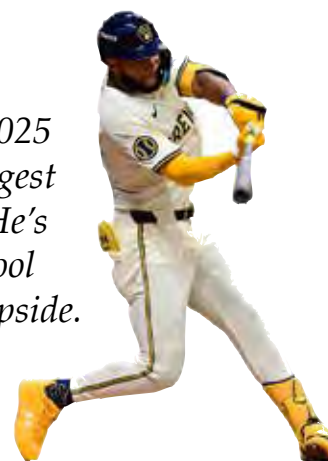
Departed: Jose AZOCAR, Ji Hwan BAE, Oscar COLAS, Jason DELAY, Jordan DIAZ, Mason ENGLERT, Erick FEDDE, Joey GALLO, Lucas GILBREATH, Zack GREINKE, Michael GROVE, Jonathan HERNANDEZ, Ryan NODA, Liover PEGUERO, Tayler SCOTT, Noah SYNDERGAARD, Spencer TURNBULL, Matt VIERLING, Joey WENDLE, Brendan WHITE.

SNT: Jackson Chourio.

He was the #1 pick in the 2025 draft and is one of the youngest players in MLB and TBL. He's the whole package – a five tool player who has enormous upside. He'll be a big part of the future in Warrenton.

both Grade 7s; Ryne Nelson is a Grade 6 (C+31); and Joey Estes (Grade 5 C+32 HR-25) completes the rotation.

There are no truly awful starts, which is a nice change from last year, but they'll give up some runs.

BULLPEN. As Mr. Murphy says, there are "lots of innings available, though very few of them are actually helpful." Accurate. The closer is Trent Thornton (Grade 10* C+22, 72 innings), which helps most of the rotation, but isn't exactly what you want at the end of a game. Still, he's better than the setup men – Nick Anderson (Grade 9* C-22 HR-22) and Steven Wilson (Grade 9* C-61 HR-36). They have 71 innings between them. Joey Wentz (Grade 7* C-35 HR+14) and Jake Bird (Grade 7* C-62) is another 100 innings of guys who occasionally take some hits on occasion.

After that it's tons of innings of Griffin Canning (Grade 5 HR-24), Declan Cronin (Grade 5* HR+62), John Brebbia (Grade 4* HR-31) and some Grade 1s. It's very 1962 Mets (or if you're a little younger, 1969 Phillies). There'll be lots of learning opportunities.

Offense: 5.0
Very young.

While there are definitely weaknesses in the lineup, there are some nice high points as well. We have to start with the SNT, Jackson Chourio (1-0-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 29 SSN for 29 SBA). He's just fine. Most of the time, he'll be joined in the outfield by Pete Crow-Armstrong (3 0s, 9 hits, 2 walks+22, 34 SSN for 30 SBA) and the "senior man" (at age 24), Michael Harris (1-0-0, 10 hits, 2 walks, 25 SSN) for 16 SBA. Mike Yastrzemski

Keith: Nice catch

(1-3-5, 9 hits, 3 walks) will pick up some of the slack. Mike Trout's high-power card will be relegated to the bench due to very little usage.

In the infield, rookie Colt Keith (2 0s, 10 hits, 2 walks, 34 SSN) will be the full time second baseman; he was a nice catch in the draft. Ceddane Rafaela (3 0s, 10 hits, 26 SSN for 29 SBA), who was a pleasant surprise for the Red Sox last summer in the outfield and shortstop, will play third base most days. There's a full season of shortstop for Orlando Arcia (1-0-0, 8 hits); he came in an off-season trade, and is probably just a space filler now. Adley Rutschman is the primary catcher, but he had a bit of an off year (1-6, 9 hits, 3 walks). First base will be manned by Jake Bauers (1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, 35 SSN for 14 SBA) and rookie Spencer Horwitz

Rutschman: Off year

(1-6-6, 9 hits, 4 walks+42, but L-13 R+2). Jhonkensy "Big Christmas" Noel (1-1-5-6, 8 hits, 1 walk+42, 9 13s) will provide some "three true outcomes" entertainment, sharing the DH spot with Yastrzemski.

Overall, this is a lineup which will have short stretches of offensive capability, but there will be some empty innings as well. But they are *very* young.

Defense: 4.5
Some high points.

The outfield is really the high point of the Warrenton defense. Chourio, Crow-Armstrong, Harris, Yastrzemski and Trout are all OF3s; if moved there, Ceddane Rafaela, if used out there, is an OF2. He's a problem at third as a 3B3, and there's no help for him; Keith is only average as a 2B7, meaning that Orlando Arcia

(SS9) will be covering a lot of ground. Curtis Mead and Spencer Horwitz are also 2B7s, and Horwitz and Jake Bauers are both 1B3s. Behind the plate, Adley Rutschman is still a good defender, but his arm noodled in 2024 (C9 Th-3). The only other alternative behind the plate is Eric Haase (C6 Th-4), which is no help.

