

JIM BARNES JOURNAL



Former *Stardust* Consultant 1993-2004
Statis-Pro Game Designer (*Sports Illustrated* Series)

Major League 2019 Preview, Depth Charts

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Experts now face a challenge calculating the final standing order in each of baseball's six divisions. The one lone awaited signature is off the board, possessed by a hitter that can make a difference.

There are just a handful of free agents still seeking mega-bucks and a new mailing address. Each passing day may cost them in wallet weight.

Brian Harper is signing a 13-year contract with Philadelphia. The former Washington outfielder will be paid \$25.4-million per year and \$330-million until age 39. The 2015 MVP is not ruffled after a rather mild 2018 with a .249 average and 34 home runs.

The Padres also expressed interest, visions of having both Harper and shortstop Manny Machado on a team most expect to finish last in the NL West. Machado signed to what might be the next to last long-term contract in baseball. (Harper's deal will never be topped according to most experts.)

The Phillies are also looking at pitchers Craig Kimbrel and Dallas Keuchel. 3B Mike Moustakas was on the "wish list," but re-signed with the Brewers. The loser in the Harper deal is outfielder Nick Williams, just 25 and only nine at bats last season.

Atlanta has better than just a casual interest in starter Keuchel and closer Kimbrel. Keuchel might stick with the Astros while Kimbrel is among the best closers and listening to everyone. In nine years he

Arizona (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Carson Kelly	C	.114	1-3	0
Jake Lamb	1B	.222	34-31	6
Wilmer Flores	2B	.267	43-51	11
Nick Ahmed	SS	.234	61-70	16
Eduardo Escobar	3B	.272	75-84	23
David Peralta	LF	.293	75-87	30
Ketel Marte	CF	.260	68-59	14
Steven Souza	RF	.220	21-29	5
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Zack Greinke R	18-15	5-3	15-11	3.21
Robbie Ray L	11-13	7-7	6-2	3.93
Zack Godley R	17-15	12-12	15-11	4.74
Luke Weaver R	11-14	6-10	7-11	4-95
Merrill Kelly R	0-0	0-0	0-0	0.00

TRGS is Team Record in Games Started by pitchers, more valuable than W-L record. **Un-3** and **Ov-5** is the number of games started where the opponents tallied less than 3-runs (normally a win) or the opposition scored 5 or more (usually a defeat). Research applied to this category surpasses use of the age-old ERA. Batter data is standard and readily available.

Atlanta (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Brian McCann	C	.212	22-23	7
Freddie Freeman	1B	.309	94-98	23
Ozzie Albies	2B	.261	105-72	24
Dansby Swanson	SS	.238	51-59	14.
Josh Donaldson	3B	.246	30-23	8
Roland Acuna	LF	.293	78-64	26
Ender Inciarte	CF	.265	83-81	10
Nick Markakis	RF	.297	78-93	14
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Mike Foltynewicz R	15-18	11-7	13-10	2.85
Julio Teheran R	18-13	9-10	9-9	3.94
Kevin Gausman R	7-3	4-0	5-3	3.92
Sean Newcomb L	16-15	12-12	12-9	3.90
Touki Toussaint R	4-1	1-1	2-1	4.03

has a 1.91 ERA, over 330 saves and strikes out 14.7 batter per nine innings (he could not maintain that pace if going further than just two innings.) With an “iffy situation” in Chicago, the Cubs should be a solid contender for Kimbrel.

A “sleeper” among the free agents is former Red Sox and Arizona hurler Clay Buchholz, limited to just 16 starts in 2018. Once in the Diamondback’s rota-

Boston (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Christian Vazquez	C	.251	24-16	3
Mitch Moreland	1B	.245	57-68	15
Dustin Pedroia	2B	.091	1-0	0
Xander Bogaerts	SS	.288	72-103	23
Rafael Devers	3B	.240	59-66	21
Andrew Benintendi	LF	.290	103-87	16
Jackie Bradley	CF	.234	78-59	13
Mookie Betts	RF	.346	129-80	32
J. D. Martinez	DH	.330	111-130	43
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Chris Sale L	20-10	13-7	12-4	2.11
David Price L	26-9	18-8	16-7	3.58
Rick Porcello R	23-12	8-8	17-7	4.28
Eduardo Rodriguez L	16-4	7-5	13-5	3.82
Nathan Eovaldi R	7-5	6-6	6-7	3.81

Baltimore (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Chance Sisco	C	.181	13-16	2
Chris Davis	1B	.168	40-49	16
Jonathan Villar	2B	.260	54-46	14
Richie Martin	SS	.000	0	0
Renato Nunez	3B	.258	28-22	8
Trey Mancini	LF	.242	69-58	24
Cedric Mullins	CF	.235	23-11	4
D. J. Stewart	RF	.250	8-10	3
Mark Tumbo	DH	.261	41-44	17
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Dylan Bundy R	9-22	5-14	8-16	5.45
Alex Cobb R	8-20	3-11	5-15	4.90
Andrew Cashner R	9-19	4-7	4-15	5.29
David Hess R	4-15	5-8	3-10	4.88
Yefry Ramirez R	3-8	1-7	1-8	5.92

tion, Buchholz held six of seven opponents to less than three runs and finished with a 7-2 log and 2.01 ERA.

While the Yankees revealed an early interest, the best Buchholz fit might be with the Dodgers. Kershaw has had injury problems for the past three years, his fastball has lost some its zip and he says his arm doesn’t feel 100% as spring drills commence.

Since 2016, the next Sandy Koufax has seen his collection of starts decrease and injury list days increase. He posted just one complete game in 2018 and is behind both Walker Buehler and Hyun-jin Ryu.

One website I saw pointed out that 2018 “big bucks” went to four well known starters that fizzled while bargains such as Miles Mikolas (St. Louis) and Jhoulys Chacin (Cincinnati) were worth the much smaller paychecks each received.

