

2024 Season Preview

FIFTH AND GOAL SPORTS MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

PREVIEWS FOR ALL
30 TEAMS

Award Winner
Predictions
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What Do All
These Stats Mean?
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Freddie Freeman - 1B - Los Angeles Dodgers

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FIFTH AND GOAL SPORTS MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



TEXAS RANGERS
American League West

4740 90-72 2nd #10
FRANCHISE WINS 2023 SEASON DIVISION FARM SYSTEM RANK
#10: New World Series

Arlington, TX - Globe Life Field (A3000)
Manager: Bruce Bochy (90-72, 2nd Season)

Unlikely Champs Ready to Run It Back

The Rangers' 2023 season was a roller coaster, starting with a 100-loss season in 2022, followed by a 90-win season in 2023. The team's success was largely due to the addition of star players like Corey Seager and Adolis Garcia. The team's pitching staff, led by Jacob deGrom, was also a key factor in their success. The Rangers' offense was led by Seager and Garcia, who combined for 100 home runs and 100 RBIs. The team's defense was also solid, with deGrom leading the league in strikeouts. The Rangers' bullpen was also a key factor in their success, with several relievers contributing to their 90 wins. The team's manager, Bruce Bochy, was also a key factor in their success, as he led the team to a 90-win season in 2023. The Rangers' success in 2023 was a testament to their resilience and ability to overcome adversity. The team's fans were also a key factor in their success, as they provided the team with the support and encouragement they needed to succeed. The Rangers' success in 2023 was a testament to their resilience and ability to overcome adversity. The team's fans were also a key factor in their success, as they provided the team with the support and encouragement they needed to succeed.

Batting

The strength of the Rangers in 2023 was their lineup, demonstrated by the Texas players electing to play in the All-Star game for the American League. The Rangers' offense was led by Corey Seager and Adolis Garcia, who combined for 100 home runs and 100 RBIs. The team's defense was also solid, with deGrom leading the league in strikeouts. The Rangers' bullpen was also a key factor in their success, with several relievers contributing to their 90 wins. The team's manager, Bruce Bochy, was also a key factor in their success, as he led the team to a 90-win season in 2023. The Rangers' success in 2023 was a testament to their resilience and ability to overcome adversity. The team's fans were also a key factor in their success, as they provided the team with the support and encouragement they needed to succeed.


Pitching

The Rangers' pitching staff was a key factor in their success in 2023. The team's ace, Jacob deGrom, was a dominant force on the mound, leading the league in strikeouts and ERA. The team's other pitchers, including Gerrit Cole and Nolan Ryan, also contributed to the team's success. The Rangers' bullpen was also a key factor in their success, with several relievers contributing to their 90 wins. The team's manager, Bruce Bochy, was also a key factor in their success, as he led the team to a 90-win season in 2023. The Rangers' success in 2023 was a testament to their resilience and ability to overcome adversity. The team's fans were also a key factor in their success, as they provided the team with the support and encouragement they needed to succeed.

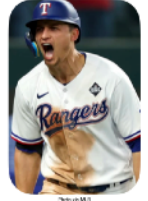
The Bottom Line

The Rangers' success in 2023 was a testament to their resilience and ability to overcome adversity. The team's fans were also a key factor in their success, as they provided the team with the support and encouragement they needed to succeed. The Rangers' success in 2023 was a testament to their resilience and ability to overcome adversity. The team's fans were also a key factor in their success, as they provided the team with the support and encouragement they needed to succeed.

2024 Projection: 92-70, 2nd in AL West



Corey Seager



Projected Lineup (vs LAD)

2	Marcus Seman	2B	27%
5	Corey Seager	SS	37%
33	Adolis Garcia	RF	26%
3	Joakim Soria	LF	26%
6	Josh Jung	1B	24%
39	Nathaniel Lowe	1B	20%
28	Joey Gallo	C	25%
-	Wyatt Langford	CF	-
3	Leody Taveras	OF	24%

Projected Rotation (vs LAD)

17	Nathan Eovaldi	SP	3.43
22	Jon Gray	SP	4.11
44	Jacob deGrom	SP	4.11
33	Drew Darvill	SP	3.31
41	Corey Seager	SP	5.11
28	Andriuselis	DL	2.68

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT
Evan Carter - CF

2023 Statistics
GP AVG OPS HR RBI
22 .306 1.058 5 12

PROJECT TO WATCH
Wyatt Langford - OF

The Rangers made a smart move in the 2023 offseason, adding Wyatt Langford to the roster. Langford was a key contributor to the team's success in 2023, and he is expected to continue to be a key player in 2024. Langford's performance in 2023 was a testament to his resilience and ability to overcome adversity. The team's fans were also a key factor in his success, as they provided him with the support and encouragement he needed to succeed.

Check out our team previews for all 30 major league teams!

Included in each preview is a recap of the 2023 season, an overview of the team's batting and pitching, notable statistics, impact players to watch, predictions on the upcoming season, and much more. Whether you're here to check out your favorite team, get a scouting report on an opponent, or here to simply read up on the beautiful game of baseball, these pages are a resource made by baseball fans for baseball fans.

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Photo via Minor League Baseball

Baseball For Everyone

by Aaron Lynn

Let's pretend that you are trying to take your family of four to a Major League Baseball game. In this hypothetical (or perhaps all-too-real) scenario, you are planning on attending a game at PNC Park to root on your hometown favorite Pittsburgh Pirates. After finding \$20 parking located reasonably close to the ballpark, you and the family weave your way into the stadium. In an attempt to keep the experience affordable, you've opted for some of the cheapest seats in the park and find yourself situated high above most of the other spectators. While the tickets cost you \$86 for the set, you've finally found your seat and you discover you have a terrific view of the scenic Roberto Clemente Bridge that spans the Allegheny River.

As the game commences, the family eventually submits a request for food and you oblige. While the temptation of a Primante Bros. sandwich wafts through the air in the concourse, you show restraint and select a more traditional ballpark offering. Still, after hot dogs, popcorn, and water bottles have been consumed, the bill runs to \$43.

When the top of the seventh inning ends, you and the family lock arms and join in a rousing chorus of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" and just a few outs later, PNC Park erupts in applause following a thrilling 4-3 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals. The cost of that victory? In total, approximately \$149, according to Money Geek (and that's not including gas to get there).

This Pittsburgh scenario represents the *average* cost to attend an MLB game across all 30 ball clubs. So, if you're a fan of the Padres, Astros, or Cubs, you're likely spending more than \$149 while Tigers, Mariners, and Brewers fans are saving a few bucks.

Even though this example takes on a pessimistic attitude, please don't misunderstand the point I am trying to make. I'm not trying to scare you away from a Major League ballpark. Many of my favorite childhood memories took place at a ballpark. If you have the means to enjoy an MLB Stadium, it's absolutely

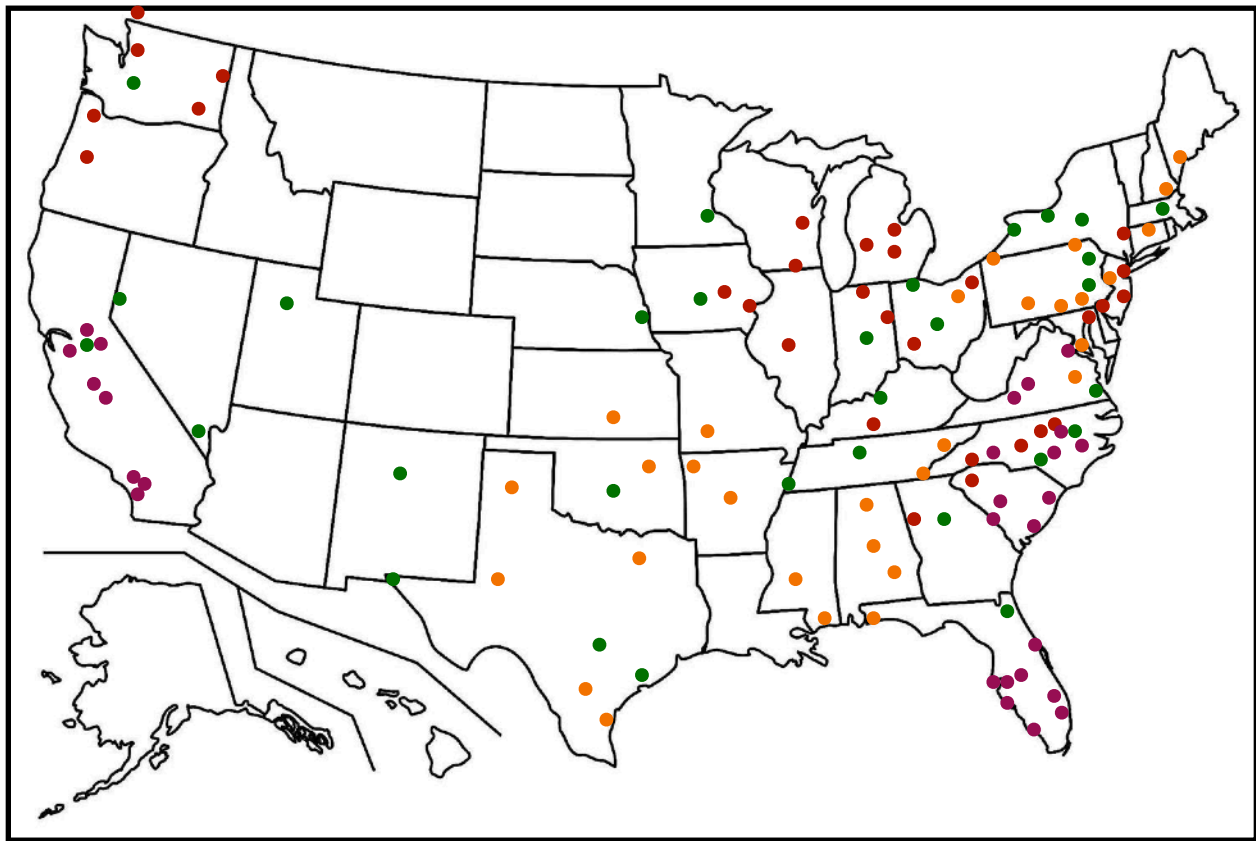
worth your time (my personal goal is to someday attend a game at all 30 parks). However, it's no secret that the cost of attending a game is increasing yet again in 2024. For some families, attending an MLB game simply isn't feasible on a regular or even semi-regular basis.

However, there's good news. There are *dozens* of ballparks scattered throughout the country and nearly all of them are significantly more affordable than your average big league ball club. Yes, you'll *technically* be missing out on witnessing the highest level of the sport by looking for an alternate to an MLB stadium, but it's not too difficult to find very meaningful, competitive baseball, and in many cases the *experience* can actually be better.

A great place to start to find that "alternate" stadium is to check out the minor league system. Each MLB team has four "affiliate" teams, one in each of the four levels of minor league baseball. As you can see from the map on page 5, there are over 100 minor league clubs spread out throughout the country.

I was fortunate enough to be at Huntington Park in Columbus, Ohio on July 31, 2014. There, me and my dad watched Tyler Cloyd pitch a no-hitter for the Columbus Clippers, the Triple-A affiliate of the then Cleveland Indians. Statistically, the odds of seeing a no-hitter in any given game are about 1 in 787. So, witnessing a no-hitter in person was remarkable just by itself. However, the evening was that much sweeter being perched just a few rows behind third base, a perfect angle, as it turns out, to witness Cloyd's teammates mob him in celebration after recording the final out.

A couple years earlier, I had attended a Clippers game that had quickly turned into a blowout in favor of the visiting Norfolk Tides. The downside of a non-competitive game worked to my benefit. As fans exited their seats, I gradually slid my way forward until I found myself in the row right behind the opposing dugout. In an effort to keep themselves entertained, the Tides flipped bubble gum to me and my younger brother.



■ Triple-A
 ■ Double-A
 ■ High-A
 ■ Low-A

The best \$7 piece of Double Bubble ever. That’s right, in both of these games, I got into Huntington Park for approximately seven dollars. A trip to Great American Ballpark in Cincinnati would have been equally if not more exciting, but I would have spent over double the money for a seat far worse than the one I enjoyed in Columbus. Worried about the cost of food? Attend a dime-a-dog night. Need a cheap ticket? Pack a lawn chair and plop down on the lawn above the center field fence for \$5 (or maybe even less).

Another very special aspect of a minor league game is the opportunity to see baseball’s future greats. Derek Jeter played for the Clippers. Mike Trout played for Cedar Rapids, Rancho Cucamonga, Arkansas, Scottsdale, and Salt Lake. Clayton Kershaw played in Jacksonville, Oklahoma City, and Midland. I still have a scorecard from a minor league game with the name Francisco Lindor. He turned out to be pretty good. (Yes, I’m admitting to being a nerd for keeping score on paper).

It’s quite possible that you are attending a game with family members who couldn’t care less about the players in the game, the score, or even the sport itself. The good news is that minor league baseball provides all kinds of fun entertainment between innings, just like you would see at a MLB ballpark. Plus, wait until you hear about some of the “theme nights” that take place in the minors.

Maybe you’re looking at the map above and you don’t see a minor league team close to your location. There’s a good chance that one of over 250 NCAA Division I baseball programs will fit the need. There’s also plenty of independent league and rookie league teams to choose from, too.

Nothing fosters a love for the game of baseball more than going to a ballpark and soaking in the sights, smells, and sounds of America’s great pastime. And no, you don’t have to break the bank to make incredible memories, spend valuable time with friends and family, and experience the joy that baseball can bring. Do yourself a favor, and get to a game.

- Top 10 -
**MINOR LEAGUE
 PROMOTIONAL NIGHTS**

- Nothing Night**
Inland Empire 66ers
- Star Wars Night**
Lowell Spinners
- Taco Truck Throwdown**
Fresno Grizzlies
- “The Office” Night**
Columbus Clippers
- Mustache Appreciation Night**
Connecticut Tigers
- Harry Potter Night**
Portland Pickles
- Anger Management Night**
Augusta Green Jackets
- Helicopter Candy Drop**
Bowie Baysox
- World Record Day**
Southern Maryland Blue Crabs
- Used Car Night**
San Antonio Missions

PREDICTING

2024 AWARD WINNERS

by Noah Cutting

AL MVP: Corey Seager - SS - Texas

It's possible that no one was happier to see Shohei Ohtani sign with a National League team than the top players in the American League like Seager. Although he was limited to 119 games due to injury, he still managed to lead the AL in doubles and he matched his 33 homers from the previous year while helping lead Texas to the 2023 World Series title. Seager, a left-handed hitter, benefitted greatly from the elimination of the shift in 2023, raising his average from .245 in 2022 to .327. Seager is in the middle of his prime and always has elite production while he is on the field, including excellent defense at shortstop. He finished second behind Ohtani for MVP last year, he'll break through this year.



NL MVP: Ronald Acuña Jr. - OF - Atlanta

Baseball hasn't seen a player with the combo of power and speed that Ronald Acuña Jr. possesses since Rickey Henderson. In 2023, Acuña became the first player in MLB history to hit 40+ home runs and steal 70+ bases in the same season. On top of that, he is tremendous outfield defender and hits for average as well, leading the league in hits and on-base percentage. He will face stiff competition in his bid for a second straight MVP from teammate Matt Olson and the Dodgers' big three of Ohtani, Mookie Betts, and Freddie Freeman, but Acuña is the total package and as long as he stays healthy, he will be a strong favorite to repeat.



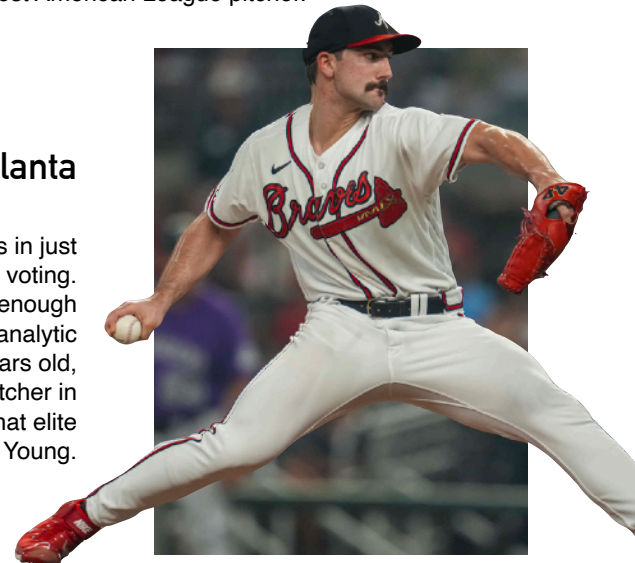
AL Cy Young: Gerrit Cole - New York Yankees

Since 2018, Gerrit Cole has consistently been one of the top pitchers in baseball and he was finally rewarded for his efforts in 2023, winning his first Cy Young award. Cole is one of the most durable pitchers in the game, leading MLB in games started after pitching over 200 innings in each of the last two seasons. He finally embraced the pressure of performing in New York, breaking the Yankees single season strikeout record in 2022 and leading the AL in ERA in 2023. Cole will face some challengers for a repeat win with new Orioles ace Corbin Burnes and 2023 third-place finisher Kevin Gausman, but Cole clearly remains the best American League pitcher.



NL Cy Young: Spencer Strider - Atlanta

Spencer Strider burst onto the scene in 2022 when he struck out 202 batters in just 131 innings with a 2.67 ERA and a second place finish in Rookie of the Year voting. He regressed a bit in 2023 with his ERA rising to 3.86, but he was still good enough to lead MLB with 20 wins and his elite strikeout stuff remained. Strider's analytic numbers in 2023 show that he was a bit unlucky last year and at just 25 years old, there's still time for him to get even better. There might not be a starting pitcher in baseball that strikes out hitters as easily as Strider and, in 2024, he'll use that elite skill to win his first Cy Young.



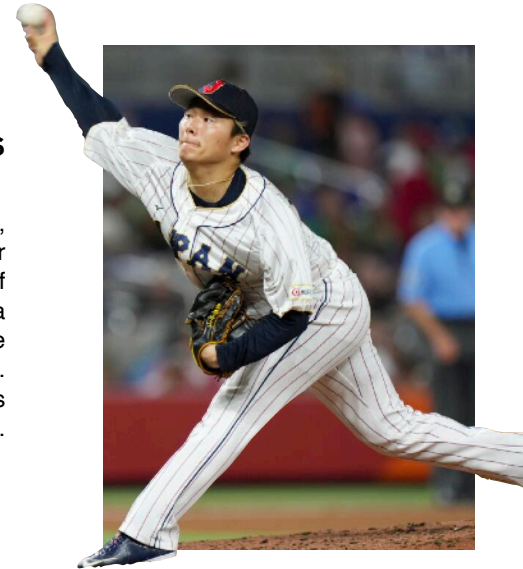


AL Rookie of the Year: Jackson Holliday - SS - Baltimore

The Orioles have had a slew of great young players make their respective major league debuts over the past couple of years and 20-year-old Holliday should debut early in 2024 and he could be the best of all of them. The #1 pick in the 2022 draft and the son of former big-leaguer Matt Holliday has obliterated minor league pitching at every level. He went from Single-A all the way to Triple-A in the 2023 season while hitting .323 with 51 extra-base hits, 24 stolen bases, and an incredible .442 on-base percentage. Holliday is the #1 prospect in all of baseball per MLB Pipeline and projects as the O's opening day shortstop. If he lives up to the hype, he could take a Baltimore team that already won 100 games in 2023 to the next level.

NL Rookie of the Year: Yoshinobu Yamamoto - SP - LA Dodgers

We've never seen a rookie of the year contender take the field after securing a \$325 million contract, but Yoshinobu Yamamoto is about to change that. Yamamoto will look to live up to the hype after signing the largest contract for a pitcher in baseball history despite never throwing a pitch in MLB. If his stats in Japan are any indication, the hype is real. Yamamoto won three straight Sawamura Awards (the Cy Young equivalent in Japan), led the league in wins, ERA, and strikeouts for three straight years, tossed two no-hitters, and guided the Prix Buffaloes to the 2022 Japan Series title. Even if Yamamoto never quite lives up to the amazing numbers he put up in Japan, he still projects as a top pitcher in baseball.



AL Reliever of the Year: Jhoan Duran - Minnesota

Jhoan Duran is a name you might not know, but you will. Duran throws with incredible velocity, tossing 9 of the 10 fastest pitches in MLB in 2023 with a high of nearly 105 mph. Along with possibly the best fastball in the majors, he throws a "splinker", or splitter-sinker combo, which also comes in at 100+ mph and dives downward, making it almost impossible to hit. Outside of a rough July, where he allowed 7 runs in 9.2 innings, Duran was dominant and showcased his abilities on a big stage by helping the Twins win a playoff series for the first time since 2002. Entering his third major league season, Duran will quickly become a household name if he continues to succeed at a high level.

NL Reliever of the Year: Devin Williams - Milwaukee

Devin Williams dominated his way to the 2020 NL Rookie of the Year award thanks to a microscopic 0.33 ERA in the shortened Covid season and he has remained one of the best relievers in baseball ever since. He continues to be an elite strikeout pitcher and he is coming off a 1.53 ERA in 2023. It speaks to Williams's excellence that even though he walked 28 batters in 58 innings last year, he still allowed fewer than one baserunner per inning pitched. If Williams doesn't walk you, you're probably not going to hit your way on base against him. Williams is the closer for a Milwaukee team that hopes to contend in the NL Central in 2024 and there's nothing to suggest that he will stop being one of the toughest pitchers to face in all of baseball.



College Baseball's Future Stars

by Aaron Lynn

Before he was mashing home runs in the majors, Adley Rutschman was celebrating with his Oregon State teammates in Omaha, Nebraska after claiming a national championship in 2018. While many of baseball's best prospects move right to a minor league system out of high school, more and more players have decided to spend a couple of seasons at college. Paul Skenes and Dylan Crews took the baseball world by storm with their incredible seasons for eventual champion LSU in 2023 and they were picked with the first two picks in the draft. The college game is again loaded with talent in 2024, so, here are 10 players to watch this season.



JJ Wetherholt - 2B - West Virginia



The Cleveland Guardians, who own the #1 draft pick in 2024, will be keeping a close eye on Wetherholt this season. The reigning Big 12 Player of the Year and unanimous First-Team All-American hit a ridiculous .449 as a sophomore (which led NCAA) and he added 16 home runs and 60 RBI. He drew 26 walks to just 22 strikeouts and his slugging percentage soared to .787. As if that wasn't enough, he swiped 36 bases, too. If there's an area of growth for Wetherholt, it's likely his defense, but he showed rapid improvement at second from his freshman to sophomore year. If he shows defensive improvement again in 2024 he'll set himself apart even more from other prospects. There's no such thing as a "guarantee" for a top pick, but Wetherholt appears to be as close to a guarantee as possible.



Nick Kurtz - 1B - Wake Forest

Kurtz leads a stacked Wake Forest team that enters as the preseason #1 and the favorite to win the College World Series. There's no shortage of power in the 6'6" Kurtz's bat: he launched 15 home runs as a freshman and improved that number to 22 last season. He has good plate discipline evidenced by a .525 on-base percentage and a solid glove at first and is a legitimate candidate for a #1 overall pick later this year.



Travis Bazzana - 2B - Oregon State



Major league teams are going to go bananas for Bazzana. He led the Beavers with a .374 average in 2023 and an OBP of .500 paired with 36 stolen bases means that he's a major headache for opponents when he's on the basepaths. He's also a nightmare at the plate for opposing pitchers with his excellent eye for the strike zone, and he's a rangy infielder who is only getting more comfortable at second base.



Mike Sirota - OF - Northeastern

Don't overlook Sirota just because he doesn't play in a major conference, the junior from New York is the real deal. His 73 runs in 2023 broke a school record and his power is remarkable (.674 slugging). He's an athletic outfielder with good speed and he could very well be a plus defender at center field for an MLB team in the coming years. He's not easily overwhelmed with high velocity and may very well be the first outfielder drafted in 2024.



Vance Honeycutt - OF - North Carolina



If Sirota isn't the first outfielder drafted in 2024, it will probably be Honeycutt who goes first. He's a gifted defender and enters the season as the reigning ACC Defensive Player of the Year. He's not a great hitter for average, but he has power to spare and he did cut down on his strikeouts rather significantly in his sophomore year and he improved his walks, too. He's still raw as a batter by MLB standards but his defense is electric and if he continues to show improvement, he has the opportunity to be a standout centerfielder in the big leagues.



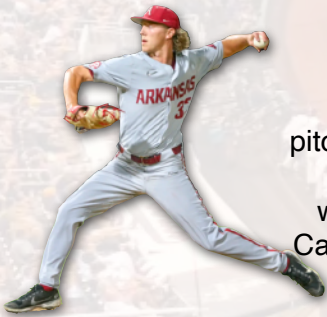
WF Seaver King - 2B/OF - Wake Forest

King posted a ridiculous slash line of .411/.457/.699 in 2023 with Wingate University (Division II). Transferring to Wake Forest will certainly provide a step up in competition, but it appears that King has all the tools to flourish in Winston-Salem and to become a potential Top 10 pick in the draft. The biggest challenge he'll face is staying patient at the plate. He drew only 18 walks in 243 plate appearances, but in fairness, he really didn't need to draw many since he connected for 90 hits, 36 of them for extra bases. He gained valuable experience with Team USA this summer and he's a versatile and capable defender in both the infield and the outfield.

Chase Burns - RHP - Wake Forest



We weren't kidding about Wake Forest being loaded in 2024. A Tennessee transfer, Burns can easily blow batters away with his fastball that can hit triple digits and his slider can do just as much damage. He's still developing other pitches like a curveball and changeup and he did take a bit of a step back in 2023 in terms of ERA, but his strikeout rate increased and he was used more out of the 'pen, too. If he truly develops a third and fourth pitch and can locate them effectively, he'll find even more success. He'll have other teammates who have their sights set on the pros and he has the makings of a quality major league arm.



Hagen Smith - LHP - Arkansas

It's not a lot of fun to be in the box when Hagen Smith is on the mound. With an arsenal of pitches including a mid-90s fastball and nearly unhittable sinker, the 6'3" Smith will come flying off the mound with a delivery that is especially devastating to left handed hitters. He's not one to work especially deep into a game (his season high was a 5.2 inning performance against South Carolina), but his stuff is nasty and he had 109 strikeouts in 71.2 innings. He might best be suited for a bullpen role at least early on in his major league career.

Charlie Condon - OF/1B - Georgia



Condon took a redshirt in 2022 to work on his swing and build strength and the wait paid off in a major way in 2023. The 6'6" hometown kid smashed 25 of his 81 hits for home runs and wracked up 67 RBI. Those home runs allowed Condon to pass the legendary Frank Thomas and Pedro Alvarez for the most homers ever by an SEC freshman. He is still pretty raw and his defensive position is a bit up in the air between the outfield and first, but you don't just *accidentally* hit .386/.484/.800 in the best conference in college baseball. The future is bright for Condon.



Jac Caglianone - 1B/LHP - Florida

Nope, that's not a typo. Caglianone is both a batter and pitcher and he's exceptionally talented at both. As a batter, he wielded unrivaled power, crushing an NCAA-best 33 home runs and 90 RBI. He'll need better plate discipline in 2024 as pitchers try to avoid the strike zone, but the sheer power is something to behold. On the mound, he can hurl his fastball in the upper 90s and his slider is a nice complementary piece to the heat. He tends to be inconsistent with his command at times but he also produces plenty of swings and misses and his K/9 is in the double digits. When batters did make contact against the big 6'5" lefty, it only amounted to a .190 average. Caglianone is appointment television.

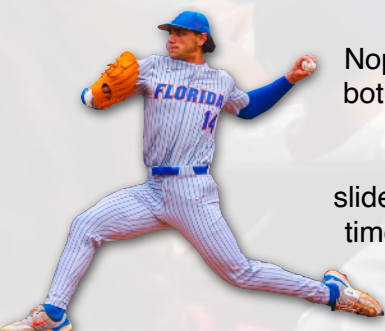




Photo via KGET

The Lo\$ Angele\$ Dodger\$

Analyzing Baseball's Record-Breaking, Billion-Dollar Spending Spree

by Aaron Lynn

In 2004, the New York Yankees had a payroll of \$182,835,513, a figure that easily led the majors. In fact, the Bronx Bombers doubled the spending of all but four other MLB franchises that season. Only the eventual World Series champion Boston Red Sox had a comparable payroll of \$125.2 million.

In 2014, the Los Angeles Dodgers became the first team to outspend the Yankees since 1998, a year in which the Orioles took the top spot with New York holding a “modest” second. The \$235,295,219 dollars spent amounted to only a gentlemen’s sweep in the NLDS that year, but Los Angeles did claim their second straight National League West division title and the message had been clearly sent to the other 29 ball clubs that the Dodgers were here to stay.

No team has spent more money on the payroll than the Dodgers over the last 10 years and, incidentally, no team has claimed more regular season victories over that same time span. **In 2024, the Dodgers are prepared to blow every other team out of the water in spending. Well, sort of.**

Heading into Spring Training, the Dodgers’ 2024 payroll sits at approximately \$255.9 million. If that number holds, it won’t top their 2022 spending of \$277.1 million and teams like the Yankees, Mets, Rangers, and Braves will likely write a bigger check this year. Well, sort of.

It’s no small secret that the Dodgers were the big winners of free agency by wooing the likes of Shohei Ohtani, Tyler Glasnow, and Yoshinobu Yamamoto. And it’s also no small secret that the price tag to accomplish such a feat was the biggest baseball has ever seen. While Ohtani’s 10-year, \$700 million contract is an MLB record, he is deferring \$680 million of that deal to 2034, meaning that the Dodgers are responsible for just \$2 million in 2024, which allowed them to sign another potential Japanese superstar: Yoshinobu Yamamoto.

Yamamoto is taking advantage of a recent trend: some of Japan’s biggest stars are now taking their talents to the United States instead of remaining in Japan’s NPB league. Make no mistake, the NPB is a seriously competitive environment which makes Yamamoto’s three NPB MVPs that much more impressive. At just 25 years old, he posted a ridiculous 1.16 ERA in Japan last season coupled with a minuscule 0.86 WHIP.

The Dodgers dished out a 12-year, \$325 million deal for the right-handed hurler whose fastball can reach the upper 90s despite his 5’10” frame and unique delivery style. Compared to Ohtani’s gargantuan contract, Yamamoto’s deal seems rather tame, but it’s actually the largest (and longest) pitcher contract ever. However, his deal is not deferred, so approximately \$55 million counts against the 2024 salary.

The front office wasn’t finished. Tyler Glasnow, rumored to be the long lost twin of Cillian Murphy, signed a \$136.5 million extension after joining the team via a trade with the Tampa Bay Rays. Yamamoto’s potential in the majors is sky high as is Glasnow’s, but for a different reason. The latter hasn’t been able to stay on the field. However, he tossed a career-high 120.0 innings in 2023 after just 6.2 the year prior and it marks just the second time in his career that he has topped the 100 inning mark. When Glasnow is on the mound, his stuff is filthy and he has a career K/9 rate of 11.5. If the Dodgers can keep him healthy, they have a bona fide star.

Ohtani, Yamamoto, and Glasnow make up the “big three” of the offseason signings (pictured on next page, bottom right), but the proverbial “icing on the cake” was the signings of outfielders Manuel Margot and Teoscar Hernandez. As if the Dodgers needed more depth, Jason Heyward signed for \$9 million and Clayton Kershaw and Ryan Brasier both re-upped with the team.

Assuming the dust is now settled, **the Dodgers spent \$1.24 billion in future salaries.** This means that, moving forward, the franchise will be paying not only salaries but a significant amount of “competitive balance tax.” As long as they win, they won’t mind. That’s the catch here, despite all of the recent spending, the Dodgers have just one World Series for their efforts and far more early playoff exits. Last season was no exception when the 100-win team failed to win a single postseason game. While they did lose to the eventual NL pennant winners, the Arizona Diamondbacks, the trend of playoff disappointment has become all-too familiar.

Since 2013, the Dodgers have claimed the NL West title every single year except for 2021 and, even in that season, the club tallied 106 victories in the regular season. Yet, in that same time span, the Dodgers have reached the NL Championship Series only four times. They are 1-6 in the postseason in the last two seasons despite those 100 wins in 2023 and a franchise record 111 wins in 2022.

The New York Yankees have similarly dumped money into the payroll year after year and they have come up empty-handed in October when it matters most. Since 2013, the Yankees have missed the postseason four times, and reached the ALCS three times with the most recent appearance a sweep in 2022. The Tampa Bay Rays have spent a fraction of the Yankee’s payroll but reached a World Series in 2020, losing to the Dodgers. The moral of the story is: money doesn’t guarantee you a championship. However, we have never seen the kind of spending that the Dodgers put forth in the offseason.

This prompts a question: is this good for baseball? The Dodgers are in a league of their own. The chasm is a mile wide between LA and a team like the Oakland Athletics, a team so unwilling to spend money that their roster will be far from competitive in 2024. **Do small market teams even have a chance now?**

For the most part, history tells us “yes.” When they won the World Series in 2015, the Kansas City Royals were in the bottom half of payrolls in MLB. The Cleveland Indians were painfully close to a title in 2016 despite a payroll of \$86.3 million which ranked 24th in the majors. The Astros are now one of the biggest spenders, but that wasn’t the case when they won the World Series in 2017 with the 18th biggest payroll and they’ve been in the top five just once since.

However, one of the biggest and most significant differences between a team like the Dodgers and a team like the Kansas City Royals is that the

window for a championship is drastically bigger for a big spender. The Dodgers have won division title after division title, seemingly reloading the roster every single season. Since winning the 2015 title, the Royals haven’t had a division title or even finished second. The Baltimore Orioles are now a young, exciting team filled with budding stars and are the favorites to repeat as AL East champs in 2024. And yet, for years the Orioles sat in the basement of baseball with all hope seemingly lost (and truthfully, a more accurate analogy is that they went to the basement, dug a whole five stories deep and flung themselves in).

Teams like the Orioles, who spent the fourth fewest payroll dollars in 2023, have to hit on several draft picks and capitalize on the short time period when those prospects are performing at a high level but haven’t yet signed their big free agent contract. We’re talking about a window of at most, three, maybe four seasons? Teams willing to open up the pocketbooks can extend that window much further into the future. The Cincinnati Reds are another team who have seemingly reached that three to four year window. That window for the Royals was glorious: a World Series appearance in 2014 and the franchise’s second championship in 2015. But, it’s been rather bleak since then. The Royals haven’t topped .500 since the ’15 season and they haven’t made the postseason in 36 of the last 38 years.

As the gap widens between the Dodgers and the “cheaper” teams in terms of the books, the already small window shrinks even more. It’s not impossible that the Tampa Bay Rays or the Cleveland Guardians win a World Series in the next few seasons, but the likelihood seems to be diminishing. It is worth noting, however, that few athletes are able to or willing to defer their contract like Ohtani. So, perhaps the Dodgers’ 2024 spending spree is an anomaly (although I personally doubt it). It’s also worth noting that part of the blame for this disparity falls on opposing owners who are unwilling to spend, even when they have plenty of resources.

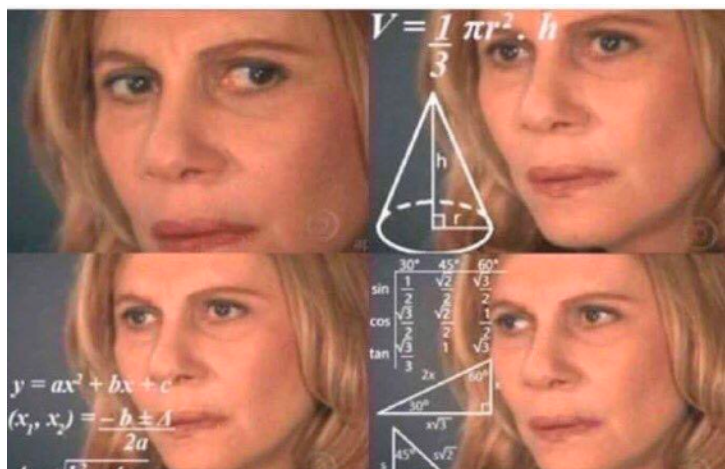
Do I think baseball needs a salary cap? Yes. But in order for that to happen, the franchises who benefit the most from the current arrangement would have to sacrifice their hard-earned (or easily-earned) dollars, and I simply don’t see that happening. As a result, I’m not one to harp on the potential salary cap because I just don’t see the format changing anytime soon.

So, root, root, root for the home team, sure. But root for the little guy, too.



Baseball Analytics for Dummies

by Aaron Lynn



You're at a baseball game or watching on TV and you find yourself being bombarded by stats such as WAR, OPS, ERA+, and FIP.

Feel like this woman?

Don't worry, we're here to help.

I'm going to assume that, if you're reading a magazine about baseball, you at least have a basic understanding of baseball statistics like batting average, runs batted in (RBI), and earned run average (ERA). However, as baseball has evolved over the years, the emphasis on analytics and advanced statistics has grown exponentially. So, it's certainly understandable if you are still trying to interpret the ever-evolving language of baseball. Never fear, you'll find descriptions (and even sometimes formulas, yuck) on various statistics as well as the players who were the best of the best in that specific category.

Slugging Percentage (SLG) (Number of Bases Gained/Number of At Bats)

Slugging percentage... isn't technically a percentage (whoops). Instead, it's actually an *average* of the number of bases reached per at bat. At risk of potentially stating the obvious, a batter earns 0 bases on an out, 1 for a single, 2 for a double, 3 for a triple, and 4 for a home run.

Let's take a look at Matt McClain's performance in the Cincinnati Reds' victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks on July 23, 2023. In the 1st inning, McClain struck out swinging (0 bases). In the 3rd, McClain hit a rope into centerfield but the ball was caught by Alek Thomas for an out (0 bases). McClain started off the bottom of the 6th with a single to right field (1 base). He found green grass in right field yet again in the 8th inning for another single (1 base). So, in the game he had **2 bases** and **4 at bats** giving him a slugging percentage for the game of **.500**. As it turns out, that game was an accurate depiction of his slugging percentage for the season of .507.

2023 MLB Slugging Percentage Leader: Shohei Ohtani, Los Angeles Angels (.654)

Offense Plus Slugging (OPS) (On-Base Percentage + Slugging Percentage)

Slugging percentage factors into another commonly used statistic, OPS. The calculation of this statistic is pretty simple: add on-base percentage and slugging percentage together and you get OPS. McClain's on base percentage in 2023 was .357. Add his .507 slugging percentage and you get an OPS of .864. Typically, an OPS of .800 or better is considered quite good and McClain's .864 OPS led his team.

2023 MLB OPS Leader: Shohei Ohtani, Los Angeles Angels (1.066)

Offense Plus Slugging Plus (OPS+)

No, OPS+ isn't a subscription streaming service (thank goodness). OPS+ takes a player's OPS and factors in "external factors" such as a player's home ballpark. For example, McClain's home ballpark in Cincinnati is notoriously favorable for hitters

If you *really* want a formula for this stat, it looks like this: (OPS/league OPS, adjusted for park factors) x 100.

Matt McClain's OPS+ was **129** for the 2023 season. That means that, accounting for external factors, Matt McClain's OPS was **29% better** than the league average. If his OPS+ would have been 91, his OPS would have been 9% worse than MLB average.

2023 MLB OPS+ Leader: Shohei Ohtani, Los Angeles Angels (184)

Runs Created (RC)

Runs Batted In (RBI) is a great statistic and it's part of baseball's "triple crown" in terms of hitting, but it comes up a bit short in actually quantifying a player's offensive contribution of total runs. After all, someone has to actually be on base in order for a batter to earn an RBI, short of a home run. That's where the RC statistic comes into play.

The formula: $\text{Total Bases} \times (\text{Hits} + \text{Walks}) / (\text{At Bats} + \text{Walks}) = \text{Runs Created}$

The formula certainly looks complicated, but the end result is fairly straightforward: how many runs did a batter create? The RC statistic will tell you. Atlanta's Ronald Acuña Jr. put together the first 40 home run & 70 stolen base season in MLB history, so it's not shocking to see that he led the majors with a whopping 168 runs created.

2023 MLB RC Leader: Ronald Acuña Jr. (168)

Wins Above Replacement (WAR)

WAR determines how much better (or worse) a player performs compared to a "replacement-level player" (a.k.a, a player off the bench) at his same position. Matt McClain had a WAR of 3.7 in 2023. So, his play at the shortstop position provided the Reds with approximately 3.7 *more* wins than if they had played a "replacement" MLB player at shortstop. The exact formula is pretty complicated and actually differs depending on what organization is calculating WAR, but the meaning behind the statistic remains the same.

WAR can actually be broken out into offensive WAR (oWAR) and defensive WAR (dWAR). McClain's oWAR was 3.3 and his dWAR was 0.8. These numbers indicate that while McClain's fielding was still above average, his bat was significantly better than the average MLB shortstop. It's worth noting that he accomplished a WAR of 3.7 in just 89 games and he was on pace for an extremely impressive WAR of 6.7 across a full 162-game season.

2023 MLB WAR Leader: Mookie Betts, Los Angeles Dodgers (8.3)

2023 MLB oWAR Leader: Ronald Acuña Jr, Atlanta Braves (8.5)

2023 MLB dWAR Leader: Gabriel Moreno, Arizona Diamondbacks (3.1)

Adjusted Earned Run Average (ERA+)

ERA is perhaps the most commonly used statistic to measure a pitcher's effectiveness. ERA measures the average number of earned runs a pitcher allows over a 9-inning period. ERA+ is essentially the same calculation as the OPS+ statistic we discussed earlier and also factors in a pitcher's ballpark. Chicago Cub pitcher Justin Steele had a very impressive 3.06 ERA across 173.1 innings in 30 starts. After adjusting for the ballparks he pitched in, his ERA+ is 146, meaning that his ERA was 46% better than the league average (an average pitcher would have an ERA+ of 100).

2023 MLB ERA+ Leader: Blake Snell, San Diego Padres (182)

Fielding Independent Pitching (FIP)

Let's face it, not all defenses are created alike. The Arizona Diamondbacks relied on their MLB-best defense all the way to the World Series (and faced another superb defense in the Texas Rangers in the Fall Classic) while teams like the Boston Red Sox suffered through a comedy of errors. Because defense can vary, it can sometimes be difficult to determine the exact effectiveness of a pitcher. That's where the FIP statistic comes into play. FIP *removes* balls in play and instead focuses *only* on strikeouts, walks, hit-by-pitches, and home runs. A somewhat complicated formula weights those four factors and returns a "score" that is comparable to ERA. The Atlanta Braves' star pitcher Spencer Strider is a very interesting case study. His FIP was 2.85, the second best mark in the league. His actual ERA was 3.86 which was just 29th of 45 qualifying MLB starting pitchers. What does this mean? When batters put a ball in play, they were more likely to have success than if they took their chances with drawing a walk or trying to swing for the fences. In other words, the ball didn't tend to bounce Strider's way. Considering that Strider was far and away the MLB strikeout leader (281) and walked only 58 batters, the FIP of 2.85 even with an ERA of 3.86 makes a lot of sense.

2023 MLB FIP Leader: Sonny Gray, Minnesota Twins (2.83)

Have more questions?

Ask us on Twitter!

@5thGoalSports

Sonny Gray allowed just 8 home runs in 184.0 IP, the best mark in the majors leading to a league-leading FIP of 2.83

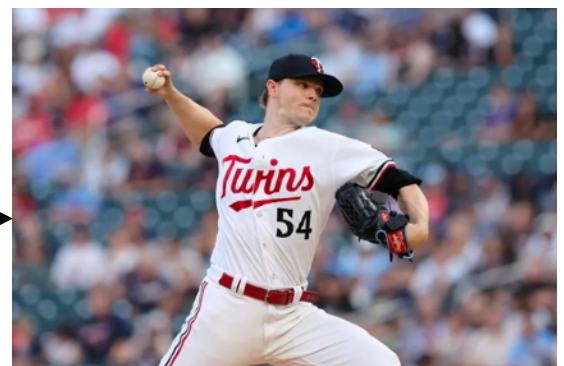


Photo via Forbes

AMERICAN LEAGUE
EAST
PREVIEW

PROJECTED FINISH



Baseball's Best Division (Again)

The Tampa Bay Rays took Major League Baseball by storm with a 13-game winning streak to begin the season. However, the red hot Rays were eventually supplanted by an even more exciting Baltimore Orioles team that has recently seen young star after young star make an enormous impact in the big leagues. (Hint: they're not done yet.) The Toronto Blue Jays featured a trio of starters who carried the Blue Jays to 89 wins and another postseason birth. The Yankees had a down year by their standards as injuries took their toll with none more significant than the toe injury that sidelined Aaron Judge for several weeks. The Red Sox finished last in the division for the second straight season but still scratched across 78 wins and would have been a contender for a playoff position... had they played in the AL Central.

In short, the American League East division was the best in baseball. However, for whatever reason, October wasn't kind to AL East teams. The Tampa Bay Rays were quietly swept out of the Wild Card round by the eventual World Series champions, the Texas Rangers. The Rangers took out another East team when they swept the 101-win Baltimore Orioles. Meanwhile, the Toronto Blue Jays scored just once in their 18 postseason innings against the Minnesota Twins. Why did the AL East experience such struggles in the postseason? Did they beat one another up in the regular season? Was the division's strength a mirage? It probably had more to do with the former.

The **Tampa Bay Rays** cooled off after a torrid start. They had grown such an early lead in the division last season that most thought the title was already wrapped up. But, after an 8-16 July, it was anything but. They found their footing again down the stretch but their season ended unceremoniously in the postseason against Texas in a barely-full Tropicana Field. Since then, Tyler Glasnow was traded to the Dodgers and Shane Bieber will be unavailable this season after Tommy John surgery. Shane Bieber will also miss time after undergoing the same surgery. The good news is that most of the lineup that produced 5.31 runs per game returns including AL batting champ Yandy Diaz. The Rays seem to always find a way to develop pitchers with ridiculous stuff and overachieve expectations, so perhaps they can do it again.

Outside of the spending flurry this offseason by the Los Angeles Dodgers, the runner-up for the biggest signing goes to the **New York Yankees**, who bring in hitter extraordinaire Juan Soto. He should provide a badly needed resurgence to a lineup who were, largely, very poor at the plate, especially when Aaron Judge was out with injury. If Judge and Soto can stay healthy, and with Cy Young winner Gerrit Cole and newly acquired Marcus Stroman anchoring the rotation, the Bronx Bombers could return to prominence.

The **Baltimore Orioles** were baseball's best story last season, and they're not done yet. Jackson Holliday's debut is highly anticipated and MLB's top prospect will soon join a young core of Gunnar Henderson and Adley Rutschman. But, the Orioles didn't stop there. They traded for Cy Young-caliber arm **Corbin Burnes** who now becomes the ace of the team. The Orioles won't sneak up on anybody like they may have done last season, but this is a team with legitimate World Series aspirations.

On the other side of the spectrum are the **Boston Red Sox**, who have floundered since their 2018 World Series Championship. Much to the chagrin of Boston fans, the Red Sox were fairly quiet in free agency, especially considering the additions made by the Yankees and Orioles. Finding enough runs to cover a potentially shaky rotation could be a challenge and the defense was one of baseball's worst last season.

The **Toronto Blue Jays** were also relatively quiet in the offseason. They made a big push for Shohei Ohtani but came up empty despite the conspiracy theories that he was on a flight heading to The 6. Instead, the Blue Jays will be hoping that the existing players simply play better in 2024 than they did in 2023, especially on offense. George Springer and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. will be critical pieces in Toronto's success. The pitching staff figures to be a strength but it's worth noting that they were remarkably healthy last season and it would be hard to expect the same this year. A six-game losing streak in the postseason looms large.

Anthony Rizzo



Photo via New York Post

Win Totals	
5 Seasons	
Tampa Bay	421
New York	409
Toronto	371
Boston	356
Baltimore	315

Win Totals	
10 Seasons	
New York	855
Tampa Bay	816
Boston	799
Toronto	785
Baltimore	703

Win Totals	
15 Seasons	
New York	1330
Tampa Bay	1269
Boston	1239
Toronto	1207
Baltimore	1080



Photo via MLB

STADIUM SPOTLIGHT

Oriole Park at Camden Yards

Constructed in 1991, Oriole Park is a blueprint for many of the modern ballparks you will see today. Bud Selig once remarked that "Camden Yards is the ballpark that has forever changed baseball." He was right then, and he's right now. The park sits in the heart of downtown Baltimore and its most prominent feature is the eight-story, beautifully red bricked warehouse that runs from deep center field and well past the right foul pole. Oriole Legends Park pays homage to the best Orioles in the storied franchise. You will see bronze statues of Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, Jim Palmer, Earl Waver, Eddie Murray, and Cal Ripken Jr. in a large picnic grove behind the left-field wall and adjacent to the main outfield entrance. Don't forget to stop and visit Boog's BBQ located on Eutaw Street before the game.

2023 Statistical Leaders

Batting Average

1. Yandy Díaz - TB - .330
2. Bo Bichette - TOR - .306
3. Masataka Yoshida - BOS - .289
4. Adley Rutschman - BAL - .277
5. Justin Turner - BOS - .276
6. Austin Hays - BAL - .275
7. Gleyber Torres - NYY - .273
8. Whit Merrifield - TOR - .272
9. Rafael Devers - BOS - .271
10. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. - TOR - .264

Home Runs

1. Aaron Judge - NYY - 37
2. Rafael Devers - BOS - 33
3. Isaac Paredes - TB - 31
4. Gunnar Henderson - BAL - 28
4. Anthony Santander - BAL - 28
6. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. - TOR - 26
7. José Siri - TB - 25
7. Gleyber Torres - NYY - 25
9. Tristan Casas - BOS - 24
9. Giancarlo Stanton - NYY - 24

RBI

1. Rafael Devers - BOS - 100
2. Isaac Paredes - TB - 98
3. Justin Turner - BOS - 96
4. Anthony Santander - BAL - 95
5. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. - TOR - 94
6. Randy Arozarena - TB - 83
6. Josh Lowe - TB - 83
8. Gunnar Henderson - BAL - 82
9. Adley Rutschman - BAL - 80
10. Yandy Díaz - TB - 78

ERA (min 162 IP)

1. Gerrit Cole - NYY - 2.63
2. Kyle Bradish - BAL - 2.83
3. Kevin Gausman - TOR - 3.16
4. Zach Eflin - TB - 3.50
5. Chris Bassitt - TOR - 3.60
6. José Berríos - TOR - 3.65
7. Yusei Kikuchi - TOR - 3.86
8. Dean Kremer - BAL - 4.12
9. Kyle Gibson - BAL - 4.73

Strikeouts

1. Kevin Gausman - TOR - 237
2. Gerrit Cole - NYY - 222
3. Zach Eflin - TB - 186
4. Chris Bassitt - TOR - 186
5. José Berríos - TOR - 184
6. Nick Pivetta - BOS - 183
7. Yusei Kikuchi - TOR - 181
8. Kyle Bradish - BAL - 168
9. Tyler Glasnow - TB - 162
10. Dean Kremer - BAL - 157

Stolen Bases

1. Josh Lowe - TB - 32
1. Jorge Mateo - BAL - 32
3. Wander Franco - TB - 30
4. Whit Merrifield - TOR - 26
5. Anthony Volpe - NYY - 24
5. Jarren Duran - BOS - 24
7. Randy Arozarena - TOR - 22
7. Taylor Walls - TOR - 22
9. George Springer - TOR - 20
10. Cedric Mullins - BAL - 19

Stadium Rank: 1

Anthony Santander

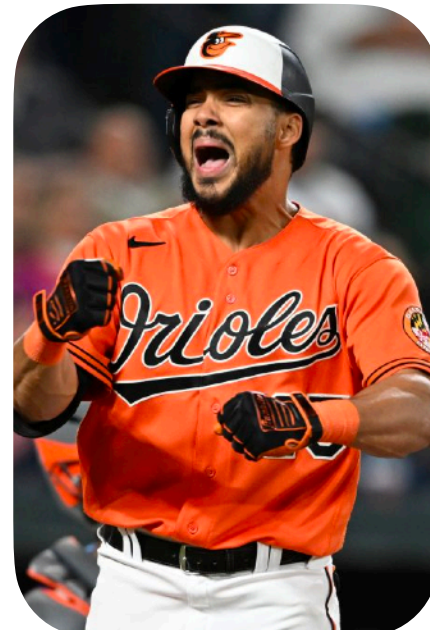


Photo via Baltimore Sports and Life

DID YOU KNOW

An AL East team has gone on to play in the World Series 27 times in its 50-year existence with 16 of those teams winning the Fall Classic. The division has also accounted for 20 of the 32 American League Wild Card berths since 1995 including two of the three spots in 2023.

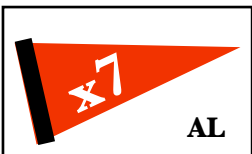
Past Division Winners





BALTIMORE ORIOLES

American League East



9029
FRANCHISE WINS

101-61
2023 SEASON

1st
DIVISION

#1
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Baltimore, MD - Oriole Park at Camden Yards (44,970)
Manager: Brandon Hyde (315-393, 6th Season)

2023: Lost in ALDS

Young Core Growing Stronger

The 2023 season was simultaneously a huge success and a major disappointment. On one hand, the Orioles claimed their first division title since 2014 and their 101 wins were the most since 1979. Seemingly every prospect called up to the majors in 2023 provided a huge contribution to the team, evidenced by AL Rookie of the Year Gunnar Henderson. Baseball fans around the country quickly fell in love with this team, and for good reason. But all of the excitement built from a tremendous regular season quickly dissipated when the Orioles were swept out of the ALDS by the eventual World Series champion Texas Rangers. New ownership is on the way (which is great news) and the Orioles also made a splash signing in the offseason, but the focus will once again be on young, budding stars in 2024.

Batting

The offense hummed along at a healthy 4.98 runs per game clip and they had several key contributors. **Adley Rutschman** had a ridiculous opening day performance and didn't look back, posting a team-best 163 hits paired with his remarkable defense behind the dish. He earned an All-Star nomination and a Silver Slugger for his efforts. Rutschman was the star rookie in 2022 and the star rookie in 2023 was **Gunnar Henderson**. In 150 games, Henderson roped 28 home runs and added 29 doubles for a team-best .489 slugging percentage. His strikeout numbers were a bit high but his power makes up for it and his defense on the left side of the infield is exceptional despite being just 23 years old. **Anthony Santander** matched Henderson's 28 homers and he has been very reliable and productive in each of the last two seasons. **Cedric Mullins** struggled with injuries and inconsistencies at the plate but he still posted a .320 average with runners in scoring position. When healthy, he's a tremendous outfielder and capable of stealing bases. **Austin Hays** is coming off his career best season which culminated in an All-Star appearance. **Ryan O'Hearn** has seemingly salvaged his career in Baltimore and posted a career-best .289 batting average and career high 112 games played.

Rutschman and Henderson's debuts were eagerly anticipated but the hype surrounding **Jackson Holliday** is even bigger, and it's warranted. The top prospect in baseball will presumably start at shortstop on opening day and his blend of power, speed, and patience are virtually unprecedented for someone his age. He will likely supplant **Jorge Mateo** who led the team with 32 stolen bases and does have some experience in the outfield. **Jordan Westburg** is another young bat who tallied 17 doubles in only 68 games. Prospect **Heston Kjerstad** is another player to watch after playing 13 games in 2023.

