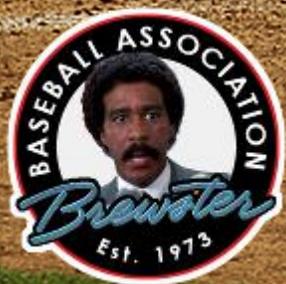


2028 MBBA

MEDIA GUIDE

**CAN THE
HUSTLERS**

**DOUBLE
DOWN?**



MONTY BREWSTER WORLD BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

EST. 1973 – 2028, WE VOTE NONE OF THE ABOVE

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Vice Commissioner: Aaron Weiner
League Director & Chief Muckraker: Kyle Stever
PR Director/Historian: Stephen Lane

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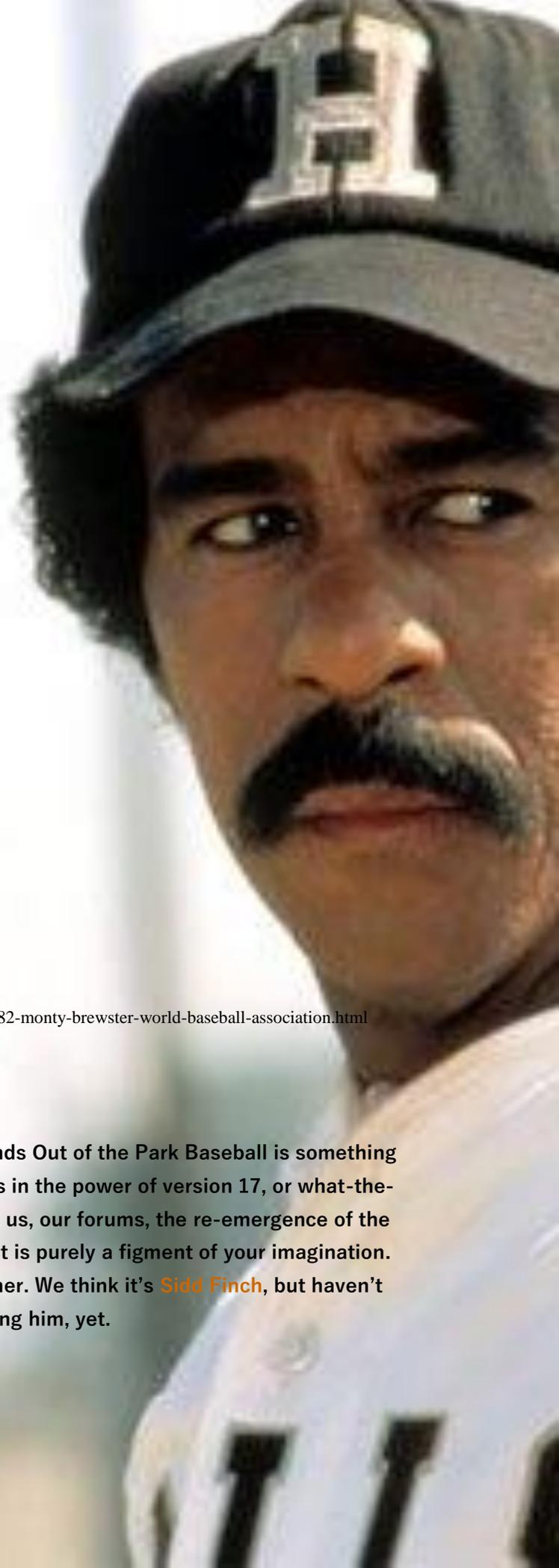
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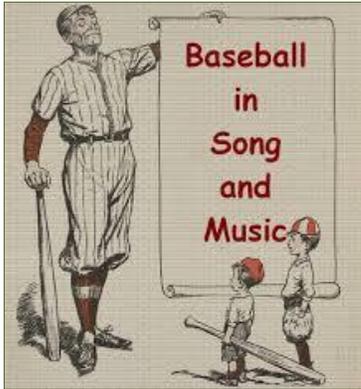
OOTP Forum Entry:
<http://www.ootpdevelopments.com/board/ootp-17-online-leagues/267282-monty-brewster-world-baseball-association.html>

The MBWBA is a fake baseball universe that pretends Out of the Park Baseball is something real. At the time of this writing, we're true believers in the power of version 17, or what-the-hell-ever Recte says we believe in. Anything about us, our forums, the re-emergence of the once-derelict Drew Zodcast, or even this document is purely a figment of your imagination.

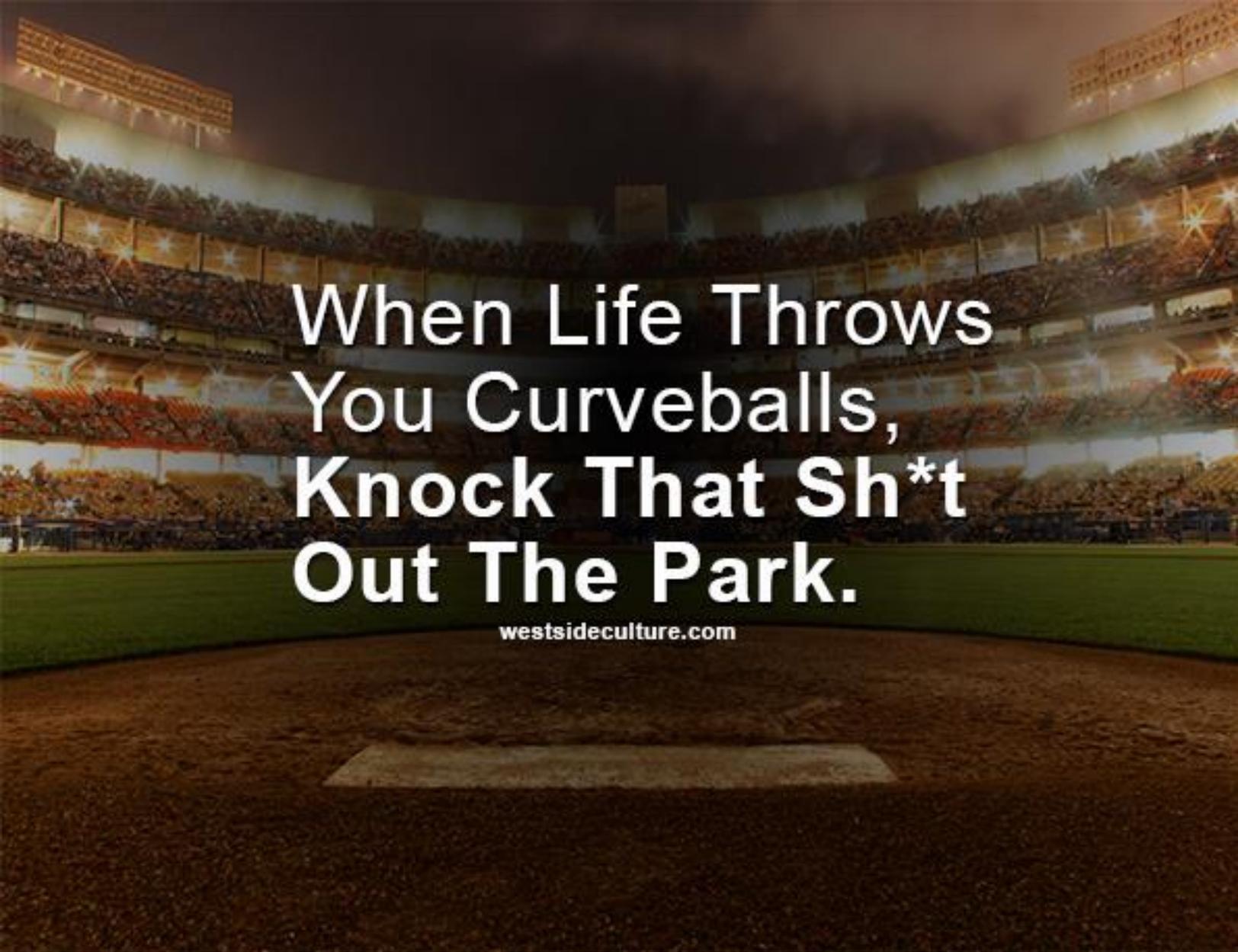
Please ignore the crazy guy meditating in the corner. We think it's **Sidd Finch**, but haven't gotten around to asking him, yet.



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When Life Throws
You Curveballs,
Knock That Sh*t
Out The Park.

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THE STATE OF THE LEAGUES

Kyle Stever, MBBA Chief Muckety-Muck of Muckrakers sings Kumbaya, and points out the finer elements of what it means, has meant, and perhaps will always mean to be part of one of the most vibrant communities in all of fake sports.

What is the state of the MBBA? Well, we now have 33 seasons in the modern era in the books and the league is still going strong. The GM roll call is one of the more consistent of any league I've ever been in - with even the recycled GMs never staying away for long. The EBA has been fired back up as a human competitive league and currently houses 3 long time MBBA vets along with a few fresh new faces chomping at the bit to make it back to North America. We have Zodcasts and podcasts. We have media revenues and Media Guides. We have one all-encompassing Unified



History... and trending towards an infinite amount of unique ones, too. We have... a community. Ted talks about trades. Aaron talks about previews. Stephen talks about prospects. Chris talks about secretaries. Stu talks about himself in the third person. Kyle talks about himself in the first person. Brett talks about Kyle talking about himself in the first person. And Ron talks about... well, if last year's PP count is any indication, *he* talks about everything. And whatever your opinion of any of the above may be on any given day, they are, as we enter the 2028 season, vital pieces of fabric in the overall tapestry that is the Monty Brewster Baseball Association. And every time a fresh new GM - or old mainstay - finds/rediscovers their voice, the clarity of what this league is comes further into focus... and all are better for it. So what is the state of the MBBA, you ask? The state of the MBBA is an ever evolving storyline, penned by 24 different authors every chapter. And as the story unfolds we may find new twists and turns, but ultimately the overall theme is a familiar - and reassuring - one.

In 2027, the JL Pacific rose above its former lowly stature to stake its claim as the new best division in the Johnson League - with the mainstays in California and Hawaii being joined by the upstart Mounties in Vancouver. The JL Atlantic took the mantle from the JLP as the bottom (and as the brunt of jokes) of the league, though continues to house the last Johnson League Landis Champion in Brooklyn. The JL Midwest saw hubris overthrown in Huntsville and Yellow Springs and quiet achievement once again rising to the top in Omaha. The Frick Atlantic saw a changing of the guard with Atlantic City and Carolina yielding to a young, rising squad in Montreal. The Frick Midwest watched one team fall from grace in Indy while New Orleans maintained its decades long strangle hold - and the division itself escaped jokes despite not being much better than the JL Atlantic. And the Frick Pacific saw the commish still on top in Las Vegas, our most recent Landis Champion - as, perhaps, it should be.

But, that was last year. Now, as is its modus operandi, the calendar has turned and our new, familiar crop of authors find themselves once again with their pens hovering above the paper. Just as spring represents a new beginning for nature, so, too, does spring training represent one for baseball teams. Everyone is tied at 0-0 and hopes once dashed now spring like geysers once more. Perhaps this is the year for Yellow Springs or Calgary to break through and win their divisions? Perhaps it's the year that Omaha finally wins their first Landis? Perhaps it's the year that Madison or Tucson start to see the fruits of their rebuilds? Now is the time for 'perhaps'. Answers will inevitably - as they always do - come later. Many - in fact, most - will be disappointments. Some will be decidedly the antithesis of that. But, for now, it is the time to dream, to hope, to project. And that is - as it always is - the state of the MBBA as we head into another new season.

<http://montybrewster.net/application-2/>



FINAL 2027 STANDINGS

FRICK LEAGUE

Atlantic	
Montreal	95-67
Carolina	89-74
Havana	82-80
Atlantic City	76-86

Midwestern	
New Orleans	100-62
Des Moines	78-84
Indy	71-91
Birmingham	67-95

Pacific	
Las Vegas	103-59
Calgary	90-72
Seattle	88-75
Tucson	51-111

FL Geoghegan Round: Calgary 2 – Carolina 0

FL Doubleday Series

Las Vegas 4 – Calgary 1
Montreal 4 – New Orleans 2

FL Cartwright Cup

Las Vegas 4 – Montreal 0

Landis Memorial Series

Las Vegas 4 – Omaha 1

JL Cartwright Cup

Omaha 4 – Vancouver 2

JL Doubleday Series

Vancouver 4 – Brooklyn 2
Omaha 4 – California 1

JL Geoghegan Round: Vancouver 2 – Hawaii 1

JOHNSON LEAGUE

Atlantic	
Brooklyn	98-64
Halifax	72-90
Jacksonville	67-95
Louisville	62-100

Midwestern	
Omaha	89-73
Huntsville	84-78
Yellow Springs	75-87
Madison	63-99

Pacific	
California	97-65
Vancouver	89-73
Hawaii	88-74
Valencia	71-91



2027: FEAR AND WINNING IN VEGAS?

*Think about this a little. What kind of franchise does it take to have a decade long losing streak in the playoffs? Where most franchises are struggling just to make it to this Nirvana, the Las Vegas Hustlers have made a habit of cashing playoff checks, and then going home to watch the Landis. Would that happen again in 2028? The smart money might have said so. But Hustler GM **Matt Rectenwald** takes us back through it all ... one sweet game at a time.*

The 2027 season of baseball in the MBWBA had plenty of storylines. Teams made huge gains in the standings en route to the postseason, such as the New Orleans Crawdads (+18), the Montreal Blazers (+17), the Brooklyn Robins (+14), the California Crusaders (+14), and the Calgary Pioneers (+8). Others took a tumble from previous glory, those being the Indy Grasshoppers (-19), the Huntsville Phantoms (-13), and the Yellow Springs Nine (-11). At the end of the day, there could only be one Landis Memorial Series Champion, and that team would be the Las Vegas Hustlers.

Las Vegas has long been one of the top regular season teams, in fact, since 2017 they have made the playoffs in ten of the eleven seasons. 2027 marked the FIFTH time they've won more than 100 games in that span. There's only been one problem—they haven't been able to close the deal. Year in and year out they have been one of, if not THE favorite to win it all, but they haven't been able to do it. Let's review:

YEAR	REC		PLAYOFF RESULT
2017	98-64	Tied for best in the Frick.	Lost to Carolina 4-1: Cartwright Cup
2018	112-50	Amazing record. By far the best record in the Frick.	Lost to Calgary 4-2: Cartwright Cup
2019	86-76	MISSED the playoffs. Heads would roll. (a -26 differential, by the way, not good)	None
2020	114-48	That record is not a typo. It put even 2018 to shame	Lost to Carolina 4-1: Cartwright Cup
2021	100-62	That impressive record put them 1 game behind Calgary.	Lost to New Orleans 2-1: Geoghegan Round
2022	96-66	Tied for best in the Frick.	Lost to Atlantic City 4-2: Cartwright Cup
2023	91-71	Won the Frick League Pacific.	Lost to Atlantic City (again) 4-3: Doubleday Series
2024	91-71	Finished one game behind Seattle in the FLP and took a wild card spot.	Lost to Atlantic City 2-1: Geoghegan Round
2025	87-75	It was a dogfight in the Frick League Pacific, but the Hustlers won the division	Lost to Atlantic City (AGAIN!) 4-2: Doubleday Series
2026	100-62	A huge jump, best record in the Frick.	Lost to New Orleans 4-2: Doubleday Series
2027	103-59	Best record in the league again.	↓

In 2027, the Hustlers rolled into the playoffs for the 10th time in 11 years. Something seemed different this time, though. They rolled past Calgary (4-1) in the Doubleday Series, making it to the Cartwright Cup for the first time since 2022. They'd match up against the vastly improved Montreal Blazers in the Cartwright, with



everyone expecting a good series. Something strange happened, and the Hustlers swept past Montreal to the Landis.

And that's where the story takes us....

The 2027 Landis Memorial Series

GAME 1: OCTOBER 30, 2027 OMAHA, NEBRASKA

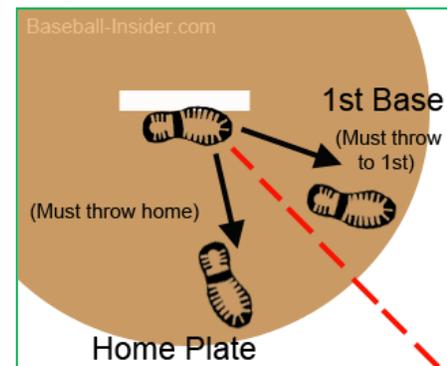
Vegas hadn't been in a Landis Memorial Series since 2009, which they lost to Madison. Now manager Riley Hinson would ready his troops for battle. They'd be facing one of the top pitchers in the league in [Enrique Gomez](#). [Ernesto Chavez](#) led off the game against Gomez with strict orders: MAKE HIM WORK. After falling behind 1-2, Chavez stepped in and was hit by a Gomez fastball. Later in the inning, [Jack Gulliver](#) would double, however Chavez was only able to make it to third base. [Gervasio Ridder](#) would hit a sac fly, however, and the Hustlers were on the board first. That'd be the extent of the damage in the first inning.

[Gary Estes](#), the Hustlers long time ace, got the call for Game 1. The first inning didn't go exactly as he planned. After giving up a leadoff single to [Valentin Colon](#), he struck out [Jorge Castellanos](#) and then got [Juan Pablo](#) to ground out, moving Colon to second base. After getting [Bob Burke](#) to look at strike one, he then completely lost him, walking him on four straight pitches. The next batter, [Brian Whitten](#), laced a single, sending Colon sprinting for home, where he'd be cut down! Estes wiped his brow, tipped his cap, and walked back to the dugout unscathed.

The top of the second was a bit strange. Leadoff man [Hank Brewer](#) singled, then stole second. He advanced to third on a ground out, then with Chavez up he suckered Gomez into balking him home! Amazing!

