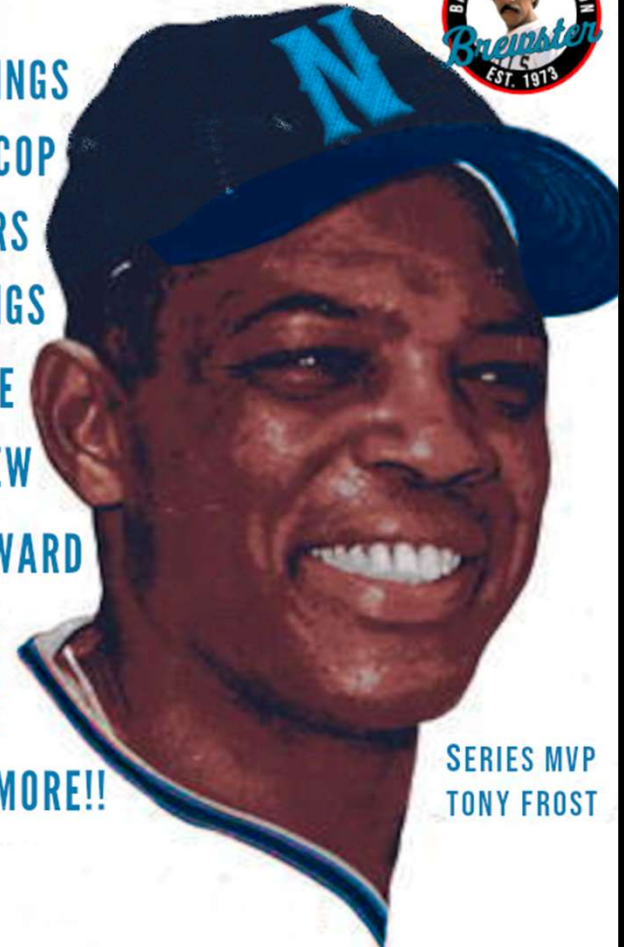


# BREWSTER BASEBALL ASSOCIATION 2051 MEDIA GUIDE



PLAYER RANKINGS  
GOOD COP / BAD COP  
2050 ALL STARS  
POWER RANKINGS  
UMEBYE-BYE  
GBC PREVIEW  
CALECA AWARD  
A NEWCOMERS  
PERSPECTIVE  
...AND MORE!!



SERIES MVP  
TONY FROST

'BIRDS TAKE HOME 2ND TITLE IN FRACHISE HISTORY

# BREWSTER SERIES

2050  
OFFICIAL  
PROGRAM

BBA GB

**Commissioner**  
Matt Rectenwald

**Vice Commissioner**  
Aaron Weiner

**League Advisor**  
Ron Collins

**League Director / Historian**  
Stephen Lane

**League Director**  
Mike Simon  
Brett Golden

**GBC Ambassador**  
James Walker

ARE THE 'BIRDS COUNTING THEIR  
EGGS BEFORE THEY'RE HATCHED?

OCTOBER 31, 2050



VS







Mike Simon

Editor's Note:

Welcome back to those returning GMs, and a "Hello" to those who are new to us this season. Looking back it was a tumultuous year in the Brewster in 2050. We lost some longtime GMs, we had changeover on the Governing board, and the big one, the end of the UMEBA. However, the Phoenix (Talons) has risen and given birth of the Global Baseball Consortium, (well sort of).

The start of the 2051 season marks the Brewsters' 78th opening day and with all that happened in 2050, this season couldn't look more promising!

So sit back and grab your favorite beverage, and enjoy all the hard work put into your Media Guide by your fellow GMs of the Brewster-verse!

<http://montybrewster.net/>



# Contents

# 6



## Power Rankings

By James Walker

# 7



## Player Rankings

By James Walker

# 15



## 2050 All Stars

By John Momburg

UMEBye-Bye	22
GBC Previews	31
Caleca Award	39
A Newcomers Perspective	40
Good Cop/Bad Cop	45
<i>The Skeeter Chronicles</i>	58
<i>Johnson League Preview</i>	63
<i>Frick League Preview</i>	82

# PREAMBLE 2051

## *A look back and ahead*

Aaron Weiner

The Nashville Bluebirds were first the Nashville Goats when they first moved from Halifax, almost twenty years ago. Back then, they were terrible, so calling them the “Goats” would occasionally bring them mockery from the local media. “The Goats,” they would write, “are definitely not the GOAT.” The mockery got to the point where the team changed the name of the team to the Bluebirds just to stop the jokes after a long-term name search.

A team official said, in confidence, that the team settled on the Bluebirds because of the “Bluebird Cafe,” a musical landmark that accidentally became great. At the time it was thought that the Nashville franchise would only become great by accident, thus, Bluebirds. But, since becoming the Nashville Bluebirds in 2040, Nashville has had just two losing seasons, has made the playoffs for three consecutive years, and has just brought home the 2050 Brewster Championship. Apparently, these Bluebirds can sing – and can become great on purpose.

Nashville didn’t have to go to a Game 7 during their playoff run, and after taking care of the Sacramento Mad Popes in six games in the de facto FL Cartwright Cup (which was perhaps the de facto Brewster when Las Vegas bowed out in the Doubleday), Nashville would lose just two more games the rest of the way to gaining their franchise’s first trophy in Nashville, and their second overall. Face of the franchise Tony Frost, in a post-game interview, let everyone know that the title wasn’t a fluke, either.

“We’ve been winners since I got here,” said Frost, a career Nashville player and one of the league’s true superstars. “I play with winners, we’re driven, talented people, we work hard and we earned every bit of this. It’s a great moment for the franchise, but no, I’m not surprised that we won this title.”

We also wouldn’t have been shocked if their Doubleday opponents, Sacramento, had won the title. Sacramento didn’t win their division this year because of an incredible season by the Portland Lumberjacks, but they’re back again with a superb team that will likely improve this season as the season goes on. Portland set all kinds of pitching records last year, and their pitching didn’t lose any personnel, they may lose momentum – and they lost a ton on offense. They’re still dangerous, though. There are plenty of other dangerous teams in the FL, too.

Yellow Springs looks a little different, but they’re still one of the better teams 1-27 in the Brewster. Louisville broke up the band this offseason, trading Theo Bourges to Nashville, but they still have a good team, too. Madison and Vancouver are likely to duke it out with these teams for a wild card, and Omaha, Long Beach and maybe someone we hadn’t even considered might come in to spoil the party for one of those teams.

The Johnson League still has some powerful teams, too. Las Vegas, before dropping out early last year, had won the last three championships and a jaw-dropping 117 games. There’s every reason to believe that they’re in the title conversation again, and could win their fourth in five years – the second time the franchise will have done that.

There are some contenders in the JL to Vegas’ throne, of course. Mexico City won 99 games last year, and they’re absolutely the buzz team this offseason, letting Aaron Haney go to Charlotte but picking up two of the more notable players in the last decade in Felix Roman and Felipe Vega.

Atlantic City, the actual JL pennant winners in 2051, is under new management, but didn’t lose much last year and were probably the best team in the JL Atlantic last year by the numbers. Then again, that particular crown is a bit up for grabs, since four teams finished within 6 games of division winner New Orleans, who improved this offseason.

# PREAMBLE 2051

## *A look back and ahead*

The other two teams, Rockville and Jacksonville, both fell back a bit, but it's going to be difficult to pin down the Pikemen specifically as they totally restructured the team this offseason. Jacksonville, on the other hand, is a likely faller this year, but they're still very good, led by a talented young pitching staff. Charlotte also enters the conversation with the addition of Haney, and they're one of the biggest risers this offseason.

And there are LOTS more dangerous teams in the JL. El Paso has some serious star power, Phoenix was smoking hot early last year, and Calgary, always dangerous, improved. Any of these teams could sneak into the wild card round.

Even if none of the middling teams, the kind who wins around 81-85 games every year, slips into the playoffs this season and rises above the pack, building that kind of a tradition clearly matters. The Bluebirds franchise surely isn't the GOAT yet, but they're not the Goats anymore either. It's obvious they're building something to last down there, and isn't that what we all strive to do – something eternal with our names on it? Like a trophy. Nashville might suffer through any twist of fate over the next few years, but they can always look back at their semicentennial championship, tinted in Frost. Time to see who gets the semicentennial and one.



Ran	Pre	Team	Power Ratin
1	1	Las Vegas	112.8
2	2	Sacramento	108.1
3	4	Nashville	101.9
4	3	Yellow Springs	98.4
5	5	Jacksonville	93.5
6	6	Louisville	93.2
7	17	Portland	93.2
8	12	Mexico City	92.1
9	15	Atlantic City	91.9
10	7	Charlotte	89.7
11	9	New Orleans	89.5
12	11	Rockville	88.0
13	14	Madison	86.9
14	13	Calgary	82.5
15	10	Chicago	80.9
16	8	Omaha	79.7
17	24	Vancouver	79.3
18	16	Phoenix	78.6
19	20	Valencia	76.6
20	19	Charm City	75.4
21	18	Hawaii	72.9
22	21	San Fernando	71.9
23	26	Long Beach	70.1
24	22	Montreal	69.5
25	31	El Paso	69.5
26	27	Boise	68.0
27	25	San Antonio	66.6
28	23	Edmonton	63.4
29	28	Seattle	60.7
30	29	Des Moines	60.4
31	30	Brooklyn	56.9
32	32	Twin Cities	48.8

# Power Rankings

By: James Walker

These power rankings are a combination of playoff appearances, championships, 3 yrs Pythagorean wins, 3 year actual win total and 3 year season RPI.

The formula is playoff appearances \*4+ championships \*8+ average 3 years pyth + average 3 years actual wins + average 3 years season rating/ 5.

*Vegas on top again...*



The Las Vegas Hustlers maintain their stranglehold of the top of the Brewster Power Rankings but their lead over Sacramento shrinks. The Hustlers string of three Monty Brewster Championships ended after a shocking exit in the Doubleday Series against the eventual Johnson League pennant winner Atlantic City Gamblers.

The 2050 Monty Brewster Champion Nashville Bluebirds pull into the third spot with their big season. Yellow Springs and Jacksonville round out the top 5.

The big mover in the rankings was the El Paso Chilis jumping from 31<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>. Look for the Chilis to steadily improve and wreck Johnson League teams hopes down the line.

Twin Cities remains in the cellar but have made improvements but lost points this season in the rankings



In previous Brewster Media Guides, I used the Player Rater to rank BBA players. I used counting stats and game scores to come up with a final score. I was bored, so I decided to revamp it and decided to use stats that better describe a player.

For hitters, I will use ISO (power), wOBA (weighted on base average) and wRC+ (weighted runs created plus).

As in previous rankings, I will take an average and standard deviation of each stat to get a zSCORE. The scores will be added to come to a Total Score.

For pitchers, I will use K%, BB%, GO%, FIP- and SIERA. SIERA was just added in 23 and I decided, "What the hell, use it for giggles."

On defense, I will utilize Fielding %, Range Factor, Zone Rating and Efficiency. Catchers will be on their own using the same as the fielders but adding RTO% and CERA.

I will also rank player over their last three seasons combined, weighting them 50% current year, 30% last year and 20% 2 years ago.

# Player Ratings

By: James Walker

Top 10 in 2050 (min 502AB)

Who's this Juan Rivera guy anyway?



Atlantic City Gambler's CF Juan Rivera put up good numbers once again for the Johnson League Champions as he slashed .324/.415/.629 with 40 big flies and 112 RBI while posting a 6.9 WAR.

PO	Name	TM	zScore
LF	Juan Rivera	ATC	7.80
LF	Fernando Castillo	LOU	6.24
LF	Jeffrey Smith	POR	6.20
RF	Manobu Shimizu	MAD	5.94
CF	Aaron Haney	MEX	5.76
CF	Hector Cano, Jr.	ELP	5.73
1B	Oliverio Luna	PHX	5.53
LF	Cinema Jones	ATC	5.21
1B	Ernest McBride	POR	5.13
3B	Luis Mendoza	LOU	5.00

# Player Rankings

Top 10 (last 3 seasons)

Rivera edges out Manobu Shimizu for the top spot.

POS	Name	TM	Total zScore
LF	Juan Rivera	ATC	6.89
RF	Manobu Shimizu	MAD	6.23
LF	Rex Foster	YS9	5.43
RF	Juan Donéstevez	NO	5.40
1B	Larry Stinson	CLG	5.32
1B	Ernest McBride	POR	5.30
RF	Bret Powers	YS9	5.23
RF	Semei Kwakou	LOU	5.23
CF	Aaron Haney	MEX	5.14
LF	Jim Ashford	LV	4.91



*Shimizu so close,  
and yet...*

Top 10 vs RHP in 2050

Rivera once again...

PO	Name	TM	zScore
LF	Juan Rivera	ATC	8.50
RF	Pedro Bustamante	SA	8.06
CF	Hector Cano, Jr.	ELP	6.70
LF	Fernando Castillo	LOU	6.50
RF	Manobu Shimizu	MAD	6.14
1B	Wilson Estrada	OMA	5.97
RF	Júlio Barajas	RCK	5.76
RF	Pedro Mendoza	RCK	5.60
1B	Majid bin Husam	SA	5.45
RF	José Romero	ATC	5.43



*...Rivera's efforts  
weren't enough to  
bring ATC the title*



# Player Rankings

## Top 10 Hitters vs LHP 2050



*Jacksonville 1B Pancho Costa narrowly edges out Hasheem Makim, Jude Stephens and Ricardo Ruiz for the top spot.*

*Costa slashed .356/.393/.660 vs lefties. He hit 14 homers with 33 RBI with a 184 OPS+ and a 3 WAR.*

PO	Name	TM	zScore
1B	Pancho Costa	JAX	6.47
LF	Hasheem Makim	DM	6.46
RF	Jude Stephens	JAX	6.44
LF	Ricardo Ruíz	CHA	6.42
RF	Germán Romero	CLG	5.96
2B	Don Pérez	ATC	5.93
LF	Jim Ashford	LV	5.91
RF	Bret Powers	YS9	5.80
LF	Peter Crocker	MTL	5.69
LF	Cinema Jones	ATC	5.63

## Top 10 Starting Pitchers in 2050



*The Mad Popes Starter Ruben Vazquez easily took the top SP spot after a tremendous season. Vazquez posted a 16-4 record with 232 Ks and 31 walks in 172 1/3 IP. He had a 2.09 ERA with a 0.85 WHIP and 12.1 K/9.*

POS	Name	TM	zScore
SP	Rubén Vázquez	SAC	11.06
SP	Carlos Flores	ATC	8.87
SP	Dave Corfield	MEX	8.57
SP	Alaric Wullenweber	DM	6.05
SP	Ken Sparks	POR	5.70
SP	Steven Clayton	NSH	5.57
SP	Dave Lee	YS9	5.50
SP	Jay Hodge	LV	5.37
SP	Félix Vidaca	POR	5.36
SP	Barney Lindsay	NSH	5.06

## Top 10 Starting Pitching (last 3 seasons)

Ruben Vazquez holds the top spot over a three-season period but the Portland Lumberjacks place two pitchers in the Top 10.



*...Suck it  
Wullenweber!!*

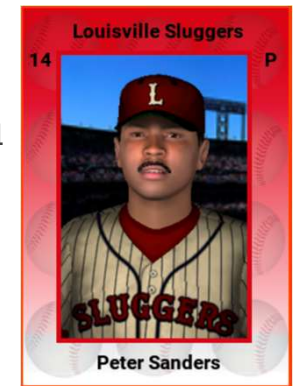
*@Shoeless*

PC	Name	TM	Total Score
SP	Rubén Vázquez	SAC	9.62
SP	Carlos Flores	ATC	8.60
SP	Alaric Wullenweber	DM	7.72
SP	Dave Corfield	MEX	7.50
SP	Dave Lee	YS9	6.07
SP	Jay Hodge	LV	5.47
SP	Phil Cole	VAN	4.91
SP	Barney Lindsay	NSH	4.87
SP	Ken Sparks	POR	4.84
SP	Félix Vidaca	POR	4.70

# Player Rankings

## Top 10 Relief Pitchers in 2050 (30 IP)

Louisville's youngster Peter Sanders led this group making 90 appearances pitching 83 innings putting up 156 Ks and walking just 11 batters. He posted an eye popping 3.3 WAR for the season



PC	Name	TM	Total Score
RP	Peter Sanders	LOU	8.70
RP	Senen Subandrio	MAD	8.48
RP	Adergazoz Ouakili	PHX	6.05
RP	Mitchell Purssell	NSH	5.78
RP	Juan García	CCJ	5.71
RP	Tiernan O'Macken	PHX	5.45
RP	Jason Clark	PHX	5.24
RP	Quirke Roddis	NSH	4.86
RP	Luis Manuel Rodríguez	LBC	4.83
RP	Ángel Hernández	LBC	4.79

# Player Rankings

## Top 10 Closers (Last 3 seasons)

Charlotte's Augusto Ramirez edged out De'Medici with a big 2049 putting him over the top. After struggling in El Paso and Sacramento, Ramirez has found a home with the Cougars.

He has a 3.7 and 3.2 WAR seasons for Charlotte with 300 Ks and 45 walks in two seasons of work with the Cougars.

*...f\*ckin El Paso!*



PC	Name	TM	Total Sco
CL	Augusto Ramirez	CHA	5.74
CL	Lorenzo de' Medici	POR	5.54
CL	Todd Stone	MAD	5.04
CL	José Ordóñez	BRK	1.96
CL	Billy Kelly	NO	1.35
CL	Alejandro Chávez	JAX	1.27
CL	Keijo Reini	SAC	1.11
CL	Francisco Salgado	DM	0.86
CL	Manuel Cruz	MEX	0.55
CL	Derrick Chaney	YS9	0.49

## Top 10 Closers in 2050

Portland's Lorenzo De'Medici ran away with the 2050 season's top spot.

De'Medici threw 107 1/3 innings fanning 203 batters while walking 32. He also just gave up 5 homers while posting a 1.17 ERA and a 0.75 WHIP.



PO	Name	TM	zScol
CL	Lorenzo de' Medici	POR	6.36
CL	Augusto Ramirez	CHA	4.97
CL	Todd Stone	MAD	4.01
CL	Billy Kelly	NO	2.26
CL	José Ordóñez	BRK	1.86
CL	Juan García	SAC	1.70
CL	Alejandro Chávez	JAX	1.58
CL	Eric Buckson	LV	1.12
CL	Manuel Cruz	MEX	0.98
CL	John Olson	VAL	0.88



# Player Rankings

## Top 10 Fielders (non-C) in 2050

Hawaii Tropics SS Thomas Kramer leads the Brewster by a large margin while the Tropics place two players in the Top 10. Kramer played 149 games at SS for a total of 1291 innings with 708 total chances. He had 212 putouts, 485 assists, 109 double plays and committed 11 errors. He had a .984 fielding % with a Range Factor of 4.86, a Zone Rating of 22.9 and an Efficiency Rating of 1.123. Kramers covers a ton of ground and more than likely will make the play.



PO	Name	TM	Total
SS	Thomas Kramer	HAW	6.12
2B	Bob Irwin	POR	4.80
1B	Jorge Morán	EDM	4.71
SS	Badr Isam	CHI	4.69
CF	Angelo Lucchesi	HAW	4.64
1B	Pedro Martínez	SEA	4.51
CF	Hector Cano, Jr.	ELP	4.50
SS	Mauro Soto	MAD	4.41
SS	José Núñez	ATC	4.34
SS	Larry Barkin	JAX	4.33

## Top 10 Fielding C in 2050

Sacramento Mad Popes backstop John Kinsella beat out Crawdads C Todd Tatlock for the top spot. Kinsella played 97 games at catcher for 847 innings. He committed two errors and had 6 passed balls. He threw out 47 baserunners for a 49% of runners thrown out. The Sacramento pitching staff enjoyed pitching to Kinsella as he posted a 2.95 CERA.



*...Hey son wanna have a catch?*

PO	Name	TM	zScore
C	John Kinsella	SAC	8.71
C	Todd Tatlock	NO	6.65
C	Jared Bolen	POR	6.51
C	Geoff Combs	POR	6.39
C	Jesús Rodríguez	YS9	6.14
C	Philitis Tsafento	LOU	4.50
C	Jay Pochin	SAC	4.16
C	Taylor Michaels	LOU	4.12
C	Octávio Moreno	ATC	3.75
C	Quinton Lara	MEX	3.69

# Player Rankings

*Top 5 Hitting Catchers in 2050*

PO	Name	TM	zSco
C	Quinton Lara	MEX	2.61
C	Ichizo Sugiyama	PHX	2.56
C	Octávio Moreno	ATC	2.53
C	Ron Shiplack	HAW	1.92
C	Gerardo Eremitani	BRK	1.79

*Top 5 Hitting 1B in 2050*

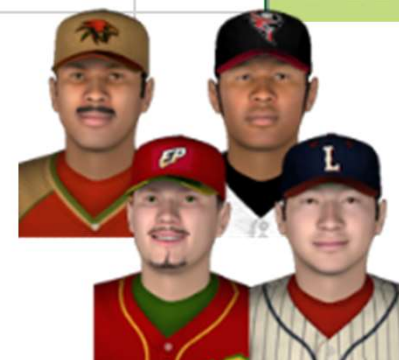
PO	Name	TM	zSco
1B	Wilson Estrada	OMA	5.74
1B	Oliverio Luna	PHX	5.53
1B	Larry Stinson	CLG	4.88
1B	Abu Wamukota	LV	4.27
1B	Liann-wei Mao	NSH	4.18

*Top 5 Hitting 2B in 2050*

PO	Name	TM	zSco
2B	Pete Brace	ELP	4.36
2B	Daniel Pepper	VAN	3.72
2B	Yodo Sato	VAL	2.48
2B	Stewart Turton	LV	2.29
2B	Rocky Wattson	RCK	1.82

*Top 5 Hitting 3B in 2050*

PO	Name	TM	zSco
3B	Luis Mendoza	LOU	5.00
3B	Tony Frost	NSH	4.61
3B	Manny Collazo	MEX	4.29
3B	Edward W. Leialoha	ELP	3.12
3B	Mal Fountain	NO	3.11



Top Row: Lara & Estrada

Bottom Row: Brace & Mendoza

# Player Rankings

Top 5 Hitting SS in 2050

PO	Name	TM	zSco
SS	Damek Korbelt	LOU	0.56
SS	José Sánchez	ELP	0.55
SS	Robert Menzies	CHA	0.19
SS	Felipe Reyna	NO	0.13
SS	Sammy McNeill	NSH	0.08

Top 5 Hitting LF in 2050

PO	Name	TM	zSco
LF	Fernando Castillo	LOU	6.24
LF	Jim Ashford	LV	5.96
LF	Aaron Haney	MEX	5.76
LF	Ernesto Alfonso	ELP	5.25
LF	Cinema Jones	ATC	5.21

Top 5 Hitting CF in 2050

PO	Name	TM	zSco
CF	Juan Rivera	ATC	7.80
CF	Hector Cano, Jr.	ELP	5.73
CF	Félix Román	CCJ	4.57
CF	Alexander Julyan	SEA	4.26
CF	Kidane Ata	LV	2.96

Top 5 Hitting RF in 2050

PO	Name	TM	zSco
RF	Jeffrey Smith	POR	6.20
RF	Manobu Shimizu	MAD	5.94
RF	Juan Donéstevez	NO	5.40
RF	Júlio Barajas	RCK	4.99
RF	Pedro Bustamante	SA	4.79



Top Row: Rivera, Smith

Bottom Row: Castillo, Korbelt



# Player Rankings

*Top 5 Hitting DH in 2050*



PO	Name	TM	zScor
DH	Rex Foster	YS9	5.23
DH	Ernest McBride	POR	5.13
DH	Hugh Mangrouthorn	SAC	4.69
DH	Matt Normore	MEX	4.47
DH	Adam Backhouse	CLG	4.43

# 2050 All Stars

*A Deep Dive (Or Maybe Just Trivia)*

*John Momburg*

I stand in awe (well, actually I'm sitting) of some of the research that is done by some of my fellow Brewster GMs. I read their work and think, "there's no way I could ever do something that complex". And I'm right- I can't.

