

# Play Ball!

The next generation of young stars will lead the way to a great 2010 baseball season



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Courtesy of daylife.com

St. Louis looks for their \$138 million man, Matt Holliday, to help lead them back to the World Series.

The 2010 baseball regular season begins on April 4, 2010, when the World Series Champion New York Yankees will visit their archrival's home stadium – Fenway Park. We have arrived at a new season, and every team has zero wins and zero losses, all tied for first place. Hope springs eternal for all teams, even the lowly Washington Nationals. With a view into the future this spring, we got to see the next three young superstars play with their respective clubs: Stephen Strasburg, Jason Heyward, and Aroldis Chapman. Opening Day is finally here and this is your best look into what we have in store. In over 60 pages of baseball breakdown, each team is analyzed, and you will find out who will surprise us, impress us, and who will take home the hardware at the end of the year. This is your 2010 Baseball Preview.

This Baseball Preview has been written by Ben Weinrib.  
Designs based off Sports Illustrated issue from March 31, 2008.

Designs based off Sporting News February 2009 issue.  
All photos courtesy of daylife.com unless otherwise noted.

Thanks to baseballamerica.com, scoutingbook.com, soxprospects.com, and oriolesprospects.com

\* Minor League Statistics





# American League East

▲ B.J. Upton



## AL East – 1. Boston Red Sox – AL East



Lineup	Pos.
Jacoby Ellsbury	LF
'09 Stats: .301, 8 HR, 60 RBI, 70 SB	
Dustin Pedroia	2B
'09 Stats: .296, 15 HR, 72 RBI, 20 SB	
Victor Martinez	C
'09 Stats: .303, 23 HR, 108 RBI, 1 SB	
Kevin Youkilis	1B
'09 Stats: .305, 27 HR, 94 RBI, 7 SB	
David Ortiz	DH
'09 Stats: .238, 28 HR, 99 RBI, 0 SB	
J.D. Drew	RF
'09 Stats: .279, 24 HR, 68 RBI, 2 SB	
Adrian Beltre	3B
'09 Stats: .265, 8 HR, 44 RBI, 13 SB	
Mike Cameron	CF
'09 Stats: .250, 24 HR, 70 RBI, 7 SB	
Marco Scutaro	SS
'09 Stats: .282, 12 HR, 60 RBI, 14 SB	
Jeremy Hermida	OF
'09 Stats: .253, 13 HR, 47 RBI, 5 SB	
Bill Hall	3B/SS
'09 Stats: .201, 8 HR, 36 RBI, 2 SB	
Mike Lowell	3B/1B
'09 Stats: .290, 17 HR, 74 RBI, 2 SB	
Jason Varitek	C
'09 Stats: .209, 14 HR, 52 RBI, 0 SB	
Josh Beckett	RHP
'09 Stats: 17-6, 3.86 ERA, 199 K	
Jon Lester	LHP
'09 Stats: 15-8, 3.41 ERA, 225 K	
John Lackey	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-8, 3.83 ERA, 139 K	
Daisuke Matsuzaka	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-6, 5.76 ERA, 54 K	
Clay Buchholz	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-4, 4.21 ERA, 68 K	
Jonathan Papelbon	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-1, 1.85 ERA, 76 K, 38 Sv	
Daniel Bard	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-2, 3.65 ERA, 63 K, 1 Sv	
Hideki Okajima	LHP
'09 Stats: 4-0, 2.76 ERA, 47 K, 0 Sv	

The Red Sox went into this past off-season with question marks. They had to fill holes in left field and shortstop and had issues at third base and the end of the rotation, too. Instead of spending big money on slugging outfielders Jason Bay or Matt Holliday, GM Theo Epstein and the Red Sox brass decided to go a different direction: pitching and defense.

They spent the money that would have gone to a free agent slugger on a top-of-the-rotation starter John Lackey. He will be Boston's third starter behind Josh Beckett and Jon Lester. They then spent the rest of their budget on three exquisite fielders: Adrian Beltre, Mike Cameron and Marco Scutaro. The moves will shift rising star Jacoby Ellsbury to left field and veteran third baseman Mike Lowell to the bench. He will likely be traded early in the year. They have upgraded their defense dramatically with Cameron, Scutaro, and Beltre, all major upgrades over their predecessors. Scutaro and Beltre are widely considered the among the best defensive players at their respective positions, and will form a very good fielding left side of the infield. Last season, the Red Sox defense was the third least efficient, and now they will likely be one of the three most efficient. Suddenly, they have a team who will be winning more games 4-3 than 8-6.

Although they lost Jason Bay and Mike Lowell's big bats, their bats will still be loud and productive. Victor Martinez and Kevin Youkilis hit .300-25-100 and David Ortiz hit 27 home runs and 81 RBIs after May. Expect diminishing returns from David Ortiz because of his wrist surgery and age. Jacoby Ellsbury and Dustin Pedroia are ideal top-of-the-order batters with great abilities to get on base, steal bases, and occasionally hit a bomb. Mike Cameron and Adrian Beltre both average around 25 homers a year, and they finally get to play in a right handed-friendly ballpark. Expect a major spike in their production, and not from PEDs as both of them have (allegedly) used in the past. The much-maligned J.D. Drew is often criticized for being overpaid (\$14 million per year), but the Red Sox didn't sign him to be a Big Papi-esque slugger. He is a grinder; he takes pitches and gets clutch hits



regularly, while playing right field well above average. The offense is missing the mashers in the middle, but they have quality all around.

Their offense, alone, will not carry them to the playoffs, but their pitching will. They have the greatest rotation in the majors (I will not allow any argument here) featuring three aces Beckett, Lester, and Lackey. Lackey's addition pushes them to the top. Come playoff time, they have three pitchers most teams would kill to have start Game 1. The back end of the rotation, Daisuke Matsuzaka and Clay Buchholz, can both be fantastic, when healthy. Dice-K's struggles last season were due to his covering up of his groin injury. If their pitching surplus dries up (Dice-K will start the year on the DL), they have veteran Tim Wakefield who is reliable for double-digit wins and seven innings per start.

Boston's bullpen isn't shabby either. Jonathan Papelbon is an ace closer, even though he lets too many runners on base. They have a quality lefty in Hideki Okajima along with hard-throwing righties Daniel Bard, Ramon Ramirez, and Manny Delcarmen. Boston has both quality and quantity when it comes to pitching. What wins in the playoffs? Great pitching.




Theo Epstein should be applauded for not making quick, rash decisions to counter the Yankees' big moves. While New York traded for Curtis Granderson and Javier Vazquez, the Red Sox didn't hand out nine-digit contracts nor did they mortgage the future for a star. Their young talent will produce in Red Sox uniforms – not as trade bait – and they still have a top-five offense in the league without a slugger in the middle of the order.

In the end, the Red Sox are built to win this year, 2011, and beyond. They won't have the same power they had last year, but their pitching more than cancels it out. Josh Beckett, now in another contract year, should be better then ever. Lester and Buchholz are only getting better. They are set for the future with Lowell and Ortiz's contracts coming off the books and Carl Crawford hitting the market. In the playoffs, pitching, defense, and timely hitting wins, not hitting and timely pitching. They won't be flashy and may win only win 95 games in the regular season, but they will show up in October. This team has way too much pitching not to win. Remember Dice-K is only the fourth starter! Grade: 96



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Red Sox need to trade for Padre Adrian Gonzalez. He fits in their defense-first mentality and will provide a power boost to the middle of their lineup. They can send the suddenly expendable Clay Buchholz, outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury, and Michael Bowden to San Diego. Jeremy Hermida can replace Ellsbury for the time being and until Ryan Kalish develops. They will also be able to give Adrian Beltre extra "days off" so he won't reach the 640-plate appearances needed for his player option to double to \$10 million. Boston is in a great position because big bats are easier to acquire than ace pitchers. Look at how easily they got Victor Martinez.

On the Rise		Jacoby Ellsbury
On the Decline		David Ortiz
Sleeper		Clay Buchholz

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Scouting Report
Casey Kelly	RHP	Athletic, dominating starter with a fastball, curve, and changeup. Excellent control
Ryan Westmoreland	OF	5-tool outfielder with 30-30 potential. Fantastic potential, but has been injury-prone
Lars Anderson	1B	Elite power potential and solid fielder. Big frame and can also hit for average
Josh Reddick	OF	Thin but athletic with strong arm and solid range. Great contact, developing power
Junichi Tazawa	RHP	Small-framed starter with great breaking pitches. Great control and funky delivery
Michael Bowden	RHP	Big frame, excellent control, but not over-powering. Fastball with sinking action
Ryan Kalish	OF	Athletic outfielder with excellent bat speed and speed. Leadoff hitter potential
Jose Iglesias	SS	Incredible fielder with plus range, arm and glove-work. Hitting is a bit questionable
Stolmy Pimentel	RHP	Aggressive, hard-throwing starter with mid-90s fastball, and solid changeup, curve
Anthony Rizzo	1B	Tough hitter with great bat speed, solid power. Excellent defender with great instincts



Lineup	Pos.
Derek Jeter	SS
'09 Stats: .334, 18 HR, 66 RBI, 30 SB	
Nick Johnson	DH
'09 Stats: .291, 8 HR, 62 RBI, 2 SB	
Mark Teixeira	1B
'09 Stats: .292, 39 HR, 122 RBI, 2 SB	
Alex Rodriguez	3B
'09 Stats: .286, 30 HR, 100 RBI, 14 SB	
Robinson Cano	2B
'09 Stats: .320, 25 HR, 85 RBI, 5 SB	
Jorge Posada	C
'09 Stats: .285, 22 HR, 81 RBI, 1 SB	
Curtis Granderson	LF
'09 Stats: .249, 30 HR, 71 RBI, 20 SB	
Nick Swisher	RF
'09 Stats: .249, 29 HR, 82 RBI, 0 SB	
Brett Gardner	CF
'09 Stats: .270, 3 HR, 23 RBI, 26 SB	
Randy Winn	OF
'09 Stats: .262, 2 HR, 51 RBI, 16 SB	
Ramiro Peña	2B/3B
'09 Stats: .287, 1 HR, 10 RBI, 4 SB	
Francisco Cervelli	C
'09 Stats: .298, 1 HR, 11 RBI, 0 SB	
Mike Rivera	C
'09 Stats: .228, 2 HR, 14 RBI, 1 SB	
CC Sabathia	LHP
'09 Stats: 19-7, 3.37 ERA, 197 K	
A.J. Burnett	RHP
'09 Stats: 13-9, 4.04 ERA, 195 K	
Javier Vazquez	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-10, 2.87 ERA, 238 K	
Andy Pettitte	LHP
'09 Stats: 14-8, 4.16 ERA, 148 K	
Phil Hughes	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-3, 3.03 ERA, 96 K, 3 Sv	
Mariano Rivera	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-3, 1.76 ERA, 72 K, 44 Sv	
Joba Chamberlain	RHP
'09 Stats: 9-6, 4.75 ERA, 133 K	
David Robertson	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-1, 3.30 ERA, 63 K, 1 Sv	

The defending champs have certainly been in the middle of nearly all of the off-season talks, whether it was trade rumors for Roy Halladay and Curtis Granderson, or free agent offers for Matt Holliday, John Lackey, Jason Bay, Aroldis Chapman, and Chone Figgins. They ended their off-season by replacing Hideki Matsui with Nick Johnson, Johnny Damon with Granderson, Sergio Mitre with Javier Vazquez, and Melky Cabrera with Randy Winn. Only Vazquez and Granderson are clear upgrades, yet both players have unanswered issues about them. Granderson did not even hit .250 last season (.183 against lefties) – not what you want from your top-of-the-order hitter. Vazquez has a history of pitching much better in the National League compared to the American League. He struggled with the Chicago White Sox and during his first stint with the Yankees.

The Yankees are easily a top-three team in Major League Baseball. Every team (except the Red Sox) would love to have CC and A.J. Burnett at the top of the rotation. Vazquez dominated last year in Atlanta and Andy Pettitte is as clutch as they come in big games. Young Phil Hughes won the last spot in the Yankees rotation. They have, arguably, the best ever closer in the game (Mariano Rivera) along with hard throwing young righties: Joba Chamberlain and David Robertson. The only deficiencies remaining in their pitching are a proven fifth starter and depth – they'll need more than Sergio Mitre as the season progresses.

The Yankees' lineup is as good as it gets. They have quality hitters up and down (maybe until to the eighth hitter) who all love to take pitches. Patient hitters make opposing starters tire quicker and throw worse until their early exit. Alex Rodriguez and Mark Teixeira will take advantage of every hanging breaking ball thrown to them and Granderson, Jorge Posada, and Robinson Cano are fully capable of doing the same. Longtime veterans Derek Jeter and Nick Johnson will get on base frequently, with the heart of their order bound to drive them home. Right fielder Nick Swisher is a hot and cold hitter, and the Yankees expect Gardner to cover the outfield well, while tolerating his average hitting. The Randy Winn signing is quite the head-



scratcher since they had a much better player, Johnny Damon. The Yankees will have no problems scoring runs; barring injuries, like what happened when A-Rod missed the first month of 2009.

New York's defense has question marks going into this year. They got rid of poorly fielding Johnny Damon and Hideki Matsui, but Brett Gardner and Curtis Granderson don't take great routes to fly balls. Jeter and Rodriguez both have diminishing range, but Teixeira and Cano counterbalance their poorly fielding left side of the infield by shifting to their right a few steps. Their biggest problem, though, is Jorge Posada and his below-average throwing arm. The Yankees will certainly miss their excellent fielding catcher Jose Molina, who left via free agency. Overall, their defense has lots of room for improvement and they will need to improve because the best baseball is error-free baseball.



The Yankees are the champions, and whether or not you like their transactions, no team is going to improve by sitting still. GM Brian Cashman took the initiative, shipping out promising youngsters Austin Jackson, Ian Kennedy, Arodys Vizcaino, and Michael Dunn for proven stars, Curtis Granderson and Javier Vazquez. One of the more troubling aspects of their team is the fact that their farm system is extremely depleted. Through several big trades and de-emphasis on scouting, their flow of young talent is slowing to a trickle. Jesus Montero will very likely switch away from catcher to another position, but he is blocked by superstars on the big league team, and injuries have slowed the progress of Dellin Betances.

In sum, the Bronx Bombers have it all; there's not much to dislike about this team. New York is in prime position to make another deep run in the playoffs, at the expense of the Angels. The only major problems for the Yankees are their age (which leads to injury), their inability to hit against lefties, and the challenge to play hungry as defending champions. If Burnett and Vazquez can settle down and dominate without throwing wildly, there won't be too many teams able to stand in the Yankees' way. The offense will take care of itself in the wiffleball park more commonly known as Yankee Stadium, but the measure of how much they improved depends on how well they replace the offensive power of Damon and Matsui. Then again, how aren't you going to win after spending \$2 billion in an off-season? GRADE: 95



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Yankees should make sure that Joba Chamberlain and Phil Hughes will be working out of the bullpen for not only this year, and for the rest of their careers. Chamberlain's ERA as a reliever is nearly three times lower than as a starter. His K/BB ratio almost doubles. He struggled to get past five innings as a starter, thus over-stressing their already depleted bullpen. Hughes reinvented himself as a set-up man last season. His ERA as a starter is nearly four points higher than it is as a reliever and his K/BB ratio increases by more than three. By moving Joba and Hughes to the bullpen, they provide have a smoother bridge to Mariano Rivera.

On the Rise		Robinson Cano
On the Decline		Jorge Posada
Sleeper		Nick Swisher

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Scouting Reports
Jesus Montero	C	Extremely high power potential. Huge frame but will likely be moved from catcher
Dellin Betances	RHP	Hard-throwing starter with high strikeout rate. Doesn't let many hitters get on base
Manuel Banuelos	LHP	Soft-throwing pitcher with smooth delivery. Small in size, but has plenty of poise
Slade Heathcott	OF	Athletic with plus range, arm strength. Good bat speed, but needs consistent swing
Austin Romine	C	Excellent fielder with cannon arm and rising power. Yankees' catcher of the future
Zach McAllister	RHP	Not a flashy pitcher but eats innings and get his work done. Groundball pitcher
Andrew Brackman	RHP	Finesse pitcher who underwent Tommy John Surgery. Sinking action on his fastball
Juan Miranda	1B	Relatively high power ceiling, but is a defensive liability. Big frame and unathletic
Gary Sanchez	C	Big frame with a cannon arm. Solid overall hitter, but swing can get too long
Jeremy Bleich	LHP	Low velocity, four-pitch starter with above average command and aggressiveness

## AL East – 3. Tampa Bay Rays – AL East



Lineup	Pos.
Jason Bartlett	SS
'09 Stats: .320, 14 HR, 66 RBI, 30 SB	
Carl Crawford	LF
'09 Stats: .305, 15 HR, 68 RBI, 60 SB	
Ben Zobrist	2B
'09 Stats: .297, 27 HR, 91 RBI, 17 SB	
Evan Longoria	3B
'09 Stats: .281, 33 HR, 119 RBI, 9 SB	
Carlos Peña	1B
'09 Stats: .227, 39 HR, 100 RBI, 3 SB	
B.J. Upton	CF
'09 Stats: .241, 11 HR, 55 RBI, 42 SB	
Pat Burrell	DH
'09 Stats: .221, 14 HR, 64 RBI, 2 SB	
Dioner Navarro	C
'09 Stats: .218, 8 HR, 32 RBI, 5 SB	
Matt Joyce	RF
'09 Stats: .273, 16 HR, 66 RBI, 14 SB*	
Gabe Kapler	OF
'09 Stats: .239, 8 HR, 32 RBI, 5 SB	
Willy Aybar	3B/SS
'09 Stats: .253, 12 HR, 41 RBI, 1 SB	
Sean Rodriguez	2B
'09 Stats: .299, 29 HR, 93 RBI, 9 SB*	
Kelly Shoppach	C
'09 Stats: .260, 8 HR, 27 RBI, 0 SB	
James Shields	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-12, 4.14 ERA, 167 K	
Matt Garza	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-12, 3.95 ERA, 189 K	
David Price	LHP
'09 Stats: 10-7, 4.42 ERA, 102 K	
Jeff Niemann	RHP
'09 Stats: 13-6, 3.94 ERA, 125 K	
Wade Davis	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-2, 3.72 ERA, 36 K	
Rafael Soriano	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-6, 2.97 ERA, 102 K, 27 Sv	
J.P. Howell	LHP
'09 Stats: 7-5, 2.84 ERA, 79 K, 17 Sv	
Dan Wheeler	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-5, 3.28 ERA, 45 K, 2 Sv	

To say the least, the Rays had a very disappointing 2009 season. Not only did they not make the playoffs, but they also finished only six games over .500. They shipped off their most important starting pitcher in franchise history, Scott Kazmir. They gave a \$16 million, two-year contract to Pat Burrell, who then played absolutely horribly. The money they owe him is a major reason why the Rays had to move Kazmir and will likely have to trade B.J. Upton or Carl Crawford in the near future. Despite the bad contracts and small budget, the Rays still have a great young core to keep them in contention for years to come.

They have a cornerstone hitter in third baseman Evan Longoria and two speedy outfielders B.J. Upton and Carl Crawford (although he isn't so young anymore). They are overflowing with quality young pitching, headed by James Shields, Matt Garza, and David Price. Tampa Bay's scouting is and has been incredible, especially considering their paltry budget. They have a top-five farm system, to keep their future bright. But this Rays team probably won't shine as bright for this season. The Rays are stuck behind two giants in Boston and New York and now the Orioles are markedly improved.

While Tampa has neither the Red Sox pitching nor Yankees hitting, they do have an above-average mix of both. They have incredible power from the middle of their lineup (Ben Zobrist, Longoria, and Carlos Peña). All three hitters can change the momentum of any game with their bat, creating one of the most formidable 3-4-5 combinations in the league. Zobrist and Jason Bartlett were two of the biggest surprises last year. Previously, both were considered poor hitters, but now are both All-Stars and fielding at the same level, if not better. Dioner Navarro and Matt Joyce had down years last season (Joyce couldn't even make the team), but both are poised for bounce back years.

The Rays have speed and defense, plain and simple. Outfielders Crawford and Upton will both cut down on runs allowed, plus their speed is a major asset on the bases. Their top prospect, Desmond Jennings, is on the fast track to the majors. Great



## AL East – 3. Tampa Bay Rays – AL East

defense directly correlates to winning: just take a look at how the 2008 Rays fell three games short of winning it all. That year, they had the best defense in the American League. Their emphasis on defense hasn't stopped over the past two years; the Rays have Gold Glove caliber defenders now at just about every position. Their strength in speed and defense will make up for their average offense.

Tampa's great pitching will also thrive. As another product of their excellent scouting, it will be a major asset for at least the next five years. Hard-throwing ace James Shields and Matt Garza anchor a deep and talented pool of young pitching. The key starter will actually be former number one overall pick David Price, who was shaky in his first full year in Major League Baseball. If Price can become dominant and pitch deep into games, the Rays could make their run at the playoffs even stronger. The back end of their rotation features two products of the 2004 draft, first-rounder Jeff Niemann and third-rounder Wade Davis. Both are still developing as pitchers and have bright futures ahead of them.

Even in their World Series run, the Rays never had a true closer. This off-season, they addressed that need. Rafael Soriano was acquired from the Braves, and he will close out a fairly solid bullpen that was in desperate need of a late inning stopper. They have plenty of heat between Soriano and Grant Balfour to go with high command set-up men J.P. Howell and Dan Wheeler.

Like the Red Sox, the Rays won't be flashy. They do all the fundamentals and get the job done. Tampa won't out-slug you like the Yankees, but they progress quickly through games with great pitching and defense. The bad news for the Rays is that they are in the same division as the Sox and Yanks. They would be the favorite to win any other division in the American League, but the three best teams in the AL are currently in the East. Only two teams will make it to October, and at the moment the Red Sox and Yankees are neck and neck for the best team in the league, and it's not too close. Essentially, the Rays must play similar to the level they did when they reached the Fall Classic two years ago. They won't have the same element of surprise as '08, but expect them to be overlooked since they finished so poorly last year. This team can and will be dangerous, so be ware. GRADE: 93



### Moves That Must Be Made

Tampa Bay needs to move David Price back to the bullpen. He only has a fastball, slider, and a seldom-used changeup. He was dominating at the end of 2008 in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> innings, and last year he rarely got out of the fifth inning. Like Joba Chamberlain, he is more dominant for one inning because he can throw his heart out and doesn't have to hold back and save energy. For the time being, the Rays can start Andy Sonnanstine, who won 13 games in 2008, and eventually move towards using prospects Jeremy Hellickson or Matt Moore. With his deceptive delivery, Price will make a much larger impact as a late inning pitcher.

On the Rise		Jason Bartlett
On the Decline		Pat Burrell
Sleeper		Matt Joyce

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Desmond Jennings	OF	Extremely athletic and speedy, graceful in the field. Line drive power, quick hands
Jeremy Hellickson	RHP	Very efficient starter who has strikeout potential. Great mechanics, solid control
Tim Beckham	SS	Former first overall pick, toolsy player. Smooth fielder with an effortless swing
Matt Moore	LHP	Deceptive starter with a plus fastball and curve. Dominated low levels, high upside
Reid Brignac	SS	Excellent fielding infielder with a great arm. Solid speed, but struggles at the plate
Jake McGee	LHP	A little short on stamina but racks up a ton of strikeouts. Has a wipeout curveball
Matt Sweeney	3B	Corner infielder with high power potential. Great arm, but poor accuracy, footwork
Alex Torres	LHP	Small frame, often struggles with command. Has fantastic slider, strikeout potential
Matt Walker	RHP	Relief pitcher with an inconsistent but blazing fastball. Hasn't reached expectations
Alexander Colome	LHP	Lacks control but can be dominant if he gets his breaking pitches under control

4

Lineup	Pos.
Brian Roberts	2B
'09 Stats: .283, 16 HR, 79 RBI, 30 SB	
Adam Jones	CF
'09 Stats: .277, 19 HR, 70 RBI, 10 SB	
Matt Wieters	C
'09 Stats: .288, 9 HR, 43 RBI, 0 SB	
Nick Markakis	RF
'09 Stats: .293, 18 HR, 103 RBI, 6 SB	
Miguel Tejada	3B
'09 Stats: .340, 14 HR, 86 RBI, 5 SB	
Luke Scott	LF
'09 Stats: .258, 25 HR, 77 RBI, 0 SB	
Garrett Atkins	1B
'09 Stats: .226, 9 HR, 48 RBI, 0 SB	
Nolan Reimold	DH
'09 Stats: .279, 15 HR, 45 RBI, 8 SB	
Cesar Izturis	SS
'09 Stats: .256, 2 HR, 30 RBI, 12 SB	
Felix Pie	OF
'09 Stats: .266, 9 HR, 29 RBI, 1 SB	
Robert Andino	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .222, 2 HR, 10 RBI, 3 SB	
Ty Wigginton	1B/3B
'09 Stats: .273, 11 HR, 41 RBI, 1 SB	
Julio Lugo	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .280, 3 HR, 21 RBI, 9 SB	
Kevin Millwood	RHP
'09 Stats: 13-10, 3.67 ERA, 123 K	
Jeremy Guthrie	RHP
'09 Stats: 10-17, 5.04 ERA, 110 K	
Brian Matusz	LHP
'09 Stats: 5-2, 4.63 ERA, 38 K	
Brad Bergesen	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-5, 3.43 ERA, 65 K	
Chris Tillman	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-5, 5.40 ERA, 39 K	
Mike Gonzalez	LHP
'09 Stats: 2-4, 4.05 ERA, 48 K, 0 Sv	
Jim Johnson	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-6, 4.11 ERA, 49 K, 10 Sv	
Cla Meredith	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-2, 4.00 ERA, 37 K, 0 Sv	



Courtesy of daylife.com

The team that has improved the most in the AL East has easily been the Orioles. They didn't lose any major players and they acquired a veteran innings eater, a quality closer, and brought back an old friend. The Orioles held the third worst record in the league last year, but don't be fooled; this team has a high potential. Leaning on budding stars Adam Jones and Matt Wieters, the Orioles won few games but gained very meaningful experience. Baltimore wasn't built to win last year, and this year will be another rebuilding year. However things will be a little different. Most of their young hitting has hit the show (with the exception of Josh Bell) but only pitchers Brian Matusz and Chris Tillman have made it to the majors.

Even though the Birds are waiting on their young pitching, they still have a decent rotation to work with. Their biggest pickup of the off-season was ace Kevin Millwood, acquiring him from Texas for injury-prone reliever Chris Ray. Millwood isn't dominating and he sure isn't young, but he pitches deep into games and saves the bullpen. Jeremy Guthrie will pair up with Millwood to complete an average 1-2 punch. The rest of the Orioles' rotation will consist of young pitchers. This team won't be going anywhere unless Brian Matusz can be close to as dominant as he was in the minors, and Brad Bergessen and Chris Tillman can step up. There is a strong likelihood that another starter will be a major contributor this season. It's rare that you will see two rookies and a sophomore start and finish the season in the rotation. David Hernandez and Koji Uehara, who both started over ten games last year, are the two best candidates to fill in the rotation.

The Orioles may not have top-notch pitching right now, but they do have a great, young offense. Their lineup is filled with athletic hitters who have both power and speed. The top of their batting order – All Stars Brian Roberts, Nick Markakis and Adam Jones – are great players who desire to improve their own baseball talents. Baltimore received a huge boost to the middle of their order by signing former All-Stars, Miguel Tejada and Garrett Atkins. While both corner infielders are well past their primes, they will provide great role models and tutors to the O's young players,



and can still hit and field. If there are two things the Oriole's lineup doesn't lack, it's youth and power. While they don't have any huge sluggers like Mark Teixeira, Matt Holliday, or Adrian Gonzalez, all of whom they have pursued over the past two off-seasons, just about every batter in their lineup has 20-home run power. Three more examples of those types of players are Luke Scott and Nolan Reimold (who are strikingly similar in nearly every fashion of the game) and Matt Wieters.

The best comparison to this Orioles' team would likely be the Rays from end of 2007 to the start of 2008. The Orioles are definitely going to get overlooked. They aren't star-studded like the other teams in their division, but they have a ton of young talent with even more on the way. They are still a year from contention, but they have a bright future ahead. If they aren't given the respect they truly deserve. So am I predicting a World Series title any time soon in Baltimore? No! But I do see brighter days ahead.


So for the most part, we've all deduced that this team won't be able to compete with three other teams who have proven time and time again that they can and will win. So what can the Orioles do to make sure that when all of their young talent has matured? Will they be able to maximize their potential, like the 2008 Rays? The sad answer is that there really isn't much for them to do, other than to swap out their pricy veterans later this season for other teams' medium level prospects. They badly need for a cornerstone shortstop of the future, something they have lacked since Miguel Tejada left.

This year, if anything, will be a stepping stone year for the Orioles. They finally have a bulldog starter worth re-signing for another two seasons, and a legitimate closer. With the addition of a few more blue chip prospects, the Orioles will be able to make a run at the playoffs. The biggest trade chips at the deadline will be Guthrie and Luke Scott, and if they can get a B-level middle infielder, they should be in store for a great 2011. The Orioles were poised to make a shot at a .500 season, but when news broke that Brian Roberts had a herniated disc in his back, those plans would have to be pushed back. Look out for the Orioles in the future as their young pitching develops, but they are stuck behind the Sox, Yankees, and Rays for now. GRADE: 85



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Orioles need to find a way to move Luke Scott. Scott is suddenly expendable with the acquisition of Garrett Atkins, who can play either corner infield position. They have two cornerstones in Nick Markakis and Adam Jones, a solid outfielder in Nolan Reimold, and an above average first base prospect in Brandon Snyder. They can get one or two solid prospects for Scott and will also clear the way for Felix Pie or Michael Aubrey, two former highly touted prospects, to start. They have plenty of young pitching, and they most need a power bat, not specific to any position. Teams who may be interested in Scott are the Tigers, Rays, and Giants.

