



By Ray Flowers

CATCHER CAPSULES

Joe Mauer

The only catcher worth a top-25 pick, the only skill he lacks is a plus power bat – if we remove his 28 homer outburst in '09, Mauer has averaged 9.4 dingers in his other five full seasons. You can find your homers somewhere else and should have no problem rostering Mauer's .327 average and .407 career OBP marks. No one should be taken ahead of him at catcher, period.

Victor Martinez

The Tigers' jack of all trades should spend ample time at DH which should help to keep his bat strong. Given his per 500 at-bat career marks of 18 homers, 85 RBI, a .300 average, not to mention a .369 OBP, there would appear to be precious little downside to this switch hitter other than the fact that his new home yard is far from an offense intensive environment.

Brian McCann

The past five years McCann has more homers (107) and RBI (443) than any other backstop in the game (V-Mart is second with 86 homers and 429 RBI). Moreover, McCann is 42nd amongst all players in homers and tied with Ryan Zimmerman for 26th in RBI. When you add his .289 average to the mix, it becomes clear just how dynamic the Braves' catcher is at the dish.

Buster Posey

The NL Rookie of the Year had an impressive season, especially when you consider that he appeared in barely 100 games. Posey was the only NL catcher to hit .285 with 15 homers, and his .862 OPS was second to that of Geo Soto (.890) in the NL. There is a question about whether or not he'll hit more than 20 homers, but there is none in terms of his 2011 value – it's immense.

Geovany Soto

Soto not only had a wonderful bounce back season, he would have led all catchers in OPS if he had qualified for the batting title (Mauer led the way at .871) while his .393 OBP would have paced NL backstops (McCann - .375). There are few catchers in the game who can hit 20 homers and not sink your batting average, and the Cubs' backstop is one of them.



Carlos Santana

The AL version of Posey, Santana's season ended early with a knee injury that required surgery (he should be at full strength once the season begins). Few players have his eye at the plate – a .401 OBP and stunning 1.28 BB/K mark – which suggests that his .260 batting average of last season is the flooring of what to expect. A full season of at-bats will bring ample value in '11.

Mike Napoli

For three years Napoli has bashed his way to 20 homers despite an average of 354 at-bats a season. Few catchers can match his power. Adding the dimension of playing first base last season allowed him to post a career-high at-bat total, and one would think that if he ever was given 500 at-bats that he might be capable of posting that elusive 30 homer season.

Matt Wieters

A fantasy disappointment through two seasons, Wieters still has 20 homers and 98 RBI which when coupled with a .266 batting average don't signal failure at all. Wieters showed an increased ability to take a walk while cutting down the strike zone, and improvements like that often portend a breakout. Don't give up on this smooth swinging switch hitter just yet.

Miguel Montero

Montero wasn't quite the hitter last season that he was the year previously, but at least he put behind him worries about his knee. Montero hit just .213 against lefties last season, well below his .276 career mark, which likely explains his batting average decline. He's only had one season of fantasy relevance, but that's more than most catchers that are ranked in this guide.

Kurt Suzuki

Since he took over for Jason Kendall it's apropos that he might be taking over the title of iron man behind the plate from Kendall. Suzuki is one of only three backstops to play 130 games the past three years – Mauer and McCann – and the fact that he is in the lineup everyday greatly boosts Kurt's value in the counting categories even if he doesn't own outstanding skills.

Jorge Posada

At nearly 40 years of age, Posada simply can't handle the rigors of catching on a daily basis. That's why the Yankees plan to use Posada as their DH in 2011. Can Posada still hit? He will be a threat to 20 homers and 70 RBI – totals he has reached eight times in the same season – if he can stay healthy, but beware his declining bat speed and what that might do to his average.



Carlos Ruiz

Amongst catchers with 400 plate appearances Ruiz was fourth in average and second in OBP (two points behind Mauer). Ruiz also owns an ultra impressive 1.03 BB/K mark for his career, so while he will never be a homer threat, he gets on base and has a chance to produce a strong batting average. In the world of two starting catcher leagues, there's a lot of value here.

Yadier Molina

A batting average booster in 2007-09, Yadier fell on hard times last season posting his worst average since 2006. Despite that fact, there is reason for optimism. His walk rate was up last season leaving him with a career average BB/K mark, and his line drive rate was a career-high 21 percent. A .281 BABIP likely speaks to a bit of poor luck for the Cardinal in 2010.

Chris Iannetta

For some reason the Rockies haven't trusted this guy despite the fact that per 500 at-bats in his career that he has averaged roughly 23 homers and 83 RBI. His batting average is an eyesore, he owns a career .234 mark, but with ample power and an ability to take a walk (.353 career OBP), it's odd that he has been given more than 300 at-bats just once in his career.

John Buck

Buck used a career season to boondoggle the Marlins into giving him an absurd 3-year, \$18 million deal. Buck is really nothing more than a middling hitter with some pop, just look at his career slash line for the proof (.243/.301/.421). He'll reach double-digits in homers, he has done so in five of seven seasons, but only twice has he reached the seats more than 12 times.

Ryan Doumit

A solid hitter, Doumit has been an injury ravaged wreck most of his time in Pittsburgh. The plan is for Doumit to see time in the outfield, first, and catcher. Given that he has hit 17 homers with 67 RBI per 500 at-bats in his career, that sounds appealing, though the fact that he doesn't have a spot in the starting lineup means he'll need a trade/injury to be a viable option.

Russell Martin

Martin's value the last two years has been greatly diminished, not just because of an inexplicable loss of both power and batting average, but because of a hip condition. Martin could return to the level he displayed in 2008 if everything broke right for him, but once catchers bodies start to fail them you rarely see those players offer a renaissance at the dish.



John Jaso

Jaso walked 20 more times than he struck out last season, and guys with 1.51 BB/K mark simply shouldn't be hitting in the .260's. He doesn't have eye opening pop by any means, but his ability to get on base, coupled with the fact that he never strikes out, could make him an ideal #2 hitter if given the chance. A solid addition to any fantasy club though he lacks upside.

Yorvit Torrealba

The Rangers gave him two years and \$6.25 million to be their primary backstop the next two years. While Yorvit has never had 400 at-bats in a season, he has been a very productive hitter the past two years with nine homers, 68 RBI and a .279 average. In a good ballpark and surrounded by talented hitters, Yorvit will be a hot late round add on draft day.

Miguel Olivo

People will point out that he hit like a sickly Jason Kendall in the second half (.193-3-16), but what about turning that frown upside down and focusing on the positive? From 2006-10, Olivo is one of only two catchers to sock at least 12 long balls each season. The other is Brian McCann. Olivo isn't a superstar, but he brings a nice power bat as a strong second option.

J.P. Arencibia

When a young catcher bashes 32 homers in just 459 at-bats in Triple-A, everyone stands up and takes notice. Arencibia torched Triple-A hurlers to the tune of a .626 SLG, which for some catchers is a solid OPS. It remains to be seen if he will be given the full-time gig to start the year, but few youngsters at the position can match his potential at the dish.

Chris Snyder

A huge man that has to spend a lot of time in a chiropractors' office, Snyder can certainly blast the big flies as he has gone deep 21 times in his last 484 at-bats. He should see the majority of starts behind the dish for the Pirates, but beware of his one glaring flaw – he can't really hit. Snyder owns a .229 career average, and the last time he hit .240 was the 2007 season.

Rod Barajas

The Dodgers paid over \$3 million dollars for his power bat, and make no mistake he can power the ball with a career average of 19 homers per 500 at-bats. At the same time he really isn't a very good hitter which can be easily seen by looking at his career slash line (.239/.284/.412). He's worth an add as a power option, but his batting average could be detrimental.



Ramon Hernandez

Over his last 600 at-bats he has gone deep only 12 times, and given his age that isn't a trend anyone is happy to see. Still, Hernandez has always been a productive big league hitter when healthy, so you should feel comfortable in tabbing him as your second catcher in 2011, even though there is little chance he will return to his 2008 levels that had him as a top-15 option.

