

# Astros Daily Clips

## Wednesday, September 21, 2016

### Astros win in 10, continue Wild Card ascent

By Rick Eymer and Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The Astros are surging just at the right time.

George Springer shot a single up the middle in the 10th inning to score Tony Kemp, who had doubled off Sean Doolittle, from third base to send the Astros to their fifth win in their last six games, 2-1, over the A's on Tuesday night at the Oakland Coliseum.

"I understood I just had to hit it through the infield somehow," Springer said. "Just like I was taught before, you find a way and help the team."

In a game in which Jose Altuve collected his 200th hit of the season, the Astros moved to within two games of the Orioles for the second spot in the American League Wild Card race with 11 games remaining, staying one-half game behind the Tigers and moving one game ahead of the Mariners. Relief pitcher Chris Devenski got the win in relief with 3 2/3 perfect innings, and Ken Giles stranded the bases loaded for his 13th save.

"We played well," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "We fight until the end, we play our 27 outs, 30 outs, 33 outs -- whatever it was going to take, we were going to play 'til the end. Our guys understand where we're at on the calendar. We've played important games lately. They're playing very loose and certainly want to spoil some seasons, so it sets up to be a very intense playoff atmosphere game."

Astros starter Joe Musgrove and A's starter Sean Manaea were locked in a scoreless battle through five innings before Oakland pushed a run across in the sixth on a bases-loaded grounder off the bat of Stephen Vogt.

"Another really tough loss, back-to-back nights, especially frustrating because of the start Manaea gave us," Doolittle said. "That was one of his best outings of the season and to squander it is incredibly frustrating."

The Astros answered in the seventh when Kemp's grounder glanced off the glove of reliever John Axford and rolled into right field to score Marwin Gonzalez with a game-tying double. Kemp went 2-for-2 with two doubles off the bench.

"Before the game today, everyone seemed really loose and ready to go out there and play," Kemp said. "That's the main thing. No one's really panicking, everyone's having fun at this last stretch and we're just trying to finish as strong as we can."

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Altuve notches No. 200: Altuve reached 200 hits for the third consecutive season with a one-out chopper over third baseman Ryon Healy in the eighth inning. He's the first player to have three consecutive 200-hit seasons since Ichiro Suzuki (2001-10) and first right-handed hitter since Michael Young (2003-07). [More >](#)

"He was chasing 200 hits for a little while now," Hinch said. "He's such a good hitter and when he goes two or three or five at-bats without getting a hit, he's really hard on himself and he tries to do everything that he can to get on base. He tries to be the hero. He really does a good job of conducting his at-bats. Two-hundred hits is a big deal. It's not easy to do. He's done it a number of seasons in a row now, which is why he was one of the elite hitters in the league."

Vogt's stroke: After Jake Smolinski broke up Musgrove's no-hit bid in the sixth, the A's loaded the bases and Vogt hit a slow bouncer to short, allowing Smolinski to score the first run of the game.

"Musgrove was on his game tonight," Manaea said. "It was a hard game. It's tough to lose like that."

Devenski unhittable: After Musgrove didn't give up a hit until the sixth inning, rookie reliever Devenski replaced him and sent down all 11 batters he faced, including four strikeouts, to get the win. Devenski, who entered the game with a 1.41 ERA in relief this year, hasn't allowed a run in his last 11 outings.

"I never know when a game like this is going to come up, and for him to take 3 2/3 of a really good performance in a game that we needed it the most, is very, very valuable for us," Hinch said.

Oh boy, Danny: Danny Valencia, 0-for-4 on the night, thought he earned a walk. Instead he was called out on strikes and then earned an ejection from home plate Marty Foster after the bottom of the ninth.

#### REPLAY REVIEW

The A's played the game under protest after the outcome of a replay review in the third inning. After Astros outfielder Teoscar Hernandez led off the third with a single, Jake Marisnick popped up a bunt that first baseman Yonder Alonso allowed to drop. Alonso tried to swipe tag a diving Marisnick at first, but he was called safe, and then Alonso tagged out Hernandez when he stepped off first base.

The A's challenged that Alonso had tagged out Marisnick, which replays confirmed. The call at first was overturned, but the umpires allowed Hernandez to remain at first base after determining he had stepped off the base because he had reacted to the incorrect call.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Astros: Right-hander Collin McHugh (11-10, 4.66 ERA) will take the mound for the Astros in Wednesday's 2:35 p.m. CT series finale against the A's. The Astros have won six games in a row started by McHugh, who is 2-0 with a 2.96 ERA in his last five starts.

Athletics: Right-hander Daniel Mengden makes the start for the Athletics in Wednesday's season series finale at 12:35 p.m. PT against the Astros. The rookie would rather forget his first two starts against his hometown team that drafted him, as he's allowed nine runs in 9 2/3 innings.

## Altuve tallies 200 hits for 3rd straight season

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Astros All-Star second baseman Jose Altuve hasn't been finding hits as often as he did in the first five months of the season, which made for what seemed like a struggle to reach 200. After making outs in his first three at-bats in Tuesday's 2-1 win over the A's, Altuve singled in the eighth inning and breathed a little easier.

Altuve cranked out his 200th hit, becoming the first player to have three consecutive 200-hit seasons since Ichiro Suzuki (2001-10) and first right-handed hitter since Michael Young (2003-07).

"It took a long time," said Altuve, who's batting .224 in September. "I tried to get hits in Seattle, I couldn't. I tried to get hits here, I couldn't, but finally. I think now I'm going to get more hits."

The hit came on a one-out chopper over the head of Oakland third baseman Ryon Healy off pitcher Liam Hendriks.

"He was chasing 200 hits for a little while now," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "He's such a good hitter and when he goes two or three or five at-bats without getting a hit, he's really hard on himself and he tries to do everything that he can to get on base. He tries to be the hero. He really does a good job of conducting his at-bats. Two-hundred hits is a big deal. It's not easy to do. He's done it a number of seasons in a row now, which is why he was one of the elite hitters in the league."

Altuve, who had a club-record 225 hits in '14 and 200 hits last year, is the third second baseman to reach 200 hits in three straight seasons, along with Charlie Gehringer and Rogers Hornsby. Prior to Altuve reaching 200 hits in '14, the only Astros player to have 200 hits in a season was Craig Biggio (210 in 1998).

Altuve showed some frustration in the sixth when he tried to bunt for a hit but was thrown out and threw his bat down in the dugout.

"I mean, I wasn't thinking about getting a hit just because I could get to 200," he said. "I was just trying to get on base. It was a close game, we're winning by one run and we knew that one of the other teams lost today, so we wanted to win and get closer today and try to make the Wild Card."

Altuve, who notched his 1,000th career hit earlier this year, entered the day leading the Majors in hits, but Mookie Betts of the Red Sox beat him to 200 hits earlier in the day. Altuve is chasing his second American League batting title in three seasons and leads the league with a .336 average.

## Devenski delivers again in 'very valuable' role

*Astros reliever extends scoreless streak in 2-1 win*

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Despite the shortcomings of his team's starting rotation in the wake of injuries to Dallas Keuchel and Lance McCullers, Astros manager A.J. Hinch has resisted the temptation to insert rookie right-hander Chris Devenski into the rotation. And Tuesday showed why.

Devenski, the former starter, retired all 11 batters he faced in relief to get the win in the Astros' 2-1, 10-inning victory over the A's on Tuesday night, bridging the gap from starter Joe Musgrove to closer Ken Giles, who locked down his 13th save.

With the win, Houston moved to two games back of the Orioles for the second American League Wild Card spot.

"This is exactly why Devenski's valuable in the role that he's in," Hinch said. "I never know when a game like this is going to come up, and for him to take 3 2/3 of a really good performance in a game that we needed it the most, is very, very valuable for us. I understand the appeal of him starting, but in a couple of days he's going to be back in there again in some clutch games over the course of the rest of the season."

It was another night at the office for Devenski, who only needed 29 pitches -- including good command of his slider and his effective changeup -- to work 3 2/3 innings of perfection.

"It was a great performance by Joe to keep us in there through five or so innings, and then luckily I got to limit the damage," he said.

Devenski hasn't allowed a run in his last 11 outings, lowering his ERA as a reliever to 1.35. It was his longest outing since Aug. 19 because Hinch has started using him in higher-leverage roles later in games than the long-relief role he was performing earlier.

"I like relieving," Devenski said. "I get a good little rush going out there and I've been going out there and giving it my best."

When asked if he would be available to pitch Wednesday, Devenski said, "We'll see how the body responds when I wake up in the morning. Hopefully my arm won't be on the other side of the bed."

## McHugh rides September surge into A's finale

By Rick Eymer / MLB.com

Collin McHugh, set to start Wednesday's series finale in Oakland, could be the key for the Astros reaching the postseason this year. The right-hander has owned the month of September since coming to Houston, which entered Wednesday two games back of the Orioles for the second American League Wild Card spot.

He's already 2-0 with a 3.31 ERA this month and is unbeaten (10-0, 3.08) in his last 12 September starts dating back to 2014.

The Astros have won six games in a row started by McHugh, who is 2-0 with a 2.96 ERA in his last five outings. He's 5-1 with a 3.00 ERA in eight career starts against the A's.

The A's will send Daniel Mengden to the mound for his third start of the year against the Astros. He's allowed nine runs on 11 hits and seven walks in 9 2/3 innings against Houston.

Mengden pitched seven scoreless innings against the Royals in his last start, allowing just three hits and striking out six.

"The last game, by far his best since probably his first two outings that we saw," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It was just pounding the strike zone. I think he'd been getting behind in counts, maybe picking a little too much at the corners as opposed to throwing the ball over the plate and getting ahead."

Things to know about this game

- Jose Altuve notched his 200th hit of the season Tuesday to become the first player since Ichiro Suzuki (2001-10) to record three consecutive seasons of at least 200 hits.
- Marcus Semien is 7-for-15 (.467) with three doubles and a home run against McHugh, while Danny Valencia has a home run and a pair of doubles in 20 at-bats against him.
- Khris Davis and Yonder Alonso are a combined 3-for-19 against McHugh.

## A's play Astros under protest after overturned call

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's played Tuesday's 2-1 loss to the Astros under protest after manager Bob Melvin appeared to express disagreement with the outcome of a replay review in the third inning.

After Astros outfielder Teoscar Hernandez led off the third with a single, Jake Marisnick popped up a bunt that first baseman Yonder Alonso allowed to drop. Alonso tried to swipe tag a diving Marisnick at first, but he was called safe, and then Alonso tagged out Hernandez when he stepped off first base.

The A's challenged that Alonso had tagged out Marisnick, which replays confirmed. The call at first was overturned, but the umpires allowed Hernandez to remain at first base after determining he had stepped off the base because he had reacted to the incorrect call.

Melvin came out and informed the umpires he was going to play the game under protest.

"They said that the call affected what the runner did," Melvin said after the game. "In my opinion, if the runner was affected by the call, he'd head toward second. We had a play here a couple years ago where they said the exact same thing and we didn't get the call. So I'm just trying to cover my bases."

The call wound up not hurting the A's because Yulieski Gurriel came to the plate and hit into a 4-6-3 double play to end the inning.

## Rasmus hopes to find spark down stretch

*'It's been tough,' Astros outfielder says of limited playing time*

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Veteran outfielder Colby Rasmus has seen his at-bats dry up in the last couple of weeks, even to the point that he hasn't been playing against right-handers. Despite his struggles at the plate, Rasmus has been trying to put on a positive face and make sure he's ready whenever he's called upon.