So the defense is a bit of a mixed bag. Obviously the high points are good, but there are problems that cannot be solved.

Bench: **2.0**
Make the best of it.

The platoons and mix-and-match lineups provide a few extra games, and there are also some small-usage extra parts. Eric Haase (1-1-5, 10 hits, 2 walks, 11 13s, L+6 R-6) is the very definition of hit or miss. Mike Trout (1-1-0-0, 8 hits, 4 walks, 33 SSN for 7 SBA) had his season cut short before he could take off; Wilmer Flores is a waiver pickup who will probably get some playing time; Curtis Mead (9 hits, L+12 R-10) and Trey Sweeney (1-0-0, 8 hits, SS8) are, well, *Here:* in each case the most important number on each card is 00, their birth year. We are assured that Mr. Murphy will make the best of them.

4th   And by a good margin. This is a very talented team, and not to beat a dead horse but a very young team.

It's exactly what a rebuilder should have – some top draft pick types, a lot of lottery picks, a few mainstream major leaguers, and a single generational superstar (Mike Trout) whose arrival on the roster several years ago still affects the team years later as he enjoys the dreams of past and future. An outfield of Chourio, Crow-Armstrong, Harris and Trout is a beautiful thing to behold; if Sweeney or Rafaela can replace Arcia, if Mead can take Keith's place (and Keith and Horwitz become the 1B team), if some of the pitchers can work

out . . . if injuries don't derail things for another year, if the uncarded guys (Giolito, Bachman, Ray) make a comeback . . .

If, if, if. Considering the place from which it originated, Warrenton is on the right road and doing the right things. But we have long asserted,

Trout: Dreams of past and future

with years of wise-ass pundit experience, that entropy is a thing; it's hard for a team to pull together to contend, and even harder to stay there. But they've got the talent.

Ages of players on the Warrenton roster, as of 07/01/2025:

35: Brebbia
34: N. Anderson, Yastrzemski
33: Flores, Ray, Trout
32: Haase
31: Thornton
30: Arcia, Giolito, S. Wilson
29: Bauers, Bird, Canning
28: G. Anderson, J. Hicks
27: Cronin, Horwitz, A. Marsh, R. Nelson, Rutschman, Wentz
25: Arrighetti, Bachman, Detmers, Sweeney
24: M. Harris, Mead, Rafaela
23: Crow-Armstrong, Estes, Harrison, J. Jones, Keith, Noel
21: Chourio

TQ: **16.0**

15

breakthrough

There are fringe players on TBL rosters right now who might be important players on rosters in 2024. Some of those names appear in the list below. Some won't make it, but last year's list included Dairon Blanco, Brayan Bello, Reese Olson, Masyn Winn, Cole Ragans, Jose Butto, and Matthew Liberatore – as usual, a pretty good list (though our top 10 was again a bit disappointing).

1 **Jackson Holliday, IF, Brobdingnag.**

At 21, he's the latest top prospect for the Orioles. He's got a solid bat and a great glove, and will be a big boost for Brobdingnag.
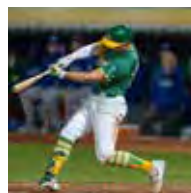
2 **Spencer Torkelson, 1B, Munich.**

We've been waiting for this version of Torkelson to emerge, and he's showing the talent that made him a top pick.

3 **Junior Caminero, 3B, Brobdingnag.**

The power hitting third baseman was a top pick in the 2025 draft, and will be manning the hot corner for Joe (or someone) for years to come.

4 **Dylan Crews, OF, Maracaibo.**

A five tool player, he's a nice addition to a team that needs to build up its outfield.

5 **Jasson Dominguez, OF, Brobdingnag.**

A star outfield prospect, he hasn't quite arrived, but will certainly be there soon. He has all the tools.

6 **Connor Norby, 3B, Columbus.**

After a quick rise through the Orioles system, Norby is now a big part of the Miami roster, and is a great addition to the Columbus one as well.

7 **Tyler Soderstrom, 1B, Brobdingnag.**

He's already on the roster, and is the fourth best breakthrough prospect for the Barbarians. He's a prototype player for Joe's team: he hits the ball frequently and far.