A.J. Pierzynski

A.J. got \$8 million to remain with the White Sox for two more years despite the fact that he is coming off his worst effort since 2000. He failed to reach 10 homers for the first time since 2002, had his lowest run total ever, and that OBP, never a strength, tumbled to a career low. Aging catchers rarely turn things around, so bid cautiously on the 35 year old backstop.

Nick Hundley

After losing Yorvit Torrealba to the Rangers, the Padres plan on giving Hundley a bigger piece of the pie in 2011. After back-to-back efforts that were nearly identical, Nick has clearly set a base line for his performance. With a bit more playing time, and some slight improvement, he could hit .250 with 10 homers, and that marks him as a solid end game target.

Hank Congar

It's not too often a catcher hits .300 in Triple-A, but that's what Hank was able to do last season. He also posted a terrific BB/K mark of 0.95 which speaks to his advanced approach at the plate for someone of such relative youth. Congar is also a switch hitter, something we never see from a backstop. Add that all up and his future is bright, even if he doesn't figure to be fantasy star in 2011.

Jesus Montero

Montero can hit, he batted .289 with 21 homers, 75 RBI and a .870 OPS at Triple-A last year, and it appears that he will be given a legit shot to open the year as member of the Bronx Bombers. The question really is, can he be proficient enough on the defensive side of the game to warrant starting more than 100 times in the field? There's obvious value if he can.

Ryan Hanigan

Hanigan is one of those late round grabs that can pay dividends. He isn't going to be exceedingly effective in the power departments with 10 homers and 62 RBI in 645 at-bats, but his production should be solid. His batting average sits at .279 in his career, he walks more (81) than he strikes out (63), and that likely means the floor for his average is his 2009 mark.



Ivan Rodriguez

A mere 187 hits short of 3,000, will he get there? I-Rod has at least 100 hits in 19-straight seasons, seven more than any other catcher who has ever lived, so if he can hang on for two more years he would seem to have a chance. That run at history will be fun to watch, but in terms of his fantasy outlook you realize he is a hacker with no power, right?

Josh Thole

The Mets think they have a Jason Kendall clone at the dish in Thole, a light hitting catcher who makes solid contact, rarely strikes out, and who has little pop. Thole will be leaned on as the starter for the Mets in 2011, though the club brought in Ronny Paulino to face lefties which will limit Thole's playing time to the point that he will only be a strong league specific option.

Alex Avila

Victor Martinez will spend some time wearing the tools of ignorance, but Avila figures to start the majority of games for the Tigers. The youngster was a disappointment in 2010, but his overall production through 355 career at-bats gives you a fair idea of the type of performance he is capable of (.237-12-45). More of an AL-only option than anything else.

Jonathan Lucroy

Lucroy could miss most of March with a broken pinky finger leaving Will Nieves and George Kottaras a chance to earn more work. A review of Lucroy's 2010 effort shows leave average skills pretty much across the board, and that relegates this type of skill set to nothing more than a desperation addition in the end game. It would be nice if he could rediscover the pop that led to 20 homers in A-ball in 2008.

Jarrod Saltalamacchia

Have you ever noticed that "Salty" needs to use especially small letters to fit his name on the back of his jersey? In a similar manner, with each passing year, Jarrod sees his name recognition fade with the realization that his minor league success simply hasn't translated into big league production. He's a risky play, though there is upside to be mined.

Jeff Mathis

We all know the guy can play defense, but honetly, he might be one of the worst hitters the game has seen the past 25 years. He has decent pop with 23 homers in 954 career at-bats, but he strikes out 30 percent of the time, has a pathetic 0.28 BB/K ratio, and has hit .199 in his career. Even in an AL-only league as a second catcher, there isn't much to like.



Humberto Quintero

When your career line includes a .271 OBP and a 0.17 BB/K mark you know you aren't in the game for your bat. Quintero also sports a .322 SLG, which would be a poor OBP. There is no reason on earth for anyone to call out Humberto's name in a mixed league, but in NL-only leagues he's a person of interest now that Jason Castro is hurt.

Jake Fox

Coming into 2010 with a head of steam, the wind died leaving Fox's sails without any wind to propel the ship forward. He does have a solid total of 18 homers in 428 career at-bats, but he also has nearly a strikeout per four at-bats, and with just 23 walks in his career his OBP sits at a sickly .285. He'll have to sell his soul to the devil in order to get enough work to be relevant.

Tyler Flowers

His outlook is capped unless he is dealt as the White Sox brought back A.J. Pierzynski for two more years. Flowers owns a power bat, he slugged 16 homers in just 346 at-bats in Triple-A, but he continued to also be a batting average drain (.220) and a prolific strikeout artist (121 Ks). Even in keeper leagues, his value is on the decline, so don't expect great things.

J.R. Towles

With the injury to Jason Castro, Towles may finally get a chance to see ample playing time. Towles, at one time thought to be a burgeoning fantasy star, has hit .189 in nearly 300 at-bats in the big leagues, though his minor league slash line is pretty impressive (.297/.390/.470). If he can stay healthy, he could end up being a solid option as a second catcher in NL-only leagues.

Adam Moore

The Mariners added Miguel Olivo meaning Moore will be relegated to starting once or twice a week. Given how poorly he performed with the Mariners in 2010, Moore must lean on his excellent work at Triple-A (.321 average) as his only bright spot. At this point his addition is merely a speculative play, but even then you are going to have a boatload of patience for the payoff.

Jason Varitek

Varitek will not be turning back the clock, and that means he is a poor option at the dish. He has lost plenty of bat speed, and last year his K-rate went through the roof. He will run into one every once in a while, but there just isn't anything at all to hang your hat on with Varitek. The result? Varitek is a second catcher in AL-only leagues since he could reach double-digit homers.



Brayan Pena

With Jason Kendall coming off major shoulder surgery, Pena figures to see a ton of at-bats early in the year. Pena has hit .253 in the majors, but he has shown a considerably better bat while at Triple-A (.303 and .307 the past two years). A solid option in AL-only league, Pena's value is limited in mixed leagues because of his lack of extra base pop and the imminent return of Kendall.

Max Ramirez

Ramirez, who owns a power bat, will be hard pressed to find much playing time in 2011 unless he is dealt. That's what happens when you find yourself behind a catcher of the level of Geovany Soto. Ramirez has decent power as well as a solid approach at the dish, but he'll need a change of scenery, or injury, to be a fantasy option.

Bengie Molina

One of the more consistent hitting catchers in the game from 2003-08 (14 homers and 57 RBI five of six years), Molina fell flat on his ample keester. Apparently the years of catching simply wore him down, and without the homers, his production was hideous. It can go quickly for aging catchers, and that's what happened here. Stay clear in all leagues until he signs somewhere.

Ronny Paulino

Paulino, coming off a 50-game suspension for failing a drug test, signed a 1- year deal to work behind the plate for the Mets. Paulino figures to fill a platoon role with Josh Thole, though he is on the wrong side of it (he will face lefties). If you are in a league that has daily transactions Paulino is an intriguing option give his career rates against lefties (.338/.390/.491).

Jason Kendall

Well ahead of the late June return date that was often floated after shoulder surgery, it appears possible that Kendall could be back in game action by the end of April. His return is more about the diminishing value of Brayan Pena than it is about Kendall. At this point Jason is merely a second catching option in AL-only leagues.

Jason Castro

Castro injured his knee early in camp, and it appears that the resulting surgery could keep him out of action for the entire season. Humberto Quintero will likely see a lot of time behind the dish as a result, and J.R. Towles, the erstwhile prospect, may finally be forced into a role with the Astros after years of teasing with his talent but never being able to break through.

Ray Flowers can be heard daily on Sirius/XM Radio on The Fantasy Drive, 5-8 PM Eastern, on Sirius 211 and XM 147. Ray's baseball analysis can be found at www.baseballguys.com and his minute to minute musings can be located at the <http://twitter.com/BaseballGuys> .



