BRAYDEN'S BREAKDOWN:
WHO TO TARGET IN YOUR FANTASY BASEBALL DRAFT

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Opening Day in Major League Baseball is upon us and with that comes a new season of fantasy sports.

Fantasy baseball is a little bit different from other sports. With most teams only having one day off a week, you need to be sure you are drafting the right players for your lineup. One wrong draft pick and it could cost you the season.

There are players like Shohei Ohtani, Aaron Judge and Cal Raleigh who will deservedly be top picks because of their outstanding seasons in 2025. However, what you do after the first round is even more important than your first selection.

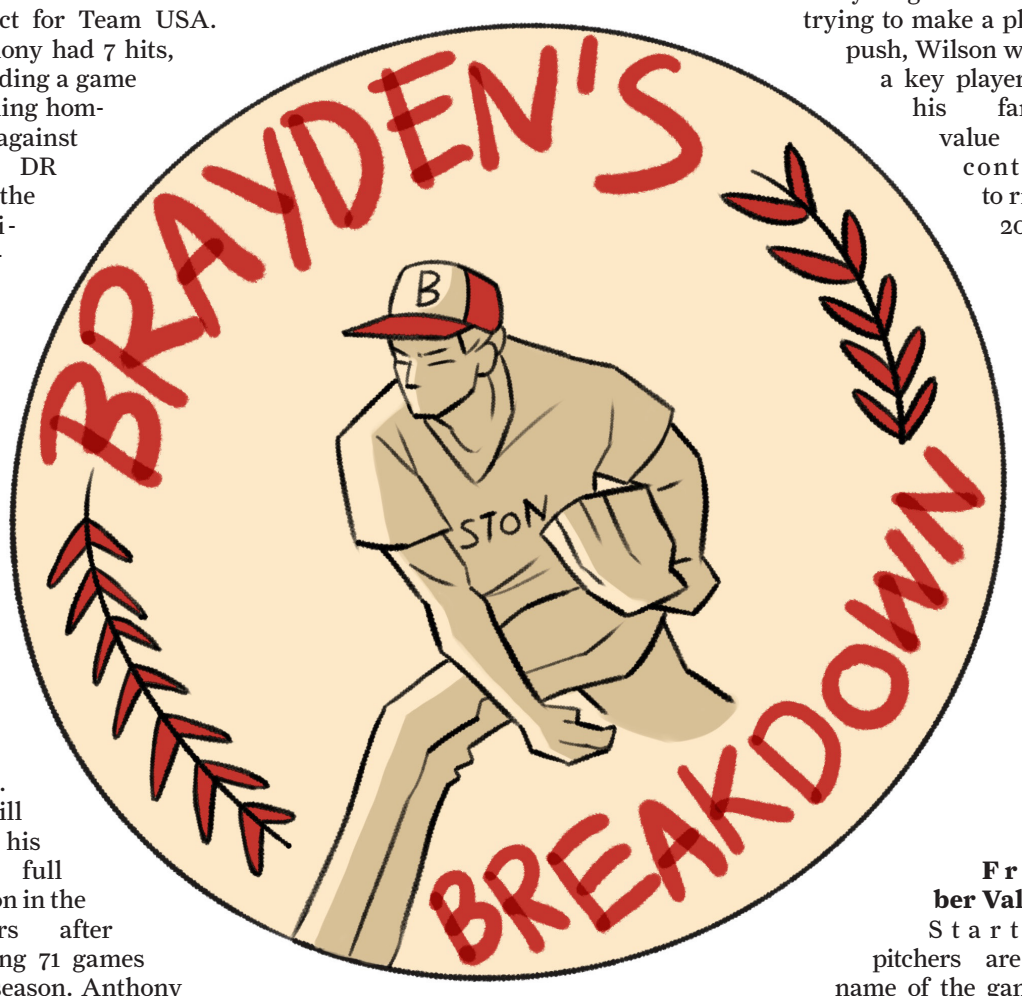
Here are five players to keep an eye on when you are drafting.