Another favorite of mine, Minnesota’s once dominant Ervin Santana could be a 2019 steal. An injured finger resulted in the one time all-star resembling a batting practice pitcher; five terrible starting assignments. He will start the with the White Sox, joining a minor league team to get more pitching starts.

The Mets have a solid 1-2-3 at the top of their pitching rotation, also a super closer in Edwin Diaz (Seattle). Depth in starting pitchers is just one shy, a

Chicago (NL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Wilson Contreras		C	.249	50-54	10
Anthony Rizzo		1B	.283	74-101	25
Ben Zobrist		2B	.305	67-58	9
Javier Baez		SS	.290	101-111	34
Kris Bryant		3B	.272	59-52	13
Kyle Schwarber		LF	.238	64-61	26
Albert Amora		CF	.286	62-41	5
Jason Heyward		RF	.270	67-57	8
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Jon Lester	L	24-9	14-5	18-6	3.32
Kyle Hendricks	R	18-15	13-7	14-11	3.44
Cole Hamels	L	6-6	7-2	4-3	3.78
Jose Quintana	L	18-14	13-11	13-11	4.03
Yu Darvish	R	5-3	4-2	1-3	4.95

slot where Gio Gonzalez (Nationals) would be a perfect choice.

Gonzalez was strong with Milwaukee in the race to the wire, and just two years ago was one of the National League's top starters.

As noted, many free agents have already signed with new franchises, among more notable Cincinnati adds pitchers Sonny Gray (Yankees), Alex Wood (Dodgers) and Tanner Roark (Washington). The Reds also welcome Dodgers outfielders Matt Kemp and Yasiel Puig.

Los Angeles could obtain A. J. Pollock from the Diamondbacks, a sign the Dodgers may move Cody Bellinger to either right field or insert him at first base.

The Mets front office is aware the offense needs more gusto. New York picked up catcher Wilson Ramos (Philadelphia), 2nd baseman Robinson Cano and what might be one of most ignored free agent signings is getting Jed Lowrie from Oakland. (A spring knee injury, requiring an MRI, does not appear to be serious.)

The FA hungry Phillies like .304 hitting shortstop Juan Segura (Seattle) and expect a rebound of Andrew McCutchen (Yankees).

St. Louis made just one early move; a big one. Paul Goldschmidt arrives from Arizona to play first

Chicago (AL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Wellington Castillo		C	.259	17-15	6
Yonder Alonso		1B	.250	64-63	23
Yoan Moncada		2B	.235	73-61	17
Tim Anderson		SS	.240	77-64	20
Yolmer Sanchez		3B	.242	62-55	8
Daniel Palka		LF	.240	56-67	27
Adam Engel		CF	.235	49-29	6
Jon Jay		RF	.268	74-40	3
Jose Abreu		DH	.265	68-78	22
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Lucas Giolito	R	15-17	5-13	10-13	6.13
Ivan Nova	R	14-14	10-9	9-9	4.19
Carlos Rodon	L	9-11	6-6	6-8	8.49
Reynaldo Lopez	R	12-20	7-12	7-10	3.91
Dylan Covey	R	5-12	5-11	5-14	5.18

Cincinnati (NL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Tucker Barnhart		C	.248	50-48	10
Joey Votto		1B	.284	67-67	12
Scooter Gennett		2B	.310	86-92	23
Jose Peraza		SS	.288	85-58	14
Eugenio Suarez		3B	.283	79-104	34
Matt Kemp		LF	.290	62-85	21
Scott Schebler		CF	.255	55-49	17
Yasiel Puig		RF	.267	60-63	23
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Sonny Gray	R	11-12	9-10	11-9	4.90
Alex Wood	L	13-14	11-5	9-7	3.68
Luis Castillo	R	15-14	8-10	10-12	4.30
Tanner Roark	R	13-17	7-8	9-15	4.34
Tyler Mahle	R	11-12	7-8	7-9	4.98

base, bringing 33 home runs and a solid .290 batting average with him.

Not a lot is written about the Redbirds closer Jordan Hicks, but his fastball is clocked at close to 105 miles per hour.

San Fran- Continued on Page 5 cisco needed a

Colorado (NL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Chris Iannetta		C	.224	36-38	11
Dan Murphy		1B	.226	5-11	2
Garrett Hampson		2B	.275	3-4	0
Trevor Story		SS	.291	88-108	37
Nolan Arenado		3B	.297	104-110	38
Ian Desmond		LF	.236	82-88	22
Charlie Blackmon		CF	.291	119-70	29
David Dahl		RF	.273	31-48	16
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
German Marquez	R	19-15	15-10	14-11	3.77
Kyle Freeland	L	24-10	17-5	17-7	2.85
Jon Gray	R	17-13	8-11	12-9	5.12
Tyler Anderson	L	13-21	10-15	7-9	4.55
Antonio Senzatela	R	7-7	4-5	6-6	4.38

If what I read is correct the baseball season will begin the earliest in history. Oakland and Seattle will play March 20-21 in Tokyo, a homecoming for a Seattle transplant.

All 30 teams will then re-open the season again on March 28. In the old days, baseball and basketball were at least two weeks apart.