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FIRST BASE CAPSULES

Albert Pujols

Pujols hands out .300-30-100-100 seasons like it was candy from his pocket. The only time he failed to reach those totals was in 2007 when he scored “just” 99 runs. That 2007 season was also the only time over the past eight seasons that he failed to post a 1.000 OPS (it was .997). He is the safest player on the board, regardless of position, and an outright all-time great.

Joey Votto

The NL MVP had a wonderful season, including an impressive 16 steals to led the position. Of course, you'll draft Votto for his ability to drive the ball, which when coupled with his ability to hit for a high batting average, marks him as a unique talent. The only substantial question with Votto this season is if you draft him in the top-5 or the top-10 overall?

Mark Teixeira

After hitting .136 in April it looked as if Mark would fail for the first time. He didn't. He did fail to hit .280 for the first time since his rookie season, but still led the AL in runs scored (113), and produced his 7th straight 30 HR, 100 RBI campaign – a feat only Pujols and Arod can match. A rock solid run producer, there is no reason to avoid turning to Teixeira in 2011.

Miguel Cabrera

If not for Pujols, Cabrera would likely be considered the best right-handed hitter in baseball. Cabrera was second in baseball in OPS, was one of only two men with 38 homers and 120 RBI (Jose Bautista), and his .328 average was third in baseball. He doesn't run, but he also doesn't slump. However, Cabrera could fall out of the top-10 on draft day due to his off the field issues.

Prince Fielder

This 2010 “failure” still posted a better OBP than Paul Konerko (.401 to .393), hit more homers than Adrian Gonzalez (32 to 31), and scored more runs than Ryan Howard (94 to 87). Heck, his OPS was .014 points better than Billy Butler. You can rightfully be disappointed in his substantial drop in RBIs (down to 83), but don't fool yourself – Fielder was still an offensive dynamo even in a down season.



Adrian Gonzalez

The Red Sox newest slugger, Gonzalez will have to overcome shoulder surgery that will keep him out of action until March. No one seems to doubt that he will be at full strength by Opening Day though, and he should rake in Fenway, but with all the fervor his addition to the Sox will bring, be careful that you don't allocate too much of your resources to the lefty swinger who is coming off a long rest after that shoulder surgery.

Kevin Youkilis

The addition of Adrian Gonzalez will push Youkilis to third base full-time in 2010. On pace to post a third straight .300-25-90-90 season before injury, Kevin is one of the safest names to call out on draft day. He has patience (.390 or better OBP in five of six seasons), drives the ball (35 or more doubles from 2006-09) and he owns a career batting average of .294 for the Sox.

Adam Dunn

Someone is going to love hitting in Chicago. Long one of the better power yards in baseball, U.S. Cellular Field also has one other thing going for it – a lineup with some thump. The biggest basher will likely be Dunn who for each of the past seven seasons has hit at least 38 homers. That stretch is tied with some guy named *Babe Ruth* for 2nd all-time. That's good right?

Ryan Howard

When you have your worst season and it still results in 31 homers and 108 RBI you are a special player. Ending a four year run of 45 homers and 136 RBI – the second longest streak in baseball history with those numbers – Howard has something to prove. Players with his build often age quickly, and he's older than you think as he is already 31 years old.

Paul Konerko

The Sox signed him to a 3-year deal to team with Adam Dunn as a righty-lefty power duo. Konerko has always been a safe selection, but be careful not to overestimate his value after arguably his best season. From 2007-09 he was pretty good but there is a huge difference between a .260-27-80-68 line (three year average) and his 2010 totals (.312-39-111-89).

Billy Butler

Butler is going to have a long and successful career, but he will never be a prototypical first basemen. Simply put, he'll never hit homers, not unless he changes an approach that has resulted in a ground ball to fly ball ratio between 1.37 and 1.43 in his four big league seasons. The average is totally legit, but his 2009 power performance might be his upside at this point.



Justin Morneau

A key player at the position, Morneau's value is up in the air because of concussion woes. If he is successfully able to put those concerns behind him, there is little reason to believe he won't be able to post another 20 homer, 100 RBI season just as he did in each of his last four healthy campaigns. Don't forget that when he was felled by his head issue he was likely the AL MVP.

Kendry Morales

As long as he can avoid celebrating his homers, Morales is a bounce back candidate in 2011. A year removed from a season in which he posted a better OPS than Justin Morneau, Morales should be fully recovered right around Opening Day. If we extrapolate his pace of last season over 150 games we end up with 32 homers and 115 RBI, and that closely matches his '09 effort.

Derrek Lee

When healthy he has rarely been great but he is almost always very good. In each of his last 10 healthy seasons he has hit at least 19 homers with 70 runs and 70 RBI. Those numbers don't sound exciting, but since 2000 his total of 10 such seasons leads all first basemen. Age is catching up with him, and he never runs anymore, but he is a safe option if you don't reach.

Aubrey Huff

Huff and the *Rally Thong* helped lead the Giants to the World Series, and they'll both be back for two more years in San Francisco. One of only four first basemen to hit .290 with 25 homers, 85 RBI and 100 runs, Huff rebounded from a disastrous 2009 to post his 7th 20-homer season and his 6th season of 85 RBI. If you pay for a repeat you should be on fairly solid ground.

Adam LaRoche

Have bat, will travel is the bumper sticker on Adam's car. LaRoche has been on four teams the past two years, but through all the movement he extended his streak of 20 homer, 78 RBI seasons to six which has, surprisingly, only been matched by two other first basemen (Teixeira, Pujols). You won't do a cartwheel when you have to call his name, but the production is solid.

James Loney

Like Billy Butler, Loney is a solid run producer who is exceedingly consistent, even if he lacks ideal power for a first sacker. Still, you have to give him his due since he knocked in more runs than Aubrey Huff, Prince Fielder and Carlos Pena in 2010. Loney also adds a wee bit of value in the steals department with 24 thefts the past three years which is 4th at the position.



Lance Berkman

Berkman will see a bump in value since he will return to the outfield, but the question remains – can his body handle the move? Batting alongside Pujols and Holliday should help him be productive when on the field, though his average, OBP and SLG all dipped to 11 year lows last season. He can still get on base, and his power isn't drained, but his salad days are long gone.

Gaby Sanchez

He didn't get the publicity of rookies like Posey and Heyward, but Sanchez still had more homers and RBI than either. However, there were a few chinks in Gaby's armor such as a complete inability to hit on the road (.234/.288/.421) and his mediocre work against righties (.256/.324/.419). There may not be more power to mine at this point of his career.

Carlos Pena

Pena will look to re-establish his value with the Cubs. Pena ended '10 with four year lows in homers, RBI, runs and batting average, and that last mark is the biggest concern. Not only was he incredibly putrid in '10, he has now hit .212 the past two years and .224 the past three. That's a high price to pay for his 30 homer power, so don't reach on Pena in his first NL campaign.

Ike Davis

A very productive first season in New York was produced by this lefty with a hand-hitch. That hitch led to some serious cold spells and tons of strikeouts. Davis also failed to be anything other than average in his GB/FB and HR/F rates, which when coupled with a below average line drive rate of 16.4 percent marks him as a player who is unlikely to improve in 2011.

Daric Barton

It will likely surprise most, but Barton had the fifth best OBP of any first baseman in baseball last season. Unfortunately he also had less homers than Matt LaPorta and fewer RBI than Lyle Overbay. Barton will be useful in points leagues, and his excellent approach at the dish (211 walks, 237 Ks in his career) means that he will never be a batting average liability.

Garrett Jones

Jones cut his strikeouts in '10, but unfortunately his walk rate also fell leading to yet another poor BB/K mark of 0.43. That was the least of his concerns though as his OBP fell to toxic levels (.306). Jones also saw his 21 percent HR/F rate slashed to 11 percent, and as a result he was only able to repeat in the homer category despite a massive increase in opportunity for the Bucs (21 homers each of the last two years though he had 278 *more* at-bats in 2010).



Lyle Overbay

Overbay hit 20 homers for the second time, but his average fell to .243, the second worst mark of his career. On the plus side, he rebounded after hitting .171 in April, but unfortunately he finished the year on a down note batting .234 over his last 66 games. With no upside whatsoever, Overbay will be leaned on by the Pirates only for his veteran presence.