On the Rise		Adam Jones
On the Decline		Cesar Izturis
Sleeper		Jeremy Guthrie

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Josh Bell	3B	Good power and even better ability to get on base. Great defender with plus arm
Zach Britton	LHP	Sinkerball pitcher who can strike out hitters, too. Quality slider, sinker, and fastball
Jake Arrieta	RHP	Plus slider and fastball, lacks consistency. Dominant, strikes out an ton of hitters
Brandon Snyder	1B	Great on-base hitter but lacks middle-of-the-order power. Strikes out too much
Matt Hobgood	RHP	Excellent fastball and curve, needs better command. Number 5 overall pick in 2009
Brandon Erbe	RHP	Has an explosive fastball with great movement. Needs better mechanics, command
Mychal Givens	SS	Extremely athletic with great arm strength. Above average speed, developing power
Xavier Avery	OF	Very fast, athletic, and has lots of range. Has quick wrists and makes great contact.
Caleb Joseph	C	Very tall starter with a downhill delivery. Very good curveball and low 90s fastball
Billy Rowell	OF	Great power, arm strength, but hasn't lived up to expectations. Makes poor contact

5



Lineup	Pos.
Jose Bautista	RF
'09 Stats: .235, 13 HR, 40 RBI, 4 SB	
Aaron Hill	2B
'09 Stats: .286, 36 HR, 108 RBI, 6 SB	
Adam Lind	DH
'09 Stats: .305, 35 HR, 114 RBI, 1 SB	
Vernon Wells	CF
'09 Stats: .216, 15 HR, 66 RBI, 17 SB	
Lyle Overbay	1B
'09 Stats: .265, 16 HR, 64 RBI, 0 SB	
Edwin Encarnacion	3B
'09 Stats: .240, 8 HR, 23 RBI, 1 SB	
Travis Snider	LF
'09 Stats: .241, 9 HR, 29 RBI, 1 SB	
John Buck	C
'09 Stats: .247, 8 HR, 36 RBI, 1 SB	
Alex Gonzalez	SS
'09 Stats: .284, 15 HR, 67 RBI, 2 SB	
Jarrett Hoffpauir	2B
'09 Stats: .291, 14 HR, 53 RBI, 4 SB*	
John McDonald	SS/3B
'09 Stats: .253, 4 HR, 13 RBI, 0 SB	
Randy Ruiz	1B
'09 Stats: .313, 10 HR, 17 RBI, 1 SB	
Jose Molina	C
'09 Stats: .217, 1 HR, 11 RBI, 0 SB	
Shaun Marcum	RHP
'08 Stats: 9-7, 3.39 ERA, 123 K	
Ricky Romero	LHP
'09 Stats: 13-9, 4.30 ERA, 141 K	
Jesse Litsch	RHP
'08 Stats: 13-9, 3.58 ERA, 99 K	
Brandon Morrow	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-4, 4.39 ERA, 63 K	
Brett Cecil	LHP
'09 Stats: 7-4, 5.30 ERA, 69 K	
Jason Frasor	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-2, 2.50 ERA, 56 K, 11 Sv	
Kevin Gregg	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-6, 4.72 ERA, 71 K, 23 Sv	
Scott Downs	LHP
'09 Stats: 1-3, 3.09 ERA, 43 K, 9 Sv	

The Blue Jays finally pulled off the deal that they should have consummated at the trade deadline last year: the club-crippling move of trading Roy Halladay. Toronto received a fantastic package of young talent (Kyle Drabek, Brett Wallace, and Travis D'Arnaud) especially considering made their deal after Halladay passed his peak trade value. While this deal has shot down all present plans for success, they have set themselves up wonderfully. With a future ace (Drabek) and masher (Wallace), and other high-level prospects Zach Stewart and J.P. Arencibia. While they have replenished their stock of young talent, the Blue Jays currently have one of the very worst teams in the Major Leagues.

Last season the Jays found out they had two very productive hitters, as two highly overpaid veterans, Vernon Wells and Alex Rios, continued their fall from All-Star status. Adam Lind (26) and Aaron Hill (28) each mashed 35 homers and 100 RBIs. The Jays lineup has gone under serious reconstruction since last Opening Day; only five players return from the start of last season, and former first-rounder Travis Snider only played in 77 games. The Jays replaced smooth fielders Scott Rolen, Marco Scutaro, Rod Barajas, and Rios for cheap free agents and former backups. Toronto unloaded a large portion of their offense to save money, which certainly won't pay off now. Toronto has an abysmal offense, one of the absolute worst in the league. Not too many teams can boast the worst three-player combination in the league, John Buck, Alex Gonzalez, and Jose Bautista. These players are has-been's or never-was's. This line-up is weaker than a Denny's bowl of chili. Blue Jays fans would be better off watching re-runs of the '89 or '93 teams led by Cito Gaston on TV than paying to see the present version at the Rogers Centre. This line-up could beat the '62 Mets, but would take 6 games to do it.

While their offense is clearly lacking, their pitching isn't too impressive either. With Doc gone, their entire rotation will be under the age of 29 and they have a grand total of 175 starts between them. Expect their inexperience to rear its ugly head early and often. Jesse Litsch and Shaun Marcum have shown they can be solid,



mid-rotation starters but haven't been able to stay healthy an entire year. Ricky Romero finally showed some of the promise that got him drafted number six in 2005, until his ERA rocketed over 2.5 point higher in the second half. Brandon Morrow is very similar to Romero; Seattle drafted the recently acquired righty third overall in 2006, but he hasn't lived up to his expectations. Even if Romero and Morrow both stay healthy throughout the entire season and improve their games, the Jays won't be able to compete with the rest of the league. The last man in the rotation will likely be Brett Cecil, another young starter thrust into the majors maybe just a big too early, a big risk towards his development. Brian Tallet and Marc Rzepczynski could see plenty of starts, especially considering injuries to Litsch and the inconsistency of Dusty McGowan.

The part of the Jays' team that could surprise many is their bullpen. They don't have a shutdown closer as they did before in B.J. Ryan, but they do have four solid set-up men to finish Toronto's close games. The head of the relief corps will be free agent acquisition Kevin Gregg, who has been shaky recently as a closer with the Cubs and Marlins but needs a change of scenery. Scott Downs, Jason Frasor, and Jeremy Accardo have all been solid throughout their careers out of the 'pen, and the Jays will really need them to protect their few and far between leads.

Only a few years ago, the Blue Jays were on the upswing, with talented youngsters Vernon Wells and Alex Rios, along with a great rotation of Roy Halladay, A.J. Burnett, Shaun Marcum, and Dustin McGowan. Now, their hitters are either well past their prime or gone and their surplus of pitching has suddenly dried up. They are now fifth in a division with three legitimate title contenders and a Baltimore team rocketing towards playoff contention. Toronto is trying to keep their team afloat while building towards the future. That was what made the Halladay deal necessary. With Doc, they were an okay team. Without the former Cy Young winner, they are a truly awful team. This team does have some pop in the middle of their order, but before that, their lineup is pedestrian and their rotation, as noted before, is certainly lacking. Look for the Jays to fall out of contention early and ship off Lyle Overbay, Vernon Wells, and their massive contracts, if at all possible. GRADE: 79



### Moves That Must Be Made

Somehow, some way, the Jays need to find an innings eater, near top of the rotation starter. They just traded Roy Halladay and now are looking at a very young and inexperienced rotation with Ricky Romero and Jesse Litsch. They need to make a move similar to what Baltimore did by shipping Chris Ray to Texas for Kevin Millwood. They should have taken a look at free agents like Jarrod Washburn, Paul Byrd, or Braden Loeper. Such a veteran could mentor Toronto's young starters such as Brandon Morrow, Kyle Drabek, and Brett Cecil, and save the bullpen. Marc Rzepczynski just won't cut it from here on out, no matter how awesome the name.

On the Rise	↑	Adam Lind
On the Decline	↓	Lyle Overbay
Sleeper	Z	Jesse Litsch

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Kyle Drabek	RHP	Dominating starter with an incredible curve, excellent control. The sky is the limit
Brett Wallace	3B	Mammoth power hitter, but fielding is in question. May end up at first or DH-ing
Adeiny Hechevarria	SS	Incredible tools with excellent offensive potential, great pop. Exceptional on defense
Zach Stewart	RHP	Has good command of sinking fastball, slider. Struggles with consistency at times
J.P. Arencibia	C	Dead pull hitter with a ton of power. Has a cannon arm, too. Needs better discipline
Chad Jenkins	RHP	Terrific slider and induces a ton of ground balls. Has a "major league" changeup
David Cooper	1B	Long swing, power to all fields, and gets on base. Doesn't have much range, though
Travis D'Arnaud	C	Moderate bat speed, plate discipline. Excellent fielder with great arm, quick release
Henderson Alvarez	RHP	Great arm strength, excellent control and changeup. Needs to improve versus lefties
Jake Marisnick	OF	Athletic with speed on the base paths, aggressive in the field. Power yet to emerge



# American League Central

▲ Jake Peavy





## AL Central – 1. Chicago White Sox – AL Central



Lineup	Pos.
Juan Pierre	LF
'09 Stats: .308, 0 HR, 31 RBI, 30 SB	
Gordon Beckham	2B
'09 Stats: .270, 14 HR, 63 RBI, 7 SB	
Carlos Quentin	RF
'09 Stats: .231, 26 HR, 53 RBI, 3 SB	
Paul Konerko	1B
'09 Stats: .277, 28 HR, 88 RBI, 1 SB	
Alex Rios	CF
'09 Stats: .241, 17 HR, 71 RBI, 24 SB	
A.J. Pierzynski	C
'09 Stats: .300, 13 HR, 49 RBI, 1 SB	
Mark Teahen	3B
'09 Stats: .271, 12 HR, 50 RBI, 8 RBI	
Andruw Jones	DH
'09 Stats: .214, 17 HR, 43 RBI, 5 SB	
Alexei Ramirez	SS
'09 Stats: .277, 15 HR, 68 RBI, 14 SB	
Mark Kotsay	OF/1B
'09 Stats: .278, 4 HR, 23 RBI, 3 SB	
Jayson Nix	2B/OF
'09 Stats: .224, 12 HR, 34 RBI, 10 SB	
Omar Vizquel	SS/3B
'09 Stats: .266, 1 HR, 14 RBI, 4 SB	
Ramon Castro	C
'09 Stats: .219, 7 HR, 25 RBI, 0 SB	
Jake Peavy	RHP
'09 Stats: 9-6, 3.45 ERA, 110 K	
Mark Buehrle	LHP
'09 Stats: 13-10, 3.84 ERA, 105 K	
John Danks	LHP
'09 Stats: 13-11, 3.77 ERA, 149 K	
Gavin Floyd	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-11, 4.06 ERA, 163 K	
Freddy Garcia	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-4, 4.34 ERA, 37 K	
Bobby Jenks	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-4, 3.71 ERA, 49 K, 29 Sv	
J.J. Putz	RHP
'09 Stats: 31-4, 5.22 ERA, 19 K, 2 Sv	
Matt Thornton	LHP
'09 Stats: 6-3, 2.74 ERA, 87 K, 4 Sv	

The White Sox have been one of the most successful teams of this past decade, but like every team in Major League Baseball, they have their share of up's and down's. Take the past few years for example. Chicago won the AL Central in 2008 and that off-season, instead of adding stars, they shipped off Javier Vazquez, Nick Swisher, and Orlando Cabrera. Last year, they sank from contention to mediocrity. Not content with his .500 team, GM Kenny Williams took matters into his own hands, trading for All-Stars Alex Rios and Jake Peavy late in the season and Mark Teahen and Juan Pierre this winter. The White Sox emptied their already weak farm system to contend this season. They are gambling on the Tigers' and Twins' shortcomings, already aided by Joe Nathan's injury.

The White Sox have plenty of pitching. With the addition of Peavy (along with Detroit's trade of Edwin Jackson) the Sox now have the best pitching staff in the AL Central. Peavy had a severe ankle injury last year, yet he came back in September to finish 3-0 with a 1.35 ERA in three starts with his new team. Mark Buehrle is just about as good a number two starter as you can get. He throws 200 innings every season, and he is very efficient with his pitches. Buehrle pitches more to contact and can surprise fans with a no-hitter or perfect game. After their two aces, the White Sox have two budding stars in John Danks and Gavin Floyd. Both Floyd and Danks were top-10 selections and are quickly becoming top-of-the-rotation starters. The wild card for Chicago's rotation is Bartolo Colon, an aging veteran who hasn't been healthy for an entire season since 2005. If Colon, who will turn 37 in May, can make at least 20 starts, the White Sox won't have to sign a veteran or rush a young pitcher, such as Daniel Hudson or Jeff Marquez. Although they don't have big name starters like some other teams, only a handful of teams have better pitching than Chicago.

The White Sox strength is certainly their pitching, but their offense isn't bad. They will not be able to outslug their opponents. The best part about the White Sox team on both offense and defense is their versatility. This off-season, the White Sox let go of veteran sluggers Jim Thome and Jermaine Dye because their hitting wasn't

## AL Central – 1. Chicago White Sox – AL Central

making up for their lack of fielding skills. Nearly every player on their new club can play multiple positions (the exceptions being A.J. Pierzynski and Paul Konerko) and play those positions well. For example, Mark Teahen doesn't have exceptional power or on-base skills, but he is an above average contributor across the board and will be in the starting lineup everyday. Gordon Beckham, their first-round pick last year, will shift from third to second, showing more of the Sox' versatility. He has incredible strength and bat speed, especially for his age. Infielders Alexei Ramirez and Paul Konerko will provide stability both with their gloves and bats. Team captain Konerko's leadership extends to both veterans and young players alike. Chicago's outfield is especially well rounded; all three players have an excellent combination of fielding, speed, and power, though none are top-echelon players. Rios and Carlos Quentin have shown great power potential yet neither has been able to prove that they can remain healthy for a full year. In order to contend and win, Chicago will need both sluggers to play well nearly every day. The White Sox will have Juan Pierre leading off, who doesn't have any power, has arguably the best speed and defense combination in the league.


Pitching is certainly the strength of Chicago, and the bullpen is fairly strong, too. Bobby Jenks isn't always the most consistent closer, but he is often dominant in tight situations. Setting up for Jenks, the Sox have Matt Thornton, J.J. Putz, and Scott Linebrink, all of whom are high quality late-inning relievers.

Chicago is a good team in a weakened division. They have an excellent team, when healthy, but they are still missing a piece or two. They are set on pitching with four impressive starters and a great bullpen, headed by closer Bobby Jenks, but their offense is missing one hitter. Andruw Jones is a serviceable DH at best, but he is not going to cut it for the whole season. The White Sox really needed to sign a player like Jermaine Dye or Carlos Delgado to a short, cheap contract as a middle-of-the-lineup hitter. Luckily for Chicago, hitting is easier to fix than pitching, and they can go get another bat. In the mean time, the White Sox should be able to pitch their way into October. Chicago is a well-constructed team to win now, just not win a title. Chicago can be very competitive, but they still have many needs to address. GRADE: 91



### Moves That Must Be Made

Although the White Sox are my favorite to win the AL Central, they need to add another bat to their lineup to contend for the AL crown. Platooning Andruw Jones and Mark Kotsay at DH is not going to cut it if they want to make a run for the title. They can send shortstop prospect Brent Lillibridge or Jayson Nix and a lower level prospect for a veteran slugger who is about to reach free agency. If the Rays fall out of contention, GM Kenny Williams should take a look at Carlos Peña, and for a cheaper option, maybe Pat Burrell. Another possible trade bait would be reliever Scott Linebrink, who was nearly traded for Milton Bradley in the off-season.

On the Rise		Gordon Beckham
On the Decline		Freddy Garcia
Sleeper		Alex Rios

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Tyler Flowers	C	Disciplined, powerful hitter, a muscular build. Great arm strength, but isn't agile
Jared Mitchell	OF	Extremely athletic with speed, hits for average and power. Great in the field, too.
Dayan Viciedo	3B	Cuban defector with excellent power, bat speed. Has a great arm, but limited range
Daniel Hudson	RHP	Big-framed starter with exquisite control, strikeout slider. Struggles versus lefties
Brent Lillibridge	SS	Speedy, strong-armed infielder with limited power. Can play the outfield, too
Jordan Danks	OF	Great defensive outfielder with developing power, speed. Brother of John Danks
Jeff Marquez	RHP	Has four quality pitches and pitches to contact. Somewhat of a groundball pitcher
Brent Morel	3B	Very good fielder, great hitter for average. Doesn't have much power at the moment
John Shelby	OF	Athletic with plus speed, developing power. Needs to take more pitches and walks
Christian Marrero	1B	Hits well for average, medium power. Can play corner outfield, but is a poor fielder





Lineup	Pos.
Denard Span	CF
'09 Stats: .311, 8 HR, 68 RBI, 23 SB	
Orlando Hudson	2B
'09 Stats: .283, 9 HR, 63 RBI, 8 SB	
Joe Mauer	C
'09 Stats: .365, 28 HR, 96 RBI, 4 SB	
Justin Morneau	1B
'09 Stats: .274, 30 HR, 100 RBI, 0 SB	
Michael Cuddyer	RF
'09 Stats: .276, 32 HR, 94 RBI, 6 SB	
Jim Thome	DH
'09 Stats: .249, 23 HR, 77 RBI, 0 SB	
Jason Kubel	LF
'09 Stats: .300, 28 HR, 103 RBI, 1 SB	
J.J. Hardy	SS
'09 Stats: .229, 11 HR, 47 RBI, 0 SB	
Nick Punto	3B
'09 Stats: .228, 13 HR, 81 RBI, 6 SB	
Delmon Young	OF
'09 Stats: .284, 12 HR, 60 RBI, 2 SB	
Brendan Harris	3B/SS
'09 Stats: .261, 6 HR, 37 RBI, 0 SB	
Alexi Casilla	2B
'09 Stats: .202, 0 HR, 17 RBI, 11 SB	
Jose Morales	C
'09 Stats: .336, 2 HR, 26 RBI, 1 SB*	
Scott Baker	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-9, 4.37 ERA, 162 K	
Carl Pavano	RHP
'09 Stats: 14-12, 5.10 ERA, 147 K	
Francisco Liriano	LHP
'09 Stats: 5-13, 5.80 ERA, 122 K	
Kevin Slowey	RHP
'09 Stats: 10-3, 4.86 ERA, 75 K	
Nick Blackburn	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-11, 4.03 ERA, 98 K	
Jon Rauch	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-1, 1.72 ERA, 14 K, 0 Sv	
Matt Guerrier	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-1, 2.36 ERA, 47 K, 1 Sv	
Jose Mijares	LHP
'09 Stats: 2-2, 2.34 ERA, 55 K, 0 Sv	

When you talk about which teams do the small things right, the teams that first come to mind are the Twins and Angels. For the longest time, the Twins have been a small market team with a tight budget; just look at how the Twins had to let Torii Hunter go and trade Johan Santana for a small return. Minnesota just opened their new stadium, open-air Target Field, and now has a larger payroll than the Dodgers. The Twins' payroll is now over \$100 million, due to a very busy off-season, most notably including Joe Mauer's \$184 million extension.

Minnesota's management finally stepped up this off-season. They found a replacement for floundering outfielder, Delmon Young, and added great leadership to an already great clubhouse. Recent pickups Orlando Hudson and Jim Thome are two of the greatest teammates you will ever want; they keep things loose and exciting, something only the Yankees' Curtis Granderson and Nick Swisher can rival. All off-the-field antics aside, this team can flat out hit. The Twins have the best, young 3-4 batting combos in Joe Mauer and Justin Morneau; both of whom are former MVPs with the knack to get on base and produce power. Defensively challenged sluggers Jason Kubel and Thome will also provide plenty of power to the Twins' slugging lineup. Kubel is probably the best seventh hitter in the league, which goes to show how deep the Twins' lineup really is. Perhaps the most underappreciated hitter in the Twins lineup is Michael Cuddyer, a late-bloomer who hit the quietest .275-30-90 year ever. The two keys to the Twins lineup are at the top and bottom of their order: Denard Span and J.J. Hardy. Span plays excellent offense and even better defense, largely due to his blazing speed. Hardy, acquired for Carlos Gomez, had a very poor last season and is looking to bounce back to All-Star form. If Span, Hardy, and the combination of versatile Nick Punto and Brendan Harris can provide timely hits and adequate defense, the Twins will be in great position to win the Central.

Minnesota has a decent pitching staff. The Twins have a rotation filled with solid pitchers who will fly under the national media's radar. Scott Baker is a very, very productive starter but doesn't get the recognition that nearly every other ace

gets. Francisco Liriano will be the key to this staff. Since his phenomenal rookie season, he hasn't been able to remain healthy. However this winter, he was very dominant in the Dominican Winter League. If he can pitch like he did earlier this year, the Twins will be in for a big treat. The Twins took a gamble by offered Type B free agent Carl Pavano arbitration, and he returned for a hefty price of \$7 million. He isn't the most consistent or dominating starter, but he will provide leadership and consistency (although consistent mediocrity). Finishing out the rotation will be two young starters who stepped up in a huge way last year, although with contrasting styles. Kevin Slowey dominated in his 16 starts and finished near the top of the league in strikeouts per nine innings. Nick Blackburn was the only Twins' starter who stayed healthy the entire season. He logged over 200 quick and efficient innings, a trademark of the Twins' club.

For decades, the Twins have been a club that does all the small things necessary to win. Although they are a small market team, their \$100+ million payroll shows that you don't have to be in a major East Coast or West Coast city to pay serious bucks for quality players. Still, they must find and develop their own talent in order to remain cost effective. The one consistency that Minnesota has had over the past seven years is manager Ron Gardenhire. Gardenhire is easily one of the best two managers in the league along with the Angels' Mike Scioscia. He is an elite strategist and a great leader, with a great eye for talent. The Twins will clearly miss elite closer Nathan, who will be out the entire 2010 season with a torn elbow ligament. In Nathan's absence, the Twins will feature a bullpen by committee, featuring quality righties Jon Rauch, Matt Guerrier, Pat Neshek and, Jesse Crain, and young lefty Jose Mijares.

To a much smaller extent, the AL Central division race is very similar to the AL East race between the Red Sox and Yankees (and maybe the Rays). The White Sox have a decent offense and fantastic pitching while the Twins have a great offense and solid pitching. When it comes down to it, great pitching wins, and that's not what the Twins have. They will be better down the road when their deep farm system produces more young stars. For now, they'll need one more quality pitcher before they make the next step. GRADE: 89



### Moves That Must Be Made

Joe Nathan will miss the 2010 season, so the Twins will be in the market for a closer – unless they want to depend on Jon Rauch. The best closer available will be Heath Bell of the Padres. With San Diego heading into a rebuilding mode, Bell and Adrian Gonzalez will likely be traded for young prospects. Minnesota has a surplus of young outfielders, so they could ship off speedy Ben Revere and an MLB-ready player (Alexi Casilla or Brian Duensing). Bell is also a very good set-up man, so when Nathan comes back from Tommy John surgery, the Twins have the option of keeping both and using Bell to set-up. Unfortunately they would make \$20 million combined.

On the Rise		Scott Baker
On the Decline		Delmon Young
Sleeper		J.J. Hardy

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Aaron Hicks	OF	5-tool athlete with plenty of raw skills. Could be a top-flight player in a few years
Ben Revere	OF	Prototype leadoff hitter. Incredible speed and ability to put the bat on the ball
Miguel Sano	SS	Highly touted Dominican signee. Big for his age (16) and has power to all fields
Danny Valencia	3B	He can flat out hit. Blossoming power, decent speed, arm strength but whiffs a lot
Wilson Ramos	C	Has a strong, line drive swing and improving power. Excellent defender, great arm
Kyle Gibson	RHP	Big-framed inning eater, grinds through at-bats. Possesses hard fastball, plus slider
Glen Perkins	LHP	Soft-throwing and pitches to contact. Doesn't strike many out, but gets the job done
Angel Morales	OF	Young, speedy, and already possesses high-caliber power. A few years away
Shooter Hunt	RHP	Racks up strikeouts between blazing fastball, hard curve. Needs to improve command
Carlos Gutierrez	RHP	Hard-throwing closer coming off TJ Surgery. Throws up to 98 mph, needs 2 <sup>nd</sup> pitch



## AL Central – 3. Detroit Tigers – AL Central



Lineup	Pos.
Austin Jackson	CF
'09 Stats: .300, 4 HR, 64 RBI, 24 SB*	
Johnny Damon	LF
'09 Stats: .282, 24 HR, 82 RBI, 12 SB	
Magglio Ordoñez	RF
'09 Stats: .310, 9 HR, 50 RBI, 3 SB	
Miguel Cabrera	1B
'09 Stats: .324, 34 HR, 103 RBI, 6 SB	
Carlos Guillen	DH
'09 Stats: .242, 11 HR, 41 RBI, 1 SB	
Brandon Inge	3B
'09 Stats: .230, 27 HR, 84 RBI, 2 SB	
Scott Sizemore	2B
'09 Stats: .308, 17 HR, 66 RBI, 21 SB*	
Gerald Laird	C
'09 Stats: .225, 4 HR, 35 RBI, 5 SB	
Adam Everett	SS
'09 Stats: .238, 8 HR, 44 RBI, 5 SB	
Clete Thomas	OF
'09 Stats: .240, 7 HR, 39 RBI, 3 SB	
Ryan Raburn	OF/3B
'09 Stats: .291, 16 HR, 45 RBI, 5 SB	
Ramon Santiago	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .267, 7 HR, 35 RBI, 1 SB	
Alex Avila	C
'09 Stats: .279, 5 HR, 14 RBI, 0 SB	
Justin Verlander	RHP
'09 Stats: 19-9, 3.45 ERA, 269 K	
Rick Porcello	RHP
'09 Stats: 14-9, 3.96 ERA, 89 K	
Max Scherzer	RHP
'09 Stats: 9-11, 4.12 ERA, 174 K	
Jeremy Bonderman	RHP
'08 Stats: 3-4, 4.29 ERA, 44 K	
Dontrelle Willis	LHP
'09 Stats: 1-4, 7.49 ERA, 17 K	
Jose Valverde	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-2, 2.33 ERA, 56 K, 25 Sv	
Joel Zumaya	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-3 4.94 ERA, 31 K, 1 Sv	
Phil Coke	LHP
'09 Stats: 4-3, 4.50 ERA, 49 K, 2 Sv	

Going into the off-season, the Tigers appeared to be looking to shed payroll. They shipped off All-Stars Curtis Granderson and Edwin Jackson for four young players. But surprisingly, Detroit ended up not shedding payroll. Granderson was benched against lefties in favor of Ryan Raburn, a solid utility hitter, and Edwin Jackson was due for a pay raise. In return, they received Max Scherzer, who they can keep for two extra years before he hits free agency. The Tigers then took the money that would have gone to Granderson and Jackson and spent it to extend ace Justin Verlander as well as signing Jose Valverde and Johnny Damon.

After losing Granderson, Placido Palanco, and Aubrey Huff this off-season, the Tigers' offense will be a lot younger and have a lot less bite. Detroit will now turn to rookies Austin Jackson (age 23) and Scott Sizemore (age 25), so the pair will really have to step up their game. Jackson has elite speed and, like Granderson early in his career, lacks power. He should improve as the year goes on and projects to become an elite defender and great leadoff hitter. Sizemore has very good discipline and hits well for average. Sizemore had a very poor spring, and the Tigers may look to find a replacement if he can't improve his numbers. The rest of the team has an average age of 32 and an old 32 at that. Veterans Magglio Ordoñez, Carlos Guillen, and Adam Everett are well past their primes, but will still provide some offense. Damon, Ordoñez, and Guillen still have a little pop left in their bats and unfortunately for the Tigers will likely be three of their top five run producers. Not to be overlooked, the best player on the Tigers is clearly Miguel Cabrera. He is a career .311 hitter and averages 33 homers and 117 RBIs. Cabrera fell into an alcohol problem at the end of the season but is still the most dangerous hitter in the AL Central. When Cabrera is on his game, no pitcher wants to pitch to him.

Detroit's rotation is a question mark going into the year. The first three spots are already guaranteed, and after that, four up-and-down starters will compete throughout the season for the last two spots. The top of their rotation features three of the best young, hard-throwing righties in the league. Justin Verlander and his blazing

## AL Central – 3. Detroit Tigers – AL Central

100-mph fastball leads the way, as he will try to live up to his 5-year, \$80 million contract. When healthy, Verlander is easily a top-10 pitcher in Major League Baseball. The Tigers did a great job buying out the next two years of arbitration and three years of free agency. After Verlander, the Tigers will turn to 21-year old Rick Porcello who's stuff was electric in his rookie year, but the team will need to monitor his innings so he doesn't blow out his arm shoulder from over pitching. A product of the Edwin Jackson trade, flamethrower Max Scherzer, has fantastic breaking pitches and a hard fastball. Unfortunately, he is also a major injury risk. That injury risk was a factor for the Diamondbacks to swap him, something that should concern Detroit. After that, three former 13-game winners are competing for the Tigers' last two rotation spots. Injuries have derailed the careers of hard-throwing righty Jeremy Bonderman, and inconsistent Dontrelle Willis while Armando Galarraga had a sophomore slump after a fantastic '08 rookie season. Bonderman and Willis are the two best equipped to win the starting jobs while Gallaraga will likely work out of the bullpen.




Age and experience are major concerns for the Tigers. With the exceptions of Cabrera and slick fielding Brandon Inge, everyone on the team is either in the league too soon or well past his prime. In an ideal world, Jackson and Sizemore would not be rushed into their starting roles and they could find more replacements for veterans such as Guillen and Ordoñez. One of the problems of an aging team is a deteriorating defense, and that is where the Tigers will need help. Adam Everett is an elite defender and Laird is solid; beyond that, the rest of the team is below average to bad. If the Tigers' can't pick up a solid hitting player who can field well, they probably will fall out of contention by late July.

