



BASEBALL BETTING GUIDE

TIPS & STRATEGIES FOR BETTING THE MLB

OUR REGIONAL GUIDE INCLUDES

- TEAM PREVIEWS
- A LOOK AT FUTURES
- MLB STATS TO KNOW



A NORTH STAR FOR FUTURES

By Adam Burke

We've all heard about how money doesn't buy happiness. I don't know, I'm pretty happy when I can use money to buy a plane ticket and take a vacation or purchase those concert tickets that I want.

We've also heard that money doesn't buy championships. The other three major North American professional sports have salary caps, so it's hard to really apply that notion to those, but we can look at what it means in the context of Major League Baseball. (At least until we get a salary cap and salary floor in the next CBA negotiations!)

Objectively, no, money does not buy championships. Dating back to 2011, the most expensive roster in baseball has lifted the Commissioner's Trophy just three times and two of them have been the Dodgers over the last two seasons. But, one thing that we can state is that spending more money than the majority of teams does increase your chances of playing for a championship.

Jensen Lewis, my co-author on this year's MLB Team Previews and co-host of VSIN By The Books, actually had an interesting page in his Google Doc of writeups highlighting the payroll ranks of teams to make it to the World Series, with a side-by-side comparison of the winner and the loser. It was just in there. I don't think it was meant to be the catalyst for a featured article in this year's publication, but it can be something of a north star for those looking to get involved in the World Series futures market.

WORLD SERIES WINNER & RUNNER-UP PAYROLL RANKS

- This is the Opening Day 40-man, taxable roster payroll
- Total payroll in millions

The average payroll rank of the last 14 WS champs is 6.6 with an average payroll of \$218.4 million.

The average payroll rank of the last 14 WS runners-up is 11.0 with an average payroll of \$184.7 million.

As you can see, we've only had three teams outside the top 10 and only one outside the top half of the league in payroll as the champion of October baseball. We've had more outliers get there and lose, including five teams in the bottom half of the league, but we've only had one World Series out of the last 14 with two teams outside the top 10 in payroll.

None of this data is shocking, though I guess it is somewhat shocking to only see the team with the highest payroll in the World Series four times in this data set and the No. 2 team in payroll nowhere to be found. But, as you think about the futures market for 2026, longer shots that have still been willing to spend some money are probably better investments than young teams on the come-up that look promising and tantalizing.

YEAR	WS WINNER	PAYROLL RANK	TOTAL PAYROLL	WS LOSER	PAYROLL RANK	TOTAL PAYROLL
2012	Giants	5th	160.4	Tigers	8th	145.2
2013	Red Sox	3rd	177.8	Cardinals	10th	138.6
2014	Giants	7th	179.8	Royals	19th	111.0
2015	Royals	11th	152.1	Mets	21st	122.7
2016	Cubs	4th	205.9	Indians	21st	117.6
2017	Astros	19th	140.5	Dodgers	1st	253.6
2018	Red Sox	1st	239.5	Dodgers	4th	195.0
2019	Nationals	6th	201.2	Astros	5th	203.8
2020	Dodgers	5th	204.7	Rays	27th	89.9
2021	Braves	13th	172.6	Astros	7th	206.6
2022	Astros	9th	210.7	Phillies	4th	244.4
2023	Rangers	8th	242.1	D-Backs	19th	154.6
2024	Dodgers	1st	353.0	Yankees	3rd	316.2
2025	Dodgers	1st	417.3	Blue Jays	5th	286.1

*Data from Spotrac

DETROIT TIGERS

25-1

The Tigers look to be cracking the top 10 here with Tarik Skubal victorious in arbitration and then more than \$50 million for Framber Valdez and Justin Verlander. That's not what pushes them over the edge for me, though those are some very valuable innings to add to the picture. What is really nice, and what we see with a few of the lower payrolls on there is that they've been teams capable of winning a bad division and then making a run, like the Indians in 2016 and Royals in 2015.

The Tigers have a playoff-worthy pitching staff and any offensive gains will help, plus it appears as though Christopher Ilitch is at the point where he's ready to spend after cutting a lot of pork from the payroll when his father, Mike, went all-in to try and get a title before he passed away. That also means perhaps going out and buying a more expensive Trade Deadline piece as well as they have maybe the easiest path to the postseason in the AL Central.