Detroit (AL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Grayson Greiner		C	.219	9-12	0
Miguel Cabrera		1B	.299	17-22	3
Josh Harrison		2B	.250	41-37	8
Jody Mercer		SS	.251	43-39	6
Jeimer Candelario		3B	.224	78-54	19
Christin Stewart		LF	.267	7-10	2
JaCoby Jones		CF	.207	54-34	11
Nick Castellanos		RF	.298	88-89	23
Mike Mahtook		DH	.223	24-29	9
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Matt Boyd		16-15	10-10	9-13	4.39
Jordan Zimmerman		11-14	6-9	7-8	4.52
Michael Fulmer		5-18	7-9	3-12	4.69
Tyson Ross		1-0	1-0	8-9	4.15
Matt Moore		5-7	1-9	3-8	6.79

The Bullpen Closers, Some Good - Most Just Adequate

In the old days of baseball, starting pitchers were also the ones that finished the game. Not so in a sport that has become "so stimulated by analysts that closing out a game is now a specialty." The chosen one works no more than one or two innings; rated more on his Saves vs Blown Saves than his W-L and even ERA.

Closer	W-L	ERA	Saves-Blown
Ariz Archie Bailey	4-5	3.62	3-8
Atl Aroldys Vizcaino	2-2	2.11	16-2
Bal Mychal Givens	0-7	3.99	9-4
Bos Ryan Brasier	2-0	1.60	0-2
ChC Pedro Strop	4-1	2.51	5-4
CWS Kelvin Herrera	2-2	2.23	16-2
Cinc Rafael Iglesias	2-5	2.38	30-4
Clev Brad Hand	2-4	3.05	24-5
Colo Wade Davis	3-6	4.13	43-6
Det Shane Greene	4-6	5.12	32-6
Hou Roberto Osuna	2-2	2.37	21-2
KC Wily Peralta	1-0	3.67	14-0
LAA Cody Allen	4-6	4/70	27-5
LAD Kenley Jansen	1-5	3/01	38-4
Mia Drew Steckenrider	4-4	3.90	5-3
Millw Corey Knebel	4-3	3.58	16-3
Minn Blake Parker	21	3.20	14-3
NYM Edwin Diaz	0-4	1.96	57-4
NYY Aroldis Chapman	3-0	2.45	32-2
Oak Blake Treinen	9-2	0.78	38-5
Phi S'anthony Dominguez	2-5	2.95	16-4
Pitt Felipe Rivero-Vazquez	4-2	2.70	37-5
St. L. Jordan Hicks	3-4	3.50	6-4
SDg Kirby Yates	5-3	2.14	12-1
SF Will Smith	2-3	2.55	14-4
Sea Hunter Strickland	3-5	3.97	14-4
TB Jose Alvarado	1-6	1.39	8-4
Tex Jose Leclerc	2-3	1.56	12-4
Tor Ken Giles	0-1	4.12	14-0
Was Sean Doolittle	3-3	1.60	25-1

The one statistic that might be included is strikeouts, usually measured by the formula K/9 or strikeouts per nine innings pitched. The top aces are Chapman (NYY) 16.3, Diaz (NYM) 15.2 and Knebel (Milw) 14.3.

Bryce Harper, their best returning outfielder is Steve Duggar, an anemic .255 with just two home runs in 141 trips to the plate. Harper didn't have the same interest level.

Washington is serious about becoming the World Series champion, adding former Arizona pitcher Patrick Corbin along with Anibal Sanchez (Atlanta).

Hapless Baltimore isn't much improved from 2018, the solo change is replacing shortstop Hanser Alberto with Oakland's once promising Richie Martin. The Orioles' pitching rotation doesn't have a single starter with an ERA under 4.88.

The White Sox add closer Alex Colome (Tampa Bay) and outfielder Daniel Palka (Twins), who hit 27 home runs in 2018 or four more than any 2018 player.

The Indians greet a new closer Brad Hand (San Diego), first baseman Jake Bauers (Tampa Bay) and DH Carlos Santana (Phillies).

Detroit has picked up a trio of free agents, none of which will add much to a team near the bottom of the American League Central Division.

Houston remains a team to beat, getting catcher Robinson Chirinos from Texas and Cleveland outfielder Michael Brantley. The Indians long-baller adds another potential 30 round trippers this summer for the under-performing 2018 Astros

Kansas City adds little. Billy Hamilton (Reds) batted 504 times and hit just four homers and drove in 29 runs. He adds speed with 34 stolen bases, a strength of the Royals. Runs is another issue.

The Angels are active in the free agent marketplace getting catcher Jonathan Lucroy (Oakland) and first baseman Justin Bour (Phillies) and questionable closer Cody Allen (Cleveland).

The Twins made a pair of positive moves, inking Tampa Bay first baseman C. J. Cron and DH Nelson Cruz (Seattle). The pair arrive with a combined total of 67 home runs a year ago. Houston's Marwin Gonzalez is a backup at many positions.

Pitcher James Paxton moves to the Big Apple from Seattle where he allowed only 134 hits in 160 innings and fanned over 200 batters.

Cleveland (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Roberto Perez	C	.166	16-19	2
Jake Bauers	1B	.201	48-48	11
Jason Kilpnis	2B	.230	65-75	18
Francisco Lindor	SS	.277	129-92	38
Jose Ramirez	3B	.270	110-105	39
Greg Allen	LF	.257	36-20	2
Leonys Martin	CF	.255	48-33	11
Tyler Naquin	RF	.264	22-23	3
Carlos Santana	DH	.229	82-86	24
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Corey Kluber	21-13	13-10	20-7	2.89
Carlos Carrasco	19-12	13-9	17-10	3.38
Trevor Bauer	16-11	13-6	12-6	2.21
Mike Clevinger	16-17	9-10	13-8	3.02
Shane Bieber	13-6	6-4	11-5	4.55

Oakland opens with Jurickson Profar at 2nd base. The former Rangers infielder hit 20 home runs in 524 at bats and only struck out 88 times.

Seattle may have the foreign deal of the year. Pitcher Yusei Kikuchi won't hit like the Angels Shohei Ohtani, but he can pitch. He is 27 years-old, been in

Continued on Page 8

The major league transaction list is checked each morning and as players are signed or dismissed, depth charts and text will be altered accordingly.

