

*Twins Daily*

**2011  
OFFSEASON  
HANDBOOK**

**BYRON  
BUXTON,  
CF**





●	3	introduction
●	5	john bonnes feature: past & present
●	10	organizational depth
●	17	seth stohs feature: clearing the clutter
●	24	arbitration decisions
●	27	payroll
●	30	free agents
●	44	nick nelson feature: dealing dozier
●	48	parker hageman feature: above & beyond
●	54	offseason blueprint

MAX KEPLER  
.734 OPS



## A New Hope

by Nick Nelson

Pitching and defense.

Over many years, these were the foundational staples of Twins baseball. For a decade after the turn of the century, Terry Ryan's teams consistently competed with a blueprint featuring pitchers that threw strikes and fielders that made plays.

It wasn't sexy, but it worked. The Twins consistently ranked among the league's most successful teams in terms of run prevention, and that factored heavily into their six division titles.

The extent to which they have strayed from that formula almost defies comprehension.

In 2016, the Twins allowed a staggering 889 runs. As you would expect with such an inflated number, it was a collective effort. The pitchers allowed a league-leading 221 home runs, while the defense converted balls in play into outs at a league-worst 68.1 percent rate. That, folks, is a recipe for disaster.

It led to 103 losses and sadly overshadowed a very promising year on the offensive side. A young lineup keyed by a legendary season from Brian Dozier scored 722 runs. Encouraging signs from young players like Max Kepler, Miguel Sano, Byron Buxton and Jorge Polanco suggest that the arrow is pointing up.

**MIGUEL SANO**  
**.462 SLUGGING**

But without some drastic improvements on the other end, the offense's potential will go to waste. And that brings us to the task at hand. The objective is very clear this offseason: fix the pitching staff.

Of course, that isn't novel; we've said much the same while setting up the last several editions of this Handbook. However, the urgency has grown and the stakes are now higher than ever. The Twins are coming off a fifth 90-plus loss season in six years, and fan interest is waning. The vaunted position player prospects have arrived, but they need help.

This offseason presents a unique opportunity for the franchise. With Ryan being dismissed and new leadership being ushered in, the Twins have a chance to reinvent themselves, and chart a new course for the future. This Offseason Handbook puts you in the shoes of the new general manager.

We'll lay out the options available – from free agency to trades to internal solutions and beyond – to address the club's greatest weaknesses.

The rest is up to you.



**E. ESCOBAR**  
105 G, 377 PAS



## Past & Present: We've Been Here Before

by John Bonnes

When it was leaked that the Twins had hired 33-year-old Derek Falvey to oversee their baseball operations, it was easy to make comparisons to 1985, the last time the Twins went outside their organization to hire a new leader. That time, they found 32-year-old Andy MacPhail. But parallels between the two situations don't end at the winning candidate's age. The challenges and solutions that MacPhail faced provide some interesting insight as to what we might see next.

### The Situation

The situations were eerily similar. The year before, the 1984 Twins had a very successful season, raising hopes. In fact, they competed for a postseason spot right until they were swept in their last series of the year.

(P.S. In fact, they lost their last six games, a streak which started when they were just a half-game from the division lead. That included perhaps the two most heartbreaking losses between the years 1970 and 1992, and they were back-to-back. One was yet another blown lead by Ron Davis and then the Twins coughed up a 10-0 lead with Frank Viola on the mound. After that game, Gary Gaetti offered his appraisal of his own throwing error that led to a seven-run inning: "It's hard to throw with both hands around your neck.")

(P.P.S. "Twins Worst Losses." How did Twins Daily not produce that series in this year of all years? Apparently, it's also hard to blog with both hands around your neck.)

**TARGET FIELD**  
**MINNEAPOLIS, MN**



The success in 1984 raised hopes, because the team was filled with promising youngsters. Kirby Puckett had debuted that year. Kent Hrbek had been snubbed for the All-Star team. Seven of the nine starters in the lineup were 26 or younger.

But 1985 started poorly. After winning their first two games, the team fell into a nine-game losing streak. (Again – sound familiar?) They rebounded with a 10-game winning streak, but on June 20th, they were only 27-35 and in sixth place in the division. Like this year’s team, a change was made, but in their case it was the manager who was fired. Billy Gardner was replaced by Ray Miller, and the team limped to a fourth place finish in the division, fourteen games back.

By then, the new owner, Carl Pohlad, had determined that the organization needed to modernize from the decades-old management structure that Calvin Griffith had in place. But rather than fire team “interim” president Howard Fox, he looked for young blood to help evaluate things first.

That included interviewing the relatively inexperienced MacPhail. He was probably best known for his father, Lee MacPhail, who built the Orioles powerhouses of the ‘60s and ‘70s. Andy didn’t exactly have high hopes about the interview. In Doug Grow’s book *We’re Gonna Win Twins*, MacPhail admitted, “I’d never managed anything. I was flattered they wanted to talk to me. I came in, I met with Carl and Jim, answered a series of questions, and went back to Houston.”

Sure enough, the Twins didn’t get back to MacPhail for months. But in June, they interviewed him again once they got a better feel for how the baseball-side was (or wasn’t) working. In August, MacPhail was hired, but not as General Manager.

**TARGET FIELD**  
**MINNEAPOLIS, MN**



## The Organization

MacPhail was the Vice President of Player Personnel. That position still reported to Fox, but ultimately his position was closer to the one Derek Falvey will inaugurate: examining, organizing and overhauling the ballclub with a long-term view, instead of paying attention to the more immediate roster needs.

MacPhail started with the scouting department, and that's when the Pohlad's fears were confirmed. Again, in *We're Gonna Win Twins*, MacPhail recalled his reaction to seeing the Griffith-era scouting reports:

"They had their scouting reports on little 3 x 5 cards," MacPhail said. "And I don't mean a 3 x 5 card for each player. Each card was for a whole team. It was just incredible. I don't mean to put them down. That organization came up with great players over the years. But things were changing in baseball. I think the median age for their scouts was about seventy-three. They had two scouts living in North Dakota, which is not exactly rich in baseball talent. But they didn't have anybody in Texas."


To clean up that mess, MacPhail plucked someone from another organization. He tapped the New York Mets midwest scouting supervisor: Terry Ryan. Ryan was also only 32 years old, but that wouldn't be the most controversial of his younger hires.

## Adding New Blood

At the end of the 1986 season, the Twins decided to make another change at manager. Ray Miller had never really worked out and so Fox designated third base coach Tom Kelly to hold down the position for rest of the year. MacPhail was charged with finding the next manager for the 1987 season.

He cast a wide net, starting with over eighty names, but whittled it down to two main candidates.

**TARGET FIELD**  
**MINNEAPOLIS, MN**



The first was Kelly, who didn't really impress with his mumbling and unique "charm." He was also nearly as young as MacPhail, just 36 years old. The second candidate was far safer.

He was Jim Frey, a 55-year-old ex-manager of the Kansas City Royals. But when he came in to interview, a misunderstanding led to him removing himself from the search. Since the Twins didn't have an official general manager at the time, he assumed he was interviewing for both positions, but Pohlad made it clear that he was going to name MacPhail the GM. (Indeed, this is how MacPhail learned he was going to be the GM.) Frey didn't want to work underneath someone as young as MacPhail, and so the Twins were down to hiring Kelly or starting over.

MacPhail's mind was made up. He had seen the energy the team played with during Kelly's short tenure, and he had received personal pleas from players begging him to make Kelly their full-time manager. But Pohlad was worried about having two 30-somethings running his \$45 million investment. There needed to be some balance.

That balance was Ralph Houk, a 68-year-old retiree who managed the pennant-winning Yankees teams in the early '60s. He was hired as "Vice President of Personnel" but really he was a consultant upon whom MacPhail and Kelly could lean. MacPhail says that Houk helped them avoid some rookie mistakes in his first couple of years, but primarily he was around to soothe the Pohlads' concerns.

### Decisions

The next year, 1987, the Twins won the World Series, so those concerns were quickly addressed. That championship was largely fueled by several deals that MacPhail made that offseason, particularly the acquisition of Jeff Reardon as the Twins' new closer.

**TARGET FIELD**  
**MINNEAPOLIS, MN**





What is often forgotten is just how they acquired him.

The Twins had finished at the bottom of the American League in pitching the year before, with a 4.77 ERA. One of their bright spots was Neal Heaton, whom they had acquired midyear and who led the Twins starting rotation with a 3.98 ERA. Think about this: a “Boy Wonder” general manager was going to trade a 26-year-old promising starting pitcher (Heaton) from his league-worst pitching staff to acquire a closer. If you think that was easy, this anecdote by Grow might help put it in perspective:

Before pulling the trigger on his first big deal, the Boy Wonder general manager turned to the team’s new president, [Jerry] Bell.

‘I’d been on the job for about two weeks,” said Bell. “I honestly didn’t know a thing about the National League or Jeff Reardon, but I did know that Heaton was a pretty good pitcher. I asked the most embarrassing question I ever asked Andy. I said ‘Ummmm, did you talk to your dad about this?’”

MacPhail was not insulted by the question.

“As a matter of fact, I did,” he said.

Falvey and (presumed) new General Manager Thad Levine can expect similar challenges. Expectations will need to be handled. The organization will need to be updated. New blood will need to be injected, often with objections, and some of those objections might even come from ownership. Tough decisions on personnel will need to be made, and he is likely to be doubted on them due to his invis before. The better news is where they ended up shortly thereafter.

**TARGET FIELD**  
**MINNEAPOLIS, MN**

Before you survey the offseason markets for upgrade opportunities, you'll need to have an idea of what you already have on hand. The following pages will break down the current organizational depth at each position. Listed next to each player is his age (as of Opening Day 2017) and the level he finished at this year. We added a "Depth Rating" as a measure of the urgency to upgrade each area.



**CATCHER**

**RATING: F**

<b>MITCH GARVER</b> (26) AAA	<b>STUART TURNER</b> (25) AA	<b>AJ MURRAY</b> (23) A+	<b>BRIAN NAVARETTO</b> (22) A+

Kurt Suzuki and Juan Centeno are free agents. Murphy is the underwhelming incumbent starter. Garver and Turner are decent minor-leaguers who could perhaps be viewed as potential backups. Obviously, the need here is very dire.