BOSTON RED SOX

15-1

I like this one less because the path to the postseason is much tougher to navigate, as the Yankees and Blue Jays look strong again, plus the Orioles could be an improved team and the Rays are always pesky. But, this is an ideal confluence of high-priced talent with pre-arb and early-arb up-and-coming talent.

Expensive players are often older with more extensive track records, but higher injury risk profiles. That's why a team needs to be able to have cheap, preferably internally-developed replacements waiting in the wings. In that respect, the Red Sox are in great shape, in that their highly-paid players aren't that old, but there are plenty of options to fill in the gaps. Boston has also produced additional payroll flexibility by locking in guys like Roman Anthony and Kristian Campbell to long-term surplus value deals that are likely to make the books look way better than they are because of the future equity. That often leads to purchasing power at the Trade Deadline.

So, keep in mind that while money doesn't necessarily buy a championship, it surely gives you a much better chance at playing for one.



MLB STATS TO KNOW

By Adam Burke

My go-to line when explaining baseball stats and analytics to people is to say that “they quantify what the eyes can see.” Advanced MLB stats simply paint a better picture than the traditional stats and provide more layers of context to help explain how much a player is helping or hurting his team.

You may watch a game and notice that the center fielder isn't very good defensively. He's getting a late read on fly balls and doesn't have the speed to compensate. He's got a “noodle arm”. Well, the advanced metrics can look at things like “Outs Above Average” or “Defensive Runs Saved” to show how much worse than an “average” fielder that player is.

A lot of traditional metrics fall short. Think about on-base percentage, which is walks plus hits divided by plate appearances $((BB + H) / PA)$. That stat really came to prominence around the time that the Michael Lewis book Moneyball was released in 2003. Batting average had always been the go-to stat, but the whole goal as a hitter is not to make an out. Walks are a big part of that equation, thus OBP became a better indicator of offensive output than BA.

But, let's think more about OBP. Should a home run count the same as a single? Should a double count the same as a walk? With OBP, there is no distinction between the ways of reaching base. Enter wOBA, or weighted on-base average, which is an OBP variant that assigns run values to the manner in which a hitter reaches base. For example, in 2025, a single was worth .882 runs, while a home run was worth 2.037 runs in the formula for wOBA. A walk was worth .691 runs, but a double was worth 1.252. Why? Because doubles increase the chances of scoring a run or driving in a run more than a walk does.

The way I analyze baseball is to utilize the metrics and the statistics to try and find betting opportunities. I don't want readers or listeners to be overwhelmed by the numbers. It's my job to explain what they mean, why they are important and how we can use them in our handicapping to find smart bets to make.

I know these stats and abbreviations can be daunting. My only request is that you keep an open mind throughout the season.

The following are some of the stats that I use in my team previews and will use throughout my daily article and my on-air appearances over the course of the season.

ALTERNATE TEAM STANDINGS METRICS

BASERUNS

In my season previews, I talk about the BaseRuns record. BaseRuns is a “context-neutral environment” that takes all of the individual outcomes, puts them together and spits out expected runs for and against.

Think about these six events in an inning: HR, 1B, 1B, K, K, K. Depending on the order, a team might score three runs (1B, 1B, K, K, HR, K), two runs (1B, HR, K, 1B, K, K), one run (HR, 1B, 1B, K, K, K). The same six outcomes, just in different orders. BaseRuns removes “sequencing”, which is largely random. This also eliminates the randomness of hitting or defending with runners in scoring position. A big disparity between actual record and BaseRuns record might show that a team got lucky or won a lot of close games.

PYTHAGOREAN WIN-LOSS

Pythagorean Win-Loss is a standings metric based on run differential. A team's runs scored and runs against are put into a formula and an expected record is produced. This concept is used across all sports and is sometimes just labeled “Expected W-L”.

TEAM AND PLAYER MLB STATS

FANGRAPHS WINS ABOVE REPLACEMENT PLAYER (fWAR)

Wins Above Replacement Player (WAR) is one of the most comprehensive individual player statistics available. It shows how much value a player has provided relative to his peers. The “f” stands for FanGraphs, which is where I pull my player WAR data from, since I think they do the best job of calculating it.

