Sports

Photo of the Day |



No. 4 UConn men's basketball faces Gardner-Webb on Monday, Nov. 2, 2026, at PeoplesBank Arena in Hartford. The Huskies defeated the Runnin' Bulldogs 86-46 in their regular-season opener, earning head coach Dan Hurley his 200th win at UConn. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYERS/THE DAILY CAMPUS

MONEYBALL WEEKLY:
HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

by Jack Yadlon
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
ptf24003@uconn.edu

The Houston Astros have become the prime modern example of full-fledged tanking paying off in dividends. While there will forever be debates about whether they deserve to retain the 2017 World Series title due to an infamous cheating scandal, their success in other years, including a 2022 World Series title, cannot be argued.

That title came four years ago. Since then, every year has gotten progressively worse. From falling in game seven of the 2023 American League Championship Series to being the worst team to ever make the playoffs in 2026 before getting embarrassed in the wild card by the Chicago White Sox.

The writing is on the wall in Houston and this isn't a new development: The franchise has fallen from year-to-year domination to just scraping by in their playoff hopes.

Not only has Houston lost its once-present edge and winning ways, but they now face additional issues. The age of the roster is the prominent problem, with most of the team being close to or older than 30 years old. The past few years have had solid frameworks but haven't come together for a multitude of reasons.

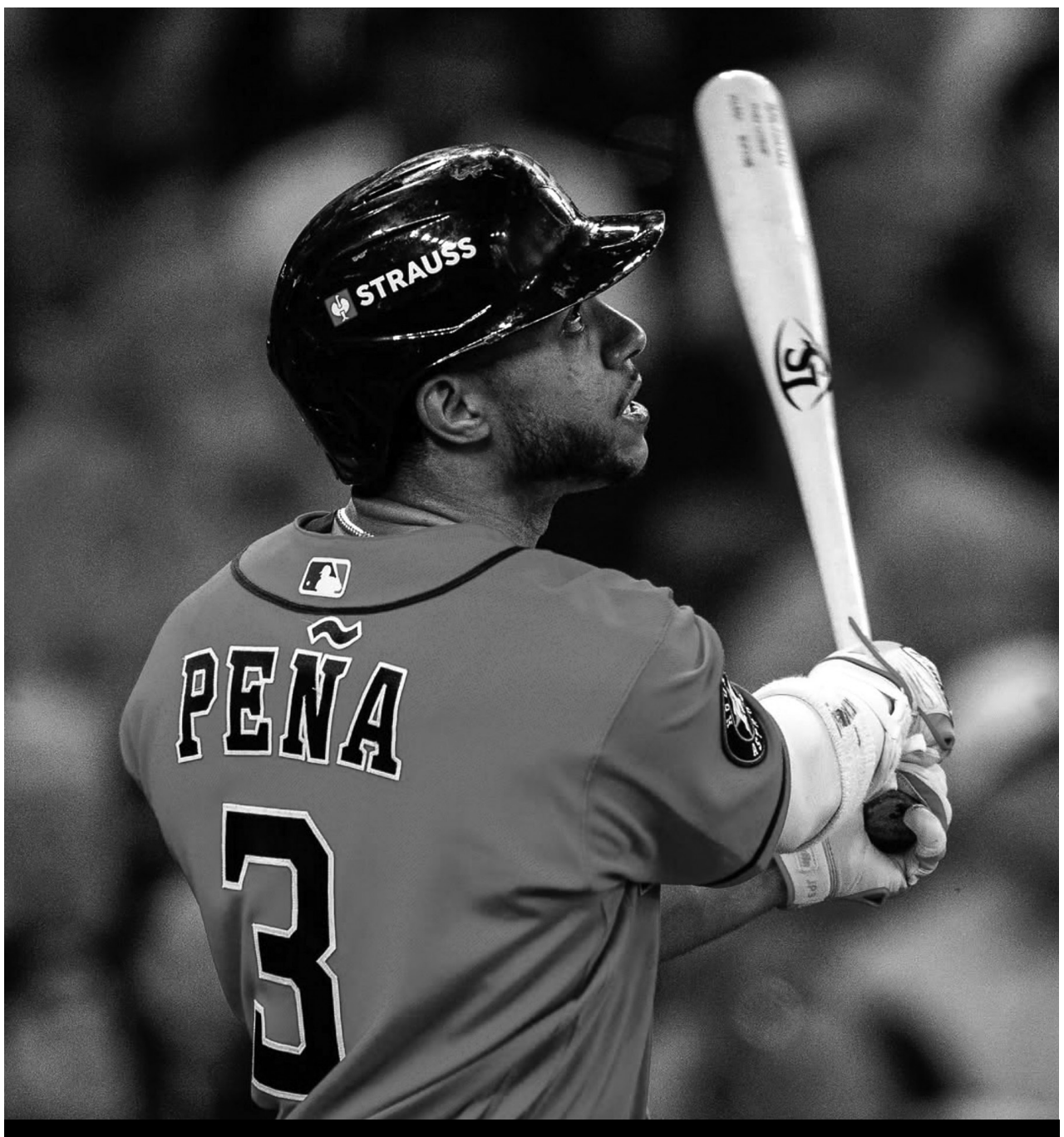
Houston now faces an age-old decision that sports franchises often run into after extended success. The team has two main directions to go in, where they can either run the current core until the demise is unavoidable, buying assets with whatever's left to sell in order to increase chances, or they can sell old players and expiring contracts to start to rebuild the young core, focusing on the future rather than the present. While there is a way to aim for a middle ground, this can run the risk of getting stuck in mediocrity.