**JR MURPHY**  
.413 OPS



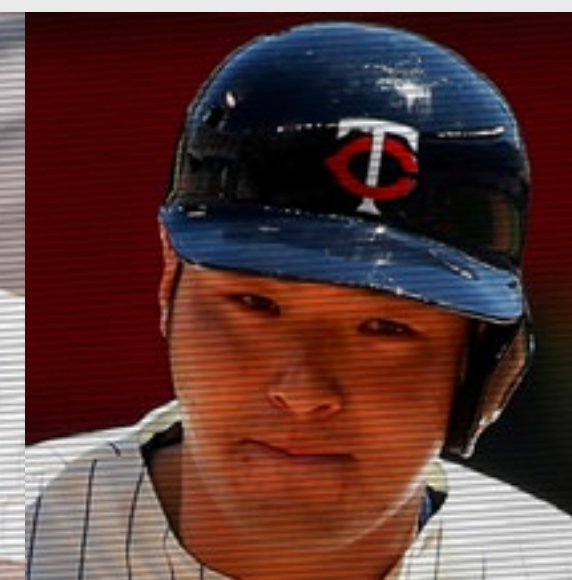
**JOE MAUER**  
(33)  
MLB

**FIRST BASE**

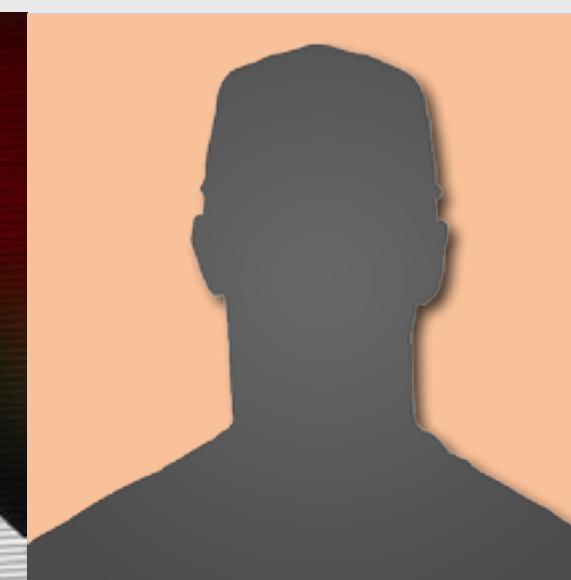
**RATING: B**



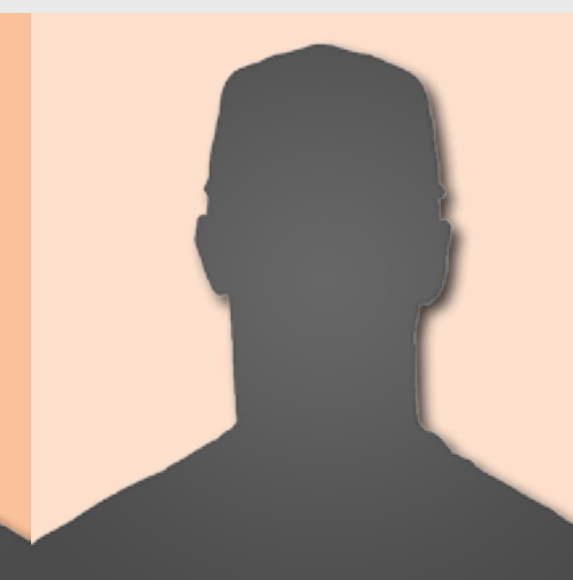
**KENNYS VARGAS**  
(26)  
MLB



**BYUNG HO PARK**  
(30)  
AAA

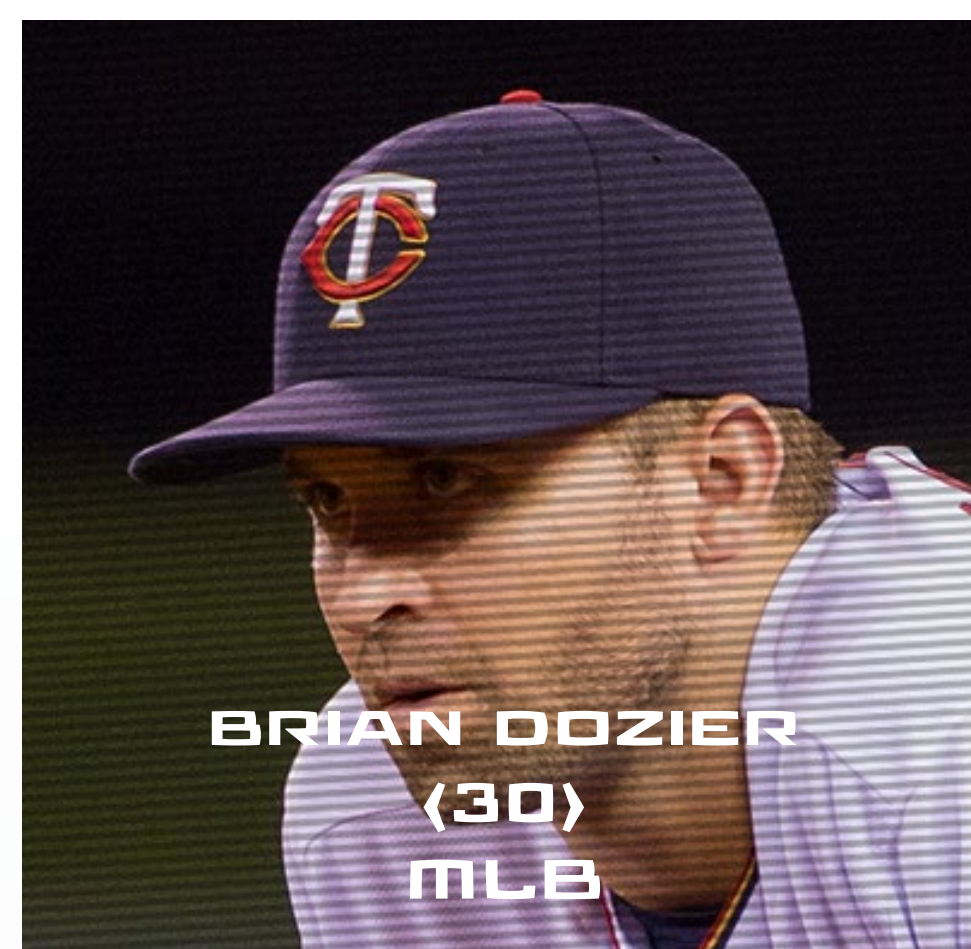


**DJ HICKS**  
(27)  
AA



**ZANDER WIEL**  
(24)  
A

Mauer is coming off a decent year, which is about the best you can hope for at this point. He's locked in for two more seasons. Park, under contract through 2019, will be attempting to rebound from wrist surgery. Vargas will be out of options and showed enough this summer to merit another look. Others such as Max Kepler and Daniel Palka are also options at this position. The Twins lack elite first base talent but have plenty of solid depth.



**BRIAN DOZIER**  
(30)  
MLB

**SECOND BASE**

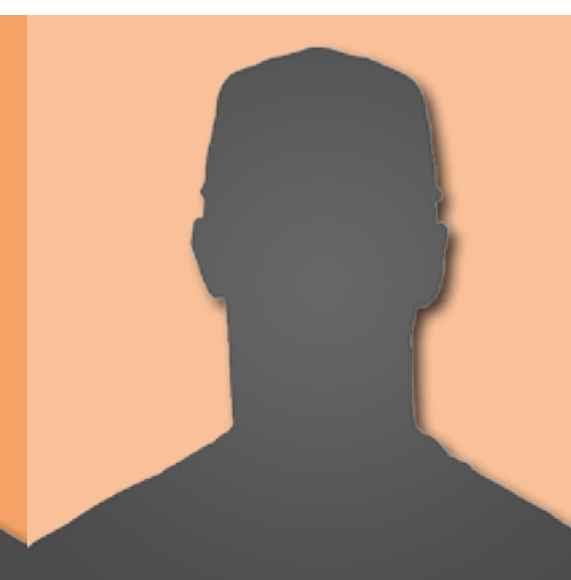
**RATING: B+**



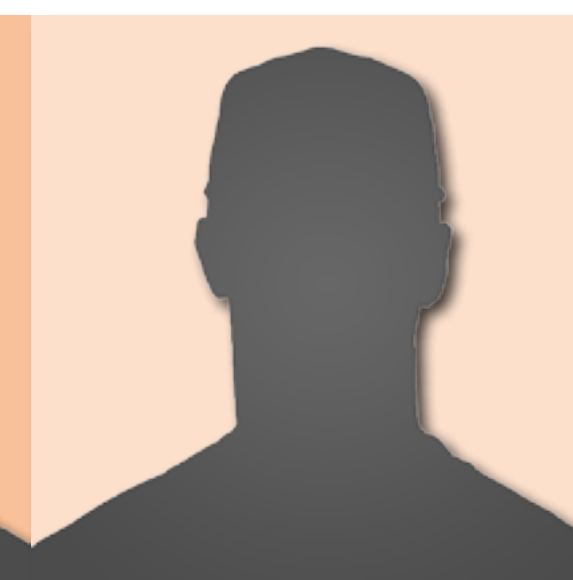
**JAMES BERESFORD**  
(28)  
MLB



**RYAN WALKER**  
(25)  
AA

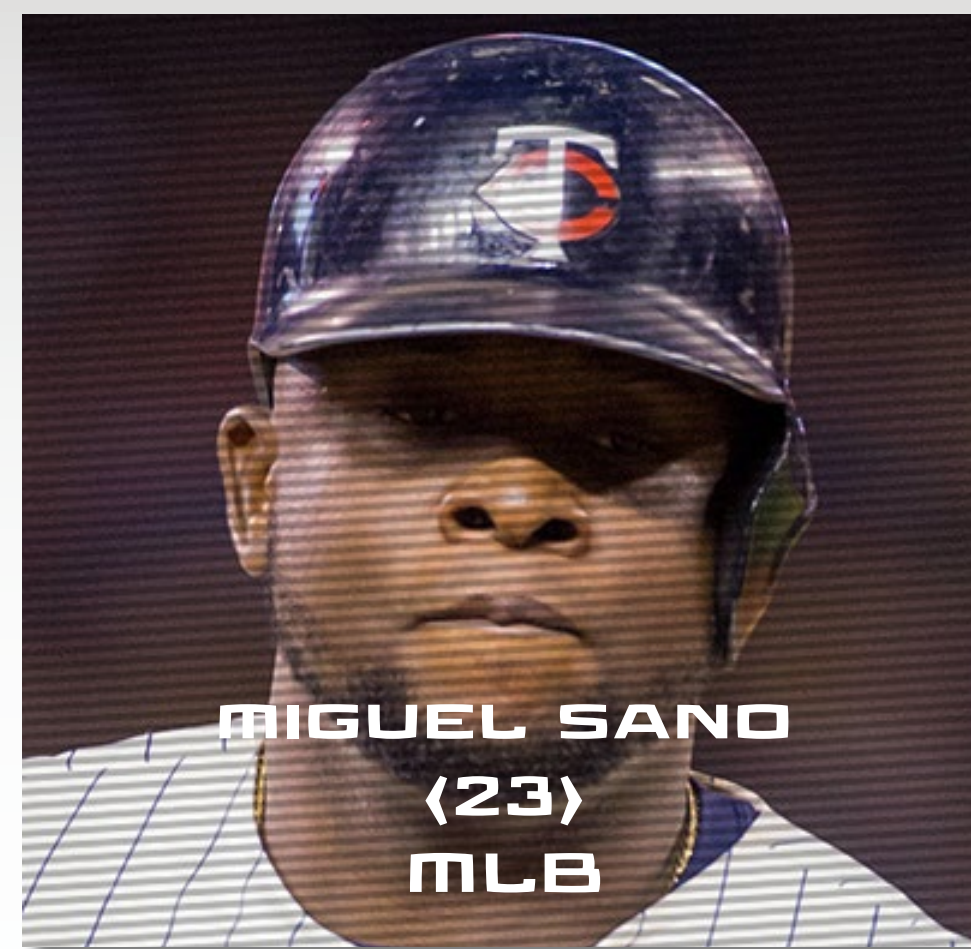


**LEVI MICHAEL**  
(26)  
AA



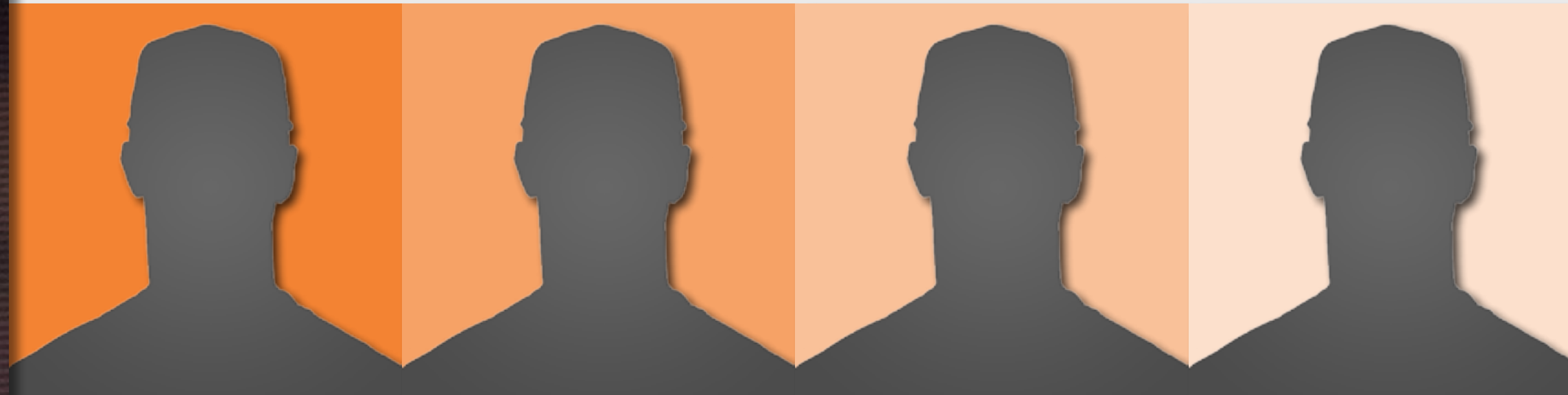
**TRAVIS BLANKENHORN**  
(20)  
A

The incumbent starter was one of the most dominant power hitters in the majors, and won't turn 30 until next May. Jorge Polanco isn't listed here because he played mostly short for the Twins, but second is quite clearly his best position. There's not a ton behind those two but very few clubs can boast that kind of high-end talent.



### THIRD BASE

**RATING: C**



NIKO GOODRUM  
(25)  
AA

LEONARDO REGINATTO  
(26)  
AAA

TJ WHITE  
(25)  
AA

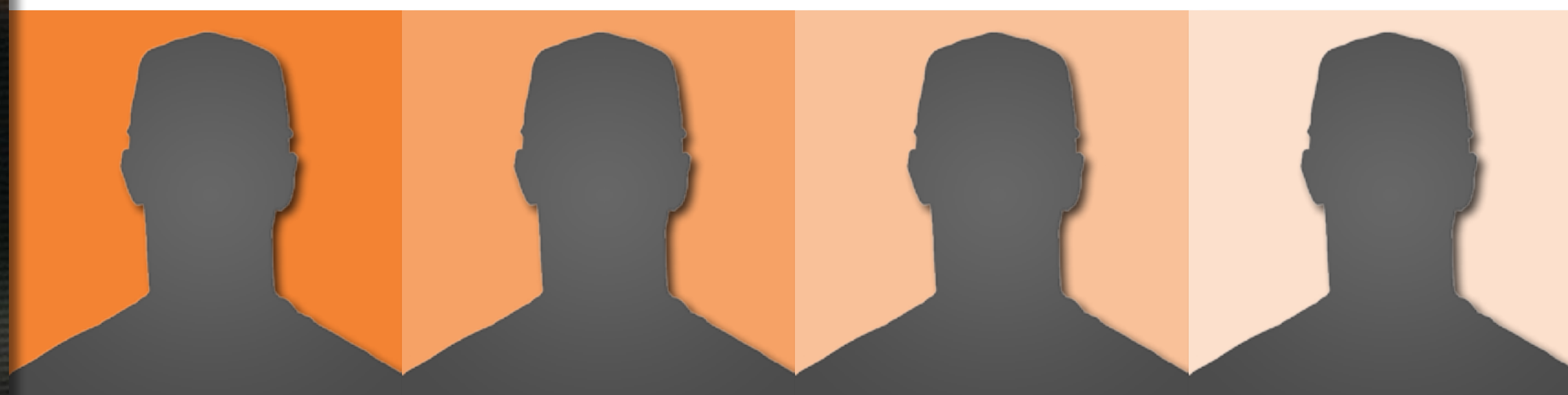
CHRIS PAUL  
(24)  
A+

Trevor Plouffe is arbitration eligible, so there's an open option to bring him back for one more year. Sano is a 23-year-old wunderkind, but it's unclear whether the Twins trust him (and his baky elbow) at third. Goodrum is a former second-round pick who never developed much as a hitter but can play several positions. Beyond that, the depth is non-existent. If you don't believe in Sano at the hot corner, then the cupboard is pretty empty here.



