

# 2025

MEDIA GUIDE

*Can the Crusaders  
Bowl the League Over  
Again?*



# MONTY BREWSTER WORLD BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

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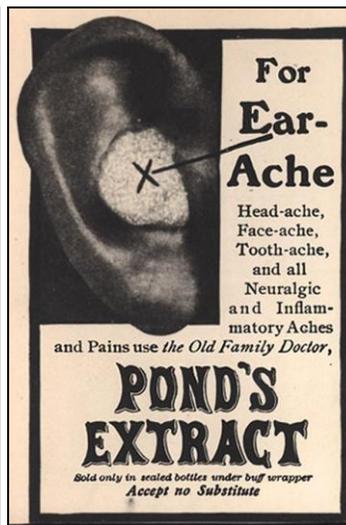
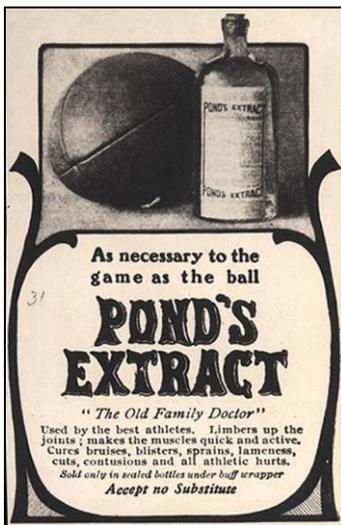
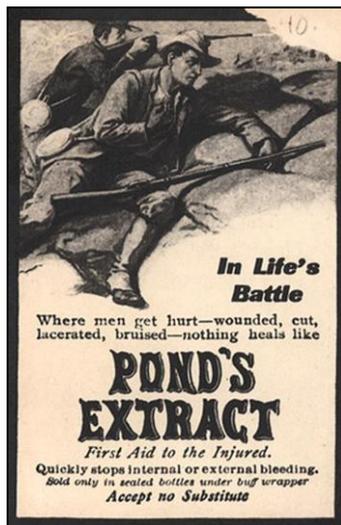
**Primary Website:** <http://mbwba.whsites.net/>

**Forums:** <http://baseballretrospective.com/MBBA/phpBB3/index.php>

**OOTP Forum Entry:** <http://www.ootpdevelopments.com/board/ootp-16-online-leagues/254905-monty-brewster-world-baseball-association-now-ootp16.html>

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*The MBWBA is a fake baseball universe resting on the shoulders of Out of the Park Baseball. At the time of this writing, we sit on version 16. Anything inside this document resembling anything as mundane as real life is accidental. Sanity is nowhere close to implied.*





## 2024: CRUSADERS ON CRUSADE

Johnson Pacific's Finest Show Their Quality

*"I'm dancing naked with myse-lf! I'm dancing naked with myse-lf! There's nothing to lose, and I got nothing to prove, so I'll be dancing with myse-lf!"*

Ted Schmidt, General Manager of the California Crusaders, might be allowed a bit of Billy Idoling after his club weathered a 10-16 April start, a cascade of derision hurdled at the Johnson Pacific as a whole, a stiff challenge from the Tropics in Hawaii, and a string of playoff rivals in order just to face the Atlantic City Gamblers in the Landis Cup. But then, of course, came the series to end all series.

It was a series that saw the Crusaders, a squad built on the backbone of pitching, use three homers to club their way to a Game 1 victory (including a massive 1st inning shot from mid-season acquisition Doug Glover that sent a message). It was a series that then saw the Gamblers register 21 hits and turn the tide with a 16-2 bludgeoning to even the score. After Jesús Tonche did his thing, California was up 2 games to 1.

Then Game Four Happened.

Seven scoreless innings from Richado Díaz wasn't enough. Then five more scoreless from the bullpen didn't do the deed either because on the other side of the field the Gambler staff was stifling the Crusaders. In what was one of the more pressurized games in league history, it took a Glover homer and a base hit from Holden Blackwell to bring home the bacon, and even that wasn't clear until shortstop Todd Kilger flipped a ground ball to Blackwell with the bases loaded to put a lid on the game. The Crusaders were up 3-1, and the Gamblers' geese looked cooked.

"We know it's not over, though," Díaz said after the celebration had died down. "Those guys are too good to come this far and then just quit."

Truer words have never been spoken. Atlantic City took the next two games, and suddenly the pressure was on. Would the club choke?

If it weren't for Game 4, Game 9 might be considered a classic in itself. It was 41 degrees outside as the clubs got to business on a November evening. Three hours and fourteen minutes, 14 base hits and a couple lead changes later, the California Crusaders were the Landis Cup champions and Ted Schmidt was doing his worst Billy Idol impersonation.

*"If I had the chance I'd ask the world to dance, but I'll be dancing with myse-lf, oh, oh, oh-oh!"*



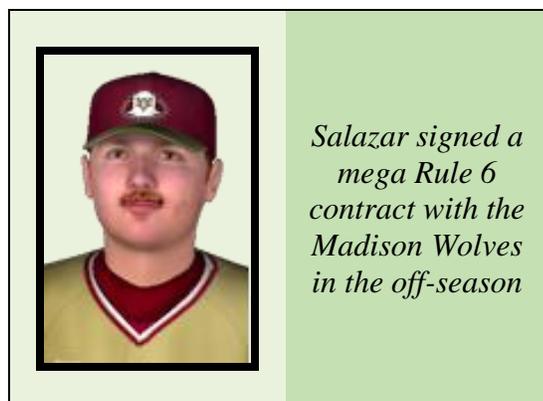
## 2024: EAT YOUR BRUSSELS SPROUTS AND BE THANKFUL

Eagles Hoist the European Cup

Baseball? In Europe? *Go on, girl!* Or, if you prefer something on the more intellectual scale we can try: *surely, Mr, Feynman, you must be joking?*

If you live in North America, you can be forgiven if you don't think about baseball when someone says "Brussels." Belgium is known for chocolate, of course. And in literary circles, Belgium is home to Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, detective of *Murder on the Orient Express* fame. They speak French here, right? (In the southern regions, anyway ... Dutch in the north.) But baseball as played in the MBWBA is alive and well across Europe, and is become home to several past MBBA heroes as well as the developing grounds of several future MBBA stars.

And they clearly play a pretty mean game of baseball in Brussels. The Eagles have posted winning seasons each of the last four years, and by the fact that they beat Eastern Association rival Munchen in six games to take out the Western Alliance's wild card team, then took Belfast to the mat, winning the best of nine European Cup series in dramatic fashion (scoring three runs in the least two innings of the season), is all that's needed to say they done well.

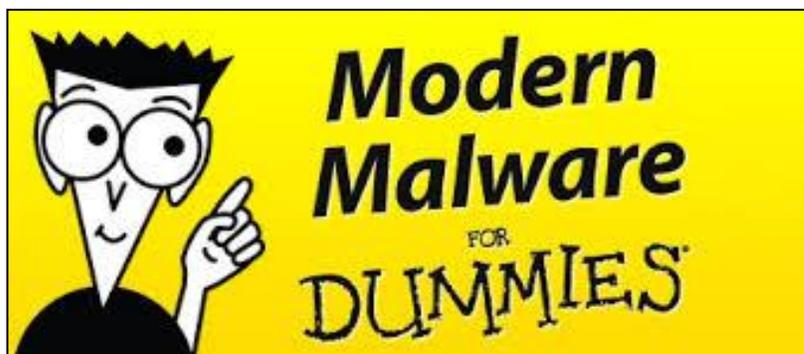


If you need more, though, we suggest you note that Brussels was home to third baseman Connor Tyldsley (29 HR, .262/.335/.455), pitcher Fernando Alaniz (19-10, 3.83 ER), and the scintillating Alfredo Salazar (43 HR, .309/.392/.575), all of whom will be playing the North American wing of the MBWBA in 2025.

With 561 walks, the Eagles were the most patient offense in the league, leading Europe with a .346 team OBP. They stole 126 bases (behind Salazar's 45 and Rubén Álvarez's 35). Their pitchers struck out more hitters and walked fewer than any team not

named Madrid. They led the league in complete games.

The big question facing the Eagle's General Manager, Chris Wilson, in 2025 will how to replace the production of the three Rule 6 transfers. It will be a tough task, that's for sure. But baseball in Brussels has become kind of a thing, and we figure if nothing else the answer will be fun to watch unfold.





## DID WE JUST SEE THE BIRTH OF THE MBN?

*Adam Dee and Kyle Stever Jaw for Freaking Hours About Lots of Cool and Dumb Shit*

All right, admit it. You listened to every bit of the Drew Zocast.

You listened to it, and you loved it, and you waited for the moment when Adam and Kyle talked about your ball club, and for those few moments you thought: "Yeah, baby, this is it. This is the moment when we lift our sorry little asses out of the pretend morass of hard-core silliness to become that full-blooded thing of our dreams that we always thought we were."

I did it, and at the time I didn't even have a goddamned team.

If I did it, you did it.

And it was Holy.Mother.of.God Cool. Monty Brewster Network, hear us roar.

An hour on the Frick, and an hour on the Johnson: predictions, rye commentary, inclusion of OOTP-complaints and suggestions and peeks into history, two guys getting their whole, full-forced, unapologetic fake baseball geek neep on. What could be better?