Freddie Freeman

The future is now for this slugger. Freeman hit nearly .320 with 18 homers and a .898 OPS in 124 games at Triple-A before heading to the AFL. Unfortunately he suffered a thumb injury that limited him to 16 at-bats, but the good news is that he should be 100 percent by spring training. The Braves will hand him the keys to their first base job. Will the engine turn over?

Matt LaPorta

Thought to be a difference maker in the eyes of scouts and front office types, LaPorta has produced 19 homers, 62 RBI and 70 runs in 557 career at-bats, though his average is a mere .232. LaPorta simply has not been able to find any type of groove at the dish, has struggled to hit the ball on the screws, and he might already be at the end of his leash in Cleveland.

Mitch Moreland

The Rangers third choice at first base last year, Mitch didn't exactly tear it up with the big league club after hitting .289 with 12 homers and 65 RBI in 95 games at Triple-A. As with many youngsters his K-rate shot up in the majors, and whiffing once every four at-bats isn't at all good. Given his faults, including a lack of pop, he isn't very enticing in mixed leagues.

Justin Smoak

2010 didn't turn out as expected for the 2008 first round draft pick. He certainly isn't in a good park to produce prodigious offensive numbers, but at the same time he is simply too accomplished a swinger to expect such another dreadful campaign. Smoak hit a lot of liners last year, 23 percent of his batted balls, and there is no way that should have led to a .218 average.

Todd Helton

One of the more productive hitters of the last 15 years, Helton is but a shadow of his former self. Back woes have sapped his power and his ability to play on a daily basis, and the resulting offense from the lefty marks him as an option only in NL-only leagues or those that count categories such as OBP. Mixed leaguers should pass right on by and keep shopping.



Ty Wigginton

The Rockies gave Ty a 2-year deal for \$7.5 million, seemingly admitting that Todd Helton will have a hard time playing everyday. Ty has hit at least 22 homers in four of the past five seasons, and he had hit at least .273 the previous four seasons before last years debacle. With a swing made for Coors and with positional flexibility, Wigginton is a nice end game grab.

Russell Branyan

Here is what we know about Branyan. (1) His back is a continual concern. (2) When on the field he will blast homers with the best of them. In fact, amongst players who have 3,000 career plate appearances, Branyan is 15th in baseball history with a HR/PA mark of 5.81. (3) He will sink your batting average with a career mark of .234 thanks to one strikeout every 2.61 at-bats.

Brandon Belt

Belt could open the year as the Giants starter in left field or at first base, or he could spend half the year in the minors. What is known is that Belt is a good athlete that can handle each position, and Belt's lanky frame led to a massive 2010 season that saw him hit .352 with 23 homers, 112 RBI and a 1.075 OPS. He could, could, be this year's Gaby Sanchez.

Kila Ka'aihue

Exhibit 2,878 of why the Royals have no idea what they are doing. Kila owns a .387 minor league on base percentage, and last season in just 94 games at Triple-A he hit .319 with 24 homers, 78 RBI and a 1.061 OPS. So of course the Royals aren't convinced he will be part of their everyday lineup in 2011. Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.

Dan Johnson

Johnson had 25 homers and 83 RBI in 113 Triple-A games in '08, but with no starting role in the majors he went to Japan in 2009. Back in the States in 2010, Johnson annihilated Triple-A pitchers hitting .303 with 30 homers, 95 RBI and a 1.054 OPS in just 98 games. He'll have to fight for a significant role, but he appears likely to be given a chance to start with the Rays.



Leslie Anderson

Progressing rapidly through the minors, Anderson went from High-A, to Double-A to Triple-A all in one fell swoop. Overall he appeared in 99 games hitting .302 with 11 homers and 49 RBI. His walk to strikeout rate of 0.50 about matches the big league average, and is an encouraging number for a first time player in North American professional baseball.

Xavier Nady

Never healthy in 2010 as he worked his way back from yet another Tommy John surgery, Nady offered little of the pop he flashed in 2007-08 when hit hit a homer every 21.9 at-bats (he went deep once every 58 at-bats in '10). With what appears to be a path to playing time with the D'backs, but little in the way of performance since 2008, Nady is only a speculative investment.

Chris Davis

Davis has as much power as any hitter in baseball, it's just that making contact is always an issue. In a career of 806 at-bats he has struck out once every 2.90 at-bats leading to a .248 average. However, he has still powered 39 balls into the seats. If Carlos Pena can find full-time work, it's pretty surprising that no one seems willing to give the younger Davis 500 at-bats.

Mike Carp

A ninth round selection in 2004, Carps advanced to Triple-A in 2009. He had a solid year with 15 homers and 64 RBI, but he took his game up a notch in 2010 with 29 bombs and 76 RBI in 110 games at Tacoma. His 2010 outlook will obviously be determined by his ability to make it out onto the field on a consistent basis, but when out there he could provide plenty of pop.

Brett Wallace

Most think he can hit, but there are still a plethora of doubters about his ability to play any position other than DH. Alas, the Astros will likely have to push aging and somewhat decrepit outfielder Carlos Lee to first which may leave Wallace out of the daily lineup. Wallace has hit over .300 in the minors, but his path to everyday playing time might be blocked – again.

Juan Miranda

Miranda has spent the past three years at Triple-A producing a solid batting average (between .285 and .290) and little power for a first baseman (an average of 15 homers a season). Already nearing 28 years of age, it might be now or never for this Cuban born slugger who does own a rather impressive slash line at Triple-A (.287/.374/.481), minus ideal pop.



Mark Trumbo

A power bat of note, Trumbo blasted his way to one of the best seasons in minor league baseball last season as he hit .301 with 36 homers and 122 RBI in 139 games at Triple-A. If Kendry Morales is fully healthy as expected Trumbo will almost certainly begin the year in the minors, but if the Angels need a boost in-season, Mark could be the first to get the call.

Travis Ishikawa

A part timer with a good glove, Ishikawa has produced a decent career batting line of .265-15-80-80-3 in 603 at-bats. However, he continues to be completely lost against lefties (career .534 OPS), and with his success as a pinch hitter (.319 in 47 at-bats), he might find himself typecast as a utility corner infielder who is good in a pinch hitting role despite his relative youth.

Mark Kotsay

At this point the best thing we can say about Kotsay is that he has a super hot wife. The former college star never reached the heights predicted for him, and his last truly worthy fantasy season was 2005. He is nothing more than a fill-in in league specific option when your starters are injured or unavailable. Still though, have you seen his wife? He's one lucky dude.

Mike Jacobs

Was it just three years ago that he went deep 32 times and the Royals foolishly lavished millions of dollars on him? Since that point he has gone deep 20 times while hitting .227 over 458 at-bats. Given the fact that he also struck out 30 percent of the time you basically have Russell Branyan Jr., though Jacobs is without any discernible role for 2011.

Jason Giambi

At this point, the only real thing that Giambi has going for him is his sweet mustache. OK, he'll pop the odd long ball, and he still walks an awful lot, but he has lost bat speed, his body can't stand up to the daily grind of being on the field, and he'll never again be a starting player. Giambi last hit .255 in 2005 and there is no reason to expect that trend to reverse itself.

Steve Pearce

At one time a prime prospect, Pearce will be 28 years old in April and it would take a rather amazing turn of events for him to ever reach the heights that were once predicted. His minor league totals are impressive including a .292/.367/.519 line and a homer every 22 at-bats, but he simply hasn't ever been able to find any traction at the big league level.



Eric Hosmer

The Royals plan is for this prospect, some would call him the best in baseball at the position, to spend most of the year at Triple-A. Hosmer blasted his way to an impressive .338/.406/.571 slash line at two stops last season, but with only 195 at-bats at Double-A Hosmer is really only a keeper league option in 2011. What a luminous future this Royals' prospect has though.

Casey Kotchman

When the topic of worst offensive performance by a first baseman in the 21st century is brought up, Kotchman's 2010 season is at the top of the list. How Kotchman convinced the Mariners to give him more than 400 at-bats with an OPS that was less than Erick Aybar is simply befuddling. Seriously – Kotchman set back hitting about nine decades in 2010.