There are a handful of expected lineup changes and readers need to keep their charts as up to date as possible.

A number of roster personnel are also on the disabled list (name being changed for some reason) and key players will be listed in this 2019 baseball preview.

After 40-years (or more) of studying baseball, I have come to the conclusion that the sport is actually: **“Pitching only 20%, batting actually 80%!** (Can't win without runs, regardless of pitcher.)

Houston (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Robinson Chirinos	C	.222	48-65	18
Yulieski Gurriel	1B	.291	70-85	13
Jose Altuve	2B	.316	84-61	13
Carlos Correa	SS	.239	60-65	15
Alex Bregman	3B	.286	105-103	31
Michael Brantley	LF	.309	89-76	17
George Springer	CF	.265	102-71	22
Jose Reddick	RF	.242	63-47	17
Tyler White	DH	.276	27-42	12
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Justin Verlander R	23-14	15-5	16-9	2.52
Gerrit Cole R	25-9	17-3	15-5	2.88
Collin McHugh R	0-0	0-0	6-2	1.99
Josh James R	3-0	2-0	2-0	2.35
Brad Peacock R	1-0	1-0	3-5	3.46

Kansas City (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Salvador Perez	C	.235	52-60	27
Ryan O'Hearn	1B	.262	23-30	12
Whit Merrifield	2B	.304	88-60	12
Adalberto Mondesi	SS	.276	47-37	14
Hunter Dozier	3B	.229	38-34	11
Alex Gordon	LF	.245	56-54	13
Billy Hamilton	CF	.236	74-29	4
Brian Goodwin	RF	.239	20-25	6
Jorge Soler	DH	.265	27-28	9
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Danny Duffy L	10-18	7-13	8-12	4.88
Ian Kennedy R	6-16	2-8	3-9	4.66
Brad Keller R	9-11	6-7	9-6	3.08
Jakob Junis R	13-17	9-12	9-12	4.37
Jorge Lopez R	3-4	3-3	2-5	5.03

On page 4, I went “outside the box” and stipulated baseball has become more of a hitting and scoring game than one that centers around pitcher ability. For the most part, a hurler’s season ending record is determined by the offense and runs scored. This point is a vital element in a study that is detailed on Page 8. Several Las Vegas sportsbook managers have agreed with my theory; undoubtedly the vast majority of baseball fans will continue to live in the dark ages. So be it.

Los Angeles (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Jonathan Lucroy	C	.241	41-51	4
Justin Bour	1B	.227	49-59	20
David Fletcher	2B	.275	35-25	1
Andrelton Simmons	SS	.292	68-75	11
Zack Cozart	3B	.219	29-18	5
Justin Upton	LF	.257	80-85	30
Mike Trout	CF	.312	101-79	39
Kole Calhoun	RF	.208	71-57	19
Albert Pujols	DH	.245	50-64	19
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Matt Harvey R	11-13	8-8	7-9	4.94
Andrew Heaney L	15-15	7-9	9-10	4.15
Trevor Cahill R	12-8	6-5	7-4	3.76
Tyler Skaggs L	12-12	10-8	8-10	4.02
Jaime Barria R	12-14	5-4		3.41

Los Angeles (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Austin Barnes	C	.205	32-14	4
Max Muncy	1B	.263	75-79	35
Chris Taylor	2B	.254	85-63	17
Corey Seager	SS	.267	13-13	2
Justin Turner	3B	.312	62-52	14
Joc Pederson	LF	.248	65-56	25
A. J. Pollock	CF	.257	61-65	21
Cody Bellinger	RF	.260	84-76	25
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Clayton Kershaw L	18-13	12-7	9-5	2.73
Walker Buehler R	16-11	14-4	8-5	2.62
Hyun-Jin Ryu L	12-7	8-4	7-3	1.97
Rich Hill L	16-11	9-6	11-5	3.66
Kenta Maeda R	8-12	6-6	8-10	3.81

Miami (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Jorge Alfaro	C	.252	35-37	10
Neil Walker	1B	.219	48-46	11
Starlin Castro	2B	.278	76-54	12
J. T. Riddle	SS	.231	28-36	9
Brian Anderson	3B	.273	87-65	11
Peter O'Brien	LF	.273	8-10	4
Lewis Brinson	CF	.199	31-42	11
Austin Dean	RF	.221	16-14	4
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Jose Urena R	12-19	8-11	9-12	3.98
Wei-Yin Chen L	11-14	7-7	6-12	4.79
Trevor Richards R	10-15	8-11	4-9	4.42
Dan Straily R	8-12	3-7	5-6	4.12
Pablo Lopez R	1-7	2-3	2-4	4.14

Milwaukee (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Yasmani Grandal	C	.241	65-68	24
Jesus Aguilar	1B	.274	80-108	35
Travis Shaw	2B	.241	73-86	32
Orlando Arcia	SS	.236	32-30	3
Mike Moustakas	3B	.256	20-33	8
Ryan Braun	LF	.254	59-54	20
Lorenzo Cain	CF	.308	90-38	10
Christian Yelich	RF	.326	118-110	36
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Jhoulys Chacin R	25-13	18-9	15-8	3.50
Chase Anderson R	16-14	13-8	9-8	3.93
Zach Davies R	5-8	3-3	2-7	4.77
Brandon Woodruff R	4-1	2-1	3-0	3.61
Junior Guerra R	13-13	7-9	6-9	4.09

One thing that fantasy baseball managers/owners/coaches like to obtain is home run power. A homer produces two things, both a run scored and run batted in; if the bases are empty two runs are logged. In some fantasy leagues, runs scored on home runs is logged as one point; accepted is the run batted in while the run scored is rejected as a duplication.