Nevertheless, I wanted to try to do something along that line; something that would hopefully help me understand more about where successful players come from and how they are developed.

I hit on the idea of using the 2050 all-stars as a sample. While they're probably not the 68 best players in the Brewster universe, I think we can safely label them as successful players.

Plus using them as a focus group allowed me to spend the second half of the season crunching the numbers in several different ways to see if there's a pattern in how all-star level players are drafted and developed. Let's take a look at what I found.



# 2050 All Stars

*Part 1: The Draft and Entering the System*

*John Momburg*

**56%**

38 of the 68 2050 all-stars remain with their original organization. Of the 30 who have changed organizations, Portland has acquired the most (4), followed by Vegas, Sacramento and Vancouver, with 3 apiece.

El Paso (nee Wichita), Hawaii and Twin Cities share the dubious distinction of having four of their draftees become 2050 all-stars for some other team. Of course, that's not saying they didn't receive valuable compensation when these guys left their systems.

**82%**

56 of the 68 entered the league through the rookie draft. 40 of those 56 were first-round picks, and four of them were #1 overall picks. Looking farther down, we have 12 second-rounders, two third-rounders, and one each from rounds four, six and ten (shout out to Manuel Barrera-an all-star from the tenth round, 333<sup>rd</sup> overall pick. Gold star in drafting to Boise).

**28%**

The most popular age to draft an all-star is 18; 17 were taken at that age. Then we have fifteen 19-year-olds, nine 17-year-olds, two 20-year-olds, ten 21-year-olds and two 22-year-olds. Six all-stars entered the league at age 16, but five of them were international signees; only Luis Rojas was drafted at 16.

# 2050 All Stars

## Part 2: Player Development - Batters

157

As common sense would have it, all-star batters who entered the system at ages 16 or 17 almost without exception started their professional careers in the rookie leagues. I say “almost” because Majid bin Husam signed at 16 and skipped both the rookie and short-A levels, going directly to full-season A. The quickest path to the majors in this grouping was taken by Edgardo Encarnacion, who has appeared in only 157 minor league games. Three of the early signees have played in over 400 minor league games, with Juan Donestevéz leading the way with 469. Another unusual stat: Ángel Gonzalez played in the most rookie league games (116), but then skipped the next two levels, jumping all the way to AA.

27

There were 27 all-star batters who were signed as 18 and 19-year-olds. All the 18s played at least some rookie ball; six of the eleven 19-year-olds skipped to a higher level. Five of them skipped short-A as well, and two of those five, Tom Rudge and Alex Ramirez, began their careers as 19-year-olds in AA. Tom Rudge had the shortest sojourn in the minors of any all-star of any age- 69 games total- while Pedro Gomez had the longest minors career: 575 games. He zoomed through the lower minors, then spent 336 games at AAA; the most of any all-star.

Only five all-star batters were drafted at ages 21 or 22 (none were drafted at age 20). They were four first basemen and a left fielder. There’s probably something that can be learned there about what age one should draft power hitters. At any rate, they all spent a relatively short time in the minors, as you’d expect from an older draftee. Wilson Estrada, for example, started in AA for 67 games, then moved to AAA for a mere five games before hitting the big time.

5

Adding it all up, we find that the average all-star position player spent 40 games in rookie league, 10 games in short-A, 66 games in high-A, 74 games in double-A and 96 games in triple-A. Honestly, I’m not sure how much this means; the variations among players are so great that no one really had a minor league career that resembles those numbers.

286



# 2050 All Stars

## Part 2: Player Development - Pitchers

221

We're dealing with a smaller sample size here of course- only 26 pitchers- but let's look anyway. Six all-star pitchers entered the system at ages 16 or 17, and all of them pitched at the rookie level. Of note: Augusto Ramirez, who jumped directly from short-A to AAA, and Cornelio Lozano, a sixth-round draft pick who had to pitch 84 games in rookie ball and 221 total minor league games before getting the big phone call. That's by far the most minor league games pitched of any 2050 all-star.

Eleven 2050 all-star pitchers came onto the scene at ages 18 or 19, and they're a mixed bag. Seven began in the rookie league; one, Don Jaramillo, started in high-A, then went directly to the majors the next year. Eugenio Asseldonk and Carlos Flores both appeared in 156 minor league games, the high in this group. Both got a bit bogged down in AAA, with Flores in particular making 101 appearances there. In contrast, Danya Tchekanov and Ruben Vazquez shot through the minors with 47 and 41 appearances respectively. Neither ever pitched as many as 20 games at any one level. Strange that those two would be fast tracked given that neither was a #1 draft pick; Tchekanov was an international free agent and Vazquez was a lowly fourth-rounder.

11

106

The seven 21-22-year-old all-star pitchers were all first round picks, and as you'd expect by their older age and high draft slot, they pretty much all ascended to the majors in quick time. Three of them started their careers in AAA, and six of the seven appeared in fewer than 30 minor league games. The exception is Billy Kelly, who made it to AAA in good time but ended up staying there long enough to take to the mound 106 times.

By the numbers: The average all-star pitcher appeared in 11 rookie league games, 6 short-A games, 20 high-A games, 11 double-A games and 35 triple-A games. Of course, the same caveat I mentioned about hitters applies even more here, since I'm lumping relievers and starters in together. But I'm just leaving it in in the interest of completeness

83

# 2050 All Stars

## Part 3: In Game Ratings

Four all-stars have not reached their maximum potential as of this writing (Kelly, Hinkle, Ploid and Cole).

4

50

Naturally, most all-stars had very high ratings; the lowest was 50 (Alonso and Asseldonk).

Work ethic is important. 33 all-stars rated “high” while only three rated as “low”.

33

11

On the other hand, intelligence may not be quite as important: Only 11 rated with “high” intelligence; two with “low”.

1

The overwhelming majority of all-stars had assigned personalities that could be considered positive or neutral. There was one “selfish” (Chavez) and one “disruptive” (Garcia). Todd Stone was the only all-star labeled a “prankster”; don’t know if you the reader consider that a positive or a negative.

# 2050 All Stars

## Part 4: Major League Debut

If you want your hot prospect to become an all-star, apparently you want him to hit the majors at age 21. 28 of the 68 stars started at that age, more than the next two ages combined. For the record, thirteen debuted at age 20, eleven at age 22, eight at age 23, and six at age 19, which surprised me. Two stars, Hinkle and Lozano, lollygagged around in the minors till age 24. These two are an interesting contrast. Lozano was a sixth-round pick who spent six seasons trying to reach higher than A-ball, then was a Rule 5 pick who went immediately to the majors and stayed there with only a brief demotion to AAA. Hinkle, on the other hand, was drafted in the top half of the first round, which you'd think would put him on the fast track. But he never lived up to his lofty draft status; to be honest, he didn't do all that much this year either. He's kind of a funky all-star selection

21

.635

Then, one last thing: As if I hadn't parsed the numbers on these guys enough, I decided to look at how they performed in their rookie seasons as opposed to how they did at their highest minor league levels. Using OPS for the hitters and ERA+ for the pitchers, I found that most players in their rookie seasons produced stats very similar to what they did in the high minors. In fact, Ryan Geauxinue had a .635 OPS as a rookie and a .635 OPS for his AAA career.

Daniel Pepper skipped AAA but posted a 1.039 in AA, and then didn't mind skipping a level at all; he OPSed 1.202 as a rookie

Despite playing 404 minor league games, Steveland Morris posted the lowest rookie OPS of any 2050 all-star: .539. He's certainly built from there, though.

404



Among pitchers, it was pretty much the same story; their rookie stats were about the same as their AAA stats. The outlier here is Ken Arroyo, but his minors career was so weird- just a stint in short-A, a cup of coffee at AA, then on to the majors- that his minor league stats don't really mean anything. (BTW, I didn't deal with relievers- the sample size is way too small).





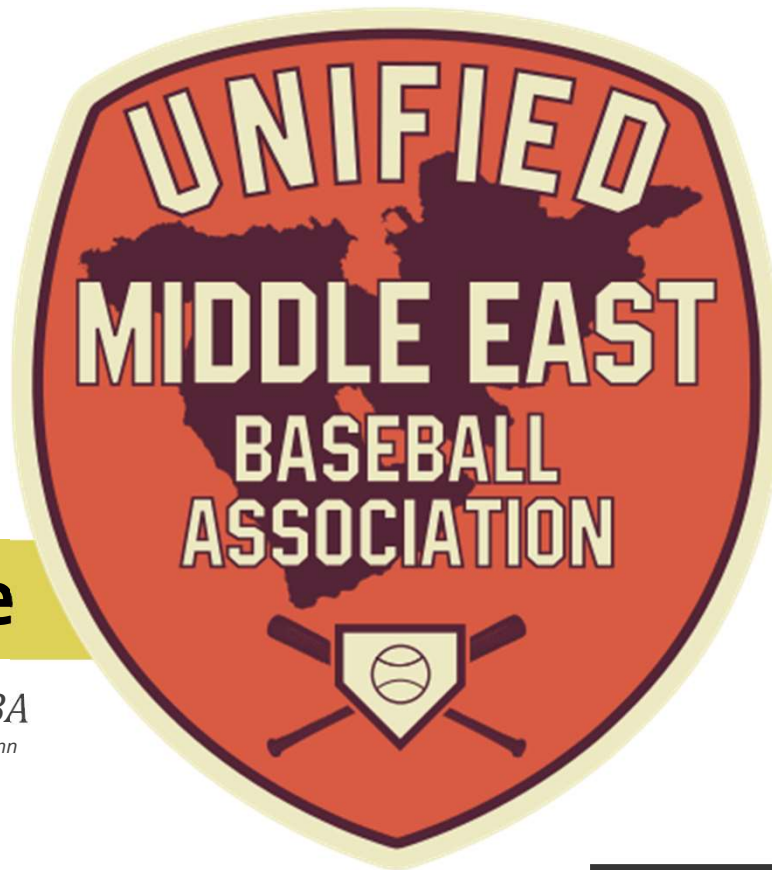
*"A tale of hot dogs and hookers, greed and betrayal."*

*"The tipping point for me were hot dog sales. Hot dogs and baseball go hand-in-hand. Yet the UMEBA teams couldn't sell them, even on dollar dog nights."*

## UMEBye-bye

*The Demise of the UMEBA*

Mike Dunn



*"I'm not going to get in the middle of a pissing match between Barney and the Brewster Governing Board"*

*...And then, of course, there was the "hookers and blow" issue with UMEBA.*

# UMEBye-bye

Mike Dunn

An Oral History of the Shockingly Swift Demise of the Unified Middle East Baseball Association. A tale of hot dogs and hookers, greed and betrayal.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The news this past November that the Monty Brewster Baseball Association would no longer support its smaller cousin, the Unified Middle East Baseball Association (UMEBA), shocked millions of fans throughout the Middle East. As the MBBA instead turned its focus – and its financial support – to the nascent Global Baseball Consortium (GBC), UMEBA's corporate sponsors immediately nixed contracts with those teams, and within days the league had little choice but to fold – with supporters left scratching their heads over how what was once a grand dream fell apart so quickly.*

*What follows is an oral history of the shocking swift demise of the UMEBA, as told by the individuals who were directly involved.*

**Matt Rectenwald, Commissioner of the Monty Brewster Baseball Association:** For the past few seasons of the UMEBA, we had been looking at attendance and merchandise sales figures, and they were not up to our expectations. We feared simply that baseball was just not catching on in that part of the world as we had hoped. It was good, but it wasn't great. It wasn't enough. The tipping point for me were hot dog sales. Hot dogs and baseball go hand-in-hand. Yet the UMEBA teams couldn't sell them, even on dollar dog nights. Instead, what sold were samosas, gyros, biryani, hummus. Sorry, 'Dollar Falafel Night' doesn't work for me.



*Biryani was once served up at the now-shuttered Manama Pearls ballpark.*

# UMEBye-bye

Don't get me wrong -- Barney (UMEBA founder and former U.S. President Barney Bancroft) had a great vision. His league brought peace to the Middle East after all! But unfortunately, we reluctantly came to the conclusion that it was just not sustainable

**Bernard Addison**  
**"Barney" Bancroft,**  
**UMEBA founder and**  
**former U.S. President:**  
I'm livid. I understand Rectenwald and his ilk weren't happy with the situation. But did that mean they could just yank the rug out from beneath us? After years of promising support? Don't they have any honor? This was an absolute betrayal, and then to learn about it on Twitter was even worse. They never even called me!



*UMEBA founder Barney Bancroft during happier times.*



**Aaron Weiner, Vice**  
**Commissioner, MBBA:** We tried reaching out to Barney. He wouldn't respond to our phone calls, or text messages. But we tried. To say we didn't try is utter b-s. 24

# UMEBye-bye

**UMEBA Commissioner Brodie Burt:** I'm not going to get in the middle of a pissing match between Barney and the Brewster Governing Board. That doesn't help anyone. But Barney poured his heart and soul into the UMEBA, so I don't blame him for being angry. We simply did not see this coming. We were given no warning. Let me repeat that: no warning. We were betrayed, plain and simple.



*Barney Bancroft won the Nobel Prize in 2035 for bringing peace to the Middle East through baseball.*



*Bancrofts' personel P.I. found images of UMEBA Ambassador Mike Simon on day the "News" was allegedly going to be communicated.*

**Neil Thomas, GM, Athens Fighting Centaurs (one of three UMEBA teams to jump to the GBC):** Uh, sorry, I don't want to stir things up. I like Barney and Brodie. But it's crazy to claim we didn't have warning from the Governing Board that something was up. I knew it was coming. In fact, I engaged in about three months of negotiations with the Brewster folks on making the leap to the Consortium. Bottom line is, everyone knew, and Barney and Brodie just chose to bury their heads in the desert sand.

I know Barney's upset with me for jumping. But without Brewster support, UMEBA was dead in the waters of the Red Sea. Simple as that. I'd have been crazy not to move to the GBC when the offer came. And if Barney doesn't understand that, well, that's his problem.



# UMEBye-bye

**Barney Bancroft:** Neil Thomas betrayed me. I will never speak to him again. Same with the other teams that jumped ship. Traitors, one and all. They're dead to me.



*Better days: UMEBA founder Barney Bancroft after being inaugurated President in January 2036*

**Bancroft:** I don't deny the problems, particularly the revolving door of GMs. And I don't deny that some teams left their GM positions vacant, and it seemed almost as if they were on autopilot. But what could I do? Some of them were being lured by bigger contracts to the Brewster. It was really the Brewster that had the GM shuffle! We were just the victims

**Frick League Director Mike Simon (former UMEBA Ambassador):** Our decision became even more clear once the great GM shuffle set in. That was the true death knell of the UMEBA. I think we could have continued on with the UMEBA for another season or two, but last season multiple UMEBA General Managers were either promoted to the MBBA or left outright, leaving some of the clubs without any clear leadership. The writing really was on the wall. In this case, the Wailing Wall.

# UMEBye-bye



Former MBBA slugger Frank Mahaffey was among the players lured to UMEBA by extra perks, signing with Mumbai in 2043.

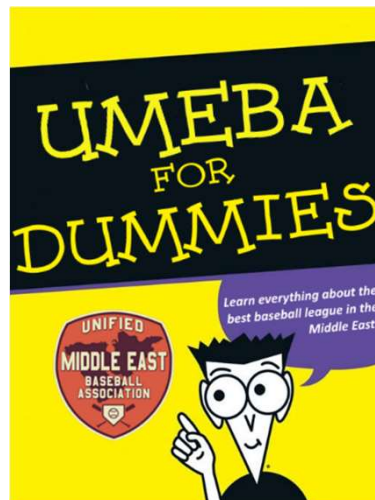
**Ron Collins, MBBA Advisor:** And then, of course, there was the “hookers and blow” issue with UMEBA. Many of those GMs were constantly enticing free agents to UMEBA by promising women and drugs, all under the table, not added to the value of the contract.

**Mike Dunn, former GM, Libya Generals/Tripoli Piranhas, now GM of the Chicago Black Sox:** Well, sure, UMEBA GMs offered hookers and blow to FAs. What else could we do? We couldn’t compete with the salaries being offered in the Brewster. I think it was a perfectly legitimate approach.

**Ron Collins:** Mind you, the Governing Board doesn’t object to hookers and blow per se. Hell, we’ve all been known to dabble now and then. But there’s a dollar value attached to those goods and services that needs to be reflected in the players’ contracts. Such perks can’t be used by UMEBA GMs to get around their \$55 million salary cap. That’s just not right. We could not allow that to continue.

# UMEBye-bye

**Stephen Lane, Official Historian of the Monty Brewster Baseball Association:** This is actually less about the finances of UMEBA and more about the Governing Board's vision. The old Major League Baseball – you remember them? – they tried to become global, but never really came close. Here, Matt and the board have a vision of every child on this planet wanting to play baseball, and the UMEBA was a step in that direction. Now comes the next step: a truly global consortium. It's just a shame about Barney. We tried to talk to him, to bring him along on this ride. But he wanted only to do things his way. The train has literally passed him by.



*In 2045, with the league's popularity growing, "UMEBAs for Dummies" sold 1,470,000 copies.*

**Barney Bancroft, UMEBA founder:** It absolutely was about the finances. Here's the truth (leans in): our operating agreement with the Brewster gave them 10% of UMEBA profits, up to a maximum of \$75 million per season. In return we received marketing support and access to MBBA free agents.

But this season, after old Matt and his cronies saw what kind of profits we were making, they wanted to rip up that deal and go with a flat 15% of all profits – no cap. I told him get f'ed. So he just shut us down and set up a new league with more favorable terms. I hear the Brewster is getting 25% of all GBC profits. What scum!

**Kate Fiscus, Assistant General Manager, Portland Lumberjacks:** Sorry, I don't have much to add to this discussion. But I heard "oral history" and "blow," so I'd thought I'd stop by. Let me tell you my oral history...

# UMEBye-bye



*UMEBA Commissioner Brodie Burt announced formal closure of the league on November 14, two days after the MBBA Commissioner claimed UMEBA was “going global.”*

**Barney Bancroft, UMEBA founder:** The Pearls – gone. The Piranhas – gone. The Metro Stars – gone. The Impalers – gone. Gone, gone, gone. (He begins weeping). All gone, because of greed. The unmitigated, unrelenting greed of the owners of the Monty Brewster Baseball Association. A pox on their houses!

Unified Middle Eastern  
Baseball Association

2037 – 2050

R.I.P

**UMEBA Commissioner Brodie Burt:** It was ridiculous for Rect to characterize this as ‘UMEBA going global.’ That’s just PR spin. The reality was that UMEBA was being unceremoniously shut down, replaced by a new league whose finances undoubtedly favor owners in the Brewster. We who toiled for years here in the Middle East were given the shaft. The Brewster owners pulled this off simply to line their own pockets.



*From the MBBA World Headquarters in New York City, Rectenwald and the Governing Board rule baseball with an iron fist.*

**MBBA Commissioner Matt Rectenwald:** Yes, I am aware that Barney claims I wanted a new operating agreement. I am also aware that he has been so distraught that he had to be institutionalized. So those are, frankly, the claims of a delusional man. It’s all so sad. He was a great man once. A great ballplayer, a great President of the United States, and a great Nobel Peace Prize winner. My thoughts and prayers are with him and his family. But this sport will move forward, because is a greater than any single person. Greater than me, greater than Barney. And I only hope that when the game is finally played in every corner of globe, Barney and all the supporters of the UMEBA will take some pride in having played a role in that accomplishment. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a meeting with the league’s Vice President for Tax Avoidance.





# UMEBA Remembered

*Some stuff from the archives*

*Mike Simon*

2037  
Manama Pearls

2038  
Jerusalem Hebrew Hammers

2043  
Kuwait City Alhafr

# GBC Preview

## *Buenos Aries Brisas*

Woody Donahue

**2050 record:** 97-65, 1st place in Bancroft League (as Tripoli Piranhas)

**2050 recap:** The then-Piranhas made it all the way to game seven of the United Cup, but ultimately lost to Jerusalem. Still, they exceeded everyone's wildest expectations, and proved that their 2049 playoff run was no fluke.

Tripoli enjoyed a nice year from staff ace Mahad Einan (4.4 WAR and an UMEBA-leading 1.17 WHIP) and left fielder Ant3nio Rom3n (4.5 WAR, 140 OPS+).

**Notable additions:** RP Su-yeong Pak, SP Shea Valance, IF/OF Juan Luis Manuel

**Losses:** SP Liam Dalton, RP Luis Gonz3les, RP Steven Bobovnik, RP Jonathan Merritt, SP Pierre Legrand, SS Russell Sharp, C Ram3n Camacho, RP Ricardo Moreno, IF/OF Mike England, SP Gavrilovich Mastinsky, IF Takechi Eida, RP Toby Bundy, RP Jayden Nicholls, SP Geoffroy Robert



*New look for a new league*

**2051 outlook:** It's really remarkable that last year's team accomplished so much largely without their star player, first baseman Helmut Gr3n, who constantly battled injuries and played in just 78 games. Now that he's back and fully healthy, Buenos Aries' lineup gains another dimension, and the world will once again be on "Helmut watch" to see if he can be the first UMEBA/GBC player to hit .400 in a season (he won't, but there will at least be a fun race for the batting title, now that he and Patrick Strolz are in the same division).

*From Piranhas to Brisas, will their luck continue?*

Buenos Aries also sports a revamped infield, with Manny Toledo taking over the second base job, and BBA castoff Juan Luis Manuel joining to play shortstop. Manuel was a positive contributor for Edmonton last year, and is exactly the type of player who could see his career revitalized by a move to the GBC.

Einan will once again be the ace of the pitching staff, and they added Shea Valance as redemption for the time they foolishly traded him away as a 20-year-old rookie. But this version of Valance is not the same version they had before. This one is a polished veteran with five fully-developed pitches and pinpoint control. He's coming off last season's rotator cuff injury, but if he's back to 100 percent, he can be like a second ace for the Brisas.

