



2008 AL STARTING PITCHERS Rankings

AL Only Rankings & Analysis

Written by
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| SP Josh Beckett, Boston | Age: 27 Size: 6'5" 220 |
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| <p>FM: Beckett finally broke through after turning 27 and never looked back. 20 wins again a possibility while Boston should be in the race for another division title. The knock on Beckett is his prone-ness to injury. The shoulder seems fine but the blisters are often a problem. Regardless, he's a top 5 SP in 2008.</p> <p>MLBFO: A lot of people were staying away from Beckett last year, which caused some to realize the huge sleeper potential he had. If you were one of those people, you probably finished at the top of your league. He does miss time to injury, so just be aware you likely won't get 220 innings out of him.</p> | |
| <p>2007 Stats: IP: 200 W-L: 20-7 ERA: 3.27 WHIP: 1.14 K: 194 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 20-8 ERA: 3.20 WHIP: 1.10 K: 200 SV: 0</p> | |



| SP C.C. Sabathia, Cleveland | Age: 27 Size: 6'7" 290 |
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| <p>FM: Sabathia is a monster in size, he's intimidating, and finally stayed healthy for a full season. We all predicted a break out and it happened. Sabathia is for real, his size, age, and team he plays for make him arguably a top 5 SP candidate in 2008. Sabathia makes a fantastic option in keeper leagues. Expect to pay in the \$25-\$30 range in auction leagues.</p> <p>MLBFO: Sabathia may sign a long term contract prior to the start of the 2008 season and he deserves to get the kind of money Barry Zito did. Sabathia is still only 27 and plays for an up and coming Indians team that will produce enough runs for him to win 20 games in 2008. Expect similar numbers as last year for the reigning AL Cy Young.</p> | |
| <p>2007 Stats: IP: 241 W-L: 19-7 ERA: 3.21 WHIP: 1.14 K: 209 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 20-8 ERA: 3.20 WHIP: 1.20 K: 200 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP John Lackey, Los Angeles | Age: 29 Size: 6'6" 245 |
| <p>FM: Lackey's K's dropped a bit but so did his ERA/WHIP while winning a few more games. He's headed in the right direction, in the early part of his prime, he's solid, he's durable, he's a monster in size, and he's on a team that should be a favorite to win the western division. What's not to like? Lackey also decreased the amount of walks given up, which indicates that he could keep that WHIP down below 1.20. Bid with confidence, Lackey is worth the \$20+ or a 5th round selection.</p> <p>MLBFO: Lackey often gets overlooked when it comes to top pitchers in the AL. He certainly got a bit over looked in the Cy Young voting last year, but don't make the same mistake and overlook him in your draft. Lackey could improve all of his numbers next year and if he does, it will be hard to overlook him for Cy Young again.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 224 W-L: 19-9 ERA: 3.01 WHIP: 1.12 K: 179 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 20-8 ERA: 2.90 WHIP: 1.10 K: 190 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Scott Kazmir, Tampa Bay | Age: 24 Size: 6'0" 190 |
| <p>FM: I love the potential and upside of Scott Kazmir. The 239 K are for real, the 196 hits in 206 IP is encouraging but the 89 BB are a problem. You have to assume that a high K guy like Kazmir means a bit higher WHIP but the potential to decrease the walks is there. Don't let Kazmir slip! He can certainly find 15+ wins with that revamped D-Ray bullpen. \$20 will be a bargain at the auction in 2008!</p> <p>MLBFO: The only reasons not to take Kazmir higher are because of his higher WHIP and lower win total. He likely won't improve either a whole lot next year because of the nature of his situation (a high strikeout pitcher in a losing city). However, he could drop his ERA and make for great value at this point in the draft.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 206 W-L: 13-9 ERA: 3.48 WHIP: 1.38 K: 239 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 15-9 ERA: 3.20 WHIP: 1.30 K: 230 SV: 0</p> | |



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| SP Justin Verlander, Detroit | Age: 25 Size: 6'5" 200 |
| <p>FM: Verlander held batters to 181 hits in 201 IP while improving in every category. He's only 25, has great size, 200/200 potential and will pitch for a team with an insane lineup that rivals the Yankees and Red Sox. Verlander will be pushed aside for guys like Beckett, Sabathia, Bedard and even Haren, so that's when you pounce on Verlander when he slips a round or two or falls under \$25.</p> <p>MLBFO: Verlander has become the true ace on the Tigers' staff and he has the potential to improve even more in 2008. He could even make a run at Cy Young with the improved lineup behind him. A strikeout total of 200 would be icing on the cake for this 25 year old pitching machine.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 201 W-L: 18-6 ERA: 3.66 WHIP: 1.23 K: 183 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 20-8 ERA: 3.30 WHIP: 1.20 K: 200 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Erik Bedard, Seattle | Age: 29 Size: 6'1" 190 |
| <p>FM: Bedard was insane in the 2nd half last season before a strained oblique ended his season. Bedard has upside and after being traded to Seattle, his potential has skyrocketed. Keep in mind that 2006 was Bedard's only full season as he has proved to be susceptible to injury. He has the potential to be great, but if he hits \$23, I might bow out of bidding and opt for a guy like Verlander or Kazmir because then you're just caught in a bidding war.</p> <p>MLBFO: Now that Bedard has found a home in Seattle in a pitchers ball park with a fantastic bullpen, I'm thinking 18 or 19 possible wins.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 182 W-L: 13-5 ERA: 3.16 WHIP: 1.09 K: 221 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 18-6 ERA: 3.20 WHIP: 1.20 K: 200 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Felix Hernandez, Seattle | Age: 22 Size: 6'3" 225 |
| <p>FM: Is this the year? Felix turns 22 in April and with this being his 3rd full year in the league, a breakout is likely. We saw what Felix could do back in April with a few stellar starts but was suddenly sidelined with a forearm injury. He's got 200/200 potential, youth to be a fantastic keeper, and experience to finally breakout. He's valued around \$20. Anything cheaper will be a bargain!</p> <p>MLBFO: Every year everyone predicts a breakout for Felix and up until now, it hasn't really happened. However, he has all of the skills, so there's no reason to think this will not be his year. When he breaks out, you will want to have him because the results will be extraordinary. If this was any other pitcher I'd say at age 22, he still needs more time, but this is King Felix! Look out!</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 190 W-L: 14-7 ERA: 3.92 WHIP: 1.38 K: 165 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 17-9 ERA: 3.30 WHIP: 1.20 K: 200 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Roy Halladay, Toronto | Age: 30 Size: 6'6" 225 |
| <p>FM: Halladay is an innings eater that doesn't seem to have the 200K potential with 132 in 2006 and 139 in 2007, both full seasons. Expect Halladay to be solid and healthy. Draft him more for a low ERA/WHIP instead of high K potential. Halladay is one pitcher who you can draft comfortably knowing he has to face the Yankees and Red Sox more than most pitchers. Only gave up 6 ER in 22 IP against the Yankees but 22 ER in 32 IP against Boston. I wouldn't pay more than \$20 unless all other top SP's are gone.</p> | |