Garrett Atkins

Over the past two seasons Atkins has hit 10 homers with 57 RBI and a .223 average in 494 at-bats, a far cry from the guy who hit at least 21 homers with 99 RBI each season from 2006-08. Leaving Colorado certainly didn't help, he owns a career .252/.322/.406 line in 417 road games, but the depths that he has fallen to the past two years are nearly unfathomable.

Mike Sweeney

A wonderful clubhouse presence, Sweeney's value is for what he brings to the club off the field, not on it. Even if injuries decimated his team, there is virtually no chance that he would be given a shot at regular at-bats despite the fact that he owns a career .297 average. You want your kid to emulate his lifestyle, but you don't want Sweeney on your fantasy team.

Robb Quinlan

Beloved by the fans and front office in Anaheim, Quinlan doesn't own the skill set to be even an effective option in single leagues. He has little speed or power with only 10 thefts and six homers the past four years, and after last seasons disappearing act how could you possibly even consider rostering him? We're sorry we wasted 10 seconds of your life with this capsule.

Jeff Clement

No longer considered a catcher, Clement's star has fallen as fast as that of Britney Spears. Clement is at the point where his career hangs in the balance as he went from being the Pirates primary first baseman to being banished to the minors in '10. He underwent knee surgery in September that might sideline him into March leaving his 2011 outlook severely muted.



Jeff Larish

Larish slugged his way to 15 homers, 55 RBI and a .497 SLG in 84 games at Triple-A last season after he came over from the Tigers. Out-righted in late October by the Athletics, Larish signed a minor league contract with the Phillies in November. With Ryan Howard in the bigs, the Phils signed him merely for organizational depth. There is nothing to see here.

Ross Gload

If you watch Gload take batting practice you would swear you were looking at an all-star. However, hitting 65 mph fastballs from a 50 year old coach is different from hitting 95 mph fastballs from 25 year olds. Gload does own a surprisingly strong .283 career batting average, but the only way he plays every day is if half his team picks up the Ebola virus.

Anthony Rizzo

One of the centerpieces of the Adrian Gonzalez deal, Rizzo hit 25 bombs with 100 RBI and 10 steals at two minor league stops. He struck out a lot with 132 punchouts in 531 at-bats, but he is young, strong and athletic. It's not like the Padres are stocked with first baseman, but the prudent move would be to keep an eye on Rizzo as he could be a mid-season call up.

Chris Marrero

Marrero had a solid season at Harrisburg in Double-A hitting .294 with 18 homers and 82 RBI. A former first round draft pick, Marrero might be the long-term answer at first base for the Nationals thanks to his raw power, but that doesn't mean you should be counting on seeing him in the big leagues until at least the second half of the season.

Brandon Snyder

Snyder wasn't exactly impressive last season hitting just .256 with 10 homers and 47 RBI in 101 games. As worrisome when it comes to his short-term prospects is that he had more Ks (103) than games played, and with just 28 walks it is clear he has a long way to go in terms of his plate discipline. It would be surprising if he offered anything of note this season.

Matt Rizzotti

One of the hitting starts of the Arizona Fall League, Rizzotti posted a .500 OBP over 19 games. While that number certainly isn't sustainable, Rizzotti showed a wonderful eye all year with a .430 mark over 125 regular season games. That number is hardly surprising given that he hit a robust .343 on the year. There's only one problem – he's stuck behind Ryan Howard.



Jerry Sands

Sands started last year at Single-A, but after mashing his way to a .333-18-46 line in 69 games, he moved up to Double-A where he was slightly less successful (.270-17-47 in 68 games). He then moved on to the AFL where he posted a .904 OPS in 24 games with only three more strikeouts than walks. If he keeps it going at Triple-A he could be a mid-season call up.

Troy Glaus

When healthy in the first half last season Glaus hit .254 with 14 homers. When the injuries piled up in the second half he hit a mere .205 with two homers. At this point of his career he is basically the Chipper Jones of first basemen. Glaus hasn't yet signed with a team and it appears that he might end up sitting out the 2011 season, so be very careful in calling out his name.

Lars Anderson

Seemingly a prospect forever, Anderson is looking for a way to convince his employers that he deserves a shot at regular playing time in the bigs. After hitting .355 over 62 at-bats in Triple-A he received a late season call up, only to predictably fail to make a mark. He strikes out too much, isn't very patient, and just can't seem to hit the ball deep with enough regularity.

Fernando Tatis

Tatis once hit not one but two grand slams off of Chan Ho Park. The date was April 23rd, 1999, and Tatis actually hit both salami's in the same inning. We bring that up because, Tatis was only able to match that homer total while falling two RBI short of that one inning of performance in his entire 2010 season. Don't spend a moments time with this option.

Ray Flowers can be heard daily on Sirius/XM Radio on The Fantasy Drive, 5-8 PM Eastern, on Sirius 211 and XM 147. Ray's baseball analysis can be found at www.baseballguys.com and his minute to minute musings can be located at the <http://twitter.com/BaseballGuys>.



By Ray Flowers

SECOND BASE CAPSULES

Robinson Cano

A wonderful hitter who owns a .309 career average, Cano has taken his game to new heights the past two seasons with his new found power. It's also encouraging that he posted the best walk rate of his career last season which helped him to a career best OBP (.381). Cano is rock solid and should have no problem repeating his efforts of the past two years. If only he stole bases.

Dustin Pedroia

Pedroia's foot should be 100 percent by the time games count. Lest you forget how good he was in 2008-09, try this on for size: DP is one of only four players in the history of the game to have back-to-back seasons of .295-15-70-115-20. Think about that for a moment. Add into the mixer that he plays second base and you shouldn't be shocked when he goes off the board early.

Brandon Phillips

Even in a down year he was just a couple of homers and four steals from a 4th straight 20/20 season. Moreover, Phillips has averaged 21 homers and 24 steals in his five seasons with the Reds. His batting average is rarely impressive, he owns a .267 career mark, but his ability to produce homers and steals is unparalleled at the position the past five seasons.

Dan Uggla

The right handed power bat the Braves needed, Uggla is working on an amazing run as the *only* second baseman in history with 5-straight years of 27 homers, 85 RBI and 80 runs. For some reason he hasn't gotten his respect in the fantasy game be it because he has 19 career thefts or the fact that he owns a .263 career average, though that is odd considering his power bat.

Chase Utley

Utley's season was truncated last year because of injury, but in all five of his career seasons of 130 games played he has hit 22 homers with 93 RBI, 93 runs and a .282 batting average. In fact, per 162 games in his career he has average 29-105-109 and 15 steals. With the uncertainty surround his knee this season, drafting him early is a definite risk so tread carefully.



Ian Kinsler

Per 162 games in his career Kinsler has produced a 5x5 effort of .281-24-83-115-28, a simply monstrous line. However, as we all know, the cat can rarely stay healthy long enough to reach those numbers. Still, the talent is undeniable, and when everything comes together you have a top-20 overall performer (see 2009). Kinsler is a risky gamble that could go either way.

Rickie Weeks

Could Weeks repeat or improve upon his '10 performance? He is certainly talented enough to do that. At the same time he has averaged 106 games played the past six seasons – that's only two-thirds of a season folks. Keep in mind he has a career .253 average and has only one season of more than 16 homers or 46 RBI when deciding how much to bid on his talent.

Howie Kendrick

Continually held back by injury like Rickie Weeks, Kendrick, like Weeks, was healthy in 2010. However, unlike Weeks, he didn't explode as many expected he would. Howie did reach career bests in runs (67), RBI (75) and steals (14), but his batting average fell to a career worst .279. Kendrick has yet to meet a pitch he didn't think he could hit, but he does own a .295 career batting average.

Aaron Hill

The worst performer in baseball in BABIP and line drive rate, Hill could have been the unluckiest hitter in baseball over the past decade. Still, he powered more homers than any AL second baseman not named Robinson Cano, and he was only two RBI from being one of five full-time second basemen with 70 runs and RBI. Don't be scared away by his low average.