Oh, yeah...I know what could be better:

A whole goddamned freaking hour and a half on the goddamned playoffs, that's what could be better—and a peak into next season.

Including ... Yes!

Oh my goodness, an honest to goodness comment about ME!

Yes, ME!

I, RonCo, a guy who barely made a ripple in the momentous season that was the MBWBA in 2024, managed to sneak into the ZocCast!

Screw the skiffy award. Screw the imagined life as a point guard for my beloved Louisville Cardinals followed by a career as the ruggedly handsome, yet humble center fielder for the Chicago Cubs. Screw summers in Vermont and winters on the Riviera. Screw dating <insert hot Hollywood starlet here>.

My life is now complete.



## **IT'S #5. DEFINITELY. YES TO #5.**



### Why We Oppose Votes For Men

1.

*Because man's place is in the army.*

2.

*Because no really manly man wants to settle any question otherwise than by fighting about it.*

3.

*Because if men should adopt peaceable methods women will no longer look up to them.*

4.

*Because men will lose their charm if they step out of their natural sphere and interest themselves in other matters than feats of arms, uniforms and drums.*

5.

*Because men are too emotional to vote. Their conduct at baseball games and political conventions shows this, while their innate tendency to appeal to force renders them particularly unfit for the task of government.*

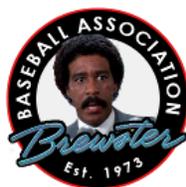
- Alice Duer Miller, 1915





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PREVIEW  
2025**

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## MBWBA 2025: THE PREVIEW WHO THE HELL KNOWS ANYTHING?

By Prog N. Osticator

The whole point of these here previews is to go out on a limb and suggest what's going to happen in this coming season—as if we're all these great prognosticators of prognostication, as if we can all just hold up a “Dewey Beats Truman” sign or project that Gore has taken Florida. When it comes to suggesting we know much about how the season is going to go do, I would say I'm probably the Kanye West of the circuit.

Which probably means that either Beck or Taylor Swift is going to win it all.

Or maybe this time Beyoncé will actually take all the marbles, and we'll be left without anything else to make fun of. Yeah, right. Like that's ever going to happen?

Enough with the silly stuff, though.

Let's get down to the brass tacks. Really. Seriously. Who's going to take it all in 2025?

Well, I'm glad you asked ...



## JOHNSON PACIFIC DIVISION PROJECTIONS



### CALIFORNIA CRUSADERS: (86-76)

GM: Ted Schmidt

The Crusaders return to 2025 essentially intact from the squad that took home the Landis Cup last season. That is both the good and the bad news. It is a team, after all, that won only 84 games—and 84 games would have come third in any other division in the league.

The presence of slugger Doug Glover (38 HR, 108 RBI) for the entire season should boost the overall offence, and the pitching staff remains the same outstanding staff, built to take advantage of the same cavernous ballpark. The outfield defense remains sterling and, given their ages, should stay so for another season or two—the infield defense may flag a little as Glover, 2B Dave Pruitt (+1.2 ZR) and SS Tod Kilger (+3.4 ZR) edge fully into their 30s.

As Crusader fans discovered to their delight last year, to win the whole thing, you have to first win your division, and California has the horses to do that again in 2025.

*“I’ve always been one to say that if you have pitching and defense, you have a chance, but yeah, this was a little lucky. We’ll see if we can get a little better this winter, and who knows what happens next year.”*

California 2025.1 –  
Crusaders Win the Landis!

### HAWAII TROPICS: (82-80)

GM: Mike Bieschke

The Tropics won 82 games in 2024, which may not come as much of a surprise seeing that they won 82 games a year prior and (you got it) 82 games the year before that. You think I’m going to bet against a streak like that?

In truth, this is an interesting call, because Hawaii’s young infield core of 2B José Martínez (2.7 WAR), SS Paul Backstrom (2.4 WAR in AAA), and 3B Joe Wilcox (3.0 WAR), are all 24 going on 25, and should all take a step forward. Unfortunately, the pitching staff are the guys who turned in a moderately bland 3.71 team ERA—which sounds impressive until you see that the JL Pacific is crammed full of pitcher’s parks.

Bottom line to me: this was a good, not great, team last year, and Mikey-Mike B. hasn’t done a whole lot in the off season to step either forward or backward. This is a team treading water, and (let’s not forget) a team with an 82-win Jones going on. So the prediction here has to be—you got it—82 wins.

*“Every damn guy I offer a contract to signs for less somewhere else. Very frustrating.”*

2025, FA Sim #4 Chatter





**VALENCIA STARS: (77-85)**

GM: Lee Honigsfeld

The Stars' fall from grace last season was anything but graceful, and went a long way toward proving that this is Jason Dunn's team. The aging catcher had a fine enough season when he could stay in the line-up (his defense and .298/.338/.476 slash was good for 3.3 WAR), but he saw only 94 games in 2024 after never playing less than 136 in his career. The team was competitive until late March when Dunn decided to do what a lot of guys in their mid-30 do, and busted a gut somehow. After that, the team just kind of died.

The front office is still betting on the core of the team, though. It's been active in the off-season, but adding only fringy bench players (2B Tisnal Blythin, and Lamberto Morra) and bottom of the order pitchers ('Horse' Hoffman) to date.

That said, it's also a team only two seasons from their division winning squad, and it still has guys like podcast namesake Drew Zodiak (35 HR, 80 RBI) and one-time super-ace José León (who should rebound from a nightmare 2024). If young SP Ezechiele Mariotto can grow a bit in his 23-year-old season, the Stars just might line up once again. Last year's projections say the club should have won 71 games rather than 69, so let's assume the pitching staff gets a rebound, and go with 77 wins this year—good enough to get out of the division cellar.

*“The Stars have had a busy off season so far adding some bench depth and pitching depth...”*

Valencia Stars: Off Season  
# 1

**VANCOUVER MOUNTIES: (75-87)**

GM: Brett Schroeder

The Mounties have been working their way through a mini-rebuild after their time in the strawberry patch a couple years back. After an eye-ball gouging 71-win 2024, though (a season in which no pitcher for the club won even 10 games), fans of the club are happy to see the front office open the wallet and bringing in some talent.

Originally in the discussion for who might acquire Savage Salvador, Vancouver's GM checked down and grabbed pitchers Alberto Escobedo (18-8, 3.14) from the EBA. Full of cash, they signed 23-year-old catcher Juan Cantú away from the Louisville club by giving him a highly front-loaded deal. One assumes this will be the year fans see fastball throwing phenom Anastasio Quintana arrive on the scene.

So, yeah, help is on its way for guys like Pedro Burgos (33 HR, 86 RBI) and Ángel Calderón (2-2, 3.04). We just aren't sure 2025 is going to represent the same level of step-up that some in Canada would like to see.



*“Yellow springs prepare to be poison pillled! Mwahahaha”*

2024-25, EBA Rights Draft (Rule 6)



## JOHNSON MID-WESTERN DIVISION



### OMAHA: BARNSTORMERS: (103-59)

GM: Fred Holmes

Our question for the day, class, is whether a torn ligament can change a player—in this specific case, the torn ligament that was once in the knee of one Emilio “Sunshine” Rodriguez, he of the 6-7 WAR season, the Puckett Winner, and the perennial Sawyer Silk candidate.

Not that the Barnstormers don’t have other guys. Let’s talk Iran Brito (that’s Gold Glove, Puckett, and Silk winning Iran Brito to you), and let’s talk All-Star shortstop Jonathan Archer and his DP mate in Juan Pablo. Though he’s 21, you can probably still pencil catcher Bob Burke in for 5 WAR. And any rotation led by young-gun 25-year-old Enrique Gómez (15-6, 2.69) is a dangerous rotation. Look up the definition of “lock-down” bullpen, and you see a team photo of the Omaha Barnstormers. Even if the sun don’t shine no more, the team has weapons.

Yet, the question remains. If you answer it in the positive (that Rodriguez bounces back), Omaha is special. Otherwise, they are merely very good.

*“I would expect that there’s much more to come from this rivalry, as I don’t see either of these teams going anywhere in the next couple of seasons.”*

2024.7: Doubleday Series

### HUNTSVILLE PHANTOMS: (98-64)

GM: Kyle Stevers

Filled with a brace of young talent, and headed by a flamboyant lightning rod of a GM, the Phantoms are the James Dean of the MBBA. Petulant, brash, and brilliant. The roster is Rock-Star Gorgeous and Astronomically Glittery. The pocket books are swollen as a pimple on a prom king’s nose.

Someday this club will catch Omaha. Someday they will stake claim to the JL Mid-west for the first time since 2015. Last year’s acquisition of 'Beer Barrel' Valéncia (45 HR) in his prime just put the stake in the ground that the arrival of young hitters like José Pérez and Chris Workman had already brought into the clubhouse.

Pitching out of the ballparks in the JLM, it’s arguable that the Phantom’s staff was the best in Johnson baseball (3.46 ERA, 350 walks ... second best in the JL).

Yes, someday the Phantoms will catch and pass the Barnstormers. But Prog N. Osticator says that time is not now.