It'd remain 2-0 Hustlers until the bottom of the second. [Omar Aparicio](#) led off with a single against Estes. After Colon struck out swinging, Castellanos came up. Aparicio then tried to steal second. Brewer would have none of that, gunning him down. With two out, Castellanos hit a double, keeping the inning alive. Pablo followed with another double, driving in the first Omaha run. Pitching Coach Christopher Stoller visited the mound. "What's going on, Gary," he asked. "I'm just missing by a little here, and a little there," Estes replied. "Just trust the guys behind you, don't try to strike everyone out," Stoller instructed the veteran lefty. "Pitch to contact, but pitch smartly." Estes nodded. Back to the game, Estes' first pitch to Burke was a routine fly out, getting him out of trouble again. Were it not for Brewer gunning down Aparicio, things could have gotten worse.

To the top of the 4th! [Mark Stuart](#) would lead off with a clean single, bringing up Brewer. He'd foul off a total of five Gomez offerings before ripping a double to left



field. Stuart, not a burner at all, would advance to third. That'd bring up the true rookie, [Lloyd Braun](#), who'd been recalled for the Cartwright without ever playing a major league game. He singled, scoring Stuart and sending Brewer hustling for home where he'd be out at the plate. Braun hustled to second on the play, then advanced to third on a Banuelos groundout. It looked like the inning would be over when Chavez hit a soft grounder, but Pablo dropped the throw! Braun scored! Gomez finally bore down and struck out star Hustler Alfredo Martinez to end the inning. Hustlers 4, Barnstormers 1.

Bottom of the fourth. Estes was feeling better after the last at-bat when he got Burke to pop up the first pitch. In steps [Brian Whitten](#). After looking at ball one, he sees a pitch he likes, and rips it 447 feet to right field for a homer. Estes can't believe it. Brewer quickly runs to the mound, gives him some encouragement, and tells him to “stick to the plan!” Alright then, Estes tells himself. Next batter, Vicente Morin, looks at a called strike three. Then, [Victor Talboom](#) flies out. Armando Casteneda, swinging on the first pitch, rips a clean single, but Estes bears down and fans Aparicio to end the inning. It's 4-2, Vegas.

As we move to the top of the fifth, Omaha has decided to make a pitching change, bringing in [Sebastien Durand](#) to replace Gomez. He quickly gets Gulliver to fly out, and then strikes out Ridder. Jared Davis would then stroke a single to center, bringing up Stuart. Durand worked him full, but Stuart was right on top of the 3-2 offering and hit a line drive, 391 foot homer to right center field. Brewer singled, then Braun singled, advancing Brewer to third, and Banuelos was coming up to the plate. Durand fired over to first base before offering, and Brewer was picked off, ending the inning. The damage was done, however, and now the Hustlers held a 6-2 lead.



That'd be the score through seven full innings. Omaha's [Corey Edwards](#) manned the hill entering his third inning of work. That seems a lot for a short reliever, but he was ready to battle. It didn't go well. Banuelos led off with a single, then stole second. After Ridder grounded out, Martinez was walked intentionally to set up a double play ball. Forget that, Gulliver doubled again, scoring Banuelos. Next, Ridder doubled, scoring both of them. That's enough for

Edwards, and the Barnstormers brought in lefty [Conan Harris](#) to face Davis. He'd walk, but then Stuart would ground out and Brewer would strike out to finally end the inning. LV 9, OMA 2.

That'd be the final. Estes went six, and struggled, but earned the win. [Miguel Dezgado](#) would pitch a brilliant final three innings, saving the bullpen for the next day.



GAME 2: OCTOBER 31, 2027 OMAHA, NEBRASKA

Las Vegas was hoping to take the momentum of the Game 1 rout into the second game. “We need to really force the issue now,” Hustlers skipper Hinson said. “It’s time to take charge.”

They’d send out midseason acquisition [Domingo Castillo](#) to face wily veteran [Mick Hanscombe](#). After a scoreless first, the Hustlers would indeed force the issue in the top of 2. Following a single by Stuart, Brewer would hit a laser line drive homer to left field, making it 2-0 Hustlers early.

It didn’t stop there. In the next inning, after a Chavez double, Hanscombe struck out the next two Hustlers. Ridder had other ideas, though, scorching a two run dinger to right field (381 feet).

Meanwhile, while Castillo wasn’t exactly untouchable, he’d be unscathed all the way through a complete six innings, where it was still 4-0 in favor of the Hustlers. Hinson called on his rubber armed lefty, Jesus Sandoval, for the bottom of the seventh. Casteneda led off with a single, then Talboom would line out to Braun. Sandoval would work Aparicio to a 2-2 count, then lost him and walked him. Colon would then single into shallow right field, and Casteneda would try to score, but would be gunned down by Stuart! Sandoval, pumped up, pointed at Stuart in tribute, then got Pablo to ground out to somehow pull a Houdini and end the inning with no damage done.

Omaha left Hanscombe in to pitch the top of the 8th inning, facing leadoff hitter Martinez. Ding—405 foot homer. That’s all for the Omaha starter, as they turn to [Hector Leyva](#) who gets them out of the inning. It’s 5-0, Hustlers.

Sandoval is back out to pitch the home half of the eighth after a rocky seventh. Whitten leads off with a single, then Burke with a double. Then, Marin doubles, scoring both of the Omaha baserunners. That’s enough for Sandoval, as Hinson strides out tapping his right arm. It’s [Ricardo Valera](#) time, and that’s usually bad news for opponents. He’s in to face Castellanos, who sac bunts, sending Marin to third. You don’t usually see 31 homer guys sac bunting with their team down three runs in the eighth inning, but here it was. And that’d be Valera’s only batter, as Hinson elects to bring in Dezgado a day after he threw three full innings. The questionable strategy continues. Casteneda grounds out, as the Hustlers concede the run with Marin scoring. It’s now 5-3, Hustlers. But Dezgado bears down and strikes out Talboom to end the eighth.

After a scoreless top of the ninth, the Hustlers bring in their stopper, [Ed Staples](#), for the first time in the series. One, two,



three down and the Hustlers win their second game on the road in the Landis. We're going back to Vegas for Game 3.

GAME 3: NOVEMBER 2, 2027
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA



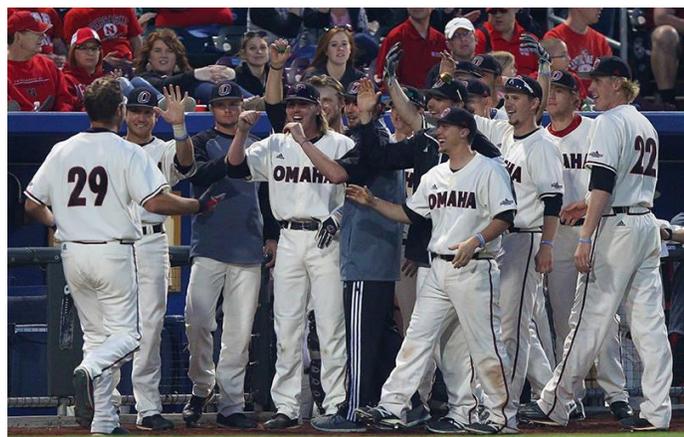
After a day off, the Hustlers find themselves back at home in the friendly confines of The Casino by Moe Fugger. It's an old stadium, lacking many of the luxuries of some of the new parks that have been built in the last decade. "It's crusty, but it's home," joked utility man [Ramon Espinosa](#), an eleven year member of the club. "I'd be willing to wager most folks don't even know who or what Moe Fugger is these days," cracked Hinson. "Still, we have an advantage here because of our fans."

[Mike Bailey](#), the tallest pitcher in baseball at 7'2", would take the hill for the Hustlers today. He'd strand two runners in the first inning. Chavez reached on an error in the bottom of the first, followed by a Martinez walk. Gulliver then grounded into a double play, advancing Chavez to third base. Ridder then drove him in with a single before Davis flied out to end the inning. Bailey had an early lead to work with, but it wouldn't last long after Castellanos tripled and was driven in by a Casteneda single. Talboom bunted him over to second, then Aparicio singled and Casteneda scored. The next batter, Colon, singled moving Aparicio to second. Bailey got out of more trouble by getting Pablo to ground into a double play but the Hustlers were now trailing for the first time in the series.

The Hustlers would come up empty in the top half of the third, but Omaha remained hot in the bottom half. Whitten singled, then Burke tripled him in. Marin sac flied Burke home, and that would be the end of the scoring in that frame, as the Barnstormers now led, 4-1.

[Martin Pacheco](#) continued to pitch well for Omaha, but so did Bailey after his early struggles. The score remained the same all the way to the eighth inning. Bailey, still in the game, gave up a leadoff single to Pablo, then walked Whitten. Burke hit a deep fly ball to center, and Pablo was able to tag up and make it to third. After Marin struck out swinging, Castellanos singled Pablo home. That'd be the end for Bailey, as Dezgado came in for the third consecutive game, and got Casteneda to fly out on the first pitch to end the inning. It's now Omaha, 5-1.

Meanwhile, Pacheco's day was done with a brilliant seven inning effort. Lefty [Esteban Velasquez](#) came on, and immediately walked the leadoff batter, Gulliver. Ridder flied out to shortstop, bringing up Davis. He took the first pitch offering from Velasquez and hit a deep fly to left field, clearing the fence for a two run shot (380 feet). Omaha called to the pen for righty



Armando Morales, one of the first EBA stars to come over to the MBBA. He made quick work of Stuart and Brewer to close the scoring and keep Omaha in the lead, 5-3.

Dezgado ran into some trouble in the top of the ninth, leaving runners on the corners with one out, forcing Hinson to bring in [Ed Staples](#) trailing by two. He quickly disposed of Pablo and Whitten, ending the inning.

The home team had one more chance to pull a rabbit out of their hat, but Morales would have none of that, retiring the side in order with two strikeouts.

The Barnstormers would take Game Three, reducing the Hustlers series lead to 2 games to 1.

GAME 4: NOVEMBER 3, 2027 LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Game Four starters were lefty [Philip Morris](#) for the Hustlers, opposing Gomez for the Barnstormers. Omaha had decided to go with a three man staff, while Vegas went with a four man staff. "Sometimes those decisions are critical," Hinson acknowledged.

Morris kept the Barnstormers at bay through four innings, while Gomez was matching him. In the bottom of the fourth, however, the Hustlers played fundamental ball to score a run. Martinez led off the inning with a walk, then Gulliver followed with a bloop single. Ridder flied out to right field, giving Martinez the chance to tag up and advance to third base. Then Davis hit a fly ball to left field, deep enough to allow Martinez to tag and score. Stuart would ground out, ending the inning, but the Hustlers were on the board first.

Morris kept dealing scoreless frames through seven, but was pulled after one out and one on in the top of the eighth for [Ricardo Valera](#), who struck out Burke. Hinson then called on the lefty Sandoval to face the left-handed Whitten, and he struck him out swinging to end the inning.

Gomez was still on in the eighth on short rest and was dealing. He struck out the leadoff batter, Braun, but then Omaha decided to pull him with LH Banuelos coming up in favor of their lefty, [Duane Grimes](#). He got Banuelos to ground out, then Chavez to ground out. On to the ninth!

Of course, the ninth inning and a one run lead meant it was Staples time. He struck out Marin in dominating fashion, but then it got interesting. [Vogte Denhardt](#) walked, then Casteneda singled. Staples, buckling down with two runners on, struck out Aparicio on three straight pitches, then got Colon to ground into a 5-4 fielder's choice to end Game 3.

The Hustlers now led the series, 3 games to 1. They were one game away from that elusive title. They'd have to go back to Nebraska to do it.



GAME 5: NOVEMBER 5, 2027 OMAHA, NEBRASKA

“I’ve got a good feeling about today,” observed Hinson. “It feels right that Estes is on the hill today.”

Indeed, the Hustlers' ace was ready to oppose wily veteran Hanscombe in Game 5. It'd be the Hustlers, once again scoring in the first inning, who'd take the early lead on a Davis RBI single.

Then, the two vets would lock into a pitchers' duel. It'd be 1-0 until the bottom of the fifth, when Estes became hittable again. A leadoff single by Whitten was followed by a Marin single, sending Whitten to third. Oliver Hernandez then hit a sac fly, scoring Whitten and tying the game. Casteneda would then single, sending Marin to third. Estes settled back in, striking out Aparicio and Colon to end the inning, with the game deadlocked at 1 run each.

On to the top of the sixth, where Hanscombe opened strong by striking out Martinez looking. Gulliver followed with a single, but then Ridder flied out to make the second out. Davis stepped in, swinging at the first pitch and coming up empty. He'd then foul off three straight pitches. With the count 0-2, Hanscombe made a big mistake, and Davis took advantage with a 349 foot homer to left, giving the Hustlers a 3-1 lead.

Thus the score would remain all the way until the bottom of the ninth. Estes, having completed eight strong innings of one run ball, was lifted in favor of Staples. Castellanos led off with a fly out to left field. Pablo would work an eight pitch walk. With Pablo running, Burke hit a grounder to second base and the only play would be at first base. Whitten would be the last hope for the Barnstormers. He hit the second offering by Staples weakly to Ridder at first base, who took it unassisted, recording the final out of Game 4 and the 2027 Landis Memorial Series. The Hustlers had finally won a Landis!

Davis was named the MVP of the series, largely on the heroics of his Game 5 dinger. "It's a team effort," Davis said. "I'm accepting the award on behalf of all my teammates."

Manager Riley Hinson was beaming as the celebration continued to unfold.

“Anything can happen in baseball,” said the skipper. “Especially in the playoffs. It’s special for these guys. I’m just so happy they all have the chance to experience coming out on top.”





Editor's Note: Speaking for the league as a whole, I'm sure ... congrats to Recte, the team, and the Vegas fans. That's a long damned haul.



2027 EBA: AMSTERDAM & THE PURSUIT OF INNOCENCE

Luca Mac Cracken Takes us Through Europe, Baseball style

2027 European Baseball Association Final Standings	
Western Alliance	Eastern Alliance
Paris 93-89	Amsterdam 98-64
London 89-73	Rome 78-84
Madrid 83-79	Brussels 73-89
Belfast 65-97	Munchen 69-93

What do you think when hear about Amsterdam ?

Surely it's the city of channels, called the Venice of North. Maybe the Van Gogh Museum. If you are a sportsman (and if you read this words probably you are), the legendary Ajax soccer team. If you are mischievous (and if you read this words ...we can't know if you are or not) you can imagine hotter distractions.

But this wonderful city hides an unexpected, genuine passion: love for baseball!

It's a passion that returned to burn with intensity in 2027 when Amsterdam reconquered, following only a sabbatical year, the primacy in Europe.

This, thanks to a great bunch of players and their skipper, who succeeded in clinching the title in his first year at the franchise helm.

In the spring, the Neptunes were projected 94-68, but they managed to do even better with an 98-64 record in regular season, relegating their more next division rival - Rome Raiders - 20gb.

It was no real contest in Eastern Alliance division.

Amsterdam showed the most prolific offense in the league with 810 R and second best defense.

The team was guided by Alain Perras (334/388/630 33HR 103 RBI) the expected prospect catcher Don Logan winner of Newcomers Award (276/416/435, 15 HR, 24 SB 5.7 war) and the top of rotation Martin Sempa with a 23-7 record (WAR 5.9). Another pivotal player came to light during the season; the veteran starter Latobe, local idol, suffered a severe injury so the closer Ryun-Hi-Son was put in rotation. It was a hazardous move, but he repaid the trust with a 8-5 record in 12 GS and a great post-season performance with a 3-on-3 GS.



While there was no real competition in the East, a much more animated party happened in the Western division, where early the Paris Patriots and Madrid Matador seemed to fight for the pennant. But after the All-Star game Madrid misfired and the London Bishops speed up so much to have the second best record in last part of season. It was such an impressive comeback that some expected them to threaten a repeat of last year's exploits. They come short only of 4 from the sturdy Paris Patriots (93 wins), showing second best offensive attack (806 R) and a very reliable defense (4 players won a Glove Award, other team won no more than one).

But we are aware that autumn baseball is another pair of shoes.

London ran out of juice and stumbled badly on Paris for 1-4, while Neptunes prevailed on the Raiders 4-2.

So no surprises this year: the two best record teams faced each other in EBA championship series.

The numbers gave the prize to the Neptunes, who appeared to meet the predictions easily winning the first two games.