The Tigers have a great manager in Jim Leyland, but great managing can only go so far. The Tigers lack a run producer, and Magglio Ordoñez just isn't that anymore. They aren't in contention, and in this economic climate, they are in no position to add any salary. The Tigers need to dump Bonderman or Willis to a team who badly needs pitching in any form and can take on the contract. This Tigers team isn't going anywhere, so wait 'til hockey season, people of Detroit. GRADE: 86



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Tigers need to shed salary, and the place where they have the most unused money is at starting pitcher, Jeremy Bonderman and Dontrelle Willis at a combined \$24.5 million this year. Detroit will need to ship one (if not both) of them to a team in need of pitching. Two contenders that lack pitching are the Yankees and Dodgers. Los Angeles has a surplus of hitters, and the two clubs could swap Bonderman for an outfielder like Reed Johnson and with a midlevel prospect. Johnson could fill in left and center field and is probably a better hitter than Ryan Raburn. Another option is to just send him to a contender for prospects.

On the Rise		Max Scherzer
On the Decline		Magglio Ordoñez
Sleeper		Jeremy Bonderman

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Jacob Turner	RHP	Power starter drafted 9 <sup>th</sup> overall out of high school. Blazing fastball and solid curve
Ryan Perry	RHP	Electric fastball with above-average breaking pitches. Elite closer in the making
Casey Crosby	LHP	Hard-throwing, but efficient starter with excellent fastball. Changes speeds well
Daniel Schlereth	LHP	Plus fastball and slider and worked well out of the bullpen. Deceptive delivery
Wilkin Ramirez	OF	Above average power and speed. Aggressive at the plate, progressing in the field
Ryan Strieby	1B	Big-framed hitter with elite power potential. Has excellent patience at the plate
Alfredo Figaro	RHP	Small frame, but hits mid-90s. Only legitimate breaking pitching is solid curve
Gustavo Nuñez	SS	Outstanding fielding infielder with speed. Hits well for average, but no power
Casper Wells	OF	Power-hitting outfielder with speed. Best asset is his plus arm strength
Brett Jacobson	RHP	Hard-throwing closer with strikeout ability. Needs to keep the ball down in the zone





Lineup	Pos.
Asdrubal Cabrera	SS
'09 Stats: .308, 6 HR, 68 RBI, 17 SB	
Grady Sizemore	CF
'09 Stats: .248, 18 HR, 64 RBI, 13 SB	
Shin-Soo Choo	RF
'09 Stats: .300, 20 HR, 86 RBI, 21 SB	
Travis Hafner	DH
'09 Stats: .272, 16 HR, 49 RBI, 0 SB	
Russell Branyan	1B
'09 Stats: .251, 31 HR, 76 RBI, 2 SB	
Jhonny Peralta	3B
'09 Stats: .254, 11 HR, 83 RBI, 0 SB	
Matt LaPorta	1B
'09 Stats: .254, 7 HR, 21 RBI, 2 SB	
Lou Marson	C
'09 Stats: .290, 2 HR, 33 RBI, 4 SB*	
Luis Valbuena	2B
'09 Stats: .250, 10 HR, 31 RBI, 2 SB	
Trevor Crowe	OF
'09 Stats: .235, 1 HR, 17 RBI, 6 SB	
Anderson Hernandez	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .251, 3 HR, 37 RBI, 7 SB	
Andy Marte	3B/1B
'09 Stats: .232, 6 HR, 25 RBI, 0 SB	
Mike Redmond	C
'09 Stats: .237, 0 HR, 7 RBI, 0 SB	
Fausto Carmona	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-12, 6.23 ERA, 79 K	
Jake Westbrook	RHP
'08 Stats: 1-2, 3.12 ERA, 19 K	
Justin Masterson	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-10, 4.52 ERA, 119 K	
David Huff	LHP
'09 Stats: 11-8, 5.61 ERA, 65 K	
Aaron Laffey	LHP
'09 Stats: 7-9, 4.44 ERA, 59 K	
Kerry Wood	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-3, 4.52 ERA, 63 K, 20 Sv	
Chris Perez	RHP
'09 Stats: 0-1, 4.32 ERA, 38 K, 1 Sv	
Rafael Perez	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-3, 7.31 ERA, 32 K, 0 Sv	

Cleveland Indians fans have gone through a lot recently, but nothing hurt more than watching two of their former aces start in the World Series – for the Yankees and Phillies. After blowing a 3-1 lead in the '07 ALCS, they have undergone a massive fall from grace that resulted in trading CC Sabathia, Cliff Lee, Victor Martinez, and the seven All-Star appearances between them. For now, Cleveland will move on with Grady Sizemore and their collection of young talent.

Simply put, the Indians have very little to work with on offense. They are starting three rookies and two more players with three or less years of experience. Lou Marson, who was acquired in the Lee trade, will take over at catcher, but he won't be there for long, once their top prospect (Carlos Santana) is ready to play in the Big Leagues, likely by 2011. The two biggest prizes of the Sabathia trade, Matt LaPorta and Michael Brantley, will be stepping up in a big way this season. With Martinez, Casey Blake, and Franklin Gutierrez gone, LaPorta will (and must) become one of the top run-producers. That shouldn't be much of a problem, though, because he has hit at least 20 home runs four of the last five seasons. Expect Brantley to play frequently off the bench. He brings incredible speed but little power. The success of the Indians will largely depend on how well the rookie hitters adjust to Major League pitching. The middle infield will consist of two 24-year old Venezuelans, Asdrubal Cabrera and Luis Valbuena. Both are above average in the field but merely an average bat. Cleveland's last remaining All-Star is Grady Sizemore. His outstanding athleticism, speed, and power will keep the Indians' floundering offense and marketability afloat. The Tribe has another up-and-coming star, Shin-Soo Choo. Choo had a breakout year last season and finally broke the 20 home run mark. The Tribe needs production improvement from Hafner and Peralta to assist Sizemore and Choo in this power-challenged lineup. Pronk hasn't been in All-Star form in two years and may be hurting from coming off the juice (allegedly). Peralta had the worst full year of his career. The Tribe will look for a replacement at the hot corner in 2011 if Peralta repeats his 2009 (lack of) power numbers. If you catch the pattern, the

## AL Central – 4. Cleveland Indians – AL Central

Indians are a team with a fading offense full of has-beens, will-be's, and Grady Sizemore.

Cleveland's pitching shares many of the same traits of its offense. Their top two pitchers, Fausto Carmona and Jake Westbrook, had their days winning double-digit games a few years ago. Now are injury riddled, inaccurate starters who have lost their feel for their breaking pitches. The sad part for the Indians is that Carmona and Westbrook are the best they have to work with. Perhaps they aren't ready for the big stage and none of them are the second coming of Bob Feller or CC Sabathia. Justin Masterson, David Huff, and Aaron Laffey will form the rest of the rotation. None of them have the best stuff, but no one would be shocked if any of them broke out to be very good starters. Masterson, acquired in the Martinez trade, has an excellent sinker but can never string together consecutive quality starts, at least at the moment. Huff and Laffey are two more average starters Cleveland will have to endure. Jeremy Sowers would be another possible starter, but he can never make it past two times through the batting order before self-destructing, so he will be relegated to the 'pen.

One of the perceived strengths for the 2009 the Indians was their bullpen. Kerry Wood had regained his swagger and Rafael Betancourt and Rafael Perez would provide great relief work and help protect their saves. As we now know, that didn't happen. Wood is a struggling closer making \$10.5 million, Betancourt is in Colorado, and Perez had an ERA above 7.00. The Indians now have young righties Chris Perez, Joe Smith, and Jensen Lewis, none of which are very productive and dependable.

It's always sad to see a team fall from the highest places, and that is what we are witnessing now with this club. Sabathia, Lee, and Martinez are gone and maybe Sizemore is the next man to go to the shopping block. Cleveland has young talent to build around, and in a few years, the third best farm system in the majors (after Texas and Boston) will hopefully make this team a winner again. For now, there is very little to look forward to, unless you like feeling the breeze from Travis Hafner's wiffs (potentially nice in the summer heat) and watching a race with the Royals for the higher pick in the 2011 draft. GRADE: 80



### Moves That Must Be Made

While Grady Sizemore is the best player on the Indians, his skills may be more suited later on in the order. Sizemore hit a lowly .248, which is unacceptable for a second hitter. Cleveland should do what Tampa Bay did to Carl Crawford: move him to the three spot in the batting order. Sizemore can still use his speed, but he won't have as much pressure on him to get on base. He can also take advantage of the power he possesses. Luckily, they won't have to go outside their club to find a new leadoff hitter; they have an excellent young outfielder with elite speed, Michael Brantley. Brantley hit .313 in Cleveland last year and should easily slide in to the leadoff spot.

On the Rise	↑	Asdrubal Cabrera
On the Decline	↓	Travis Hafner
Sleeper	Z	Fausto Carmona

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Carlos Santana	C	Switch-hitter with exceptional power, discipline. Great defender with cannon arm
Michael Brantley	OF	Speedy, athletic with great discipline. Developing power and premium fielding
Nick Hagadone	LHP	Tall frame, aggressive with plus fastball and slider. Fluid, but compact delivery
Lonnie Chisenhall	3B	Smooth, rangy fielder with developing power. Quick bat speed, hits well for average
Hector Rondon	RHP	Extremely accurate starter, but can get aggressive. Has fastball with life, solid slider
Adam White	RHP	Great arm strength with array of off-speed pitches, especially sinker. Long motion
Adam Miller	RHP	Throws upwards of 98 mph but hasn't stayed healthy. Can be elite starter or closer
Carlos Carrasco	RHP	Excellent fastball and changeup. Curve is solid, needs polish. Poor mental approach
Jason Knapp	RHP	Huge arm and big frame. Needs to develop secondary pitches but is still young
Jason Donald	SS	Line drive power and great patience. Lacks poor range, but has a strong arm



5



Lineup	Pos.
David DeJesus	RF
'09 Stats: .281, 13 HR, 71 RBI, 4 SB	
Scott Podsednik	LF
'09 Stats: .333, 3 HR, 31 RBI, 9 SB	
Alex Gordon	3B
'09 Stats: .232, 6 HR, 22 RBI, 5 SB	
Billy Butler	1B
'09 Stats: .301, 21 HR, 93 RBI, 1 SB	
Jose Guillen	DH
'09 Stats: .242, 9 HR, 40 RBI, 1 SB	
Rick Ankiel	CF
'09 Stats: .231, 11 HR, 38 RBI, 4 SB	
Jason Kendall	C
'09 Stats: .241, 2 HR, 43 RBI, 7 SB	
Yuniesky Betancourt	SS
'09 Stats: .245, 6 HR, 49 RBI, 3 SB	
Chris Getz	2B
'09 Stats: .261, 2 HR, 31 RBI, 25 SB	
Willy Bloomquist	2B/OF
'09 Stats: .265, 4 HR, 29 RBI, 25 SB	
Josh Fields	3B/1B
'09 Stats: .222, 7 HR, 30 RBI, 2 SB	
Alberto Callaspo	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .300, 11 HR, 73 RBI, 2 SB	
Brayan Peña	C
'09 Stats: .273, 6 HR, 18 RBI, 0 SB	
Zack Greinke	RHP
'09 Stats: 16-8, 2.16 ERA, 242 K	
Gil Meche	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-10, 5.09 ERA, 95 K	
Brian Bannister	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-12, 4.73 ERA, 98 K	
Luke Hochaver	LHP
'09 Stats: 7-13, 6.55 ERA, 106 K	
Kyle Davies	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-9, 5.27 ERA, 86 K	
Joakim Soria	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-2, 2.21 ERA, 69 K, 30 Sv	
Kyle Farnsworth	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-5, 4.58 ERA, 42 K, 0 Sv	
Juan Cruz	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-4, 5.72 ERA, 38 K, 2 Sv	

The Royals have not had a winning team since 2003, but for the first time since then, last year's squad had hope going into the season. Even the New York Times picked them to win the AL Central. They responded by starting the year 18-11, only to finish out the season 47-86. The good news for Kansas City is that they developed a Cy Young winner, Zack Greinke, and a middle-of-the-order slugger, Billy Butler. So another season ended with the only prize at the end of the season being another top-5 draft pick. Now we can see what they have in store for 2010.

The Royals offense was second to last in runs scored a year ago, and they made a flurry of moves to try to fix that problem – sort of. During the World Series, they shipped off slugger Mark Teahen to Chicago for a pair of young infielders, Chris Getz and Josh Fields, to save money on payroll. A few weeks later, they cut loose slugging first baseman Mike Jacobs and catcher Miguel Olivo, who combined for 42 home runs and 126 RBI. Their replacements, Jason Kendall and Rick Ankiel, are beyond on their best years. They aren't up to the challenge of carrying an entire offense on their back. Ankiel lived out a fairy tale transformation from elite pitching prospect to 25-homer hitter but last year most of his power abandoned him. The Cardinals benched him in favor of rookie Colby Rasmus. GM Dayton Moore tried to fix his club's offensive woes early on last season when young shortstop Mike Aviles underwent Tommy John Surgery by acquiring poor fielding, abysmal hitting, highly overpaid Yuniesky Betancourt for a pair of very good prospects. Betancourt can make a case for the single worst player in MLB, with his lack of plate discipline, sub-par range, and lack of offensive skills. It's a wonder he has a starting job.

That disastrous Betancourt trade sums up how the Royals put the 'dys' in 'dysfunctional'. They are inefficient, untalented, and overpaid. They prematurely rushed their 2<sup>nd</sup> overall 2005 pick, Alex Gordon, to the majors, scarring him to the point where he may never reach his enormous potential. The overpaid portion of the team is everywhere. Just look at the middle of their batting order. The Royals outbid a few other teams for the services of Jose Guillen, an explosive clubhouse influence and

and a much less explosive hitter at the plate. David DeJesus came much cheaper than the 3-year, \$36 million contract Guillen received in December of 2007, but Moore gave the washed-up outfielder 5 years nonetheless. Betancourt is making over \$13 million over four years, Kendall \$6 million over two, and relievers Kyle Farnsworth and Juan Cruz cost a combined \$7.75 million and a second round pick. Dysfunctional teams spring from dysfunctional organizations, and this apple didn't fall far from the tree.

For any Royals fans who are reading and haven't lost all hope yet, I have two things to say: one, I am sorry you couldn't pick an easier team to root for, and two, yes, your pitching will actually be above par. In comparison to their hitting, the Royals have an outstanding young group of starters, headed by Zack Greinke and his 2.16 ERA. The rest of the group are nowhere as dominant as Greinke, but will manage to get through at least six innings for each start, hopefully. Gil Meche slides back into the category of overpaid players, as one usually doesn't equate an ERA over 5.00 and double digit losses to \$11 million annually over 5 years. Brian Bannister, Luke Hochaver, and Kyle Davies are very similar to Alex Gordon in how they were hot commodities who reached the majors too soon and subsequently got abused. Hochevar has been especially disappointing considering he was drafted in the first round and has yet to put together even an average year. Their rotation will get the job done, and they have the up side of a top-15 rotation, but KC fans should not expect a second straight Cy Young Award.

The Royals are a small market team with small sized hopes for this season. This is a team ready to sell any and all veterans teams will take. Kansas City has three centerpieces for a very good team (Greinke, Butler, and closer Joakim Soria). After that, they are a very pedestrian team. Their batting order is uninspiring and after Greinke and Soria, their pitching is terrible. They need to see if anyone can take the horrific contracts of Jason Kendall, Jose Guillen, Yuniesky Betancourt (if anyone will even consider his services), and David DeJesus, then start fresh again. I still have my offer on the table for them to switch their name to the Kings and their colors to black and indigo to get some Rays/D-Backs magic working for a division title. Unlikely to happen, but assured to work. GRADE: 79



### Moves That Must Be Made

If Alex Gordon finally comes around as a solid, middle-of-the-order hitter or even a decent hitter, Kansas City should consider trading him instead of holding on to him for the future. He has not proven himself to be reliable at all and they already know he won't live up to his high expectations. Some team will probably see some potential in the young hitter. If they can collect two above-average prospects, they need to take the offer. Mike Moustakas will be ready for the majors in a year or two, and he will need a position to play. The Royals need to revamp their farm system without trading Greinke, Butler, or Soria, and trading Gordon is the best way.

On the Rise		Billy Butler
On the Decline		Jose Guillen
Sleeper		Luke Hochevar

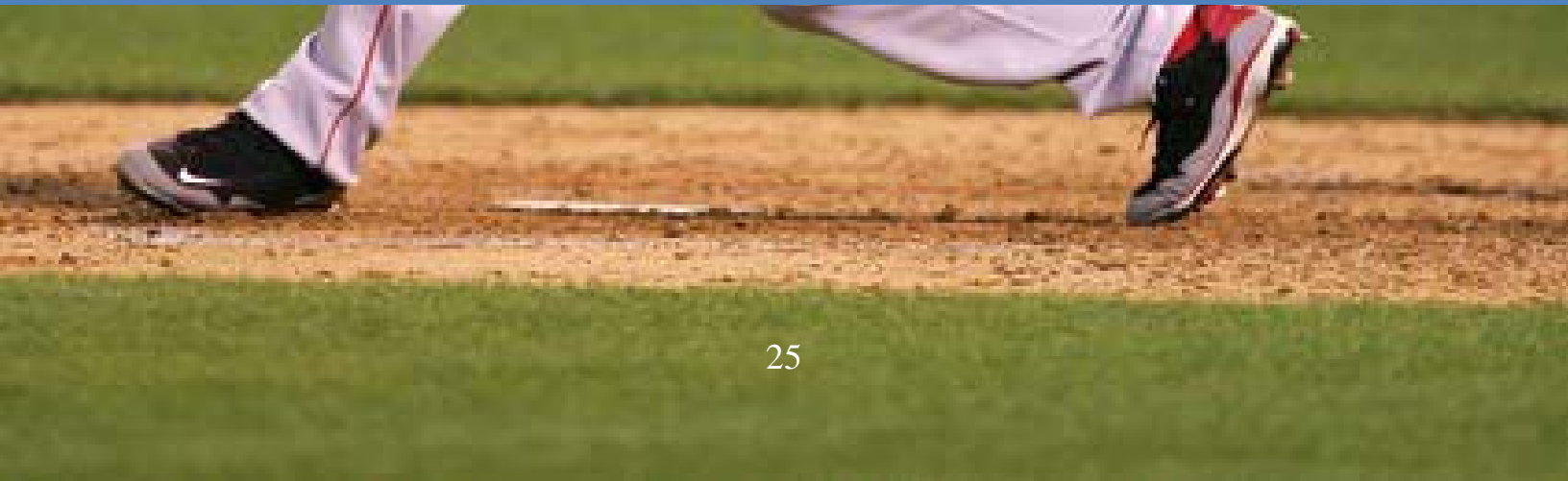
Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Mike Moustakas	3B	Incredible bat speed and outstanding raw power to all fields. Excellent arm strength
Mike Montgomery	LHP	Tall, lanky starter with a plus fastball and off-speed pitches. Excellent command
Eric Hosmer	1B	Great power and very good bat speed. Great hands in the field and strong arm
Wil Myers	C	Plethora of offensive tools, namely plus power and bat speed. Versatile in the field
Aaron Crow	RHP	Fantastic slider, fastball, generates lots of strikeouts, groundballs with aggressiveness
Noel Arguelles	LHP	Lean, athletic with solid fastball and developing changeup. Throws with authority
Tim Melville	LHP	Solid fastball and off-speeds. Inconsistent mechanics, allows too many runs
Kila Ka'aihue	LHP	On-base machine with developing power. Poor batting average, range, and glove
Chris Dwyer	LHP	Overpowering with plus curveball. Questionable command, struggled in college
Carlos Rosa	RHP	Flamethrower with solid curve out of the 'pen. Needs to avoid injuries for success





# American League West

▲ Torii Hunter





Lineup	Pos.
Ichiro Suzuki	RF
'09 Stats: .352, 11 HR, 46 RBI, 26 SB	
Chone Figgins	2B
'09 Stats: .298, 5 HR, 54 RBI, 42 SB	
Casey Kotchman	1B
'09 Stats: .268, 7 HR, 48 RBI, 1 SB	
Milton Bradley	LF
'09 Stats: .257, 12 HR, 40 RBI, 2 SB	
Ken Griffey Jr.	DH
'09 Stats: .214, 19 HR, 57 RBI, 0 SB	
Jose Lopez	3B
'09 Stats: .272, 25 HR, 96 RBI, 3 SB	
Franklin Gutierrez	CF
'09 Stats: .283, 18 HR, 70 RBI, 16 SB	
Rob Johnson	C
'09 Stats: .213, 1 HR, 27 RBI, 1 SB	
Jack Wilson	SS
'09 Stats: .267, 4 HR, 31 RBI, 2 SB	
Eric Byrnes	OF
'09 Stats: .226, 8 HR, 31 RBI, 9 SB*	
Jack Hannahan	3B/SS
'09 Stats: .213, 4 HR, 19 RBI, 1 SB	
Mike Sweeney	1B
'09 Stats: .281, 8 HR, 34 RBI, 0 SB	
Adam Moore	C
'09 Stats: .287, 12 HR, 56 RBI, 1 SB*	
Felix Hernandez	RHP
'09 Stats: 19-5, 2.49 ERA, 217 K	
Cliff Lee	LHP
'09 Stats: 14-13, 3.22 ERA, 181 K	
Erik Bedard	LHP
'09 Stats: 5-3, 2.82 ERA, 90 Sv	
Ian Snell	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-2, 4.20 ERA, 37 K	
Ryan Rowland-Smith	LHP
'09 Stats: 5-4, 3.74 ERA, 52 K	
David Aardsma	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-6, 2.52 ERA, 80 K, 38 Sv	
Mark Lowe	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-7, 3.26 ERA, 69 K, 3 Sv	
Brandon League	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-6, 4.58 ERA, 76 K, 0 Sv	

The most improved team this year did not go out and acquire the best starting pitcher, Roy Halladay, nor did they sign a slugging outfielder, such as Matt Holliday or Jason Bay. The most improved team made eight big moves to attempt to displace a team who has won five of the last six division titles in the AL West. That team is the Seattle Mariners. GM Jack Zduriencik did a masterful job molding Seattle into an American League power, based on the new Moneyball tactics: elite pitching and defense.

The biggest move, and probably most surprising, was Seattle's acquisition of Cliff Lee. The Phillies had been rumored to be looking at Halladay, but needed a third team to complete their trade. Zduriencik was more than willing to part with his highly touted prospects to land the Cy Young Award winner. Lee, paired with budding superstar Felix Hernandez, will form the most dangerous 1-2 punch in the league with two of the best young pitchers in the game. Hernandez had his best year by far last season, posting an ERA well below 3.00 and nearly 20 wins. Lee has been as dominant as any starter over the past two seasons, especially in the playoffs where he had a 1.56 ERA. In another surprising off-season move, the Mariners retained starter Erik Bedard. Acquired for a bunch of prospects two years ago, Bedard never maintained his health and wasn't as dominant as he was in his Baltimore days. However, in his short time healthy in 2009, he seemed to have turned the corner; he pitched in 15 games and compiled an ERA of 2.82. Ian Snell, another recent acquisition, will solidify the back end of the rotation. Before the re-signing of Bedard, Snell was going to be the third starter, so they will be more than happy to have him as their fourth starter. Snell was not subject to the common decrease in dominance after switching from the NL to the AL, he actually improved after leaving Pittsburgh. The depth of Seattle's rotation is first of the many improved features of the Mariners; the second of which is their defense.

There has been a major shift in focus in the strategy of Moneyball-type teams and sabermetricians from On Base Percentage to Ultimate Zone Rating. Basically, the stat men at Baseball Prospectus and Fan Graphs have devised a new stat that measures the amount of runs each player prevents. Out of all of the Major League Teams, the



Mariners have used it the most. Instead of signing slugging first basemen Russell Branyan, Carlos Delgado, or Adam LaRoche, Seattle chose to trade for sweet-fielding Casey Kotchman. They already have two of the best fielding outfielders in the game in Ichiro Suzuki and Franklin Gutierrez (who was robbed of a Gold Glove Award last year) along with an elite level defender in Jack Wilson. Their big free agent signing was infielder Chone Figgins, a very fast top-of-the-order batter and is a fantastic fielder. Jack Zduriencik and the Seattle brass made sure to shore up their defense, and they have now put together the best fielding team in the league.



The downside to their collection of top-of-the-line defenders is their sudden lack of offense. Their cleanup hitter is the volatile Milton Bradley, a player the Cubs wanted to move so badly, and they were willing to trade him for Carlos Silva and his 8.60 ERA. Bradley is a great bounce-back candidate, but don't depend on him for 30 home runs for your fantasy (or nightmare) team. Jose Lopez and Gutierrez are solid young hitters. They cannot carry the burden of coming through time and time again with clutch hits. Ken Griffey Jr., and Jack Wilson are also not particularly great hitters but will be able to provide veteran leadership, timely hitting, and in Wilson's case, fantastic defense. They have lots of great small ball hitters and should be able to claw and slash their way to enough runs to support their fantastic pitching and defense.

Seattle is built like many of the teams that are winning now. They have a great front office and now a great defense. They have a top-five American League rotation, and like I have said before, great pitching and timely defense will beat great hitting and timely pitching. If one of the below-average hitters can step up as Russell Branyan did last year, the Mariners will be in great position to finally compete, especially considering the Angels lost John Lackey, Figgins, and Vladimir Guerrero. The Rangers are also down after swapping veteran Kevin Millwood for younger, but more injury prone Rich Harden. In the end, the Mariners are the most improved team in a division where the weak got stronger (Oakland) and the strong got weaker (Los Angeles and Texas). King Felix and Lee will be able to pitch their way to the title, and their elite defense will take care of itself. GRADE: 93



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Mariners' biggest two holes on their team is their bullpen and power in their lineup. David Aardsma can hold down the fort in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning, and if not, Brandon League, who has incredible breaking pitches, can able to fill in. That leaves a slugger as the last piece missing on their team. Seattle doesn't quite have the young talent necessary to land Adrian Gonzalez, so they should inquire upon Carl Crawford. He can start in left field and Bradley can platoon with Griffey at DH. Crawford is an elite fielder with speed (fitting in Seattle's mold) and has fairly good power. Michael Saunders and Michael Pineda should be enough to land the free agent-to-be.

On the Rise		Franklin Gutierrez
On the Decline		David Aardsma
Sleeper		Casey Kotchman

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Michael Saunders	OF	5-tool outfielder with great athleticism, arm strength. Needs to improve discipline
Dustin Ackley	1B	Phenomenal pure hitter, quick wrists at the plate. Best hitter out of the 2009 draft
Carlos Triunfel	SS	High-ceiling infielder with a cannon arm and great all-around hitting skills
Greg Halman	OF	Extremely athletic with above-average speed and great raw power. Solid defender
Michael Pineda	RHP	Accurate pitcher with solid pitches, but can locate anything. Attacks the strike zone
Josh Fields	RHP	Power closer with plus fastball and curveball pitches but lacking command.
Daniel Cortes	RHP	Strong fastball and curve, workhorse body. Needs to develop more command
Alex Liddi	3B	Elite potential but lacks consistency. Needs to improve his bat speed, defense
Mike Carp	1B	Very disciplined, but lacks first baseman power. Poor fielder, may end up at DH
Luke French	LHP	Durable fly ball pitcher with three average pitches. Needs to keep the ball down

2



Lineup	Pos.
Erick Aybar	SS
'09 Stats: .312, 5 HR, 58 RBI, 14 SB	
Bobby Abreu	RF
'09 Stats: .293, 15 HR, 103 RBI, 30 SB	
Torii Hunter	CF
'09 Stats: .299, 22 HR, 90 RBI, 18 SB	
Hideki Matsui	DH
'09 Stats: .274, 28 HR, 90 RBI, 0 SB	
Kendry Morales	1B
'09 Stats: .306, 34 HR, 108 RBI, 3 SB	
Juan Rivera	LF
'09 Stats: .287, 25 HR, 88 RBI, 0 SB	
Howie Kendrick	2B
'09 Stats: .291, 10 HR, 61 RBI, 11 SB	
Mike Napoli	C
'09 Stats: .272, 20 HR, 56 RBI, 3 SB	
Brandon Wood	3B
'09 Stats: .293, 22 HR, 72 RBI, 1 SB*	
Reggie Willits	OF
'09 Stats: .213, 0 HR, 6 RBI, 5 SB	
Freddy Sandoval	3B
'09 Stats: .297, 6 HR, 47 RBI, 13 SB*	
Maicer Izturis	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .300, 8 HR, 65 RBI, 13 SB	
Jeff Mathis	C
'09 Stats: .211, 5 HR, 28 RBI, 3 SB	
Jered Weaver	RHP
'09 Stats: 16-8, 3.75 ERA, 174 K	
Scott Kazmir	LHP
'09 Stats: 10-9, 4.89 ERA, 117 K	
Joel Piñeiro	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-12, 3.49 ERA, 105 K	
Joe Saunders	LHP
'09 Stats: 16-7, 4.60 ERA, 101 K	
Ervin Santana	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-8, 5.03 ERA, 107 K	
Brian Fuentes	LHP
'09 Stats: 1-5, 3.93 ERA, 46 K, 48 Sv	
Fernando Rodney	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-5, 4.40 ERA, 61 K, 37 Sv	
Jason Bulger	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-1, 3.56 ERA, 68 K, 1 Sv	

The Angels have been the most consistent team over the past decade – at least when it comes to making the playoffs. They have arguably the best team management in the game; they treat all of their players like family. Over recent years, they would lose free agents but had enough talent to keep winning. This time is different. They lost. They lost their leadoff hitter, cleanup hitter, and ace starter, and you can only lose so many quality players before you fall out of contention.