### SHORTSTOP

**RATING: B-**



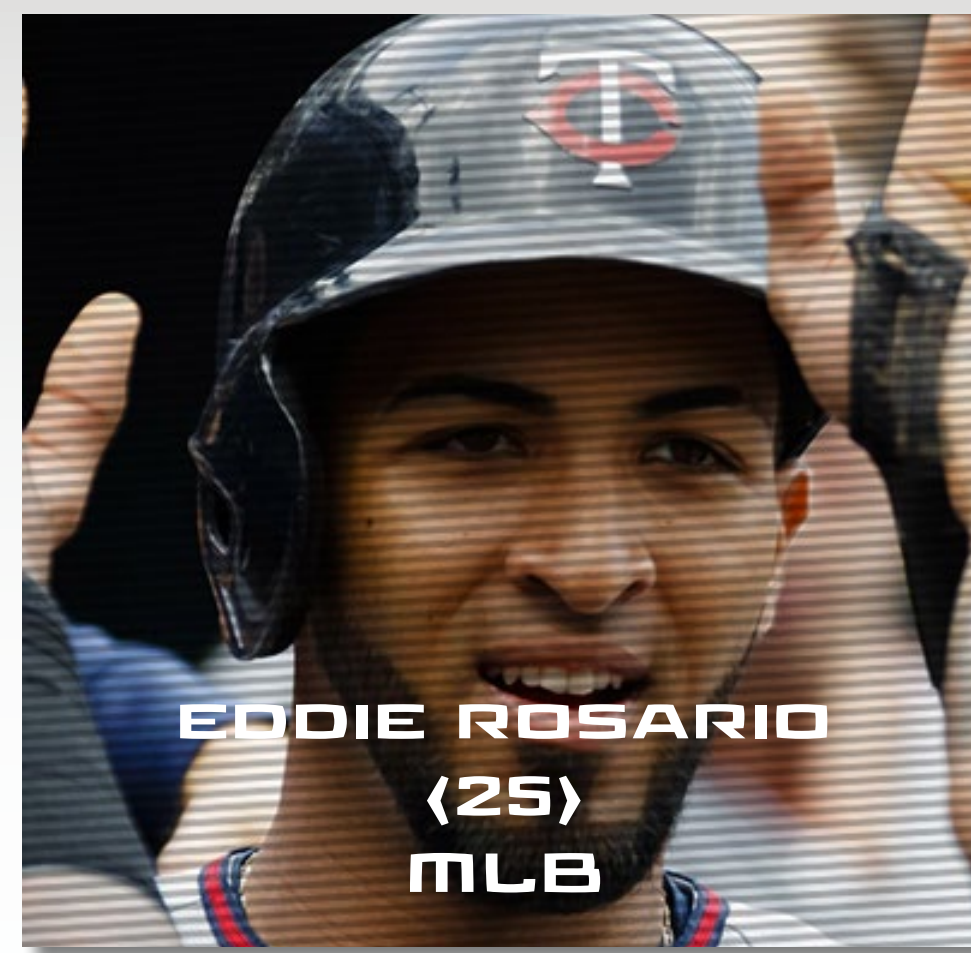
ENGELB VIELMA  
(22)  
AA

NICK GORDON  
(21)  
A+

JERMAINE PALACIOS  
(20)  
A

BRANDON LOPEZ  
(23)  
A

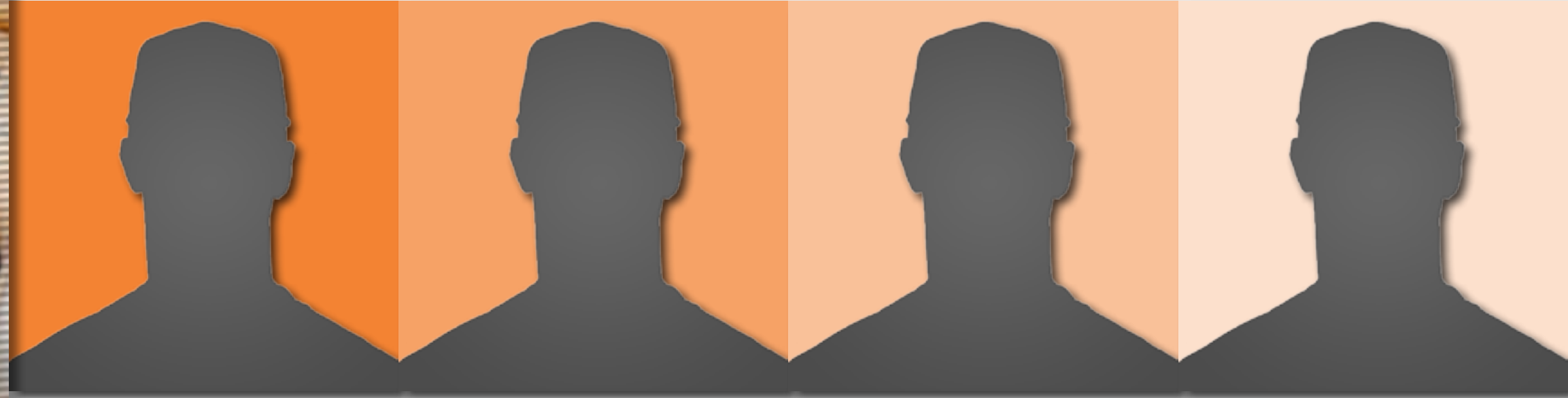
Is Polanco a really shortstop? Paul Molitor seemed to think so in the second half, but there's plenty of reason to believe otherwise. Eduardo Escobar is arbitration eligible and could return as a palatable starter. Vielma is a defensive whiz who won't hit a lick. Gordon is the one we're waiting for, though. The former first-round pick is widely viewed as the future. But he's probably a couple of years away, so the objective is to fill the gap until then.



**EDDIE ROSARIO**  
(25)  
MLB

## LEFT FIELD

**RATING: B**



**ADAM WALKER**  
(25)  
AAA

**TRAVIS HARRISON**  
(23)  
AA

**LAMONTE WADE**  
(23)  
A+

**DANIEL KIHLE**  
(23)  
A+

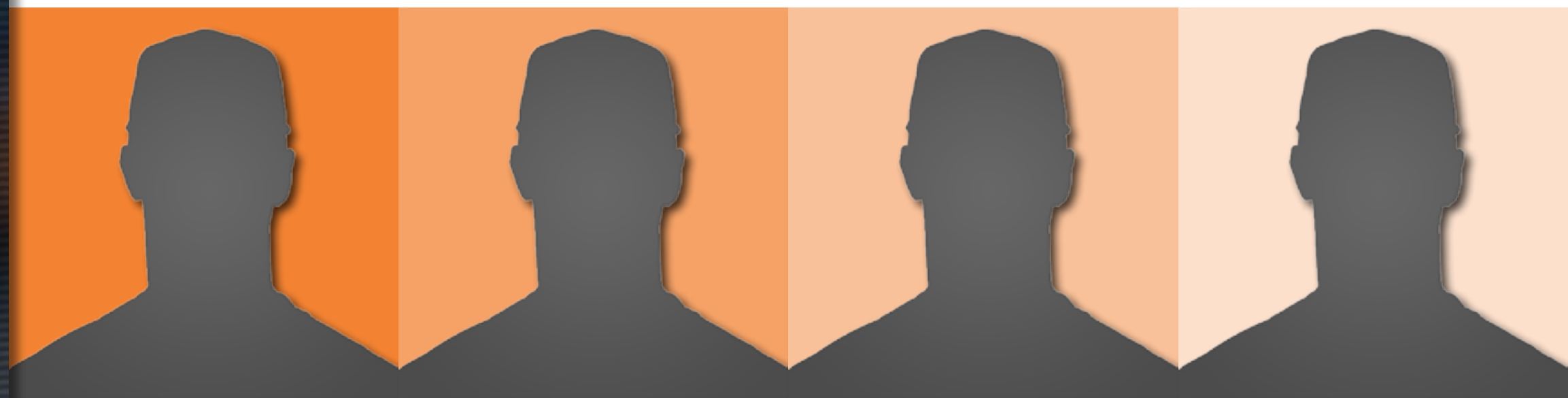
Rosario reprised his rookie act as a sophomore, hacking his way to a decent OPS while providing flashy – if occasionally frustrating – defense in left. Walker is a free swinger himself, having accomplished the rare feat of striking out 200 times in a minor-league season, but he has immense power. Robbie Grossman will probably be retained, adding extra depth.



**BYRON BUXTON**  
(23)  
MLB

## CENTER FIELD

**RATING: B+**



**ZACH GRANITE**  
(24)  
AA

**TANNER ENGLISH**  
(23)  
A+

**EDGAR CORCINO**  
(24)  
AA

**CASEY SCOGGINS**  
(23)  
A+

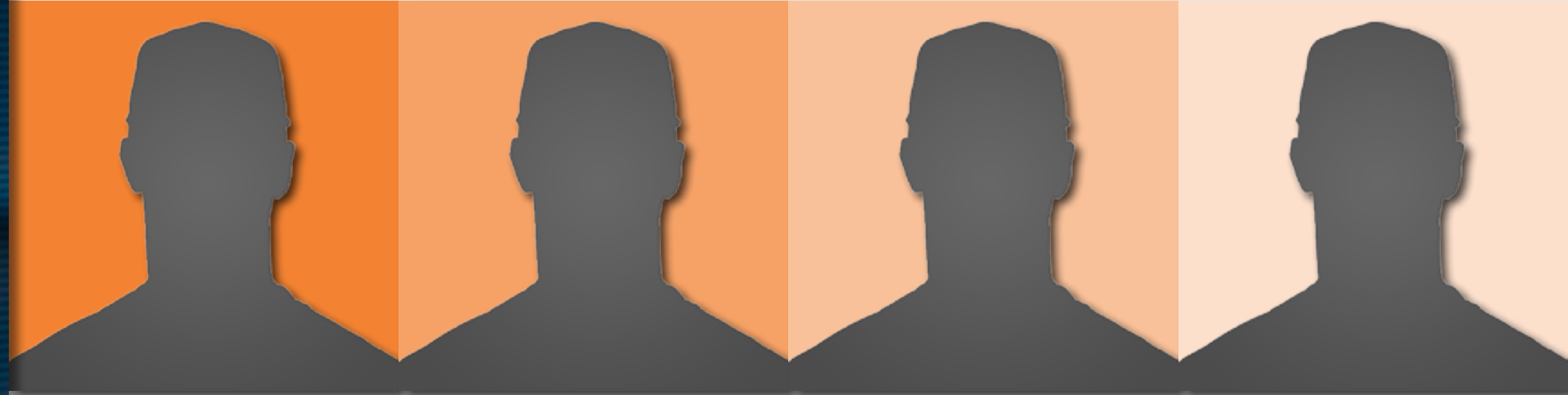
Barring something unforeseen, Buxton should be holding down this position for many years. If he gets hurt, Eddie Rosario can shift over. Granite is a speedy and disciplined hitter coming off a 56-steal season at Double-A. He's one to watch.



**MAX KEPLER**  
(24)  
MLB

## RIGHT FIELD

**RATING: A-**



**DANIEL PALKA**  
(25)  
AAA

**MAX MURPHY**  
(24)  
A+

**JAYLIN DAVIS**  
(22)  
A

**ALEX KIRILLOFF**  
(19)  
RK

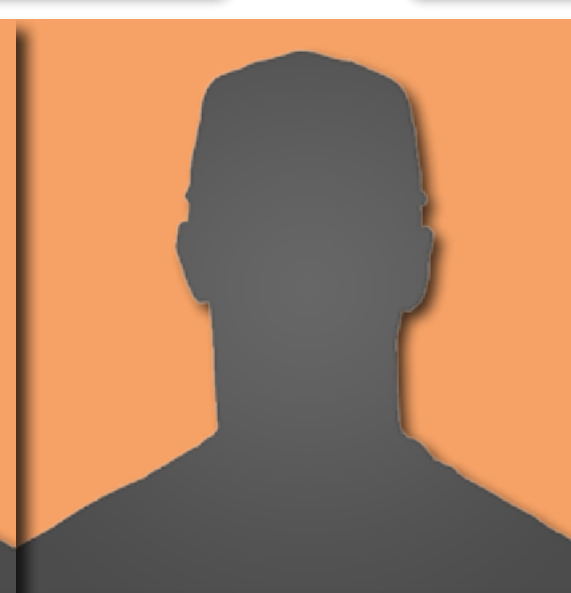
Kepler has the makings of a middle-of-the-lineup bat. Palka just earned Twins Daily's Minor League Player of the Year honors with a 34-homer campaign. Kirilloff was the team's first-round pick in June, and could rise fast.