If you look at each 2019 roster and add the two best home run hitters' total together, the combo lists the 30 franchises in this order: Cleveland 77, Oakland 76, Colorado and Boston 75, Milwaukee 71, Los Angeles Angels and St. Louis 69, Minnesota 67, New York Yankees 65, Texas 63, Los Angeles Dodgers 60, Chicago Cubs 59, Seattle 58, Cincinnati 57, Philadelphia 56, Arizona and Houston 53, New York Mets 51, Atlanta, Toronto and Chicago White Sox 50, Washington 46, San Diego 44, Detroit 42, Baltimore, Kansas City and Tampa Bay 41, Pittsburgh 33, San Francisco 30 and Miami 25.

Yankee fans felt Judge and Stanton would combine for close to 100. The pair fell 35 short.

Minnesota (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Jason Castro	C	.143	4-3	1
C. J. Cron	1B	.253	68-74	30
Jonathan Schoop	2B	.233	61-61	21
Jorge Polanco	SS	.288	38-42	6
Miguel Sano	3B	.199	32-41	13
Eddie Rosario	LF	.288	67-77	24
Bryon Buxton	CF	.156	8-4	0
Max Kepler	RF	.224	80-58	20
Nelson Cruz	DH	.256	70-97	37
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Jose Berrios R	16-16	13-10	12-11	3.84
Kyle Gibson R	15-17	7-14	10-13	3.62
Jake Odorizzi R	15-17	10-9	7-10	4.49
Michael Pineda R	0-0	0-0	0-0	0.00
Martin Perez L	4-10	1-8	2-7	6.22

New York (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Wilson Ramos	C	.306	39-70	15
Todd Frazier	1B	.213	54-59	18
Robinson Cano	2B	.303	44-50	10
Ahmed Rosario	SS	.256	79-51	9
Jed Lowrie	3B	.267	78-99	23
Michael Conforto	LF	.243	78-82	28
Juan Lagares	CF	.339	9-6	0
Brandon Nimmo	RF	.283	77-47	17
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Jacob DeGrom R	15-17	16-5	10-9	1.70
Noah Syndergaard R	16-9	9-2	13-4	3.03
Zack Wheeler R	15-14	10-7	12-7	3.31
Steven Matz L	15-15	9-9	5-11	3.97
Jason Vargas L	8-12	7-9	7-9	5.77

New York (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Gary Sanchez	C	.186	51-53	18
Luke Voit	1B	.322	30-36	15
D J. LeMahiou	2B	.276	90-62	15
Gleyber Torres	SS	.271	54-77	24
Miguel Andujar	3B	.297	83-92	27
Brett Gardner	LF	.236	95-45	12
Aaron Hicks	CF	.248	90-79	27
Aaron Judge	RF	.278	77-67	27
Giancarlo Santana	DH	.266	102-100	38
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Luis Severino R	25-9	14-7	19-8	3.39
James Paxton L	15-12	9-8	11-6	3.76
Masahiro Tanaka R	17-10	12-8	12-6	3.75
J. A. Happ L	9-3	5-3	7-0	2.69
C. C. Sabathia L	16-14	8-7	9-7	3.65

Japanese baseball for eight years with a 74-48 record and 2.31 ERA.

No team is hit as hard as Seattle, losing pitchers James Paxton, Juan Nicasio, Alex Colome, and Edwin Diaz. Also gone via free agency, infielder Robinson Cano and designated hitter Nelson Cruz.

Tampa Bay adds Houston starter Charlie Morton (201 strikeouts in 167 innings and only 130 hits allowed. Former Seattle catcher Mike Zunino hit 20 homers in 373 times at bat, and the new DH is Avisal Garcia (White Sox).

Texas gets a switch-hitting shortstop with little power and a .228 average along with starter Lance Lynn (New York Yankees).

Free agency brings two starters to the Blue Jays, Clayton Richard (San Diego) and Matt Shoemaker (Los Angeles Angels). Fans are not excited, neither arrives with sterling statistics.

If you are a dedicated baseball fan, wins and losses occur in streaks. Average runs per game are useful only in a short term, like three to five games.

Once the season is over all teams will be in a range of average finals either 5-4, 4-5, 4-4 or 5-5. Other scores, such as 6-4, 4-3, and 4-6 pale in com-

Best 2019 Starting Pitchers

As I have suggested several times in this preview, baseball is no longer 80% pitching. Except for the 22 starting hurlers in the following table, the other more than 330 that started at least one game had their W-L determined by offensive support.

The very strong list includes any starter that held the opposition to 0, 1 or 2 runs in more than 80% of games started. This group has just six members and represents 1.7% of 2018 starting pitchers.

These are starters than can win without very much offense.

Add any who finished with at least 70% of their starts ending with the opposition held to less than three runs, the total increases to only 15 pitchers or 4.2% of all starters.

If all 22 are considered as being able to win without much support the ending skyrockets to 6.2%.

This should reveal that 100% less 6.2% is 93.8% or the number of pitchers that will win or lose depending on the offense.

Pitchers	Team	UN3-Ov5	Percent
Max Scherzer	Wash	16-2	89%
Blake Snell	TB	17-2	89%
Aaron Nola	Phil	18-3	86%
Gerrit Cole	Hou	17-3	85%
Zack Greinke	Ariz	15-3	83%
Noah Syndergaard	NYM	9-2	82%
Walker Buehler	LAD	14-4	78%
Kyle Freeland	Colo	17-5	77%
Jacob deGrom	NYM	16-5	76%
Justin Verlander	Hou	15-5	75%
Jon Lester	ChC	14-5	74%
Trevor Williams	Pitt	17-6	74%
Jameson Taillon	Pit	13-5	72%
Patrick Corbin	Was	10-4	71%
Derek Holland	SF	10-4	71%
David Price	Bos	18-8	69%
Alex Wood	Cin	11-5	69%
Mike Mikolas	St. L.	15-7	68%
Jhoulys Chacin	Milw	18-9	67%
Luis Severino	NYN	14-7	67%