Pitching

The pitching staff was somewhat inconsistent in 2023 and those struggles ultimately contributed to the downfall in the postseason. What better way to fix the issue than to bring in a recent Cy Young Award winner in **Corbin Burnes**. They gave up a pair of prospects in the trade, but if Burnes performs at the same level that he has over the past four years, the Orioles will be clear winners in this deal. He instantly becomes the ace of the staff and could be the perfect missing piece. With a sensational year from **Kyle Bradish** in his second season in the majors, the O's can suddenly wield one of the best 1-2 punches of any rotation, so long as his UCL issues don't flare up when he returns to the mound. **Grayson Rodriguez** had a rough start to his big league career and his ERA soared up to 7.33 in July, but he found his footing and in his last eight starts he posted a 5-1 record and allowed only 11 earned runs in 48 innings. When healthy, **John Means** has been effective but he's pitched just 31.2 innings in the past two seasons due to Tommy John surgery. Another several months removed, the lone lefty in the rotation can set himself up for a good payday with a career-best season. **Tyler Wells** started in the rotation but ended up in the bullpen where he'll likely begin 2024, but he's a very capable arm with an ERA+ of 113. **Dean Kremer** should get the nod for the last rotation spot.

Félix Bautista was arguably the best closer in baseball last season so his September injury was that much more devastating to Baltimore. The injury required Tommy John Surgery and he'll miss the entire 2024 season. The Orioles brought in future hall-of-famer **Craig Kimbrel** to take the closer role. He struggled in key moments in the postseason and he'll be 36, but he was an All Star in 2023 and his 71 appearances were the second most in his 15-year career. **Yennier Cano**, **Danny Coulombe**, and **Jacob Webb** are key bullpen arms.

The Bottom Line

Somehow a 101-win team just got more exciting and possibly significantly better. The lineup is loaded with young talent and there's good depth in the infield. The trio of Henderson, Rutschman, and Holliday is must watch television and will pace the offense. The addition of Corbin Burnes instantly elevates the Oriole pitching staff from sub-par to one of the best in the division. The AL East will once again be the best division in baseball so don't expect a huge jump in wins from Baltimore even though their team should be better in 2024 than it was in 2023. Expect another division title and this time, expect a deep postseason run.

2024 Projection: 100-62, 1st in AL East

Adley Rutschman

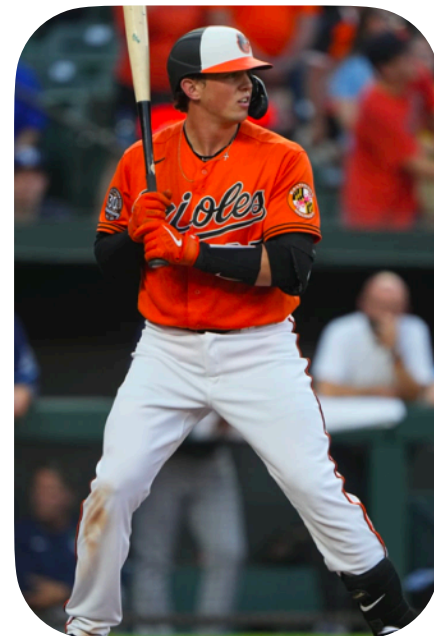



Photo via Sports Illustrated



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.98 (7th)
 HITS - 1399 (12th)
 HR - 183 (17th)
 ERA - 3.89 (7th)
 SO - 1431 (13th)
 FD% - .988% (5th)

Gunnar Henderson

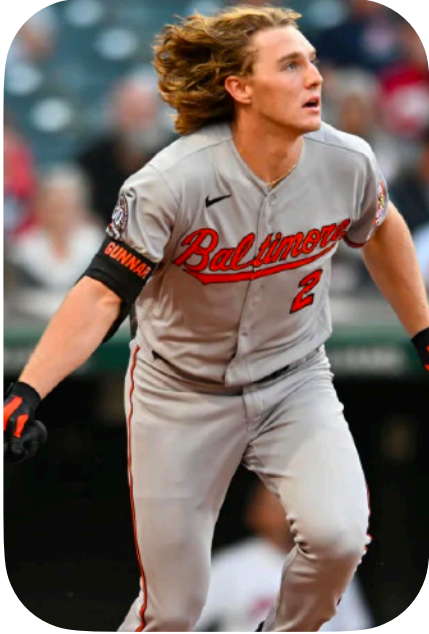
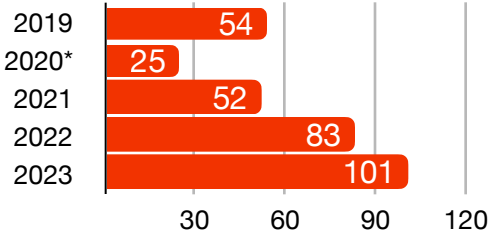


Photo via CBS Sports

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
2	Gunnar Henderson	3B	.255
35	Adley Rutschman	C	.277
25	Anthony Santander	RF	.257
32	Ryan O'Hearn	1B	.289
21	Austin Hays	LF	.275
6	Ryan Mountcastle	DH	.270
87	Jackson Holliday	SS	-
31	Cedric Mullins	CF	.233
11	Jordan Westburg	2B	.260

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
39	Corbin Burnes	SP	3.39
38	Kyle Bradish	SP	2.83
30	Grayson Rodriguez	SP	4.35
47	John Means	SP	2.66
64	Dean Kremer	SP	4.12
46	Craig Kimbrel	CL	3.26

ORIOLES 5-YEAR WIN TREND



1 < Number to Know

The Orioles have the top farm system even after losing two prospects in the Burnes trade. Holliday is the obvious star, but Samuel Basallo and Coby Mayo are up next.



Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH

Jackson Holliday - SS

He's only 20 years old, but all signs indicate that Holliday will take MLB by storm much like Adley Rutschman and Gunnar Henderson and he has the potential to be even better. He demolished minor league pitching last season with an OPS of .941 and displayed remarkable plate discipline, power, and speed. He hit above .300 in single-A and double-A and while his average in triple-A was just .267, his on-base percentage remained high at .396. His natural position is shortstop but he could also see time at second base, especially with a bit of a log jam in the infield. Spring training will be the next step in his path to the majors, but if he passes the test he'll be on the Opening Day roster and an everyday player in the infield.

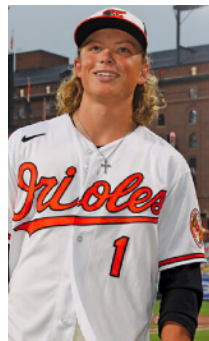


Photo via PressBoxOnline

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024						
				LAA 3:05		LAA 4:05
LAA 1:35	KC 6:35	KC 6:35	KC 1:05		PIT 4:12	PIT 4:05
PIT 1:35		BOS 2:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10	MIL 7:05	MIL 4:05
MIL 1:35	MIIN 6:35	MIN 6:35	MIN 1:05		KC 7:40	KC 7:10
KC 2:10	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 4:07		OAK 7:05	OAK 4:05
OAK 1:35	NYJ 6:35	NYJ 6:35				

May 2024						
				NYJ 6:35	NYJ 1:05	CIN 6:10
CIN 4:10		WSH 6:45	WSH 6:45		ARI 7:05	ARI 4:05
ARI 1:35	TOR 6:35	TOR 6:35	TOR 12:35		SEA 7:05	SEA 4:05
SEA 1:35	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 1:15	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:40	CWS 2:10
CWS 2:10	BOS 1:05	BOS 6:35	BOS 6:35		TB 7:05	

June 2024						
						TB 4:05
TB 1:35	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 1:07	TB 6:50	TB 4:10
TB 1:40	TB 6:50	ATL 6:35	ATL 6:35	ATL 1:05	PHI 7:05	PHI 4:05
PHI 1:35		NYJ 7:05	NYJ 7:05	NYJ 4:05	HOU 8:10	HOU 7:10
HOU 2:10	CLE 6:35	CLE 6:35	CLE 6:35	TEX 6:35	TEX 7:05	TEX 7:15
TEX 1:35						

July 2024						
		SEA 9:40	SEA 10:10	SEA 4:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 4:07
OAK 4:07		CHC 6:35	CHC 6:35	CHC 6:35	NYJ 7:05	NYJ 4:05
NYJ 1:35	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX				TEX 8:05	TEX 7:05
TEX 2:35		MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40	MIA 12:10	SD 7:05	SD 4:05
SD 1:35	TOR 6:35	TOR 6:35	TOR 12:35			

August 2024						
				CLE 6:40	CLE 7:10	CLE 7:15
CLE 1:40		TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TB 6:50	TB TBD
TB 1:40		WSH 6:35	WSH 6:35	BOS 6:35	BOS 7:05	BOS 4:05
BOS 1:35	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 1:10	HOU 7:15	HOU 7:05	HOU 4:05
HOU 1:35		LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	COL 8:40	COL 8:10

September 2024						
COL 3:10	CWS 1:05	CWS 6:35	CWS 6:35		TB 7:05	TB 4:05
TB 1:35	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10		DET 6:40	DET 6:10
DET 1:40		SF 6:35	SF 6:35	SF 1:05	DET 7:05	DET 4:05
DET 1:35		NYJ 7:05	NYJ 7:05	NYJ 7:05	MIN 8:10	MIN 2:10
MIN 3:10						

HOME AWAY




NEW YORK YANKEES

American League East



x27



x40
AL

10684
FRANCHISE WINS

82-80
2023 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

#21
FARM SYSTEM RANK

New York City, NY - Yankee Stadium (46,537)
 Manager: Aaron Boone (509-361, 7th Season)

Forgetting the 2023 Bronx Bummer

Don't look now, but it's been well over a decade since the Bronx Bombers hoisted the World Series trophy or even appeared in the Fall Classic and last season was their worst since the year before their last championship in 2009. A combination of age and injuries led to a 10-year low in runs and only the 112-loss Oakland Athletics had fewer hits than New York. When the dust settled, the Yankees found themselves in fourth in the AL East, a place they hadn't been since 1992 when the division had 7 teams. The once feared "Evil Empire" of baseball has consistently missed on free agent signings in recent years, and, outside of Aaron Judge, the home-grown prospects who have found success in New York have been few and far between. Will the reinforcements added in 2024 be able to change the trajectory of this team?

Batting

Yes, the Yankees have missed on free agent signings in recent years (see: Josh Donaldson, Joey Gallo, Corey Kluber, and J.A. Happ, to name a few), but **Juan Soto** is about as sure of a bet as there is. The Yankees traded with the Padres to acquire one of the best pure hitters in the game. It's a one year rental as this is Soto's contract year, but if he lives up to his own high expectations, he could become the highest-paid Yankee of all time. New York also made a rare trade with rival Boston for **Alex Verdugo** who joins Soto in the outfield. Of course, **Aaron Judge**, will occupy center. Injuries cost him nearly 60 games last season and he didn't come close to replicating his historic MVP campaign of 2022. But, he still mashed 37 home runs in just 367 plate appearances and his OPS topped 1.000 for the third time in his career. The difference between the Yankee's offense was night and day when he was in the lineup so it's critical that he stay healthy in 2024 like he did in 2021 and 2022. With Soto, Judge, and Verdugo in the outfield, **Giancarlo Stanton** will fill the designated hitter role almost exclusively. Although he hit 24 home runs, his 2023 season was otherwise a complete disaster and he posted a career-worst .191 batting average.

DJ LeMahieu didn't fare all that much better. After leading the majors in batting average in 2020, he too suffered through his career-worst season with a .243 average and an OPS+ that was below league average. His defense remained strong, however, and he split time between mostly first and third in 2023. **Anthony Rizzo** suffered a concussion on May 28 that wasn't fully diagnosed until August and he missed significant time. The expectation is that he will be fully healthy in 2024 which is great news for the team in pinstripes. **Anthony Volpe's** MLB debut was highly anticipated but the results were mixed. He displayed great power but was a consistent strikeout candidate and his slash line was just .209/.283/.383. However, his defense was simply superb and he won a gold glove. If he takes the next step at the plate, he'll become a badly needed young centerpiece for this franchise moving forward. **Austin Wells** will have a chance to join that category. **Jasson Dominguez** is another young Yankee to watch, but he will be sidelined with an elbow injury until at least this summer. **Gleyber Torres** was a rare bright spot offensively in 2023 and **Trent Grisham** will contribute off the bench as a part of the Soto deal.

Pitching

While the Yankees as a team were wildly inconsistent, **Gerrit Cole** was remarkably dominant, claiming his first Cy Young Award after finishing in the top five in voting on five separate occasions. His 2.63 ERA led the American League and his 0.981 WHIP led the majors. Somehow, even into his 30s and despite the pressure of pitching for the Yankees, Cole has only gotten better and he almost never misses a start. The Yankees added **Marcus Stroman** to the rotation who is coming off a 2023 All-Star appearance. **Carlos Rodón** was an All-Star for the Chicago White Sox in 2021 and for the San Francisco Giants in 2022. For the Yankees in 2023, he was a completely different pitcher, and not in a good way. Injuries had a lot to do with it, but he saw his ERA balloon up to 6.85. Considering that the Yankees spent \$162 million on the now 31-year-old, there's certainly cause for concern if he can't quickly return to form. The back end of the rotation has some questions too with **Clarke Schmidt** and **Nestor Cortes** as the likely candidates to fill the last two starting roles.

The Yankee bullpen was the best in the majors last season, posting a 3.34 ERA. A couple key pieces from that group have moved on but this still figures to be a strong group with **Jonathan Loáisiga** as a very capable set-up man and **Clay Holmes** assuming the full-time closing role. If the Yankees get quality pitching out of newly acquired lefty **Victor González**, the bullpen will remain one of baseball's best.

The Bottom Line


The Yankees have never been afraid to spend money and the 2024 offseason was no exception. The trade of Juan Soto has a chance to completely revolutionize this offense, but there are still injury concerns in some key areas as Yankee hitters like LeMahieu, Rizzo, and Stanton continue to age. If there are injuries, depth is a concern. The pitching staff should be strong so it's not as if the offense has to be the best in the majors for the Yankees to have success. If the hitters can get away from a "home run or bust mentality", this team will be better for it. Improvement is quite possible even in a highly competitive division and the Yankees should grab a Wild Card spot in the postseason.

2024 Projection: 89-73, 2nd in AL East

Aaron Judge



Photo via San Diego Union Tribune



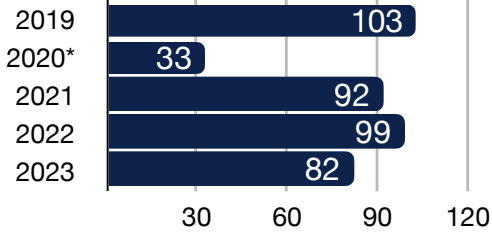
2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.15 (25th)
 HITS - 1207 (29th)
 HR - 219 (9th)
 ERA - 3.97 (10th)
 SO - 1439 (12th)
 FD% - .984% (19th)

Gerrit Cole



Photo via CNBC

YANKEES 5-YEAR WIN TREND



7.3 < Number to Know

According to FanGraphs, the Yankees added a projected 7.3 WAR with their offseason additions, giving them the second-most improved roster behind only the Dodgers.

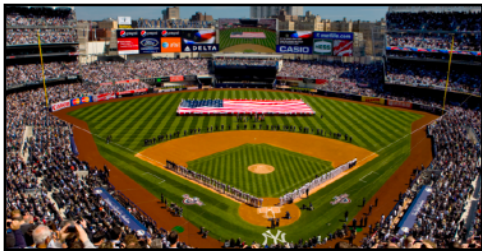


Photo via Populus

PROSPECT TO WATCH Austin Wells - C

The Yankees traded away Kyle Higashioka in the Soto trade which means that the 24-year-old Austin Wells will have his opportunity to be a starting catcher in the majors. He quickly made a name for himself by collecting his first career hit off of a future hall-of-famer, Justin Verlander. He appeared in 19 games last year and showed his power, with 10 of his 16 hits going for extra bases including four home runs. All four of those long bombs came in just the last eight games of the season, and the Yankees are hopeful it's a sign of things to come. His defense is still a question, but if his bat is good enough, Aaron Boone won't have much of a choice but to play him often. A platoon role with right-handed catcher Jose Trevino might be a realistic scenario in the early part of the year.



Photo via New York Post

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
26	DJ LeMahieu	3B	.243
22	Juan Soto	RF	.275
99	Aaron Judge	CF	.267
48	Anthony Rizzo	1B	.244
25	Gleyber Torres	2B	.273
27	Giancarlo Stanton	DH	.191
24	Alex Verdugo	LF	.264
11	Anthony Volpe	SS	.209
88	Austin Wells	C	.229

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
45	Gerrit Cole	SP	2.63
0	Marcus Stroman	SP	3.95
55	Carlos Rodón	SP	6.85
36	Clarke Schmidt	SP	4.64
65	Nestor Cortes	SP	4.97
35	Clay Holmes	CL	2.86

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Juan Soto - RF



2023 Statistics

GP **AVG** **OPS** **HR** **RBI**
162 .275 .930 35 109

Soto's career OPS is .946. Oh, and he's just 25-years old which means there is still potential for him to get, brace yourselves, better. Putting on the pinstripes certainly adds pressure, but Soto hasn't shied away from the spotlight to this point and already has a World Series under his belt. He's a great hitter for any team, but he provides what the Yankees as a team have been sorely lacking: someone who can hit for average and get on-base at an extremely high level. There will be plenty of pop behind Soto in the lineup including a guy named Aaron Judge who knows a thing or two about hitting homers. A match made in heaven?

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024						
				HOU 4:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 7:15
HOU 2:10	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 3:40		TOR 1:05	TOR 7:05
TOR 1:35	MIA TBD	MIA 7:05	MIA 7:05		CLE 7:10	CLE 6:10
CLE 1:40	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07		TB 7:05	TB 1:05
TB 1:35	OAK 1:05	OAK 7:05	OAK 7:05	OAK 7:05	MIL 8:10	MIL 7:10
MIL 2:10	BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35				

May 2024						
			BAL 6:35	BAL 1:05	DET 7:05	DET 1:05
DET 1:35		HOU 7:05	HOU 7:05	HOU 5:05	TB 6:50	TB 4:10
TB 1:40		MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40	MIN 1:10	CWS 7:05	CWS 1:05
CWS 1:35	SEA 7:05	SEA 7:05	SEA 7:05	SEA 12:35	SD 9:40	SD 9:40
SD 4:10		LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	SF 10:15	

June 2024						
						SF 10:15
SF 4:05		MIN 7:05	MIN 7:05	MIN 7:05	LAD 7:05	LAD 7:35
LAD 7:00	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 2:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:15
BOS 7:00		BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05	BAL 4:05	ATL 7:05	ATL 7:15
ATL 1:35		NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07
TOR 1:37						

July 2024						
		CIN 7:05	CIN 7:05	CIN 1:05	BOS 7:05	BOS 1:05
BOS 1:35		TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	BAL 7:05	BAL 4:05
BAL 1:35		All-Star Break - Arlington, TX			TB 7:05	TB 1:05
TB 1:35	TB 1:05	NYM 7:05	NYM 7:05		BOS 7:10	BOS 7:15
BOS 1:35	PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 12:35			

August 2024						
					TOR 7:05	TOR 1:05
TOR 1:35		LAA 7:05	LAA 7:05	LAA 7:05	TEX 7:05	TEX 1:05
TEX 1:35	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10		DET 6:40	DET 1:10
DET 7:00		CLE 7:05	CLE 7:05	CLE 1:05	COL 7:05	COL 2:05
COL 1:35	WSH 6:45	WSH 6:45	WSH 6:45		STL 7:05	STL 1:05

September 2024						
STL 1:35	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05		CHC 2:20	CHC 2:20
CHC 2:20	KC 7:05	KC 7:05	KC 7:05	BOS 7:05	BOS 7:05	BOS 1:35
BOS 1:35		SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 4:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 9:07
OAK 4:07		BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05	PIT 7:05	PIT 1:05
PIT 3:05						

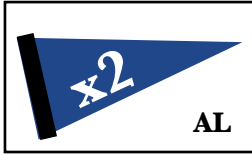
HOME

AWAY



TORONTO BLUE JAYS

American League East



3687
FRANCHISE WINS

89-73
2023 SEASON

3rd
DIVISION

#25
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Toronto, Canada - Rogers Centre (41,500)
Manager: John Schneider (135-101, 2nd Season)

2023: Lost in ALWC

Blue Jays Banking On Resurgence

All in all, the offseason was a disappointing one for the Blue Jays who felt very much in the mix of the Shohei Ohtani sweepstakes. Heck, fans were tracking flights from Los Angeles to Toronto. The Blue Jays couldn't prompt a Juan Soto trade and instead must face him 13 times this season. It's especially frustrating because many Toronto fans feel their team is right on the brink of potential greatness, and they may not be wrong. The Blue Jays had one of the best pitching staffs in the league in 2023 but often couldn't reliably provide run support. Those offensive issues surfaced at exactly the wrong time: the postseason. Toronto scratched across just a single run against Minnesota in the two-game Wild Card series and their postseason losing streak now extends to six games. To this point, Toronto seemingly hasn't added the pieces necessary to get over the hump, especially compared to teams in their own division like the Yankees and Orioles. Instead, they are hoping (with fingers and toes crossed) that the already existing roster will simply outperform the 2023 team, but is that wishful thinking?

Batting

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. is the focal point of the offense and has made three straight All-Star appearances but in the last two seasons his numbers have drifted further and further away from his monstrous 2021 season, a year in which he would have won an MVP if not for the otherworldliness of Shohei Ohtani. While his batting average and slugging dropped in 2023, his on-base percentage improved to .345 and you can virtually guarantee that he will play every day. There aren't many new faces on the roster, but **Justin Turner** is one of them. Now entering his 16th year in the majors, Turner is still an above average hitter and he'll reach the milestones of 1,500 career hits and 200 career home runs this season at his current pace. Matt Chapman departs and his perennial gold glove follows him, leaving an obvious gap on defense. **Isiah Kiner-Falefa** can play just about any position on the field, but he might find a home at third base, primarily, in 2024.

Cavan Biggio has been unable to take the next step at the plate and has now had an OPS+ of 100 or below in three consecutive seasons. Conversely, **Bo Bichette** is simply a hitting machine with a career batting average of .299 in 528 games since his debut in 2019. Last season, he paired a .306/.339/.475 slash line with his best defensive season and he's clubbed 20 or more homers in each of the last three seasons. The Blue Jays have two viable catching options between **Alejandro Kirk** and **Danny Jansen**. You'll be hard pressed to find a better defensive outfield with the likes of **Daulton Varsho** and **Kevin Kiermaier** patrolling left and center, respectively. **George Springer** has hit 20 or more home runs in 8 of his 10 big league seasons although his .732 OPS in 2023 was a career low.

Pitching

Kevin Gausman leads a strong Toronto rotation. He has been superb for the Blue Jays in the last two seasons and has clearly established himself as not only the ace of the staff but as one of the best arms in the game. Add in his All-Star campaign with the Giants in 2021 and you have a ridiculous 669/133 strikeout to walk ratio over the last three years. After a very forgettable 2022, **José Berrios** put together a nice bounce-back season. While he tends to give up hits, he did a much better job of managing baserunners in 2023 and, like Gausman, "The Machine" rarely misses a start. **Chris Bassitt** was also an ironman, facing an AL-high 826 batters and he reached the now-rare plateau of 200 innings. He did tend to give up the long ball last year but that hasn't been a major tendency in the past. **Yusei Kikuchi** put together a career-best 2023 campaign which included career bests in ERA, innings pitched, and strikeouts although his WHIP remained fairly high at 1.270. Despite finishing third in AL Cy Young voting in 2022, **Alek Manoah** struggled so much in 2023 that the Blue Jays actually sent him down to the minors, not once, but twice. The team is optimistic that he will return to form in 2024, and Spring Training could be critical to his confidence heading into the season.

The bullpen wasn't quite as good as the rotation last year, but it was still strong. **Jordan Romano** will again assume the closer role. **Tim Mayza** was lights out, posting a 1.52 ERA across 53.1 innings. **Erik Swanson**, **Yimi Garcia**, and **Trevor Richards** all swallowed up a bunch of innings with Swanson being one of the most effective arms out of the pen.

The Bottom Line

Toronto is essentially counting on another very strong season from the pitching staff and for the hitting to improve in 2024. Both are big assumptions. Will the likes of Guerrero Jr. and Springer really hit peak hitting form? Hopefully, yes, for Toronto's sake. Will the pitching really be as good as it was last year? Maybe, but the starting rotation was exceptionally healthy last year and it seems almost impossible that the Blue Jays would have such good fortune again in 2024. While this offseason was arguably a huge missed opportunity, there is still enough talent on this team to reach the postseason, but it's simultaneously doubtful that Toronto will be able to make much noise in October.

2024 Projection: 86-76, 3rd in AL East

Bo Bichette



Photo via Sports Illustrated



2023 MLB Ranks

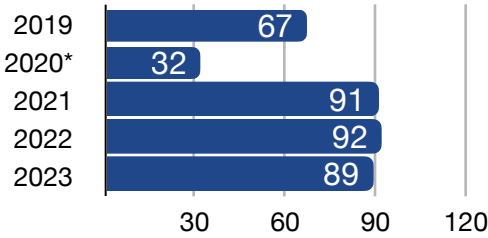
RPG - 4.60 (14th)
HITS - 1423 (6th)
HR - 188 (16th)
ERA - 3.78 (4th)
SO - 1528 (2nd)
FD% - .988% (4th)

Vladimir Guerrero Jr.



Photo via Bluebird Banter

BLUE JAYS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



6 < Number to Know

The current postseason losing streak which includes last year's sweep in the ALWC and 2022's painful 8-1 blown lead against the Mariners.



Photo via Ballparks of Baseball

PROSPECT TO WATCH Orelvis Martinez - 3B

There is a ton of pop in Martinez' bat. At just 21, he hammered 28 home runs in double-A and triple-A in 2023, backing up his 30 homers in double-A ball in 2022. While he has plenty of power to spare, Martinez is still working on his plate discipline and he's never been one to hit for a high average. However, he showed definitive improvement from 2022 to 2023, drawing more walks and striking out less. In 55 games with triple-A Buffalo, he hit for a .263 average and his gap power and 67 walks on the season elevated his OPS to a very respectable .847. Making the leap to the majors will be another big challenge and will offer its own unique challenge, but it's clear that Martinez is trending in the right direction. He's played both third base and shortstop in the minors and that defensive versatility might help him see a big league field even sooner.



Photo via Sportsnet

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
4	George Springer	RF	.258
11	Bo Bichette	SS	.306
27	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	1B	.264
2	Justin Turner	DH	.276
8	Cavan Biggio	2B	.235
30	Alejandro Kirk	C	.250
25	Daulton Varsho	LF	.220
7	Isiah Kiner-Falefa	3B	.242
39	Kevin Kiermaier	CF	.265

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
34	Kevin Gausman	SP	3.16
17	José Berrios	SP	3.65
40	Chris Bassitt	SP	3.60
16	Yusei Kikuchi	SP	3.86
6	Alek Manoah	SP	5.87
68	Jordan Romano	CL	2.90

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Kevin Gausman - SP



2023 Statistics

APP IP ERA K BB
31 185.0 3.16 237 55

After being a bit of a journeyman, Gausman has clearly found a home in Toronto. He was masterful in 2023, finishing third in Cy Young voting and nobody in the American League struck out more batters than the 11-year vet. You can count the number of missed starts in the last three years on one hand and hitters have simply been unable to square the ball up in those seasons. His pitch mix of fastball/splitter/slider is incredibly deceptive and he is able to draw swings on pitches located outside the strike zone. The splitter is especially nasty, as hitters batted just .201 against the pitch.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024												
										TB 28 4:10	TB 29 6:50	TB 30 4:10
TB 31 1:40	HOU 1 8:10	HOU 2 8:10	HOU 3 8:10							NYN 5 1:05	NYN 6 7:05	
NYN 7 1:35	SEA 8 7:07	SEA 9 7:07	SEA 10 3:07							COL 12 7:07	COL 13 3:07	
COL 14 1:37	NYN 15 7:07	NYN 16 7:07	NYN 17 3:07							SD 19 9:40	SD 20 8:40	
SD 21 4:10	KC 22 7:40	KC 23 7:40	KC 24 7:40							KC 25 2:10	LAD 26 7:07	LAD 27 3:07
LAD 28 1:37	KC 29 7:07	KC 30 7:07										

May 2024														
											KC 1 3:07	WSH 3 6:45	WSH 4 4:05	
WSH 5 1:35												MIN 10 7:07	MIN 11 3:07	
MIN 12 1:37	BAL 13 6:35	BAL 14 6:35	BAL 15 12:35									TB 17 7:07	TB 18 3:07	
TB 19 1:37	CWS 20 3:07	CWS 21 7:07	CWS 22 7:07									DET 23 6:40	DET 24 6:40	DET 25 1:10
DET 26 1:40	CWS 27 2:10	CWS 28 7:40	CWS 29 7:40									PIT 31 7:07		

June 2024														
													PIT 1 3:07	
PIT 2 1:37	BAL 3 7:07	BAL 4 7:07	BAL 5 7:07	BAL 6 1:07								OAK 7 9:40	OAK 8 4:07	
OAK 9 4:07	MIL 10 8:10	MIL 11 8:10	MIL 12 2:10									CLE 14 7:07	CLE 15 3:07	
CLE 16 1:37	BOS 17 7:07	BOS 18 7:07	BOS 19 7:07									CLE 21 7:10	CLE 22 4:10	
CLE 23 1:40	BOS 24 7:10	BOS 25 7:10	BOS 26 7:10									NYN 27 7:07	NYN 28 7:07	NYN 29 3:07
NYN 30 1:37														

July 2024													
	HOU 3:07	HOU 7:07	HOU 7:07	HOU 1:07	SEA 9:40	SEA 4:10							
SEA 7 4:10		SF 9 9:45	SF 10 9:45	SF 11 3:45	ARI 9:40	ARI 10:10							
ARI 14 4:10													
DET 21 1:37		TB 23 7:07	TB 24 7:07	TB 25 3:07									
TEX 28 1:37	BAL 29 6:35	BAL 30 6:35	BAL 31 12:35										

August 2024													
												NYN 2 7:05	NYN 3 1:05
NYN 4 1:35													
OAK 11 1:37	LAA 12 9:38	LAA 13 9:38	LAA 14 9:38									CHC 16 2:20	CHC 17 2:20
CHC 18 2:20	CIN 19 7:07	CIN 20 7:07	CIN 21 7:07									LAA 23 7:07	LAA 24 3:07
LAA 25 1:37	BOS 26 7:10	BOS 27 7:10	BOS 28 7:10									MIN 30 8:10	MIN 31 7:10

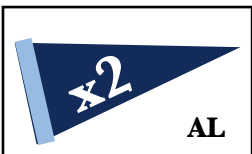
September 2024													
MIN 1 2:10												ATL 6 7:20	ATL 7 7:20
ATL 8 1:35	NYM 9 7:07	NYM 10 7:07	NYM 11 3:07									STL 13 7:07	STL 14 3:07
STL 15 1:37													
TB 22 1:40	BOS 23 7:07	BOS 24 7:07	BOS 25 7:07									MIA 27 7:07	MIA 28 3:07
MIA 29 3:07													

HOME AWAY



TAMPA BAY RAYS

American League East



2011
FRANCHISE WINS

99-63
2023 SEASON

2nd
DIVISION

#7
FARM SYSTEM RANK

St. Petersburg, FL - Tropicana Field (42,735)
Manager: Kevin Cash (739-617, 10th Season)

2023: Lost in ALWC

Can Rays Reload Yet Again?

Year after year, the Tampa Bay Rays dramatically overachieve and make the most of a roster that is usually in the bottom five in terms of MLB payroll. Last year was no exception. The Rays started the season red hot with a 13-game win streak that was essentially the best start to an MLB season since the 1884 St. Louis Maroons. They finished April with a 22-6 record, outscoring opponents by a huge margin, 191-92. May and June were also strong months and Tampa Bay built a division lead of 6.5 games as the All-Star Game quickly approached. But the Rays faltered down the stretch and the upstart Orioles raced past them to claim the division title. The only thing quicker than Baltimore passing Tampa Bay in the standings was the postseason exit. Granted, the eventual World Series champs were the team to sweep the Rays out of the Wild Card round, but it didn't dampen the disappointment or lessen the feeling that the historic start to the season and the 99 regular season wins were wasted. Short of the 2020 World Series run, the Rays have posted a lot of regular season wins and have very little to show for it in October. To make matters more difficult this year, several key players have moved on, leaving the Rays with more questions than answers in a very difficult division.

Batting

The Rays hung runs on the board with the best of them last season. In seasons past they have focused on hitting for average, playing "small ball" when necessary, and relying on strong pitching. That was all true in 2023, but they also broke a franchise record with 230 home runs. The added power helped set a franchise record in runs scored. **Yandy Díaz** won the AL batting title with a noteworthy .330 average and he would have finished higher in MVP voting had he not missed 25 games. **Harold Ramirez** wasn't far behind with a .313 average and he's now posted two very strong seasons with the Rays, although he's a bit of a defensive liability when he's not in the designated hitter role. **Brandon Lowe** has missed nearly a full season's worth of games over the last two years but when he's healthy, he provides a ton of power at second base.

Randy Arozarena earned his first All-Star appearance and has contributed 80+ RBI in each of the last two years. One piece of last year's offense that will not return is Wander Franco, who was arrested on criminal charges. While the main concern in this situation is for the victim of the crime, on the field, the Rays need to solve the shortstop position and will likely call on young **José Caballero** to do so with **Taylor Walls** currently injured. **Isaac Paredes** rounds out the infield after bashing 31 home runs and posting a career-best slash line of .250/.352/.488. **Josh Lowe** emerged as a quality hitter in his first full season in the majors, displaying both power and great speed (32 stolen bases). **Jose Siri** had 25 home runs in just 101 games. Both Christian Bethancourt and Francisco Mejia are gone, leaving **René Pinto** as the probable primary catcher with **Alex Jackson** ready to fill in as backup.

Pitching

The rotation will look very different for the Rays in 2024. Shane McClellan needed Tommy John surgery in August and will miss all of 2024 and Tyler Glasnow is now with the Los Angeles Dodgers. **Zach Eflin** is one of the holdovers from last year and will assume the "ace" role after an AL-best 16 wins and career bests in virtually every category. While he did get hit hard in his one postseason appearance, it's clear that Tampa Bay's pitcher voodoo magic worked for Eflin. It did not work for **Aaron Civale**, who had an ERA of 2.34 in 13 appearances with the Guardians but an ERA of 5.36 with the Rays. **Zack Littell** worked his way out of the bullpen last year and into a starting role and could show improvement in 2024 with a full offseason to prepare as a starter. The Dodgers used **Ryan Pepiot**, who joins the Rays after the Glasnow trade, both as a starter and out of the bullpen last year and he's been extremely effective when healthy. **Taj Bradley** was hit hard in his rookie season but does exhibit high-strikeout stuff. While the pitching staff looks a bit worse on paper than they did in 2023, no team has maximized pitching talent more than the Rays and the bullpen should be a strength with the likes of **Phil Maton**, **Shawn Armstrong**, **Colin Poche**, and **Pete Fairbanks**. Expect starter **Shane Baz**'s to return from Tommy John sometime this year along with **Drew Rasmussen**.

The Bottom Line

Underestimate the Rays at your own risk. They have finished no worse than third in the division in the last seven years and Kevin Cash, now the longest-tenured MLB manager, has guided his team to the postseason in each of the last five years. That being said, the losses in the offseason will be difficult to overcome. McClellan was a legitimate Cy Young Award candidate prior to his injury and the oft-injured Glasnow had a career-high 120 innings. Franco was the team's WAR leader. Was the offense opportunistic last year or can they be one of the best in the American League yet again? The pitching staff, in particular, will have a hard time recreating last year's success and the offenses in the AL East have somehow only improved. A bit of a step back for the Rays is likely in 2024, but don't be shocked if they prove the "experts" wrong yet again.


2024 Projection: 82-80, 4th in AL East

Randy Arozarena



Photo via Sports Illustrated

2023 MLB Ranks



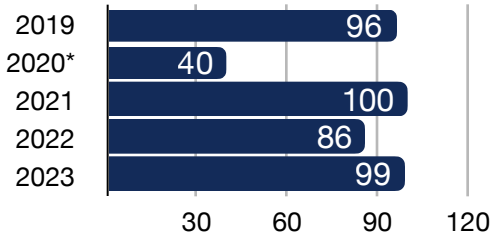
- RPG - 5.31 (4th)
- HITS - 1432 (5th)
- HR - 230 (6th)
- ERA - 3.86 (5th)
- SO - 1507 (4th)
- FD% - .987% (8th)

Yandy Díaz



Photo via Reuters

RAYS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



.330 < Number to Know

Yandy Diaz's batting average in 2023, the best in the American League. He also added career bests in doubles (35), home runs (22), and RBI (78) and he rarely strikes out.

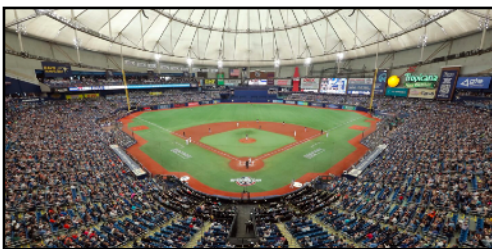


Photo via NBC Sports

PROSPECT TO WATCH Junior Caminero - 3B

Caminero made the rare journey from single-A baseball all the way to the majors in a single season. At just 20-years-old, he's set to play a more prominent role on this year's Rays team. Despite his relatively small 6'1", 160 pound frame, his bat is electric and his quick hands are one of his greatest traits. He simply crushed minor league pitching to the tune of 31 home runs in just 117 games for 94 RBI and a ridiculous slash line of .324/.384/.591. The trick for Caminero will be to find an opening in the Rays infield. Yandy Diaz, Brandon Lowe, and Isaac Paredes have three of the four positions locked down with Paredes covering Caminero's preferred position at third. Could that mean Caminero assumes shortstop, where he played two games? Tampa might test that theory in triple-A, but it won't be long before Caminero is regularly making his impact felt in the majors.



Photo via Baseball America

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
2	Yandy Díaz	1B	.330
8	Brandon Lowe	2B	.231
56	Randy Arozarena	LF	.254
15	Josh Lowe	RF	.292
43	Harold Ramirez	DH	.313
17	Isaac Paredes	3B	.250
22	Jose Siri	CF	.222
7	José Caballero	SS	.221
50	René Pinto	C	.252

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
24	Zach Eflin	SP	3.50
34	Aaron Civale	SP	3.46
52	Zack Littell	SP	4.10
44	Ryan Pepiot	SP	2.14
45	Taj Bradley	SP	5.59
29	Pete Fairbanks	CL	2.58

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Ryan Pepiot - SP



2023 Statistics

APP	IP	ERA	K	BB
8	42.0	2.14	38	5

Pepiot is the key returning piece in the Tyler Glasnow trade with the Los Angeles Dodgers. He's only tallied 78.1 innings pitched in his first two years in the majors, but what he has shown so far has been impressive. An oblique injury cost him most of the 2023 season, but he's now healthy and should be a big part of the Tampa Bay rotation in 2024. Pepiot relies on a mid-90s fastball paired with a good changeup and he'll sneak a slider in every once in awhile too. In a small sample size, he avoided hard contact and his walk rate was just 3.1% in 2024, well below the MLB average of 8.4.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
									TOR 28 4:10	TOR 29 6:50	TOR 30 4:10
TOR 31 1:40	TEX 1 6:50	TEX 2 6:50	TEX 3 1:10						COL 5 4:10	COL 6 8:10	
COL 7 3:10	LAA 8 9:38	LAA 9 9:38	LAA 10 4:07						SF 12 6:50	SF 13 4:10	
SF 14 1:40	LAA 15 6:50	LAA 16 6:50	LAA 17 6:50	LAA 18 1:10					NYN 19 7:05	NYN 20 1:05	
NYN 21 1:35	DET 22 6:50	DET 23 6:50	DET 24 6:50						CWS 26 7:40	CWS 27 7:10	
CWS 28 2:10	MIL 29 7:40	MIL 30 7:40									

May 2024											
				MIL 1 1:10					NYM 3 6:50	NYM 4 7:15	
NYM 5 1:40	CWS 6 6:50	CWS 7 6:50	CWS 8 6:50						NYN 10 6:50	NYN 11 4:10	
NYN 12 1:40	BOS 13 7:10	BOS 14 7:10	BOS 15 7:10	BOS 16 7:10					TOR 17 7:07	TOR 18 3:07	
TOR 19 1:37	BOS 20 6:50	BOS 21 6:50	BOS 22 6:50						KC 24 6:50	KC 25 4:10	
KC 26 1:40		OAK 28 6:50	OAK 29 6:50	OAK 30 1:10					BAL 31 7:05		

June 2024											
											BAL 1 4:05
BAL 2 1:35		MIA 4 6:40	MIA 5 6:40						BAL 7 6:50	BAL 8 4:10	
BAL 9 1:40	BAL 10 6:50	CHC 11 6:50	CHC 12 6:50	CHC 13 6:50					ATL 14 7:20	ATL 15 4:10	
ATL 16 1:35		MIN 18 7:40	MIN 19 7:40	MIN 20 1:10					PIT 21 6:40	PIT 22 4:05	
PIT 23 1:35	SEA 24 6:50	SEA 25 6:50	SEA 26 12:10						WSH 28 6:50	WSH 29 4:10	
WSH 30 1:40											

July 2024											
		KC 2 8:10	KC 3 8:10	KC 4 8:10	TEX 5 8:05	TEX 6 4:05					
TEX 7 2:35		NYN 9 6:50	NYN 10 6:50	NYN 11 6:50	CLE 12 6:50	CLE 13 4:10					
CLE 14 1:40	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX									NYN 19 7:05	NYN 20 1:05
NYN 21 1:35	NYN 22 1:05	TOR 23 7:07	TOR 24 7:07	TOR 25 3:07					CIN 26 6:50	CIN 27 4:10	
CIN 28 1:40		MIA 30 6:50	MIA 31 12:10								

August 2024											
									HOU 2 8:10	HOU 3 7:15	
HOU 4 2:10		STL 6 7:45	STL 7 7:45	STL 8 7:15					BAL 9 6:50	BAL 10 TBD	
BAL 11 1:40	HOU 12 6:50	HOU 13 6:50	HOU 14 6:50						ARI 16 6:50	ARI 17 4:10	
ARI 18 1:40	OAK 19 9:40	OAK 20 9:40	OAK 21 9:40	OAK 22 3:37					LAD 23 10:10	LAD 24 9:10	
LAD 25 4:10	SEA 26 9:40	SEA 27 9:40	SEA 28 4:10						SD 30 6:50	SD 31 4:10	

September 2024											
SD 1 1:40	MIN 2 6:50	MIN 3 6:50	MIN 4 6:50	MIN 5 1:10					BAL 6 7:05	BAL 7 4:05	
BAL 8 1:35	PHI 9 6:40	PHI 10 6:40	PHI 11 6:40	CLE 12 6:40	CLE 13 7:10	CLE 14 6:10					
CLE 15 1:40		BOS 17 6:50	BOS 18 6:50	BOS 19 6:50	TOR 20 6:50	TOR 21 4:10					
TOR 22 1:40		DET 24 6:40	DET 25 6:40	DET 26 1:10	DET 27 7:10	BOS 28 4:10					
BOS 29 3:05											

HOME AWAY



BOSTON RED SOX

American League East



9874
FRANCHISE WINS

78-84
2023 SEASON

5th
DIVISION

#16
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Boston, MA - Fenway Park (37,755)
Manager: Alex Cora (440-370, 6th Season)

Escaping The AL East Basement

The Red Sox have now suffered back-to-back last place finishes in the extremely competitive AL East despite being just two years removed from a trip to the ALCS. Even though Boston made some notable free agent signings and entered with expectations of improvement in 2023, Boston finished with an identical record in 2023 (78-84) to the 2022 season. In the offseason, the club let Chief of Baseball Operations Chaim Bloom hit the job market in favor of Craig Breslow, a former Sox reliever whose history includes two World Series rings. The division is as challenging as ever in 2024, but Breslow is hopeful that free agent additions and a potential youth movement move the Red Sox in the right direction.

Batting

The 2023 free agent signings of **Masataka Yoshida**, Justin Turner, and **Adam Duvall** gave the Red Sox an early season spark on offense. Despite several injuries, Boston stayed in the top ten in Major League Baseball in batting average, OPS, and runs nearly all season. The vast improvement of **Jarren Duran** in centerfield and behind the plate was a welcome surprise as Alex Verdugo struggled defensively and Raimel Tapia didn't pan out. **Tyler O'Neill** is a two-time gold glove in the outfield and joins Boston after six seasons with the Cardinals.

Second baseman and shortstop **Trevor Story** is the player with the most to prove in the 2024 season. His defensive expertise has offset his streaky hitting, but he hasn't been able to perform at a level to warrant the 6-year, \$140 million deal he signed in 2022. With the additions of **Vaughn Grissom**, **Emmanuel Valdez**, and the surprising play of **Pablo Reyes**, Story has little breathing room for another season hindered by injuries or subpar play. Watch out for two key young rookies in **Wilyer Abreu** and **Ceddanne Rafaela**. They both made just one error after being thrown into the lineup due to injuries. Abreu is rock solid in the outfield and played all three positions. He tracks the ball extremely well and has a strong arm to keep runners at bay.

Rafael Devers continues to be a reliable option at the plate and he's slugged .500 or better in each of the last three seasons while missing just 36 games in that same time span. His defense is shaky at best, but it's hard to argue with the power his bat produces and his plate discipline is an added bonus. Yoshida proved he can hit for average in his first year in the majors. Expect young **Triston Casas** to play a major role in the middle of the lineup at his first base position.



Photo via MassLive

Pitching

Pitching was a strength for the Red Sox in 2022, but in 2023 starting pitchers struggled to make it deep into games with the exception of **Bryan Bello**. The Sox were 25th in quality starts with only 47 (Bello had 15 of them) and they finished 21st with a team ERA of 4.52. Ironically, the bullpen, which was the downfall of the team in 2022, suddenly became one of the best in MLB last year. **Brennan Bernadino**, **Josh Winckowski**, **Chris Martin**, and **Nick Pivetta** were all solid in relief with sub-3.50 ERAs. The issue moving forward will be keeping all four of those players healthy as each player missed at least 10+ games.

The starting rotation on Opening Day will look vastly different from last season with the departures of Chris Sale and Corey Kluber, the emergence of Bello, and the arrival of **Lucas Giolito**. In the past, Giolito has been brilliant but he couldn't keep the ball in the yard last season, allowing an AL-high 40 home runs. **Kutter Crawford** hopes to cement his promotion to the rotation alongside of **Tanner Houck**. **Chris Murphy** could vie for a rotation spot, especially if Boston opts to keep Pivetta in the bullpen in 2024. The ceiling for this staff is high with a strong catching duo, the defensive stalwart **Connor Wong** and his complementary offensive backstop, **Reese McGuire**. It's worth noting that there are a couple of quality arms still available in free agency at the time of this article, so it's possible Boston could improve the pitching staff even more. With the kinds of offenses that the AL East wields, it's probably not a bad idea.

The Bottom Line

In 2023, Red Sox fans were optimistic by an offseason of signings after a disappointing campaign that saw the team fail to make the postseason just a year following an ALCS appearance. This year, the youth movement continues for the Boys from Beantown. The three keys to a successful Red Sox team in 2024 are a revival of the starting pitching dominance of years' past, consistency of play in the middle infield, and the continued output of the young bats. The competition in the AL East is as challenging as it's ever been and, at face value, it doesn't seem like the club made enough offseason moves to match up with the likes of the Orioles or Yankees.

2024 Projection: 80-82, 5th in AL East



2023 MLB Ranks

RPG - 4.77 (11th)
HITS - 1437 (4th)
HR - 182 (18th)
ERA - 4.52 (21st)
SO - 1423 (15th)
FD% - .982% (28th)

RED SOX

Brayan Bello

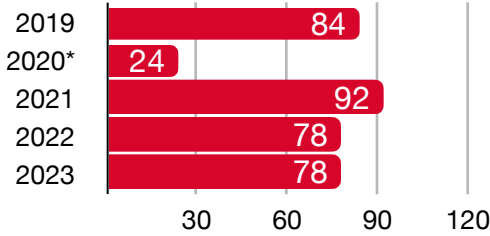


Photo via Sports Illustrated

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
16	Jarren Duran	CF	.295
11	Rafael Devers	3B	.271
36	Triston Casas	1B	.263
10	Trevor Story	SS	.203
7	Masataka Yoshida	DH	.289
17	Tyler O'Neill	LF	.231
52	Wilyer Abreu	RF	.316
5	Vaughn Grissom	2B	.280
12	Connor Wong	C	.235

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
54	Lucas Giolito	SP	4.88
66	Brayan Bello	SP	4.24
37	Nick Pivetta	SP	4.24
89	Tanner Houck	SP	5.01
50	Kutter Crawford	SP	4.04
74	Kenley Jansen	CL	3.63

RED SOX 5-YEAR WIN TREND



0.63 < Number to Know

The number of errors per game by the Red Sox in 2023, making them the third-worst defense team in MLB (Boston's fielding percentage of .982 was also third-worst).



Photo via Eater Boston

PROSPECT TO WATCH Nick Yorke - 2B

The soon to be 22-year-old has a stable contact approach to the plate with moderate power. He rarely makes mistakes in the field and is a pure second baseman. Though he has stiff competition throughout the Boston system both ahead of and behind him, his bat amplifies his potential usefulness on the orange clay of Fenway. He clearly improved his game in the minors from 2022 to 2023, elevating his average from .232 in High-A ball to .268 in Double-A. His walk numbers also took a healthy step forward. The next step in Yorke's journey to The Show will be, presumably, navigating Triple-A pitching in 2024. He's been willing to put in the work to improve his game and a 2025 MLB debut is a reasonable goal for the 2020 first-rounder.



Photo via Providence Journal

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
					SEA 10:10	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40
SEA 4:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 9:40	OAK 3:37			LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38
LAA 4:07		BAL 2:10	BAL 3:37	BAL 7:10	BAL 7:10	BAL 7:10	LAA 7:10	LAA 7:10	LAA 7:10	LAA 7:10	LAA 7:10
LAA 1:35	CLE 11:10a	CLE 7:10	CLE 7:10	CLE 7:10	CLE 1:35	CLE 1:35	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40
PIT 1:35		CLE 6:10	CLE 6:10	CLE 6:10	CLE 1:10	CLE 1:10	CHC 7:10	CHC 7:10	CHC 7:10	CHC 7:10	CHC 7:10
CHC 7:00		SF 7:10									

May 2024											
				SF 7:10	SF 1:35	MIN 8:10	MIN 2:10	MIN 2:10	MIN 2:10	MIN 2:10	MIN 2:10
MIN 2:10		ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20			WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10
WSH 1:35	TB 7:10	TB 7:10	TB 7:10	TB 7:10	TB 7:10	STL 8:15	STL 8:15	STL 8:15	STL 8:15	STL 8:15	STL 8:15
STL 2:15	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 6:50		MIL 4:10	MIL 4:10	MIL 4:10	MIL 4:10	MIL 4:10	MIL 4:10
MIL 1:35	BAL 1:05	BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35	DET 7:10	DET 7:10	DET 7:10	DET 7:10	DET 7:10	DET 7:10	DET 7:10

June 2024											
										DET 4:10	DET 4:10
DET 1:35		ATL 7:10	ATL 7:10	ATL 7:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10
CWS 2:10		PHI 7:10	PHI 7:10	PHI 7:10	PHI 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10
NYN 7:00	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07		CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10
CIN 1:40	TOR 7:10	TOR 7:10	TOR 7:10	TOR 7:10		SD 7:10	SD 7:10	SD 7:10	SD 7:10	SD 7:10	SD 7:10
SD 1:35											

July 2024											
		MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40	MIA 1:10	NYN 7:05	NYN 1:05	NYN 1:05	NYN 1:05	NYN 1:05	NYN 1:05	NYN 1:05
NYN 1:35		OAK 7:10	OAK 7:10	OAK 7:10	KC 7:10	KC 7:10	KC 7:10	KC 7:10	KC 7:10	KC 7:10	KC 7:10
KC 1:35		All-Star Break - Arlington, TX						LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10
LAD 4:10	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 3:10			NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10
NYN 1:35	SEA 7:10	SEA 7:10	SEA 7:10	SEA 4:10							

August 2024											
						TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05
TEX 2:35	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 8:10		HOU 7:10	HOU 7:10	HOU 7:10	HOU 7:10	HOU 7:10	HOU 7:10
HOU 1:35	TEX 7:10	TEX 7:10	TEX 7:10	TEX 6:10	BAL 6:35	BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05	BAL 7:05
BAL 1:35	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 2:10		ARI 7:10	ARI 7:10	ARI 7:10	ARI 7:10	ARI 7:10	ARI 7:10
ARI 1:35	TOR 7:10	TOR 7:10	TOR 7:10	TOR 7:10	TOR 7:10	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40

September 2024											
DET 1:40	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10		CWS 7:10	CWS 7:10	CWS 7:10	CWS 7:10	CWS 7:10	CWS 7:10
CWS 1:35	BAL 7:10	BAL 7:10	BAL 7:10	BAL 7:10	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05
NYN 1:35		TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	MIN 7:10	MIN 7:10	MIN 7:10	MIN 7:10	MIN 7:10	MIN 7:10
MIN 1:35	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07		TB 7:10	TB 7:10	TB 7:10	TB 7:10	TB 7:10	TB 7:10
TB 3:05											

HOME AWAY



Twin Titles for Minnesota?

The AL Central was much maligned last season, and it's understandable why. The Boston Red Sox finished last in the AL East but there were times in 2023 where, had Boston been in the Central, they would have been leading the division. The Twins capitalized on the opportunity and won their third division in five seasons. But, just because the division isn't highly competitive like the East doesn't mean that there is a lack of stars in the Central.

The Kansas City Royals signed Bobby Witt Jr. to a massive contract after a remarkable 2023 season. He led the majors with 11 triples and his 30 home runs and 49 stolen bases have been simultaneously achieved only a handful of times throughout baseball's illustrious history. The Cleveland Guardians' Jose Ramirez has finished no worse than tenth in AL MVP voting in each of the last four years. To put into perspective how great he has truly been, his 2023 slash line of .282/.356/.475 was technically a "down" year. With Shohei Ohtani heading to the NL, the AL MVP race is as open as ever, why couldn't Ramirez win it? Minnesota's Pablo López recorded 234 strikeouts in 2023. Even still, statistics indicate the he was actually a bit "unlucky" so it's possible he shaves a little off of his 3.66 ERA from last year. If that's the case, he'll be in prime contention for a Cy Young award.

The **Detroit Tigers** don't have a bona fide star on the roster, at least, *not yet*. When they take the field in 2024, for the first time in 16 seasons, Miguel Cabrera won't go with them. The future first-ballot hall-of-famer retired at the end of 2023. Looking to end a long playoff drought, the Tigers will look to a young core comprised of Spencer Torkelson, Riley Greene, and a host of other players. Detroit was offensively challenged, and they are hopeful that those young players will take the next step in their progression. They revamped the rotation, too. If everything goes to plan, the Tigers could be dark horse contenders to not only compete in the Central, but to actually win it when the final pitch of Game 162 is thrown.