The Angels may have lost two of their best four hitters, but they have improved in one of their signature categories: plate discipline. The departure of Vladimir Guerrero isn't a killer loss, especially if you consider who they brought in, Hideki Matsui. No one can argue that Matsui has more power, but he takes 50% more pitches than the wild-swinging veteran. Matsui and Bobby Abreu bring over the Yankees' mentality of taking pitches to make the opposing pitcher throw the wrong pitch and exit early. The loss of Chone Figgins, though, hurts a lot more than Guerrero. Not only did Figgins go to a division rival, but he leaves a gaping hole in their lineup. Without him, Erick Aybar will have to lead off (although he could be sneaky good) and over-hyped rookie third baseman Brandon Wood will finally get a shot to play. Wood was a top-10 MLB prospect a few years ago, but has since lost his luster like many of the Angels' prospects of the past. In Los Angeles' new batting order, two players are going to really have to step up: Torii Hunter and Kendry Morales. Morales made a big step up last year when his offensive game exploded for career highs in every category. He became an All-Star caliber hitter, a worthy replacement for Mark Teixeira. Hunter is an excellent fielder and a well above-average offensive player, too, not to mention one of the best fielding center fielders in the game. The rest of the hitters in their order, Juan Rivera, Mike Napoli, and Howie Kendrick, are all wild cards going into the year. Like Brandon Wood, all three were highly touted prospects who slowly fell back to Earth last season. Rivera and Napoli both have 30 home run power and Howie Kendrick still has .300 potential, but it's a wild guess if any of them will regain their previous promise.



Another signature of the Angels' team is their solid pitching. This will be the first time in eight years they won't be going into the season with John Lackey penciled in the rotation, they will have to find a way to survive on so-so pitching this season. Their suddenly average rotation will start off with young Jered Weaver. Weaver became a co-ace with Lackey but hasn't developed the playoff clutch Lackey had and, like the rest of the rotation, lacks big game experience. After Weaver, the Angels will turn to Scott Kazmir, stolen from Tampa Bay for a group of mediocre prospects and salary relief. Kazmir is very dominant, when healthy. Unfortunately, he hasn't stayed healthy and when he was, he could not keep runners off the base paths. The strangest pickup of the off-season started out as Joel Piñeiro. Piñeiro was a horrific pitcher in Boston in 2007, then became a solid pitcher when he pitched for the best pitching coach in Major League Baseball: St. Louis' Dave Duncan. Duncan resurrected the careers of Chris Carpenter, Todd Wellemeyer, Kyle Lohse, and many more; Piñeiro was just another pitcher. He now returns to the league where he had humungous struggles and isn't the dominating type. He is a solid back-of-the-rotation pitcher but not great third option. Joe Saunders and Ervin Santana both had poor seasons compared to their 2008 All-Star years but should return to at least two thirds of their former selves.

The bullpen of the Angels isn't the same without K-Rod to close it out, but the combination of erratic closers Brian Fuentes and Fernando Rodney should get the job done. They have three more quality young righties in the back of the 'pen: Jason Bulger, Scot Shields and Kevin Jepsen. As long as the starters can pitch up to eight innings nearly every game, their talent-thin bullpen shouldn't hurt them too much.

Mike Scioscia is the best manager in the majors and as I have said before, the Angels are probably the best organization in baseball. That is nice for the players, but this team has lost too many important players to repeat as division winners. The Mariners got a ton better and the Rangers are creeping up on Los Angeles. If the Angels don't make any moves soon, they will be in danger of falling into third place. That being said, you can never underestimate a team full of winners, and that is certainly the Angels. GRADE: 90



### Moves That Must Be Made

Los Angeles has a deep farm system full of much young talent (we think) and the Angels are in need of a quick boost. GM Terry Ragin should package two or three of them into a swap for another team's veteran. A top-tier starter and infield bat are the top orders, and players who will be available and somewhat valuable is Adrian Gonzalez. Unfortunately, they have no room for the young slugger, so they will have to look for a cheaper option. Mike Lowell is as good as traded, and he can still hit and provide great veteran leadership. When healthy he is an elite defender, and won't cost more than a bag of balls and two broken bats.

On the Rise		Kendry Morales
On the Decline		Howie Kendrick
Sleeper		Brandon Wood

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Hank Conger	C	Switch-hitter with plus plate discipline, all around hitting. Improving on defense
Mike Trout	OF	Fantastic athlete who hits well for average. Above average speed and solid power
Peter Bourjos	OF	Very, very fast 4-tool outfielder (lacks power). Very good defensively, strong arm
Jordan Walden	RHP	Flamethrower with a sinking fastball up to 100. Poor mechanics, is an injury risk
Trevor Reckling	LHP	Average fastball but strikes out plenty of hitters. Accurate, needs more off-speeds
Tyler Skaggs	LHP	Tall, with good leverage, balance. Solid fastball, change-up, needs better command
Garrett Richards	RHP	Generates effortless great arm speed with 3 plus pitches: fastball, curve, and slider
Sean O'Sullivan	RHP	Dominating power pitcher. Has command of off-speed pitches, pounds the strike zone
Mark Trumbo	1B	Generates incredible raw power, but is makes poor contact otherwise. Awful fielder
Randal Grichuk	OF	Has tremendous power and likes to pull the ball. Lacks speed and arm strength

## AL West – 3. Texas Rangers – AL West



Lineup	Pos.
Julio Borbon	CF
'09 Stats: .312, 4 HR, 20 RBI, 19 SB	
Michael Young	SS
'09 Stats: .322, 22 HR, 68 RBI, 8 SB	
Josh Hamilton	LF
'09 Stats: .268, 10 HR, 54 RBI, 8 SB	
Vladimir Guerrero	DH
'09 Stats: .295, 15 HR, 50 RBI, 2 SB	
Ian Kinsler	2B
'09 Stats: .253, 31 HR, 86 RBI, 31 SB	
Nelson Cruz	RF
'09 Stats: .260, 33 HR, 76 RBI, 20 SB	
Chris Davis	1B
'09 Stats: .238, 21 HR, 59 RBI, 0 SB	
Jarrod Saltalamacchia	C
'09 Stats: .233, 9 HR, 34 RBI, 0 SB	
Elvis Andrus	SS
'09 Stats: .267, 6 HR, 40 RBI, 33 SB	
Endy Chavez	OF
'09 Stats: .273, 2 HR, 13 RBI, 9 SB	
David Murphy	OF
'09 Stats: .269, 17 HR, 57 RBI, 9 SB	
Esteban German	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .319, 4 HR, 50 RBI, 35 SB*	
Taylor Teagarden	C
'09 Stats: .217, 6 HR, 24 RBI, 0 SB	
Rich Harden	RHP
'09 Stats: 9-9, 4.09 ERA, 171 K	
Scott Feldman	LHP
'09 Stats: 17-8, 4.08 ERA, 113 K	
Derek Holland	LHP
'09 Stats: 8-13, 6.12 ERA, 107 K	
Colby Lewis	RHP
'07 Stats: 0-2, 6.45 ERA, 23 K	
Tommy Hunter	RHP
'09 Stats: 9-6, 4.10 ERA, 64 K	
Frank Francisco	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-3, 3.83 ERA, 57, 25 Sv	
C.J. Wilson	LHP
'09 Stats: 5-6, 2.81 ERA, 84 K, 14 Sv	
Chris Ray	RHP
'09 Stats: 0-4, 7.27 ERA, 39 K, 0 Sv	

The Rangers took a big step up last year behind a power hitting outfielder and young pitching; only the hitter wasn't Josh Hamilton – it was Nelson Cruz. Cruz, Scott Feldman, and many more young players stepped up for Texas as they fell eight games short of the playoffs. With the development of young players like Julio Borbon, Neftali Feliz, and Elvis Andrus, along with the deepest, strongest farm system in the league, Texas has a great future ahead. But how will they fare now?

After trading Kevin Millwood and bringing in Vladimir Guerrero, it is very clear that the strength of this club is their hitting. You start with their nucleus of Ian Kinsler, Michael Young, and Hamilton (who when healthy is a top-10 hitter) and go on from there. Kinsler and Young are both All-Stars who are patient at the plate and are fantastic overall hitters. Both have 20-30 home run power, solid to above-average speed, in addition to a great ability to score runs. Hamilton still puts the fear of God in opposing pitchers with his tremendous power, despite his lack of discipline and consistent contact. After their big three, add free agent Vladimir Guerrero. He owns a career 1.175 OPS in the Ballpark at Arlington, except he won't get to face the Rangers' poor pitching. Speedy rookies Julio Borbon and Elvis Andrus provided fantastic defense (when Borbon wasn't DH-ing) and were great sparks to the lineup. They combined for 52 stolen bases and a very nice average. Chris Davis and Jarrod Saltalamacchia were both considered top-3 prospects for the Rangers but haven't maintained a solid batting average in the big leagues. Salty hasn't been able to stay healthy, but Davis has gained his power stroke. He will get better as he gains more experience.

The Rangers pitching has never been good, ever since Nolan Ryan left them in 1993. Ryan is back, but as the team's president and part owner. They shipped off their most consistent starter over the past four years, Kevin Millwood, for hard-throwing reliever Chris Ray, so to replace him Texas signed Rich Harden. The former Cub is as dominant as any pitcher, when he isn't spending his annual month on the DL. Harden is returning to the AL West, where he held a 3.44 ERA in his five



and a half years in Oakland. He will anchor the rotation along with surprise 17-game winner Scott Feldman, a soft-throwing ground ball pitcher. Feldman appeared to be a younger version of Millwood last year; he wasn't injured and threw over 200 innings without high strikeout rates. The rest of the rotation will feature two 23 year olds and another pitcher who hasn't been in the big leagues since 2007. The two younger pitchers, Derek Holland and Tommy Hunter (products of the 2006 and 2007 drafts respectively) rocketed up the Rangers' farm system before finally making the show last season. Hunter was steady while Holland showed flashes of dominance, but ultimately his ERA of 6.12 showed the team rushed him prematurely. Colby Lewis is the most interesting of Texas' starters. Lewis was drafted by the Rangers before they let him go in 2004. Now he finally got another shot in the majors. He will prove to be a major asset if he pitches similar to his 26-17, 2.82 ERA Japanese League Colby Lewis rather than his 12-15, 6.71 Major League self.

Although their starting pitching is questionable going into the season, the Rangers are going to have a deep bullpen. They have a young righty-lefty closer combination in Frank Francisco and C.J. Wilson, not to mention flame throwing righties Feliz and Ray. The Rangers got a huge boost to their bullpen when they signed versatile veteran lefty Darren Oliver, who can specialize versus lefties, pitch in long relief, and finish out games. The Rangers will need their bullpen to be strong this year because when the average age of your starting pitchers is 26, chances are you will have plenty of early exits and calls to the 'pen.

The Rangers are heading in the right direction, developing young talent into budding All-Stars, but right now their pitching is not where it needs to be. They need more stability in the rotation to beat out the Mariners and Angels for the division titles, and they need Harden, Holland, and Lewis to step up big time. Their hitting is fantastic, and they will feast in their great hitters ballpark as opposing pitchers wilt in the Texas heat. Unfortunately, their pitchers will do the same and that will eventually be their downfall. The fact that they don't have five proven starters, but instead seven pitchers who will get plenty of starts ultimately hurt them. After all, consistency is the key to success. Maybe next year, Rangers. GRADE: 87



### Moves That Must Be Made

The best asset for the Rangers is their young talent and their biggest need is pitching. What does that mean? They need to go out at the Trade Deadline and swap out some of their prized young pitchers for a proven ace. They missed out on their chances to land Roy Halladay, Felix Hernandez, and Josh Johnson, but maybe Josh Beckett will become available if they are willing to part with Justin Smoak, Neftali Feliz, and maybe more. Beckett is a Texas native and will be a free agent at the end of the year, so Boston could be willing to part with their pitching depth. Beckett provides needed stability and a proven ace to carry them to the playoffs.

On the Rise		Elvis Andrus
On the Decline		Frank Francisco
Sleeper		Chris Davis

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Neftali Feliz	RHP	Consistently hits triple digits, also has plus curve and changeup. Nice, easy delivery
Justin Smoak	1B	Incredible pure hitter, hits well for power, average with discipline from both sides
Martin Perez	LHP	Great command of fastball, curveball, and changeup. Great delivery and deception
Tanner Scheppers	RHP	Throws a hard fastball, nasty curve. Shoulder is questionable, a major injury risk
Engel Beltre	OF	Incredible raw skills but has yet to translate to the field. Needs to improve discipline
Jurickson Profar	SS	International switch-hitting signee. Small frame, but great all-around potential
Kasey Kiker	LHP	Consistent, strikes out many without giving up many hits. Throws a plus changeup
Max Ramirez	C	Fantastic power and patient . Plays poor defense and will likely switch positions.
Blake Beavan	RHP	Tremendous fastball, excellent control. Needs to develop more off-speed pitches
Daniel Gutierrez	RHP	Solid fastball-curve mix, but lacks great velocity. Likel to end up as a reliever



Lineup	Pos.
Coco Crisp	CF
'08 Stats: .283, 7 HR, 41 RBI, 20 SB	
Rajai Davis	LF
'09 Stats: .305, 3 HR, 48 RBI, 41 SB	
Kurt Suzuki	C
'09 Stats: .274, 15 HR, 88 RBI, 8 SB	
Kevin Kouzmanoff	3B
'09 Stats: .255, 18 HR, 88 RBI, 1 SB	
Jack Cust	DH
'09 Stats: .240, 25 HR, 70 RBI, 4 SB	
Daric Barton	1B
'09 Stats: .269, 3 HR, 24 RBI, 0 SB	
Ryan Sweeney	RF
'09 Stats: .293, 6 HR, 53 RBI, 6 SB	
Mark Ellis	2B
'09 Stats: .263, 10 HR, 61 RBI, 10 SB	
Cliff Pennington	SS
'09 Stats: .279, 4 HR, 21 RBI, 7 SB	
Jake Fox	OF/3B
'09 Stats: .259, 11 HR, 44 RBI, 0 SB	
Eric Chavez	3B/1B
'07 Stats: .240, 15 HR, 46 RBI, 4 SB	
Adam Rosales	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .213, 4 HR, 19 RBI, 1 SB	
Landon Powell	C
'09 Stats: .229, 7 HR, 30 RBI, 0 SB	
Ben Sheets	RHP
'08 Stats: 13-9, 3.09 ERA, 158 K	
Justin Duchsherer	RHP
'09 Stats: 10-8, 2.54 ERA, 95 K	
Brett Anderson	LHP
'09 Stats: 11-11, 4.06 ERA, 150 K	
Trevor Cahill	RHP
'09 Stats: 10-13, 4.63 ERA, 90 K	
Dallas Braden	LHP
'09 Stats: 8-9 3.89 ERA, 81 K	
Andrew Bailey	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-3, 1.84 ERA, 91 K, 26 Sv	
Brad Ziegler	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-4, 3.07 ERA, 54 K, 7 Sv	
Michael Wuertz	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-1, 2.63 ERA, 102 K, 4 Sv	

Over the last two seasons, the Athletics and GM mastermind Billy Beane have slowly moving away from their old Moneyball mentality and more towards buying low on high-ceiling players. Four great cases of that are Ben Sheets, Kevin Kouzmanoff, Coco Crisp, and Jake Fox. Since they don't have Mark Mulder, Tim Hudson, and Barry Zito at the top of their rotation and Eric Chavez, Jason Giambi, and Miguel Tejada in the middle of their order, the A's will have to turn to young players to carry them onwards and upwards.

The Athletics' lineup is going to be solid at best this year, but a lot of the major contributions will come from high up-side players. You won't find many teams with a top to their batting order faster than Oakland; Crisp and Rajai Davis are both speed demons on the base paths and elite defenders in the outfield, a trademark of the new A's mentality. The two outfielders will provide a fantastic spark to the top of the order and cause chaos on the opposing pitchers if one or both reaches base. Jack Cust and Kouzmanoff will form the middle of the lineup, but both are questionable hitters. Cust has never hit over .260 in a full season while Kouzmanoff has never hit 25 home runs. At the same time, both have higher potential than they have reached, and Kouzmanoff is one of the premier defenders at the hot corner. Three young players will have a big role for Oakland this year: Ryan Sweeney, Daric Barton, and Cliff Pennington. Sweeney was solid, but unspectacular in his second full season last year, but his great on-base skills show the promise of developing into a J.D. Drew-type hitter. Both Barton and Pennington have failed to live up to their high expectations. Barton's power never panned out and Pennington did not consistently get on base. If the young hitters' struggles continue, veterans like Mark Ellis, Cust, and Kurt Suzuki will really have to step up. Ellis and Suzuki have are average all-around, and the A's are hoping either – or both – will surprise them with a breakout season.

Since their offense mediocre, they will have to rely on defense to win. Beane tried to land free agents Marco Scutaro and Adrian Beltre before they ultimately



## AL West – 4. Oakland Athletics – AL West

signed lesser deals with Boston. Still, Oakland is taking steps to win. Oakland has the best fielding out-field in the league with speedy Crisp and Davis along with rangy Sweeney. Kouzmanoff and Ellis are improving defenders, though not in the same league as Beltre and Scutaro, but very good nonetheless.

The next part to run prevention is great pitching. Mulder, Hudson, and Zito are long gone, as well as Dan Haren, Rich Harden, and Joe Blanton, but Oakland has a new Big Three: Ben Sheets, Brett Anderson, and Trevor Cahill. When healthy, Ben Sheets is as nasty of a pitcher as you will ever find, plus the hitters in the AL West have never faced him before. If Sheets can start 30 or more games, he will play the veteran solidifying role to an otherwise young rotation. Anderson, a key piece to the trade that sent Haren to Arizona, is a young ace-in-the-making. He emerged last year, pitching over 175 innings that featured 13 wins, 150 strikeouts, and a two-hitter at Fenway Park. Trevor Cahill, who pitched alongside Anderson extensively through the Athletics' system, is the best young sinkerball pitcher in the game. He has a fantastic future ahead. Justin Duchscherer is another great Billy Beane gamble. Similar to Sheets, Duchscherer is a fantastic pitcher when healthy, but doesn't have the stamina nor the off-speed pitches of Sheets. The last spot in the rotation will come down to one of three youngsters: Dallas Braden, Vin Mazzaro, and Josh Outman. Of the three, Braden is the most experienced and most likely to land the job, but Mazzaro was great last year, and Outman was solid in his short stint in the majors.

Oakland is a young team that is hard to root against, but like the past three years, they are a few players short. Their pitching will be a top-5 rotation in a year or two, but they aren't quite there yet. Their defense is reliable, but they lack any big run producers. They have very little power from first base and outfield, and are waiting on Sweeney and Barton to develop. Certainly, 10-15 homer power will not going to cut it. Oakland is in a bad economic situation because of tight-fisted ownership, an outdated stadium, and fledgling fan support. A change in ownership and location (another Bay area spot or even Vancouver) must occur before they become a winning team. GRADE: 83



### Moves That Must Be Made

The A's badly need a big hitter in the middle of their lineup, and they have a lot of young pitching. The Brewers may not have the money necessary to lock up Yovani Gallardo, Prince Fielder, and any other young players close to free agency, and with Mat Gamel in the majors, Fielder may become expendable. To land Fielder, the Athletics will have to part with either Brett Anderson or Trevor Cahill in addition to a combination of Adrian Cardenas, Max Stassi, Daric Barton, and Tyson Ross. Fielder will become an instant fan favorite and will pick up the slack in the middle of the order. In addition, Fielder is a very underrated defender.

On the Rise	↑	Ryan Sweeney
On the Decline	↓	Justin Duchscherer
Sleeper	Z	Coco Crisp

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Chris Carter	1B	Tremendous power, patient. Lacks great contact, strikes out too much (Ryan Howard)
Michael Taylor	OF	Great all-around hitter, major league ready. Makes great contact, has solid speed
Michel Inoa	RHP	Very young, but big frame. Plus fastball and curve, but needs much development
Grant Green	SS	Polished spray hitter with plus bat speed and good all around hitting. Great fielder
Jemile Weeks	2B	Fast with plus contact, arm strength, and developing power. Rickie Weeks' Brother
Max Stassi	C	Small framed with power to all fields, great contact. Great leader, excellent fielder
Tyson Ross	RHP	Groundball pitcher with solid fastball, plus slider. Command needs improvement
Adrian Cardenas	SS	Average fielder with strong, compact swing. Hits well for average but poor power
Vin Mazzaro	RHP	Best pitch is his hard sinker that induces lots of groundballs. Not overpowering
Fautino de los Santos	RHP	Fireballer who will likely to move to the bullpen. Average secondary pitches



# National League East

▲ Hanley Ramirez







Lineup	Pos.
Jimmy Rollins	SS
'09 Stats: .250, 21 HR, 77 RBI, 31 SB	
Placido Polanco	3B
'09 Stats: .285, 10 HR, 72 RBI, 7 SB	
Chase Utley	2B
'09 Stats: .282, 31 HR, 93 RBI, 23 SB	
Ryan Howard	1B
'09 Stats: .279, 45 HR, 141 RBI, 8 SB	
Jayson Werth	RF
'09 Stats: .268, 36 HR, 99 RBI, 20 SB	
Raul Ibanez	LF
'09 Stats: .272, 34 HR, 93 RBI, 4 SB	
Shane Victorino	CF
'09 Stats: .292, 10 HR, 62 RBI, 25 SB	
Carlos Ruiz	C
'09 Stats: .255, 9 HR, 43 RBI, 3 SB	
Ben Francisco	OF
'09 Stats: .257, 15 HR, 46 RBI, 14 SB	
Greg Dobbs	3B/1B
'09 Stats: .247, 5 HR, 20 RBI, 1 SB	
Juan Castro	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .277, 1 HR, 9 RBI, 0 SB	
Ross Gload	1B
'09 Stats: .260, 6 HR, 30 RBI, 0 SB	
Brian Schneider	C
'09 Stats: .218, 3 HR, 24 RBI, 0 SB	
Roy Halladay	RHP
'09 Stats: 17-10, 2.79 ERA, 208 K	
Cole Hamels	LHP
'09 Stats: 10-11, 4.32 ERA, 168 K	
J.A. Happ	LHP
'09 Stats: 12-4, 2.93 ERA, 119 K	
Joe Blanton	RHP
'09 Stats: 12-8, 4.05 ERA, 163 K	
Jamie Moyer	LHP
'09 Stats: 12-10, 4.94 ERA, 94 K	
Ryan Madson	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-5, 3.26 ERA, 78 K, 10 Sv	
Brad Lidge	RHP
'09 Stats: 0-8, 7.21 ERA, 61 K, 31 Sv	
Danys Baez	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-6, 4.02 ERA, 40 K, 0 Sv	

While chaos has overcome former National League powers like the Chicago Cubs and New York Mets, one team has stayed steady since 2003: the Philadelphia Phillies. They have had a winning record every season over the last seven years, including three straight division titles and two trips to the World Series. Give the Phillies credit, they don't just sit on the throne, they made moves to get better over the off-season. They landed the biggest fish on the trade market, extended key hitters, and solidified their bench. The Phillies are an American League style team blessed enough to be placed in the National League, destined to return to the Fall Classic.

The Phillies have consistently won over this past decade. Their recipe for success is to develop young talent and turn them into superstars. The best examples of that come from the middle of the Phillies' lineup. Ryan Howard and Chase Utley were high picks by Philadelphia, and Shane Victorino and Jayson Werth were plucked out of other teams' systems at an early age. Young players come cheap, and will get you just about as much bang for your buck (though likely not the same production) as overpriced veterans. Now, the Phillies have a 50 home run masher (Howard), two five-tool players (Utley and Werth), a spark to the lineup and clubhouse (Victorino), and another high-caliber player on the way (top prospect Domonic Brown). A lineup strictly consisting of young talent won't cut it for a team in the search for a title, so Philly has three quality veterans who are great in the clubhouse and still solid at the plate. Jimmy Rollins had a terrible year last year, but no one can really expect him to have the same drop off from last year; my guess is that his batting average will return to around .280. Raul Ibanez's production improved last year; he set a career high in home runs, despite hitting only 12 bombs in the second half. Placido Polanco returns to the City of Brotherly Love, only this time around he will be playing at third base instead of his customary job at second base, a move which is questionable in the least. One would expect more power production out of the hot corner, and his defense will need adjusting. Carlos Ruiz will round out the impressive Phillies order, but he isn't much of an offensive force. He does, however,

## NL East – 1. Philadelphia Phillies – NL East

handle the pitching staff well and plays great defense.



The Phillies' pitching was great last season headed by Cole Hamels and later supplemented with Cliff Lee, but now it is even better. Ruben Amaro Jr. landed the starting pitcher he really wanted at the Trade Deadline last year, Roy Halladay. And now the Phillies have a rotation hand in hand with the Cardinals, Giants and Braves for best in the NL. Halladay will be an extremely intriguing pitcher going into this season because he has an ERA of 3.13 since he became a full-time starter in 2002 in the same division as the Yanks and Sox. The American League is clearly harder on pitchers than the NL, and none of the hitters in the NL East have extensively faced Doc (with the exception of Jason Bay, Melky Cabrera, and Troy Glaus) so that will further amplify his dominance, which will easily end with him winning over 20 games. Cole Hamels was very disappointing last season, but he was essentially a two-pitch pitcher. He has since developed further and is a sure-fire bounce-back candidate. If Hamels returns to 2007 form, they will have the best top-of-the-rotation. In the deal that landed Halladay, the Phillies sent Lee to Seattle for prospects, a somewhat unnecessary trade that brings down their current potential in order to set them up for the future. A 1-2-3 punch of Halladay, Lee, and Hamels would be unstoppable come October, but Amaro preferred proven, advanced prospects over potential compensation picks. The rest of the rotation isn't a pile of scraps; J.A. Happ and Joe Blanton are quality young pitchers still yet to reach their potential. Happ had a fantastic rookie year and Blanton is a great inning eater. The Phillies should get solid production out of either 25-year old Kyle Kendrick or 47-year old Jamie Moyer.

The Phillies are clearly better than any other team in their division; the Marlins and Braves have paltry offense, and the Mets and Nationals are just dysfunctional. Philly is also the clear-cut favorite to win the National League crown. They are the most complete team with quality players at every position, while every other team has holes across the board. The only question will be if they can defeat the champion of the AL, but I can tell you one thing: Cliff Lee would certainly help. I believe they will make the Fall Classic for a third straight year, but ultimately fall short without Lee and inconsistency out of the bullpen. GRADE: 95



### Moves That Must Be Made

Philadelphia has a poor bullpen with shaky Brad Lidge to finish it off. Ryan Madson, Danys Baez, and J.C. Romero are great in a set-up role, but not in the ninth inning. The Phillies passed up on Fernando Rodney, Brandon Lyon, and Jose Valverde this off-season, and really needed a quality closer. Kerry Wood and Bobby Jenks will become available whether or not their teams are in contention, but the Phillies need to avoid emptying what is left of their depleted farm system. If they can land one of the closers for salary relief and a mid-level prospect like Anthony Gose or Trevor May, Amaro needs to pull the trigger because you can't win without finishing the deal.

On the Rise		J.A. Happ
On the Decline		Placido Polanco
Sleeper		Joe Blanton

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Domonic Brown	OF	5-tool outfielder with great athleticism and great eye. Plus arm, speed, and power
Phillipe Aumont	RHP	Very tall with blazing fastball, nasty breaking pitches. Could be starter or closer
Juan Ramirez	RHP	Solid fastball, changes speeds well. Great movement on breaking pitches, command
Anthony Gose	OF	Raw skills with fantastic speed. Very good defensively, but makes sub-par contact
Trevor May	RHP	Young and powerful, needs to work on control. Has 3 pitches, most notably curve
Tyson Gillies	OF	Athletic with speed, very nice fielder. Works the count well, but lacks power
Antonio Bastardo	LHP	Low-90s fastball with deceptive delivery. Figures to be lefty specialist reliever
John Mayberry	OF	Huge frame with very nice power, solid speed. Average struggles at higher levels
Joe Savery	LHP	Great mechanics and pounds the strike zone. Plus changeup and excellent control
Jarred Cosart	RHP	Unconventional delivery with solid breaking pitches. Good leverage off the mound





Lineup	Pos.
Nate McLouth	CF
'09 Stats: .256, 20 HR, 70 RBI, 19 SB	
Martin Prado	2B
'09 Stats: .307, 11 HR, 49 RBI, 1 SB	
Chipper Jones	3B
'09 Stats: .264, 18 HR, 71 RBI, 4 SB	
Brian McCann	C
'09 Stats: .281, 21 HR, 94 RBI, 4 SB	
Troy Glaus	1B
'09 Stats: .270, 27 HR, 99 RBI, 0 SB	
Yunel Escobar	SS
'09 Stats: .299, 14 HR, 76 RBI, 5 SB	
Jason Heyward	RF
'09 Stats: .323, 17 HR, 63 RBI, 10 SB*	
Matt Diaz	LR
'09 Stats: .313, 13 HR, 58 RBI, 12 SB	
Melky Cabrera	OF
'09 Stats: .274, 13 HR, 68 RBI, 10 SB	
Gregor Blanco	OF
'09 Stats: .228, 2 HR, 30 RBI, 10 SB*	
Omar Infante	2B/OF
'09 Stats: .305, 2 HR, 27 RBI, 2 SB	
Eric Hinske	1B/OF
'09 Stats: .242, 8 HR, 26 RBI, 1 SB	
David Ross	C
'09 Stats: .273, 7 HR, 20 RBI, 0 SB	
Derek Lowe	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-10, 4.67 ERA, 111 K	
Jair Jurrjens	RHP
'09 Stats: 14-10, 2.60 ERA, 152 K	
Tommy Hanson	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-4, 2.89 ERA, 114 K	
Tim Hudson	RHP
'08 Stats: 11-7, 3.17 ERA, 85 K	
Kenshin Kawakami	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-12, 3.86 ERA, 105 K	
Billy Wagner	LHP
'08 Stats: 0-1, 2.30 ERA, 52 K, 27 Sv	
Takashi Saito	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-3, 2.43 ERA, 52 K, 2 Sv	
Peter Moylan	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-2, 2.84 ERA, 61 K, 0 Sv	

All of the usual suspects were in playoff contention at the end of last season, but the surprise team of the bunch was the Atlanta Braves. The failed experiment that was Mark Teixeira will certainly hurt them in the long run with the losses of Neftali Feliz, Elvis Andrus, Jarrod Saltalamachia, and Matt Harrison, but that didn't hold Atlanta from contention. Led by their deep and talented pitching staff, they were able to stay in the playoff picture until about a week was left in the season when their hitting gave in, only scoring 21 runs in the last week. They underwent several changes this off-season, clearing the way for elite prospects and giant contracts.