Tulon Korut3rk and Jacob Oort are dependable in the 3rd and 4th starter spots, but there's no clear fifth starter. If they can't find one on waivers, Buenos Aries' plan might be to call up top prospect Ielemia Faletose, though he may not be ready for the big leagues.

One area where it may prove difficult to repeat the success of last season is in the bullpen. Led by now-departed closer Toby Bundy, the bullpen in Tripoli led the team to a 13-5 record in extra-inning games. Without Bundy, the Brisas will be counting on Su-yeong Pak, a waiver claim from Tokyo, to close games. His strikeout rate has always been impressive, but he has not seen a save situation at the big league level, so we'll have to see how he handles the pressure. Having taken the Hebrew Hammers to game 7 in the Cup last year? Put it all together, and we may see the first championship for a long-troubled franchise.



If he fails, Buenos Aries can always give the closer role to Faletose as a way of getting his feet wet in the bigs. Many great GBC pitchers (Edwin Harney, Susila Kartosuwiryo) started out as closers before moving into the rotation full-time.

**2051 prediction:** 98-64. A full year of Gr3n, a new ace, and the swagger of having taken the Hebrew Hammers to game 7 in the Cup last year? Put it all together, and we may see the first championship for a long-troubled franchise.

# GBC Preview

## Tokyo Pearls Baseball Club

**2050 record:** 89-73, 2nd place in Burt League (as Manama Pearls)

**2050 recap:** The Pearls made the playoffs, which has become par for the course for the franchise, but once again failed to win it all. They were led by their trio of young hitters: Socrates Kazantziakis won Position Player of the Year with a career-high 6.6 WAR, while Patrick Strolz (won batting title) and Taylor Barfoot (40 home runs) also put up career-best campaigns.

**Notable additions:** RP Enrico Morales, SP Bartolo Muñoz, SP Umar Dogar, C Rich Burke, SP Geoffroy Robert

**Losses:** OF Bobby Parker, C Felipe Delgado, RP Su-yeong Pak, RP Nando Horsey, SP Wayne Mawle, OF Joshua Koka, RP Jaime Herrera, OF Luis González, SP Santiago Zúñiga

*Will a new location make a difference for the pearls this year?*



*Still one of the classiest logos in the GBC*

**2051 outlook:** The Pearls' offense is always their strongest asset, and with Kazantziakis/Strolz/Barfoot all only 25, they can all be counted on to repeat their performances from last season. Kazantziakis is the best defensive player in the league, and he hits like an All-Star. To have that production at shortstop is the envy of every team in both the GBC and the BBA, because it means a manager can spread more production around the other, more traditional "offensive" field positions.

But does Tokyo have a good enough supporting cast? That's the question.

Joshua Koka is now gone, and they didn't bring in anybody to replace his production. That means Tokyo is probably relying on waiver wire pickups to fill center field, which is worrisome.

Another concern is their lack of a decent right-handed bat. Last season, they were only 20-27 against left-handed starters (and that was with Koka in the mix).

This year, the middle of the lineup will be a Murderer's Row of lefties in Strolz, Barfoot, and Kinfu Lugono, but it makes them very vulnerable to left-handed pitching. A few more platoon options should do the trick, though, and those can always be picked up off the waiver wire as well.

The Pearls have a pretty solid 1-5, with Ji-e Woo shifting into the rotation full-time, and Edgar Sosa and Damian Theophanous both excellent groundballers, playing off the team's strong infield defense. To round it out, they picked up Geoffroy Robert on a steal of a one-year contract, giving them substantial depth, which will serve them well during the long season.

**2051 prediction:** 90-72. Their pitching is probably the deepest in the GBC, so the playoffs should be the expectation. An impact right-handed bat could put them over the top and make them the clear favorites to win it all.

Tokyo's starting rotation received a huge gift as a result of the UMEBA contraction, which is that young superstar and former first overall draft pick Umar Dogar wound up in their minor league system. Dogar was terrific in his major league debut with Riyadh two years ago before going down with a torn rotator cuff. Riyadh then eased him back into the workload, having him spend a year in Triple-A, which he absolutely dominated. There's no question now that he's ready for the big time, where he can emerge as the Pearls' ace if he can avoid another injury.



# GBC Preview

## Sydney Sharks Baseball Club



*Will they need a bigger boat in 2051?*

**2050 record:** 64-98, 5th place in Bancroft League (as Mumbai Metro Stars)

**2050 recap:** It was a disaster of a season for Mumbai, who just three years after their three-peat fell to the bottom of the barrel. Some bright spots were the continued development of third baseman Bodil Sellevold (3.4 WAR) and pitcher Peter Ramsay (2.4 WAR), both in their third year with the team.

**Losses:** SS Matthew Hewat, OF Edward Lake, RP Knox Sked, SP Ronald Eglinton, 1B/OF Keiran Filby, CF Chuck Dickens

**Notable additions:** C Rafael Mendoza, RP Raúl García, SP Wayne Mawle, RP Chase Walter, OF Owen Furlong, OF Michail Shemetov, OF Ramiro Cisneros, IF David Guerra, IF Carl McFadyen, C Ángel Garcia, IF Iván Sosa, IF/OF Pierre Lemaire, IF Raúl Alilea, IF Jonathon O'Reilly, IF Bill Moody,

SS Tadasuke Suzuki, OF Tom Barnett, IF Ernest Peters, 1B Wilbur Lewis, OF Bayissa Mbaya, SP Carlos Nieves, IF/OF Blake Bell, C William Henley, IF Ron Ritchie, OF Keith Sánchez, C Juan Vélez, IF Emilio Medina, SP Guillermo Sánchez, IF/OF Bernardo García, SP Duane Coutts, 1B Edgardo Díaz, SP Billy Martin, RP Kirk Stannard, RP José López, SP Terrence Kelly, OF Dani Sánchez, IF Ben Vaive, OF Jorge González, 1B Miguel Angel Perales, OF Wilton Rivera, 1B Pedro Ruíz, RP Jorge Huerta, OF Cristo López, SP Jai Redelius, IF/OF Abdul-Muttalib Khair al Din

**2051 outlook:** Sydney went on a spree, and signed just about every player who would agree to a minor league contract, inviting them all to spring camp. It's hard to say who will emerge from the Battle Royale, but you might see a lineup that includes some of the following players:

Iván Sosa plays everywhere on the infield, and his bat should translate well to the GBC. I wouldn't be surprised if he became the everyday shortstop.

Bayissa Mbaya is a corner outfield bat who can steal 30 bases a year. He's just two years removed from a 3.9 WAR season in the BBA. Count him as a lock for a roster spot.

Owen Furlong was the Sharks' Rule 5 pick from Athens, so he has to stay on the team. He plays all three outfield positions, and batted .320 last season in Triple-A. He'll probably be a bench player, filling in as needed.

They also signed David Guerra, formerly of Cairo, to play second base. He has been one of the top base stealers in the league for the past three seasons, but also can hit like a middle-of-the-order bat, a pretty rare combination.

He's also a "reverse split" guy, who hits righties better even though he's right-handed.

*Bye-Bye Mumbai*

My only concern with their offense is that it's not really geared towards Sydney's ballpark, which favors right-handed power hitters. As it stands now, the Sharks have nobody that matches that profile, eliminating any home-field advantage.

The Metro Stars' pitching was the worst in the UMEBA last season, but it should've been better on paper, so the Sharks are counting on the law of averages to even out. It seems like every year in these previews I advocate that Susila Kartosuwiryo is still a great pitcher, but he is, and I'll die on that hill. He simply got knocked around last year, seeing his home run rate nearly double, which won't happen again.

The Sharks also snagged veteran Duane Coutts on a minor-league deal to fill out the rotation. He's a pretty solid pickup — he won't light up the radar gun, but he's one of the more dependable arms around, given that he hasn't missed a start in three years.

Closing games will be Raúl García, a legitimate BBA closer with a good track record who will likely be one of the top contenders for the Reliever of the Year award.

**2051 prediction:** 86-76. I like the Sharks' creative roster strategy, and I expect they're not done making moves to improve the team. One or two more quality pitchers, and they could see the playoffs.



# GBC Preview

## *Athens Fighting Centaurs*

**2050 record:** 81-81, 3rd place in Bancroft League

**2050 recap:** Despite having the best player in the UMEBA in Quinn Greene, Athens squandered yet another chance to reach the playoffs with him. Their pitching was absolutely dreadful, both at the front end (4.99 starters' ERA) and back end (5.94 ERA for closer Steffan Gimseng). They'll need to fix both those areas to have a chance at playoff baseball.

**Notable additions:** SP Xian Ling, OF Wesley Johnson, RP Antonio Castillo, 2B Danny Glatz, OF Juan Martínez, OF Manuel Rivera

**Losses:** CF Juan López, 1B José Cordero, SP Felipe Méndez, IF/OF Jimmy Starks, Jr., CF Cristo López, 3B Rúbem Bordonhos.



*Down year after a championship run*

**2051 outlook:** Though the Centaurs' offense was potent last season, it had many holes. The star power of Greene, William Drew and Sosa Seki distracted from the fact that other guys like Rúbem Bordonhos and Juan López were dragging the team down to a collective .319 on-base percentage.

Well, the good news is both Bordonhos and López are gone now. The lineup will now feature a more balanced attack, brought by some nice pickups like slap-hitter Danny Glatz, and UMEBA veteran Juan Martínez, who brings good leadership and a nice eye at the plate.

The lineup has a lot of depth, with several prospects ready to step up and play bit parts for the Centaurs, like Jaypee Tacadena, who hit 31 homers in Triple-A last season and whose swing is made for Piraeus Park. And Steven Bonney, who is part of an unusually stacked catching tandem, with starter Tokimasa Yano and backup Adalgiso Bosendorfer.

The pitching is essentially the same as last year, with no notable additions. Though Athens' emphasis on high-movement groundballers is technically the correct strategy for their park, they can't expect to keep running out the same guys and get different results.

Nevertheless, Liam Johnston and Quintiliano Rodeia will give it another shot. Johnston has done well this spring, and at just 24, could be on the cusp of a breakout year. Shigekazu Kikuchi, one of the lone bright spots from last year, will try to continue his success as a starter since being moved from the bullpen last September.

Rolf Reinhardt rounds out the bunch, and appears to have greatly improved movement this year. He'd be my dark horse pick to emerge as the ace before the season is through.

We'll also see top prospect Cody Glynn in the bullpen, where he may soon take over the closer role from the incumbent Gimseng.

*...we survived the UMEBA carnage*

**2051 prediction:** 82-80. Drew is a free agent after the season, and Greene is getting more expensive every year, so their window is now. I like their improved depth, but the lack of a real impact pitcher will mean Athens treads water for another year.

# GBC Preview

## Sao Paulo Pilots Baseball Club



*This could be the next best logo in the GBC*

**2050 record:** 88-74, 2nd place in Bancroft League (as Bucharest Impalers)

**2050 recap:** It was a disappointing season overall for the then-Impalers, who despite making the playoffs, posted their worst record since 2046. Staff ace Owen Geddes had a standout year, leading the league in wins, ERA, and pitching WAR. But #2 starter Neill Fenomore struggled, posting an uncharacteristic 5.40 ERA. Both starters were signed to big extensions over the offseason, as Sao Paulo attempts to double down with the same guys, for better or for worse.

**Notable additions:** None

**Losses:** RP Shotaro Kawamura, 1B Jay Gamble, C Pat Alexander, RP Fernando Morán

**2051 outlook:** The Pilots/Impalers have always been good at getting on base, having led the UMEBA in walks last season. That's in large part due to first baseman Ricardo De Jesús, who is a dreamboat of a leadoff hitter. He led the UMEBA in walks, steals, and on-base percentage last season, and at just 25 years old is still getting better. With him leading off, the Pilots will have no shortage of opportunities.

Tasked with driving in runs will be former Position Player of the Year Jeremy Owbridge, who had a resurgent 2050, and young Tadataka Yoshikawa, who is primed for his own breakout year. Yoshikawa has had his share of struggles, but really caught on fire last August, hitting seven home runs in the month and showing what he's capable of.

In a home ballpark that suppresses doubles and triples, the power stroke will be the key to his future success.

Going down the lineup, the Pilots have a good mix of righty and lefty bats with no obvious holes. The vacated DH spot from the one key player they lost, Jay Gamble, will be used to distribute more playing time to up-and-coming guys like infielders Joseph Alexander and Daniel Watson.

As previously mentioned, the rotation looks about the same as last year, with Geddes and Fenomore leading the group. Young fireballer Eng-hee Kin will be given a shot in the rotation, and so far this spring it looks like he's taken quite well to the role, with a 1.15 ERA in three starts. Incumbents Adam Barber and Ajanidha Praveen round out the rotation.

*With no notable additions will the Pilots soar to great heights in 2051?*

Sao Paulo has had a difficult time finding consistency in the ninth inning, with Alfonzo Castillo getting most of the save opportunities last season, but blowing over 30% of them. This year, the plan appears to be converting ex-starter Jason Lee into the closer, which could give the back end of the bullpen a nice boost.

Castillo is still around in a setup role, and top prospect Richard Balgera may also be asked to pitch in some high-leverage situations. This gives Sao Paulo a nice, deep, bullpen, though it lacks a real lefty arm, so they may have some trouble shutting down lefty-heavy lineups like Tokyo's or Jerusalem's.

**2051 prediction:** 79-83. The lineup can take care of business, but putting all their eggs in the baskets of two starters is very risky, and doesn't give them a whole lot of options if something goes wrong. The Pilots could challenge for a playoff spot, but I think they're a long shot to make it all the way.

# GBC Preview

## Cairo Pharaohs

**2050 record:** 76-86, 4th place in Bancroft League

**2050 recap:** Cairo was simply unlucky, finishing 10 games under .500 as a result of losing their ace, Shea Valance, to a season-ending injury in June, and by dropping a lot of one-run games, in which they finished 16-28 for the season. They had good talent, but simply didn't put it together. First baseman Jae-hyung Chi (5.0 WAR) and shortstop Quintin Trewartha (5.4 WAR and a +30.9 ZR at short) had breakout years.

**Notable additions:** 1B Tim Battle, OF Manchu Li, SP Ricardo Quadrado, IF Jeffrey Cote, C Geoff Combs, IF Luis Domínguez, OF Fernando Archuleta, 1B Otto Altaner, SP Ronald Eglinton, IF Daryl Pris, OF Jim Lorenzen, SP Lance Harrison, SS Russell Sharp, 3B J.R. Browne, 1B/OF Keiran Filby, 1B/OF Robby Clements



*Team is going though GMs like Spinal Tops is with drummers...*

**Losses:** C António Ruíz, LF Frank Mahaffey, SP German Evdakov, OF Dani Sánchez, SP Jason Donaldson, IF/OF Ernie Schoonmaker, CF Freddy Ayala, 1B/OF Nacho Méndez, IF David Guerra, RP Ramón Sánchez, OF Juan Rocha, RP Júlio Cuevas, SP Chase Walter, IF Ron Ritchie, C Ed Cooper, SP Shea Valance, SS Quintin Trewartha, RP Joaquín Romano

*Losing Shea Valance in 2050 sucked...*

**2051 outlook:** Cairo is a reinvented team this season, since three of their best players (Valance, Trewartha, and Freddy Ayala) have departed. Chi is back to anchor the offense, but I'm not sure that he'll be able to replicate last year's numbers. Looking at his track record, he hasn't been a .300 hitter at any level before last season, so Cairo should be ready if he takes a step backward this year.

Among the newcomers to the team is former UMEBA star Jim Lorenzen, who couldn't quite hack it in the BBA, but can still go get 'em in the outfield and will try to find his swing again.

Daryl Pris also gives the Pharaohs a defensive shortstop with good gap power, which will play well in Pyramid Park. He has provided over 5 WAR for Riyadh the last two seasons, so he'll be a positive contributor.

And designated hitter Tim Battle is the rare lefty who doesn't really need a platoon partner, so he'll likely play every day and be good for at least 40 doubles and a handful of dingers.

Former first overall pick Han-I Kim, last year's most dependable pitcher for the Pharaohs, will be heading up the rotation again. He's still only 22, and should just be coming into the prime of his development. Scouts say he has increased movement this year, which should improve his ability to induce weak ground balls.

Following him will be Lance Harrison, who came over on a one-year free agent contract, and Ronald Eglinton, former three-time UMEBA champion with the Mumbai Metro Stars. Both these signings give the Pharaohs veteran leadership and guys who know how to win. Perhaps their guidance will help Kim, and others like António Ramírez (who has had a disaster of a career so far), reach the next level.

**2051 prediction:** 75-87. Overall, it'll be fairly plug-and-play for the Pharaohs, but if they play everybody to their strengths and make some wise waiver pickups, you can maybe squint and see a .500 season in the cards.

# GBC Preview

## Jerusalem Hebrew Hammers

**2050 record:** 99-63, 1st place in Burt League

**2050 recap:** Easily the premier team of the UMEBA, Jerusalem stormed to 99 wins and a United Cup championship, fighting off underdog Tripoli for the title in seven games. The rotation especially shined: Leon Ludeman won Pitcher of the Year, with Jorge Vega and Hsuang-tsung Xú finishing second and third in voting.

**Notable additions:** RP Toby Bundy, SP Shakir Abdul, 1B/DH Bratislev Marousek, C Shan Guan, SP David Díaz, C Felipe Delgado, 1B/DH Bartolo Ortíz



*Last champions of the now defunct UMEBA*

**Losses:** IF Javier Castillo, RP Bron Cortez, SS Jonathon O'Reilly, SP Leon Ludeman, C Vicente Meléndez, RP Adrian Kraft, RP Gilberto Cruz, RP Bryce Emery, OF Ricardo Esparza, SP Jorge Vega, SP Manuel Andrés, IF Jack Nichols, RP Jan Chmelyk, IF/OF Mario Rodríguez, SP Hsuang-tsung Xú, C Baden Dutton.

**2051 outlook:** "If it wins a ring, don't change a thing," they say. And Jerusalem took these words to heart, bringing back nearly the entire starting lineup from their championship team.

The only guy who left was longtime fan favorite Baden Dutton, who the Hammers replaced with Felipe Delgado. Delgado is an excellent defensive catcher who can also hit well, having been a .300 hitter multiple times in the BBA.

Alejandro Córdova is the table setter and catalyst of the lineup. He had a career year last year and will be looking to build on it. Following him, it doesn't get any easier: the duo of Dane Licht and Garry Mihalsky combined for 66 home runs last season, and both have a tremendous eye at the plate. They'll make life very difficult for right-handed pitchers.

Against lefty hurlers, it's more of a speed-based attack. Young center fielder Bill Bowers is a slap hitter who also walks a lot, and second baseman Juan Castillo possesses an excellent combination of speed and power.

The rotation is where Jerusalem made wholesale changes. Gone are the three pitchers who swept the Pitcher of the Year voting last season, leaving the Hammers short-handed for starters.

Anchoring the rotation will be new pickup David Díaz, who missed most of last season with Tommy John surgery. They'll also be counting on Edwin Harney to stay healthy and throw a bit better than last season, when his 4.65 ERA was not exactly befitting of his \$5.3M contract. To fill out the rotation, they'll promote top prospect Milojica Suljic (whether he's ready or not), and take a look at young two-way player Adel bin Hasam al Din. He's more of a hitter than a pitcher, frankly, but Jerusalem really doesn't have any other options.

The Hammers will also be missing Jan Chmelyk, the shutdown closer from their championship team. But Toby Bundy, the closer from Tripoli's pennant-winning squad, should fill in quite respectably.

**2051 prediction:** 71-91. Losing their top three starters while hanging their hopes on a guy coming back from a season-long injury is risky, and I think there will be a drastic shift in the Hammers' performance this year. Unless they add some depth, and quickly.

*Can they be the first GBC 2x champs in 2051?*



# GBC Preview

## London Monarchs Baseball Club

**2050 record:** 73-89, 3rd place in Burt League (as Beirut Cedars)

**2050 recap:** The then-Cedars were bad. You may see “3rd place” and think that sounds okay, but their offense was the worst in the UMEBA, and they only finished third out of sheer luck and beating their Pythagorean record by three games. On top of that, their top three players by WAR — Hyeon-uk Hong, Jamie Angwin and Marco Acheson — all became free agents at the end of the season.

**Notable additions:** SP Leon Ludeman, SP Daniel Camacho, SP Santiago Zúñiga, OF Niccolo Machiavelli, IF Rakim Stevenson, OF José Domínguez, OF Ricardo Esparza, IF Sven Burel, C Mario Rolo, 1B José Ayala, C Ramón Camacho, LF Paul Kemp, IF Cary Brackett, IF Takechi Eida, IF Carlos Fernández, OF Al Garrett



*Now that Riyadh is gone, this is arguably the worst team in the GBC.*

**Losses:** RP Alejandro Cruz, RP Masaru Yokota, OF Hyeon-uk Hong, SP Boris Milatovic, CF Jamie Angwin, SP Duane Coutts, SP David Díaz, 1B Marco Acheson, SP Dmitr Zhivlyuk.

**2051 outlook:** Give London some credit, for they’ve assembled a halfway-decent lineup from almost nothing but players on minimum-salary deals and minor-league contracts.

First baseman Carlos Fernández has been a dependable bat in the BBA, and his fielding should improve moving to first base.

At second base, incumbent In-sik Park will share time with Takechi Eida, former Position Player of the Year and one of the all-time UMEBA greats. At short, it’s defensive wizard Sven Burel. It’s basically an All-Star team of bargain bin players.

The only position player on the roster making more than \$1 million is third baseman Nicolai Reshetkov, now by tenure the old timer of the group. He’s a great hitter who goes to all fields, and has the gap power and speed to lead the league in doubles and triples.

And then there’s Sangmok Kim, who is a decent power bat, but whose glove might force him into full-time DH duty.

All of that gives the offense a nice, balanced attack that’ll win them a few ballgames. Emphasis on “few”.

*You may see “3rd place” and think that sounds okay...*

The rotation is where London spent some money, doling out a \$14.6M one-year contract to steal Leon Ludeman from Jerusalem. Ludeman is good, but I’m not sure that he’s ‘nearly 30 percent of your team’s entire payroll’ good.

Following him, they’ve got Daniel Camacho, who will be asked to start for the first time since 2047. What both he and Ludeman do quite well is limit home runs, which should do a lot to keep the Monarchs in ball games.

Closing games will be David Prigent, who was quietly effective for last year’s Cedars, saving 33 games in 35 opportunities. Another groundballer, he should continue to be effective as long as he has a decent defense behind him.

**2051 prediction:** 68-94. They may be better than last year’s team, but luck will even out and see them drop to last place. The lineup lacks star power, and the rotation is pretty thin after the two frontliners.



## Caleca Team News Award

*Twin Cites – 2050.5 River Monsters Media Campaign Goes Viral*

The people nominated 9 selections they felt qualified for team news of the year in 2050. When the voting closed, and the votes were counted, winning by 2x the next highest vote getter was Twin Cites GM Alan Ethers submission!



