



2017
FANTASY BASEBALL
GUIDE



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1B

Several first-rate choices stock the first base draft.

Paul Goldschmidt is a compelling pick combining power, speed (32 SB in 2016) and durability. The 29-year-old led the NL in PA (705) in 2016, and he's had 500 or more at bats four of the last five seasons averaging 26 homers a year in that span.

Cincinnati's **Joey Votto** led the National League in OBP (.434) and led all NL first basemen in OPS (.985) and BA (.326).

Freddie Freeman is coming off career-highs in HR (34), OBP (.400) and OPS (.968) and like Goldschmidt and Votto can anchor a lineup. The trio finished among the Top 5 in games played last season. **Anthony Rizzo** was a key component of the Cubs World Series win and should be entering his prime at age 27. Rizzo has hit 30 or more home runs three years in a row, tied for second in the league in doubles (43) and figures to continue compiling major power numbers in a loaded lineup.

Managers seeking to conserve cash can still find quality with the Dodgers' **Adrian Gonzalez**, Giants' **Brandon Belt** or newly-acquired Rockies' **Ian Desmond**, who signed a 5-year, \$70 million deal with Colorado. An all-star OF with the Rangers last season, Desmond has never played 1B at any level of pro ball and it's not out of the question he could see time in the Colorado OF.

The Cardinals' **Matt Carpenter** split time between first, second and third base last season. The former All-Star third baseman enters 2017 atop the first base depth chart for St. Louis.

Two choices who provide both risk and reward potential: Miami's **Justin Bour**, who was limited to 90 games with a sprained right ankle, still hit 15 HR and 30-year-old **Lucas Duda**, whose creaky back reduced him to just 153 AB and 7 HR in 2016. Duda hit 27 and 30 HR in 2015 and 2014.



Paul Goldschmidt
ARI
Freddie Freeman
ATL
Anthony Rizzo
CHN



Matt Carpenter
STL



Ryan Zimmerman
WAS

2B

The NL batting champion, slugging king and stolen base leader are all standouts at second.

Daniel Murphy, who led the National League in slugging (.595), OPS (.985) and doubles (47) and was second in BA (.347), figures to top several draft lists. The NL MVP runner-up is coming off career highs in home runs (25), doubles and OPS and will be a dangerous presence in a loaded Nationals lineup.

DJ LeMahieu edged Murphy by a single point for the NL batting title (.348 BA) and was eighth in the league in OPS (.911). Playing home games in hitter haven Coors Field should benefit LeMahieu again: He had 51 extra-base hits in 2016. World Series MVP **Ben Zobrist**, who belted 18 HR and 31 doubles, is a versatile and dependable switch hitter. Zobrist started 113 games at 2B and made 29 OF starts for the Cubs in 2016. Zobrist has played every position except pitcher and catcher in his 11-year MLB career and is expected to spend some time in the OF this season too. If that happens, **Javier Baez**, who made 38 starts at 2B and 36 starts at 3B last season, will likely see more at bats at second.

National League

MLB stolen base leader **Jonathan Villar** is playing second base in winter ball and scheduled to start there for the Brewers. The upside: Villar has power and speed (62 SB, 19 HR, 38 2B). The downside: his 174 strikeouts were the second-highest strikeout total in the league.

Brandon Phillips, César Hernández, Josh Hernandez and Neil Walker are all coming off solid seasons. Phillips is in the final year of a six-year contract with talented 22-year-old **Dilson Herrera** behind him on the Reds roster. Though Walker was limited to 412 AB by season-ending back surgery, he still hit 23 HR, is only 31 and should be highly motivated playing for a new contract. If Walker is hobbled, **TJ Rivera**, who hit .333 in 105 AB last year, could step in for the Mets.

More affordable options include Cardinals **Kolten Wong** and **Jedd Gyorko**, who hit a career-high 30 HR in just 400 AB. Serving an 80-game suspension for PED use limited **Dee Gordon** to 325 AB last season. Still, he stole 30 bases and while he won't match the power numbers of other standouts at this spot, Gordon hit a career-high .333 a couple of years ago.



Daniel Murphy
WAS
DJ LeMahieu
COL
Neil Walker
NYM



Jonathan Villar
MIL



Brandon Phillips
CIN

3B

A trio of talented power hitters—**Nolan Arenado**, **Kris Bryant** and **Maikel Franco**—are the top choices at the hot corner.