*“It is legitimately arguable that the Phantoms are the best franchise in the league at the moment.”*

24.10- State of Affairs





**YELLOW SPRINGS NINE: (78-84)**

GM: Ron Collins

“The glass is half empty” version: The rule of thumb is that rookie GMs make rookie GM mistakes, and we expect no deviation from Hoyle here. Some are whispering that the entire Salazar debacle was the first such sign, and that Collins should have played it cagey and not drafted Savage at all in the Rule 6 Draft. It’s a tough world, and the Yellow Springs organization has seen its share of tough events. It is a squad that is nearly 400 games below .500 since the mid-90s, and honestly may add to that total this year.

The “glass is half full” version: The team had to try to lose 97 games, and it succeeded. It won’t try again. In addition, the club is chock full of young talent, and that let Collins be a bit blustery with the cash this off-season. Yellow Springs used the situation to sign a 35-year-old catcher in Peter McClure, a 30-year-old clubhouse leader in thick-legged left fielder ‘Dinner Plate’ McIntyre (from the Vancouver organization), and flirt with a few other such guys. But the fact is that the Nine have a stock of young arms and young bats already in the organization—it didn’t need to go too heavily into the FA market to compete.

Which version is right? *You make the call!*

*“The first thing I did was use the plane’s phone to call Tuna and tell him that even though we’re contractually required to pay him only 40% of his salary for the next few years, that we loved him twice as much.”*

YS 24.39 – Help Us, Obi-Ron, You’re Our Only Hope

**MADISON WOLVES: (68-94)**

GM: Chris Wilson

Any discussion centered around the off-season that Madison Wolves fans have enjoyed has to begin and end with the sensational acquisitions of EBA star Alfredo Salazar (43 HR, 23 steal, 7.1 WAR is making fans burst in anticipation) and starting pitcher Fernando Alaniz (19-10, 3.83). But there’s more going on in the middle. The Wolves picked up Sandy Fox out of the Rule 5 draft, a 27-year old guy who has had a nice little bounce-around in the Hawaii organization (23 homers in the first time he was given 500 AB). They dealt aging Hank Sharp in a cash dump, and they added a dazzling defender in utility man Carlos Garza, signed to a cheap 1-season deal.

Some league experts suggest Madison will have problems become a team that eventually competes seriously for the crown. They say the Savage contract will kill them in the end (admittedly, that kind of expense is like a snake swallowing a hippopotamus). But we’re not here to predict the death of the Wolves. No. We’re here to look at 2025, and that far out our crystal ball is saying the club improves from 55 wins to 68.

*“I continue glancing at guys on the computer, trying to solve our problem at 1B when I notice Kate hasn’t left.”*

House of Fiscus Episode 5



## JOHNSON ATLANTIC DIVISION



### HALIFAX HAWKS: (92-70)

GM: Joe Geoghegan

If you think being #2 makes you try just that much harder, the Halifax Hawks may well be your poster child organization. GM Joe Geoghegan's bunch came up one single game short on the division crown, and he's used the off-season to take a step forward.

The first boost is the arrival of 22-year-old right-hander Daniel Jordan. Jordan pitched through injury last season, but team insiders say he's looking good enough to pencil into the rotation in Halifax. They also added back-up depth at center field in Barry Allen (21 HR, 3.7 WAR with Tucson) and at catcher with the signing of career minor leaguer David O'Sullivan, who brings the leather well enough.

But the big news was the signing of 29 year-old RH starter Martin Lewis (17-9, 3.90) from out of the Tucson organization. Martin brings a bit more pizzaz to the squad and stabilizes the risk inherent in Jordan's arrival. The Hawk's staff was just a tick behind Brooklyn's last season, and the work done here should certainly raise it a notch.

*“Ha Ha.  
Keith Young wants \$4.2  
million for four years.  
He laughed at my offer.  
I am laughing at him.  
He can fly back to  
Europe or perhaps try  
the Australia/New  
Zealand league.”*

2024-25, EBA Rights Draft  
(Rule 6)

*“All in all, 2024 was a  
masterful rebuild of an  
ancient, under-  
performing rotation, into  
a young, dynamic force  
to be reckoned with for  
the future. Simply  
Genius.”*

Awesome Slugger  
Sauce...2024.12 Starter  
report cards

### LOUISVILLE SLUGGERS: (88-74)

GM: Stu Hopkins

*Considine and Ramos, then get the hell outta the house...* seems to be the plan on the mound for the guys from Louisville. Actually, that's not true. The Slugger pitching staff is a bit unsung, but appears to be a solid, meat and potatoes kind of collective. The kind that can win games well enough that the club could let longtime ace Bryan Walden walk (though admittedly, Walden was showing more signs of aging than pretty much anyone short of Keith Richards).

Offensively the team is not much changed from the club that was second in the division to Brooklyn, and they added European center fielder Mar . This is a fairly young team, though we'll begin to see how much shelf life 31-year-old 2B Brian 'Ol Big Head' Clough has. Clough's 5.5 WAR is a big part of Louisville's success, and if he goes south I suspect the Sluggers' slugging will head that way, too.

All total, we think it adds up to improved prospects in the River City. How much is debatable. Probably not enough to catch Halifax, but arguably enough to pass by Brooklyn and make it up a rung.





**BROOKLYN ROBINS: (84-78)**

GM: Nathan Laverick

Who would have thought Victor Talboom was going to go and drop 29 homers and a 3.3 WAR season on the heads of JA opponents? Well, apparently Nigel Laverick for one (and possibly only), as he signed the EBA star to a major deal last off-season that spurred the team to the division crown. This season, however, Laverick has spent much of the off-season vacationing and basking in the fruits of his labor, so the player flow has been mostly outward.

The team lost four players to Rule 5. Throughout the organization, it had a whopping 25 players become free agents (including slugging 1B Rob Childress and several interesting pitchers).

90 wins was enough to snag the division last year. We're suggesting that no matter how much Tal lays the boom, this *laissez-faire* attitude and 84 wins won't get it done in 2025. The better question going forward is whether Laverick will get back to his building ways after he returns from vaca, or not. And if not, how long will it be before the fans begin the old Brooklyn cheer?

*“Not growing up with baseball, it's stats and their analysis has always put me at a severe disadvantage”*

Stats Discussion

*“...underneath the small conversations in the largely quiet locker room, there was an undercurrent of resignation. Players knew that next year was not going to be any better, nor perhaps the year after. Greenville is in a full rebuild and the guys knew it.”*

That Good Ole Mountain Dew - 2024.3 - Playing the Long Game

**GREENVILLE MOONSHINERS: (62-100)**

GM: Gates Elliott

Let's face it, the Shiners are a bit of a mess. Yes, they managed to somehow sign their best starter Ernie Von Schledorn to a long term contract at a price point that wasn't devastating. (EVS, at 4-9, 4.76 may be one of the best advertisements for FIP one can point to. His 3.55 FIP is unencumbered by a BABIP that ballooned from around the .300 range all his career to .368 in 2024—can you say no defense? I thought you could). They are relying on David Cantu to come in and pair with Von Schledorn, which is a good idea even though both his history and his repertoire suggest Cantu may be better framed in the bullpen.

And then you come to ...

What's next? A bucket of semi-cheap FA signings like RP Lorenzo Perez, who got lost in Louisville last year and never made it out and 1B Fulton Reed, who hits them far, but also only hit .185 in Des Moines.

In the end, what do you come to in Greenville but a collection of good guys and tough luck cases that you can't help but root for despite knowing they are doomed. We suggest going to a Moonshiner's game in 2025 is going to feel a lot like going back in time to watch the Titanic leave the dock. You know Jack and Rose are doomed, but there's just nothing for you to do but wave goodbye and hope they enjoy their time together.



## FRICK PACIFIC DIVISION



### LAS VEGAS HUSTLERS: (94-68)

GM: Matt Rectenwald

If Yogi Berra could be believed, (and why the hell not, eh?) it can be said that good pitching always beats good hitting, and visa versa. Last year was apparently a visa versa year in the FP division, and it appeared to be such a vise versa season that it nearly tore the guts out of the team’s GM—who basically threatened to rip the team up and start over again.

Cooler minds prevailed, though, and it appears the Hustlers will be back at it this year, as pitching-dominant as always, but with a fresh perspective on fate. The team returns its core—and what a nice core it is. Mike Swanson (17-12) still anchors the rotation that is rumored will include Luis Tiant IV (41 saves). The offensive pieces remain, also, but will be tweaked—players are getting more input into the lineup order, and the message around the clubhouse has been altered to one of inclusion and high expectation.

So, yeah. Tweaks. Looking at the Hustlers off-season is like watching a race car make a pit stop. *Fill ‘er up, and take a little downforce off the front left if you would. Yes. Indeed. Tweak me, baby. Tweak me.*

*“That means 2025 is an all-in scenario for these Hustlers, who were built to win championships.”*

WHIV 2025.1- What's the plan, Recte?

*“Any season that doesn’t end with a championship is at least a little disappointing, and Seattle fans are certainly aware of this...”*

Chasing The Storm 2025-1  
Off-Season Primer

### SEATTLE STORM: (91-71)

GM: Nathan Eagan

Seattle used one of the league’s premier offenses to storm past Las Vegas last year. Their torrential downpour of 832 runs was the second best in the MBBA, only 8 behind Atlantic City. Outfielder Jorge Rodríguez led the thunder brigade with 41 homers and 151 RBI while posting 6.3 WAR. 1B Juan Escobar wasn’t far behind with 19 homers and 5.7 WAR. Not surprisingly, the front office let that side of the team alone through the off-season.