The offensive core is strong enough to be competitive. While it's nothing special, the offense still saw success despite Carlos Correa missing most of the season. The glaring hole is the starting pitching but the silver lining of one major problem is that most resources can be allocated to fixing it.

This could be an easy fix, but acquiring good players means giving up valuable assets. Houston's offense doesn't have much room to shed quality players, and the prospect pool is one of the worst in the MLB, with Xavier Neyens, the team's lone top 100 prospect, barely making that list at number 100. To improve the pitching would risk any remaining future or potentially jeopardize the side of the field that has worked.

The alternative Houston may pursue is going nuclear on the roster. If the team is not good enough to contend and has no way to reach that threshold, the organization could bite the bullet and sell off major names to build a better future.

The obvious candidate is likely American League MVP winner Yordan Alvarez, the team's designated hitter. Nobody came close to him hitting-wise in what was by far his strongest and healthiest season. With two years left on his deal, capitalizing on his sky-high value would net Houston major capital. While the argument to keep a player of his caliber exists due to the infrequency of his talent, the flipside is that if Houston goes into a rebuild, it's unlikely they exit it before his prime concludes. If Houston sells, they'll most likely be forced to sell Alvarez.



Jeremy Peña of the Houston Astros batting during a game against the Philadelphia Phillies. The Astros lost 7-11 against the Phillies on Sept. 9, 2026.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @ASTROS ON INSTAGRAM

Jeremy Pena and Isaac Paredes are also candidates to be moved, as both infielders will be unrestricted free agents following the 2027 season. With Correa, one could be expendable to try and find pitching help, though both likely would be on the move if the team goes more drastic. Catcher Yainer Diaz also would catch the eye of contenders due to him being a productive bat in a premium position.

Starter Hunter Brown also could be on the block if the team goes full teardown, however the weakness of the team's pitching would make this unlikely unless they execute a fire sale.

Houston is not locked in either direction, but the one certain thing in its near future is the end of this group. Returning to being a bottom feeder is nobody's highest interest but the Astros may approach a time where this is unavoidable. If Houston wants to avoid returning to the dark days of the 2010s while having no young talent to look forward to, the time to bite the bullet and replenish the farm would be this offseason.