Rasmus, who took a \$15.8 million qualifying offer this year and began the season as the team's everyday starting left fielder and cleanup hitter, got off to a hot start, but struggled as the summer progressed and eventually went on the disabled list (to remove a cyst in his ear) following a 3-for-66 slump.

He homered in his return to the lineup Aug. 30, but is hitting .167 with three homers and six RBIs in 42 at-bats since being activated.

Colby Rasmus launches a solo home run deep into the seats in right in his first at-bat back from injury to open the scoring in Houston

Tuesday marked Rasmus' fourth consecutive game out of the lineup, though three of those have been against lefties, against which he's hitting .138 this year. Rookie Teoscar Hernandez has started five of the last six games in left field.

"There's no doubt he's had a tough season on a lot of levels," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "He's had to battle a number of things. He's also grinding to the point of being really hard on himself and not performing at a level that he's used to.

"I'm going to mix and match. A lot of it has to do with how Teoscar plays, how Jake [Marisnick] plays, how [Tony] Kemp plays [and] if I need to put Marwin [Gonzalez] in the outfield. We're trying to put our best team out there, and Colby can help us. He may find himself mixed and matched a little bit more than we're used to. We're used to seeing him out there against every right-hander. He knows that may not be the case. But he knows that he can help us win in certain games."

Rasmus, who lost 10 pounds following the surgery and had to work to regain his strength, understands where Hinch is coming from. He says he's had some good at-bats, but knows it's a results-oriented game.

"It makes it tough, but that's the game," Rasmus said. "I ain't mad at nobody. I ain't mad about it. Just not playing as good as I would like to play. It's just one of those years you've got to try down the stretch here to make some adjustments and hopefully make those adjustments and spark a little fire to get it going."

Rasmus is as prideful as it gets in the Astros' clubhouse. He wants to play and wants to win, so these last couple of weeks have been challenging. All he can do now is be ready when his number is called.

"It's just been a little bit frustrating to not get it done," he said. "Everybody wants to play good. You know, I'm going to definitely take my swings and try to get it right and all those things, but right now it's tough."

## Astros outlast Athletics in 10 innings

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. --- A pinch-hitter called upon in the seventh inning, Tony Kemp batted only twice Tuesday night at Oakland's Coliseum.

Yet, the reserve outfielder had a hand in both the Astros' runs in their 2-1 win in 10 innings against the Athletics. Their second come-from-behind victory in as many nights pushed them to only two games behind the second wild card spot with 11 games left to play.

The Astros (80-71) will enter Wednesday afternoon's series finale against the A's two games behind the Orioles. The Tigers, who also won Tuesday, are 1.5 games back of the O's.

"We are right there," Jose Altuve said. "We've got the team to do it."

Tuesday's triumph was the Astros' fifth in six games. Kemp doubled twice, driving in the game-tying run in the seventh and setting up the winning run in the 10th. He scored the latter when George Springer smacked a single past a drawn-in infield with one out in the inning.

Chris Devenski earned the win after retiring each of the 11 batters he faced in relief. Ken Giles escaped a self-inflicted one-out, bases loaded jam in converting the save on his 26th birthday.

"I was talking to George and before the game today everyone just seemed really loose and ready to go out there and play," Kemp said. "No one's really panicking. Everyone's having fun at this last stretch and we're just trying to finish as strong as we can."

Joe Musgrove left with a no decision despite mowing down the A's lineup nearly twice through. The Astros' rookie righthander took the mound for the sixth inning more than halfway to a no-hitter. A pair of walks marked the only blemishes to his first start in his home state as a major leaguer.

But two shift-beating singles and a four-pitch walk changed the complexion of Musgrove's outing. Manager A.J. Hinch summoned Devenski to pitch with the bases loaded and one out. After a weakly hit grounder by Stephen Vogt plated the game's first run, Devenski induced Danny Valencia into an inning-ending groundout.

With a little help from A's reliever John Axford, the Astros got Musgrove off the hook in the next half inning.

Kemp smacked a chopper up the middle that deflected off Axford's glove enough to where second baseman Joey Wendle wasn't able to change direction in time to field it. Marwin Gonzalez scored easily from third. Kemp, who hustled to second base, was awarded a double, the first of his two.

Devenski remained in the game after the sixth and provided the Astros' three-plus pivotal frames, merely adding to what has been an incredible rookie season for the revelatory righthander. He recorded four of his 11 outs via strikeouts and improving his ERA to 1.98 over 104 2/3 innings between starting and relief roles.

"This is exactly why Devenski's valuable in the role that he's in," Hinch said. "I never know when a game like this is going to come up. For him to take 3 2/3 of a really good performance in a game where we needed it the most, it's very, very valuable for us.

"I understand the appeal of him starting. But in a couple day's rest, he's going to be back in there again and in some clutch games over the course of the rest of the season."

Mere minutes after the game's final out, Devenski exited the visitors' clubhouse and disappeared down a hallway leading to the weight room used by visiting players at the Coliseum. Once he resurfaced in the clubhouse about 20 minutes later, he was asked in jest by a reporter if he would be available to pitch again Wednesday.

"Hopefully. We'll see how the body responds when I wake up in the morning," he said with a smile before joking: "Hopefully my arm's not on the other side of the bed."

## **Astros report: Jose Altuve posts third straight 200-hit season**

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. - In the 55 seasons a major league franchise has belonged to Houston, only four times has a player recorded 200 hits. Jose Altuve, all of 26 years old, accounts for all but one of those seasons.

Altuve hit a chopper over the head of Athletics third baseman Ryon Healy in the eighth inning of Tuesday night's 2-1, 10-inning win over the Oakland A's to become the first major leaguer with three consecutive 200-hit seasons since Ichiro Suzuki reeled off 10 straight from 2001 to 2010.

Consecutive or not, the Astros star second baseman is only the fifth second baseman to record three 200-hit seasons in a career and the first since World War II.

Only three second basemen had more than three 200-hit seasons. Each is enshrined in Cooperstown. Rogers Hornsby compiled seven such seasons from 1920 to 1929. Charlie Gehringer matched him from 1929 to 1937. Nap Lajoie had four 200-hit campaigns from 1901 to 1910.

Regardless of position, Altuve is the 54th player with at least three 200-hit seasons. Only 35 players have more than three. Suzuki and Pete Rose each had 10, the most in major league history.

Before Altuve broke out with 225 hits in 2014, Craig Biggio's 210-hit campaign in 1998 marked the only 200-hit season in Astros franchise history.

Lighter White, heavier stats?

If you've noticed a much trimmer version of Tyler White gracing your monitor recently, your television isn't playing tricks on you.

The 5-11 White has lost a considerable amount of weight, about 20 to 25 pounds, he says, from when he reported to Astros spring training in February. Although listed at 225 pounds, the first baseman had said in April he was playing at about 230.

"This season has had its up and downs," he said. "It's kind of something that, I don't know when exactly, but I started losing a little bit, and I'm just trying to make healthier decisions."

Simply losing weight wasn't White's plan. His goal has been more in regard to getting in better shape by making better dietary decisions and spending more time in the gym. He credits early-season conversations with Erik Kratz, the journeyman catcher who spent April and the first half of May with the Astros, as the genesis of the changes he made.

"I still get my baseball work in, but I get in the gym as soon as I get here (to the ballpark) almost every day," White said. "I try to get in the gym and get myself a little bit of time just to do some cardio, to do some core, just something to make my body better and to become a better athlete."

Playing time has been limited for White since he rejoined the team this most recent time as a September call-up, but he has produced when called upon. His game-tying pinch double Monday was his fourth two-bagger in 15 at-bats this month.

Moran considers winter ball

The Astros would like to see Colin Moran play winter ball this offseason, and the 23-year-old third baseman is considering the idea.

"I haven't really made a decision on it so far, but I was thinking about it," Moran said Tuesday.

A stint in winter ball might allow Moran to garner more exposure at first base, where he played only twice during the Pacific Coast League season. He batted just .259 with a .697 on-base plus slugging percentage over 459 at-bats in his first year in Class AAA and now finds his position blocked at the major league level not only by Alex Bregman but by Yuli Gurriel.

Moran's best chance to contribute to the Astros in 2017 might be as a backup at both corner infield positions. The Astros, whose lineup is righthanded-heavy, still like his lefthanded bat.

"Anybody who's in sort of that between Triple A and the big leagues (tier) as a position player, I think those guys can all benefit from (winter ball) because it's good competition. You have to play well to stay," Astros general manager Jeff Luhnow said. "It's a good environment."

Asked what he would like to see Moran accomplish with a stint in winter ball, Luhnow said, "Just get some more at-bats. Maybe play a little first base. Put himself in a position for next year."

## **Hitting more homers, Astros' Gattis closing in on triple-less season**

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. --- A year after his uncanny knack for hitting triples garnered the attention of the collective baseball world, Evan Gattis is closing in on a season without even one three-bagger.

"That's fine," he said. "Just hit 'em out of the yard, ya know?"

Perhaps one or two of Gattis' aberrational number of triples from last season (11) have turned into home runs this year. The burly 6-foot-4, 270-pound Astros designated hitter/catcher has a new career high in homers (28) in more than 150 fewer at-bats than he totaled in 2015.

Gattis and the Mets' Yoenis Cespedes are the only major leaguers with 28 or more home runs in fewer than 450 at-bats this season. (Cespedes had 30 in 436 at-bats entering Tuesday.) George Springer, tied with Gattis for the Astros' lead in homers, came into Tuesday with 593 at-bats to Gattis' 410.

When it was presented to him Tuesday that his home run rate had spiked, Gattis offered a thumbs up followed by his reasoning.

"Swinging at better pitches," he said. "Not chasing as much. Knowing the difference in balls I can drive and strikes."

Gattis has at least five home runs in each of the last four months, including six in only 15 September starts entering Tuesday. His 11 homers and .939 on-base plus slugging percentage since July 31 coming into Tuesday led the Astros.

Gattis has actually made less contact this year than last but has also swung less. He's hitting fewer groundballs, more fly balls and in general pulling the ball more.

Gattis, who is also walking at a career-best rate, said he's worked on pitch selection with hitting coach Dave Hudgens the last two seasons. Even though he struggled early this season – he attributes part of that to still working his way back from offseason hernia surgery – he still bought into the work, he said.

"When he's got his strike zone a little bit more refined, he does a ton of damage," manager A.J. Hinch said.

"Overall, he's been a better hitter this year. He's been a little bit more efficient with his pitch selection."

Gattis has 19 doubles, one off the career-best total he set last year. And yet, not even one triple?

Hinch smiled Tuesday when asked if Gattis' lack of a triple had crossed his mind.

"It sort of breaks my heart that I haven't been able to talk about triples with him," Hinch said. "He might've used all his triples up last year."

Said Gattis, "That was just such a weird thing last year. I don't know. I'm just glad I'm hitting more homers."

## Astros' Colin Moran considering winter ball

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND --- The Astros would like to see Colin Moran play winter ball this offseason and the 23-year-old third baseman is considering the idea.

"I haven't really made a decision on it so far, but I was thinking about it," Moran said on Tuesday.

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Asked what he would like to see Moran accomplish with a stint in winter ball, Luhnow said, "Just get some more at-bats. Maybe play a little first base. Put himself in a position for next year."

Odds & ends

--- George Springer entered Tuesday having struck out 165 times, the fifth-most in the majors. Only Chris Carter has struck out more in a single season for the Astros. Carter was punched out 212 times in 2013 and 182 times in 2014.

--- The Astros caught a break Tuesday when Athletics' slugger Khris Davis, the reigning AL player of the week, was scratched from the lineup because of a stomach bug.