8 **Max Meyer, P, Zion.**

The Sensei selected a player who shares his last name, but it looks like he's snagged a solid addition to the team. He's a hard thrower and has a high ceiling.
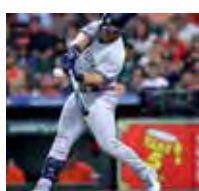
9 **Jose Tena, 1B, Calusa.**

He hits the ball very hard and has a lot of flexibility. As Calusa rebuilds, this is a good player to build around.

10 **Joe Boyle, Riverwoolf.**

A nice late-draft addition for the Sharks, he might turn out to be a steal. Riverwoolf could certainly use some new blood on the pitching staff.

Honorable mention: Logan T. Allen, P, Midwest; Brooks Baldwin, IF, Whitman; Addison Barger, 3B, Riverwoolf; Brett Baty, 3B, Las Vegas; Jordan Beck, OF, Northboro; Slade Cecconi, P, Melrose; Declan Cronin, P, Warrenton; Xzavion Curry, P, New Westminster; Henry Davis, C, Midwest; Dillon Dingler, C, Munich; Bryce Elder, P, Blue Hill; Jerar Encarnacion, OF-1B, Maracaibo; David Festa, P, Brobdingnag; Emerson Hancock, P, New Westminster; Jace Jung, 3B, Maracaibo; Max Lazar, P, Munich; Jung Hoo Lee, OF, Rocky Mountain; Kyle Manzardo, 1B, Zion; Curtis Mead, IF, Warrenton; Justin-Henry Malloy, OF, Hudson; Garrett Mitchell, OF, Grand Cayman; Jhonkensy Noel, 1B, Warrenton; Daniel Palencia, P, Melrose; Eury Perez, P, Munich; Bryan Ramos, 3B, Zion; Ben Rice, 1B, Melrose; Landon Roup, P, Hudson; Trey Sweeney, SS, Warrenton; Luis Urias, 3B, Brobdingnag; Jordan Weeks, P, Brobdingnag.

future

Every year we look forward to see who might be the big names in the next draft. Sometimes these predictions are prophetic, and sometimes they fall short. Once again eight of our top ten last year were top 2024 choices (the other two were taken early as well). Eight of our honorable mentions made it to round 1 as well. You be the judge.

1 **Roman Anthony, OF, Boston.**

He's a dominant prospect at age 21, and may make his debut for the Red Sox as soon as there's space for him to play.

2 **Jackson Jobe, P, Detroit.**

He's made the Tigers' rotation and is having a good season so far. He's got a tremendous upside and should have a solid major league career.

3 **Kristian Campbell, 2B, Boston.**

He's taken the Hub by storm, and is the complete package. His future might be in the infield or the outfield, but he's here to stay.

4 **Nick Kurtz, 1B, Athletics.**

A top pick in the 2024 draft, he's already getting his chance to play with the A's. He's got serious major league power.

5 **Matt Shaw, 3B, Chicago (N).**

A serious power hitter, he'll make his impact at Wrigley later this year.

6 **Jac Caglianone, 1B, Kansas City.**

He's had some injuries en route to his major league career, but he has "roof-top power" and could have a major impact when he arrives.
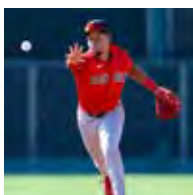

7 **Chase Dollander, P, Colorado.**

A hard throwing pitcher, he's the complete package. He'll have to get used to pitching in Denver, of course.

8 **Marcelo Mayer, SS, Boston.**

He's waiting in the wings, but by later in the year there might be roster space for this top prospect in Boston.

9 **Edgar Quero, C, Chicago (A).**

There's nothing quite like a 22-year-old catcher to attract the interest of TBL general managers. If he continues to perform, he'll be very compelling in the 2026 draft.

10 **Bubba Chandler, P, Pittsburgh.**

The latest top pitching prospect, he could join Skenes and Jones this summer to give the Pirates a dominant trio.

Honorable mention: Luisangel Acuna, IF, New York (N); Samuel Basallo, C, Baltimore; Travis Bazzana, IF, Cleveland; Chase Delauter, IF, Cleveland; Thomas Harrington, P, Pittsburgh; Jackson Jobe, P, Detroit; Luke Keaschall, IF, Minnesota; Jordan Lawlar, SS, Arizona; Walker Jenkins, OF, Minnesota; Rhett Lowder, P, Cincinnati; Coby Mayo, 3B, Baltimore; Chase Meidroth, IF, Chicago (A); Jacob Misiorowski, P, Milwaukee; Christian Moore, IF, Los Angeles (A); Andrew Painter, P, Philadelphia; Kumar Rocker, P, Texas; Dalton Rushing, C-OF, Los Angeles (N); Ethan Salas, C, San Diego; Roki Sasaki, P, Los Angeles (N); Kyle Teel, C, Chicago (A); J. J. Wetherholt, IF, St. Louis; Carson Williams, IF, Tampa Bay; Cole Young, IF, Seattle.

rickey

by Walter Hunt

He was bigger than life. He inspired a whole generation to "Run Like Rickey". He referred to himself in the third person. But he was more than just a base stealer: he was arguably the best leadoff hitter the game has ever seen. He had power as well, and was a solid defender.