Usually we post the entire content's of the article here in the Media Guide, however since Alan's TN contains plenty of animated GIF it would not do it justice.

So for your viewing pleasure, click the following link below (don't worry its not a rick-roll) and if you haven't read it, do yourself a favor and check it out. This is one of the many reasons that makes this league to enjoyable.



2050 - Caleca Team News Winner

# A Newcomers Perspective

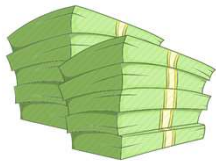
*My Take on the 2050-2051 Free Agency Period*

Kurt Imher



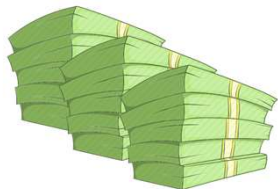
## **Pedro Gomez (Long Beach Surfers) - 3 years, \$36M**

One of the best catchers in the league, Pedro Gomez is the kind of consummate professional who can join an underperforming team like Long Beach and help turn things around in a hurry. He's a veteran backstop who can handle a pitching staff while also being dangerous at the plate. Long Beach tried young Joe Zwicker in 2050, and while he didn't sink, he didn't do much more than tread water either. Gomez gives them a right-handed platoon mate that allows Zwicker to emerge on his own terms. The contract they gave Gomez will sting in 2052 if he falls off a cliff, but there is always risk inherent in signing an over 30 year-old free agent. At least this one is among the best at his position, and the Surfers hold a team option on 2053 that limits their liability.



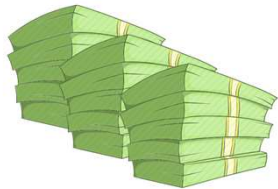
## **Scott Davis (Mexico City Aztecs) - 6 years, \$51M**

Contracts of this size usually don't warrant a thumbs up, but Davis has several factors working in Mexico City's favor: his age, his past performance, and his popularity with the fans. With 2051 being his age 26 season, Davis may still carry upside to what he's shown so far, and what he's shown were flashes of being one of the best young starting pitchers in the Brewster during his early 20s. Indeed, this contract pays for second or third starter production, and that is his track record. He retains a three-pitch mix that includes a plus changeup, allowing him to be equally effective against batters standing on either side of the plate. If there is any risk, it is with concerns around his durability and being able to play out a six-year contract.



## **Bret Powers (Charlotte Cougars) - 4 years, \$52M**

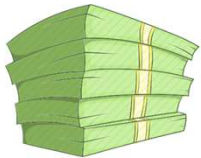
A career .281/.328/.556 hitter in the BBA, the only thing holding Bret Powers back thus far is the amount of playing time Yellow Springs afforded him. Those career numbers translate to 3.6 WAR per 600 PAs, but the 30 year-old has never received more than 441 PAs in a season. Powers will be a mediocre defender in the corner outfield by the time his contract ends, but that risk is offset by the fact his fourth year with the Cougars is a vesting option requiring 585 PAs. If his skills diminish sufficiently, Charlotte will surely adopt the YS9 approach of platooning him more aggressively.



**\$139M**

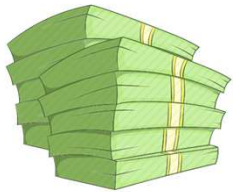
# A Newcomers Perspective

*My Take on the 2050-2051 Free Agency Period*



## **Francisco Ortiz (Las Vegas Hustlers) - 2 years, \$2.7M**

The contraction of the GBC offered unique opportunities in the 2050-2051 free agent class, with several younger-than-normal free agents available. The headlining young talent received long, expensive contracts and it remains to be seen whether more of those high-risk, high-upside signings should have been included somewhere on this list. Instead, let's highlight a modest signing by the Las Vegas Hustlers. Francisco Ortiz is a 26 year-old starting pitcher who won't overpower BBA hitters, but the movement on his pitches--a great forkball in particular--should allow him to eat innings and contribute at the back of the Hustlers rotation. Even better, with less than a year of MLB experience, Ortiz can be retained for an additional four seasons beyond 2051 if things click.



## **Jesper Sonderlei (Twin City River Monsters) - 3 years, \$12.8M**

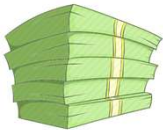
In a similar vein to Francisco Ortiz, the Twin City River Monsters plucked Jesper Sonderlei out of the GBC on a modest deal. Twin City hopes the 25 year-old corner outfielder comes into his own in his new league, tapping into what league scouts believe is plus power. Those scouts see the rest of his offensive game as well-rounded, in addition to describing him as a hard worker with a sparkplug personality. Sonderlei failed to produce much statistically in the GBC so further development is imperative, but that's a reasonable expectation for a young player just entering his prime on such an economical contract.

**\$15.5M**



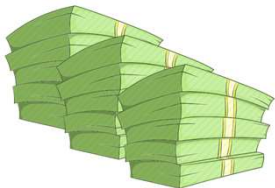
# A Newcomers Perspective

*My Take on the 2050-2051 Free Agency Period*



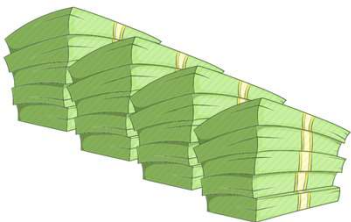
## **Shalom Van Buuren (Seattle Storm) - 2 years, \$10M**

There was a feeding frenzy on defense-first shortstops over the offseason, a category Shalom Van Buuren certainly qualifies for. The 32 year-old shortstop has only been worth 2.7 WAR in his 2,100 PA career in the BBA, tallying only 0.9 WAR in his most recent season. This isn't the type of contract that sinks a franchise, but it is a head scratcher for a player of this age and performance. To add insult to injury, the second season of the deal is a player option, meaning even if Van Buuren plays great the best Seattle can do to parlay it into future value is Type B compensation or a deadline trade.



## **Matthew Hewat (Twin City River Monsters) - 6 years, \$51M**

Another young GBC product, Matthew Hewat is a light-hitting shortstop who will need to play award-worthy defense to live up to this long-term contract. Although only 25 years of age, Hewat's defense peaked in his early 20s as he saw his ZR fall to a negative value by his final season in the GBC. The River Monsters will have a disaster on their hands if his defense isn't above average because the scouts see Matthew Hewat's bat as lacking much in the way of home run power and he does not take many walks. That adds up to too much risk to give a player \$8.5M annually, as well as a player option in his final season under contract.



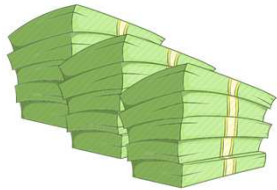
## **Felipe Vega (Mexico City Aztecs) - 6 years, \$69M**

Mexico City handed out several big contracts this offseason, some of which were worth the risk-- Felipe Vega's six-year deal is not one of those contracts. Vega is an aging 31 year-old corner outfielder a few years removed from his elite peak. Gone are the days of Vega hitting 40 home runs, with his SLG% falling below .500 for the first time in his career in 2050. Without providing any defensive value, it will be imperative Vega not decline any further offensively for this contract to remain respectable. A player opt-out after the 2051 season means a one-year spike might be the best possible outcome for the Aztecs; two team options at the end of the contract could be necessary insurance policies when Vega reaches his mid-30s.

**\$130M**

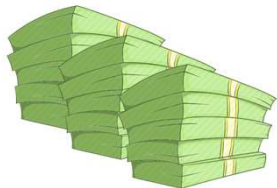
# A Newcomers Perspective

*My Take on the 2050-2051 Free Agency Period*



## **Raul Fernandez (Seattle Storm) - 3 years, \$42.2M**

Raul Fernandez is a feared power bat who had a career high .390 OBP in 2050. But this will be his age 33 season, and this kind of AAV is usually reserved for elite players rather than an aging one-dimensional first baseman. There are question marks about how his game will play in the deep outfield dimensions of the Storm home ballpark. To make matters worse, the final year of this three-year pact is a player option, further limiting the upside of the deal.



## **Angel Zalapa (Portland Lumberjacks) - 4 years, \$35M**

The Lumberjacks gave the 35 year-old Angel Zalapa all of the power in this relationship. He has an opt-out following the 2051 season, and holds a player option in 2053. A team option in 2054 offers some silver lining, but even that option comes with a \$2.5M buyout. Granted, Zalapa is a sure-fire Brewster Hall of Famer, but he's been in decline for two consecutive seasons since his elite 2048, and last year even saw his OBP fall below .300 and the fewest home runs of his career. Unless he has an excellent 2051 and opts out, this will become a contract Portland regrets.

**\$77.2M**

# CONGRADULATIONS

*2<sup>ND</sup> TITLE IN TEAM HISTORY*



# Good Cop / Bad Cop

## Heartland Division

Brett Golden & Chad Nason

### Nashville Bluebirds



**GOOD COP**

GC: In a season that saw the lowest FL ERA in BBA history, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest Avg in FL history, the Bluebirds were almost half a point lower in ERA and half a point higher in Avg. The younger guys have more seasoning this year and it's kind of hard to see who dethrones them in the Heartland this season.



**BAD COP**

BC: Sure, winning is easy when Ron is AFK and Shaw is only halfway trying. Now they have to look out for Twin Cities and Des Moines in the latter part of the decade and see if they can still compete.

### Louisville Sluggers



**GOOD COP**

GC: Luke takes over a very strong pitching staff. That feared outfield trio has pared down to Kwak, but the offense will still be really tough. Another postseason appearance for the Sluggers should be in the works.



**BAD COP**

BC: That's a lot of money for a corner outfielder on the wrong side of 30. Rookie moves like this will see Loserville permanently lit up on the stadium by their own fans.

### Madison Wolves



**GOOD COP**

GC: Shimizu and Stone are still here and that's a good start. Oh yeah, and that Allende guy and that Miyamoto guy as well. That should be enough to send the Wolves hunting a playoff spot this year. If Mike can turn some of that minor league pitching depth into cap space and that one extra piece, crazy things could happen in the Heartland.



**BAD COP**

BC: Pretty much the same team they ran out there last year. Yep, still best 6th place team of all-time.



# Good Cop / Bad Cop

## *Heartland Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

### Yellow Springs Nine



**GOOD COP**

GC: Ron will of course be missed. The Nine lost a lot of talent this offseason but don't get too eager Heartland teams; runs will be a premium when you face Yellow Springs. Dong-Po Thum is still around so don't let your guard down. And, when Ron makes it back on a regular basis, that will be fun to watch.



**BAD COP**

BC: Apparently division titles don't even matter anymore. I'll take a Caleca over a Pulitzer any day.

### Chicago Black Sox



**GOOD COP**

GC: Strong pitching and a few studs sprinkled throughout the lineup – not a bad way to start the season. Add in a top 10 farm system and the future is looking bright. Does Isam stick around or do you trade him for someone's entire draft or minor leagues? Tough call but either way, if Mike finds a way to get the fans back in the stadium and re-fill those coffers, the future could look even brighter.



**BAD COP**

BC: Hello, Fernando Castillo. Goodbye, Fernando Castillo. Please take any chance at the playoffs with you to your next doctor's appointment. The Black Sox need surgical precision this year to keep this franchise relevant.

### Des Moines Kernels



**GOOD COP**

GC: Aaron performed miracles in his first season – an increase of 13 wins, the team's first sub-4.00 ERA in 21 years, and how about an increase of over 2.3 million fans entering the stadium? That's a new team record, in year one of Weiner's reign, and only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in the long history of Kernels baseball they have been over 4 million. Oh yeah, that's a crazy pitching staff out there in the corn fields too.



**BAD COP**

BC: If you build it, they will come. Too bad it's being built in a fucking cornfield.

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Heartland Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*



**GOOD COP**

## Omaha Cyclones

GC: Justin has had a rough couple of seasons these last couple of years. For a team that lost 3 players this offseason (for a total of 0.0 WAR lost) and added a pretty good free agent SP from the GBC and finally got that coveted stud SS that's he's been looking to get for a long time, I'm not counting him out of anything.



**BAD COP**

BC: Whose next? Charlotte Cyclones? Oh yes, the Omaha Cyclones. Sorry. Was mixing them up with their counterpart in the Johnson League who also always performs below expectations.



**GOOD COP**

## Twin Cities River Monsters

GC: Lots of change this offseason in the Twin Cities. 13 players lost and 13 players added. Alan increased the TWC win totals by 16 last season, his first at the helm. The addition and subtractions seem to be very methodical and easily understandable. Alan still has almost \$23M in cap space to play with and next year that could be either \$20-33M more. If next year's FA class looks like this year's, don't get too comfortable swimming in the river.



**BAD COP**

BC: Wait. Twin Cities hasn't been relegated to the Pacific yet? Not even the Johnson League?! \$20 if you can name three players on their team.

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Pacific Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Vancouver Mounties



**GOOD COP**

GC: Phil Cole got better this offseason – now his knuckleball moves even more. Yeah, said no one in the Pacific. Playoffs for the first time in 10 years after a 19-win increase from 2049. 3B Tyler decided to Opt Out and try Free Agency and as spring training is about to start, still sits at home without a team. Schroeder has been around a while and knows what he is doing. And, never count out a guy named Brett.



**BAD COP**

BC: Brett spelled backwards is Tterb, which is awfully close to Terd. What can Brown do for YOU?

## Sacramento Mad Popes



**GOOD COP**

GC: Hard to say that there is a better OF/DH group in the Frick. Shoeless held back from temptation and will be bargain hunting as Spring Training starts, which will be scary with almost \$23M to spend under the cap. If the Popes stay healthy, they will be more than relevant.



**BAD COP**

BC: The team that Ted built. Can't even win the Pacific. luls

## Hawaii Tropics



**GOOD COP**

GC: The defense returns 3 Gold Glove winners and the offense starts with the Puckett winner behind the plate in Ron Shiplack. The time to strike for Hawaii as around \$35M comes off the books after this season with a lot of arbitration coming and a lot of key holes to fill. If Shoeless can win in the Pacific, surely James can too.



**BAD COP**

BC: Pretty solid team behind Wullenweber. Oh. Wait. Making the playoffs with this squad is gonna be harder than James' croutons. Would be a lot easier to know it's time to strike if he had any clocks remaining in his office.

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Pacific Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Valencia Stars



**GOOD COP**

CG: Lost a bunch of guys that didn't do too much last year. Picked up 2 that put those guys to shame. Strong defense at SS and CF will always seem to make sense. Good pitching in a pitcher's park and a plethora of decent OFers to work in, the Stars can get back to easily winning more than 62 games.



**BAD COP**

BC: Valencia has more ups and downs in the past few season than Six Flags Magic Mountain. Jorge de Los Santos was the Pacific League MVP last season. His education from Dr. Nick's School for Healing People Mostly Good is under review.

## San Fernando Bears



**GOOD COP**

GC: Gone is long-time GM Randy Weigand. In comes newcomer Kurt Imher. Kurt is quickly realizing the quirks of Chico's Bail Bonds Field and the roster he has to work with. Once he decides on the path forward, it'll be fun to see how far he can take this team.



**BAD COP**

BC: Any hope of playoffs in 2051 sailed away with Randy. This team is ready for a fire sale so they can start with a blank slate. That stinky valley has a new meaning in San Fernando now.

## Long Beach Surfers



**GOOD COP**

GC: One more year of Danya for Lane and with another projected FA class that could at least compete with this year's look out for the Surfers...but next year. They'll still be competitive in the Pacific with guys like Morris and Rutgers. Doubling attendance numbers from 2049 to 2050 should bump up that budget too.



**BAD COP**

BC: Tchekanov gave everything he had last season and now is paying the price as his stuff this spring seems to be lackluster. The Surfers are still the ones paying the heavy price though and now might not be able to trade him.



# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Pacific Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Valencia Stars



**GOOD COP**

CG: Lost a bunch of guys that didn't do too much last year. Picked up 2 that put those guys to shame. Strong defense at SS and CF will always seem to make sense. Good pitching in a pitcher's park and a plethora of decent OFers to work in, the Stars can get back to easily winning more than 62 games.



**BAD COP**

BC: Valencia has more ups and downs in the past few season than Six Flags Magic Mountain. Jorge de Los Santos was the Pacific League MVP last season. His education from Dr. Nick's School for Healing People Mostly Good is under review.

## San Fernando Bears



**GOOD COP**

GC: Gone is long-time GM Randy Weigand. In comes newcomer Kurt Imher. Kurt is quickly realizing the quirks of Chico's Bail Bonds Field and the roster he has to work with. Once he decides on the path forward, it'll be fun to see how far he can take this team.



**BAD COP**

BC: Any hope of playoffs in 2051 sailed away with Randy. This team is ready for a fire sale so they can start with a blank slate. That stinky valley has a new meaning in San Fernando now.

## Long Beach Surfers



**GOOD COP**

GC: One more year of Danya for Lane and with another projected FA class that could at least compete with this year's look out for the Surfers...but next year. They'll still be competitive in the Pacific with guys like Morris and Rutgers. Doubling attendance numbers from 2049 to 2050 should bump up that budget too.



**BAD COP**

BC: Tchekanov gave everything he had last season and now is paying the price as his stuff this spring seems to be lackluster. The Surfers are still the ones paying the heavy price though and now might not be able to trade him.

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Pacific Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Seattle Storm



**GOOD COP**

GC: As of this writing, no team has added more net WAR than the Storm. Look for Fernandez to have a bounce-back year now that he is settled in to the area. If Jamie Angwin can come over from the GBC and be that spark for Julyan and Andrade, the Storm should easily increase in last year's 66 wins.



**BAD COP**

BC: Even strong pitching prospects ready to come up won't save this God forsaken franchise from head-scratching deal after head-scratching deal. Angwin isn't good, but better than trying to watch Julyan try and play CF.

## Portland Lumberjacks



**GOOD COP**

GC: Ah, Portland. 108 wins and a Division Championship. That pitching staff is killer – almost an entire rotation that could be an Ace on any other team, and they are all 26 or younger. Assistant GM Kate Ficus needs to “prod” McBride to get back to career averages. The offense isn't what it was last year (only Nashville lost more WAR) but the new guys can do some damage as well.



**BAD COP**

BC: Portland sucks more than....no, that's too easy. If McBride or Smith go down with injury, or regression, this team has problems. Can't win a game (-1) – 0, even with that pitching staff.

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Atlantic Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Brooklyn Robins



**GOOD COP**

GC: The Robins will likely get their new franchise player in Felix Ramos or Emilio Morales Jr. in this year's amateur draft. Either player could help turn this franchise around.



**BAD COP**

BC: The Robins haven't won more than 60 games in 5 seasons. Last year they had less than one million fans show up. No other team has ever had an attendance of less than a million, so congrats on that!

## Jacksonville Hurricanes



**GOOD COP**

GC: The Canes made the playoffs for the fourth consecutive year in 2050, but will have to try again without 3B Jeremy Pickens and SP Scott Davis. If they choose to rebuild, trading David Simpson on his expiring deal should help jump start a rebuild.



**BAD COP**

BC: Simpson sure is earning that \$28M a year contract with that 1.6 WAR. At least you'll have to replace almost half your team next season.

## Montreal Blazers



**GOOD COP**

GC: Veterans Joe Bradshaw, Linea Aldo, and Eduardo Gonzalez could see their remaining days as Blazers as the club will likely look for younger talent. GM Jeffrey Everroad is beginning his second year with the club and can easily have a blank canvas to put his vision on the field.



**BAD COP**

BC: Go ahead, change your name so its in French, that way the Americans wont know who they are talking about when they say the team is "pue."

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Atlantic Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Atlantic City Gamblers



**GOOD COP**

GC: The Gamblers will be on their third GM since winning the pennant last season, but bring back almost the entire roster in hopes of a repeat. Carlos Flores and Juan Rivera will surely do their part in the process.



**BAD COP**

BC: I guess you can get by without signing any free agents or making any moves. The good news is though, in 3 seasons 89% of your roster will be taken up by 6 players. That should do the trick.

## Rockville Pikemen



**GOOD COP**

GC: A busy offseason sees longtime Pikeman, Danny Leach, headed to Boise, but Angel Gonzalez joins via trade with San Fernando. GM Jim Slade has done a great job retooling this team and you can expect more moves.



**BAD COP**

BC: Nothing like being handed a perennial playoff team and then stripping it down. At least it's a team of young guys – old guys get hurt.

## New Orleans Crawdads



**GOOD COP**

GC: The Crawdads have a good mix of youngsters and veterans, headlined by one of the best players in the BBA – Juan Donestevéz. Expect a third straight playoff appearance.



**BAD COP**

BC: There's a guy named Nigel Laverick on this team. Enough said.



# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Atlantic Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Charm City Jimmies



**GOOD COP**

GC: The rebuild in Charm City begins as star CF, Felix Roman, is traded for a handful of prospects that are only a few bumps away from making the Jimmies the team of the future!



**BAD COP**

BC: Don't let the name fool you – the place is anything but charming. Addition by subtraction with the loss of Roman is the only thing I can think of in this case.

## Charlotte Cougars



**GOOD COP**

GC: Aaron Haney and Brett Powers are added to an already impressive offense. If pitching can limit walks, expect the Cougars to compete for the division title.



**BAD COP**

BC: We've been hearing for years about The Plan®. I find it interesting we've never really heard much about it. This GM is all smoke-and-mirrors. The training rolling at you doesn't look like its stopping.

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Frontier Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Mexico City Aztecs



**GOOD COP**

GC: One would seem to think it would be hard to recover after losing Aaron Haney to free agency, but the Aztecs are the big winners this offseason after signing Felipe Vega and Scott Davis. Oh yeah, and they traded for the best CF in the game for a bag of peanuts. They might have what it takes to unseat Vegas as the Frontier champs.



**BAD COP**

BC: Lost a good amount of WAR but it seems like it got replaced nicely. Wont matter, Vegas will still find a way to beat the Aztecs back.

## San Antonio Outlaws



**GOOD COP**

GC: The Outlaws have star power in the middle of the lineup and top of the rotation, but need some role players to step up in order to compete in the Frontier. Majid bin Husam is ready to break out in a big way.



**BAD COP**

BC: An amazing pitching staff, cant deny it. But, you still need to score runs in order to win a game. Maybe the Outlaws can win 69 games this season so at least the reporters can have some fin writing about this team.

## Calgary Pioneers



**GOOD COP**

GC: A lot of pop in the middle of this lineup makes the Pioneers dangerous and Franklin Badger should be a nice addition to the rotation. Another impact arm will keep Calgary near the playoffs.



**BAD COP**

BC: Good thing there wasn't a ton of guys in FA that could play 1B or DH. Even better that the Pioneers have almost \$30M wrapped up in those super scarce positions. No need to spend that money somewhere else.

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

Frontier Division

Brett Golden & Chad Nason

## Las Vegas Hustlers



**GOOD COP**

GC: Despite losing Damek Korbelt as a cap casualty, the Hustlers should still win 100+ games for the fifth straight season. This team has no weak spots on the roster, but dancing around the salary cap could see more familiar faces departing.



**BAD COP**

BC: The Hustlers keep talking about having to start rebuilding this year. Gee, guess that means they'll only win 90+ games instead of 100+. Nobody likes humble-braggers.