The **Cleveland Guardians** are hopeful that 2023 was an anomaly and that they can chalk up only their second losing season in the last 11 years to youth, as the youngest team in the majors finished with a 76-86 record. Part of their issues stemmed from a lack of power. The 124 home runs hit by the Guardians were the fewest in Major League Baseball. Compare that number to the 233 homers hit by the division winners Minnesota and you begin to understand why Cleveland had such a difficult time scratching runs across. The good news is that the top of the lineup in Steven Kwan, Andrés Giménez, and Jose Ramirez can make life extremely difficult on opposing pitching and can quickly elevate a pitch count. Can that trio, along with Josh Naylor, get help from the rest of the lineup?

Both the **Chicago White Sox** and **Kansas City Royals** suffered through 100-loss seasons in 2023. While it's unrealistic to expect either team to compete for a division title, they are in a way competing against one another to see which team can complete their rebuild first. For now, it appears that the Royals have a slight leg up in that regarding considering some of the departures from the White Sox including Yasmani Grandal and Tim Anderson. The trade of Dylan Cease also sets Chicago back, at least in the short term. Meanwhile, the Royals locked up their budding superstar with an 11-year, \$287 million contract, which makes Bobby Witt Jr. the highest paid player in franchise history. Both teams have a long way to go, but a weak division works in their favor.

All four teams will be chasing the reigning AL Central champs, the **Minnesota Twins**. Minnesota led the division for the vast majority of the season thanks to stellar starting pitching and the aforementioned home run ability. While it's hard to imagine the pitching staff will have as remarkable a season as they did in 2023, it's still a very quality group led by Pablo López and Joe Ryan. Jhoan Duran has quickly developed into one of the best closers in the game.

The Twins look good on paper and there's a reason why they are the favorites to win the division. However, baseball isn't played on paper, don't be surprised if a dark horse team in the American League comes from the Central division.

Riley Greene



Photo via The Athletic

Win Totals	
5 Seasons	
Cleveland	376
Minnesota	375
Chicago	342
Detroit	291
Kansas City	280

Win Totals	
10 Seasons	
Cleveland	829
Minnesota	750
Chicago	698
Kansas City	683
Detroit	669

Win Totals	
15 Seasons	
Cleveland	1203
Minnesota	1126
Detroit	1112
Chicago	1092
Kansas City	1044

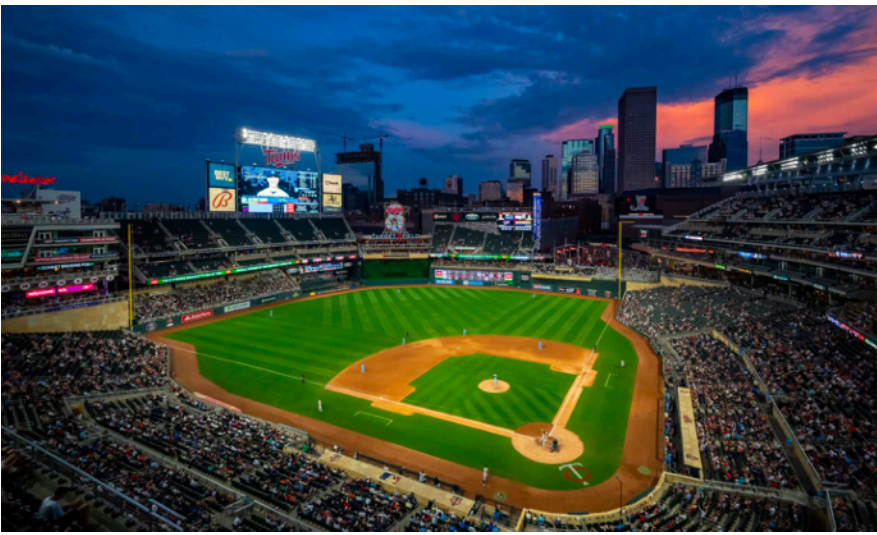


Photo via The Business Download

STADIUM SPOTLIGHT

Target Field

Target Field is one of the least discussed ballparks and we couldn't begin to tell you why. It's stunning in every way. The facility features majestic views of the Minneapolis skyline from just about every seat in the upper bowl and a 360-degree open main concourse gives fans an uninterrupted view of the field. A light rail transit can get you to the ballpark for less than \$5 (a true bargain if you've seen the prices of parking recently). The Twins do a good job of honoring their past legends. You will see unique hardwood murals of Rod Carew and Kirby Puckett featured on the club level and signage highlights other players like Joe Mauer, Harmon Killebrew, and Johan Santana on the main concourse level.

Stadium Rank: 10

2023 Statistical Leaders

Batting Average

1. José Ramírez - CLE - **.282**
2. Bobby Witt Jr. - KC - **.276**
3. Maikel García - KC - **.272**
4. Steven Kwan - CLE - **.268**
5. Luis Robert Jr. - CWS - **.264**
6. Andrew Benintendi - CWS - **.262**
7. Matt Vierling - DET - **.261**
8. Andrew Vaughn - CWS - **.258**
9. Salvador Perez - KC - **.255**
10. Andrés Giménez - CLE - **.251**

Home Runs

1. Luis Robert Jr. - CWS - **38**
2. Spencer Torkelson - DET - **31**
3. Bobby Witt Jr. - KC - **30**
4. Jake Burger - CWS - **25**
5. José Ramírez - CLE - **24**
5. Max Kepler - MIN - **24**
7. Salvador Perez - KC - **23**
8. Andrew Vaughn - CWS - **21**
8. Jake Rogers - DET - **21**
8. Joey Gallo - MIN - **21**

RBI

1. Josh Naylor - CLE - **97**
2. Bobby Witt Jr. - KC - **96**
3. Spencer Torkelson - DET - **94**
4. Luis Robert Jr. - CWS - **80**
4. José Ramírez - CLE - **80**
4. Salvador Pérez - KC - **80**
4. Andrew Vaughn - CWS - **80**
8. Max Kepler - MIN - **66**
9. Carlos Correa - MIN - **65**
10. Kerry Carpenter - DET - **64**

ERA (min 162 IP)

1. Sonny Gray - MIN - **2.79**
2. Pablo López - MIN - **3.66**
3. Dylan Cease - CHW - **4.58**
4. Jordan Lyles - KC - **6.28**

Strikeouts

1. Pablo López - MIN - **234**
2. Dylan Cease - CHW - **214**
3. Lucas Giolito - CHW/CLE - **204**
4. Joe Ryan - MIN - **197**
5. Sonny Gray - MIN - **183**
6. Bailey Ober - MIN - **146**
7. Lance Lynn - CWS - **144**
8. Eduardo Rodríguez - DET - **143**
9. Tanner Bibee - CLE - **141**
10. Michael Kopeck - CWS - **134**

Stolen Bases

1. Bobby Witt Jr. - KC - **49**
2. Will Castro - MIN - **33**
3. Andrés Giménez - CLE - **30**
4. José Ramírez - CLE - **28**
5. Dairon Blanco - KC - **24**
6. Maikel García - KC - **23**
7. Steven Kwan - CLE - **21**
8. Luis Robert Jr. - CWS - **20**
8. Myles Straw - CWS - **20**
10. Zach McKinstry - DET - **16**

**5th and Goal
On YouTube**

 [Subscribe](#)

Salvador Perez



Photo via Sports Illustrated

DID YOU KNOW

The AL Central was the only division in 2023 to have just one team finish with a winning record (the Twins, with 87 victories). The trend of the AL Central being comparatively weak to other divisions isn't necessarily new, there have been just three 100-win teams in the division since its inception in 1994.

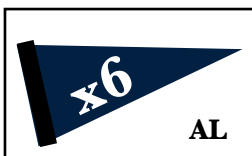
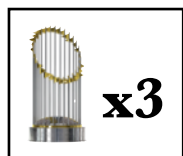
Past Division Winners





MINNESOTA TWINS

American League Central



9177
FRANCHISE WINS

87-75
2023 SEASON

1st
DIVISION

#17
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Minneapolis, MN - Target Field (38,544)
Manager: Rocco Baldelli (375-333, 6th Season)

2023: Lost in ALDS

Twins vs. The Field

For the third time in the last five seasons, the Twins claimed the AL Central division title. To top it off, the Twins finally erased their historic losing streak in the postseason and swept the Toronto Blue Jays out of the Wild Card round before falling to the Astros 3-1 in the ALDS. In 2024, the division appears to be the Twins to lose.

Batting

The Twins were ranked in the bottom half of baseball in hits, but they still scored 4.80 runs per game by virtue of hitting 233 home runs. The power helped to negate a whopping 1,654 strikeouts, a major league record. Every player in the projected lineup hit double digit home runs, including newcomer **Carlos Santana**. The Twins signed him to a 1 year, \$5.25 million contract after season which included a slash line of .240/.318/.429, 23 home runs, and 86 RBI. 14 years later, he can still draw a walk with the best of them. **Byron Buxton**'s career has been a huge "what if" as the injury bug has bitten in almost every season. Even though the Twins kept him at the DH position to help his body, a knee injury still sidelined him from August 1st onwards. This year, he talked his way into playing centerfield again, and he's since stated his excitement of being back in the field. His batting average dropped again in 2023 and he's only played 100+ games once in his 9-year career, but, on the bright side, he has All-Star potential if he can stay on the field. An ACL injury has kept **Royce Lewis** off the field, but when he's played he's been sensational and he was a postseason hero. After signing a big contract, shortstop **Carlos Correa** struggled at the plate and had a propensity to ground into double plays (an MLB-most 30 in 2023), although injuries played a factor, and he did hit 9 of 24 with an OPS of 1.038 in the postseason.

Rookie **Edouard Julien** was a huge bright spot for the Twins. He posted an on-base percentage of .381 after drawing 64 walks in just 109 games. **Matt Wallner** took a step forward in his sophomore year, albeit in a small sample size, hitting 14 home runs in only 213 at bats. He went 0-12 in the postseason, but his exit velocity jumped up well above the Major League average. **Ryan Jeffers** had a career year at the plate and will split time at catcher with **Christian Vázquez**. **Alex Kirilloff** can play both first and in the outfield and **Kyle Farmer** has likewise played multiple positions in his career.

Pitching

The Twins' pitching staff was tremendous in 2023. No team struck out more batters in the regular season and in the postseason, the Twins held the Blue Jays to just a single run in 18 innings. The Houston Astros got the better of Minnesota pitching, but, to be fair, the Astros tend to do that against very team they face. This year, the rotation looks quite different now that Sonny Gray, Kenta Maeda, and others are gone. **Pablo López** was an All-Star in 2023 and he pitched 194 innings with an ERA of 3.66. He was a key piece in a deal that sent batting champion Luis Arraez to the Marlins, a trade that both teams seem to have "won." He was the winning pitcher twice in the postseason. The Twins landed **Anthony DeSclafani** in a trade from the Mariners and **Joe Ryan**, **Bailey Ober**, and **Chris Paddack** round out the rotation. When Ryan keeps the ball in the yard, he can be very effective as demonstrated in 2022 and in the first half of 2023. Ober turned in a quality season in 2023 with career bests in virtually every category, including an ERA+ of 125. A few rookies could also work their way into the rotation or bullpens if injuries pop up, **Simeon Woods-Richardson** and **Brent Headrick** are two to watch.

As it presently stands, there are only two left-handers in the projected bullpen. **Steven Okert** joins the club after making 64 appearances with the Marlins last season. **Caleb Thielbar** is the other southpaw and he had a 3.23 ERA over 30.2 innings. **Jhoan Duran** is a lockdown closer who has largely baffled major league hitting in the first two years of his career. His fastball averages 100 mph which makes his curveball that much more devastating. Even that pitch he throws with velocity, usually in the upper 80s. He also has a splitter/sinker combo that he throws with velocity and vicious movement. This bullpen is legit, so even if the starting pitching isn't quite as strong as it was in 2023, the Twins should be in good shape.

The Bottom Line

Compared to past offseasons, the Twins were relatively quiet. However, they find themselves in arguably the weakest division in baseball, so just maintaining the "status quo" should put the Twins in the driver seat. It's difficult to imagine Minnesota slugging as many home runs as they did last year but if players like Royce Lewis and Max Kepler can stay healthy, the number of hits should increase. The bats struggled against the Astros in the ALDS (.198 average), so if the Twins want to make a deep run in October, the offense will need more balance. Meanwhile, the pitching staff should again be the strength of the team. Teams like the Tigers and Royals should challenge more in 2024 than they have in the past few seasons, but the Twins have what it takes to repeat as division champs.

2024 Projection: 87-75, 1st in AL Central

Pablo López

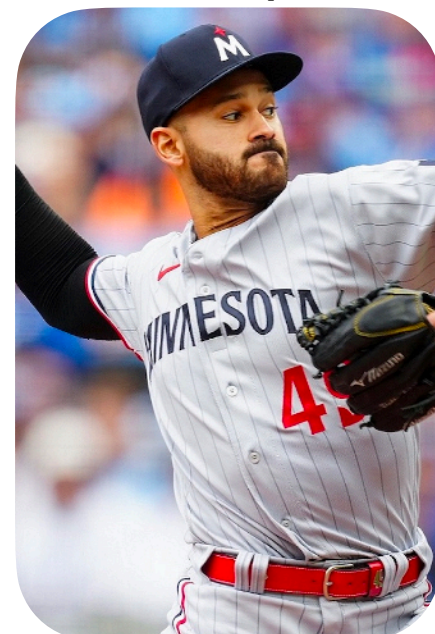



Photo via Twins Daily




2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.80 (10th)
 HITS - 1336 (19th)
 HR - 233 (4th)
 ERA - 3.87 (6th)
 SO - 1560 (1st)
 FD% - .988% (4th)



DETROIT TIGERS

American League Central



x4



x11
AL

9590
FRANCHISE WINS

78-84
2023 SEASON

2nd
DIVISION

#13
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Detroit, MI - Comerica Park (41,083)
 Manager: A.J. Hinch (202-252, 4th Season)

Young Tigers Ready to Pounce

Tigers fans don't need to be reminded that, if their team doesn't reach the postseason in 2024, the playoff-less streak runs to double digit years. After three straight appearances in the ALCS from 2011-2013, it's been quite the fall from grace for Detroit. However, the baseball in the Motor City took a significant step forward from where it had been in previous seasons in 2023. The team's 78 wins was the most since 2016 and the organization has seemingly been successful in building a young nucleus of talent with more help on the way. Despite being six games under .500, the Tigers were just 9.0 games back of the division when the dust settled in 2023, so the window of opportunity clearly exists at the top of the AL Central.

Batting

After a shaky rookie season, **Spencer Torkelson** finally showed off what fans were begging to see: his power. He smashed 31 home runs and drove in 94 runs and there were only eight occasions in which he did not occupy first base on defense. He still has room for growth in terms of limiting strikeouts and getting on base more frequently, but he's showing glimpses that he could be a premier power hitter and at just 24 years old, he's just getting started. Fellow 2022 rookie **Riley Greene** also took a major step forward in his sophomore year but his challenge has been staying on the field. He had Tommy John surgery in the offseason, but luckily for the Tigers, it was on his non-throwing shoulder so he's expected to be a full participant from the start of the season. The final member of the "Class of 2022" featured in the projected starting lineup is **Kerry Carpenter**, who displayed a nice balance of hitting for contact and for power. **Parker Meadows** debuted last season and had ups and downs in a 37-game sample size. What he did show was a remarkable ability to draw a walk, which led to an on-base percentage of .331 despite a batting average of .232. He's a capable defender in centerfield, too. **Colt Keith** hasn't even taken a major league swing yet, but he's expected to be another piece of the young core and will likely cover second with newly-acquired veteran **Gio Urshela** claiming third base. When healthy, Urshela is a high-average hitter with above-average defensive skills. **Jace Jung** could also debut in the majors early this season.

The other side of the coin is **Javier Baéz**, whose lack of plate discipline turned him into a meme on several occasions in 2024. With his power seemingly having dried up, the Tigers are likely regretting the 6-year, \$140 million contract they offered the former Silver Slugger at the beginning of the 2022 season. (His OPS+ of 62 indicates that his adjusted OPS was 38% worse than the average player.) The Tigers also bring in **Mark Canha** who is now on his fourth team in as many seasons. Some of the best offense of his now-10-year-career came in the final 50 games of the season with the Brewers, so Detroit is hopeful that's the version of Canha they get in 2024. **Jake Rogers** returns as catcher and **Carson Kelly** will catch, too.

Pitching

With Eduardo Rodriguez signing with the Arizona Diamondbacks, the Opening Day starter will be **Tarik Skubal**. He has great stuff, maybe even "ace" stuff as long as he can stay healthy. He was tremendous last year but didn't get his season started until July and he's only topped 120 innings once in his first four seasons. His fastball is noticeable with both high velocity and late life. **Jack Flaherty** is a pitcher with high upside but a lot to prove in 2024. He received MVP votes in 2019 when he was with the St. Louis Cardinals after a season that featured 196.1 innings pitched, a 2.75 ERA, 231 strikeouts, and an NL-best WHIP of 0.968. Since then, he's battled numerous injuries but he did record 144.1 innings of work in 2023, although he wasn't especially effective. Speaking of WHIP leaders, **Kenta Maeda** led the majors with his 0.750 WHIP and finished second in Cy Young voting in the shortened 2020 season with the Twins. Tommy John surgery essentially halted any hopes of replicating that performance, but the Tigers' pickup of Maeda is a good one. **Matt Manning** and **Reese Olson** round out the probable rotation. **Jackson Jobe** could debut this season, especially if the Tigers are in the mix late in the season. The bullpen was relatively average last season but the additions of **Andrew Chafin** and **Shelby Miller** should help. **Alex Lange** enters the season as the team's closer again but that role is by no means locked down.

The Bottom Line


The Tigers could legitimately win the division and they could also legitimately finish last in the division. It all depends on if young hitters like Torkelson, Greene, Carpenter, Meadows, (and even incoming rookies Keith and Jung) can take the next step. Most did from their "freshman" season to their "sophomore" season, but this step will need to be even bigger, especially given the Tigers' struggles to score runs last season. If healthy, the pitching staff could be one of the most undervalued groups in baseball and will move from below average to above average. Now, that perspective is certainly an optimist's point of view, but with the recent success of the Lions and the Red Wings (sorry, Pistons), why can't the Tigers be next?

2024 Projection: 81-81, 2nd in AL Central

Spencer Torkelson



Photo via FanGraphs



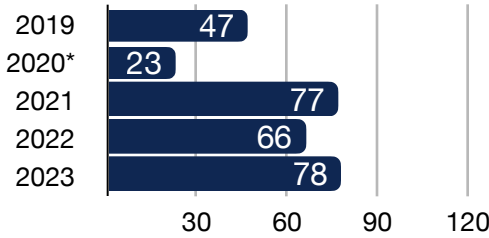
2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.08 (28th)
 HITS - 1292 (25th)
 HR - 165 (24th)
 ERA - 4.24 (17th)
 SO - 1374 (20th)
 FD% - .983% (24th)

Tarik Skubal



Photo via Bless You Boys

TIGERS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



.530 < Number to Know

The Tigers' winning percentage from July 1st until the end of the year. Extrapolate that over 162 games, and you get a 86-76 record. Could that record win the Central in 2024?



Photo via Detroit Sports Commission

PROSPECT TO WATCH Colt Keith - 2B

Keith has hammered minor league pitching at every stop in his journey through the minor league system. In his very first swing with triple-A Toledo, he bashed a ball over 400 feet for a home run. His bat is tremendous and he has a very good sense of the strike zone and he actually reduced the number of strikeouts when he made the jump to triple-A in the middle of last season. The Tigers are certain enough that they have a potential star that they signed the 22-year-old to a 6-year, \$28.6 million contract before he even steps foot on a big league field. That contract could extend to a 9-year, \$82 million deal if Detroit picks up all three club options. A remaining question is whether Keith will play second or third base, but there are no questions about his potential as a hitter.



Photo via USA Today

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
22	Parker Meadows	CF	.232
31	Riley Greene	RF	.288
20	Spencer Torkelson	1B	.233
30	Kerry Carpenter	DH	.278
21	Mark Canha	LF	.262
33	Colt Keith	2B	-
28	Javier Báez	SS	.222
13	Gio Urshela	3B	.299
34	Jake Rogers	CF	.221

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
29	Tarik Skubal	SP	2.80
45	Jack Flaherty	SP	4.99
18	Kenta Maeda	SP	4.23
25	Matt Manning	SP	3.58
40	Reese Olson	SP	3.99
55	Alex Lange	CL	3.68

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Riley Greene - OF



2023 Statistics

GP 99 **AVG** .288 **OPS** .796 **HR** 11 **RBI** 37

Of the two players who debuted in 2022, Spencer Torkelson gets a lot of attention for his incredible power, but Riley Greene is just as vital (if not more) to the Tigers' success. Injuries have slowed what has otherwise been a great start to Greene's major league career. His debut was delayed by a broken foot in 2022 and in 2023 he played just 99 games due to elbow and leg injuries. Depending on which advanced metrics you want to dive into (expected batting average and exit velocity, to name a couple), you'll find him ranked in the upper echelon of hitters. Now, he just has to prove he can stay on the field.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
									CWS 4:10		CWS 2:10
CWS 2:10	NYM 7:10	1	NYM 7:10	2	NYM 7:10	3			OAK 1:10	5	OAK 1:10
OAK 1:40	PIT 6:40	8	PIT 12:35	9				MIN 1:10	11	MIN 6:40	12
MIN 1:40	TEX 6:40	15	TEX 1:10	16	TEX 1:10	17	TEX 1:10	18	MIN 8:10	19	MIN 2:10
MIN 2:10	TB 6:50	21	TB 6:50	22	TB 6:50	23	24		KC 1:10	26	KC 6:10
KC 1:40	STL 6:40	28	STL 6:40	29	30						

May 2024											
									STL 1:10	1	
NYM 1:35	CLE 6:10	6	CLE 6:10	7	CLE 1:10	8			HOU 6:40	10	HOU 6:10
HOU 1:40	MIA 6:40	13	MIA 6:40	14	MIA 1:10	15			ARI 9:40	17	ARI 8:10
ARI 4:10	KC 7:40	20	KC 2:10	21	KC 2:10	22	TOR 6:40	23	TOR 6:40	24	TOR 1:10
TOR 1:40			PIT 6:40	28	PIT 1:10	29	BOS 7:10	30	BOS 7:10	31	

June 2024											
											BOS 4:10
BOS 1:35	TEX 8:05	3	TEX 8:05	4	TEX 8:05	5			MIL 6:40	7	MIL 4:10
MIL 1:40			WSH 6:40	11	WSH 6:40	12	WSH 1:10	13	HOU 7:10	14	HOU 7:10
HOU 2:10	ATL 7:20	17	ATL 7:20	18	ATL 12:20	19			CWS 6:40	21	CWS 1:10
CWS 1:40	PHI 6:40	24	PHI 6:40	25	PHI 1:10	26	LAA 9:38	27	LAA 9:38	28	LAA 10:07
LAA 4:07	30										

July 2024											
CIN 1:40	CLE 6:40	8	CLE 6:40	9	CLE 6:40	10	CLE 1:10	11	LAD 6:40	12	LAD 1:10
LAD 1:40									TOR 7:07	19	TOR 3:07
TOR 1:37	CLE 6:40	22	CLE 6:40	23	CLE 6:40	24	CLE 1:10	25	MIN 6:40	26	MIN 6:10
MIN 1:40	CLE 6:40	29	30								

August 2024											
KC 1:40			SEA 9:40	6	SEA 9:40	7	SEA 9:40	8	SF 10:15	9	SF 4:05
SF 4:05			SEA 6:40	13	SEA 6:40	14	SEA 1:10	15	NYM 6:40	16	NYM 1:10
NYM 7:00			CHC 8:05	20	CHC 8:05	21	CHC 8:05	22	CWS 8:10	23	CWS 7:10
CWS 2:10	CWS 8:10	26	LAA 6:40	27	LAA 6:40	28	LAA 1:10	29	BOS 6:40	30	BOS 6:10

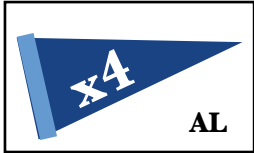
September 2024											
BOS 1:40	SD 6:40	2			SD 9:40	4	SD 8:40	5	OAK 9:40	6	OAK 4:07
OAK 4:07			COL 6:40	10	COL 6:40	11	COL 1:10	12	BAL 6:40	13	BAL 6:10
BAL 1:40	KC 7:40	16	KC 7:40	17	KC 7:40	18			BAL 7:05	20	BAL 4:05
BAL 1:35			TB 6:40	24	TB 6:40	25	TB 1:10	26	CWS 6:40	27	CWS 1:10
CWS 3:10	29										

HOME AWAY



KANSAS CITY ROYALS

American League Central



4122
FRANCHISE WINS

56-106
2023 SEASON

5th
DIVISION

#29
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Kansas City, MO - Kauffman Stadium (37,903)
Manager: Matt Quatraro (56-106, 2nd Season)

Has the Kansas City Future Arrived?

The Kansas City Royals have made the playoffs just twice in the last 38 seasons. Those two instances? A 2014 World Series appearance and a 2015 World Series Championship. Since then, the Royals haven't finished better than third in the division and they've ended up last or second-to-last in each of the last six seasons. In that same 38-year time span, the Royals have suffered through 7 seasons of 100+ losses and have only produced 11 seasons of .500 ball or better, with several of those seasons coming in the late 1980s. In short, Royals fans and players alike have gone through some dark days. However, there's hope that, starting this season, the light at the end of this extremely long and dark tunnel is relevance (and not a train).

Batting

The second overall pick in the 2019 draft has been as advertised in the first two years of his career. **Bobby Witt** finished seventh in AL MVP voting in 2023 and the Royals responded by locking up the future of the franchise with an enormous 11-year, \$288.7 million dollar deal. The contract could keep him in the Royal Blue until 2037 if the club elects to pick up all three team options. Only Fernando Tatis' \$340 million contract surpasses that of Witt's for a non-arbitration-eligible player. The deal not only locks down a budding superstar but it also gives indication that owner John Sherman is willing to spend the big bucks.

Witt is the young gun and **Salvador Pérez** is the savvy veteran who is still eager to play catcher at the age of 34. The now 8-time All Star played some first base last season, but the Royals are hopeful that **Vinnie Pasquantino** will be manning that position. He burst onto the scene as a rookie in 2022, batting .295 with an OPS of .832 in 72 games. However, in 2023, he tore his labrum in early June and missed the remainder of the season. Journeyman **Hunter Renfro** joins the Royals this season and should provide the team with some needed pop. The expected-to-be right fielder has clubbed 177 career home runs in 8 big league seasons including 20 last year. **MJ Melendez** has good power too, but his strikeouts skyrocketed in 2024 and he really struggled on defense. **Nelson Velázquez** flourished after a mid-season trade from the Cubs and slugged 14 home runs in just 40 games for the Royals. **Maikel Garcia** hit .272 as a rookie and stole 23 bases, and he's developing into a plus-defender at the Major League level. **Kyle Isbel** is a terrific defender in center but hasn't offered a lot at the plate to this point. **Freddy Fermin** should see more time behind the dish.

Pitching

If the Royals are to get out of the basement of the AL Central, they simply have to be better on the mound. After a career year in 2022 that featured a 10-5 record, a 3.23 ERA, and two complete games, **Brady Singer** lost his way in 2023. His ERA soared to 5.52 and he struggled in just about every aspect. However, his ERA leaving May was 7.12 so give him credit for righting the ship at least a little bit down the stretch of the season. While he was technically a bit unlucky from an advanced analytics perspective, batters routinely hit him hard, and he'll need to produce a lot more ground balls in 2024 to be successful. The Royals brought in **Cole Ragans** as part of the Aroldis Chapman trade with the Texas Rangers, and it's a good thing they did. The Rangers had utilized his skill set in bullpen, but the Royals, desperate for potential rotation pitchers, put him to work right away as a starter. He thrived in that role, allowing just two earned runs in his first 17.2 innings of work for Kansas City. As a starter he went 5-2 and figures to be the Opening Day starter for the Royals. Kansas City is hoping to squeeze out another good season from veteran **Michael Wacha**, who is actually coming off of one of his best seasons. Remarkably, in the last two years he has a 25-6 record and he's had an ERA+ of 127 in each of those years. Unlike Wacha, **Jordan Lyles** would prefer to forget about his record in 2023 after being credited with an MLB-high 17 losses. He holds an inauspicious career ERA of 5.24, but if you want to look on the bright side, he's pitched 170+ innings in each of the last three seasons. **Seth Lugo** put together a solid season with the Padres as a full time starter for the first time since 2017.

The bullpen has several new faces including **Chris Stratton**, **Nick Anderson**, and **John Schreiber**. **Will Smith**, another newcomer, is the only player in the projected bullpen with more than one save from the 2023 season so he could assume the closer role at the start of 2024.

The Bottom Line

Don't let anybody tell you that this roster isn't improved from the 106-loss nightmare of 2023 in which the Royals tied the franchise record for most losses in a season. Now, it's critically important that this team stays healthy, especially in the rotation where there are several older arms. Don't expect a playoff push, but if the projection below comes true, the Royals will have won 21 more games in 2024 than they did in 2023 which would be a resounding success of a season. However, if the Royals don't make a resurgence in 2024, the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel really will be a train considering the apparent lack of big-league-ready talent in the farm system. Calling 2024 a "now or never" season is probably a bit too dramatic, but this season does have the feeling of "if not now, then when?"

2024 Projection: 75-87, 3rd in AL Central

Bobby Witt Jr.

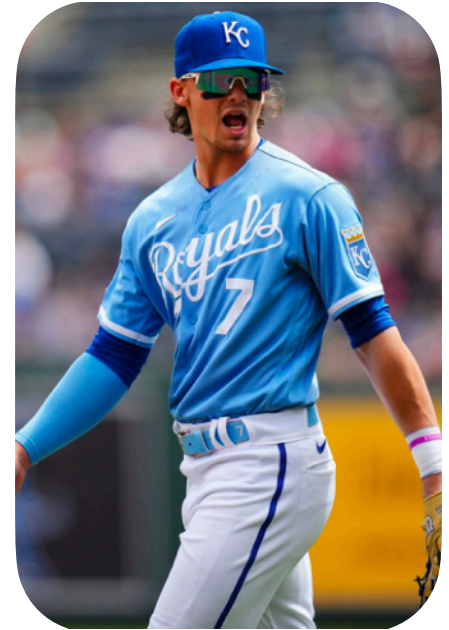



Photo via Royals Review



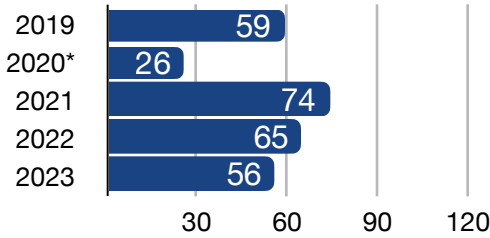
2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.17 (23rd)
 HITS - 1325 (21st)
 HR - 163 (26th)
 ERA - 5.17 (28th)
 SO - 1270 (27th)
 FD% - .986% (12th)

Cole Ragans



Photo via Royals Review

ROYALS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



4 < Number to Know

Bobby Witt Jr. had 30 home runs and 49 stolen bases in 2023, only four players in MLB history have ever had as many home runs and stolen bases in a season.

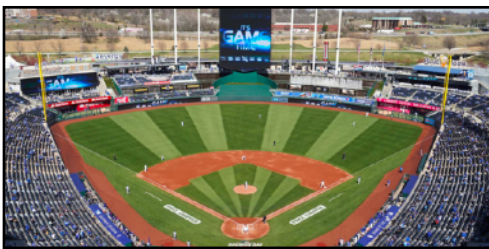


Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH Nick Loftin - IF

Why is there no specific position listed for Nick Loftin? It's because he's a talented utility player who can cover first, second, or third base. Even though he only appeared in 19 games for the Royals in 2023, he played all three of those positions. While his versatility is perhaps his most notable attribute as a prospect, he handled the bat very well. He hit .323 through 68 plate appearances and he stole a couple bases and legged out a triple as well. While he has yet to register his first major league home run, the capability is certainly there based on his time in Triple-A. If Loftin can continue to impress at the plate, the Royals won't have a choice but to pencil him somewhere in the lineup.



Photo @NickLoftin02

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
1	MJ Melendez	LF	.235
7	Bobby Witt Jr.	SS	.276
13	Salvador Perez	C	.255
9	Vinnie Pasquantino	1B	.247
16	Hunter Renfroe	RF	.233
26	Adam Frazier	2B	.240
17	Nelson Velázquez	DH	.235
28	Kyle Isbel	CF	.240
11	Maikel Garcia	3B	.272

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
55	Cole Ragans	SP	3.47
52	Michael Wacha	SP	3.22
67	Seth Lugo	SP	3.57
51	Brady Singer	SP	5.52
24	Jordan Lyles	SP	6.28
CL	Will Smith	CL	4.40

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Salvador Pérez - C



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
140 .255 .714 23 80

In his many years with this Royals franchise, Perez has seen the good, bad, ugly, and just about everything in between. He'll hit some big milestones in his 14th season including 1,500 hits, 250 home runs, and 1,500 games played (assuming he plays 106 games). Last season, he played a couple dozen games at first base and 29 games as the designated hitter. If the Royals can stay healthy this season, expect to see Perez play more DH this season, especially with three catchers potentially making the Opening Day roster. Salvy will continue to build his case for the Hall of Fame in 2024.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
					MIN 4:10					MIN 4:10	30
MIN 2:10	BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35	BAL 1:05	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:10					
CWS 2:10		HOU 7:40	HOU 7:40	HOU 2:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 1:40					
NYM 1:40	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:40	CWS 2:10		BAL 7:40	BAL 7:10					
BAL 2:10	TOR 7:40	TOR 7:40	TOR 7:40	TOR 2:10	DET 1:10	DET 6:10					
DET 1:40	TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07									

May 2024											
				TOR 3:07			TEX 7:40	TEX 4:10			
TEX 2:10	MIL 7:40	MIL 7:40	MIL 2:10	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38					
LAA 4:07	SEA 9:40	SEA 8:40	SEA 4:10		OAK 7:40	OAK 7:10					
OAK 2:10	DET 7:40	DET 2:10	DET 2:10		TB 6:50	TB 4:10					
TB 1:40	MIN 2:10	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40	MIN 1:10	SD 8:10						

June 2024											
										SD 4:10	1
SD 2:10		CLE 6:40	CLE 8:40	CLE 1:10	SEA 8:10	SEA 4:10					
SEA 2:10	NYG 8:10	NYG 8:10	NYG 8:10	NYG 2:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 9:10					
LAD 4:10		OAK 9:40	OAK 9:40	OAK 3:37	TEX 8:05	TEX 4:05					
TEX 2:35	MIA 8:10	MIA 8:10	MIA 2:10	CLE 8:10	CLE 8:10	CLE 4:10					
CLE 2:10											

July 2024											
COL 3:10		TB 8:10	TB 8:10	TB 8:10	COL 8:10	COL 9:10					
BOS 1:35		STL 7:45	STL 7:45		BOS 7:10	BOS 4:10					
		All-Star Break - Arlington, TX				CWS 7:10	CWS 7:10				
CWS 2:10	ARI 8:10	ARI 8:10	ARI 8:10		CHC 8:10	CHC 7:10					
CHC 2:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 2:10								

August 2024											
DET 1:40	BOS 8:10	BOS 8:10	BOS 8:10		DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:10				
	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40	MIN 1:10		STL 8:10	STL 7:10					
CIN 1:40	LAA 8:10	LAA 8:10	LAA 8:10		CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40					
PHI 2:10	CLE 6:40	CLE 6:40	CLE 1:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 7:10					

September 2024											
HOU 2:10	CLE 4:10	CLE 7:40	CLE 7:40		MIN 8:10	MIN 7:10					
MIN 2:10	NYG 7:05	NYG 7:05	NYG 7:05		PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40					
PIT 1:35	DET 7:40	DET 7:40	DET 7:40		SF 8:10	SF 7:10					
SF 2:10		WSH 6:45	WSH 6:45	WSH 1:05	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20					
ATL 3:20											

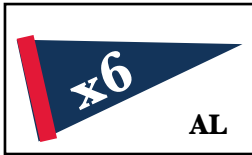
HOME

AWAY



CLEVELAND GUARDIANS

American League Central



9760
FRANCHISE WINS

76-86
2023 SEASON

3rd
DIVISION

#15
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Cleveland, OH - Progressive Field (34,830)
Manager: Stephen Vogt (0-0, 1st Season)

Guardians' Hitting Still Hiding

The Guardians missed the postseason in 2023 for just the third time in the last eight seasons in what was, by record, their worst performance in over a decade. The offense struggled throughout the entire season and a lack of power was certainly a contributing factor. Cleveland ranked dead last in the majors for the long ball. The pitching was strong despite key injuries but, without enough run support, the pitching didn't often translate into wins. With no significant offseason moves, the Guardians are hoping for better performances from hitters and for young prospects to reach the big leagues and make an immediate impact. Otherwise, Cleveland will be staring at another sub-.500 season.

Batting

The offense is led by superstar **José Ramírez**. The 12-year veteran is building a Hall-of-Fame caliber résumé and, somehow, he seems to still be getting better with each passing year. At the very least, he's not slowing down anytime soon, both figuratively and literally, after posting 28 stolen bases along with a remarkable .282/.356/.475 slash line. Nobody has been intentionally walked more in baseball than Ramírez over the past two years and that likely won't change this season. He plays every day and is a nightmare for most pitchers with his remarkable eye for the strike zone and superb plate discipline. The Naylor brothers, **Josh Naylor** and **Bo Naylor** are featured in the heart of the lineup. The older Josh had a career year in 2023 with a batting average of .308 and an OPS of .842. He produced 97 runs, and, like Ramírez, is capable of producing long at-bats and his strikeout rate was almost 10 points below MLB average. Bo appears to be the starting catcher moving forward after 72 games in the majors over the past two seasons. **Austin Hedges** will serve as the likely backup.

The infield positions are up for grabs other than **Andrés Giménez**, who has shortstop locked down. Now a two-time Gold Glover, Giménez is criminally underrated. The other spots are open, however.

Gabriel Arias is an ultra-utility player who can and has played nearly every position in the field. **Brayan Rocchio** debuted in the majors last season and hit .247 in 23 games with most of his time being spent at shortstop. **Deyvison De Los Santos** is a Rule 5 player who could wind up playing first base even though he's never even reached triple-A. The Cleveland outfield is one of the best defensive groups thanks to the speedy **Steven Kwan** who has two Gold Gloves in his first two major league seasons and his bat is nothing to sneeze at, either. **Myles Straw** is also a terrific defender and **Ramón Laureano** can play both centerfield and right field. Power will still be an issue in 2024 outside of Ramírez and Josh Naylor but the Guardians have speed all over the lineup and will steal a ton of bases again.

Pitching

Shane Bieber's name was brought up quite a bit in potential trade offers at both the deadline and at the offseason, but, at present, he's still the ace of the staff and one of baseball's best. The former Cy Young winner had a down year by his standards. His 3.80 ERA was the worst of his career outside of his rookie season and he also posted a career-low 107 strikeouts but that was largely due to elbow inflammation that knocked him out for over two months of the season. If healthy, he should be the pitcher that opposing hitters have come to dread facing. **Triston McKenzie** is also eager to put 2023 in the rearview mirror. After a remarkable season in 2022 (2.96 ERA, 191.1 IP, 190 K), he suffered multiple injuries in 2023 and made just four starts for a total of 16 innings of work. His slider is particularly nasty and, when he's at his best, he pairs a mid 90s fastball and a curveball with that pitch. **Tanner Bibee** had a fantastic rookie season, finishing behind only Baltimore's Gunnar Henderson in the AL Rookie of the Year race. He made 25 starts and posted an ERA of 2.98 and a record of 10-4. He went less than five innings only twice and, if he avoids a sophomore slump, he'll give the Guardians one of the best rotations in the division. **Logan Allen** and **Gavin Williams** are two solid options at the back of the rotation. If injuries prevent themselves, things could get dicey as the bullpen was relatively average last season. **Emmanuel Clase** has made the most appearances and has registered the most saves in all of baseball in the last two seasons.

The Bottom Line

For the most part, it doesn't seem like the Cleveland Guardians addressed the issues that plagued the team last season. Scoring runs appears to be a laborious process again in 2024, especially without a consistent threat of the home run. The Guardians will need to be extremely fortunate in the injury department to have a chance to compete for a division title. Luckily, the race appears to be wide open and Cleveland is accustomed to being at or near the top of the standings. It's also worth noting that the Guardians were the youngest team in the majors last season. The season will likely come down to how quickly the Guardians' young prospects can make an impact at the Major League level. For now, the Royals and Tigers seem better positioned in to contend right away.

2024 Projection: 74-88, 4th in AL Central

José Ramírez

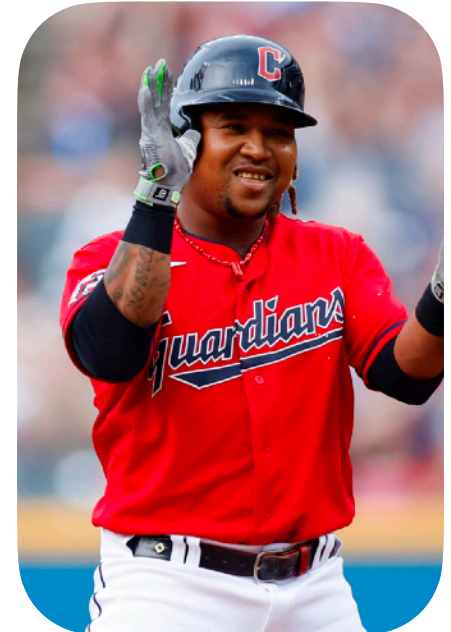


Photo via The Athletic



2023 MLB Ranks

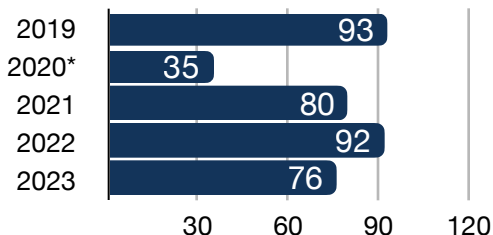
RPG - 4.09 (27th)
HITS - 1379 (13th)
HR - 124 (30th)
ERA - 3.96 (9th)
SO - 1311 (25th)
FD% - .986% (12th)

Josh Naylor



Photo via Covering the Corner

GUARDIANS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



376 < Number to Know

The number of wins by the Guardians in the last five seasons, the most in the division. Yet, in that same time span, Cleveland has claimed the division title just once.

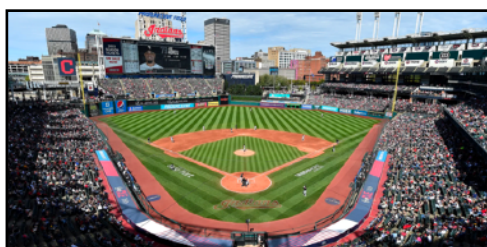


Photo via Axios

PROSPECT TO WATCH

Kyle Manzardo - 1B

First base is a big question for the Guardians heading into 2024, and Kyle Manzardo could be the answer. He was traded to the Guardians from Tampa Bay and he benefited from the change of scenery in triple-A Columbus where his OPS soared to .938 in 21 games. He hit 6 home runs in just 92 plate appearances and mixed in 8 doubles. He picked up where he left off in the Arizona Fall League and again proved he has a very capable power bat. Will that ability translate to the majors? We might find out soon, as Manzardo could very well find himself on the Opening Day roster, especially if he can put together a decent spring.

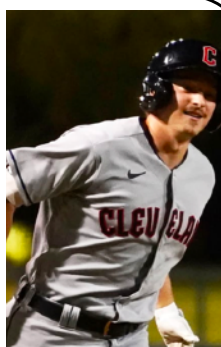


Photo via MLB

Projected Lineup

'23 AVG

38	Steven Kwan	LF	.268
0	Andrés Giménez	2B	.251
11	José Ramírez	3B	.282
22	Josh Naylor	DH	.308
23	Bo Naylor	C	.237
10	Ramón Laureano	RF	.224
4	Brayan Rocchio	SS	.247
13	Gabriel Arias	1B	.210
7	Myles Straw	CF	.238

Projected Rotation

'23 ERA

57	Shane Bieber	SP	3.80
24	Triston McKenzie	SP	5.06
28	Tanner Bibee	SP	2.98
41	Logan Allen	SP	3.81
32	Gavin Williams	SP	3.29
48	Emmanuel Clase	CL	3.22

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Andrés Giménez - 2B



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
153 .251 .712 15 62

Giménez, not Shane Bieber, has led his team in WAR in each of the last past two seasons. He was especially impressive in 2022 when he slashed .297/.371/.466. While his productivity at the plate dipped in comparison to that season in which he was an All Star and 6th in AL MVP voting, he still put together a quality season. Statistically, he was the best defensive shortstop in the game with a staggering dWAR of 2.9 and he was clearly deserving of his second straight Gold Glove. He also swiped a career-best 30 bags last season and he's arguably only now hitting his prime years.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024

				OAK 10:07	OAK 9:40	OAK 4:07
OAK 4:07	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 4:10	MIN 4:10		MIN 2:10
MIN 2:10	CWS TBD	CWS 6:10	CWS 6:10		NYG 7:10	NYG 6:10
NYG 1:40	BOS 11:10a	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 1:35	OAK 7:10	OAK 6:10
OAK 1:40		BOS 6:10	BOS 6:10	BOS 1:10	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20
ATL 1:35		HOU 8:10				

May 2024

			HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	LAA 7:10	LAA 6:10
LAA 1:40	DET 6:10	DET 6:10	DET 1:10	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:10
CWS 2:10	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05		MIN 7:10	MIN 6:10
MIN 1:40	NYM 6:10	NYM 6:10	NYM 1:10		LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38
LAA 4:07	COL 4:10	COL 8:40	COL 8:40		WSH 7:10	

June 2024

						WSH 4:10
WSH 1:40		KC 6:40	KC 6:40	KC 1:10	MIA 7:10	MIA 7:35
MIA 1:40		CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10		TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07
TOR 1:07		SEA 6:40	SEA 6:40	SEA 1:10	TOR 7:10	TOR 4:10
TOR 1:40	BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 4:10
KC 2:10						

July 2024

		CWS 6:40	CWS 6:40	CWS 1:10	SF 7:10	SF 4:10
SF 1:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 1:10	TB 6:50	TB 4:10
TB 1:40		All-Star Break - Arlington, TX			SD 7:10	SD 7:10
SD 1:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 1:10	PHI 6:40	PHI 6:05
PHI 1:35	DET 6:40	DET 1:10				

August 2024

				BAL 6:40	BAL 7:10	BAL 7:15
BAL 1:40	ARI 6:40	ARI 6:40	ARI 1:10		MIN 8:10	MIN 7:10
MIN 2:10	CHC 6:40	CHC 6:40	CHC 6:40		MIL 8:10	MIL 7:15
MIL 2:10		NYG 7:05	NYG 7:05	NYG 1:05	TEX 7:10	TEX 7:10
TEX 1:40	KC 6:40	KC 6:40	KC 1:10		PIT 7:10	PIT 6:10

September 2024

PIT TBD	KC 4:10	KC 7:40	KC 7:40		LAD 10:10	LAD 9:10
LAD 4:10	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:40	CWS 2:10	TB 6:40	TB 7:10	TB 6:10
TB 1:40	MIN 6:40	MIN 6:40	MIN 6:40	MIN 1:10	STL 8:15	STL 7:15
STL 2:15		CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40		HOU 7:10	HOU 6:10
HOU 3:10						

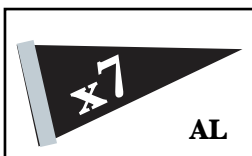
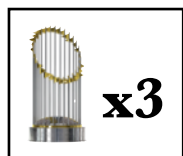
HOME

AWAY



CHICAGO WHITE SOX

American League Central



9553
FRANCHISE WINS

61-101
2023 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

#20
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Chicago, IL - Guaranteed Rate Field (40,615)
Manager: Pedro Grifol (61-101, 2nd Season)

On the Long Rebuild Road

The White Sox are currently going through what is essentially a wholesale rebuild. That rebuild includes newly installed general manager Chris Getz who has his hands full as the team on the Southside tries to forget all about the dismal 101-loss campaign of 2023. Frankly, there weren't a lot of bright spots last season. The offense was sluggish, the pitching struggled, and the defense was even worse. The struggles have put a big chip on the shoulder of the 2024 team and there should be some improvement, but the climb is still steep for the White Sox to be actual contenders in the American League, even in the typically weak Central division.

Batting

A few familiar faces are gone this season, most notably catcher Yasmani Grandal and shortstop Tim Anderson. The veteran Elvis Andrus also departs after spending parts of the past two seasons with the White Sox. The "core" of the team largely returns, however, with players like **Luis Robert Jr.**, **Yoán Moncada**, and **Eloy Jiménez**. Injuries at various times have prevented these three from seeing the field together as much as both fans and the front office would have liked. Robert Jr. finally put together a complete 162-game season and was an All Star and a Silver Slugger, tallying an OPS of .857 with career bests in numerous categories including home runs (38) and RBI (80) and he threw in 20 stolen bases for good measure. A knock against the Cuban native is his propensity to strike out at a high rate and he rarely will draw a walk, and his on-base percentage was just .315 despite a .264 batting average. Moncada has also been a high-strikeout player in his career and he's been a below-average OPS+ player in the past two seasons, although injuries may have played a factor and he played in just 92 games last season. A Silver Slugger award winner in 2020, Jiménez has since missed more games than he's played. When he's on the field, he has plus power and strong bat to ball skills.



Eloy Jiménez

Paul DeJong and **Martin Maldonado** join Chicago and will be the everyday shortstop and catcher, respectively. Photo via Wisconsin State Journal They both are defensive upgrades but don't provide the kind of offense that Tim Anderson and Yasmani Grandal once did, although both struggled mightily for the White Sox last year so the impact of their departure may not be significant. **Nicky Lopez** is also a new face, who, like DeJong and Maldonado, offers a big defensive improvement but may not wow offensively. **Andrew Benintendi** didn't come close to replicating his remarkable 2022 All Star season last year, but the potential remains even if he doesn't have a lot of home run power. **Andrew Vaughn** and rookie **Dominic Fletcher** round out the White Sox lineup. In a short sample size, Fletcher played very well for the Diamondbacks last season in 28 games, particularly against righties.

Pitching


The White Sox must now navigate life without their ace Dylan Cease. Chicago dealt him to San Diego in a blockbuster deal in early March. In return, the Southsiders received a quartet of prospects including three right handed pitchers, **Drew Thorpe**, **Jairo Iriarte**, and **Steven Wilson**. Thorpe is both the highest ranked prospect and the most MLB ready, although he may not debut until 2025 since he has yet to reach triple-A. In the short term, Cease's departure leaves the front office searching for rotation arms from an already lackluster pitching staff. **Michael Soroka** has missed essentially all of the last four seasons with injury but the White Sox are hopeful he can make a comeback that reflects his 2019 All-Star campaign with Atlanta. That season he finished as the runner-up for the NL Rookie of the Year and posted a 2.68 ERA in 174.2 innings at just 21-years old. **Michael Kopeck** is also looking for a bounce-back year after leading the American League in walks (91) in just 129.1 innings pitched. **Erick Fedde** joins the White Sox after a one-year stint in the Korean league. The final spots in the rotation are up for grabs. There are several players currently projected as bullpen arms who have starting experience who could fill in, including **Touki Toussaint**.

The roster turnover affects the bullpen, too. Closer Liam Hendricks has moved on, leaving **John Brebbia** as the probable replacement, although the closer role might be by committee in the early going. Aaron Bummer is also gone after a very forgettable 6.79 ERA performance in 2023.

The Bottom Line

There are still major concerns with this roster, so don't expect anything too special from the White Sox in 2024. They will likely still struggle to score runs (only the Oakland Athletics scored fewer in 2023) barring a stroke of luck with health. The pitching was already a major question before Cease was dealt and now it's a glaring problem. Hopefully, the White Sox's return on the trade makes the deal worth it in the future. The rebuild is very real this season, but the White Sox could be slightly improved and will try to avoid consecutive triple-digit-loss campaigns.

2024 Projection: 65-97, 5th in AL Central

	2023 MLB Ranks
	RPG - 3.96 (29th)
	HITS - 1308 (23rd)
	HR - 171 (20th)
	ERA - 4.87 (26th)
	SO - 1470 (6th)
	FD% - .982% (28th)

Andrew Benintendi

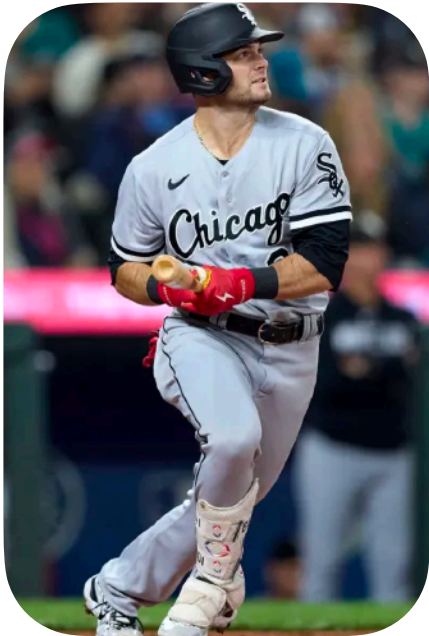
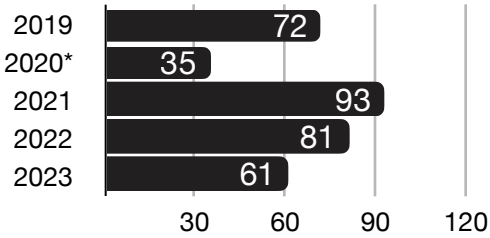


Photo via USA Today

WHITE SOX 5-YEAR WIN TREND



377 < Number to Know

The number of walks drawn by the White Sox in 2023, the fewest in the majors. The White Sox also finished with the second-fewest walks in 2022 with 388.

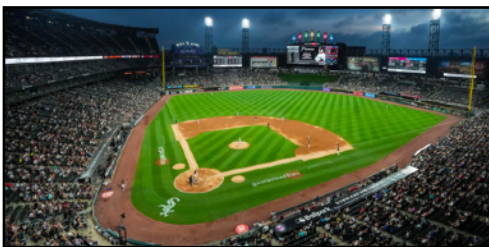


Photo via NBC Sports Chicago

PROSPECT TO WATCH Edgar Quero - C

When the White Sox traded Lucas Giolito to the Los Angeles Angels, one of the key pieces they received in return was catcher Edgar Quero. To this point, the highest level of baseball he's played is double-A, where he spent 101 games in 2023. Perhaps Quero's most notable attribute is his terrific eye at the plate. He drew 70 or more walks in each of the past two seasons which has earned him a very respectable .409 on-base percentage in his three-year minor league career. Possessing that kind of patience at the catcher position and at the age of just 20 means that Quero will likely become a key building block for the future of the White Sox. It's unclear whether or not he'll make his MLB debut this season, but you could argue he's the best offensive option the team currently has.