MLBFO: Halladay makes a great ERA anchor for your team that you can grab in the 8th round. However, if you grab him, make sure to grab one or two high strikeout guys, because Halladay simply won't get it done in that department. Again, the fact that he was a top four starting pitcher last year and is now available in round eight shows exactly why you shouldn't be drafting a SP in the first couple rounds.

2007 Stats: IP: 225 W-L: 16-7 ERA: 3.71 WHIP: 1.24 K: 139 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 17-8 ERA: 3.40 WHIP: 1.20 K: 150 SV: 0

SP Fausto Carmona, Cleveland

Age: 24 Size: 6'4" 220

FM: Carmona surprised everyone even though we knew about his potential. This guy is for real and you can expect a season close to or better than 2007. If there was one thing, I'd take a guess and say he'll add to his K total considerably. Carmona has filthy stuff and great size and I seem him missing more bats this season he's filthy.

MLBFO: Carmona surprised everyone last year and could surprise everyone again...by regressing a bit. However, he has the stuff to stay an elite pitcher and numbers similar to last year seem realistic. Just be aware of the innate risk involved with drafting a 24 year old starter with only one season under his belt.

2007 Stats: IP: 215 W-L: 19-8 ERA: 3.06 WHIP: 1.21 K: 137 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 19-8 ERA: 3.00 WHIP: 1.20 K: 160 SV: 0

SP Daisuke Matsuzaka, Boston

Age: 27 Size: 6'0" 190

FM: Matsuzaka has supreme stuff but obviously an adjustment to the majors, the workload and stronger American hitters all took a toll on Dice-K. Still, he did manage 201 strikeouts. Expect an increase in numbers across the board while nabbing him somewhere around the 8th-10th rounds and about \$15-\$20 in the auction as most people seem to not want take the risk.

MLBFO: Matsuzaka had a bit of a rough adjustment to the majors last year. Perhaps being in a new environment got to him or maybe Dice-K Mania was a little too much for him. Either way, we think he'll improve in 2008 to a very good value for someone you can nab in the 10th round. With the Boston offense behind him, more than 17 wins is certainly possible.

2007 Stats: IP: 205 W-L: 15-12 ERA: 4.40 WHIP: 1.32 K: 201 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 17-10 ERA: 3.70 WHIP: 1.25 K: 200 SV: 0

SP Javier Vazquez, Chicago

Age: 31 Size: 6'1" 210

FM: Here's a guy who quietly notched 213 K at about a K/IP with 15 wins on a crappy team. He'll most likely slip to rounds 8-10 with Dice-K but should perform like a 5-7 round player. There's not a lot of hype surrounding Vazquez which means you can nab him at a decent price.

MLBFO: Vazquez had a career year last year at age 30 and will be hard pressed to repeat it. While he could see similar ERA numbers as last year, his strikeouts are almost certain to go down. Additionally, playing for a weak Chicago team, the record is a little up in the air.

2007 Stats: IP: 217 W-L: 15-8 ERA: 3.74 WHIP: 1.14 K: 213 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 16-8 ERA: 3.65 WHIP: 1.15 K: 200 SV: 0