Unfortunately, the squad didn’t have a whole lot of payroll cap to work with in order to get the pitching side shored up. Mostly they went out and got guys with big fastballs. Guys like José Liñares (99 MPH), and Wayne Williams (98). Guys like Stevie 'Oil Can' Wolarski (99). Or the extension they gave Tomás Guerrero (a paltry 96). The downside to these guys is that they all struggle to hit the plate at anything but dinner time.

That’s the life of a team with these kinds of bats, though.

We should all feel Seattle’s pain.





**TUCSON CACTUS: (87-75)**

GM: Carl Mitchell

By the numbers, Tucson really should have won 82 games and come third in the division. But the baseball gods don't play by the numbers, and the baseball gods can be sadistic and cruel, which is pretty much the name of the game here. Bottom line for Tucson: any season that has an injury to Leon Sandcastle (17 HR) is going to be a bad year. Second bottom line: ditto if Daniel Labrie looks more like the Brooklyn version of himself than the Vegas version. 2024 saw both of these situations occur, as well as a scad more injuries.

If you're Charlie Brown, you stick with these guys. You believe in your plan, and chalk last year up to happenstance. You give the ball to Tully Crow (13-13) and 25-year-old twirler José Cavazos (13-5), and maybe you sign a European catcher like Jeremy Cirolli (.321/.383/.482) and you tell yourself you'll see the real team you put together next year.

If you're Charlie Brown you take a swing.

Which is what Tucson might be doing. Or might not. At the time of this writing, Sandcastle and Cavazos are being shopped. If they go, cut this prediction by a billion.

*"Tucson. Where hopes fade, dashed against the rocks of the MBWA."*

The Tucson Prick – 2024.5

**CALGARY PIONEERS: (80-82), third place, 14 games out**

GM: Kevin Dickson

The Pioneers put a new face on the pig last year, but the fact remains that the ball club has not budged much from the team that's averaged 80 wins, and third place in the division, 14 games out. "Pencil it in," said one fan. "You know you want to."

*"Reminds me of when Carl Long hit a grand slam to win a key playoff game our first Landis season. That one at bat is why I still have him on the team."*

Now this is a walkoff

As of this writing, the front office has taken the bold strides of adding two Rule 5 draftees, so fans are not particularly high of expectation. To be fair, though, Dickson is a little strapped for cash. This is because it costs good money to staff an 80-win team. And the Pioneers, while stagnant, have been entertaining. I mean, they've got some guys who can play the game.

Guys like 32-year-old outfielder Héctor Canó and his 35 homers. Or Dave Romero, his 26-year-old cohort in right with his 30 round trippers. When they aren't hitting, fans can play "watch the fuzzy facial hair," which is always good for a laugh. On the mound you have 26-year-old Ace Young (14-7), who really *can* pitch, but who keeps his Fu Manchu too well-trimmed to play in any reindeer games.

We've heard the team's latest season ticket ad includes the tagline: *"Come to the Park! What else do you have to do?"*



## FRICK MID-WESTERN DIVISION



### INDY GRASSHOPPERS: (92-70)

GM: Ben Teague

The Grasshoppers won their division by 8 games last season, and had the bulk of their team returning. They did not need to accomplish a whole lot in the off-season, but, even at that, had a productive one. Adding lefty Scott Adams to the pen was a nice finishing touch, and of course resigning César Rodríguez at a price higher than arbitration is a difficult pill to swallow, but like cod liver oil, sometimes needs to be done. That act may show why Indy is where it's at—GM Ben Teague wasn't afraid to admit he made a mistake, and rather than hide it away, he went out and got his man.

We note here that, like Montreal, the Hoppers play in a pitchers park, but in a division full of hitter's parks. In fact, Montreal and Indy are the only parks in the Frick that clearly depress runs. This can server to mess with your mind a little. For example, at 728 runs, the Indy offense sounds decent—6th in the Frick. But if you put that offense in another division they probably finish third or fourth.

But pitching-wise, it's a different story. The staff allowed only 624 runs last year, nearly 30 fewer than the next best staff...but gain, put them in another division and watch that advantage dry up.

Whatevs, right?

*“So, yet again the Hoppers will return to Indianapolis to regroup and reassess a squad good enough to win a FL Midwest title but badly exposed in the postseason.”*

The Hopper 2024.30:  
Pitching Again Sinks Indy's  
Postseason

### NEW ORLEANS CRAWDAD: (84-78)

GM: Jim Roberts

Despite big-ish talk in the early part of off-season and the best of efforts, the New Orleans front office has really only made one big splash to date, the acquisition of Henry Sharp (17 HR, 48 RBI) from Madison to boost the catcher slot. Admittedly, it's a nice add. But the team won 87 games last year, and they will need to win more than that if they want to take a division title in 2025.

We're thinking that news of Buffalo's move to Havana—home of their minor league franchise, got them to take their eye off the ball.

The best news, really, is that you can stack this rotation up with the best in the league and come out pretty even. Start with Manuel Ramírez (13-10, 3.43), then go to a hopefully resurgent Miguel Datiz (7-14, 4.48 in a very tough year), and follow up with Michael Leroy (14-10, 3.44, and who they did extend this off-season), Luis Espinoza (14-10, 3.41), and ... well ... somebody. Nearly anybody will do the job, though Flint Colbert (7-2, 2.33) struggled in his four starts, so that might not actually be true.

Bottom line: the numbers suggest the Crawdads over-performed a bit, and I don't see a projection of much more success. Say 79 wins.

*“GM Jim Roberts has announced a restructuring. Don't be surprised if you see some aging veterans get moved, and some new shiny pieces come in in Free Agency.”*

Crawdads Chronicles 24.02 -  
Playoff Streak Ends





**DES MOINES KERNELS: (78-84)**

GM: Edward Murphy

25-year-old pitcher Rio Underhill went 17-7 with a 2.87 ERA for the EBA's Munchen franchise last year. This year he's sporting a shiny new \$4M salary and a Kernels' uniform. Likewise 3B Connor Tyldsey, who will be paid \$9M this year to don the black and red. Tyldsey hit 29 homers with a .790 OPS in Europe. Both players are good adds, but just as clearly those numbers won't transfer over with quite such fervor.

The additional bad news is that the pyth-a-beast says the Kernels over-performed by a remarkable *10 games* on their way to an 80 win season. This is a huge number, and says barring something huge we should expect a reversion to some mean. By "something big," I think we mean something more than two EBA players.

At present we don't see it, though the team is young (only one player on the entire 40-man roster is over 31), so the team should see a natural emerging of skills and talents over the season. That makes Des Moines one of the more interesting teams to watch this year.

*"...is there a betting line in Vegas that the Kernels will sweep the Krakens in the up coming series Aug 26-28?"*

Carolina Out Of Town

**BIRMINGHAM BANDITS: (69-93)**

GM: Mike Calvaruso

The biggest thing Big Mike has done this off-season is to keep the Top-Gun in the fold, signing 26-year-old Nelson Ramírez to a 6-season deal worth half a Salvador. The fans are happy for that, we suppose. On the other hand, I hear them saying "where's the beef?"

At issue, we're sure, is that the team is a little cash-strapped, and cap-constrained. So in the end, Calvaruso is forced to deal with what he has—and to be true to fact, the club has some nice pieces. Starters Dave Wren (15-9, 3.89) and Juan Jose Ornelas (13-10, 2.92) set up with Ramírez to make a nice 3-man rotation. An optimist would say that the only problem is with that word "three."

Offensively, the team looks like it will lose catcher Lance Stephens (25 HR, 61 RBI), its best power hitter, to a very pricey free agency, though an outfield of Juan Cruz (22 HR, .763 OPS), CF Vicente Marín (32 HR, 72 RBI), and RF Pedro Vega (20 HR, .864 OPS) are nice and solid with George Patrick (20/56) and 3B Diego Moreno (15/57, .797 OPS) there to provide some additional power. Without Stephens around, though, one has to expect the offense to drop to the lower third of the Frick, and the pitching was already lower half to begin with...

Well, we're thinking 2025 will be another disappointment for Bandit fans.

*"...to say that there is disappointment throughout the Bandits' front office would be a colossal understatement. The season looked so promising on paper."*

The Outlaw Chronicles  
2024-13 Abject Failure



## FRICK ATLANTIC DIVISION



### CAROLINA KRAKEN: (91-71)

GM: Aaron Weiner

By the numbers, pretty much everything about the Carolina pitching staff was in the top two or three in the league. From that staff, the Kraken lost 29-year-old starter Alan Kennedy (13-4, 3.62), but added lefty Julian Anderson (22 saves, 4.48 ERA) in a deal from Yellow Springs. All seems well, doesn't it? The problem, as we see it, though, is that so much of those top-level numbers are tied up in pitchers named Billy Chapel, Jr (19-7, 2.92) and Ángel 'Beast of Burden' Ramírez (16-8, 2.83 [combined with Greenville]). There are holes—we're just sayin'

The lineup, on the other hand, is hard to argue with. Led by Future Hall of Famer Frank Thomas III (33 HR, 119 RBI in what could be called an "off" 4.9 WAR year), the Kraken hitters were third best in the Frick, possibly second when you take ballpark effects into account. They led the league in doubles, and led the league in slugging. They struck out a fair chunk, but were top two in walks.