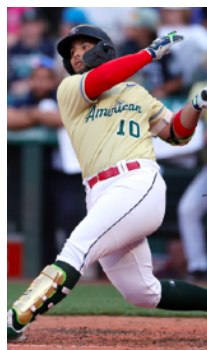


Photo via South Side Sox

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
23	Andrew Benintendi	LF	.262
25	Andrew Vaughn	1B	.258
88	Luis Robert Jr.	CF	.264
10	Yoán Moncada	3B	.260
74	Eloy Jiménez	DH	.272
7	Dominic Fletcher	RF	.301
29	Paul DeJong	SS	.207
8	Nicky Lopez	2B	.231
15	Martin Maldonado	C	.191

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
20	Erick Fedde	SP	-
34	Michael Kopeck	SP	5.43
40	Michael Soroka	SP	6.40
47	Touki Toussaint	SP	4.97
45	Garrett Crochet	SP	3.99
59	John Brebbia	CL	3.99

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Luis Robert Jr. - CF



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
145 .264 .857 38 80

Robert has unbelievable power and can bash the baseball with the best of them. His 38 homers in 2023 surpassed his career high by a healthy margin and so too did his 80 RBI. The downside to this power and his efforts to pull the ball deep into left field is a whiff rate that scores well about the MLB average. Even though he's played four major league seasons, he's still just 26, so there's still room for growth in his swing in the unlikely event that the power dries up a bit in the coming seasons. He had his best statistical season in centerfield in 2023 in addition to the hitting.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
					DET 4:10						DET 2:10
DET 2:10	ATL 2:10	ATL 7:40	ATL 2:10	ATL 2:10	KC 7:40	KC 7:40	KC 7:10				
KC 2:10	CLE TBD	CLE 6:10	CLE 6:10	CLE 6:10		CIN 7:40	CIN 2:10				
CIN 2:10	KC 7:40	KC 7:40	KC 2:10	KC 2:10		PHI 6:40	PHI 6:05				
PHI 1:35	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40	MIN 2:10	MIN 1:10	TB 7:40	TB 7:10				
TB 2:10	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40									

May 2024											
				MIN 2:10			STL 8:15	STL 2:15			
STL 2:15	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	CLE 7:40	CLE 7:40	CLE 7:10					
CLE 2:10	WSH 7:40	WSH 7:40	WSH 2:10			NYN 7:05	NYN 1:05				
NYN 1:35	TOR 3:07	TOR 2:10	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	BAL 7:40	BAL 7:40	BAL 2:10				
BAL 2:10	TOR 2:10	TOR 7:40	TOR 7:40				MIL 8:10				

June 2024											
										MIL 4:10	
MIL 2:10		CHC 8:05	CHC 8:05	BOS 8:10	BOS 8:10	BOS 4:10					
BOS 2:10	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 10:10					
ARI 4:10		HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 2:10							
DET 1:40	LAD 8:10	LAD 8:10	LAD 8:10			COL 8:10	COL 2:10				
COL 2:10											

July 2024											
			CLE 6:40	CLE 6:40	CLE 1:10	MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10				
MIA 1:40	MIN 8:10	MIN 8:10	MIN 2:10			PIT 8:10	PIT 2:10				
PIT 2:10											
KC 2:10	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 2:35	SEA 8:10	SEA 7:15					
SEA 2:10	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 2:10								

August 2024											
							MIN 8:10	MIN 7:10			
MIN 2:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 9:40	OAK 3:37			CHC 8:10	CHC 7:15				
	NYN 8:10	NYN 8:10	NYN 8:10			HOU 8:10	HOU 7:10				
HOU 2:10	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 3:45			DET 8:10	DET 7:10				
DET 2:10	DET 8:10	TEX 8:10	TEX 8:10	TEX 2:10		NYM 8:10	NYM 7:10				

September 2024											
NYM 2:10	BAL 1:05	BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35			BOS 7:10	BOS 7:15				
BOS 1:35	CLE 7:40	CLE 7:40	CLE 2:10			OAK 7:40	OAK 7:10				
OAK 2:10	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 4:07			SD 9:40	SD 8:40				
SD 4:10		LAA 7:40	LAA 7:40	LAA 2:10		DET 6:40	DET 1:10				
DET 3:10											

HOME AWAY

AMERICAN LEAGUE
WEST
PREVIEW

PROJECTED FINISH



A Postseason of Dominance

The Astros only held the AL West division lead for 24 days throughout the 2023 season, but they were in first when it mattered most: the end of the year. Texas battled their in-state rivals throughout the season, and even though the Rangers held first place for 160 days, their 6.5 game lead in mid-June eventually evaporated. On October 1, they lost a road game to the Seattle Mariners 1-0, a game that lasted just two hours and one minute. Meanwhile, on the same day, the Astros beat Arizona 8-1 to complete a three-game sweep of the Diamondbacks. When the dust settled, both the Astros and Rangers finished the season with identical 90-72 records and the division title went in favor of Houston due to a 9-4 head-to-head advantage.

So, the Astros claimed yet another division title and the Rangers, instead of hosting an ALDS series, now had to travel from one corner of the country to the other to play a road Wild Card series at Tampa Bay. Despite the disappointing finish to the season, Texas handled business against the Rays and then swept the top seeded Baltimore Orioles. Meanwhile, the Astros accomplished what is now an annual tradition: a trip to the ALCS. However, despite the regular season success over their rivals, the Astros blew a 3-2 lead in the ALCS and watched as the Rangers mashed multiple home runs and scored 20 runs in the final two games of the series. The Rangers then rolled to a World Series victory over the Diamondbacks and posted a nearly unfathomable 11-0 record on the road in the postseason.

Given the success by both teams, it's no secret that the Astros and the Rangers are the odds-on favorites in the division in 2024. The **Houston Astros** will look a little different, however. For one, manager Dusty Baker retired which leaves former bench coach Joe Estada as the man for the job. Longtime catcher and defensive savant Martin Maldonado is also gone. The core of the team, however, returns including the big bats of Jose Altuve, Alex Bregman, Yordan Alvarez, and Kyle Tucker. The pitching staff has a lot of promise, too. If Christian Javier has a bounce back season, the top three of the rotation will compete with just about any other group. The Astros' signing of lockdown closer Josh Hader is a huge deal. With Ryan Pressly and Bryan Abreu still in the bullpen, it's going to become incredibly difficult to score on the Astros in the seventh inning and on.

The **Texas Rangers** are ready to run it back. Pitching is the main concern for 2024. Statistically, they were actually below average in the regular season but turned it on in the postseason and with an elite offense, the Rangers staff could usually afford to give up a few runs. It will be awhile until Max Scherzer and Jacob deGrom are back and healthy and Jordan Montgomery is still a free agent, as of the time this article was written. Nathan Eovaldi is a capable Opening Day starter but if the Rangers have any injuries in the rotation in addition to what they are already dealing with, Texas could be in a bit of trouble. The good news is that the offense should be just as lethal in 2024 and if young players like Wyatt Langford and Evan Carter shine, there won't be an easy out in the entire lineup.

The **Seattle Mariners** ended a long, painful postseason-less streak in 2022 and fell just a couple of games short of the playoffs in 2023. They caught fire down the stretch but they dug too big of a hole early in the season and will need to avoid that same fate again in 2024. They were fairly active in the offseason and brought in Jorge Polanco, Luke Raley, and Mitch Hanigan. However, those moves were more out of necessity with the loss of Jarrod Kelenic and Teoscar Hernandez more so than they were to make a legitimate World Series push. The starting pitching should be strong with Luis Castillo and George Kirby presenting a strong one-two punch at the top of the rotation.

Unfortunately, every effort to bring in players to supplement the play of Mike Trout and Shohei Ohtani has blown up in the face of the **Los Angeles Angels**. Even the decision to let Ohtani walk instead of trading him midseason was, in hindsight, a colossal failure. Will they try to orchestrate a trade for Mike Trout? In any case, the Angels were barely competitive even with Ohtani and their prospects, both in terms of young players and their outlook in 2024, aren't bright this year.

The **Oakland Athletics** are owned by John Fisher, a person who is simply unwilling to spend money to field anything resembling a competitive team as a potential move to Las Vegas looms.

Jose Altuve

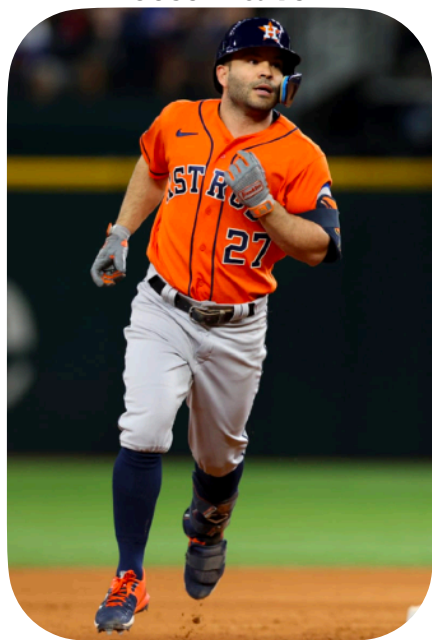


Photo via Sports Illustrated

Win Totals	
5 Seasons	
Houston	427
Seattle	363
Oakland	329
Los Angeles	321
Texas	318

Win Totals	
10 Seasons	
Houston	871
Seattle	779
Los Angeles	738
Oakland	726
Texas	713

Win Totals	
15 Seasons	
Houston	1183
Texas	1170
Los Angeles	1168
Oakland	1146
Seattle	1138



Photo via Ballparks of Baseball

STADIUM SPOTLIGHT T-Mobile Park

T-Mobile Park might have the best food of any ballpark in America, especially if you enjoy seafood. Makes sense, right? The crabmeat nachos located on the main concourse in center field are worth more than the \$16 you will spend on them. You'll get the best view if you sit down the first base line in the upper bowl that features the Seattle skyline and Lumen Field, home of the Seattle Seahawks. The Mariners Hall of Fame and Baseball Museum of the Pacific Northwest will quench any "historian" you may have in your bones and includes ten Mariner legends. In addition, right outside the main rotunda entrance you can see Ken "The Kid" Griffey Jr. and Edgar Martinez statues. They serve as great photo ops and a good place to meet before the game.

Stadium Rank: 11

2023 Statistical Leaders

Batting Average

1. Corey Seager - TEX - .327
2. Shohei Ohtani - LAA - .304
3. Kyle Tucker - HOU - .284
4. Marcus Semien - TEX - .276
5. Julio Rodríguez - SEA - .275
6. Leody Taveras - TEX - .266
6. J.P. Crawford - SEA - .266
6. Josh Jung - TEX - .266
9. Jeremy Peña - HOU - .263
10. Alex Bregman - HOU - .262

Home Runs

1. Shohei Ohtani - LAA - 44
2. Adolis Garcia - TEX - 39
3. Corey Seager - TEX - 33
4. Julio Rodríguez - SEA - 32
5. Yordan Álvarez - HOU - 31
6. Brent Rooker - OAK - 30
6. Cal Raleigh - SEA - 30
8. Kyle Tucker - HOU - 29
8. Marcus Semien - TEX - 29
10. Brandon Drury - LAA - 26

RBI

1. Kyle Tucker - HOU - 112
2. Adolis Garcia - TEX - 107
3. Julio Rodríguez - SEA - 103
4. Marcus Semien - TEX - 100
5. Alex Bregman - HOU - 98
6. Yordan Álvarez - HOU - 97
7. Corey Seager - TEX - 96
8. Eugenio Suárez - SEA - 96
9. Shohei Ohtani - LAA - 95
9. Jonah Heim - TEX - 95

ERA (min 162 IP)

1. Luis Castillo - SEA - 3.34
2. George Kirby - SEA - 3.35
3. Framber Valdez - HOU - 3.45
4. Dane Dunning - TEX - 3.70
5. Logan Gilbert - SEA - 3.73
6. JP Sears - OAK - 4.54
7. Cristian Javier - HOU - 4.56

Strikeouts

1. Luis Castillo - SEA - 219
2. Framber Valdez - HOU - 200
3. Logan Gilbert - SEA - 189
4. Hunter Brown - HOU - 178
5. George Kirby - SEA - 172
6. Reid Detmers - LAA - 168
7. Shohei Ohtani - LAA - 167
8. JP Sears - OAK - 161
9. Cristian Javier - HOU - 159
10. Andrew Heaney - TEX - 151

Stolen Bases

1. Estuary Ruiz - OAK - 67
2. Julio Rodríguez - SEA - 37
3. Kyle Tucker - HOU - 30
4. José Caballero - SEA - 26
5. Shohei Ohtani - LAA - 20
6. Chas McCormick - HOU - 19
6. Travis Jankowski - TEX - 19
8. Corey Julks - HOU - 15
8. Tony Kemp - OAK - 15
10. Marcus Semien - TEX - 14

Marcus Semien



Photo via Sports Illustrated

5th and Goal On YouTube



DID YOU KNOW

The Houston Astros have been so dominant that, despite three-straight seasons of 100+ losses from 2011-2013, they still have the most regular season wins in the division over the last 15 seasons. Thanks to the Astros, no division has appeared in the ALCS more than the West in that same time span and West teams have made a total of seven appearances in the Fall Classic (Houston 4, Texas 3).

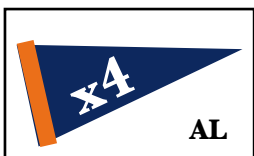
Past Division Winners





HOUSTON ASTROS

American League West



4921
FRANCHISE WINS

90-72
2023 SEASON

1st
DIVISION

#30
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Houston, TX - Minute Maid Park (41,168)
Manager: Joe Espada (0-0, 1st Season)

2023: Lost in ALCS

'Stros Hungry For More

Since 2017, the Astros have consistently been top contenders in the American League and 2023 was no exception. Despite losing Yuli Gurriel and Justin Verlander to free agency before the season, Houston upgraded at first base with the signing of Jose Abreu and eventually re-acquired Verlander at the trade deadline, making them a formidable contender yet again. Houston defeated the Twins in four games in the ALDS before falling to the Texas Rangers in a seven-game ALCS, ending their hopes of a second-straight World Series title. Manager Dusty Baker retired after the season and the team promoted bench coach Joe Espada to fill the position.

Batting

The Astros have had one of the better lineups in the game for years and that should continue in 2024. **Jose Altuve** missed nearly half the season with two separate injuries, but when he was on the field he produced at a high level again, batting .311 with 17 home runs in 90 games. **Alex Bregman** has never quite reached the heights of his 41-home run 2019 season, but he remains a solid hitter with power and good defense at third base. **Yordan Alvarez** was also limited due to injuries, but he put up huge numbers in the 114 games that he played and he remains one of the most feared hitters in baseball. **Kyle Tucker** has a case as the most underrated player in baseball and has come very close to posting 30 home runs and 30 stolen bases in each of the last two seasons while providing terrific defense in right field. The rest of the Houston outfield will likely be made up of **Chas McCormick** and **Mauricio Dubon**, who are both coming off the best offensive seasons of their respective careers.

Jose Abreu disappointed a bit in his first season with Houston, but he played better down the stretch, including hitting three home runs in the ALDS to power the Astros to the next round of the playoffs. At the catcher position, longtime veteran Martin Maldonado has moved on to Chicago and it's now **Yainer Diaz's** time to shine. While his defense is a downgrade from Maldonado, his offense is a big upgrade. Yainer showed huge power with 23 home runs in just 104 games during 2023. Big things were expected of **Jeremy Peña** after he won both the ALCS and World Series MVPs in 2022, but he had a bit of a disappointing season with a big drop in power. He remains a young player with tons of potential and he's one of the better defenders in the league at shortstop.

Pitching

The biggest reason Houston won the World Series in 2022 was their pitching; the Astros allowed just three runs in the final three games of the 2022 Fall Classic. However, their pitching proved to be their downfall in 2023 and they allowed a combined 20 runs in the final two games of the ALCS vs. Texas. That said, the team returns much of the same rotation and there is plenty of talent there. **Justin Verlander** will turn 41 before the start of the 2024 season, but he still knows how to get batters out and hasn't shown any signs of his age and he pitched to a 3.22 ERA in 2023. **Framber Valdez** tossed a no-hitter in 2023 and remains a very effective #2 pitcher who allows lots of soft contact and has pitched nearly 200 innings in each of the last two years. **Cristian Javier** became a household name with his World Series no-hitter in 2022, but he took a big step back last season with his ERA rising from 2.54 to 4.56. Javier is still young with elite stuff, however, and will have every opportunity to bounce back. One big breakout candidate is **Hunter Brown**, a Detroit native who grew up idolizing Verlander while watching him pitch for the Tigers. Although he struggled last season, he has huge potential. **José Urquidy** had a rough 2023 season between injuries and poor performance, but he has proved that he can be a capable starter in the past. **J.P France** pitched effectively as a starter last year and can serve as a long reliever out of the bullpen as well.

Houston's big free agent splash this year was bringing in former Brewers and Padres closer **Josh Hader**, who has a strong case as the best reliever in the game. Hader pitched to a 1.28 ERA during 2023 while striking out 85 batters in 56 innings. **Ryan Pressly**, who has been the club's closer, will remain with the team as the setup man. It speaks to the depth of the Astros' bullpen that their best reliever last year, **Bryan Abreu** (100 Ks in 72 innings, 1.75 ERA) may be the man who pitches the 7th inning when Houston has a lead.

The Bottom Line

The Astros have made seven-straight appearances in the ALCS thanks to a perennially-balanced team with players that are elite at hitting, pitching, and defense. It's hard to bet against them until they give reason to do otherwise. The team has lost George Springer, Gerrit Cole, and Carlos Correa to free agency over the years but they haven't missed a beat. With Bregman and Pressly becoming free agents after the season, other core players beginning to get older, and the farm system a bit bare due to various trades to better the team for another playoff run, time could be running out on this window of contention. At least for this year, Houston can be considered strong World Series contenders again.

2024 Projection: 95-67, 1st in AL West

Kyle Tucker



Photo via Sports Illustrated



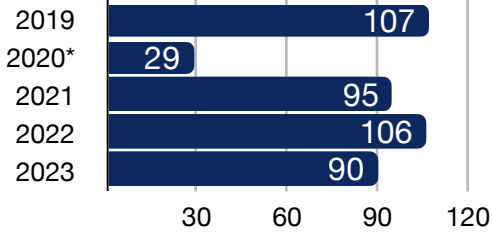
2023 MLB Ranks
RPG - 5.10 (5th)
HITS - 1441 (3rd)
HR - 222 (7th)
ERA - 3.94 (8th)
SO - 1460 (7th)
FD% - .986% (12th)

Framber Valdez



Photo via Sports Illustrated

ASTROS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



7 < Number to Know

Remarkably, Houston has made seven straight appearances in the ALCS and they've gone on to the World Series four of those seven times. Can they make it eight straight in 2024?



Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH Jacob Melton - OF

A second round pick by Houston in 2022 and a former PAC-12 player of the year at Oregon State, Jacob Melton has as much potential as anyone in the Astros' farm system. He is a threat with both power and speed, hitting 23 home runs while stealing 46 bases in the minor leagues in 2023 and he's a capable defender in center or right field. A left-handed batter, the biggest question in his development to this point is whether he will be able to hit left-handed pitching consistently, as that has been a struggle in the minors thus far. He will likely begin the 2024 season at Double-A and, while we probably won't see him in the big leagues this year, if he continues to demonstrate power and speed he could be on the Opening Day roster in 2025.



Photo via The Crawfish Boxes

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
27	Jose Altuve	2B	.311
2	Alex Bregman	3B	.262
44	Yordan Alvarez	DH	.293
30	Kyle Tucker	RF	.284
79	José Abreu	1B	.237
21	Yainer Diaz	C	.282
20	Chas McCormick	LF	.273
3	Jeremy Peña	SS	.263
14	Mauricio Dubon	CF	.278

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
35	Justin Verlander	SP	3.22
59	Framber Valdez	SP	3.45
53	Cristian Javier	SP	4.56
58	Hunter Brown	SP	5.09
65	José Urquidy	SP	5.29
71	Josh Hader	CL	1.28

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Kyle Tucker - RF



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
157 .284 .886 29 112

Even with all of the great hitters in the Astros lineup, no one drove in more runs or stole more bases for Houston in 2023 than Kyle Tucker. Over the past two seasons, he has 59 home runs and 55 stolen bases. In every full season he has played in his career, he has had an OPS of .800 or better. And, as good as he's been, he's just entering his prime at age 27. Even the slightest improvement will make him a legitimate MVP contender after he finished 5th in the voting in 2023.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
					NYN 28 4:10	NYN 29 8:10	NYN 30 7:15				
NYN 31 2:10	TOR 1 8:10	TOR 2 8:10	TOR 3 8:10			TEX 5 8:05	TEX 6 7:05				
TEX 7 7:00	TEX 8 8:05	KC 9 7:40	KC 10 7:40	KC 11 7:40	TEX 12 8:10	TEX 13 4:05					
TEX 14 2:10	ATL 15 8:10	ATL 16 8:10	ATL 17 8:10			WSH 19 6:45	WSH 20 4:05				
WSH 21 1:35		CHC 23 7:40	CHC 24 7:40	CHC 25 2:20			COL 27 6:05				
COL 28 4:05		CLE 30 8:10									

May 2024											
					CLE 1 8:10	CLE 2 8:10	SEA 3 8:10	SEA 4 7:15			
SEA 5 2:10		NYN 7 7:05	NYN 8 7:05	NYN 9 5:05	DET 10 6:40	DET 11 6:10					
DET 12 1:40	OAK 13 8:10	OAK 14 8:10	OAK 15 8:10	OAK 16 8:10	MIL 17 8:10	MIL 18 7:10					
MIL 19 2:10	LAA 20 8:10	LAA 21 8:10	LAA 22 2:10			OAK 24 9:40	OAK 25 4:07				
OAK 26 4:07	SEA 27 9:40	SEA 28 9:40	SEA 29 9:40	SEA 30 4:10	MIN 31 8:10						

June 2024											
										MIN 1 7:10	
MIN 2 2:10	STL 3 8:10	STL 4 8:10	STL 5 8:10			LAA 7 9:38	LAA 8 10:07				
LAA 9 4:07	SF 10 9:45	SF 11 9:45	SF 12 3:45			DET 14 7:10	DET 15 7:10				
DET 16 2:10		CWS 18 8:10	CWS 19 8:10	CWS 20 2:10	BAL 21 8:10	BAL 22 7:10					
BAL 23 2:10		COL 25 8:10	COL 26 2:10			NYM 28 7:10	NYM 29 4:10				
NYM 30 1:40											

July 2024												
	TOR 3:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 1:07	MIN 8:10	MIN 2:10						
MIN 7 2:10		MIA 9 8:10	MIA 10 8:10	MIA 11 8:10	TEX 12 8:10	TEX 13 4:10						
TEX 14 2:10	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX						SEA 19 10:10	SEA 20 9:40				
SEA 21 4:10	OAK 22 9:40	OAK 23 9:40	OAK 24 3:37			LAD 26 8:10	LAD 27 7:10					
LAD 28 2:10	PIT 29 8:10	PIT 30 8:10	PIT 31 8:10									

August 2024											
										TB 2 8:10	TB 3 7:15
TB 4 2:10	TEX 5 8:05	TEX 6 8:05	TEX 7 2:35			BOS 9 7:10	BOS 10 4:10				
BOS 11 1:35	TB 12 6:50	TB 13 6:50	TB 14 6:50			CWS 16 8:10	CWS 17 7:10				
CWS 18 2:10	BOS 19 8:10	BOS 20 8:10	BOS 21 2:10			BAL 22 7:15	BAL 23 7:05	BAL 24 4:05			
BAL 25 1:35	PHI 26 6:40	PHI 27 6:40	PHI 28 4:05	KC 29 8:10	KC 30 8:10	KC 31 7:10					

September 2024											
KC 1 2:10	CIN 2 4:10		CIN 4 6:40	CIN 5 1:10	ARI 6 8:10	ARI 7 4:10					
ARI 8 2:10		OAK 10 8:10	OAK 11 8:10	OAK 12 2:10	LAA 13 9:38	LAA 14 9:38					
LAA 15 4:07	SD 16 9:40	SD 17 9:40	SD 18 6:40	LAA 19 8:10	LAA 20 8:10	LAA 21 7:10					
LAA 22 2:10	SEA 23 8:10	SEA 24 8:10	SEA 25 2:10			CLE 27 7:10	CLE 28 6:10				
CLE 29 3:10											

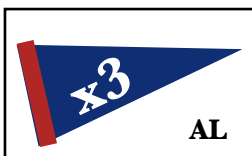
HOME

AWAY



TEXAS RANGERS

American League West



4740
FRANCHISE WINS

90-72
2023 SEASON

2nd
DIVISION

#10
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Arlington, TX - Globe Life Field (40,300)
Manager: Bruce Bochy (90-72, 2nd Season)

2023: Won World Series

Unlikely Champs Ready to Run It Back

Many baseball fans and media members scoffed at the Rangers' decision to sign **Marcus Semien** and **Corey Seager** to contracts worth a combined \$500 million after losing 102 games in 2021. But no one was laughing at the end of 2023 when Seager and Semien helped lead Texas to their first World Series in franchise history. The Rangers' biggest offseason acquisition before the 2023 season was not on the field, but in the dugout as 3-time World Series champion Bruce Bochy came out of retirement to manage the team. Bochy earned his 4th title as Texas defeated the Rays in the Wild Card series before stunning top seeded Baltimore in the ALDS, conquering the defending champion and in-state rival Astros in an epic seven-game ALCS and, finally, winning the title against the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Batting

The strength of the Rangers in 2023 was their lineup, demonstrated by five Texas players starting in the All Star game for the American League. The aforementioned Seager was limited to 119 games in 2023 due to injury, but when he was on the field his production was elite. His postseason performance, most notably a dramatic home run to tie Game 1 of the World Series, led to Seager becoming just the 4th player in MLB history to win two World Series MVP awards. Semien is an iron man, missing only one game over the past three seasons and he provides excellent offense out of the leadoff spot. The star of the Texas outfield is **Adolis Garcia**. He's the Rangers' biggest long ball threat whose personality is as big as his bat. The emotional heart of the team, Garcia mashed 39 home runs in the regular season before going off in the playoffs with 8 homers and an MLB-record 22 RBIs, including a walk-off in Game 1 of the Fall Classic.

Evan Carter is a prime breakout candidate in 2024 and **Leody Taveras** is a solid defender with speed and a bat that is good enough for the value he brings in other areas. **Josh Jung** played his first full season in 2023 and all he did was blast 23 HR and finish fourth in the AL Rookie of the Year voting while providing excellent defense at third base. **Jonah Heim** is one of the top defensive catchers in the game and his bat isn't bad either. **Ezequiel Duran** is a valuable utility player who can play all over the field. **Wyatt Langford**, the #6 overall prospect in baseball, should debut this season and has huge potential. The Rangers are an elite defensive team, finishing with the top fielding percentage in the AL during 2023 (.990%). Don't expect the Rangers to run a lot as they had the fewest steals in the league in 2023.

Pitching

Texas' pitching rotation has far more questions than their lineup as their two big pitching acquisitions **Max Scherzer** and **Jacob deGrom** will both miss the start of the season recovering from injury. Both players hope to return midseason, but it remains to be seen how much the oft-injured deGrom and the aging Scherzer will be able to help the Rangers. **Nathan Eovaldi** was Texas' best pitcher during the playoffs in 2023 and as it stands now, he is the ace of the staff. **Jon Gray** and **Andrew Heaney** are both solid veterans who typically pitch well enough to give the team a chance to win. **Dane Dunning** and **Cody Bradford** are two young pitchers with potential. Dunning pitched a career-high 173 innings during 2023 and had a career-low ERA of 3.70. Although Bradford struggled in eight games as a spot starter, he will likely get another shot at it in 2024 as he improved greatly after moving to the bullpen and he also had a great postseason performance. Texas could answer at least some of their rotation questions if they bring back current free agent Jordan Montgomery, who was the team's #2 starter throughout the playoffs.

The bullpen was the shakiest part of the team in 2023 and there were definitely some nervous moments for Texas fans throughout the season. Those moments should be at least a little less frequent during 2024 with the additions of **David Robertson** and **Kirby Yates**. Robertson, a longtime closer, will likely serve as the setup man for Texas but he can certainly still close if needed after converting 18 of 24 save opportunities last year for the Mets and Marlins. Yates rebounded from several injury-plagued years and had a solid 2023 season, striking out 80 batters in 60 innings for the Braves. The save opportunities will be handled by **Jose Leclerc** who has elite stuff at his best but is prone to wildness at times. **Josh Sborz** had a very poor regular season but found something in the playoffs, allowing only one run over 12 innings and throwing the final pitch that clinched the World Series.

The Bottom Line

The Rangers surprised many with their success in 2023, but big things are now expected of this team in 2024. While it is extremely difficult to win back-to-back titles in baseball (with no team accomplishing the feat since the 2000 Yankees), Texas will have every opportunity to pull it off. They return much of their World Series winning team, they have more young talent on the way, and Bruce Bochy is one of the best managers in the history of the game. The question marks on the pitching staff may keep Texas from beating out the Astros for the AL West crown, but they should certainly remain a strong playoff contender and a team that no one in the American League wants to see when October comes around.

2024 Projection: 92-70, 2nd in AL West

Adolis Garcia



Photo via MLB



2023 MLB Ranks

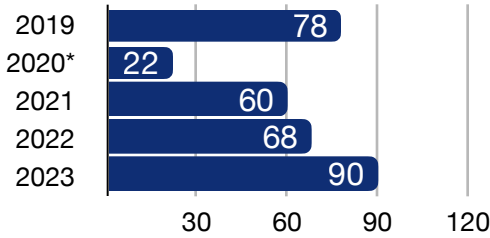
RPG - 5.44 (3rd)
HITS - 1470 (2nd)
HR - 233 (3rd)
ERA - 4.28 (18th)
SO - 1351 (23rd)
FD% - .990% (1st)

Corey Seager



Photo via MLB

RANGERS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



11-0 < Number to Know

The Rangers' record in road games in the 2023 postseason, a major league all-time best. Texas clinched both the ALCS and the World Series in hostile territory.



Photo via Wikipedia

PROSPECT TO WATCH Wyatt Langford - OF

The Rangers rode their elite lineup to a World Series title and they have a chance to be even better offensively in 2024 thanks to the expected debut of Wyatt Langford, the #6 overall prospect in baseball per MLB Pipeline. Langford led the Florida Gators to a runner-up finish in the 2023 College World Series, hitting .373 with 21 HR and an NCAA-leading 52 extra base hits. Texas picked Langford with the 4th overall pick in the 2023 Draft and he quickly proved that his bat was big-league ready, hitting his way from the rookie league to Triple-A in just 44 games. Langford has the potential to become a perennial 30-HR hitter and will likely get his first taste of MLB action early in the season as a Designated Hitter or as a member of the Ranger outfield.

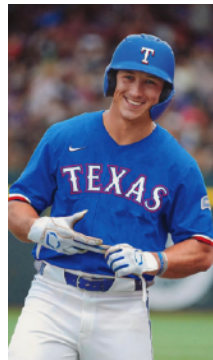


Photo via @langford_wyatt

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
2	Marcus Semien	2B	.276
5	Corey Seager	SS	.327
53	Adolis Garcia	RF	.245
32	Evan Carter	LF	.306
6	Josh Jung	3B	.266
30	Nathaniel Lowe	1B	.262
28	Jonah Heim	C	.258
-	Wyatt Langford	DH	-
3	Leody Taveras	CF	.266

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
17	Nathan Eovaldi	SP	3.63
22	Jon Gray	SP	4.12
44	Andrew Heaney	SP	4.15
33	Dane Dunning	SP	3.70
61	Cody Bradford	SP	5.30
25	José Leclerc	CL	2.68

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Evan Carter - CF



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
22 .306 1.058 5 12

Although he didn't make his MLB debut until late in the 2023 season, Evan Carter quickly became a key part of the Texas run to the World Series title. During the postseason, Carter hit .300 and reached base in 16 of 17 games. He is elite at pitch recognition, which allows him to consistently draw walks. Entering his first full season, Carter is a prime breakout candidate. If his performance under the bright lights of the Fall Classic is any indication, he may quickly become one of baseball's best.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024													
					CHC 7:35							CHC 7:05	30
CHC 2:35	TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 1:10						HOU 8:05			HOU 7:05	6
HOU 7:00	HOU 8:05	OAK 8:05	OAK 8:05	OAK 2:35					HOU 8:10			HOU 4:05	13
HOU 2:10	DET 6:40	DET 1:10	DET 1:10	DET 1:10					ATL 7:20			ATL 7:20	20
ATL 7:00		SEA 8:05	SEA 8:05	SEA 2:35					CIN 8:05			CIN 4:05	27
CIN 2:35		WSH 8:05											

May 2024														
					WSH 8:05				WSH 2:35			KC 7:40	KC 7:10	4
KC 2:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 3:37	OAK 3:37						COL 8:40			COL 8:10	11	
COL 3:10	CLE 8:05	CLE 8:05	CLE 8:05						LAA 8:05			LAA 7:15	18	
LAA 2:10		PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 1:05					MIN 8:10			MIN 2:10	25	
MIN 2:10		ARI 8:05	ARI 2:35						MIA 7:10				31	

June 2024														
													MIA 4:10	1
MIA 1:40	DET 8:05	DET 8:05	DET 8:05						SF 8:05			SF 4:05	8	
SF 2:35		LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10					SEA 10:10			SEA 7:15	15	
SEA 4:10	NYM 8:05	NYM 8:05	NYM 8:05						KC 8:05			KC 4:05	22	
KC 2:35	MIL 8:10	MIL 8:10	MIL 2:10						BAL 6:35			BAL 7:15	29	
BAL 1:35														

July 2024															
					SD 8:05				SD 8:05			SD 2:35	TB 8:05	TB 4:05	6
TB 2:35	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38						HOU 8:10			HOU 4:10	13		
HOU 2:10												BAL 7:05	20		
BAL 2:35	CWS 8:05	CWS 8:05	CWS 8:05						CWS 2:35			TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07	27	
TOR 1:37	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 2:15												

August 2024														
												BOS 8:05	BOS 7:05	3
BOS 2:35	HOU 8:05	HOU 8:05	HOU 8:05									NYG 7:05	NYG 1:05	10
NYG 1:35	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 6:10						MIN 8:05			MIN 8:05	MIN 7:05	17
MIN 2:35	PIT 8:05	PIT 8:05	PIT 2:35									CLE 7:10	CLE 7:10	24
CLE 1:40		CWS 8:10	CWS 8:10						CWS 2:10			OAK 8:05	OAK 7:05	31

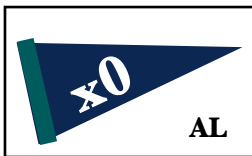
September 2024														
OAK 2:35	NYG 8:05	NYG 8:05	NYG 8:05						LAA 8:05			LAA 8:05	LAA 7:15	7
LAA 2:35		ARI 9:40	ARI 3:40						SEA 9:40			SEA 10:10	SEA 9:40	14
SEA 4:10		TOR 8:05	TOR 8:05						TOR 2:35			SEA 8:05	SEA 7:05	21
SEA 2:35		OAK 9:40	OAK 9:40						OAK 3:37			LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	28
LAA 3:07														

HOME AWAY



SEATTLE MARINERS

American League West



3514
FRANCHISE WINS

88-74
2023 SEASON

3rd
DIVISION

#19
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Seattle, WA - T-Mobile Park (47,929)
Manager: Scott Servais (616-578, 9th Season)

'24 Mariners: Contenders or Pretenders?

After finally breaking a long postseason drought and locking up young superstar Julio Rodriguez to a 14-year contract extension in 2022, Seattle and their fans had high hopes that 2023 could be the year that they finally made a run at the World Series. However, it wasn't to be as the Mariners won 88 games and finished a game out of a playoff spot. Seattle caught fire with a 38-15 record in July and August but it wasn't enough to overcome a 38-42 record through the first three months. Manager Scott Servais returns for his 9th season with the team and the Mariners again have their sights set on the postseason.

Batting

Any discussion of the Mariners has to start with one of the top young players in the game, **Julio Rodríguez**. Julio is a complete player: he robs home runs as a center fielder, hits homer runs, bats for average, and steals bases. As Rodríguez goes, so goes Seattle. He got off to a bit of a slow start in 2023 before going on a tear in July and August to give the Mariners a chance at the postseason. The rest of the Mariners' outfield looks quite a bit different with Jarred Kelenic traded to Atlanta and Teoscar Hernandez signing with the Dodgers. In their place are **Luke Raley** and **Mitch Haniger**. Raley showed a lot of potential last year with the Rays with 19 homers and 14 steals. Haniger enters his second stint with Seattle and he has always been an effective player when he is on the field. Unfortunately, that hasn't been very often as he has played more than 100 games in just two of his eight MLB seasons. Shortstop and leadoff hitter **J.P. Crawford** quietly had a very good season last year, hitting a career high 19 home runs while walking an AL-high 94 times. The Mariners' big move in the offseason was making a trade with the Twins to bring in **Jorge Polanco** to play second base. Polanco has struggled with injuries the past two years, but he provides strong production and is a power threat when on the field.

Catcher **Cal Raleigh** strikes out a lot and he won't hit for average, but when he gets the bat on the ball it usually goes a long way (30 home runs in 2023). **Mitch Garver** won the World Series with Texas last year and he is expected to fill the designated hitter role for the Mariners. Carver is another player who struggles to stay on the field, but his bat is very good with plus power (19 home runs in 87 games). **Ty France** made his first All-Star team in 2022, and was a key part of Seattle's run to the playoffs, but he is coming off a disappointing season that featured a drop in batting average and power. France will need to rebound if the Mariners are to have a real shot at the postseason in 2024. Third base will likely be shared by **Josh Rojas**, who played well after a midseason trade from Arizona, and **Luis Arias**, a former top prospect whose 2023 was largely lost to injuries. Don't expect either to contribute much offensively, though both are decent defenders and Rojas provides some speed on the bases.

Pitching

While Seattle's offense has a lot of questions outside of Julio Rodriguez, the starting rotation is in a much better spot. **Luis Castillo** is the team's ace and he has been everything Seattle hoped he would be when they traded four prospects to the Reds in order to acquire him in 2022. He made the 2023 All-Star team and finished fifth in AL Cy Young voting while striking out the fourth-most batters in the American League. **Logan Gilbert** and **George Kirby** are both excellent young pitchers who limit walks and were among the league leaders in innings pitched last season. **Bryce Miller** and **Bryan Woo** both made their major league debuts in 2023 and put up decent numbers. They both had a couple of ugly starts throughout the year, but they also had some very good ones and they should be able to pitch well enough to keep the Mariners in the game the majority of the time.

The Mariners' bullpen is led by closer **Andrés Muñoz**. After Seattle traded Paul Sewald to the Diamondbacks at the 2023 trade deadline, Muñoz took over as the closer and saved 13 games down the stretch. He has elite strikeout stuff, with 163 Ks in 114 innings over the past two seasons. **Matt Brash** had a breakout season last year with 107 strikeouts in 71 innings, while pitching in a league-high 78 games. **Trent Thornton** arrived in a midseason trade from Toronto and pitched well for Seattle, but he won't strike out a lot of hitters. **Gregory Santos** is a 24-year-old with potential. He pitched to a 3.39 ERA with the White Sox in 2023 and showed an ability to close games if necessary with five saves.

The Bottom Line

The Mariners' success in 2024 will be determined largely on how well their offense performs. Their rotation has a top three that can compete with most teams in baseball, but Seattle's offense disappointed last year and at least on paper they are worse this year with the subtractions of Kelenic and Hernandez. Mariners fans were frustrated with ownership's unwillingness to invest more money in the team after making the playoffs in 2022, and so far, that has continued into 2024. If new acquisitions Polanco, Garver, and Haniger are able to stay healthy and produce, then the Mariners can contend for a postseason spot. The starting rotation has a high ceiling and will keep the team in games the majority of the time, but the offense likely has too many questions to be a serious contender in the AL West or the American League.

2024 Projection: 82-80, 3rd in AL West

Julio Rodríguez



Photo via The Seattle Times



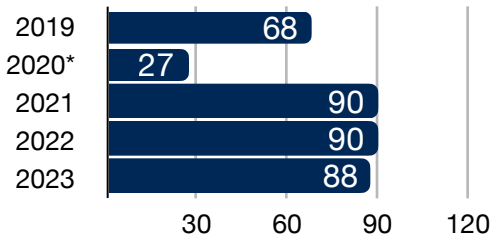
2023 MLB Ranks
RPG - 4.68 (12th)
HITS - 1332 (20th)
HR - 210 (11th)
ERA - 3.74 (3rd)
SO - 1459 (8th)
FD% - .987% (8th)

Luis Castillo



Photo via The Boston Globe

MARINERS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



1977 < Number to Know

Seattle had its first major league season in 1977 and the team still has not played in a World Series. Fans in the PNW hope Rodríguez and Co. can finally lead them to the Fall Classic.

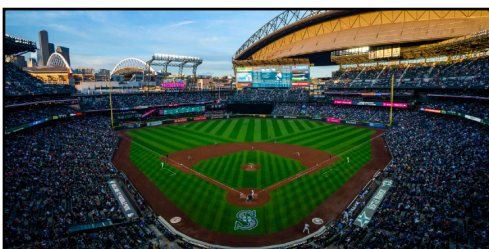


Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH Harry Ford - C

The Mariners drafted Harry Ford out of high school in 2021 and he has quickly risen up Seattle's prospect rankings. He is a rare catcher with speed, stealing 24 bases during 2023 and he has a great arm behind the plate. While he probably won't be a home run hitter in the majors, he has hit 15 home runs in 118 games in the minors. Ford's parents hail from the UK and he helped lead Great Britain to their first World Baseball Classic appearance in the country's history in 2023, hitting .429 in the European qualifiers. His skills are still a little raw (as are most players drafted out of high school) so he probably won't contribute in the majors this year, but he is definitely a name to watch in 2025.



Photo via MLB

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
3	J.P. Crawford	SS	.266
44	Julio Rodríguez	CF	.275
7	Jorge Polanco	2B	.255
18	Mitch Garver	DH	.270
29	Cal Raleigh	C	.232
23	Ty France	1B	.250
20	Luke Raley	LF	.249
17	Mitch Haniger	RF	.209
4	Josh Rojas	3B	.245

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
58	Luis Castillo	SP	3.34
68	George Kirby	SP	3.35
36	Logan Gilbert	SP	3.73
50	Bryce Miller	SP	4.32
22	Bryan Woo	SP	4.21
75	Andrés Muñoz	CL	2.94

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT George Kirby - SP



2023 Statistics

APP IP ERA K BB
31 190.2 3.35 172 19

George Kirby has established himself as a top young pitcher in baseball over the last two seasons. The key to his success is the very low number of batters that he walks. In 321 career innings, Kirby has remarkably only walked 41 hitters. In 2023, he walked only 2.5% of the hitters he faced and allowed more home runs (22) than walks (19). Only ten pitchers since 1946 have had a walk rate that low. Kirby also strikes batters out, with 172 Ks in 190 innings last season.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
					BOS 10:10	BOS 9:40				BOS 30	
BOS 31 4:10	CLE 1 9:40	CLE 2 9:40	CLE 3 4:10			MIL 5 8:10	MIL 6 7:10				
MIL 7 2:10	TOR 8 7:07	TOR 9 7:07	TOR 10 3:07			CHC 12 9:40	CHC 13 9:40				
CHC 14 4:10	CIN 15 9:42	CIN 16 9:40	CIN 17 4:10			COL 19 8:40	COL 20 8:10				
COL 21 3:10		TEX 23 8:05	TEX 24 8:05	TEX 25 2:35		ARI 26 9:40	ARI 27 9:40				
ARI 28 4:10	ATL 29 9:40	ATL 30 9:40									

May 2024											
				ATL 1 3:40			HOU 3 8:10	HOU 4 7:15			
HOU 5 2:10	MIN 6 7:40	MIN 7 7:40	MIN 8 7:40	MIN 9 1:10		OAK 10 9:40	OAK 11 9:40				
OAK 12 4:10	KC 13 9:40	KC 14 9:40	KC 15 4:10			BAL 17 7:05	BAL 18 4:05				
BAL 19 1:35	NYG 20 7:05	NY 21 7:05	NYG 22 7:05	NYG 23 12:35		WSH 24 6:45	WSH 25 4:05				
WSH 26 1:35	HOU 27 9:40	HOU 28 9:40	HOU 29 9:40	HOU 30 4:10		LAA 31 10:10					

June 2024											
										LAA 1 7:15	
LAA 2 4:10			OAK 4 9:40	OAK 5 9:40	OAK 6 3:37	KC 7 8:10	KC 8 4:10				
KC 9 2:10	CWS 10 9:40	CWS 11 9:40	CWS 12 9:40	CWS 13 9:40	TEX 14 10:10	TEX 15 7:15					
TEX 16 4:10		CLE 18 6:40	CLE 19 6:40	CLE 20 1:10	MIA 21 7:10	MIA 22 4:10					
MIA 23 1:40	TB 24 6:50	TB 25 6:50	TB 26 12:10			MIN 28 9:40	MIN 29 10:10				
MIN 30 4:10											

July 2024												
			BAL 2 9:40	BAL 3 10:10	BAL 4 4:10	TOR 5 9:40	TOR 6 4:10					
TOR 7 4:10			SD 9 9:40	SD 10 9:40	LAA 11 9:38	LAA 12 9:38	LAA 13 9:38					
LAA 14 4:07		All-Star Break - Arlington, TX					HOU 19 10:10	HOU 20 9:40				
HOU 21 4:10	LAA 22 9:40	LAA 23 9:40	LAA 24 3:40			CWS 26 8:10	CWS 27 7:15					
CWS 28 2:10	BOS 29 7:10	BOS 30 7:10	BOS 31 4:10									

August 2024											
							PHI 2 9:40	PHI 3 9:40			
PHI 4 4:10			DET 6 9:40	DET 7 9:40	DET 8 9:40	NYM 9 10:10	NYM 10 9:40				
NYM 11 4:10			DET 13 6:40	DET 14 6:40	DET 15 1:10	PIT 16 6:40	PIT 17 1:05				
PIT 18 1:35	LAD 19 10:10	LAD 20 10:10	LAD 21 10:10			SF 23 10:10	SF 24 4:10				
SF 25 4:10	TB 26 9:40	TB 27 9:40	TB 28 4:10			LAA 30 9:38	LAA 31 9:38				

September 2024											
LAA 1 4:07	OAK 2 7:07	OAK 3 9:40	OAK 4 9:40	OAK 5 3:37	STL 6 8:15	STL 7 7:15					
STL 8 2:15			SD 10 9:40	SD 11 9:40	TEX 12 9:40	TEX 13 10:10	TEX 14 9:40				
TEX 15 4:10			NYG 17 9:40	NYG 18 9:40	NYG 19 4:10	TEX 20 8:05	TEX 21 7:05				
TEX 22 2:35	HOU 23 8:10	HOU 24 8:10	HOU 25 2:10			OAK 27 10:10	OAK 28 9:40				
OAK 29 3:10											

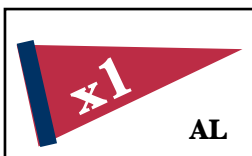
HOME

AWAY



LOS ANGELES ANGELS

American League West



4958
FRANCHISE WINS

73-89
2023 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

#28
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Anaheim, CA - Angel Stadium (45,517)
Manager: Ron Washington (0-0, 1st Season)

What's Next For Angels?

The Angels entered 2023 with optimism that they could be a playoff contender and prove to Shohei Ohtani that they could be a team he could win with in hopes of signing the two-way superstar to a new contract. In the 2023 offseason, the Angels signed Brandon Drury and Hunter Renfroe, then acquired Lucas Giolito, Mike Moustakas, C.J. Cron, and Randal Grichuk at the trade deadline to try and make a playoff push. However, in typical Angels fashion, L.A. failed on both fronts. Not only did they finish 15 games out of a playoff spot, extending their MLB-leading active playoff drought to nine seasons, but they also lost Ohtani to the crosstown rival Dodgers after the year ended. New manager Ron Washington takes over a team that has more questions than ever before.

Batting

Even without Ohtani, the Angels' offense is not completely devoid of talent and has several young players with potential. It feels like it has been a long time since **Mike Trout** has been considered the best player in baseball due to his many injuries over the last few years, but his 40 home runs and .999 OPS as recently as 2022 shows that there is still elite talent there if he can stay on the field. He will have to be healthy if the Angels are to have any hope of contention. Former #1 overall pick **Mickey Moniak** finally got real playing time in 2023 and put up good numbers including 14 home runs in 85 games. **Nolan Schanuel** was drafted by the Angels in July 2023 and incredibly was in the major leagues just a month later. Though he didn't provide much power, he demonstrated excellent on-base skills, walking more than he struck out. **Zach Neto** is another young player who debuted in 2023 and although he struggled, he is just 23-years-old and showed good skills in the minors, so there's room for growth. **Logan O'Hoppe** lost much of his 2023 season to injury, but he showed the skills and power that made him one of the top catching prospects in baseball, hitting 14 homers in just 51 games.

The first four years of **Anthony Rendon's** contract with L.A. have been an unmitigated disaster, with constant injuries keeping him off the field (he's appeared in only a third of the Angels' games over the last four years), and his performance has not been good even when he does play. There is still talent there, but at this point, it would be surprising if Rendon is much of a factor this year or in the future. **Luis Rengifo** is coming off the best year of his career and projects as the leadoff hitter. **Taylor Ward** missed half of the season after being hit in the face with a pitch, but he's proved to be a capable hitter in the past. **Brandon Drury** was very solid for the Angels in his first season with the team and he is a long ball threat.

Pitching

Losing Ohtani meant that the Angels lost both their best hitter and pitcher. A staff that already had a lot of questions even with Ohtani in the fold now has even more. **Reid Detmers** has been a very average pitcher in his first two years in the big leagues, but he is just 24 years old and is a former 1st round pick, so the Angels are hoping for growth in year three. **Tyler Anderson** had an excellent 2022 season with the Dodgers but regressed sharply in 2023 with his ERA rising from 2.57 to 5.43. Much of Anderson's career has been more in line with his 2023 numbers and as he heads into his age-34 season, it seems unlikely that he'll repeat that 2022 season again. **Patrick Sandoval** and **Griffin Canning** have both had decent careers thus far and both are still young, but expecting top-of-the-line-caliber pitching from this duo is probably a stretch. **Chase Silseth** fills in the last spot in the rotation after being used mostly as a spot starter and a long reliever last year. He had some very good starts down the stretch, including five shutout innings against the Astros, but he will need to improve his walk rate (26 walks in 52 innings) to be a consistent contributor.

The Angels completely overhauled their bullpen in the offseason signing five major league relievers, but 2023 closer **Carlos Estevez** returns. His 3.90 ERA doesn't look good on paper, but he did lock down 31 of 35 save opportunities. **Robert Stephenson** was traded to the Rays midseason in 2023 and he did what most pitchers do when they go to Tampa: get a lot better. The Angels are hoping the magic carries over to their ball club. **Matt Moore** is a former starter who has proved effective in the bullpen the last two seasons.

The Bottom Line

With the loss of Ohtani, the Angels are certainly a team in transition. Their decision not to trade Ohtani at the deadline last year, all while draining their farm system for players who were largely disappointing, looked like a bad decision at the time and looks even worse now that Ohtani is playing just 30 miles away for the Dodgers. The hiring of Ron Washington as manager and the young talent on offense provides a sliver of hope for the future, though. Washington has proven himself as a very good manager and coach who knows how to build a winning culture, taking the Texas Rangers to two World Series and becoming the beloved third base coach for the eventual World Series champion Braves. But, Washington has his work cut out for him to make the Angels a playoff contender in 2024 or in the future.

2024 Projection: 70-92, 4th in AL West

Mike Trout

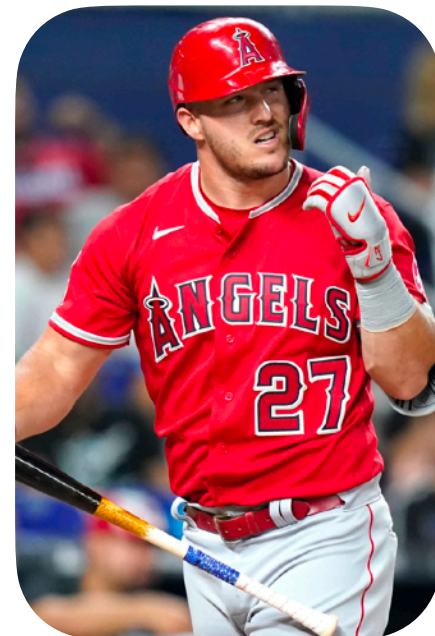


Photo via The Desert Sun

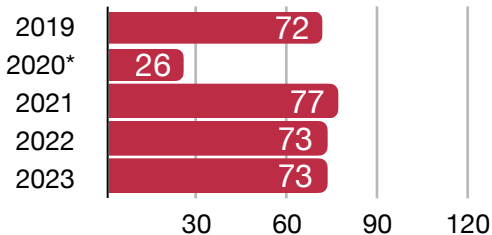
	2023 MLB Ranks
	RPG - 4.56 (16th)
	HITS - 1346 (18th)
	HR - 231 (5th)
	ERA - 4.64 (23rd)
	SO - 1445 (11th)
	FD% - .983% (24th)

Carlos Estevez



Photo via MLB

ANGELS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



9 < Number to Know

The Angels have the longest active playoff drought in the MLB at nine years and without Ohtani, it will be an uphill battle to change that in 2024.

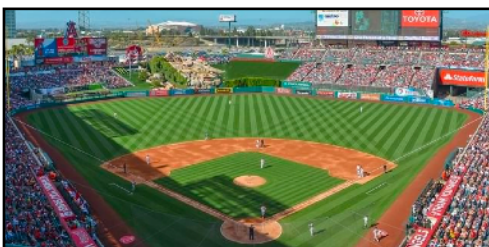


Photo via Grand Legacy at the Park

PROSPECT TO WATCH Nolan Schanuel - 1B

After being drafted by the Angels on July 9 of last year, Schanuel was so good at the minor league level (.991 OPS) that the Angels gave him the call to the majors after just 22 games in the minors. Since he only played 29 games in the big leagues, he is still considered a rookie for 2024. His career got off to a great start as he hit .275 with more walks than strikeouts. He didn't provide much power at all in his limited sample size with only four extra base hits, but he was a power threat during his college career, so the power should come as he continues to develop. He has a chance to be a plus hitter going forward.