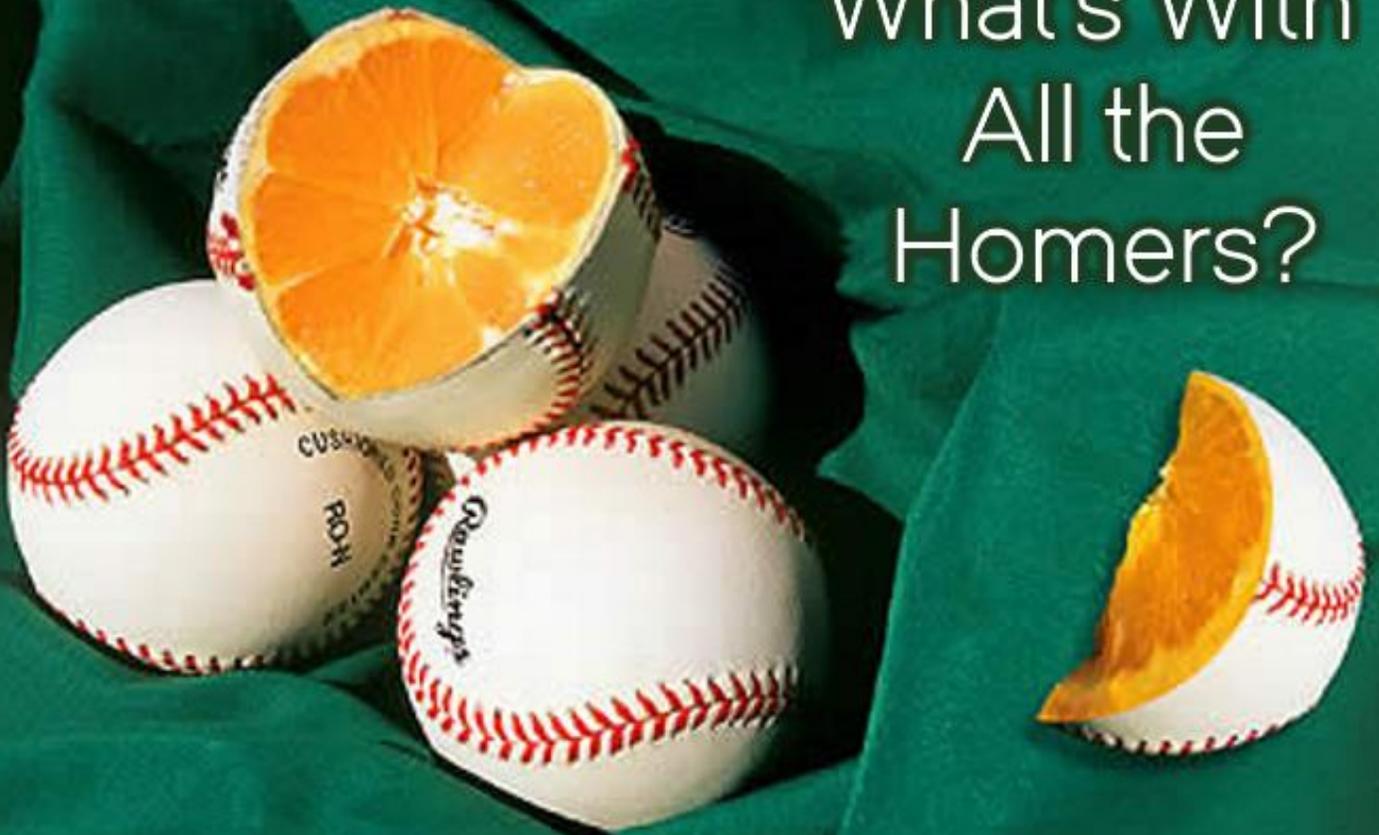
The Patriots reacted promptly, though, and took the series lead 3-2 and then on 4-3.

At this point the North Sea's chilly wind started to blow over Amsterdam park. Neptunes did not panic, though first forcing their opponents to a game 9 where prospect N. Bauer blasted a solo homer at bottom of 9th inning that turn off all the red lights in the city!

Let's celebrations starts, enjoy baseball innocence and forget sinful thoughts for a night! Right?



What's With All the Homers?



*It was a poorly hidden secret that homers were on the rise in 2027, a fact that led to no little speculation of the reasons, not all of it tin-hatted. Were the players just stronger? Were the pitchers tipping their stiff? Was it winds caused by global warming? Tucson GM **Stephen Lane** wanted to know. Here's what he came up with.*

JUICED!

The MBBA is not struggling. The twenty four teams combined to earn an [estimated](#) \$2.8 billion with a capital B in 2027. League-wide attendance was 72.8 million this past year. For over 50 years now, the MBBA has been a successful, profitable, enviable behemoth in the North American sports landscape. So, all is well, right?

Wrong.

Like an unscrupulous accountant at the end of the fiscal year, the leadership of the MBBA makes one final push to increase attendance, ratings and revenue during the playoffs. It has been suspected for years, but now this publication has unearthed



inscrutable, undeniable, concrete proof that the baseballs themselves are juiced, just in time for the playoffs. Consider this:

Regular season Home Runs per Game - 1.1

Playoff series Home Runs per Game - 2.0

That's a 82% increase, folks! Eighty Two percent! Nearly double!!



Sure, the best teams are battling it out every year in the playoffs, so you might expect a little increase. But that also means that the best *pitchers* in baseball are throwing their best stuff. There's really no reason to expect such a huge increase without a juiced baseball.

By now you must be asking yourself, "How would someone *juice* a baseball!?" Certainly you can't just stick a needle in and shoot up some 'roids, a la Jose Canseco, right? Maybe? We didn't know, so we had to find someone who did.

After a lot of phone calls, we found Professor Ken E. Tyk of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and were able to meet him in his underground physics lab. In what we imagine was his most pompous physics-ey voice, he did his best to explain: "It's all about the coefficient of restitution and the conservation of energy. When the bat impacts the baseball there's a transfer of energy, and it's all about where that energy

goes. The less deformation in each of the objects, the more energy will be transferred to the exit velocity of the baseball after impact."

Now if you're anything like us, dear reader, that made hardly any sense. So we found a teacher's assistant named Moe Mentum wandering around the physics labs at MIT to help us put that into words we could understand. Moe explained "Basically, it's about how hard or soft the baseball is. A soft baseball deforms, and takes energy away from the velocity. If the baseball is really hard, then it won't deform, and more energy goes towards the velocity."

So now that we know *how* to juice a baseball, and obviously we know *why* the league wants to juice a baseball, we need more evidence. Conveniently, Commissioner Matthew Rectenwald has all playoff baseballs destroyed or recycled after the playoffs. And unfortunately, I did not have the budget to travel the country seeking out those 66 lucky fans who caught playoff home runs. That is, if the league hadn't already confiscated *those* balls too.

Fortunately, with my connections in the game, I was able to speak to multiple pitchers that participated in the 2027 playoffs. The pitchers we spoke with requested to remain anonymous for fear of retribution, but one pitcher from a west-coast team had this to say: "Yeah, they felt weird, man. Like, I couldn't squeeze em. Couldn't get my usual movement out there. Then there's guys hitting bombs, like for real bombs. And their contact didn't even look that great. The ball just flew outta the park."



Another pitcher we spoke with already had suspicions of his own: "Chicks dig the long ball right? People love it. It gets more people to the park and they buy more beer. Which, if you're a team owner, or the commish, great. But I don't see any of that extra money. I'm just the shitty visiting pitcher on the team that gave up seven goddamn home runs in one game! Seven! I've always had my suspicions, but that game sealed the deal for me. The ball feels different in the playoffs. And every playoffs guys just hit jacks on jacks. Like, if you wanna go back to the days of insane offense, just do it for real. Don't just do it for the playoffs."



Well, there you have it folks. Irrefutable, incontrovertible, incontestable evidence of tampering with the baseball at the highest levels of the Monty Brewster World Baseball Association. And in a year where the commissioners team won the title? We demand a formal investigation of the commissioners' office and all owners. We the people, the fans of the MBWBA will not stand for such shenanigans!



A Poem for Those Who Try Anyway ...

Graceful
Face Plants

When the ground below your feet
races up, your head to meet,
to smash your nose, and grind your face
In epic fail of style and grace,

Just tuck and roll, and let it slide!
And rise up on the other side,
With arms outstretched! Head held up strong!
As if you planned it all along.....

From: 4 Brothers Blog: <https://4brosblog.com/2015/07/12/graceful-faceplants/>
<https://4brosblog.com/2015/07/12/graceful-faceplants/>



WHAT TO AWAIT IN 2028

MBWBA SEASON PREVIEWS

Aaron Weiner weaves his latest masterpiece of prognostication

*For the second year in a row, the Media Guide is proud to present the greatest previews known to Fake Sports. Yes, I know we were all thinking it, but I said it Carolina Kraken GM **Aaron Weiner** joins us again to present previews that are so perfect that if the future doesn't actually happen this way, we know that Agent Smith must have changed to code.*





2028 JOHNSON LEAGUE

CHEATSHEET:

Projected finishes:

JLA: Brooklyn, Halifax, Louisville, Jacksonville

JLM: Huntsville, Yellow Springs, Omaha, Madison

JLP: Vancouver, Hawaii, California, Valencia

Wild card winners: Hawaii, Yellow Springs

The JL lost their first Landis Memorial Series in the last five championship series, but don't blame the Omaha Barnstormers: they weren't supposed to get close to that prize at all. The Barnstormers had quite the fortunate season, winning the JL Midwest and knocking out two favored teams in California and Vancouver before getting thumped by hugely favored Las Vegas in the title round. The Barnstormers probably only had about a 15% chance to make the championship series at all, so they should be very proud with their season.



How wide-open is the JL this year? Omaha isn't an immediately obvious favorite to return to the playoffs at all, but if they do they still have Enrique Gomez to do damage. The team they kept out of the playoffs, Huntsville, has to be extremely hungry after a very disappointing 2027 season. Brooklyn, the 2026 MBWBA champs, are probably the safest bet to go back to the playoffs after winning the JL Atlantic by 26 games.

Then there are questions abound in the JL Pacific. If we're going by expected record, Hawaii and Vancouver should have been in the playoffs and California, who won 97 games and the division last season, should have been watching them on TV. Hawaii had a tough offseason, though Vancouver's might have been a net positive. It should be a really exciting race. We also have to pay attention to Yellow Springs, who should have been a lot better last year and is extremely dangerous, and Madison and Jacksonville could be a lot better than their records last year, too.

There's very little question that the JL, who hadn't lost in a Landis since 2022, is a league that's no longer on the rise but has already risen. If a team like Omaha, who wasn't expected to make the playoffs, can knock off 90-win teams on the way to the pennant, it's safe to say the Johnson League, who has now been won by five different teams in five years, is the Wild West.

Note 1: All Gained/Lost players are through free agency unless otherwise indicated.

Note 2: Note 2: The Frick League managed to pull back ahead in total wins this year, going 989-955 last season. Considering it's 34 wins out of 1944 possible wins, it's probably not statistically significant, but it's good for bragging rights..



2028: JOHNSON PACIFIC

PROJECTED FINAL STANDINGS		W	L	PCT	GB	2027	RS	RA
	Vancouver	88	74	.543	-	89-73	645	580
	Hawaii	85	77	.524	3	88-74	761	643
	California	83	79	.512	5	97-65	661	611
	Valencia	71	91	.4318	16	71-91	643	779

TEAM	GAINED	LOST
VANCOUVER	SP Harry Considine (trade) RP Jesus Hopkins RP Pedro Chaves (trade)	LF Mike Love P Carlos Cortez (trade) P Andy Cantrell (trade)
HAWAII	RF Gilberto Pacheco RP Cedric Andrews	SP Chris Lee (trade) RF Doug Kendall RP Miguel Lara RP Francisco Rodriguez 2B Sam Hampton
CALIFORNIA	RF Doug Kendall SS Armando Reyes RP Terrence Miller	LF Juan Hernandez SP Gow Cho (trade) C Maxwell Weiss, Jr.
VALENCIA	OF Cesar Valencia SS Mario Garcia RP Fernando Lopez	C Pedro Gomez P Carlos Villalobas



Editor's Notes:

Cali pitched themselves to another Division crown in 2027, but the Tropics are hoping to make get back into the swing ... and, then, there's the guys up there in Vancouver who are looking like they might be serious about this thing.

I suppose Aaron is going to have a few thoughts on the matter.





“Once again the Hawaii Tropics have made the playoffs. Once again they go out with a whimper.”

HAWAII TROPICS

GM: Mike Bieschke

2027: 88-74 (Lost in Geoghegan Round) || 2028 Projection: 85-77

OUTLOOK:

Hawaii’s expected record was the best team in the Johnson League by expected record last year. Despite that, they won just 88 games and dropped their first round series to division rival Vancouver last season, the second straight season they’d gone out of the playoffs on their first chance. Analytics might suggest that I have Hawaii taking a step forward this year, but, instead, I think they could take a step back.

Let’s start with the offseason, where Hawaii dropped two key performers: longtime starter Chris Lee and surprise performer Doug Kendall. Their best effort to replace Kendall is Gilberto Pacheco, who’s out with an injury until at least June. They might have some serious issues offensively. The lineup is very right-handed, and of the likely nine Hawaii starters only star CF Francisco Flores is a lefty. Roberto Miranda continues to outpace his reputation, and if he along with Flores and Joe Wilcox can continue to get on base at a robust .350+ clip, they should do very nicely this year as Paul Backstrom and Edgardo Jaso should hit more than their fair share of homers. The group finished second in the league in offense with 4.7 runs per game, and while I can foresee a possible falloff it hasn’t happened yet.

The Hawaii pitching staff also finished in the top half of the league last year, and while the Tropics parted with longtime top starter Chris Lee this offseason they should still have a very serviceable rotation. However, there are some signs that the Hawaii rotation might fall back this year. Floyd Carter and Jose Olivarez showed some wear this offseason, and Jody Nunez has yet to take the next step. Manny Bautista is still a top starter but is also an injury risk this season. The bullpen might be slightly above average, but it’s not a great unit. The Hawaii defense is also just okay at this point.

Do I still think Hawaii will make the playoffs? Well, that’s how I’m calling it; with all the warts I listed they’re still obvious contenders and a fairly solid team in all aspects of the game, but Lee won 17 games last year for Hawaii and his loss will likely be felt. I’m projecting them for the second wild card, but they could easily miss the playoffs.





"I have no idea what he's talking about. Pythagorean . . . Isn't that something about triangles?"

Skip Glendenning

CALIFORNIA CRUSADERS

GM: Ted Schmidt

2027: 97-65 (Lost in Doubleday Series) || 2028 Projection: 83-79

OUTLOOK:

So California's expected record was just 87-75, which leads to the obvious point that California has to be the prime candidate for regression this year...right? Well, surely I can't imagine a scenario in which the Crusaders, who finished +10 in Pythagorean record, win 97 games again. That was beyond the absolute tip top of their range last year, and no team has been as lucky as the Crusaders last year since the 2024 Des Moines Kernels. They admittedly deserved a bit of good luck for some of their struggles, but +10 seems excessive.

Obviously no conversation about any California team should generally start with anything but Ricardo Diaz and Jesus Tonche, both former Steve Nebraska winners, but the top pitcher on the staff last year was actually #3 starter Gerardo Castillo, and #4 starter Li Beggs led the team in ERA. Both of the latter two are strong candidates to regress, but Diaz and Tonche should pick up the slack somewhat with better years. Their bullpen is more or less average, and while California finished second in the league last year in ERA and could be first again this year, they will do so only if their bullpen holds up.

The offense is also a little bit scary. BFP was solid last year and so was Daniel Labrie, Jr., but both players are basically made of glass at this point in their careers. Juan Fernandez is gone, replaced by regression candidate Doug Kendall. Cris Vazquez will be valuable as long as he can hit .270, which is hardly a guarantee. Andre Wellington is probably underrated; he generally gets a league average OPS and plays stellar defense, but like the rest of the team isn't particularly good at getting on base.

I'm expecting a huge falloff from the Crusaders. In fact, I think they may fall even further than their expected record last year of 87-75. As long as they're getting good luck they should be fine, but we don't grade on a curve around here. I think inconsistency on the offense and in the bullpen will sink this team out of the playoffs.



VANCOUVER MOUNTIES

GM: Brett Schroeder

2027: 89-73 (Lost in Cartwright Cup) || 2028 Projection: 88-74



“Technically if Huntsville sweeps Omaha in 4 games and Hawaii sweeps Vancouver in 4 games, there would be a tie. Odds aren't great on that though and I'd pretty much hate Fred forever at that point :bye: . But in reality if I get swept by Hawaii in four games, its probably my own fault.”

OUTLOOK:

Welcome to your preview of the Vancouver Grasshoppers. OK, so that's probably extreme, but the Mounties last year made a successful push to the playoffs in no small part because of a huge trade with Indy to acquire Chad Lawrence and Valeri Kharlamov. No longer just a team that wins solely on pitching and defense, Vancouver took a huge step forward last year. Can they take the next step?

Well, you have to credit the Mounties: they have a strategy, and they're sticking to their guns. Worked great last year: the Mounties had the lowest team ERA and the lowest number of runs allowed last season. Some of that is their superior defense; Vancouver's worst defender might be some teams' best. Some of that is their ballpark, as they're concentrating on low movement players because the ball stays in the ballpark in Vancouver. However, I actually like their pitching staff on the face. Alfredo Granados hits 100 on the gun, and Tully Crow and Juan Hernandez hit the high 90s. Antonio Correa could actually be better this year, and the team acquired starter Harry Considine, who might find success in the Pacific Northwest. Their bullpen has a strong core and good depth and could be one of the top units in the JL this year.

Vancouver's offense isn't quite the exciting group as their pitching staff. Kharlamov is usually one of the best two-way players in the game, but he barely hit after coming over from Indy last year and could be due for a bounce back season. Chad Lawrence raked, but he just about always does. Stelio Kontos is clearly one of the rising young stars in the league. Owen Stark did a fine job of getting on base, and Frank Thomas had a strong season. Julio Morin might be okay. Jesus Gonzales is good defensively and might improve at the plate. It's not actually a very good lineup, but it should potentially serve to outscore the pitching staff and could get more improvements this year with trades.

The Mounties finished at the top of my range last year and appear to have improved this season. The way I project it, 90 wins should take the JL Pacific as I expect both the Vancouver rivals, Hawaii and California, to regress this year. The climate seems right for the first Vancouver division title since the 2022 season, and I think Vancouver, who still has a few prospects to trade and maybe as much as \$25 million to acquire solid hitters, might make a deal or two this year. I'm buying into the system.





VALENCIA STARS

GM: Lee Honigsfeld

2027: 71-91 || 2028 Projection: 71-91

“His number look pretty good, 84 innings, 66 hits allowed, 61 K's and 31 walks...he also has a 1.15 WHIP...Sounds good until you see his record, 1-8”

OUTLOOK:

If you have a below average pitching staff and the worst offense in the Johnson League, there's a fair chance that you'll lose 90 games. That was the Valencia Stars last year, who played even worse than their 91 losses last year but might not be as bad as they looked in 2027.