Arenado is a stud slugger, who led the league in home runs (41) for the second straight year, was second in slugging (.570) and sixth in OPS (.932). Consider the 25-year-old has had more than 600 AB in each of the last two seasons, plays in the most homer-friendly park in the league and anchors an explosive Rockies infield that includes NL batting leader DJ LeMahieu and it's easy to see why he'll top most draft lists.

Bryant exceeded Arenado in OPS (.939), finished fourth in the NL in slugging (.554) and hit 39 home runs. Bryant is a proven run producer, the question is what position will he call home? **Javier Baez** is expected to gain more starts at both 2B and 3B, which means Bryant, who started 100 games at 3B and 48 in the OF last year, could again split starting time at two positions. The 24-year-old Franco, one of the most exciting young players in the league, is coming off a breakthrough year where he drilled 25 home runs and 23 doubles. The downside: playing for an anemic Phillies line-up that was second to last in offense last season, he may not see much to hit.

A solid secondary tier of options includes **Martin Prado** (.305 BA), **Justin Turner** (.275, 27 HR, 34 2B) and NL Comeback Player of the Year **Anthony Rendon**, who hit .270 with 20 HR and 38 doubles last season. **Travis Shaw**, acquired in a trade with the Red Sox, gives the Brewers a left-handed hitting third baseman with some pop. Shaw hit 16 homers in 480 at bats for the Sox last season.

Jung Ho Kang, who hit 21 HR in just 318 AB, could be a sleeper pick though there are concerns about injuries that limited him to 103 games last season and potential discipline after an offseason DUI arrest. **Yangervis Solarte** (.286 BA, 15 HR, 26 2B in 405 AB), **Jhonny Peralta**, penciled in as Cardinals starter, and **Jose Reyes**, who replaced an injured **David Wright** at 3B last season could be lower-cost, quality picks. While Wright hopes to return from neck surgery, Reyes' versatility and mobility means he will see plenty of starts on a Mets squad starved for team speed. Utility man **Wilmer Flores** can play all four infield positions though he has veteran starters ahead of him at every spot.



Kris Bryant
CHN

Nolan Arenado
COL

Maikel Franco
PHI



Jake Lamb
ARI



David Wright
NYM

SS

In a non-traditional power position, there are some shortstops who can slug.

Dodgers SS **Corey Seager** won Rookie of the Year honors with a declarative season in which he hit .308 with 26 HR and 193 hits—second most in the league.

Trevor Story opened 2016 as a breakout star. Story smacked 27 homers, 21 doubles and produced a .909 OPS despite left thumb surgery that limited him to 372 at bats.

Veteran **Asdrubal Cabrera** batted .280 with 23 HR—his sixth straight season of double digit homers. The Cubs believe 22-year-old **Addison Russell**, who hit 21 HR last season, possesses as much talent as Seager and Story. Can Russell, a .240 hitter in his two MLB seasons, manage the strike zone better?

A position laden with young talent may have a potential sleeper in St. Louis starter **Aledmys Díaz**, who hit .300 with 17 HR in a successful debut.

Brandon Crawford may not match those power totals, but remains one of the league's most dependable shortstops. **Trea Turner's** torrid second-half saw him finish 2016 with a .342 BA, 13 HR and 33 stolen bases. That performance prompted the Nationals to trade 2016 starting SS **Danny Espinosa** and pencil Turner in as starting shortstop. Turner started 44 games in the OF and 25 at 2B, but did not start at SS in 2016.

Mid-level options include **Chris Owings** (.277 BA, 21 SB), **Freddy Galvis** (20 HR, 26 2B, 17 SB) and **Jordy Mercer**. **Dansby Swanson**, the first overall selection in the 2015 draft by the D-Backs, will get a shot to start for the Braves after Atlanta traded veteran **Erick Aybar** to the Tigers. Swanson, who was called up to the big leagues on August 17th, hit .302 in 129 AB for the Braves.



Corey Seager
LAD

Trevor Story
COL

Aledmys Diaz
STL



Trea Turner
WAS



Adeiny Hechavarria
MIA

C

Usual suspects are leading masked men in the draft.

Buster Posey's home run total and OPS has declined in each of the last three years, but the 2012 MVP has hit .311 or higher in three of the last five years and will go high again.