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| SP Kelvim Escobar, Los Angeles | Age: 31 Size: 6'1" 230 |
| <p>FM: Escobar quietly put together a great season while staying fairly healthy. The knock on Escobar is that you'll always have to live in fear as if his elbow is hanging on by a thread. Actually, Escobar is currently out with a shoulder injury, so I'd most likely pass on him right now.</p> <p>MLBFO: Kelvim Escobar seems to get overlooked every year, but digging a little deeper, perhaps rightfully so. The injury risk with this guy is too much to warrant taking him above some guys he may put up better pure numbers than in a full season.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 196 W-L: 18-7 ERA: 3.40 WHIP: 1.27 K: 160 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 100 W-L: 7-5 ERA: 3.20 WHIP: 1.25 K: 90 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP James Shields, Tampa Bay | Age: 26 Size: 6'4" 215 |
| <p>FM: Shields was one of the biggest surprises in 2008 along with Fausto Carmona. The nice thing about Shields is that he'll benefit from a revamped bullpen and solid offense and win more games. Shields is for real, has upside and should improve overall while being affordable on draft day.</p> <p>MLBFO: James Shields, Scott Kazmir...Scott Kazmir, James Shields. Shields will get you a better WHIP and Kazmir will get you a better ERA and more strikeouts. Either way, this 1-2 in Tampa Bay is downright dirty. That on top of Wade Davis and more coming up from the minors and the Devil Rays have found themselves a nice little rotation, now all we need is some offense!</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 215 W-L: 12-8 ERA: 3.85 WHIP: 1.11 K: 184 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 15-8 ERA: 3.40 WHIP: 1.10 K: 200 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Jered Weaver, Los Angeles | Age: 25 Size: 6'7" 205 |
| <p>FM: Weaver's numbers are skewed a bit because of a few rough starts after he came back early in the season from a bicep injury. However, if you look at his game log, he was quite effective down the stretch. All his numbers should be better in 2008 and he'll slip as far as the 14th round in some leagues. Should be a nice sleeper on draft day.</p> <p>MLBFO: Jered Weaver was considered a sleeper last year and disappointed with a small 115 strikeout total. However, that was in 161 innings and he should be able to put together a full season this year. His numbers should be all around better and as the fantasy man said, a nice sleeper again this year.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 161 W-L: 13-7 ERA: 3.91 WHIP: 1.39 K: 115 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 17-9 ERA: 3.50 WHIP: 1.25 K: 180 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP A.J. Burnett, Toronto | Age: 31 Size: 6'4" 230 |
| <p>FM: Burnett usually has trouble staying on the mound because of injury, but when he's is on the mound he's gold the way Chipper Jones is when he actually plays. The good thing is that Burnett, although misses games, is not in the injury league of Harden, Sheets, Prior, Colon, etc... At more than a K/IP, Burnett has some sweet upside at half the price of normal star pitchers. Should be available after the 12th and for under \$15.</p> <p>MLBFO: Burnett and Ben Sheets seem to compare well: When they're healthy they're top guys, but they have trouble staying healthy...BIG TROUBLE! However, as I said, if Burnett can stay on the field, in the 12th or 13th rounds, he's great value. If Burnett</p> | |

somehow managed a full season, 220 strikeouts would not be out of the question.
2007 Stats: IP: 166 W-L: 10-8 ERA: 3.75 WHIP: 1.19 K: 176 SV: 0
2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 14-10 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.20 K: 180 SV: 0

SP Chen-Ming Wang, New York

Age: 28 Size: 6'3" 225

FM: Ground ball pitcher, not a lot of K's but can rack up a 19 win season better than anyone. Draft sometime after round 10 if you have already loaded up on big time K guys. If not, pass on Wang. He's really just good for Wins, an ERA under 3.80 and a WHIP under 1.30....which is good enough to keep in your rotation.

MLBFO: You won't get any strikeouts, let's start there. If you can get beyond that fact, then Wang is a good ERA and Wins source in the latter rounds. He gets about a strikeout every other inning and may have trouble improving his ERA much with a strikeout rate that low. An ERA of 3.50 is his upside with a 3.70 like last year being much more likely.

2007 Stats: IP: 199 W-L: 19-7 ERA: 3.70 WHIP: 1.29 K: 104 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 20-8 ERA: 3.50 WHIP: 1.20 K: 120 SV: 0

SP Francisco Liriano, Minnesota

Age: 24 Size: 6'2" 185

FM: Ahh, the great debate! Is Liriano going to be gold or not? If you search the internet hard enough you will find a ton of articles from "experts" praising this guy, how great he is, and how much his rookie season was better than Johan's rookie season. HAS EVERYONE FORGOTTEN ABOUT HIS INJURY???? I feel like I'm the only one out there saying it, which I feel is obvious. Liriano had major reconstructive elbow surgery and if I remember correctly, it was due to his "jerky" mechanics. He's in a Catch-22 because those mechanics made bats miss before he got hurt but it's those mechanics that got him hurt. Common sense tells me that... **A.** he'll have to readjust to the league after missing close to a year and a half... **B.** he has faced any major league batters since August of 2006.... **C.** he'll probably have to readjust his approach/mechanics to take the stress off his elbow and prevent further injury. The potential is there to be great and a quality season could be on the horizon, but the superstar stuff probably won't happen in 2008. 2006 Stats mean nothing in this case! You'd be a fool to draft Liriano before the 12th round or for more than \$8-\$10...you're paying for hype.

MLBFO: Liriano has the potential to regain is stud-dom. Okay, I just made up a word. Either way, I doubt Liriano reaches his full potential or his 2006 numbers in 2008. As the FM noted, his mechanics were the reason for his success and the reason for his downfall. If he doesn't adjust the mechanics he runs the risk of re-injuring himself. But, if he does adjust the mechanics he runs the risk of becoming just another pitcher. Either way, it doesn't work out great for fantasy owners in 2008. High risk, high reward pick here but you'll likely have to overpay to get him.

2007 Stats: DID NOT PLAY

2008 Potential: IP: 190 W-L: 15-8 ERA: 3.70 WHIP: 1.25 K: 180 SV: 0

SP Philip Hughes, New York

Age: 21 Size: 6'5" 220

FM: Hughes has the size, stuff, command, and intelligence to be a top flight pitcher for years to come. There have been comparisons to Roger Clemens and the near no-hitter over the summer. I expect Hughes to suffer an occasional growing pain or two this season as he's still inexperienced although a touch more seasoned then say Kennedy or

Chamberlain. It's not out of the question to expect 15+ wins assuming he stays healthy and he's not traded.

MLBFO: Phil Hughes can be great next year, but there are also a ton of other pitchers like him available in the draft this year. He wasn't great in limited time in 2007 and 2008 won't be without some rough games, but he really is a top notch prospect. Sometimes you wonder about the New York media hype with Yankees' and Mets' prospects, but this kid is for real.