Oakland (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
John Phegley	C	.204	13-15	2
Matt Olson	1B	.247	85-84	28
Jurickson Profar	2B	.254	82-77	20
Marcus Semien	SS	.255	89-70	15
Matt Chapman	3B	.278	100-68	24
Nick Martini	LF	.296	26-19	1
Ramon Laureano	CF	.288	27-19	5
Stephen Piscotty	RF	.267	78-88	27
Khris Davis	DH	.247	98-123	48
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Michael Fiers R	7-1	6-0	12-8	3.56
Daniel Mengden R	11-7	4-8	7-6	4.05
Marco Estrada	12-16	6-10	7-14	5.64
Frankie Montas R	7-4	4-5	5-4	3.88
Chris Bassitt R	4-2	4-1	2-3	3.02

Philadelphia (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
J. T. Realmuto	C	.277	74-74	21
Rhys Hoskins	1B	.246	89-96	34
Cesar Hernandez	2B	.253	91-80	15
Jean Segura	SS	.304	91-63	10
Maikel Franco	3B	.270	48-68	22
Andrew McCutcheon	LF	.255	83-65	20
Odubel Herrera	CF	.255	84-71	22
Brian Harper	RF	.249	103-100	34
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Aaron Nola R	22-11	18-3	17-6	2.37
Jake Arrieta R	14-17	6-11	10-11	3.96
Nick Pivetta R	14-18	9-11	7-14	4.77
Vince Velasquez R	12-18	7-12	9-12	4.85
Zach Eflin R	12-12	10-9	11-8	4.36

parison.

When forecasting how a team will do in its next game depends (more often than not) on the club's run production in a short span of time.

Unless the starting pitcher is in the top 2-5% there is no reason to be fearful of him.

One thing I track daily for my personal knowledge, is team batting average, runs scored in past 3-5 games and total home runs. For pitchers, I record Team Record in Games Started and number of times Under 3 or

Pittsburgh (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Francisco Cervelli	C	.259	39-57	12
Josh Bell	1B	.281	74-62	12
Adam Frazier	2B	.277	52-38	10
Kevin Newman	SS	.209	7-6	0
Colin Moran	3B	.277	49-56	11
Corey Dickerson	LF	.300	65-55	13
Starling Marte	CF	.277	81-72	20
Lonnie Chisenhall	RF	.321	11-9	1
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Chris Archer R	5-5	3-3	6-8	4.31
Trevor Williams R	16-15	17-6	14-10	3.11
Jameson Taillon R	20-12	13-5	14-10	3.20
Joe Musgrove R	8-11	5-7	6-9	4.05
Nick Kingham R	6-9	4-6	5-7	5.21

San Diego (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Austin Hedges	C	.231	29-37	14
Eric Hosmer	1B	.253	72-69	18
Ian Kinsler	2B	.240	66-46	14
Manny Machado	SS	.297	84-107	37
Ty France	3B	.000	0-0	0
Wil Myers	LF	.253	38-39	11
Frenchy Cordero	CF	.237	19-19	7
Hunter Renfroe	RF	.248	53-68	26
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Joey Lucchesi L	11-15	5-8	8-9	4.08
Eric Lauer L	9-15	8-8	6-7	4.34
Robbie Erlin L	4-7	1-4	4-7	4.21
Jacob Nix R	4-5	2-4	2-5	7.02
Bryan Mitchell L	5-6	4-4	2-4	5.42

San Francisco (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Buster Posey	C	.284	47-41	5
Brandon Belt	1B	.253	50-49	14
Joe Panik	2B	.254	38-24	4
Brandon Crawford	SS	.254	83-54	14
Evan Longoria	3B	.244	51-54	16
Chris Shaw	LF	.185	2-7	1
Steven Duggar	CF	.255	20-17	2
Mac Williamson	RF	.213	14-11	4
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Madison Bumgarner L	9-12	9-5	6-7	3.26
Derek Holland L	15-15	10-4	7-9	3.57
Dereck Rodriguez R	9-10	6-5	6-4	2.81
Jeff Samardzija R	2-8	1-4	1-5	6.25
Drew Pomeranz L	6-6	0-5	2-8	6.08

St. Louis (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Yadier Molina	C	.261	55-74	20
Paul Goldschmidt	1B	.290	95-83	33
Kolten Wong	2B	.249	41-38	9
Paul DeJong	SS	.241	68-68	19
Matt Carpenter	3B	.257	111-81	36
Marcell Ozuna	LF	.280	69-88	23
Harrison Bader	CF	.264	81-37	12
Dexter Fowler	RF	.180	40-31	8
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Carlos Martinez R	9-9	4-9	8-6	3.11
Miles Mikolas R	25-8	15-7	18-4	2.83
Jack Flaherty R	11-17	9-10	8-9	3.34
Michael Wacha R	10-5	6-2	8-2	3.20
Adam Wainwright R	4-4	1-2	2-4	4.46

more than 5 runs cross the plate versus the starter.

W-L and ERA are not one of my equations.

As a prime example, Arizona's Zack Greinke had a league log 15-11; hardly outstanding by any interpretation. When you look at the number of starts that were Un3 and Ov5, his record improves to 15-3 as the table (right side of page) shows. What does mean? He loses too many low scoring games.

Another thing that plagues teams is injuries, unpredictable in most cases; although once a player gets on the disable list or whatever name it goes under this season, he seems to spend more time there than on the field.

The major injury among top rung personnel is the Angels' Shohei Ohtani, who will not be going to the mound this season. There was talk about his returning in May or June, pure speculation. Ohtani will appear in warm, summer weather as a designated hitter. He batted 325 times last year with a .285 average and 22 home runs; some of which were highlight film blasts. The Angels also have Albert Pujols slated for that slot in the lineup, even though he hit three less home runs and registered a weak .245.