Yadier Molina has hit .300 or better four of the last six years, including .307 last season. At some point, the 34-year-old wizard will slow down, but should be a Top 3 pick in most leagues. **Yasmani Grandel** is a career .238 hitter, but showed pop blasting a career-best 27 HR last season—the most by any MLB catcher. Sixteen of those HR came in his final 60 games though Grandel is an injury risk: He's yet to generate 400 AB in any of his five seasons.

Coming off a breakout season in which he hit .303 with 11 home runs, **J.T. Realmuto** led all MLB catchers with 12 steals. Be aware the 25-year-old Realmuto hit RHP significantly better than LHP (.322 vs. RHP, .215 vs. LHP).

Willson Contreras could be the sleeper pick of the catcher draft. The Cubs 2015 Minor League Player of the Year broke in with a bang homering in his first MLB AB on June 19th. Contreras hit .333 after September 1st, finishing with a .282 BA, 12 HR and an .845 OPS in 252 AB. **Kyle Schwarber**, who caught 21 games in 2015, could see limited action again.

National League

Coming off a season in which he posted career-highs in BA (.252), OPS (.750) and HR (16), **Cameron Rupp** can be a solid starter.

A cast of young catchers aiming for bounce-back seasons offer varying degrees of risk. Limited to 326 AB recovering from a broken bone in his left hand, **Francisco Cervelli** hit .385 against LHP last season and is a solid mid-round selection after hitting .295 in 2015.

Travis d'Arnaud was once touted as the Mets solution at catcher, but after another injury-plagued season that saw him regress to a .247 BA/.307 OBP/.629 OPS stat line the question is can he stay relevant? D'Arnaud will be given every opportunity in a catching rotation that includes 33-year-old **Rene Rivera**, who became **Noah Syndergaard's** personal catcher, and possibly former No. 1 pick **Kevin Plawecki**, who has yet to show he can consistently hit big-league pitching.

The Nationals acquired **Derek Norris** from the Padres to fill their hole at catcher, but is he a capable starter? Norris is coming off a self-described "awful" season; the Nats won't tolerate a repeat of his .186 BA, .255 OBP debacle.

Manny Pina enters Brewers spring training atop the depth chart though largely untested: Pina earned 71 of his 87 career AB last season hitting .254. **Jeff Mathis'** .197 career batting average doesn't evoke excitement, but the 12-year veteran signed a two-year contract as the projected D-backs starter and should be a serviceable BBM backup.



Buster Posey
SFO

Willson Contreras
CHN

Yadier Molina
STL



JT Realmuto
MIA



Devin Mesoraco
CIN

OF

Game-changers, sluggers and spark plugs populate the OF draft.

Begin in Colorado where **Charlie Blackmon** is coming off a career year (.324 BA, 29 HR, 34 2B, .933 OPS) and fellow lefty **Carlos Gonzalez**, is hoping to improve on his .295 BA and 25 HR performance last season.

A groin strain stalled **Giancarlo Stanton's** 2016 season yet he still slammed 27 HR in only 413 AB. Stanton has hit 30 or more HR in three of the last six seasons with an OPS over .950 three times in that span.

Yoenis Cespedes re-signed with the Mets after his second straight 30 home-run season. Cespedes has hit 48 home runs in 189 games with the Mets despite playing in Citi Field, a park traditionally tough on right-handed hitters.

Ryan Braun is coming off a superb 2016 (.305 BA, .538 SLG, .903 OPS, 30 HR) and should be a Top 5 pick in many leagues. However, there is a risk with Braun, who would face a 100-game suspension if he incurs another PED violation.

Bryce Harper struggled to back up his 2015 MVP season with a .243 BA and .373 OBP last season. Look for Harper to have a big bounce-back season in a Nationals lineup that should be strengthened with the addition of **Adam Eaton** in a trade with the White Sox. Eaton could go in the first two rounds of some drafts.

National League

Veterans who have been the subject of off-season trade rumors—2013 MVP **Andrew McCutchen**, **Jay Bruce** and **Curtis Granderson**—are experienced power producers. McCutchen hit a career-worst .256 with a career-worst OPS of .766 though he's hit 20 or more homers for six straight seasons. Bruce faltered badly after his trade to the Mets yet still hit 30 HR and Granderson banged 30 homers, but hasn't hit better than .240 in four of the last five years.