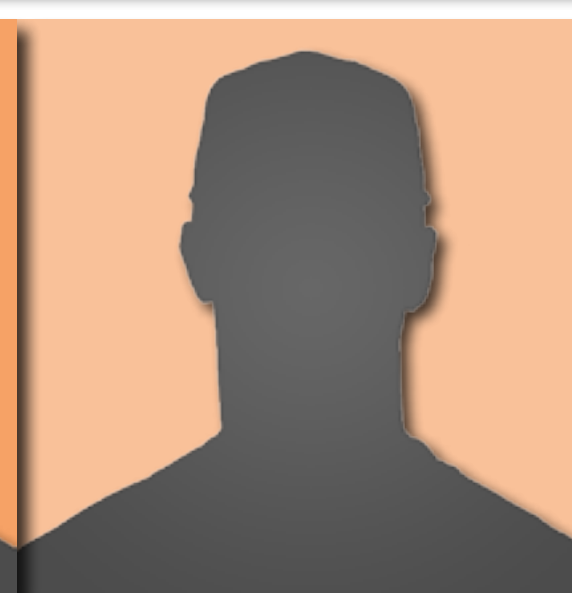
## STARTING PITCHER



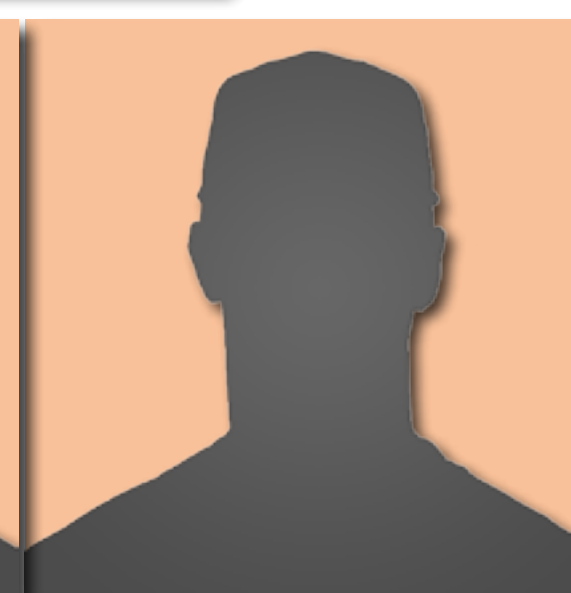
ADALBERTO MEJIA  
(23)  
AA



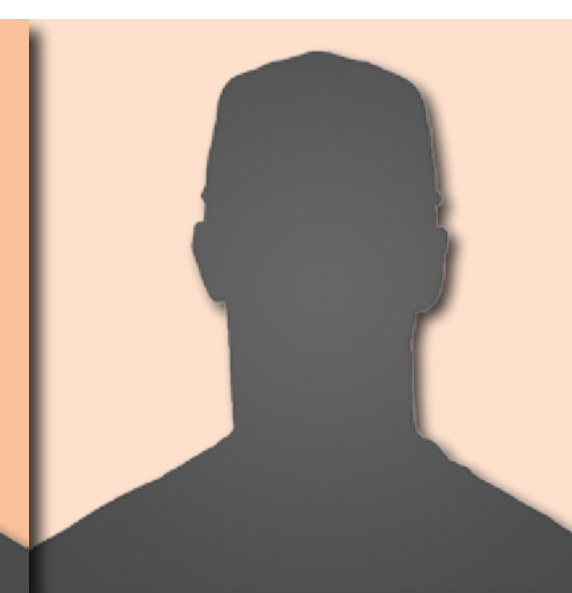
KOHL STEWART  
(22)  
AA



TYLER JAY  
(22)  
AA



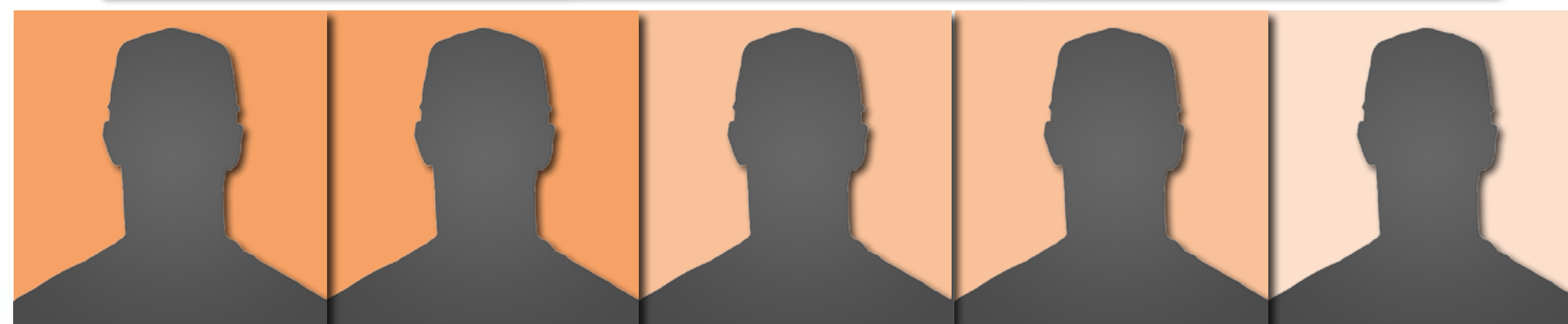
FERNANDO ROMERO  
(22)  
A+



FELIX JORGE  
(23)  
AA

There's much more talent here than you'd expect to find from a rotation that performed so terribly. Santana had a great year. Gibson and Duffey need to rebound. Hughes will be an enormous question mark coming off shoulder surgery. Berrios was widely viewed as one of the best pitching talents in the minors before graduating, and is now replaced by Gonsalves as the prodigious prospect. May could make a big impact if he successfully transitions back to starting. Mejia, Stewart and Jay are all solid young arms that are relatively close to breaking through. Romero, now past his Tommy John surgery, may boast the most upside of the bunch and will move up quickly if he stays healthy.

## RELIEF PITCHER



T. HILDENBERGER  
(26)  
AA

JAKE REED  
(23)  
AA

ALAN BUSENITZ  
(26)  
AA

ZACK JONES  
(26)  
AA

NICK BURDI  
(24)  
AA

Perkins can't be counted on coming off of labrum repair at age 34. Keeping around Brandon Kintzler, the arbitration-eligible veteran who filled in adequately as Perk's replacement in the ninth inning, is essentially a no-brainer. Pressly and Rogers had fine years, while Chargois – a potential closer-in-waiting – came on strong at the end of his rookie campaign. The rest of the group collectively had a lot of ups and downs, so it may be tough to sift through and figure out what's worth keeping. Adding Tyler Duffey, a formerly dominant college closer, to this mix could be interesting.





## Clearing the Clutter

by Seth Stohs

In recent years, the Twins have accumulated a glut of first base and designated hitter player types. These are players that don't have the speed or agility to play in the middle of the infield or outfield. They may not have the quickness nor instincts to play at the hot corner. So, if they are to get to the big leagues, they would have to play first base or DH.

The best example of this might have come nearly a decade ago. The Twins had Justin Morneau at first base, Michael Cuddyer in right field, and Jason Kubel in a corner or at designated hitter. Joe Mauer filled in at DH some. Delmon Young was acquired and played in the outfield (though I think we can all agree DH was probably his best position). Meanwhile, a slugging power hitter named Garrett Jones sat in Triple-A, mashing mightily. Unfortunately, here wasn't really a place for him. The team let Jones go, and he went on to hit 178 doubles and 122 home runs in seven seasons split between the Pirates, the Marlins and the Yankees. He's still playing in Japan.

At this point, there isn't a Morneau or Cuddyer in the group. Mauer (age 33) isn't the same as Mauer (age 25). There may not be a Garrett Jones in the current group. However, there are options that have had, or at least can have, success. Here are some notes on each so that those of you can have a little more information to make decisions.

We'll look at the candidates that are in the big leagues or very close to the big leagues. We'll take break down each and determine what we know as far as strengths and weaknesses, and what your options might be. In the end, you can make some informed decisions.

**PAUL MOLITOR**  
**MANAGER**

We'll start with the incumbents.



*Note: As usual, age is as of Opening Day 2017.*

## **Joe Mauer**

Age: 33

Contract Status: 2 years, \$46 million remaining. Full no-trade clause.

### **What We Know**

**The Good:** For all his faults and limitations, Joe Mauer was able to get on base in 2016. He walked nearly 14 percent of his plate appearances, and his .363 on-base percentage was his best since his concussion. He was the only Twins player listed in FanGraphs' Gold Glove metrics following the season.

**The Bad:** His .261 average was the lowest of his career. Broke down the last six weeks of the season which really hurt his overall numbers. On August 16th, he was hitting .284/.384/.417 (.801). After that day, he played 22 games (sporadically) and hit just .146/.255/.244 (.499).

### **Options**

1. Enters 2017 as an everyday player.
2. Plan for him to start about 55-60% of the games in an attempt to keep his legs strong throughout the year. As Molitor did in the second half, sit him against left-handed starters, but also never have him start more than two games in a row.
3. Work with him on a buy-out. It's possible that Joe Mauer would then be able to sign on with another team. There are teams out there who would use him in a role to be successful and be very willing to do so at a much-reduced cost. It is also possible that Mauer would be ready to step away and retire (with the buyout). He's from Minnesota. He has stayed with the Twins. He may not want to play for another organization. Have that discussion. This needs to happen as early as possible in the offseason as it could open up a roster spot.

**PAUL MOLITOR**  
**MANAGER**



## Kennys Vargas

Age: 26

Contract Status: Out of options in 2017. Service time is about 1.5 years.

### What We Know

The Good: The calling card for Vargas is his power. He hit 25 home runs in 2016 between Rochester (15) and the Twins (10). Of his 35 hits for the Twins, 21 of them went for extra bases. In the minors, Vargas walked a lot (over 12% of plate appearances). In 2014 and 2015, he rarely walked in the big leagues. But in 2016, he walked 13.5 percent of his PAs.

The Bad: He likely won't hit for average. He struck out at a 35 percent clip in 2016, and has struck out over 29 percent of the time in his big league career. Not swift-of-foot. Plays an adequate first base, though he has very minimal range.

### Options

1. Could 'platoon' with Joe Mauer at first base and get more at bats as the DH.
2. Bench bat who makes occasional starts at first base and DH.
3. Seek a trade or try to sneak him through waivers.

## Byungho Park

Age: 30

Contract Status: 3 years, \$9.5 million remaining, plus 2020 team option at \$6.5 million. Two option years remaining.

### What We Know

The Good: Park has tremendous power. We saw that with the 12 homers he hit. In the two seasons previous to coming to the States from Korea, Park hit 105 homers and drive in 270 runs. He proved to be solid defensively as a first baseman.

**PAUL MOLITOR**  
**MANAGER**



**PAUL MOLITOR**  
**MANAGER**

**The Bad:** In 244 plate appearances with the Twins, he hit just .191/.275/.409 (.684). He struck out in one-third of his plate appearances. Even with his success/dominance in Korea, Park struck out over 25 percent of the time. He hit just .224 with a .297 OBP in Rochester before his season came to an end with a wrist injury. There were many rumblings that the injury had been ongoing since spring training.

### Options

1. Start season in Rochester. Assuming health, let him get to back into a routine at AAA, rather than under the big league's bright lights.
2. Start him in Minnesota. If he comes to spring training healthy and productive, he's got immense talent and should be in the lineup regularly at DH or first base.
3. Trade him. Selling low is never a good thing, especially when it's clear some of this issues were injury-related.
4. Release him. There was a \$24 million investment in him one year ago. This makes little sense.

### Robbie Grossman

Age: 27

Contract Status: One option year remaining. Service time just over 2.0 years.

### What We Know

**The Good:** Came to the Twins and was on fire early. Ended season hitting .280/.386/.443 (.828) with 19 doubles, 11 homers. He walked a ton (14%), and he provided a lot of extra base hits. A switch-hitter, Grossman hit .344/.418/.576 (.994) against left-handed pitching compared to a .729 OPS versus right-handers.

**The Bad:** He is an outfielder, but he fits into this discussion as a DH. Why? Because he is a really bad defensive outfielder.



### Options

1. Let him compete with Eddie Rosario for a left field job, or have the two platoon.
2. Employ him as a backup outfielder, part-time DH, pinch-hitter option.
3. Trade him. Despite his solid three months, Grossman would likely have little trade value.
4. Non-tender him. He would become a free agent.

### Miguel Sano

Age: 23

Contract Status: 1.095 years of service time. Two options remaining.

### What We Know

The Good: We know about the power potential. He was third in AL Rookie of the Year voting in 2015 and then hit 25 homers in 2016. Charismatic.