2007 Stats: IP: 73 W-L: 5-3 ERA: 4.46 WHIP: 1.28 K: 170 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 15-10 ERA: 3.80 WHIP: 1.20 K: 170 SV: 0

SP Andy Pettitte, New York

Age: 35 Size: 6'5" 225

FM: Pettitte seemed like he had a great season in real life but fantasy wise he was inconsistent. I think Pettitte goes into 2008 with a chip on his shoulder because of the whole steroid thing and because of the way the Yankees were knocked out of the playoffs. You can steal Pettitte after the 16th round in most 12 team mixed league drafts and for under \$10 in the auction. He makes a great 4th-5th starter on your team with a bit of upside. Should be a nice source of wins with some better run support. It's always nice to get a top 30 starting pitcher so cheap and so late. By the way, Andy is almost always a second half pitcher.

MLBFO: Pettitte is a solid innings eater in real life and the fact that he plays for the Yankees makes him a decent mid-late round pick in fantasy. His ERA is likely to linger around 4.00 and while his WHIP could get up to 1.25, I think 1.35 is a bit more reasonable. He won't get you a ton of strikeouts either, but an all around serviceable player.

2007 Stats: IP: 215 W-L: 15-9 ERA: 4.05 WHIP: 1.43 K: 141 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 17-9 ERA: 3.80 WHIP: 1.25 K: 150 SV: 0

SP Joba Chamberlain, New York

Age: 22 Size: 6'2" 230

FM: Joba is officially The Fantasy Man's new favorite player! I don't think the Fly Attack of 2007 has hindered his confidence at all. But let's be careful here. I just have this weird feeling that Joba could end up back in the bullpen. Regardless, he was amazing in the minors going 9-2, 2.45ERA, 135K, 27BB in 88IP. Hype will value Joba at \$10-\$13 but he's truly a \$5- \$7 player in any other situation. Don't over pay but feel free to be aggressive. Worst Case Scenario: Joba ends up in the bullpen and posts super quality numbers as a middle reliever for your fantasy team with a few saves mixed in. By the way, the Yankees have capped Joba at 150 IP for 2008 no matter where he pitches.

MLBFO: The Yankees have claimed that they want to play Chamberlain out of the bullpen to start the 2008 season to keep the innings down, but even if he starts there, he won't be there all year. One of their pitchers is bound to get hurt eventually and Joba will step in a likely never step back out. The kid has a ton of talent and now just needs an opportunity to use it. Plus, with the Yankees the wins come flowing in.

2007 Stats: IP: 24 W-L: 2-0 ERA: 0.38 WHIP: 0.75 K: 34 SV: 1

2008 Potential: IP: 150 W-L: 12-4 ERA: 3.80 WHIP: 1.25 K: 160 SV: 4

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| SP Ian Kennedy, New York | Age: 23 Size: 6'0" 195 |
| <p>FM: What I like best about Kennedy is that he's living in Joba & Phil's shadows. They get all the hype while Kennedy just sits back quietly, in a fantasy sense. Fact is, Kennedy is just as good. He doesn't have the size of Hughes or the tantalization of Joba but he has a healthy combination of both plus a touch of intelligence and super command. Don't be surprised if Kennedy has a better season than both Joba and Hughes. Check out his minor league numbers for kicks and giggles... in 25 starts, 12-3, 1.91ERA, 163K in 146IP while holding all batters to a .189AVG. That's nasty! Its possible Kennedy could start the year in the minors if he's not named the 5th starter or if Joba isn't banished to the bullpen. The problem is that Mike Mussina will keep that 4th spot, in which case Joba would get the 5th. Worst Case Scenario: We don't see Kennedy until late May. I'd still draft him in the top 50 SP's anyway especially in keeper leagues. Non keeper leagues, you might want to wait unless we hear Kennedy is guaranteed that 5th spot. Then again, Kennedy would be a huge "homer" pick for me!</p> <p>MLBFO: Kennedy is clearly a tier below Chamberlain and Hughes and this is just a crazy high projection for him in 2008. I'll put the chances of him reaching this projection at about 10-15%. That said, I'll humor the FM on this one and allow him his outrageous projection. Kennedy is barely getting drafted in most drafts so at least you can snag him at the very end of the draft.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 19 W-L: 1-0 ERA: 1.89 WHIP: 1.16 K: 15 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 150 W-L: 10-4 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.25 K: 130 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Jeremy Bonderman, Detroit | Age: 25 Size: 6'2" 220 |
| <p>FM: After improving consistently for 3-4 years consecutively Bonderman bombed in 2007. His ERA, WHIP and K/IP rate all dropped and he did get bit slightly with the injury bug. I'd look for a bounce back season as he's still young with upside on a quality team and should be pretty cheap on draft day.</p> <p>MLBFO: With Verlander now clearly the cream of the crop in the Detroit rotation, Bonderman no longer has to pretend to be the ace of the staff that he isn't. That being said, Bonderman could put up very good numbers in a rebound year with a little pressure off of his back. He'll come very cheap on draft day because of his poor 2007, but an ERA below 4.00 is not out of the question.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 174 W-L: 11-9 ERA: 5.01 WHIP: 1.38 K: 145 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 15-10 ERA: 3.90 WHIP: 1.30 K: 185 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Dustin McGowan, Toronto | Age: 26 Size: 6'3" 220 |
| <p>FM: McGowan has some real potential but don't necessary go by his full season numbers as they are skewed due to a few poor performances early on. In the 2nd half this guy was gold with a 3.67 ERA with 89K in 97IP. McGowan will be hyped in every magazine imaginable, and we all know what happens when magazines go crazy over a player. McGowan could rank higher here but that AL East is tough and McGowan wasn't spectacular against NYY/BOS. In 24 IP, McGowan gave up 14 ER against NYY and 7 ER in 14 IP against BOS. Point is, don't be so quick to jump on the bandwagon.</p> <p>MLBFO: McGowan has outstanding potential and unlike the FM, I'm jumping right on this bandwagon. In fact, I'm projecting McGowan at a 10-15% of reaching an ERA below 3.60. For a guy you're nabbing in the 14th round, that is excellent value. The</p> | |