Managers who favor speed in the outfield will want to look at **Starling Marte** (.311 BA, 47 SB, 34 2B), **Billy Hamilton** (.260 BA, 58 SB), **Angel Pagan** (.277 BA, 15 SB) and **A.J. Pollock** aiming to bounce back after a fractured elbow and groin injury limited him to 41 AB.

Two members of the Cubs outfield—**Jason Heyward** and **Kyle Schwarber**—are capable of bounce-back seasons. Schwarber missed nearly the entire 2016 season with a knee injury, but showed an explosive bat in the postseason. He is a defensive liability, but the Cubs are committed to get him AB. Heyward wilted after signing on as a free agent last year struggling to a .230 BA, and hitting a career-low 7 HR, but should be better this season.

Yasiel Puig is a freakish talent capable of jaw-dropping plays like this (<http://m.mlb.com/news/article/211933010/the-most-extreme-statcast-throws-of-2016/>) . Puig hit .293 after June 1st, but can he stay motivated and disciplined for a bounce-back year?



Bryce Harper
WAS
Yoenis Cespedes
NYM
Giancarlo Stanton
MIA



Christian Yelich
MIA



Jay Bruce
NYM

RP

The MLB-record 15,893.2 innings relievers logged last season is one reason experts call 2016 the Year of the Reliever. Consider the average outing for an MLB starter in 2016 was slightly less than 5 2/3 innings and it reinforces the need for depth and strength in the bullpen.

Middle relievers are more valuable than closers in BBM because saves are not a factor in BBM game resolution. Consequently, high-priced closers who only work an inning are devalued in BBM where saves are irrelevant.

Addison Reed has been a reliable middle reliever coming off a 1.97 ERA season. Look for **Brad Hand**, **Blake Wood**, **Randall Delgado** and **Chris Hatcher** to have major middle reliever roles.

Strong set-up men include **Hector Neris**, **Derek Law** (2.13 ERA, 0.96 WHIP, 55 IP), **Felipe Rivero**, **Shawn Kelley** (2.64 ERA, 0.90 WHIP, 58 IP), **Jose Ramirez**, **Kevin Siegrist**, **Hector Rondon**, **Jacob Barnes**.

If you're committed to anchoring your bullpen with a traditional closer there are several stoppers.

Kenley Jensen (1.83 ERA, 0.67 WHIP, 68.2 IP), **Mark Melancon** (1.64 ERA, 0.90 WHIP, 71 IP), **Wade Davis** (1.87 ERA, 0.93 WHIP, 43 IP), **Seung Hwan Oh** (1.94 ERA, 0.92 WHIP, 79.2 IP), **Jeury Familia** (2.55 ERA, 1.21 WHIP 77.2 IP), **A.J. Ramos** (2.81 ERA, 1.36 WHIP, 64 IP) and **Tony Watson** are one-inning specialists.

The Reds are still undecided on **Raisel Iglesias'** role for 2017, but if he's in the bullpen full-time look for him to improve on his solid debut season.



Kenley Jansen
LAD

Wade Davis
CHN

Mark Melancon
SFO



Addison Reed
NYM



Brandon Mauer
SDG

SP

In a gifted pack of pitchers, there are clear aces.

Clayton Kershaw posted the lowest ERA and WHIP of any SP in baseball (1.69 ERA, 0.72 WHIP) last season. Concerns about the herniated disk in his lower back could impact the three-time Cy Young award winners perennial place atop this list, but Kershaw says he's feeling fine and throwing in the offseason. When healthy, there's no one better.

Max Scherzer led the league in IP (228.1) and Ks (284) in a Cy Young season. The 2015 Cy Young Award winner **Jake Arrieta** has produced an ERA under 3 and WHIP below 1 in two of the last three seasons. **Madison Bumgarner** (2.74 ERA), **Jon Lester** (2.44 ERA, 1.02 WHIP), **Noah Syndergaard** (2.60 ERA, 1.15 WHIP), **Kyle Hendricks** (2.13 ERA, 0.98 WHIP) and **Johnny Cueto** (2.79 ERA, 1.09 WHIP) finished in the Top 5 in NL ERA last season and are all premier starters.

Intriguing talents coming back from injury shortened seasons include **Stephen Strasburg** (3.60 ERA, slight tear in right elbow tendon), **Matt Harvey** (4.86 ERA in 92.3 IP, underwent surgery to remove a rib), **Jacob deGrom** (3.04 ERA in 148 IP, underwent right elbow surgery) and **Gerrit Cole** (right elbow inflammation).