## Phoenix Talons



**GOOD COP**

GC: Kondo and Moelling provide a solid 1-2 punch atop the rotation and the Talons have arguably the best bullpen in the league, which should help some of the inconsistencies in the lineup.



**BAD COP**

BC: I looked at some FA pitchers this year. Really liked a couple. Then I saw that they had played for Phoenix and passed – they'll blow their shoulder or elbow out before too long. Its called "The Talons Way" of playing baseball.

## Edmonton Jackrabbits



**GOOD COP**

GC: I hear Edmonton is beautiful in the summer.



**BAD COP**

BC: "I hear Edmonton is beautiful in the summer." Not if you're a baseball fan!

# Good Cop / Bad Cop

*Frontier Division*

*Brett Golden & Chad Nason*

## Boise Spuds



**GOOD COP**

GC: Losing Moelling to free agency is tough, but replacing him with Danny Leach and rookie Gavrilovich Mastinsky will do the trick. Offense needs some tuning, but expect the Spuds to play around .500 ball.



**BAD COP**

BC: Three times out of the 25 seasons in Boise's existence they have been over .500 in wins. People keep showing up to the stadium though. Boise must be more boring of a town than Edmonton.

## El Paso Chilis



**GOOD COP**

GC: The Chilis won 29 more games last year than they did in 2048. Nearly 50 games better than 2047. This young team has yet to play its best baseball and Hector Cano is coming off his first Silk award at the ripe age of 23.



**BAD COP**

BC: Can the Chilis maintain their success or just slip back into mediocrity again. Seems like the rest of the Frontier might be having more or less of a down season so it might be a good time to strike. I'm sure the ghosts of GMs past will come back to make sure that doesn't happen though.



**Whitby, Ontario** is a rather nondescript town. With a population of over 100,000, some would consider it a decent-sized city. However, in the Greater Toronto Area, it's just another suburb on the North shore of Lake Ontario, outclassed even by its neighboring city of Oshawa.

If one were to drive around Whitby a few years back, one might catch the sight of youngsters playing Little League at a place like Pringle Creek Park, or maybe Optimist Park down the street. Summers in Canada don't last long, but everyone makes the most of the few short months of good weather each year.

Especially Kyle and Emily Hanna.

Kyle works at the GM Assembly plant over in Oshawa, while Emily is an administrator down at Durham College. It's tough to raise a family with both parents working full time, but that never seemed to dampen the Hanna's enthusiasm for baseball season. Durham College doesn't have a summer semester, and Kyle has enough seniority at GM to take a good size chunk of vacation time once June rolls around. He and Emily always followed the Canadian teams like the Vancouver Mounties and Montreal Blazers, not to mention Calgary and Edmonton.

Even so, the biggest baseball fan in the Hanna family wasn't Kyle, or Emily, or even their son Jason. No, the true baseball fan was their daughter Jodie.

Jodie was always baseball obsessed. She was six years old when Edmonton won the first BBA Championship of their amazing '38 to '45 run of success; and she was glued to the TV well past her bedtime watching stars like Bobby Lynch, Jubal Troop, and Steve Collins bring the BBA title back to Canada for the first time in 17 seasons. Naturally, her Christmas present that year was her first baseball glove.

Tee Ball and Little League followed; Kyle and Emily supporting their daughter through those tough first few years that see many youngsters give up the sport for good. She was always buzzing around the local ballfields, even in the mud of spring and the harsh winds of fall... so much so that everyone called her 'Skeeter'. But Jodie didn't just participate, she thrived. She always wanted to be a pitcher "like Jubal", she would say. And one day in her third season of youth baseball, Jodie got the chance she always wanted.

## The Skeeter Chronicles

*Sean Marko*

Now, these days, it's not uncommon to see a few ponytails among the little leaguers. What was uncommon this time was the way one particular ponytail always seemed to get the bigger kids out. How this little girl begged to pitch every day, before even understanding the reason for youth pitch counts. How she dominated the local competition. Yep, Jodie was a natural.



*HS photo of Skeeter*

As a parent, it's always a thrill when you see your kids find something they truly love and excel at it. But with that thrill came anxiety for Kyle and Emily. Now it's not just Little League. There are travel teams. Tournaments. Never a weekend off. Even trips to Florida every March for spring competitions involving dozens of teams and hundreds of players. How far can she go? Were they ready for this? *Of course we are*, they would tell themselves. But in reality, fear of success can be just as real and powerful as the fear of failure.

Fast forward a few years, and little Jodie was now ready for high school. Not so little anymore, eh? Donald A. Wilson Secondary School had a baseball team, of course. And folks around Whitby had heard about Skeeter. But how would it turn out? Questions like this were quickly turned aside, as Jodie made JV her first year and Varsity as a sophomore. Players generally treated her like any other teammate, and she found some success early on.

But the road was hard. Hanna wasn't always in the starting rotation. The JV team only won 4 games her freshman year. And though no one would say she couldn't hit, there were other pitchers on the team that were very good with the bat, as most of the best high school hurlers are. Jodie never really liked hitting anyway, and couldn't shake feelings of being left out when she didn't pitch in the biggest games.

Sometimes, imposter syndrome started to creep in. *Do I really belong here?* she thought. It was always in the back of her mind. The doubts. The feeling that this team, these people in the stands, were merely tolerating her "because she's a girl". Every time the coach had to stop himself from addressing the players as *guys* and correcting himself to something like *team*, Jodie could feel the eyes glance toward her. 24 players would head to the locker room to celebrate a win or console a loss, while Jodie would walk the other way to a separate changing area.

As lonely as that sounds, it's nothing compared to her loneliness on the mound. When Jodie pitched in high school, she was good. Very good, in fact. The team won district tournaments. Success was not fleeting. Hanna won games, and everyone was happy for her. But the doubts kept creeping. Every walk or hit, she would glance at the sidelines to see if anyone else was warming up. When the opposing team hit a double, she could swear that she heard the runner on second base quietly catcalling her. The other teams were generally respectful; everyone in Whitby knew about her anyway. Even so, for Jodie, the enemy wasn't from without, it was from within.

As stated above, fear of success can be just as powerful as fear of failure. Every well pitched game would merely draw more attention to her. Every good season would just raise expectations for the next. As everyone else had more and more confidence in her, Jodie struggled to have confidence in herself, even as she was named MVP of the Ontario Provincial Tournament her senior year. The results were there, but was the passion for the game slipping away?

Jodie's parents, Kyle and Emily, were just as nervous. Senior year was coming to an end. What now? Were there any colleges that would even accept a female player? Of course, they reasoned. But where will she go? Despite plenty of success as a high school pitcher, there was surprisingly little interest from collegiate athletic programs. Most AD's never even imagined that Hanna would want to pitch after high school. After all, there's no future in the pros for a female baseball player.

Jodie had always wanted to be a pitcher like her hero Jubal Troop. She would send in baseball cards for him to autograph, and, surprisingly, he would accommodate the request. Troop had played in the minor leagues in Oshawa, so the Whitby return address likely caught his eye. In fact, after he retired, Troop actually attended the championship game her senior year, and watched her win that tournament MVP award. Fortunately for Jodie, she didn't see Troop until after the game; otherwise her nerves would have been even worse than they already were.

# The Skeeter Chronicles

No one was more excited to meet Jubal than Kyle and Emily Hanna, longtime fans of BBA baseball. After that championship game, Troop made his way through the stands and quietly introduced himself to the star struck parents of that pony-tailed pitcher who just won her high school the provincial title. What Jubal said next caught the Hanna's off guard: *So, where's she pitching after high school?*

Maybe it was the craziness of the moment – after all, the team was still celebrating on the field – but Kyle and Emily Hanna were initially speechless. They looked at each other, then out to their daughter, then back at Troop. *We are keeping our options open.* It was a rather strange thing for Kyle to say, considering the fact that there actually were no options.

The conversation probably lasted no more than ninety seconds. Hands were shaken, wishes for continued success were conveyed, and Troop made his way back to his car, trying to avoid being noticed and taking the spotlight away from the players on the field. As he drove away from the scene, Jubal called the front office of his former team. But it wasn't the Jackrabbits.... It was the Talons.

The Talons have a longstanding reputation for doing things their own way. If there was any pro team that would take a chance on Jodie Hanna, it was that crazy outfit from Phoenix, right? Troop played for the club toward the end of his career, and though he hated to leave Edmonton, he soon warmed to Phoenix's reliable fanbase, good weather, and laid back atmosphere in the Talons clubhouse. The team is famously loyal to its former players, and it took all of two minutes for his cold call to be connected to the GM.

Troop talked about this scene he just drove away from.

Yes, she's for real. She can play.

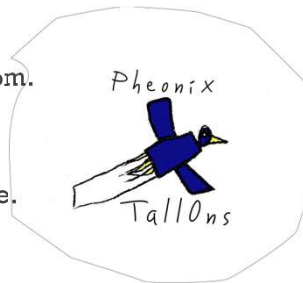
This could really happen if the opportunity was there.

No, it won't be a publicity stunt. Not if she's good.

This girl... this *pitcher*, can bring it. She can get guys out.

Look into this and you'll see for yourself.

Talk to you later.



Troop ended the call. Did he do the right thing? If this actually happens, what is he getting this family into? Jubal remembered back to his time in the minor leagues. All of the expectations and pressure. What if it doesn't work out? What if it DOES? Fear of success. Fear of failure.

## The Skeeter Chronicles

A couple of weeks later, a strange looking envelope showed up in the Hanna's mailbox. Kyle opened it and stood there, flabbergasted. He called out to his wife. *Ever been to Traverse City?* Yep, that crazy GM from that crazy team was willing to shake things up. Jodie and her family had been invited to the Talon's rookie league team in Northern Michigan to attend a tryout. It was a long drive around Lake Huron and down through Sault Ste. Marie, made even longer by anticipation and the weight of expectations.

Jodie had shown up early on that chilly, late spring morning. The field was still muddy from the previous night's rain, but the indoor complex was open, a few players here and there. The mood was a little dour in the building, given the weather and the fact that any player in the complex was there because they had not advanced to the next level after spring training. A new face can brighten the mood, however, and Jodie's presence was immediately noticed. As soon as she felt the eyes turn toward her, she felt that old creeping doubt start to get closer, but soon the personable nature of Angel Ramirez soon put her at ease.

The veteran Traverse City Talons pitching coach had seen many young players get their first taste of pro ball, including many from overseas. They are always nervous, as they should be. This is the real deal. But Ramirez knew that a well placed kind word or two can go a long way with these youngsters. *At least you won't have any trouble learning English!* He joked. Jodie resisted the urge to smile. Pros are supposed to be serious and determined, right? Time to get to work.

Later that morning, an email was sent to the Talons front office in Phoenix. Attached was the following scouting report:

**Hanna, Jodie** (2050) – Whitby, ON, CA (international free agent)

**Positional Profile:** RHP. Groundballer, pitches to contact. Added strength will clean up some mechanical issues. Defends position well. Needs third pitch.

**Frame:** 5-foot-9, 145-pounds. Slender build, good lower half power. Narrow shoulders will limit lever action and velocity.

**Psych Profile:** Good baseball intelligence. Hard worker. Questionable confidence at times.

**Delivery:** Quick, repeatable tempo out of the windup. Gets out front well. Could benefit from more lower half and core involvement.

**Arm Action:** RH. Quick arm, delivers from a low 3/4 slot. Good wrist enhances spin.

**Medical Report:** Clean MRIs. Good structure of ligaments and tendons. Low mileage arm.

**CB:** 79.96-84.3 mph. Can spot well with late movement low in the zone. Nice horizontal break. Close to a slurve. Changes speed and angle well. Needs more consistency. 2132 average rpm.

**Cir CH:** 77.86-80.90 mph. Has some good horizontal movement to it. Good pronation produces screwball-like effect. Command was spotty, showed it can be an out pitch if more consistent with command. 1780 average rpm.

**Projection:** 35-40/80. Short reliever. AAA/4A Upside. Will need to prove can handle big game pressure. Long term project, will take a few years work.

The email was replied to mere minutes after it was sent. Jodie was on her way out of the facility when the office admin caught up to her. As she listened to the news, she felt relief and terror at the same time. *Report to Talons International Complex in two weeks.* Her stomach tied up in knots. Her fingers trembled as she texted her parents the details. She didn't even notice the six figure signing bonus at the bottom of the document.

When it comes to trailblazing athletes, it's often the team taking just as much risk as the player. Will this be perceived as a publicity stunt? Will every move just be dismissed as a chance to sell jerseys or generate news copy? Absolutely. Once a decision is made, interpretation is left up to the observer. But second-guessing is counterproductive to progress, and is detrimental for all involved. As Jodie Hanna moves forward, so must the Talons. And vice versa.

Hanna spent most of the 2050 baseball season at the International Complex, getting used to life in the pros. In September of that year, she was called up to Rookie League Traverse City as that team was once again making their annual playoff run. The naysayers were out in force. *She's not even eligible for the post-season roster!* Comments piled up, emails were sent.

But supporters were just as vociferous as detractors. A roar went up when Hanna was introduced before each game of the Spike Nolan League championship series, even in the opponent's ballpark. The Talons know that they have to take this slow, without the perception of them taking it *too* slow. Jodie, despite being derisively called a 'cheerleader' in certain publications, truly bonded with her teammates and once again flashed that big smile she was known for back on the Little League fields of Whitby.

# The Skeeter Chronicles



Later this season, sometime in June, Jodie 'Skeeter' Hanna will throw her first professional pitch as a reliever for the Traverse City Talons, likely in front of a few thousand people in a nondescript early season game. Each step from there will be newsworthy.

The fear of success and fear of failure will be out in equal force. Her confidence must build and the Talons must have the courage to do the right thing despite what people may say. In a few years' time, she may very well be the first female pitcher in BBA Major League history. When and if that day comes, it will be because the Talons are ready. It will be because Kyle and Emily Hanna are ready. It will be because Skeeter is ready.

But will we be ready?

## The Skeeter Chronicles



*The future of Skeeter*

# League Preview

*Johnson League*

*Chris Wilson*



For the first time in 4 seasons, the Johnson League did not win the Brewster. And by Johnson League I mean the Las Vegas Hustlers. Are the times changing in the JL? The Atlantic City Gamblers surprised the Brewster world by knocking off the 3-time defending champions in last year's Doubleday Series. The Gamblers would eventually fall to the Nashville Bluebirds in the Brewster Series. Is Vegas riled up for revenge to return to glory or is the JL open for new blood?

Mexico City has made the moves to perhaps not only contend to knock off Vegas for the Frontier title but also take a run at the Brewster. Charlotte, perhaps angry over missing out of the post-season last year, has made some moves as well. How will the new GMs lay their claim to what's at stake in the JL? Does new blood mean new teams or new GMs at the top? Can New Orleans, Jacksonville, or Rockville do their part to win the JL?

Then there is Brooklyn, Montreal, and Charm City. Can they improve on last year's dismal seasons. Can San Antonio stop being an enigma to my predictions? Can Calgary take the next step? Can Phoenix actually make a post-season? Are woes still waiting for Edmonton and Boise? It's a new season, let's see.

And oh yeah, El Paso is here and perhaps here to stay. You've been warned!

# League Preview

*Johnson League*

*Chris Wilson*



## **Johnson League Atlantic Predictions:**

Charlotte Cougars - 92-70

Rockville Pikemen - 90-72

Atlantic City Gamblers - 89-73

New Orleans Crawdads - 88-74

Jacksonville Hurricanes - 86-76

Montreal Blazers - 70-92

Charm City Jimmies - 66-96

Brooklyn Robins - 56-106

# League Preview

Johnson League - Atlantic

Chris Wilson



## Brooklyn Robins

Prediction 56-106

The Brooklyn Robins enter the 2051 season with back to back 59 win seasons and are also on a run of 5 consecutive 100 loss seasons. This run began on what was their last trip to the post-season, a 91-71 2045 season that saw them advance to the DoubleDay Series. It's been tough sledding of late for a Robins team looking to regain some footing in a tough Atlantic Division.

The Robins haven't done much this off-season to improve their stock. They lost their key offensive piece in Felipe Vega who departed via free agency and has since signed on with Frontier rival Mexico City. The lifetime Robin had hit 434 homeruns with the club while posting 58.2 WAR as a Robin. One new face to watch this season was free agent signing Jayden Nicholls. Nicholls is slotted as a starter in the Robins rotation after spending his first 6 professional seasons with Tripoli of the GBC\*.

The most exciting players to watch this year in Brooklyn might be Tommy Bailey and Jose Ordonez. Bailey returns the highest WAR figure for an offense that doesn't return a whole lot. Ordonez is a lively arm in the bullpen but the problem will be getting Ordonez quality innings to pitch with his team in the lead.

The Robins are also a team in some financial trouble. The team is currently sporting a negative cash total as well as a budget of \$96 million, the lowest budget in the entire Monty Brewster. It appears that before Brooklyn can return to prominence again, they'll need to find a steady cash flow.

---

\*This is my first mention of the GBC, short for Global Baseball Consortium, in the league previews and I love it. For those that don't know, the GBC was the OG of online baseball leagues. At least from my perspective. I was in High School when I joined the GBC some 23 years ago and it ran off a program called Front Page Sports (FPS). Changing the UMEBA to the GBC is one of the greatest decisions we've made in the league! Go Atlantic City Mobsters!



# League Preview

*Johnson League - Atlantic*

*Chris Wilson*



## Jacksonville Hurricanes

Prediction 86-76

The Jacksonville Hurricanes enter the 2051 season on the coattails of 4 consecutive trips to the post-season. After a slow start to the 2050 season, the Hurricanes got the ship corrected and finished 88-74 which was good enough to earn the final wild card spot in the Johnson League last season. All it got them was a quick 3 game exit at the hands of Mexico City in the Geoghegan Series.

The headlining news entering the 2051 season will be the new face of Jack Whalen in the General Manager's position. Whalen inherits a team that lost some key pieces from last year's squad, including Pepe Prieto, Jose Arellano, and most notably Jeremy Pickens. A team financially strapped for cap space\*, it has put the handcuffs on making many moves this off-season for the new GM. Whalen did get creative by drafting 5 guys in the Rule 5 draft. One would assume not all 5 of these guys stick around the full season with the Hurricanes.

Despite the losses and financial restrictions, the Hurricanes still have some key players to watch in 2051. Stephen Best^ returns in the rotation as the top arm and is a quality ace to watch every 5th day. Peter Dean and Luis Rubio give the team a solid 3-man start to a good rotation. Offensively, David Simpson is back bringing with him his 31 homeruns from a season ago. Oddly enough, those 31 homeruns yielded only 65 runs batted in. Granted "Horrible" also brings with him a bloated salary of \$28 million that the new GM can't be all that unhappy about getting rid of at season's end.

All in all there are still some pieces in Jacksonville to keep this team in the running. But will cap-space inflexibility prohibit this team from staying in the hunt while up and coming teams look to take that final wild card spot in 2051? It could be a tough task for the new GM to keep the streak alive!

---

\*With no free agent signings made, Jacksonville is currently at \$107 million in payroll, leaving the new GM little wiggle room this off-season.

^Best finished 3rd in the Johnson League Nebraska voting last season.

# League Preview

Johnson League - Atlantic

Chris Wilson



## Montreal Blazers

Prediction 70-92

The Montreal Blazers enter the 2051 season looking to stop a downward trend that saw them win just 68 games a year ago. Five years removed now from their last trip to the post-season, this once proud franchise hasn't won a Landis Title since 2011. Last year's preview touched on pitching woes being their main problem and that came to fruition. The Blazers allowed a league worst 914 runs last season while scoring 677. The one thing the Blazers do have that is different this season is a new uniform and logo design. I'm a fan of the black on gray look of the jerseys and the "de Montreal" addition to the logo is nice, even for those of us that can't speak French.

The club signed Boris Milatovic\* from the GBC to try and boost the rotation. He'll join Don Jaramillo as the main pieces in a short rotation. Youngster Cheslav Evgrafov also has some potential to boost the rotation, but has some warts^ he'll have to overcome. Carlton Casson is a nice end of the bullpen guy.

Offensively, as I said last season, this team has some pieces. I said it last year and I'll repeat, with the offensive deficiencies in this league at the moment, Montreal could possibly trade off a nice offensive piece and perhaps get a nice arm or two in return. I know one team# in fact that has a few extra arms it could possibly trade for a bat or two. Aldo and Gonzalez return to anchor the middle of the lineup. Aldo had a real down year last year, perhaps all the more reason to find a suitor. Basgil and Wignes help hold down the lineup and backstop Joe Bradshaw is probably still one of the top 5 catchers in the league.

Unfortunately for Montreal, despite some nice pieces all around, I see some of the same problems that have plagued them for the last few seasons doing so again in 2051. I see them bouncing back slightly from last season's 64 win total but I don't see them quite challenging the .500 mark.

---

\*I'm always concerned about signing guys from the GBC in hopes they'll fix a team's woes. The GBC isn't exactly top tier talent and a guy with an ERA over 4.00 and a WHIP of 1.50 or higher does not translate well to BBA success usually.

# League Preview

Johnson League - Atlantic

Chris Wilson



## Atlantic City Gamblers

Prediction 89-73

The Atlantic City Gamblers surprised many around the league last season by making it all the way to the Brewster Series before falling short of their 2nd Brewster Title\*. Three straight seasons of 90+ wins finally yielded a chance at the title only to fall at the hands of Nashville in the Brewster Series. The big shock last season was how the Gamblers disposed of the 3-time reigning champion Vegas in convincing fashion.

The 2051 season enters with big expectations, but also big question marks. The biggest question mark being how will new GM Robert Savard handle the pressures of being handed a championship caliber team? He's done what most would expect a new GM to do when handed a 90-win, runner-up team to do. And that is: very little. Atlantic City lost little of note via free agency but has also signed little of note. Of course the team enters with \$106 million in salary, leaving very little wiggle room for the new Savard.

Luckily the team doesn't need a lot of changing. The Gamblers finished 2050 with both the 4th most runs scored and 4th fewest runs allowed in the Johnson League. Finishing that high in both is a good combination for success. Having a bonafide stud ace in Carlos Flores also helps your chances especially in the post-season. Few are better in the league than Flores\*. Curt Fields is another impressive arm that should be ready to break out any season now. And I'd encourage most of the division to not look at the stable of young arms ready to enter the league any moment now.

Offensively, this team is just as good. Juan Rivera is still one of the top hitters in the game^ and he has plenty of protection in the forms of Romero and Donadoni hitting behind him.

All in all, Robert has inherited a very good team and as long as he resists the early urge to make this team "his own", he should be able to ride some very early success in the BBA#.

---

\*In fact only one pitcher was better last season as Flores finished runner-up in the JL's Nebraska voting last season. Oddly enough though he went just 2-3 in the post-season, completely disproving my assumption he'd be unbeatable in a short series.

^Second in Silk Voting last season

#And there is nothing wrong with that. Just look at Madison circa 1999-2010. I rode Gates Elliott's team to a lot of success!