Kansas City occasional starting pitcher Eric

Skoglund is probably out until late June. He is serving a suspension for a league enhancing drug violation. Arizona pitcher Taijuan Walker doesn't get clearance to pitch until July, on the 60-day DL following Tommy John surgery.

Houston starter Lance McCullers is out all year because of the same procedure and the Twins' Michael Pineda is listed as questionable following an identical process.

Three other known hurlers will return, no one is sure when after each underwent the elbow surgery named after a pitcher who had the slowest fastball in baseball history. This group includes Jordan Montgomery (Yankees), Chad Kuhl (Pirates) and Johnny Cueto (Giants).

Note: When John pitched for the White Sox, his fastball was around 80 miles an hour; sometimes it didn't even reach the catcher for lack of anti-gravitational velocity. The birth of slow-pitch!

Teams that lead the league in most batting categories will be World Series candidates, In 2018, Boston, New York Yankees and Cleveland finished 1-2-3 in hitting. New York and Boston won 208 contests, lost 116. Cleveland finished 1st in the American League Central, and Houston (6th in

Seattle (AL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Omar Narvaez		C	.275	30-30	9
Edwin Encarnacion		1B	.246	74-107	32
Dee Gordon		2B	.268	62-36	4
Tim Beckham		SS	.230	45-35	12
Kyle Seager		3B	.221	62-78	22
Domingo Santana		LF	.265	21-20	5
Mallex Smith		CF	.296	65-40	2
Mitch Haniger		RF	.285	90-93	26
Jay Bruce		DH	.223	31-37	9
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Yusei Kikuchi	L	0-0	0-0	0-0	0.00
Marco Gonzales	L	16-13	11-10	13-9	4.00
Mike Leake	R	20-11	9-9	10-10	4.36
Felix Hernandez	R	10-17	6-11	8-14	5.55
Wade LeBlanc	L	17-10	10-7	9-5	3.72

major league offense ranking) galloped to 103 victories and the American West title.

The Red Sox won the World Series 4 games to 1 versus the Dodgers, 5th in major league batting. Surprising Oakland, 2nd in the AL West, was 4th in baseball batting.

Texas (AL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Isiah Kiner-Falefa		C	.261	43-34	4
Ron Guzman		1B	.235	48-58	16
Roughned Odor		2B	.253	76-63	18
Elvis Andrus		SS	.256	53-33	6
Asdrubal Cabrera		3B	.262	68-75	23
Joey Gallo		LF	.206	82-92	40
Delino DeShields		CF	.216	52-22	2
Normar Mazara		RF	.258	61-77	20
Shin-Soo Choo		DH	.264	83-62	21
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Mike Minor	L	14-14	8-10	12-8	4.18
Lance Lynn	R	6-3	3-2	10-10	4.77
Drew Smyly	L	0-0	0-0	0-0	0.00
Edison Volquez	R	0-0	0-0	0-0	0.00
Shelby Miller		0-4	0-4	0-4	10.69

Tampa Bay (AL)		Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Mike Zunino		C	.201	37-44	20
Ji-Man Choi		1B	.263	25-32	10
Joe Wendle		2B	.300	62-61	7
Willy Adames		SS	.278	43-34	10
Matt Duffy		3B	.294	59-44	4
Thomas Pham		LF	.275	102-63	21
Kevin Kiermaier		CF	.217	44-29	7
Austin Meadows		RF	.287	19-17	6
Avsail Garcia		DH	.236	47-49	19
Starting Pitchers		TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Blake Snell	L	22-9	17-2	21-5	1.89
Charlie Morton	R	18-13	12-8	15-3	3.13
Tyler Glasnow	L	4-7	4-3	2-7	4.27
Ryan Yarbrough	L	4-2	2-2	16-6	3.91
Yonny Chirinos	R	2-5	1-4	5-5	3.51

The Mets certainly possess an outstanding rotation, no offense as the New Yorkers ranked 23rd in that category.

Philadelphia also boasted a good rotation, again lacking an offense (22nd in the majors).

In most analysts 2019 projections, Houston comes out as the foremost choice in the American League. The Astros lack a household name in the lineup, yet every hitter will connect for double digit home run totals this season.

Houston has minor league depth and losing Charlie Morton (a free agent) and Dennis Keuchel might not even be felt.

Justin Verlander and Gerrit Cole pace a rotation with the ability to win when the team scores few runs. Add to the mix Josh James and you have all the ingredients for a World Series appearance.

Challenging the Astros will be New York Yankees and Boston,; a closer race in the NL with Los Angeles Dodgers, Atlanta, Chicago Cubs and Washington each possessing a chance. New York Mets will probably be over-rated by “fake news.”

With a mass of free agent movements about the

Toronto (AL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Danny Jansen	C	.247	12-8	3
Justin Smoak	1B	.242	67-77	25
Lourdes Gurriel	2B	.281	30-35	11
Freddy Galvas	SS	.248	62-67	13
Yangervis Solarte	3B	.226	50-54	17
Teoscar Hernandez	LF	.239	67-57	22
Kevin Pillar	CF	.252	65-59	15
Randal Grichuk	RF	.245	80-61	25
Kendrys Morales	DH	.249	47-57	21
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Marcus Stroman R	8-11	5-7	4-9	5.54
Aaron Sanchez R	9-10	2-4	4-6	4.89
Clayton Richard L	12-14	5-8	7-11	5.33
Matt Shoemaker R	5-2	2-1	2-2	4.94
Ryan Borucki L	7-10	4-5	4-6	3.87

only certainty for 2019 is Baltimore and Miami will be out of contention after the first week.