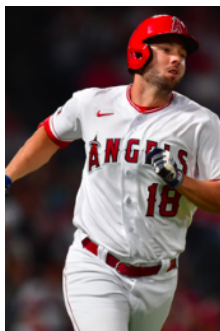


Photo via Sports Illustrated

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
2	Luis Rengifo	2B	.264
27	Mike Trout	CF	.263
23	Brandon Drury	DH	.262
6	Anthony Rendon	3B	.236
3	Taylor Ward	CF	.253
16	Mickey Moniak	RF	.280
14	Logan O'Hoppe	C	.236
18	Nolan Schanuel	1B	.275
9	Zach Neto	SS	.225

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
48	Reid Detmers	SP	4.48
47	Griffin Canning	SP	4.32
43	Patrick Sandoval	SP	4.11
31	Tyler Anderson	SP	5.43
63	Chase Silseth	SP	3.96
53	Carlos Estevez	CL	3.90

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Reid Detmers - SP



2023 Statistics

APP IP ERA K BB
28 148.2 4.48 168 60

After being drafted 10th overall in the 2020 draft, Reid Detmers' major league career thus far has been very average, though he has shown flashes of brilliance. In 2022, he threw a no-hitter in just his 11th career start and pitched to a 3.77 ERA. However, his 2023 season was largely disappointing, as his ERA rose to 4.48 and his walk rate increased. He did have a strong finish to the year, allowing three runs or less in his final five starts. The Angels hope that Detmers can live up to his draft-billing as they build for the future.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024													
									BAL 3:05		BAL 4:05	30	
BAL 1:35	MIA 6:40	1	MIA 6:40	2	MIA 1:10	3			BOS 9:38	5	BOS 9:38	6	
BOS 4:07	7	TB 9:38	8	TB 9:38	9	TB 4:07	10		BOS 7:10	12	BOS 4:10	13	
BOS 1:35	14	TB 6:50	15	TB 6:50	16	TB 6:50	17	TB 1:10	18	CIN 6:40	19	CIN 6:40	20
CIN 1:40	21	BAL 9:38	22	BAL 9:38	23	BAL 4:07	24		MIN 9:38	26	MIN 9:38	27	
MIN 4:07	28	PHI 9:38	29	PHI 9:38	30								

May 2024															
									PHI 4:07	1		CLE 7:10	3	CLE 6:10	4
CLE 1:40	5	PIT 6:40	6	PIT 6:50	7	PIT 12:35	8	KC 9:38	9	KC 9:38	10	KC 9:38	11		
KC 4:07	12	STL 9:38	13	STL 9:38	14	STL 9:07	15		TEX 8:05	17	TEX 7:15	18			
TEX 2:35	19	HOU 8:10	20	HOU 8:10	21	HOU 2:10	22		CLE 9:38	24	CLE 9:38	25			
CLE 4:07	26			NYN 9:38	28	NYN 9:38	29	NYN 9:38	30	SEA 10:10	31				

June 2024													
												SEA 7:15	1
SEA 4:10	2	SD 9:38	3	SD 9:38	4	SD 9:38	5		HOU 9:38	7	HOU 10:07	8	
HOU 9:07	9			ARI 9:40	11	ARI 9:40	12	ARI 9:40	13	SF 10:15	14	SF 4:05	15
SF 4:05	16	MIL 9:38	17	MIL 9:38	18	MIL 9:38	19		LAD 10:10	21	LAD 10:10	22	
		OAK 9:38	24	OAK 9:38	25	OAK 4:07	26	DET 9:38	27	DET 9:38	28	DET 10:07	29
DET 4:07	30												

July 2024													
CHC 2:20	7	TEX 9:38	8	TEX 9:38	9	TEX 9:38	10	SEA 9:38	11	SEA 9:38	12	SEA 9:38	13
SEA 4:07	14	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX				19	OAK 9:40	19	OAK 4:07	20			
OAK 4:07	21	SEA 9:40	22	SEA 9:40	23	SEA 3:40	24	OAK 9:38	25	OAK 9:38	26	OAK 9:38	27
OAK 4:07	28			COL 9:38	30	COL 9:38	31						

August 2024													
NYM 4:07	4			NYN 7:05	6	NYN 7:05	7	NYN 7:05	8	WSH 6:45	9	WSH 6:45	10
WSH 1:35	11	TOR 9:38	12	TOR 9:38	13	TOR 9:38	14		ATL 9:38	16	ATL 9:38	17	
ATL 4:07	18	KC 8:10	19	KC 8:10	20	KC 8:10	21	TOR 7:07	22	TOR 7:07	23	TOR 3:07	24
TOR 1:37	25			DET 6:40	27	DET 6:40	28	DET 1:10	29	SEA 9:38	30	SEA 9:38	31

September 2024													
SEA 4:07	1			LAD 9:38	3	LAD 9:38	4	TEX 8:05	5	TEX 8:05	6	TEX 7:15	7
TEX 2:35	8	MIN 7:40	9	MIN 7:40	10	MIN 7:10	11		HOU 9:38	13	HOU 9:38	14	
HOU 4:07	15	CWS 9:38	16	CWS 9:38	17	CWS 4:07	18	HOU 8:10	19	HOU 8:10	20	HOU 7:10	21
HOU 2:10	22			CWS 7:40	24	CWS 7:40	25	CWS 2:10	26	TEX 9:38	27	TEX 9:38	28
TEX 3:07	29												

HOME AWAY



OAKLAND ATHLETICS

American League West



9260
FRANCHISE WINS

50-112
2023 SEASON

5th
DIVISION

#26
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Oakland, CA - Oakland Coliseum (56,782)
Manager: Mark Kotsay (110-214, 3rd Season)

Final Season in Oakland Won't Be Pretty

The one word that best describes the Oakland Athletics' organization for the past two seasons is dysfunctional. Since trading Matt Olson, Matt Chapman, and other starters after the 2021 season, the product that Oakland has put on the field has been poor, to be kind. Ownership has seemed more concerned with cutting payroll and moving the team to Las Vegas than actually making moves to improve the team. With all of that in mind, the A's performance was expectedly terrible in 2023 as they went 50-112 and were eliminated from playoff contention before the end of August.

Batting

There were a couple of bright spots for Oakland in their lineup through 2023; rookie second baseman **Zack Gelof** joined the team after the All-Star break and put up 14 home runs and 14 steals. **Shea Langeliers** was acquired from the Braves for Matt Olson and while he didn't have a good batting average last year, he did provide power with 22 homers. **Brent Rooker** got his first shot at regular playing time and put up a 30 home run season and should continue to be a power threat moving forward. **Esteury Ruiz** led the American League with 67 steals and is a capable defender in center field, though he doesn't provide much offensively other than his base running. **Seth Brown** and **JJ Bleday** will make up the rest of the Oakland outfield. Bleday is a former top five pick who hasn't yet lived up to his potential at the major league level, while Brown is a left-handed power threat.

First baseman **Ryan Noda** strikes out a lot and doesn't hit for average, but he does get on base a lot through walks and also has decent power. **Abraham Toro** is projected to start at third base and has bounced around to a few different teams throughout his career. Oakland is hoping that consistent playing time will help Toro to improve, as he debuted in 2019 and hasn't shown much with the bat to this point. Rookie **Darrell Hernaiz** will get a shot as the starting shortstop after having an excellent 2023 season in the minors, hitting .321 with 45 extra base hits and 13 steals. Utility man **Aledmys Diaz** doesn't provide much with the bat, but he is a valuable defender off the bench who can play multiple positions. Oakland will also be hoping that **Miguel Andujar**, a former Rookie of the Year runner-up with the Yankees, can recover the form of his amazing 2018 rookie season and become a major league contributor once again. However, since a shoulder injury derailed his 2019 season, he hasn't had nearly as much success at the plate and he won't provide much defensively.

Pitching

Oakland may have a glimmer of hope offensively, but the pitching staff is unfortunately another story. Athletics pitching was a total disaster in 2023, finishing last in the AL with an absurd team ERA of 5.48. The "ace" of the staff is **JP Sears**, a durable and decent pitcher who started 32 games last year, though he doesn't strikeout a lot of hitters and his 4.54 ERA was below league average. **Paul Blackburn** was an All-Star in 2022 and is another respectable pitcher, though he is similar to Sears with a low strikeout rate. Former Dodgers and Giant **Alex Wood** joins Oakland this year and he's been a decent pitcher throughout his career, though it has been a couple of years since he has been consistently effective. **Ross Stripling** is another newcomer to the staff. While he had a poor showing in 2023, as recently as 2022 he was a very effective pitcher for the Blue Jays. **Luis Medina** is a former highly ranked prospect but he had a rough debut in the majors last year.

Top prospect **Mason Miller** will likely get a shot at being the Oakland closer. Miller has a triple digit fastball but has struggled to stay on the field due to injury. **Lucas Erceg** strikes out his fair share of hitters but he also walks a lot of hitters and gives up a lot of contact. **Dany Jimenez** was a bright spot out of the bullpen with a 3.47 ERA in 23 innings at the end of the season. **Scott Alexander** has been a good pitcher out of the bullpen and as a spot starter in the past, though he joins Oakland after a rough 2023 campaign in San Francisco.

The Bottom Line

2023 was a very rough year for Oakland and their fans and it's difficult to see how 2024 will be much better. Owner John Fisher continues to cut payroll to the bone and seemingly can't be bothered to even try to put a halfway decent team on the field. Even all of the trades that the A's made hasn't seemed to improve their farm system as they are still ranked towards the bottom of the league by multiple publications. The biggest news surrounding the Athletics last season was the revelation that possums are living in the press box as well as two "reverse boycotts" where fans packed the ballpark to protest ownership and demand that the team be sold to someone who cares. 2024 is very likely the last year that the Athletics play in Oakland. MLB owners approved a move to Las Vegas, but even that move is uncertain with stadium approval still pending and the mayor being noncommittal at best. Unfortunately, it looks like Oakland players and fans will have to go through another year dealing with one of the most incompetent owners in sports while hoping that they don't break the major league record for losses in a season.

2024 Projection: 48-114, 5th in AL West

Zack Gelof

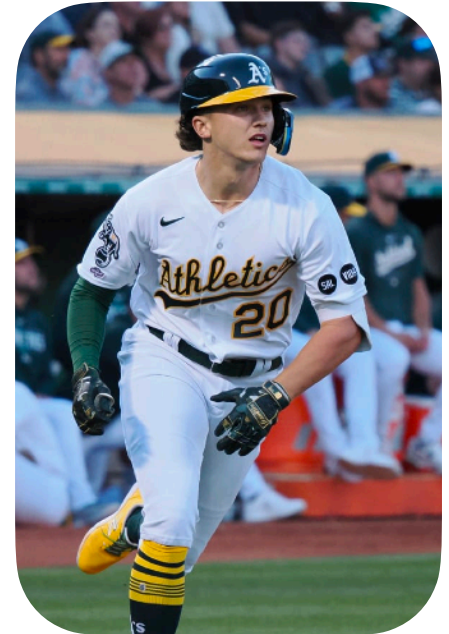



Photo via Sports Illustrated



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 3.61 (30th)
 HITS - 1187 (30th)
 HR - 171 (21st)
 ERA - 5.48 (29th)
 SO - 1300 (26th)
 FD% - .982% (28th)

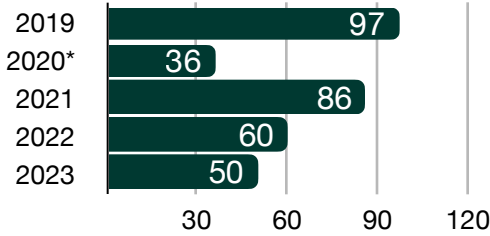
OAKLAND

JP Sears



Photo via Sports Illustrated

ATHLETICS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



10,275 < Number to Know

Oakland's average attendance for 2023, a major league worst. This figure would be even worse if not for two "reverse boycotts". With the product on the field, who can blame the fans?

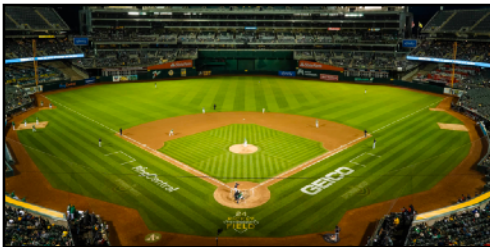


Photo via Ticketmaster

PROSPECT TO WATCH Mason Miller - P

Even though the A's have traded several big name players over the last couple of years, Oakland's farm system is surprisingly light on impact prospects. Mason Miller is currently the Athletic's #2 prospect per MLB Pipeline and he has shown a very good fastball and slider, with 69 Ks in 39 innings in his minor league career. Unfortunately, Miller has historically struggled to stay on the field due to injury, starting a total of only 21 games over the past three seasons. He did make six starts in the big leagues in 2023 with a very respectable 3.78 ERA. Oakland plans on using Miller as a reliever in hopes that he can stay healthy with a lower workload. With his triple digit fastball, he will likely get some save opportunities.

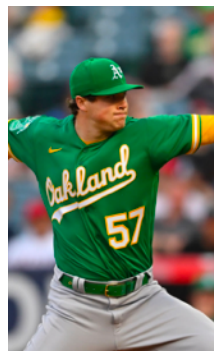


Photo via Sports Illustrated

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
49	Ryan Noda	1B	.229
20	Zack Gelof	2B	.267
25	Brent Rooker	DH	.246
15	Seth Brown	RF	.222
23	Shea Langeliers	C	.205
33	JJ Bleday	LF	.195
1	Esteury Ruiz	CF	.254
31	Abraham Toro	3B	.444
10	Darell Hernaiz	SS	.221

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
38	JP Sears	SP	4.54
58	Paul Blackburn	SP	4.43
57	Alex Wood	SP	4.33
36	Ross Stripling	SP	5.36
46	Luis Medina	SP	5.42
19	Mason Miller	CL	3.78

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Esteury Ruiz - OF



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
130 .254 .654 5 47

While Ronald Acuña Jr. led MLB with 73 stolen bases, Ruiz wasn't far behind with his 67 steals. Ruiz's total is even more impressive considering that he played 27 less games than Acuña. There is a lot of room for improvement in Ruiz's game as he's not someone who will provide a lot of power (just five homers in 2023) and his OPS was just .654 with a .309 on-base percentage. However, he is still only 24 years old, and if he can find a way to get on base more consistently, it's staggering to think of the stolen base numbers he could reach.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
					CLE 10:07				CLE 9:40		CLE 4:07
CLE 4:07	BOS 9:40	BOS 9:40	BOS 3:37					DET 1:10		DET 1:10	
DET 1:40		TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 11:23				WSH 9:40		WSH 4:07	
WSH 4:07	STL 9:40	STL 9:40	STL 3:37					CLE 7:10		CLE 6:10	
CLE 1:40	NYN 1:05	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05				BAL 7:05		BAL 4:05	
BAL 1:35	PIT 9:40	PIT 9:40									

May 2024											
					PIT 3:37				MIA 9:40		MIA 4:07
MIA 4:07	TEX 9:40	TEX 3:37	TEX (DH)					SEA 9:40		SEA 9:40	
SEA 4:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10				KC 7:40		KC 7:10	
KC 2:10		COL 9:40	COL 9:40	COL 3:37				HOU 9:40		HOU 4:07	
HOU 4:07		TB 6:50	TB 6:50	TB 1:10				ATL 7:20			

June 2024											
											ATL 4:10
ATL 1:35		SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 3:37				TOR 9:40		TOR 4:07	
TOR 4:07	SD 9:40	SD 8:40	SD 4:10	MIN 7:40				MIN 2:10		MIN 2:10	
MIN 2:10		KC 9:40	KC 9:40	KC 3:37				MIN 9:40		MIN 4:07	
MIN 4:07	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 4:07					ARI 9:40		ARI 4:10	
ARI 4:10											

July 2024											
					LAA 9:40				BAL 9:40		BAL 4:07
BAL 4:07		BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10				PHI 6:40		PHI 4:05	
PHI 1:35								LAA 9:40		LAA 4:07	
LAA 4:07	HOU 9:40	HOU 9:40	HOU 3:37	LAA 9:38				LAA 9:38		LAA 9:38	
LAA 4:07		SF 9:45	SF 9:45								

August 2024											
									LAD 9:40		LAD 9:07
LAD 4:07	CWS 9:40	CWS 9:40	CWS 3:37					TOR 7:07		TOR 3:07	
TOR 1:37		NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 1:10						SF 7:07	
SF 4:07	TB 9:40	TB 9:40	TB 9:40	TB 3:37				MIL 9:40		MIL 4:07	
MIL 4:07		CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 5:10				TEX 8:05		TEX 7:05	

September 2024											
TEX 2:35	SEA 7:07	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40	SEA 3:37				DET 9:40		DET 4:07	
DET 4:07		HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 2:10				CWS 7:40		CWS 7:10	
CWS 2:10	CHC 7:40	CHC 7:40	CHC 2:20					NYN 9:40		NYN 9:07	
NYN 4:07		TEX 9:40	TEX 9:40	TEX 3:37				SEA 10:10		SEA 9:40	
SEA 3:10											

HOME AWAY

NATIONAL LEAGUE
EAST
PREVIEW

PROJECTED FINISH



Can the Braves Be Stopped?

The Atlanta Braves have been the class of the National League East for many years. Going back to the 1995 World Series team, the Braves have since won 18 division titles, made three additional Fall Classic appearances, and won another World Series in 2021. Over the years, Atlanta has been led by stars like Greg Maddox, John Smoltz, Chipper Jones, Jason Hayward, and Freddie Freeman. Now, the **Atlanta Braves** are led by a player with the most raw talent and ability of any player in baseball not named Shohei Ohtani (and even that's up for debate). Ronald Acuña Jr. put together a historic 2023 performance that included 41 home runs and 73 stolen bases. As if that wasn't impressive enough, he hit .337, the best in MLB behind only Luis Arráez and he was appropriately named MVP. His teammate Matt Olson crushed an NL-best 54 home runs and a host of other Braves were All Stars. The offense was a complete juggernaut and scored 947 runs, guiding Atlanta to the most wins in Major League Baseball: 104.

However, for the second straight season, Atlanta's regular season success did not translate to postseason wins and the rival **Philadelphia Phillies** bounced the Braves in the NLDS. It wasn't always obvious that the Phillies would even make the postseason. After a World Series appearance in 2022, Philadelphia found themselves with a dubious 25-32 record following five-straight losses to division opponents. Then, something clicked (Bryce Harper's return had a lot to do with it), and an 18-8 June put the Phillies back on the right track. A 17-10 August improved the situation even more and a season-best seven game winning streak towards the end of the season clinched a playoff berth. The Phillies nearly reached the Fall Classic again but blew a 3-2 lead in the NCLS to the Arizona Diamondbacks. The high-powered offense slumped at exactly the wrong time and scored only three runs in those final two games. Like the Braves, the Phillies have expectations of postseason success in 2024 and put their money where their mouth is with extensions to the top two arms on the pitching staff, Zack Wheeler and Aaron Nola.

Speaking of spending money, the **New York Mets** went all in with their 2023 payroll of \$374.7 million. Unfortunately for Mets fans and owner Steve Cohen, the results were disastrous. The team finished in fourth place in the division behind a Miami team with a payroll of a mere \$110 million and Steve Cohen was hit with an MLB-record \$101 million luxury tax for his efforts. To make matters even more complicated, the Mets will be in search of a new general manager after Billy Eppler resigned after being caught for misusing the injury list. The Mets still have stars on the roster including Francisco Lindor and Pete Alonso, but even Cohen has admitted that the Mets aren't set up for success in 2024.

The **Miami Marlins** made the postseason but were quickly swept out of the Wild Card round. The most significant addition in the offseason might be the drums and flags that are now being allowed in LoanDepot Park for 2024. Former batting champ Tim Anderson joins current batting champion Luis Arráez, but Anderson had a forgettable 2023 season and other additions don't move the needle enough to get Miami back to the playoffs in 2024, especially with the likes of Sandy Alcantara out for the season following Tommy John surgery.

The **Washington Nationals** are looking to escape the bottom of the division where they've been stuck since winning the 2019 World Series. While it's a tradeoff most teams would probably take, Nationals fans are becoming more and more anxious for progress to be made. The farm system is developing nicely especially with the addition of second overall pick Dylan Crews and young players such as Keibert Ruiz, Josiah Gray, and MacKenzie Gore have formed the nucleus for the rebuild. However, success may still be hard to come by in 2024.

So, can the Braves be stopped? In the regular season, the answer appears to be "no". The Braves' roster is simply loaded and they have a real opportunity to reach triple-digit wins for the third season in a row (would be the first time since 1997-1999 and only the second such streak in franchise history). However, the Phillies will be right on their heels and have proven to be a total nemesis in October. The remaining three teams don't figure to be major contenders, but there's a reason that baseball isn't just played on paper.

Matt Olson



Photo via Battery Power

Win Totals	
5 Seasons	
Atlanta	425
Philadelphia	368
New York	365
Washington	310
Miami	308

Win Totals	
10 Seasons	
Atlanta	801
New York	768
Washington	763
Philadelphia	721
Miami	675

Win Totals	
15 Seasons	
Atlanta	1257
Philadelphia	1167
Washington	1155
New York	1142
Miami	1045



Photo via MLB

STADIUM SPOTLIGHT Citizens Bank Park

It's no secret that Philadelphia loves their sports and we've all seen and heard their robust postseason crowds in the past two seasons. It's a rowdy environment whether its Game 4 of the World Series or a Wednesday matinee in May. The fans live and breath baseball. There's no complex like this in all of sports — four professional teams playing within a quarter mile of one another. The nearby Xfinity Live sports bar features 150+ televisions and the park itself has an open concourse and several options for an authentic cheesesteak in the ballpark. There are 22,000 parking spaces near the stadium which is great for access but bad for getting out. However, the traffic is certainly worth it to catch a game at CBP.

Stadium Rank: 6

2023 Statistical Leaders

Batting Average	Home Runs	RBI
1. Luis Arráez - MIA - .354	1. Matt Olson - ATL - 54	1. Matt Olson - ATL - 139
2. Ronald Acuña Jr. - ATL - .337	2. Kyle Schwarber - PHI - 47	2. Pete Alonso - NYM - 118
3. Bryce Harper - PHI - .293	3. Pete Alonso - NYM - 46	3. Ozzie Albies - ATL - 109
4. Michael Harris II - ATL - .293	4. Ronald Acuña Jr. - ATL - 41	4. Ronald Acuña Jr. - ATL - 106
5. Matt Olson - ATL - .283	5. Marcell Ozuna - ATL - 40	4. Nick Castellanos - PHI - 106
6. Austin Riley - ATL - .281	6. Austin Riley - ATL - 37	6. Kyle Schwarber - PHI - 104
7. Ozzie Albies - ATL - .280	7. Jorge Soler - MIA - 36	7. Marcell Ozuna - ATL - 100
7. Bryson Stott - PHI - .280	8. Ozzie Albies - ATL - 33	8. Francisco Lindor - NYM - 98
9. Joey Meneses - WSH - .275	9. Francisco Lindor - NYM - 31	9. Austin Riley - ATL - 97
10. Alec Bohm - PHI - .274	10. Nick Castellanos - PHI - 29	9. Alec Bohm - PHI - 97

ERA (min 162 IP)	Strikeouts	Stolen Bases
1. Kodai Senga - NYM - 2.98	1. Spencer Strider - ATL - 281	1. Ronald Acuña Jr. - ATL - 73
2. Jesús Luzardo - MIA - 3.58	2. Zack Wheeler - PHI - 212	2. CJ Abrams - WSH - 47
3. Zack Wheeler - PHI - 3.61	3. Jesús Luzardo - MIA - 208	3. Francisco Lindor - NYM - 31
4. Charlie Morton - ATL - 3.64	4. Kodai Senga - NYM - 202	4. Bryson Stott - PHI - 31
5. Bryce Elder - ATL - 3.81	4. Aaron Nola - PHI - 202	5. Trea Turner - PHI - 30
6. Spencer Strider - ATL - 3.86	6. Charlie Morton - ATL - 183	6. Starling Marte - NYM - 24
7. Sandy Alcántara - MIA - 4.14	7. Braxton Garrett - MIA - 156	7. Tommy Pham - NYM - 22
8. Taijuan Walker - PHI - 4.38	8. Sandy Alcántara - MIA - 151	7. Jazz Chisholm Jr. - MIA - 22
9. Aaron Nola - PHI - 4.46	8. MacKenzie Gore - WSH - 151	9. Lane Thomas - WSH - 20
10. Patrick Corbin - WSH - 5.20	10. Josiah Gray - WSH - 143	9. Michael Harris II - ATL - 20

Zack Wheeler

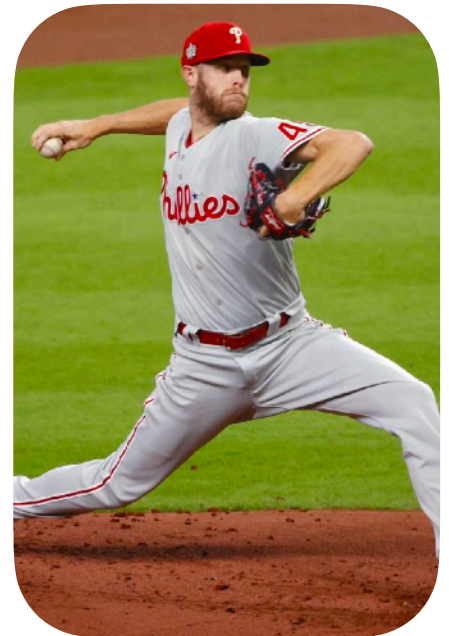


Photo via ESPN

DID YOU KNOW

The Atlanta Braves won a World Series title in 1995 and proceeded to win 11 consecutive NL East titles, a Major League record. No other team in MLB history has had 10 or more consecutive titles. Currently, the Braves' streak sits at six division titles from 2018 to 2023. Could Atlanta again make postseason history? It's very possible, given that the franchise has locked up the majority of their core to long, yet relatively team-friendly contracts.

Past Division Winners





ATLANTA BRAVES

National League East



x4



x18
NL

11025
FRANCHISE WINS

104-58
2023 SEASON

1st
DIVISION

#27
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Atlanta, GA - Truist Park (41,084)
 Manager: Brian Snitker (646-509, 9th Season)

2023: Lost in NLDS

Can Braves Brush Off Postseason Bust?

The Braves have been wildly successful in the regular season and in the process, they have managed to sign many of their biggest stars to long, yet relatively team-friendly contracts. For the second straight season, Atlanta topped the 100 win mark and they are only three years removed from their World Series title over the Houston Astros. Yet, in the last two seasons, the Braves are just 2-6 in the postseason with back-to-back NLDS exits to the Philadelphia Phillies. In the regular season, they posted a 19-13 record against the Phillies. So, what changed? It's hard to pinpoint one specific reason for the recent postseason struggles (the Dodgers are looking for the answer, too).

Batting

The Braves offense in 2023 was the best in baseball by just about every metric you can find. Not only did Atlanta lead MLB in average (.276) but they also hit the most home runs (307), so it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out how they scored an average of 5.85 runs per game. That figure means the Braves had the most prolific offense since the 2007 New York Yankees, who, ironically, also lost a Divisional Series 3-1. However, if you never watched the Braves in the regular season and instead only watched their four games in the NLDS, you would have no idea how the offense was so successful. The batting average plummeted to .186 and the Phillies outscored the Braves 20-7. The team with 307 home runs in the regular season had just three round trippers in those four games while the Phillies smashed 11 home runs.

While the Braves are still searching for answers on why the offense fell so flat in October, the good news is that the lineup is absolutely loaded yet again. The usual suspects **Ronald Acuña**, **Ozzie Albies**, and **Austin Riley** start a lineup that is unforgiving against opposing pitchers. When they get on base, which happens frequently, **Matt Olson** steps up to the plate and does massive damage to the tune of 54 home runs and 139 RBI, both of which led the majors. Eventual MVP Acuña was historic in his own right with the first 40-70 season in MLB history. He played 159 games and had more hits, runs, OBP, OPS, and total bases of anyone in the National League and he did it all while playing gold glove defense in right field.

Marcell Ozuna still has a bunch of pop left in his bat even after 1,307 career games and he played more games in 2023 than he had in any season since 2018. **Michael Harris II** proved that his 2022 NL Rookie of the Year campaign wasn't a fluke and instead a sign of things to come. **Sean Murphy** continues to be on the best catchers in the game with his blend of power and elite defensive abilities. **Jarred Kelenic** is a newcomer to the Braves. He struggled mightily in his first two seasons in the big leagues and was even demoted to the minors but he had a breakthrough season in 2023 and it's hard to see how he wouldn't improve by simply existing in the same lineup and clubhouse as some of the aforementioned stars. **Orlando Arcia** made his first All-Star team last year and was a serviceable replacement for Dansby Swanson.

Pitching

Relative to the offense, Atlanta pitching was quite average but there's reason to believe the Braves can and will improve on that side of the inning. For one, Atlanta has a legitimate Cy Young candidate in **Spencer Strider**. His stuff is simply electric and even though his ERA rose to 3.86 last season, he can wrack up strikeouts like no other pitcher in baseball (not even relievers). He broke John Smoltz's 20+ year standing record of most strikeouts in a season. His NL-best 2.85 FIP indicates that the jump in ERA was somewhat "unlucky." **Max Fried** had an injury plagued 2023 but when he was on the mound he was dominant, similar to his 2022 season in which he finished second in Cy Young voting. **Charlie Morton** has apparently never met father time and he's made 30 or more starts in each of the last three seasons and heads into his 17th big league season at the age of 40. One of the most dominant pitchers of the 2010s is looking to finally put together a full, injury-free season. **Chris Sale** did pitch 102.2 innings after Tommy John surgery and he's also dealt with elbow inflammation, a rib fracture, and other injuries since signing a 5-year \$145 million deal with the Red Sox in 2019, who traded him to Atlanta. If he pans out (early signs in Spring Training are good), then Atlanta will have fleeced Boston.

The bullpen was moderately successful last season. Veteran closer **Raisel Iglesias** returns for his second full season in an Atlanta uniform. The Braves also added two more veterans in **Aaron Bummer** and **Reynaldo López**. **A.J. Minter** was used often by the Braves and he completed 64.2 innings of work in 70 appearances. He along with **Tyler Matzek** were highlights of the bullpen.

The Bottom Line

The Braves have arguably the best position player (Acuña) and pitcher (Strider) in the National League. That's a pretty good place to start. The lineup is littered with talent and the offense should again be lethal. Optimistically, the pitching will be much improved but even a worse case scenario has the Braves as an average staff. So, in short, the regular season Doesn't leave much doubt and expect Atlanta to raise a seventh straight division banner. But what about October?

2024 Projection: 102-60, 1st in NL East

Ronald Acuña Jr.

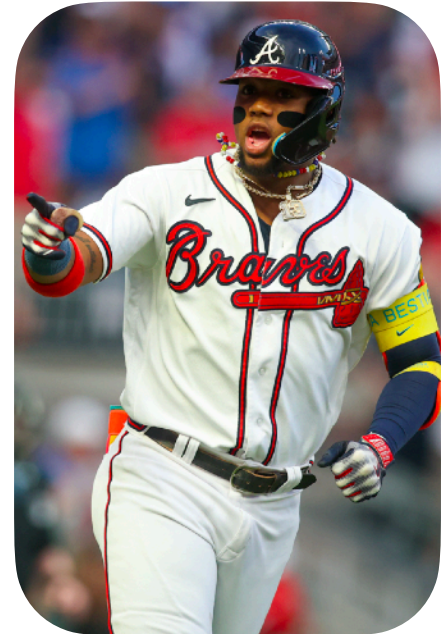



Photo via Reuters



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 5.85 (1st)
 HITS - 1543 (1st)
 HR - 307 (1st)
 ERA - 4.14 (15th)
 SO - 1516 (3rd)
 FD% - .986% (11th)



Spencer Strider

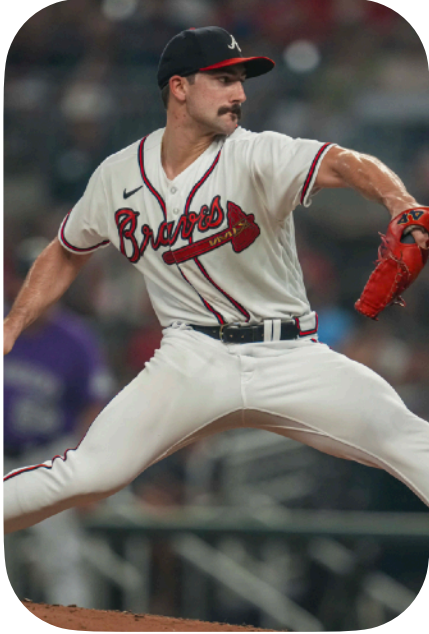
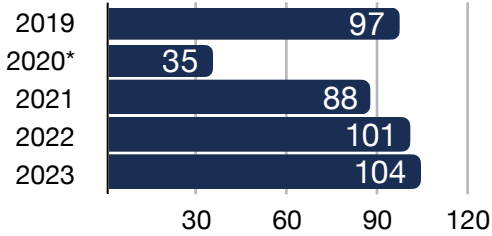


Photo via Reuters

BRAVES 5-YEAR WIN TREND



40-70 < Number to Know

There is a total of *one* player in the 40-70 club (40 home runs and 70 stolen bases) and it's Ronald Acuña Jr. What will he do with his encore performance in 2024?

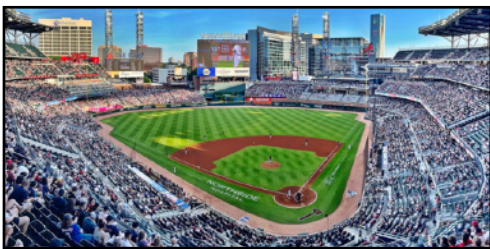


Photo via Cobb Travel & Tourism

PROSPECT TO WATCH AJ Smith-Shawver - P

Smith-Shawver was drafted in 2021 out of high school and yet, remarkably, he has already made his MLB debut. He tore through the minor leagues in 2023 on account of not allowing a single earned run in 21 combined innings in High-A Rome and Double-A Mississippi. He came back to earth in Triple-A Gwinnett but still struck out 47 batters in just 41.0 innings. He has historically walked a lot of batters, so that's certainly something to work on and he's also still working on making his curveball a viable pitch at the major league level, but the Braves believe they have a good one in Smith-Shawver. Certainly, their track record of developing pitchers like Spencer Strider speaks for itself, although it's unfair to put that kind of expectation on Smith-Shawver.

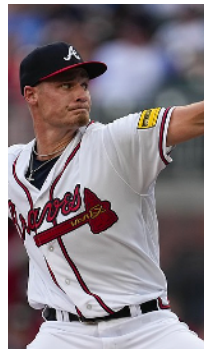


Photo via Chattanooga Times

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
13	Ronald Acuña Jr.	RF	.337
1	Ozzie Albies	2B	.280
27	Austin Riley	3B	.281
28	Matt Olson	1B	.283
20	Marcell Ozuna	DH	.274
23	Michael Harris II	CF	.293
12	Sean Murphy	C	.251
24	Jarred Kelenic	LF	.253
11	Orlando Arcia	SS	.264

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
99	Spencer Strider	SP	3.86
54	Max Fried	SP	2.55
50	Charlie Morton	SP	3.64
51	Chris Sale	SP	4.30
55	Bryce Elder	SP	3.81
26	Raisel Iglesias	CL	2.75

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Austin Riley - 3B



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
159 .281 .861 37 97

Somehow, it still feels like Austin Riley is underrated. It's obviously hard to ignore Acuña's ridiculous talent or Matt Olson's tape measure power but Riley has been one of the most consistent and formidable Braves over the last few years. He's finished no worse than seventh in NL MVP voting and in the same time span he's collected two Silver Slugger awards, missed a grand total of eight games and hit a total of 110 home runs. His 10-year, \$212 million deal that keeps him in Atlanta until 2032 is a bargain compared to the kind of production he offers.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
										PHI 28 3:05	PHI 30 4:05
PHI 1:35	CWS 2:10	CWS 7:40	CWS 2:10						ARI 7:20	ARI 7:20	
ARI 1:35	NYM 7:20	NYM 7:20	NYM 7:20	NYM 12:20					MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10	
MIA 1:40	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10						TEX 7:20	TEX 2:20	
TEX 7:00	MIA 7:20	MIA 7:20	MIA 7:20						CLE 7:20	CLE 7:20	
CLE 1:35	SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40									

May 2024												
										SEA 3:40	LAD 10:10	LAD 9:10
LAD 4:10			BOS 7:20	BOS 7:20						NYM 7:10	NYM 4:10	
NYM 1:40	CHC 7:20	CHC 7:20	CHC 7:20						SD 7:20	SD 7:20		
SD 1:35	SD 12:20	CHC 21 7:40	CHC 22 7:40	CHC 23 7:20					PIT 6:40	PIT 4:05		
PIT 1:35	WSH 4:10	WSH 7:20	WSH 7:20	WSH 7:20					OAK 7:20			

June 2024											
											OAK 4:10
OAK 1:35			BOS 7:10	BOS 6:45	WSH 6:45	WSH 6:45				WSH 4:05	
WSH 1:35			BAL 6:35	BAL 1:05	BAL 1:05				TB 7:20	TB 15:10	
TB 1:35	DET 7:20	DET 7:20	DET 12:20						NYN 7:05	NYN 7:15	
NYN 1:35	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 7:15						PIT 7:20	PIT 4:10	
PIT 1:35											

July 2024											
PHI 1:35	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40					SD 9:40	SD 7:15	
SD 4:10											
STL 1:35	CIN 7:20	CIN 7:20	CIN 12:20						NYM 7:10	NYM 4:10	
NYM 1:40	MIL 8:10	MIL 8:10	MIL 2:10								

August 2024											
MIA 1:35									MIA 7:20	MIA 7:20	MIA 7:20
COL 3:10	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 3:45				COL 8:40	COL 8:10	
LAA 4:07									LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	
WSH 1:35	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40						PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 7:15

September 2024											
PHI 1:35											
TOR 1:35											
LAD 1:35	LAD 7:20										
MIA 1:40											
KC 3:20											

HOME AWAY



PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

National League East



x2



x8
NL

10112
FRANCHISE WINS

90-72
2023 SEASON

2nd
DIVISION

#23
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Philadelphia, PA - Citizens Bank Park (42,901)
 Manager: Rob Thomson (155-118, 3rd Season)

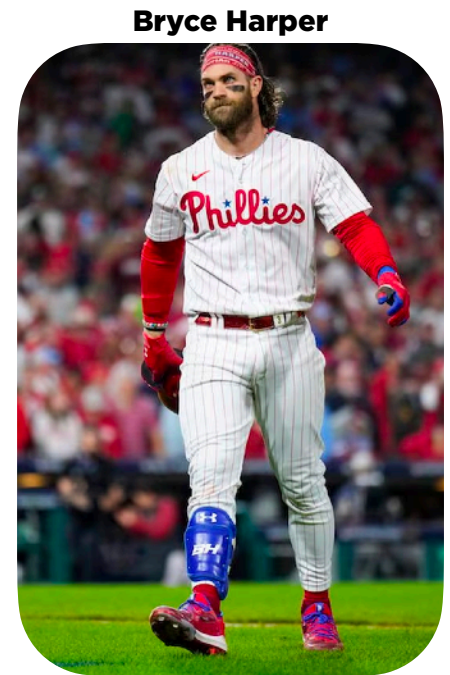
2023: Lost in NLCS

Phillies Prep For Another Playoff Push

For a second straight season, the Phillies made a deep postseason run as an NL Wild Card team, once again knocking their rivals and East champion Atlanta Braves out of the postseason. They were only a game away from appearing in their second straight Fall Classic. While most teams would kill for what Philly has accomplished in the postseason, the Phillies aren't satisfied and want to bring home some hardware, and they believe they have the team to make it happen in 2024. As it turns out, it's because they return virtually the exact same team this season.

Batting

The Phillies are hopeful that **Bryce Harper** will be able to play closer to 141 games in 2024, the number of appearances he made in his MVP season of 2021 when he simply destroyed opposing pitching to the tune of a .309/.429/.615 slash line. While he wasn't quite as otherworldly in 2023, he still had a remarkable season when he eventually made his season debut following a torn UCL. The injury moved him from the outfield to first base, which is now his permanent home on defense. While he mostly played DH, expect him at first more this season so that power hitter **Kyle Schwarber** can occupy DH. Schwarber is far from your prototypical leadoff hitter, but what he lacks in average he makes up for with his tape measure power. He's easily led the majors in strikeouts in each of the past two years but he's also hit 93 home runs and driven in 198 runs while drawing over 200 walks. **Trea Turner** wields home run power too. He's a career .296 hitter but struggled for the majority of the 2023 season. Philadelphia fans gave Turner a standing ovation to support the floundering shortstop and it seemed to rejuvenate him as he promptly put together a 10-game hitting streak and he was also excellent in the postseason. **J.T. Realmuto** continues to be one of the best and most well-rounded catchers in the game, although there are finally some signs of decline. **Nick Castellanos** is another veteran with pop. **Bryson Stott** looks to build on a promising sophomore season that featured a .280 average and 31 stolen bases. **Brandon Marsh** also played well in his first full season with the Phillies and may slide over to left field more frequently with Schwarber expected to play more DH and with defensively gifted **Johan Rojas** covering centerfield. Rojas is ready to build on what was a very strong rookie regular season of 59 games although he was abysmal at the plate in the postseason (4 of 43).



Bryce Harper

Photo via NJ.com

Pitching


After another very strong season, the Phillies extended the contract of **Zack Wheeler**. He's already lived up to his 5 year, \$118 million deal signed in 2020 and then some. He's been remarkably reliable and consistent and he was simply dominant in the postseason. You can say the same about **Aaron Nola** who also signed a big contract extension this offseason and who has likewise been the epitome of reliability. His ERA did jump from 3.25 to 4.46 in 2023 but he continued his streak of 180 innings or more in a season (not including the shortened 2020 year) to five. **Ranger Suárez** and **Taijuan Walker** will jockey for starts towards the back of the rotation. Walker has bounced around to numerous teams in the last few seasons but he pitched a career-high 172.2 innings for the Phillies last year but that also came with a 4.38 ERA and a career-high 1.309 WHIP. The Phillies signed **Spencer Turnbull**, a former starter with the Tigers, but injuries have largely derailed his career to this point and he may be better suited in the bullpen.

That bullpen was a strength in both the regular season and the postseason and features veterans **Gregory Soto**, **Matt Strahm**, and **Seranthony Domínguez**. Nine different Phillies earned a save last year with now-departed Craig Kimbrel leading the way with 23. Kimbrel's exit gives **José Alvarado** the opportunity to be the unquestioned closer for the first time in his career. He possesses a high-90s fastball that he's willing to throw high in the strike zone and he mixes in a cutter that still tops 90 on the radar gun.

The Bottom Line

The Phillies didn't make a big splash in free agency in terms of new additions, but the extensions of Nola and Wheeler solidifies a core that made the Fall Classic in 2022 and was one game away from the World Series in 2023. While the loaded Atlanta Braves are better poised to bring home another division title, it's doubtful that the Phillies even care considering they've bounced the Braves from the playoffs in each of the last two seasons. Bryce Harper's health remains paramount, but if the two-time MVP stays on the field and if Trea Turner returns to the form he showed in the postseason, the Phillies will have one of the most dangerous offenses in the game. As long as the back half of the rotation holds up, the Phillies pitching staff should also be dangerous and the bullpen should be a Top 10 MLB bullpen like they were last season.

2024 Projection: 89-73, 2nd in NL East



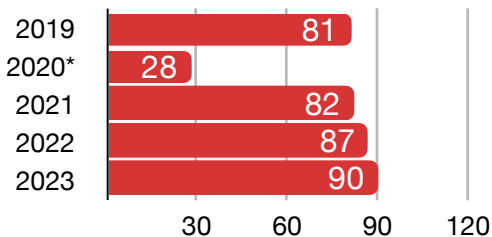
2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.91 (8th)
 HITS - 1417 (9th)
 HR - 220 (8th)
 ERA - 4.03 (12th)
 SO - 1454 (9th)
 FD% - .984% (19th)

Aaron Nola



Photo via NBC Sports

PHILLIES 5-YEAR WIN TREND



7 < Number to Know

A seven game win streak in late September helped guide the Phillies back to the postseason and set the table for another deep playoff run.



Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH Mick Abel - SP

Arguably, the main concern for the Phillies heading into 2024 is the rotation (outside of staples Zack Wheeler and Aaron Nola). Abel might be able to help alleviate that concern. In the minor leagues he's demonstrated that he's in possession of quality strikeout stuff (11.1 K/9 in 266.1 IP). The downside to his game is that he has struggled with control at times and will walk a lot of batters too, leading to elevated pitch counts early in his starts. His upside, which includes a fastball that sails to home plate in the upper 90s, outweighs any downsides. He's made only one start at the triple-A level so don't expect him to make the Opening Day roster, but if he succeeds in Lehigh Valley he could still debut in 2024. Could he be a valuable piece of a postseason roster?

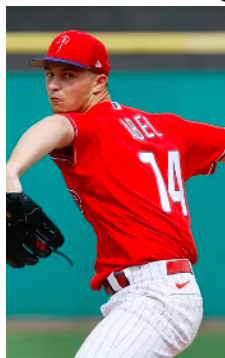


Photo via Philadelphia Inquirer

Projected Lineup

'23 AVG

12	Kyle Schwarber	DH	.197
7	Trea Turner	SS	.266
3	Bryce Harper	1B	.293
10	J.T. Realmuto	C	.252
5	Bryson Stott	2B	.280
28	Alec Bohm	3B	.274
8	Nick Castellanos	RF	.272
16	Brandon Marsh	LF	.277
18	Johan Rojas	CF	.302

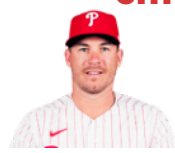
Projected Rotation

'23 ERA

45	Zack Wheeler	SP	3.61
27	Aaron Nola	SP	4.46
55	Ranger Suárez	SP	4.18
99	Taijuan Walker	SP	4.38
61	Cristopher Sánchez	SP	3.44
46	José Alvarado	CL	1.74

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

J.T. Realmuto - C



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
135 .252 .762 20 63

Realmuto continues to play the catcher position at an elite level even into his thirties. His offense alone sets him apart from all other catchers. A slash line of .252/.310/.452 with 20 home runs and 63 RBI could actually be considered as somewhat of a "down" year compared to past seasons but just about any other catcher would take that production in a heartbeat. His right arm is a cannon and his glove is gold two times over. What's even more remarkable is his ability to overcome the wear and tear of the catcher position as he has played 130 or more games in four consecutive 162-game seasons.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024

					ATL 3:05				ATL 4:05	30
ATL 1:35	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 7:45	CIN 1:05		WSH 6:45		WSH 4:05		6
WSH 1:35	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 1:15	STL 1:15	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40		PIT 4:05		13
PIT 1:35	COL 6:40	COL 6:40	COL 6:05	COL 6:05		CWS 6:40		CWS 6:05		20
CWS 1:35	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 1:10		SD 9:40		SD 8:40		27
SD 4:10	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38								

May 2024

				LAA 4:07		SF 6:40		SF 6:05		4
SF 2:05	SF 4:05	TOR 6:40	TOR 1:05			MIA 7:10		MIA 4:10		11
MIA 1:40	NYM 7:10	NYM 1:10	NYM 6:40	NYM 6:40		WSH 6:40		WSH 6:05		18
WSH 1:35		TEX 2:10	TEX 6:40	TEX 10:50		COL 8:40		COL 9:10		25
COL 3:10	SF 5:05	SF 9:45	SF 3:45			STL 6:40				31

June 2024

									STL 7:15	1
STL 1:35	MIL 6:40	MIL 6:40	MIL 4:05					NYM 1:10		8
NYM 10:10a		BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10		BAL 7:05		BAL 4:05		15
BAL 1:35	SD 6:40	SD 6:40	SD 1:05			ARI 6:40		ARI 4:05		22
ARI 1:35	DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 1:10			MIA 6:20		MIA 4:05		29
MIA 1:35										30

July 2024

			CHC 8:05	CHC 8:05	CHC 2:20	ATL 7:20		ATL 7:15		6
ATL 1:35			LAD 6:40	LAD 7:05	LAD 6:05	OAK 6:40		OAK 4:05		13
OAK 1:35			All-Star Break - Arlington, TX				PIT 6:40		PIT 6:40	20
PIT 1:35	MIN 7:40	MIN 7:40	MIN 1:10			CLE 6:40		CLE 6:05		27
CLE 1:35	NYG 6:40	NYG 6:40	NYG 12:35							31

August 2024

						SEA 9:40		SEA 9:40		3
SEA 4:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	ARI 9:40		ARI 9:40		ARI 8:10		10
ARI 4:10		MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40	WSH 6:40		WSH 6:40		WSH 6:05		17
WSH 1:35		ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:15		KC 8:10		KC 7:10		24
KC 2:10	HOU 6:40	HOU 6:40	HOU 4:05	ATL 6:40		ATL 6:40		ATL 7:15		31

September 2024

ATL 1:35		TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07	MIA 6:40		MIA 7:10		MIA 4:10		7
MIA 1:40	TB 6:40	TB 6:40	TB 6:40			NYM 6:40		NYM 4:05		14
NYM 1:35	MIL 7:40	MIL 7:40	MIL 7:40	NYM 7:10		NYM 7:10		NYM 4:10		21
NYM 1:40	CHC 6:40	CHC 6:40	CHC 6:05			WSH 6:45		WSH 4:05		28
WSH 3:05										29

HOME

AWAY



NEW YORK METS

National League East



4727
FRANCHISE WINS

75-87
2023 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

#11
FARM SYSTEM RANK

New York City, NY - Citi Field (41,922)
Manager: Carlos Mendoza (0-0, 1st Season)

Mets Rebuild Begins in Earnest

Mets owner Steve Cohen was pretty clear, this year will be a rebuilding year for the Mets. He knows this to be true because he took a \$353 million payroll, the highest in Major League Baseball in 2023, and blew it up around the trade deadline when it became increasingly obvious that the Mets would miss the postseason for the sixth time in the last seven years. The rebuild is all-encompassing, yet bizarre. Carlos Mendoza steps in as manager, replacing Buck Showalter. The general manager role won't be filled in 2024 and was made vacant when Billy Eppler "resigned" after MLB launched an investigation that Eppler and the Mets misused the injury list. There are many new faces on the payroll in 2024, several of them prospects, after New York dealt the likes of Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander, among others.

Batting

For the kind of star power that the Mets possessed in the lineup, the offense was largely underwhelming in 2023. Don't blame **Francisco Lindor**, who had his best season in Met pinstripes and joined the 30-30 club for the first time in his career. He's missed just three games over the past two seasons and he's finished in the top 10 in NL MVP voting in each of those years. Add in his gold-glove caliber defense at shortstop and you get a 6.0 WAR, which tied him for 8th among all position players in MLB. **Pete Alonso** saw his batting average take a dive down to .217 for the season but he smashed a ton of home runs yet again and earned his third All Star nomination while driving in a team-high 118 RBI and he still draws a fair number of walks. **Brandon Nimmo** and **Jeff McNeil** are known more for their ability to hit for average, although the former connected for 20 home runs last year while the latter won the 2022 batting title. McNeil's average fell to .270 but his career average is just a notch below .300 and the Mets are hopeful his 2024 batting more closely resembles that career mark.

The back half of the lineup is where the question marks begin to appear. Gone are players like Mark Canha, Daniel Vogelbach, and Tommy Pham, and the Mets didn't bring in a lot of reinforcements other than **Harrison Bader**. **Joey Wendle** and **Tyrone Taylor** are new additions but both project to be bench players as opposed to starters, although they could be used as platoon options. **Starling Marte** started to show his age last season and it's unclear how many games he can be counted on to play heading into his 13th major league season. **DJ Stewart** found success with the Mets in the second-half of the season and will look to fill the void left by Vogelbach. **Francisco Alvarez** is limited at the plate but he's a borderline-elite pitch framer despite being just 22 years old.

Pitching

It's certainly no secret that the Mets rotation in 2024 will look vastly different than the one that opened the 2023 season. Even **Kodai Senga**, the ace of the staff, will miss at least a month with a strained shoulder. The Japanese sensation Senga signed with the Mets prior to the 2023 season and baffled MLB hitting last season. He was the runner-up to Corbin Carroll for the NL Rookie of the Year, he was an All-Star, and he received Cy Young votes. Control can sometimes be an issue for Senga but his stuff is simply ridiculous and his "ghost fork" pitch was, for all intensive purposes, unhittable. While they wait on his return, veteran **Jose Quintana** figures to be a top-of-the-rotation pitcher. He recently turned 35 and he'll need to find a way to get outs effectively on the ground as he no longer possesses the ability to strike out double-digit batters like he did earlier in his career. **Luis Severino** and **Sean Manaea** join the rotation. Severino was once the ace of the Yankees but his 2023 season was a complete disaster. However, his Yankee teammate Tommy Kahnle revealed in an interview that injuries were a major contributing factor. He was good in 2022 in 102.0 innings and the Mets desperately need him to return to that version of himself. Manaea doesn't have the upside of Severino but he's been far more reliable and has 30 or more appearances in each of the last three seasons, albeit with an average ERA of above 4.00. **Adrian Houser** is another new face who spent six big league seasons with the Brewers.

The bullpen gets a huge lift with the return of **Edwin Díaz**. When we last saw him in a Mets uniform, he was entering to the beat of Tommy Trumpet and carving up hitting in the ninth inning. Unfortunately, that was in 2022 as a freak injury in a World Baseball Classic celebration cost him the entirety of the 2023 season. He's expected to be fully healthy in 2024 and should again be one of the game's best closers. **Adam Ottavino** and **Brooks Raley** are two very capable arms and quality set up pitchers and **Jake Diekman** pitched well for the Rays last season. **Jorge López** and **Shintaro Fujinami** were free agent signings from the Orioles.

The Bottom Line

Love him or hate him, Steve Cohen was at least honest with Mets fans when he set expectations of a rebuilding year in 2024 (and maybe 2025). However, there are still some good pieces on the roster so don't expect the Mets to just fall off a cliff unless the injury bug really gets ahold of the team. There are depth questions in both the lineup and the rotation but the duo of Lindor and Alonso is a great one-two punch. The bullpen figures to be a strength despite a rocky performance last year. The Mets will flirt with .500, but nothing more.

2024 Projection: 78-84, 3rd in NL East

Francisco Lindor

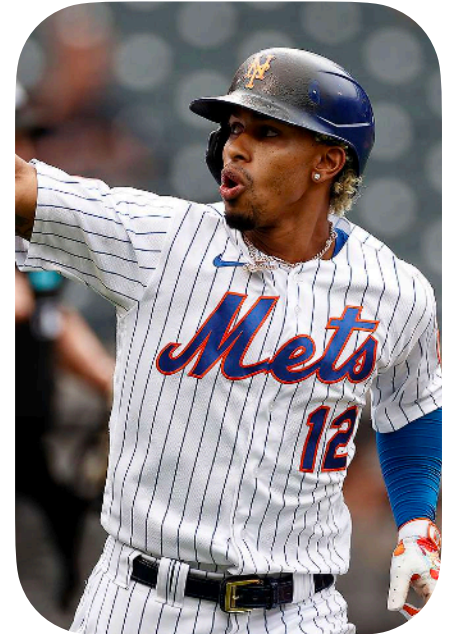


Photo via People



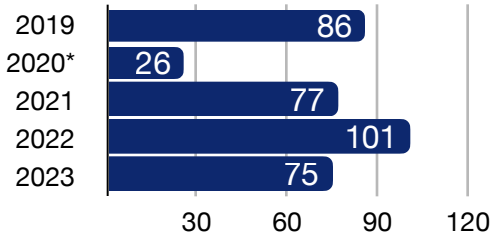
2023 MLB Ranks
RPG - 4.43 (20th)
HITS - 1276 (27th)
HR - 215 (10th)
ERA - 4.30 (19th)
SO - 1397 (16th)
FD% - .985% (17th)

Edwin Díaz



Photo via North Jersey

METS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



321 < Number to Know

The number of games played by shortstop Francisco Lindor out of a possible 324 games over the past two seasons.



Photo via Fox News

PROSPECT TO WATCH Jett Williams - SS/OF

Williams hasn't even made it past double-A yet, but the Mets top prospect already has a huge selling point: his elite eye and plate discipline. Last year in 121 games, he drew a whopping 104 walks (second in the minor leagues) which gave him an on-base percentage of .425. He was a pitcher's worst nightmare on the base paths, stealing 45 bags while being caught only seven times. Jett also lived up to his first name by legging out eight triples. He'll have to make some necessary adjustments as he works his way from double-A to triple-A but the fact that he is already debuting such impressive skills at only 20-years-old is very notable. He only appeared in six double-A games last season so his big league debut probably won't come this season, but when it does, he'll have a chance to become truly special.