# League Preview

*Johnson League - Atlantic*

*Chris Wilson*



## Rockville Pikemen

Prediction 90-72

After seeing their 15 consecutive trips to the post-season snapped in 2049 and the departure of long-time General Manager Aaron Weiner, the Rockville Pikemen under 1st year GM Jim Slade returned to the post-season after a 91-71 bounceback claimed the 3rd wild card slot in the JL. The ride was short-lived as the Pikemen were promptly swept by the JL Champion Gamblers. Slade didn't a great job with a roster that was starting to age slightly and had some salary cap issues and getting things fixed enough to keep the team prominent and winning in the JL. Can he do it again in year 2?

The Pikemen have seen several familiar faces depart this off-season, either via free agency or trade.\* Gone are the team's starting 2B, CF, 3B, C, and a couple of relievers. But entering the fray to take their spots will be some new faces like Xavier Rangel and Angel Gonzalez^ . The team also brought in some mid-level arms that can round out the rotation or staff in a trade with Sacramento. The offense with Rangel and Gonzalez included in with Julio Barajas and Chip Puckett, should keep this team square in the hunt.

The rotation looks solid, if not over impressive. Nasir al Din bin Sahir enters as a good looking young arm and put up a 1.8 WAR his rookie season. He'll look to take the next leap towards being a stud pitcher while Jafaar Haamid adds the veteran leadership at the top.

Rockville is still financially stable with some wiggle room still left to improve in cap space. Jim has done a remarkable job of not shying away from making big moves and keeping Rockville in the spotlight after the departure of Weiner. Look for the Pikemen to stay in the hunt for a post-season spot in 2051.

---

\*In fact, only 4 teams have lost more WAR this off-season than Rockville: Nashville, Louisville, Portland, and Charm City.

^Rangel, A 3.0 WAR centerfielder from Edmonton in 2050 and Gonzalez a career 69.5 WAR guy with Vancouver and San Fernando.

# League Preview

Johnson League - Atlantic

Chris Wilson



## New Orleans Crawdads

Prediction 88-74

New Orleans enters the 2051 season on the heels of back to back trips to the post-season that included a division title a season ago. After a bye in the opening round, the “rusty” Crawdads\* were promptly swept out of the post-season by the Aztecs. Long time GM of New Orleans Jim Roberts looks to continue his team’s upward trend heading into 2051.

The Crawdads lost very little and signed a few guys into the fold for the season. 2B Edgardo Encarnacion opted for free agency and then back tracked, deciding to re-sign with the team just recently. The team also rolled the dice on pitcher Steven Anderton, an underdeveloped pitcher who has never pitched above AA ball in the GBC. The Crawdads gave Anderton a \$4 million deal, showing how much they need pitching in New Orleans. Jason Bowen was also brought in as a reserve catcher to back-up starter Todd Tatlock.

Offensively, it’s the same cast of characters we’ve seen of late in New Orleans. Juan Donestevéz^ took a slight step back in 2050 but is still one of the tops in the game. Fountain and Fredesso give them solid lineup pieces as well and keeping Encarnacion in the fold only keeps the team ticking. If only Mahine Karetu# would become the player Jim had hoped he’d be.

Pitching has been the sore spot recently with New Orleans. The team was 8th last season in runs allowed. Christian Burgos took a step forward by nearly doubling his WAR output while Christian Garcia stuck to form. Zak Johnson came in last season and rebounded nicely. After that, it is anybody’s guess. It will be interesting to track Anderton throughout the season and see if he make it to the big leagues and stays consistent.

All in all, should be another competitive season down in the Bayou for the Crawdads.

---

\*3 of the 4 teams that got a bye last season by winning their division during the regular season was promptly eliminated in the opening round. The only team to survive the opening round after winning their division was the eventual champions in Nashville. In fact, the 3 teams to lose out in the Doubleday managed to win just 2 games combined in their series, losing 12 games to 2.

^He’s still a 2-time Silk Award winner

#I regretted trading him from Portland to New Orleans at the time. Thinking he would end up a stud. In 6 seasons, he’s posted a combined -1.6 WAR.



# League Preview

Johnson League - Atlantic

Chris Wilson



## Charm City Jimmies

Prediction 66-96

The Charm City Jimmies, like many others in the division, are seeing a change at General Manager with David Burcicki taking over Stu Hopkins. The Jimmies are stuck in a mediocre funk, winning 70+ games in the last 3 years and finishing in 6th in the division in each of the last 4 seasons.

Burcicki has been busy this off-season with his biggest move being the decision to trade superstar CF Felix Roman to Mexico City. The trade didn't bring the Jimmies back anything of value necessarily for this year but did add a couple solid prospect arms. Gone are also Ashton Brooks\* and Jose Montana via free agency.

The team has been active adding guys this off-season via all avenues. Several guys have been claimed on waivers, drafted via the Rule 5 draft, and even via free agency. The most interesting addition thus far is that of 23 year old centerfielder Ramon Moreno. Charm City paid over \$5 million for his services in free agency. What makes him interesting is he's a lot like Anderton with New Orleans in that he's not fully developed yet but will be making big league dough<sup>^</sup>. He had a 1.0 WAR last year with Riyadh with the GBC before defecting over to the BBA.

Last season the Jimmies finished decently considering the boat had a rudder but apparently no one to steer the rudder. Let's see if Burcicki has what it takes to get this franchise back on course. It could be a tough road to sled in 2051, but perhaps things are looking up for the Jimmies.

---

\*Brooks was the team's best starting pitcher last season, posting 11 wins and a 4.3 WAR.

<sup>^</sup>Granted I suppose making pick-ups like these are no different and no more risky than forking over tons of money to sign an international free agent.

# League Preview

Johnson League - Atlantic

Chris Wilson



## Charlotte Cougars

Prediction 92-70

The Charlotte Cougars took a step back in 2050 and failed to make it to the post-season for the first time in 4 seasons. They also failed to win 90 games and had their first sub .500 season over that span\*. The team was unlucky in 2050 in some regards. They outscored their opponents last year and posted a negative pythag record. Their pythag record suggests they were closer to being the first team out of the post-season rather than a sub .500 team.

Brett Golden, not one to shy away from making moves, has once again gone out and brought in some pieces he hopes will return the Cougars to glory. Brett Powers brings his talents to the OF over from Yellow Springs. John McClain and Ismael Alfonzo bring their experience from Portland last year over to Charlotte. Bruce McKinley comes in as catcher depth and will battle it out with Roeloff Klooster for ABs behind the dish. But the big fish signing for Charlotte was Aaron Haney. Haney had one of his best seasons last year with Mexico City, producing an eye popping 7.8 WAR<sup>^</sup>. Throw in all of these guys along with Robert Menzies and Pedro Huerta and the Cougars have an extremely potent offense.

Haravira Chandar gives the Cougars a top of the rotation starter while Ruben bin Majid al Din# is a serviceable number 2 guy. Mercati and McClain are pretty good bottom of the rotation guys and should be good enough to win ball games considering the offense Charlotte will be running out there daily.

All in all, I like Charlotte's chances to rebound and recover from it's bad luck in 2050 and once again compete for a post-season spot.&

-----  
\*Brett won't admit it, but his team was jinxed from the start. For the first time ever in doing these previews I gave the Cougars a favorable report last season and predicted them to make the post-season. That prediction is why they lost and you can't convince me otherwise! <insert a coffee emoji here>

<sup>^</sup>It also nabbed him a 3rd place finish in the final JL Silk Voting in 2050.

#I fucking quit!

&You better drink a lot of coffee, Brett!

# League Preview

*Johnson League*

*Chris Wilson*



## Johnson League Frontier Predictions:

Las Vegas Hustlers - 99-63

Mexico City Aztecs - 98-64

El Paso Chilis - 86-76

Phoenix Talons - 81-81

Calgary Pioneers - 81-81

San Antonio Outlaws - 78-84

Boise Spuds - 74-88

Edmonton Jackrabbits - 62-100

# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson



## Mexico City Aztecs

Prediction 98-64

The Mexico City Aztecs enter the 2051 season with high expectations following a 99 win season that saw them advance all the way to the Cartright Series in the Johnson League, falling just 2 wins shy of the Brewster Series. It's back to back 90+ win seasons and trips to the post-season have Fred Holmes' bunch chomping at the bit for a return trip with division winning and perhaps even Brewster winning aspirations on the horizon.

Fred wasted little time filling the void left by Aaron Haney's 7.8 WAR from last season. The Aztecs struck the big trade this off-season, acquiring Felix Roman from the Jimmies and convincing Charm City to cover 50% of his salary in the process\*. The salary flexibility in Charm City doing that has allowed the Aztecs to add on Felipe Vega to play outfield, and sign Scott Davis and Angel Herrera to help with the pitching staff in free agency.

These were just some of the off-season moves made. Let's not forget this team still has guys like Geauxinue at SS and Collazo and Lara out there. And that's assuming you forgot they have this guy named Dave Corfield on the mound^.

Mexico City finished last season 3rd in runs scored and 2nd in runs allowed. Sure, they've lost some pieces since last year but they've done an outstanding job and finding top notch replacements. The team still has some salary cap flexibility to continue making this team better as well. I personally put Mexico City as one of the top favorites to win, not only the Frontier Division in 2051, but the Johnson League Pennant.#

---

\*Seeing Roman tossed around like this these days really has me regretting not trading for him in Portland years ago when I had the chance. The failed trade was all because I couldn't pull the trigger on moving Fernando Castillo for nothing but a salary dump. He'd leave at season's end anyway.

^Shame on you if you forgot last year's Nebraska winner.

#Hope you like coffee, Fred!

# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson



## San Antonio Outlaws

### Prediction 78-84

The San Antonio Outlaws are in a funk. After making it to the post-season in back to back years back in 2043 and 2043, the Outlaws have failed to post a winning season. Their best run was an 81-81 season back in 2047. The Outlaws are also a team that on paper has some quality talent but it never seems to translate into the standings. They've also been hit with some bad luck over the years and their pythag record suggests they've been better than their final standing shows in recent years.

With that said, coming off a 66 win season, San Antonio has done very little to improve its position via off-season moves. If anything they've gotten slightly worse due to the loss of Alfredo Rosas in free agency\* and some minor pieces like Ignacio Venegas.

But as mentioned, there are some pieces to be excited about watching if you're a fan of the Outlaws. Pedro Bustamante is a premier hitter in the league that Outlaw fans yearn to return to his 8.3 WAR days of 2048. Majid bin Husam did not take the leap forward in 2050 like many had hoped, but still shows the promise of being a Silk caliber weapon in the lineup. To do so, he'll likely need to get closer to 30 homeruns a season and push that OPS closer to .900. It is not out of the realm of possibility he can do that. The team also needs something other than a negative WAR out of Lucio de la Cruz.

On the pitching side, there is no reason that Ricardo Rivera, Francisco Franco, and Brody Picot aren't giving this team every right to win their starts 3 out of every 5 days. Most teams with a stable of 3 solid arms like that are typically in the hunt for a post-season spot.

Perhaps 2051 is a make or break season for the Outlaws. They have some pieces that many would look at and say they are a contender. But if it doesn't happen this year, perhaps Ryan Hetzer's bunch should start looking towards a rebuild and trade off these big names I've mentioned^.

---

\*He's still available as a free agent. The Outlaws do have some cap space but are showing a negative cash balance so it might be difficult for San Antonio to do much to improve without hoping some of these available free agents begin lowering their demands as the season approaches.

^I truly am puzzled by this bunch over the years of doing these previews.



# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson



## Calgary Pioneers

Prediction 81-81

The Calgary Pioneers have been on a steady decline of late. After 6 straight winning seasons that saw them appear in 4 post-seasons, the squad witnessed it's first losing season in 2050 by going 77-85 and finishing 5th in the Frontier. A solid offense was paired up with poor pitching that led to the poor finish in Calgary last season.

To try and fix some of the pitching woes, the Pioneers went out and signed Brian King in free agency. The former Madison Wolves hurler posted an 11 win season last season with a 4.0 WAR. King is extremely familiar with pitching in the Frontier League having spent 5 seasons with the Las Vegas Hustlers. After that Calgary has a whole slew of young, rookie types looking to crack the rotation as well as other new faces in Gerald Sizemore and Stanley Kowalski\*

Larry Stinson remains the focal point of the offense. The big bopper hit 38 homeruns last year, marking the first time in his career he's failed to clear the 40 homerun plateau, but still posted a solid 5.0 WAR on the season. He's joined offensively by "The Italian Stallion" who rebounded last season for a 4.7 WAR.^ Adam Backhouse is another guy who had a solid year in 2050, hitting 45 homeruns and driving in 128 RBI#.

Calgary's success or lack thereof in 2051 will likely hinge on whether the pitching can improve and how many of the young, unproven pieces Kevin throws out there on opening day. If the staff can improve over last year's effort, then Calgary can see an improvement in the standings.

---

\*Both Sizemore and Kowalski signed with Calgary on minor league contracts. Sizemore had a 2.1 WAR as recently as 2049 while Kowalski is another young arm that fits in with many of the other young arms Calgary is giving a look at this spring.

^Also known in some circles as L'Arch. I personally feel at this point L'Arch has played for nearly every franchise in the JL at this point and was shocked to see he's only been with 3 teams.

#And also proved you can go from the GBC to the BBA and have a successful stint. Backhouse had spent 8 seasons in the GBC and was a superstar there and didn't skip a beat in his rookie BBA season.

# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson



## Las Vegas Hustlers

Prediction 99-63

The 2050 season for the Las Vegas Hustlers was a complete and utter disaster. OK, that's a slight exaggeration. The Hustlers won a league high 117 games in 2050 and clinched the Frontier Division in a landslide. The statement is only slightly true due to the fact that Matt Rectenwald's squad failed to win its 4th consecutive Brewster title, falling to eventual JL Champ Atlantic City in the Doubleday Round. The Hustlers are the gold standard\* in the Brewster and it shocks many when they don't win it.

The Hustlers have lost some WAR this off-season, most of it coming in the trading of SS Damek Korbel to Louisville. Korbel posted a 3.7 WAR last season with the Hustlers and had been their starting SS since 2045. But in typical Recte fashion, there's a plan. Stewart Turton will likely shift from 2B to fill the void at SS and fill the spot a 2B with a host of viable options. Vegas' offense won't miss many beats anyway. Last year's top scoring squad will still feature the trio of Rudge, Ashford, and Ata that will cause fits to opposing rotations.

And just when you get tired of hearing about how the offense is good, the pitching is just as good. The Hustlers not only scored the most runs in 2050 but allowed the fewest and didn't lose anything of significance here. The rotation, headlined by Hodge, Ross, and Rasmussen III is consistent from top to bottom and will keep the Vegas train rolling right into 2051.

Vegas does face some salary cap issues this season and those could hinder Vegas over the next few seasons. So perhaps there is an opening soon for the JL teams^

---

\*I really, really wanted to give Mexico City the nod just to be controversial and create a talking piece. I think the Aztecs give Vegas a run for their money in 2051, but I have to see it first.

^But don't count on it. Recte will find a way to replace high priced pieces. On that note, it both honors me and bugs me when Recte scoops up Portland's cast-offs for cheap. See: Bolen, Leeper, Moran. Means I had something right in when I signed them but also means had something wrong if I let them go and Recte signs them.

# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson

## Phoenix Talons

### Prediction 81-81



The Phoenix Talons rebounded from a losing 2049 season to get back to .500 in 2050. However that 81-81 record felt like just more salt in the wound of a franchise that seems to climb to the top of the hill, only to slip and roll back down. The Talons have won at least 81 games in 6 of the last 7 seasons but have exactly ZERO post-season trips to show for their efforts. Sean Marko's frustrations with his organization have to be reaching a pinnacle at this point\*.

The Talons signed Amayas Moelling to help booster a staff that still finished 7th in runs allowed a year ago. He will fill Luis Rojas' spot in the rotation that was vacated by Rojas' venture into free agency. Moelling will join Aki Kondo as a 1-2 punch in the Talons rotation, a rotation that has some question marks after that. Those question marks though are helped somewhat by a top notch bullpen. In fact, the Talons bullpen returns four guys that had WARs of over 2.0 from 2050.

Chua-kah Yang burst out last year as the Talons 2B. The 30 year old posted a career best 4.1 WAR after years of consistent play in Des Moines. Oliverio Luna also posted a career year last year. The 34 year old 1B hit 47 homeruns and a 3.1 WAR. Andrew Torres is another piece that continues to put up consistently solid numbers. Overall, the Talons have some nice offensive pieces, even if none are exactly Silk contenders.

The Talons are up against the cap so have little flexibility to make many more moves. They don't have the talent of Vegas nor Mexico City within their own division, putting this team yet again hoping they have enough to get over the hump and earn a wild card spot. I'm just not sure it's in the cards again. ^

-----  
\*Let's not kid ourselves here. The Toledo Liberty won the Single-A title last season, giving them 6 Single-A titles over the span in which Phoenix has failed to make the post-season themselves. We all know Toledo is Marko's real baby here!

^But there is always the biggest "Grand Slam Breakfast Party" going on out in Centerfield at the World's Largest Denny's. And there is always the best logo in Minor League baseball out in Surprise!

# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson



## Edmonton Jackrabbits

Prediction 62-100

The Edmonton Jackrabbits reached a low point last year, going 59-103 for the season. The 103 losses was the franchise's most since 2033 in which they lost a franchise high 108. A franchise that once won 3 Brewster titles in an 8 year span is now struggling to regain that identity of a great JL franchise. Ben's efforts last season to get things going failed, but rival GM's expect him to continue his efforts in making the Jackrabbits relative again in the Frontier division.

Ben will have his work cut out for him in 2051 and could see similar results as 2050. The team has a \$90 million payroll this year but expected to lose money. Some high priced contracts like Armando Feliciano and Bastiao Fardos are set to come off the books after this season, giving the team a lot of flexibility in 2052. Both are solid pieces but are likely overpaid in today's market.

But for all of that, the rotation has some good pieces. Feliciano included, he's joined by lefty Gabriel Soto\* and Grux Parks^ . The Jackrabbits pitching was at least respectable last season, with 5 teams in the Johnson League allowing more runs. Granted the staff as a whole posted just 6.6 WAR combined. Ben will hope youngsters Claudio Garcia and Gary Owens can also help improve on that.

The offense on the other hand was not good. At a combined 6.3 WAR, they scored the JL's fewest runs a season ago. The team acquired catcher Manuel Moreno from Rockville in a trade but they'll need more than just him. Jorge Moran is a solid bat, that needs the glove to play 2B but can't. Francisco Martinez is also a good hitter, but forced to be a 1B or DH with Moran. After that, it's not good. Dusty Crouch was not a good option at SS last year, posting a -2.4 WAR.

Things don't look promising for Edmonton in 2051. But I really feel brighter days could be on the horizon for Edmonton. They project to only have a \$41.5 million payroll in 2052, meaning Ben could do a lot of fixing this roster to make this team respectable again.

---

\*Hard to believe Soto was part of the Portland-Edmonton trade that sent Robert Menzies to Portland all of those years ago. Also a part of that trade was Mahine Karetu. See: New Orleans

^I love how OOTP will re-use names of created players. Grux is a custom ammy name of a guy I created many seasons ago. Grux Parks is NOT a custom ammy.

# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson



## Boise Spuds

Prediction 74-88

The Boise Spuds\* are stuck in the mud. After a 90-win 2045 that earned them a trip to the post-season, the Spuds have seen many big names come and go^ and have failed to have a winning season in the last 5 years. Woody Donahue's squad made some moves, notably with the pitching, this off-season to try and boost their standing.

Gone are Amayas Moelling and Tomas Ramirez who combined for 16 wins and 5.2 WAR last season. But the team went out and acquired Danny Leach in a trade with Rockville. Leach brings 16 wins and 4.6 WAR in just by himself. The problem for the Spuds, and Leach, is who helps him in the rotation. The bullpen has some absolute studs at the back end with Barrera, Daugherty, and bin Ayyub. But for the team to be a competitor, they'll need a big year out of rookie Jeff Doane and sophomore arm Brian Ioneki. Both have potential, but some warts to overcome. They'll also need to recapture some lightning in a bottle with the likes of Robin Cooper and Kent Montoya. The possibilities are there. But it could be a lot to ask for.

Perhaps it's a lot to ask for, and added pressure on the staff, when you include the offense was the 2nd worst in the Johnson a year ago. There are solid pieces there, but nothing that wows you. Steve Collins III is still an all-star caliber player. After Collins it's a big bag of question marks. Boise has to get a positive number from the likes of Cordell Vaughn and Francisco Vega if they want to win consistently. You can't have a middle of the order posting a negative overall WAR if you want to contend in the Frontier. Rookie Murad Abdul-Alim could help sure up the outfield somewhat, but it's asking a lot of a rookie.

Give this team a lead and they'll be tough to beat with that bullpen. Getting the lead to begin with will be the challenge facing Boise in 2051.

---

\*Or fancy turds with arms and legs depending on how you view that logo/mascot

^That 2045 team had both Felix Roman and Dennis French patrolling the outfield.



# League Preview

Johnson League - Frontier

Chris Wilson



## El Paso Chilis

### Prediction 86-76

If the El Paso Chilis weren't on your radar prior to the 2050 season, they should be on your radar now\*. The Chilis will be everyone's Cinderella team to make the post-season in 2051 after posting their best season in franchise history, an 84-78 finish a year ago. Those 84 wins earned them a 3rd place finish in the Frontier, 4 games out of the post-season.

The biggest loss this team suffered in the off-season was that of relief pitcher Robinson Valdez. Valdez posted a 2.8 WAR last season<sup>^</sup>. El Paso, with tons of cap space but a traditionally tight ownership group, have made some low key moves like the signing of Larry Fain, Antonio Ruiz, and Jose Arrellano. None are big signings but could add some depth to the roster. They are moves much like the waiver claim of Vegas' Anibal Ramirez and Rule 5 pickup of Guo-dong Zha. Nothing major, but also nothing that breaks the bank and is going to hurt you long term. For a team on the rise, it's smart business decisions being made by John Momburg, El Paso GM.

What El Paso has in its favor is offense. Granted, they play in a band box of a stadium that yields runs, but Johns' squad is catered to its strength. Hector Cano, Jr# has emerged as the player we all thought he'd be when he was drafted first overall. 41 homeruns and a 7.9 WAR. Yeah, he's good! Robert Chenowith has fit in nicely as Cano's protection in the 4 spot, hitting 35 homeruns and driving in 125 a year ago. It was a career best in RBI for Chenowith, even with all those years in Yellow Springs. Pablo Lara was another quite, lowkey move made this off-season to add more offense in a trade with Rockville. The weakness, and what may hold the team back, is the bottom of the lineup isn't as strong as say a Vegas or Mexico City.

The pitching will get beat up, mainly due to the ballpark. But Stan Cyr and Anthony Jones are serviceable at the top of the rotation. The rest of the rotation, at least right now on paper, is scary bad. Rich Jacobs, listed as closer, would be shifted to the rotation if it were me. Hard throwing lefties can be very good in the rotation@. This team has some pieces in the farm too. El Paso is on the verge ladies and gentlemen.