Pitchers poised for bounce-back seasons: **Clay Buchholz** (4.78 ERA with Red Sox in 2016), **Zack Greinke** (4.37 ERA), **Gio Gonzalez** (4.57 ERA).

Inning eaters are valuable assets to any staff in Baseball Manager. Some starters who can go deep: **Tanner Roark** (210 IP), **Jeff Samardzija** (203.1 IP), **Matt Moore** (198.1 IP), **Jerad Eickhoff** (197.1 IP), **Chad Bettis**, **Edinson Volquez**, **Jeremy Hellickson**, **Julio Teheran** and **Robbie Ray**.

Our sleeper picks are **Rich Hill**, **Adam Conley**, **Jameson Taillon**, **Kenta Maeda**, **Steven Matz** and **Tyler Chatwood**.

And finally, there are always some veterans that can squeeze out another solid season. Among them 43-year-old **Bartolo Colon** and 42-year-old **R.A. Dickey**.



Clayton Kershaw
LAD

Max Scherzer
WAS

Madison Bumgarner
SFO



Steven Matz
NYM



Adam Wainwright
STL

1B

A power-loaded position provides several potential cornerstone players.

Two-time AL MVP **Miguel Cabrera** was among the league leaders in BA (.316), HR (38), SLG (.563) and OPS (.956). The 33-year-old slugger has hit 30 or more HR in eight of the last 10 years. **Jose Abreu** enters his prime propelled by his third straight season of 25 or more HR's. **Edwin Encarnacion** is an intriguing pick. Coming off a massive 42 HR, .529 SLG, .886 OPS, the 33-year-old is a proven powerhouse, yet Encarnacion made just 74 of his 160 starts at 1B in 2016. So if he is your top pick here, make sure to select an active back-up in Baseball Manager where defense matters.

A pair of players proficient in going deep and striking out often figure to be first-round picks. **Chris Davis** led the AL in strikeouts (205) hit 38 HR for the third time in the last four years and saw his batting average drop 41 points (.221) compared to 2015. Free agent **Mike Napoli** hit 34 HR while striking 194 times playing 98 games at 1B helping the Indians to the World Series last year and remains a proven power presence at age 35.

The Red Sox are hoping newly-signed 31-year-old **Mitch Moreland** (.233 BA, 22 HR) will pick up some of the power slack lost with the retirement of **David Ortiz**. **Jurickson Profar** is the ultimate utilityman. He played all four infield positions, starting 13 games at 1B, as well as OF and DH in 2016, but his position is uncertain as spring training looms. **Greg Bird** missed the entire 2016 season after undergoing surgery to repair a torn labrum, but if healthy could replace the retired **Mark Teixeira** as Yankees 1B. Bird blasted 11 home runs and posted a .529 SLG in 157 at bats in 2015.



Miguel Cabrera
DET

Jose Abreu
CHA

Edwin Encarnacion
CLE



Jurickson Profar
TEX



A.J. Reed
HOU

2B

Five impact players coming off 600 AB seasons are the class of this round.

AL batting champion **Jose Altuve** (.338 BA/.396 OBP/.928 OPS, 24 HR, 42 2B), **Robinson Cano** (.298 BA/.350 OBP/.882 OPS, 39 HR), 2008 MVP **Dustin Pedroia** (.318 BA/.376 OBP/.825 OPS, 15 HR), **Brian Dozier** (.288 BA, 42 HR, 35 2B), and **Ian Kinsler** (.288 BA, 28 HR, 29 2B) are projected as top picks.

Depth at this position provides several solid mid-round options. **Rougned Odor** (.271 BA, 33 HR, 14 SB), **Jason Kipnis**, coming off a breakout 23 HR season, **Jonathan Schoop** (25 HR), **Starling Castro** and **Devon Travis**, who was troubled by shoulder and knee injuries, all merit consideration.

Brett Lawrie, **Jed Lowrie**, whose 2016 season ended with a foot injury in August and **Danny Espinosa**, who was acquired from the Nationals and is projected as the Angels starting 2B, should see substantial AB's. White Sox utility man **Tyler Saladino** made appearances at every position except pitcher and catcher in 2016 with 39 of his starts coming at 2B.



