



# 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 fraction, 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.**

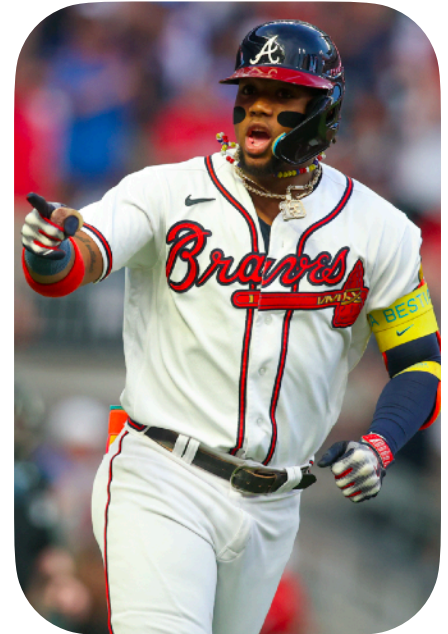


Photo via Reuters

**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

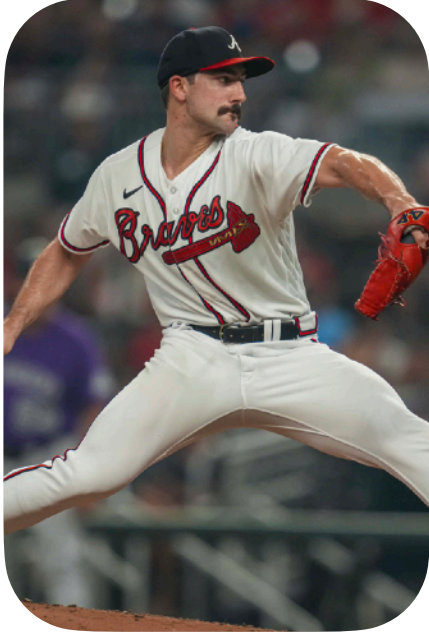
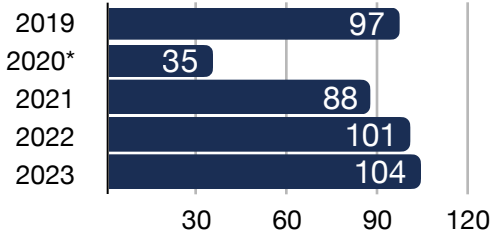


Photo via Reuters

### 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?

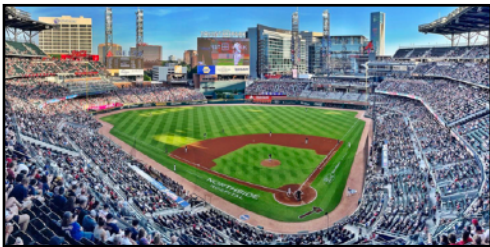


Photo via Cobb Travel & Tourism

### 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.

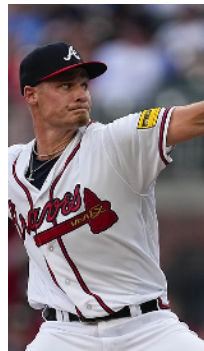


Photo via Chattanooga Times

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** 159 **AVG** .281 **OPS** .861 **HR** 37 **RBI** 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														
LAD 4:10														
NYM 1:40	CHC 7:20	CHC 7:20	CHC 7:20											
SD 1:35	SD 12:20	CHC 21 7:40	CHC 22 7:40	CHC 23 7:20										
PIT 1:35	WSH 4:10	WSH 7:20	WSH 7:20	WSH 7:20										

June 2024														
OAK 1:35														
WSH 1:35														
TB 1:35	DET 7:20	DET 7:20	DET 12:20											
NYN 1:35	STL 7:45	STL 7:45	STL 7:15											
PIT 1:35														

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

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

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

HOME AWAY