And they all come back.

It's an offense composed of guys at the tail end of their peaks. We're guessing they have one more top-notch season as a collective before it will begin to erode, slowly, but sure. Enjoy it while you can.

*"It's a pretty simple equation, actually," said Kraken GM Aaron Weiner. "We felt his vices outweighed his virtues."*

WK 2024.45: Why Would Carolina Deal Cesar Valencia?

### ATLANTIC CITY GAMBLERS: (87-75)

GM: Ryan Scott

Despite some suggestion otherwise, the Gamblers have been moderately calm this off-season, suffering the loss of 36-year-old catcher Ernest Watts to free agency, but signing 22-year-old lefty Tom Miller to fill a slot in the pen. Otherwise, they've stood fairly pat. This might be good. The club did finish one game away from taking the Landis Cup, after all.

But Atlantic City has, to our eyes, a lot of nagging questions—not the least is whether 34-year-old Gabriel Campos (11-12, 4.06) will come out of the other end of elbow surgery looking like Gabriel Campos, or even if Gabriel Campos at 34 looks like Gabriel Campos are 32? Questions like will this be the "even" year closer Hani Tinsley and his 41 saves breaks the mold and sets down a second stunning performance? How long past 30 will shortstop Timmy Moulin (+10.7 ZR) keep playing elite-level defense? And as it fades, where will that leave his WAR?

Atlantic City still has way too much grunt to not be good, but the real question is whether they have enough to be great?

Our answer is: probably not.

*"Despite a year full of individual accolades and team success when it counts, there could be some significant changes in Atlantic City for 2025."*

Boardwalk Empire #2 2024:  
Came Up Short.





### HAVANA SUGAR KINGS: (86-76)

GM: Adam Dee

Given the passion for baseball in Cuba, the newly relocated Havana Sugar Kings are sure to spark some intense interest. But the fact is that the team won 75 games last year and it could have been worse. So what's a GM in a bright and shiny new City to do, eh?

Step one: draft a slugging 1B in the EBA Rule 6 draft—like Mike McPherson (51 HR in Europe) [check]. Step two: sign outfielder Thor Rosko and hope that .3 WAR last year bounces back up to 3-4.0 where it belongs [check]. Step three: pluck a spunky defensive shortstop out of Rule 5—like 23-year-old Alberto Campos (2.2 WAR in the minors, all of it with the leather) [check]. Step four: bring a reliever from Florida in—like Jonathan Sorensen [check]

Will it be enough to climb out of third in the Frick Atlantic? Probably not. It's a long climb. But it might be closer than the guys at the top would like to think...and when these guys combine with players like SP Jon Chandler (14-13, 3.76) and 22-year-old phenom, Ignacio Rodríguez, and if they get just a little more offense ... well ... the Sugar Kings could wind up looking sweet indeed.

*“It felt like every man, woman and child of Havana was crowded into this massive assembly waiting to hear the words: major league baseball was coming to Cuba.”*

25.01 – The Big Move

### MONTREAL BLAZERS: (63-99)

GM: John Callahan

Poor Montreal fans.

GM John Callahan picked up 38-year-old reliever Perry Eccles (1-7, 3.47 in 96 innings) to help the pen, and selected a solid 3B in Connor Tyldsley out of Europe, only to have Des Moines out-spend them. The Blazers won 66 games last season, worst in the Frick by a wide margin. Their collective offense was kept from being the worst in the league only by Buffalo's hapless bats, and the team's collective -46 ZR was the worst in the Frick by several country miles, and their DEFF was nearly as bad. The staff as a whole gave up more runs than anyone but Calgary.

The front office needed to give their fans something to hold onto. Some form of hope. And what they got was Perry Eccles and a new set of snazzy uniforms.

So the news for 2025 is moderately bleak—except ... true Blazer fans will take a scan down into the minors and see guys like SS Jared Gilstrom (20), and pitchers Denny Marino (21), and Juan Flores (20), and a bevy of others ... and while they watch their team take a few licks now, they will be completely prepared to use the old cliché “Wait until next year,” with full justification in thinking they are probably right.

*“Most conversations involving Canadians turn to hockey at some point.”*

Oshawa Dodgers - Alive Again - 2025





## EUROPEAN BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

### LEST WE FORGET THE GUYS “OVER THERE”

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EASTERN ALLIANCE</b></p> 	<p>Munchen: 97- 65</p> <p>The Brauers were the second biggest loser in the MBBA Rule 6 draft, with 1B Mike McPhereson and SP Rio Underhill making the trek to North America. The good news is that they return a solid core that includes a pair of double-digit winning SP (Dominc New at 15-9, and Frédéric Bonnin at 10-6 in only 18 starts), and three guys who can swat balls gone (C Shoin Tanaka had 28 homers, 1B Santiago Green 23, and Marcus Hollis 37). They won 95 games last year. After picking up two young pitchers in José Peña and Roger Brown in this year's Rule 7 addition, we can't see them doing much worse this season.</p>
	<p>Amsterdam 86-76</p> <p>The team sank over \$5M into free agents this year, including the signing of Ted "Gallows" Zeppelin, whose parents are clearly two of Little Stevie Van Zandt's coolest people on the plant. Seriously, though, we like the add of pitcher Tim McPhater, and the fact that the Neptunes brought back Juan Costello. They have a pair of serious sluggers in 1B Edgardo Jaso (who may be stateside next year), and young centerfielder Marceau Dubois (who may also someday wind up in North America, though the jury is a bit out there). This is a sleeper team. Could win 90, but we'll set expectation lower.</p>
	<p>Brussels: 85-77</p> <p>Yes, they got first baseman José Rodríguez, and pitchers Konstantin Dankers and Jorge Concepción back from the Rule 7 draft, which is nice. But you don't lose Alfredo Salazar, Fernanzo Alaniz, and Connor Tyldsley from a 92-win team and expect to win 92 games again. Worse, their big offensive adds at the time of this writing have been shortstop Carlos Valentin and 42-year-old Harvey Newton, who hit .216 for London last year (though they did sign a solid EBA pitcher in another 41-year-old, lestyn Pilgrim ... key phrase, 41-year-old?). Worst-er, their minor league team won only 43 games last year.</p>
	<p>Rome: (73-89)</p> <p>The Raiders lost 97 games last year, and then lost defensive wizard Maurizio Lucantoni in center field and Keith Young from the infield in the Rule 6 draft. The plus side consists of the signing of Mal Banks from Madrid and the addition of a pair of exciting young pitchers (Stan Davidson and Anastasio Cortéz) in Rule 7. We suspect the Raiders will be improved, but part of that is that it's hard to get much worse than 97 losses. On the other hand, though, if Cortéz and Davidson can march on Europe, things could turn around rapidly.</p>



<p><b>WESTERN ALLIANCE</b></p> 	<p>Madrid: 96-56</p> <p>The Matadors were the class of the EBA, still made a bitter exit from the first round of the post season in 2024. They return looking for vengeance. Luckily they also return a pitching staff that, though hamstrung by the Rule 6 loss of Alberto Escobedo, should be the class of Europe. Attoehow, Granados, Abrams, and Beadle should pair with just about anyone else (Alberto Gil?) to be elite. Offensively, the loss of Emilio Maez will hurt, but they still get on base as well as anyone in the league, and new shortstop Ferdinand Magellan is a positive. Don't look for another 106 win season, but we would be shocked if Madrid didn't win the Western Association for the third straight season.</p>
	<p>London: 82-80</p> <p>If there's a team that got better as the result of a Rule 6 loss, London is it. They lost catcher Jeremy Cirolli, but replaced him with Rule 5 selection Mike Hunter (from Munchen). Hunter is probably a better catcher, and will provide more offensive punch. Then they used Rule 7 to add reliever Evan Hansen from Tucson's organization into the roster slot vacated by Cirolli. Add Fre agent pitchers Matthis Bélisle and Blakeley Gabriel, and you've got the makings of an interesting off-season. Add in the fact that the Bishops were -7 in their Pyth last year, and one has to look for a major improvement in the win column, and only the organization's third trip to the post season.</p>
	<p>Belfast: 76-86</p> <p>"Steady She Goes," appears to be the day's charter in Ireland. Fresh off a 76-win second place finish, the Northstars have done effectively nothing to go forward or backward. At least they've not lost anything, and given the cost avoidance involved in not stitching new names on the back of jerseys, we figure someone is getting quite a bonus come spring. They were good enough to win 76 games last year, so we'll certainly say they're good enough to do it again.</p>
	<p>Paris: 62-100</p> <p>Paris didn't lose anyone to the Rule 6 selection process, and a big reason for this is that they were not a very good baseball team last year. In response, team management has signed a series of international free agents and picked up Chris Omiboni from Madrid in the Rule 5 draft. We hope Omiboni knows what he's in for. This is a team that had one decent offensive player last year (catcher Jackie McKillen posted a 5+ WAR, no one else was above .9), and a pitching staff with a combined ERA of 5.17. At present we see no signs of life in Rome for the foreseeable future. They lost 94 games last year. Look for them to achieve a higher number in 2025.</p>



**WHATEVER HAPPENS, LET'S ALL REMEMBER TO ACT LIKE GROWN MEN, UM-KAY?**





GM, Ron Collins) has said would attempt to be competitive immediately, and saw Salazar as the way to do that. “The question of whether you can afford to bid like that is predicated on whether you think you have the kids around to be competitive in 2-3 years with,” Collins said. “There are only three teams that have the grunt to get close, and of those we think Yellow Springs is in pretty okay space. We’ll see, though. I may well be fine with letting Salazar slip—especially if it’s to a division rival.”