Junior Caminero

Expect the star third baseman to pick up right where he left off in the World Baseball Classic. Caminero had 7 hits and 3 home runs in 6 games for the Dominican Republic. He will be the focal point of Tampa Bay's offense this season and will try to live up to the massive expectations that he set last year. In his first full MLB season, the 22-year-old slugged 45 home runs along with 159 hits and 110 RBIs. The only issue is his strikeout rate. Caminero struck out 125 times and only walked 41 times. Despite that, his home runs and other hits should make him a first or second round pick this fantasy season.

Roman Anthony

Speaking of WBC success, Roman Anthony was a last-minute replacement for Corbin Carroll and made an instant impact for Team USA. Anthony had 7 hits, including a game winning homer against the DR in the semifinals. It will be his first full season in the majors after playing 71 games last season. Anthony had an on-base percentage of .396 and his ability to get on base gives his fantasy owners a few easy points every game. He had more hits than games played, a feat he could repeat in a full 162 game season.



LOGO BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Jacob Wilson

Wilson is another promising second year player who will try to build off his successful 2025 campaign. He had 151 hits and only struck out 39 times last year. His .311 average was tied for second best in the league. Wilson is a low risk, high reward player who will be available in the middle of most drafts.

With the young Athletics core trying to make a playoff push, Wilson will be a key player and his fantasy value will continue to rise in 2026.

Framber Valdez

Starting pitchers are the name of the game in fantasy baseball. They rack up the most points and can pitch once or twice a week depending on the schedule. The obvious top picks are Tarik Skubal, Paul Skenes and Garrett Crochet, but the rest of the field is up for debate. Framber Valdez departed from the Astros in the offseason to team up with Skubal in Detroit, something that will benefit him. Valdez had a rough year last season, but has some pressure taken off him starting after Skubal. He does not have to be the number one guy and carry the load for a pitching staff like he had to do in Houston for some years. Valdez had a sub 3 ERA in 2022 and 2024 and his strikeout numbers usually are near 200 per season. He has pitched over 175 innings in each of the last four seasons, making him a reliable option for fantasy. The native of the Dominican Republic should have a bounce back year in the Motor City.

Pete Fairbanks

Even though you should have as many starting pitchers as possible, it is always nice to have a reliable reliever on your roster. Aroldis Chapman was putting up championship winning numbers down the stretch in his first year in Boston. So, in Pete Fairbanks' first year in Miami, expect similar results. Fairbanks is averaging 25 saves per season the past three seasons and his strikeout numbers are also solid. He appeared in a career-high 61 games last season for a fourth-place Tampa Bay Rays team. If the young Marlins want to contend this season, they need Fairbanks to deliver in clutch situations. Expect him to be the closer for a Marlins team that won 79 games last season.

2026 MLB STANDINGS PREDICTIONS:
AMERICAN LEAGUE

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With the MLB season set to officially start tonight as the New York Yankees face the San Francisco Giants, here are my predictions for the American League division races.

East

Blue Jays

Toronto captures a second straight division title. The 2025 AL champions upgraded their rotation by signing Dylan Cease and added Tyler Rogers to the bullpen, creating depth on the pitching staff.

Despite the loss of Bo Bichette, the Blue Jays received production from so many utility-style players last season that, even if a few take a step back, there should be plenty of hitting to sustain last year's success. Add in all-star Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and well-rounded Japanese import Kazuma Okamoto and the Jays should be just fine.

Yankees

The Yankees didn't do much beyond re-signing players, bringing back Cody Bellinger and retaining Trent Grisham via the qualifying offer. Ben Rice should see an improvement on his stat page after suffering from being one of baseball's unluckiest hitters last season. Still, the lineup remains largely the same.

The rotation improves with the acquisition of Ryan Weathers (despite a horrid spring, 11.08 ERA over 13 innings) and the return of Gerrit Cole, plus a full season of Cam Schlittler. However, the bullpen, on paper, appears markedly worse after both Devin Williams and Luke Weaver defected from the Bronx to Queens to pitch for the Mets.

The lineup is the same, and the pitching staff overall didn't clearly improve.