A player with a fWAR under 1.0 is a replacement-level player, or not a very good one. A player with a 1-2 fWAR is a decent role player or a platoon type of guy. A player with a 2-3 fWAR is a solid player that any team would be happy to have. The scale goes up from there and separates the bad players from the good players and the good players from the great players.

WEIGHTED ON-BASE AVERAGE (wOBA)

wOBA is one of my favorite stats because it does add more context than on-base percentage (OBP). Much like OBP, a high wOBA is good and a low wOBA is bad for hitters. On the flip side, a low wOBA is good and a high wOBA is bad for pitchers. Once again, it just adds another layer of context where the outcomes of reaching base are weighted differently based on their importance.

WEIGHTED RUNS CREATED PLUS (wRC+)

Using wOBA, we can get to a stat called wRC+. With this stat, a player that has a 100 wRC+ is exactly league average. A player with a 120 wRC+ is 20% more productive than a league average player. A player with an 80 wRC+ is 20% less productive than a league average player. Anything over 100 is good, anything under 100 is bad.

The “Plus” means that the stat is park-adjusted and league-adjusted for the run environment. “Park-adjusted” means that there are factors within the formula that account for the way that Coors Field is a better hitter's park than American Family Field or that Fenway Park is a better hitter's park than Tropicana Field.

“League-adjusted” basically means grading on a curve. If a lot of runs are being scored, batters have to be that much productive to be above average. If it is a low run environment, then great hitters will stand out that much more.

K% AND BB%

I don't like using raw strikeout and walk numbers or strikeouts per nine innings (K/9) or walks per nine innings (BB/9). I prefer to use K% and BB%, which is simply the percentage of plate appearances that end in a strikeout (K%) or a walk (BB%). This can be used for both pitchers and hitters.

Last season, the league average K% was 22.6% and the league average BB% was 8.1%.

BURKE'S BOLD TAKE:

Logan Gilbert's slider returns to form and he is your American League Cy Young winner

HITTING

Something I mentioned in last year's Mariners write-up that seemingly carried over to 2025 is how well they performed offensively in September 2024. Scott Servais was fired, Wilson took over, and Edgar Martinez returned as the interim hitting coach. Martinez was jumping around the org as a hitting advisor, and was called into duty in Seattle. He's now the team's Senior Director of Hitting Strategy, but with one of the game's purest hitters in the dugout, the Mariners slashed .264/.347/.433 in September 2024 with a .339 wOBA and a 129 wRC+ that both ranked third in the league. Prior to September, the Mariners were 28th in wOBA at .296, had a 99 wRC+, and slashed .216/.304/.364.

While that torrid final-month pace proved unsustainable as expected, Seattle did make huge strides offensively in 2025, slashing .244/.320/.420 with a .321 wOBA and a strong 113 wRC+, influenced by how T-Mobile Park requires a team to be graded on a curve. The team went from seventh at 40.5% and fourth in Barrel% at 8.9% to fourth in HH% at 42.8% and improved their Barrel% to 9.5%. Along with improved contact quality and authority, the M's simply made more contact, cutting their K% from 26.8% to 23.3%. With the same group, plus a full season of Naylor, a strong trade addition in Brendan Donovan, and a good platoon stick in Rob Refsnyder, this should be a very good offense again.

PITCHING

While it seemed like the Mariners were up against it because of injuries to Logan Gilbert and George Kirby, the reality is that they had it a lot better than most. Seattle only used nine different starting pitchers and seven of them made at least 15 starts, anchored by 32 from Luis Castillo and 30 from Bryan Woo. Kirby's early-season injury led to a career-worst 4.21 ERA and Bryce Miller never got on track with multiple IL stints, posting a 5.68 ERA with a 5.36 xERA and a 5.17 FIP one season removed

from going 2.94/3.71/3.58 in those metrics.

The Mariners were second in ERA and third in FIP as a staff in 2024. They were 13th in ERA and ninth in FIP this past season, so if they can stay a little bit healthier and regain that 2024 form with an improved offense, this team has a remarkably high ceiling. Given that not much has changed with this group from a personnel standpoint, and the park factor remains very favorable, I'd expect strong numbers again, including a bit of a K% bump that was lacking last season with some of the injuries.