Oh, it's not that I think they're good or anything. They know it, too: they brought back Jason Dunn at \$4.6 million. Sentiment aside, Dunn was the worst defensive catcher in baseball last year and doesn't have any business behind the plate, but he should still be a league average hitter. The Stars' offensive players are all kind of like Dunn; they all have something to hide other than CF Felipe Gonzalez, who has performed like a star, and Christian Scott, who's not good for a first baseman but is consistent at the plate. The team is borrowing a page from Omaha's offensive philosophy minus the stellar defense and Brian Whitten, as they're all contact hitters who run a bit. The offense finished with a combined 11.5 WAR, basically dead last, and they're poor defensively.

The pitching staff is better than the offense, but given the division they're in they should have been even better. Nobody in the league has been more consistent than Ezechiele Marriotto, whose analytics weren't good last year – but you couldn't tell from his performance. Juan Martinez and Andre Jacobs were both passable last year, and rookie Mauro Flores might be Valencia's next ace, but none of those guys is going to make a dent in Valencia's fortunes this year. There isn't any one leader of the bullpen, and none of them are particularly great, though Manny Vargas has had some excellent seasons for the Stars.

Valencia has their highest team farm ranking that I can remember (ninth) and it might even be underrated, as Jesus Duarte and Xavier Silva might both be underrated prospects. But the Stars are clearly not as good as the more solid teams in their division, and I see very little chance for them to finish above .500 this season. I doubt they're a 95-loss team, but they could be, and I don't see how they're going to contend.



2028 JOHNSON MID-WESTERN

PROJECTED FINAL STANDINGS		<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>PCT</u>	<u>GB</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>RS</u>	<u>RA</u>
	Huntsville	92	70	.568	-	84-78	745	641
	Yellow Springs	84	78	.518	8	75-87	661	652
	Omaha	81	81	.500	11	89-73	649	625
	Madison	70	92	.432	22	63-99	660	846

TEAM	GAINED	LOST
HUNTSVILLE	SP Chris Lee (trade) SS Jonathan Archer (trade) C Pedro Gomez P Miguel Lara	P Justin Alexander, Jr. (trade) C Richie Shafer (retirement)
YELLOW SPRINGS	RP Cesar Sandoval	SS Edward Allen RP Ryan Craigie
OMAHA	Zero	C Bob Burke CL Armando Morales CF Vicente Marin (trade) RP Terrence Miller SS Omar Aparicio
MADISON	2B Don Draper (rookie) SP Peter Bryant (trade) CL Ruben Vargas RP Cesar Martinez 3B Eugene Russell	3B Francisco Camacho (trade)



Editor's Notes:

Let's face it, the Barnstormers kicked a bit of JLM ass last year, and it was made even worse because no one expected it. Can they sneak up on everyone again? Will the reloaded Huntsville squad give them a sucker punch? Will Madison get its act together? Can Yellow Springs snap back?

Let's see what the experts say



HUNTSVILLE PHANTOMS

GM: Kyle Stever

2027: 84-78 || 2028 Projection: 92-70



“My trades are (at least in theory) almost always meticulous even if they don't work out.”

OUTLOOK:

Last year, I wrote that Huntsville received a gut punch by getting swept by Brooklyn in the Cartwright, but apparently we hadn't seen anything yet. The Huntsville Phantoms went through one of the more frustrating seasons I can remember seeing for a prominent franchise, dropping to 83 wins last year and missing the playoffs. To add insult to injury, they had to watch Omaha, who took the JL Midwest, go to the Landis. If they're not bitter about that, they're not human. Admittedly, they had a higher beta than I was willing to admit last year, as I thought their bullpen was a little bit shaky. But the Phantoms finished third in offense and fourth in runs allowed last year, and any team that does that simply shouldn't miss the playoffs, no matter how unlucky they are.

This year, the Phantoms went right out and addressed their pitching concerns with a flourish. Jose Cavazos might take a step back this year, but Gerardo Fajardo should still be solid and Chris Lee is a big acquisition. Felipe Baez is an early Joe Gillstrom candidate, as the #2 prospect in the game had a productive September call up last year. Their late-inning questions should be properly handled by Bob Sanderson and Reynaldo Garza as usual, and Aymeric Marinelli should be a huge addition to the middle relief.

Huntsville's offense is also still a cut above. Adding back Jonathan Archer was a nice touch, but the team was already solid offensively, with star first baseman Fernando Moreno posting the biggest year of his career last year and Joe Gillstrom winner Ed Curry knocking 33 homers in his first full season of action. Hunter Eisenhower has posted back-to-back 6 WAR seasons, and young Gerardo Guzman should build on his rookie season. It's a very strong lineup and perhaps the class of the JL offensively, as the team finished second in OPS and first in OBP.

I suppose I should have tempered expectations for this team somewhat last year, and clearly there was some growth that the Phantoms needed to go through in 2027. Assuming they're over their growth period, I think it's safe to put them back onto 90 wins and probably the division title.



YELLOW SPRINGS NINE

GM: Ron Collins

2027: 75-87 || 2028 Projection: 84-74

OUTLOOK:

No team was likely more disappointed to finish below .500 than the Yellow Springs Nine, who not only had the run differential of an 83 win team, but had been steadily improving their franchise for several years. The Nine were all set to make a serious run at a wild card berth last year, and then something unforeseen happened: Omaha put up a spunky 89 wins, Vancouver improved by leaps and bounds, and Yellow Springs couldn't capitalize on their solid team.

This year might be different for the Nine. Yellow Springs might have the top rotation in the JL this year, with Lawrence Columbus LaLoosh heading a rotation that also includes Jose Chavez, Eduardo Lopez, and Mario Gonzalez. LaLoosh actually regressed somewhat from his 2026 season but there's a very realistic chance he takes a quantum leap forward this year at age 23. The rotation fronts a maybe slightly below average bullpen, with Colin Julyan an unlikely but effective closer. Yellow Springs could legitimately lead the league in ERA this season if the Nine's mediocre defense holds up.

Yellow Springs' offense isn't particularly great, but it was good enough to finish in the middle of the pack last year despite Luis Baca having a lost season. Baca has been a disappointment in two of the last three seasons, and he may never achieve the superstar promise he had when he came over from the EBA. At this point they really need to think about playing him at DH, since his defensive metrics weren't good last year either. Second-year player Lucas McNeill quietly had a few phenomenal rookie months last year and looks potentially primed to take a step forward into stardom. Pedro Hernandez has been solid offensively for an infielder, and Luis Campos can surely do better than his pathetic .223/.263/.373 slashline from last year.

If Yellow Springs finishes in the top three in pitching and can raise their offense to fifth or sixth, that could be enough to get them into the playoffs. Much depends on Baca's bat, and if the outfielder is unable to perform up to his 2026 standard, Yellow Springs could be on the outside looking in yet again. The Nine still have payroll flexibility and a number of positions they could upgrade, including first base, and a wealth of prospects to deal from, so if the season starts out well we might see some upgrades here. They should return to a winning record at least in 2028.



"Pro-choice or Pro-Life, I think we can all agree that if there was a baseball season worthy of aborting, it would be the Yellow Springs Nine year of 2027. I mean, seriously, it was about as fun to watch as a turnip getting a root canal."



OMAHA BARNSTORMERS

GM: Fred Holmes

2027: 89-73 (Lost in Landis Cup) || 2028 Projection: 81-81

OUTLOOK:

So I'd like to take credit for thinking that Omaha might do something last year because I answered my own question about whether they were a contender in the affirmative. Did I expect them to finish division winners over a potential juggernaut in Huntsville, then beat two better teams in the playoffs to make their first Landis in 16 years? No. Nobody expected that. But the Barnstormers apparently had me completely fooled last year, then acquired DH Brian Whitten midseason to cement their division title. That is, as they say, why you play the games.

The biggest surge in Omaha came from the pitching staff, and, no, it wasn't Enrique Gomez, who might still be the best pitcher working today (and led the JL in WAR in 2027). Gomez went just 15-10 with a 3.33 ERA. Mick Hanscombe, on the other hand, went 16-7 with a stellar 2.91 ERA. Juan Jose Mayorga and Martin Pacheco combined for 460 innings and almost 7 WAR also, and current free agent Armando Morales had a massive season for the Barnstormers, with 46 saves and a 2.47 ERA. All of that had to go right for the Barnstormers to win 89 games, and it all did.

The offense, however, was largely struck with a power outage all season long. Omaha finished second to last in home runs and last in doubles (though first in triples), and tied for tenth in OPS. Defensively the team was quite good, but until the acquisition of Brian Whitten, just two Barnstormers had OPS marks at or above league average: the stalwart career Barnstormer Juan Pablo and departed FA Bob Burke. The team did steal a league high number of bases at a passable rate and was tied for second in batting average, so they did admittedly hit their usual benchmarks for offensive success, and they are as always excellent in the field.

I cannot imagine this team not regressing this year, at least somewhat, despite the all-year presence of Whitten. Hanscombe's average season is 9 wins and a 4.10 ERA, and while Pacheco and Mayorga may well repeat again, their bullpen looks quite shaky. Their offense finished tenth last year and they're going to need to repeat their third place pitching finish to even have a shot. They could, of course, do that again, but their division is rising and Omaha is not.



"To his credit, Talboom didn't sulk and refuse a minor league assignment, he walked on the plane to Halifax, trotted out onto the field every day and did his job.."



MADISON WOLVES

GM: Chris Wilson

2027: 63-99 || 2028 Projection: 70-92

OUTLOOK:

It's still clearly a work in progress for the Madison Wolves, which is the only thing that rings true after 99 losses. However, there are potentially some places where the Wolves might leap forward. Madison's offense didn't play as well as we thought they would last year and their pitching staff was much, much worse. The Wolves stand to be better in 2028, but how much better will they be?

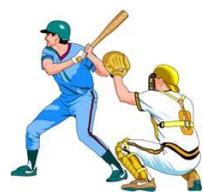
Intelligent minds can debate whether Alfredo Salazar is worth \$31 million in a season, but it's a sight lot better than the \$50 million he got in 2027, and next year he's down to a manageable \$20 million. Salazar won his second Sawyer Silk last year, and Dusty Rhodes finished a disappointing 6th despite winning his second batting title in two major league seasons with a robust .356 average. Steve Dempsey could play better this year; he's a threat to hit .320 in any given year. Former top draft pick Rupert Grant had an absolutely lost rookie year and could play a lot better, Manuel Freyta is a candidate to improve also, and Eugene Russell is just a year removed from a 36-homer season. It's still a work in progress, but Madison could legitimately finish in the top four or five in offense this year, especially if Don Draper takes some steps forward in his rookie season.

The problem with this team is the pitching staff, which completely crapped out last year. The news wasn't all bad, as Marcos Villegas had a promising rookie season and improved his movement this offseason, but it was nearly all bad. Madison had a pathetic 7.2 team WAR on the pitching staff, and there really isn't much good news there. Bart Ender is a candidate to bounce back, as the strong-armed lefty had two strong seasons before crashing last year. Peter Bryant returns to Madison, but at 36 years old it remains to be seen how much he has left in the tank coming off a workmanlike effort in Atlantic City. Madison's bullpen looks improved this year, as Cesar Martinez comes over from Birmingham and it's peppered with solid pitchers like Ruben Vargas and Chris Harris. In fact, their bullpen could be one of the best such units in the JL this year.

The Wolves aren't blessed with a wealth of pitching prospects and might do well to make a deal or two for rotation arms, but such talk is probably premature. With the rotation as poor as it is this year, it's highly unlikely Madison becomes a contender outside of very good luck, as much as I love the pieces they have there. It's clear that they're building something there, and when Salazar's salary becomes sane next year they might be able to take another big step forward back into the limelight.



“When you've been as bad as Madison has been over the last few seasons, you really have to question whether it is fair to force this club to play 11 games in a sim.”



2028 JOHNSON ATLANTIC

PROJECTED FINAL STANDINGS		W	L	PCT	GB	2026 W-L	RS	RA
	Brooklyn	92	70	.568	-	98-64	811	705
	Halifax	75	87	.463	17	72-90	703	754
	Louisville	74	88	.457	18	62-100	680	897
	Jacksonville	66	96	.407	26	67-95	709	833

TEAM	GAINED	LOST
BROOKLYN	Nothing of note	Ditto
HALIFAX	OF JJ Abrams SP Domingo Hernandez 1B Albert Tas (Rule 6)	OF Gilberto Pacheco SS Mario Garcia
LOUISVILLE	CF Leon Sandcastle (trade) SP Carlos Villalobas (waivers)	None
JACKSONVILLE	P Ramon Farias P Andy Cantrell P Justin Alexander, Jr. 2B Boys Altena	2B Chris Workman (trade) SP Harry Considine (trade) SS Jonathan Archer (trade) OF Cesar Valencia 1B Elmer Mould P Domingo Hernandez



Editor's Notes:

Given that the 2026 champs finished 2027 31 games over their next closest rival, I think it's fair to say this division has been about Brooklyn for a while. Let's see if the MBBA chief prognosticator says he thinks Halifax can close that gap in 2028...





“Many baseball experts are calling for Robin's general manager Alan Ehlers to step down after making such a bad trade that not only makes his team worse, but a playoff contender better.”

BROOKLYN ROBINS

GM: Alan Ehlers

2027: 98-64 (Lost Doubleday Series) || 2028 Projection: 92-70

OUTLOOK:

Welcome back to the playoffs, Robins. OK, so that's probably a bit cynical; couldn't Brooklyn, whose expected win/loss record was a meager 91-71 last year despite winning a league-high 98 wins, stumble and fall out of first place? The answers are, respectively, yes and no. Brooklyn has virtually no chance to miss the playoffs last year because their division is so internally sick at this point, much like New Orleans.

This has happened before; from 1999-2013 the Robins won the division all but one year, and eight of those fourteen times the Robins didn't have 90 wins. This is not to simply discredit Brooklyn's team on the field, as the lineup is peppered with stars like Emilio Rodriguez, Holden Blackwell, Rob Childers, and Sam Adams, and was actually quite good last year, leading the JL with 5 runs a game and a 28.0 team offensive WAR. I don't think they're really THAT good but they're plenty good enough with their ballpark to finish well into the top quarter offensively.

Their rotation is pretty good too. Led by Rick Ward, Joey Budding, rising star Jose Garcia, and possibly Mario Mendez, it's one of the top rated rotations in the game today. Their late-inning bullpen work is handled by Alan Dominguez and Jose Castro, and while their bullpen isn't particularly great otherwise, it should be a cohesive unit as long as they stay healthy.

So yes, it's going to be pretty hard to keep Brooklyn out of the playoffs. I expect their offense to fall off a bit, but they're clearly the class of the JL Atlantic. They have no farm at all, so they're clearly playing for now, which should lead to some midseason help for them if they need it; they have Michael Leroy's salary slot to play with.





HALIFAX HAWKS

GM: Tim Meseck

2027: 72-90 || 2028 Projection: 75-86

“ As Ace I mean only in a team building he’s the guy we want to pitch an important game for us kind of way and not the he needs to qualify for the Nebraska Award and if not be in the top 15 (or whatever arbitrary number) of the league to be a true bonafide ace.”*

OUTLOOK:

Halifax is a pretty clear total noncontender, which makes sense because they have the massive contract of Bo Jordan hanging around their necks. Let’s not mince words: the Jordan contract made sense at the time they signed the massive extension, but it was always going to end this way, with Jordan making \$20 million and the team going into the tank.

Jordan is merely the most glaring problem with the lineup, not the only one. Sure, they still have Elroy Hinson, who is building up some Hall of Fame credentials himself as the best catcher in the game and last year the best position player in the JL, too. But most of the team is either too old, too young, or too untalented to really move the dials offensively. Guys like Manuel Roman and Pierre Cordona aren’t going to make a huge difference for Halifax. Mark Sturdivant doesn’t look like a star, just a solid pro. And then there’s Jordan, who at this point in his career might not be good for 25 homers a season and hit just .249 last year, though he should still get on base at a reasonable clip.

The poor lineup belies an interesting pitching staff. Led by Sancho Delgado and Martin Lewis and a solid bullpen, the Hawks should get some solid pitching at least two days out of five. None of the other likely rotation members are likely to help very much, however, as Daniel Jordan has begun an unfortunate decline at age 25 and Domingo Hernandez has been on that path for years. The pen is actually quite good, led by Wally Lopez, Bobby Guthrington, and Jose Perucho, but a good pen is generally a luxury of a contender, not a noncontender such as Halifax.

The Hawks have some excellent chips to trade, especially relievers, and could drop off Jordan on a team who’s in need of the skills he still possesses, but I don’t see them making a dent in the playoff race this season. Jordan’s contract is on the books through 2029, and until they shed him, this team is probably going nowhere.





LOUISVILLE SLUGGERS

GM: Stu Hopkins

2027: 62-100 || 2028 Projection: 74-88

“Lindsey and Pringle, are awful, just awful, confirmed Genius, “The are probably the single biggest reason we are losing games this season. Hell, I would have given away prospects to see the backs of them.”

OUTLOOK:

Louisville did better than my 104-loss projection last year, but still managed 100 losses last year, which makes their trade for Leon Sandcastle at least somewhat questionable, if not outright dubious. Sandcastle has failed to be the difference maker for two franchises after leaving Montreal, and I can’t see him moving the dials much here either.

Sure, if you squint pretty hard you can start seeing why they’d want a guy like Sandcastle as the glue for a budding young lineup, but I’m not sure it’s the sort of group that’s going to make a big leap with a superstar. They still have Brian Clough as long as he stays in one piece, and if Clough continues putting up big seasons as he has he might make the Hall of Fame yet. They added back Paul Scholes and tacked on the aging Bob Garner, and they have rising young players like Mike Barnett, James Kane, and Sean Maguire, so their offense should be pretty good this year now that they’ve added Sandcastle.

