PREDICTING THE 2026–27 YANKEES OFFSEASON: OUTSIDE ACQUISITIONS

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This is part two of a two-part series predicting offseason moves for the New York Yankees. Part one focused on free agency and arbitration decisions. Part two focuses on outside free agents and potential trades.

On Tuesday, Major League Baseball proposed to push their goal of instituting a salary floor and cap from 2027 to 2028, with an initial 2028 cap of $258.2 million.

That figure is $12.9 million higher the $245.3 million mark from their original July proposal, approximately a 5% increase.

While it is unlikely the 2027 number would've ever been accepted by the MLB Players Association — the association has already rejected the 2028 number — a cap being introduced in 2027 would have severely hamstrung the Yankees' offseason.

New York has $212,405,034 in guarantees going into next season and are projected to spend $36.7 million should they offer arbitration to all nine eligible players. That $249,105,034 doesn't even include pre-arbitration contracts.

The Yankees, along with seven other teams who would have to shed salary to duck under the proposed 2028 salary cap number, may spend more cautiously this offseason until a concrete format is in place.

In the meantime, here are some cost-effective, short-term moves the Yankees would benefit from.

Shoring up the bullpen

Assuming the Yankees re-sign closer David Bednar and relief ace Paul Blackburn, they would retain their top three leverage arms from last season, including Brent Headrick.

Outside those three, the Yankees' bullpen was largely scraped together when the postseason rolled around.

Starters Will Warren and Ryan Weathers were bumped to the bullpen, while John Schreiber was a late-season waiver claim. Ryan Yarbrough was more an adequate swingman than a needle mover.

Either Warren or Weathers will start the year as a reliever if the rest of the rotation is healthy. Weathers could assume Yarbrough's role as the swingman, as he has a more extensive relief background than Warren.

Fernando Cruz may also be back, though he is a candidate to start the season on the IL as he recovers from a torn right ulnar collateral ligament.

That leaves three open spots to fill.

One will inevitably go to a minor-league signing or depth arm that performs well in spring training, such as the out-of-options Luis Gil.

Another seems destined for flame-throwing top prospect Carlos Lagrange. whose major league debut in 2027 seems inevitable should he stay healthy.

With the final spot, the Yankees could opt to sign a veteran to a short-term major league contract, as they did to retain Blackburn last offseason.

The Yankees front office often targets traits including high velocity, strong groundball rates and a slider-heavy pitch mix.

While Tyler Alexander averaged just 91.7 mph on his fastball in 2026, he missed barrels, limited hard contact and induced ground balls at an 86th percentile rate or better, according to Baseball Savant. The swingman did so while throwing his sweeper 18% of the time.



Baseball player Carlos Lagrange pitches the ball. Lagrange is a top prospect in the New York Yankees farm system.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @CARLOSLAGRANGE1 ON INSTAGRAM

The left-hander has made 62 career starts, giving him the wider pitch mix the Yankees also targeted with Blackburn.

Final prediction: Lagrange selected to 40-man roster, Alexander signed for one year, $2.1 million

Adequately addressing catcher

The Yankees front office has punted multiple times on finding a right-handed hitter to compliment left-handed hitter Austin Wells behind the plate.

Wells was horrid in the first half but picked up the pace post-All-Star break, slashing .229/.351/.436 with an .787 OPS from that point on. The 27-year-old was also a Gold Glove finalist.

Wells deserves to be in the lineup against right-handers, meaning the Yankees need a platoon bat rather than a full-time starter.

That likely rules out top-of-the-market options like Ryan Jeffers and Carson Kelly, even if the Yankees were frequently linked to the former at the trade deadline.

It also throws cold water on the idea of acquiring Colorado Rockies' top trade chip Hunter Goodman.

Reenter, Kyle Higashioka. Originally a Yankees farm hand for eight seasons before debuting in 2017, Higashioka was a reliable glove-first backup with some pop before being shipped to San Diego as part of the Juan Soto trade during the 2023-24 offseason.

While his glove has declined in three seasons since leaving New York, his ability to hit lefties has not. In 54 plate appearances against left-handers this season, Higashioka slashed .255/.352/.489, good for an .841 OPS.

Higashioka will likely command a one-year deal, and the arrangement would buy the Yankees one more season to decide whether Wells is the long-term answer.

Final prediction: Higashioka signed for one year, $4.4 million

Dealing for a third baseman

2025 trade deadline acquisition Ryan McMahon severely underperformed in 2026, posting a sub-.700 OPS for the second-straight year. While McMahon has never been a consistent bat, his defense also regressed to just average.

With third base being the clearest position of need and the free agent class being headlined by 35-year-old Eugenio Suárez, the Yankees could turn to the trade market.

On Monday, the Houston Astros exercised a $13.35 million team option on third baseman Isaac Paredes' 2027 services. Though the value was there after Paredes accumulated 4 WAR and posted an .806 OPS, the Astros also have a logjam in the infield.

Second baseman Jose Altuve, shortstop Jeremy Peña and third baseman Carlos Correa aren't going anywhere. Neither is first baseman Christian Walker, as his $20 million salary would be prohibitive in any deal.

Paredes is a subpar defender, notching −7 defensive runs saved in 2026 and profiling better as a designated hitter. That's not an option in Houston either, as probable American League MVP Yordan Alvarez has the role locked down.

The Yankees may be willing to stomach that poor defense to add some right-handed power to the lineup, a clear area of weakness with Aaron Judge out of the lineup. Even away from the Crawford Boxes at Daikin Park, Paredes would still bring 20-home run power.