The Braves' offense will be – as it has for the last decade plus – based around homegrown talent. Chipper Jones and Brian McCann were top picks of the Braves from years past and they are now All-Stars several times over. Middle infielders Yunel Escobar and Martin Prado were signed at a young age by the Braves and have been developed into solid young players. Escobar, in particular, has developed into a top-10 shortstop in the league with a great arm and makes incredible contact. To supplement the talent from the inside, the Braves have brought in outfielders Nate McLouth and Matt Diaz recently. McLouth is a great all-around hitter, but may have to move down from his leadoff position if he continues to hit under .260. Diaz developed power towards the end of the year last season, but was very streaky last year. In a curious trade, the Braves shipped off Javier Vazquez after he had a career year for a bag of rocks and dirt: Melky Cabrera, Arodys Vizcaino, and Michael Dunn. Cabrera is an average hitter in the launching pad that is Yankee Stadium, and he may lose his starting job sooner rather than later to Major League Baseball's top prospect, Jason Heyward. That move is solid if you can follow it up with a big signing from the money you saved by trading Vazquez, but they signed washed up corner infielder Troy Glaus for only \$1.75 million when they could have brought back Adam LaRoche, or bring in Russell Branyan, Carlos Delgado, or even Adrian Gonzalez.

Trading Vazquez certainly hurts the Braves' rotation, but they still have two of the best young pitchers in MLB to go with two great veterans and a questionable

fifth starter. Derek Lowe, while wildly overpaid, is hardly ever hurt and has thrown at least 180 innings each of the last eight years. Lowe is efficient in his pitches and, if given a competent infield defense, will win you twelve or more wins. Jair Jurrjens went completely under the radar, especially considering his level of accomplishment: 14 wins and 2.60 ERA. Tommy Hanson will get his first full year of experience under his belt this year after he was eased into the Majors for a series of reasons, including the Braves avoiding him attaining Super Two status, ultimately gaining one more year of arbitration. Hanson, like Jurrjens, had a sub-three ERA and double digit wins. The two wild cards of the rotation are Tim Hudson and Kenshin Kawakami. Hudson is a force when healthy, but he missed almost all of last season due to Tommy John Surgery, while Kawakami has maintained his health but isn't a great pitcher. Atlanta will need both pitchers to be healthy for most of the season and be relatively productive, and as long as Jurrjens and Hanson continue to develop, the Braves will be set for the future and remain in contention to grab the Wild Card.

The Braves bullpen went under major construction this off-season. They replaced their closing duo of Rafael Soriano and Miguel Gonzalez from last year with two former Red Sox relievers, Billy Wagner and Takashi Saito. Both have plenty of closing experience, but Wagner (when healthy) will have the ninth inning role. Pete Moylan and Manny Acosta are two more solid relievers, and they will round out Atlanta's semi-quality portion of the 'pen.

The key to the Braves' season will be the production of their offense. We already know Lowe, Jurrjens, and Hanson will be great and Hudson and Wagner should continue to throw as they did at the end of the year, but you know your offense is in trouble when your cleanup hitter is Troy Glaus. They will need much more production out of the middle of their order, which can easily be picked up at the Trade Deadline. The Braves have great pitching, and pitching will win you games. The NL Wild Card is wide open, and they are just as good as the Marlins, Brewers, and Giants. If the Braves make the playoffs, look out: they are dangerous. An interesting note is that Eric Hinske has played in the World Series each of the last three years (Red Sox, Rays, and Yankees) with two rings. **GRADE: 88**



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Braves seriously lack hitting production from the middle of their order. The best way (and cheapest way) will be to bring up super prospect Jason Heyward in May. The Braves need to avoid letting Heyward reach Super Two status, similar to what they did with Hanson last year, but they will want to get the most production out of him in the majors as they can. Until Heyward is really ready to come up, Melky Cabrera can fill in. Cabrera is a serviceable player, but he won't fill up the highlight reel, and he won't come through in the clutch. Heyward projects to have around 30-home run power, something the Braves desperately need – quickly.

On the Rise		Jair Jurrjens
On the Decline		Troy Glaus
Sleeper		Yunel Escobar

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Freddie Freeman	1B	Drives the ball well, power and contact still developing. Great fielder, throwing arm
Julio Teheron	RHP	Small frame, but electric stuff. Blazing fastball and plus curveball and changeup
Arodys Vizcaino	RHP	Plus curveball with leads to lots of strikeouts. Command is very developed for age
Jordan Schafer	OF	Great defender with good average. Power hasn't set in, but mechanics are smooth
Mike Minor	LHP	Fastball not overpowering, but very accurate. Great hard slider and changeup
Edward Salcedo	SS	Solid power potential and great range. Strong arm, may move over to third base
Randall Delgado	RHP	Good movement on fastball, solid curve. Very good strikeout pitcher, fair command
Craig Kimbrel	RHP	Plus fastball, future star closer. Strikeouts a ton of hitters, but has poor command
Christian Bethancourt	C	Average power, really came on towards the end of last season. Plays sound defense
Cody Johnson	OF	Big swing, incredible power, makes inconsistent contact. Big frame, long swing





Courtesy of daylife.com

Lineup	Pos.
Chris Coghlan	LF
'09 Stats: .321, 9 HR, 47 RBI, 8 SB	
Cameron Maybin	CF
'09 Stats: .319, 3 HR, 39 RBI, 8 SB*	
Hanley Ramirez	SS
'09 Stats: .342, 24 HR, 106 RBI, 27 SB	
Jorge Cantu	1B
'09 Stats: .289, 16 HR, 100 RBI, 3 SB	
Dan Uggla	2B
'09 Stats: .243, 31 HR, 90 RBI, 2 SB	
Cody Ross	RF
'09 Stats: .270, 24 HR, 90 RBI, 5 SB	
Gaby Sanchez	1B
'09 Stats: .290, 16 HR, 55 RBI, 4 SB*	
John Baker	C
'09 Stats: .271, 9 HR, 50 RBI, 0 SB	
Brett Carroll	OF
'09 Stats: .234, 3 HR, 18 RBI, 0 SB	
Jai Miller	OF
'09 Stats: .288, 16 HR, 52 RBI, 5 SB*	
Emilio Bonafacio	3B/2B
'09 Stats: .217, 1 HR, 27 RBI, 21 SB	
Wes Helms	3B/1B
'09 Stats: .271, 3 HR, 33 RBI, 1 SB	
Ronny Paulino	C
'09 Stats: .272, 8 HR, 27 RBI, 1 SB	
Josh Johnson	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-5, 3.23 ERA, 191 K	
Ricky Nolasco	RHP
'09 Stats: 13-9, 5.06 ERA, 195 K	
Andibal Sanchez	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-8, 3.87 ERA, 71 K	
Chris Volstad	LHP
'09 Stats: 9-13, 5.21 ERA, 107 K	
Nate Robertson	LHP
'09 Stats: 2-3, 5.44 ERA, 35 K	
Leo Nuñez	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-6, 4.06 ERA, 60 K, 26 Sv	
Renyel Pinto	LHP
'09 Stats: 4-1, 3.23 ERA, 58 K, 0 Sv	
Mike MacDougal	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-1, 4.31 ERA, 34 K, 20 Sv	

The Marlins have always been a low-budget team, but Major League Baseball finally made a move to stop Florida's fire sales and cost cutting. Early this January, the Players' Association told the Marlins that they had to spend more than the \$36 million they spent last year. As strange as the request sounded, the Marlins ended up extending ace pitcher Josh Johnson to a 5-year deal and not trading Dan Uggla, Jorge Cantu, or Cody Ross. Whether or not the Marlins had those moves in store before the MLBPA stepped in is not clear, they are headed in the right direction.

Although Sun Life Stadium (formerly named Joe Robbie Stadium, Pro Player Park, Pro Player Stadium, Dolphins Stadium, Dolphin Stadium, and Land Shark Stadium) is a very pitcher friendly ballpark, the Marlins were fifth in the National League in home runs. The team's power is their greatest strength on offense; their 3-4-5-6 hitters average nearly 24 homers apiece. The best of those four hitters is easily Hanley Ramirez. Ramirez is the best shortstop in baseball, bar none, and is also the best all-around player in the league. He nearly led the league in batting average, has improving but already might power, incredible speed, plus arm strength, and is great in the clubhouse. Uggla, Cantu, and Ross aren't quite at the HanRam level, but they are solid contributors in their own rights. Uggla has even better power than Ramirez but has much room for improvement in his defense and batting average. Cantu is the veteran of the group, a versatile fielder with very good run production, but less than inspiring power. Ross is similar to Cantu in the fact that he doesn't have exceptional power like Ramirez and Uggla, but he gets the job done and is very efficient.

The rest of the Marlins' lineup will consist of four very interesting rookies and sophomores. Reigning Rookie of the Year Chris Coghlan shifted from his natural position at second base out to left field where he quickly found his niche, leading all of the Major Leagues in hits after the All-Star break. Coghlan leading off allows Ramirez and Cameron to take advantage of their power and not have the pressure of having to set up the rest of their teammates to start the game. Maybin was part of the deal that netted Detroit Miguel Cabrera but has yet to secure a starting role in spring

training. He will be entering his fourth year in the big leagues, yet has only totaled 257 at-bats and still has enormous up side. Gaby Sanchez is similar to Maybin on a smaller scale, as he was given the opportunity to win the starting first base job last spring, but lost it to speedy Emilio Bonafacio. Sanchez has solid power but will be supplanted by elite prospect Logan Morrison in a year or so. John Baker is solid at the plate with no particular strengths but is disciplined and handled the young pitching staff well.

As mentioned above, the Marlins' pitching staff is very young, but at the same time very talented. Headed by Johnson who had a fantastic breakout year, Florida's rotation is one of the tops in the NL. When healthy, Johnson proved to be as dominant as anyone, and now that he finished a full season without a trip to the DL, the Marlins may have the pitching equivalent of Hanley Ramirez. Ricky Nolasco was a curious player last year; he went 6-7 with a 5.76 ERA but settled down for a 7-2, 4.39 ERA in the second half. He became a dominant pitcher in the second half of the year, but still let too many runners on base. Anibal Sanchez is another player, similar to Johnson, who hasn't been able to maintain his health, but showed he has no-hit potential (literally). Chris Volstad is a big lefty with solid upside, and Nate Robertson is a steady vet who will provide stability. Both allow too many base runners, but Volstad has a bright future ahead.


With the losses of hard-throwing Matt Lindstrom, Kiko Calero, and Brendan Donnelly, the Marlins' bullpen will be much younger and inexperienced. The veterans will be missed, and the key relievers are now inconsistent, flame throwing closer Leo Nunez, Renyel Pinto, and shaky Taylor Tankersley. The point here is the bullpen has great potential, but more than likely, they will blow several big games and need more stability.

Hanley Ramirez and Josh Johnson are at the top of their games and they are two top-10 hitters and pitchers. The rest of the team is very, very young, but that doesn't have to be a bad thing. Players like Maybin, Coghlan, and Sanchez could break out and become stars, and all of a sudden, the Marlins could become major players in a thin talent pool in contention for the NL Wild Card. I believe one of the young hitters will step up and push the Fish above the Braves and the dysfunctional Mets. GRADE: 87



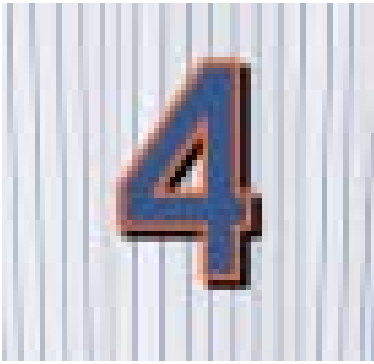
### Moves That Must Be Made

With Logan Morrison and Matt Dominguez on the way to play the corner infield positions for the future, Gaby Sanchez will soon be out of a position unless he or Morrison switches to the outfield, which is unlikely. Sanchez is a desirable young player, and the Marlins should be able to land a solid young player in return. The problem with trading a first baseman arises because nearly all contenders already have a steady player there. Florida will have to turn to a mid-level team, such as Oakland, Kansas City, or Washington for a player such as Josh Outman, Chris Dwyer, or Michael Burgess. Emilio Bonafacio can fill in at third and Cantu can switch to first.

On the Rise		Josh Johnson
On the Decline		Jorge Cantu
Sleeper		Cameron Maybin

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Mike Stanton	OF	Tremendous power and impeccable defender. Has potential for 40-homer power
Logan Morrison	1B	Great all-around hitter with great contact and plus power. Disciplined and strong
Matt Dominguez	3B	Has big league power but poor discipline. Fantastic defender with a plus arm, glove
Ryan Tucker	RHP	Strong fastball, quick motion. Future closer, but induces more grounders than Ks
Sean West	LHP	Big lefty starter with plus slider. Solid strikeout rate, but lets too many runners on
Chad James	LHP	Well-built starter with four quality pitches. Clean mechanics, but needs consistency
Andrew Miller	RHP	Big framed with blazing fastball and plus slider. Location needs improvement
Jose Ceda	RHP	Flame throwing reliever with an incredible strike out ability. Good versus power
Kyle Skipworth	C	Athletic with raw defensive skills and developing contact. High power ceiling
Brett Sinkbeil	RHP	Has the makeup of a major leaguer, but can't stay healthy. Plus fastball and slider





Lineup	Pos.
Jose Reyes	SS
'09 Stats: .279, 2 HR, 15 RBI, 11 SB	
Luis Castillo	2B
'09 Stats: .302, 1 HR, 40 RBI, 20 SB	
Carlos Beltran	CF
'09 Stats: .325, 10 HR, 48 RBI, 11 SB	
David Wright	3B
'09 Stats: .307, 10 HR, 72 RBI, 27 SB	
Jason Bay	LF
'09 Stats: .267, 36 HR, 119 RB, 13 SB	
Daniel Murphy	1B
'09 Stats: .266, 12 HR, 63 RBI, 4 SB	
Jeff Francouer	RF
'09 Stats: .280, 15 HR, 76 HR, 6 SB	
Rod Barajas	C
'09 Stats: .291, 2 HR, 31 RBI, 1 SB	
Angel Pagan	OF
'09 Stats: .306, 6 HR, 32 RBI, 14 SB	
Gary Matthews Jr.	OF
'09 Stats: .250, 4 HR, 50 RBI, 4 SB	
Alex Cora	SS/3B
'09 Stats: .251, 1 HR, 18 RBI, 8 SB	
Mike Jacobs	1B
'09 Stats: .228, 19 HR, 61 RBI, 0 SB	
Omir Santos	C
'09 Stats: .260, 7 HR, 40 RBI, 0 SB	
Johan Santana	LHP
'09 Stats: 13-9, 3.13 ERA, 146 K	
Oliver Perez	LHP
'09 Stats: 3-4, 6.82 ERA, 62 K	
John Maine	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-6, 4.43 ERA, 55 K	
Mike Pelfrey	RHP
'09 Stats: 10-12, 5.03 ERA, 107 K	
Jonathon Niese	LHP
'07 Stats: 5-6, 3.82 ERA, 82 K	
Francisco Rodriguez	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-6, 3.71 ERA, 73 K, 35 Sv	
Kelvim Escobar	RHP
'07 Stats: 18-7, 3.40 ERA, 160 K, 0 Sv	
Pedro Feliciano	LHP
'09 Stats: 6-4, 3.03 ERA, 59 K, 0 Sv	

Let's be frank: the Mets are a bad, dysfunctional, poorly run team. Now that we've put that onto the table, we can better look into why the Mets won't be that team this year. The Mets are sour from the top. The Fred Wilpon is willing to spend, as an owner, but doesn't hire the right guys. His general manager, Omar Minaya, pulled off the single worst trade in the history of baseball: Bartolo Colon for Cliff Lee, Grady Sizemore, and Brandon Phillips. Minaya's trades and signings have gotten progressively less and less awful, but he is still one of the worst five GMs in the game. Even their manager, Jerry Manuel, is incompetent and unproductive.

Don't worry, Mets fans; your management isn't the only debilitated portion of your team. Last season, the Mets had the worst barrage of injuries perhaps in the last 20 years, if not ever. At one point, they had more than \$50 million on the DL – more than the Pirates', Padres', Marlins' payrolls. While spending money on players who are going to get injured often is a projectable problem, it is not entirely their fault. With all of that in mind, the team the Mets were fielding at the end of the year was atrocious. The only major-league caliber players on that team were Brian Schneider and Jeff Francouer, both of whom are fringe starters and really just bad players. Fernando Cabrera, Anderson Hernandez, Alex Cora, Corey Sullivan, Nick Evans, and Angel Pagan were all holding starting jobs, and that is just inexcusable. Luckily for the Mets, none of those players will hold a prime role on the team, but the team is still bad. Luis Castillo is a few years over the hump now and shouldn't be making half of his \$6 million salary. Francouer's lone asset is his plus arm strength, but the team was so bad last year that he ended up leading them with 15 home runs. The lack of power was likely because of the fact that middle-of-the-order bats Carlos Beltran (who will be out past April), the departed Carlos Delgado, and David Wright missed a combined 149 games due to injuries and rest days. The major addition to the club, Jason Bay, cost them \$80 million over five years, which is reasonable for his numbers. The problem arises because his skill set does not match at all with his new home ballpark. Citi Field has gigantic dimensions, and Bay's pull swing and deteriorating

defense will languish the Queens. The other free agent acquisition, Rod Barajas, is another spectacularly average player with a poor offensive game but decent defense. The move looks especially bad when you consider they could have landed Bengie Molina. Jose Reyes is going to be the key to the lineup. He is still recovering from knee surgery, and he will need to be at full speed to be disruptive on the bases and play up to the level of his earlier self.

So a broken team with awful management and unpredictable offense should at least have good pitching, right? Wrong. The Mets do have the second most dominant pitcher (when healthy) in the division, Johan Santana, but after that, they have next to nothing. Scott Boras hoodwinked Minaya into signing Oliver Perez to a \$36 million contract, and what did he give them in return? Three wins and an ERA of almost seven. Perez is incredibly dominant when he is on, but he is only on once every five starts, and is a terrible pitcher when he's not at the top of his game. With Perez in the two slot going into the off-season, the Mets were in desperate need of a good starting pitcher. John Lackey, Randy Wolf, and even Jason Marquis and Joel Piñeiro were available, but the Mets jumped on converted set-up man Kelvim Escobar instead. Now, the back of the Mets' rotation will feature the oft-injured John Maine and Mike Pelfrey to go with unproved Jonathan Niese – never a good idea.

The Mets' bullpen may be the only silver lining to an otherwise behemoth of a rain cloud. Closer Francisco Rodriguez made a smooth transition into the spotlight of New York, although he barely saved half the games he did the year before. J.J. Putz was a failure as a set-up man, but Escobar and a combination of Pedro Feliciano and Sean Green should be able to safely get the ball to K-Rod to save the few leads the Mets will have.

Dysfunctional teams stem from the bad leadership, and the Mets get a check plus for both. In order to right their shaky boat, an overhaul will need to take place in the front office. Minaya and Manuel need to go, as the Mets need a fresh start. As for the team, well, they have a ways to go. Their pitching is horrendous, and you need quality pitching to win. They also have bad health and little help coming along from the minors. Really, this team is just as good as Gary Matthews Jr.'s ability to hit (not good at all). **GRADE: 83**



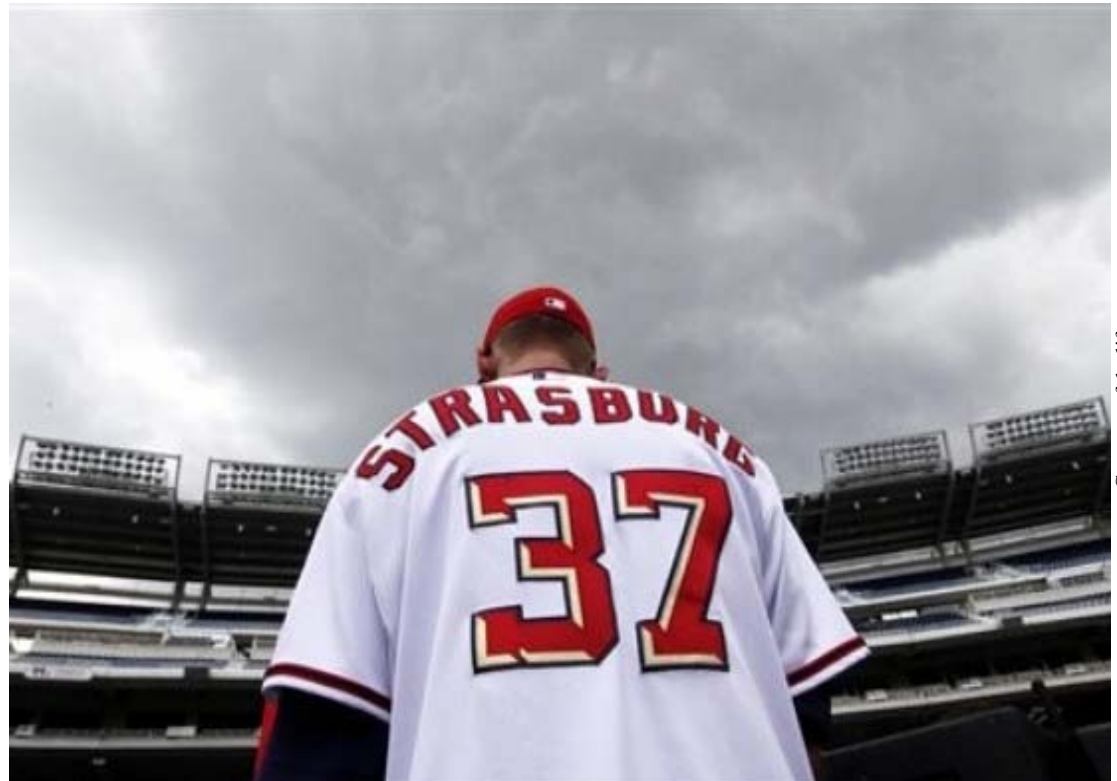
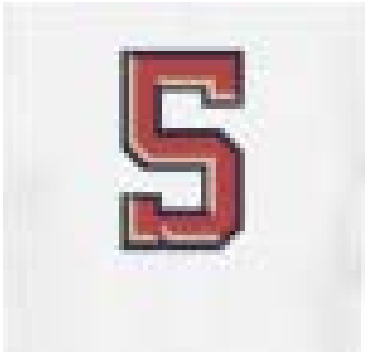
### **Moves That Must Be Made**

The Mets need to get rid of some of the several awful contracts they have. Luis Castillo is very expendable with their middle infield depth in Cora and Hernandez. In fact, the best part about the Mets in their depth in the field, a clear sign that your organization is not going in the right direction and you need to spend your money in a better way. If the Mets want to receive better prospects to replenish their relatively empty farm system, they will have to eat most of his salary. Minaya should be able to get the Dodgers or Cardinals to bite on Castillo for cheap, but they will be lucky to find a suitor for the defensively challenged 34-year old.

On the Rise		Angel Pagan
On the Decline		Luis Castillo
Sleeper		Jose Reyes

<b>Top 10 Prospects</b>	<b>Pos.</b>	<b>Description</b>
Fernando Martinez	OF	Great bat speed, projects a high average, solid power. Great arm, plays solid defense
Jenrry Mejia	RHP	Power armed starter with blazing fastball. Has three plus pitches, but lacks command
Wilmer Flores	SS	Fantastic bat speed, makes great contact. Big frame, Reyes likely to move him from SS
Ike Davis	1B	Smooth swing with power potential. Athletic and rangy with good reaction time
Eddie Kunz	RHP	Thick-framed closer with sinking fastball, great velocity. No legitimate off-speeds
Josh Thole	C	Solid defender with plus bat speed. Hits well for average, especially for catcher
Brad Holt	RHP	Good velocity on fastball with improving command. Big frame and clean delivery
Nick Evans	OF	Versatile fielder, but hasn't reached potential at higher levels. Average is terrible
Reese Havens	SS	Disciplined hitter with big frame. Great mechanics and can play all infield positions
Juan Urbina	LHP	International signee with solid command, breaking pitches. Son of Ugueth Urbina





Courtesy of daylife.com

Lineup	Pos.
Nyjer Morgan	CF
'09 Stats: .307, 3 HR, 39 RBI, 42 SB	
Ian Desmond	SS
'09 Stats: .330, 7 HR, 32 RBI, 9 SB*	
Ryan Zimmerman	3B
'09 Stats: .292, 33 HR, 106 RBI, 2 SB	
Adam Dunn	1B
'09 Stats: .267, 38 HR, 105 RBI, 0 SB	
Josh Willingham	LF
'09 Stats: .260, 24 HR, 61 RBI, 4 SB	
Ivan Rodriguez	C
'09 Stats: .249, 10 HR, 47 RBI, 1 SB	
Adam Kennedy	2B
'09 Stats: .289, 11 HR, 63 RBI, 20 SB	
Willy Harris	RF
'09 Stats: .242, 13 HR, 42 RBI, 35 SB*	
Willy Taveras	OF
'09 Stats: .240, 1 HR, 15 RBI, 24 SB	
Mike Morse	SS/OF
'09 Stats: .250, 3 HR, 10 RBI, 0 SB	
Alberto Gonzalez	SS/3B
'09 Stats: .265, 1 HR, 33 RBI, 1 SB	
Cristian Guzman	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .284, 6 HR, 52 RBI, 4 SB	
Jesus Flores	C
'08 Stats: .256, 8 HR, 59 RBI, 0 SB	
Jason Marquis	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-13, 4.04 ERA, 115 K	
John Lannan	LHP
'09 Stats: 9-13, 3.88 ERA, 89 K	
Scott Olsen	LHP
'09 Stats: 2-4, 6.03 ERA, 42 K	
Ross Detwiler	LHP
'09 Stats: 1-6, 5.00 ERA, 43 K	
Chien-Ming Wang	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-6, 9.64 ERA, 29 K	
Matt Capps	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-8, 5.80 ERA, 46 K, 27 Sv	
Sean Burnett	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-3, 3.12 ERA, 43 K, 1 Sv	
Brian Bruney	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-0, 3.92 ERA, 36 K, 0 Sv	

Every sport has a team (or two) that is consistently bad and consistently makes bad decisions. For the NFL, it is the Raiders and their questionable owner Al Davis, the Knicks and their attempts to clear room to eventually set themselves up to be disappointed when they don't land LeBron James, Dwayne Wade, nor Chris Bosh; and the Nationals and Pirates who just have no utter idea what they are doing. The Nationals have been handing out bad contracts to over-the-hill veterans (\$16 million over 2 for Cristian Guzman and \$6 million over Ivan Rodriguez) years while unable to develop young talent.

The Nationals have been questionable spenders for some time now. Their lineup is filled with bad contracts and problematic players. Adam Dunn has tremendous power, but is one of the worst defenders in the league, leading to his switch to first base. Dunn will be making \$12 million and is rumored to having an extension offer. Pudge is a great mentor, but his defense and offense have deteriorated immensely, and he has what I like to call the Jason Varitek Syndrome: his only legitimate tools are handling a pitching staff and calling a good game. GM Anthony Rizzo made another questionable move when he brought in infielder Adam Kennedy. The move alone sounds good, but not when you consider rookie Ian Desmond will now have to spend extensive periods of time on the bench, hindering his development. The good news for Washington is that they have one of the best five third basemen in the league: Ryan Zimmerman. Since being drafted number four overall in the 2005 draft, Zim has cranked out 91 home runs and 364 RBIs, while maintaining a lifetime .284 batting average. He had his best season yet with career highs in nearly every category last year, and he is expected to carry the bulk of the load along with Dunn on the offensive side of the ball. Outfielders Nyjer Morgan and Josh Willingham, who were solid pickups by GM Mike Rizzo last year, have really come along as average role players with speed (Morgan) and power (Willingham).

The pitching of the Nationals is not impressive either. The leading man will be free agent pickup Jason Marquis. Washington passed up higher priced free agents

such as John Lackey and Randy Wolf, and opted for a cheaper, but still over-priced starter in Jason Marquis. Marquis is a winner everywhere he has been, which can never hurt. In fact, Marquis has never failed to reach the postseason, but as we all know, everything good must eventually come to an end, and this streak will come to a close this year. After the veteran, the next three starters will all have less than four years of experience. John Lannan is entering his third year in the league and finally made steps towards being a quality pitcher, a rarity for anyone to don a Nationals (or Nationals jersey). Scott Olsen was unimpressive in his first season in DC, but will prove to be an asset if he pitches like he did in Florida. The back of the rotation could prove to be the most important to the Nats. Ross Detwiler was a top-10 draft pick and could eventually become a dominant starter. The last starter will likely be Chien-Ming Wang, a man who won a measly 19 games just two years ago before he was tossed aside. He should be able to dominate the inexperienced NL hitters, assuming he doesn't sprain an ankle running the bases again.