PROSPECT WATCH

Third base was a real sore spot for the M's, which is why they reacquainted with Eugenio Suarez for the playoff push. He wasn't very good for Seattle, but that position group posted a .242/.299/.374 slash with a .295 wOBA last season. Fortunately, Colt Emerson is coming. Emerson was drafted as a shortstop, but probably wasn't going to stick there anyway, as the 20-year-old prep product taken 22nd overall in 2023 will have the chance to break camp with the club. Ben Williamson was 24% below league average offensively last season, so Emerson, who mostly played at A+ and AA, is a guy to follow very closely in the Cactus League and early in the season if he doesn't make the Opening Day roster with his advanced tools.

OUTLOOK

It's pretty clear that I love the composition of this team. Maybe Wilson brought some new vibes to the clubhouse and Kevin Seitzer, who did some excellent things as the Braves hitting coach for a decade, seems to be improving this group. Pitching coach Pete Woodworth was hired at 31 years of age and has held this role since November 2019 with a lot of positive results. It's taken a ton of maneuvering over the years, but Jerry Dipoto has this team where he wants it and I'd be very surprised if they don't repeat in the AL West.

**BURKE'S WIN TOTAL
LEAN: OVER 89.5**



2026 ODDS

WIN TOTAL: 89.5

DIVISION: +110

PENNANT: +500

WORLD SERIES: 13-1

SEATTLE MARINERS ADAM BURKE'S NERDY TAKE

How can you not feel good for a team whose star player goes by "Big Dumper" winning the division for the first time in 25 seasons? Though Cal Raleigh didn't win the AL MVP, he did get to play in the ALCS, a series that the Mariners lost after blowing leads of 2-0 and 3-2, falling so painfully short of their first World Series appearance in franchise history. As bitter as the ending was, a team so close in recent seasons got over the hump and they should be better for it moving forward.

Despite five straight seasons with 85+ wins, and three of

them with exactly 90 wins, the Mariners only have two playoff appearances because of how the Wild Card bubble has played out and Houston's dominance in the AL West. The balance of power seems to be shifting now, though, and the Mariners, division champs in their first full season under manager Dan Wilson, are the team to beat in 2026.

While the Mariners didn't do much this offseason, they have a top-10 prospect in waiting, locked in spark plug Josh Naylor, and brought in a lot of depth arms to try and withstand the grind of 162 games.

2025 BETTING RECORDS

MONEYLINE
96-78
-.5 UNITS

TOTAL
95-73-6

RUN LINE
77-97

MONEYLINE 1ST 5
75-71-28
-20.9 UNITS

TOTAL 1ST 5
93-81

RUN LINE 1ST 5
82-92

**YES RUN
FIRST INNING**
84-90



**SEATTLE
MARINERS**

22025 RECORD: 90-72
1ST IN AL WEST

LEWIS' WIN TOTAL
LEAN: OVER 89.5

JENSEN LEWIS' PLAYER TAKE

HITTING

What a magical run in 2025. Storybook season with so many memorable moments - and we may be in for another one just like it in 2026. AL MVP runner-up C Cal Raleigh put together arguably the greatest single season from a catcher we've ever seen. He'll lead a Mariners attack absolutely stacked with newly-acquired leadoff man 3B Brendan Donovan, superstar CF Julio Rodriguez, 1B Josh Naylor and LF Randy Arozarena. Speed and versatility will play a huge role in this back half of the lineup, with DH Dominic Canzone, RF Victor Robles, SS J.P. Crawford and youngster 2B Cole Young rounding out the starting nine. T-Mobile Park isn't known for being a hitter's paradise by any stretch of the imagination, but it didn't hold down the home offense, seeing this Mariners team hit for the third-most HR in MLB. A top-10 scoring group is

well within reach again and role players INF Leo Rivas, as well as 1B/OF Luke Raley and newly signed 1B/OF Rob Refsnyder, provide plenty of diverse options in late game situations.

PITCHING

It's been the envy of pretty much every other organization in the game for the last half decade. This starting rotation can be stacked up against any lineup, anywhere, any time. Pick your poison with multiple aces, from Bryan Woo, Logan Gilbert and George Kirby. Veteran Luis Castillo is still as reliable as any starting pitcher in MLB. Bryce Miller is really the No. 5 starter in name only - he'd likely be at least a No. 2 or No. 3 in many other rotations. Oh, then you deal with the nastiness of the Seattle bullpen. Closer Andrés Muñoz finished second statistically to Aroldis Chapman as the best reliever in the sport last season.