The Bad: OPS dropped from .916 to .781 in his first full season. Showed that he isn't an outfielder in 2016. His injuries cost him valuable evaluation time at third base. He performed well as a DH in 2015. Several have questioned his work ethic. Set Twins record with 178 strikeouts in 2016.

### Options

1. Give him the 2017 season at third base. See if he can play it adequately defensively and can stay healthy.
2. Move him to DH immediately, though this obviously affects several other players on this as well as a potential decision on Trevor Plouffe.

### Adam Brett Walker

Age: 25

Contract Status: Two option years remaining. No MLB service time. Spent all of 2016 in Rochester.

**PAUL MOLITOR**  
**MANAGER**



**PAUL MOLITOR**  
**MANAGER**

### What We Know

The Good: Has as much power as anyone on this list. Finished second in the International League in home runs in 2016. It marked the first time he didn't lead his league in home runs. Has hit at least 25 home runs in all four of his full minor league seasons.

The Bad: He strikes out. A lot! In Cedar Rapids in 2013, he struck out 21 percent of the time. That number increased to 28 percent in Ft. Myers in 2014, and then 35 percent in 2015 at Chattanooga. This year in Rochester, he struck out 38 percent of the time. He did manage to lower his rate in the latter half of the campaign. Walker can play left field. He's a good athlete, but he has average range but a well below-average arm. DH is his best position.

### Options

1. Keep him on the 40-man roster and hope that he can continue his second half reduction in strikeouts in Rochester. Depth is a good thing.
2. Make an assumption that his strikeout rate will never get better and remove him from the 40-man roster. Trade him, though he likely has minimal trade value.

### Daniel Palka

Age: 25

Contract Status: Needs to be added to the 40-man roster in November or likely be lost in the Rule 5 draft. Split 2016 between AA Chattanooga and AAA Rochester.

### What We Know

The Good: Again, Palka's Power (#PalkaPower) is upper echelon. His 34 combined home runs between AA And AAA were tops in the Twins minor leagues and most since Sano hit 35 in 2013 between Ft. Myers and New Britain.



Palka hit 21 homers in 79 games in Chattanooga before adding 13 more in 56 games in Rochester.

The Bad: After striking out in 29 percent of his plate appearances in Chattanooga he struck out in 39 percent of his Triple-A PAs. He's an adequate defensive right fielder, but he has played some first base also (37 games in 2015, 3 games in 2016).

### Options

1. Do not add him to the 40-man roster. He would almost certainly be selected by another team in the Rule 5 and would be lost.
2. Add him to the 40-man roster. Send him to AAA Rochester. Play him in both corner outfield spots and some at first base so that he can be an option when needed by the Twins.

So there you have it, seven players at Triple-A or the big leagues who fit into the 1B/DH situation. The first step will be to talk to Joe Mauer and see where he is at. What he decides will affect everything else. Next, you'll have to determine what is to be done with Miguel Sano. Do you want to give him a shot to play third base most every day?

We laid out various options for each player, but now it's your turn. What will you do?

**PAUL MOLITOR**  
**MANAGER**



Each year, the Twins have a number of players eligible for arbitration. This designation is for those who are beyond three years of service time but are still under team control. When a team tenders a contract to an arbitration eligible player, the two sides must come to agreement on a salary figure for the coming year. If no agreement is reached the case goes in front of an independent panel, but this is exceedingly rare.

Below you will find Minnesota's six players that are up for arbitration in 2017, along with pros and cons that could be factored into determining a salary. We included our estimate for what they would stand to make next year, so you can plan your payroll. In each case, you can also choose to non-tender the player and move on.

### **Trevor Plouffe, 3B**

4th Year Arb

2015 Salary: \$4.8M | 2016 Salary: \$7.25M | 2017 Estimate: \$9M

**His Case:** The first half was a struggle for Plouffe. His second half was better but hampered by injuries, limiting him to just 26 total games after the fourth of July. That will hamper his ability to demand a sizable raise, but we can safely project an increase to around \$9 million in his final shot at arbitration.

### **Hector Santiago, SP**

3rd Year Arb

2015 Salary: \$2.3M | 2016 Salary: \$5M | 2017 Estimate: \$8M

**His Case:** Santiago posted the worst ERA of his career (4.70) and led the league in walks (79) but made 33 starts and totaled 182 innings. When a guy stays healthy and takes the ball he's going to get a decent uptick, especially in his third arb year.

tre  
**TREVOR PLOUFFE**  
**84 G, -0.4 FWAR**





### **Brandon Kintzler, RP**

3rd Year Arb

2015 Salary: \$1.1M | 2016 Salary: \$1.1M | 2017 Estimate: \$2.5M

His Case: Tricky one to project here. Kintzler had to settle for a minor-league deal last offseason after being released by the Brewers but had a very nice season for the Twins. He took over as closer following the Kevin Jepsen DFA and handled it well, converting 17 saves while hammering the zone. While he's no one's idea of a long-term closer, his performance in that role will help him take a healthy jump forward.

### **Eduardo Escobar, SS**

2nd Year Arb

2015 Salary: | 2016 Salary: \$2.15M | 2017 Estimate: \$3.5M

His Case: Not much to brag about. He opened the year as starting shortstop and ended it as a utility man. Escobar took steps backward both offensively and defensively, and finished very poorly with a .384 OPS in September. My guess is that he'll ask for \$4 million, the Twins will offer \$3 million and they'll settle in the middle.



**HECTOR SANTIAGO**  
11 G, 5.82 FIP



## Kyle Gibson, SP

1st Year Arb

2015 Salary: \$500K | 2016 Salary: \$500K | 2017 Estimate: \$2.5M

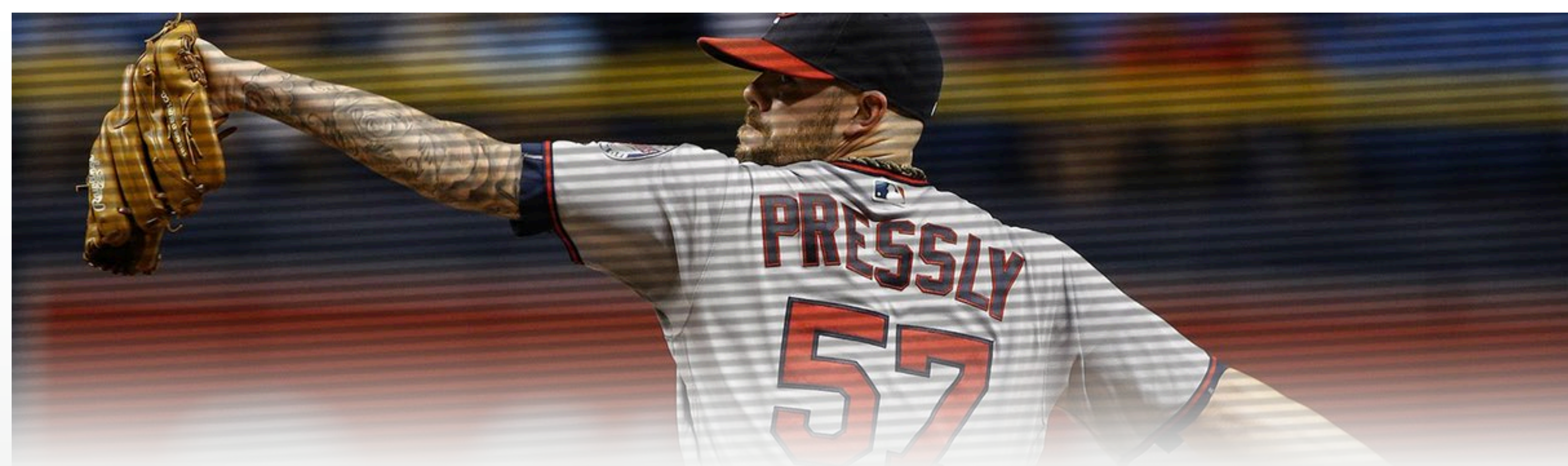
His Case: For the most part, he has been a durable staple in the Twins rotation. Since joining full-time in 2014 he has rarely missed a start outside of a disabled stint this year due to shoulder issues, which may have continued to affect him after returning. He just didn't look like himself, giving up hits and homers at uncharacteristically high rates. He should still land somewhere in the \$3 million range though, based on his body of work.

## Ryan Pressly, RP

1st Year Arb

2015 Salary: \$500K | 2016 Salary: \$500K | 2017 Estimate: \$1.5M

His Case: He was the bullpen workhorse, making a team-high 72 appearances while delivering reliably solid performance. Non-closer relief pitchers don't tend to make a ton in arbitration, especially right away, but he should get a nice bump.



kyle

**KYLE GIBSON**  
**25 G, 1.1 FWAR**



## Moneyball: Playing With Payroll

by Nick Nelson

The spending landscape has changed in Major League Baseball. In 2011, when the Twins set their franchise record with a \$113 million payroll, theirs ranked ninth-highest in baseball.

In 2015 the Twins spent \$109 million and in 2016 about the same. They ranked 18th both years.

The influx of money from lucrative media contracts in recent years has pumped up payrolls across the league. Back in 2011, the Royals spent the lowest total in baseball at \$36 million. In 2016 the last-ranked team, Houston, spent nearly double that at \$69 million.

So, the benchmarks have shifted a bit. Even while moving well into nine-digit territory, Minnesota has remained solidly in the bottom half of the league. Coming off a 103-loss season, and with season-ticket sales down, that isn't likely positioning to change much.

While we have no way of knowing what kind of spending cap will be imposed by ownership with a newly restructured front office, we can assume it will continue to hover around \$110 million, where the Twins have sat for the past couple of seasons.

As you look at the following table, you'll see that the 2017 roster is almost already there with current commitments. However, that number can come down in a hurry with a few simple tweaks.

kyle

**JOE MAUER**

**\$23M CONTRACT**

In our payroll grid, we have included Minnesota's six arbitration eligible players.

Because teams have the ability to non-tender any such player without penalty, you can easily shave off those (estimated) salaries if you so choose.

So if you're ready to move on from Trevor Plouffe and plug in Miguel Sano at third base, that's \$9 million off the books. Unimpressed with what you saw from Hector Santiago? Unload him and his \$8 million. Is Eduardo Escobar worth \$3 million if he's just a utility guy?

By taking out those players alone, you have opened up another \$20 mil.

That wiggle room will come in handy as you seek your most urgent upgrade: catcher. We listed John Ryan Murphy as the starter and prospect Juan Centeno as his backup because they're the top internal candidates, but without question you'll need to make at least one significant addition. Starting pitching and relief pitching could also be targets. Later in this Handbook, you'll find a full breakdown of the free agent markets for each position, as well as potential trade targets.

In order to create your own blueprint for a roster that can turn things around in 2017, the only thing you'll need to spend is a little time.



kyle  
**ERVIN SANTANA**  
**\$13.5M CONTRACT**



kyle  
**PHIL HUGHES**  
**\$13.2M CONTRACT**

## Starters

C	JR Murphy	\$500k
1B	Joe Mauer	\$23m
2B	Brian Dozier	\$6m
3B	Trevor Plouffe*	\$9m
SS	Jorge Polanco	\$500k
DH	Miguel Sano	\$500k
OF	Eddie Rosario	\$500k
OF	Byron Buxton	\$500k
OF	Max Kepler	\$500k

## Rotation

SP	Ervin Santana	\$13.5m
SP	Phil Hughes	\$13.2m
SP	Hector Santiago*	\$8m
SP	Kyle Gibson*	\$2.5m
SP	Tyler Duffey	\$500k

\*Denotes Arbitration Eligible

## Bench

C	Juan Centeno	\$500k
1B/DH	Byung Ho Park	\$2.75m
1B/DH	Kennys Vargas	\$500k
IF	Eduardo Escobar*	\$3.5m
OF	Robbie Grossman	\$500k

## Bullpen

RP	Glen Perkins	\$6.5m
RP	Brandon Kintzler*	\$2.5m
RP	Ryan Pressly*	\$1.5m
RP	Taylor Rogers	\$500k
RP	Trevor May	\$500k
RP	Michael Tonkin	\$500k

2017 Total  
**\$98.5m**

While the starting lineup is mostly filled out, the Twins enter the offseason with an enormous hole at catcher. With John Ryan Murphy failing to develop as the team hoped, there isn't a single player in the organization who profiles as a starter in 2017. That frames the position as an urgent need. The free agent field is intriguing, with a couple of big names and some others that deserve consideration. Here's a look at the names worth exploring.

## WILSON RAMOS

AGE: 29



**PREVIOUS TEAM: NATIONALS**  
**2016 STATS: 131 G, .307/.354/.496,**  
**22 HR, 80 RBI**

Coming off a career year and heading into free agency for the first time, Ramos was headed toward a monster contract, perhaps exceeding \$100 million. Then, in the last week of the season, he tore his ACL. It's his second major injury to the same knee, so now Ramos has major question marks floating over his head. When healthy, he's a power hitter with outstanding defensive skills.