---

\*2050 was the 16th season of the Chilis (formerly the Wichita Aviators) existence and it was their first ever winning season. Yes, you read that right. First ever winning season!

<sup>^</sup>Calling Valdez a loss is only in the WAR sense and in the 2050 version. Valdez once posted a -1.9 WAR with Nashville so it's hard telling what El Paso would have gotten in 2051 anyway.

#God I wanted him to fall to 2nd. So badly! And oh yeah, he was last year's Sawyer Silk Award winner!

@See Randolph Marable;Portland

# League Preview

*Heartland Division*

*Aaron Weiner*



## **Frick League Heartland Predictions:**

Nashville Bluebirds – 102-60

Yellow Springs Nine – 92-70

Madison Wolves – 88-74

Louisville Sluggers – 87-75

Omaha Cyclones – 82-80

Chicago Black Sox – 75-87

Des Moines Kernals – 68-94

Twin Cities River Monsters – 64-98

# League Preview

Aaron Weiner

## Heartland Division



This projection shows my confidence in Brewster winner Nashville, and I think it would be quite a thing if they did lose the division. They could steal wins from every team on this list and be a 110-win juggernaut. Or they could just win 97 games. I don't see them dropping below that mark, though, and with every other team depleted in the Heartland, it's their division to lose.

Depleted, you say? Well, Louisville lost Fernando Castillo and Theo Bourges and replaced them with a pretty good shortstop in Damek Korb – that's a bit down. Yellow Springs replaced Arvin Duggan with Ronnie Hubbard – probably a wash – but there's plenty more turnover, and I'm skeptical that in equals out for them. Still, I've dropped them just a little bit, not the twelve games I'm docking Louisville.

Madison didn't have almost any turnover at all, and they still have Manobu and their Clockwork Orange pitching staff, and they've traded in the 88-90 win range for the last three years. Omaha is better than 92 losses, though I might have been overzealous. Still, I like the add of Jose Barron.

The rest of the division is probably non-contenders. Chicago is a couple years too late for contention, I think, and need to purge players like Aarnoud Budding among the others they have lost. Des Moines has a good rotation and no offense or bullpen. Twin Cities is still coming back from being wreckage, though they get closer every day, it seems.

Nashville's the team to beat in this division, after a lot of difficult climbing and tricky moves. But also notable is the new potential power void left by some of the teams falling from where they were. Yellow Springs still seems formidable, but there was a time where we could have four or five 90-win teams from this division, and that's not the case now. The middle of this division should be quite the dogfight

# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

Aaron Weiner



## Nashville Bluebirds

Prediction 102-60

Finally. Nashville is one of the best-run franchises in the league at the moment along with Sacramento and Las Vegas, and now two of the triumvirate have championships, as Nashville ended Las Vegas' three-peat with the franchise's second championship. (Fun fact: the last championship was when they were the Halifax Hawks, and they beat me.) And, no, it's not cheapened by the fact that they didn't face the Hustlers directly – the Hustlers didn't make it out of the Doubleday. Nashville deserved their title, and they deserve what could be coming to them, too: control of the Heartland. The Bluebirds shed a lot of talent this offseason, but they added a lot, too, and it wouldn't surprise anyone to see that they're the new Yellow Springs – plus a Brewster. Is Nashville the shoo-in they seem or are there hidden flaws?

Looking at this Nashville team, it's astonishing to me they only won the division by one game last year. Let's start with the rotation. For at least one more season, and probably two, Steven Clayton is that rarest of breeds: the minimum salary ace. Barney Lindsay is a legit bargain for at least one more season, then a relative one for the next six. Then they have Nobuhito Kan, who is making a robust \$3.2 million and has officially broken out. And Adrian Custello, making \$1.2 million. That's the best rotation in the Frick League for about \$15 million this year, which means I can basically stop writing now – though I would be remiss to not also mention their likely league-best bullpen. Nashville might not be the low water mark for allowing runs, but that's a scary good staff 1-12.

Sure, the team lost 18 offensive WAR. And yet: their lineup is nasty. Theo Bourges at half price? Yes please. Bourges joins superstar 3B Tony Frost and newly minted superstar SS Sammy McNeill, who hit .302 and stole 83 bases last year. Martin Hemming and Dennis French are as steady above-average outfielders as you could want. Wafid Bashr replaces Liann-wei Mao, and while the top prospect would have some work to do to better Mao's 3.8 WAR he's got a shot. Catcher Alberto Rodriguez bounced back after two years in the weeds, and we'll see. Candranibha Saswata is unlikely to equal Jesus Yan's 4 WAR either, but he's talented. They might threaten the nearly 40 WAR offensively last year they posted.

Nashville also has a high ranking farm system, though other than starting pitcher John Dawson I think it's a bit overrated at this point now that they've brought up most of the talent. They have no serious cap issues, though I wouldn't be surprised to see a little effort this offseason with Tony Frost and Mitchell Pursell likely to opt out, and maybe Juan Cerda, too. That said, this team is superb, top to bottom, and with Yellow Springs a bit degraded and a bit rudderless and Louisville dropping talent like it's hot, it's foreseeable that Nashville wins this division by double digits. They won't miss the playoffs at any rate

# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

Aaron Weiner



## Yellow Springs Nine

Prediction 92-70

Yellow Springs finished just seven games ahead of Madison for the third wild card, and their days of dominating the Heartland may be over. The cracks have begun to show in the seemingly impenetrable Yellow Springs armor, but it would be a bit of a stretch to count this team out for any reason. After all, they haven't missed the playoffs since 2037 and made it to the Cartwright last year. A casual observer would suggest they have at least two more years of life in them, but it doesn't take much to fall from 95 wins to 85 wins (or lower; just ask Valencia). Is this the year that Yellow Springs' run comes to an end?

Sure, the team lost long-time stalwarts Arvin Duggan and Rex Foster (and 17 offensive WAR), but the biggest issue is Dong-po Thum. A league average hitter at second base is a plus for a franchise, but it was the worst performance relative to the league in his career, and he is no longer an otherworldly defensive player, though he's still well above average. The future Hall of Famer might just be a 4 WAR player now, which is fine except he's making at least \$25 million over the next five seasons. Jeremy Pickens isn't reliable and just turned 30, but he's got star power. Nazeeh Ragheb is more reliable, and the additions of Rocky Allen and Po-Sin Shi should end the experimentation in center field. For that matter, adding Ronnie Hubbard almost confuses the issue. Shi had a great 2050 and looks to be aging gracefully. LF Natsume Kondo won't be as amazing as he was last year; 3B Banger Dan will be much better than his major dud. The team is hoping Burhan Tahir improves offensively in his rookie season over his pathetic late-season callup.

Similarly, Yellow Springs' pitching staff is still good, but lacks the superiority of seasons past. It's hard to find a much better 1-2 punch than Dave Lee and Antonio Hernandez, but they do exist, and in Yellow Springs' division. The revelation last year was Jerry Borque (14-6, 3.11), who was absolutely outstanding last season for the Nine; a repeat season would go a long way towards their rotation stability. Mathis Gerard might be good enough today to make a major impact, though he didn't impress last year in a midseason callup. Loan Duval is a tragedy, though he can still pitch. Yellow Springs still has one of the most talented bullpen units around, so if their starters can continue to keep them in the game they are one of the more solid units 1-13 in the Frick League, but it doesn't pack the punch they had with Carlos Valle headlining the group.

The Nine are not overendowed with prospects at this point, and other than Tahir and the enigmatic Francis Xavier Pfeffer they're not deep on the farm, which is what happens when you make the playoffs for 13 straight seasons. Their cap situation is very clean even with Thum, but unless they improve in-house they don't have a ton of cap space to work with. There's a chance that this year ends their playoff run, but I'm not betting on it, not with their pitching depth. However, their days of dominating the Heartland probably came to an end with the rise of Nashville. Then again, I've counted this team out before, to my own peril.



# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

Aaron Weiner



## Madison Wolves

### Prediction 88-74

The Wolves were the team that missed the playoffs by the smallest margin last year, and it's realistic to suggest that someone else might have that dubious honor next year. Brian King will be a significant loss to the team, but in a year where Yellow Springs, Louisville, and Portland suffered significant, tangible losses, Madison was a bastion of stability. It's conjecturable that Madison might be even better than last year, if some players stay stable. Does Madison, for the first time in years, project to the playoffs?

Manobu's pathetically weak 7 WAR season last year had him winning the OPS title by a meager 35 points over the former Vancouver law firm of Castillo and Smith. He's just hit the wrong side of 30, but he's gonna keep hitting the right side of .300 – and by that I mean above .350, probably, a mark he's fallen below twice in his career. After Manobu, Chris Mann is as steady as they come. Then, questions abound. Salvador Allende is usually the Batman to Manobu's Superman, but he fell off the table a bit last year and is now 30 also. Bin Wan looks more than ready to step into the starting catcher spot, but he's mostly "good for a catcher." Ettan Cherukuri is here to stay, too, and he's a legit on-base threat. Jose Hernandez is usually passable at DH, but he'd make a better regular 1B for someone. Mauro Soto is either terrible offensively or incredibly terrible, but he's a superior glove man. This team is top-notch defensively, though they could stand to run less – their 64% conversion rate isn't doing them any favors.

Madison's pitching staff is a Rube Goldberg machine, and has been for quite some time, funneling as many appearances as they can to the superb late-inning duo of Todd Stone and Senen Subandrio. Stone is the best short reliever in the game today. But it's not just those two: Raphael Castagna and Brian Smith have been amazing. The top innings man on the team last year was Carter Morris, who was outstanding last year. Yorikane Miyamoto is a solid 1A starter masquerading as a five-inning guy. The team is hoping top prospect Buwono Mainaky becomes unmuffled this year; right now he's a really good middle reliever. Madison signed Dana Pualani out of the GBC this offseason, and he looks interesting despite his lack of success in the junior circuit; we shall see. The team isn't deep at starter, but that's more of a reason to not pitch them very much, which they don't.

Madison has hit gold with a number of their young pitchers, and has a very solid pitching farm, though not much in the way of position players. None of them are really ready yet, including Mainaky, but there's tons of promise here. The Wolves have some major pending contract issues over the next two years, but they have every reason to believe that during both of those years they'll be playoff contenders. Pitching, defense, and Manobu will surely be enough for another winning record again, and mostly it will matter how much teams like Louisville, Yellow Springs, and Vancouver fall off more than how much Madison improves; with so many rotation and lineup question marks I'm capping them around 92 wins. It'll probably be more like 86-90 again, in which case they'll need some help.

# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Louisville Sluggers

Prediction 87-75

Louisville climbed near the top of the Heartland in 2050. Guess they should have finished the job. The Sluggers won 98 games, one game out of first, and their reward was Yellow Springs in the Geoghegan and a speedy exit from the playoffs. Other than Portland, no team in the BBA lost more talent than the Sluggers, including Theo Bourges, long the face of the team. To add insult to injury, Bourges was traded to Nashville and they retained salary. Can Louisville maintain their playoff position or did a wild card just open up?

Let's start with the big thing: Semei Kwakou got PAID. Kwakou, expected to be a free agent, instead got signed for \$133 million at age 31, and he's likely to see every dollar. Between him and superstar third baseman Luis Mendoza they'll earn about 40% of the team's cap until 2057 unless Mendoza opts out. The Sluggers appeared to finally sort Ricardo Yanez, whose talent has always been apparent; the 1B had a OPS 45% above league average last year. The team also traded for Damek Korbel on the cheap, and the shortstop should be extremely steady defensively. Speaking of which, young centerfielder Ragheb Burhan should also be very steady in center field defensively, and he hit league average in 55 at bats last year. Mu'ayyad Bin Nu'man probably won't go crazy feta all over the league, but the Lebanese outfielder has loads of promise. After this group, though, the lineup is full of holes, and it's not great defensively, either. Louisville's park is one of the better ones for hitters, so that might help the team a little, but it's not the juggernauts of years past.

Similarly, it's hard to get overly excited about the pitching staff. Edward Crutcher has been pure consistency for half a decade. Greg Shaw made the leap last year, but it would be easy to get nervous about the former surgical patient. Similarly, Yoshii Takuda has a long injury history. Neither is especially durable and won't work deep into ballgames. Antonio Baldez wasn't bad last year, but he's another contestant in the BBA's longest-running reality show: "Waiting For My Change." (Not about transsexuality, BTW.) The team will likely see if either Tim Gibbs or Makin bin Isma'il can stick in the majors this season; neither seems wholly ready. The bullpen was led by Peter Sanders' amazing season, but his 3.3 WAR last year nearly doubled up his career numbers, and he's a constant injury risk, too. They do have a few other guys, though, so it should be a decent unit.

Louisville has a couple decent prospects outside of Gibbs and Isma'il, but Ryobe Watanabe might be the most stuck prospect in the game if he can't stay at third base; he's crying out for a sideways trade. Louisville's cap situation is also fine, and Edward Crutcher might end up a nice bargain contract, which they should get done. Their problem is a talent drain, and while they have a lot of slack before they fall out of a playoff position, they're no longer the absolute lock they've been in the past. It's fathomable they fall all the way to sub-.500 land if the pitching gets hurt.

# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

Aaron Weiner



## Omaha Cyclones

### Prediction 82-80

Clearly I was more bullish on Omaha than they were on themselves. At this rate \*I\* might overtake them. Omaha's offense has been surprisingly quiet over the past two seasons, averaging 4 runs a game with an offense that used to dominate. Look a hair under 5 runs a game. They've done some work on both the offense and the pitching staff this offseason, and while they're living on the edge more than Aerosmith with the cap, their team looks much better than their 70-92 record last year (again, two games better than DES MOINES). Can they bounce back?

Omaha would be a much better team if their lineup wasn't just so disappointing. Star outfielders Orlando Ordonez and Andre Ly are the headliners, and while both are entering the downside of their careers their recent downside is better than most players' upside. We may use the same language to describe Wilson Estrada soon, but not yet; the super-steady first baseman had his best season in 2050. And then...then there's Eric Wagner and Malik bin Mazin. Wagner has somehow had serious issues hitting the baseball, which doesn't seem possible considering his talent and his home ballpark. Bin Mazin hasn't really captured his full potential yet, but that guy has to hit, and soon. The two combined for 2.6 WAR last year, you know, less than MAURO SOTO, who had a .637 OPS for Madison. The rest of Omaha's lineup is a little listless, but several players like Thomas Jefferson or Julio Garcia could break out. Juan Medrano shows they have given up on Robbie Sullivan – probably a good idea.

The Omaha pitching staff is defined by their starting rotation and their complete lack of a bullpen, which has been their calling card for almost a decade. Don't laugh – they won a championship like that, and their starting rotation last year finished 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th in innings pitched - only Steve Nebraska winner Danya Tchekanov prevented them from sweeping the category. Despite all the innings, only Timo Dooley had a WAR over 2 last year, which might repeat this year. Then there's the inconsistent newcomer: Jose Barron might be their most talented pitcher, but he also missed all of 2050 with a torn UCL, something I was concerned about when he was drafted. If he's healthy he's maybe a minimum salary rocket boost. Admittedly, Omaha's home park doesn't help the staff; it's the easiest place in the FL to hit a home run. Neither does the bullpen, which looks as mediocre as ever even with the addition of solid GBC reliever Elliot Woodger.

Omaha is doing some interesting cap gymnastics but will probably be okay. They have a somewhat overrated farm system, largely on the basis of top prospect Takashi Nakamura, who we'll probably see very soon – or right away as a potential bullpen anchor. The Cyclones have the best chance of any team in the BBA to bounce back into a playoff position if some of their question marks iron themselves out, but their margin is razor-thin. I'm going to put them back to .500 this year, but I don't feel good about it. Sometimes things that don't work out don't work out for a reason

# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Chicago Black Sox

Prediction 75-87

Chicago continues to slide into mediocrity. The Black Sox did some clever things this offseason, but they also lost two of their central offensive performers on a 11th-place offense without significant replacement. The answer to that isn't the injured Fernando Castillo, no matter how much they paid for him. Does Chicago have enough in-house to replace the loss of five offensive wins, or is 86 losses an optimistic total?

The best player left on Chicago is definitely Bernie Stuart (9-6, 2.13), and the rotation ace is no longer strictly cheap, but definitely below market price for a player of his talents; he was the best pitcher in the Frick League last year when healthy. Jim Wilkinson had a mediocre season last year, but he's a rock-solid rotation member. The team signed GBC bullpen star Jan Chmelyk, who they are hoping to turn into a rotation member; good luck with that. The team is also trying out Rule 5 pick Ramiro Medina, who's about as ready as he'll ever be. We could see Malik bin Adnan this year, either at the beginning or somewhere in the middle, but I'm betting it'll be former first round pick Brick Pollitt to start. The bullpen wasn't overwhelmingly productive last year, but there's some talent there, led by 24 year old Clarence Pritchard. There are more questions than answers here.

The offense is also full of holes. Aarnoud Budding is no longer a star at age 31, and based on last year's performance should probably be playing in Sao Paulo. Badr Isam has a world of talent, but he didn't hit last year. Scouts say Tomas Duran and Manoell Whanon have both lost steps, and they're both on the wrong side of 30. Louisville import Philitis Tsafento is a sneaky-good signing at catcher, as the defensive ace frequently makes my All-Underrated list. The team's best hopes for a big up are 1B Michael MacKeon and second baseman Scott Torres, both of whom look potentially productive. This isn't a great lineup, but is likely to have a number of players hit league average, which has its own value. One caveat: other than Isam, the team isn't particularly good defensively.

Not mentioned above: Fernando Castillo, who had 7 WAR last year, ruptured his Achilles, and will be lucky to play 70 games this year. Castillo's deal isn't a franchise-killer, because they can get out of it after three years, but \$20 million a year for him is a total cap-clogger. They're one of the richest teams in the league so they can eat his contract and still be fine, but it's head-shaking. Some of their arbitration futures are out of whack (\$6.6 million for David McElroy? Please.) but as it stands they might not have any cap space until 2055. Also, their team construction should prevent them from bottoming out. The Black Sox do have a very decent farm already, so there's some bridge to the future here, especially after 2053, but it's hard to see them climbing back to a wild card spot as they're built.

# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

Aaron Weiner



## Des Moines Kernels

Prediction 68-94

Year 1 of the Weiner regime was pretty much what we expected. The new guys played well and virtually nobody else did, and that's pretty much the end of it. That's what happens when new management takes over a team that lost an average of 105 games for the previous six seasons. The team did a good job identifying productive talent, but that's why the city was excited to get the guy who writes the previews. The team did add a legitimate young potential superstar in 22-year old Slobodan Omeragic, so they weren't quiet this offseason, but there isn't a lot of talent on the offensive side of the ball. Can the Kernels take another step forward or is this a sidestep with an eye on the future?

Des Moines has built a very interesting rotation, to say the least. Alaric appeared to be caught up in the malaise that is Des Moines last year, posting easily the worst season of his career. He could bounce back hard. Omeragic has a massive, massive arm and a world of promise; a very small percentage of BBA starters have his quality of stuff, and he was dominant in the GBC. Thomas Turner is a control pitcher personified, and he could bust out at any time. Rookie Jon Brown, who's slightly banged up, was impressive in 11 starts last year. Des Moines has several options at fifth starter. On the other hand, their bullpen looked a lot better before Deron Alexander, who took well to the pen after three awful years in the rotation, went down until at least the All-Star Break, and now it's fairly terrible.

The Des Moines lineup is a have and have nots situation, and even the haves are sort of, well, interesting. Home run champ Hasheem Makin is the headliner here, and the career .214 hitter ALSO has 8 career WAR because he's a potential 30-30 machine who draws walks in bunches. Felix Parreno is similar, and his value took off when he got moved to second base last year. Pedro Guzman is usually a guaranteed 3 WAR at DH. Then, uh, nope. The team is hoping top prospect Sloth Fratelli can stick in the majors this year; last year he lost his job to geriatric Francisco Flores. The team appears to be starting Carlos Souza, last year's #3 overall, in AAA. For now it looks like Tyson Barber will get a shot. Des Moines might actually try to run CF John Henderson out there again – good luck. He can field, though. And their projected starting shortstop hit .091 last year in Calgary, so, um. They can field for the most part and run relatively well, but it's not a good lineup.

The Kernels should have a better farm considering how long they've been down, but they do have several interesting prospects including top ten prospect Tommy Akers, who might not be long from the majors. Their cap situation is technically fine, but they have too much money tied up in dead money Phoenix players and guys like Manuel Camacho, Guillermo Fuentes, and Bill Keil – almost a quarter of their cap is those five guys. Because of this the Kernels might have some issues rising to the .500 mark again this year, and by the numbers their cap situation might not clear until 2053. However, they have a solid core if they re-sign Thomas Turner, and in two years, maybe, watch out



# League Preview

*Frick League - Heartland*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Twin Cities River Monsters

### Prediction 64-98

Twin Cities' season posits the question: if the River Monsters played Portland every game, would Portland allow a run? Twin Cities' offense actually wasn't as bad as their exactly three-run per game pace suggested, as they finished with a positive offensive WAR. However, they continued the worst three year run in the history of the BBA offensively by finishing with the fourth-worst Frick League offense of all time: their best result since 2047. It should be interesting to watch what happens to Twin Cities this year, whose improvement is real. Have they done enough?

Twin Cities is trying to steal my best ideas (Wilson Alomar, Lucio Cuellar, Pedro Diaz), but I'm not sure that it will do what they need it to do. I'm really not at all convinced that the River Monsters lineup is that bad, in fact, but they'll still finish in the bottom half. Alomar gives them a legitimate middle of the order hitter for the first time in a while. Cuellar is kind of sneaky good, Pedro Diaz is much better than last year's lemon, and Andy Elmer might be coming into his own at age 25. That's not to mention GBC import Jesper Sonderlei, who isn't going to win a Yogi Zimmer but should probably hit. Twin Cities' infield defense is very good, and while their corner outfielders are awful, Arthur Daniel can pick it pretty well in center, and Hollis O'Hara is one of the best defensive backstops around, so the team is very strong up the middle.

Twin Cities' pitching rotation isn't all bad, either, though it's still very weak. The best holdover is Jorge Hernandez, who was good last year after several disappointing years in Omaha. Eddie Armstrong was solid in his debut last year and looks like a lunchpail guy. Based on his AA performance last year, Erik Brooks is one of the more exciting rookies in recent history. That's really about it for the rotation, but those are some decent foundational pieces. The more impressive unit for the River Monsters is the bullpen, which now features another GBC import, the exciting Sebastian Seabert, and former #1 overall prospect Jamie Barber, among others. This group will beat Seattle, but it's still a bottom-tier staff.

Twin Cities, long down now, has built up the farm and could go through a resurgence in a couple of years, especially now that the finances have been cleaned up, though it's hard to buy Burl Primmer as a top 50 prospect. Again, I think they need a year just sort of down to refill the coffers next year, and they have the personnel to make this work. For the time being, this team is still at the bottom of the barrel in the Heartland, but it doesn't appear rudderless and should be relatively stable for the time being. I'm taking the wait and see approach.