worst case scenario here is an ERA right at 4.00 which isn't a huge risk considering others being draft at the same time. In the 14th round, I'm licking my lips over McGowan.
2007 Stats: IP: 170 W-L: 12-10 ERA: 4.09 WHIP: 1.22 K: 144 SV: 0
2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 14-10 ERA: 3.80 WHIP: 1.20 K: 180 SV: 0

SP Dontrelle Willis, Detroit

Age: 26 Size: 6'4" 225

FM: Some people are still cursing Willis for the crap of a season he gave fantasy owners in 2007. We're all hoping the trade to Detroit will help but of course there's always an adjustment period when moving into the American League. Don't expect Willis to be amazing but expect bumps and bruises and expect him to be available in the 15th round on draft day which could turn out to be a steal. Willis is still young and has the upside and potential to be great again.

MLBFO: Willis has been on a slippery slope over the past three years. Even two years ago when his numbers looked fine, the peripherals did not. Willis' collapse was far from a surprise last year. However, the Detroit lineup playing behind him is good and perhaps a change of scenery is what he needed. I'm not putting too much money on a 3.90 ERA, but an ERA below 4.50 is to be expected. Remember, the AL is harder to pitch in than the NL, so temper your "all he needed was a new team" talk.

2007 Stats: IP: 205 W-L: 10-15 ERA: 5.17 WHIP: 1.60 K: 146 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 14-12 ERA: 3.90 WHIP: 1.30 K: 160 SV: 0

SP Joe Blanton, Oakland

Age: 27 Size: 6'3" 250

FM: Blanton is an innings eater and an overall consistent starting pitcher. You know what you're going to get with Blanton. However, Oakland is in rebuilding mode and if he's not traded he could suffer a bit in the win department. Expect much of the same this year from Blanton no matter where he pitches, which is consistent serviceability.

MLBFO: We're looking at a pretty optimistic projection giving Blanton 220 innings of 3.80 ERA ball. However, he can probably do it. He'll likely be dealt before the trade deadline at the latest. Just remember, you're not going to get a ton of strikeouts from him. That's 140 strikeouts in 230 innings.

2007 Stats: IP: 230 W-L: 14-10 ERA: 3.95 WHIP: 1.22 K: 140 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 15-10 ERA: 3.80 WHIP: 1.25 K: 140 SV: 0

SP Mark Buehrle, Chicago

Age: 29 Size: 6'2" 230

FM: Buehrle provides consistency in the WHIP department while having the opportunity to win 15+ games. The White Sox look to be a bit better this year which will certainly help Buehrle's fantasy production. He's an innings eater, super durable, and forgotten about every year on draft day. The only knock is that he lacks in the K department.

MLBFO: Buehrle pitched extremely well last year and the White Sox do look to be a tad better next year (just a wee bit). However, Buehrle hasn't exactly been the most consistent pitcher throughout his career so there is a significant amount of risk involved in this projection. We tend to project on the better side for most pitchers, so just keep in mind that this is his potential, not the be all and end all of projections.

2007 Stats: IP: 201 W-L: 10-9 ERA: 3.63 WHIP: 1.26 K: 115 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 15-10 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.25 K: 120 SV: 0