The Nationals bullpen was a mess last year. They had to trade closer Joel Hanrahan after he had five saves in 34 appearances and a 7.71 ERA. Mike MacDougal was serviceable but inconsistent, so Washington decided to move on – they signed Matt Capps. The last thing a losing team wants to do is hand out big contracts to low impact players, especially if that is a closer with an ERA almost at 6. Capps is really no better than Hanrahan nor MacDougal, so look for Brian Bruney, MacDougal, or Drew Storen to have to fill in at closer later on in the year when Capps inevitable implodes.

The best example of how big of a black hole Washington is would be to look at their game versus the Marlins on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009. Zimmerman and Dunn donned jerseys that read “Natinals” instead of “Nationals.” You know your team is really bad when you can't even get the right uniforms. The Nationals lack quality pitch, any sort of defense, and production offensively other than Z and Dunn – and the surprise release of Elijah Dukes doesn't help. The Nationals and Pirates are easily the worst clubs, but the Pirates admit to being in a ceaseless rebuilding process. The Nats' attempts to get better end up in horrid contracts and a terrible team, the one thing this franchise has been able to do since they arrived in DC. GRADE: 78



## Moves That Must Be Made

Cristian Guzman has the worst contract on the team, and probably won't be starting after a poor spring training. While he still is productive, his defense is poor and hitting is corroding. The Cardinals, Dodgers, and Diamondbacks could each use an upgrade in the infield, and anything in return for Guzman would be worth it. Eight million off the books and a better defense is always and help, not to mention Desmond getting more playing time. If possible, the Nats should also try to trade medium upside utility players Willie Harris and Willy Taveras, but both will be hard to move since Harris is making \$1.5 million and Taveras could be had earlier for free.

On the Rise		John Lannan
On the Decline		Ivan Rodriguez
Sleeper		Ross Detwiler

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Stephen Strasburg	RHP	Flamethrower with plus plus fastball, curve, control. Best pitching prospect recently
Jordan Zimmermann	RHP	Pounds the strike zone with great command. Out until August with TJ Surgery
Drew Storen	RHP	MLB ready closer with great slider, sinking fastball. Good control, efficiency
Derek Norris	C	Very patient with great all-around hitting skills. Plus power and on base skills
Collin Balester	RHP	Not overpowering with low-90s fastball, solid curve. Needs to develop more pitches
Justin Maxwell	OF	Good speed and a solid glove. Good power potential, already hits well for average
Michael Burgess	OF	Muscular build with power potential and good bat speed. Very good arm strength
Chris Marreo	1B	Above average power, can play the outfield. Injuries have hampered development
Destin Hood	OF	Very athletic with speed, power potential. Inconsistent hitter, especially for average
Danny Espinosa	SS	Lean build with long swing. Power coming along and speed already has set in





# National League Central

▲ Aramis Ramirez





Lineup	Pos.
Skip Schumaker	2B
'09 Stats: .303, 4 HR, 35 RBI, 2 SB	
Felipe Lopez	3B
'09 Stats: .310, 0 HR, 57 RBI, 6 SB	
Albert Pujols	1B
'09 Stats: .327, 47 HR, 135 RBI, 16 SB	
Matt Holliday	LF
'09 Stats: .313, 24 HR, 109 RBI, 14 SB	
Ryan Ludwick	RF
'09 Stats: .265, 22 HR, 97 RBI, 4 SB	
Colby Rasmus	CF
'09 Stats: .251, 16 HR, 52 RBI, 3 SB	
Yadier Molina	C
'09 Stats: .293, 6 HR, 54 RBI, 9 SB	
Brendan Ryan	SS
'09 Stats: .292, 3 HR, 37 RBI, 14 SB	
Joe Mather	OF
'09 Stats: .188, 4 HR, 28 RBI, 7 SB*	
David Freese	3B
'09 Stats: .313, 12 HR, 48 RBI, 1 SB*	
Tyler Greene	3B/SS
'09 Stats: .291, 15 HR, 42 RBI, 31 SB*	
Matt Pagnozzi	C
'09 Stats: .221, 5 HR, 32 RBI, 0 SB*	
Jason LaRue	C
'09 Stats: .240, 2 HR, 6 RBI, 1 SB	
Chris Carpenter	RHP
'09 Stats: 17-4, 2.24 ERA, 144 K	
Adam Wainwright	RHP
'09 Stats: 19-8, 2.63 ERA, 212 K	
Kyle Lohse	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-10, 4.74 ERA, 77 K	
Brad Penny	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-9, 4.88 ERA, 109 K	
Jaime Garcia	LHP
'09 Stats: 2-2 2.87 ERA, 41 K	
Ryan Franklin	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-3, 1.92 ERA, 44 K, 38 Sv	
Kyle McClellan	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-4, 3.37 ERA, 51 K, 3 Sv	
Jason Motte	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-4, 4.76 ERA, 54 K, 0 Sv	

For the first time in what feels like an eternity, the Cardinals finally listened to Albert Pujols' request to add another middle-of-the-order slugger. Last trade deadline, the Cards sent a package of prospects (most notably Brett Wallace) for Matt Holliday, and then re-signed him to a \$138 million, eight-year contract. St. Louis made a curious decision when bringing back Holliday, since they were the only legitimate bidder for the slugger's services. They improved their previous offer by around \$50 million to close the deal, even though they still need to extend Pujols, Chris Carpenter, and Adam Wainwright.

When the Cardinals' offense did not have Matt Holliday, they were just another average NL Central team with little excitement. Bringing in another huge bat to hit behind Pujols creates suddenly one of the better lineups in the majors. Both have .320-40-120 potential, and they will need to hit somewhere around there because the rest of the lineup is okay. Young outfielders Colby Rasmus and Ryan Ludwick will improve their batting production and gain more muscle as they age and get more playing experience. Last season, Skip Schumaker made a seamless transition from left field to second base when the Cardinals released Adam Kennedy. In addition, Schumaker has also slid into the leadoff spot well. With the addition of Felipe Lopez just days into spring training, St. Louis will have a three-man rotation at the left side of the infield between Lopez, Brendan Ryan, and David Freese. Lopez is clearly the best hitter but also the worst fielder. Ryan and Freese have solid up-sides; Ryan is more developed, but Freese has more power.

While the Cardinals aren't quite the small market team like Seattle or Oakland, they too will be depending on a fairly solid defense. Yadier Molina is the best defensive catcher in baseball, perhaps the best since Pudge Rodriguez in his prime. Pujols plays a very good first base, and Rasmus and Ludwick excel in the outfield. The problem is that Lopez and Holliday are both below average fielders. Holliday, notorious for dropping a fly ball with two outs in the ninth inning of the NLDS, is essentially a DH playing outfield. He will become an even bigger defensive hazard



by the time his contract runs out in 2017. Schumaker and Freese are both solid defensive infielders.

Similar to Pujols and Holliday in the middle of the lineup, the Cardinals have an incredible 1-2 punch at the top of their rotation. Chris Carpenter and Adam Wainwright finished second and third respectively in the Cy Young voting, even though Carpenter missed the first month of the year. The dual aces were extremely dominant when healthy, with sub-3.00 ERAs. Kyle Lohse is yet another resurrection project by pitching mastermind Dave Duncan. Duncan has turned Lohse into a quality pitcher as he throws more two-seam fastballs and pitches to contact. An interesting pickup Brad Penny will fill the fourth spot in the rotation. Penny pitched like two different men last year; in Boston he went 7-8 with a 5.71 ERA, but when he returned to the National League with the Giants, he went 4-1 with a 2.59 ERA. If the Cardinals and Duncan can get the National League Penny, they will have a 2<sup>nd</sup> starter quality pitcher at the back of their rotation. The bigger question at starting pitcher the Penny this year will be who will step up as the fifth starter. Jaime Garcia has won the final rotation spot, but Rich Hill and Blake Hawksworth will be waiting in the wings should Garcia slip up.

If the middle of the order and top of the rotation are the strengths of St. Louis, the bullpen is certainly the weakness. Ryan Franklin was an All-Star but was by no means a shutdown closer. He had a career year, but similar to David Aardsma, few people anticipate a repeat performance. Kyle McClellan and Jason Motte were solid, but their steadiest reliever was Trevor Miller – a tell-tale sign you need help when a journeyman was your best reliever.

The Cardinals are going to be very competitive this year and should easily take the weak NL Central. With the 1-2 punch of Carpenter and Wainwright, few teams will be able to stop them in a short playoff series. Expect a sneaky Mark DeRosa-type trade at mid-season to affirm themselves as title contenders. The Cardinals do need to look into the future, though, because they desperately need to extend Pujols and one (if not both) of the two pitchers. If not, they will be a team depending on an aging Matt Holliday and lots of average players. GRADE: 93



### Moves That Must Be Made

St. Louis needs to address their shortcomings in the bullpen and left side of the infield, and it would be convenient to find both pieces in one trade. Without giving up too much, the Cardinals could land Ryan Raburn and Dontrelle Willis from the Tigers. Both players are currently squeezed out of the starting lineup and could use a change of scenery. Willis would be the fifth starter and should enjoy a new beginning now that he is back to the National League, where he has been the most comfortable. Although the Cards don't have a deep farm system, they could pay for most of the contracts and send Julio Lugo and McClellan in return.

On the Rise		Colby Rasmus
On the Decline		Brad Penny
Sleeper		Yadier Molina

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Shelby Miller	RHP	Big framed first rounder out of high school. Plus fastball, much room to improve
Daryl Jones	OF	Incredible athlete with plenty of raw skills. Major weakness is pitch recognition
Lance Lynn	RHP	Big frame with high strikeout rate. 3 pitches are all average, but very serviceable
Jon Jay	OF	Hits very well for average but 10-15 homer power. Excellent fielder with speed
Mitchell Boggs	RHP	Good velocity with great movement on cutter and curveball. Groundball pitcher
Bryan Anderson	C	Advanced hitter who makes great contact, but lacks power. Elite defensive catcher
Eduardo Sanchez	RHP	Young flamethrower with plus fastball, lots of strikeouts. Keeps runners off base
Allen Craig	3B	Very good power but has no home defensively. Streaky hitter, but drives the ball well
Pete Kozma	SS	Strong defender, possible leadoff hitter. Average needs help, though patience is here
P.J. Walters	RHP	Plus changeup and excellent control. Creates misses, but lets too many runners on



Lineup	Pos.
Rickie Weeks	2B
'09 Stats: .272, 9 HR, 24 RBI, 2 SB	
Carlos Gomez	CF
'09 Stats: .229, 3 HR, 28 RBI, 14 SB	
Ryan Braun	LF
'09 Stats: .320, 32 HR, 114 RBI, 20 SB	
Prince Fielder	1B
'09 Stats: .299, 46 HR, 141 RBI, 2 SB	
Corey Hart	RF
'09 Stats: .260, 12 HR, 48 RBI, 11 SB	
Casey McGehee	3B
'09 Stats: .301, 16 HR, 66 RBI, 0 SB	
Gregg Zaun	C
'09 Stats: .260, 8 HR, 27 RBI, 0 SB	
Alcides Escobar	SS
'09 Stats: .298, 4 HR, 34 RBI, 42 SB*	
Jody Gerut	OF
'09 Stats: .230, 9 HR, 35 RBI, 6 SB	
Jim Edmonds	OF
'08 Stats: .235, 20 HR, 55 RBI, 2 SB	
Joe Inglett	2B/OF
'09 Stats: .360, 3 HR, 25 RBI, 4 SB*	
Craig Counsell	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .285, 4 HR, 35 RBI, 3 SB	
George Kottaras	C
'09 Stats: .237, 1 HR, 10 RBI, 0 SB	
Yovani Gallardo	RHP
'09 Stats: 13-12, 3.73 ERA, 204 K	
Randy Wolf	LHP
'09 Stats: 11-7, 3.23 ERA, 160 K	
Doug Davis	LHP
'09 Stats: 9-14, 4.12 ERA, 146 K	
Dave Bush	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-9, 6.38 ERA, 89 K	
Manny Parra	LHP
'09 Stats: 11-11, 6.36 ERA, 116 K	
Trevor Hoffman	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-2, 1.83 ERA, 48 K, 37 Sv	
LaTroy Hawkins	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-4, 2.13 ERA, 45 K, 11 Sv	
David Riske	RHP
'08 Stats: 1-2, 5.31 ERA, 27 K, 2 Sv	

The Brewers recently took initiative to push their team into contention. Two years ago, they pulled the trigger on the deal that landed CC Sabathia for top-notch prospects. They didn't hesitate on mortgaging the future for a shot at playoff glory. Now, they parted ways with questionable hitting J.J. Hardy, Mike Cameron, and Jason Kendall in return for Carlos Gomez and Greg Zaun, while making room for Alcides Escobar. The big moves, however, came this winter when they signed starting pitchers Randy Wolf and Doug Davis.

Miller Park is one of the more hitter friendly parks in the majors, and by hook or by crook (or more likely by design) they have a team centered on powerful hitting. They spent four high draft picks from 2002 to 2005 on future cornerstones of their offense: Prince Fielder, Ryan Braun, Rickie Weeks, and Mat Gamel. Fielder and Braun combined for 78 homers and 255 RBIs, while maintaining a .310 average. While overcome with injuries recently, Weeks has above-average power and speed. He is a fantastic number two hitter, so expect a big bounce back year. Gamel, of the four, has been the slowest to progress but has enormous power potential. He should take over for Casey McGehee at third later this year. McGehee is fairly average across the board. He had signed to a Minor League contract last season before he broke camp with the big league club and claimed the third base job. Gomez and Corey Hart are two outfielders who haven't quite lived up to expectations, but they have still been productive hitters. Gomez lost much of his speed last year with 19 less steals, albeit in 262 less at-bats. Hart's home runs and stolen bases dropped in half because he was injured for parts of the year with various injuries. Similar to Weeks, Gomez and Hart should have much better years, akin to 2008 than 2009. The last two hitters in the lineup, Zaun and Escobar, are not very impressive at the plate but are fantastic defenders. Escobar's defensive prowess draws comparisons to Elvis Andrus and Omar Vizquel.

With the departure of Sabathia and Ben Sheets last year, the Brewers needed one of their young pitchers to step up to fill the ace void, and they found one in



Yovani Gallardo. The 24 year old led the team in wins, ERA, and strikeouts, and was second in innings. As he gains more experience, he will become steadier, lowering his 3.73 ERA and 1.31 WHIP. Gallardo now has a right hand man in veteran Randy Wolf to help carry pitching load. Wolf has really come into his own the last three seasons, logging 595 innings, 35 wins, and 484 strikeouts. He signed a three-year deal this off-season, which may come back to haunt GM Doug Melvin in the later years of the contract. Milwaukee also brought in veteran Doug Davis, who had pitched with the Brewers from 2003 to 2006. Davis' ERA skyrocketed when he left Milwaukee for Arizona, but he threw a lot of innings. Dave Bush and Manny Parra will form the end of the rotation. They are both similar to Davis in that they will pitch a ton of innings without blowing away hitters. Unlike Davis, they each own high ERAs. Jeff Suppan could also see plenty of starts when he is fully healthy.

The Brewers' bullpen may be the least reliable division of the team. They brought back all-time saves leader Trevor Hoffman and signed LaTroy Hawkins to a hefty 2-year, \$7.5 million contract. Beyond them, the bullpen is shaky. David Riske and Todd Coffey can be very good when there isn't any pressure, but when the lights shine, they can't come through. Young lefty-specialist Mitch Stetter and Carlos Villanueva stepped up last year and could both be sleepers for major late-inning roles this season.

The Brewers don't have the most talented or complete team, but they are in a great situation. After the Phillies and Cards, there aren't going to be any sure-fire contenders. The Dodgers (and the NL West altogether) look nice on paper but have glaring mistakes. The Brew Crew has two incredible hitters in the middle of the lineup to pair with lots of young talent and high up-side hitters. As their rotation is pieced together, Milwaukee will emerge as legitimate contenders as veteran teams like the Cubs, Mets and Dodgers fall into late-summer swoons. GM Doug Melvin has always been one to make big moves, and I believe the Brewers have the firepower to pull off a big trade at the deadline to add another bat or top-of-the-rotation starter. Once they add that final piece, they will be right in the thick of the Wild Card race. I expect big years from Gallardo, Hart, and the Brewers in general. GRADE: 88

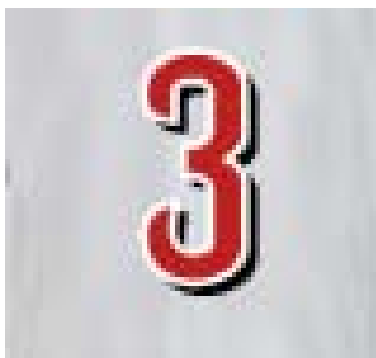


### Moves That Must Be Made

While Corey Hart and Rickie Weeks are poised for bounce-back years, Milwaukee should consider trading either or both to help themselves in other areas, such as relief pitching and their starting rotation. Jody Gerut and Jim Edmonds are capable backups. The Brewers could pair one of their young players with either Casey McGehee (to make way for Gamel) or a starter (say Doug Davis or Dave Bush) in return for a young starter. James Shields, Francisco Liriano, and Ricky Nolasco would be very good options to pair with Yovani Gallardo at the top of the rotation if their respective teams fall out of contention. Heath Bell is another option.

On the Rise		Yovani Gallardo
On the Decline		Gregg Zaun
Sleeper		Rickie Weeks

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Mat Gamel	3B	Terrific pure hitter with power to all fields. Poor fielding may lead to switch to first
Brett Lawrie	2B	Great bat speed and strong hands lead to big power. Good athlete and decent speed
Jeremy Jeffress	RHP	Power pitcher with 100 mph fastball and dangerous curve. Makeup questionable
Eric Arnett	RHP	Inconsistent velocity, high pitch counts, but has high potential. Plus breaking pitches
Zack Braddock	LHP	Highly inconsistent converted reliever. Strikes out inordinate amount of hitters
Kentrail Davis	OF	Small, but strong with great speed and developing power. Unpolished defense
Angel Salome	C	Short and stocky, but has a cannon arm and plus power. Caught using PEDs earlier
Jonathan Lucroy	C	Very disciplined hitter, makes great contact, but not much power. Defense is solid
Jake Odorizzi	RHP	High potential in fastball, curve. Dominated lower levels with impeccable control
Amaury Rivas	RHP	Good out pitch in changeup, control, but not overwhelming. Average all-around



Lineup	Pos.
Drew Stubbs	CF
'09 Stats: .267, 8 HR, 17 RBI, 10 SB	
Orlando Cabrera	SS
'09 Stats: .284, 9 HR, 77 RBI, 13 SB	
Joey Votto	1B
'09 Stats: .322, 25 HR, 84 RBI, 4 SB	
Brandon Phillips	2B
'09 Stats: .276, 20 HR, 98 RBI, 25 SB	
Scott Rolen	3B
'09 Stats: .305, 11 HR, 67 RBI, 5 SB	
Jay Bruce	RF
'09 Stats: .223, 22 HR, 58 RBI, 3 SB	
Jonny Gomes	LF
'09 Stats: .267, 20 HR, 51 RBI, 3 SB	
Ramon Hernandez	C
'09 Stats: .258, 5 HR, 37 RBI, 1 SB	
Chris Dickerson	OF
'09 Stats: .275, 2 HR, 15 RBI, 11 SB	
Laynce Nix	OF
'09 Stats: .239, 15 HR, 46 RBI, 0 SB	
Paul Janish	SS/3B
'09 Stats: .211, 1 HR, 16 RBI, 2 SB	
Aaron Miles	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .185, 0 HR, 5 RBI, 3 SB	
Ryan Hanigan	C
'09 Stats: .263, 3 HR, 11 RBI, 0 SB	
Aaron Harang	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-14, 4.21 ERA, 142 K	
Edinson Volquez	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-2, 4.35 ERA, 47 K	
Bronson Arroyo	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-13, 3.84 ERA, 127 K	
Jonny Cueto	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-11, 4.41 ERA, 132 K	
Homer Bailey	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-5, 4.53 ERA, 86 K	
Francisco Cordero	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-6, 2.16 ERA, 58 K, 39 Sv	
Nick Masset	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-1, 2.37 ERA, 70 K, 0 Sv	
Arthur Rhodes	LHP
'09 Stats: 1-1, 2.53 ERA, 48 K, 0 Sv	

For a small-market team, the Reds were certainly busy this year. GM Walt Jocketty brought in shortstop Orlando Cabrera, re-signed Jonny Gomes and Ramon Hernandez, and extended Scott Rolen. Oh yeah, and they signed that guy Aroldis Chapman. Cincinnati is making moves to win for the first time in a long time, and their young roster is finally starting to form a playoff contending team.

The Reds' offense has probably the most bang for their buck in the league – only two players make more than \$3 million: Brandon Phillips at \$11 million and Scott Rolen at \$6.5 million. Phillips and Rolen are great in the locker room and still can hit, especially Phillips. Phillips is the best all-around second baseman in the league; he has fantastic power, above average speed, and a solid glove. By playing half of his games at the Great American Launching Pad, Rolen should put up better offensive numbers, closer but not quite to his career peak. Plus, he is still one of the best fielders at the hot corner. Although they will make less than \$900k combined, Joey Votto and Jay Bruce are two of the Reds' best hitters. Cincy's great scouting landed these two young All-Stars-in-the-making, and each are under club control until 2013, so the Reds have set the middle of their lineup for years to come. Drew Stubbs, the number eight overall pick in 2006, will get his first full season under his belt. Stubbs has 5-star potential; his speed has always been there and his power finally started to come around during his short stint in the majors. While the four most important hitters in the lineup (Stubbs, Votto, Phillips, and Bruce) are all under the age of 28, one player over 33 will play a major role. Orlando Cabrera was a huge pickup late in the off-season. O-Cab is a great sparkplug at the top of the order and a fantastic fielder. Ramon Hernandez wields an average bat, but he still plays solid defense and most importantly excels at handling the pitchers. At the end of the off-season, the Reds were hurting for a leftfielder, and they ended up, not with Johnny Damon, but with Jonny Gomes. While Gomes doesn't have the name of the World Series hero, he quietly hit 20 homers in a half season. Dusty Baker can counter Gomes' defensive shortcomings by using the Reds' beset athlete, Chris Dickerson, as a late inning defensive replacement when they are not in a platoon.



While the position players for the Reds will be coming very cheap, for the most part, the pitching is more on the expensive side. Veterans Aaron Harang and Bronson Arroyo will command \$23.5 million together. If the Reds fall out of contention early, they will be major trade pieces at the deadline. Arroyo pitched very well towards the end of last year, while Harang had a second straight poor season. Both will be hard to move because of their contracts, so they may end up staying on the Reds, which will likely help them in the short run, but not the long run. The Reds have two spectacular, hard-throwing Dominican righties: Edinson Volquez and Johnny Cueto. Unfortunately, Volquez will be out until June or later while he recovers from Tommy John surgery, but he and Cueto can be very dominant pitchers – when they stay consistent. A first-rounder in 2004, Homer Bailey had yet to become even a solid major league starter until September and October of last season. In the final five weeks of the season, Bailey logged 43 innings to go with a 4-1 record, 42 strikeouts and a 2.08 ERA. Bailey could be a future top-of-the-rotation pitcher if he keeps that up, and the Reds could certainly use more capable starters. The wild card for the Reds will be Aroldis Chapman, their \$30 million man. Chapman certainly has the stuff to make any major league rotation, but his faulty mechanics needs fine-tuning. Chapman could get the call by mid-2010, although a later debut is expected.




It's usually not a good sign when the closer is the highest paid player on a team, but that's the situation the Reds are in. Francisco Cordero is a very good closer, but he isn't quite worth \$12 million annually. Cordero can bring the heat but can get very erratic at times. Nick Masset and Jared Burton are solid young set-up men, and Arthur Rhodes is a great lefty specialist.

The Reds have an underrated club, filled with young talent and high potential. Votto, Bruce, and Phillips are playing at All-Star levels and should keep that up. Gomes, Rolen, and Cabrera (who has made the playoffs each of the last six seasons) aren't getting any younger, but all can still produce. Their defense is impeccable, a sign of a maturing team. Dusty Baker is a great manager and will straighten out this team when they start to lean the wrong way. They will have an underdog mentality and surprise the entire league. **GRADE: 87**



### **Moves That Must Be Made**

Although the offense could use a major bat to the middle of the lineup, Jocketty would have to give up more than he'd be willing to do, for a Brad Hawpe-type player. Moving Aaron Harang or Bronson Arroyo will free up salary, add semi-valuable prospects, and clear a rotation spot for Aroldis Chapman by the end of the year. The Dodgers and Mets desperately need starting pitching, but neither have deep farm systems, let alone productive ones. The Reds would want outfield and relief help in return. Jeff Francouer and Ramon Troncoso may be reaches for Walt Jocketty, but those types of trades will be available.

On the Rise		Joey Votto
On the Decline		Ramon Hernandez
Sleeper		Homer Bailey

<b>Top 10 Prospects</b>	<b>Pos.</b>	<b>Description</b>
Aroldis Chapman	LHP	Big lefty with blazing fastball and great slider. Powerful and has enormous upside
Juan Francisco	3B	Power hitting switch hitter with great approach. Cannon arm and good athleticism
Todd Frazier	SS	Versatile player with no sure position, but great bat. Good power, average lacking
Yonder Alonso	1B	Great power potential and already makes great contact and has great plate discipline
Mike Leake	RHP	2009 First-rounder with great curve, above-average command. Fastball with sink
Chris Heisey	OF	Hits very well for average with solid power, speed. Solid player across the board
Travis Wood	LHP	Plus changeup, but doesn't have other developed off-speed pitches. Needs polishing
Yorman Rodriguez	OF	Dynamic and young with five-tool potential. Outstanding frame and athleticism
Neftali Soto	3B	Productive hitter with hard contact. Long, smooth swing, leading to high average
Brad Boxberger	LHP	Good fastball with movement and solid mechanics. Poor control, consistency

## NL Central – 4. Chicago Cubs – NL Central



Lineup	Pos.
Ryan Theriot	SS
'09 Stats: .284, 7 HR, 54 RBI, 21 SB	
Kosuke Fukudome	RF
'09 Stats: .259, 11 HR, 54 RBI, 6 SB	
Derrek Lee	1B
'09 Stats: .306, 35 HR, 111 RBI, 1 SB	
Aramis Ramirez	3B
'09 Stats: .317, 15 HR, 65 RBI, 2 SB	
Alfonso Soriano	LF
'09 Stats: .241, 20 HR, 55 RBI, 9 SB	
Geovanny Soto	C
'09 Stats: .218, 11 HR, 47 RBI, 1 SB	
Marlon Byrd	CF
'09 Stats: .283, 20 HR, 89 RBI, 8 SB	
Mike Fontenot	2B
'09 Stats: .236, 9 HR, 43 RBI, 4 SB	
Xavier Nady	OF
'08 Stats: .305, 25 HR, 95 RBI, 2 SB	
Micah Hoffpauir	1B/OF
'09 Stats: .239, 10 HR, 35 RBI, 1 SB	
Jeff Baker	2B/OF
'09 Stats: .288, 4 HR, 24 RBI, 1 SB	
Chad Tracy	1B/3B
'09 Stats: .237, 8 HR, 39 RBI, 1 SB	
Koyie Hill	C
'09 Stats: .237, 2 HR, 24 RBI, 0 SB	
Carlos Zambrano	RHP
'09 Stats: 9-7, 3.77 ERA, 152 K	
Ted Lilly	LHP
'09 Stats: 13-9, 3.10 ERA, 151 K	
Ryan Dempster	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-9, 3.65 ERA, 172 K	
Randy Wells	RHP
'09 Stats: 12-10, 3.05 ERA, 104 K	
Tom Gorzelanny	LHP
'09 Stats: 7-3, 5.55 ERA, 47 K	
Carlos Marmol	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-4, 3.41 ERA, 93 K, 15 Sv	
John Grabow	LHP
'09 Stats: 3-0, 3.36 ERA, 57 K, 0 Sv	
Sean Marshall	LHP
'09 Stats: 3-7, 4.32 ERA, 68 K, 0 Sv	

Not long ago, the Cubs were the best team in the National League; they had plenty of big bats and clutch pitching. Back then, Kerry Wood and Mark Prior were dominating starting pitchers and the public didn't even know who Steve Bartman was (sorry, Cubs fans). After four awful contracts handed out to outfielders (8 years, \$138 million for Alfonso Soriano; 4 years, \$48 million for Kosuke Fukudome; 3 years, \$30 million for the now departed Milton Bradley, and 3 years, \$15 million for Marlon Byrd), the Cubs have fallen back to Earth, back to the middle of the already dreadfully average NL Central.

Last year was a huge disappointment for the Cubs, especially for their offense. Reigning NL Rookie of the Year Geovanny Soto looked like he didn't belong in the major leagues (similar to every Mets hitter at the end of the year) and Soriano had career lows across the board. Aramis Ramirez, the most consistent Cubs hitter since his 2003 arrival, missed almost half the year with injuries then floundered with his tweaked wrist. Essentially, Derrek Lee was the only highlight for Chicago with 35 homers and 111 RBIs. With that little production out of the four most important hitters, the club had to rely on younger fill-ins. Micah Hoffpauir and current Athletic Jake Fox were fantastic when they did play, but others, such as Aaron Miles, were forgettable. The middle infield includes two pesky, young hitters: Ryan Theriot and Jeff Baker. Neither has much pop, but both can run up the count and get on base. Troubled outfielders Milton Bradley and Kosuke Fukudome provided no extra aid to the Cubs floundering lineup, and, even worse, Bradley started to cause turmoil in the locker room. Breaking a team apart causes division among players, and ultimately bad chemistry and poor play. While Bradley is a much better hitter than Marlon Byrd, Byrd won't cause any riffs in the clubhouse. That being said, bringing in Johnny Damon probably would have helped much more.