Estimated Contract: 4 years,  
\$60 million

## MATT WIETERS

AGE: 30



**PREVIOUS TEAM: ORIOLES**  
**2016 STATS: 124 G, .243/.302/.409,**  
**17 HR, 66 RBI**

After the Ramos injury, Wieters may be the top name on the catching market, especially in the scope of 2017 impact. He had a chance to test free agency last year but opted instead to re-up with Baltimore for one more season. The strategy didn't pay off, as he had one of his worst campaigns as a big-leaguer. Still, he's a solid switch-hitter and a decent defender, and he's only 30.

Estimated Contract: 4 years,  
\$52 million

## JASON CASTRO

AGE: 29



**PREVIOUS TEAM: ASTROS**

**2016 STATS: 113 G, .210/.307/.377,  
11 HR, 32 RBI**

Castro doesn't hit much, with a .215 cumulative average over the past three years, but he's got a bit of pop. What makes him intriguing is that he's considered a strong receiver and rates very well according to pitch framing metrics. That's the kind of edge that the Twins should be looking for as they try to turn around their staff.

Estimated Contract: 3 years,  
\$21 million

## KURT SUZUKI

AGE: 33



**PREVIOUS TEAM: TWINS**

**2016 STATS: 106 G, .258/.301/.403,  
8 HR, 49 RBI**

It's tough to know what to make of Suzuki. He enjoyed a blistering midsummer hot streak but was otherwise his normal light-hitting self. Defensively he doesn't bring much to the table. The veteran has indicated that he would prefer to move on to a winning team at this stage of his career.

Estimated Contract: 2 years,  
\$10 million

## ALEX AVILA

AGE: 30



**PREVIOUS TEAM: WHITE SOX**

**2016 STATS: 57 G, .213/.359/.373,  
7 HR, 11 RBI**

He was a promising young backstop early on with the Tigers, but health and consistent production haven't been there for Avila lately. He's relatively young, and left-handed, so he would fit as a cheap platoon-mate for John Ryan Murphy with some upside.

Estimated Contract: 1 year,  
\$3 million



**Drew Butera (33):** Former Twin and renowned defensive whiz actually had a strangely good offensive year. But he's not a starting option.

**A.J. Ellis (35):** Veteran backup offers minimal upside.

**Ryan Hanigan (36):** Coming off a terrible season but he's been a solid hitter in the past.

**Nick Hundley (33):** Bat-first catcher could add some punch to the lineup.

**Chris Iannetta (34):** Has batted .200 over the last two seasons.

**Jeff Mathis (34):** Very much a glove-only backup. Has never played 100 games in a season and owns a .563 career OPS.

**Dioner Navarro (33):** Respectable two-way catcher played poorly after a midseason trade to Toronto.

**Jarrod Saltalamacchia (32):** Brutal defender who can hit for power and strikes out a ton. The Twins have plenty of those already.

**Geovany Soto (34):** Coming off an injury-marred season, which is typical.

**DREW BUTERA**  
**2,000 BASES LOADED OPS**



Free agency is one method of addressing a dysfunctional rotation, but it's one the Twins have had mixed results with in recent years. If you're expecting to find more of a sure thing in this offseason's yield, you will be gravely disappointed. However, there are a few names worthy of consideration, including some potential values.

## **RICH HILL, LHP**

**AGE: 37**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: DODGERS**

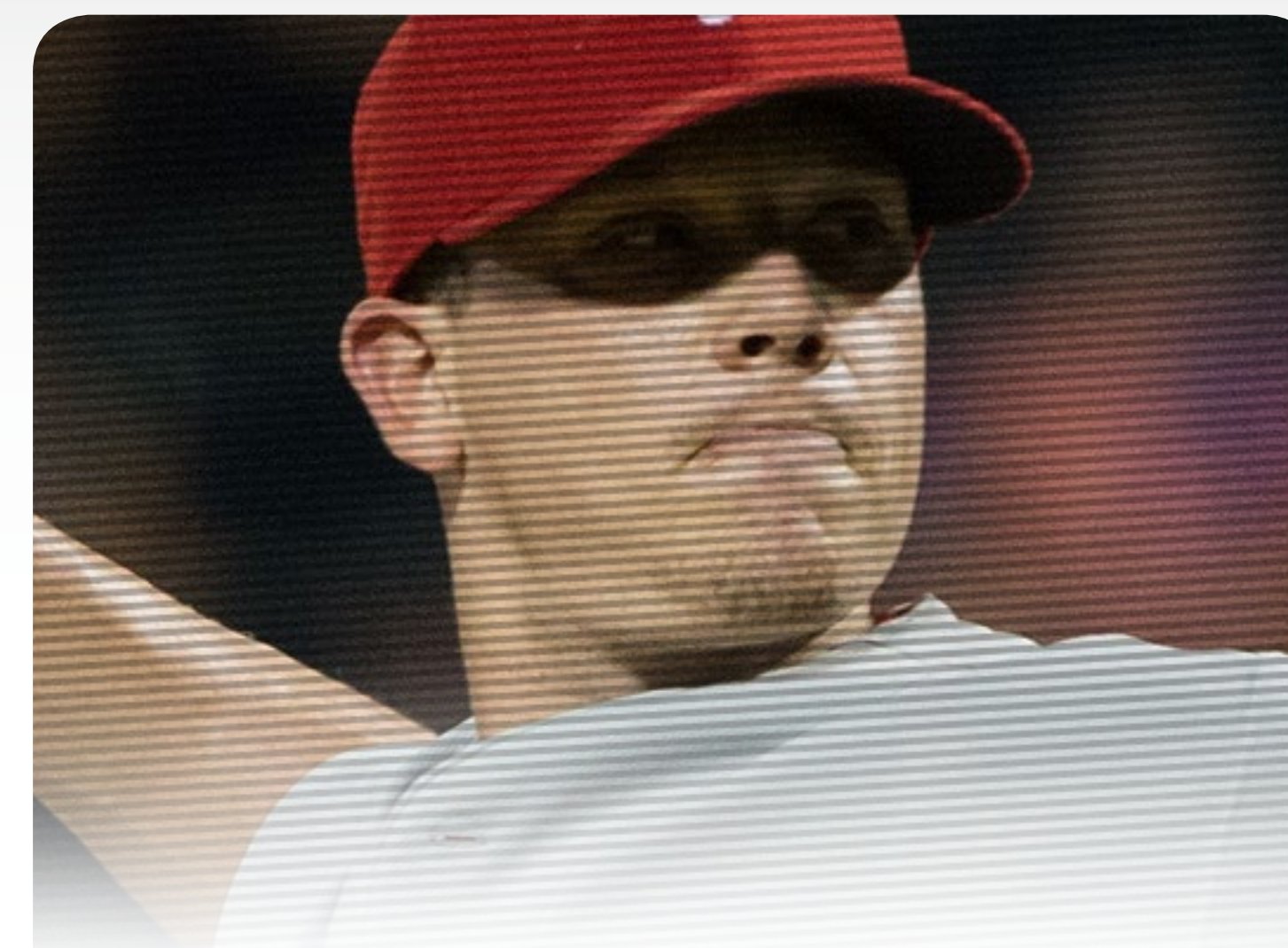
**2016 STATS: 110.1 IP, 12-5, 2.12 ERA, 129/33 K/BB, 1.00 WHIP**

He's the closest thing on the free agent list to an ace. Hill has looked every bit the part since rejoining the big-league ranks late last year with Boston. However, given his age, and the level of demand for his services, it's hard to envision Hill signing with a last-place club. He'll be looking for a lucrative short-term deal with a title contender and should have no problem landing one.

Estimated Contract: 2 years, \$36 million

## **JEREMY HELLICKSON, RHP**

**AGE: 29**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: PHILLIES**

**2016 STATS: 189 IP, 12-10, 3.71 ERA, 154/45 K/BB, 1.15 WHIP**

He doesn't bring the No. 1 starter ceiling you're looking for, but Hellickson is fairly young and capable. He has been fairly mediocre since winning Rookie of the Year with the Rays in 2011. Yet, 2016 was his best season in a long while.

Estimated Contract: 3 years, \$36 million

**ANDREW CASHNER, RHP**

**AGE: 30**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: MARLINS**

**2016 STATS: 132 IP, 5-11, 5.25 ERA, 112/60 K/BB, 1.53 WHIP**

Once a staple at the front of the Padres rotation, Cashner has gone 11-27 with a 4.72 ERA over the past two seasons. He's nothing too special, but the appeal here is the buy-low angle. Like Hellickson, Cashner is relatively young with success in his track record.

Estimated Contract: 3 years, \$33 million

**IVAN NOVA, RHP**

**AGE: 30**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: PIRATES**

**2016 STATS: 162 IP, 12-8, 4.17 ERA, 127/28 K/BB, 1.25 WHIP**

Nova has followed a winding path since emerging as a 16-game winner for the Yankees in 2011, and mostly hasn't been very good. However, he put together a very strong run after a deadline trade to the Pirates, so he's got a bit of momentum as he hits the market.

Estimated Contract: 2 years, \$18 million

**BRETT ANDERSON, LHP**

**AGE: 29**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: DODGERS**

**2016 STATS: 11.1 IP, 1-2, 11.91 ERA, 5/4 K/BB, 2.60 WHIP**

When healthy, Anderson offers excellent potential. He was a very solid starter for the Dodgers in 2015. Unfortunately, that marked the only year in the last five that he's made more than eight starts. Trusting the lefty to stay healthy is a big gamble, but perhaps a worthwhile one for the Twins on a one-year deal.

Estimated Contract: 1 year, \$3 million plus incentives



**C.J. Wilson (36):** Former Angel is in his mid-30s and coming off labrum surgery. Odds against him.

**Jhoulys Chacin (29):** Had some nice years for the Rockies early on, but hasn't been good recently.

**Bartolo Colon (43):** Something tells us that if the ageless wonder plays another year it won't be with a 100-loss team.

**Jorge De La Rosa (35):** 4.64 career ERA and relentless control problems.

**R.A. Dickey (42):** Knuckleballer's effectiveness has declined.

**Doug Fister (33):** Aging mid-rotation arm hardly an answer to Minnesota's needs.

**Derek Holland (30):** Could be available on a one-year deal if Rangers buy out his 2017 option following unimpressive season marred by shoulder issues.

**Mat Latos (29):** Has been consistently ineffective since leaving Cincinnati in 2014.

**Jered Weaver (34):** Former ace can now barely touch the mid-80s with what is charitably called a fastball.

**Colby Lewis (37):** Old and mediocre.

**Jake Peavy (35):** Ditto.

**R.A. DICKEY**  
**29 GS, 4.46 ERA**

**Alfredo Simon (35):** Double ditto.

With Glen Perkins coming off shoulder surgery and carrying an air of uncertainty going forward, bullpen construction presents a challenging conundrum. The Twins got a few decent performances from relievers in 2016 but very few players made convincing cases for high-leverage roles going forward. It's certainly a unit that could use some supplementation, so here are some of the better names that will be available via free agency.

## **AROLDIS CHAPMAN, LHP**

**AGE: 29**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: CUBS**

**2016 STATS: 58 IP, 36 SV, 1.55 ERA, 90/18 K/BB, 0.86 WHIP**

He's the hardest-throwing reliever in big-league history and among the most unhittable. Dating back to his first full season in 2011, Chapman ranks first among relief pitchers in strikeouts and opponents' batting average. He's coming off another dynamite campaign, split between the Yankees and Cubs, though his domestic abuse issues may repel some suitors in free agency. Either way, he ain't signing with a 100-loss team.

Estimated Contract: 4 years,  
\$60 million

## **BRETT CECIL, LHP**

**AGE: 30**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: BLUE JAYS**

**2016 STATS: 36.2 IP, 3.93 ERA, 35/8 K/BB, 1.28 WHIP**

Since moving from the rotation to the bullpen, Cecil has developed into one of baseball's better lefty relievers. He has averaged an eye-popping 11.5 K/9 in four seasons since making the full-time switch. He's coming off his worst campaign of those four, in which he missed time with a lat injury, but Cecil performed well enough down the stretch to alleviate any concerns. He'd be a top lefty, a late-inning weapon and maybe even a closer candidate.

Estimated Contract: 3 years,  
\$21 million

## SANTIAGO CASILLA, RHP

AGE: 36



**PREVIOUS TEAM: GIANTS**

**2016 STATS: 58 IP, 31 SV, 3.57 ERA, 65/19 K/BB, 1.19 WHIP**

The reliably excellent veteran served as San Francisco's closer up until being stripped of his duties late this season due to second-half struggles. He posted 2.42 ERA over seven years with the Giants. Although he registered his worst mark this year, he also put up career bests in both K/9 and BB/9 rate. Casilla has a strong track record and lots of experience in the ninth.

Estimated Contract: 2 years, \$16 million

## NEFTALI FELIZ, RHP

AGE: 28



**PREVIOUS TEAM: PIRATES**

**2016 STATS: 53.2 IP, 2 SV, 3.52 ERA, 61/21 K/BB, 1.14 WHIP**

He won Rookie of the Year as the Texas closer all the way back in 2010, but since then Feliz has battled injuries and ineffectiveness. However, he emerged as a quality contributor in the Pirates bullpen this season, racking up tons of strikeouts with his best velocity in five years. He's also quite young for a free agent. Feliz is an intriguing option.