Jose Altuve
HOU

Robinson Cano
SEA

Brian Dozier
MIN



Devon Travis
TOR



Johnny Giavotella
BAL

3B

If you're seeking corner position power, consider investing in one of several accomplished big bangers at third.

Josh Donaldson hit .284 with 37 HR and 32 2B last season. The 31-year-old right-hander finished 2016 ranked among the Top 5 in the AL in OPS (.953), OBP (.404) and SLG (.549).

Manny Machado boasts the explosiveness to earn number one pick honors in several leagues. The third overall pick of the first round in the 2010 MLB draft, Machado blasted 37 HR, 40 2B and batted .294. Starting 114 games at 3B and 43 at SS last season, the 24-year-old Machado has drilled 72 HR over the past two seasons and figures to continue that power pace.

Evan Longoria has registered four 30 or more HR seasons in his nine-year career, including 36 HR, 41 2B, .273 BA last season. **Kyle Seager** is coming off a .278, 30 HR, 36 2B season.

Age is an understandable concern when assessing 37-year-old **Adrian Beltre's** value. Consider though Beltre has batted .300 or better in five of the last seven seasons, is coming off a .300 BA, 32 HR, .879 OPS season and has had 500 or more AB in 13 of the last 15 years you can view durability trumping advancing age.

American League

Todd Frazier bombed 40 HR in 2016 though his .225 BA, 163 strikeouts and the fact he's been the subject of trade rumors in the offseason can be concerns. Is Kung Fu Panda preparing for a revival season? **Pablo Sandoval** has shed substantial weight after missing nearly the entire 2016 season after undergoing left shoulder surgery. Sandoval has struggled since leaving San Francisco for Boston, but could be due for a bounce-back season at age 30.

A pair of sleeper picks pop out here. **Mike Moustakas** is expected to be ready for Spring Training after a torn right ACL and fractured left thumb restricted him to 104 AB last season following a 22 HR 2015 campaign. Astros 2015 number one draft pick **Alex Bregman** could also be a sleeper pick at third. In his rookie season, Bregman hit .264 with 8 HR in 201 AB, including a .323 BA in September.

Second-tier options include **Jose Ramirez**, **Nick Castellanos**, **Miguel Sanos** and **Chase Headley**.



Josh Donaldson
TOR
Adrian Beltre
TEX
Manny Machado
BAL



Mike Moustakas
KAN



Chase Headley
NYY

SS

Some of the most exciting young players in the league reside at shortstop.

Francisco Lindor (.301 BA, 15 HR, 19 SB), **Carlos Correa** (.274 BA, 20 HR, 13 SB), **Xander Bogaerts** (.294 BA, 21 HR, 13 SB) and **Didi Gregorius** (.276 BA, career-high 20 HR) all figure to be high draft picks.

Veteran **Troy Tulowitzki** has not exceeded 500 AB in a season since 2011, however Tulowitzki belted 24 HR and 21 2B last season. The Mariners acquired **Jean Segura** from the D-Backs in an off-season trade. The 26-year-old Segura was fifth in the NL in BA (.319) and SB (33) and hit 20 HR and 41 2B. Playing alongside **Robinson Cano** in a talented Mariners infield should further empower Segura.

Elvis Andrus batted a career-high .302 last season though he's coming off sports hernia surgery this season. **Marcus Semien** slugged 27 HR hitting .238 last season.

Mid-round prospects include **Alcides Escobar**, **Andrelton Simmons**, defensive wizard **Jose Iglesias**, **Tim Anderson**, **J.J. Hardy** and **Jorge Polanco**.

Switch hitter **Brad Miller** is a multi-position player with some pop. Miller hit 30 homers with 95 starts at SS and 37 at 1B last season. Heading into spring training, Miller tops the Rays depth chart at 1B with 25-year-old **Matt Duffy**, who hit .258 in 333 AB last season, penciled in as starting SS.



Carlos Carrea
HOU

Francisco Lindor
CLE

Xander Bogaerts
BOS



Marcus Semien
OAK



Alcides Escobar
KAN

C

A key question to the entire draft: is the "Sanchise" truly a franchise player?

The Yankees believe 24-year-old phenom **Gary Sanchez** is a foundational player poised to honor a legacy position of predecessors Bill Dickey, Yogi Berra and Thurman Munson. Exploding out of the box, Sanchez made history as the fastest player in Major League Baseball history to hit 18 home runs. Sanchez bombed 20 home runs in just 201 AB tying teammate **Brian McCann** and **Russell Martin** for most among AL catchers. Add an astounding 1.032 OPS for a rookie and Sanchez, who has all of 55 games career MLB experience, is a likely number one pick in many leagues.