The Dodgers could have a season to remember IF Kershaw re-finds his fastball and Los Angeles realizes it has enough money in the vault to entice top free agent Harper to move to the worst geological landscape in the nation.

The Red Sox can score, score and score more. Boston led all teams with 876 runs during the regular season and boast Mookie Betts, J. D. Martinez and others with run producing ability.

Losing free agent Kimbrel will hurt some as will any healing delay to pitcher Chris Sale's shoulder.

The Yankees get credit for assembling a good pitching ledger, primary starter Luis Severino is followed by James Paxton (Seattle) and dependable Masahiro Tanaka and J. A. Happ. C. C. Sabathia, on a downhill slope, will hang up his spikes after this season.

The franchise doubts oft-injured Troy Tulowitzki will bounce back, leaving the middle infield positions up for grabs. Miguel Andujar, Gleyber Torres and a healthy Brett Gardner can hit shots into the stands, a plus for a team that includes fence busters Aaron

Washington (NL)	Position	BatAvg	RS-RBI	HR
Yan Gomes	C	.266	52-48	16
Ryan Zimmerman	1B	.264	33-51	13
Brian Dozier	2B	.215	81-72	21
Trea Turner	SS	.271	103-73	19
Anthony Rendon	3B	.308	88-92	24
Juan Soto	LF	.292	77-70	22
Victor Robles	CF	.288	6-10	3
Adam Eaton	RF	.301	55-33	5
Starting Pitchers	TRGS	Un3-Ov5	W-L	ERA
Max Scherzer L	22-11	16-2	18-7	2.53
Patrick Corbin L	17-16	10-4	11-7	3.15
Stephen Strasburg R	13-9	6-8	10-7	3.74
Anibal Sanchez R	13-12	8-6	7-6	2.83
Joe Ross R	0-3	0-0	0-2	5.06

Judge and Giancarlo Stanton.

Two National League teams I expect to once again lead the Series parade are Atlanta and Milwaukee, returning divisional champs.

Atlanta finished eight games in front runner-up Washington with the Phillies ten back, New York Mets 13.

Milwaukee edged the Cubs by a single game and could increase the margin this year with starting pitcher Jimmy Nelson returning after missing all of 2018. Nelson might be best hurler in the rotation.

The Brewers didn't make any primary free agent moves, not needing too. Five hitters connected for over 20 home runs. Travis Shaw, Jesus Aguilar and Christian Yelich each belted more than 30. The big question is at 2B where three players will contest for playing time. Milwaukee also has a deep vault, buying or trading is always an option.

The Braves were not a "single season idol," scoring 759 runs while holding foes to 657....this is a scoring difference of 102 runs trailing only the Dodgers and Cubs in the junior circuit.

Ronald Acuna, Jr., is the main thrust in the lineup and might end the season as the National

League's MVP. Despite a slow start, Acuna finished powerful and has both speed and power. Re-signing outfielder Nick Markakis is another step forward and free agent Josh Donaldson will play 3B. Donald arrives from Cleveland where he hit eight home runs, but batted only 187 times. In a full season with over 500 AB's his home run total should soar. The front office is extremely high on his talent potential.

The starting rotation appears below average until you discover the gap between hits and innings pitched. The Braves also have major talent lurking in AAA; most of whom have a taste of "the Show."

The Indians success is being housed in baseball's weakest division. There are many possible problems facing this team.

The Cubs fell to the wayside by a scant game, injuries were overwhelming as both Kris Bryant and pitcher Yu Darvish were absent too often. The Cubs are likely to keep Jose Baez at shortstop, getting rid of Addison Russell (suspended for alleged domestic assault problems).

St. Louis has an outside chance, thanks to getting a free agent with power and the improvement of pitcher Jack Flaherty.

The Twins got rid of mainstay players, looking for incoming talent to develop. The only main holdover, Joe Mauer, is close to retiring.

Tampa Bay is a team to watch. The Rays posted 90-wins, primarily because of pitcher Blake Snell who is all-star quality. The franchise could make multiple moves, plenty of cash is available.

A few years forward and Pittsburgh might be the powerhouse that is being assembled now. They have a lot of young talent on the major league roster, needing developmental time. The greatest need is for a powerful bat to augment the middle of the lineup.

Philadelphia nose-dived in the 2018 stretch drive and needs far more talent to compete this year; pitcher Aaron Nola is the Phillies standout performer.

One can color Toronto, Detroit, Chicago White

Sox, Kansas City, Seattle, and Texas as gone in the 2019 chase. The Mariners have a miserable minor league pool and the oldest lineup in baseball.

Baseball is not without its problems, too.

No one really feels sorry for either the players or the owners, the fans are suffering. When it boils down, the game is a skirmish between billionaires (owners) and players (millionaires).

Owners are making more, players less. The sport is getting away from expensive, long contracts with players. The preference is to sign younger personnel and let them play their way into the majors - at a lower salary.

Fans are growing tired of paying hundreds of dollars for a reasonable seat and having to endure a very slow moving game. Changes are planned not only to speed games up, but create more continuous action.

Game attendance and television ratings are down. More and more hitters wind up either striking out or hitting a home run. The time between pitchers is as long as a TV commercial, and there are too many meetings on the mound.

A pitcher is brought in and faces one batter, then a long pause while a mound change is made. The American League employs a DH, the National should, too.

Free agency rules and arbitration need to be modernized. There are too many filing for free agency, not getting what they feel is fair - despite still being over-paid.

A family of four used to pay about \$50 to attend a game when it was the National Pasttime, now it can cost more than \$500 and any kids under 14 will probably bring their portable tablets and indulge in digital action games.

Nothing can be as boring as a regular season game that even players get impatient waiting for it to end. Unless owners and players get on the same page and reduce prices, the sport may end up being close to Curling appeal.