## Astros' Tyler White trims down during season

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND - If you've noticed a much trimmer version of Tyler White gracing your monitor recently, your television isn't playing tricks on you.

The 5-foot-11 White has lost a considerable amount of weight, about 20 to 25 pounds, he says, from when he reported to Astros spring training in February. Although listed at 225 pounds, the first baseman had said in April he was playing at about 230.

"This season has had its up and downs," he said. "It's kind of something that, I don't know when exactly, but I started losing a little bit and I'm just trying to make healthier decisions."

Simply losing weight wasn't White's plan. His goal has been more so to get in better shape by making better dietary decisions and spending more time in the gym. He credits early season conversations with Erik Kratz, the journeyman catcher who spent April and the first half of May with the Astros, as the genesis of the changes he made.

"I think when I went down (to Class AAA) and then came back up (in late July), it was still kind of sketchy on when I was playing and stuff and just to kind of keep myself on the right track mentally and getting on the right track physically I just tried to every day do something to make myself a better player," White said.

"Obviously, I still get my baseball work in, but I get in the gym as soon as I get here (to the ballpark) almost every day. I try to get in the gym and get myself a little bit of time just to do some cardio, to do some core, just something to make my body better and to become a better athlete."

Playing time has been limited for White since he rejoined the team this most recent time as a September call up, but he has produced when called upon off. His game-tying pinch-hit double Monday was his fourth two-bagger in 15 at-bats this month. He feels quicker running and when playing the field. He does not feel he has sacrificed any strength.

"I think I did a good job of continuing to work out and keep myself strong while -- not even trying to lose the weight -- it's just happening because I'm doing the right things," he said.

## Springer delivers, Astros hold off Athletics in 10 innings

By: Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Houston Astros have a winning vibe during the September stretch run.

Tony Kemp noticed it before Tuesday night's 2-1, 10-inning win against the Oakland Athletics.

"Before the game today, everyone seemed loose," Kemp said. "No one's really panicking. Everyone's just having fun this last stretch."

George Springer hit a go-ahead single in the top of the 10th inning. Kemp, who tied it with a pinch-hit double in the seventh, got things going with a leadoff double against Sean Doolittle (2-3) and Jake Marisnick sacrificed him to third to bring up Springer.

Chris Devenski (4-4) struck out four in 3 2/3 innings of relief for the win, and Ken Giles escaped a bases-loaded jam and closed it out for his 13th save. The Astros remain in the mix for the AL wild card.

"The dramatic finish at the end, it's hard to overlook," manager A.J. Hinch said. "There are so many story lines that go on why we won a close game. ... Our guys understand where we're at in the calendar. We've played important games late."

Jose Altuve's eighth-inning single gave him 200 hits in three straight seasons, the first to do so since Ichiro Suzuki from 2001-10.

Oakland's Danny Valencia was ejected at the end of the ninth by plate umpire Marty Foster after striking out.

It was announced that the A's played the game under protest after a call was overturned on replay review in the third. Marisnick was initially called safe on his bunt and that was overturned, but Teoscar Hernandez -- aboard on a single -- got to return to first base rather than be called out on a double play because he reacted to the original, incorrect call. Oakland briefly protested before withdrawing it, both managers said afterward.

"It ended up just being a really weird play," Hinch said.

Sean Manaea struck out seven with two walks over six scoreless innings. The lefty allowed three hits in his second start since missing 15 days with a strained muscle in his upper back.

"That was one of his best outings of the season and to squander it is incredibly frustrating," Doolittle said.

Oakland has lost six straight to the Astros, its longest skid ever in the series.

Jake Smolinski's sharp single through a shifted infield with one out in the sixth was the A's first hit against Astros starter Joe Musgrove, who then loaded the bases and was done for the night.

The rookie right-hander, who beat the A's earlier this season when he pitched 5 1/3 scoreless innings, gave up two hits and one run, struck out four and walked three.

Devenski relieved Musgrove and allowed Stephen Vogt's RBI groundout.

"It's incredible," Musgrove said. "This team's got so much fight in it."

### VOGT RECOGNIZED

Vogt, the Oakland catcher, was named the 2016 Dave Stewart Community Service Award winner and will be honored before Wednesday afternoon's series finale. Vogt earned the award for a second straight year, the first two-time winner. He and wife, Alyssa, support the School of Imagination in Dublin that offers services and support systems to more than 350 children, many with special needs and disabilities such as autism.

"We have a duty to the Bay Area," he said.

### TRAINER'S ROOM

Astros: Manager Hinch will pick his moments to use OF Colby Rasmus, who has struggled since he came off the disabled list Aug. 30 after surgery to have a cyst removed from his ear. Rasmus is in an 0-for-17 stretch. "No doubt he's had a rough season on a lot of levels," said Hinch, who still expects Rasmus will contribute down the stretch.

Athletics: RF Khris Davis was a late scratch because of a stomach bug that had him throwing up during the day. Valencia replaced him in the lineup. ... RHP Sonny Gray threw a 48-pitch bullpen session and the next step for him in his recovery from a strained right forearm will be to throw to hitters this weekend, the day still to be determined. ... RHP Henderson Alvarez, who hasn't pitched in the majors since May 2015, underwent a second surgery on his right shoulder Tuesday. It was performed by Dr. James Andrews.



UP NEXT

Astros: RHP Collin McHugh (11-10, 4.66 ERA) is 2-0 with a 3.31 ERA so far in September. He is 10-0 in 12 September starts with the Astros dating to 2014.

Athletics: Rookie RHP Daniel Mengden (2-7, 5.68) looks to win consecutive starts for the first time all season.

## Who was our 2016 MLB Prospect of the Year?

By: Keith Law / ESPN.com

With the minor leagues' regular seasons over, it's time to present our third annual Prospect of the Year award, given to the prospect who showed the best performance in the minor leagues in 2016.

Although the process of selecting the top prospects was ultimately subjective, I focused primarily on legitimate prospects who performed well relative to their age, level and experience in pro ball. In short, the younger a player was relative to the other players in his league, especially when compared to the players in his league with a chance to have some impact in the majors, the more impressed I was with a strong performance. The primary criterion here is performance as a prospect while still in the minors because nearly all of the minors' best hitting prospects ended up in the big leagues at some point in July or August.

With that, here is my overall Prospect of the Year assessment for 2016, as well as several players who had outstanding seasons and deserve notice. I also gave a separate award to the 2016 draftee who had the best pro debut and noted a handful of runners-up in that category.

### 2016 Prospect of the Year

#### Alex Bregman, SS, Houston Astros

**I don't see how it could be anybody else. Bregman, drafted out of LSU with the second overall pick in 2015, tore apart Double-A and Triple-A en route to a late-July call-up. Including his time in the majors, he has 28 homers this year. Bregman, who turned 22 in March, hit a combined .306/.406/.580 at Corpus Christi and Fresno, with more walks than strikeouts, and finished 16th in the Texas League in homers, even though he left that league on June 26. He played solid defense at shortstop before shifting primarily to third base due to the presence of Carlos Correa at the big league level. However, Bregman is the better defender and could convince the Astros to slide Correa, who's bigger and less agile, to the hot corner next year.**

Runners-up

Andrew Benintendi, CF, Boston Red Sox

Benintendi, the seventh overall pick in 2015, raced to the majors in his first full pro season and did damage in the minors in high-A and Double-A, hitting .312/.378/.532 before his recall to Boston after the trade deadline. Benintendi has played primarily left field in the big leagues but is a natural center fielder who could handle the position if the Red Sox didn't have several plus center fielders on the roster already.

Eloy Jimenez, OF, Chicago Cubs

Jimenez got the biggest bonus the Cubs handed out in their July 2, 2014, spending spree but was briefly overshadowed by another teenager from the same crop, Gleyber Torres, whom the Cubs shipped to the Yankees in the Aroldis Chapman trade. Jimenez broke out across the board this year and put a big exclamation point on the season with a towering home run to deep left field at Petco Park -- a spot where few big leaguers manage to hit balls -- in this year's Futures Game. Jimenez hit .329/.369/.534 as a 19-year-old in low-A this year, with fewer than 100 strikeouts in a full season, which is remarkable for a young power hitter already in the Midwest League. He led the circuit with 40 doubles and finished third with 14 homers and second in slugging percentage, even though he was one of the five youngest regulars in the league. He's going to be a monster at the plate.

Mitch Keller, RHP, Pittsburgh Pirates

Keller was a second-round pick by the Pirates in 2014, but he missed nearly all of 2015 because of a forearm strain. He threw just 19 2/3 ineffective innings for short-season Bristol in the Appalachian League. Keller worked last offseason to get into premium shape, and with the help of some minor mechanical changes, he had the best season of any pitching prospect in the minors, with 138 strikeouts and just 19 walks in 130 innings, nearly all of them for low-A West Virginia. By season's end, Keller was sitting 95 mph and up, touching 99, with a hard 12-to-6 curveball and an improving changeup, and there's enormous upside now that he's healthy.

Brock Stewart, RHP, Los Angeles Dodgers

For all the money the Dodgers have spent to boost their farm system, one of their best-performing prospects this year was a sixth-round pick from 2014 who signed for \$32,000 below slot.

Stewart was a two-way player at Illinois State, and he threw only 26 2/3 innings there his senior year. Yet two years and 18 days after signing, he made his major league debut, a one-start call-up in the midst of a year that saw him post a 1.79 ERA between high-A, Double-A and Triple-A, with 129 strikeouts and 19 walks in 121 innings. Stewart throws 92-97 mph with a solid-average changeup and needs a better breaking ball and better fastball command. He is probably a fourth starter with his current repertoire, but he still bears some upside because of his relative lack of experience on the mound.

Honorable mentions: Rafael Devers, 3B, Red Sox; David Dahl, OF, Rockies; Francisco Mejia, C, Indians; Gary Sanchez, C, Yankees; Trea Turner, SS/CF/2B, Nationals; Reynaldo Lopez, RHP, Nationals; Josh Hader, LHP, Brewers; Luke Weaver, RHP, Cardinals.

#### Best 2016 draft class debut

Nick Senzel, 3B, Cincinnati Reds (No. 2 overall): Only a handful of players from the 2016 draft went to full-season leagues this summer, and of those, Senzel had the best showing, as he hit .329/.415/.567 in the Midwest League with solid peripherals and a surprising 17 steals in 235 at-bats. Senzel was the top pure bat in the college crop this year. He walked nearly twice as often as he struck out, though there's still disagreement over whether the power he shows in BP will ever be part of his game. He can hit and has improved his defense at third base substantially, so there's a very high floor here, and if he gets to 15-20 homers, he has All-Star potential as well.

#### Others of note

Bo Bichette, the Blue Jays' second-round pick, hit .427/.451/.732 in the Gulf Coast League in 91 plate appearances, missing five weeks around an emergency appendectomy. He played primarily shortstop this summer but is most likely to end up at second base, where he played a half-dozen games for the Baby Jays. ...Blake Rutherford, the Yankees' first pick in '16 and a top-five talent who slid because of his age (19) and concerns about his signability, earned a quick promotion to the Appy League and hit .382/.440/.618 for Pulaski before injuries cost him about a dozen games in August. ... Lucas Erceg, the Brewers' second-round pick out of NAIA Menlo College, hit .400/.452/.552 in short-season Helena before a promotion to low-A, where he hit .281/.328/.497 with a bit more swing and miss.

I feel like Alec Hansen, the White Sox's second-round pick, deserves the nod for the best pitching debut from the draft class just because his debut was worlds better than his spring performance. Some minor mechanical tweaks restored his ability to throw strikes, and he struck out 39 percent of the batters he faced across three levels, with most of his time spent in the Pioneer League.