While Sanchez aims to solidify his historic start, the 32-year-old McCann moves on to Houston where he figures to extend his streak of nine consecutive seasons with 20 or more HR. Martin has been a consistent 20 HR producer in recent years though his BA dipped to .231 in 2016.

If you're not quite convinced to go all-in with sophomore Sanchez, then **Jonathan Lucroy** is the best bet at catcher. A 2016 All Star with the Brewers before moving to the Rangers, Lucroy finished with a .292/.355/.855 stat line last season, hitting 11 of his 24 HR after his trade to Texas in just 152 AB. At 6-foot-3, 240 pounds **Salvador Perez** is one of the larger catchers in the game, who provides value in durability and some pop coming off a career-high 22 HR season. Right shoulder and wrist injuries restricted **Yan Gomes** to 251 AB last year. Look for a bounce-back season.

Stephen Vogt, switch-hitter **Matt Wieters** and **James McCann** are likely late first-round picks in the catcher position in Baseball Manager. Boston's catching tandem of **Sandy Leon** and **Christian Vazquez**, the Twins **Jason Castro** and Rays' **Luke Maile** are later-round options.



Gary Sanchez
NYY

Jonathan Lucroy
TEX

Russell Martin
TOR



Yan Gomes
CLE



James McCann
DET

OF

AL MVP **Mike Trout** is a perennial top pick. Trout led the league in OBP (.441), was second in OPS (.991), hit 29 HR and stole 30 bases. It all added up to his second MVP award in the last three years. The five-tool stud has hit 25 or more HR for five years in a row and has not finished lower than second in MVP voting in that span.

Mookie Betts brings power and speed (31 HR and 26 SB) and finished second in the league in BA (.318). Betts led the league in AB (672) is coming off a career-high in hits (214) and should thrive again in the comfortable confines of Fenway Park. Veteran DH **Nelson Cruz** produced another monster season (.287 BA, .915 OPS, 43 HR) and is the only player in MLB to hit 40 or more HR in each of the last three seasons. **George Springer** posted career-highs in 2B (29) and HR (29), finished fourth in the league in AB (644) and at age 27 should be entering his prime. Draft **Adam Jones** and you can almost count on 25 HR and a .265 to .285 BA—the Orioles CF has hit 25 or more HR six years in a row. **J.D. Martinez** (.307 BA, 22 HR) could be the sleeper pick of the opening rounds. **Justin Upton** established career highs in HR (31) and strikeouts (179) last season.

Other sluggers to consider, include **Mark Trumbo**, who led the league in HR (47), and is currently a free agent (as of January 1, 2017) and **Khris Davis** (42 HR).

Potential mid-round draft choices include **Jackie Bradley, Jr.** (.267 BA, 26 HR), **Melvin Upton** (20 HR, 27 SB), **Lorenzo Cain**, **Jacoby Ellsbury**, **Tyler Naquin**, **Melky Cabrera**, and **Cameron Maybin**.

Alex Gordon could be poised for a bounce-back season after hitting .220 with 17 HR last season. A two-time All Star with the Brewers, **Carlos Gomez** should be highly-motivated playing for a new contract, but slumped to a .231 BA, 13 HR performance in 411 AB last year. **Jorge Soler** tops the Royals depth chart in RF after playing for the World Series champion Cubs last season.

Shin-Soo Choo has been a professional hitter throughout his career, but are four different stints on the DL and a .242 BA last season signs of physical decline?



Mike Trout
LAA
Mookie Betts
BOS
J.D. Martinez
DET



Alex Gordon
KAN



Carlos Gomez
TEX

American League

RP

In BBM there are often many relievers available in Free Agency—one reason why some BBM managers intentionally set their relief pitcher salary cap low—however you can build the bullpen through the draft as well.

Though MLB saves are not used in determining BBM games, a strong arm in the back of the bullpen is an asset. Three dominant lefty relievers will likely be the leading picks.