The Cubs used to have a talented, deep rotation. Now, they just have depth. Carlos Zambrano is a nice starter against the Pirates and Astros, but he has never been clutch against the best teams. Rich Harden is off to Texas, so steady vet Ted



Lilly will fall into the second starter role. Lilly can be spectacularly solid, but he's probably not what you want as a number two for a playoff contender. Ryan Dempster is another uninspiring Chicago pitcher; he has logged 200 innings since his switch from closer but has a high WHIP and a low strikeout rate. The biggest surprise of the year, maybe aside from the hitting struggles, was Randy Wells. Drafted in the 38<sup>th</sup> round, Wells spent six plus years in the minors before his rookie season at age 27. Wells led the club in wins and ERA and took the stress of Big Z at the top of the rotation. The last spot in the rotation will likely be by committee. Tom Gorzelanny was mediocre in his two months with the Cubs last year, Jeff Samardzija suddenly became very hittable when he wasn't coming out of the 'pen, and Carlos Silva (acquired for Milton Bradley) throws batting practice during games. The Cubs would almost be better off cutting Bradley then acquiring Silva, except the Mariners are paying Chicago \$9 million in the trade.

The Cubs' bullpen is going to be solid this year, but don't take this for granted. Closer Carlos Marmol has electric stuff, but is often shaky in the ninth inning. Samardzija may or may not be working out of the 'pen, but if he does, he will be a premier set-up man, similar to Joba Chamberlain. John Grabow is a solid reliever, but GM Jim Hendry made a huge mistake signing the 31-year old to a 2-year, \$7.5 million contract early in the off-season.

The Cubs have problems across the board, but they can all be easily fixed. Soto, Soriano, and Ramirez all had a bad 2009. They should avoid playing in the World Baseball Classic, but if they have repeat performances then it's a sign of worse things to come. A total roster overhaul isn't completely necessary, but the Cubs can't keep depending on the same veteran players year after year. After all, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Whether they really do have a curse, the Cubs play like they have one. They need to play like winners to get rid of their "curse" because curses only exist when you believe in them, and the Cubs play like defeated players. The Cubs needs a new personality and a new beginning. This team is old and set in their losing habits, even in the weak National League. GRADE: 86



## Moves That Must Be Made

Jeff Samardzija is incredibly similar to Joba Chamberlain – both have great pitches and excelled out of the bullpen until forced into the rotation. Samardzija is clearly more comfortable with less innings; he can throw his heart out for a short amount of time. Since Carlos Marmol is already the closer and his ERA was almost 4 points higher in non-save situations than save situations, the Cubs should consider making him strictly an eighth inning pitcher. There, he can throw as hard for his one inning appearance. Tom Gorzelanny can hold down the fort for six innings every fifth day then turn it over to Samardzija, Marmol, and company.

On the Rise		Carlos Marmol
On the Decline		Kosuke Fukudome
Sleeper		Geovanny Soto

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Jeff Samardzija	RHP	Plus plus fastball with serious sink. Potential stud closer if he sticks in the bullpen
Starlin Castro	SS	Small frame, but rocket arm and electric bat. Makes great contact and bat speed
Brett Jackson	OF	Strong hands and fast bat. Above average arm strength, nice power, and solid range
Josh Vitters	3B	Great all-around hitter except for patience. Good arm and potential .320-30 hitter
Andrew Cashner	RHP	Nasty off-speed pitches, but inconsistent, wild at times. Slider causes plenty of Ks
Sam Fuld	OF	Patient hitter with good discipline, decent speed. Fundamental, not overwhelming
Jay Jackson	RHP	Two-way player likely to stay a pitcher. Good control and big curveball, efficient
Hak-Ju Lee	SS	Fantastic defender, great arm and solid range. Blazing speed, makes great contact
Kyler Burke	OF	Cannon arm and patient at the plate. Inconsistent at the plate, power developing
Casey Coleman	RHP	Pitches to contact, features plus changeup and good control. Fairly efficient starter



Courtesy of daylife.com

Lineup	Pos.
Michael Bourn	CF
'09 Stats: .285, 3 HR, 35 RBI, 61 SB	
Kaz Matsui	2B
'09 Stats: .250, 9 HR, 46 RBI, 19 SB	
Lance Berkman	1B
'09 Stats: .274, 25 HR, 80 RBI, 7 SB	
Carlos Lee	LF
'09 Stats: .300, 26 HR, 102 RBI, 5 SB	
Hunter Pence	RF
'09 Stats: .282, 25 HR, 72 RBI, 14 SB	
Pedro Feliz	3B
'09 Stats: .266, 12 HR, 82 RBI, 0 SB	
J.R. Towles	C
'09 Stats: .276, 4 HR, 22 RBI, 3 SB*	
Tommy Manzella	SS
'09 Stats: .289, 9 HR, 56 RBI, 12 SB*	
Jason Michaels	OF
'09 Stats: .237, 4 HR, 16 RBI, 1 SB	
Alex Romero	OF
'09 Stats: .333, 2 HR, 51 RBI, 9 SB*	
Jeff Keppinger	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .256, 7 HR, 29 RBI, 0 SB	
Geoff Blum	3B/1B
'09 Stats: .247, 10 HR, 49 RBI, 0 SB	
Humberto Quintero	C
'09 Stats: .236, 4 HR, 14 RBI, 0 SB	
Roy Oswalt	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-6, 4.12 ERA, 138 K	
Wandy Rodriguez	LHP
'09 Stats: 14-12, 3.02 ERA, 193 K	
Brett Myers	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-3, 4.84 ERA, 50 K	
Bud Norris	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-3, 4.53 ERA, 54 K	
Brian Moehler	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-12, 5.47 ERA, 91 K	
Matt Lindstrom	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-1, 5.89 ERA, 39 K, 15 Sv	
Brandon Lyon	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-5, 2.86 ERA, 57 K, 3 Sv	
Tim Lincecum	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-2, 3.23 ERA, 58 K, 0 Sv	

Houston, we have a problem. Actually, several. Teams are generally in one of three stages: rebuilding, improving, or competing for a championship. The Astros are really in the rebuilding stage, but they acted like a competing team this off-season. Doling out big deals to Pedro Feliz, Brandon Lyon, and Brett Myers, the Astros are acting like they are still big players in the NL Central. The core of the team (Roy Oswalt, Lance Berkman, and Carlos Lee) is an average age of 33 years old. They certainly aren't getting any younger.

Overall, the Astros are a poorly assembled team on offense. J.R. Towles and Tommy Manzella don't deserve to be starters in the Major Leagues, let alone be in the majors. Towles' career Major League batting average is .188 and Manzella, although promising in the minors, has not shown that he can produce at the highest level. Pedro Feliz has a one-year, \$4.5 million deal, generous considering he is very streaky on offense and above average on defense. Going into the off-season, they already had Geoff Blum penciled in for the starting third base job. Instead, they decided to spend money on an upgrade at the hot corner rather than at starting pitcher, where they had a greater need. Berkman and Lee are identical, good hitting, poor fielding players in the decline of their careers. Hunter Pence may be the best hitter on the team by the end of the year; the 26-year old is rapidly improving his all-around game. Michael Bourn, another young outfielder, is perhaps the fastest player in the majors, neck and neck with Carl Crawford and Jacoby Ellsbury. However, for a leadoff hitter he lacks power and has makes poor contact. The recurring theme for all Astros hitters is underwhelming talent, and Kaz Matsui is no exception. Matsui is hopelessly average. Astros fans would rather have Craig Biggio back, even age 44.

Similar to the batting lineup, the Astros starting rotation will be very underwhelming. Unlike the lineup, the rotation actually has fairly high upside. Roy Oswalt is one of this decade's most consistently productive pitchers. He no longer blows away hitters, but can deliver in big game situations. Last season showed that Oswalt is no longer the Astros' Superman. For the first time in his career, he didn't



win double-digit games or keep his ERA under 4.00. This was only the second time in eight years he didn't throw 200 innings and compile 150+ strikeouts. Even with his recent struggles, Oswalt is clearly still the top dog in the rotation. Wandy Rodriguez showed great promise last year, finishing 12<sup>th</sup> in the majors in ERA and winning a career high 14 games. The combination of Oswalt and Rodriguez at the top of the rotation can be hard to beat, but it falls off fairly quickly from there. Brett Myers will be the third starter, but he already has many performance questions going into the year. Will he be able to handle pitching in 30 or more games? Can he keep his off-the-field marital troubles from distracting him? Houston will need him to do both for success. Highly touted prospect Bud Norris reached the Majors last year and played fairly well; his success came mainly from his plus fastball and high strikeout rate. The last spot will switch throughout the season between the abysmal Brian Moehler and the abysmal Felipe Paulino. This rotation can be an average group, but more than likely, they will end up as just another forgettable group of five starters.

The bullpen of the Astros was went through major changes, but stayed at the same average level. Jose Valverde left for Detroit, but Brandon Lyon and Matt Lindstrom were brought in, so the club now has plenty of firepower at the back of the bullpen. Wesley Wright and Tim Lincecum could be breakout candidates, but beyond that, there isn't much talent to show off.

Last season, the Astros were an average defensive team, and this year it shouldn't be too different. Feliz is an upgrade over Blum, but Manzella isn't any better than Miguel Tejada. Bourn and Matsui are excellent fielders, but Lee is very bad, and Quintero, Berkman, and Pence have nothing to brag about in the field.

Some teams have good pitching and defense. Others will try to out-slug you. Unfortunately for Houston, they have neither. This team is in denial – they still think they are contenders when they will be lucky to win 75 games. The Astros are in troubled times as owner Drayton McLane is looking to cut costs while trying to sell the team. The payroll will be around \$100 million this year, and that is a bad, bad thing, especially considering how poorly they will play this season. GRADE: 81



## Moves That Must Be Made

Houston is clearly not going to compete this year, and with their gigantic payroll, they need to find a way to dump salary. Carlos Lee, Roy Oswalt, and Lance Berkman will be extremely hard to move, so a lower caliber player, such as Kaz Matsui, may soon be on the trade block. Players like Matsui, Brett Myers, and Pedro Feliz can be easier to move, as long as any team is interested. Until they have enough talent to contend, the Astros need to dump as much payroll as possible. Hopefully they can find a competent catcher and shortstop before Jason Castro and Jiovanni Mier reach the majors by late 2011 or early in the 2012 season.

On the Rise		Wandy Rodriguez
On the Decline		Kaz Matsui
Sleeper		Michael Bourn

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Jason Castro	C	Big framed catcher with great bat, especially for average. Great arm, plus defender
Jiovanni Mier	SS	Athletic with advanced skills coming out of high school. Plus defender, contact
Jordan Lyles	RHP	Top-of-the-rotation talent, great changeup. Creates lots of strikeouts, very efficient
Sammy Gervacio	RHP	Future closer with very good slider, strikeout rate. Arm slot adds to deception
Ross Seaton	RHP	Pinpoint accuracy and pitches to contact. Underwhelming, but lasts into games
Jay Austin	OF	Extremely athletic and speedy. Inconsistent at the plate, but dangerous on the bases
Chris Johnson	3B	Average all-around hitter. Projects to be serviceable platoon or utility infielder
Brian Bogusovic	OF	Solid hitter with developing speed. Very good defender, covers ground well in center
Yordanny Ramirez	OF	Great fielder with plus speed. Power setting in, but batting average has suffered lately
Chia-Jen Lo	RHP	Fastball is best pitch, but average for now. Reliever in the making, poor command

## NL Central – 6. Pittsburgh Pirates – NL Central



Lineup	Pos.
Andrew McCutchen	CF
'09 Stats: .286, 12 HR, 54 RBI, 22 SB	
Akinori Iwamura	2B
'09 Stats: .290, 1 HR, 22 RBI, 9 SB	
Garrett Jones	RF
'09 Stats: .293, 21 HR, 44 RBI, 10 SB	
Ryan Doumit	C
'09 Stats: .250, 10 HR, 38 RBI, 4 SB	
Lastings Milledge	LF
'09 Stats: .279, 4 HR, 21 RBI, 7 SB	
Jeff Clement	1B
'09 Stats: .206, 4 HR, 16 RBI, 1 SB	
Andy LaRoche	3B
'09 Stats: .258, 12 HR, 64 RBI, 3 SB	
Ronny Cedeño	SS
'09 Stats: .208, 10 HR, 38 RBI, 5 SB	
Ryan Church	OF
'09 Stats: .273, 4 HR, 40 RBI, 6 SB	
Delwyn Young	2B/OF
'09 Stats: .266, 7 HR, 43 RBI, 2 SB	
Ramon Vazquez	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .230, 1 HR, 16 RBI, 1 SB	
Bobby Crosby	SS/3B
'09 Stats: .223, 6 HR, 29 RBI, 2 SB	
Jason Jaramillo	C
'09 Stats: .252, 3 HR, 26 RBI, 1 SB	
Paul Maholm	LHP
'09 Stats: 8-9, 4.44 ERA, 119 K	
Zach Duke	LHP
'09 Stats: 11-16, 4.06 ERA, 106 K	
Ross Ohlendorf	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-10, 3.92 ERA, 109 K	
Charlie Morton	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-4, 4.55 ERA, 62 K	
Kevin Hart	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-9, 5.54 ERA, 49 K	
Octavio Dotel	RHP
'09 Stats: 3-3, 3.32 ERA, 75 K, 0 Sv	
Joel Hanrahan	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-4, 4.78 ERA, 72 K, 5 Sv	
Evan Meek	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-1, 3.45 ERA, 42 K, 0 Sv	

The Pirates are a team in a continual sports purgatory. In the NBA and NFL there are teams with aging stars good enough to compete somewhat for a playoff spot yet never land a top draft pick. In Major League Baseball, it is developing great young talent, just to send them off to contenders for more young talent. The Pirates have no continuity from year to year, which isn't too bad if your team plays this poorly. Eight of nine starters on their 2008 Opening Day lineup are no longer in Pittsburgh, and only three from last year are still on the club.

Over the last two seasons, Pittsburgh has dumped Jason Bay, Xavier Nady, Nate McLouth, Adam LaRoche, Freddy Sanchez, and Jack Wilson for young talent, which they will in turn trade later. The result of the continuous rebuilding plan is a team with the average age of almost twenty-seven. The starting eight also have only an average of two and a half years in the big leagues. The youngest of the hitters, Andrew McCutchen, burst onto the Major League scene in mid-May, after the Bucs traded off Nate McLouth to the Braves. McCutchen is one of the fastest players in the league. He is a great leadoff hitter and fielder, yet he has even more room for improvement. Garrett Jones was another player who broke out last season; Jones was a career AAA hitter who finally got the chance to start. It paid off; he hit 21 home runs in his half season in Pittsburgh. To add veteran stability, the Pirates added Akinori Iwamura from Tampa Bay this off-season. Iwamura is a solid top-of-the-lineup hitter and plays sound defense. As part of the deal that sent veteran defensive wizard Jack Wilson and Ian Snell to Seattle, Pittsburgh received Jeff Clement and Ronny Cedeño. Clement was a very high draft pick in 2005 but hasn't lived up to expectations. Cedeño is average offensively but fairly good defensively. Andy LaRoche and Lastings Milledge are two more youngsters Pittsburgh acquired in trades, both having had high, unrealistic expectations elsewhere. LaRoche hasn't consistently been able to make good batting contact, and Milledge hasn't been able to stay in the majors for extensive periods of time.

The Pirates' offense may be abysmal, but their pitching is even worse. Paul



## NL Central – 6. Pittsburgh Pirates – NL Central

Maholm started to look like a major leaguer for the first time in his short career, despite pitching a little worse than last season. Zach Duke also had a nice year compared to seasons past, but, again, he is not a good pitcher at all, let alone a number two starter. By the end of the season, the best pitcher in the Bucs' staff could easily be Ross Ohlendorf. Ohlendorf was a product of the lone good Pirates trade of the decade: Xavier Nady and Damaso Marte for Ohlendorf, Jose Tabata, Jeff Karstens, and Daniel McCutchen. He has emerged as a quality mid-rotation starter; he will never be an ace. The Pirates imported Charlie Morton and Kevin Hart last year, but, truthfully, neither is a good pitcher. Maholm, Ohlendorf, and Hart are all 27 while Duke and Hart are only 26. 27-year old Daniel McCutchen could see plenty of time if and when one of the starts slips up. Pittsburgh would be better off with Tom Gorzelanny and Ian Snell than these youngsters, but when you have a team as dysfunctional as the Pirates, these are the issues they will have to face.




Matt Capps. Joel Hanrahan. Jesse Chavez. All were attempted and failed closers for the Pirates last year. Now, Pittsburgh has Octavio Dotel, a very erratic veteran reliever, penciled into the closer role. No one knows how long he will last in that role. Hanrahan is the only of the three still on the club. He was absolutely terrible with the Nationals and settled down in Pittsburgh. Evan Meek and Brendan Donnelly will play big roles in the 'pen – not because of their skills (or lack thereof) but because of how often they will begin the 4<sup>th</sup> inning in long relief.

The Pirates are really a terrible team. They don't have any run producers. They don't have any dependable starters. They even don't have a semi-quality reliever. Pittsburgh continually developing great players, just look at Jason Bay, Nate McLouth, and every other player traded off in the last decade. The problem is just that the Pirates don't even attempt to keep them; they just ship them off for more young players. The one free agent splash they made was Ryan Church. Church isn't at all productive and will only block Steve Pearce from more playing time. They didn't address their needs; they just brought in washed up veterans. The Pirates are one of the few teams in the league who don't even make an attempt to create a winner. GRADE: 77



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Pirates have a huge problem of trading off their young stars as soon as they will command an average salary. Pittsburgh needs to hold on to Ryan Doumit and Paul Maholm if they want to stay anywhere near competitive. GM Neil Huntington may want to eventually move Doumit as first-rounder Tony Sanchez gains experience, but he should consider a position change before shipping him off. How about an extension for rookie sensation Andrew McCutchen? It would be a travesty for the Bucs to have to trade away their former top prospect because they didn't want to pay him or because Gorkys Hernandez has the semblance of a semi-productive major leaguer

On the Rise		Garrett Jones
On the Decline		Octavio Dotel
Sleeper		Lastings Milledge

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Pedro Alvarez	3B	Incredible power from the left side of the plate. Extremely patient, very consistent
Tim Alderson	RHP	Huge frame and plus plus control. Breaking pitches aren't great, but deceptive
Steve Pearce	1B	Great all-around hitter, especially power. Defensively challenged, lacks speed
Jose Tabata	OF	Incredible tools and raw talent. Batting average improving and has solid speed
Tony Sanchez	C	Well-rounded with .300-30-90 potential. Advanced defensive skills, plus arm
Gorkys Hernandez	OF	Sharp bat, blazing speed, and a stellar glove. Future leadoff hitter, lacks power
Brad Lincoln	RHP	Injuries hindered development, but has incredible stuff. Plus hard curve, fastball
Daniel McCutchen	RHP	Best assets are control and plus changeup. Fastball with tail leads to groundballs
Starling Marte	OF	Lightning fast speed and plays great defense. Incredible arm strength and solid
Victor Black	RHP	Very advanced fastball and slider. Lacks control, lets too many hitters on base



# American League Central

▲ Troy Tulowitzki



1



Lineup	Pos.
Conor Jackson	LF
'08 Stats: .300, 12 HR, 75 RBI, 10 SB	
Stephen Drew	SS
'09 Stats: .261, 12 HR, 65 RBI, 5 SB	
Justin Upton	RF
'09 Stats: .300, 26 HR, 86 RBI, 20 SB	
Adam LaRoche	1B
'09 Stats: .277, 25 HR, 83 RBI, 2 SB	
Mark Reynolds	3B
'09 Stats: .260, 44 HR, 102 RBI, 24 SB	
Miguel Montero	C
'09 Stats: .294, 16 HR, 59 RBI, 1 SB	
Chris Young	CF
'09 Stats: .212, 15 HR, 42 RBI, 11 SB	
Kelly Johnson	2B
'09 Stats: .224, 8 HR, 29 RBI, 7 SB	
Gerardo Parra	OF
'09 Stats: .290, 5 HR, 60 RBI, 5 SB	
Ryan Roberts	2B/OF
'09 Stats: .279, 7 HR, 25 RBI, 7 SB	
Tony Abreu	2B
'09 Stats: .336, 11 HR, 53 RBI, 3 SB*	
Augie Ojeda	SS/2B
'09 Stats: .246, 1 HR, 16 RBI, 3 SB	
Chris Snyder	C
'09 Stats: .200, 6 HR, 22 RBI, 0 SB	
Dan Haren	RHP
'09 Stats: 14-10, 3.14 ERA, 223 K	
Brandon Webb	RHP
'08 Stats: 22-7, 3.30 ERA, 183 K	
Edwin Jackson	RHP
'09 Stats: 13-9, 3.62 ERA, 161 K	
Ian Kennedy	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-0, 1.95 ERA, 25 K*	
Billy Buckner	LHP
'09 Stats: 4-6, 6.40 ERA, 96 K	
Chad Qualls	RHP
'09 Stats: 2-2, 3.63 ERA, 45 K, 24 Sv	
Juan Gutierrez	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-3, 4.06 ERA, 66 K, 9 Sv	
Aaron Heilman	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-4, 4.11 ERA, 65 K, 1 Sv	

It is very rare that a season is ruined by the injury to one player, let alone their second starting pitcher. Unfortunately for Arizona, that was the case last year. After his Opening Day start, Brandon Webb was shelved for the year with an injured right elbow, one that eventually required surgery. The Diamondbacks never quite recovered from the blow to their pitching staff, although Dan Haren stepped up in the first half to become a top-5 NL pitcher. Haren cooled off in the second half, and the D-Backs ended the year last in the NL West, tied for third-worst in the National League. Not discouraged, GM Josh Byrnes had a busy off-season and looks to have a contending team this season.

Last season, the Diamondbacks were already depending on their pitching because of their poor offense before Eric Byrnes and Conor Jackson went down with injuries. Chris Young was having a down year, and before long, Felipe Lopez was spun off to the Brewers. Their team is young and, thus, will become better as they gain more experience. That time appears to be now; Justin Upton and Mark Reynolds are two budding stars just entering the primes of their careers. Upton signed a 6-year extension at the start of spring training, and he is only 22 – and growing into his man-body. Chris Young and Stephen Drew have shown plenty of promise throughout their four-year careers, but Young needs to maintain a steadier batting average, and Drew needs to develop better power. The biggest free agent signing for the D-Backs was clearly Adam LaRoche. LaRoche adds much needed power to the middle of the lineup and allows young Brandon Allen more time to develop in the minors. His veteran leadership and mentoring will make up for the loss of Eric Byrnes, too. The Diamondbacks also picked up former Brave Kelly Johnson. Last season Johnson hit only .224 and got benched for Martin Prado. If he regains his form from only two years ago, he will be one of the better eighth hitters and value pickups of the off-season. Conor Jackson was going to be a major contributor for Arizona, but unfortunately his season came to an end 30 games into the year. Jackson has never hit 20 home runs, but he is very patient with a great ability to get on base. As he develops more power,

Jackson could potentially become a middle-of-the-order batter. One of their most productive young hitters, Miguel Montero, will have his first season as a starter. While platooning with Chris Snyder, Montero nearly hit .300 with solid power from both sides of the plate.

Even with two of the best young hitters in the National League in the middle of the lineup, the strength of the D-Backs is clearly their pitching. Dan Haren led the majors in WHIP last season, staying under 1.00 for most of the season. Brandon Webb has finished first or second in the Cy Young voting for the three years previous to the injury, totaling 56 wins and an average ERA of 3.13. Unfortunately, he will not be healthy in time for Opening Day. Webb at 80% of his Cy Young years would be incredible for Arizona, lifting a huge burden off the bullpen and back of the rotation. The D-Backs sent off injury prone flamethrower Max Scherzer and young closer-in-the-making Daniel Schlereth for their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> starters: Edwin Jackson and Ian Kennedy. After struggling to find his niche in Los Angeles and Tampa Bay, Jackson became an All-Star in his first season in Detroit, mainly because of his blazing fastball and sudden boost of command. He now pitches in the weaker National League and has less pressure, as he is the third starter. Kennedy hasn't yet found success in the majors, but should find the NL West to be much easier to pitch in then the brutal AL East. The last starter will be a youngster, most likely Billy Buckner. Unrelated to the Boston scapegoat, Buckner hasn't found much success as a starter and may be replaced by Kevin Mulvey as they year progresses.


Two years removed from the Jose Valverde era, Arizona has to use a plethora of solid set-up men to close. Chad Qualls did a fine job closing last year, but he was far from shutdown. Bob Howry, Juan Gutierrez, and Aaron Heilman are quality set-up man; Gutierrez has the potential to be a solid closer down the road.

The D-Backs have three elite pitchers, and that may be enough to win the NL West. The Dodgers have two semi-quality starters, and the Giants and Rockies lack offense. Upton and Reynolds are going to be fantastic and two of Drew, Young, and Jackson should step up. This team could easily be 20 games better, and everyone will sleep on them. Watch out if they reach the playoffs because their 3-man rotation will be hard to beat. GRADE: 90



### Moves That Must Be Made

While the Diamondbacks have the best top of the rotation in the NL West, if not the entire National League, they have possibly the worst 4-5 starters outside of Pittsburgh. Ian Kennedy could be solid, but Buckner and Mulvey are nothing to brag about. For only a million dollars or so, Arizona could bring in one of several free agent pitchers. The top starters available, Jarrod Washburn, Braden Loooper, Pedro Martinez, John Smoltz, and Paul Byrd are all great mentors and still have plenty left in the tank. A starter would be crucial down the stretch, and signing one of the veterans won't cost any prospects; Jarrod Parker could still get a call up at the end of the year.

On the Rise		Mark Reynolds
On the Decline		Chad Qualls
Sleeper		Stephen Drew

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Jarrod Parker	RHP	Great command with four plus pitches. Will miss 2010 season with TJ Surgery
Brandon Allen	1B	Great power and patience with great athleticism for big frame. Average speed
A.J. Pollack	OF	Stellar defender and makes great contact. Good speed and great all-around hitter
Bobby Borcherding	3B	Switch-hitter with tremendous power, bat speed. Cannon arm, average mobility
Matt Davidson	3B	Has great pull power and fairly patient. Good arm and better footwork defensively
Kevin Mulvey	RHP	Two solid pitches (fastball and changeup), average breaking balls. Pitches to contact
Mike Belfiore	LHP	Collegiate closer, may be converted to starter. Big breaking slider, running fastball
Ryan Wheeler	1B	Fast hands and drives the ball well. Disciplined and has nice inside-out swing
Chris Owings	SS	Lacks power, but uses the whole field well. Range, arm may lead to move to second
Pedro Ciriaco	SS	Excellent fielder with plus arm strength and speed. Doesn't make consistent contact





Lineup	Pos.
Carlos Gonzalez	LF
'09 Stats: .284, 13 HR, 29 RBI, 16 SB	
Dexter Fowler	CF
'09 Stats: .266, 4 HR, 34 RBI, 27 SB	
Todd Helton	1B
'09 Stats: .325, 15 HR, 86 RBI, 0 SB	
Troy Tulowitzki	SS
'09 Stats: .297, 32 HR, 92 RBI, 20 SB	
Brad Hawpe	RF
'09 Stats: .285, 23 HR, 86 RBI, 1 SB	
Chris Iannetta	C
'09 Stats: .228, 16 HR, 52 RBI, 0 SB	
Ian Stewart	3B
'09 Stats: .228, 25 HR, 70 RBI, 7 SB	
Clint Barmes	2B
'09 Stats: .245, 23 HR, 76 RBI, 12 SB	
Seth Smith	OF
'09 Stats: .293, 15 HR, 55 RBI, 3 SB	
Ryan Spilborghs	OF
'09 Stats: .241, 8 HR, 48 RBI, 9 SB	
Melvin Mora	3B/SS
'09 Stats: .260, 8 HR, 48 RBI, 3 SB	
Jason Giambi	1B
'08 Stats: .243, 7 HR, 41 RBI, 8 SB	
Miguel Olivo	C
'09 Stats: .249, 23 HR, 65 RBI, 5 SB	
Ubaldo Jimenez	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-12, 3.47 ERA, 198 K	
Aaron Cook	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-6, 4.16 ERA, 78 K	
Jeff Francis	LHP
'08 Stats: 4-10, 5.01 ERA, 94 K	
Jason Hammel	RHP
'09 Stats: 10-8, 4.33 ERA, 133 K	
Jorge De La Rosa	RHP
'09 Stats: 16-9, 4.38 ERA, 193 K	
Huston Street	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-1, 3.06 ERA, 70 K, 35 Sv	
Manny Corpas	RHP
'09 Stats: 1-3, 5.88 ERA, 24 K, 1 Sv	
Franklin Morales	LHP
'09 Stats: 3-2, 4.50 ERA, 41 K, 7 Sv	

The Rockies made the World Series in 2007 largely on the arm of Jeff Francis, and partly on the bat of Garrett Atkins. Without any contributions from Francis and much productivity from Atkins, Colorado won the Wild Card in surprising fashion. Jim Tracy took over for Clint Hurdle on May 29<sup>th</sup> before leading the team to a 74-42 record, the NL Wild Card, and the Manager of the Year Award, including winning eleven straight and seventeen of eighteen. As young players progress and they add more pieces to the mix, the Rockies are poised for another postseason run.