In short, the gap between the Yankees and Blue Jays grew this offseason. The Yankees are one Aaron Judge injury away from missing the postseason.

Red Sox

It was a peculiar offseason for the Red Sox, who made plenty of additions but lost Alex Bregman after seemingly cementing his role as long term leader with the Rafael Devers trade.

Willson Contreras and Sonny Gray are fine pickups. Ranger Suárez is a fantastic two behind Garrett Crochet in the rotation. Still, that may not be enough to make up for the loss of Bregman.

Orioles

Baltimore finishes just behind Boston in a close call. Pete Alonso is the big pick up, but Taylor Ward brings another 30-plus home run bat.

The rotation still falls short, but Chris Bassitt is another good signing. Trevor Rogers maintaining his breakout and Kyle Bradish returning strong in his first full season back from injury would give them postseason potential.

Rays

The small-market Rays return to Tropicana but can't recapture a winning record. Tampa Bay is always game for a surprise, but the lineup only got weaker.

Central

Tigers

Detroit went all out in improving their rotation, bringing back living franchise legend Justin Verlander as well as signing Framber Valdez, who pitched from A.J. Hinch before Hinch's firing. Combine that with Cy Young, favorite Tarik Skubal, the ever-solid Casey Mize and Jack Flaherty, and you're looking at a top five rotation in the AL.

The improved staff should allow them to avoid the division title slipping away for a second straight season.

Royals

You can never count out a team with both the league's best shortstop, Bobby Witt Jr. (7.1 WAR led all shortstops), and four playoff-caliber starters. The additions of Matt Strahm, Nick Mears and Alex Lange should be a big bullpen booster.

A bona fide starting outfielder at the trade deadline would go a long way in overcoming the Tigers for the division.

Guardians

Cleveland's two biggest strengths remain Manager Stephen Vogt and José Ramírez. Though the Central in both leagues generally has increased parity due to the surplus of small market status, the Guardians can't afford to wait and make their move as they did last season.

White Sox

Chicago quietly had one of the most successful offseasons in baseball. Using the money freed by the Luis Robert Jr. trade, the Pale Hose surprisingly won the Munetaka Murakami bidding with a short-term deal and brought in set-up man Seranthony Domínguez.

With a pair of young catchers in Kyle Teel and Edgar Quero leading the way alongside slugger Colson Montgomery, the White Sox possess an exciting young lineup for the first time in a while.

Twins

Following the 2025 deadline fire sale and Pablo López's season-ending UCL surgery, Minnesota's outlook is bleak. The Twins have a long way to go before showing they're serious about winning again.

West

Mariners

Seattle repeats after electing to keep the band together after a Championship Series run, essentially swapping out Jorge Polanco for super-utility man Brendan Donovan.

The Mariners have maybe the strongest rotation depth in baseball and as scary a top of the order as there is in Cal Raleigh, Julio Rodríguez and Josh Naylor.

The M's have the potential to win the most games in the AL.

Rangers

After trading for MacKenzie Gore, Texas now features an imposing one-two-three punches of any rotation with Nathan Eovaldi and Jacob DeGrom. The real question is health. Both Gore and Eovaldi missed time in 2025, as did star shortstop Corey Seager and outfielders Wyatt Langford and Evan Carter. If healthy, Texas could push for a division title.

Athletics

The recent loss has taken the luster off a genuinely great lineup.

Young stars Jacob Wilson and Tyler Soderstrom earned extensions. Nick Kurtz enters his first full season as a top first baseman, while designated hitter Brent Rooker and catcher Shea Langeliers are widely considered top 10 hitters at their positions.

The rotation keeps the A's from fully breaking out of a rebuild, but an argument could be made for one to pick their offense over Texas'.

Astros

Houston continues to regress after missing the playoffs for the first time in eight years last season. The addition of Japanese starter Tatsuya Imai is interesting but merely replaces Framber Valdez in the rotation rather than being a real addition.

Angels

A perennial division bottom feeder, the Halos again come in last after not doing much to improve their outlook.

Best record: Mariners
Worst record: Angels
Surprise: Athletics
Under-performer: Guardians