So, you must be thinking that it’s the pitching that’s the problem, since I wasn’t particularly glowing about this team. Even after adding former 22-game winner Jose De La Cruz to the rotation, the rest of their rotation is highly suspect. Anastasio Quintana led the league in losses last year and was below replacement level. Tomas Claros and Carlos Villalobas aren’t likely to turn the dial. The bullpen is mediocre at best. There’s nothing that jumps out at you.

I think this is a cautionary tale. If you’ve just lost 100 games and the predictions all suggest that you’re not a very good ballclub, that’s usually not the time to make your big push forward. The team does have the #1 farm system and didn’t surrender too much of it to push forward, and so there is a certain rationale to putting some pieces in place, but they’re starting from such a low perch they’re going to have to roll a lot of sevens and elevens this year to get to where they want to go, which is clearly the playoffs.





JACKSONVILLE HURRICANES

GM: Tyler Simmons

2027: 67-95 || 2028 Projection: 66-96

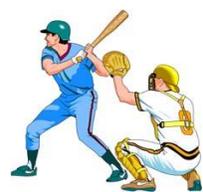
“Baseball returned to Jacksonville but it wasn't a storybook beginning. The Phantoms crushed the Hurricane 12-0 on Opening Day and J'ville went on to lose their first four starts.”

OUTLOOK:

Jacksonville wasn't supposed to be really good last year, but their moves were supposed to show some improvement for the franchise. Instead, they went the other way, regressing to a ghastly 95 losses and playing about as badly as that. They weren't as bad as their record indicated, but the wheels came off the pitching staff and that, as they say, is that.

It's pretty clear, actually, that they don't consider themselves contenders. Harry Considine is now a Vancouver Mountie, Jonathan Archer is back in Huntsville, and Chris Workman now resides in Las Vegas. The team still has workmanlike starter Bertolomeu Bolota, who just continues chugging along with solid #3 starter type seasons. And Norris Rutledge is a legitimate rising star in this league; some people didn't notice, but Rutledge hit 21 homers last year – in about half a season. But that's the best of a bad lot; they have a rotation full of near-replacement level players and a great closer in Ernie von Schledorn with a mediocre pen behind him.

For now, at least, they seem to be resigned to their fates as also-rans. The modest fire sale they went through this offseason clinches that status, and I would be deeply surprised to see them improve very much upon their poor standing last year. Jacksonville does have a solid farm and potentially a good future, but this year they'll probably feed wins to the other teams in their division.





2028 FRICK LEAGUE

CHEATSHEET:

Projected finishes:

FLA: Montreal, Carolina, Atlantic City, Havana

FLM: New Orleans, Des Moines, Birmingham, Indy

FLP: Las Vegas, Calgary, Seattle, Tucson

Wild card winners: Calgary, Carolina

When I was in college, I wrote a poem which ended “when he could no longer hold his breath/he was allowed to breathe.” Las Vegas stopped holding their breath for a title at least two years ago; welcome back to regular respiration, Recte. The Hustlers left very little doubt as to their worthiness for a championship, smashing through the playoffs in fourteen games, going 12-2 and winning their first pennant and title in nearly two decades.



Vegas' title broke a long streak of underdog title winners. The Hustlers' championship was the first since Atlantic City's 96-win group in 2022 that the team with the most wins in the Association won the title, and before that it hadn't been done since 2006, when Vegas did it with a dominant 115-win team. Of course, Vegas fans would probably argue they should have had two or three by now over the past seven years, since the Hustlers have averaged a robust 98 wins in that time. However, the numbers don't bear that out: whatever team had the most wins in the FL in any given year has won the pennant just three times in the last ten years.

Knowing the history, predicting that Vegas, who again looks like the best team in the Frick League, might not be the obvious favorite to take their second consecutive pennant – though they certainly might be. The Hustlers are going to have a big target on their backs this year, and they're going to have to rise back up to the top without longtime #1 starter Gary Estes, who's now a member of the Tucson Cactus. New Orleans showed that they're fully revived last year by winning the FL Midwest by 22 games; they should be back in the playoffs again. Montreal emerged from dormancy last year, and despite not putting up much of a fight against the Hustlers in the Cartwright should be solid again. Carolina and Calgary have now made the playoffs in multiple consecutive years and should be considered dangerous.

That's not a complete list of contenders, of course. Seattle has consistently been on the fringe of the playoffs and could have been in last year if they won a one-game playoff. Atlantic City continually reloads and Havana might be an up and comer. Des Moines has been making some inspired moves and have the potential Joe Gillstrom in William Moreland. Any of these teams could make the playoffs with a little good luck and some good moves.

The Frick League still hasn't had a team win consecutive pennants since the Hustlers did it in the 2008 and 2009 seasons. Can the Hustlers be the next team to do it too? History tells us no, but maybe the Hustlers have what it takes to buck the trend now that they've broken through.

Note 1: All Gained/Lost players are through free agency unless otherwise indicated.

Note 2: The Frick League managed to pull back ahead in total wins this year, going 989-955 last season. Considering it's 34 wins out of 1944 possible wins, it's probably not statistically significant, but it's good for bragging rights.



2028 FRICK PACIFIC

PROJECTED FINAL STANDINGS		W	L	PCT	GB	2026	RS	RA
	Las Vegas	100	62	.617	-	103-59	842	604
	Calgary	87	75	.537	13	90-72	810	746
	Seattle	86	76	.531	14	88-75	820	738
	Tucson	73	89	.451	27	51-111	570	833

TEAM	GAINED	LOST
LAS VEGAS	2B Chris Workman RP Francisco Rodriguez SS Omar Aparicio	SP Gary Estes RP Aymeric Marinelli
CALGARY	None	SP Jorge Jimenez (trade) SP Dieter Hartinger 1B Phil Chapman
SEATTLE	2B Cesar Colon	2B Quinlan Upham OF JJ Abrams P Stevie Wolarski
TUCSON	SP Gary Estes SS Edward Allen OF Mike Love RF Esteban Contreras OF Vicente Marin (trade) RP Ed Phillips DH Pedro Burgos RP Bailey Attoehow (Rule 6)	None

Editor's Notes:

Yeah, we know ... it finally happened. Las Vegas finally won it all. Whoopty-freaky-doo. I thought what happened Vegas was supposed to stay in Vegas.

So, what's up I Calgary, eh? And Seattle, what about the land of Perpetual Rain? And Tucson.

We're interested if the average rainfall of Seattle and Tucson is in line with the national numbers..

Let's see what the preview says about them apples, eh?



LAS VEGAS HUSTLERS

GM: Matt Rectenwald

2027: 103-59 (Won Landis Cup) || 2028 Projection: 100-62



OUTLOOK:

OK. So it wasn't the curse of the Bambino. But the Las Vegas Hustlers had to be starting to feel like the fates were against them. Ever since dominating the league in the 2000s, winning five titles and six pennants in nine years, the Hustlers had failed to get out of the FL playoffs since, an 18 year drought. Six teams have had to wait longer between pennants in the modern era, so it's not as uncommon as you might think...

Havana: 28 years (as Buffalo), 2000 to current
 Huntsville: 25 years (as Chicago), 1999 to 2023
 Jacksonville: 20 years (as Greenville), 2007 to current
 Des Moines: 20 years, 2007 to current
 Carolina: 20 years, 1998 to 2017
 Vancouver: 19 years, 2008 to current

...but none of these teams have had a period of prolonged success like the Hustlers and not won a title. Las Vegas has missed the playoffs just once since the 2017 season, and they don't appear to be in danger of making this season their second time.

Yes, the rotation is about to miss Gary Estes for the first time in over a decade; the star lefty posted the second best year of his career last season, so his loss will be felt. However, Las Vegas is well positioned for his loss. Mike Bailey, Domingo Castillo, and Phillip Morris are all good starters, and David Cantu may join them this year. Even if the starting pitching is just okay, the Hustlers have by far the best bullpen in the Frick League, a superior group from 1-6 at least. Nobody would be terribly surprised to see them finish in the top three in pitching again, as they were second last year, but I'd suspect they'll fall off a bit without their #1 starter.

However, in an unusual flip-flop, Vegas is about to start launching on their offense. The Hustlers have one of the top five players in the game in Alfredo Martinez, fresh off his first Sawyer Silk. Gervasio Ridder, Hank Brewer, Jack Gulliver, stolen base king Tony Banuelos, and newly acquired Chris Workman make up what looks like the top offense in the Frick League. They're not the superior defensive groups of years past in Vegas, but they can really rake. They finished with 5.2 runs per game last year, tops in the Frick, and they should top the league again; the question is whether they'll chase 6 runs per game.

Vegas should be among the top teams in the league again, and it would be fairly surprising to see them fall at all. They even have the interesting Antonio Valentin in AAA if they get some injuries. A 95-win season should be a minimum for them, and they could easily win 100 again.

"Well, Miguel, we gave you a month in the rotation, and numbers don't lie," Stoller explained calmly. "You're far more valuable to us as a reliever."?"



CALGARY PIONEERS

GM: Kevin Dickson

2027: 90-72 (Lost in Doubleday Series) || 2028 Projection: 87-75

OUTLOOK:

Calgary is always one of the more interesting teams to review. Last year, they made the playoffs for the second consecutive year and bettered their record to 90 wins. Some of that was luck and some of it was skill; they went out and got Atusmori Maeda last year, but also got just 260 combined innings from starters Dieter Hartinger and Jorge Jimenez, both gone this year. Can Calgary, with a remade pitching staff, repeat their playoff berth for the third straight year?

Calgary will feature Maeda as the #1 starter, and he's just one year removed from winning the JL Steve Nebraska, but he's not really that type of pitcher. He is a pretty good replacement for Jorge Jimenez, however. They have a solid rotation throughout to try and keep them in ballgames; Ace Young has been solid for Calgary since 2024, and Fernando Alaniz has been great for them the past two years, winning 15 games last year. Lambert Snabel has been remarkably solid for them, too. There's no question the wheels could come off this rotation, but it might be good enough to hold it together. The bullpen might be a bit shaky after their late-inning guys, but at the very least they have a chance to be okay.

As for the offense, you know most of the names already. Hector Cano whacked 45 over the fence last year, including his 500th. Cano now has 530 in his stellar career. Dan Leonard had a massive season last year, but he's a candidate for regression, as he's probably neither the 1 WAR disappointment he's been half his career or the 5 WAR monster he was last year. Bernardo Perez led the league in homers last year, and he'll be very, very valuable as long as he can hit .260, a mark he's surpassed both of the past two years. Mario Soriano continues to be one of the best leadoff men in the game. Tony Franco has never equaled his early career success, but he's still a great defender. Mario Balderas looks passable, though he's probably a year away. In fact, the whole Calgary team is fairly good on defense.

The offense for the Pioneers should again be solid, and the pitching staff has benefited from good defense and isn't half bad. Calgary will likely go as their middle relief goes, as they really can't afford to go out and get more relief pitching, and their starting pitching is just solid, not great. A solid winning season should be expected for them, and they will likely be in the wild card race until the end.



“Dave was supposed to sign some of these guys and he got beat out on every single one by that smartass in Louisville.”



SEATTLE STORM

GM: Nathan Egan

2027: 88-75 || 2028 Projection: 86-76

OUTLOOK:

Other than Huntsville, perhaps no team was unluckier than the Seattle Storm last year. That seems unreasonable in the face of the fact that they finished just one game below their expected record, but the Storm had a lot of obstacles to overcome. They played in the same division as Las Vegas and Calgary and still managed 88 wins. They made it to a one-game playoff but ran into a well-prepared, overachieving Carolina team. With that in mind, there's no reason that Seattle isn't still a contender this year.

Maybe it's time to retire the idea that Seattle doesn't have any starting pitching. The Storm had four players last year in the rotation with better than a 2.5 WAR, better than Montreal, Carolina, Havana, or Atlantic City, for example. Edward Davis has established a solid level of performance over the past two years. The acquisition of Roberto Ramos before last year was a sparkling success, as Ramos won 15 games, a career high. Lorenzo Pena looks like he won't repeat his 12-8, 3.22 he posted last year, but maybe Josh Rosser can take a step forward. The Seattle pen is probably below average.

Seattle still has a wonderful lineup, but it's starting to show just a few cracks. Superstar CF Jorge Rodriguez appears to be starting to lose a little bat speed, though his power is still unquestionable. He's still probably the most valuable CF in the game, and Juan Escobar might still be the most valuable hitter in the MBBWA. Hector Valentin and Ralph Benson set the table nicely, and the team has a few valuable players in the back half of the lineup. The defense isn't too bad either.

I write it every year, so why not again? Seattle's hitting ought to outpace the runs their mediocre pitching staff allows, and that should be enough for them to finish above .500 again.



“As Seattle GM Nathan Egan asserted, “we all hoped that King would stay in Seattle until he retired. But with the way his play had slipped, and with the demands of the salary cap, we knew that he needed to be moved to make this trade work.”



TUCSON CACTUS

GM: Stephan Lane

2027: 51-111 | | 2028 Projection: 73-89

OUTLOOK:

Tucson threw a lot of money at a lot of free agents this offseason, and while it remains to be seen whether the spending spree will pay off, they should be a lot better than the disaster area the team was last year, when they lost 111 games, second-worst in franchise history. A lot of things could be very different this year for the Cactus, but we suspect management might be more patient than the last group despite the spending.

Tucson's rotation is now headed by Gary Estes, who was poached from the cap-strapped Las Vegas Hustlers this offseason. It's weird saying any player is a Cactus (just in general) but Estes being there is stranger than most because he's feasted on Tucson his whole career. Estes is the only sure thing in the rotation at this point, as Esteban Gil might be suited better for the pen, or not, and Jose Lozano is still a rookie. Van Willard looks like a potential mid-rotation guy, but he still needs to work on his breaking stuff. John Woods has been one of the best fifth starters in the game for half a decade, though, and the addition of Rule 6 pick Bailey Attoehow might help to solidify an average pen.

The lineup is still a work in progress, but it's starting to look like a cohesive unit a little bit. Mike Love should still be able to set the table adequately, and players like Pedro Burgos and Esteban Contreras might finally be in the right ballparks for their power hitting skills. Nothing about this lineup suggests a major breakout for Tucson, but they could easily finish in the top third in offense this year with the ballpark acting as the wind at their back.

If the rotation comes through, Tucson could actually threaten the .500 mark or surpass it, something the past administration was unable to do despite trying nearly every year. I wouldn't bet on it, though, as they still play in a very tough division and don't look quite as good as Calgary or Seattle. It's a start, though, and a sight lot better than last year's skid mark. Stephen Lane might get quite a few GM of the Year votes.



“While we have not been able to access the full filings, we can tell you that Adam Dee, currently GM of the EBA's Belfast Northstars has filed this suit in response to Tucson's decision to match Belfast's agreement with P Bailey Attoehow. Commissioner Matt Rectenwald has also been named a defendant in the case.”



2028 FRICK MID-WESTERN

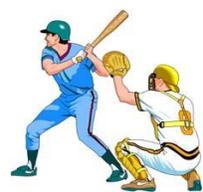
PROJECTED FINAL STANDINGS		W	L	PCT	GB	2026	RS	RA
	New Orleans	84	68	.518	-	100-62	755	612
	Des Moines	81	81	.500	3	78-84	744	772
	Birmingham	71	91	.438	13	67-95	724	819
	Indy	66	96	.407	18	71-91	604	712

TEAM	GAINED	LOST
NEW ORLEANS	C Bob Burke	1B Jorge Caballero OF Juan Olivarez (injury, maybe back for playoffs) RP Ed Phillips C Roman Araujo
DES MOINES	None	None
BIRMINGHAM	2B Sam Hampton SP Gow Cho SP Carlos Cortez	DH Pedro Burgos RP Cesar Martinez (apathy) RP Jesus Hopkins 2B Cesar Colon C Ulbert Spitsbaard
INDY	A totally rebuilding program	RP Cedric Andrews

**Editor's Notes:**

Amid the rise of the Crawdad's it's easy to miss the fact that the kids in Des Moines nearly got themselves up over .500 ball. With Indy in Freefall, and Birmingham in rebuild, is 2028 the year they do it?

I can't wait to see what the true swami has to say about it...



NEW ORLEANS CRAWDADS

GM: Jim Crawford

2027: 100-62 (Lost in Doubleday Series) || 2028 Projection: 84-68



“Power is Sexy. But if every one of those Home Runs is a solo shot, then it’s hard to be on top of the world.”

OUTLOOK:

Last year I wrote: “I’m gonna say Indy gets knocked out of first place for the first time in half a decade. You can put that in the books and mock me for it later if I’m wrong.” Jokes about stopped clocks aside, I pretty much nailed that one: New Orleans won their division by 22 games and Indy finished 71-91 after a total fire sale. At one time, the Crawdads owned this division, winning it nine consecutive years between 2012 and 2020, and they seem primed to do that again.

Their heavily right-handed lineup finished fourth last year in runs and OPS, which is unusual, to say the very least; most tacticians in the league swear by lefty bats. Admittedly, their top guys, Pedro Canales, Mark Dempsey, and Maximo Cuevas, are all equally good contact hitters against lefties and righties. This year, they’re adding in top prospect Arthur Norris, who was unimpressive in a September call up but absolutely wrecked AAA last year. He could hit 40 homers. James Cunningham is wildly inconsistent, but he’s in his prime and could put up another big season. New Orleans has issues with table setters but is otherwise pretty solid.

The New Orleans pitching staff has to lead in the discussion for the best in the Frick League now that Gary Estes is a member of the Cactus. Miguel Datiz took his turn winning a Steve Nebraska, and along with Manuel Ramirez make up possibly the best 1-2 punch in the game. Jorge Ortiz made the leap last year, and Luis Espinoza has been one of the most consistent middle rotation guys in the game. New Orleans has made some effort to upgrade their bullpen with mediocre results, however, closer Flint Colbert was one of the best pitchers in the game last year, taking to the pen with a phenomenal 52 saves and a 2.39 ERA. Orlando Rivera is an interesting pitcher and could eventually be a solid starter; he has nothing else to prove in the minors.