San Diego's first pick, Cal Quantrill, taken No. 8 overall out of Stanford, didn't pitch at all for the Cardinal this spring while coming off Tommy John surgery. Even so, he was impressive in short stints this summer and dominated two short-season leagues before two awful starts in the Midwest League to end his season. Yes, that's Paul Quantrill's son, and yes, you are old if you remember Paul Quantrill.

Although he isn't a significant prospect, the Padres' fourth-rounder, Joey Lucchesi, threw 40 innings in short-season ball while striking out 53 and walking just two. It's notable because Lucchesi was abused at Southeast Missouri State during the conference tournament, throwing 35 pitches in relief two days after a 119-pitch start, and his total for the calendar year reached 153 innings before we even reached instructs.

## Breathe a sigh of relief? Grading each contender's bullpen

By: David Schoenfeld / ESPN.com

With two weeks left in the regular season, we're getting some clarity. Five of the division titles are all but wrapped up -- although the Giants, five games behind, do have five games left against the Dodgers -- and a few teams have dropped out of the wild-card races. For contenders still fighting for the playoffs, every loss is magnified, especially those that come in the late innings.

The Yankees' loss last Thursday to the Red Sox, blowing a three-run lead in the ninth, was arguably the most devastating any team has suffered this season. Two nights before that, the Astros blew a lead in the ninth to the Rangers. You can't lose games like this in late September when you're trying to catch teams ahead of you.

Let's see how each team's bullpen is shaping up for these final games of the regular season and beyond.

#### American League contenders:

##### Boston Red Sox

The four-game sweep of the Yankees has helped the Red Sox build a four-game cushion in the AL East, and the bullpen is back at full strength with Koji Uehara's return. He has yet to allow a run in his six September appearances, and Craig Kimbrel has allowed a .102 average in 16 appearances since returning from knee surgery in July.

Key guy: Uehara. He has 58 strikeouts and nine walks, so he still has that immaculate control and ability to fool hitters with the splitter, but he can be prone to the long ball (eight home runs in 42 innings).

Security rating (one to five): Four stars.

##### Baltimore Orioles

Zach Britton remains perfect in closing out games, but note that the Orioles' bullpen has the worst ERA and highest wOBA allowed of all the playoff contenders since Aug. 1. Most of that is the result of a back end that has struggled when the O's are behind. Donnie Hart has also provided a big lift from the left side with 14.2 scoreless innings to start his career.

Key guy: All-Star Brad Brach has been worked heavily -- 66 appearances, 74 innings -- and hasn't been quite as dominant of late with a 3.50 ERA, three home runs and seven walks in 18 innings since Aug. 1.

Security rating: Four stars. Not worried about Britton, but some minor concerns have popped up.

#### Toronto Blue Jays

Roberto Osuna has been excellent -- 34-for-37 in save chances -- but the rest of the pen has been shuffled throughout the season, and veteran trade acquisitions Jason Grilli and Joaquin Benoit are now pitching big innings. Other than that four-run blowup against the Yankees earlier this month, Grilli has been effective as the eighth-inning guy.

Key guy: Benoit. His changeup means he can match up against both sides of the plate as the seventh-inning guy. He has allowed one run in 20 innings since coming over from Seattle (where he struggled).

Security rating: Three stars. Depth is a bit of an issue, and I don't completely trust Grilli and Benoit.

#### New York Yankees

The blown save on Thursday was devastating, and while you can't blame one game for the next three, losing all four to the Red Sox dropped the Yankees' playoff chances to about 3 percent. Just too many teams to jump over. Joe Girardi's starters aren't going deep, so he has done a nice job of mixing and matching his no-name bullpen.

Key guy: Dellin Betances has to regroup, but all his work the past three seasons may be catching up with him.

Security rating: Three stars. Trading Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman was still the right call.

#### Cleveland Indians

The most underrated pen in the game was enhanced by picking up Miller, and the Indians have the best bullpen ERA in the majors since Aug. 1. With the rotation now down Carlos Carrasco (along with Danny Salazar), the pen will have to pick up some extra innings down the stretch. Terry Francona will have to balance keeping everyone as fresh as possible for the postseason -- starters and relievers -- but luckily has a seven-game cushion over the Tigers.

Key guy: Miller and Cody Allen are great, and Bryan Shaw is the rubber-armed vet, but Dan Otero has been huge in the middle innings with a 1.54 ERA and two home runs in 64 1/3 innings.

Security rating: Four stars. Love this group, although Miller is the only lefty, and both Miller and Allen can be prone to home runs (15 combined).

#### Detroit Tigers

It's not always pretty with Francisco Rodriguez, but he has saved 43 games in 47 opportunities. After that, you don't feel all that confident as the Tigers' pen ranks 25th in the majors in strikeout rate and 23rd in left-on-base percentage.

Key guy: It could be Bruce Rondon, who has worked his way into the late-inning mix. He has 38 K's and 21 hits in 31 1/3 innings and has a 1.65 ERA and .495 OPS allowed since the beginning of August.

Security rating: Two stars. It's better than recent Tigers bullpens but still not the most trustworthy.

#### Texas Rangers

Like a lot of things about the Rangers this season, some of the numbers don't add up. Overall, the Texas bullpen ranks 27th in the majors in ERA, 27th in left-on-base rate and 29th in strikeout rate. And yet the Rangers are 33-10 in one-run games. For the most part, the back of the bullpen, with Sam Dyson, Jake Diekmann, Matt Bush and Tony Barnette, has been pretty clutch, which is why the Rangers are fifth in the majors with a 75 percent save rate (which includes all save situations during a game, not just in the ninth inning).

Key guy: Closer Dyson throws hard with an upper-90s two-seamer, but he's a little unconventional for a closer in that he doesn't have a big strikeout rate. He has 34 saves but five blown saves. And once the postseason starts, he'll have to forget about the big home run Jose Bautista hit off him last October.

Security rating: Three stars. Matt Bush has become the top setup guy, and that's asking a lot of a guy who was working at a Golden Corral a year ago.

## Seattle Mariners

The Mariners have lost seven games when leading heading into the ninth -- only the Giants, with eight, have more -- and the MLB average is 2.7 losses. In other words, even semi-competent results in the ninth inning would have the Mariners leading the wild-card race instead of standing two games out. Edwin Diaz, with 16 saves in 17 chances since taking over as closer, has solved the ninth inning. So now it's just a matter of getting the ball to him.

Key guy: Steve Cishek lost his closer job, landed on the DL for a couple weeks, was demoted to the sixth inning but is now back as the eighth-inning guy.

Security rating: Two stars. Diaz is a strikeout machine, but the middle innings remain nervous time for Mariners fans.

## Houston Astros

**Last week's outing notwithstanding -- and a few bad outings by Ken Giles in April -- the bullpen has been pretty solid all season. The injuries and ineffectiveness of the rotation means the pen has had to carry a big workload down the stretch, so keep an eye on that. Rookie Chris Devenski has been a revelation as a multi-inning guy, throwing 76 innings in 40 relief appearances with a 1.41 ERA. Look for A.J. Hinch to ride him heavily these final two weeks.**

Key guy: Giles. He worked his way into the closer's role and has a 94 K's in 61 1/3 innings. He has also, however, allowed eight runs in his past 16 appearances.

Security rating: Three stars. Giles seems a little shaky of late, even as he racks up the strikeouts.

National League contenders:

## Chicago Cubs

The luxury for Joe Maddon is that the rotation has been so good that Cubs relievers have thrown the second-fewest innings in the majors (only the Blue Jays have fewer). Aroldis Chapman gives the team maybe the best closer in the game, and Carl Edwards has become a revelation with a .125 average allowed in 31 innings (although he allowed three runs in his last outing).

Key guy: Hector Rondon has made just four appearances since returning from a three-week stint on the DL with triceps soreness. Is he ready to become Chapman's setup guy in October?

Security rating: Five stars. The one concern heading into October is that Chapman has never had a postseason save opportunity. How will he respond to that pressure?

## Washington Nationals

Would you have guessed the Nationals are second in the majors in bullpen ERA? Mark Melancon is obviously an upgrade over Jonathan Papelbon, while Blake Treinen (2.27 ERA), Matt Belisle (1.88 ERA) and Shawn Kelley (2.92 ERA) provide the depth. The major concern is there isn't really a reliable lefty out there right now, with veterans Oliver Perez and Marc Rzepczynski the guys Dusty Baker is relying on.

Key guy: Melancon has just six postseason appearances and has allowed four runs and two home runs in 5 2/3 innings. How will he perform in October?

Security rating: Four stars.

## New York Mets

Jeurys Familia has been superb all season -- one home run 70 1/3 innings -- but has appeared in 72 games. Terry Collins will have to continue to push him and the rest of his bullpen mates because the rotation is running on fumes and the Mets don't score many runs. The pen has a 3.52 ERA this season, but 4.18 since Aug. 1, perhaps a sign that some fatigue is setting in.

Key guy: Addison Reed has quietly been one of MLB's best relievers with a 1.76 ERA and better peripherals than Familia, while carrying a similar workload (73 games, 71 2/3 innings). He hasn't allowed a run in September.

Security rating: Four stars. You do have to worry a little bit about the workloads of Familia, Reed, Hansel Robles and Jerry Blevins, but so far they continue to do the job.

## St. Louis Cardinals

Where would this pen be without Seung-hwan Oh, who has maybe been the most valuable reliever in the game outside of Britton? He's 5-3 with 18 saves and a 1.79 ERA in 75 1/3 innings. Against the Giants on Saturday he pitched two innings to get the win and then got the save on Sunday. The rest of the pen? Shaky, as Kevin Siegrist has been haunted by the home run (10 in 57 2/3 innings), and Trevor Rosenthal, just off the DL, couldn't throw enough strikes.

Key guy: Oh. Let's see if Mike Matheny pushes him for more extended outings as the Cardinals try to chase down the Giants (or Mets).

Security rating: Three stars.

## Los Angeles Dodgers

The Dodgers bullpen has been used a lot this year: second in the majors in innings and first in total relief appearances. And yet it's second in the majors in ERA even though only Joe Blanton stands out aside from closer Kenley Jansen. Grant Dayton, a 28-year-old rookie, has been a key lately with 33 strikeouts, nine walks and just nine hits in 22 1/3 innings. It's about getting the hot hands at the right time.

Key guy: Jansen's numbers are dominant -- 97 strikeouts and just nine walks -- but he has somehow managed to blow six saves, a high number for a closer. In other words, he doesn't do his best work in one-run games.

Security rating: Four stars. Jansen's blown-save percentage means I can't give this pen five stars. And, no, I don't completely trust Blanton, as good as he has been.

## San Francisco Giants

And here you go. The bullpen has taken the brunt of the criticism for the team's second-half fade (although the offense needs to share in the blame). The weird thing is the overall bullpen ERA is decent at 3.65 -- and ninth-best in baseball since Aug. 1. They just have one minor issue: closing out games in the ninth inning. Santiago Casillalost his closer's job, Hunter Strickland got it for a day and then blew his next chance, Casilla got another chance on Saturday and blew that one (his ninth blown save) and now Bruce Bochy indicated that Strickland and Derek Law will be the main guys for the ninth.

Key guy: Strickland ... Law ... Casilla ...

Security rating: One star. Of course, Law will take over and go 6-for-6 down the stretch, the Giants will sneak into the postseason and then they'll win their fourth title in seven years. Because baseball.