At the other side of the table you had Madison GM Chris Wilson, who looked at the situation as one in which paying Salazar now was merely a chit in the rebuilding phase. “It’s all about knowing you’re going to be bad for a few years, and trying to secure the rights to a really good player even if it calls for spending crazy amounts of money to secure the player now in hopes he helps in the future.”

Havana GM Adam Dee was happy all around: “I, personally, think it’s a phenomenal idea to pay him this kind of money.”

We’re assuming that the one guy on the face of the earth that agrees most with Mr. Dee is, in fact, Alfredo Salvador.

### Final 2024-35 Rule 6 Results

Yellow Springs- CF Alfredo "Savage" Salazar, Brussels Eagles (MAD, 6/\$249M, not matched)

Madison- SP Fernando Alaniz, Brussels Eagles (HFX, 4/\$40M, matched)

Buffalo- 1B Mike McPherson, Munchen Brauers

Des Moines- SP Rio Underhill, Munchen Brauers (VAN, 6/\$24M, matched)

Montreal- 3B Connor Tyldsley, Brussels Eagles (DM, 5/\$36M)

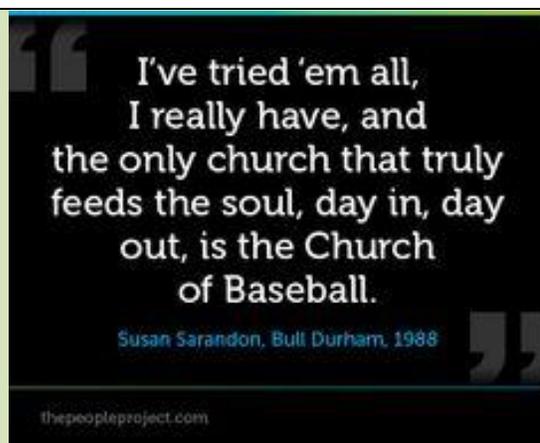
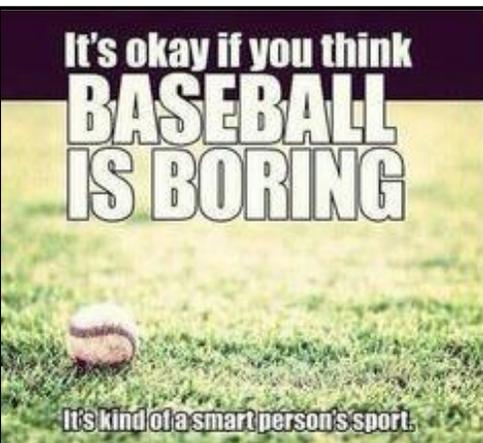
Vancouver- SP Alberto "Dracula" Escobedo, Madrid Matadors (LON, 8/\$11.2M)

Louisville- OF Maurizio Lucantoni, Rome Raiders (HFX, 3/\$6M, matched)

Tucson- C Jeremy Cirolli, London Bishops

Halifax- IF Keith Young, Rome Raiders

Las Vegas- 1B Emilio Maez, Madrid Matadors



# TOP 10 PROSPECTS



Who are the best kids in the MBBA?

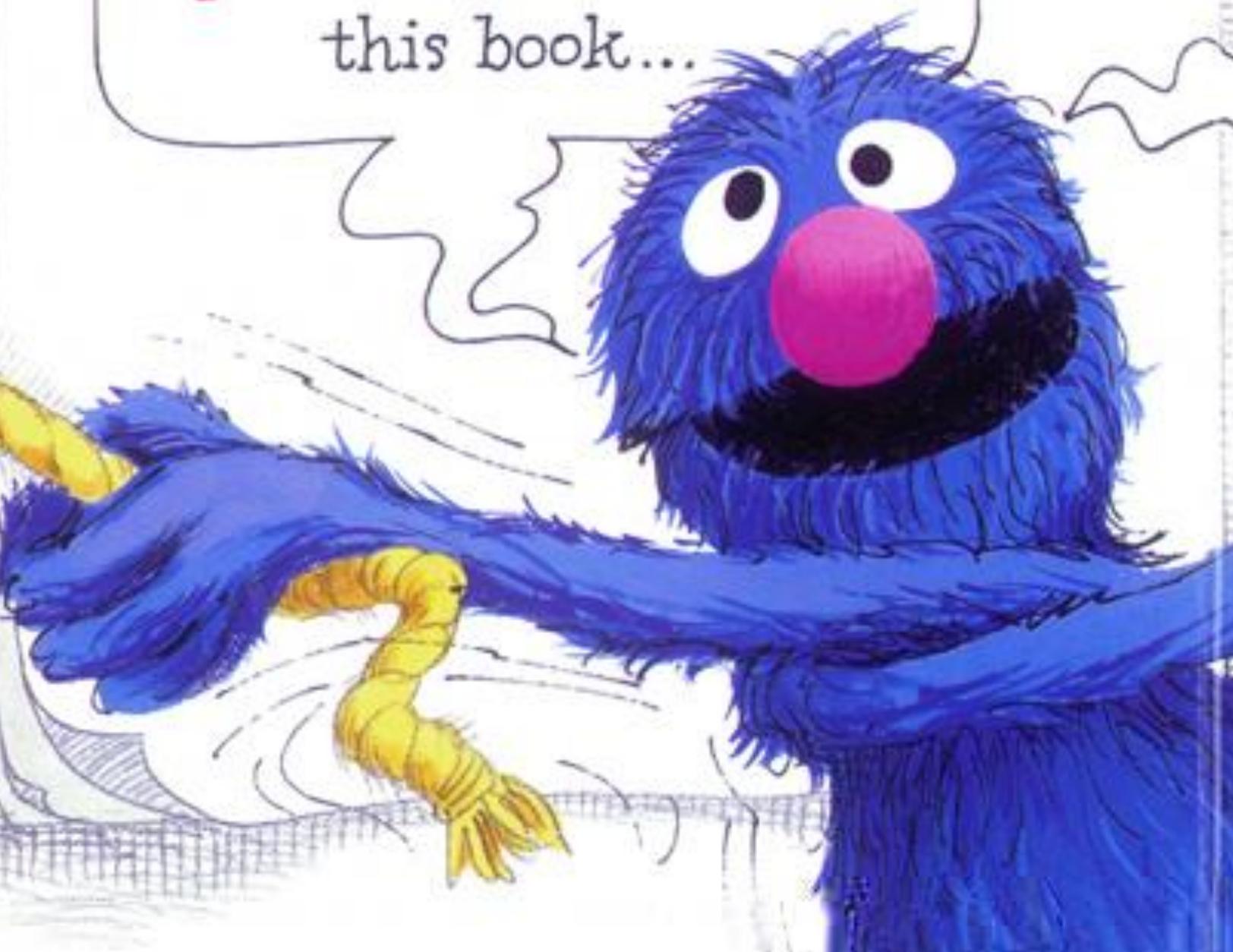


and find out ...



# YOU TURNED THE PAGE!

Maybe you do not understand.  
You see, turning pages will  
bring us to the end of  
this book, and there is a  
**Monster** at the end of  
this book...



## TOP TEN – THE ACTUAL LIST

Youth is, of course, the lifeblood of any team. These days you don't need Bill James to tell you the difference between a Hall of Famer and just a good player is pretty much summed up by the time they enter the league. The cream of the crop, as Mr. James often showed, come into the league at the lowest of ages, and exist older than the rest.

So, who are those 5-star kids down on the farms that we ought to be seeing sometime soon? Who are these precocious youths who will soon be filling the news outlets with stories of daring do, and fitting into the high-light reels of tomorrow?

Here are a Top Ten, but in no particular order:

### [RICK WARD: STARTING PITCHER \(22 – AAA, BROOKLYN\)](#)

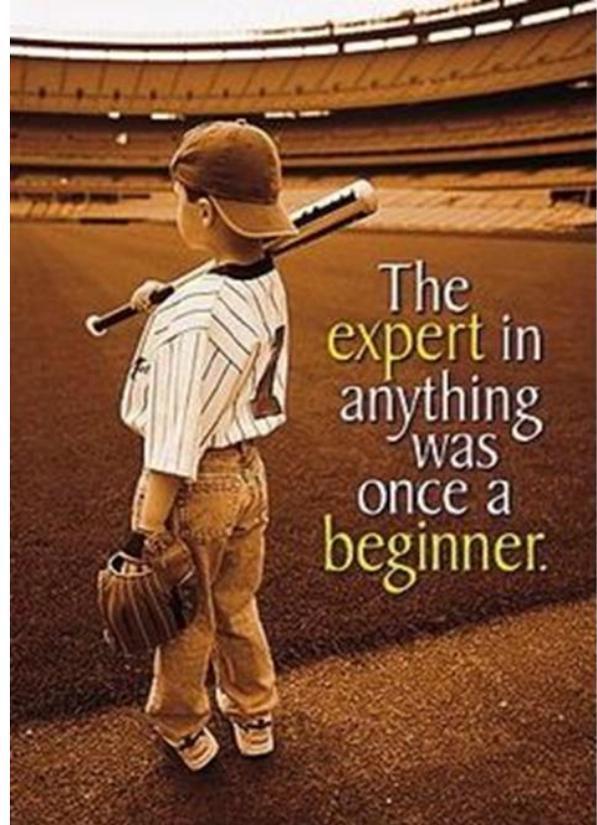
Ward fits the mold of classic All-American boy. He's a strapping lad, 6'5" 195. He's from a place called Glendale, which is about as American as you can get, eh? He's also got a 101 MPH fastball, a curveball that kills, and a splitter good enough to get by. After posting an 8-6 record and a 2.91 ERA last season, we figure he's got nothing left to prove in the minors.