New Orleans is a storied franchise, and there’s very little question that their rotation is solid, their bullpen has improved, and their lineup has no big issues. They even have almost 8 million under the cap to improve any part that’s not working, plus over \$10 million of tradable salary matches. This is going to be an awfully good team again, and I’m upgrading them slightly despite the slight downgrade in their rotation.



DES MOINES KERNELS

GM: Edward Murphy

2027: 78-84 || 2028 Projection: 81-81



“The question was asked to GM Edward Murphy, when 1B William Moreland is going to be called up. “The simple answer is when the team has a spot for him on the field. We are not going to call him up to sit on the bench”

|

OUTLOOK:

I’ve been touting the positive moves that Des Moines has made over the past few years, and they have created quite the promising group: the #2 farm system in the game, a powerhouse at first base, and a wealth of financial flexibility. The Kernels still need a trade or two, but finishing above .500 would be a smart move for this franchise and help them spend some of their \$65 million in cap space available next season, and they should make a push forward.

Des Moines is in a little bit of a pickle in their lineup, but it’s not actually a difficult decision what to do: you put Luis Alicea on the bench and start William Moreland. Moreland might be one of the top hitters in either league, and Alicea is a very nice first baseman. Sacrificing outfield or infield depth to carry three first basemen is usually an awful idea, but there’s no getting around it. Alicea isn’t clearly the one to trade; they could move Dani Lopez, too. Cisco Arreola might become the best catcher in the game, if he isn’t already; his 6.0 WAR last season was the highest for any Des Moines player since Rafael Rodriguez in 2006. Past those three, only Adilmar Hoffman was particularly valuable last year for the Kernels. Moreland might be the type of guy who can carry an offense all by himself, though.

Their rotation is more of a complete unit than their lineup, but it’s marred a little bit by inconsistency. Tavio Ciccolella is a solid #1A starter, and Rio Underhill and Mike Davis are probably better than their numbers have been lately. The rotation lacks a little depth, but Viacheslav Vasilyev could be a potential partial solution to that problem, even though he had an awful year last year. Their bullpen is a tire fire, however, as past Cap Morgan there isn’t anyone who’s really reliable.

If I were Des Moines, I’d trade Lopez or Alicea for significant bullpen help, and go for a year above .500 this season. Wanting to deal Lopez or Alicea for prospects or players at other positions is noble, but this is a league where Elmer Mould and Fulton Reed are on the waiver wire. Someone could use those guys, and someone should be willing to give up bullpen guys in exchange. (Hawaii and Valencia seem like a good fit, for starters.) If the Kernels can put together a mediocre pen and maybe find a little batting help somewhere (some overpriced contract maybe?) they should be able to make a solid run at their first winning record since *gasp* 2014.



BIRMINGHAM BANDITS

GM: Mike Calvaruso

2027: 67-95 || 2028 Projection: 71-91



“Things did not go so smoothly in the Bandits offices however as GM Mike Calvaruso had to be physically restrained by 6 members of the Birmingham Bandits security staff after trying to choke the living shit out of Manager Ben Rivera. GM Calvaruso could be heard screaming through the entire Bandits office complex “You risk our best pitcher in a meaningless fu&king game, in the last week of shit storm of a season and potentially get him injured. I’m going to rip your head off and shit down your neck you brainless son of a B)@%\$”..”*

OUTLOOK:

Birmingham had a significant falloff last year due to an unforeseen factor: a complete pitching staff collapse. Perhaps it was partially predictable. The Bandits’ lineup is a ruin at this point, and while the Bandits focused on defense to try and lift their sagging pitching staff this offseason, it’s going to be a big, uphill climb.

Let’s ignore for a second that Diego Moreno, Vincent Kompany, and Juan Cruz, the Bandits’ three best hitters, will start the year on the DL. Instead, let’s focus on the fact that none of those guys might actually be good anymore. Moreno had an enormous, phenomenal outlier year last season for the Bandits, putting up a spectacular .299/.371/.496 slashline with 30 homers. However, this offseason he seemed to lose bat speed and might be far more pedestrian than last season. Juan Cruz also hit a major outlier 40 homers last season. Birmingham lost 95 games despite these efforts; I shudder to think of what might happen if they fall off. Pretty much every Bandit player can field, but the jury is quite out whether guys like Preston King, Steven Gibbons, and Jorge Gonzalez can hit on the major league level.

The poor lineup is there, however, supporting what might be the most talented pitching rotation in the game. Juan Jose Ornelas and Nelson Ramirez might have had poor years last year, but they’re fantastic. Juan Rodriguez is likely to take the next step someday, though time is really running out on him. Gow Cho and Carlos Cortez are solid lunchpail veterans. It’s worth noting that other than Jonathan Bowen, however, Birmingham’s pen is a mess.

I can’t see this team finishing above .500 with their current offense; there may not be one standout performer in the whole bunch. They have nearly zero monetary wiggle room and really nowhere to go. The question is whether they’ll avoid 90 losses and whether they’ll start rebuilding this year; their farm is a lot more marginal than even their meager 18th ranking. Of course, last time I said this about Birmingham they won the pennant.



INDY GRASSHOPPERS

GM: Fletcher Conner

2027: 71-91 || 2028 Projection: 66-96



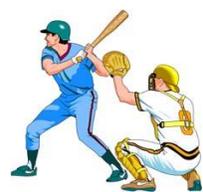
“We are aware of our salary cap situation, that is one of the drawbacks of having a team this talented.”

OUTLOOK:

Indy might have finished above .500 last year as I predicted, but a mass fire sale made that goal impossible. The question for Indy is whether there’s still enough left in the tank for them to make a wild card run this year.

Well, no. Gone are #1 starter Eduardo Lopez and a lineup that included Mario Soriano, Valeri Kharlamov, Chad Lawrence, and Newman Watson. That’s basically 20 WAR of production. Replacing them right now are, well, nobody at all. Untradeable veteran Sergio Ramos and young 1B Patrick Lue and Jimmy Bennett are the best of a bad lot, and there just isn’t a lot to mention on the offense. The rotation still features the untradeable Kevin Lee and Francisco Medina, and the highly moveable Chester Kipling, but Lee and Medina are serious injury risks. Anastasio Vazquez had a likely career year last year, and while the bullpen still features top closer Jeffrey Waller, I wouldn’t expect him to make it through the season as a Grasshopper.

Is there hope for the Indy franchise? They’ve started accumulating a few top prospects, most notably Emilio Morales and Andres Martinez, but their farm is definitely a work in progress. I’d say they have a long way to go to get to where they were before the fire sale, and it’s going to be a long climb.



2028 FRICK ATLANTIC

PROJECTED FINAL STANDINGS		W	L	PCT	GB	2027	RS	RA
	Montreal	89	73	.549	-	95-67	715	575
	Carolina	87	75	.537	2	89-74	727	699
	Atlantic City	79	83	.487	10	76-86	692	692
	Havana	68	94	.420	21	82-80	696	668

TEAM	GAINED	LOST
MONTREAL	SP Jorge Jimenez (trade) LF Juan Fernandez C Oliver Carmona	RF Esteban Contreras SP Christian Brown C Lewis Stephens P Vicente Perez
CAROLINA	None	Also Nothing
ATLANTIC CITY	C Lewis Stephens SP Dieter Hartinger	SP Peter Bryant (trade) 2B Boys Altana
HAVANA	3B Francisco Camacho (trade) A slew of Rule 5 draftees	C Oliver Carmona CL Ruben Vargas SS Armando Reyes SP Tomas Suarez RP Cesar Sandoval



Editor's Notes:

Yeah, we know. Carolina's got the history and Montreal the momentum. And, sure, Atlantic City is always interesting. But the big question is: can the Havana Sugar Kings get out of the on-deck circle.

And, yeah, I know. Aaron probably doesn't agree that this is the right question, but what the hell does he know? I suppose we're about to find out...



MONTREAL BLAZERS

GM: John Callahan

2027: 95-67 (Lost in Cartwright Cup) - 2028 Projection: 89-73

OUTLOOK:

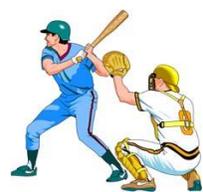
Montreal made a financial gamble on the 2027 season, and I think we can say it paid off handsomely. The Blazers won 95 games last year to take their first division title since 2021, the last time they made the playoffs. In fact, it was their only winning season in their last five. After a busy offseason, the Blazers look primed to repeat their 90-win season.

Montreal's rotation received a huge shot in the arm last year with Luis Flores (19-8, 2.56) living up to every bit of his potential, winning the Joe Gillstrom and finishing a close second in Steve Nebraska voting to Miguel Datiz. (One first-place vote one way or the other would have been enough.) Flores' presence helped the Montreal pitching staff to the #1 spot in the Frick last year, but that's not to say the staff wasn't without their warts. The Blazers' #2 starter Jorge Stanza continues to be one of the top pitchers in the league, and they added former Calgary ace Jorge Jimenez to try and stabilize a rotation that was otherwise fairly lucky last year (combined FIP for the other three guys was 4.56 last year). The presence of Jimenez gives them one of the best top threes in the game so long as he stays healthy. Their bullpen is notably a top unit also, led by closer Dillon Young.

The infield is the strength of their offense; last year I wrote that Jared Gillstrom, Gilberto Keating, and Anastasio Santana could combine for 15 WAR; they settled for a still-good 11 WAR. I expected Gillstrom to take a bigger step forward in his second year, and it's in no small part because he didn't that Montreal scored just 4.4 runs per game. They've adjusted the offense somewhat this offseason, replacing Lewis Stephens with Oliver Carmona (a clear downgrade) and letting Esteban Contreras walk so that Cisco Guerrero can replace him (a clear upgrade). Juan Fernandez should also be a very useful addition to the team, as the doubles hitter has posted above-average OPS marks in each of the last four seasons in California, no small feat. I would expect most of their improvement to come from Gillstrom or nowhere; he's still striking out far too often. Cody Smith could also perform better than last year's .740 OPS. Montreal is a clear-cut contender as long as their moves work out for them, and they do have some cap wiggle room if they shed Francisco Liriano, Bruno Santiago or Arend Glas. I'd expect them to be right in this one again.



'It looks like the Blazers will be adding another rookie to the fold this season as flame throwing left hander Alex Lopez is set to make his big league debut for the team this week.'



CAROLINA KRAKEN

GM: Aaron Weiner

2027: 89-74 (Lost in Geoghegan Round) | | 2028 Projection: 87-75

OUTLOOK:

The Kraken faithful are no doubt getting a bit frustrated with Carolina lately. The Kraken have made the playoffs for four consecutive seasons and have lost in their first playoff series in – you guessed it – four consecutive seasons. Last year’s Kraken team was the worst of the group so far, finishing just sixth in runs scored and sixth in runs allowed, which was easily their worst showing of the streak. Are the Kraken running out of juice or do they have what it takes to make it back to the show this year?

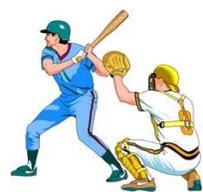
Carolina did peel off a major prospect for talent deal last year, adding Newman Watson from Indy. Watson has been one of the most consistent performers in the league for several seasons, and while he’s a free agent after this season he should provide some consistency in the lineup. Speaking of consistency, FTIII continued his career-long streak of having an OPS 40% better than the rest of the league despite posting the lowest batting average of his career and got a legacy \$84 million extension this offseason. Juan Castillo also had a monster season in 2027, posting a 5.5 WAR, and Ron Whitney had his coming out party with a 4 WAR. OF Jorge Vargas had a rough season at the plate but should bounce back, and Jose Rodriguez didn’t embarrass himself as a rookie and could be even better than his .701 OPS. All of this is to say that the Carolina offense could be a lot better this year than last year.

The pitching staff might be improved too, at least in the rotation. Billy Chapel, Jr., ruined one of my favorite stats: he had won 15 games and lost less than 10 in every year of his career; last year he still won 16 games but lost 11. Most everyone would still take him; he’s in a contract year so it’ll be interesting to see how that plays out. He also had the highest ERA since his rookie year and the lowest WAR of his career, but his numbers were still fantastic. Carolina has one of the deepest rotations in the game with Juan Lopez healthy, with 17-game winner Angel Ramirez still one of the league’s top lefties, with Juan Lopez and Gustavo De La Torre two of the higher rated third and fourth starters in the game. Carolina also has an excellent late-inning guy in Rafael Mata and closer Juliano Fallardo will be back near the beginning of the season.

This certainly looks like a playoff team to me. The question is whether Carolina has the horses to finally win a playoff series, and if not, what they’ll do about it. Billy Chapel, Jr., will surely get paid, and the team is building up a little bit of a farm, but if they don’t make it in a year or two they might have some pretty serious issues down the line if they don’t start trading.



“We have some questions to answer, but it's not like we can't answer them.”



ATLANTIC CITY GAMBLERS

GM: Ryan Scott

2027: 76-86 || 2028 Projection: 79-83

OUTLOOK:

The Gamblers were actually a lot better than their 86 loss season last year, finishing with a dead even run differential. It's a team of two sides: the offense is highly suspect, with a lot of inconsistent players populating lineup spots, while the rotation has potentially two of the biggest studs in the game.

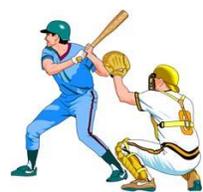
Mingo Boone is usually where I start this conversation, but I'm going to go with Hiroyuki Rin, who looks like a potential superstar in the making. Blessed with some of the best stuff in the game, Rin is just 22 years old and the team should have every reason to believe that he'll take the next step this season. Omaha's former Steve Nebraska winner Enrique Gomez is a good comparison point to Rin, who has poor endurance. Boone is still chugging along at 35, and there's no reason he can't blow last year's 14-13, 3.74 marks out of the water. Dieter Hartinger has shown no signs of age at 38 years old, though he's really always been a good #3 starter. The back end of the rotation is marginal, especially with the falloff from Jesus Paez, and their bullpen is also. They would likely benefit from returning Jesus Feliciano to the pen, as he'd be their only really plus reliever other than Jerry Johnson.

The offense is suspect after Rafael Bido and Boone Carlyle. For example, leadoff hitter Manuel Garcia is still among the leaders in walks and steals every year, but he's getting to the point where hitting the baseball is becoming a problem for him, and he's starting to slow on the base paths. Jose Perez is a definite power/OBP threat, but he also – you guessed it – can't hit the baseball. The re-signed Antonio Sanchez is nowhere near as bad as the .232 he hit last year, but he only dropped off 9 points in OPS, so he may have found a new normal – but he could also improve. Adam Parrish probably won't turn the dials too much. Atlantic City finished tenth last year offensively and might not be much better this year. Their defense is still fairly good, however.

It'll obviously depend on a number of factors, but none bigger than Rin. If he takes the next step this year, Atlantic City could win a wild card or the division. If he doesn't, they'll have to hope some of their offensive players make an unexpected leap. Otherwise, this team is going to be in no-man's land once again.



"We can't score. We can't stop anybody. Our star players are not playing like stars, and our role-players are playing like guys who should be in Triple-A."



HAVANA SUGAR KINGS

GM: Wally Christensen

2027: 76-86 || 2028 Projection: 68-94

OUTLOOK:

Havana continues to be one of the unluckier teams by run differential in the league, and it showed up again last season; the Sugar Kings' expected record was actually better than Carolina's last year, but it was the Kraken in the playoffs and Havana waiting it out in Cuba until next year. Havana's offense is now extremely suspect with the departure of Leon Sandcastle by trade. Surprisingly, however, I think they'll also have to worry about the rotation this season.

Let's start with the rotation. Jon Chandler looks in just about every way like a #1 starter, but he's been pitching like a #2 for two straight years. He's still one of the most valuable commodities in the game, but for the team to contend he has to pitch better. Ignacio Rodriguez, on the other hand, has not been a problem. While has had the difficulties with home runs that everyone knew he'd have, he has been otherwise outstanding when healthy. Jose Rivera has been a reliable #3 starter, but he's been overachieving for two years now. Miguel Macias might be pretty good, but he's still a rookie. Their bullpen does have an excellent nucleus, which should keep them afloat even if their starters are a bit shaky at times.

Then there are the hordes of Rule 5 draftees currently making up the Havana hitting roster, none of whom are likely to move the dials dramatically. The best of the bunch is probably Alfredo Roniero. Iran Brito is starting to lose bat speed and Dave Wilfer got hit with a huge sophomore slump last year. Other than Sandcastle and Wilfer the team is uniformly mediocre to poor in the field, and there aren't any significant hitters worth touting. It's gotten so questionable on offense that they're trying out former Sawyer Silk Bruce Wayne at catcher, and they have too many DHs and 1B on the roster.

Sandcastle's departure should cause this team to bottom out a bit. They're also entering a huge extension with Rodriguez this season, and for the kind of money he's earning he should probably be wrecking the league. I don't even quite know what they can do to take a step forward, and their cupboard is bare: they did a little by trading their star CF, but they're still not a top farm. It's going to be a bit painful in the Caribbean.



"I guess I violated the first rule of online multiplayer: never agree to take a team before you see what the team looks like. My bad. The Sugar Kings are one hot mess. In fact, they are probably the worst team I've ever started with in any league, anywhere."





2028 EUROPEAN BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

Let's talk about the EBA, shall we? The league has had its ups and its downs, and if the recent past has anything to say about it, the ups are leading the downs right now. The GM ranks are swelling with solid guys, and the teams are benefitting from it. The league had an intense playoff championship race, and for the second straight season at least five of the eight franchises drew more than a million fans. This despite (or because of) the fact that the MBBA has not done a whole lot of poaching in the past couple seasons.

It's an odd fact of like in the EBA that you'd like your players good, but not *too* good.