Setup men Matt Brash, Eduard Bazarido and Gabe Speier get another power arm to add in the fold, with Jose A. Ferrer coming over in a trade with the Nationals. The scariest part of the Mariners staff is they didn't really pitch to their full capabilities for most of the 2025 regular season. Best of luck trying to win series against this incredible force of nature.

PROSPECT WATCH

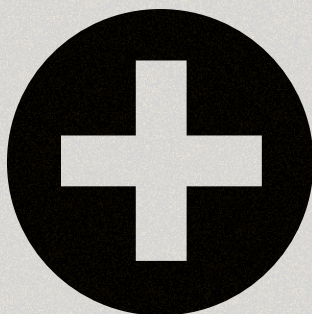
Top organizational prospect and No. 9 overall in MiLB is SS Colt Emerson. Widely viewed as one of the best pure hitters in any minor league system, his only real question is what position will be a fit at the big league level? A switch to third base may fast track his call-up here in 2026. 2025 No. 3 overall selection and No. 21 overall MiLB prospect LHP Kade Anderson helped pitch LSU to a national championship and cemented his stock as one of the best arms in the entire draft. He's

got a great shot to rocket through multiple minor league levels in 2026. Seattle also holds two more Top-50 overall MiLB prospects in RHP Ryan Sloan (No. 33) and OF Lazaro Montes (No. 43), as well as a total of six in the Top 100. 2B Michael Arroyo (No. 67) is a name to watch for a potential call to the Pacific Northwest this year. Add OF Jonny Farmelo (No. 78) in and it's as loaded a farm system there is.

OUTLOOK

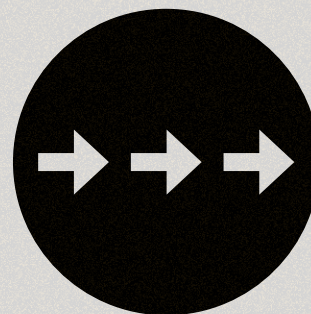
Manager Dan Wilson brought this team within one win of the franchise's first trip to the Fall Classic. Gut-wrenching way to blow a 2-0 ALCS lead, but it will only fuel the desire and fire for the 2026 group. "Unfinished business" for sure and with Raleigh reprising his role as an MVP candidate, alongside as vaunted a pitching staff there is in the game, the Mariners are poised for another deep postseason run.

LEWIS' BOLD TAKE: THE MARINERS WIN THE AL WEST, EN ROUTE TO PUNCHING THEIR FIRST-EVER TICKET TO THE WORLD SERIES



NOTABLE ADDITIONS

INF Brendan Donovan
C Andrew Knizner
OF/1B Rob Refsnyder
RP Jose A. Ferrer
RP Cooper Criswell



NOTABLE DEPARTURES

INF Eugenio Suárez
INF Jorge Polanco
RP Caleb Ferguson
C Mitch Garver
RP Tayler Saucedo
RP Luke Jackson
RP Gregory Santos
RP Trent Thornton
OF Leody Taveras
INF Ben Williamson



SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

ADAM BURKE'S NERDY TAKE

There is some measure of solace in going 81-81 instead of having a losing season, as the Giants won their final four games in 2025 to avoid that fate. But, this is a team that has gone 81-81, 80-82, 79-83, and 81-81 over the last four seasons since the enormous outlier back in 2021 with a 107-55 mark. That is also the only season in which the Giants have made it to the postseason since 2016 and their only winning season in that time. While the Giants haven't really bottomed out like others around the league of late, as they reserved that for 2017-18, they still haven't been good enough.

Fans, players, ownership, front office personnel, coaches, everybody is at a point where

they are demanding more from this Giants team and who can blame them? Things could have swung more in one direction or the other last season, as the Giants played 58 one-run games. The only team to play more was the Pirates with 60. San Francisco was 28-30 in those games and the team was even 12 games over .500 on June 13. They fell below .500 on July 30 for the first time. The 162-game grind is just so hard.

There are a lot of solid big leaguers on this team and that means another competitive ballclub. This is a high-floor, low-ceiling roster where a lot of overachievement will have to take place to exceed expectations.