Martin Prado

Slated to see time in the outfield this season, Prado was a difference maker last season. A potential multi-position star in 2011 with his soon to be added outfield flexibility, Prado owns a .307 average in nearly 1,400 at-bats. Will the power improve? Not likely, meaning his value would drop significantly if your league rules will limit him, positionally, to wherever spot he plays in the 2011 season.

Chone Figgins

2010 was far from his best effort, but Figgins still swiped more than 30 for the seventh straight year, a streak only Juan Pierre can match. The addition of Brendan Ryan will likely push Figgins back to third base, further enhancing his fantasy value. Even in Safeco, Figgins should see his batting average rebound if his line drive rate returns to his career level.



Kelly Johnson

Johnson blew up last season as the *only* full-time second baseman in the game to hit .280 with 25 homers, 70 RBI, 90 runs and 10 steals. At the same time he added 50 percent to his HR/F ratio, that won't continue, and he also posted the worst K-rate of his last four seasons. Don't pay for a 100 percent repeat, but he'll still be a solid across the board contributor regardless.

Gordon Beckham

A tale of two halves. Gordon hit .216 with three homers in the first half and .310 with six homers in the second. Beckham does own a great opposite field stroke, but he has also been prone to long stretches of ineffectiveness. Moreover, the majority of his career rates suggest solid but not elite level skills, so be careful to avoid a bidding war on draft day.

Brian Roberts

He says he is healthy – finally. Beset by a myriad of physical maladies, Roberts went from being a top-5 second baseman for the past five years to fantasy anonymity. Through it all he still had a respectable average (.278) and even stole a fair amount of bags (12 in 59 games). He is a risk to rebound fully, but Roberts would be an excellent gamble if the price is reasonable.

Alexi Casilla

A one time 50 theft man in the minors, Casilla has only 35 steals in his Twins' career. If he started running like that again his value would obviously skyrocket. Of bigger concern is his inability to convince the Twins that he deserves to be an everyday player. There is talent locked up in this mans body, but will they be able to flower in Minnesota with J.J. Hardy out of the way?

Mike Aviles

Few seem willing to give this guy his due. Not only does he own a .298 career average, in his two healthy seasons he has hit better than .300. Do you know how many .300 seasons that Chase Utley has? Try two. Aviles seems capable of going 10/10 as well, and though his run producing is suspect, only nine players hit .300 with 10 homers and 10 steals in 2010.

Ryan Theriot

Were you aware that Theriot is one of only 10 men in baseball who have stolen 20 or more bases each of the past four years? Or how about the fact that he owns a .284 career average which is one point better than Brian Roberts? If Ryan can find his way to the top of the Cardinals lineup he should extend his 70-run streak to five seasons as well.



Tyoshi Nishioka

The Twins signed this shortstop, who will likely be asked to play second base, to a three year deal. The PCL leader with a .346 batting average last season, there are debates amongst talent evaluators as to what to expect from the Japanese import. Tyoshi had a BABIP mark over .400 last season (which is unsustainable), and does the old Ichiro half running swing thing.

Danny Espinosa

The leading candidate to play second for the Nationals, Espinosa had surgery on the hamate bone in his right wrist at the end of November after hurting the hand in winter ball. He is expected to be full recovered by the start of the year, but it certainly throws the proverbial wrench into the monkey works. His leather is flashy, but his bat lags a bit behind.

Sean Rodriguez

Likely to take on a bigger role this season, Rodriguez had a solid first year in Tampa. He'll need to keep his strikeout rate in check if he wants to improve his average, and though his GB/FB ratio (1.06) and HR/F rate (9.7) were pretty much league average it signals that he might be an Aaron Hill type performer if given 500+ plate appearances in 2011.

Neil Walker

Walker had a wonderful rookie campaign in which he hit more homers than Ben Zobrist, knocked in more runs than Chase Utley and scored more times than Dustin Pedroia. Of course that isn't really fair since Utley and Pedroia were hurt, but it does underscore that Walker had a pretty successful season. A repeat might be a bit tough as that BABIP was pretty darn high (.340).

Mark Ellis

Ellis will be the A's starter for one more year at least after his \$6 million option was picked up. Though he failed to hit 10 homers for the first time since 2003, he did post the second best average of his career after hitting .405 over his last 31 games. A solid, cheap source of production, Ellis is the rare second baseman capable of going 10/10.

Omar Infante

The Marlins bought into his all-star performance, will you? Somehow he produced the best BABIP of his career, some .042 points above his career average, despite a five year low in his line drive rate. He also somehow upped his ground ball rate by 10 percent to post a GB/FB rate that exceeded his career mark by about 50 percent. A repeat seems highly unlikely.



Reid Brignac

Slated for an everyday job with Jason Bartlett out of town, Brignac will get a chance to reward the Rays faith in him. He does enough to be of interest with an every day role, though he would appear to be more of a replacement level type of guy versus someone who could lead a fantasy team to a championship. Don't reach for him, but he's a solid AL-only option.

Bill Hall

The Astros plan on making Hall their everyday second baseman, and they need his power in their lineup. At the same time, his pop comes with a price as he has hit just .225 over the past three years while striking out 32 percent of the time. For goodness sakes, he hasn't had a league average OBP since 2006. Hall and Clint Barmes, what a great up the middle duo Astros.

Blake DeWitt

A solid minor league performer, DeWitt has shown that talent in spurts in the bigs. However, he has also had long periods of poor performance, such as hitting .250 with a .314 OBP with the Cubs last season in 184 at-bats. DeWitt offers minimal upside and isn't a sexy selection as time is growing short for him to prove that he is anything more than a spare part.

Skip Schumaker

After hitting over .300 two years in a row Skip slumped in 2010. It's not like there aren't positive signs though as he hit .278 after the break and actually bettered his career line drive rate while holding steady in the GB/FB category. In fact, the majority of his hitting line was identical to what he did in 2008-09, so a rebound seems entirely possible.

Freddy Sanchez

Just like Orlando Hudson, Sanchez offers no upside despite some solid work at the plate. Also like Hudson, Sanchez has been in and out of the lineup with injury of late, further diminishing his meager fantasy value. Sanchez is best left on waivers and should only be added if you are in need of a league specific option or if your regular second sacker is injured.

Orlando Hudson

Have glove, will travel. One of the most well liked players in the game, the simple truth is that O-Dog isn't a good fantasy option. He hasn't hit 10 homers since 2007, has never knocked in 70 runs and has averaged a mere eight steals the past eight years. He does own a solid .280 batting average, but this guy is the poster boy for a replacement level player.



Dustin Ackley

Ackley might be ready to vie for the AL Rookie of the Year after a wonderful end to the season where he was named the Arizona Fall League MVP. Though still a work in progress on defense, Ackley barely strikeout more than he walked last season, and he was encouraged by the Mariners to be more aggressive on the base paths – which could be a key to his fantasy success.

Jeff Keppinger

His greatest asset is that he won't sink your batting average. Keppinger owns a league average line drive rate and BABIP mark, thanks in no small part to a supremely impressive BB/K mark of 1.21 (the big league average is about 0.50). Even so, Keppinger is miscast as an everyday player and his 2010 season will likely go down as a career best effort.

Clint Barmes

The king of cannibalizing at-bats to make you think he is better than he really is, the fact is that Barmes is only a useful fantasy weapon if he is playing everyday. Luckily the Astros appear foolish enough to go that route. In his career Barmes owns a career .254/.300/.404 batting line which just so happens to trail the average major league hitter in that time (.267/.339/.427).

Will Rhymes

A 27th round draft pick in 2005 out of William and Mary College, Will has hit .289 during his minor league career, albeit with scant power (.under .375 SLG). He does possess 20+ steal ability and he does an excellent job of making contact at the dish. Still, he is Luis Castillo with even less stolen base potential, and that isn't very exciting.

Scott Sizemore

Everyone's fantasy darling at this point last year, Sizemore tanked quicker than Lindsey Lohan's career. To his credit, Scott had a lot of success at Triple-A after the demotion, and in fact his numbers at that level the last two years are intriguing (.303-17-70-98 in 591 ABs). He'll be given another chance to prove he is ready for prime time in Spring Training.