AL Reliever of the Year **Zach Britton** (0.54 ERA, 0.84 WHIP, 67 IP) remains the premier closer. **Aroldis Chapman** helped the Cubs end their World Series drought then took his triple-digit heater back to the Yankees. Fresh off a 1.55 ERA, 0.86 WHIP season, Chapman signed a reliever-record five-year pact with New York and will be a high-priced player in BBM. **Andrew Miller** (1.45 ERA, 0.69 WHIP, 123 Ks in 74.1 IP) enjoyed a career year in 2016.

Toronto's 21-year-old reliever **Roberto Osuna**, who struck out 82 in 74 innings, and 22-year-old Mariners reliever **Edwin Diaz** (88 Ks in 51.2 IP) are two of the best young closers in the game. Two-time all-star **Kelvin Herrera**, **Cody Allen**, **David Robertson**, **Brandon Kintzler**, **Dellin Betances** and **Francisco Rodriguez** are potential high draft choices.

Craig Kimbrel, the 2011 NL Rookie of the Year, earned all-star honors for the Red Sox last season. **Sam Dyson**, **Alex Colome**, **Ken Giles**, career-best 102 Ks, **Nate Jones**, veteran **Ryan Madson**, **Darren O'Day** and **Joakim Soria** should earn high to mid-level draft status.

Hudson Street underwent season-ending right knee surgery in August finishing with 22.1 IP—the lowest total of his 12-year career. Another closer on the comeback trail is **Glen Perkins**, who made two appearances in last April, before undergoing season-ending shoulder surgery.



Zach Britton
BAL
Andrew Miller
CLE
Dan Otero
CL



Alex Colome
TAM



Daniel Mengden
OAK

SP

Winning a title requires a workhorse pitcher to set the pace for the staff.

Any discussion of elite starters who can go deep in games starts with **Justin Verlander**. The 33-year-old righty was second in the league in IP (227.2) last season. It marked the ninth time in the last 10 seasons Verlander has tossed 200 or more innings in a season. Factor in a league-best 254 strikeouts, the league's second-lowest ERA (3.04) and a drop-dead gorgeous super model girlfriend and you see why Verlander is first-rate in baseball and life.

Corey Kluber has pitched to an under 3.50 ERA for three consecutive years, including 2016 when he produced a 3.14 ERA in 215 IP. Former Tigers first-round pick **Rick Porcello** is coming off a career-year with the Red Sox. The 28-year-old right-hander's 3.15 ERA in 223 IP helped him sweep Cy Young and Comeback Player of the Year honors. **Aaron Sanchez** will be a Top 10 pick after a stellar season in which he led the league in ERA (3.00) with a 1.17 WHIP And 161 Ks in 192 IP.

Masahiro Tanaka (3.07 ERA, 1.08 WHIP, 165 Ks in 199 IP), **Felix Hernandez**, **Michael Fulmer** (3.06 ERA, 1.12 WHIP), **Chris Archer** (233 Ks) **Chris Tillman**, **Carlos Carrasco**,

who is looking to bounce back from a fractured right hand, **Jake Odorizzi**, **Hisashi Iwakuma** and Athletics 2011 first-round pick **Sonny Gray**, who endured an injury-interrupted 2016 season after registering a 2.73 ERA in 2015, are all worthy of consideration.

AL managers are anxious to see if two former standouts—**Yu Darvish** of Texas and **Alex Cobb** of Tampa Bay—return to their winning ways after battling injuries the past couple of years. In 2014, his last complete season, Cobb pitched to a 2.87 ERA with 149 strikeouts in 166.1 innings.

Left-handers can be invaluable assets. Here are some of the best. **J.A. Happ** (3.18 ERA, 1.17 WHIP), 27-year-old **Jose Quintana** (3.20 ERA, 208 IP), who has been the subject of trade talks, **Cole Hamels** (3.32 ERA, 200.2 IP), **Danny Duffy** (3.51 ERA, 1.14 WHIP), **James Paxton** (3.79 ERA in 121 IP) and **Sean Manaea** (3.86 ERA) are all quality starters. Left-hander **David Price** led the league in IP (230) though his 3.99 ERA was his highest mark since 2009 and he allowed 30 home runs in a season for the first time in his nine-year career. **CC Sabathia**, the 2007 Cy Young Award winner, is on the back end of an impressive career but still pitched to a 3.91 ERA at age 36 last season.

American League



Aaron Sanchez
TOR
Justin Verlander
DET
Michael Fulmer
DET



Sonny Gray
OAK



Wade Miley
BAL