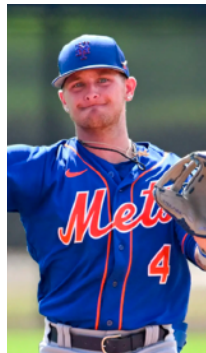


Photo via New York Post

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
9	Brandon Nimmo	LF	.274
1	Jeff McNeil	2B	.270
12	Francisco Lindor	SS	.254
20	Pete Alonso	1B	.217
6	Starling Marte	RF	.248
29	DJ Stewart	DH	.244
4	Francisco Alvarez	C	.209
22	Brett Baty	3B	.212
44	Harrison Bader	CF	.232

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
62	Jose Quintana	SP	3.57
40	Luis Severino	SP	6.65
59	Sean Manaea	SP	4.44
35	Adrian Houser	SP	4.12
38	Tylor Megill	SP	4.70
39	Edwin Díaz	CL	-

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Pete Alonso - 1B



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
154 .217 .821 46 118

Alonso's batting average won't look good on the enormous scoreboard hovering over center field in Citi Park, but few can bash home runs like the Polar Bear. He's clubbed 192 homers in only 684 career games and he wields an OPS of .870. It's a contract year for Alonso, so expect the big first baseman to be extra focused and productive. While he strikes out a lot, he draws a lot of walks and he also had the painful distinction of being hit by pitch the most of any NL player. He had 118 RBI last season and if Nimmo, McNeil, and Lindor continue to get on base at a high percentage, he'll top 100 RBI for the third straight year.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
						MIL 1:10				MIL 1:40	
MIL 1:40	DET 7:10	DET 7:10	DET 7:10	DET 7:10				CIN 6:40	CIN 4:10	CIN 4:10	
CIN 1:40	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	ATL 12:20			KC 7:10	KC 1:40	KC 1:40	
KC 1:40	PIT 7:10	PIT 7:10	PIT 7:10	PIT 7:10				LAD 10:10	LAD 4:05	LAD 4:05	
LAD 4:10	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 3:45				STL 7:10	STL 4:05	STL 4:05	
STL 1:40	CHC 7:10	CHC 7:10									

May 2024											
						CHC 7:10	CHC 1:10		TB 6:50	TB 7:15	
TB 1:40	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 1:15					ATL 7:10	ATL 4:10	ATL 4:10	
ATL 1:40	PHI 7:10	PHI 1:10	PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40			MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10	MIA 4:10	
MIA 1:40	CLE 6:10	CLE 6:10	CLE 1:10	CLE 2:20				SF 7:10	SF 1:40	SF 1:40	
SF 1:40	LAD 4:10	LAD 7:10	LAD 4:10	LAD 2:20				ARI 7:10	ARI 7:10	ARI 7:10	

June 2024											
										ARI 4:10	
ARI 1:40	WSH 6:45	WSH 6:45	WSH 4:05							PHI 1:10	
PHI 10:10a			MIA 7:10	MIA 7:10	MIA 7:10	MIA 7:10		SD 7:10	SD 4:10	SD 4:10	
SD 1:40	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05				CHC 2:20	CHC 2:20	CHC 2:20	
CHC 2:20			NYN 7:10	NYN 7:10				HOU 7:10	HOU 4:10	HOU 4:10	
HOU 1:40											

July 2024											
PIT 1:35	PIT 12:35	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	WSH 11:05a	PIT 6:40	PIT 4:05				
COL 1:40								MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10	MIA 4:10	
MIA 1:40	MIA 6:40	NYN 7:05	NYN 7:05	ATL 7:10	ATL 7:10	ATL 7:10	ATL 4:10				
ATL 1:40	MIN 7:10	MIN 7:10	MIN 1:10								

August 2024											
									LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	
LAA 4:07			COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 3:10	SEA 10:10	SEA 9:40				
SEA 4:10			OAK 7:10	OAK 7:10	OAK 1:10	MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10				
MIA 1:40	BAL 7:10	BAL 7:10	BAL 1:10	SD 9:40	SD 9:40	SD 9:40	SD 8:40				
SD 4:10			ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 3:40	CWS 8:10	CWS 7:10				

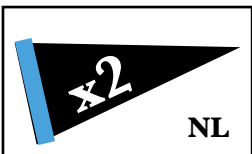
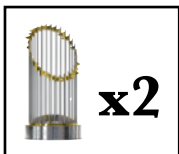
September 2024											
CWS 2:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10	BOS 7:10					CIN 7:10	CIN 4:10	CIN 4:10	
CIN 1:40	TOR 7:07	TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07					PHI 6:40	PHI 4:05	PHI 4:05	
PHI 1:35	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	WSH 7:10	PHI 7:10	PHI 7:10	PHI 7:10	PHI 4:10				
PHI 1:40			ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20				MIL 8:10	MIL 7:10	MIL 7:10	
MIL 3:10											

HOME AWAY



MIAMI MARLINS

National League East



2241
FRANCHISE WINS

84-78
2023 SEASON

3rd
DIVISION

#24
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Miami, FL - LoanDepot Park (36,742)
Manager: Skip Schumaker (84-78, 2nd Season)

2023: Lost in NLWC

Marlins Might Flounder in 2024

The Marlins made the postseason for the first time in a 162-game season since the 2003 World Series Champion team. They were promptly swept out of the NL Wild Card round at the hands of the Philadelphia Phillies who went on to take out the East division champs in the Divisional Round. The Marlins lost those two games by a combined score of 11-2 and they needed a good September to escape from a rough 19-32 stretch through July and August. So, what's next for the Marlins? It seems very unlikely that Miami can compete with the likes of the Braves or even the Phillies especially considering their quiet offseason outside of the signing of Tim Anderson.

Batting

The Marlins put together a lot of hits as team (thanks in large part to batting champion **Luis Arráez**) but they struggled to bring those runners home. Their batting average with runners in scoring position was .254 which ranked 21st in Major League Baseball compared to their overall .259 average which ranked 4th. While Arráez was simply brilliant at the plate in his first season with Miami, there's not another player in the projected lineup who has an average of above .260. Could newcomer **Tim Anderson** turn that around? He's a career .282 batter and a former batting champ (2019) who would love to forget his career-worst 2023 season. If he's successful, he won't be the first former-White Sox player to experience a revival at the plate. While he played just 53 games for the Marlins, **Jake Burger** hit .303 while slugging .505 and driving in 28 runs. **Jazz Chisholm Jr.** should be better defensively in his second season as an outfielder and there's no questioning his raw talent. However, he's been injury plagued the past two seasons and the Marlins' success in 2024 may be largely dependent on his health. There are some real questions towards the back of the Miami lineup. Is there anything left in the bat of **Avisail García**? The veteran has over 1,000 career hits but he played in only 37 games for the Marlins while hitting just .185. **Christian Bethancourt** and **Nick Gordon** are a couple new faces who will look to contribute offensively.

Pitching

With **Sandy Alcantara** undergoing Tommy John surgery, **Jesús Luzardo** is the clear cut Opening Day starter and he's coming off a strong 2023 performance. After only tallying 100.1 innings pitched in 2022, Luzardo blew past that career high and pitched 178.2 innings across 32 starts. He impressed with a 3.58 ERA, 208 strikeouts, and 10 wins. He's always been a high walk pitcher but he negates the consequences of those free passes with a plethora of strikeouts and he's posted a K/9 rate of over 10 in both 2022 and 2023. Young **Eury Pérez** looks to take a bigger role in the rotation this season after a very impressive rookie year where he pitched 91.1 innings and posted a 3.15 ERA. **Braxton Garrett** has, almost quietly, become a very solid middle rotation pitcher and should be poised for a strong 2024 as long as shoulder soreness which bugged him in the early spring doesn't last too long. **A.J. Puk** is attempting to transition from the bullpen to a full-time starter after picking up 15 saves last season. He'll have to fend off **Edward Cabrera** and **Trevor Rogers** who both have eyes on the last two spots in the rotation. Cabrera's struggles last season went beyond the face value of his 4.24 ERA. Command issues plagued him (6.0 walks per nine innings, the second-most in the majors) and often forced him out of games early. He made 20 starts but failed to cross the 100-inning threshold and was sent to triple-A in early August. When he came back, the Marlins used him in the pen. **Trevor Rogers** nearly won the NL Rookie of the Year in 2021 but he's pitched a combined 125 innings over the last two years since and missed essentially all of 2023. **Ryan Weathers** is a lefty arm to watch if you're looking for other starting options.

The bullpen will look nearly identical in 2024. The continuity is a plus but the Marlins' pen ranked in the bottom ten in Major League Baseball with an ERA of 4.37 and they converted just 58% of save opportunities even with their tremendous record in one-score games. **Bryan Hoeing**, **Andrew Nardi**, and **Ryan Weathers** all chewed up innings and closer **Tanner Scott** returns after appearing in a career high 74 games. He possesses elite strikeout stuff and he cut down significantly in his free passes in 2023 and his WHIP dipped below 1.000 for the first time in his seven-year career.

The Bottom Line


Even though the Mets have presumably dropped out of contention in the division, the Marlins will have to be extremely fortunate in the injury department and will need bounce back seasons from several key contributors if they are to reach the postseason again. The improvement of other potential Wild Card teams like the Cubs, Reds, and Diamondbacks makes the future look even more murky. It's also worth noting that the Marlins were remarkably good in one-run games, to the tune of a 33-14 record. The law of averages technically doesn't exist, but it states that Miami won't be nearly as fortunate in that regard this season. Unfortunately, their 31-39 second-half record might be a more accurate predictor of the 2024 season than their 53-39 start.

2024 Projection: 76-86, 4th in NL East

Luis Arráez



Photo via New York Times

2023 MLB Ranks	
	RPG - 4.11 (26th)
	HITS - 1423 (7th)
	HR - 166 (22nd)
	ERA - 4.21 (16th)
	SO - 1490 (5th)
	FD% - .983% (24th)

Jesús Luzardo

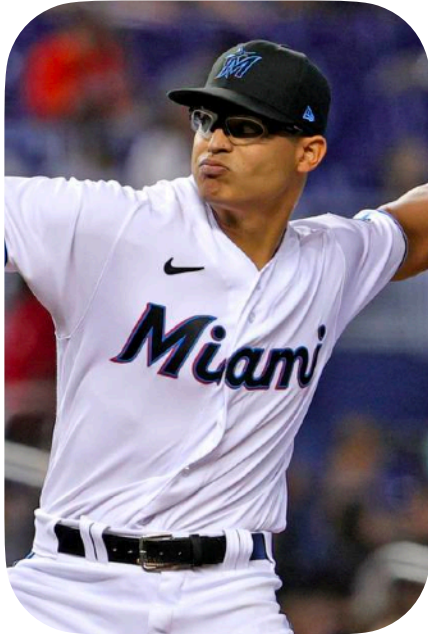
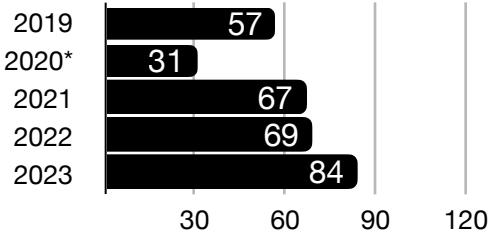


Photo via Miami Herald

MARLINS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



.354 < Number to Know

Luis Arráez's league-leading batting average in 2023, the highest batting average in a 162-game season since Josh Hamilton's mark of .359 in 2010.

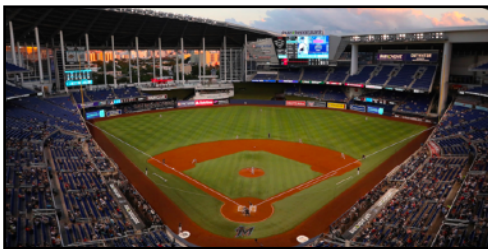


Photo via Miami New Times

PROSPECT TO WATCH Victor Mesa Jr. - OF

There aren't a lot of current Marlins prospects who are actually MLB-ready in the next couple of seasons, but Mesa could be one of those players, especially if he can improve in one specific area: his tendency to chase pitches. At Double-A Pensacola last season, he struck out 122 times in 533 plate appearances, a fairly significant increase compared to his 2022 showing. However, he showed stark improvement in his power numbers in 2023, hitting 18 home runs and driving in 76 runs. He also swiped 16 bases showing that he has enough speed to run the bases and cover centerfield on defense. He has yet to advance past Double-A thus far in his career, but he'll presumably reach triple-A early this year which means he will likely debut in the majors in 2025, if all goes well.



Photo via Miami Herald

Projected Lineup

			'23 AVG
3	Luis Arráez	2B	.354
7	Tim Anderson	SS	.245
9	Josh Bell	1B	.247
36	Jake Burger	3B	.250
2	Jazz Chisholm Jr.	CF	.250
14	Bryan De La Cruz	LF	.257
12	Jesús Sánchez	RF	.253
24	Avisail Garcia	DH	.185
4	Nick Fortes	C	.204

Projected Rotation

			'23 ERA
44	Jesús Luzardo	SP	3.58
39	Eury Pérez	SP	3.15
29	Braxton Garrett	SP	3.66
27	Edward Cabrera	SP	4.24
28	Trevor Rogers	SP	4.00
66	Tanner Scott	CL	2.31

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Jazz Chisholm Jr. - OF



2023 Statistics

GP 97 **AVG** .250 **OPS** .761 **HR** 19 **RBI** 51

The face of MLB The Show 23 has been highly regarded since his MLB debut in late 2020 due to his impressive athleticism on defense, his overall speed, and his plus-power bat. Unfortunately, he's never been able to truly realize his potential due to injuries that have kept him out of the lineup for the better part of two seasons. At the beginning of 2023, the Marlins decided to relocate Jazz to the outfield, and while there were certainly some growing pains he got better as the season went along. If he can stay on the field, he has 30-30 potential and could provide a huge lift for Miami.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024

					PIT 4:10	PIT 7:10	PIT 30 4:10
PIT 31 1:40	LAA 6:40	LAA 6:40	LAA 2 6:40	LAA 3 1:10	STL 4 4:15		STL 6 2:15
STL 7 2:15	NYN 8 7:05	NYN 9 7:05	NYN 10 7:05			ATL 12 7:10	ATL 13 4:10
ATL 14 1:40	SF 15 6:40	SF 16 6:40	SF 17 12:10	CHC 18 7:40	CHC 19 7:10	CHC 20 2:20	
CHC 21 2:20	ATL 22 7:20	ATL 23 7:20	ATL 24 7:20			WSH 26 7:10	WSH 27 4:10
WSH 28 1:40	WSH 29 6:40	COL 30 6:40					

May 2024

				COL 6:40	COL 12:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 4:07
OAK 5 4:07	LAD 6 10:10	LAD 7 10:10	LAD 8 3:10			PHI 10 7:10	PHI 11 4:10
PHI 12 1:40	DET 13 6:40	DET 14 6:40	DET 15 1:10			NYM 17 7:10	NYM 18 4:10
NYM 19 1:40	MIL 20 6:40	MIL 21 6:40	MIL 22 6:40			ARI 24 9:40	ARI 25 10:10
ARI 26 4:10	SD 27 6:40	SD 28 9:40	SD 29 4:10			TEX 31 7:10	

June 2024

							TEX 1 4:10
TEX 2 1:40		TB 4 6:40	TB 5 6:40			CLE 7 7:10	CLE 8 7:35
CLE 9 1:40		NYM 11 7:10	NYM 12 7:10	NYM 13 7:10	WSH 14 6:45	WSH 15 4:05	
WSH 16 1:35	STL 17 6:40	STL 18 6:40	STL 19 12:40			SEA 21 7:10	SEA 22 4:10
SEA 23 1:40	KC 24 8:10	KC 25 8:10	KC 26 2:10	PHI 27 6:20	PHI 28 6:20	PHI 29 4:05	
PHI 30 1:35							

July 2024

		BOS 2 6:40	BOS 3 6:50	BOS 4 1:10	CWS 5 7:10	CWS 6 4:10	
CWS 7 1:40		HOU 9 8:10	HOU 10 8:10	HOU 11 8:10	CIN 12 7:10	CIN 13 4:10	
CIN 14 1:40	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX					NYM 19 7:10	NYM 20 4:10
NYM 21 1:40	NYM 22 6:40	BAL 23 6:40	BAL 24 6:40	BAL 25 12:10	MIL 26 8:10	MIL 27 7:10	
MIL 28 2:10		TB 30 6:50	TB 31 12:10				

August 2024

				ATL 1 7:20	ATL 2 7:20	ATL 3 7:20	
ATL 4 1:35	CIN 5 6:40	CIN 6 6:40	CIN 7 6:40	CIN 8 6:10	SD 9 7:10	SD 10 4:10	
SD 11 1:40		PHI 13 6:40	PHI 14 6:40		NYM 16 7:10	NYM 17 4:10	
NYM 18 1:40	ARI 19 6:40	ARI 20 6:40	ARI 21 6:40		CHC 23 7:10	CHC 24 4:10	
CHC 25 1:40	COL 26 8:40	COL 27 8:40	COL 28 8:40	COL 29 3:10	SF 30 10:15	SF 31 9:05	

September 2024

SF 1 4:05		WSH 3 6:40	WSH 4 6:40	PHI 5 6:40	PHI 6 7:10	PHI 7 4:10	
PHI 8 1:40	PIT 9 6:40	PIT 10 6:40	PIT 11 12:35	WSH 12 6:45	WSH 13 6:45	WSH 14 4:05	
WSH 15 1:35		LAD 17 6:40	LAD 18 6:40	LAD 19 4:40	ATL 20 7:10	ATL 21 4:10	
ATL 22 1:40		MIN 24 7:40	MIN 25 7:40	MIN 26 7:40	TOR 27 7:07	TOR 28 3:07	
TOR 29 3:07							

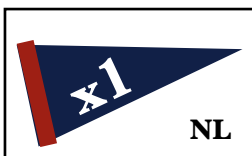
HOME

AWAY



WASHINGTON NATIONALS

National League East



4194
FRANCHISE WINS

71-91
2023 SEASON

5th
DIVISION

#8
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Washington, D.C. - Nationals Park (41,339)
Manager: Dave Martinez (392-478, 7th Season)

From First to Stuck At Worst

Ever since the Nationals claimed their first-ever World Series championship in 2019, Washington has finished dead last in the NL East in each of the last four seasons. A 17-11 August gave the Nationals hope that they might overtake the struggling Mets in the standings (they did for eight days), but an 8-18 September doomed their chances. The story remains the same in 2024: while contention doesn't appear realistic, escaping last place would help bring some hope for the near future, especially with key young players on the rise within the organization.

Batting

The Nationals actually finished in the top 10 in the majors for hits, albeit tenth. However, the number of hits didn't necessarily correspond to the number of runs scored in large part due to an overall lack of power in the lineup; only the Cleveland Guardians hit fewer home runs. In theory, a player with 198 career home runs should help in that category but **Joey Gallo** has struggled at the plate in recent seasons and hasn't topped a .200 batting average since 2019. So, whether he will be a benefit or a hindrance to the offense remains to be seen. The Nats also signed veteran **Eddie Rosario** a couple weeks into Spring Training and are hopeful that there's still some magic left in his NLCS MVP bat from the 2021 World Series championship run with the Braves. Those additions means **Joey Meneses** will retain his designated hitter role. He drew excitement in 2022 when he hit 13 home runs in just 56 games as a rookie but it took him 154 games to hit 13 home runs in 2023. **CJ Abrams** is also a young player who stole 47 bases and was caught only four times and could improve on those numbers if he can hit better than .245 this season.

Lane Thomas is coming off of a career year that included 28 home runs, 86 RBI, and 20 stolen bases. In general, he's made the most of his time in Washington and seems to be just now approaching his prime. **Keibert Ruiz** is a durable catcher with a good bat that showed increased power in 2023 (18 home runs, 67 RBI). The second overall pick of the 2016 draft was injury riddled in his time with Cincinnati and while **Nick Senzel's** offense never lived up to his first round billing, he's capable of playing several positions defensively including third base, where he'll likely start with the Nationals. **Victor Robles** started the season red hot but a back injury ended his season after just 36 games and his career OPS is just .671.

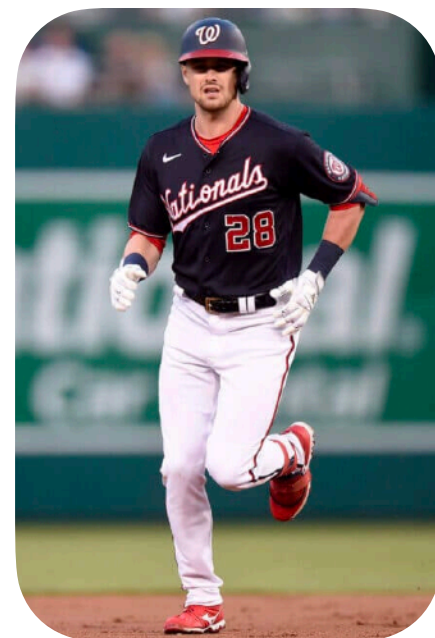


Photo via The Athletic

Pitching

The Nationals have a potential budding star in **Josiah Gray**. His 2022 season was a bit of a disaster, he gave up 38 home runs, the most of any major league pitcher, and he also allowed 66 walks all in just 148.2 innings. He showed significant improvement in 2023 and cut way down on home runs allowed (22) even though he pitched 159.0 innings. He still walks a very high number of batters, leading to a 1.459 WHIP but his ERA fell all the way to 3.91 and he was named an All-Star. **MacKenzie Gore** finally played in his first full season after being the third overall pick of the 2017 draft. An ERA of 4.42 isn't particularly notable, however, he proved that he wields great strikeout stuff featuring a curveball that batters whiffed on at a rate of 37.9%, making it the 12th best curveball in the majors. Although they are both young, the Gray-Gore duo at the top of the rotation could be sneaky good in 2024 and will hopefully be a solid building block for the future of the franchise. **Patrick Corbin** has been hit about as hard as any pitcher in baseball over the last three seasons, but to his credit he almost never misses a start. Unfortunately, his reliability on the mound has also led to a league-leading 49 losses over the past three years. **Jake Irvin** pitched 121 innings as a rookie with mixed results. He had a decent second half but two tough performances at the end of the year put his ERA+ below MLB average on the season. **Trevor Williams** allowed an NL-high 34 home runs but did pitch 100+ innings for the first time since 2019.


The bullpen was one of the worst in baseball behind only the Rockies, Royals, and Athletics. **Hunter Harvey** was a bright spot after pitching to a 2.82 ERA across 60.2 innings. He collected 10 saves while **Kyle Finnegan** claimed 28. **Dylan Floro** is one of the few additions to the pitching staff, but he should prove to be an upgrade.

The Bottom Line

The Nationals weren't expected to compete this season, but it's still surprising how little the Nationals moved in either free agency or trades with other teams. The main concern heading into 2024 is the issue that plagued Washington all of last season: the pitching staff. The Nationals were one of only four teams with a team ERA above 5.00 and there are no additions on the staff that give hope of quick improvement. Instead, the Nationals will be relying on Josiah Gray and MacKenzie Gore to take the next step and holding out hope that Patrick Corbin and Trevor Williams can reverse their downward trend of the past few seasons. The offense may hit a few more home runs this season but it's highly doubtful they'll connect for as many hits and the back portion of the lineup could become a glaring weakness especially if injuries pop up. Unfortunately, it appears that the Nats are again destined for a last place finish.

2024 Projection: 70-92, 5th in NL Central

2023 MLB Ranks



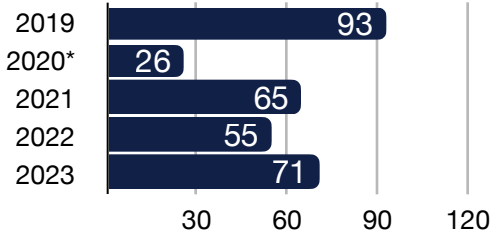
- RPG - 4.32 (21st)
- HITS - 1401 (10th)
- HR - 151 (29th)
- ERA - 5.02 (27th)
- SO - 1225 (28th)
- FD% - .985% (17th)

Josiah Gray



Photo via Washington Post

NATIONALS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



28.2 < Number to Know

The Nationals spent just \$28.2 million this offseason, not a particularly good sign for a team looking to escape last place (and with dollars to spend).



Photo via Ballparks of Baseball

PROSPECT TO WATCH Dylan Crews - OF

Crews was just drafted in June (second overall), but he has so much potential that it's not out of the realm of possibility that he debuts for the Nationals sometime this season. He posted ridiculous numbers for the national championship LSU Tigers in his senior season (no college batter was better than Crews in 2023) and he transitioned seamlessly to single-A Fredericksburg where he hit .355 and smashed 5 home runs in 14 games. He stumbled a bit in 20 games at double-A Harrisburg but chalk that up to fatigue in an extended season that started in mid-February. Whether fair or unfair, he will probably draw comparisons to Bryce Harper given his top prospect status. The Nationals clearly believe in him and give him the second-highest rookie bonus in MLB history.



Photo via MLBfits

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
5	CJ Abrams	SS	.245
28	Lane Thomas	RF	.268
24	Joey Gallo	1B	.177
45	Joey Meneses	DH	.275
-	Eddie Rosario	LF	.255
20	Keibert Ruiz	C	.260
13	Nick Senzel	3B	.236
2	Luis Garcia Jr.	2B	.266
16	Victor Robles	CF	.299

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
40	Josiah Gray	SP	3.91
1	MacKenzie Gore	SP	4.42
46	Patrick Corbin	SP	5.20
27	Jake Irvin	SP	4.61
32	Trevor Williams	SP	5.55
67	Kyle Finnegan	CL	3.76

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Keibert Ruiz - C



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
136 .260 .717 18 67

The Nationals clearly believe in Ruiz as their catcher of the future after inking him to an 8-year, \$50 million extension. He came on strong following the 2023 All-Star break and he hit a remarkable .365 with runners in scoring position over the entire season. He tallied a career-best 18 home runs and 24 doubles and while he finished with a below-average OPS+, he's one of the best offensive catchers in the game, making up for his below-average defense. He does need to improve in that category after allowing a whopping 119 runners to steal a base, but he's clearly a focal point of the Nationals rebuild.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
										CIN 4:10	CIN 4:10
CIN 1:40	PIT 4:05			PIT 6:45	PIT 4:05	PHI 6:45	PHI 4:05				
PHI 1:35	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 3:55			OAK 9:40	OAK 4:07				
OAK 4:07	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 3:10			HOU 6:45	HOU 4:05				
HOU 1:35		LAD 6:45	LAD 6:45	LAD 4:05	MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10					
	MIA 1:40	MIA 6:40	TEX 8:05								

May 2024											
				TEX 8:05	TEX 2:35	TOR 6:45	TOR 4:05				
TOR 1:35		BAL 6:45	BAL 6:45			BOS 7:10	BOS 4:10				
BOS 1:35	CWS 7:40	CWS 7:40	CWS 2:10			PHI 6:40	PHI 6:05				
PHI 1:35	MIN 6:45	MIN 6:45	MIN 1:05			SEA 6:45	SEA 4:05				
SEA 1:35	ATL 4:10	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	CLE 7:10					

June 2024											
											CLE 4:10
CLE 1:40	NYM 6:45	NYM 6:45	NYM 4:05	ATL 6:45	ATL 6:45	ATL 4:05					
ATL 1:35		DET 6:40	DET 6:40	DET 1:10	MIA 6:45	MIA 4:05					
MIA 1:35		ARI 6:45	ARI 4:05	ARI 1:05	COL 8:40	COL 9:10					
COL 3:10	SD 9:40	SD 9:40	SD 4:10			TB 6:50	TB 4:10				
TB 1:40											

July 2024												
	NYM 6:45	NYM 6:45	NYM 6:45	NYM 11:05a	STL 6:45	STL 4:05						
STL 1:35	STL 4:05	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 1:10	MIL 8:10	MIL 4:10						
MIL 2:10	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX						CIN 6:45	CIN 6:45				
CIN 1:35		SD 6:45	SD 6:45	SD 12:05	STL 8:15	STL 7:15						
STL 2:15	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 3:40									

August 2024											
								MIL 6:45	MIL 4:05		
MIL 1:35	SF 6:45	SF 6:45	SF 6:35	SF 4:05	LAA 6:45	LAA 6:45					
LAA 1:35		BAL 6:35	BAL 6:35	PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 6:05					
PHI 1:35		COL 6:45	COL 6:45	COL 1:05	ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20					
ATL 1:35	NYG 6:45	NYG 6:45	NYG 6:35		CHC 6:45	CHC 4:05					

September 2024											
CHC 1:35		MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40					
PIT 1:35		ATL 6:45	ATL 6:45	MIA 6:45	MIA 6:45	MIA 4:05					
MIA 1:35	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	CHC 7:40	CHC 2:20	CHC 2:20					
CHC 2:20		KC 6:45	KC 6:45	KC 1:05	PHI 6:45	PHI 4:05					

HOME AWAY

NATIONAL LEAGUE
CENTRAL
PREVIEW

PROJECTED FINISH



The Most Winnable Division in Baseball

For whatever reason, both the American League Central and National League Central divisions were relatively weak in comparison to the other four divisions. The Minnesota Twins won the AL Central with 87 wins (they would have missed both AL Wild Card spots with that record) and the Milwaukee Brewers won the NL Central with 92 wins. However, the AL Central featured two teams with 100+ losses, a key distinguishing factor between the two divisions. Why does this difference matter? Because it sets the NL Central apart as the most “winnable division” in baseball. The **Pittsburgh Pirates**, who ended up finishing last in the division, led the NL Central for 27 days and as late into the season as June 15. While many have projected the Pirates to again finish last in the division, they have quickly assembled a nice young core with even more talent waiting in the wings including the first overall pick in the 2023 draft, pitcher Paul Skenes. FanGraphs projects the Pirates to finish last place but they also give the Buccos an 18% chance to make the postseason which gives you a sense of just how wide open this division truly is.

The **Milwaukee Brewers** have won the division in two of the past three seasons and they are obvious contenders as a result, but they must grapple with losing two of their best starting pitchers heading into 2024. Cy Young winner Corbin Burnes was traded to Baltimore ahead of his free agency offseason in 2025 and time will tell if the pieces Milwaukee gets back in the trade warrant such a deal from a team that won the division. Brandon Woodruff remains on the roster but he will likely miss the entire season following shoulder surgery. Due to those losses, the Brew Crew will be looking for more offense in 2024. The addition of Rhys Hoskins should provide exactly that if the power hitter is able to bounce back after an ACL injury cost him the 2023 season. Milwaukee will also be relying on a host of young, potential-filled, but unproven bats throughout the lineup.

The **Cincinnati Reds** took baseball by storm with their high-speed, rookie-laden offense that led the majors in both stolen bases and excitement. After a rebuild that seemed without end, a 12-game win streak in the middle of June completely revitalized the city and fans flocked to Great American Ballpark to see what the likes of Elly De La Cruz, Matt McClain, and Spencer Steer would do next. The potential shown in 2023 has led to great optimism in 2024 and so too have the additions to the roster in Jeimer Candelario, Frankie Montas, and Nick Martinez. Not seeing Joey Votto in a Reds uniform will be a bit bizarre, but the youth movement in the Queen City has given the franchise some real direction for the first time in nearly a decade. The young stars aren't located in just the lineup but in the rotation as well. Hunter Greene throws consistently harder than any other pitcher in the game. Andrew Abbott had a ridiculously good start to his major league career and if Graham Ashcroft and Nick Lodolo have bounce back seasons, the Reds rotation will be wildly underrated, even in the extremely hitter friendly Great American Ballpark. There have been only two division titles in the past 27 seasons including an ongoing 11-year drought, could that finally end in 2024?

Following two seasons of sub-.500 baseball, the **Chicago Cubs** also had a resurgence in 2023 although they did choke away a potential Wild Card spot late in the season. The Cubs were active in free agency, resigning Cody Bellinger following a year in which he looked much more like his former MVP self. The Northsiders also brought in pitcher Shoto Imanaga from Japan. He'll join former Japanese star Seiya Suzuki who finished the year with an OPS of .843. The Cubs will need Imanaga to perform right away as starting pitching is arguably their main concern. If healthy, this Cubs roster looks like a playoff team and a division winner.

The 2023 season was both bizarre and wildly disappointing by **St. Louis Cardinals** standards. The class of the NL Central over the past decade plus never held a division lead or a record of .500 or better outside of the baseball's opening weekend. Injuries played a factor and the front office made some moves at the trade deadline to bring in prospects. In the offseason, the Cardinals brought in several seasoned veterans. Those new but old faces should serve as incredible mentors for the next generation of Cardinals stars but in the short-term, injury concern is high with so many older players being asked to play every day. Nolan Arenado and Paul Goldschmidt will both pace the offense but it's worth noting that Goldy is a free agent following this season. If things don't go well again in 2024, expect to see his name floating around in various trade scenarios.

Cody Bellinger

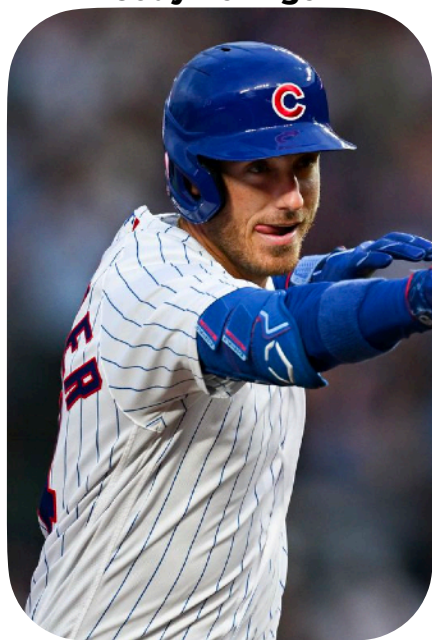


Photo via Bleed Cubbie Blue

Win Totals	
5 Seasons	
Milwaukee	391
St. Louis	375
Chicago	346
Cincinnati	333
Pittsburgh	287

Win Totals	
10 Seasons	
St. Louis	822
Chicago	806
Milwaukee	796
Pittsburgh	708
Cincinnati	676

Win Totals	
15 Seasons	
St. Louis	1274
Milwaukee	1206
Chicago	1162
Cincinnati	1111
Pittsburgh	1072



Photo via MLB

STADIUM SPOTLIGHT Busch Stadium

There is no city in America that loves their baseball team quite like St. Louis loves the Cardinals. From live music inside and outside the stadium, the family-friendly atmosphere, and the buzz before the first pitch has even been thrown, it's a euphoric experience. Ballpark Village adds to the mystique of Busch Stadium, a premiere dining and entertainment district outside the stadium. Salt & Smoke is the best restaurant and BBQ option and it's highly recommended that you carve out a way to make it happen. Visit the upper concourse behind home plate to get a view of the city that includes the famous St. Louis arch. The Cardinals Hall of Fame is also a must-see.

Stadium Rank: 7

2023 Statistical Leaders

Batting Average	Home Runs	RBI
1. Cody Bellinger - CHC - .307	1. Nolan Gorman - STL - 27	1. Cody Bellinger - CHC - 97
2. William Contreras - MIL - .289	2. Cody Bellinger - CHC - 26	2. Nolan Arenado - STL - 93
3. Seiya Suzuki - CHC - .285	2. Jack Suwinski - PIT - 26	3. Spencer Steer - CIN - 86
4. Nico Hoerner - CHC - .283	2. Christopher Morel - CHC - 26	3. Carlos Santana - PIT/MIL - 86
5. TJ Friedl - CIN - .279	5. Paul Goldschmidt - STL - 25	5. Bryan Reynolds - PIT - 84
6. Christian Yelich - MIL - .278	6. Bryan Reynolds - PIT - 24	5. Ian Happ - CHC - 84
7. Spencer Steer - CIN - .271	6. Willy Adames - MIL - 24	7. Paul Goldschmidt - STL - 80
7. Ke'Bryan Hayes - PIT - .271	8. Spencer Steer - CIN - 23	7. Willy Adames - MIL - 80
9. Paul Goldschmidt - STL - .268	8. Carlos Santana - PIT/MIL - 23	7. Dansby Swanson - CHC - 80
10. Nolan Arenado - STL - .266	8. Patrick Wisdom - CHC - 23	10. William Contreras - MIL - 78

Matt McClain

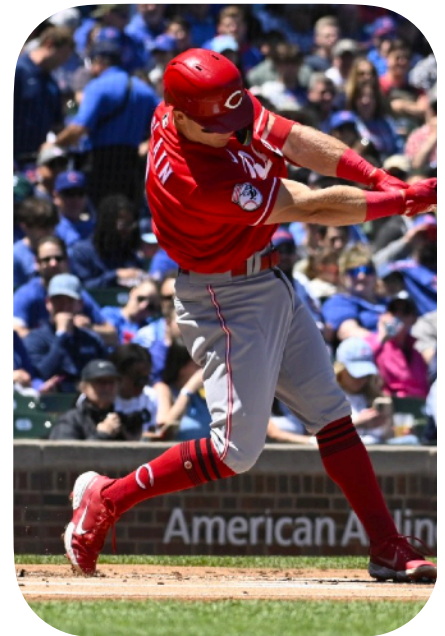


Photo via Sports Illustrated

ERA (min 162 IP)	Strikeouts	Stolen Bases
1. Justin Steele - CHC - 3.06	1. Freddy Peralta - MIL - 210	1. Nico Hoerner - CHC - 43
2. Corbin Burnes - MIL - 3.39	1. Mitch Keller - PIT - 210	2. Elly De La Cruz - CIN - 35
3. Freddy Peralta - MIL - 3.86	3. Corbin Burnes - MIL - 200	3. Christian Yelich - MIL - 28
4. Mitch Keller - PIT - 4.21	4. Justin Steele - CHC - 176	4. TJ Friedl - CIN - 27
5. Johan Oviedo - PIT - 4.31	5. Johan Oviedo - PIT - 158	4. Tommy Edman - STL - 27
6. Miles Mikolas - STL - 4.78	6. Hunter Greene - CIN - 152	6. Brice Turang - MIL - 26
	7. Drew Smyly - CHC - 141	7. Ji Hwan Bae - PIT - 24
	8. Jameson Taillon - CHC - 140	8. Jake Fraley - CIN - 21
	9. Miles Mikolas - STL - 137	9. Cody Bellinger - CHC - 20
	10. Rich Hill - PIT - 129	10. Will Benson - CIN - 19

5th and Goal On YouTube



DID YOU KNOW

Division winners in the NL Central have not fared well in the postseason. The last division winner to actually *win* a postseason series is the 2019 St. Louis Cardinals, and they were promptly swept 4-0 in the NLCS. Division winners have a playoff record of just 1-13 since that same NLCS series. With teams like the Reds and Pirates seemingly on the rise, will they push the division to be more competitive in October?

Past Division Winners





CHICAGO CUBS

National League Central



11244
FRANCHISE WINS

83-79
2023 SEASON

2nd
DIVISION

#4
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Chicago, IL - Wrigley Field (41,649)
Manager: Craig Counsell (0-0, 1st Season)

Go Cubs Go (to the Postseason)

The Cubs are looking to end their three-year postseason drought and to claim a playoff victory for the first time since 2017. 2023 showed promise and after a red-hot August that featured an 18-9 record, the Cubs seemed poised for a Wild Card berth. Unfortunately, September did not go nearly as well. In the middle of the month the Cubs lost eight of ten, finished by losing four of five games, and found themselves on the wrong end of two extra-inning walk off games. The Cubs decided to part ways with David Ross and they stole manager Craig Counsell from division opponent Milwaukee. Counsell guided the Brewers to division titles in 2021 and 2023 and the expectation is for him to do the same with the Cubs in 2024 given that he is now the highest paid manager in the sport. Given a couple of key additions to the roster, those expectations may very well become reality.

Batting

After a remarkable comeback season, the Cubs inked **Cody Bellinger** to a 3-year, \$80 million contract. Whether it was the change of scenery or another year removed from a complicated shoulder injury, in 2023 with the Cubs, Bellinger played much closer to his MVP season of 2019 complete with a slash line of .307/.356/.525, 26 home runs, 97 RBI, and a career-high 20 stolen bases. He's a capable defender at either first base or in the outfield. Speaking of defense, **Ian Happ** has won gold gloves in back-to-back years and he has never had a season below 100 OPS+. His .360 OBP was just a point shy of his career-best thanks to 99 walks and reflective of his development as a hitter. **Seiya Suzuki** committed a painful error that essentially sealed the Cubs' postseasonless-fate. While that memory is probably seared into the minds of then-hopeful Cubs fans, he put together a very solid season in 2023 in his second season in Major League Baseball following a career in Japan. His banged 20 home runs and finished the year with an OPS of .842. Assuming Bellinger is playing first, the centerfield position will go to either **Mike Tauchman** or **Patrick Wisdom**.

Nico Hoerner has turned himself into a terrific leadoff hitter with a gold glove at second base. The Cubs added another gold glove at shortstop in **Dansby Swanson** who won the award again in 2023 while being named to his second All Star team. His offense took a step back after playing in all 162 games in 2022 with the Braves, but he increased his walks in 2023 and he has hit 20 or more home runs in each of the last three seasons. **Christopher Morel** played six different positions for the Cubs in 2023 alone while hitting 26 home runs in each of the last three seasons. The DH position is up for grabs but it could go to veteran **Garrett Cooper**, but that's only if he's healthy, which has been a big problem the past two seasons. Fellow veteran **Yan Gomes** returns at catcher with rookie **Miguel Amaya** as the backup backstop. **Michael Busch** has plus power and could factor into the lineup as well.

Pitching

Justin Steele had not only a breakout season but a Cy Young-caliber season in 2023. He pitched 173.1 innings with a very respectable 3.06 ERA and he has an uncanny ability to keep the baseball in the yard. The Cubs found success with the signing of Seiya Suzuki from Japan and the front office is trying their hand again with the addition of **Shota Imanaga**. The lefty was signed to a four-year, \$53 million contract in the offseason and his strength is a nasty splitter that he pairs with a mid-90s fastball. Steele was very complementary of Imanaga this spring and the two could become the Central's best one-two punch at the top of the rotation. After a 14-5 record in 2022 with the Yankees, **Jameson Taillon** couldn't replicate his success with the Cubs and his ERA ballooned out to a career-worst 4.84 and his spring was delayed due to injury. **Kyle Hendricks** was once the Cubs' ace but he did have a bit of a resurgence in 2023 and the Cubs exercised their team option of his contract.

The Bellinger and Imanaga offseason signings received most of the attention, but the free agent signing of **Héctor Neris** could be just as impactful. The seasoned veteran was sensational with the Houston Astros in 2023 and he held batters to just a .174 average over 71 appearances in the 'pen.

The Bottom Line

The Cubs are the real deal in 2024. Not only is the current roster set up for success, but the farm system features several prospects who could make a positive impact at the major league level as soon as this season. Chicago scored better than five runs a game and the offense should again guide the Cubbies to success in 2024. If there's concern for this team, it's pitching. Jameson Taillon and Kyle Hendricks are older and the Cubs will be potentially relying on rookies **Jordan Wicks** or **Ben Brown** for additional help with the departure of Marcus Stroman. However, Imanaga has the chance to be a star and Justin Steele is a legitimate Cy Young candidate. Craig Counsell hasn't found any postseason success outside of the 2018 team that was a game away from the World Series, but he's been successful in the regular season and could be the perfect hire for the Cubs to get back to October baseball.

2024 Projection: 90-72, 1st in NL Central

Dansby Swanson

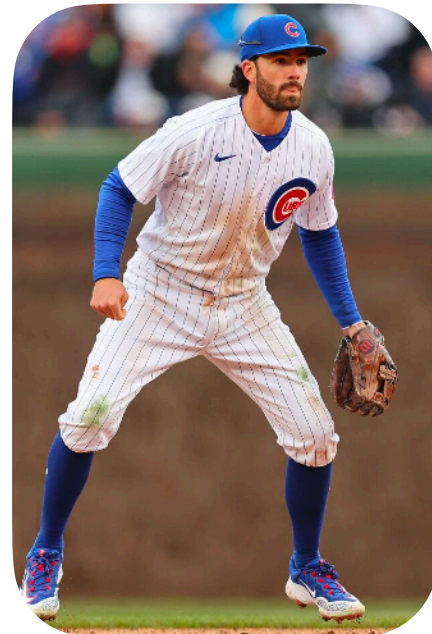



Photo via Chicago Sun-Times



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 5.06 (6th)
 HITS - 1399 (11th)
 HR - 196 (15th)
 ERA - 4.08 (14th)
 SO - 1377 (19th)
 FD% - .984% (19th)

Seiya Suzuki

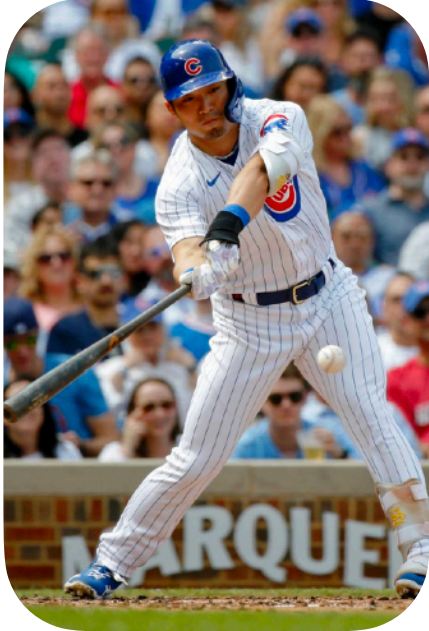
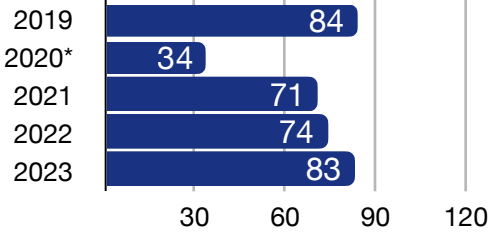


Photo via The Japan Times

CUBS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



22 < Number to Know

In 2023, the Cubs had the seventh-fewest saves of the 30 MLB clubs and blew 22 saves in 57 total opportunities. The bullpen could make or break the season in 2024.



Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH

Pete Crow-Armstrong - OF

With the re-signing of Cody Bollinger, PCA is scheduled to begin the season with triple-A Iowa. However, he may not be there long, especially if Mike Tauchman or Patrick Wisdom don't provide much offense while playing centerfield. His major league debut was far from that of a Hollywood movie. Instead, he went 0-14 with 7 strikeouts and he was caught stealing on 50% of his attempts. The early part of spring training hasn't gone much better, but it's probably unfair to read too much into those numbers. However, his minor league season in 2023, split between double-A Tennessee and triple-A Iowa, was much better. He hit .283 with 46 extra bases, 37 stolen bases, and an OPS of .876. He is also a great defender and is only now turning 22 years old.

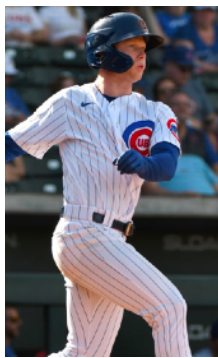


Photo via Bleed Cubbie Blue

Projected Lineup

			'23 AVG
2	Nico Hoerner	2B	.283
7	Dansby Swanson	SS	.244
8	Ian Happ	LF	.248
24	Cody Bellinger	1B	.307
27	Seiya Suzuki	RF	.285
5	Christopher Morel	3B	.247
41	Garrett Cooper	DH	.251
15	Yan Gomes	C	.267
40	Mike Tauchman	CF	.252

Projected Rotation

			'23 ERA
35	Justin Steele	SP	3.06
50	Jameson Taillon	SP	4.84
18	Shota Imanaga	SP	-
28	Kyle Hendricks	SP	3.74
36	Jordan Wicks	SP	4.41
73	Albert Alozoly	CL	2.67

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Justin Steele - SP



2023 Statistics

APP IP ERA K BB
30 173.1 3.06 176 36

In 2022, Justin Steele pitched to a 3.18 ERA over 24 starts and 119 innings. As it turns out, his performance was a sign of things to come for a pitcher who had spent six years in the minor leagues before a brief major league debut in 2021. In 2023 he allowed just 0.7 home runs per nine innings, the best mark in the National League. He relies heavily on a two-pitch mix of a fastball and a slider, but he's been very effective. Steele's fastball has deceptive, even random movement which makes it extremely difficult for batters to square up. Steele is aiming for 200 innings in 2024.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024

					TEX 28 7:35			TEX 30 7:05
TEX 31 2:35	COL 2:20	COL 7:40	COL 7:40	COL 7:40		LAD 5 2:20	LAD 6 4:05	
LAD 7 2:20	SD 8 9:40	SD 9 10:15	SD 10 6:40			SEA 12 9:40	SEA 13 9:40	
SEA 14 4:10	ARI 15 9:40	ARI 16 8:40	ARI 17 3:40	MIA 18 7:40	MIA 19 2:20	MIA 20 2:20		
MIA 21 2:20		HOU 23 7:40	HOU 24 7:40	HOU 25 2:20	BOS 26 7:10	BOS 27 4:10		
BOS 28 7:00	NYM 29 7:10	NYM 30 7:10						

May 2024

					NYM 1 7:10	NYM 2 1:10	MIL 3 2:20	MIL 4 2:20
MIL 5 2:20	SD 6 7:40	SD 7 7:40	SD 8 2:20			PIT 10 6:40	PIT 11 4:05	
PIT 12 1:35	ATL 13 7:20	ATL 14 7:20	ATL 15 7:20	PIT 16 7:40	PIT 17 2:20	PIT 18 2:20		
PIT 19 2:20		ATL 21 7:20	ATL 22 7:20	ATL 23 7:20	STL 24 8:15	STL 25 7:15		
STL 26 7:00	MIL 27 4:10	MIL 28 7:40	MIL 29 7:40	MIL 30 1:10	CIN 31 2:20			

June 2024

								CIN 1 7:15
CIN 2 2:20		CWS 4 8:05	CWS 5 8:05	CIN 6 7:10	CIN 7 7:10	CIN 8 4:10		
CIN 9 1:40		TB 11 6:50	TB 12 6:50	TB 13 6:50	STL 14 2:20	STL 15 2:20		
STL 16 2:20	SF 17 8:05	SF 18 8:05	SF 19 2:20		NYM 21 2:20	NYM 22 2:20		
NYM 23 2:20	SF 24 9:45	SF 25 9:45	SF 26 9:45	SF 27 3:45	MIL 28 8:10	MIL 29 4:10		
MIL 30 2:10								

July 2024

		PHI 2 8:05	PHI 3 8:05	PHI 4 2:20	LAA 5 2:20	LAA 6 2:20		
LAA 7 2:20		BAL 9 6:35	BAL 10 6:35	BAL 11 6:35	STL 12 8:15	STL 13 2:15		
STL 14 2:15		All-Star Break - Arlington, TX			ARI 19 2:20	ARI 20 7:15		
ARI 21 2:20	MIL 22 8:05	MIL 23 8:05	MIL 24 2:20		KC 26 8:10	KC 27 7:10		
KC 28 2:10	CIN 29 7:10	CIN 30 7:10	CIN 31 7:10					

August 2024

						STL 1 8:05	STL 2 2:20	STL 3 2:20
STL 4 2:20	MIN 5 8:05	MIN 6 8:05	MIN 7 2:20			CWS 9 8:10	CWS 10 7:15	
	CLE 12 6:40	CLE 13 6:40	CLE 14 6:40			TOR 16 2:20	TOR 17 2:20	
TOR 18 2:20		DET 20 8:05	DET 21 8:05	DET 22 2:20	MIA 23 7:10	MIA 24 4:10		
MIA 25 1:40	PIT 26 6:40	PIT 27 6:40	PIT 28 12:35		WSH 30 6:45	WSH 31 4:05		

September 2024

WSH 1 1:35	PIT 2 7:40	PIT 3 7:40	PIT 4 7:40			NYN 6 2:20	NYN 7 2:20	
NYN 8 2:20	LAD 9 10:10	LAD 10 10:10	LAD 11 10:10			COL 13 8:40	COL 14 8:10	
COL 15 3:10	OAK 16 7:40	OAK 17 7:40	OAK 18 2:20	WSH 19 7:40	WSH 20 2:20	WSH 21 2:20		
WSH 22 2:20	PHI 23 6:40	PHI 24 6:40	PHI 25 6:05			CIN 27 2:20	CIN 28 2:20	
CIN 29 3:20								

HOME

AWAY



CINCINNATI REDS

National League Central



10857
FRANCHISE WINS

82-80
2023 SEASON

3rd
DIVISION

#5
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Cincinnati, OH - Great American Ballpark (43,500)
Manager: David Bell (333-375, 6th Season)

Can Young Reds Reach Postseason Play?

Before the commencement of the 2023 season, Reds fans were bracing themselves for what appeared to be another long rebuilding year similar to the 100-loss campaign of 2022. Instead, a collection of young rookies sparked a revival in the Queen City and turned the Reds into one of the most exciting teams in all of MLB. The team faltered in August and September and missed out on a postseason appearance despite holding an NL Central lead or Wild Card position at various times throughout the season. However, the 2023 squad brought much needed hope for the future and revitalized a baseball-crazed city.

Batting

No team benefitted more from the rule changes in Major League Baseball more than the Reds. Cincinnati went from 25th in stolen bases in 2022 with just 58 to an MLB-best 190 in 2023. With speed across the entire lineup, the Reds were willing to play small ball and create havoc on the base paths. And no player caused more havoc than **Elly De La Cruz**. He stole three bases (including home) in just two pitches against Milwaukee and in addition to his blinding speed, he boasts absurd arm strength at third or shortstop. He still has room to grow in his plate approach, especially against off speed pitches, but when he gets a hold of a mistake, the ball goes a *long* way. He is part of a crowded but talented infield that includes a budding star in shortstop **Matt McClain**. **Jonathan India** hasn't been able to replicate his magical Rookie of the Year season of 2021 but still provides quality offense at the second base position and is in many ways the heartbeat of the team. The Reds picked up **Jeimer Candelario** in the offseason and he'll have the opportunity to be the everyday third baseman but could be used at other positions, too. **Christian Encarnacion-Strand** will take first, a position that has long been occupied by Joey Votto, whose beloved Reds tenure has come to an end. **Spencer Steer**, **TJ Friedl**, **Will Benson**, and **Jake Fraley** make up the outfield and all pose a long ball threat. **Tyler Stephenson** saw his offense dip quite a bit in 2023 but he was excellent in both 2021 and 2022 when healthy and he can also play first base in a pinch.

Pitching

Pitching is what ultimately kept the Reds out of the postseason last year. It didn't help that both **Hunter Greene** and **Nick Lodolo**, the two arms at the top of the rotation, both missed extended time and it's also a challenge to pitch in the very-batter-friendly Great American Ballpark. However, the bullpen has been a consistent problem over the last few seasons (although it's worth noting a bullpen ERA improvement of 4.72 in 2022 to 4.11 in 2023). The front office added a couple of bullpen arms in Cincinnati native **Brent Suter** and **Nick Martinez**. Martinez appeared in 63 games with the Padres last season in what was his best statistical season. **Tejay Antone** has been excellent out of the pen, but he's been injury-prone and has pitched just 74.2 innings over the last three seasons with an ERA of just 2.14 and a K/9 of 11.3. **Sam Moll** was dominant for Cincinnati after being acquired from Oakland at the deadline. Closer **Alexis Díaz** was an All Star last season and converted 37 of 40 save opportunities. **Lucas Sims**, **Buck Farmer**, and **Ian Gibaut** were regulars out of the bullpen in 2023 and could be again in 2024.