Estimated Contract: 2 years, \$12 million

## DREW STOREN, RHP

AGE: 29



**PREVIOUS TEAM: MARINERS**

**2016 STATS: 51.2 IP, 3 SV, 5.23 ERA, 48/13 K/BB, 1.34 WHI**

Interesting case here. Storen was once a great young closer for the Nationals, but has gone through some major ups and downs in recent years. He really struggled in the first half for the Blue Jays, but performed much better down the stretch after being traded to Seattle. He's a gamble but perhaps a worthwhile one for a team like the Twins.

Estimated Contract: 2 years, \$12 million



## Righties

**Kenley Jansen (29):** Second-best name on the market behind Chapman. He'll be prohibitively expensive.

**Mark Melancon (32):** One of the more accomplished righty relievers in the league and a three-time All Star. Saved 131 games last three seasons. Another pricy proposition.

**Sergio Romo (34):** Stellar veteran owns a 2.58 career ERA and has some closing experience. He'll command a high price.

**Brad Ziegler (37):** He's got the closing experience you look for in a potential Perkins fallback plan, and has been extremely durable.

**Matt Belisle (37):** He's been around a long time, with 598 career appearances. Coming off a great campaign in Washington.

**Daniel Hudson (30):** Former starter has flashed good stuff in relief. Posted 5.22 ERA with D-backs but peripherals much better. Buy-low candidate.

**Joaquin Benoit (39):** Approaching 40, he still somehow hasn't lost any gas on his heater.

**Jonathan Papelbon (36):** Problematic malcontent coming off a mediocre season.

**Joe Blanton (36):** He has reinvented himself as a reliever and has looked dang good since making the switch.

**J. PAPELBON**  
**-1.30 WPA**



**Joba Chamberlain (31):** Released by Cleveland in July and no one picked him up. Offers some upside on a minor-league deal.

**Scott Feldman (34):** Another former starter who has ramped his stuff up in the bullpen.

**David Hernandez (31):** Struck out 80 over 72 innings for Baltimore.

**Greg Holland (31):** Once a standout closer for the Royals, he missed 2016 season with Tommy John surgery. He'll be 18 months removed from operation by next Opening Day.

**Fernando Salas (32):** Has posted a 1.15 career WHIP while averaging a K per inning.

**Junichi Tazawa (30):** Value down after putting up 4.15 ERA last two seasons in Boston. Lots of talent when healthy.

**Koji Uehara (42):** Still a strikeout machine at his age. Fanned 63 in 42 innings this year.

**Joe Smith (33):** Sidearmer blows away righty hitters.

**Kevin Jepsen (32):** Yeah, right.

kyle  
**SCOTT FELDMAN**  
**4.24 FIP**



## Lefties

**Travis Wood (30):** Held lefties to a .128 average this season. Probably the best of the southpaw bullpen bunch beyond Chapman and Cecil.

**Mike Dunn (32):** Strikeout machine owns a career 10.0 K/9 rate, but also an unimpressive 1.37 WHIP.

**Boone Logan (32):** Another big strikeout guy but results haven't always matched and righties hit him hard.

**Javier Lopez (39):** A true lefty specialist. Made 68 appearances and recorded fewer than two outs in 50 of them.

**Eric O'Flaherty (32):** 7.52 ERA over the last two years but was effective for a long time before that.

**Marc Rzepczynski (31):** Coming off a good year (2.64 ERA) but he's been inconsistent like many bullpen role players.

**MIKE DUNN**  
**8.1 SO/9**



The team's needs heading into the offseason are narrowly defined. Outside of pitching and catchers, there aren't really any evident holes that would need to be addressed through free agency. But perhaps you want to get creative. Maybe you want to move on from Trevor Plouffe at third while sticking Miguel Sano at DH, opening a need at the hot corner. Maybe you want to trade Eddie Rosario and add another corner outfielder. Here's a brief overview of the rest of the free agent market, with some of the most noteworthy names.

**YOENIS CESPEDES, OF**  
**AGE: 29**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: METS**  
**2016 STATS: 132 G, .280/.354/.530,**  
**31 HR, 86 RBI**

Just one year after signing a deal with New York, Cespedes made no secret of his plans to opt out in order to chase an even bigger payday. He'll get it from someone, and that might be the Mets, who can ill afford to lose his power from their lineup. The idea of placing his bat next to Miguel Sano and Brian Dozier in the lineup is a fun pipe dream, but nothing more.

Estimated Contract: 5 years,  
\$115 million

**EDWIN ENCARNACION, 1B**  
**AGE: 34**



**PREVIOUS TEAM: BLUE JAYS**  
**2016 STATS: 160 G, .263/.357/.529,**  
**42 HR, 127 RBI**

He's another elite slugger on the market who doesn't really seem like a fit for the Twins. Coming off a year in which he matched Dozier's 42 homers and led the league in RBI, the ultra-consistent Encarnacion is going to get paid.

Estimated Contract: 4 years,  
\$100 million

## NEIL WALKER, 2B

AGE: 31



**PREVIOUS TEAM: METS**

**2016 STATS: 113 G, .282/.347/.476,  
23 HR, 55 RBI**

Over the first 3/4 of the season, Walker was Dozier Lite, delivering exceptional power production at second. However, he enters free agency with an air of uncertainty after undergoing surgery to repair a herniated disc in his back. He would likely accept a one-year QO from New York but if they have championship aspirations the Mets may seek more assurance. Maybe someone like Dozier. And then Walker is out there for the taking...

Estimated Contract: 3 years,  
\$45 million

## JOSH REDDICK, OF

AGE: 30



**PREVIOUS TEAM: DODGERS**

**2016 STATS: 115 G, .281/.345/.405,  
10 HR, 37 RBI**

Reddick has never really fulfilled the long-term potential he showed as a breakout 25-year-old slugger back in 2012, his first year with Oakland. But he's a quality outfielder and would be a fine replacement if you were to deal someone like Eddie Rosario or Max Kepler.

Estimated Contract: 3 years,  
\$36 million

## LUIS VALBUENA, 3B

AGE: 31



**PREVIOUS TEAM: ASTROS**

**2016 STATS: 90 G, .260/.357/.459,  
13 HR, 40 RBI**

Want to move on from Trevor Plouffe, but not prepared to trust Miguel Sano at third base? Valbuena might be your best bet among free agents. He's an experienced player with a solid bat and the versatility to play a few other positions. He's not considered a great defender, though.

Estimated Contract: 2 years,  
\$18 million

**Erick Aybar, SS (33):** Weak-swinging infielder posted a .639 OPS and is probably the best free agent shortstop. Yikes.

**Ian Desmond, OF (31):** Had an All-Star season transitioning to OF. Intriguing option if moved back to SS.

**Stephen Drew, 2B (34):** Former SS now mostly plays second. Bat rebounded in 2016. He'd be a cheap Dozier replacement with some upside.

**Chris Coghlan, OF (31):** Versatile defender can play all over, but batted just .188 this year.

**Aaron Hill, 3B (35):** Solid veteran bat with a bit of pop.

**Mike Napoli, 1B (35):** Slugger mashed 34 HR for Cleveland, but struck out 194 times.

**Steve Pearce, 1B (33):** Nice platoon option, excels against lefties.

**Carlos Gomez, OF (31):** Very fun player, but elite athleticism diminishing as he ages.

**Peter Bourjos, OF (30):** Defensive whiz, but doesn't hit much.

**Daniel Descalso, SS (30):** Utility infielder type with experience a good glove.



IAN DESMOND  
3.3 FWAR



## Dealing Dozier: Gauging The Trade Market

by Nick Nelson

Trades are obviously a key method for acquiring talent, and one that will almost certainly be utilized to shake up a 100-loss team. There are a number of players on the roster who could be viewed as trade candidates, but when it comes to chips capable of netting the frontline pitcher (or starting catcher) you need, there's one name that clearly stands out.

Brian Dozier's value is obvious. He's coming off a monster season in which he filled the stat sheet with 42 home runs, 99 RBI, 104 runs scored and 18 steals. His power is clearly no fluke based on the past three seasons. Since 2014 he has 20 more homers than any other middle infielder in the game. He's a reputed clubhouse leader with charisma and media savvy. He doesn't turn 30 until next May, and has a favorable contract that runs through 2018 at just \$15 million.

He's the kind of middle-of-the-order bat that an offense-needy contender might view as the piece that could put them over the top. Hypothetically. But it takes two to tango, so you need to identify a partner that will make giving up your best player a palatable option. With Jorge Polanco next in line at second base, the Twins can live without Dozier although it would obviously be a significant hit to the lineup.

Looking out across the major-league landscape, there are three teams that look like highly logical destinations for Dozier. They have a need, they have World Series aspirations, and they have young pieces that could be very appealing to the Twins. It's possible a dark horse could emerge but if you're shopping the slugging second baseman around, I'd recommend getting in touch with these three front offices.

**BRIAN DOZIER**

**5.9 FWAR**



## Los Angeles Dodgers

### Why Are They A Fit?

It's go time for the Dodgers. In Clayton Kershaw, they have the best pitcher – maybe the best player – in all of baseball. He's amidst his absolute prime at age 28 and the team simply must go all out to win during this window. Their championship drought is approaching three decades, and they haven't even been to the Big Show since Kirk Gibson carried them to glory in 1988. They fell short again this year, in part, because their lineup lacked outstanding punch. Dozier would provide it. Oh, and they have some fantastic young pitchers.

### Who To Target

#### 1. Julio Urias, LHP

Signed out of Mexico in 2012, Urias is one of the game's most exciting young arms. He debuted in the majors at age 19 this year, and excelled. He might be untouchable.

#### 2. Jose De Leon, RHP

A worthy fallback if the Dodgers won't part with Urias. De Leon, 24, didn't have as much success in his brief 2016 debut but he's a top prospect in his own right. He put up a 111-to-20 K/BB ratio and 2.61 ERA over 86 innings at Triple-A.

#### 3. Grant Holmes, RHP

A first-round draft pick out of high school in 2014, Holmes is the best Dodgers pitching prospect outside of the aforementioned duo, but he's much further off. He turns 21 in March and hasn't yet pitched above Single-A. He'd need to be packaged with someone, maybe a solid young big-league starter like Ross Stripling.

**BRIAN DOZIER**  
**.546 SLUGGING**



## New York Mets

### Why Are They A Fit?

Similar to Los Angeles, the Mets have the pitching they need to win it all, but could use more offensive firepower. They scored fewer runs than all but three National League clubs, failing to support an elite young rotation fronted by Noah Syndergaard, Jacob deGrom and Matt Harvey (who will be coming back from a shoulder operation). Somehow the Mets still have considerable depth beyond those three, and that's where you'd want to set your gaze.

### Who To Target

#### 1. Steven Matz, LHP

The 25-year-old southpaw has made 28 big-league starts and he's been brilliant, with a 3.16 ERA and 1.21 WHIP. He was a highly touted prospect and has become a very effective major-league starter. But he had surgery to remove a bone chip from his elbow at season's end, so there is some risk here.

#### 2. Zack Wheeler, RHP

Another of New York's exceptional pitching talents, but he hasn't taken the mound in two years. Wheeler underwent Tommy John surgery in spring of 2015 and his hit multiple setbacks in his recovery. At age 26 he's a high-risk, high-reward proposition. Certainly not enough for Dozier on his own.

#### 3. Travis d'Arnaud, C

There's no denying d'Arnaud's star-caliber talent, but he has had a heck of a time staying healthy. He has yet to play more than 108 games in a season. When on the field he's a quality hitter with pop, and he has been receiving a top-notch staff in New York. If you could get him tossed in alongside one of the quality young starters above, you have two potential long-term answers at areas of great need.

**BRIAN DOZIER**

**.340 OBP**



## Pittsburgh Pirates

### Why Are They A Fit?

Unlike the two clubs listed above, the Pirates aren't dealing with the pressures of a large-market fan base. There isn't the same urgency to make a big splash or all-in push. Still, this has the makings of a team that is one more star hitter away from being a true contender. They were knocked out in the wild-card game two straight years before dropping below .500 in 2016. They didn't have a player hit 25 home runs this year. They could use an offensive jolt, and they'd have plenty of ammo to bring into Dozier trade talks.

### Who To Target

#### 1. Tyler Glasnow, RHP

Coming into the 2016 season, Glasnow was ranked by MLB.com as the game's 10th-best prospect, and he followed up with a tremendous season at age 22. He posted a 1.87 ERA in 20 Triple-A starts and held his own in a short stint with Pittsburgh. He is a premier young arm, and maybe too much to ask. But if the Pirates REALLY want Dozier...?

#### 2. Jameson Taillon, RHP

Interesting case. Taillon is a former No. 2 overall pick and premium minor-league talent. He sat out all of 2014 following Tommy John surgery then missed all of 2015 with a hernia issue. He put himself squarely back on the map this year, however, posting a 3.38 ERA while showing excellent control as a rookie.

#### 3. Mitch Keller, RHP

More of a long-term project, as he is 20 and finished the year in Single-A. But the 2015 second-round pick offers enormous upside with his potent arsenal. He could reach the majors in a hurry. Plus, he's a Midwestern kid, from Cedar Rapids.

**BRIAN DOZIER**

**.280 BABIP**

## Above & Beyond: Creatively Improving Run Prevention

by Parker Hageman

Derek Falvey has inherited an organization that allowed the most runs in the American League. Hopefully he is a person who enjoys a good challenge.