## Elias Says...

By: Elias Sports Bureau, Inc. / Special to ESPN.com

### Wainwright can hit too

Adam Wainwright earned the win and drove in four runs in the Cardinals' win over the Rockies. It's the fourth time this season that Wainwright earned the win and had at least three RBIs in the same game tying a major-league record. Three other pitchers had four such games since RBI became an official statistic in 1920: Wes Ferrell of the Indians in 1931, Hal Schumacher of the Giants in 1935 and Don Newcombe of the Dodgers in 1955.

### Lester is pitching like an ace

Jon Lester allowed one run in seven innings and did not walk a batter in the Cubs' win over the Reds. Lester has allowed two or fewer runs and two or fewer walks in each of his last ten starts. Only two other Cubs pitchers since 1893 - the year the pitching mound was set at 60' 6" - had such a streak. Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown had an 11-game streak in 1906 and Jake Arrieta had a 10-game streak spanning the 2015 and 2016 seasons.

It's the fifth time that Lester pitched at least seven innings while allowing one or fewer runs in a start against the Reds, all since the start of last season. Only two other pitchers had as many starts of this type against one team over the last two seasons: Jaime Garcia versus the Brewers (five) and Jake Arrieta versus the Pirates (five).

### Sanchez strikes again

Gary Sanchez's three-run home run was the big blow in the Yankees' win over the Rays on Tuesday night, it was his 17th homer of the season, all coming since August 10. That's the most home runs in a season for a player who did not hit one before August 1. The previous record for such a thing was 16 which was set by Karim Garcia for the Indians in 2002. Garcia hit his first home run on August 7 of that season.

## Altuve and Hornsby

**Jose Altuve's single in the eighth inning on Tuesday night was his 200th of the season. It's the third straight season with 200 or more hits for Altuve who has increased his home run total from seven in 2014 to 15 in 2015 to 24 this season. The only other player in major-league history to have three straight 200-hit seasons while increasing his home run total by at least five in each season was Rogers Hornsby. Hornsby's hit and home run totals from 1920 to 1922 were 218/9 in 1920, 235/21 in 1921 and 250/42 in 1922. Hornsby's streak ended in 1923 when he had only 163 hits and 17 homers.**

#### Another 120-RBI season for Big Papi

David Ortiz's three-run home run in the seventh inning gave the Red Sox a 5-1 lead and gave him 121 runs batted in for the season, the fourth time in his career that he knocked in at least 120 runs in a Red Sox uniform. The only other players in Red Sox history with four seasons with at least 120 RBIs were Ted Williams (seven) and Jim Rice (four).

#### Mancini goes deep in his second plate appearance

Trey Mancini hit a home run in his second career plate appearance in the Orioles' loss to the Red Sox. Mancini is the fourth player in Baltimore Orioles history to hit a home run in his first or second career plate appearance. The others to do it are not household names: Buster Narum in 1963 (first plate appearance), Larry Haney in 1966 (second) and Jose Morban in 2003 (second). Those three players combined for 17 home runs in their major league careers.

#### Fernandez/Stanton power Marlins

Jose Fernandez threw eight scoreless innings and struck out 12 while Giancarlo Stanton hit a solo home run in the Marlins' 1-0 win over the Nationals. It was the first major-league game since August 21, 2014 in which a team won a game, 1-0, while its starting pitcher earned the win and struck out at least 12 batters and the only run was scored on a home run. The Braves' Alex Wood struck out 12 Marlins while Evan Gattis hit a home run in that game.

Stanton hit a home run in 1-0 win for the second time in his major-league career; he also did it against Washington in 2011. Stanton is the only player in Marlins history to have two such games in his career.

Fernandez improved his career record against the Nationals to 7-0 with a 0.99 ERA in 10 starts. Only one active pitcher is 7-0 or better with an ERA that low against a particular team since 2013, Fernandez's first season in the majors: Clayton Kershaw is 7-0 with a 0.67 ERA also against the Nationals since 2013.

#### Teheran tames Mets

Julio Teheran allowed one run in seven innings and the Braves' bullpen did just enough in their win over the Mets. Teheran is 7-3 with 2.36 earned-run average in 15 career games against the Mets (14 starts). Teheran's career ERA against the Mets is the third-lowest among active pitchers who have started at least ten games against them, behind Clayton Kershaw (1.29) and Max Scherzer (1.83).

#### Happ earns win #20

J.A. Happ earned win #20 in the Blue Jays' win over the Mariners. Happ joined Boston's Rick Porcello in the 20-win club this season marking the first time since 2008 that two pitchers from the American League East won 20 or more games in the same season. The Blue Jays' Roy Halladay (20-11) and the Yankees' Mike Mussina (20-9) did it that season.

Happ reached 20 wins for the first time in his career in his tenth year in the majors. The only other pitcher to reach 20 wins in a season for the first time in his tenth season (or later) while pitching for the Blue Jays was David Wells. Wells went 20-8 for Toronto in 2000, his first and only 20-win season, and it came in his 14th year in the major leagues.

#### Tigers love shopping at Target

Matt Boyd pitched eight terrific innings and James McCann hit a three-run homer as the Tigers extended their winning streak at Target Field to nine games, the longest current road winning streak for one team against another and the longest for the Tigers versus any team since they won nine in a row in Kansas City in 2006.

#### Another one-run win for the Rangers

Nomar Mazara hit his 20th home run of the season in the Rangers' 5-4 win over the Angels on Tuesday night for their 36th one-run win of the season. That's the most one run wins in a season for any American League team since the Royals had 38 wins by a one-run margin in 1993.

#### Herrera is hot

Odubel Herrera went 3-for-4 with a homer and three RBIs in the Phillies' win over the White Sox. Herrera has rapped out 15 hits with two home runs over his last seven games. The last Phillies player with that many hits and homers over a seven-game span was Chase Utley in 2014

#### Another walk-off win for the Indians

Brandon Guyer's RBI-single in the bottom of the ninth gave the Indians a 2-1 win over the Royals on Tuesday night. It was the eleventh walk-off win of the season for the Indians, the most in the major leagues. Guyer has four hits in his last seven at-bats with runners in scoring position with five runs batted in over that span.

## Wild-card watch: Astros escape with win

By: David Schoenfeld / ESPN.com

Losses by the New York Mets and Baltimore Orioles allowed those below them to tie or draw closer. The New York Yankees are barely hanging in there as superman Gary Sanchez homered again. The Seattle Mariners, in what felt like a must-win game against the Toronto Blue Jays, saw Hisashi Iwakuma give up six straight hits in an eight-run fourth inning. The Detroit Tigers and Houston Astros, however, took advantage of Baltimore's loss, so don't give up your dream of a three- or four-way tie for one or both wild-card spots. Chaos, we think of you.

Let's take a quick look at the state of the wild-card races.

Current wild-card odds (from FiveThirtyEight):

### American League

Red Sox: 92 percent to win division (plus 7 percent for wild card)

Blue Jays: 71 percent (plus 6 percent to win division)

Orioles: 51 percent

Tigers: 30 percent

**Astros: 25 percent**

Mariners: 10 percent

Yankees: 4 percent

### National League

Mets: 76 percent

Cardinals: 65 percent

Giants: 54 percent

Marlins: 2 percent

**Most important win: Astros beat A's 2-1 in 10 innings. The box score and play-by-play shows Ken Giles escaped a one-out, bases-loaded jam in the bottom of the 10th inning with a pop-out and strikeout. But the escape was even closer than that as Jake Smolinski lined a ball just foul before popping out. Remember those inches if the Astros -- now two games behind the Orioles -- make it into the postseason.**

Most important loss: Mets lose 5-4 to Braves. The projection systems like the Mets' chances because of their easy remaining schedule. But you have to take advantage of it. The Braves beat the Mets for a second consecutive night as Adonis Garcia hit a bit three-run homer off Jerry Blevins in the seventh inning. The Mets are just 9-9 against the Braves. That allowed the Cardinals and Giants to push into a three-way tie with the Mets for two spots. Chaos potential: Improving.

Hitter to watch: Chris Davis, Orioles. Buck Showalter tried something new Tuesday, hitting Davis second behind Adam Jones in the lineup -- talk about your unconventional 1-2 hitters. Davis has six home runs in September, so this wasn't a move born of desperation and was probably just a one-thing against a lefty starter (Hyun-Soo Kim is the regular No. 2 hitter against righties). Clay Buchholz starts Wednesday, so Davis will probably slide back in the lineup, but keeping him in front of Manny Machado, even against righties, is an interesting idea.

Pitcher to watch: Luke Weaver, Cardinals. The 23-year-old rookie, who was the 27th overall pick in the 2014 draft out of Florida State, looks like another late first-round college pick that will produce nice dividends for St. Louis. He has won only one of his first seven major league starts but has a 3.21 ERA (a little misleading since six of his 18 runs are unearned) and an excellent 43/10 SO/BB ratio in 33.2 innings. He throws a low-90s four-seamer, mixing in a changeup about a quarter of the time plus a cutter and curveball.

Injury to watch: Jacob deGrom, Mets. We kind of knew this might be coming after deGrom didn't start this past weekend against the Twins, but the Mets officially ended deGrom's season when they announced he'll undergo surgery later this week to repair nerve damage in his elbow. He's expected to be ready for spring training. Matt Harvey and deGrom went from a combined 27-16 and a 2.63 ERA over 380 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings to 11-18, 3.32 over 240 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings. Given that, it's amazing the Mets are still leading the wild-card race.

Game of the day: Red Sox at Orioles. The dream of an AL East title is all but gone after dropping the first two games of the four-game series, but now the Orioles can hear the footsteps of the Tigers (1 $\frac{1}{2}$  back) and Astros (two back) after losing the first two games of the four-game series to the Red Sox. Ubaldo Jimenez -- don't laugh, he has been pretty good of late -- starts against Buchholz in a matchup of the two pitchers who drive their fan bases the most crazy.

## Sunshine Kids Foundation receives \$100,000 check from KBR at game

By: KBR Inc.

KBR Inc. has donated \$100,000 to the Sunshine Kids Foundation, a non-profit that adds quality of life to children with cancer by providing them with exciting, positive group activities.

KBR President/CEO Stuart Bradie gave a check to Sunshine Kids Foundation representatives including Sunshine Kid Sophia Sereni on the field at Minute Maid Park prior to the start of the Houston Astros game.

The Astros, longtime foundation supporters, were hosting Sunshine Kids Day as part of their efforts to recognize Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Former Astro Hall of Famer Craig Biggio is the National Spokesperson for the Sunshine Kids.

"KBR is delighted to continue our longstanding relationship with the Sunshine Kids and we are honored to support their worthy goal of giving these children amazing life experiences," said Bradie. "We look forward to continuing to support the Sunshine Kids both financially and through our employees who are active and enthusiastic volunteers."

"I can't thank KBR enough for their generosity," said Biggio. "I have been with the Sunshine Kids for 30 years and we are very grateful. Thank you."

KBR announced in August that the Sunshine Kids Foundation will again be a beneficiary of the 10th annual KBR Charity Golf Tournament which will be on Sept. 22 at Kingwood Country Club.

## The 2016 Yahoo Sports All-Minor League Team

By: Jeff Passan / Yahoo Sports

There are a few rules for the 2016 Yahoo Sports All-Minor League Team.

First: You need to perform. This isn't a repository for players living on reputation or potential. It's a reward for the best 2016s.

Next: Age matters. Nobody cares about geezers crushing in Triple-A or guys five years older than the rest of the league tearing up A ball.

Finally: This is exclusively a list for full-season prospects, with the exception of one White Sox player, who was pretty much their only deserving one.

Oh, and that's another thing: There is a bit of participation-trophyitis going on here. No fan wants to feel like his or her organization's farm system is so bereft it can't place a single player on the team. So while it was a struggle, even the Los Angeles Angels are represented here.