The silver lining of the injuries in the rotation is an opportunity opened for players like **Andrew Abbott**. He burst on the scene as a rookie and didn't give up his first Major League run until his fourth start. He took an ERA of 2.35 into August and had an up and down last two months of the season, finishing with an ERA of 3.87 and a 8-6 record. However, he proved that he is a very capable starter and should be that much more effective if he can limit the long ball (16 allowed in 109.1 IP). Hunter Greene is a flamethrower who, when healthy, throws harder than any other starter in the game. **Graham Ashcraft** had a miserable stretch of starts in May and June where he allowed 7 or more runs in four of six starts but was far more effective in July and August. If he picks up where he left off in 2023, the Reds will benefit tremendously. The biggest free agency splash by Cincinnati in terms of dollars spent was starter **Frankie Montas**. A shoulder injury caused him to miss essentially all of 2023 with the Yankees. However, he made every start in 2021 (and finished sixth in Cy Young voting with Oakland) and made 27 more in 2022. The Reds are banking on Montas returning to his "Athletics" form and not the 6.35 ERA pitcher he was when he with the Yankees.

The Bottom Line

No, the Reds didn't make the postseason last year, but what they did do was inject life into a franchise that was stuck in a seemingly-endless rebuild. While there are ongoing concerns about ownership's willingness to spend money, the future is now and it is bright. The young Reds will once again utilize their tremendous speed and will flirt with 200 stolen bases and could certainly reach 5 runs per game in 2024. Expect David Bell to utilize several different lineups given the depth of quality bats in the infield. The success or failure of the season likely hinges on the pitching staff. The rotation and bullpen are deeper than last year but it's imperative that the staff stays healthy. Chasing the Cubs and Brewers will be tough, but the Reds owned first place in the division for nearly a month in 2023 and this team should be improved, in theory.

2024 Projection: 84-78, 2nd in NL Central

Elly De La Cruz

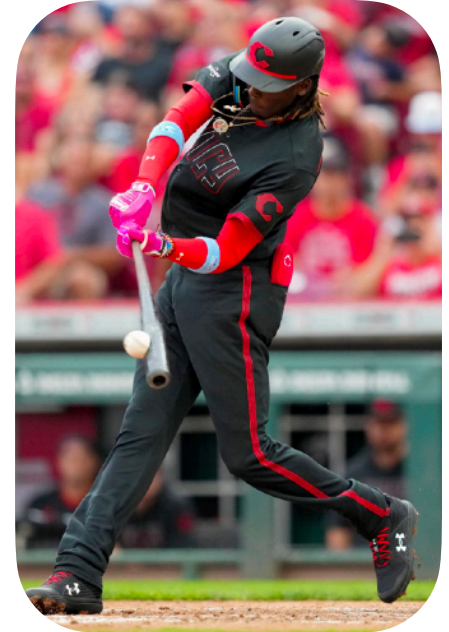



Photo via SBNation



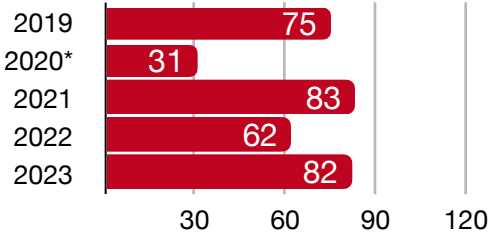
2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.83 (9th)
 HITS - 1371 (15th)
 HR - 198 (14th)
 ERA - 4.83 (25th)
 SO - 1381 (18th)
 FD% - .984% (19th)

Hunter Greene



Photo via USA Today

REDS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



190 < Number to Know

The number of stolen bases by the Reds in 2023, the most in Major League Baseball and the most by a Cincinnati team since 1997.

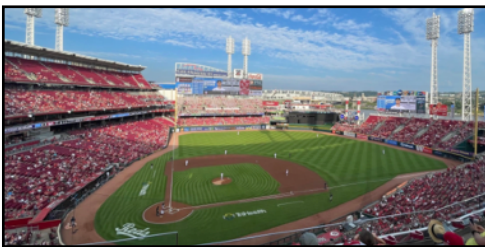


Photo via Ballparks of Baseball

PROSPECT TO WATCH

NOELVI MARTE - SS

If Marté was feeling the pressure of living up to the hype like other Reds rookies did in 2023, he certainly didn't show it. He made his Major League debut in August and despite making only 123 plate appearances, he racked up 36 hits and will open the 2024 season with a 16-game hit streak and a 22-game on-base streak! At just 22, Marté set to be a key piece of the Reds' young core. The only thing preventing him from seeing the field more in 2024 is his defense (5 errors in just 68 chances at third base) and a congested infield. However, he'll have every chance to become the everyday third baseman this season and his raw power is hard to ignore.

Note: Marté was suspended 80 games by MLB for violating the performance enhancing drug policy.

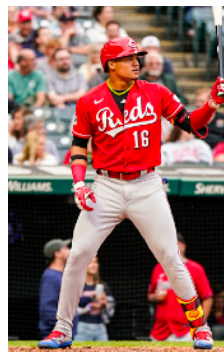


Photo via Cincinnati Reds

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
29	TJ Friedl	CF	.279
9	Matt McLain	2B	.290
7	Spencer Steer	LF	.271
3	Jeimer Candelario	3B	.251
33	C. Encarnacion-Strand	1B	.270
6	Jonathan India	DH	.244
44	Elly De La Cruz	SS	.235
30	Will Benson	RF	.275
37	Tyler Stephenson	C	.243

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
47	Frankie Montas	SP	-
21	Hunter Greene	SP	4.82
41	Andrew Abbott	SP	3.87
51	Graham Ashcraft	SP	4.76
40	Nick Lodolo	SP	6.29
43	Alexis Díaz	CL	3.07

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Matt McLain - SS/2B



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
89 .290 .864 16 50

De La Cruz understandably received most of the national media attention for his play as a rookie, but Matt McLain was the most valuable Red in 2023. He quickly asserted himself as one of the best offense shortstops in the game and displayed a remarkable blend of power and speed. Notably, 43 of his 106 hits went for extra bases and both his line drive and hard hit rates were well above league average. He is a capable defender and was very solid at shortstop although he may be the everyday second baseman in 2024. You're looking at a potential perennial All Star.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024													
					WSH 4:10					WSH 4:10	30		
WSH 1:40	PHI 6:40	1	PHI 6:40	2	PHI 1:05	3			NYM 6:40	5	NYM 4:10	6	
NYM 1:40	7	MIL 6:40	8	MIL 6:40	9	MIL 6:40	10	MIL 1:10	11	CWS 7:40	12	CWS 2:10	13
CWS 2:10	14	SEA 9:42	15	SEA 8:40	16	SEA 4:10	17			LAA 6:40	19	LAA 6:40	20
LAA 1:40	21	PHI 6:40	22	PHI 6:40	23	PHI 6:40	24	PHI 1:10	25	TEX 8:05	26	TEX 4:05	27
TEX 2:35	28	SD 9:40	29	SD 9:40	30								

May 2024													
					SD 4:10	1				BAL 6:10	3	BAL 6:40	4
BAL 4:10	5			ARI 6:40	7	ARI 6:40	8	ARI 1:10	9	SF 10:15	10	SF 7:15	11
SF 4:05	12	ARI 9:40	13	ARI 8:40	14	ARI 3:40	15	LAD 10:10	16	LAD 10:10	17	LAD 9:10	18
LAD 4:10	19			SD 6:40	21	SD 6:40	22	SD 1:10	23	LAD 7:10	24	LAD 7:15	25
LAD 1:40	26	STL 4:10	27	STL 6:40	28	STL 1:10	29			CHC 2:20	31		

June 2024													
											CHC 7:15	1	
CHC 2:20	2	COL 8:40	3	COL 8:40	4	COL 3:10	5	CHC 7:10	6	CHC 7:10	7	CHC 4:10	8
CHC 9				CLE 7:10	11	CLE 7:10	12			MIL 14	MIL 15		
MIL 2:10	16	PIT 6:40	17	PIT 6:40	18	PIT 12:35	19			BOS 7:10	21	BOS 4:10	22
BOS 1:40	23	PIT 7:10	24	PIT 7:10	25	PIT 1:10	26	STL 7:45	27	STL 8:15	28	STL 2:15	29
STL 2:15	30												

July 2024													
DET 1:40	7	COL 7:10	8	COL 7:10	9	COL 7:10	10	COL 1:10	11	MIA 7:10	12	MIA 4:10	13
MIA 1:40	14												
WSH 1:35	21	ATL 7:20	22	ATL 7:20	23	ATL 12:20	24						
TB 1:40	28	CHC 7:10	29	CHC 7:10	30	CHC 7:10	31						

August 2024													
SF 1:40	4	MIA 6:40	5	MIA 6:40	6	MIA 6:40	7	MIA 6:10	8	MIL 8:10	9	MIL 7:10	10
MIL 2:10	11	STL 6:40	12	STL 6:40	13	STL 6:40	14			KC 6:40	16	KC 6:40	17
KC 1:40	18	TOR 7:07	19	TOR 7:07	20	TOR 7:07	21	PIT 6:40	22	PIT 6:40	23	PIT 6:40	24
PIT 1:35	25			OAK 6:40	27	OAK 6:40	28	OAK 5:10	29	MIL 6:40	30	MIL 7:15	31

September 2024													
MIL 12:10	1	HOU 4:10	2			HOU 6:40	4	HOU 1:10	5	NYM 7:10	6	NYM 4:10	7
NYM 1:40	8			STL 7:45	10	STL 7:45	11	STL 1:15	12	MIN 8:10	13	MIN 7:10	14
MIN 2:10	15			ATL 6:40	17	ATL 6:40	18	ATL 1:10	19	PIT 6:40	20	PIT 6:40	21
PIT 1:10	22			CLE 6:40	24	CLE 6:40	25			CHC 2:20	27	CHC 2:20	28
CHC 3:20	29												

HOME AWAY



MILWAUKEE BREWERS

National League Central



x0



x1
NL

4215
FRANCHISE WINS

92-70
2023 SEASON

1st
DIVISION

#3
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Milwaukee, WI - American Family Field (41,900)
 Manager: Pat Murphy (0-0, 1st Season)

2023: Lost in NLWC

Brewers Going Back-to-Back?

The Brewers claimed division titles in 2021 and again in 2023 thanks to superb pitching by both the rotation and the bullpen. The one-two punch of Corbin Burnes and Brandon Woodruff paved the way to 90 or more wins in each of those seasons. Now, the former has been traded to the Baltimore Orioles and the latter will likely miss all of the 2024 season with shoulder surgery. Can the Brewers navigate another run to a division title without their dynamic duo?

Batting

For a team that won 92 games and an NL Central title, the offense was actually quite sluggish. They ranked below average in nearly every category and the back portion of the lineup struggled. **Christian Yelich** suffered through a couple of frustrating seasons following a broken leg injury in 2021 and 2022 but had a resurgence at the plate in 2023 and looked much more like the player who won an MVP in 2018 and finished runner-up in 2019. His power returned a bit in 2023 and included 19 home runs and 34 doubles and he also swiped 28 bases. He's by far the longest-tenured Brewer in a lineup that features a couple of new faces in **Rhys Hoskins** and **Joey Ortiz**. Hoskins missed all of 2023 with a torn ACL suffered in the spring but when healthy, he's a prototypical power hitter that hits plenty of home runs, draws walks, and also strikes out at a high clip. **Joey Ortiz** was one of the major pieces of the Corbin Burnes deal and he played in his first 15 major league games last year for the Orioles. He hit .321 with triple-A Norfolk last season in 88 games and while he's not a huge home run threat at the major league level, he did smack 30 doubles and stretch out four triples.

Ortiz is just one of the young Milwaukee bats who will be featured in the lineup. **Jackson Chourio** is the top prospect in the system and should start Opening Day in center field. **Brice Turang** debuted last season and while he was a bit inconsistent at the plate he is a tremendous defender at second. Fellow 2023 rookie **Sal Frelick** was a little more successful at the plate although in a much smaller sample size. He drew 28 walks in only 223 plate appearances and he too proved he is up to the task on defense. **William Contreras** had a great season at the plate and hit for both power and average and earned a Silver Slugger award at catcher. Also at the top of the lineup is **Garrett Mitchell** who was held to just 19 games last season due to a shoulder injury. **Willy Adames** is also looking for a bounce-back season after a disappointing year at the plate although he did still hit 24 home runs and draw a career-high 71 walks.

Pitching

The duo of Burnes and Woodruff are gone, but that doesn't mean that the pitching staff is devoid of talent. **Freddy Peralta** is the expected Opening Day starter, and, outside of his very last start of the 2023 campaign, he finished the season extremely strong. An ERA that was as high as 4.70 after the All Star break fell to 3.86 by the end of the season. He posted a career-best 7.9% walk rate while striking out 210 batters. The nickname "Fastball Freddy" certainly applies given the high-velocity and even his changeup registers in the high 80s. **Wade Miley** has had some of his best seasons well into his thirties which includes last season where he went 9-4 with an ERA of 3.14, although injuries held him to just 120.1 innings. In what is an extremely odd trend, Miley hasn't pitched more than 80 innings in an "even" season (only 37.0 innings with the Cubs in 2022 and 14.1 innings with the Reds in 2020). Milwaukee signed **Jakob Junis** in free agency. He made 36 of his 40 appearances last year for the San Francisco Giants out of the bullpen but he is traditionally a starter and that's the role he should have with the Brewers. **Colin Rea** pitched a career-high 124.2 innings but he's still yet to produce a season with an above-average ERA+. Former first round draft pick **DL Hall** was also a key piece in the Burnes deal and has a chance to earn the last rotation spot even though he has just one MLB start under his belt.

The bullpen was fantastic in 2023 (3.40 ERA, best in NL) and figures to be a key strength for the Brewers again in 2024. It helps to have arguably the best reliever in the game in **Devin Williams**. His changeup, nicknamed the "Airbender", is one of the most unhittable pitches in baseball. The pitch typically breaks more than 17 inches (the width of the plate) horizontally and moves so much that some have defined it as more of a "screwball". Find an overlay of his mid-90s fastball and his "Airbender" and you begin to understand why he's been so dominant. **Joel Payamps**, **Trevor Megill**, **Hoby Milner**, **Bryse Wilson** and **Abner Uribe** are all quality bullpen arms.

The Bottom Line

In order to find success in 2024, the Brewers simply must find more offense than they did in 2023. Even though the pitching staff should still be a strength, it's unrealistic to expect Brewers pitching to accomplish the MLB-best 3.71 ERA they posted in 2023. Improvement on offense is largely dependent on young hitters taking the next step. That development will now occur without manager Craig Counsell who can be found in a rival dugout on the Northside of the Chicago. There is plenty of young talent on the roster and the long-term success of the team appears to be promising. However, this season might be a step backward in order to take two steps forward

2024 Projection: 82-80, 3rd in NL Central

Christian Yelich

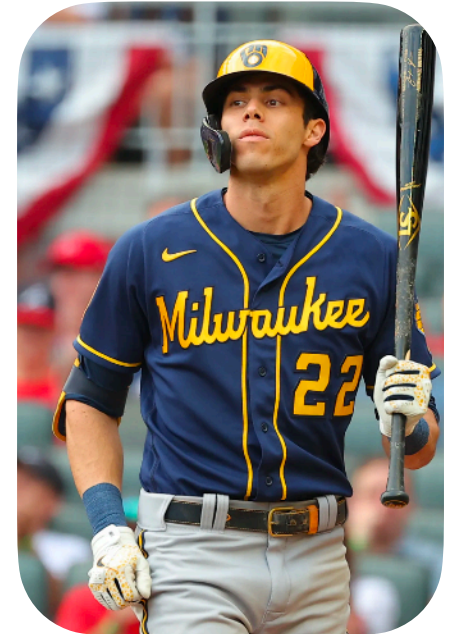



Photo via Milwaukee Journal Sentinel



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.49 (17th)
 HITS - 1290 (26th)
 HR - 165 (24th)
 ERA - 3.71 (1st)
 SO - 1425 (14th)
 FD% - .987% (8th)

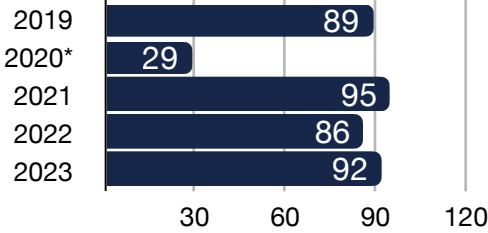
BREWERS

Freddy Peralta



Photo via Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

BREWERS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



.531 < Number to Know

Craig Counsell's career winning percentage with the Brewers (his 707 wins are most in franchise history). His longtime assistant Pat Murphy now assumes the Brewers manager position.

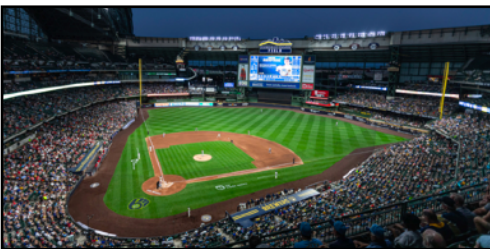


Photo via Sports Business Journal

PROSPECT TO WATCH Jackson Chourio - CF

Jackson Chourio isn't just the Milwaukee Brewers' top prospect but he's listed by many publications as the #2 overall prospect across Major League Baseball behind only Jackson Holliday. Unlike Holliday, who was drafted out of high school, Chourio was signed out of Venezuela in 2021 and he went right to work in the minor leagues. In the better part of three years, his minor league slash line is .286/.347/.490 including 47 home runs and 68 stolen bases. According to MLB, his 22 home run and 44 stolen base season in 2023 was the first 20-40 season by a teenager since some guy named Ronald Acuña Jr. His blend of power and speed at such an early age makes him an immediate candidate for Rookie of the Year contention in 2024 and he's a potential future superstar.



Photo via Brew Crew Ball

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
5	Garrett Mitchell	LF	.246
24	William Contreras	C	.289
22	Christian Yelich	DH	.278
12	Rhys Hoskins	1B	-
27	Willy Adames	SS	.217
10	Sal Frelick	RF	.246
11	Jackson Chourio	CF	-
2	Brice Turang	2B	.218
3	Joey Ortiz	3B	.212

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
51	Freddy Peralta	SP	3.86
20	Wade Miley	SP	3.14
35	Jakob Junis	SP	3.87
48	Colin Rea	SP	4.55
37	DL Hall	SP	3.26
38	Devin Williams	CL	1.53

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Rhys Hoskins - 1B



2022 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
156 .246 .794 30 79

The Brewers hit only 165 home runs which ranked them 24th in MLB. If Hoskins returns to form following an ACL injury that cost him the entire 2023 season, he'll certainly help increase the Brew Crew's power numbers. In 2022 he clubbed 30 home runs and he's historically drawn a lot of walks including leading the league in that category in 2019. He signed a one-year, \$16 million deal that includes two player options in 2025 and 2026. He's never slugged under .450 and he's only now turning 30, so it's possible he's able to bounce back quickly and become a key contributor.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024													

May 2024													

June 2024													

July 2024													

August 2024													

September 2024													

HOME AWAY




ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

National League Central



x11



x23
NL

11202
FRANCHISE WINS

71-91
2023 SEASON

5th
DIVISION

#22
FARM SYSTEM RANK

St. Louis, MO - Busch Stadium (46,000)
 Manager: Oliver Marmol (164-160, 3rd Season)

Rebounding From Rare Down Year

Cardinals fans hardly know how to deal with the season that unfolded in 2023. The last time St. Louis had a season with a win percentage of .438 or worse was in 1995 and even then the Cardinals didn't finish last place in the division like the 2023 team did. To find the last time the Cardinals finished last, you have to turn the clock back all the way to 1990. What went wrong for the redbirds in 2023 and can those issues be easily fixed in time to compete in a winnable division in 2024?

Batting

The St. Louis offense actually started the season relatively strong but faded down the stretch as injuries took their toll and the team's position in the standings certainly didn't help add any motivation. The lineup that manager Oliver Marmol put forth on Opening Day never played together again that season. The .989 fielding percentage, tied for third in MLB, was a misleading stat considering the Cardinals had an outs above average as a team of -6. **Jordan Walker** is a microcosm of that fielding statistic. Even though he was sent down to the minors after a month into his rookie season, his bat impressed and the 6'6" outfielder hit .276 with an OPS of .787 and showed some pop. His oWAR was 1.6 but he had so many struggles in right field that his -2.1 dWAR gave him an overall WAR of -0.1. In layman's terms, his bat did not make up for his poor defense. At just 22 years old, he has plenty of opportunity for growth. **Alec Burleson** had similar defensive struggles in left. On the flip side of Walker and Burleson is **Nolan Arenado** who finally saw his perfect streak of ten straight Gold Glove awards come to an end. He was still an All Star and while his offense came back to earth following a 2022 season in which he finished third in NL MVP voting, he hit 25+ home runs for the third straight season and drove in 93. 2022 MVP **Paul Goldschmidt** had a far more modest season in 2023, too, but in 13 big league seasons he has never finished with an OPS of below .800.

Wilson Contreras had the unenviable task of replacing future hall of famer Yadier Molina and while he provided an upgrade offensively, there was a bit of early season controversy in how he was managing the pitching staff. Longtime Giant **Brandon Crawford** is hopeful that a change of scenery will help him extend his already impressive playing career after his worst season at the plate in 2023. Rookie **Masyn Winn** is waiting in the wings at shortstop. Fan favorite **Matt Carpenter** is back for his second stint with the club and figures to be utilized off the bench. **Brendan Donovan** has quickly proven his ability to play multiple positions on defense and hit for a high average at the top of the lineup. **Lars Nootbar** and **Tommy Edman** will both factor into the St. Louis lineup, but both will start the season on the injured list.



Nolan Arenado

Photo via Sports Illustrated

Pitching


The Cardinals are hoping to take advantage of **Sonny Gray's** career best season in 2023. The right hander has been an All Star for three of the four teams he has pitched for and while a hamstring injury will cause him to miss his first couple of starts (including Opening Day), he has otherwise been fairly durable and pitched 175+ innings for the fourth team in his career. Nobody allowed fewer home runs per nine innings than Gray and the move to the relatively pitcher-friendly Busch Stadium shouldn't have too much of an impact, in theory. His FIP of 2.83 also led the majors but it seems very unlikely that he'll be as "fortunate" in 2024. The "silver lining" to Gray's injury is that **Zack Thompson** should again be given the opportunity to start and he was arguably the Cardinal's best rotation guy in the final two months of the season. **Miles Mikolas** has been a workhorse for the Cardinals and he topped 200 innings for the third time in his career thanks to a league-leading 35 starts. Unfortunately, his ERA grew to 4.78 in 2023, his worst mark as a Cardinal. Remarkably, **Kyle Gibson** threw 192 innings for Baltimore and his 33 starts were the most in the American League. His ERA of 4.73 is nearly identical to Mikolas'. **Lance Lynn** is back for his second stint with St. Louis and while his season numbers are dubious, he did pitch much better with the Dodgers in the regular season but got roughed up in the postseason. **Steven Matz** has been hampered by injuries in his first two years in St. Louis but showed promise last year and pitched to a 3.86 ERA.

The bullpen struggled last season, and not for a lack of effort by the front office to add arms, some of them quite expensive. Even more money has been utilized to bolster the bullpen in 2024 and the additions include **Andrew Kittredge** and **Keenan Middleton** as well as rookies **Riley O'Brien** and **Ryan Fernandez**. **Ryan Hensley** returns to the closing role after a solid but shortened season due to forearm issues.

The Bottom Line

On offense, there's no shortage of experience, Arenado, Goldschmidt, Crawford, and Carpenter have a combined 6,195 hits, 986 home runs, and 3,571 RBI in their collective careers. Unlike the division rival Cincinnati Reds who stole a league-leading 190 bases, the Cardinals don't possess loads of speed and will again be somewhat reliant on the long ball to score runs. Likewise, the rotation is full of veteran arms. Many of the starters made most, if not all, of their starts but will the Cardinals really be that fortunate in 2024? Even then, the results were somewhat mixed. In order to move on from 2023's disappointment, the Cardinals need to get younger and develop that talent, which could mean they are "sellers" yet again at the trade deadline.

2024 Projection: 77-85, 4th in NL Central



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.44 (19th)
 HITS - 1376 (14th)
 HR - 209 (12th)
 ERA - 4.79 (24th)
 SO - 1215 (29th)
 FD% - .989% (3rd)

Paul Goldschmidt

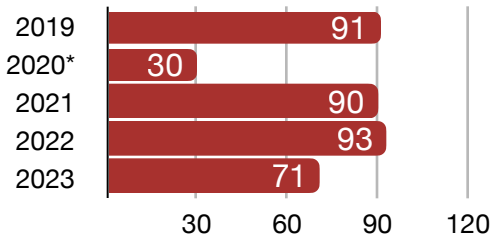


Photo via Sports Illustrated

Projected Lineup		'23 AVG	
33	Brendan Donovan	DH	.284
46	Paul Goldschmidt	1B	.268
16	Nolan Gorman	2B	.236
28	Nolan Arenado	3B	.266
40	Willson Contreras	C	.264
41	Alec Burleson	LF	.244
18	Jordan Walker	RF	.276
3	Dylan Carlson	CF	.219
35	Brandon Crawford	SS	.194

Projected Rotation		'23 ERA	
54	Sonny Gray	SP	2.79
39	Miles Mikolas	SP	4.78
44	Kyle Gibson	SP	4.73
31	Lance Lynn	SP	5.73
32	Steven Matz	SP	3.86
56	Ryan Helsley	CL	2.45

CARDINALS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



29.5 < Number to Know

The average age of the St. Louis Cardinals in 2023 (oldest in NL Central), a number that could go up with the additions of veterans like Lance Lynn, Brandon Crawford, and Matt Carpenter.

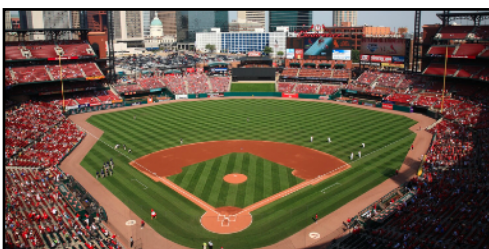


Photo via AFAR

PROSPECT TO WATCH Masyn Winn - SS

Let's throw out the small MLB sample size of 37 games that Masyn Winn produced in 2023. When he made his debut on August 18th against the New York Mets and registered his first career hit, the Cardinals were just beginning their final slide that saw the team finish 20 games below .500 for the first time in nearly three decades. Yes, he did have some major struggles at the plate and posted just a .172 average but certain statistics such as whiff and chase rates indicate that he was simply pressing in his time in the big leagues. He has Gold Glove potential at shortstop with a cannon for an arm, and what better mentor to have at shortstop than Brandon Crawford, a player with four Gold Gloves, a Silver Slugger, and three All-Star appearances?



Photo via Sports Illustrated

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
					LAD 4:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 9:10				
LAD 7:00	SD 9:40	SD 9:40	SD 4:10	MIA 4:15			MIA 2:15				
MIA 2:15	PHI 7:55	PHI 7:45	PHI 1:15			ARI 9:40	ARI 8:10				
ARI 4:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 8:40	OAK 3:37				MIL 8:15	MIL 2:15			
MIL 2:15	ARI 7:45	ARI 7:45	ARI 1:15				NYM 7:10	NYM 4:05			
NYM 1:40	DET 6:40	DET 6:40									

May 2024											
					DET 1:10		CWS 8:15	CWS 2:15			
CWS 2:15	NYM 7:45	NYM 7:45	NYM 1:15	MIL 7:40		MIL 8:10	MIL 7:15				
MIL 2:10	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:07				BOS 8:15	BOS 7:15			
BOS 2:15	BAL 7:45	BAL 7:45	BAL 1:15				CHC 8:15	CHC 7:15			
CHC 7:00	CIN 4:10	CIN 6:40	CIN 1:10				PHI 6:40				

June 2024											
										PHI 7:15	
PHI 1:35	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	COL 7:45	COL 8:15	COL 4:15					
COL 2:15		PIT 7:45	PIT 7:45	PIT 2:15	CHC 2:20	CHC 2:20					
CHC 2:20	MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40	MIA 12:40	SF 7:15					SF 2:15		
SF 2:15	ATL 7:45	ATL 7:45	ATL 7:15	CIN 7:45	CIN 8:15	CIN 2:15					
CIN 2:15											

July 2024											
					PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 12:35	WSH 6:45	WSH 4:05		
WSH 1:35	WSH 4:05	KC 7:45	KC 7:45				CHC 8:15	CHC 2:15			
CHC 2:15	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX						ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20			
ATL 1:35	PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 12:35				WSH 8:15	WSH 7:15			
WSH 2:15	TEX 7:45	TEX 7:45	TEX 2:15								

August 2024											
							CHC 8:05	CHC 2:20	CHC 2:20		
CHC 2:20		TB 7:45	TB 7:45	TB 7:15			KC 8:10	KC 7:10			
	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40				LAD 8:15	LAD 7:15			
LAD 2:15		MIL 7:45	MIL 7:45	MIL 2:15			MIN 8:10	MIN 7:10			
MIN 2:10	SD 7:45	SD 7:45	SD 7:45	SD 2:15			NYG 7:05	NYG 1:05			

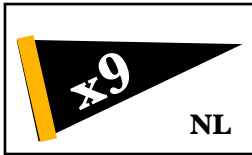
September 2024											
NYG 1:35	MIL 2:10	MIL 7:40	MIL 7:40				SEA 8:15	SEA 7:15			
SEA 2:15		CIN 7:45	CIN 7:45	CIN 1:15			TOR 7:07	TOR 3:07			
TOR 1:37	PIT 7:45	PIT 7:45	PIT 7:45	PIT 7:15			CLE 8:15	CLE 7:15			
CLE 2:15		COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 3:10			SF 10:15	SF 4:05			
SF 3:05											

HOME AWAY



PITTSBURGH PIRATES

National League Central



10763
FRANCHISE WINS

76-86
2023 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

#2
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Pittsburgh, PA - PNC Park (38,000)
Manager: Derek Shelton (218-328, 5th Season)

Hot Start in 2023 - Real or Not Real?

The biggest surprise of the early baseball season was the Pittsburgh Pirates, who started red hot with a 20-9 record and ended the month of April in first place in the NL Central. They actually held first place as late into the season as June 15th but a tough July (8-16 record) ultimately pushed the Bucs' season record below .500 for the eighth consecutive season. Was the torrid start a sign of things to come or was it just a flash in the pan in a relatively weak division? The 2024 season will provide the answer.

Batting

The Pirates were somewhat challenged offensively in 2023, in part because they hit just 159 home runs, the third fewest in the majors. **Bryan Reynolds** paced the Pittsburgh offense with an average of .263, 24 home runs, and 84 RBI. No Pittsburgh hitter had an OPS of .800 better but Reynolds got close with his mark of .790 and **Jack Suwinski** got even closer with his .793 OPS. In Suwinski's first full season in the majors, he hit 26 home runs and drew 75 walks for an on-base percentage of .339, although he did strike out 172 times. He's working on improving his plate appearances against lefties but he's one of the more underrated young hitters in the game. Potential standout **Oneil Cruz** suffered a very unfortunate fractured fibula in a collision at home plate just nine games into the 2023 season. He's played in only 98 career games in the majors, but when healthy he has a power bat and a cannon for an arm at shortstop. **Ke'Bryan Hayes** is entering his fifth year with the Pirates following a small resurgence offensively and he earned his first Gold Glove at third base. One of the best Pirates of all time, **Andrew McCutchen**, is entering his 11th season with Pittsburgh and 16th overall in the majors. He had a solid season in 2023 in his second stint with the Pirates and batted .256 with an OPS+ of 113. His days of playing in the outfield are pretty much done as he played just eight games in right field last year, but he's still a good enough hitter to warrant playing designated hitter and the insight and wisdom he can provide to younger hitters is invaluable. Two new additions in **Rowdy Tellez** and **Edward Olivares** should factor into the back half of the lineup. **Yasmani Grandal** is also a new face on the Pirates and should see some time behind the dish, but he's been a negative WAR player for the White Sox in each of the past two seasons. **Henry Davis** was also a negative WAR player but the 2021 first round pick has only 62 games of experience under his belt so it's still too early for a concrete assessment.

Pitching

After a very forgettable 2021 campaign that featured an ERA above 6.00, **Mitch Keller** has settled in nicely as the ace of the staff and he signed a handsome extension in the offseason. He was an All-Star for the first time in his career and set career bests in just about every category. **Johan Oviedo** was arguably the next most effective pitcher behind Keller but he had Tommy John surgery in December. Likewise, journeyman Rich Hill is gone. That leaves **Martin Pérez** as the next starter behind Keller. Pérez was a member of the World Series winning Texas Rangers and relies on the ground ball for his success. He was an All Star in 2022, but his ERA jumped back to his career average of 4.44 in 2023. **Marco Gonzales** joins Pittsburgh after seven years in Seattle and he's looking to bounce back from a 2023 season that was cut down to just 50 innings due to forearm surgery. **Luiz L. Ortiz** and **Jared Jones** are two arms that figure to play a role in the back portion of the rotation. Similarly, it may only be a matter of time before the first overall pick in the 2023 draft, **Paul Skenes**, makes his highly anticipated major league debut.

The bullpen gets an upgrade with the addition of flamethrower **Aroldis Chapman**. Even at the age of 36, he has somehow reinvented himself and hits triple digits on his fastball on a routine basis. He figures to be a set-up man in the eighth inning before turning it over to last year's closer **David Bednar**, who had a quality 2023 campaign that featured 39 saves and an ERA of just 2.00 across 67.1 innings. **Carmen Mlodzinski**, a 2020 first round draft pick, pitched well in his debut season out of the bullpen with an ERA of 2.25.

The Bottom Line

Will Pittsburgh be able to build on their early success from 2023? In the short term, the answer is probably no. Outside of Mitch Keller, the rotation is unproven and even Keller's ERA was above 4.00. There are a couple of new bats that arrived this offseason but those additions likely won't move the needle much on offense. In fact, the health of Oneil Cruz will prove to be far more impactful. The good news for the long-suffering Pittsburgh fans is that there are numerous prospects in the farm system with high potential, none more so than last year's first overall pick Paul Skenes. Several will make their MLB debut in 2024 and they will ideally become a core that will not only continue to push the Pirates rebuild forward but will eventually keep Pittsburgh in contention for several consecutive seasons.

2024 Projection: 72-90, 5th in NL Central

Andrew McCutchen

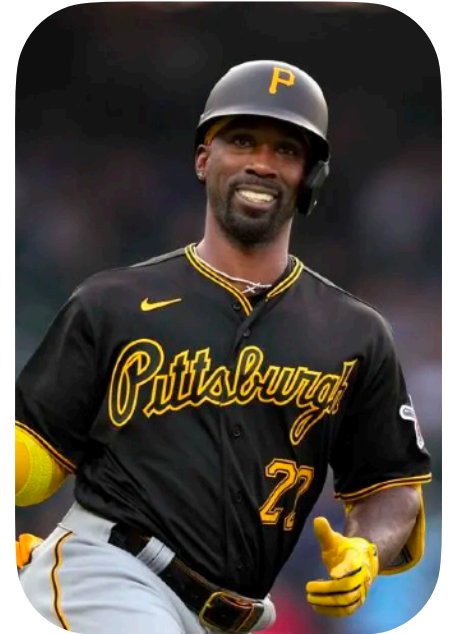



Photo via Forbes



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.27 (22nd)
 HITS - 1293 (24th)
 HR - 159 (28th)
 ERA - 4.60 (22nd)
 SO - 1363 (21st)
 FD% - .984% (19th)

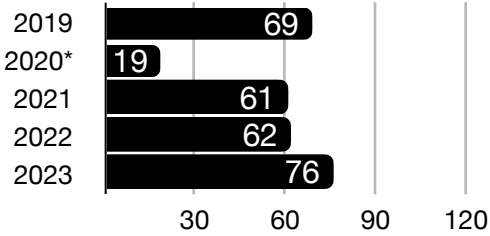
PIRATES

Oneil Cruz



Photo via USA Today

PIRATES 5-YEAR WIN TREND



18 < Number to Know

FanGraphs gives the Pittsburgh Pirates an 18% chance to make the postseason in 2024, their highest preseason playoff odds since 2016.

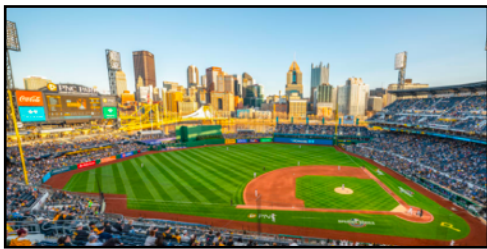


Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH Paul Skenes - P

After transferring from Air Force to LSU in 2023, Skenes took college baseball by storm with a ridiculous performance for the eventual national champion Tigers. He pitched to a minuscule 1.69 ERA over 122.2 innings and struck out 209 batters while walking only 20. His fastball routinely touches the upper 90s (and sometimes even triple digits) and his slider is an effective secondary pitch. He'll almost certainly start the season in triple-A Indianapolis since he has an entire 6.2 innings of experience in the minor league system. However, as long as the transition to facing triple-A hitting goes well, he could make his MLB debut as soon as this summer. Considering that the Pittsburgh rotation doesn't appear to be a strength in 2024, there may be added motivation from the front office to move him to The Show.

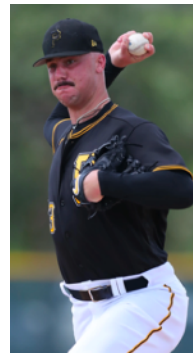


Photo via New York Post

Projected Lineup

			'23 AVG
15	Oneil Cruz	SS	.250
10	Bryan Reynolds	LF	.263
13	Ke'Bryan Hayes	3B	.271
22	Andrew McCutchen	DH	.256
65	Jack Suwinski	CF	.224
32	Henry Davis	C	.213
44	Rowdy Tellez	1B	.215
38	Edward Olivares	RF	.263
31	Liover Peguero	2B	.237

Projected Rotation

			'23 ERA
23	Mitch Keller	SP	4.21
54	Martin Pérez	SP	4.45
27	Marco Gonzales	SP	5.22
48	Luis L. Ortiz	SP	4.78
37	Jared Jones	SP	-
51	David Bednar	CL	2.00

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Mitch Keller - SP



2023 Statistics

APP IP ERA K BB
32 194.1 4.21 210 55

In recent seasons, the Pirates haven't exactly committed a lot of money to their roster. Their 2023 payroll of \$73.2 million ranked the fourth-lowest in baseball but Mitch Keller's All-Star performance gave the front office enough confidence to sign him to a 5-year, \$77 million extension. He was much better than his 4.21 ERA would otherwise indicate and a rough stretch after the All-Star break was partially to blame. He was otherwise reliable and pitched nearly 200 innings and won 13 games. The pitching staff needs an anchor and Keller will try to be exactly that again in 2024.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024

				MIA 4:10	MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10			
MIA 1:40	WSH 4:05		WSH 6:45	WSH 4:05	BAL 4:12	BAL 4:05			
BAL 1:35	DET 6:40	DET 12:35		PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 4:05			
PHI 1:35	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 1:10		BOS 6:40	BOS 4:05			
BOS 1:35	MIL 6:40	MIL 6:40	MIL 6:40	MIL 12:35	SF 10:15	SF 9:05			
SF 4:05	OAK 9:40	OAK 9:40							

May 2024

			OAK 3:37		COL 6:40	COL 4:05			
COL 1:35	LAA 6:40	LAA 6:40	LAA 12:35		CHC 6:40	CHC 4:05			
CHC 1:35	MIL 7:40	MIL 7:40	MIL 1:10	CHC 7:40	CHC 2:20	CHC 2:20			
CHC 2:20		SF 6:40	SF 6:40	SF 12:35	ATL 6:40	ATL 4:05			
ATL 1:35		DET 6:40	DET 1:10		TOR 7:07				

June 2024

						TOR 3:07			
TOR 1:37		LAD 6:40	LAD 6:40	LAD 6:40	MIN 6:40	MIN 4:05			
MIN 1:35		STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 2:15	COL 8:40	COL 9:10			
COL 3:10	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 12:35		TB 6:40	TB 4:05			
TB 1:35	CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10	CIN 7:10		ATL 7:20	ATL 4:10			
ATL 1:35									

July 2024

		STL 6:40	STL 6:40	STL 12:35	NYM 6:40	NYM 4:05			
NYM 1:35	NYM 12:35	MIL 8:10	MIL 8:10	MIL 2:10	CWS 8:10	CWS 2:10			
CWS 2:10	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX					PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40		
PHI 1:35	STL 6:40	STL 6:40	STL 12:35		ARI 9:40	ARI 8:10			
ARI 4:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10	HOU 8:10						

August 2024

					ARI 6:40	ARI 6:40			
ARI 1:35		SD 6:40	SD 6:40	SD 12:35	LAD 10:10	LAD 9:10			
LAD 4:10	SD 9:40	SD 9:40	SD 4:10		SEA 6:40	SEA 1:05			
SEA 1:35	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40			
CIN 1:35	CHC 6:40	CHC 6:40	CHC 12:35		CLE 7:10	CLE 6:10			

September 2024

CLE 1	CHC 7:40	CHC 7:40	CHC 7:40	WSH 6:40	WSH 6:40	WSH 6:40			
WSH 1:35	MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40	MIA 12:35		KC 6:40	KC 6:40			
KC 1:35	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 7:15	CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40			
CIN 1:10		MIL 6:40	MIL 6:40	MIL 12:35	NYL 7:05	NYL 1:05			
NYL 3:05									

HOME

AWAY

NATIONAL LEAGUE
WEST
PREVIEW

PROJECTED FINISH



Pencil the Dodgers As Division Winners in 2024, Right?

If you've followed even an ounce of baseball conversation this offseason, you've probably been inundated with talk about the Los Angeles Dodgers and their record-breaking spending spree. Signing a reigning MVP would draw major headlines in any scenario, but the Dodgers not only signed Shohei Ohtani to the biggest contract in MLB history but then followed it by signing Yoshinubu Yamamoto to the most lucrative contract ever awarded to a pitcher. Oh, and they added Cy Young-caliber Tyler Glasnow and power hitter Teoscar Hernandez, too. These signings come off the heels of another successful regular season, another division title, and another postseason embarrassment. The 2024 Los Angeles Dodgers roster has the potential to be one of the greatest ever assembled. So, can any other team even compete with the Dodgers in the division this season? Perhaps not, but that doesn't mean they won't try.

After all, the **Arizona Diamondbacks** swept the Dodgers right out of the NLDS as part of their Hollywood-esque postseason run that culminated in a trip to the World Series. While they eventually ran into a buzzsaw named the Texas Rangers, the run marked the first playoff series win since 2007 and just the second appearance in the Fall Classic in franchise history. The Diamondbacks added Joc Pederson and Eugenio Suarez in an attempt to bolster an otherwise average offense. The centerpiece of that offense is defending NL Rookie of the Year Corbin Carroll. However, D-Backs pitching could be deadly in 2024, especially from the rotation. Zac Gallen and Merrill Kelly are a terrific duo and they added another pitcher with ace-like potential in Eduardo Rodriguez, and Brandon Pfaadt will look to build on his postseason heroics. Arizona may fly under the radar again in the regular season, but if their starters remain healthy they know exactly what to do when the calendar flips to October.

The **San Diego Padres** were the NL West team to bounce the Dodgers in the 2022 postseason and they made a big push to stay ahead of Los Angeles in 2023. Unfortunately for the Friar Faithful, those efforts pretty much blew up in their face. The offense wasn't nearly as potent as it appeared it would be on paper heading into the 2023 season. This year, San Diego decided to deal Juan Soto to the Yankees and Blake Snell, while unsigned, is not expected to rejoin the Padres after winning the Cy Young award. Losing the best hitter and best pitcher on a team that won 82 games isn't a great sign, but San Diego did make a surprising trade for pitcher Dylan Cease, so they are far from "tanking", but they may not be very close to contending, either.

Another year, and another swing and miss from the **San Francisco Giants** in free agency. This year, they weren't able to convince Shohei Ohtani to join them after failing to bring in Aaron Judge the year prior. But, what they lack in top-end quality they attempted to make up for in quantity of free agents signed. In the lineup, Jorge Soler and Matt Chapman each signed four year deals and the Giants made Jung Hoo Lee the highest-paid position player in franchise history. Lee has been a quality hitter in the South Korea professional ranks and the Giants would be simply elated (and competitive) if he turns into a star.

The **Colorado Rockies** are, unfortunately, an entirely different conversation. Rox pitching was abysmal in 2023 even by Coors Field standards and the offense was unremarkable. Rookie Nolan Jones was a bright spot for Colorado in 2023 and if there's a bright spot in 2024, it will again be a rookie making an impact for the big league ball club. The Rockies are still firmly in a rebuild and there doesn't appear to be an end in sight at least in the near future.

So, can anyone stop the **Los Angeles Dodgers**? Based on the sheer firepower of the bats alone, it seems unlikely. It is possible that all nine players in the starting lineup will finish with an OPS+ of over 100 and the Dodgers will flirt with scoring six runs per game. Now, the offense did dry up in the postseason and scored six runs *total* in the three NLDS games, but will that really happen again? Starting pitching is a potential weakness but only because there are already injuries affecting that particular position. If LA gets Walker Buehler, Clayton Kershaw, and Dustin May back in the rotation and healthy, then it will be extremely difficult to find a chink in the Dodger armor. But, if baseball has taught us anything in the past two seasons, it's that all bets are off in October.

Corbin Carroll



Photo via Cronkite News

Win Totals	
5 Seasons	
Los Angeles	476
San Francisco	373
San Diego	357
Arizona	320
Colorado	298

Win Totals	
10 Seasons	
Los Angeles	939
San Francisco	769
San Diego	713
Colorado	685
Arizona	677

Win Totals	
15 Seasons	
Los Angeles	1374
San Francisco	1205
San Diego	1101
Colorado	1071
Arizona	1068

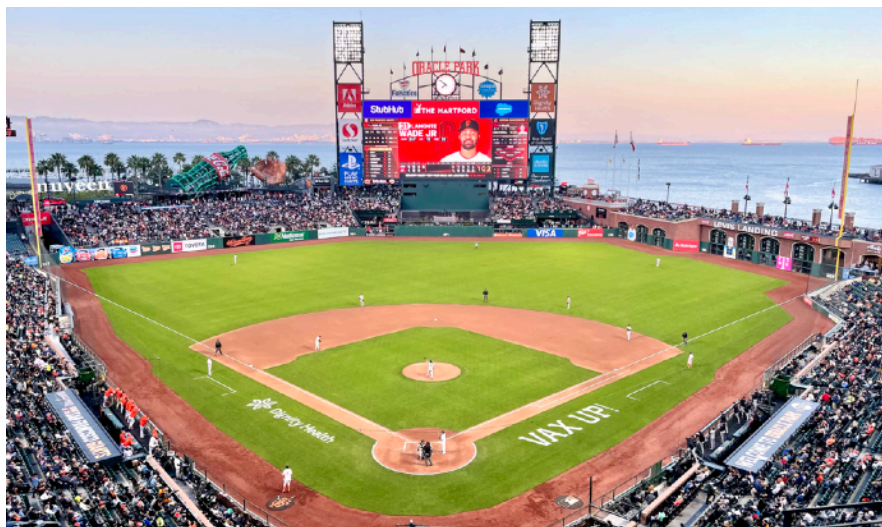


Photo via Wikipedia

STADIUM SPOTLIGHT

Oracle Park

You don't have to be a baseball fan to enjoy an evening at Oracle Park, home of the San Francisco Giants. The section of the San Francisco Bay beyond the right field wall is unofficially known as McCovey Cove in honor of former player Willie McCovey. Depending on the day, you will find several dozen boats, kayaks, and rafts waiting to see if a baseball is hit in to the Cove. Since the park's existence, 155 balls have been hit into the water. A right-handed hitter has never accomplished this feat and given the high wall and distance required, it may never happen. Standing on the right field wall provides a great view of both the game and the Bay and there are alluring food options down the first baseline. Look for Willie Mays' statue right outside the main entrance.

Stadium Rank: 5

2023 Statistical Leaders

Batting Average

1. Freddie Freeman - LAD - **.331**
2. Mookie Betts - LAD - **.307**
3. Corbin Carroll - ARI - **.285**
3. Xander Bogaerts - SD - **.285**
5. Ketel Marte - ARI - **.276**
6. Juan Soto - SD - **.275**
7. Thairo Estrada - SF - **.271**
8. Elías Díaz - COL - **.267**
9. Lourdes Gurriel Jr. - ARI - **.261**
9. Will Smith - LAD - **.261**

Home Runs

1. Mookie Betts - LAD - **39**
2. Max Muncy - LAD - **36**
3. Juan Soto - SD - **35**
4. J.D. Martinez - LAD - **33**
5. Manny Machado - SD - **30**
6. Freddie Freeman - LAD - **29**
7. Corbin Carroll - ARI - **25**
7. Ketel Marte - ARI - **25**
7. Fernando Tatis Jr. - SD - **25**
10. Lourdes Gurriel Jr. - ARI - **24**

RBI

1. Juan Soto - SD - **109**
2. Mookie Betts - LAD - **107**
3. Max Muncy - LAD - **105**
4. Christian Walker - ARI - **103**
4. J.D. Martinez - LAD - **103**
6. Freddie Freeman - LAD - **102**
7. Manny Machado - SD - **91**
8. Ketel Marte - ARI - **82**
8. Lourdes Gurriel Jr. - ARI - **82**
10. Fernando Tatis Jr. - SD - **78**

ERA (min 162 IP)

1. Blake Snell - SD - **2.25**
2. Logan Webb - SF - **3.25**
3. Merrill Kelly - ARI - **3.29**
4. Zac Gallen - ARI - **3.47**

Strikeouts

1. Blake Snell - SD - **234**
2. Zac Gallen - ARI - **220**
3. Logan Webb - SF - **194**
4. Merrill Kelly - ARI - **187**
5. Yu Darvish - SD - **141**
6. Seth Lugo - SD - **140**
7. Clayton Kershaw - LAD - **137**
8. Alex Cobb - SF - **131**
9. Sean Manaea - SF - **128**
10. Michael Wacha - SD - **124**

Stolen Bases

1. Corbin Carroll - ARI - **54**
2. Ha-Seong Kim - SD - **38**
3. Fernando Tatis Jr. - SD - **29**
4. Jake McCarthy - ARI - **26**
5. Freddie Freeman - LAD - **23**
5. Thairo Estrada - SF - **23**
7. Tommy Pham - ARI - **22**
7. Brenton Doyle - COL - **22**
9. Nolan Jones - COL - **20**
10. Xander Bogaerts - SD - **19**

5th and Goal On YouTube

Subscribe

Mookie Betts



Photo via Sports Illustrated

DID YOU KNOW

In the last five seasons, only one team who spent the most money that offseason made the postseason. This year, the Dodgers are clear leaders in that regard, will they fall prey to this surprising trend? (Probably not.)

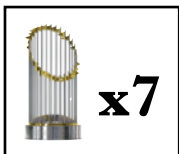
Past Division Winners





LOS ANGELES DODGERS

National League West



11334
FRANCHISE WINS

100-62
2023 SEASON

1st
DIVISION

#6
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Los Angeles, CA - Dodger Stadium (56,000)
Manager: Dave Roberts (753-442, 9th Season)

2023: Lost in NLDS

Big Spenders, Big Winners?

The Dodgers put together a spending spree this offseason unrivaled by any team in baseball's illustrious history. Shohei Ohtani, Tyler Glasnow, and Yoshinobu Yamamoto headline the new faces on a Dodgers team that has potential to put up historic numbers. However, in each of the last four full seasons the Dodgers have registered 100+ wins but have failed to accomplish their postseason goals. After an incredible 2022 season that featured a franchise record 111 wins, the Dodgers didn't even make it out of the first round. In 2023, the embarrassment grew as they were not only knocked out of the first round but swept by a division opponent that had only 84 regular season wins. To make matters more interesting, the team with the highest payroll hasn't won the Fall Classic since the Boston Red Sox in 2018 and prior to that, the New York Yankees in 2009. Can the Dodgers buck this trend in 2024?

Batting

It's very possible that the Dodgers score six runs per game in 2024. If they do, they'll become the first team since the 2000 Chicago White Sox to accomplish the feat. Obviously, adding the now two-time MVP into the heart of the lineup will only improve an offense that was already scoring 5.59 runs per game in 2023. He led the American League with 44 home runs and an on-base percentage of .412 and led the league with a ridiculous .654 slugging percentage. He won't pitch due to Tommy John surgery but that could mean that he sees more time at the plate which is a scary thought. **Freddie Freeman** was tremendous as always and he's missed 12 total games in the last six seasons and led the majors in doubles for a second straight season. **Mookie Betts** was runner-up to the NL MVP and will now slide over from second base to shortstop. He's somehow still in the peak of his physical prime and in addition to a career-best 39 home runs he drew a career-best 96 walks. **Will Smith** would be the #1 star on other teams and an argument can be made that he's the best catcher in baseball given his blend of offense and defense.

Max Muncy doesn't hit for a high average like some of his teammates but he's not lacking in home run power. He connected for 36 home runs marking the fourth time in his six year career where he's smashed 35 or more home runs in a season. As if the Dodgers needed more firepower, **James Outman** added 23 homers as a rookie although he strikes out at a rapid pace. The Dodgers added **Teoscar Hernandez** in free agency and he'll add his fair share of round trippers, too. The long ball has never been a big part of **Jason Heyward's** game but the veteran seemed re-energized in his first year with the Dodgers and slashed .269/.340/.473. With Betts now at shortstop, **Gavin Lux** has an opportunity to start at second base, although **Enrique Hernández**, **Chris Taylor**, and **Miguel Rojas** could factor into that position and are quality bench options at the very least.

Pitching

If there's a weakness on the team, it's starting pitching, even with the additions of **Tyler Glasnow** and **Yoshinobu Yamamoto**. The Dodgers are already dealing with injuries at this position. **Walker Buehler** is working his way back from a second Tommy John surgery and will miss the start of the season. **Clayton Kershaw** will miss significant time following a shoulder injury and may not return until August. **Tony Gonsolin** was an All Star in 2022 with a ridiculous 16-1 record and a 2.14 ERA but he had Tommy John surgery in September and will miss the entire season. **Dustin May** has been dynamic when he's on the mound but unfortunately those appearances have been few and far between since his MLB debut in 2019 and he'll miss at least half the year in 2024 after surgery to repair a flexor tendon.

The Dodgers made **Yoshinobu Yamamoto** the highest-paid pitcher in the game despite the fact that he has yet to throw an MLB pitch. He was superb in Japan and pairing him with Shohei Ohtani just makes too much sense. While LA waits on their stars to return, young **Bobby Miller** and **Gavin Stone** could see some starts along with veteran **James Paxton**. The bullpen should build on a strong second half after a disastrous start to the season especially if **Brusdar Graterol** stays healthy following the best season of his career. Fan-favorite **Joe Kelly** returned to the team in a midseason trade and **Evan Phillips** made 24 out of a possible 27 saves in 2023.