The Twins hired Falvey, in part, because he was analytically inclined and also carried a reputation as a pitching hawk while with Cleveland, two significant deficiencies of the previous regime. Although Jack Goin has done a good job establishing the analytics department it seemed obvious that the growth of that department was handcuffed by budgets and the prior leadership's skeptical view toward the data. With Falvey in charge, he might be able to give Goin's team the necessary support to take full advantage of the science of baseball.

Falvey's vision for his team may already include something similar to what these two clubs have been doing. However, in terms of improving the run prevention both short-term and long-term, the Twins may want to consider creating at least two new positions.

### Boston's Pitching Guru

At the end of the 2015 season, the Boston Red Sox added a new position for former major league pitcher Brian Bannister in the front office.

Already a member of the team's scouting department, his acute insight to pitching analytics prompted Boston to give Bannister the title of Director of Pitching Analysis and Development. Bannister's new job, as described by Red Sox team president Dave Dombrowski, was to develop pitching through an "analytical approach" using the power of PitchF/X and Trackman to improve arm angles, pitch types, spin rates and more.

WPA

WIN PROBABILITY ADDED



Essentially, Bannister would process the science and deliver it to the organization's pitching coaches who could distribute it to players in easier to swallow bites.

The overall goal would be to fully exploit a pitcher's talent. One of Bannister's early successes includes turning around left-handed hurler Rich Hill. Hill was pitching for the independant Long Island Ducks in 2015 when Bannister made a scouting visit. Bannister knew Hill's curveball had one of the highest spin rates in all of baseball, making it a very tough pitch to barrel, and yet Hill often opted to throw other pitches in situations where his best offering would suffice. So Bannister dropped some pitching knowledge on Hill. He told him to throw his curveball more. He told him to increase the spin on his fastball. Since the conversation with Bannister, Hill has made 24 starts with Boston, Oakland and Los Angeles, striking out 165 over 139.1 innings of work. You'll note that he's the top starting pitcher in this Handbook's free agency section.

"It was so refreshing, talking about shaping pitches, shaping the breaking ball. We talked about other pitchers — Zack Greinke, Clayton Kershaw — specifically about how they can shape their different breaking balls that they throw," Hill told the Boston Globe's Alex Speier in February. "All of those things took me from four pitches to maybe 12. It was like I had 12 pitches because of changing speeds, changing shapes, changing locations."

It is not hard to envision a pitcher like Tyler Duffey benefitting from that kind of insight. Duffey's curveball can be a monster pitch at times but he struggles to locate his two types of fastballs consistently thanks to a lowered arm slot. Having a person in the front office focused on identifying issues and isolating strengths could help Duffey reach his ceiling quicker.



WOBA

WEIGHTED ON-BASE AVG

Bannister's methods and pitching knowledge were so well received by the pitchers that the team requested that he join the coaching staff for the remainder of the 2016 season in order to better communicate with the major league roster.

While right-hander Rick Porcello doesn't credit Bannister with his career-best season, the tall sinkerballer said that in addition to Red Sox pitching coach Carl Willis, Bannister's presence has helped provide concrete insight beyond the mental aspects of the mound. When he feels like he is in a funk and doesn't get the right movement on his sinker, Porcello told the *Boston Herald* that Bannister's ability to recall data on arm angles and spin rates to quickly diagnose what is going wrong assisted in keeping him from falling into a prolonged slump. That's something Bannister said he emphasizes -- not only getting pitchers to their ceiling but sustaining as well. Someone like Kyle Gibson, who has had flashes of brilliance but has had consistency evade him, could follow in similar footsteps.

Though the Twins do not have a Brian Bannister in the front office, they do have the foundation in place to capture the necessary data that can lead to swift player development improvements. Across their minor league affiliates -- with the exception of Elizabethton and the Gulf Coast League Twins -- the organization has installed Trackman systems, the very same 3D doppler hardware that feeds MLB's StatCast with speed, spin and launch angles.

Ensuring that a person or a team of people in similar roles to how the Red Sox employed Bannister, constantly dissecting and disseminating that information throughout the organization, could rapidly improve the pitching program.



**DRS**  
**DEFENSIVE RUNS SAVED**

## Chicago's Defensive Coordinator

Often found perched high above the field in the press box, looming over the game like a football defensive coordinator, is the Chicago Cubs' Director of Run Prevention, Tommy Hottovy.

His job entails ensuring the nine men out on the fielding wearing baseball gloves are in the proper defensive positioning that he and the coaching staff predetermined based upon the tendencies of the opposition. Using all available information, Hottovy concocts a game plan for the pitching staff and the defense that can be implemented during a series. Unlike an advance scout who may follow the opponent for several series prior, the Cubs rely on as much data as they can get their hands on to set their course.

Whether Hottovy's recommendations had a hand in the fact that the Cubs' defense was the best in baseball at run prevention in 2016 -- allowing an MLB-low 559 runs -- or if the ability to retire hitters consistently is a residual effect from having a pitching staff with one of the lowest hard-hit ball percentages in the game is debatable, but there is no mistaking how differently the teams at Addison Street and Twins Way approach the defensive side of the game.

Based on run prevention, the Minnesota Twins fared very poorly. The 889 runs allowed was only surpassed by the lowly Diamondbacks (890). Advanced fielding metrics suggested the Cubs saved 93 runs in 2016, equating to roughly nine wins for the Northsiders, while the Twins saved a whopping minus-59 runs, costing them approximately six games in the ledger.

How did the Cubs do it?

Given that they are led by Joe Maddon, the godfather of the modern shift, one might assume the Cubs are taking hits away by virtue of traditionally altered alignments.



**FIP**  
**FIELDING INDEPENDENT**  
**PITCHING**

However, as more and more baseball teams have embraced it, Maddon himself has shifted: the Cubs used the fewest in baseball. The reasoning, Maddon said, is that there are fewer left-handed pull hitters in the National League combined with the growing propensity for hitters to go the other way and beat the shift.

Still, the movement of players around the field is noticeable for the Cubs but the positioning goes far beyond the standard spray charts. Data directs the Cubs' alignment and pitch selection, which is derived from Hottovy's information but it would be incomplete without the modelling conducted by Sean Ahmed, the team's Research & Development Analyst. Armed with an economics degree from the University of Chicago, Cubs GM Theo Epstein described Ahman as the team's "defensive specialist" in a *New Yorker* article. Like the seven other analysts on the Cubs' staff, Ahmed's aim is to predict the future. By using the information provided by Hottovy and other advanced scouts combined with the Trackman data, Ahmed's task is to ultimately forecast where balls will be hit.

Likewise, teams such as the Dodgers and Yankees have gone to great lengths when it comes to outfield positioning. Statcast has basically given teams the data into each hitter's exact lat and longitude, hit trajectory based on pitch velocity, as well as their defender's speed. With that information, teams could align their defense accordingly. The only issue is being able to communicate on the field where a fielder should stand. That's why the Dodgers went so far as to make a requisition to spray paint lines of the outfield grass at Citi Field in New York. That's how valuable they believe their exact positioning is.

"I just think we've evolved," Hottovy told his hometown *Wichita Eagle* in August, "Even back then, there were technically sabermetricians who were using what data they had to help the team.

They just didn't have nearly the amount of stuff we have today. It's important to have and even more important to be able to decipher just what the heck you're getting because there's so much of it."

Baseball's butterfly effect -- the unraveling that happens when a team fails to convert an out they should have made -- has a way of punishing teams and the Twins suffered greatly in 2016. They made a league-high 329 defensive misplays (mispays that are not always considered errors, but they did add an AL-high 123 errors for good measure). With the additional unwanted baserunners, the Twins pitching staff was constantly under pressure. Being able to secure outs will go a long way toward improving the team's overall pitching numbers.

The Twins clearly need to improve in the area of -- and this cannot be stressed enough -- SIMPLY MAKING THE ROUTINE PLAYS but at the same time need to have someone on the staff who is not only crunching the data but also outlining ways that it can be harnessed in-game, helping put them in better position to make those plays and giving back to the pitching staff.

Despite the ugly results, the Twins have some intriguing arms that could be the makings of a solid rotation. Ervin Santana has veteran experience. Jose Berrios has talent. Kyle Gibson could be one of the better sinkerballers not named Rick Porcello. Trevor May has the velocity and secondary pitches to find success as a strong starter. Providing this core with a sound, scientific approach in addition to a well positioned, sure-handed defense could turn the unit around quickly.

As Falvey constructs his operations staff for the 2017 season, The Twins need front office personnel that can work seamlessly within the front office and on the field.

**BABIP**  
**BATTING AVG ON**  
**BALLS IN PLAY**

## We Can Rebuild Them!

Let's be honest. There isn't some series of realistic moves that will magically turn the Twins from a 100-loss team into a title contender in one offseason. But it seems reasonable to say that this roster – nearly identical to the one that notched 83 wins a year prior – unperformed drastically in 2016. With a few bounceback performances and some savvy additions, could this team return to being a factor next year?

Here's one blueprint for an offseason plan that might help get them there.



1. Reach arbitration agreements with **Trevor Plouffe** (\$9M), **Eduardo Escobar** (\$3.5M), **Kyle Gibson** (\$2.5M), **Ryan Pressly** (\$1.5M). Non-tender **Hector Santiago** and **Brandon Kintzler**.

With so many questions surrounding Miguel Sano's defense at third base, it's worth keeping Plouffe

around for one more year. Escobar is one of those rebound candidates, as is Gibson. Pressly had a nice year. Santiago's price tag is a bit too high. Kintzler performed admirably but can be replaced with more upside.



2. Sign free agent catcher **Jason Castro** for 3 years, \$21 million.

With the cupboard mostly bare in the minors as far as starting catchers go, the Twins would be wise to lock up a somewhat long-term solution. Castro, at 29, would be a good fit on a reasonably priced three-year deal. He has been a mostly mediocre hitter but there's enough quality elsewhere in the lineup to make up for his low average. What we really like is his ability to help out the pitching staff. Castro ranked among the top three MLB catchers in pitch framing this season.

POS	NAME	SALARY
C	Jason Castro	\$7m
1B	Joe Mauer	\$23m
2B	Jorge Polanco	\$500k
3B	Trevor Plouffe	\$9m
SS	Eduardo Escobar	\$3.5m
DH	Miguel Sano	\$500k
OF	Eddie Rosario	\$500k
OF	Byron Buxton	\$500k
OF	Max Kepler	\$500k
C	JR Murphy	\$500k
1B/DH	Kennys Vargas	\$500k
IF	Erick Aybar	\$5m
OF	Robbie Grossman	\$500k
OF	Danny Santana	\$500k
SP	Ervin Santana	\$13.5m
SP	Kyle Gibson	\$2.5m
SP	Trevor May	\$500k
SP	Jose Berrios	\$500k
SP	Jose De Leon	\$500k
RP	Neftali Perez	\$6m
RP	Ryan Pressly	\$1.5m
RP	JT Chargois	\$500k
RP	Taylor Rogers	\$500k
RP	Tyler Duffey	\$500k
RP	Michael Tonkin	\$500k
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$101.5m</b>

Includes commitments to Hughes, Perkins, Park

3. Sign reliever **Neftali Feliz** for 2 years, \$12 million.

Coming off a tough surgery, Glen Perkins can't be counted on, and Kintzler is out, opening up a hole in the ninth. Feliz probably wouldn't get the opportunity to close elsewhere but might be enticed if the Twins offer him the job. If he picks up where he left off, burning mid-90s heaters past opponents, he'll either be a potent late-inning weapon or a valuable trade chip.



4. Trade second baseman **Brian Dozier** to Dodgers for starting pitcher **Jose De Leon** plus prospects.

This is the doozy. Giving up the team's best player is a tough pill to swallow, but desperate times call for desperate measures, and the need for pitching is beyond desperate. After falling just short of the big show in 2016, the Dodgers are in position to make a bold move for two years of Dozier, who would instantly become their best power hitter. De Leon is a premier pitching prospect who ranked 25th in the game on

the Baseball America Midseason Top 100 list, so the “plus” might not be a ton, but you should be able to add in a few younger minor-leaguers with high ceilings.



5. Sign free agent infielder **Erick Aybar** to one-year, \$5 million contract.

It might seem like a high price to pay for a backup, but Aybar can play all around the infield and brings veteran experience. He’s good insurance to have on hand behind a relatively unproven middle infield.

The makeup of this roster is geared toward setting a course for the future while keeping the door open for a quick jump forward. If Berrios and De Leon catch on this could be a surprising upstart rotation. Plouffe stays on for one more year as a veteran presence in an increasingly youth-infused lineup. The bullpen boasts intriguing talent and could feature multiple quality back-end arms if Perkins is able to return. What does your offseason blueprint look like?





*Twins Daily*

**2017  
OFFSEASON  
HANDBOOK**

Thank you for purchasing our 2017 Offseason Handbook. To keep up-to-date on the latest Twins news and rumors, be sure to visit us at [TwinsDaily.com](http://TwinsDaily.com).

**VISIT TWINS  
DAILY**

Do you want to craft your own 2017 blueprint? Visit the Twins Daily forums and participate in our general manager challenge!