Let's take a look at how things might play out over there this year.



Let's start in the **WESTERN ALLIANCE**, where we've seen the lowly Belfast Northstars going on a bit of a serious binge, new GM Adam Dee adding free agents like they were so many bananas. Will pitcher Alfredo Martinez, center fielder Takeo Kaneko, and MBBA star William McIntyre make Belfast a contender? We think so. And let's not even get us started on the whole Bailey Attoehow fiasco, which basically exposed Dee's propensity for legal action over substance—or at least that he's having fun in his re-emergence in Europe. [Ed: we're certain there is a story behind Dee's disappearance from Havana. That's clearly going to be a blockbuster movie someday.]

No one else in the division has really added much, and Paris, the runaway winner last season has lost 9 WAR on paper...which is where it matters most, and where it makes them vulnerable. GM Matthew Bornac has returned to take the reins, so we figure that has to be worth something, right? And they do have SP Domingo Ayala (who will probably be an MBBA'er soon) and Egbert Behner behind him. So that's good. And Hapmet Karabekir has had serious success in the past, and is still only 31. Offensively, they've got a decent outfield. Paris will not suck.





London won 89 games last year, and aren't any worse. New GM Kevin Norris has a pretty fair roster overall. Not quite a fixer-upper. It's kinda like he moved into a new place that was built back in the 90s. Still liveable, but you wouldn't mind putting a new coat of paint on the walls, and yeah the basement leaks a bit, but we suppose it can wait a bit. They're solid up the middle, and have one of the better overall rotations in Europe, anchored by 23-year-old Arturo Cruz. It's hard not to like them pretty well, but they didn't do anything splashy like Belfast, nor did they win 90+ last year like Paris.

Which leaves us Madrid, a team that won 83 games and didn't really do anything to get better. Dug Riddler's stepping into the chute with a club that does have a couple possible EBAers in 2B Jeffrey Verkade and 1B Frank Bud. There's also not much in the minors. Looks to me like a long drop is in the cards for the Matadors, which makes me a little sad. Maybe Riddler can pull a rabbit out of his hat, though. We'll see. In the meantime...



Let's call the final division standings as:

BELFAST: 95-67

PARIS: LONDON: 90-72

PARIS: 86-76

MADRID: 72-90



In the **EASTERN ALLIANCE**, we see Sean Markos' Munchen Brauers as being quite capable of going from worst to first if the moons line up just right. This is a team that seemed better than their 69 wins last year, but now have gone out and signed themselves a stable of very young, very big talents. The minor league system has 5 or 6 MBBA kind of players, and the big league team has several guys who are good EBA quality players, but short on stars that get sucked up into the MBBA. Depending on how the kids go, the Munchen franchise could be in for a fairly interesting time. The question is whether that time is 2028, and we're going to go out on a limb and say yes.

Amsterdam won it all behind GM Luca Mac Cracken last season, and on paper has the very best squad in the league again. They could well take it all again, which might actually break the town. SPs



Ernest Shaffer and Martin Ssemper are future MBBA players, as is young catcher Dan Logan and maybe a few of their bullpen arms. So, yeah. It's a good team. It takes real guts to say this is a second-place team. But it just so happens that I have that kind of real guts.



Rome will take the field behind GM Matthew Fisher. They had a 78 win team in 2027, and they lost a guy. As far as we can tell here at Prognostication Central, the Raiders have an All or Nothing kind of a roster, with three or four guys who might eventually sniff a little MBBA cash (2B Dale Stephens and C Jackie Voorneveld being the best examples), but really not much of anything else behind those guys. It's hard for a only couple players to carry the water for all of a 162 game season. I suspect the basic comment for opponents this year is going to be "when in Rome, plan to win the series."

GM Nigel Laverick returned to Europe to take on the Brussels Eagles. I mean, what a guy, eh? Brussels lost two starting pitchers from a roster that wasn't particularly good last year, and seem to have only added a couple semi-players in the EBS Rule 5 process (we kind of liked SS Julio Morales, but we have a shortstop envy that cannot be denied. Declan Hollinshead is pretty good on the mound, but it goes bad from there, and I doubt it rains nearly enough in Brussels to ensure he gets most of the starts. Closer Konstantin Dankers is pretty good, but he's not going to be called on to protect many leads. If you're getting the idea that we think it's going to be a tough year for the Eagles, you've got it about right.



Bottom line for us:

MUNCHEN: 92-70

AMSTERDAM: 91-71

ROME: 73-89

BRUSSELS: 61-101



ALL DRESSED UP

AND NOWHERE TO PLAY

THE RECTE-ING BALL FIXES THEM ALL

The Top 10 Players STILL on the FA Market- And Where They Should Land!

Seems like every year there's a bunch of players that are still very productive that remain on the free agent market even as Spring Training comes to a close. This year is no different, except that there seems to be even more prominent players than usual. We'll take a quick look at my Top 10 Available and where I think they should land.

1. **Armando Morales** (8/7/6 Ratings, 45 - 27, 3.17 ERA, 1.12 WHIP, 699 K), LHP- Seattle Storm.

The Storm has a really, really bad bullpen right now. If they are even remotely interested in contending with Las Vegas and Calgary, they had better make some moves. Here's a good start.



2. **Quinlan Upham** (7/5/6/4/5 Ratings, .258/.301/.396, 62 HR, 255 RBI) , 2B/IF- Yellow Springs Nine.

This is going to be one of the most radical ideas of this article. The Nine should sign Upham....to play shortstop. Given their lack of options, this idea could pay instant dividends.

3. **Stevie Wolarski** (8/6/5 Ratings, 134 - 112, 3.95 ERA, 1.28 WHIP, 2469 K) , LHP- Seattle Storm.

Did you know that Old "Oil Can" led the MBBA in Games Pitched last year with 82? Or that he was 9-4 with a 2.76 ERA in 104.1 innings? Or that, at age 35, he struck out an amazing 130 batters in those innings? Guess who he did it for? That's right, the Seattle Storm? Wasn't that good enough for them? Heck, he can be had for less than \$2M right now. Get it done, Storm.

4. **Jorge Caballero** (5/4/10/7/8 Ratings, .266/.348/.476, 208 HR, 619 RBI) , 1B- Indy Grasshoppers.

Let's hope Jorge isn't this year's version of **Fulton Reed** (5/7/10/7/4 Ratings, .219/.309/.478, 213 HR, 489 RBI) . Anyways, Indy isn't really going to play **Patrick Lue** (6/8/7/5/6 Ratings, .224/.285/.363, 14 HR, 51 RBI) at first base, are they? They couldn't possibly be serious about **Jimmy Bennett** (6/5/8/6/5 Ratings, .261/.314/.472, 8 HR, 24 RBI) being their primary DH option, could they? Just what the hell is going on in Indy these days?

5. **Elmer Mould** (8/7/8/4/7 Ratings, .278/.311/.461, 246 HR, 791 RBI) , 1B- Indy Grasshoppers.

Yup, I'm going right back there. The Grasshoppers 1B/DH situation is easily the worst in the league. Fix it, Fletcher. It's easy. Just listen to Recte and let him help you out. If you need references, please contact the Yellow Springs Nine, 2026.

6. **Tomas Suarez** (6/8/7 Ratings, 42 - 66, 4.61 ERA, 1.42 WHIP, 661 K) , RHP- Des Moines Kernels.

So Much Depends
So much depends
Upon
A hard round
Ball
Flying at my glove
Only
Inches away from OUT Three!

—3rd grade

Suarez is not a world beater, by any means. However, he's a perfect bridge for Des Moines to give a couple of their youngsters a little more development time in AAA.



7. **Vicente Perez** (9/5/5 Ratings, 42 - 44, 4.08 ERA, 1.32 WHIP, 649 K) , LHP- California Crusaders.

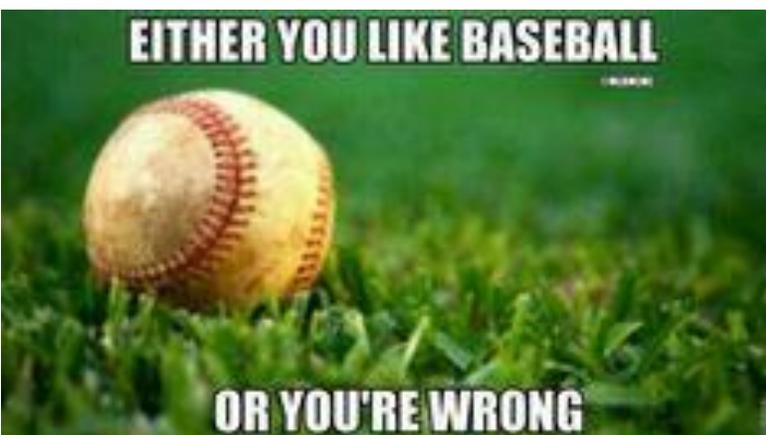
Despite his lack of movement, and lack of control, Perez has been consistently effective in Montreal, peaking last year when he won 15 games for the Blazers. I would LOVE to see what this guy can do in Cali's park. Let's make it happen, Ted.

8. **Kirk Knight** (8/5/10 Ratings, 26 - 34, 4.47 ERA, 1.26 WHIP, 495 K) , RHP- Indy Grasshoppers.

Sure, Knight has the potential to give up a bunch of homers. But he had a heck of a year last season with the Kraken. Indy's pitching staff is horrible, too. He won't hurt, that's for sure.

9. **Steve Hoffman** (7/7/7 Ratings, 182 - 120, 3.28 ERA, 1.20 WHIP, 2455 K) , RHP- Omaha Barnstormers.

"The Horse" is still fully capable of being a worthwhile arm to have on your staff. He proved that with some quality relief work for Havana last year. He only needs 18 wins to get to 200 for his career. At age 39, it's going to be a stretch, but Omaha could use a veteran arm like him as their #6 starter. It'll be fun seeing Hoffman back in the place where he became truly dominant.



10. **Daniel Ocean** (6/7/9 Ratings, 53 - 42, 3.48 ERA, 1.32 WHIP, 619 K) , LHP- Atlantic City Gamblers.

Did you know that Ocean leads all current free agents with 215 career holds? That's 76 more than the next highest (**Scott Adams** (6/8/6 Ratings, 32 - 23, 3.02 ERA, 1.16 WHIP, 368 K) , who is probably #11 on this list). He needs a home, and the Gamblers need relief help. It's a match

made in heaven, considering all of the casinos near the stadium.

And now, for the "Legacy" Category! The five best career players who are on the market! They don't belong in the Top 10, but they are #1 in our hearts.

Maxwell Weiss, Jr. (6/6/6/6/5 Ratings, .276/.328/.466, 375 HR, 1363 RBI) , C- Omaha Barnstormers.



Man, there are some horrible starting catchers in the league right now. I have no idea WHAT Omaha is thinking with their current situation. Aren't they supposed to be contenders? Weiss, Jr., even with his faded bat and defense, would run circles around the clowns they have now, and raise fan interest to boot.

Martin Felix (7/6/3/6/5 Ratings, .310/.383/.446, 173 HR, 980 RBI) , "RF"-
Jacksonville Hurricanes.

Ok, so Felix can't play the field anymore. But, he can still hit (a little), and he's going to bring fans to the park. Why not bring him back to the franchise who made him the second overall pick in 2011? This seems so natural I'm amazed it hasn't been done yet.

Luis Freitas (5/7/6 Ratings, 158 - 100, 3.35 ERA, 1.20 WHIP, 2003 K) , LHP-
Montreal Blazers.

Ok, he can't be a starter anymore. He's faded fast. Despite Kyle Stever's huge man crush on him, he cut him loose this offseason. So let's keep the homecoming theme going, and bring him back to Montreal. He'll be a decent LOOGY.

Antonio Rodriguez (4/7/9 Ratings, 172 - 171, 3.97 ERA, 1.29 WHIP, 1752 K),
RHP- Huntsville Phantoms.

703 career appearances, 172 wins. How is this guy not a household name? Well, he's 40 years old now and hasn't pitched since 2026. He's a junkballer now, but one with good movement and elite control. Sounds like he belongs in the Johnson League Pacific. Still, his twelve seasons in Chicago make him another great candidate to go back to his glory days, so let's put him on the Phantoms.

Pete King (5/7/2/8/9 Ratings, .276/.362/.369, 43 HR, 699 RBI) SS- Seattle
Storm.

This just needs to happen. Man, did he decline quickly. But, he's a local hero, has elite plate discipline and better than average defense at three infield positions. Sounds like a perfect utility infielder.



CAUGHT IN A RUNDOWN . . .

TOP ROOKIES OF 2028

For some GM's everything they touch turns to gold. They make the right call up, or they deal a guy just as he's ready to fall off, and the guys they get in return go on to become Hall of Famers. You know, what I mean. These GM's just seem to have their crystal balls screwed on just a little tighter than the average gent, if you know what I mean.

*What that has to do with the topic at hand is questionable, we suppose. But just for fun, let's all listen in as our beloved Commish, **Matt Rectenwald** takes us on a tour of the best rookies we all might get a chance to take a gander at today, as well as gives us a few early guesses at who might win the coveted Rookie of the Year Awards!*

Everyone loves a rookie! They're like a bright, shiny object that catches our attention easily! They're like the newest tech product on the market! Can they live up to the hype? Mostly, that answer is a resounding no. Let's take a look at some of the Top Profile Rookies that are projected to make an impact on the MBBA in 2028.

Arthur Norris (6/6/9/8/7 Talents, .188/.316/.328, 2 HR, 5 RBI) , LF, New Orleans Crawdads (#2 on the Top 100)- Norris is a big time left handed power bat that is ready to do some serious damage at the big league level. He struggled mightily in a September stint with the 'Dads last fall, but scouts are optimistic he'll be alright, as long as he's paired with a solid platoon partner. Rumors have been circulating about a potential trade involving Norris, so there's extra drama surrounding him as the year opens.



William Moreland (8/7/10/6/6 Talents) , 1B, Des Moines Kernels (#3)- Moreland was none too happy with being left on the AAA El Paso roster, where he slashed .316/.421/.646/1.067 with 57 HR and 149 RBI last year. He took out his anger on the poor pitchers of the MBBA Fall League, where in 39 games he batted .442/.547/.942/1.489 with 21 HR and 55 RBI. If you're counting, that makes for a grand total of 78 HR and 204 RBI on the season. The Kernels can't possibly hold him back anymore, can they?

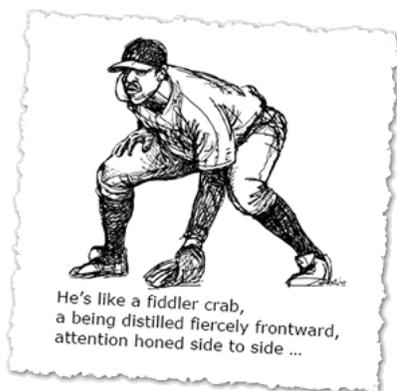
Felipe Baez (9/7/7 Talents, 3 - 1, 3.03 ERA, 1.28 WHIP, 19 K) , RHP, Huntsville Phantoms (#4)- After a solid five start September with Huntsville, Baez is poised to become the next ace of the franchise. He'll be set up with low pressure to start, as GM Kyle Stever has indicated he'll open as the fifth starter.

Mauro Flores (10/7/7 Talents) , RHP, Valencia Stars (#5)- The Stars have been hungry for an ace since Brian Middleton retired. Flores, or "Loony" as his teammates call him, might be the man for the job. He'll probably open in AAA to continue to improve on his impressive six pitch arsenal; his changeup still needs a lot of work, as does his work against left-handed bats.

Jesus Ramos RHP, Las Vegas Hustlers (#7)- "Mad Hits" has been groomed as both a closer and a starting pitcher in the minors. Now out of options, he's breaking camp with the big club but will be used in a specialist role to start, picking spots against right-handed batters to get his feet wet before taking on a bigger role, one of the perks to breaking in with the defending champs.

Luis Gracia (8/7/6 Talents) , LHP, California Crusaders (#22)- Gracia had a horrific season in AAA last year, mostly due to control, somewhat due to the long ball. California's spacious park will go a long way towards solving the latter, Gracia's effort will decide the former. Might be a better fit in relief.

Ken Jenkins (9/7/2/5/9 Talents) , CF, Montreal Blazers (#27)- Hit tool is there, speed is there, defense is solid (though best in left field). Might never be a star, but he can be a really nice player.



Mike Barnett (8/7/6/5/8 Talents) , RF, Louisville Sluggers (#30)- Left handed power hitting right fielder, at 22 years old he looks like he'll be a long term fit for the Sluggers (pun intended).

Lloyd Braun (7/7/5/6/6 Talents) , SS, Jacksonville Hurricanes (#36)- After making his debut in the playoffs for Las Vegas last year, Braun was included in an offseason deal and will probably have the inside track on the shortstop job in JAX. Defense will be



his calling card.

Charles van Es (6/6/9 Talents), RHP, Louisville Sluggers (#41)- Control pitcher who signed out of the Netherlands Antilles back in 2019. Looks like his long trip through the Sluggers system may wind up with him as their #5 starter this year. Won 19 games in a very hitters friendly AAA last season.

Cristo Coronado (7/7/7/4/7 Talents) , 3B/1B, New Orleans Crawdads (#57)- A well balanced free swinger who will be more than okay at the hot corner, Coronado was the Crawdads #1 pick in 2023. It'll be tough for him to find playing time in this deep New Orleans infield, but he is ready to roll.

Tony Nelson (7/7/7 Talents) , LHP, Calgary Pioneers (#74)- Flew through the Calgary system after being their #1 pick (15th overall) last year. Scouts say he's nearly fully developed. Not sure how his movement will play in the Frick League Pacific but he is lefty, so that has to count for something.

Adam Parrish (7/7/7/5/5 Talents) , RF, Atlantic City Gamblers (#77)- Switch hitting 21 year old who looks to be the Gamblers every day left fielder this season. He'll be making the jump from AA ball after being dealt to ATC from Madison earlier this spring.