While conversations with 20 scouts, executives and analysts with strong knowledge of the minor leagues reinforced the obvious – yes, the Angels' system really is that bad, and the Diamondbacks' and Orioles' aren't far behind – they also revealed some lesser-known players and breakout stars. **They rewarded the Astros, who lead the team with eight players**, along with the Yankees (seven), the Indians, Dodgers and Padres (six) and the Red Sox, Braves and Pirates (five).

This doesn't make their farm systems the best. Milwaukee and Colorado are considered among the industry's finest, and each has four. No, this is simply a head nod to 108 of the best players among the 5,000 or so who play minor league ball every year, a recognition of the top 2 percent. And also the top two, period, one Player of the Year and one Pitcher of the Year, one with superstar written all over him and the other who's rather unlikely to make a Top 100 list this offseason. It's best to start there and work our way position by position, with the best player at each honored and the rest worthy of a mention.

**Player of the Year: Alex Bregman, SS (AAA/AA, Houston) – When draft day arrived in 2015, the Houston Astros hoped against hope that Bregman, a shortstop from LSU, would drop to the No. 2 pick and allow them to forget about the mess of a year earlier when fears over elbow troubles kept them from signing the top overall pick in the draft, Brady Aiken. Ultimately, his Tommy John surgery vindicated their concerns, and when Arizona nabbed Dansby Swanson with the first pick, Bregman fell into the Astros' lap. All he's done since is hit, and between Double-A and Triple-A this year Bregman put up a .306/.406/.580 slash line. After a 2-for-38 start in the big leagues, Bregman hit .310/.353/.582 and flashed the tools of a star. He won't play shortstop in the big leagues – that's Carlos Correa's territory – but whether he ends up at third base or left field, Bregman is an All-Star waiting to happen and should hold down a spot in the middle of the Astros' lineup for at least the next six seasons.**

**Pitcher of the Year: Brock Stewart (AAA/AA/A+, Los Angeles Dodgers) – An infielder at Illinois State, Stewart impressed scouts with his arm as a junior and has done nothing to dissuade them from that intuition since. In 21 minor league starts over three levels, Stewart struck out 129 and walked 19 in 121 innings of 1.79 ERA ball. Opponents managed to hit just .200 off Stewart. The dominance hasn't quite translated in his six big league starts, and Stewart projects more as a back-end big league starter, but with a 93-mph fastball, a hard slider and a changeup, the 24-year-old right-hander has plenty to lock down a spot in a Dodgers rotation that soon will be populated with arms from the pitching plethora of perhaps baseball's deepest system.**

**C: Francisco Mejia (A+/A, Cleveland) – The switch-hitting 20-year-old was the centerpiece of the Jonathan Lucroy deal that never was – and it may be the best deal the Indians didn't make. He hit .342/.382/.514 in a breakout season that included a 50-game hitting streak, and with Mejia likely to start at Double-A next season, he could be just one Yan Gomes cold streak away from joining an Indians team that will happily welcome him into a lineup that proved better than expected this season.**

**Honorable mention: Austin Hedges (AAA, San Diego), Yermir Mercedes (A+/A, Baltimore), Tom Murphy (AAA, Colorado), Chance Sisco (AAA/AA, Baltimore), Garrett Stubbs (AA/A+, Houston)**



1B: Rhys Hoskins (AA, Philadelphia) – One half of the Reading Fightin' Phills wrecking crew, the 23-year-old Hoskins took advantage of the bandbox that is FirstEnergy Stadium to whack 25 of his 38 home runs. He's not exactly a top prospect – at least four, and perhaps all seven, of the honorable mentions are considered better future major leaguers than him – and his 14 errors this year at first base scream DH in a league without one. Hoskins' power is undeniable, though, and with Tommy Joseph all that stands between him and the big leagues, Hoskins' opportunity may come sooner than later.

Honorable mention: Josh Bell (AAA, Pittsburgh), Cody Bellinger (AAA/AA, Los Angeles Dodgers), Casey Gillaspie (AAA/AA, Tampa Bay), **A.J. Reed (AAA, Houston)**, Dominic Smith (AA, New York Mets), Rowdy Tellez (AA, Toronto), Dan Vogelbach (AAA, Seattle/Chicago Cubs)

2B: Yoan Moncada (AA/A+, Boston) – Even if Moncada wasn't ready for the big leagues – and even if he won't play second base there, with Dustin Pedroia locked into the job – Moncada's .294/.407/.511 season with 15 home runs and 45 stolen bases made the Red Sox rightfully giddy. Whether he's worth the \$63 million Boston paid for his rights remains to be seen, but Moncada is strong, he's fast, he's got a good eye and he's versatile enough to shift to third base without issue. He's almost certainly going to be the top prospect in baseball heading into next season, and a Red Sox lineup with him and fellow headlining prospect Andrew Benintendi to go along with Mookie Betts, Xander Bogaerts, Jackie Bradley Jr., Hanley Ramirez and Pedroia positions Boston to be an annual World Series contender.

Honorable mention: Eliezer Alvarez (A, St. Louis), Carlos Asuaje (AAA, San Diego), Willie Calhoun (AA, Los Angeles Dodgers), Travis Demeritte (A+, Atlanta/Texas), Ian Happ (AA/A+, Chicago Cubs), Max Schrock, (A+/A, Oakland/Washington), Luis Urias (AAA/A+, San Diego)

### **SS: Alex Bregman**

Honorable mention: Willy Adames (AA, Tampa Bay), Ozzie Albies (AAA/AA, Atlanta), Franklin Barreto (AAA/AA, Oakland), Gavin Cecchini (AAA, New York Mets), Yu-Cheng Chang (A+, Cleveland), Isan Diaz (A, Milwaukee), Mauricio Dubon (AA/A+, Boston), Kevin Newman (AA/A+, Pittsburgh), Brendan Rogers (A, Colorado), Amed Rosario (AA/A+, New York Mets)

3B: Ryon Healy (AAA/AA, Oakland) – Considering the overwhelming bounty at third base in the major leagues – Kris Bryant, Josh Donaldson, Manny Machado, Nolan Arenado, Kyle Seager, Matt Carpenter, Evan Longoria, Anthony Rendon, Justin Turner, Jake Lamb, Todd Frazier and more – it's a bit surprising the minor leagues are so thin. Healy is threatening to join that list of big leaguers with a September star turn that has seen him hit .391/.435/.656, besting an awfully nice minor league season in which he slashed .326/.382/.558. Maybe he's a third baseman long-term. Perhaps he ends up at first. Either way, the bat looks like it's going to play, and the A's could use some good sticks as they rebuild.

Honorable mention: Jeimer Candelario (AAA, Chicago), Matt Chapman (AAA/AA, Oakland), Rafael Devers (A+, Boston), Yandy Diaz (AAA/AA, Cleveland), Hunter Dozier (AAA/AA, Kansas City), Joey Gallo (AAA, Texas)

OF: Dylan Cozens (AA, Philadelphia)

OF: Eloy Jimenez (A, Chicago Cubs)

OF: Brandon Nimmo (AAA, New York Mets)

Cozens is the other half of the Reading Bash Brothers, and his 40 homers led the minor leagues. He was a classic Phillies draft pick: monster tools, incredible upside, immense bust potential. After four years of tantalizing with his abilities, Cozens this year used his 6-foot-6, 240-pound frame to hit .276/.350/.591 and even added 21 stolen bases in 22 attempts. He's a freakish athlete, good enough to play center field 10 games this season, but probably a right fielder in the long haul. At 22 years old, he's not far away, either. As with Hoskins, the Phillies only hope he's more Ryan Howard than Darin Ruf, who in 2012 hit 38 home runs in Reading only to, well, end up as Darin Ruf.

Jimenez, 19, is the youngest player on the team and may well wind up a top-10 prospect at this point next season. He, too, is a leviathan: 6-foot-4 and 220 pounds that sold the Cubs on spending \$2.8 million to sign him the same year they did Gleyber Torres, the main prospect who went to the Yankees in the Aroldis Chapman deal. Jimenez hit .329/.369/.532 in his first full season this year, and while his strikeout rate isn't alarming, an uptick in walks would bode well. The Cubs aren't going to fret too much. Jimenez is the sort of prospect they can sit back and let grow as their major league depth allows them.

Five years after they drafted him with the 13th overall pick out of Wyoming, Nimmo did the sorts of things the Mets hoped he might as he grew into greater competition. Yes, his .352/.423/.541 line this year was juiced by his home park (Las Vegas) and environment (Pacific Coast League), but Nimmo's abilities offer at least a glimmer of hope that he'll be ready for big league at-bats sometime soon. At 23, Nimmo has time to develop, and whether his future is in center field or one of the corners, the Mets' old outfield should open up a spot within the next year or two that gives him the opportunity to seize playing time.

Honorable mention: Greg Allen (AA/A+, Cleveland), Harrison Bader (AAA/AA, St. Louis), Andrew Benintendi (AA/A+, Boston), David Dahl (AAA/AA, Colorado), Mitch Haniger (AAA/AA, Arizona), Michael Hermosillo (A+/A, Los Angeles Angels), Manuel Margot (AAA, San Diego), Austin Meadows (AAA/AA, Pittsburgh), Tyler O'Neill (AA, Seattle), **Ramon Laureano (AA/A+, Houston)**, Roman Quinn (AA, Philadelphia), Hunter Renfroe (AAA, San Diego), Victor Robles (A+/A, Washington), Christin Stewart (AA/A+, Detroit), **Myles Straw (A+/A, Houston)**, Raimel Tapia (AAA/AA, Colorado)

SP: Brock Stewart

SP: Yohander Mendez (AAA/AA/A+, Texas)

SP: Tyler Glasnow (AAA, Pittsburgh)

SP: Stephen Gonsalves (AA/A+, Minnesota)

SP: Dietrich Enns (AAA/AA, New York Yankees)

Mendez was part of the Rangers' famous international class of 2011, which already has delivered two key everyday players (Rougned Odor and Nomar Mazara) and soon should add another to their rotation. After slow-playing his development for the last four seasons, the Rangers ramped up the 21-year-old left-hander's track this season and watched him jump from High-A to the big leagues. Along the way, Mendez held opposing hitters to a .184 batting average, struck out more than a batter an inning and established himself as among the best left-handed starters in the minor leagues. The big weapon is his changeup, a monster offering that will look awfully nice alongside Cole Hamels' on Texas' staff.

Glasnow, 23, is a regular in these parts, making his third consecutive team with a mixture of the usual: lots of strikeouts and next to no hits. Opponents batted .176 against him, and he struck out 144 in 116 2/3 innings of 1.93 ERA baseball. In his minor league career, Glasnow has punched out 645 in 500 innings. His Achilles remains walks, and that – well, that and service time – is the only thing that can keep him from winning a spot in the Pirates' rotation coming out of spring training next year. As long as the 23-year-old Glasnow's arm is healthy, he is too good for Triple-A and ready to prove himself good enough for the big leagues.

The 6-foot-5 Gonsalves is one of a bounty of live arms in the minor leagues for the Twins, who may need pitching even more than they do a GM to run their team. After slipping to the fourth round of the 2013 draft, Gonsalves has done nothing but succeed, with a 2.13 career minor league ERA. This year did nothing to diminish that, as he improved his ERA at High-A by nearly a half-point after jumping to Double-A and putting up a 1.82 ERA with 89 strikeouts and just one home run allowed in 74 1/3 innings. Along with Jose Berrios, Tyler Jay, Kohl Stewart and Fernando Romero, Gonsalves will help anchor one of the best starting-pitching collections in the minor leagues.