### [PABLO SOTO: SHORTSTOP \(20 – AAA, VALENCIA\)](#)

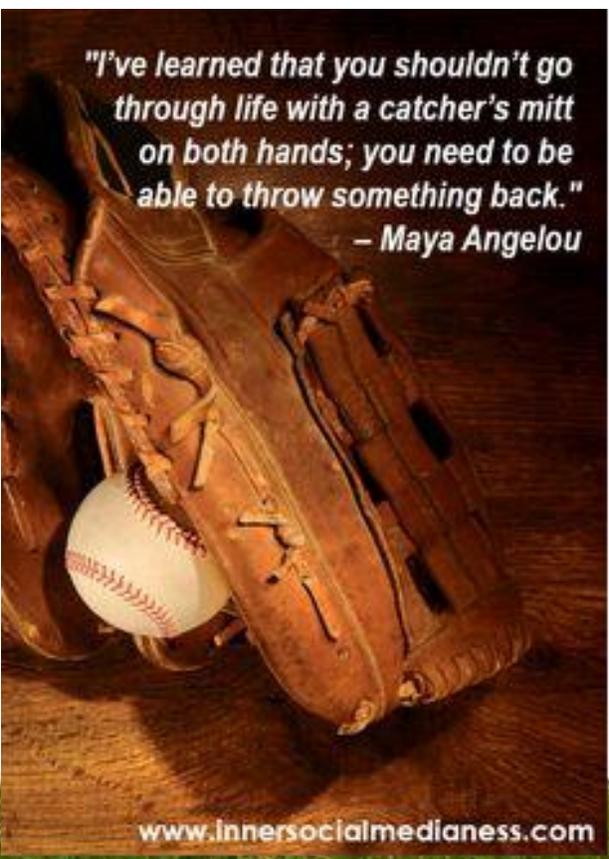
Traded to Valencia in the deal that moved super-closer Skip Glendening, Soto is already one of the better *young* shortstops in the universe, and is prepared to become just flat-out one of the best. Dropped a +21.4 ZR in 2023, but started only 6 games at the position last year. Stars GM Lee Honigsfeld has already indicated Soto will be back in the 6-hole next year. Fans are relieved.

### [RON JIMÉNEZ: OUTFIELD \(23 – AAA, MADISON\)](#)

Jiménez can run a little and play the field a little. He's got the arm for Right Field, and the patience to be successful at the plate. And, let's get serious about that power. He hit only 11 homers in South Bend last year, but scouts are unanimous in tripping over their tongues when they talk about their expectations for the guy. Jiménez, they say, may well hit 50 homers in the bigs ... assuming, that is, he makes any contact. Yes, that's right. The only knock against 6'6", 225 pound batting monster is that he hasn't shown the hit-tool. At 24 entering the season, he's still got a little time. And the idea of 50 homers in a season will make sure teams give him that time.



*"I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back."  
– Maya Angelou*



### JARED GILLSTROM: SHORTSTOP (20 – AA, MONTREAL)

The man, as they say, has a cannon. He has the glove to go in the hole, the 6'6" reach to extend his range, and when he unwinds that athletic body in its ballet-like maneuver to twist and spin and get the ball headed to first base with enough velocity to turn your head around ... well ... it's like freakin' magic. Package that with a .400ish OBP, power that projects to 25 homers, and speed enough to register upwards a 30 steals, and I think you got yourself a helluva prospect.

### JODY 'NO PANTS' NÚÑEZ: STARTING PITCHER (23 – AA, HAWAII)

A bit of an enigma. He's got the fastball and the curve, but the third pitch is questionable. And at 23, he's a little over-aged for his A-ball stats, which at 11-6, 3.32, are good but not dominating. He's been a bit of a FIP beast, though, and this suggests that the kid from Tacoma still belongs on this list. At least for now.

### DENNY MARINO: STARTING PITCHER (20 – A, MONTREAL)

The Blazer's second entry on the Kiddie Korner is the highly visible, 6'6" Puerto Rican everyone knows as "Knight." To know why scouts are ready to swoon whenever Knight enters the room, you just need to look at his 4-pitch arsenal, and realize that on their own they are each good enough to get him in the parent club. "He just needs to learn how to throw them at the right time," said one scout. "Sky's the limit." His 11-3 record at Dearborn last year suggests he might be catching onto the idea.

### ÁLEX LÓPEZ: STARTING PITCHER (20 – A, MONTREAL)

If you're getting the idea that Montreal has a few interesting prospects, you're in the right boat. López throws hard, and has begun to actually hit the corners with some of those pitches that he was missing with before. The biggest question mark is the stamina—he's struggled to get out of the 5th and 6th innings. But the club lives his work ethic, and though he's quiet, his teammates to a man suggest he'll make it. 2025 will probably go a long way toward telling the tale.

### JESÚS 'NITRO' GONZÁLES: SHORTSTOP (19 – A, VANCOUVER)

Nitro is slick in the infield, and capable in the outfield. At 19, he's a work in process—he still strikes out too much, and he's working on his hit tool. But he's a student of the game, and his overall skillset suggests he's got a solid career ahead of him.



### LEÓN 'DASH' FLORES: STARTING PITCHER (19 – A, MONTREAL)

Another Blazer. Another hard-throwing starter with a crap-ton of solid pitches (six in Flores's case, none of which—despite the velocity he shows—would be best described as a fastball). Holy crap. He went 12-9 as a 19 year-old stepping up in class from Rookie League to A-ball. Dash came to the club along with Denny Marino from Tucson in the Leon Sandcastle deal.

### LAWRENCE COLUMBUS LALOOSH: STARTING PITCHER (19 – A, YELLOW SPRINGS)

Take a fastball the registers triple digits on the gun, and mix with a changeup the has Bugs Bunny swinging fifteen times before it crosses the plate, and you get something that looks like LaLoosh. We would have included him in the list merely for the ability to type “LaLoosh” in a prospect article, but the fact remains that this is a kid who can go somewhere if he can just get a little mentoring. Calling Crash Davis, calling Crash Davis.



It had to be good  
to get where it is  
- 7 million a day

**Coca-Cola**

**One can and you're hooked!**

## THE WHISPERED QUESTION: IS BILLY CHAPEL, JR. THE GREATEST PITCHER OF ALL TIME?



Billy Chapel, Jr. is sitting on his patio, sipping warm coffee from a thermos mug. It's a cold day, with the wind coming from the north and a skeen of ice growing over the railing of the deck—which is a multi-tiered pavillion that leads down the hill to the boat dock where he keeps his fishing gear.

“My daddy and I put this in a few years ago,” he says.

Billy Chapel, Jr. is twenty-eight years old now. It's pretty obvious he wishes his dad were here with us. Between them, they are the greatest father and son combination to ever play the game of baseball. Onr must say, though, that the weights are Chapel the senior won 37 games for three teams back in the league's cotton days, nothing near Chapel the junior's 122. “That's not a fair thing, though,” Chapel says, staring out at the water. “My daddy didn't play till he was 34.”

There exists a good chance that by the time the son has turned 34, he will be barking at 230 wins and looking at a chance of creating 300 by the end of his career. 300 is not quite a Steve Nebraska number, but it's one that has the world whispering about the two of them. The name Billy Chapel, Jr., you see, has been attached to the name Steve Nebraska since 2020 when won 19 games and tossed a 2.12 ERA, and when he won the first of his three Nebraska trophies. The whispers get stronger every year. No other pitcher playing today looks like a bet for 300. Not 34-year-old Mike Swanson, not 27-year-old Eduardo López. 32-year-old Luis Frietas is in the low 100s. Sure, there are kids, and a few—perhaps Jesús '3000' Tonche chief among them—that might play through their mid-20s and make a run. But that is a different thing.

The whispers happening now are a different thing, too. They pry at Chapel, Jr. They annoy him like a cloud of gnats. *Is Billy Chapel, Jr. the best pitchr of all time?* they say. *Is Billy Chapel, Jr. better than even Steve Nebraska?*

“That's just silly,” Chapel, Jr. says.

But silly or not, the whispers exist. And, silly or not, the question stands as an academic exercise, if nothing else.

Let's start with the raw win total, which is the place of ultimate demarcation. Any baseball fan alive understands the aura of Steve Nebraska. By the time Nebraska was finishing his 28-year-old season, the guy already had 210 wins. This is a staggering total—98 more than Chapel, Jr. To put this into context, and to understand exactly how staggering this number is, you have to realize that 210 wins would list the pre-29-year-old Nebraska as the 23nd winningest pitcher in the history of the game. At 112, Chapel, Jr. is not in the same area code.