Kozue Naito (6/7/7/6/5 Talents) , CF, Louisville Sluggers (#89)- It appears Naito has won the Sluggers every day center field job out of camp. A lefty, Naito has average range for the position but extremely good hands and an above average arm. Offensively, he brings significant thump for a six foot, 170 pound guy; he hit 39 dingers in AAA last season.



JOE GILLSTROM AWARD (TOP ROOKIE) PREDICTIONS:

JOHNSON LEAGUE: BAEZ

FRICK LEAGUE: MORELAND



The Stupid Bet Award



THE BET ENTERS YEAR 2

Okay, maybe it's not the dumbest bet ever made. Or, maybe it is. I mean, someone once bet Theodor Seuss Geisel that he couldn't tell a story in 50 words. Sheesh. Can you believe that? Can you believe a cat, or a hat, or a cat in the hat? Yes, I believe you can believe that.

Anyway, you all know what we're talking about. Huntsville and Yellow Springs, Stever and Collins, two guys who run off at the mouth in torrents that sometimes you just step back and look at with one of those "7 Wonders of the World" expressions on your face.

5 WAR. Two years. Vincente Trevino & Carlos Medina.

How is that working out for you?

*YS9 GM **Ron Collins** takes us inside the situation*

The reporter is in Collins's office when the phone rings.

"Who the is it?" Collins says into the speaker.

"It's me."

Collins doesn't need to hear any more. It's all right there in the know-it-all voice. Kyle Stever, GM of the Huntsville Phantoms is on the other side of the line.

"What are you calling to apologize for this time?" he says, knowing he's not owed an apology now, but maybe he's just trying to bank one for later, or just making a dig. What the hell, eh?

"I need to change the guy," Stever says.

"What guy?"

"I want to trade Stewart cause everyone wants him."

"You want to trade the guy you put up on our bet?"

The papers have been filled with the deal in the past. We all know it. If Yellow Springs' Carlos Medina and Halifax's Vincent Trevino add up to 5.0 WAR in two seasons, the Nine will receive Jessie Stewart. Otherwise, the Phantoms will get Frank Cantezzara.

"Yeah. I figure your guy isn't worth a damn anyway, so it shouldn't matter."

"Hmmm..."



Collins is nothing, if not accomodating. After a few brief cycles of conversation they agree to ups Gilberto “Patches” Nieves instead. Collins likes Patches’ heat, but admittedly he’s been known to walk a barn.

They hang up.

“Doesn’t really matter to me who’s in the deal,” Collins says to thre reporter. “Kyle offered it to do it without even having anyone on my side, but where’s the fun in that? I mesn, hrck, I don’t think Kylr reslly cares who’s in the deal either. It’s the damned principle of the thing that matters.”

In that sense, this reporter notes that Collins isn’t particularly happy with certain turns of events when it comes to the players’ performances.

While the iron is hot, the reporter asks him to go over the particulars.

Here’s what he gets:

ON TREVINO:

“The guy had a mountain of a year, didn’t he? I mean, he sucked for two months, was blistering hot in the middle of the year, and then crashed again. Watching him was like riding a gosh-darn rollercoaster, it was. Gotta feel for the guy. He really didn’t even know what hit him, and suddenly he was in the middle of a spotlight.”

The bottom line for The Bet is that Trevino wound up registering only .9 WAR, which was essentially a career worst. This despite being up over 1.5 at mid-year (at which point The Bet appeared to be nearly over...but such is baseball).

“He got a three year extension, though, and he’s pretty cheap,” Collins continued. “So I suppose he’ll get plenty of playing time. We actually looked into dealing for him. I thought that would be cool, and for a bit it looked like we might be able to maks something happen. But it kind of faded. Probably al for the best now that we’ve got Juan Aravelo around.”

The reporter makes a note that the Nine had inquired about Trevino, then moves on.

ON MEDINA:

“Christ, I think I broke him,” Collins said. “I mean, he was up over 2 WAR when we singed him to a new contract. Seven freaking million bucks over two years, and the guys just stopped playing. Let’s say that me and his agent have been on the line a few times.”

The facts pretty much back Collins up.

Medina, like Trevino, had a mountain of a year. Horrible slump to start. But he was blazing hot in the middle of the summer and playing all the outfield slots when he signed a two-season extension to buy out his arbitration years. The deal cost the Nine \$7M, plus. Relevant to the Bet, it might cost the Nine a prospect. From the moment he inked the deal, Medina hung up the spikes, kicked back,



and took to drinking Gatorade the rest of the year. I mean. He was bad, cooling to a 1.4 WAR, considerably under the 2.5 or so he peaked at.

“We talked a lot about what Carlos was doing this off season. I mean, Carlos isn’t known to be a big worker, but I told him we needed him to come into the springtime fit. He’s going to play a lot...we’ll still platoon him in left with Magic Gonzalez, and back up both Tuna and Hector against righties. We need him.”

Needless to say, Cantazzara needs him, too.

On the other hand, maybe it would be nicer to play in Huntsville...which might have been going through the young pitcher’s mind as he scanned the Huntsville spring training camp in March.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Between the two players, they sit at 2.3 WAR. Another season like that and Cantazzara will be wearing Phantom colors in 2029.

So, who’s going to win The Bet?

“I’m confident,” Collins said. “We’ve already got Patches measured for a uniform. Or whoever Stever puts forward. We’ve got the measurement of the entire minor Phantom minor league at hand just in case we need to make another change.”



Oh! somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout
But there is no joy in Mudville—for the Corn Flakes are fresh out

Kellogg's The best to you each morning
CORN FLAKES



P.S. See your library for the original poem...
we gave you for the original Corn Flakes



MBWBA

HALL OF FAME

CLASS OF 2028

The Dreams of All, the Home of Few

This year, the MBBA Hall of Fame will see FIVE of the All-Time Greats inducted, one of the highest totals in recent years. No doubt this is a reflection of the many deserving candidates on the ballot.

Let's take a moment and run through the list with Commissioner Matt Rectenwald, first, with a quick list of the rest of the players who were on the ballot this year.

THE REST OF THE VOTING		
Milt Linares, Jr. 15 65.22 62.50	Juan Quintero 4 17.39 16.67	Marc Jutras 1 4.35 4.17
Carlos Altavista 14 60.87 58.33	Tobias Kelly 4 17.39 16.67	Jorge Diaz 1 4.35 4.17
Paul Hogan 14 60.87 58.33	Sam Brewington 4 17.39 16.67	Dave May 1 4.35 4.17
Pedro Berrios 12 52.17 50.00	Craig Murray 4 17.39 16.67	Lucio Vazquez 1 4.35 4.17
Terry Cochran 12 52.17 50.00	Dave Pruitt 4 17.39 16.67	Bob White 1 4.35 4.17
Jimmy McCabe 12 52.17 50.00	Billy Beauford 3 13.04 12.50	Valentin Lugo 1 4.35 4.17
Jonathan Sorensen 11 47.83 45.83	Luis Tiant IV 3 13.04 12.50	Jeremy Finch 1 4.35 4.17
Lionel Sanguinacco 8 34.78 33.33	Ed Mansfield 3 13.04 12.50	Eric Melton 1 4.35 4.17
Joey Rosko 8 34.78 33.33	Freddie Rigsby 3 13.04 12.50	Zach Brown 1 4.35 4.17
Jim Schmidt 8 34.78 33.33	Peter McClure 3 13.04 12.50	Robert Harrell 1 4.35 4.17
Pedro Espin 7 30.43 29.17	Kanzaburo Yamaguchi 3 13.04 12.50	Allen Kennedy 1 4.35 4.17
Kevin Minuso 6 26.09 25.00	Chuck Bowers 2 8.70 8.33	Gabriel Gomez 1 4.35 4.17
Eric Thorne 5 21.74 20.83	Bob Goodwin 2 8.70 8.33	Mack Milholm 1 4.35 4.17
Perry Eccles 5 21.74 20.83	Javier Alomar 2 8.70 8.33	Ron Lipp 1 4.35 4.17
Chris Malone 5 21.74 20.83	Moses Tallchief 2 8.70 8.33	Chad Jordan 1 4.35 4.17
	Armando Rosales 2 8.70 8.33	Bob Ritchie 1 4.35 4.17



DOUG GLOVER, 2B

Greenville Moonshiners (now Jacksonville Hurricanes)

Inducted with 100% of the vote



Glover is one of the very few to ever be elected unanimously into the Hall of Fame. He played eight plus seasons in Greenville, then parts of three years with the Madison Wolves, parts of three years with the Indy Grasshoppers, one plus seasons with the California Crusaders, and then ended his career in 2026 with the Seattle Storm at age 38. He showed power that is uncharacteristic for an infielder, with 431 career homers highlighted by a 52 HR, 156 RBI season for the Moonshiners in 2018.

AWARDS AND HONORS:

[Sawyer Silk](#) Silver Slugger Trophy (3): 2018, 2019, 2024

[Yogi Zimmer](#) Diamond Glove Award (4): 2014, 2017, 2024, 2025

All-Star (10): 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

Batter of the Month: 4

Player of the Week: 8



GABRIEL CAMPOS, SP

California Crusaders
Inducted with 95.65% of the vote



Campos was quite simply one of the top pitchers of his generation, winning a total of 211 games despite never winning more than 18 in a single season (accomplished twice, in 2014 and 2016, both with California). He was the #2 overall pick in the 2009 draft and made it to the bigs in quick order, debuting just into the 2012 season at the age of 21. Campos was an absolute workhorse, never missing major time to injury throughout his entire fifteen year career, and throwing 230 or more innings in nine straight seasons with California (2013-2021), and twice more after that (2023 with Atlantic City and Louisville, 2025 with Atlantic City). He's one of just a handful of pitchers to win the Nebraska Award (best pitcher) four or more times, joining only [Steve Nebraska](#) (14), [John Ross Riles, Jr.](#) (5), Jay Lee (5), and [Mike Swanson](#) (4) in that uber-elite club. Campos retired following the 2026 season, only the second season in his career in which he posted a losing record. Despite his greatness, he was often overlooked throughout his career, as evidenced by only being named to the All-Star team four times, equaling the number of times he was named the best pitcher in his league.

AWARDS AND HONORS:

[Steve Nebraska](#) Golden Arm Award (4): 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020

[Yogi Zimmer](#) Diamond Glove Award (1): 2023

All-Star (4): 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020

Pitcher of the Month: 3



JUAN GARCIA , LF

Halifax Hawks

Inducted with 91.3% of the vote



Garcia, after starring in four years of college play, was the seventh overall pick by the then Washington Bobwhites in 2012. He skipped all the way to AAA to start his career, spending one year there and then making the 2013 Opening Day roster for the Bobbies. After three outstanding seasons, he absolutely became a monster in the 2016 season, his second in Halifax after the franchise had moved there, batting .375 with 49 HR and 142 RBI to win his first Silk Award (top batter). He'd win two more, in 2020 and 2021 and continued to play strong for the Hawks through 2021. In 2022 his power faded a bit, and the Hawks dealt him to New Orleans but he still managed to hit an even .300 on the year with 20 HR. He'd start and play well the next year for the Crawdads (.291, 23 HR, 75 RBI), but then became a part-time player in 2024 at age 34. After two years of waiting for another job offer, he finally hung it up officially in 2026. It was far too early for a player this great to fade out, but his peak was so brilliant and reasonably long that he was a slam dunk for enshrinement.

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Sawyer Silk Silver Slugger Trophy (3): 2016, 2020, 2021
 All-Star (8): 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022
 Batter of the Month: 6
 Player of the Week: 13



MIKE SWANSON, SP

Buffalo Bison

Inducted with 91.3% of the vote



Swanson was dubbed "The Best Amateur in the Land" after winning three straight Outstanding Pitcher Awards in High School ball. The Bisons were more than happy to draft him #1 overall in the 2010 draft, and give him (then) one of the highest signing bonuses ever at \$3.4 million. He was quickly named the #1 prospect in baseball the next spring. After struggling through three minor league seasons, all the while still being held in the highest regard by scouts, he was named to the Bison Opening Day roster in 2014. A pitcher who went 4-12 with a 6.45 ERA and 1.60 WHIP the year before then burst onto the scene at age 22, going 18-5 with a 3.02 ERA, 1.15 WHIP and 229 K's en route to winning both the Gillstrom Award (Top Rookie) and the Nebraska Award (best pitcher). This would be the first of four Nebraska Awards he'd win, putting him in the elite group of four or more (see above, Campos section). At the Trade Deadline in 2022, he'd be dealt to the Las Vegas Hustlers in one of the biggest deals in league history. Mike would continue to pitch well for Vegas through the 2024 season, but then in 2025 at age 33 he started to fade quickly. The Hustlers would release him, and Havana (the former Buffalo franchise) would sign him in 2026 in a relief role, and a nod to his service to the franchise. It didn't go well (8.83 ERA in 8 games), and he was again released. Mike would head to the European Baseball Alliance in 2027, reinventing himself as a closer (21 saves combined between Belfast and London), and then he'd call it a career. He didn't quite make it to the magic 200 win mark, winning 183 games in the MBBA, but against just 100 losses Swanson was clearly one of the great pitchers. His peak years may have been just about as close to a [Steve Nebraska](#) performance as we've seen in this generation.

AWARDS AND HONORS:

[Steve Nebraska](#) Golden Arm Award (4): 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019

[Joe Gillstrom](#) Rookie Award (1): 2014

All-Star (10): 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024

Pitcher of the Month: 7



BARTOLO MELENDEZ, 1B

New Orleans Crawdads
Inducted with 86.96% of the vote



Melendez was a late bloomer. He wasn't really expected to do much when the Crawdads drafted him in the 13th Round of the 2007 draft. All he did throughout their system was hit, and before too long he was on the New Orleans radar. He made it to the big club for a September audition in 2012, and he made it count, batting .407 with 4 HR and 15 RBI over 14 games. The next season he earned a starting job and didn't disappoint, hitting .326 with 46 HR, 129 RBI and winning the Gillstrom Award (Top Rookie). He'd continue to be an extremely consistent performer, with the exception of an injury riddled 2017 season, he hit no lower than .281 and no less than 26 HR during that span. In 2020, he got some love from the league when he won his first Silk Award (Top Batter). The next season, New Orleans shipped him to Calgary, where he'd continue to perform at a top level. He'd start 2023 with Huntsville, but then be traded to Las Vegas. 2023 was one of his "down" seasons, and there was talk that he might be on the downside of his career. Melendez had one huge last hurrah left, as he kind of came out of nowhere in 2024 at age 34 to win another Silk Award with the Hustlers, hitting a career high 47 homers. The Hustlers used him in a platoon role in 2025, and he still hit .280 with 22 HR and 75 RBI, but Vegas let him walk at the end of the season. Havana picked him up in 2026, but he only managed a .185 average and 1 HR in 27 at-bats, and that'd be the end of his career at age 36.

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Awards and Honors

[Sawyer Silk](#) Sliver Slugger Trophy (2): 2020, 2024

[Joe Gillstrom](#) Newcomer of the Year (1): 2013

All-Star (8): 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2024

Batter of the Month: 4

Player of the Week: 8



AND NOW, FOR AN EDUCATIONAL MOMENT

BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE

★ NEW YORK CITY, SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 1932 ★

Ebbets Field Leaves It to Writers, Who Choose Old 'Handle'

By THOMAS HOLMES

Henceforth, the Brooklyn baseball club will officially be known as the Dodgers. This was decided at a meeting of the Brooklyn Chapter of Baseball Writers at Ebbets Field yesterday.

The Brooklyn ball club has had no official nickname in its 41 years of existence in the National League although it has rumbled along under half a dozen semi-official aliases. Originally, the Brooklyn players were known as Bridegrooms. In Ned Hanlon's time, the team was popularly known as the Superbas. Along about that time also, Charley Dryden nicknamed the club the Trolley Dodgers. In recent years, "Robins" proved fairly popular, but with the end of Wilbert Robinson's long reign as manager, that nickname lost most of its significance.

"Bridegrooms" and "Superbas" were unwieldy names. The weakness of "Robins" as a nickname was the name's natural link to Wilbert Robinson. Through the years, "Dodgers" has hung on pretty well. Since the passing of Mr. Robinson, there has been agitation in various quarters to settle upon a nickname that would be universal and un-

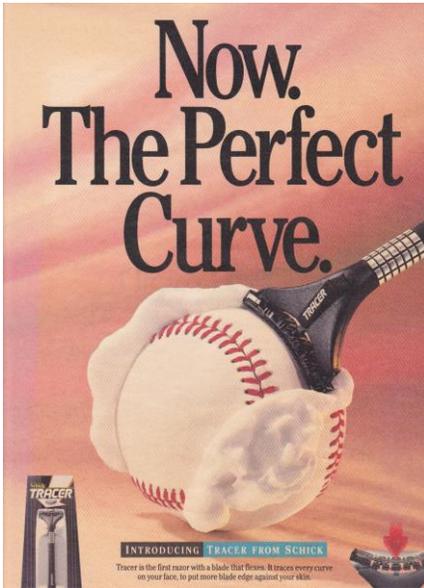
changing. Alive to the discussion, Ebbets Field last week notified the Brooklyn baseball writers that it would officially adopt any nickname that the writers desired. Yesterday, the scribes voted for "Dodgers," preferring it to "Kings," which was the only other nickname that received serious consideration.

President Frank B. York and Treasurer Steve McKeever, notified of the decision, immediately announced that the 1932 uniform of the ball team would have "Dodgers" inscribed across the breast in large letters, thus leaving no doubt as to what the nickname of the team shall be.



THANKS FOR READING!

***HERE ARE MORE PEOPLE
WHO HAVE NOT ADVERTISED WITH US***



LET'S HAVE A GREAT SEASON!