With Houston perennially in need of rotation help, the Yankees could send a pair of near-major league ready arms in return. Though he struggled immensely at the major league level, Brendan Beck won International League Pitcher of the Year in 2026 after finishing his Triple-A season with a 2.93 ERA and 151 strikeouts in 135 1/3 innings.

The addition of borderline top 100 prospect RHP Ben Hess (MLB Pipeline Yankees No. 5) would give the Astros additional long-term upside.

With Paredes in the fold, the need for McMahon would be minimal. Perhaps the Yankees could flip him with a lottery ticket prospect or eat money in a trade, but the more likely outcome is a simple release.

Final prediction: Yankees acquire Paredes, Astros receive Beck and Hess

Projected roster

Starting pitchers (5): RHP Gerrit Cole, LHP Max Fried, LHP Carlos Rodón, RHP Cam Schlittler and RHP Warren

Relievers (8): LHP Alexander, RHP Bednar, RHP Blackburn, RHP Cruz, RHP Gil, LHP Headrick, RHP Lagrange and LHP Weathers

Catchers (2): Higashioka, Wells

Infield (6): José Caballero, Luis García Jr., George Lombard Jr., Paredes, Ben Rice and Anthony Volpe

Outfield (4): Cody Bellinger, Spencer Jones, Judge and Heliot Ramos

Designated Hiter (1): Giancarlo Stanton

Salaries, AAV estimates from Spotrac

Arbitration projections by MLB Trade Rumors Contributor Matt Swartz

COLETTE'S COMMENTARY:
A FIVE-YEAR VISION, A TWO-SEASON REALITY FOR GOLDEN STATE

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Five years. That was the timeline Golden State Valkyries owner Joe Lacob envisioned for the expansion franchise to win a WNBA championship. Under head coach Natalie Nakase, the Valkyries needed just two seasons. But the road to that championship was anything but easy. In a winner-take-all Game 7, the Valkyries entered halftime trailing before mounting a second-half comeback to secure the championship.

The Valkyries opened the Finals with a narrow 68-64 victory over Atlanta, but the Dream quickly responded. Behind a dominant 30-point, 16-rebound performance from Angel Reese, Atlanta evened the series in Game 2 before taking a 2-1 lead with a 97-71 victory in Game 3.

Golden State answered with back-to-back wins in Game 4 and 5, relying on its defense to limit Atlanta to just 62 and 55 points, respectively. With a 3-2 series lead, the Valkyries had an opportunity to secure the championship on Atlanta's home court. However, the Dream refused to let their season end, earning an 80-69 victory in Game 6 to force a winner-take-all Game 7.

Golden State jumped out to an early 8-0 lead, holding Atlanta scoreless through the opening minutes. The Valkyries established their defensive presence early, recording four blocks in the first quarter. However, Atlanta quickly responded with a run of their own to cut into the deficit. At the end of the first quarter, Golden State held a narrow 14-12 lead.

Atlanta found its offensive rhythm in the second quarter, outscoring Golden State 18-10. Guard Jordin Canada led the charge, scoring 11 points in the second quarter and 13 in the first half. Meanwhile, Golden State struggled offensively, shooting just 9-of-30 from the field. The Valkyries entered halftime trailing 30-24.

Valkyries forward Gabby Williams, who recorded just two points in the first half, helped spark the Valkyries' comeback by scoring on a drive to open the second half. Williams erupted for 15 points in the third quarter alone, knocking down three consecutive 3-pointers to bring Golden State back into contention. Golden State's defense also stepped up, recording seven blocks as the team chipped away at Atlanta's lead. The Valkyries outscored Atlanta 21-14 in the third quarter to take a 45-44 lead heading into the fourth quarter.



Graphic of The Golden State Valkyries victory. The Valkyries won the WNBA 2026 Championship against the Atlanta Dream.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @VALKYRIES ON INSTAGRAM

Throughout the fourth quarter, Atlanta and Golden State traded baskets, with neither team able to establish a comfortable lead. Dream guard Rhyne Howard tied the game at 57 with a layup at 2:41 remaining. Williams responded with a clutch 3-pointer to put Golden State ahead, followed by two free throws to help the Valkyries extend their lead with a seven-point scoring run. Dream guard Allisha Gray knocked down a 3-pointer and added two free throws to keep Atlanta within reach. With just 5.1 seconds remaining, Valkyries guard Veronica Burton converted two free throws to seal the 68-63 victory.

Golden State's championship victory also marked a milestone for UConn women's basketball. The four former Huskies on the Valkyries' roster — Williams, Tiffany Hayes, Kiah Stokes and Kaitlyn Chen — each added a WNBA championship to their resumes, continuing the winning tradition they established in Storrs. Williams earned Finals MVP honors after delivering a dominant 30-point performance in Game 7, while Stokes captured her fourth career WNBA championship. With her latest title, Stokes joined former UConn greats Sue Bird and Maya Moore among the program's most decorated WNBA champions.

What began as a five-year goal became a reality in just two seasons. Through a resilient postseason run and a championship-clinching Game 7 comeback, the Valkyries established themselves as WNBA champions. For Nakase, Lacob and the players who helped build the expansion franchise, the title represents the culmination of a vision that came to fruition far sooner than expected. For the four former Huskies, it adds another championship chapter to a legacy that continues to extend from Storrs to the professional stage.