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| SP Rich Harden, Oakland | Age: 26 Size: 6'1" 190 |
| <p>FM: I normally wouldn't rank someone so brittle to high but the potential is there for greatness. Just know that greatness will probably be short-lived this year as well. I predicted last year that he'd eventually be sidelined and he was, but in keeper leagues Harden does have some value although this year I am predicting shoulder surgery a la Mark Prior. I'd pass but if he's super cheap, under \$5, why not?</p> <p>MLBFO: Harden can be extremely good if he can stay healthy...but who am I kidding, that's not going to happen. Don't draft him too high, he'll kill you with that sprinkle of greatness and then the devastating reality that he can't stay healthy.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 25 W-L: 1-2 ERA: 2.45 WHIP: 1.13 K: 27 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 90 W-L: 5-2 ERA: 3.10 WHIP: 1.20 K: 90 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Zack Greinke, Kansas City | Age: 24 Size: 6'2" 185 |
| <p>FM: Three words... Young With Potential! The thought is that the Royals originally sent Greinke out too early in his career, he got nailed, had a hard time recovering. Let's not forget that the Royals have been terrible the past few years too. Anyway, Greinke seems to be getting his career back on track and was fantastic in his limited opportunities in 2007. Look for the Royals to give Greinke a chance to start the year in the rotation and take baby steps, which could turn out to be a pretty decent season. 200 innings could easily produce close to 200 K's if he can keep his head screwed on straight.</p> <p>MLBFO: My three words are even more inspiring than the fantasy man's...Draft This Kid! Greinke was outstanding last year after returning to the rotation and before going a little wacko (yes, that's a scientific baseball term) he was a very highly touted prospect. Greinke has the potential to post 200 strikeouts with an outstanding ERA. There's obviously some risk involved in taking a player who hasn't pitched a full year in a long time (and oh yeah, he plays for the Royals), but Greinke is worth the risk in the 17th or 18th round where he's being drafted.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 122 W-L: 7-7 ERA: 3.69 WHIP: 1.30 K: 106 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 12-10 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.30 K: 190 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Kevin Slowey, Minnesota | Age: 23 Size: 6'3" 190 |
| <p>FM: I have Slowey for \$1 in two of my keeper leagues where we keep 8 or more players and in both leagues I'm keeping him. Slowey has great command and plus stuff and if Minnesota trades Johan, he'll be #2 behind Liriano with potential to be #1. It's probably more Slowey than Liriano as to why the Twins would trade Matt Garza, let Carlos Silva sign elsewhere, and want to trade Johan. Slowey is the real deal, great for WHIP help and he's available in the last 2-3 rounds of every 23 round mixed league draft. Think of Slowey as an Ian Kennedy minus the hype and the offensive support (meaning less potential wins). Pass on Kennedy and scoop Slowey up at a fraction of the cost. Slowey last year in AAA ... 10-5, 1.89ERA, 0.96WHIP, 107K, and only 18BB and 110H in 133IP (20 starts). I like the overall potential of Slowey over Dustin McGowan.</p> <p>MLBFO: Slowey has a ton of potential, but this projection might be a little high for him and I certainly don't like his potential over Dustin McGowan's. In fact, I'd expect to see an ERA around 4.00 instead of 3.70; however, this is his potential not modest projection.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 66 W-L: 4-1 ERA: 4.73 WHIP: 1.40 K: 47 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 190 W-L: 12-9 ERA: 3.70 WHIP: 1.20 K: 160 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Jon Lester, Boston | Age: 24 Size: 6'2" 190 |
| <p>FM: Comes back from Cancer, pitches a 5.2 IP shutout clincher against the Rockies in the World Series, holds off prospect Clay Buchholz and assures himself the 4th or 5th spot in the rotation in 2008. Lester is a huge sleeper with the potential once thought to be greater than Jon Papelbon's. Expect some growing pains but expect a full season of health and upside. Could turn out to be a great keeper for 2009 and available after the 18th round in most normal drafts. Need reassurance?? In 26 starts in AA '05 Lester pitched had a 2.61ERA, 163K in 148IP. In AAA '06, Lester pitched in 11 games with a 2.70ERA, 43K in 46IP before he was called up and before the cancer struck.</p> <p>MLBFO: What's not to like about Jon Lester? The only downside is that he's got uber-prospect Clay Buchholz breathing down his neck. An ERA of 3.70 is, again, on the high side. In fact, I wouldn't EXPECT anything more than a 4.10 ERA with the chance that it's closer to 4.30. If he can get it below 4.00 than that is just icing on the cake. But, you can get this guy after round 20...so don't hesitate to grab him on your way out of the draft room.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 63 W-L: 4-0 ERA: 4.57 WHIP: 1.46 K: 50 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 13-7 ERA: 3.70 WHIP: 1.25 K: 150 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Matt Garza, Tampa Bay | Age: 24 Size: 6'4" 205 |
| <p>FM: Traded to Tampa Bay in the off-season for Delmon Young and some others. Now, the question is... Did the Twins want to dump Garza or did Tampa Bay force the Twins to include Garza? I have a feeling it's the latter and with Garza's potential and youth, he could come cheap on draft day and prove to be wise investment late in the season. Of course, he'll have to deal with the Yankees and Red Sox more often than usual. I'm going to predict a few rough spots in the 1st half with the potential to shine in the 2nd half.</p> <p>MLBFO: The Devil Rays clearly love Garza and he makes a good number 3 in a rotation filled with potential. Like I mentioned earlier, once Wade Davis comes up that is going to be a great top four and there are a number of other guys to battle it out for the five spot. Either way, Garza has a ton of potential in Tampa Bay. Just don't expect a whole lot of wins from him.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 83 W-L: 5-7 ERA: 3.69 WHIP: 1.54 K: 67 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 8-10 ERA: 3.90 WHIP: 1.35 K: 160 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Clay Buchholz, Boston | Age: 23 Size: 6'3" 190 |
| <p>FM: The no-hitter was something special and the Red Sox love him despite offering him up for Johan Santana. The Red Sox will thank themselves 2-3 years down the road when Buchholz really starts to shine. Currently, Buchholz is fighting for the 5th spot with Bartolo Colon and is a great late round pick because chances are he'll be the 5th man by mid-season. He's sort of in the same situation as Ian Kennedy of the Yankees. Kennedy needs Mussina to falter or Joba to move to the 'pen while Buchholz needs Colon to falter.</p> <p>MLBFO: Buchholz has all the potential in the world and is clearly ready to succeed on the big stage in Boston.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 22 W-L: 3-1 ERA: 1.59 WHIP: 1.06 K: 22 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 12-6 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.20 K: 160 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Gil Meche, Kansas City | Age: 29 Size: 6'3" 220 |
| <p>FM: I'm not sure what kind of upside Meche has but he's serviceable with the potential to be better in each category. I think pitching for poor playing teams doesn't help either. Meche gave up no more than 3 runs in any of his last 10 starts, which is intriguing. Draft Meche for a buck or two and feel comfortable that you have a solid SP to deepen your starting staff.</p> <p>MLBFO: As the FM noted, Meche doesn't have a whole lot of upside. In fact, he has a lot more downside than upside. He played extremely well last year, but will be hard pressed to repeat it. Expect an ERA below 4.00, but above 3.70 and you won't be dissatisfied. All together, Meche is a serviceable fantasy player, but nothing special.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 216 W-L: 9-13 ERA: 3.67 WHIP: 1.30 K: 156 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 13-13 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.25 K: 160 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Shaun Marcum, Toronto | Age: 26 Size: 6'0" 180 |
| <p>FM: Marcum blasted on the scene early on and provided a stretch of quality starts during the middle of the season. He sported a sweet WHIP most of the season but eventually faded somewhat down the stretch especially when he had to face NYY/BOS in 3 of his last 4 starts. Marcum had knee surgery in late September but only needed 4-6 weeks to recover and will be ready by spring training. Expect Marcum to slightly improve in every category and steal him for \$1 while everyone else is hyped up over Dustin McGowan.</p> <p>MLBFO: Marcum doesn't have anywhere near the potential that McGowan does, but he's a good pick none the less. An ERA right around 4.00 with the potential to be higher is exactly the kind of thing Marcum is capable of producing in 2008.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 159 W-L: 12-6 ERA: 4.13 WHIP: 1.25 K: 122 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 13-9 ERA: 3.90 WHIP: 1.20 K: 140 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Jeremy Guthrie, Baltimore | Age: 29 Size: 6'1" 200 |
| <p>FM: Guthrie is another one who burst out of nowhere to post quality numbers despite a few rough starts down the stretch. I like the potential of Guthrie but he has a few things working against him. He's not huge in size, his stuff is average, and his team stinks. Guthrie will be more useful to the ERA/WHIP categories late in the draft. Snatch him up for under \$5 but he'll only contribute to two of the 5 main categories.</p> <p>MLBFO: I completely disagree with the Fantasy Man here. Guthrie is a sleeper that really isn't much of one. His peripherals were not anything near what it takes to maintain a 3.70 ERA, and a regression to a 4.00 ERA or worse is likely. You'll see the FM projection below, but keep in mind, that this is one guy I wouldn't touch.</p> <p>2007 Stats: IP: 175 W-L: 7-5 ERA: 3.70 WHIP: 1.21 K: 123 SV: 0</p> <p>2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 10-10 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.20 K: 140 SV: 0</p> | |