Enns is more Stewart than the middle three, all of whom are considered top-notch prospects. At 25 years old, Enns is a bit of a grandpa in the minor leagues. At 6-foot-1, 210 pounds, he doesn't exactly embody the scouting ideal of a pitcher. He's left-handed, though, and that makes up for a lot of faults. He'll crack the big leagues at some point next year, so long as he doesn't crater from his 135 innings of 1.73 ERA ball this season. More than anything, he's one of the close-to-the-majors Yankees starters who can be thrown out as cannon fodder as New York rebuilds on the fly and tries to figure out who's a keeper and who isn't.

Honorable mention: Domingo Acevedo (A+/A, New York Yankees), Chance Adams (AA/A+, New York Yankees), Kolby Allard (A/A-, Atlanta), Anthony Banda (AAA/AA, Arizona), Tyler Beede (AA, San Francisco), Jose Berrios (AAA, Minnesota), Phil Bickford (A+/A, Milwaukee/San Francisco), Luis Castillo (AA/A+, Miami), Trevor Clifton (A, Chicago Cubs), Jose DeLeon (AAA, Los Angeles Dodgers), Chase De Jong (AAA/AA, Los Angeles Dodgers), Erick Fedde (AA/A+ Washington), Amir Garrett (AAA/AA, Cincinnati), Lucas Giolito (AAA/AA, Washington), Luiz Gohara (A/A-, Seattle), Chad Green (AAA, New York Yankees), Josh Hader (AAA/AA, Milwaukee), Alec Hansen (A/Rookie, Chicago White Sox), Brent Honeywell (AA/A+, Tampa Bay), Mitch Keller (A+/A, Pittsburgh), Michael Kopech (A+, Boston), Dinelson Lamet (AAA/AA/A+, San Diego), Reynaldo Lopez (AAA/AA, Washington), Zack Littell (A+/A, Seattle), **Francis Martes (AA, Houston)**, Triston McKenzie (A/A-, Cleveland), Jordan Montgomery (AAA/AA, New York Yankees), Joe Palumbo (A, Texas), **David Paulino (AAA/AA, Houston)**, Angel Perdomo (A, Toronto), Dillon Peters (AA/A+, Miami), Sean Reid-Foley (A+/A, Toronto), Fernando Romero (A+/A, Minnesota), Josh Sborz (AA/A+, Los Angeles Dodgers), Justus Sheffield (AA/A+, New York Yankees), Mike Soroka (A, Atlanta), Luke Weaver (AAA/AA, St. Louis), Patrick Weigel (AA/A+, Atlanta), Brandon Woodruff (AA/A+, Milwaukee)

RP: Joe Jimenez (AAA/AA/A+, Detroit) – Jimenez is a big-bodied, ultra-hard-throwing right-hander out of the "Haven't We Seen This Before?" department. Calling him Bruce Rondon 2.0 isn't entirely fair, but it's understandable considering their shared dominance. First Jimenez pitched 17 scoreless games in High-A. Then he moved to Double-A, where he was marginally more hittable but still dominant. By the end of the season, he was carving up Triple-A hitters just the same, finishing with 78 strikeouts against 17 walks in 53 2/3 innings. His ERA was 1.51. He was 30 for 31 in save chances. Next time you see him will probably be in a Tigers uniform.

Honorable mention: Shawn Armstrong (AAA, Cleveland), J.T. Chargois (AAA/AA, Minnesota), Jonathan Holder (AAA/AA/A+, New York Yankees), **James Hoyt (AAA, Houston)**

## Fayetteville seeks 2 baseball stadium conceptual designs

By Andrew Barksdale / FayObserver

Fayetteville officials are considering two conceptual designs for a baseball stadium.

Following a 45-minute closed session Tuesday afternoon by the city's baseball committee, officials announced they have asked a consultant, HKS Sports Entertainment, to draft two concepts and report back.

Both concepts would be designed to have ballpark capacities of between 4,000 and 4,500 fans - a figure that would include fixed seating and open seating, such as on grassy banks or picnic areas inside the ballpark.

The interim city manager, Doug Hewett, described the two concepts as more about how the stadium would fit on a 9.7-acre site behind the Prince Charles Hotel downtown. The city owns most of it, but 2.5 acres are owned by the investors of Prince Charles Holdings LLC, which scooped up the shuttered building at an auction about two years ago.

The city and the investors of the holding company hope to agree on a master plan for developing the 9.7 acres - a venture that would include the city-built stadium and about \$60 million in private investment. They are looking to build a hotel, new apartments and ground-floor retail. The investors also are planning to renovate the historic hotel into rentable apartments for \$15 million, with construction to start next year.

Hewett said the committee wanted to establish behind closed doors its negotiating terms with the holding company about acquiring or swapping some of the land.

Hewett said the committee also considered in the closed session how different stadium configurations, or concepts, would affect where the private development could go on the site.

Regardless of which concept is chosen, Hewett said, both would be of a multipurpose stadium capable of hosting football and soccer tournaments, as well as concerts.

In August, the council unanimously adopted a nonbinding memorandum of understanding with the Houston Astros, which would bring to North Carolina a Class A Advanced team to play in the Carolina League. The memorandum commits the city to opening a stadium by the 2019 season. A binding lease agreement between the Astros and the city is still being drafted and subject to a future council vote.

On Sept. 12, the council voted 9-1 to approve a financial model that relies on budget savings and various new revenues, such as stadium rent and taxes collected on the new development around it, to pay for the stadium. The city would borrow about \$31 million with revenue bonds and retire the debt over 30 years.

In March, when the city was looking to build the stadium on the southern end of Murchison Road, the city and the Prince Charles Holdings LLC agreed to work together on a master plan for developing the 9.7 acres next to the hotel. They set a September deadline. But in June, the council moved the stadium to the hotel site.

Last week, the investors exercised an option to extend their master plan deadline by a month, - or until mid-October.

Also on Tuesday, Deputy City Manager Kristoff Bauer said the city plans to issue this week a request for qualifications seeking an architectural firm that would draw up the final design documents needed to build the stadium. He said selecting a firm would take a least a month, giving the HKS consultant time to present the two conceptual designs.

## Who would start?: How pitching rotations line up for MLB Wild Card game hopefuls

*Most wild card hopefuls have their aces lined up for the winner-take-all game*

By: Mike Axisa / CBS Sports

In exactly two weeks, the AL Wild Card game will be played ... somewhere. It's not clear yet. The Blue Jays and Orioles are tied for the wild card spots right now with the Tigers, Astros, and Mariners all no more than three games back. The NL wild card race is between the Mets, Giants, and Cardinals. The NL game will be played two weeks from Wednesday.

I know many folks don't consider the wild card game the "real" postseason, but the bottom line is if you get a wild card spot, you have a chance to win the World Series. The 2014 World Series between the Giants and Royals featured two wild card teams, remember. Losing the wild card game stinks and doesn't feel like the postseason, but get in however you can and you can win.

In a perfect world teams would line up their aces and we'd get phenomenal pitching matchups in the wild card games. That's not always possible. The wild card races are so close at the moment that teams may need to start their ace in Game 161 or 162 just to get to the postseason. Or maybe they'll need their ace in a tiebreaker game. It's not hard to derail pitching plans, after all.

So, with less than two weeks to go in the regular season, let's look at how the rotation is currently lined up for each wild card hopeful.

### Baltimore Orioles

Lined Up: Chris Tillman

Also Available: Wade Miley

As it stands right now, Tillman is on track to start the wild card game with one extra day of rest. That also lines him up on normal rest for a potential tiebreaker game on Monday, October 3, if necessary. Miley left his start over the weekend with back spasms but it doesn't sound as though it's anything serious. The current rotation would make him available in the wild card game on normal rest. Kevin Gausman, Dylan Bundy, and Ubaldo Jimenez would all be on short rest.

The Orioles have an off-day next Monday, which they could use to rearrange their rotation. It would allow them to flip Bundy and Miley, and instead line up Bundy for the wild card game in case Tillman is needed in a tiebreaker game or can't start the wild card game for whatever reason. That's probably the way to go given Miley's rough stint with the O's and poor season overall.

### Detroit Tigers

Lined Up: Michael Fulmer

Also Available: Daniel Norris

As good as Fulmer has been, I'm sure the Tigers would prefer to have Justin Verlander start the wild card game, and it's possible that could happen. Verlander is currently on track to start the final game of the regular season. If the Tigers clinch early, they could simply skip that start and go with Verlander in the wild card game.

On the other hand, if this goes down the wire and Verlander is needed in Game 162, Fulmer would be on an extra day of rest for the wild card game and thus available on normal rest for a tiebreaker game. Norris will be available on normal rest for the wild card game, if needed. It's worth noting the Tigers do not have an off-day the rest of the regular season.

### Houston Astros

Lined Up: Doug Fister

Also Available: Mike Fiers

**Dallas Keuchel (shoulder) and Lance McCullers Jr. (elbow) won't be available for the wild card game and might not be available for the postseason at all. Fister is the 'Stros best option and he's lined up to start the wild card game with an extra day of rest. Fiers would be on normal rest, if necessary. Houston has an off-day on Thursday, September 29, which is a little too late to rearrange the rotation for the wild card game.**

### New York Mets

Lined Up: Noah Syndergaard

Also Available: Seth Lugo, Gabriel Ynoa

Because there are two off-days between the end of the regular season and the NL wild card game, the Mets will have more pitchers available. Obviously they want Syndergaard to start the game, and he's lined up for the wild card game on normal rest. That means he won't be available for a potential tiebreaker game, unless the Mets start him on short rest. A tiebreaker game would have to go to Lugo or Ynoa.

Clinching early would give the Mets the option of skipping Bartolo Colon in Game 162 and if not starting him in the wild card game, at least having him available if necessary. The Mets have an off-day next Thursday, September 29, which is a little too late in the game to help them rearrange their rotation in a meaningful way.

### San Francisco Giants

Lined Up: Madison Bumgarner

Also Available: Jeff Samardzija, Albert Suarez

The Giants have an off-day next Monday, and that combined with the two off-days between the end of the regular season and NL wild card game gives them a lot of flexibility. Obviously they want Bumgarner starting the wild card game, and he's lined up to do so on normal rest at the moment. That's all well and good.

Bruce Bochy's team could use Monday's off-day to skip someone else (likely Suarez) and move Bumgarner up a day during the final week of the regular season. That would allow them to have Bumgarner available on normal rest for a tiebreaker game and Johnny Cueto available to start the wild card game. If there's no tiebreaker game, then Bumgarner gets the wild card game with an extra day of rest. The Giants have some flexibility. They'll be able to ensure Bumgarner is on the mound for the first postseason game. (Well, technically the tiebreaker game is be a regular season game, but you catch my drift.)

## Seattle Mariners

Lined Up: James Paxton

Also Available: Ariel Miranda

Even though he hasn't been very Felix-like of late, Felix Hernandez is the guy the Mariners want on the mound in a wild card game. He's currently lined up to start Game 162, so if they clinch early, Hernandez could skip that start and pitch the wild card game.

Skipping one of Felix's remaining starts is the only way to line him up for a tiebreaker or a wild card game. Even if the Mariners use this Thursday's off-day to skip someone else, it won't help. The best they'd be able to do is start Felix on two days' rest in the wild card game. That won't happen. Skipping a start is the only way to get Hernandez lined up at this point, otherwise the wild card game will go to Paxton with extra rest or Miranda on normal rest.