2026 ODDS

WIN TOTAL: 80.5

DIVISION: 20-1

PENNANT: 35-1

WORLD SERIES: 65-1

BURKE'S BOLD TAKE: Bryce Eldridge, who had a 62.7% Hard Hit% in AAA last season, is worth a look at +1600 for NL Rookie of the Year

HITTING

As we know, Oracle Park makes a difficult task even harder, since the ball doesn't carry well with San Francisco's climate and the marine layer right on the water. The high wall in right field also helps to suppress power production, though it can make the venue very good for doubles and triples. The Giants only hit .235 as a team, which ranked 25th and they were 29th in stolen bases, so they were a station-to-station team when they did get aboard and this is not a team that will hit a lot of home runs given the park factor. At home, the Giants were 23rd in wOBA. On the road, they were 18th.

And that's a root cause of why the Giants can't get over the hump. Their home and road numbers had a lot of similarities, but one notable difference is that they had the fifth-highest road K%. That can't happen. Rafael Devers was a fine addition with the stick, even with his career-worst 26.3% K% and a 29.4% K% with the Giants. He was one of six Giants who posted a wRC+ above 100. Because wRC+ is a park-adjusted metric, it takes into account Oracle Park's inherent hurdles and so this is a really disappointing outcome for the Giants. On the plus side, five of those six guys are back, plus former batting champ (and poor defender) Luis Arraez and a pro hitter in Harrison Bader.

PITCHING

San Francisco was 10th in ERA and second in FIP last season, so this was a stellar pitching staff on the whole. The four primary starters ran ERAs between 3.22 and 3.85 and the bullpen was top five in ERA and FIP. The Giants had the third-highest GB% and second-lowest HR/FB% in baseball, so their staff was able to thrive on home run prevention and limiting extra-base hits. Those are useful tools home or away, so the Giants were a top-10 road staff by ERA as well. What I find most interesting is that this is not a high-strikeout pitching staff and the team was -24 Outs Above Average defensively, so you could argue that they got lucky, but also argue that they'd be even better with a stronger defense.

To replace Justin Verlander and a turnstile of fifth starters, the Giants signed Tyler Mahle and Adrian Houser. I've always been intrigued by Mahle, whose command early in his career was suspect and he had to work a lot to eliminate a large platoon split. He hasn't been healthy since 2021 and Houser has thrown over 125 MLB innings once in his career. The durability of ace Logan Webb allows the Giants to go this route and take damaged goods to see what they can become. From a home run suppression standpoint, Mahle and Houser do fit the rest of the team well.

PROSPECT WATCH

This one is easy as Bryce Eldridge is the biggest name to watch. Eldridge was taken 16th overall in 2023 and made his MLB debut last season, but his cup of coffee was terribly bitter with just three hits in 37 plate appearances. He did have offseason surgery to remove a bone spur and maybe that was what cratered his numbers after slashing .260/.333/.510 in the minors. Eldridge has a lot of swing and miss in his profile, but may offer a power threat that the Giants are lacking right now. He's a large being at 6-foot-7 and has room to add weight. He's not much of a defender, but with the universal DH and his bat, the Giants will find a place to put him.

OUTLOOK

Nobody expects the NL West teams to spend like the Dodgers. But, mostly maintaining status quo isn't going to help close the gap. Even after the acquisition of Devers, the Giants were just 40-50 with him on the roster. A couple mid-rotation arms and a couple of complementary offensive pieces might raise the ceiling a little bit and help the Giants over the 81-81 hump, but this team isn't obviously better or worse than any of the last four versions we've seen. It'll likely be a repeat of what we've recently seen and the Giants are going to have to decide who stays and who goes in an effort to get closer to the top teams in the division.