When he came to the majors, the Oakland A's were in the middle of a massive rebuild. There weren't too many good players on that roster, but Rickey was a bright spot. When Billy Martin became the manager of the club in 1980 he cut loose his young star. Henderson stole 100 bases, breaking Cobb's record. A few years later he crushed Lou Brock's major league record by swiping 130.

At the beginning of TBL's history, Rickey was a member of the Shangri-La roster; the team became East Anglia, and he played there for two season before moving to Farmville for one season, and then to the place he would spend most of his career: Hudson, which was the running team of TBL for more than a decade. In 1990 and 1991 he was a key part of the Generals' playoff teams. As a run-scorer

and base stealer he could scarcely be stopped. 1991 was probably his best TBL year; he hit .310 with 29 homers, 46 doubles, 128 runs scored and 59 steals. He led the league in runs, steals and OBP, and was among the leaders in other categories.

In 1997 he moved to division rival Munich, where he hit for a low average but walked 114 times on a team that made it to the conference finals. In 2001 he had his swan song with Maracaibo – an echo of his return to Oakland in MLB, after time outside of his original major league home. During all of his career in MLB – nine teams in both leagues – and in TBL, where he stayed in place more and for much longer – he never stopped running, never stopped being Rickey.

He was a legend on and off the field, with an incomparable swagger. He always said he was "born fast", and when he set the major league record for steals he called himself the "greatest of all time." Maybe. He inspired a generation of base stealers, but there was never anyone quite like him. Without question, he passed far too young.
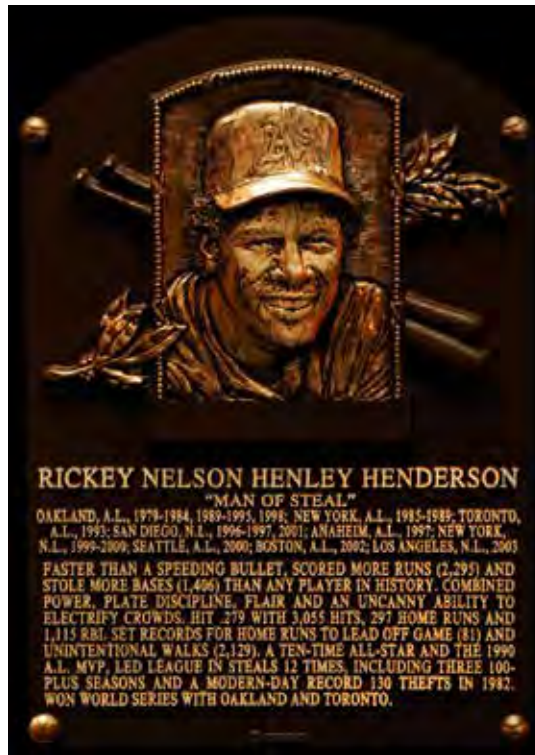
Rickey Henderson, OF, 1984-2002
East Anglia, Farmville, Hudson, Munich, Maracaibo

A tremendous leadoff hitter and base stealer, Henderson was a key part of the Hudson Generals for most of his career. He had a lifetime .255/.366/.404 hitter. He walked more than 70 times in thirteen seasons, and more than 100 on four occasions. He stole 788 bases in his career, a TBL record. His best season was 1991, in which he hit .310-29-86, with 101 walks, 59 steals, and 46 doubles.

TBL

The Transcontinental Baseball League is a 24-team, continuous ownership APBA Baseball League that plays a 162 game season using the Master Board Game and the Computer Game. We play roughly twenty games a month from April through November. TBL uses an innovative, realistic pitching system and restricts players to real-life usage.

Our members are loyal, fun-loving and astute, and we have a high rate of retention. Now in our forty-fourth season, our pennant races are always competitive and exciting.

TBL is always interested in adding backup managers to its roster. To get involved, send e-mail to our Commissioner, Ray Murphy, at

rmurph3@comcast.net

or TBL's unofficial recruiter and analyst, Walter Hunt, at

hotc@walterhunt.com.