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| SP Bartolo Colon, Boston | Age: 34 Size: 5'11" 250 |
| <p>FM: Colon is getting up there in age and isn't what he once was. However, the guy can still throw heat and rack up K's...if only he could stay healthy. His stats the past two years are terrible, but he's been bitten by the injury bug. Draft late and bid cheaply expecting the worst but he's worth a flier just in case he can keep it together and the Sox give him a chance to start.</p> <p>MLBFO: I'd stay away from Colon. At age 34, he may only have one last chance at</p> | |

MLB success before an early retirement is forced upon him.

2007 Stats: IP: 99 W-L: 6-8 ERA: 6.34 WHIP: 1.62 K: 76 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 120 W-L: 6-4 ERA: 3.99 WHIP: 1.30 K: 90 SV: 0

SP Jon Garland, Los Angeles

Age: 28 Size: 6'6" 215

FM: Simply put....I'm not a big fan of Garland and I'll let someone else pay even though he's still young and has some upside. I just don't trust him. Garland is however worth a buck because he's the #2 or #3 starter on a team that will win the division which could notch him a few extra wins. The lack of K's last year was a killer too.

MLBFO: Not a huge fan of Garland either, but who is? He won't get you many strike outs or wins. His WHIP and ERA are just so-so. About all he offers is a large amount of innings pitched each year. There are the select few leagues where IP are worth points, but otherwise he doesn't have much value.

2007 Stats: IP: 208 W-L: 10-13 ERA: 4.23 WHIP: 1.33 K: 98 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 220 W-L: 12-10 ERA: 3.90 WHIP: 1.35 K: 120 SV: 0

SP Brian Bannister, Kansas City

Age: 27 Size: 6'2" 210

FM: He's got Mets fans wishing they had kept him. Bannister is young with upside and should provide rather surprisingly consistent stats. He won't kill you, doesn't have super plus stuff and he's not a monster but he's got finesse and intelligence. Draft as a flier and use an emergency sub or against weak teams in daily leagues.

MLBFO: Bannister pitched well for a large portion of last season. He isn't going to be great in fantasy leagues, but he won't hurt you either. Spending a late round pick on him at the end of the draft isn't going to kill you and in deeper leagues he remains a nice option.

2007 Stats: IP: 165 W-L: 12-9 ERA: 3.87 WHIP: 1.21 K: 77 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 13-8 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.20 K: 110 SV: 0

SP Daniel Cabrera, Baltimore

Age: 26 Size: 6'7" 250

FM: Is this the year? I'm not buying again. The Orioles don't plan to be good and I just can't see Cabrera overcoming his wildness just yet. The nasty stuff and the potential is there but there are other young pitchers I'd rather take a risk on.

MLBFO: Cabrera is still only 26, but as the FM noted, there's just too much risk and not enough potential reward. The stuff is great, but he just has too much to work on before he can put it all together. I'm passing this year.

2007 Stats: IP: 204 W-L: 9-18 ERA: 5.55 WHIP: 1.54 K: 166 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 12-12 ERA: 4.20 WHIP: 1.35 K: 230 SV: 0

SP Kenny Rogers, Detroit

Age: 43 Size: 6'1" 190

FM: I actually have a t-shirt I bought from a guy in the Right Field Bleachers at Yankee Stadium about 10 years ago that says "Yankee Baseball, Mets Suck, Boston Sucks, Rogers Sucks and Baltimore Blows"! Ever since Rogers was a Yankee I've never been able to trust him. Rogers does have fantasy value though. He can help with wins in particular and is a big game pitcher. Rogers is a guy you draft in the last round or two as your last SP or as a reserve. He's a guy you can put in your lineup in daily transaction

leagues if you need a win.

MLBFO: I doubt Rogers will return to a 3.60 ERA at age 43, but the upside is there. He won't give you a great WHIP or a lot of strikeouts either. However, if he can stay healthy the revamped Detroit lineup is good enough to get him a good record.