**BURKE'S WIN TOTAL
LEAN: OVER 80.5**

2025 BETTING RECORDS

MONEYLINE
81-81
-18.4 UNITS

TOTAL
74-80-7

RUN LINE
75-86

MONEYLINE 1ST 5
63-63-36
-13.0 UNITS

TOTAL 1ST 5
84-77

RUN LINE 1ST 5
75-87

**YES RUN
FIRST INNING**
86-76

JENSEN LEWIS' PLAYER TAKE

HITTING

On paper, the Giants desperately needed an "aircraft carrier" in the middle of their lineup to step up in weight class with the NL contenders. Trading for 1B Rafael Devers last June answered that need, but took a bit to see results directly affect the San Francisco offense positively. Teamed with SS Willy Adames and 3B Matt Chapman, it's now a vaunted group of sluggers to power the Giants attack. LF Heliot Ramos is developing into a fabulous all-around talent. All-world bat-to-ball specialist 2B Luis Arraez teams with Ramos as a primary table-setter. RF Jung Hoo Lee finally stayed relatively healthy and put together a solid campaign. Newly-signed CF Harrison Bader joins the fold, lengthening an order that will most likely see everyday at bats from highly touted prospect DH Bryce Eldridge starting Opening Day. C Patrick Bailey rounds out the starting nine as one of the best defensive catchers in the big leagues. Oracle Park isn't the greatest hitting environment in MLB, but there's no reason why this current 2026 batting order can't be amongst the better units on the Senior Circuit.

PITCHING

Cy Young candidate Logan Webb leads a vaunted 1-2 punch with

Robbie Ray atop the Giants rotation. Tyler Mahle and Adrian Houser signed as free agents to fortify the starting five and Landen Roupp will get the chance to solidify that No. 5 spot. It's a stout group and they'll hope to build on a 2025 year that, outside of Webb and Ray, very much underperformed. You'd never guess it by looking at the statistics without the team name next to them, but the Giants bullpen actually had the fourth-lowest bullpen ERA in 2025. Closer Ryan Walker will reassume the role that he abdicated last season for Camilo Doval, now a member of the Yankees after being traded to New York at the 2025 deadline. Getting to Walker is the main concern in 2026, knowing their best setup man, Randy Rodriguez, is all but lost for this year with Tommy John surgery last September. Erik Miller, Joel Peguero, José Buttó represent the top leverage relievers tasked with building the bridge between the starters and the ninth inning.

PROSPECT WATCH

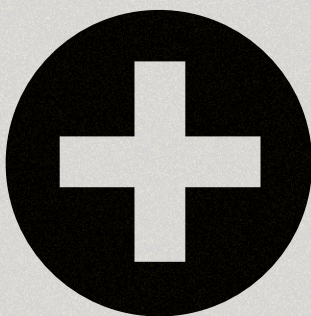
A host of graduations from Eldridge, OF Drew Gilbert, SPs Carson Whisenhunt, Blade Tidwell, Trevor McDonald and Hayden Birdsong leave the top end of the Giants farm system with

a fair amount of early big league experience. What's left is a lot of developmental, yet high ceiling youngsters in Single-A. Circle SS Jhonny Level and SS/2B Gavin Kilen (No.13 overall selection in 2025 draft) for the potential fast-risers on the position player front. There's some sneaky upside to a handful of these prospects.

OUTLOOK

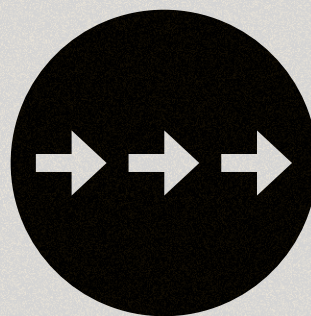
Perhaps the most widely controversial manager hire happened in the Bay Area with the hiring of Tony Vitello, former head coach at the University of Tennessee. He becomes the first manager to go straight from college to the big leagues, with no prior professional coaching experience. What that transition will look like and how the players receive him will give an early indication on how president of baseball operations Buster Posey's gamble pays off. It's a big swing for a highly accomplished college coach, but it's an entirely different world within the six-month marathon of a major league season. The triad of Devers-Adames-Chapman needs to be a wrecking ball from the get-go and the bullpen will need immediate leverage inning answers to be in contention for a Wild Card.

**LEWIS' BOLD TAKE: LOGAN WEBB FINISHES TOP 3 IN NL CY YOUNG VOTING,
GIANTS WIN 87-89 GAMES**



NOTABLE ADDITIONS

INF Luis Arraez
OF Harrison Bader
SP Tyler Mahle
SP Adrian Houser
RP Sam Hentges



NOTABLE DEPARTURES

SP Justin Verlander
INF Dominic Smith
C Andrew Knizner
RP Joey Lucchesi
INF Wilmer Flores
RP Scott Alexander
C Tom Murphy

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

2025 RECORD: 81-81, 3RD IN NL WEST
LEWIS' WIN TOTAL LEAN: OVER 80.5



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