And, yet ... by age 28, Nebraska had already started 326 games. Chapel, Jr. is only at 250.

“The game was different back then,” Chapel, Jr. said. Yes, the game was different. Four man rotations meant more starts. Pitch counts hadn’t been invented, and injury seemed less prevalent. “These days you get a hangnail and you’re on the DL for a couple weeks,” Chapel, Jr. would say later in the day. Yes, things were different in his daddy’s day.

Other numbers ring out, too. Chapel’s 1,873 Ks in 1,560 innings is an astounding number. But Nebraska. Holy freaking shit, Nebraska. By the time Steve Nebraska was finishing up his 28 year-old season, the guy had already set down 3,220 men in his 2,485 innings. Nebraska’s ERA, never greater than 1.85 in the ages of comparison, is staggering.

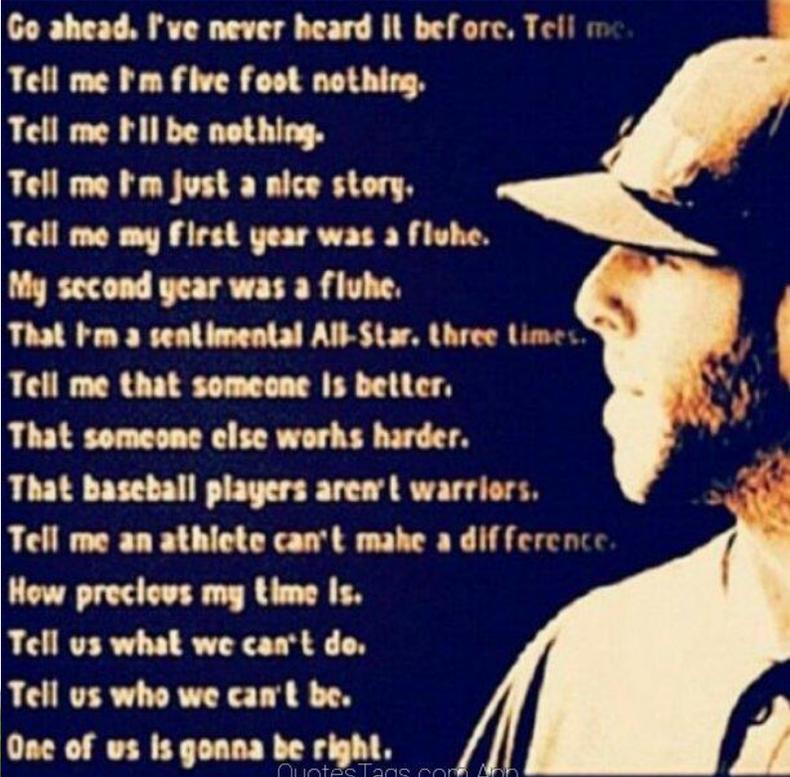
You can understand why old-school fans chafe at the comparison.

But, then, it was a pitcher’s game back then. League ERAs in the 3.60s and 3.80 were not uncommon. Today’s game has a bit more lumber to it. ERA’s in the Chapel, Jr. days hover in the 4.0s—20 to 40 points higher than the era when Nebraska ran free. Adjust his numbers to era, and Chapel’s drop down into the area that a comparison can be made, even though that comparison still falls easily on the side of Steve Nebraska.

So, no, Virginia, Billy Chapel, Jr. is the greatest pitcher of all time. That is Steve Nebraska, and it shall be Steve Nebraska for at least one more generation of MBBA hurlers. That’s fine with Billy Chapel, Jr. though.

“The only guy I compare myself to is my daddy,” he says, sipping his coffee and letting his eyes travel over his deck.

“Wanna go fishing?”

Go ahead. I've never heard it before. Tell me.  
 Tell me I'm five foot nothing.  
 Tell me I'll be nothing.  
 Tell me I'm just a nice story.  
 Tell me my first year was a fluke.  
 My second year was a fluke.  
 That I'm a sentimental All-Star. three times.  
 Tell me that someone is better.  
 That someone else works harder.  
 That baseball players aren't warriors.  
 Tell me an athlete can't make a difference.  
 How precious my time is.  
 Tell us what we can't do.  
 Tell us who we can't be.  
 One of us is gonna be right.

## BRITO VS. SÁNCHEZ: DOES THIS MEAN WAR?



Iran Brito  
26 years old  
6'3", 210  
Tough Mudder

Fans of what may be the two best hitters in baseball right now can have a heck of an argument, right? Omaha's right fielder, Iran Brito registered 7.2 WAR last year, good enough to lead the Johnson League in that category. Atlantic City's first baseman Ant3nio S3nchez took the Frick WAR crown with a 7.0 score.

Don't like the newfangled stats? Try these:

- Iran Brito: 45 HR, 35 2B, 131 RBI, .315/.348/.574
- Ant3nio S3nchez: 49 HR, 30 2B, 140 RBI, .308/.418/.608



Ant3nio S3nchez  
27 years old  
6'5", 225  
Iron Man Champ

"Brito wins the WAR game because he plays right field," said Sammy Sammons, a color man at the Baseball Faux-Cast. "But the numbers for S3nchez are just totally eye-popping in this day and age."

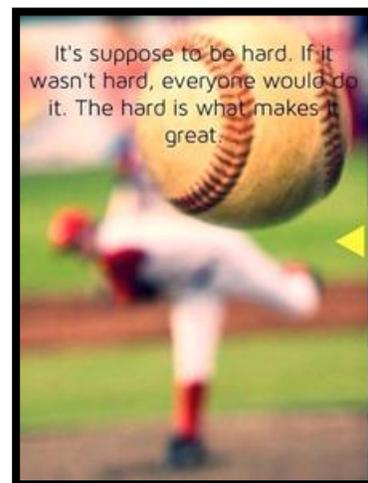
There are, of course, other hitters in the league today that can stake a claim to the title, perhaps most notably guys like New Orleans's Mark Dempsey (who won a Puckett Golden Bat Award at 3B in his rookie season) and Tucson's Leon Sandcastle (who appears to have the ability to drop an 8 WAR any season he stays healthy). But S3nchez and Brito are the guys at the top right now, and at 26 and 27 years of age, they can be argued to be the yardstick that offense will be measured by for a few years to come. They are, after all, winners of

their league's Sawyer Silk Awards.

But the argument still stands—which guy is best? Who would you take if you had first pick in your Fantasy league?

"Brito," said Johnny "Pabst" McCarthy from the edge of his barstool down at Papa Murphy's bar and bar. "S3nchez," said Lanny "Pull My Finger" Remani, from the next stool over.

May the debate continue to rage.



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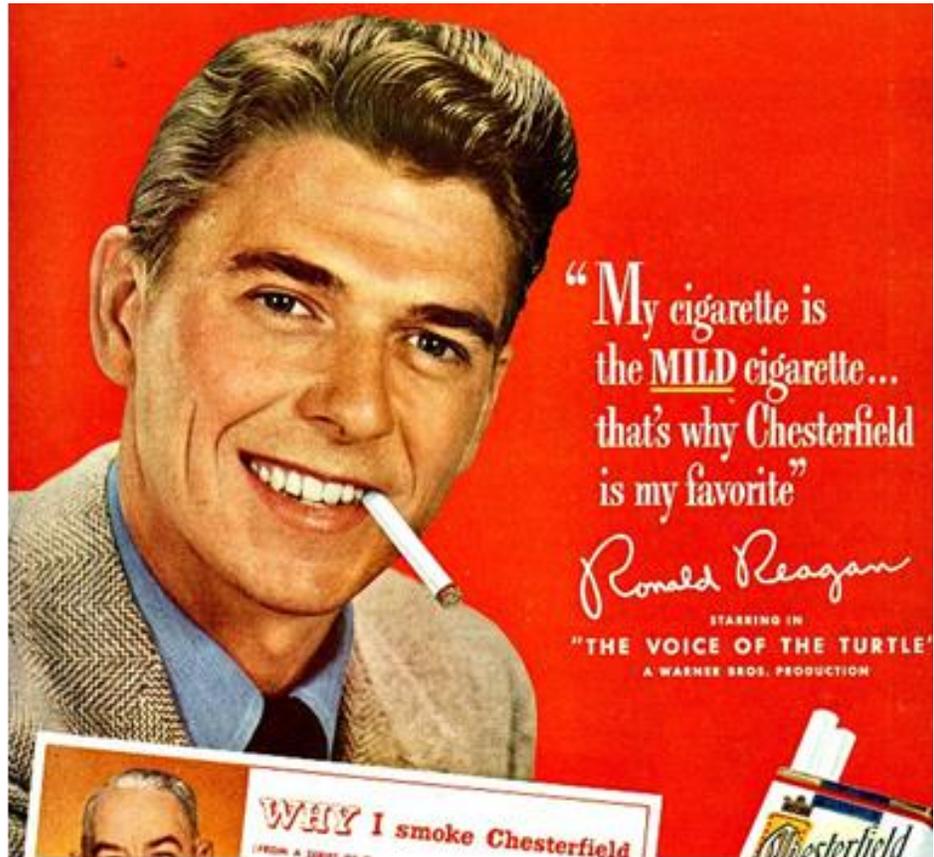
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