Serviceable is the key word here.

2007 Stats: IP: 63 W-L: 3-4 ERA: 4.43 WHIP: 1.42 K: 36 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 180 W-L: 14-8 ERA: 3.60 WHIP: 1.30 K: 120 SV: 0

SP Kevin Millwood, Texas

Age: 33 Size: 6'4" 230

FM: Ummmm.....I'll pass on every Rangers starting pitcher. Even though he's an ace and he's still somewhat young, I'll wait for the waiver wire. However, Millwood does have some value in the deepest of leagues as a sleeper.

MLBFO: As with the fantasy man, I'm passing on all Rangers pitchers. Especially ones not named Brandon McCarthy which means they have no upside what so ever. At age 33 Millwood is well past his best.

2007 Stats: IP: 172 W-L: 10-14 ERA: 5.16 WHIP: 1.62 K: 123 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 190 W-L: 11-13 ERA: 4.00 WHIP: 1.35 K: 130 SV: 0

SP Carlos Silva, Seattle

Age: 29 Size: 6'4" 250

FM: If we're lucky, Silva could possibly help in the ERA/WHIP categories keeping them under 4.00/1.30 and he could be an innings eater, but that's about it. Don't let the overpaid contract make you think differently.

MLBFO: Silva could be a decent injury fill in, in middle-deepness fantasy leagues. He won't help you much in any of the categories, but he won't hurt you either.

2007 Stats: IP: 202 W-L: 13-14 ERA: 4.19 WHIP: 1.31 K: 89 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 13-12 ERA: 3.90 WHIP: 1.20 K: 90 SV: 0

SP Jake Westbrook, Cleveland

Age: 30 Size: 6'3" 200

FM: Westbrook is a poor man's Derek Lowe without the K potential. Westbrook is more a waiver wire pick-up but has value for wins pitching in Cleveland.

MLBFO: Westbrook actually has the potential to be decent as he was playing injured for a good portion of those 152 IP. That being said, an ERA of 4.00 would be a great season from Westbrook so he doesn't have any value in shallow leagues.

2007 Stats: IP: 152 W-L: 6-9 ERA: 4.32 WHIP: 1.41 K: 93 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 200 W-L: 12-10 ERA: 4.00 WHIP: 1.35 K: 110 SV: 0

SP Curt Schilling, Boston

Age: 41 Size: 6'5" 235

FM: You have to be careful of age and injury but Schilling can still be effective. He doesn't have the stuff like he used to but he can still get guys out and he's still a big game pitcher. At the moment, Curt is rehabbing a torn rotator cuff and its possible he could miss half or all of this season and retire. I wouldn't draft him at all at this point.

MLBFO: Schilling has aged pretty gracefully up until this point, but past age 40 there's always a chance for that huge collapse, and this shoulder injury could be the start of it....

2007 Stats: IP: 151 W-L: 9-8 ERA: 3.87 WHIP: 1.25 K: 101 SV: 0

2008 Potential: IP: 80 W-L: 5-3 ERA: 4.00 WHIP: 1.25 K: 55 SV: 0

The Best of the Rest.....

Adam Loewen, BAL – Monster size and has potential as a power pitcher on a crappy team
Vicente Padilla, TEX – Waiver wire material
Mike Mussina, NYY – Has sleeper value, could surprise, has become a leader in the clubhouse
Tim Wakefield, BOS – Knuckle-baller is too inconsistent for my tastes
Joe Saunders, LAA – Wait for the waiver wire
Ervin Santana, LAA – Wait for the waiver wire
Andy Sonnanstine, TB – Has upside and potential, 4th starter in TB, \$1 value
Jarrod Washburn, SEA – Serviceable
Boof Bonser, MIN – Came into camp in fantastic shape
Aaron Laffey, CLE – Young and has some upside, \$1 with potential
Scott Baker, MIN – I like Baker, he's a Brian Bannister type...not overpowering but smart, has command
John Danks, CWS – Turns 23 but he's better than last years numbers as a rookie, could be a nice sleeper
Luke Hochevar, KC – Young prospect with skills, if he nabs a starting gig, draft as a flier, watch in Spring
Virgil Vazquez, DET – young, good K rate in the minors would be the 6th man as of now
Gio Gonzalez, OAK – Could win the 5th spot, led the minors in K's last season
Jose Contreras, CWS – Sometimes he's great, other times he's terrible...I can't take the inconsistency
Brandon McCarthy, TEX – Potential? Only 24, 6'7" 200lbs.....worth a flier in deep leagues
Nate Robertson, DET – Injury and ineffectiveness in '07, needs to not falter in '08 as 5th starter
Gavin Floyd, CWS – Only 25, hell of a curveball and has a rotation spot to lose
Lance Braoadway, CWS – If Floyd falters in the spring, Lance will be there to pick up the pieces
Edwin Jackson, TB – Progress made in '07 but it will be tough to hold off Howell, Hammel, & Neimann
Jeff Neimann, TB – A 6'9" monster could take that 5th spot from Jackson if ineffective
Kyle Davies, KC – Big size, still young, super duper sleeper
Kason Gabbard, TEX – I wouldn't trust a Ranger pitcher any further than I can throw him
Paul Byrd, CLE – Serviceable, won't help you but won't kill you
Jorge De La Rosa, KC – Don't expect anything spectacular, waiver wire material
Chad Gaudin, OAK – Had hip surgery in off season, not sure if he'll be ready for opening day
Dana Eveland, OAK – 24, great in the minors but once compared to one David Wells
Jesse Litsch, TOR – Pass, AL Only
Miguel Batista, SEA – Pass, AL Only
Horacio Ramirez, SEA – Pass, AL Only

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