# League Preview

*Pacific Division*

*Aaron Weiner*



## **Frick League Pacific Predictions:**

Sacramento Mad Popes – 102-60

Portland Lumberjacks – 92-70

Vancouver Mounties – 85-77

Valencia Stars – 78-84

Long Beach Surfers – 77-85

Hawaii Tropics – 73-89

San Fernando Bears – 68-94

Seattle Storm – 63-99

# League Preview

*Pacific Division*

*Aaron Weiner*



Portland wrecked the party for Sacramento last year, but after losing 12 WAR of offense I can't see it happening again...so welcome to the Sacramento Mad Popes Invitational, where nobody's going to mess with Sacramento's house. Based on my projections, I'd put it at less than a 5% chance that anyone wins this division but Sacramento.

Why did that probability come in last year? Portland finished with the best pitching numbers in the history of the BBA, and while Sacramento got 104 wins, Portland got 108. Considering there haven't been too many seasons of 108 wins in the history of the BBA, less than 5% seemed right. It seems righter this year. Portland could **STILL** win the division if Sacramento falters, which could happen since Sacramento's players were great last year – but I kinda think Sacramento's players are great.

Vancouver won a wild card last year, and I have them contending but falling short of the fourth wild card this year. However, a wild card is easily still within their grasp.

I have Valencia bouncing back from their disastrous 2050 season, where literally everything that went right in 2049 went wrong in 2050. Long Beach has the next best chance in my brain, but they also have some serious question marks as to their talent level – I'm saying I don't know if they're good enough, not that their team isn't fairly solid. I also think Hawaii could be better than this. Both teams have a lot of issues they need to resolve first, I think, before they're contenders.

And then there's San Fernando, who dropped Angel Gonzalez, and Seattle, who dropped the concept that you need a pitching staff to win baseball games. This is just a good estimate, not a death sentence; San Fernando needs a farm and Seattle needs to get their cap under control.

In the meantime, this is Sacramento's division to lose for a while. They didn't

# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Sacramento Mad Popes

Prediction 102-60

I won one of my two bets on Sacramento last year: lost the one where they win the division by double digits; won the one where they led the Frick League in offense for the first time in franchise history. For the record, despite Portland's insane pitching, Sacramento had a better run differential than Portland. The Mad Popes lost 4-2 in the de facto Cartwright Cup between them and Nashville in the Doubleday, but there's no reason that has to happen again. This team is a surefire playoff lock: how good are they?

Let's start with last year's league-best offense. Okay Nisanci had one of the better years for a hitter relative to the rest of the league in league history last year. He doesn't walk a ton but is otherwise the prototypical top of the order guy. Unem Ploid was thoroughly De Ploid last year, and he wrecked the Frick League. The two also combined for 153 steals last year, which contributed to a not-record 324 last year – still very impressive. Outfielder Mike Campbell is now making relative peanuts at \$9 million a year and is still a superstar so far as we can tell. Sacramento's double play combination of Dallas Dixon and Henri Charriere is rock solid, John Kinsella is otherworldly behind the plate, and last year's Chicago import Dan Flores is outstanding in center, so Sacramento is also strong up the middle. I'm not totally sold on 1B Keaton Guest, but he was incredible in AAA last year. It's a top lineup again.

Sacramento can usually fudge the pitching somewhat because of their extreme pitchers' ballpark, but there's some serious upside here. The Sacramento ace is the dazzling Ruben Vazquez (16-4, 2.09, 12.1 K/9 IP last year), still absurdly underpaid. Marvin Winston is the steady rock here, and he's very reliable. Dylan Wonnocott will probably make his full-season debut this year, and whatever the strong-armed lefty does he's too good to send back to AAA. Robert Hanson is a promising youngster who had a solid half-season debut last year, and the team has a number of options at fifth starter, including top prospect Joe King. Sacramento's bullpen probably does a little better than they should because of the ballpark, but that's okay, and there are some pretty good arms in there like Aaron Anderson, Angus Trew, and Ludwig Werberg.

The Mad Popes have some mild question marks in the rotation, but their offense is still going to rain fire all over the FL even despite the loss of Ricardo Mendoza. Nobody's cap situation is better than Sacramento's, either, and they have an excellent farm that was improved this offseason. It is actually nearly impossible in my head to imagine Sacramento out of the playoffs in 2051, and while they'll have some tough decisions to make in – really – 2055...I mean, who knows where we'll even be in 2055? For my money they're a little behind Nashville, but only if I'm splitting fragments of hairs. Still my overwhelming favorite to win the FL Pacific

# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Portland Lumberjacks

### Prediction 92-70

Portland had absolutely everything go right for them last year in the regular season, and I do mean everything. Sacramento won 104 games, as advertised; Portland won 108 to take the division. Need the lowest ERA and lowest runs allowed totals in the modern era? Check out the 2050 Portland Lumberjacks, who absolutely shattered those records. Need hitting? Portland scored 60 more runs than the Yellow Springs Nine last year despite a lower OPS. But you'll notice the caveat: Portland was whacked in the first round by the Nine, who were basically running on League Control. Ouch. And with that, the Lumberjacks lost more talent this offseason than just about anyone. With a team this interesting, I might stick to the facts here.

Let's start with the depleted offense. In all my years of writing this, I don't think I can remember a more surprising 6 WAR season than Jeffrey Smith last year. Not that he hadn't done it in the past; Smith averaged over 5 WAR from 2041-2045. It's just that since in the four seasons after 2045 he had a TOTAL of 6 WAR. Ernest McBride had to fall to 5 WAR last year, so yawn. Roberto Viramontas is also very solid. It wasn't shocking to see any of the other guys do well, either, but, um, they are all gone. The replacement lineup isn't as imposing. We have Grandpa Angel Zalapa, who is still good but also hasn't been great in three seasons. There's Jiao-long Ma, who was replacement level in 322 at bats last year. Jorge Lugo is free and still too expensive. Are you sensing a theme yet? Portland's lineup really is just mostly the top three guys, and Smith's chances of having another 6 WAR season at the age of 32 – outlook not good. The team is passable defensively and might run a little, though not overmuch.

Then, the depleted pitching staff. Wait, you say, all they lost was John McClain, who threw like 60 innings for them. Except you have to keep in mind that Portland's pitching last year, by the numbers, may have been the GREATEST OF ALL TIME. With offense way down in the BBA, I actually don't think this is true relative to other eras, but it remains that Portland was way, way better than the rest of the league. Their starting five is absolutely great; besides the trio of Sparks/Warren/Thompson, Portland also has Randolph Marable (18 wins led the FL) and Felix Vidaca, a stellar five-inning guy. They also have Lorenzo de' Medici, who garnered another masterpiece and some hardware last year with an insane season that has to be experienced to appreciate: go and look. The rest of their bullpen is also pretty good; their three-headed closer by committee had 5.7 WAR.

Portland's huge offense power outage will cost them a dozen games and the division this year for sure, but they couldn't afford to keep it up that big. They have a date with destiny in 2052, as most of their guys are set to be free agents that year, and it will be even harder keeping it together after that, especially with them being light on the farm. They might finish first in runs allowed again, but look for them to drop to the middle of the pack or worse offensively. However, the job they've done in building this is impressive, and it's a shame they couldn't close the deal last year. They're a playoff team for sure, but some things only happen once in a lifetime.



# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Vancouver Mounties

### Prediction 85-77

I suggested that Vancouver probably wouldn't get a wild card last year: wrong again! But I also thought they wouldn't be bad, and they weren't. The Mounties went ahead and defied my predictions by finishing a sneaky seventh in offense in a year where half the league averaged approximately 4 runs or less. Besides the fact that they're collecting all my former infielders, there are reasons to be bullish on their chances in 2051, including the fall of Louisville and no obvious challengers rising. It's been two decades since Vancouver made back-to-back playoff appearances: is this the year?

Before figuring this out, it's important to consider what went right with Vancouver last year, which really boils down to a fifth place in pitching. No questions about their Opening Day starter, though: knuckleballer Phil Cole did fall back from his 2049 Steve Nebraska season but is still clearly one of the top ten pitchers in the BBA. Frank Walbourne made the leap last year, but it's hard to see how he's as good as he was last year. Christo Munoz could bounce back, or not. Carlos Silva has been a classical overachiever, especially considering his injury risk. The team will probably try Sam Fisher out this year; he hasn't panned out the way I hoped. The Vancouver pen was a superior unit last year, and all signs are that they should be solid again in 2051, though it's hard to imagine them being quite so good.

On the offensive side, Daniel Pepper worked out as well as he could have, most likely. He's a likely Hall of Famer if he keeps this up a few more seasons. Good thing they had him, too, because he was worth as many wins as the next three guys. Cesar Feliciano is the next biggest name, but other than a cap drain, that's about all he is at this point. Andrew Wright is probably not quite as good as he was last year, but he's a solid powerhitter. The team is looking to replace Blaine Tyler with Mike Galloway at third base – looks like a wash. Davenport Hinkle had a solid year at catcher, and Luis Pena has been solid at shortstop, but both of them are more "good for their position" than great. The team continues to try to improve Manuel Garcia, for whom they gave up Jose Barron to Omaha: good luck. Vancouver is solid defensively, and runs less than most teams.

The Mounties don't have much of a farm past Paul England, who's a year early at least but looks potentially productive. Their cap situation gets a lot better next year, but they're fine, too. In fact, next year might be their target year to make a serious push. They could shed both Pena and Feliciano and their \$27 million in cap space, they stop paying Portland to own Jorge Lugo, and even if they re-sign Galloway they could easily have \$40 million in cap space. It would help if they had more prospects, but they don't. I have reservations about their chances this year, but I see no reason they can't contend for one of the final two wild cards if their pitching and offense hold up the way they have. I could also see them falling all the way back to 75 wins. I'll split the difference.

# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Valencia Stars

### Prediction 78-84

So, um, yeah. I didn't miss on Valencia so much as I got it right: Valencia appears to be my new Seattle. That thud you heard was the Stars falling out of a playoff position in 2049 and making a new constellation: Skata (Greek for turd). Absolutely everything went supernova last year; they finished 15th offensively and 15th in run prevention and their defense was awful. Their movement this offseason appears to have addressed the defense, but are the Stars any better this season?

Valencia's season was probably sunk the minute that Carlton Day, who was great in 2049, tore his UCL. The lefty is still shaky, but he's just 22 and is still very talented. Ken Arroyo having the worst year of his young career didn't help, either, but that guy's good. Greg Jackson also had a tough 2050 season, starting it hurt, but his numbers didn't fall off. Not so Harold Newbold, whose season resembled a cliff dive; somehow he went from allowing seven homers to allowing 34 of them; he might not be the star he looked like in 2049 but he isn't nearly as bad as he was last year. Righty Jacob Smiley showed some improvement last season, and he might be that good. That's actually a good pitching rotation, though it's only great if people stay healthy, Newbold bounces back and Arroyo pitches better. They also have one of the better closers in the game in John Olson, and they have a decent bullpen behind him, too.

Valencia's lineup could also play better this year, too, but their major additions weren't offensive ones but defensive, which is not a bad idea as their defense was porous last year. However, Valencia's offense is very right-handed and have a lot of underachievers. Valencia appears to have given up on Yodo Sato at second base, which is probably a good idea for their defense as he was one of the worst defensive second basemen in the BBA, and he has the bat for 1B. Lee Stone was fairly solid last year in a part-time role. Third baseman Kenan Reis fell off, predictably; anthropologists will discuss in due time. He might be better than he played last year, though. DH Donald Miller is definitely better than last year's numbers. The big add this offseason was GBC import Quintin Trewartha, whose shortstop defense is superb; his bat might not be totally useless, but it won't be great. Best case scenario he's Thomas Kramer. Their other import, Freddy Ayala, won't hit .298 in the BBA, but he can catch the ball. He'll move Frederick Brissett to left field, where he is Yogi Zimmer certified. Catcher Kyle Baker will be better than he was last year, but he is vastly overrated.

Valencia is likely to have another operational loss this year, so they could really use some success. They do rid themselves of a huge amount of salary next offseason, even more if they get a little bit of contract luck. They'll have to re-sign their pitchers after next year, and that's going to put a little crunch on them because they don't really have much of a farm system. If they're not winning this year, they might want to consider a little bit of a restructure and make some of their current prospects into supporting players. Statistics tells us that things don't usually undulate and gravitate to the extremes like Valencia, and I'll split the difference on them

# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Long Beach Surfers

Prediction 77-85

It would be nice to say that the Long Beach Surfers are a team on the rise. The team added several key free agents this offseason, Satan's Whelp is the reigning Steve Nebraska winner for the second time in his career, and their rotation looks very interesting. It's just hard to say one way or the other. This is a team that might be arriving now, might be a year early, or something else, and it will depend on whether their youth movement begins bearing fruit right away or not. Is this the year that Long Beach returns to contention?

Scouts say that Tchekanov might have lost something off his fastball, but they say he's countered that with veteran savvy. He's still a dangerous player. After him, it's unclear who the #2 starter is. Is it Ernesto Delgado, who despite good advanced numbers had a 5.5 ERA last year? Is it top youngster Sam Rutgers, who was passable in his first full season, or other top youngster Barry Short, who didn't live up to his talent in a mid-season callup? How about Lucas Wood, who has big chops as a pitching prospect but looks a little early? Or Shinsaku Ine, who is trying to make the jump from the bullpen? The nice thing is that all six of these starters are likely to be productive, though at this point it's possible none of them are huge stars. Long Beach's bullpen also looks solid, with the consistent 1-2 punch of Luis Manuel Rodriguez and Angel Hernandez spurring a unit that now includes Del Willis, proving maybe someone's reading these.

Long Beach's offense was lousy last year, though they should improve this year with the additions of 1B Danny Adkins and catcher Pedro Gomez. Both players are consistent performers, with Gomez having some star power at catcher but also aging. Steveland Morris looks like a rock-solid two-way shortstop, and Todd Rice is probably better than the stinker he had last year; if he's not getting base hits he's basically worthless as a batter, but he doesn't have to hit the .340 he hit in 2049 to be worth something. Gonzalo Martinez was also awful last year, but he could bounce back. The team will probably try Kwan-uk Chong again, but he's been awful so far in his career. The rest of the lineup isn't especially good, and it doesn't play defense well either.

Long Beach has many of the same problems offensively as they had last year, which is going to hold their top number down this year. Also, it's hard to say whether their pitching prospects are really ready, or whether they're good enough to propel them forward. They have \$25 million in cap space next year, but I'd expect some of that to be eaten by Angel Hernandez and Del Willis. I think this team might be a year away from making a little noise, assuming they can find some consistency on offense. The field's more open than it's been in recent years, and while I don't see Long Beach sliding into the playoffs this year, next year looks interesting.

# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Hawaii Tropics

### Prediction 73-89

Even with my doom and gloom approach to this franchise, they didn't fall back nearly so much as I thought they would. They might make it to that 94-loss total this year. The Tropics subtracted two productive relievers and added basically nothing this offseason, and appear to have serious issues with pitching depth. That said, their park is one of the better offensive-oriented parks in the game and they do have a potentially underrated lineup, so they have a puncher's chance. Does Hawaii have what it takes to sneak back into the wild card race?

Hawaii's biggest calling card is defense, and everyone on the team is average or better defensively. Ron Shiplack has all the talent in the world at catcher, but up until last year hadn't done anything with it for a while; his 2050 season was his best since he was 25. Similarly, Tomas Guillen was awesome last year, and he's just one of the BBA's better outfielders. Ramao Saturnino is a rock-solid performer in left field, and Angelo Lucchesi has a chance to rise up above his station and should at any rate be a solid defensive player, making their outfield one of the best two-way units in the game. Thomas Kramer is one of the best defensive sixes anywhere, though he can't hit. Offensively, their best chances to rise from last year is 1B Alejandro Ortiz, who was a mega-star just two years ago, and Rhys Brickell, who wasn't all that bad last year. Adhyapayana Mehta is not just a nuisance to type, he's a nuisance at the plate and might have another gear. GBC import Carlos Sanchez might not turn the dial much. The Tropics also have good depth, and steal a lot of bases inefficiently.

The Tropics' pitching staff is unimpressive, but the defense lifts them up. Hawaii's best pitcher last year by the numbers, Kirana Shivani, wouldn't start for most BBA teams, and neither their #1 nor #2 starters, Semih Gurani and Daruna Maddukuri, were particularly good last year. Maup Manshert hasn't been the same since tearing his UCL, and they're on the hook with him until 2054. Top prospects Michael Kalil and Troy Reynolds might help to lift them up this year. The Tropics did have a productive bullpen last year, which lifted up the rest of the pitching staff, but it's hard to see how they have a chance to finish above their 8th place finish last year – even that seems impressively high despite their defense.

Hawaii's farm isn't particularly deep outside of Kalil and Reynolds, so they probably won't get much help offensively this year. On the flip side, their cap situation is one of the cleanest in the game – maybe too clean, since they have a huge number of free agents this offseason. I see this franchise in much the same position as Chicago: a lot of their top free agents are gone after this year, they have a couple onerous contracts and they're trying to find their way back up. Barring their rotation coming out of nowhere and performing at an unlikely high level, I don't see it happening.

# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## San Fernando Bears

### Prediction 68-94

The Bears were the big Pythagorean losers in 2052, finishing nine games below their expected record. Their trademark offense continued to be fine, finishing roughly atop the middle tier, and their pitching wasn't completely calamitous. Fortunately, they didn't lose anyone important...oh, wait, they traded Angel Gonzalez, their best player by a mile? Bye-bye Bears. Good news is that their cap situation got a lot easier, and it should be interesting going forward. While they don't have any further to fall, how good are the Bears now?

San Fernando has a very different feel without Gonzalez, though they still have some high quality players. Still, it has to be concerning that the most productive player on the roster last year was Pedro Mendoza, a mediocre outfielder they got in return for Gonzalez. Tyler Ober is the biggest upside player on the roster; two years ago he had 5 WAR, last year, 1 WAR. Less problematic than Ober's drop in batting average is his unexplained equivalent drop in walks and home runs. Reggie Vargas also fell off the table for no reason last year. Solid third baseman Roberto Rivera is rock solid. Wasim Ala' fell far off his 2049 pace last year, and the switch-hitting outfielder will always have trouble with contact. Solid defensive left fielder Omer Dijkstra is starting to fall off a bit offensively, though he was fine last year. Farid bin Mubarak is a solid catcher who should be consistent. Shortstop Marcello Custello has a bunch of upside, though we haven't seen a lot of it yet. That's a good lineup 1-9, though it's weak defensively and has a lot of underachievers; they shouldn't fall out of the middle of the pack, though, and could rise.

The pitching staff is far more problematic, though there are some underrated players on there. Gusby Pinkerton doesn't look like much, but all he does is produce. Similarly, Tommy Baird struck out less than 4 batters a game last year, but only allowed eight home runs. Ramon Gonzalez might finally be ready to take the leap; I've been predicting good things for him for years. Jorge Moreno is more of the classical power pitcher type, and he suffers badly from poor defense. Alan Gray was fine last year. It's not a bad rotation at all, based on what they've done, but it's also potentially a house of cards you could blow on and it falls over. Sadly, you don't even have to blow on the bullpen – they might be the worst unit in the league outside of Omaha – appropriately led by a guy named Bumble. Neil Davies is a dart throw.

It's telling that San Fernando's best prospect is an underdeveloped 24 year old Rule 5 pick who doesn't play defense, because they haven't had a farm for some time. That said, they're not paying a lot for this team, which is good because San Fernando lost a ton of money last year and is also projected to lose money this season. If they're interested in keeping Pedro Mendoza they should probably move on that soon to guarantee his \$2.6 million option, but also maybe they won't if he's too expensive. If their pitching stays at their ceiling and their offense bounces back really hard, this could be a wild card team, but a lot would have to go right for this to happen. I think they'll be closer to .500 this year, though



# League Preview

*Frick League - Pacific*

*Aaron Weiner*



## Seattle Storm

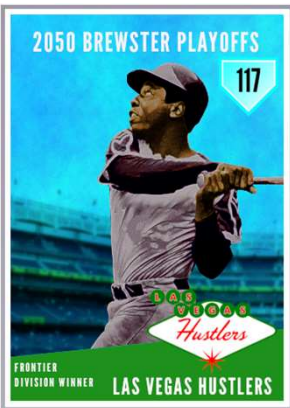
### Prediction 63-99

Words uttered with some trepidation: Seattle wasn't quite as bad as I thought they'd be last year. Words uttered with some joy: Seattle was just 4 games better than the 100-loss season I predicted for them. I think the curse of Pedro Diaz has been lifted. Seattle's average offense last year couldn't support the fact that they had basically no major league pitching, and they have done absolutely nothing to address their dead last finish in preventing runs. Is there a hidden wild card here or can we rely on this team to dwell in the cellar?

Alexander Julian is still the headliner here, and he had his best professional season at age 31 last year. That's not likely to happen again. There are several productive holdovers, though, including veterans Wilson Andrade and Valentin Fitas, who could improve from solid seasons, and young catcher Trevor Eteldrum, who hit .300 last year at catcher but might not repeat the feat again. They also brought in two players who look like good fits: GBC import Jamie Angwin, who was a huge star across the pond, and veteran BBA 1B Raul Fernandez, who was unexpectedly awesome last year (though he can't hit against his own pitchers anymore). Yo Miyamoto had his best professional season last year. The team also brought in Shalom Van Buuren, who had a great year in hitters' park El Paso last year. Second baseman Jorge Aranda could be better, possibly. It's not a bad lineup, and Seattle finished in the middle of the pack last year offensively, but they're going to have to do a lot better than that...

Because Seattle's pitching was very entertaining last year, so fans should have a good time as long as they're not Seattle fans. Seattle finished in last place by over half a run last year, and one imagines it could have been worse than that, though their BABIP was awful. Malcolm Jolly had his best professional season last year, though he's still walking a ton of batters. Advanced numbers liked Jose Costello, regular numbers put him at 2-10 with a 6.22 ERA. Just the opposite with veteran Yun Zhang and Jorge Castro, who somehow combined for 26 wins. Castro is in the reality show "Man Desperately Seeking Changeup." (Not about makeovers.) Closer Len Conboy and reliever Alonso Blanco were solid last year, but, really, virtually nobody else was.

Seattle has tried address this issue, drafting Lucio Juarez, who scouts like better than I do, and owning prospects Joe Jackson and Doug Eckhoff; the three along with Run-ming Gui rate Seattle's farm as the top group. It's not deep, but I do like all these guys. More concerning is Seattle's cap situation; all the spending has pressed them close to the cap for the next couple years, though they should get some reprieve in 2053. I feel safe putting this team soundly on 95 losses this year, and there's a good chance they repeat their last place in pitching. Actually, I'm not sure how they'll avoid it unless they're aggressive with their prospects. It's possible that in a year or two, though, this team can contend for a wild card.



YOU'RE KILLING ME, SMALLS