The Bottom Line

How good can the Dodgers be in 2024? In the regular season, they can be scary good. They won 111 games in 2022 and on paper, assuming the starting pitching returns, this roster is even better. However, the Dodgers (and their fans) don't care much about regular season wins, what records the team might break, or what the financial implications of the offseason spending spree might be in the distant future. The season will be defined as a success or failure solely by the team's performance in October. It's hard to see a team that can go head-to-head with the firepower that the Dodgers will wield in 2024, but, then again, that same statement has been uttered in prior postseasons. Even if the pitching staff doesn't improve much from an ERA in 2023 that was near the league average, the offense will cover a multitude of "sins".

2024 Projection: 108-54, 1st in NL West

Shohei Ohtani



Photo via FOX 5 San Diego



2023 MLB Ranks

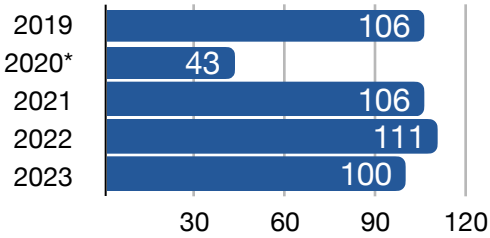
- RPG - 5.59 (2nd)
- HITS - 1422 (8th)
- HR - 249 (2nd)
- ERA - 4.06 (13th)
- SO - 1388 (17th)
- FD% - .987% (7th)

Freddie Freeman



Photo via AP News

DODGERS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



1.21 < Number to Know

\$1.21 billion (yes, *billion* with a b) spent by the Los Angeles Dodgers this offseason. Thanks to Ohtani deferring his contract, the Dodger's actual 2024 payroll is closer to \$300 million.

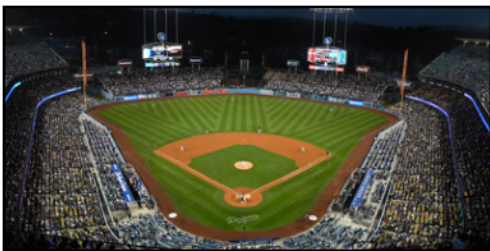


Photo via Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

PROSPECT TO WATCH Dalton Rushing - 1B/C

Despite all of their success and the many transactions that the Dodgers have made to improve the roster, the Dodgers farm system has remained strong with plenty of talented prospects including Dalton Rushing. The Dodger's top prospect was selected in the second round of the 2022 draft following a successful college career with Louisville. He had a breakout junior season that included 23 home runs and a batting average of .310. He played 89 games with High-A Great Lakes and the power remained, and he also drew 72 walks for a very respectable .404 on-base percentage. He doesn't have a lot of experience as a catcher which could mean he debuts in the majors as a first baseman. That debut may not take place in 2024 but it's worth following his baseball journey.

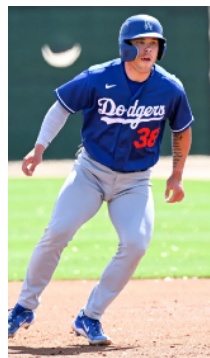


Photo via Baseball America

Projected Lineup				'23 AVG
50	Mookie Betts	SS	.307	
17	Shohei Ohtani	DH	.304	
5	Freddie Freeman	1B	.331	
16	Will Smith	C	.261	
13	Max Muncy	3B	.212	
33	James Outman	CF	.248	
37	Teoscar Hernandez	LF	.258	
23	Jason Heyward	RF	.258	
9	Gavin Lux	2B	-	

Projected Rotation				'23 ERA
31	Tyler Glasnow	SP	3.53	
18	Yoshinobu Yamamoto	SP	-	
28	Bobby Miller	SP	3.76	
65	James Paxton	SP	4.50	
71	Gavin Stone	SP	9.00	
59	Evan Phillips	CL	2.05	

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Tyler Glasnow - P



2023 Statistics

APP IP ERA K BB
21 120 3.53 162 37

The Dodgers are risking a lot by bringing in the often-injured Tyler Glasnow, but if the 6'8" lefty can stay on the mound, the reward could be immense. He's coming off his best (and healthiest) year that included 21 starts. His stuff is simply electric and his career K/9 is 11.5 thanks to a pitch repertoire of a high-velocity fastball, a nasty slider, and a curveball. He uses his size to his advantage and by the time his arm releases the ball, it's 7.5 feet in front of the rubber, giving hitters even less time to react. He's become even more comfortable with his off speed pitches as the years go by.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024													
								SD 20 6:05a	SD 21 6:05a				
										STL 28 4:10	STL 29 10:10	STL 30 9:10	
STL 31 7:00	SF 1 10:10	SF 2 10:10	SF 3 10:10							CHC 5 2:20	CHC 6 4:05		
CHC 7 2:20	MIN 8 7:40	MIN 9 7:40	MIN 10 1:10							SD 12 10:10	SD 13 10:10		
SD 14 7:00	WSH 15 10:10	WSH 16 10:10	WSH 17 3:10							NYM 19 10:10	NYM 20 4:05		
NYM 21 4:10		WSH 23 6:45	WSH 24 6:45	WSH 25 4:05						TOR 26 7:07	TOR 27 3:07		
TOR 28 1:37	ARI 29 9:40	ARI 30 9:40											

May 2024													

June 2024													

July 2024													

August 2024													

September 2024													

HOME AWAY



ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

National League West



x1



x2
NL

1998
FRANCHISE WINS

84-78
2023 SEASON

2nd
DIVISION

#12
FARM SYSTEM RANK

Phoenix, AZ - Chase Field (48,405)
 Manager: Corey Lovullo (495-537, 8th Season)

2023: Lost World Series

“Playoff Cinderella” Ready to Dance Again

Heading into the postseason, nobody gave the Diamondbacks much of a chance. They finished the season with a relatively modest 84-78 record and they were the last team in the playoffs after losing four straight games to end the 162-game slate. After they knocked out the Brewers in the Wild Card round, they faced the 100-win divisional rival Los Angeles Dodgers in the NLDS. Not only did they defeat the Dodgers but they swept them right out of the postseason. They erased a 3-2 deficit in the NLCS against the Phillies before falling to the scorching hot Texas Rangers in the World Series. Their playoff run was remarkable, especially considering the D-Backs finished the year with a 32-39 record after the All Star break. Can Arizona repeat such a performance in 2024?

Batting

Corbin Carroll had a phenomenal Rookie of the Year campaign in 2023 and he almost single-handedly erased the Brewers from the postseason with a home run and an OPS of 1.810 between the two games. He slowed down a little bit in the World Series, but so too did the rest of the offense. Despite the postseason success, the offense as a whole was quite average and scored 4.6 runs per game which ranked 18th in the majors. **Ketel Marte** also had a great season and while his primary defensive position is second, he did play a few games in the outfield and one at short. **Gabriel Moreno** earned a Gold Glove at catcher all while batting .284 at just 23 years old and leading the majors in dWAR. **Christian Walker** also provided Gold Glove defense, earning his second straight award at first base. In those same two years he's also clubbed 69 home runs, driven in 197 RBI, and drawn 131 walks.

Outside of Walker and Carroll, the Diamondbacks didn't hit a lot of home runs but that could change this season with the additions of **Joc Pederson** and **Eugenio Suárez**. While Pederson has had only one season in the past four years with 20+ home runs, the good news is that it was just in 2022, a season in which he was also an All Star. Suarez has had three such seasons consecutively but he also led the American League in strikeouts in both 2022 and 2023. **Geraldo Perdomo** will play shortstop which will allow Suárez to continue to play third base, his preferred position. Perdomo's offense came crashing back to earth after his All Star nomination and he finished with a below average OPS+ but he provides good defense and his 2023 campaign was still significantly better than his 2022 season that featured a .195 batting average. **Lourdes Gurriel Jr.** provided power with 24 home runs and 35 doubles and proved to be a key offseason acquisition prior to the 2023 season, making his first All Star appearance. **Alek Thomas** has great range in centerfield and is capable of making acrobatic catches when the need arises. He hit only nine home runs in the regular season but hit four long bombs in just 17 postseason games.

Pitching

The starting pitching duo of **Zac Gallen** and **Merrill Kelly** was one of the best one-two punches in the entire league. Gallen has now finished within the top five of NL Cy Young voting in each of the last two years and he tossed 210 innings and tallied 220 strikeouts in 2023. Kelly was also remarkably effective and in the postseason the Diamondbacks won three of his four starts and he pitched to just a 2.25 ERA in 24 innings. Gallen wasn't quite as successful in October and the D-Backs actually lost four consecutive games when he started. Regardless, the dynamic duo looks to become a terrific trio with the addition of **Eduardo Rodríguez**. He struggled with injuries and inconsistencies in three years with the Tigers but he was quite sharp in 2023 and earned a 4-year, \$80 million contract. **Brandon Pfaadt** had a mostly forgettable regular season but had terrific back-to-back postseason games to close out the Dodgers and he pitched 5.2 scoreless innings with nine strikeouts in the D-Backs Game 3 win against Philadelphia. **Ryne Nelson** also got hit hard as a rookie and he needs to focus on limiting the home run.

A midseason trade with the Mariners for **Paul Sewald** proved instrumental to Arizona's postseason success. He had 34 saves in the regular season, 13 of those in Arizona, and he picked up six consecutive saves over eight nearly perfect innings before hitting a rough patch in the World Series. **Kevin Ginkel** was superb as a set-up man with an ERA of just 2.48 over 65.1 innings. **Andrew Saalfrank** appeared in 10 games as a rookie and didn't allow a single earned run. His perfect streak ended in the postseason but even then in 11 appearances he pitched to a 3.18 ERA, relying on the terrific Arizona defense to get the job done.

The Bottom Line

With the loaded Dodgers roster, it seems unlikely that any team will challenge them for the division title. However, like last year, the Diamondbacks will have the opportunity to play spoiler and they made several transactions in an effort to keep up in the arms race that is the NL West. The offense still has some questions. The Diamondbacks struck out the fourth-fewest of all MLB teams but will likely sacrifice plate discipline for more power in 2024. The pitching staff, and specifically the rotation, could be excellent despite a sub-par team ERA of 4.47 last season.

2024 Projection: 86-76, 2nd in NL West

Zac Gallen

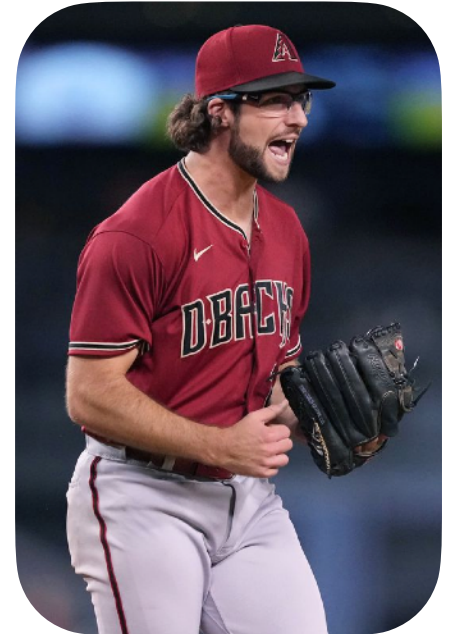



Photo via AZ Snake Pit



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.60 (18th)
 HITS - 1359 (17th)
 HR - 166 (22nd)
 ERA - 4.47 (20th)
 SO - 1351 (23rd)
 FD% - .990% (1st)

Gabriel Moreno

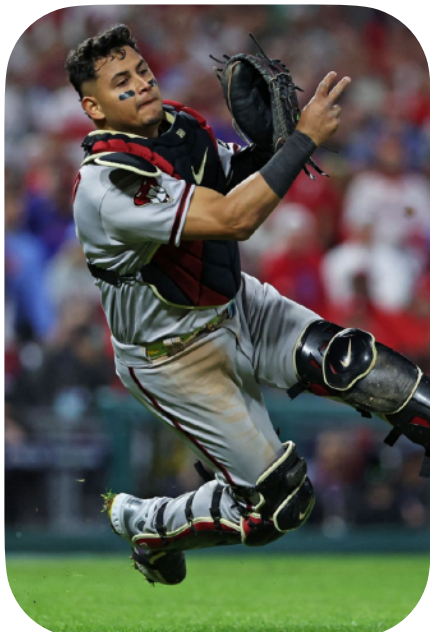


Photo via Wall State Journal

Projected Lineup			'23 AVG
7	Corbin Carroll	RF	.285
4	Ketel Marte	2B	.276
14	Gabriel Moreno	C	.284
53	Christian Walker	1B	.258
3	Joc Pederson	DH	.235
12	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	LF	.261
28	Eugenio Suárez	3B	.232
5	Alek Thomas	CF	.230
2	Geraldo Perdomo	SS	.246

Projected Rotation			'23 ERA
23	Zac Gallen	SP	3.47
29	Merrill Kelly	SP	3.29
57	Eduardo Rodriguez	SP	3.30
32	Brandon Pfaadt	SP	5.72
19	Ryne Nelson	SP	5.31
38	Paul Sewald	CL	3.12

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Corbin Carroll - OF



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
113 .254 .804 13 42

Corbin Carroll was the catalyst of an offense that was otherwise fairly average. You wouldn't know simply by watching him at the plate that he's still only 23 years old. He already has an uncanny ability to put the barrel on the ball with a 41.1% hard hit rate (MLB average: 39.0%) and he struck out less and walked more than the average hitter. Throw in his plus power and his remarkable speed and you get 25 home runs, 54 stolen bases, and an NL-leading 10 triples. He won the NL Rookie of the Year in a landslide and was fifth place in NL MVP voting. Carroll is a bona fide superstar.

PROSPECT TO WATCH

Drew Jones - OF

Drew is a notable prospect in part because of his famous, 10-time Gold Glove winning father Andruw Jones, but his game speaks for itself. He has the tools to be a skilled defender in the outfield and he features a bat that should wield some power. The word *should* is used here because, to this point, Drew has played only 29 games in a traditional minor league season and hasn't been able to fully unleash his talent. While injuries have perhaps set back his MLB debut by a year, the Diamondbacks remain bullish on the second overall pick in 2022. He's only 20 and he's just now starting his first full-fledged minor league season so it could still be a couple years before we see him don the Sedona red and teal, but he's a potential five-tool player.

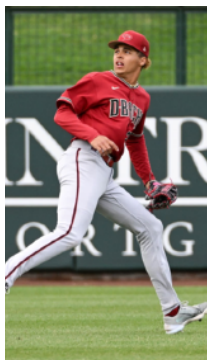


Photo via AZ Snakepit

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
									COL 10:10	COL 9:40	COL 8:10
COL 4:10	NYG 9:40	NYG 9:40	NYG 9:40	NYG 3:40					ATL 7:20	ATL 7:20	ATL 8:10
ATL 1:35	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 3:10					STL 9:40	STL 8:10	STL 8:10
STL 4:10	CHC 9:40	CHC 9:40	CHC 9:40	CHC 3:40	SF 9:45	SF 10:15	SF 4:05				
SF 4:05	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 1:15				SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40		
SEA 4:10	LAD 9:40	LAD 9:40									

May 2024											
									LAD 9:40	SD 9:40	SD 8:10
SD 4:10									CIN 6:40	CIN 6:40	CIN 1:10
BAL 1:35	CIN 9:40	CIN 9:40	CIN 9:40	CIN 3:40					BAL 7:05	BAL 4:05	BAL 4:05
DET 4:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10					DET 9:40	DET 8:10	DET 8:10
MIA 4:10									MIA 9:40	MIA 10:10	MIA 10:10
									TEX 8:05	TEX 2:35	NYM 7:10
									NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	

June 2024											
											NYM 4:10
NYM 1:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 3:40	SD 9:40	SD 9:40	SD 8:40				
SD 4:10									LAA 9:40	LAA 9:40	LAA 10:10
CWS 4:10									WSH 6:45	WSH 4:05	WSH 1:05
PHI 1:35									PHI 6:40	PHI 4:05	PHI 4:05
OAK 4:10									MIN 9:40	MIN 9:40	MIN 3:40
									OAK 9:40	OAK 4:10	OAK 4:10

July 2024											
SD 4:10	ATL 9:40	ATL 9:40	ATL 9:40	ATL 9:40	ATL 9:40	TOR 9:40	TOR 10:10				
TOR 4:10											
CHC 2:20	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 8:10								
PIT 4:10	WSH 9:40	WSH 9:40	WSH 3:40								

August 2024											
PIT 1:35	CLE 6:40	CLE 6:40	CLE 6:40	CLE 1:10	PHI 9:40	PHI 9:40	PHI 8:10				
PHI 4:10	COL 9:40	COL 9:40	COL 9:40	COL 3:40							
TB 1:40	MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40	MIA 6:40								
BOS 1:35											

September 2024											
LAD 4:10	LAD 9:40	SF 9:45	SF 9:45	SF 3:45	HOU 8:10	HOU 4:10					
HOU 2:10											
MIL 4:10	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 3:10	MIL 7:40	MIL 8:10	MIL 7:10				
MIL 2:10	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40							
SD 3:10											

HOME AWAY



SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

National League West



11461
FRANCHISE WINS

79-83
2023 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

#14
FARM SYSTEM RANK

San Francisco Giants - Oracle Park (41,915)
Manager: Bob Melvin (0-0, 1st Season)

New Look Giants, Better Results?

The Giants offseason leading into the 2023 offseason ended in embarrassment. The New York Post reported that “Arson Judge” was leaning towards signing a deal with the Giants. The typo turned from a quick chuckle to a full-blown internet meme when Judge did not, in fact, sign with the Giants. Following another mediocre regular season in 2023, the front office vowed to right the wrongs of the past offseason and make a big splash in free agency. Unfortunately, they again struck out when Shohei Ohtani took his talents to the rival Dodgers (and reports later detailed that San Francisco had offered the MVP the exact same deal). The Giants didn’t quit, however, and brought in several new pieces and even poached manager Bob Melvin away from the Padres. Will the new faces be enough to put San Francisco back in the postseason?

Batting

The offense struggled last season and was largely to blame for the Giants’ 30-42 second half of 2023. After scoring 4.62 runs per game in the first half, they scratched across just 3.58 runs in the second half. The two best hitters last season were **Wilmer Flores** and **LaMonte Wade** who are now ironically competing against one another for playing time at first base. Flores played some third base last year but that position is now occupied by four-time Gold Glove winner **Matt Chapman** who signed a three-year, \$54 million contract with the club in early March. The Giants also signed **Jorge Soler** to a three-year deal for \$42 million following his first All Star appearance in 2023. He had a complete rejuvenation at the plate, mostly because he remained much healthier and he blasted 36 home runs for the Marlins. San Francisco didn’t win the Ohtani sweepstakes but they did win the bidding war for **Jung Hoo Lee**, who joins Major League Baseball after seven seasons in the Korean league. In that time, he’s been a career .340 hitter and earned himself a six-year, \$113 million contract with the Giants. If he’s a good as advertised, he’ll be the perfect leadoff hitter for an offense that was starved for hits last season.

With Lee in centerfield, **Mike Yastrzemski** might find a more permanent home in right field. He had a better year at the plate than in 2022 but he missed nearly 60 games. San Francisco took a bit of a risk when they signed **Michael Conforto** in 2023, who was coming off a concerning shoulder injury. While he played in 125 games, he was statistically an average hitter and his slugging dipped to just .384 compared to his previous mark of .457 in seven years with the Mets. Being another year removed from that injury and the resulting surgery should only help and he’ll have more support in the lineup, too. **Nick Ahmed** joins the team from the NL pennant winners Arizona and will replace a franchise staple at shortstop, Brandon Crawford. **Thairo Estrada** will join him in the middle infield after stealing 20+ bases for the second consecutive season.

Pitching

Logan Webb is going on three outstanding seasons in a row on the bump. The Giants have a legitimate ace and the California native finished as the runner-up in Cy Young voting. His 216 innings led the majors and, somehow, he walked only 31 batters while striking out a career-high 194, a ratio that led the National League. How exactly does he do it? He bucks the trend of high velocity and instead draws an uncanny number of ground balls (the highest rate in MLB last season) with a deceptive mix of a sinker, slider, and changeup. **Alex Cobb** was the “Robin” to Webb’s “Batman” in 2023 but the veteran had offseason hip surgery and will miss at least a couple weeks of the season, although he may be back sooner than the initially reported All-Star break timeline. **Kyle Harrison** is still eligible as a rookie after tossing 34.2 innings in seven starts. In his final start of the season, he no-hit the Dodgers for five innings. The Giants are undergoing an interesting experiment with flamethrower **Jordan Hicks**, who will transition to a full-time starter following a four year, \$44-million deal. He made eight starts for the Cardinals back in 2022 but that experiment ended in May when his ERA topped 5.00 and he never made it past the fifth inning in any of his starts. **Sean Hjelle** is practically a “giant” himself at 6’11”, but could miss some time following an elbow injury in the spring. Rookie **Mason Black** could step into a starting role and make his major league debut in lieu of Hjelle. 2021 Cy Young winner **Robbie Ray** could return near the All Star break following Tommy John surgery and an offseason trade to the bay.

The bullpen could be a strength and many of the key arms from 2023 return including twins **Tyler Rogers** and **Taylor Rogers** and wipeout closer **Camilo Doval** who led the National League with 39 saves. If the Giants want to contend in 2024, pitching will pave the way.

The Bottom Line

The Giants were very active in free agency and they needed to be if they wanted to make a playoff push in a division that contains the Dodgers and the pennant-winning Diamondbacks. However, unless Jung Hoo Lee takes the league by storm, there are no stars on offense, per se, and both Soler and Chapman have had recent offensive inconsistencies. The pitching should be stellar, but will the Giants do enough on offense to break through? Probably not.

2024 Projection: 80-82, 3rd in NL West

Logan Webb



Photo via New York Post

	2023 MLB Ranks
	RPG - 4.16 (24th)
	HITS - 1271 (28th)
	HR - 174 (19th)
	ERA - 4.02 (11th)
	SO - 1359 (22nd)
FD% - .981% (30th)	

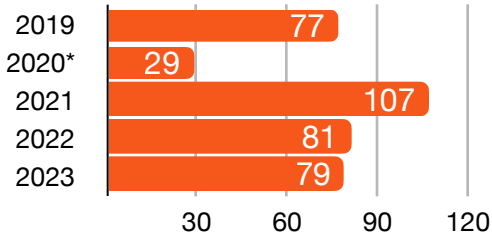
GIANTS

Camilo Doval



Photo via Sport Relay

GIANTS 5-YEAR WIN TREND



1970 < Number to Know

Prior to Logan Webb's league-leading 216.0 innings last season, the last San Francisco Giant to lead Major League Baseball in innings pitched was Gaylord Perry in 1970.

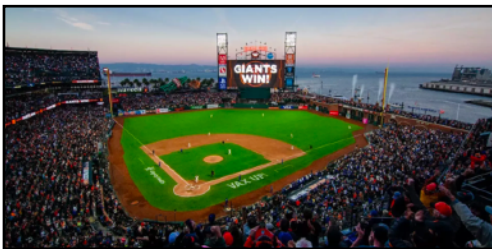


Photo via SF Travel

PROSPECT TO WATCH

Marco Luciano - SS

The Giants have a pair of prospects who could become regular rotation pitchers in 2024, but Marco Luciano provides what the Giants currently need most: offense. Back issues have slowed his path to the majors but he was healthy enough in 2023 to make a brief 14 game stint with San Francisco. He hasn't yet hit a major league home run, but if the scouting report is correct there will plenty of those to come. Even in the small sample size, he posted a remarkable hard hit rate of 54.5%, well above the 39.5% MLB average and his line drive rate and exit velocity also jump off the page. With his power comes a plethora of strikeouts, but he'll take plenty of walks too, if his minor league statistics are any indication. Defensively, there are some questions, but he will compete immediately for the starting shortstop role in 2024.



Photo via San Francisco Chronicle

Projected Lineup

'23 AVG

51	Jung Hoo Lee	CF	-
39	Thairo Estrada	2B	.271
31	LaMonte Wade Jr.	1B	.256
2	Jorge Soler	DH	.250
8	Michael Conforto	LF	.239
26	Matt Chapman	3B	.240
5	Mike Yastrzemski	RF	.233
14	Patrick Bailey	C	.233
40	Nick Ahmed	SS	.212

Projected Rotation

'23 ERA

62	Logan Webb	SP	3.25
45	Kyle Harrison	SP	4.15
12	Jordan Hicks	SP	3.29
67	Keaton Winn	SP	4.68
82	Mason Black	SP	-
75	Camilo Doval	CL	2.93

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Jung Hoo Lee - CF



2023 Statistics (KBO)

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
86 .318 .860 6 45

Although Jung Hoo Lee has yet to take a major league at-bat, it didn't stop the Giants from signing him to a \$113 million deal over six years, the biggest contract for a position player in franchise history. Lee was a hitting machine in his Korean professional career: his *worst* batting average in a season was .318. If he doesn't find the transition to MLB too difficult, he could have several very good seasons ahead of him since he's still only 25 years old. Not only does he hit for a high average, but he also draws more walks than strikeouts. He has enough athleticism to play centerfield and he'll wear #51 with the Giants to honor his idol Ichiro.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024

					SD 28 4:10	SD 29 9:40	SD 30 7:15
SD 31 4:10	LAD 1 10:10	LAD 2 10:10	LAD 3 10:10			SD 5 4:35	SD 6 9:05
SD 7 4:05	WSH 8 9:45	WSH 9 9:45	WSH 10 3:45			TB 12 6:50	TB 13 4:10
TB 14 1:40	MIA 15 6:40	MIA 16 6:40	MIA 17 12:10	ARI 18 9:45	ARI 19 10:15	ARI 20 4:05	
ARI 21 4:05	NYM 22 9:45	NYM 23 9:45	NYM 24 3:45		PIT 26 10:15	PIT 27 9:05	
PIT 28 4:05		BOS 30 7:10					

May 2024

				BOS 1 7:10	BOS 2 1:35	PHI 3 6:40	PHI 4 6:05
PHI 5 2:05	PHI 6 4:05	COL 7 8:40	COL 8 8:40	COL 9 3:10		CIN 10 10:15	CIN 11 7:15
CIN 12 4:05	LAD 13 9:45	LAD 14 9:45	LAD 15 9:45			COL 17 10:15	COL 18 4:05
COL 19 4:05		PIT 21 6:40	PIT 22 6:40	PIT 23 12:35	NYM 24 7:10	NYM 25 1:40	
NYM 26 1:40	PHI 27 5:05	PHI 28 9:45	PHI 29 3:45		NYN 31 10:15		

June 2024

							NYN 1 10:05
NYN 2 4:05	ARI 3 9:40	ARI 4 9:40	ARI 5 3:40			TEX 7 8:05	TEX 8 4:05
TEX 9 2:35	HOU 10 9:45	HOU 11 9:45	HOU 12 3:45			LAA 14 10:15	LAA 15 4:05
LAA 16 4:05	CHC 17 8:05	CHC 18 8:05	CHC 19 2:210	STL 20 7:15			STL 22 2:15
STL 23 2:15	CHC 24 9:45	CHC 25 9:45	CHC 26 9:45	CHC 27 3:45	LAD 28 10:15	LAD 29 7:15	
LAD 30 4:05		OAK 30 9:45	OAK 31 9:45				

July 2024

		ATL 2 7:20	ATL 3 7:20	ATL 4 7:20	CLE 5 7:10	CLE 6 4:10	
CLE 7 1:40		TOR 9 9:45	TOR 10 9:45	TOR 11 3:45	MIN 12 10:15	MIN 13 7:15	
MIN 14 4:05	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX					COL 19 8:40	COL 20 8:10
COL 21 3:10	LAD 22 10:10	LAD 23 10:10	LAD 24 10:10	LAD 25 4:10	COL 26 10:15	COL 27 DH	
COL 28 4:05		OAK 30 9:45	OAK 31 9:45				

August 2024

					CIN 2 7:10	CIN 3 7:15
CIN 4 1:40	WSH 5 6:45	WSH 6 6:45	WSH 7 6:45	WSH 8 4:05	DET 9 10:15	DET 10 4:05
DET 11 4:05	ATL 12 9:45	ATL 13 9:45	ATL 14 9:45	ATL 15 3:45		OAK 17 7:07
OAK 18 4:07	CWS 19 9:45	CWS 20 9:45	CWS 21 9:45		SEA 23 10:10	SEA 24 4:10
SEA 25 4:10		MIL 27 8:10	MIL 28 8:10	MIL 29 2:10	MIA 30 10:15	MIA 31 9:05

September 2024

MIA 1 4:05		ARI 3 9:45	ARI 4 9:45	ARI 5 3:45	SD 6 9:40	SD 7 8:40
SD 8 4:10		MIL 10 9:45	MIL 11 9:45	MIL 12 9:45	SD 13 10:15	SD 14 9:05
SD 15 4:05		BAL 17 6:35	BAL 18 6:35	BAL 19 1:05	KC 20 8:10	KC 21 7:10
KC 22 2:10	ARI 23 9:40	ARI 24 9:40	ARI 25 9:40		STL 27 10:15	STL 28 4:05
STL 29 3:05						

HOME

AWAY



SAN DIEGO PADRES

National League West



4034
FRANCHISE WINS

82-80
2023 SEASON

3rd
DIVISION

#9
FARM SYSTEM RANK

San Diego, CA - Petco Park (40,209)
Manager: Mike Shildt (0-0, 1st Season)

Caught in the Middle

Give the Padres some credit, they went all in during the 2023 offseason to try and stay ahead of the Los Angeles Dodgers after knocking them out of the postseason in 2022. The Friars signed Xander Bogaerts to an enormous contract and brought in veterans Matt Carpenter, Nelson Cruz, and Michael Wacha. Unfortunately, a slow start doomed San Diego's chances and they were also abysmal in close games in 2023. San Diego saw their best hitter *and* best pitcher depart in the offseason, so will this season shape up to be a rebuilding year or can the Padres reload with existing talent on the roster?

Batting

The Padres opted to trade Juan Soto to the Yankees prior to Spring Training. At face value, the return they received in the trade is not worth the star power of Soto, but the deal is done which means San Diego will need **Manny Machado** and others to step up. Machado had a down year, but only by his standards. He still hit 30 home runs but his doubles dropped from 37 to 21 and his batting average dropped by 40 points. Just two days after the season he had surgery to help repair a right elbow extensor (a.k.a., tennis elbow) which could have been a contributing factor to his more modest 2023 season. **Fernando Tatis Jr.** played well following his lengthy PED suspension and while he didn't equal his pre-suspension production at the plate, he did win a Gold Glove in right field despite just 20 MLB games of experience at that position prior to 2023. **Ha-Seong Kim's** defense at shortstop is so good that the Padres will move **Xander Bogaerts** over to second base, a position he has yet to play in his 11-year major league career. After back-to-back All Star appearances, **Jake Cronenworth** finished 2023 with an OPS+ of 92 and all three parts of his slash line hit career lows. He also recently switched defensive positions and will stay at first base in 2024.

Since Machado will likely start at DH while he recovers from surgery, third base will need occupied. Utility man **Eguy Rosario** could get the nod although he's played in only 18 career games. Machado will be joined in the outfield by last year's acquisition **Jurickson Profar** who played only 11 games for San Diego after sustaining a knee injury on a catch against the wall. **Jackson Merrill** hasn't even played in triple-A, but he could find himself starting in centerfield due to a lack of outfielder options.

Pitching

Losing Cy Young winner Blake Snell will hurt, although the Scott Boras client has yet to sign with a team as of the writing of this preview. The Padres helped soften the blow by bringing in **Dylan Cease** from the Chicago White Sox in a trade. He's a Cy Young candidate himself after finishing second in voting in 2022 and he's remarkably similar to Snell in the fact that he will strikeout a ton of hitters while also surrounding plenty of walks. He's made 32 or more starts in each of the last three seasons. **Yu Darvish** gets another "Opening Day" nod, this time a week early as the Padres start the season in South Korea. After signing a surprisingly big contract in 2023 for a player turning 36, he had his worst season as a Padre and his walk rate jumped significantly. However, you won't find anyone with a pitch arsenal like Darvish and he's constantly tinkering with his stuff, so perhaps he can rebound in 2024. **Joe Musgrove** tossed the franchise's first no-hitter back in 2021 and he's been very effective ever since, although he was held to just 97.1 innings last year due to shoulder issues. **Michael King** made nine of his 19 career starts in 2023 and he was effective in that role for the Yankees. Now with the Padres as part of the Soto deal, he looks to remain as a starter. Ignoring his final start that didn't go as planned, he allowed four earned runs in September over 27.2 innings including a seven-inning, 13 K outing against Toronto. The Padres moved **Jhony Brito** to a bullpen role last year, utilizing him as a long reliever. He fared well enough in that role that he should get another shot at the rotation in 2024.

The bullpen will look almost entirely different and not just because lights-out closer Josh Hader is no longer with the team. **Yuki Matsui** and **Woo-Suk Go** join the team from Japan and Korea, respectively. **Tom Cosgrove** will look to build on his impressive rookie season and could even battle for the wide open closer role. **Robert Suarez** *should* be the closer considering the money he is being paid, but an ERA of 4.56 in 2023 doesn't instill much confidence.

The Bottom Line

The Padres clearly felt like they weren't going to be able to pay for another lucrative contract like the ones they've recently awarded to Machado, Tatis Jr., Bogaerts, Darvish, and others, so trading away Juan Soto in an effort to get prospects and other pieces made "logical" sense. But then, they gave away some prospects and pieces to obtain Dylan Cease. Does that trade really put the Padres in contention in the division? Considering their struggles when Soto and Snell were on the roster, probably not. The Padres seem stuck in the "middle." They are not in a firm rebuild but they are also not a real threat to compete for a division, let alone a playoff spot. The good news is that there are several key prospects waiting in the wings and a couple of them will make the Opening Day roster. If San Diego can reverse their misfortune from last year, they *could* be better than last year, but that seems unlikely.

2024 Projection: 77-85, 4th in NL West

Fernando Tatis Jr.

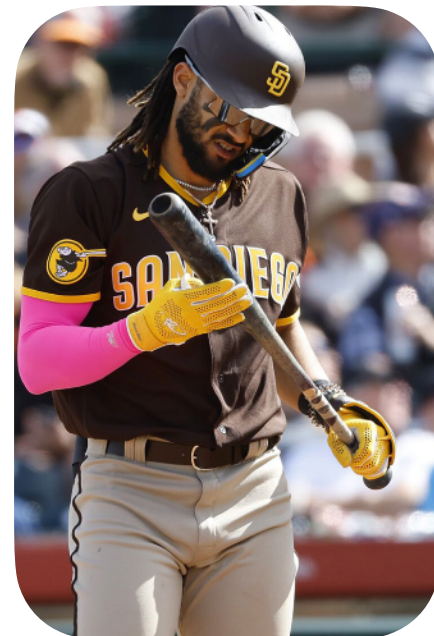


Photo via Palomar



2023 MLB Ranks
RPG - 4.64 (13th)
HITS - 1316 (22nd)
HR - 205 (13th)
ERA - 3.73 (2nd)
SO - 1455 (10th)
FD% - .988% (4th)

PADRES

Yu Darvish

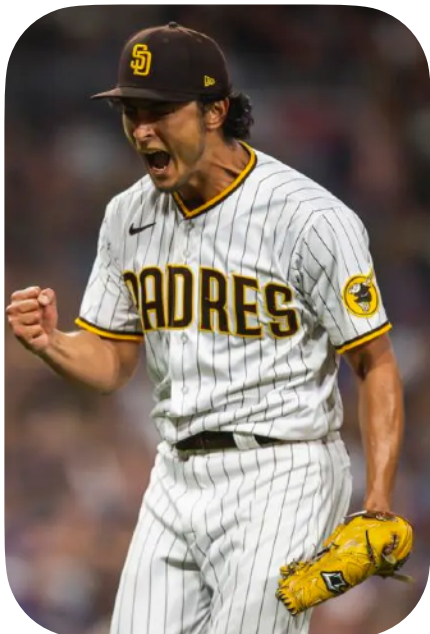
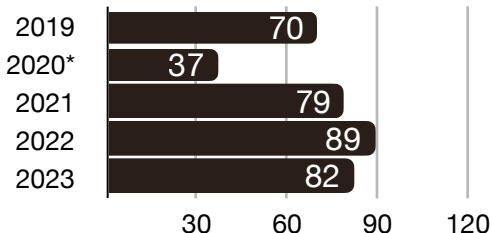


Photo via Forbes

PADRES 5-YEAR WIN TREND



104 < Number to Know

The Padres finished with a run differential of +104, ranking them 8th in MLB. Yet, the Padres finished with only 82 wins due to a 9-23 record in one-score games.



Photo via MLB

PROSPECT TO WATCH Ethan Salas - C

Want to feel old? The Padres' top prospect was born in 2006. The organization is so high on the soon-to-be-18-year-old catcher that they used almost their entire budget for international signings to ink the Venezuela native to a \$5.6 million deal. He earned an invitation to Spring Training and he will likely resume his path to the majors in double-A San Antonio where he played just nine games last season. At Single-A Lake Elsinore he hit nine home runs in only 48 games, demonstrating that power will be a big part of his game moving forward. Scouts are equally excited for his plus defense as they are for his bat. He's already worked with several of his major league teammates, including Yu Darvish, in bullpen sessions. The Padres firmly believe they have a future superstar on their hands, and he could debut as early as next season.



Photo via The Athletic

Projected Lineup

			'23 AVG
2	Xander Bogaerts	2B	.285
23	Fernando Tatis Jr.	RF	.257
9	Jake Cronenworth	1B	.229
13	Manny Macahado	DH	.258
7	Ha-Seong Kim	SS	.260
5	Eguy Rosario	3B	.250
12	Luis Campusano	C	.319
10	Jurickson Profar	LF	.242
70	Jackson Merrill	CF	-

Projected Rotation

			'23 ERA
11	Yu Darvish	SP	4.56
44	Joe Musgrove	SP	3.05
84	Dylan Cease	SP	4.58
34	Michael King	SP	2.75
76	Jhony Brito	SP	4.28
75	Robert Suarez	CL	4.23

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT Dylan Cease - SP



2023 Statistics

APP IP ERA K BB
33 177 4.58 214 79

Dylan Cease has some of the nastiest stuff you'll find in the game. His ERA saw a significant jump from 2.20 to 4.58, but if you dig into the advanced metrics you can make an argument that he was unlucky at times. Certainly, the shaky defense in Chicago didn't do him any favors and August proved to be a disaster of a month. He's a high strikeout, high walk kind of pitcher. If he can locate his usually-devastating slider better in 2024, look for him to return to form and better run support from the Padres should only help.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024											
				LAD 6:05a	LAD 6:05a						
					SF 4:10	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40	SF 9:40
SF 4:10	STL 9:40	STL 9:40	STL 9:40					SF 4:35	SF 9:05	SF 9:05	SF 9:05
SF 4:05	CHC 9:40	CHC 10:05	CHC 6:40					LAD 10:10	LAD 9:10	LAD 9:10	LAD 9:10
LAD 7:00	MIL 7:40	MIL 7:40	MIL 17:10					TOR 9:40	TOR 8:40	TOR 8:40	TOR 8:40
TOR 4:10	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 3:10				PHI 9:40	PHI 8:40	PHI 8:40	PHI 8:40
PHI 4:10	CIN 9:40	CIN 9:40									
May 2024											
				CIN 4:10				ARI 9:40	ARI 8:10	ARI 8:10	ARI 8:10
ARI 4:10	CHC 7:40	CHC 7:40	CHC 2:20					LAD 9:40	LAD 8:40	LAD 8:40	LAD 8:40
LAD 4:10	COL 9:40	COL 9:40	COL 4:10					ATL 7:20	ATL 7:15	ATL 7:15	ATL 7:15
ATL 1:35	ATL 20:00	CIN 21:00	CIN 22:00	CIN 1:10				NYG 9:40	NYG 9:40	NYG 9:40	NYG 9:40
NYG 4:10	MIA 6:40	MIA 9:40	MIA 4:10					KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 8:10	KC 8:10
June 2024											
											KC 4:10
KC 2:10	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38	LAA 9:38				ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40
ARI 4:10	OAK 9:40	OAK 9:40	OAK 4:10					NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10	NYM 7:10
NYM 1:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 6:40	PHI 1:05	MIL 9:40				MIL 9:40	MIL 7:15	MIL 7:15	MIL 7:15
MIL 4:10	WSH 9:40	WSH 9:40	WSH 4:10					BOS 7:10	BOS 4:10	BOS 4:10	BOS 4:10
BOS 1:35											
July 2024											
				TEX 8:05	TEX 8:05	TEX 2:35		ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40	ARI 9:40
ARI 4:10				SEA 9:40	SEA 6:40			ATL 9:40	ATL 7:15	ATL 7:15	ATL 7:15
ATL 4:10				All-Star Break - Arlington, TX				CLE 7:10	CLE 7:10	CLE 7:10	CLE 7:10
CLE 1:40				WSH 6:45	WSH 6:45	WSH 12:05		BAL 7:05	BAL 4:05	BAL 4:05	BAL 4:05
BAL 1:35				LAD 9:40	LAD 8:40						
August 2024											
								COL 9:40	COL 8:40	COL 8:40	COL 8:40
COL 4:10				PIT 6:40	PIT 6:40	PIT 12:35		MIA 7:10	MIA 4:10	MIA 4:10	MIA 4:10
MIA 1:40	PIT 9:40	PIT 9:40	PIT 4:10					COL 8:40	COL 8:10	COL 8:10	COL 8:10
COL 3:10	MIN 9:40	MIN 9:40	MIN 21:00					NYM 9:40	NYM 8:40	NYM 8:40	NYM 8:40
NYM 4:10	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 2:15				TB 6:50	TB 4:10	TB 4:10	TB 4:10
September 2024											
TB 1:40	DET 6:40			DET 9:40	DET 8:40			SF 9:40	SF 8:40	SF 8:40	SF 8:40
SF 4:10				SEA 9:40	SEA 9:40			SF 10:15	SF 9:05	SF 9:05	SF 9:05
SF 4:05	HOU 9:40	HOU 9:40	HOU 6:40					CWS 9:40	CWS 8:40	CWS 8:40	CWS 8:40
CWS 4:10				LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10	LAD 10:10		ARI 9:40	ARI 8:10	ARI 8:10	ARI 8:10
ARI 3:10											

HOME AWAY




COLORADO ROCKIES

National League West



x0

Denver, CO - Coors Field (46,897)
 Manager: Bud Black (476-556, 8th Season)



x1
NL

2260
FRANCHISE WINS

59-103
2023 SEASON

5th
DIVISION

#18
FARM SYSTEM RANK

2023: Won World Series

Rockies Outlook Rough in 2024

Last season was as bad as Rockies baseball has ever been in the 31-year history of the franchise. Colorado finished with a record of 59-103, the most losses in the club's history and, unfortunately, the prognosis isn't much better in 2024 as the team made no major moves in the offseason. To be fair to the front office, they are faced with a unique challenge. Not only do they have to navigate the complexities of playing home games at altitude, but they are also staring up at the mega-spender Dodgers and San Francisco and San Diego haven't stopped spending, either. Oh, and the Arizona Diamondbacks reached the World Series. To this point, the 2021 trade of Nolan Arenado has not netted much of a return and the team's biggest signing in recent memory has struggled to even stay on the field.

Batting

The player being eluded to above is, of course, **Kris Bryant**. The 2016 MVP and four-time All-Star with the Cubs has missed more games than he's played in a Rockies uniform. He played 80 games last season and struggled at the plate. The power that came so naturally early in his career has dissipated, leaving behind a slugging percentage of just .367. He has a *lot* to prove in 2024 as his 7-year, \$182 million deal is currently looking like one of the worst deals in baseball. Will that pressure help him perform or lead to additional struggles in 2024? The usually reliable **Charlie Blackmon** started showing his age, at least, in the games played department. However, he actually had a decent year at the plate when he did play including a four-year high in OBP which helps offset the absence of home run power in his late 30s. While the Arenado and Bryant deals have been less than ideal, the Rockies seemingly fleeced the Guardians in their trade for **Nolan Jones**, who posted very impressive numbers in his rookie season. Advanced analytics such as dWAR would tell you that **Ryan McMahon** is deserving of a Gold Glove in his trophy case. He could get it this year just like **Brendan Rodgers** did in 2022. Rogers was held to just 46 games in 2023, however. Catcher **Elias Diaz** made his first All-Star team and casually won MVP of the All Star Game. **Sean Bouchard** has impressed in brief major league stints the past two seasons but injuries are an ongoing concern. **Ezequiel Tovar's** batting is still a work at progress but at just 22 year olds he's a borderline-elite defensive shortstop. **Brenton Doyle** earned a Gold Glove in center last year but needs to make progress in his plate discipline. If the Rockies feel like they need more offense in the outfield, they could turn to **Sam Hilliard** who is now in his second stint with Colorado.



Photo via The Denver Post

Pitching


To say that the Colorado Rockies pitching staff struggled in 2023 would be an understatement. Even taking Coors Field into consideration, the Rockies had a difficult time getting outs in 2023. Injuries played a big role and starters **German Marquez** and **Antonio Senzatela** will miss most, if not all of 2024 following Tommy John surgery. Former closer **Daniel Bard** suffered a freak injury while playing catch and needed surgery to repair a torn meniscus. Of the franchise-record 17 starting pitchers that were used last season, most of the familiar faces who pitched the most for the Rockies are gone. **Kyle Freeland** returns to his familiar Opening Day and #1 starter spot but he's coming off a rough season that included an ERA above 5.00, a career-high 29 home runs allowed, and a career low K/9 of 5.4. **Cal Quantrill** had two extremely good seasons with the Guardians but his 2023 campaign didn't go as planned and he was held to 99.2 innings while his ERA soared to a career-worst 5.24. A shoulder injury was the cause of the limited innings and could be the culprit for the ERA, too. The Rockies signed him to a one-year deal following a trade and are hopeful he can regain his confidence in 2024. **Austin Gomber**, a member of the notorious Nolan Arenado trade, has since pitched 379.0 innings in three seasons with the Rockies, mostly as a starter, but to the tune of a 5.22 ERA although his second half of the season was much better. The other rotation spots are up for grabs and it makes sense that **Dakota Hudson** would grab one of them after signing a one-year, \$1.5 million deal.

The bullpen situation is even more concerning than the rotation. With Bard expected to miss time, the pitcher to get the nod at closer will be either **Justin Lawrence** or **Tyler Kinley**. Lawrence was a rare bright spot in comparison to a bullpen that ranked dead last in MLB in both WHIP and ERA. He made 11 saves as part of his 75 innings of work while posting an ERA of 3.72 and striking out 78 batters. Most of Kinley's 2023 season was lost to injuries. If the rotation becomes a revolving door again in 2024, relievers like **Ty Blach** and **Anthony Molina** will be asked to eat up innings. **Jake Bird** pitched 89.1 innings for the Rockies last season.

The Bottom Line

Unfortunately, there are still glaring weaknesses in the pitching staff and the lineup still appears to be "power challenged" even in the confines of Coors Field. The goal this year for Colorado should be to avoid the 100-loss mark and to see young players like Ezequiel Tovar and Nolan Jones continue their promising progressions. The silver lining to a team that won't be competitive is the ability to call up prospects without significant ramifications. The path to future contention runs through the development of young talent. Until then, it's going to be more tough sledding for the Blake Street Bombers.

2024 Projection: 53-109, 5th in NL West



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.45 (18th)
 HITS - 1368 (16th)
 HR - 163 (26th)
 ERA - 5.67 (30th)
 SO - 1129 (30th)
 FD% - .986% (12th)

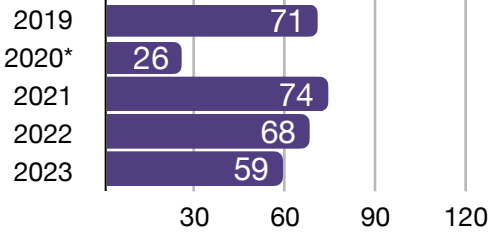
COLORADO

Kyle Freeland



Photo via Sports Illustrated

ROCKIES 5-YEAR WIN TREND



208 < Number to Know

The number of home runs hit at Coors Field. Despite sitting at an altitude of 5200 feet which heavily features hitters, eight other ballparks saw more home runs in 2023.

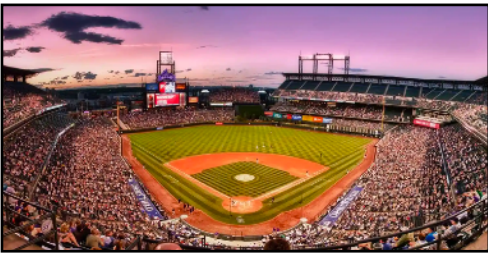


Photo via BaseballCloud

PROSPECT TO WATCH

Yanquiel Fernandez - OF

Fernandez' tremendous power is the characteristic that probably has the Rockies organization most excited, but he has since showed off additional abilities in his relatively short time in the minor leagues. He demolished the baseball in High-A Spokane and had 17 home runs and 64 RBI in just 58 games. The move to Double-A came with its challenges and included an uptick in strikeouts, but it's worth noting that he was, on average, 3.8 years younger than the average player at that level. He showed off his strong arm in the outfield at the Futures Game and threw a ball to third that clocked in at a whopping 103.3 mph which would have been the hardest throw by a Rockies outfielder in the Statcast Era (since 2015). He needs to find a way to bring down his strikeout rate, but he could be a heavyweight power hitter for Colorado soon.



Photo via Rox Pile

Projected Lineup

'23 AVG

19	Charlie Blackmon	DH	.279
23	Kris Bryant	1B	.233
22	Nolan Jones	LF	.297
7	Brendan Rodgers	2B	.258
24	Ryan McMahon	3B	.240
35	Elias Diaz	C	.267
12	Sean Bouchard	RF	.316
14	Ezequiel Tovar	SS	.253
9	Brenton Doyle	CF	.203

Projected Rotation

'23 ERA

21	Kyle Freeland	SP	5.03
47	Cal Quantrill	SP	5.24
26	Austin Gomber	SP	5.50
18	Ryan Feltner	SP	5.82
32	Dakota Hudson	SP	4.98
61	Justin Lawrence	CL	3.72

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Nolan Jones - OF



2023 Statistics

GP AVG OPS HR RBI
106 .297 .931 20 62

Injuries took their toll on the Rockies in 2023, but the bright side is that it allowed for Nolan Jones to have a prominent role in the lineup, and the former 2016 second round pick made the most of the opportunity and then some. He led the Rockies in WAR (4.3) despite playing in only 106 games. He showed his versatility as a hitter by not only hitting for average (.297) but for power too. He drew plenty of walks too, leading to a very impressive OPS of .931 and he finished fourth in Rookie of the Year voting in the National League. The Rockies are desperate for stability in their ongoing rebuild and Jones' emergence is perfectly timed.

2024 Schedule

March/April 2024

					ARI 28 10:10	ARI 29 9:40	ARI 30 8:10
ARI 31 4:10	CHC 1 2:20	CHC 2 7:40	CHC 3 7:40		TB 5 4:10	TB 6 8:10	
TB 7 3:10	ARI 8 8:40	ARI 9 8:40	ARI 10 3:10		TOR 12 7:07	TOR 13 3:07	
TOR 14 1:37	PHI 15 6:40	PHI 16 6:40	PHI 17 6:05		SEA 19 8:40	SEA 20 8:10	
SEA 21 3:10	SD 22 8:40	SD 23 8:40	SD 24 8:40	SD 25 3:10		HOU 27 6:05	
HOU 28 4:05		MIA 30 6:40					

May 2024

				MIA 1 6:40	MIA 2 12:10	PIT 3 6:40	PIT 4 4:05
PIT 5 1:35		SF 7 8:40	SF 8 8:40	SF 9 3:10	TEX 10 8:40	TEX 11 8:10	
TEX 12 3:10	SD 13 9:40	SD 14 8:40	SD 15 4:10		SF 17 10:15	SF 18 4:05	
SF 19 4:05		OAK 21 9:40	OAK 22 9:40	OAK 23 3:37	PHI 24 8:40	PHI 25 9:10	
PHI 26 3:10	CLE 27 4:10	CLE 28 8:40	CLE 29 8:40		LAD 31 10:10		

June 2024

							LAD 1 10:10
LAD 2 4:10	CIN 3 8:40	CIN 4 8:40	CIN 5 3:10	STL 6 7:45	STL 7 8:15	STL 8 4:15	
STL 9 2:15	MIN 10 7:40	MIN 11 7:40	MIN 12 1:10		PIT 14 8:40	PIT 15 9:10	
PIT 16 3:10	LAD 17 8:40	LAD 18 8:40	LAD 19 8:40	LAD 20 3:10	WSH 21 8:40	WSH 22 9:10	
WSH 23 3:10		HOU 25 8:10	HOU 26 2:10		CWS 28 8:10	CWS 29 2:10	
CWS 30 2:10							

July 2024

	MIL 1 8:40	MIL 2 8:40	MIL 3 8:40	MIL 4 8:10	KC 5 8:10	KC 6 9:10
KC 7 3:10	CIN 8 7:10	CIN 9 7:10	CIN 10 7:10	CIN 11 1:10	NYM 12 7:10	NYM 13 4:10
NYM 14 1:40	All-Star Break - Arlington, TX				SF 19 8:40	SF 20 8:10
SF 21 3:10	BOS 22 8:40	BOS 23 8:40	BOS 24 3:10		SF 26 10:15	SF 27 DH
SF 28 4:05		LAA 30 9:38	LAA 31 9:38			

August 2024

				LAA 1 9:38	SD 2 9:40	SD 3 8:40
SD 4 4:10		NYM 6 8:40	NYM 7 8:40	NYM 8 3:10	ATL 9 8:40	ATL 10 8:10
ATL 11 3:10	ARI 12 9:40	ARI 13 9:40	ARI 14 3:40		SD 16 8:40	SD 17 8:10
SD 18 3:10		WSH 20 6:45	WSH 21 6:45	WSH 22 1:05	NYG 23 7:05	NYG 24 2:05
NYG 25 1:35	MIA 26 8:40	MIA 27 8:40	MIA 28 8:40	MIA 29 3:10	BAL 30 8:40	BAL 31 8:10








September 2024

BAL 1 3:10		ATL 3 7:20	ATL 4 7:20	ATL 5 7:20	MIL 6 8:10	MIL 7 7:10
MIL 8 2:10		DET 10 6:40	DET 11 6:40	DET 12 1:10	CHC 13 8:40	CHC 14 8:10
CHC 15 3:10	ARI 16 8:40	ARI 17 8:40	ARI 18 3:10		LAD 20 10:10	LAD 21 9:10
LAD 22 4:10		STL 24 8:40	STL 25 8:40	STL 26 3:10	LAD 27 8:10	LAD 28 8:10
LAD 29 3:10						

HOME

AWAY

FIFTH AND GOAL SPORTS MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



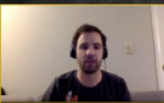

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We'd also like to encourage you to check out some of our other shows and resources all available on our website. [Enjoy the 2024 season!](#)



	RAIDERS 2022 Record: 6-11	
	2023 Draft Picks: 12 1 (7), 2 (38), 3 (70), 3 (100), 4 (109), 5 (141), 5 (144), 5 (174), 6 (204), 6 (214), 7 (220), 7 (231)	
	Offensive Ranking: #12 Defensive Ranking: #26	
	Team Needs: OT, OG, C, CB, DL, LB, S	

1, (CAR) Bryce Young - OB/Alabama 2, (HOU) C.J. Stroud - OB/Ohio State 3, (HOU) Will