Ruben Tejada

A youngster with a bright future, it would be a minor miracle if Tejada played a significant role in 2011. Simply put, he needs more seasoning in the minors, a fact drive home by his pathetic effort with the Mets last season. Honestly, when a guy has an OBP that is higher than his SLG you know just about all you need to about where he is in his development.



Jason Kipnis

Kipnis had a strong campaign hitting .307 with 17 homers, 74 RBI and 96 runs at High-A and Double-A. Those numbers aren't surprising given that he hit .378 his last two seasons at Arizona State. Kipnis says that *Superbad* is his favorite movie, and that his favorite athlete in Bears' linebacker Brian Urlacher. Oh, Kipnis just might be the top second base prospect in the game.

Carlos Guillen

A solid hitter when on the field, Guillen is coming back from microfracture surgery on his knee. Everyone is putting on a bright face in Detroit and suggesting he could open the year as the starter at second base, but that seems questionable at best. If you can buy at enough of a discount this investment could pay off, but it could also leave you holding nothing but air.

Jerry Hairston Jr.

The little fella is coming off the best run producing season of his career at the dish, but the numbers are still uninspiring. He's never been much of a hitter really, instead relying on his versatility to maintain his role with a club. He has only one double-digit theft season since 2004, and with that his value is limited to league specific scenarios.

Chris Getz

Speed – it's his calling card. Getz swiped 15 bases in part time work last season, and his total of 40 thefts the past two years places him fourth, yes fourth, at the position. However, he doesn't own a major league batting average (career .252) or OBP (career .315), and don't fool yourself into thinking he has any idea whatsoever about how to drive the ball (two career homers).

Luis Castillo

A 3-time 45 steal man, Castillo has stolen 45 bases the past three years. As players age, we expect a regression in steals. Unfortunately for Luis, he has been a liability in batting average in two of the last three seasons as well, an odd trend for a career .290 hitter. You shouldn't pay for anything other than what Castillo offered last year – there just isn't anything left.

Cristian Guzman

At one point he was a stolen base threat, but at this stage of his career Cristian is a one-trick pony who only helps out in the batting average category. Alas, that skill eluded him a bit in 2010 as he missed his career mark by .005 points. He does a good job keeping the ball on the ground, but you have to be concerned about a slowing bat given an 11-year worst K-rate.



Luis Valbuena

After a lost '10 season that saw him open the year as the starter at second, Valbuena went to the Venezuelan Winter League where he bombed. Luis isn't likely to see more work than he did last season, and why would he be given his career slash line (.227/.289/.348)? Luis is likely to be one of those players who sticks around for a long but never has any true fantasy value.

Ronnie Belliard

Last year was the first time since 2003 that Belliard failed to reach 10 homers. It was also the first time that he failed to hit .275 since 2002. His average figures to rebound, his BABIP was an eight year low despite a better than average line drive rate of 20.2 percent, and so should the power given that his HR/F rate was only 50 percent of his career mark.

Adam Kennedy

Returning from anonymity to reclaim fantasy relevance in 2009, Adam once again receded into unimportance. As long as he is given work he will be able to swipe some bases, but he offers little power and that funky swing of his can sometimes lead to prolonged slumps. At his age he will find it harder with each passing year to convince his manager that he is worthy of at-bats.

Adam Rosales

You gotta love his hustle. Rosales, whose home run trot can legitimately be called a home run sprint, missed the last month of the season because of a stress fracture in his ankle. Rosales will have to get by on his spunk because his skills aren't outstanding. The Athletics have made a lot of changes to their roster this offseason. Where does Rosales fit in the new mix?

Mike Fontenot

Though he played a minor role with the World Champs, Fontenot is no idiot so he signed a 1-year deal to remain in San Francisco. He'll be asked to fill a utility role, and with that even approaching his 2008-09 numbers isn't likely. He's always had trouble hitting lefties (.622 OPS), but when his coaches call his name against righties he isn't all that bad (.767 OPS).

Jonathan Herrera

Herrera bested his career minor league average by a few points last season as he was a vital member of the Rockies infield when Troy Tulowitzki was out of action. Though he has shown ample speed in the minors, Jonathan hasn't been able to translate that skill to the majors, and given his skill set at the plate it's really the only way he will have any fantasy value.



Scott Moore

A first round selection in 2002, Moore has struggled to make his way in the big league. He's spent time at Triple-A in each of the last five seasons, and the window for him to make an impact is closing quickly. Moore actually had a nice power campaign last year with 11 homers and 45 RBI in 61 games, but that won't change most people's minds about his outlook.

Brett Lawrie

A youngster who swiped 30 bases last season, Lawrie – not Lowrie – hit .285 in a full season of work in Double-A last season. This Canadian born second sacker was taken 16th overall in 2008, and he is considered to be a hard worker who is a bit a free spirit. His physique hints that he might lose speed and gain power as he ages, and he needs some polish at the dish.

Eric Sogard

A second round draft pick in 2008, Sogard was sent to the Athletics in the Kevin Kouzmanoff deal. Sogard had a strong Triple-A campaign hitting .300 with 65 RBI, 82 runs and 14 steals while scoring 82 runs, but his path to the big leagues is blocked by Mark Ellis who the A's decided was worthy of being their starter for one more year picking up his \$6 million option.

Brad Emaus

The Mets have a plethora of second base options, so counting heavily on any of them is likely a mistake. As for Emaus, he'll be 25 in March and is coming off a nice minor league campaign that saw him hit .290 while reaching double-digits in homers and steals. There is a chance he will secure the full-time job, but he could just as easily recede into the woodwork.

Adrian Cardenas

A first round selection in 2006 after being named *Baseball America's High School Player of the Year*, Cardenas was traded to the Athletics in the Joe Blanton deal in 2008. He has hit an even .300 in more than 500 minor league games, and his BB/K mark is solid at 0.71. He'll steal an odd base, and does have a nice bat, but his power is reminiscent of what you expect from a 2B.

Chris Valaika

A versatile option who has played second, short and third, Valaika might even be able to play the outfield in a pinch. A third round selection in 2006, Valaika hit only .235 in 2009 at Triple-A, but he rebounded strongly in 2010 hitting .304 for Triple-A Louisville. Valaika doesn't have any power, he doesn't steal bases, and he strikeouts out too much.



Alberto Gonzalez

The Nationals are still holding out hope that Gonzalez will be able to offer something of significance. Consider that hope unlikely to be fulfilled. Gonzalez isn't an effective hitter as he lacks the ability to produce power, to drive the ball or to get on base,. That's pretty much the whole ball game. He's only and option if he's playing everyday, and that isn't going to happen.

Matt Tolbert

Tolbert is a useful player for an organization to have. He doesn't own any outstanding skills, but he does the “little things” well, and that means a lot when you are with the Twins organization. He'll have a tough time accruing at-bats if Tsuyoshi Nishioka and Alexi Casilla perform as expected, but the Twins always find a way to get their backup infielders some playing time.

Brent Lillibridge

This kid just hasn't lived up to expectations. He's only been given 273 at-bats in three seasons, but why would he get more work than that when he has a slash line of .194/.254/.297? He has stolen 13 bases, and he does have an ability to be a weapon there, but simply put – he just can't hit, a position buttressed by his career minor league average which isn't even .270.

John McDonald

John has a solid glove, and that is why he has played 800 games in the majors. You might notice that he is coming off career bests of six homers and a .454 SLG, but don't be fooled. McDonald had 13 homers in his first 1,713 at-bats, and his career SLG is .328. You would be better off calling out the name of *Tony Fernandez* – and he retired in 2002.

Aaron Miles

Miles, who reminds some of Mighty Mouse, returned to the level of the living last season after a disastrous 2009 campaign. Miles has hit at least .280 in five of seven seasons, and he always seems to work his way into the lineup more than you would expect. Even so, he is nothing more than a spare part and not someone whose name should be called out.