Todd Helton is no longer the \$100 million man in Coors Field, but he is still the heart and soul of this young team. His power is dwindling from 30 home runs to 15, but he still hits .320 and gets on base with his excellent patience, not to mention his Gold Glove caliber fielding. Helton is the greatest hitter in the Rockies' short history, but there is one player who may end up taking that crown from Helton: Troy Tulowitzki. Tulo's power finally emerged last season; he hit 30 bombs, nearly hit .300, and still stole 20 bases. He is an all-around hitting machine with room still left to grow. After Hanley Ramirez, Tulowitzki is the shortstop with the most tools and overall ability. Two more young players showed up last year as major contributors: Dexter Fowler and Carlos Gonzalez. Fowler was one of the fastest outfield prospects in the majors and was handed the leadoff spot and the center field job. Fowler took it and ran with it, showing just the tip of his potential. Gonzalez, part of the deal that sent Matt Holliday to Oakland, appeared in only 89 games, but he heated up at the end of the year and became one of the more productive hitters in Colorado. The two former top prospects will become cornerstones of the Rockies club to be along with Tulo to create many winning teams in the future. Another young top draft pick, Ian Stewart, is starting to turn the corner. Stewart bumped Atkins from the starting lineup last season; he mashed 25 homers but failed to keep a high batting average. Stewart and Clint Barmes can become very good hitters if they can just raise their batting averages to a respectable .280. Chris Iannetta also falls under the same category as Stewart and Barmes, young players with developing power and poor averages.

The Rockies' rotation is one with five proven, quality starters, but five starters who can be sub-par when it matters. Ubaldo Jimenez has become an elite young starter in the NL. His fastball is clocked around at an average of 96, widely considered the hardest throwing starter in the league. Aaron Cook is much more of a crafty, soft-tosser; he only reaches 89 mph but can fool you with his breaking pitches and control. Jeff Francis, who missed the entire 2009 season, hopes to build off his previous success, most recently a 17-win year in 2007. Francis will be the key to this rotation because if he is as dominant as he used to be, Colorado will rise to the top of the division. Jorge de la Rosa had one of the strangest years in the Major Leagues last season. De la Rosa lost his first six decisions but went on to win 16 games. He had an exceptional rate of striking out hitters, but needs to improve upon his high ERA and WHIP. Jason Hammel was acquired mere days before the start of the season, but he had no problem adjusting to his new team; he won 13 games and nearly threw 200 innings.

Without any big names, the Rockies have one of the best bullpens in the league. Huston Street wasn't the biggest piece in the Holliday deal (that was Carlos Gonzalez), but he was the most consistent closer in the NL and saved 35 games. Colorado has two quality young righties to help set up for Street, Franklin Morales and Manny Corpas. Corpas isn't the same pitcher that dominated teams in the ninth inning in 2007, but he should be able to gain 80% of his old form and join Morales to form a very reliable back of the bullpen. Rafael Betancourt returns after accepting arbitration.

The Rockies have snuck into the Wild Card spot two of the last three years, and they will be in the mix again. If the don't win the division, Milwaukee, Florida, and Atlanta will provide serious competition, as none of the teams are great and stand out as Boston and New York do in the AL. Colorado can't truly hope to be as good as Arizona because they clearly have worse pitching and their hitting isn't that much better, if any better at all. Gonzalez and Fowler are poised for breakout years, and don't be surprised if Iannetta and Stewart become very nice hitters. The pitching won't be flashy, but it will be there and get the job done. The Rockies are just one slugger or ace away from a division title. **GRADE: 89**



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Rockies offense is solid at best right now, and they certainly could use a boost mid-way into the season. With young Stewart and veteran Helton, the Rockies aren't getting much production out of the corner infield, and with Stewarts versatility, he can play second and play sometimes for Clint Barmes if they acquire a third baseman. Jorge Cantu and Dan Uggla could be made available if either the Marlins fall out of contention or Emilio Bonifacio plays well early. The Rockies have pieces they can move (Seth Smith, Ryan Spillbourghs, and perhaps Stewart), so they have the fire power to pull off a deal. Their excess pitching could be key trade pieces.

On the Rise	↑	Carlos Gonzalez
On the Decline	↓	Jorge De La Rosa
Sleeper	Z	Manny Corpas

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Jhoulys Chacin	RHP	Great changeup and impeccable control. Creates great velocity on sinking fastball
Christian Friedrich	LHP	Very tall with great strikeout rate due to big curve and slider. Efficient starter
Tyler Matzek	LHP	Power pitcher with above-average fastball, solid secondary offerings. Big frame
Eric Young Jr.	2B	Blazing speed, great contact with compact swing. Excellent fielder, can play OF
Hector Gomez	SS	Lanky with a big arm, great all-around fielder. Average speed, power, good contact
Rex Brothers	RHP	Big lefty with hard slider and lots of strikeouts. Lacks control, may become reliever
Casey Weathers	RHP	Closer with great deception. Two plus pitches in fastball and inconsistent slider
Wilin Rosario	C	Good bat speed and has shown plus power. Still young, fairly average defensively
Tim Wheeler	OF	Speedy outfielder who hits very well for average with average power. Great athlete
Esmil Rogers	RHP	Dominican righty who doesn't dominate the other team. Shows flashes of greatness





Lineup	Pos.
Aaron Rowand	CF
'09 Stats: .261, 15 HR, 64 RBI, 4 SB	
Freddy Sanchez	2B
'09 Stats: .293, 7 HR, 41 RBI, 5 SB	
Pablo Sandoval	3B
'09 Stats: .330, 25 HR, 90 RBI, 5 SB	
Aubrey Huff	1B
'09 Stats: .241, 15 HR, 85 RBI, 1 SB	
Mark DeRosa	LF
'09 Stats: .250, 23 HR, 78 RBI, 3 SB	
Bengie Molina	C
'09 Stats: .265, 20 HR, 80 RBI, 0 SB	
Edgar Renteria	SS
'09 Stats: .250, 5 HR, 48 RBI, 7 SB	
Nate Schierholz	RF
'09 Stats: .267, 5 HR, 29 RBI, 3 SB	
Fred Lewis	OF
'09 Stats: .258, 4 HR, 20 RBI, 8 SB	
John Bowker	OF
'09 Stats: .342, 21 HR, 83 RBI, 10 SB*	
Eugenio Velez	OF/2B
'09 Stats: .267, 5 HR, 31 RBI, 11 SB	
Travis Ishikawa	1B
'09 Stats: .261, 9 HR, 39 RBI, 2 SB	
Eli Whiteside	C
'09 Stats: .228, 2 HR, 13 RBI, 0 SB	
Tim Lincecum	RHP
'09 Stats: 15-7, 2.48 ERA, 261 K	
Matt Cain	RHP
'09 Stats: 14-8, 2.89 ERA, 171 K	
Barry Zito	LHP
'09 Stats: 10-13, 4.03 ERA, 154 K	
Jonathan Sanchez	LHP
'09 Stats: 8-14, 4.23 ERA, 177 K	
Todd Wellemeyer	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-10, 5.89 ERA, 78 K	
Brian Wilson	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-6, 2.74 ERA, 83 K, 38 Sv	
Jeremy Affeldt	LHP
'09 Stats: 2-2, 1.73 ERA, 55 K, 0 Sv	
Brandon Medders	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-1, 3.01 ERA, 58 K., 1 Sv	

Going into the 2008 season, the Giants had many questions surrounding them. Who would drive in runs in the middle of the lineup? Would Matt Cain fulfill the promise of the man who was drafted twenty-fifth overall in 2002? Are the Giants contenders or pretenders? Luckily, San Francisco got positive answers for all three. Pablo Sandoval was a near All-Star, despite his 5' 11", 245 lb. frame, Matt Cain made his first All-Star Game, and the Giants fell just four games short of the playoffs.

With a pitcher-friendly ballpark, the Giants strength in pitching is exemplified while their offensive shortcomings become even worse. That was the case this off-season when they failed to lure free agent Adam LaRoche to the Bay Area, and he eventually ended up in more hitter-friendly Chase Field in Arizona. San Fran had to settle for Aubrey Huff as their consolation prize. Huff has been a great run producer in Baltimore and Detroit over the last few years but its not hard to knock in eighty plus runs a year when you're hitting fourth and fifth in any lineup (just look at Bengie Molina). Molina is a very nice hitter, but he lacks a consistent batting average. Molina and Sandoval are both built like bowling balls – not what one would expect from All-Star caliber players – but both slugged twenty homers and played great defense. As defense has become one of the more desirable assets to players, the Giants brought in one of the most versatile fielders in the league, Mark DeRosa – he can play third, second, and first base, but will start in left field. With the acquisition of DeRosa and Huff along with the departure of Randy Winn, Eugenio Velez will be left out of the starting lineup, leaving a gaping hole at the leadoff spot. Aaron Rowand and Freddy Sanchez are solid in the two spot, but neither have the speed nor the patience necessary to be a quality leadoff hitter. Nate Schierholz is not a good hitter, but he is still young and has some more room for improvement. John Bowker, Velez, and Fred Lewis will get plenty of time if Huff or Schierholz struggles, but it will be very hard to give quality time to each young hitter.

Their offense is certainly going to struggle, but the Giants' pitching is as good as it gets at the top of the rotation. Tim Lincecum is the only player in Major League

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history to win two Cy Young Awards before his first arbitration case. Lincecum is a physical specimen; he is well under 6' and weighs only 160 pounds, but his unorthodox delivery allows him to dominate hitters. The unusual amount of torque he produces is cause for concern; its only a matter of time before Lincecum tears something in his shoulder and has to miss extended amounts of time. Cain had his best year yet, winning double-digit games for the second year in his career with a career low in ERA. While Barry Zito will never live up to his massive \$126 million contract, but he can be a very serviceable starter when healthy. After his rookie year in which he only started 14 games, he has always won at least 10 games and appeared in 32 games, and 190 innings (with the exception of 2008). Jonathan Sanchez threw a no-hitter last summer (and was one Juan Uribe error from a perfect game) but was otherwise very inconsistent and unreliable. Top pitching prospect Madison Bumgarner will get an earlier start in the majors then expected, as he had no problem dominating the lower levels of the minors.

The Giants don't have any big names in the bullpen, but their relief corps is quietly getting the job done. Brian Wilson can bring the heat but needs to improve his secondary pitches. Jeremy Affeldt and Brandon Medders went well under the radar, but they are quality pitchers nonetheless. Young Sergio Romo could make an impact later in the year, if he doesn't make the Opening Day roster.




The Giants have one of the worst GMs in the league, but Brian Sabean has put together one of the best defensive teams in the league. Aaron Rowand and Mark DeRosa are two sweet-fielding outfielders, especially Rowand, and Edgar Rentaria and Sandoval form a solid left side of the infield. Aubrey Huff has been a DH for the last three years and will need to adjust to fielding every day.

The Giants are similar to the Diamondbacks in that they have two fantastic pitchers at the top of their rotation, but they don't have as good of a third starter (although they have more depth). They also have a inadequate offense, just without the upside of Arizona's young hitters. Kung Fu Panda is the only hitter with any sort of upside, the rest of the hitters are aging and losing offensive skills. That said, Lincecum and Cain will keep San Fran in contention in the competitive NL West; this race will be tight. GRADE: 88



### Moves That Must Be Made

The Giants have pitching down pat, but they need a big bat in the middle of the order. Jermaine Dye could be a great option for right field if they want to turn to the 36-year old. Dye hits 25 or more homers every season, when healthy, and faces tougher competition in the AL Central. If Sabean wants a younger option, they could trade for Grady Sizemore or Carl Crawford. The speedy outfielders will be very expensive, but they could both slide into the hole at the leadoff spot and spark the impoverish Giants lineup. They will probably have to part with Madison Bumgarner and/or Buster Posey, but they need to pull the trigger if it will take them to the playoffs.

On the Rise		Pablo Sandoval
On the Decline		Edgar Rentaria
Sleeper		Barry Zito

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Buster Posey	C	Advanced hitting skills with above-average power. Great athlete with plus arm
Madison Bumgarner	LHP	Plus fastball with life. Also has great curve, slider and excellent command, control
Zack Wheeler	RHP	Great fastball with terrific poise and makeup. Spotty command from poor delivery
Thomas Neal	OF	Power set in last year, big potential. Also hits well for average, but lacks speed
Dan Runzler	LHP	Top-notch reliever with great strikeout rate. Plus fastball, curve and great slider
Chris Dominguez	3B	Big time power to go with above-average speed. Streaky hitter and little patient
Brandon Crawford	SS	Great size for a shortstop, with decent range, arm strength. Solid pull power, speed
Francisco Peguero	OF	Elite speed and hits very well for average. Prototype leadoff hitter with little power
Roger Kieschnick	OF	Athletic build with great potential. Plus power, but makes inconsistent contact
Nick Noonan	2B	Solid speed, average overall hitter. Below average arm, great footwork in the field



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Lineup	Pos.
Rafael Furcal	SS
'09 Stats: .269, 9 HR, 47 RBI, 12 SB	
Matt Kemp	CF
'09 Stats: .297, 26 HR, 101 RBI, 34 SB	
Andre Ethier	RF
'09 Stats: .272, 31 HR, 106 RBI, 6 SB	
Manny Ramirez	LF
'09 Stats: .290, 19 HR, 63 RBI, 0 SB	
James Loney	1B
'09 Stats: .281, 13 HR, 90 RBI, 7 SB	
Casey Blake	3B
'09 Stats: .280, 18 HR, 79 RBI, 3 SB	
Russell Martin	C
'09 Stats: .250, 7 HR, 53 RBI, 11 SB	
Ronnie Belliard	2B
'09 Stats: .277, 10 HR, 39 RBI, 3 SB	
Reed Johnson	OF
'09 Stats: .255, 4 HR, 22 RBI, 2 SB	
Garret Anderson	OF
'09 Stats: .268, 13 HR, 61 RBI, 1 SB	
Jamey Carroll	2B/SS
'09 Stats: .276, 2 HR, 26 RBI, 4 SB	
Nick Green	SS/2B
'08 Stats: .236, 6 HR, 35 RBI, 1 SB	
Brad Ausmus	C
'09 Stats: .295, 1 HR, 9 RBI, 1 SB	
Clayton Kershaw	LHP
'09 Stats: 8-8, 2.79 ERA, 185 K	
Chad Billingsley	RHP
'09 Stats: 12-11, 4.03 ERA, 179 K	
Hiroki Kuroda	RHP
'09 Stats: 8-7, 3.76 ERA, 87 K	
Vicente Padilla	RHP
'09 Stats: 12-6, 4.46 ERA, 97 K	
James McDonald	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-5, 4.00 ERA, 54 K	
Jonathan Broxton	RHP
'09 Stats: 7-2, 2.61 ERA, 114 K, 36 Sv	
George Sherrill	LHP
'09 Stats: 1-1, 1.70 ERA, 61 K, 21 Sv	
Ramon Troncoso	RHP
'09 Stats: 5-4, 2.72 ERA, 55 K, 6 Sv	

Some teams just win, no matter who is on the roster and who has left the roster. The Angels and Twins have been those teams in the National League of the past decade, and that team in the National League would have to be the Dodgers. Los Angeles has one of the best all-time managers in the game, and they have one of the most experienced teams – almost to a fault.

The NL West is going to be a very competitive division, though not because of an abundance of skills as much as an abundance of similarly talented teams. As you can tell, I don't think very highly of the Dodgers out of the four competitive teams in the division, but the one edge they do hold over the rest is their offense. The bulk of the Dodgers' offensive production will come from their outfield, largely thanks to their wonderful scouting department. Matt Kemp has quietly become the best young centerfielder in the game. Kemp stole 30 bases, nearly hit .300, and showed great improvement in his power. Andre Ethier wasn't too shabby, either, posting 31 home runs and 106 RBIs. The pair of young outfielders will drive LA's offense, which is otherwise full of average hitters who have hit well in the past, but struggled lately. Manny Ramirez seemed to take his game down a few notches whether it was because of his 50-game suspension for PED use, a small drive after receiving a huge contract, or a switch to old habits. Rafael Furcal and Ronnie Belliard are both former All-Stars, but they have both hit a wall and do not play at the high level they used to. Russell Martin also had a very poor year for his standards last season. Martin was supposed to be a top-5 catcher, but like Geovanny Soto, he was not able to repeat his early success. Casey Blake is very patient at the plate; he nearly sees five pitches per at-bat, but he doesn't have much in the way of power. Similarly, James Loney doesn't have very much power for a corner infielder, an alarming signal for a former top prospect that his power hasn't panned out this far into his career.

The Dodgers' offense will separate them from the rest of the NL West, but the one thing they don't have that the others do is quality and quantity at starting pitcher. Clayton Kershaw emerged as a future ace with nasty breaking pitches and

blazing fastball. Kershaw has the stuff to be a top line starter, but oftentimes he failed to pitch six innings, which kills the bullpen. Luckily for Los Angeles, Kershaw is only 21 and has years to improve, although he is nearly pitching at an All-Star level. Chad Billingsley was supposed to be “that guy” going into last year, but he collapsed in the second half with a 5.30 ERA and seven losses. The Dodgers are desperate for starting pitching and will really need Billingsley to step up this year. After the pair of youngsters, the Dodgers will turn to two seasoned veterans to solidify the rotation. With Randy Wolf gone, Hiroki Kuroda will slide into the third spot in the rotation. Kuroda is a nibbler, but he logs plenty of innings. The Dodgers picked up Vicente Padilla after the Rangers released him because of disciplinary issues. Padilla can be a dominant starter with big strikeout numbers, but more often he is wild and undependable. The last rotation spot is will be a huge question, bigger than the issues at the back of the Blue Jays and Pirates rotations. James McDonald was supposed to take command of the last spot last year, but he had an 8.28 ERA in his four starts before being demoted to the bullpen. Scott Elbert and Eric Stults, two late bloomers, could also be the last starter, and if not, they will be in long relief.

Takashi Saito was not tendered a contract two off-season ago, and the Dodgers hoped that flame throwing, young set-up man Jonathan Broxton could step right into the role. Broxton did more then just close, he blew away hitters and led all closers with 13.5 K/9. Recent pickup George Sherrill, Hong-Chih Kuo, and Ramon Troncoso round out perhaps the strongest, deepest bullpen in the NL.

One of the major problems for the Dodgers recently has been spending their money wisely. The Dodgers spent this off-season adding seven veteran bench players and one starting pitcher, neglecting their major need for starting pitcher depth. When making trades at the deadline, GM Ned Coletti has done a nice job of acquiring Jim Thome, George Sherrill, Manny Ramirez, Casey Blake, and several more players for next to no money, but at the cost of 5-star prospects (Carlos Santana, Andy LaRoche, and Josh Bell). The Dodgers need to learn how to better manage their money to create a more rounded out team, but until then, they have nowhere near the pitching they’ll need to win a division. **GRADE: 86**



## Move That Must Be Made

It’s relatively safe to assume that the Dodgers will stay close to .500 or higher into the late summer, even if they are 4<sup>th</sup> in their division. They desperately need a third starter (Kuroda and Padilla are not that), and they will be close enough to the Hunt for October that trading for a pitcher would be worth the cost. Derek Lowe and Ervin Santana could be on the move, even though their teams will still be in contention. The Dodgers will likely have to include a young pitcher (Josh Lindblom) or a young hitter (Blake DeWitt). In any deal they make, it is essential that they pony up to take on the rest of the contract as not to further destroy their shallow farm system.

On the Rise		Clayton Kershaw
On the Decline		Rafael Furcal
Sleeper		Russell Martin

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Dee Gordon	SS	Premier athlete with fantastic speed. Great defender, gap power. Son of Tom Gordon
Ethan Martin	RHP	Big, athletic build with great velocity. Plus curve, but struggles with command
Blake DeWitt	3B	Late bloomer with solid power, but does not well hit for average. Versatile fielder
Chris Withrow	RHP	Blazing fastball and smooth mechanics. Racks up strikeouts, prevents big innings
Aaron Miller	LHP	Two-pitch starter with great strikeout rate. Very good control, limits base runners
Scott Elbert	LHP	Has plus fastball, devastating slider. Aggressive style, solid control of off-speeds
Andrew Lambo	OF	Great athlete with smooth swing. Has solid power and fairly good bat for average.
Josh Lindblom	RHP	Big, workhorse frame, surprisingly athletic. Fastball with late life and plus slider.
Ivan De Jesus	SS	Advanced approach at the plate. Hits well for average, but currently lacks power
Trayvon Robinson	OF	Switch hitter with plus plus speed. Has plenty of power, but lacks discipline





Lineup	Pos.
Everth Cabrera	SS
'09 Stats: .255, 2 HR, 31 RBI, 25 SB	
David Eckstein	2B
'09 Stats: .260, 2 HR, 51 RBI, 3 SB	
Adrian Gonzalez	1B
'09 Stats: .277, 40 HR, 99 RBI, 1 SB	
Kyle Blanks	LF
'09 Stats: .250, 10 HR, 22 RBI, 1 SB	
Chase Headley	3B
'09 Stats: .262, 12 HR, 64 RBI, 10 SB	
Scott Hairston	LF
'09 Stats: .265, 17 HR, 64 RBI, 11 SB	
Will Venable	RF
'09 Stats: .256, 12 HR, 38 RBI, 6 SB	
Nick Hundley	C
'09 Stats: .238, 8 HR, 30 RBI, 5 SB	
Tony Gwynn Jr.	OF
'09 Stats: .270, 2 HR, 21 RBI, 11 SB	
Luis Durango	OF
'09 Stats: .281, 0 HR, 25 RBI, 44 SB*	
Jerry Hairston	IF/OF
'09 Stats: .251, 10 HR, 39 RBI, 7 SB	
Oscar Salazar	3B/1B
'09 Stats: .302, 5 HR, 25 HR, 0 SB	
Yorvit Torrealba	C
'09 Stats: .291, 2 HR, 27 RBI, 1SB	
Jon Garland	RHP
'09 Stats: 11-13, 4.01 ERA, 109 K	
Chris Young	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-6, 5.21 ERA, 50 K	
Kevin Correia	RHP
'09 Stats: 12-11, 3.91 ERA, 142 K	
Clayton Richard	LHP
'09 Stats: 9-5, 4.41 ERA, 114 K	
Mat Latos	RHP
'09 Stats: 4-5, 4.62 ERA, 39 K	
Heath Bell	RHP
'09 Stats: 6-4, 2.71 ERA, 79 K, 42 Sv	
Mike Adams	RHP
'09 Stats: 0-0, 0.73 ERA, 45 K, 0 Sv	
Edward Mujica	LHP
'09 Stats: 3-5, 3.94 ERA, 76 K, 2 Sv	

The Padres have always been strapped for cash, but they were able to spend their money wisely and keep the budget low. Now, they are only able to keep the payroll low. Former franchise cornerstones Jake Peavy, Brian Giles, and Trevor Hoffman are all gone now and the next generation of young players will take the San Diego market by storm – or they will be the next group of players to get no attention.

San Diego is far from a great baseball town, but they do have one attraction people are clamoring to see: Adrian Gonzalez. The San Diego native has become one of the best young power hitters in the game, slugging 40 home runs while playing half of his games in the most pitcher-friendly ballpark in the game. Unfortunately for Padres fans, Gonzalez is about 90% likely to be moved within the year to a contender (Likely Boston, Seattle, or Atlanta) because of the contract he will command. San Diego went through the same process last Trade Deadline with Jake Peavy, but with a different General Manager. Ex-GM Kevin Towers did a very nice job considering the circumstances, but it's hard to justify the move's he has made lately to ownership and fans. The Padres brought in former Red Sox assistant Jed Hoyer to run the show in San Diego, and he has brought the Boston style of development and scouting west.

After Gonzalez, the Padres don't have any more quality hitters. Kyle Blanks has the most power outside of A-Gon; he hit a homer every 14.8 at-bats in his 54 games. Everth Cabrera has emerged as a great leadoff hitter in the making, but has a poor on base percentage. Cabrera and scouts liken his game to that of Rafael Furcal, and they both share speed but little power and (lately) a poor batting average. Young Chase Headley will make the transition from left field to his natural position of third base because Kevin Kouzmanoff was traded to Oakland. Headley is a former highly touted prospect, but has yet to see his power translate to home runs in spacious PETCO Park. Will Venable, son of former Major Leaguer Max Venable, will have his first full season starting. Venable is a very nice well-rounded hitter, but his numbers are slightly deflated (as are most of the Padres' hitters) because of their home ballpark. A third second year starter, Nick Hundley, was very unspectacular in his first

Year. He lacks overall power or great contact, but he is a solid defender. Yorvit Torrealba will likely take over if the 26-year old doesn't pick up his game by June or July. With their young lineup, the Padres will have to depend on veterans David Eckstein, Scott Hairston, and Jerry Hairston Jr. to a large extent. Eckstein is a very good number two hitter while Scott Hairston will be one of the major power contributors, hitting third. Jerry Hairston is not going to be an every day starter, but he will play in most games in many positions.

You can tell a lot about a team's pitching by their first two starters in the rotation. For the Padres, that would be Chris Young and Jon Garland. Neither are even close to ace status, but because of the youth to the team, they are the best San Diego has. Young looks to bounce back from a terrible, injury-filled year. When healthy, he is usually a double-digit win pitcher with a high-three to low-four ERA starter. He and Garland will log plenty of innings, but they won't take over any games and won't strike out even 100 hitters all year. Kevin Correia may have been the biggest surprise outside of Adrian Gonzalez' power surge. Correia came into the year as a fringe major leaguer and left as a 12 game winner, the most consistent out of all the Padres' starters. The last two rotation spots will belong to two young future aces: Clayton Richard and Mat Latos. Richard was the key piece to the Peavy deal and has looked great in his few starts in PETCO. Latos is a streakier, power pitcher who will rack up the Ks and improve his command over the season.

Surprise All-Star Heath Bell lead a deep bullpen last season, one with little accolade despite their outstanding production. Mike Adams, Edward Mujica, Luke Gregerson, and Joe Thatcher all had outstanding years but because of the low profile of the NL West and San Diego, they went unnoticed. After Boston and the Dodgers, the Padres may have the best overall 'pen in the league.

The Padres are the only team in their division without a hope to win. By June they will have fallen out of playoff contention, and by the Trade Deadline, Adrian Gonzalez will be in another uniform (Boston). It is a shame that their hometown slugger will have to move on, but the Padres may be better off collecting a large amount of young talent to rebuild around. This team is going nowhere, fast; so don't get your hopes up. GRADE: 78



## Moves That Must Be Made

Jed Hoyer has no option but to trade Adrian Gonzalez some time in the next two seasons, and he need not make the same mistake that nearly cost the Blue Jays serious young talent. They need to ship off the slugging first baseman with more than a year left on his contract to land a Mark Teixeira-esque haul in return. The best match in clearly the Red Sox, who need pop in their lineup and a young first baseman of the future. Hoyer will get his pick of two of Jacoby Ellsbury, Clay Buchholz, Casey Kelly, and Ryan Westmoreland and another very nice prospect. The Padres will get to move on and build around their new stars-in-the-making.

On the Rise		Everth Cabrera
On the Decline		Chris Young
Sleeper		Chase Headley

Top 10 Prospects	Pos.	Description
Donovan Tate	OF	Incredible athlete, 5-tool potential. Blazing speed, tremendous power, cannon arm
Simon Castro	RHP	Sound mechanics and command. Plus fastball with late life and very good slider
Jaff Decker	OF	Hits very well for average, plays a solid defensive center field. Underrated athlete
James Darnell	3B	Good athlete with good power potential. Very patient and makes great contact
Aaron Poreda	RHP	Accurate, but only his fastball has upside. Needs to develop more secondary pitches
Cedric Hunter	OF	Excellent bat speed and solid discipline. High contact rate and above-average speed
Adam Russell	RHP	Big frame with solid mid-90s fastball. Lacks control, but pitches well to contact
Cesar Carrillo	RHP	Good control pitcher, lets too many runners on. Yet to live up to high expectations
Logan Forsythe	3B	Shows outstanding discipline but has below average power. Versatile fielder and
Will Inman	RHP	Known for exceptional control, doesn't have any plus pitches, only average curve



## 2009 League Leaders

AL Leaders	Statistic	NL Leaders
Joe Mauer	Batting Average	Hanley Ramirez
Carlos Peña	Home Runs	Albert Pujols
Mark Teixeira	RBIs	Ryan Howard
Brian Roberts	Doubles	Miguel Tejada
Jacoby Ellsbury	Triples	Shane Victorino
Ichiro Suzuki	Hits	Ryan Braun
Dustin Pedroia	Runs	Albert Pujols
Jacoby Ellsbury	Stolen Bases	Michael Bourn
Chone Figgins	Walks	Adrian Gonzalez
Joe Mauer	OBP	Albert Pujols
Joe Mauer	SLG	Albert Pujols
Joe Mauer	OPS	Albert Pujols
Felix Hernandez	Wins	Adam Wainwright
Justin Verlander	Strikeouts	Tim Lincecum
Justin Verlander	Innings	Adam Wainwright
Zack Greinke	ERA	Chris Carpenter
Zack Greinke	WHIP	Dan Haren
Brian Fuentes	Saves	Heath Bell
Matt Guerrier	Holds	Jeremy Affeldt
Roy Halladay	Complete Games	Tim Lincecum
Roy Halladay	Shutouts	Cole Hamels
Felix Hernandez	Opp. Batting Average	Clayton Kershaw

## 2010 Division Predictions

Division	Ben Weinrib	Postseason	Readers
AL East	Red Sox	Red Sox over White Sox Yankees over Mariners	Yankees
AL Central	White Sox		Tigers
AL West	Mariners		Angels
AL Wildcard	Yankees	Phillies over Rockies Cardinals over D-Backs	Red Sox
AL Champion	Red Sox		Yankees
NL East	Phillies		Phillies
NL Central	Cardinals	Phillies over Cardinals Red Sox over Yankees	Cardinals
NL West	D-Backs		Dodgers
NL Wild Card	Rockies		Braves
NL Champion	Phillies	Red Sox over Phillies	Phillies
World Series	Red Sox		Yankees

## 2009 Award Predictions

AL	Award	NL
Miguel Cabrera	MVP	Ryan Howard
Felix Hernandez	Cy Young	Roy Halladay
Brian Matusz	Rookie of the Year	Jason Heyward
B.J. Upton	Comeback Player of the Year	Russell Martin
Don Wakamatsu	Manager of the Year	A.J. Hinch