## St. Louis Cardinals

Lined Up: Carlos Martinez

Also Available: Alex Reyes, Mike Leake

Like the Giants, the Cardinals have a lot of flexibility leading into the wild card game. They have an off-day this Thursday plus the two off-days before the wild card game itself. Martinez, who has usurped Adam Wainwright as the staff ace, is lined up to start the wild card game on normal rest right now. They have the option using Thursday's off-day to skip someone and line Wainwright up for the wild card game too, which wouldn't be a bad idea. That way Martinez could start a tiebreaker game and Wainwright the wild card game, if necessary. Either way, the Cardinals are in good shape. The off-days give them the means to line up their rotation.

## Toronto Blue Jays

Lined Up: Marcus Stroman

Also Available: Francisco Liriano

Here's a question: who would the Blue Jays want on the mound in a winner-take-all wild card game? Aaron Sanchez has been their best pitcher this season, but he's far beyond his previous career high in innings. Marco Estrada seems to flirt with a no-hitter every other week. J.A. Happ has been consistently excellent all year. Stroman started Opening Day.

Regardless of who the Blue Jays want on the mound, Stroman lines up to start the wild card game with an extra day of rest right now. Liriano would also be available on normal rest. Sanchez is lined up to start Game 162, so if they clinch early, they could skip that start and use him instead. This Thursday's off-day gives them some flexibility, as does the ability to insert R.A. Dickey for a spot start, if necessary. Keeping things as is would put the ball in Stroman's hands for a wild card game (or tiebreaker game).

Keep in mind projecting a rotation out into the future is risky business, even if it's only two weeks. The weather and injuries can change everything in an instant. As it stands right now, most teams will be able to line up either their ace or another very good pitcher for the wild card game. The Mariners and maybe the Blue Jays seem to be the only teams who might not be able to start their No. 1 guy in the wild card game.

## **Fresno Grizzlies still up for sale, losing money – but new contracts could sweeten outlook**

By: Bryant-Jon Anteola / Fresno Bee

The Fresno Grizzlies remain for sale, going on a third straight year.

But the Fresno Baseball Club, the ownership group of the Triple-A franchise, remains hopeful a revised stadium lease along with a new and likely more lucrative concessions deal will attract more potential buyers this offseason.

According to Managing General Partner Chris Cummings, the Fresno Baseball Club has received inquiries about the Triple-A franchise this year. The group even had reached an agreement to sell the Grizzlies each of the past two years – only for the prospective buyer to pull back the offer later, Cummings said.

"I just had a phone call with all of our limited partners and everybody's thinking is if we find a buyer, terrific, and I think there are things in place that make the Grizzlies attractive to own," Cummings said. "If we don't get a buyer, we'll move forward. We're going to be here, doing our best to put out a great product."

In the meantime, the Fresno Baseball Club continues to lose money each year. Attendance dropped from an average of 6,457 in 2015 to 6,189 fans per game this season – ranking ninth in the 16-team Pacific Coast League and 18th out of 30 Triple-A baseball clubs.

Despite that decline, general manager Derek Franks said the Grizzlies cut their losses from \$1.2 million last year during the franchise's first season as a Houston Astros affiliate to roughly \$700,000 by the end of this year.

That's largely because the Grizzlies are on pace to set the franchise merchandise record for a third straight year and surpass last year's revenue of \$525,000, benefiting from the popularity of the Fresno Tacos line and other catchy promotions such as the Three Amigos uniforms.

Franks added that the Grizzlies sold more group tickets and suites compared to their cheaper seats, helping offset the decline in attendance.

And he projects that with a new food service agreement in the works that will offer more favorable terms for the Grizzlies, the Fresno franchise should be on path to break even by 2018.

"It's my understanding that a lot of (minor league) clubs operate at a small loss or don't turn a big profit," Franks said. "While no ownership group wants to lose money, we have a group that can and has sustained losses, and envisions the long-term turnaround by outliving bad contracts."

The new concession stands deal that remains to be negotiated is one of the contracts the Grizzlies are happy to see expire at the end of this season. Under that contract, the Grizzlies benefited early on financially with their deal with Ovation Food Services, which later became known as Spectra. But in the later years, the Grizzlies did not receive as much of a share from concessions sales, with the club's commissions ranging from 10 percent to 25 percent, Franks said.

"There's probably another 10, 20 percent that the club will get in a new market deal," Franks added.

The Grizzlies GM also would like to see more debit/credit card point-of-sale terminals in place under the new agreement.

"The expiring food service agreement is going to be big for us," Cummings said. "Will it solve all of our problems? No. But it's a big step in the right direction."

In addition, the lease modification approved by City Hall last year allows the new buyer to pay annual rent of \$750,000 in monthly installments of \$150,000 from April through August when the Grizzlies have their most cash. And the city will contribute up to \$1 million for stadium repairs/improvements if the new owner contributes a match.

Cummings declined to state how much the Fresno Baseball Club is asking for the Grizzlies.

In a Forbes magazine article published in July, the Grizzlies were considered the 11th most valuable minor-league baseball club and valued between \$20 million and \$25 million. The rival Sacramento River Cats were rated No. 1, valued at \$49 million.

Broker Jimmy Fox, who is helping the Fresno Baseball Club find a buyer for the Grizzlies, said an ideal new owner would already own another minor-league baseball club and have a strong background in how to operate and make money running the franchise.

Cummings said the first buyer to make an offer from the Grizzlies backed out of a handshake agreement because of health reasons in 2014. And a second buyer rescinded its offer partly because of "negative press coverage," Cummings added.

Cummings said the partnership group remains patient in the search for a new buyer and continues to look for someone who'll meet their asking price and be a good fit for the city.

"We've been close in the past to a sale and, of course, I'd like to close it out," Cummings said. "But I'm sitting here in my office that's decorated with three World Series championships (when the Grizzlies served as a San Francisco Giants affiliate) and another championship when we won it all (the Grizzlies' Triple-A title in 2015), and I'm thinking it's disappointing that we haven't been able to complete the sale."

"But it's the most enjoyable disappointment I've ever experienced. I believe when the time is right, the sale will happen."

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## What You Need to Know

### *To Sin By Silence, When They Should Protest, Makes Cowards of Men*

By Emma Baccellieri / Baseball Prospectus

#### The Tuesday Takeaway

Meaningful baseball has been relatively scarce for the A's this year, as is typically the case for a team whose playoff odds have been below the 5 percent mark since early June. But there was meaning aplenty in Tuesday's game, if only in a symbolic sense: from the third inning on, Oakland was playing under protest.

Baseball under protest is weird in that it looks exactly like baseball without protest (baseball over protest?) and, far more often than not, it ends up not being baseball under protest at all—many teams decline to formally file the necessary paperwork, and even when they choose to do so, their protests are basically never upheld. Per Project Retrosheet, there are just 15 examples of games continued after a successfully overturned protest, and there is but one from this century.

After the game, it became clear that Tuesday's A's will not join that set, as manager Bob Melvin said that the protest had been rescinded. The play in question: in the top of the third, with Teoscar Hernandez on first base and no one out, Yonder Alonso fielded a Jake Marisnick bunt on a bounce—seemingly tagging Marisnick as he dove toward first, and then Hernandez, who had not made a run for second and stepped off the bag as Alonso made the tag of Marisnick.

Or not. Everyone was confused.

Marisnick was called safe, leading A's manager Bob Melvin to challenge. A replay review brought a reversal, but not the one Melvin had been looking for—under the new call, Marisnick was in fact out, but Hernandez was safe, with the replay official saying that Hernandez had been reacting to the incorrect call on Marisnick and therefore should be awarded first base. Oakland did not agree, and so—

#### Rule 7.04

##### 7.04 (4.19) **Protesting Games**

Each league shall adopt rules governing procedure for protesting a game, when a manager claims that an umpire's decision is in violation of these rules. No protest shall ever be permitted on judgment decisions by the umpire. In all protested games, the decision of the League President shall be final.

Even if it is held that the protested decision violated the rules, no replay of the game will be ordered unless in the opinion of the League President the violation adversely affected the protesting team's chances of winning the game.

*Rule 7.04 (Rule 4.19 Comment):* Whenever a manager protests a game because of alleged misapplication of the rules the protest will not be recognized unless the umpires are notified at the time the play under protest occurs and before the next pitch, play or attempted play. A protest arising on a game-ending play may be filed until 12 noon the following day with the league office.



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The A's are playing this game under protest.

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Ultimately, the baserunner didn't matter, as Sean Manaea got Yulieski Gurriel to ground into an inning-ending double play two batters later. The A's didn't get their first hit off of Astros starter Joe Musgrove until the sixth, but the one run they scored in the inning for a 1-0 lead was matched by Houston in the very next frame, and the game remained tied long enough to call for extra innings. But an Astros run in the top of the 10th went unanswered by the A's, who loaded the bases and left them that way, and Oakland took a 2-1 loss along with their revoked protest.

# Opponent Clips - at OAK

## Manaea, Cotton display bright future with A's

By Rick Eymer / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Left-hander Sean Manaea, like right-hander Jharel Cotton the night before, gave the Athletics an exciting glimpse of what's to come.

Manaea threw six scoreless innings and allowed just three hits in a no-decision Tuesday night, as the Astros rallied to hand the A's a 2-1 loss in the 10th.

Cotton threw two-hit ball over six innings in the A's 4-2 loss to Houston on Monday night.

"It's awesome to see the young guys come up and take advantage of their opportunities," said A's reliever Sean Doolittle, who took the loss on Tuesday. "Another really tough loss, back-to-back nights, especially frustrating because of the start Manaea gave us. That was one of his best outings of the season and to squander it is incredibly frustrating. The same with Cotton, one of his best starts last night. That's the silver lining in this series so far."

Manaea acknowledged he got a little frustrated in the game but knew how to calm himself down. He's quickly learning how to go about his business.

Manaea has tossed 11 scoreless innings after missing 15 days with a back injury, and has allowed just three earned runs over his past 21 1/3 innings. His ERA is 2.84 since coming off the disabled list on June 29.

Cotton is 1-0 with a 1.50 ERA after his first three Major League starts. They're beginning to look like a 1-2 punch near the top of the rotation.

"Really good. Similar to the last time out," A's manager Bob Melvin said of Manaea. "Got a lot of swing and misses, some strikeouts. He's tough to deal with when he's got all three pitches working. That was the case tonight."

Manaea plans to continue his baseball education through his last couple starts.

"My goal is to go out and throw six or seven innings," he said. "I'm looking to finish strong and carry that through to next season."

Cotton echoed the same sentiment Monday night.

"As I continue to pitch I want to get better," he said. "I'm doing what I've been taught through the Minors. I want to go out and compete with these guys."

## Davis scratched from A's lineup with illness

By Rick Eymer / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Outfielder Khris Davis, one shy of 100 RBIs, was a late scratch from Tuesday night's game against the Astros because of a stomach ailment.

"He's felt it since the morning," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Originally had him in the lineup. Was kind of waiting to see how he'd respond, but he's not getting any better so he will not be in the lineup."

Davis, who shared the AL Player of the Week honors, is hitting .252 with 40 home runs. He was replaced in the lineup by Renato Nunez.

Worth noting

- Sonny Gray threw 48 pitches in a bullpen session Tuesday and if he comes out of it healthy, he could face hitters over the weekend.

"Pretty intense in what he was doing," Melvin said. "There was a high energy level and he threw all his pitches."

- Catcher Stephen Vogt will receive the A's Dave Stewart Community Service Award for the second consecutive year, becoming the first to win the award twice in its history, which dates to 1996.

"My wife and I have always wanted to get involved with different organizations that work with kids with special needs because it's an area that a lot of people aren't comfortable doing, and we are," Vogt said.