Augie Ojeda

Ojeda is the inspirational hope for every 30 year old guy who thinks he can still be a professional player. He's small and doesn't do anything that stands out, but he comes from the Pete Rose school of thought that no matter what you are doing you do it at 100 percent. Still, you are better off taking a chance on a minor league youngster than Ojeda.



Alex Cora

He can't possibly convince his manager that he deserves 300 at-bats can he? Probably not since the last time he had that many at-bats it was 2004. He must be a great locker room guy because Cora has hit eight homers the past six years, and he has hit better than .270 just once in his career. Alex Cora is short for – don't draft. Wait, that's one extra letter isn't it?

Julio Lugo

At one point he was a borderline fantasy star (he hit .295 with 89 runs and 39 steals in 2005). Those days are long gone. Lugo would be wise to have his travel agent on speed-dial given that he has been with five teams the past five years. Lugo is best served as a veteran influence on a team looking for leadership. That's not the kind of guy you need on your fantasy team.

Ray Flowers can be heard daily on Sirius/XM Radio on The Fantasy Drive, 5-8 PM Eastern, on Sirius 211 and XM 147. Ray's baseball analysis can be found at www.baseballguys.com and his minute to minute musings can be located at the <http://twitter.com/BaseballGuys> .



By Ray Flowers

THIRD BASE CAPSULES

Evan Longoria

With just three seasons under his belt, Longoria has proven to be a top-3 fantasy third baseman – at worst. He's also improved his average, OBP, hit total, double mark and steal total in each of the last two seasons. A streaky player who loves to play at home (.324/.403/.527 in his career), Longoria could easily end up as the most productive third sacker in baseball in 2011.

David Wright

After four wonderful seasons, Wright laid a rancid egg in '09. He got right back on the horse in '10 producing a season right in line with his previous efforts. So to review, Wright has hit at least .283 with 26 homers, 102 RBI, 87 RBI and 15 steals in five of the last six years. By the way, his five years of .283-26-102-87-15 are tied for most by a third basemen in history.

Alex Rodriguez

Arod has produced 13-straight seasons of 30 homers and 100 RBI, the most in baseball history. However, after 13-straight years of 100 runs he has been held to less than 80 twice in a row, and his total of four steals last season was a career low. At this point the power numbers are still locked in, but his 5x5 dominance is clearly on the wane as he enters his mid 30's.

Ryan Zimmerman

Ryan was the only third baseman in the game who hit .300 with 25 homers, 85 RBI and 85 runs, even though he missed the end of the year with injury. He may not have the cache of the other top options at the position, but his batting average has been on the upswing the past three years, as has his OBP. There is no reason to think Ryan is anything other than an elite option.

Aramis Ramirez

Aramis just couldn't get going for most of the year, yet he still finished with 25 homers and 83 RBI for the seventh time in eight years. While his average was awful, he did improve to .276 in the second half when he knocked in 51 runs in 62 games. As he ages it's tougher to count on elite production, but he should still be drafted with confidence after the top names are gone.



Mark Reynolds

The Orioles are getting a guy who has averaged 35 homers and 95 RBI and 88 runs the past three years. However, that same guy also owns a .234 batting average in that time. You can pretty much forget about another 20 steal season, it just isn't in the cards, but there is no reason to think that Reynolds can't be the third base version of Adam Dunn for the next decade.

Michael Young

One of the most consistent hitters in the game, Young has hit at least .284 with 68 RBI, 76 runs and 174 hits each of the past eight years and only he and Albert Pujols can make that claim. Young has also rediscovered his power stroke the past two years, and given that he hasn't appeared in fewer than 135 games in the last nine years, he is as safe as they come.

Adrian Beltre

Beltre was tremendous in 2010. However, he has only been tremendous one other time in his career (2004). Beltre has scored 90 runs only one time, has only two 100-RBI campaigns, and has hit better than .290 only twice in 12 seasons. Don't bid on a repeat of 2010 (.321-28-102). Instead, set your sites on his '08 performance (.266-25-77) as your baseline for expectations and you won't be disappointed.

Pedro Alvarez

Some question whether the rotund Alvarez is long for third base, but no one questions his ability to punish the baseball with ill intent. Alvarez hit a combined 29 homers last season between Triple-A and the majors, but he also struck out a shameful 187 times. With such a poor approach at the dish, Alvarez is much more Mark Reynolds than he is Ryan Zimmerman.

Casey McGehee

McGehee actually led NL third basemen in RBI last season though he was also the only third baseman in the game who had 85 RBI who at the same time failed to score 75 runs. Despite never showing this type of power in the minors, McGehee has produced similar HR/F ratios the past two years which might signify a run of similar seasons to his 2010 performance.

Pablo Sandoval

Thinking the way to major league success was paved with pizza and profiteroles, Sandoval's weight was/is a major issue. The Giants have put Pablo on notice that if he can't see his toes, he could be sent to the minors. Just a year removed from an all-star caliber season, Sandoval would benefit from a more patient approach. Can weight loss help that?



Chase Headley

Headley put on some muscle to help him drive the ball a bit better. With Adrian Gonzalez out of town, the Padres better hope the extra muscle will translate to extra production for Chase. Headley basically replicated his '09 in '10 with some slight improvement across the board that made him one of 22 players with 10 homers, 55 RBI, 75 runs and 15 steals.

Ian Stewart

Stewart cut his K-rate a bit in '10, but he still whiffed more than a quarter of the time. He may have given up some of his pop for a slight improvement in his batting average, but more than anything it was a normalization of his BABIP mark. Stewart could threaten 30 homers with his pop, but his approach means his batting average will never allow him to be an elite option.

Jhonny Peralta

The Tigers believe that Peralta will be able to play shortstop full-time in 2011. The author of 6-straight seasons of 68 RBI, Peralta is a solid option at short, but lacking the upside of an impressive average (career .263) or huge power totals (an average of 18 homers the past six seasons) he is really miscast as a fantasy third baseman who is best used up the middle.

Placido Polanco

Coming back from elbow surgery, Polanco thinks he should be even better in 2011. We're not so sure. Yes he is on the Phillies, and yes he is an ideal #2 hitter, but at the same time he is in his mid-30's. In addition, it's not like his production fell off the map last season (.298-6-85-76). Bid on him expecting a repeat of his 2010 numbers but nothing more.

Kevin Kouzmanoff

A younger version of Casey Blake, no one is excited to call out Kouzmanoff's name on draft day, but his production is never horrible. He did offer his worst season in four years though you can blame part of that on an anemic lineup around him and a tough home ballpark to hit in. A strong league specific option, KK is better left as a weak corner infield option in mixed leagues.

Chris Johnson

Here is a *Cliff Note's* version of line drive rates. The major league average is 20 percent though players tend to set their own baseline in the category. Johnson posted a 24.0 percent rate last season, a number that is completely unsustainable for a hitter of his skill level. Translation? There is virtually no chance he will hit over .300 this year, so bid cautiously.



Edwin Encarnacion

Make sure you are seated before you continue. Ready? EE had a *better* OPS than Mark Reynolds, Aramis Ramirez and Michael Young in 2010. Edwin doesn't play very good defense, and he seems susceptible to injury, but he is also very productive when on the field – just give a look at his career numbers per 162 games played: .258-25-84-77.

Scott Rolen

After hitting 22 homers in 2008-09, Rolen somehow turned back the clock and nearly reached that total in '10 (he hit 20). Rolen also posted a second strong average after two years in the .260's (.285). However, Rolen hit only three homers over his last 54 games and he hasn't played 135 games in four years. He's a risk now that he is in his mid-30's so don't overpay.

Chipper Jones

Recovering well from ACL surgery, Chipper can still help an offense by popping the odd long ball and getting on base (his .381 OBP last year was better than all qualifying third basemen other than Ryan Zimmerman's .388). Chipper has had 500 at-bats just once in seven years so you should draft him as nothing more than a corner infield option in mixed leagues.

Wilson Betemit

On his fifth major league team, perhaps Betemit has finally found a home. One of the better hitting third basemen in baseball in the second half, Betemit still failed in the end going 0-for-15 to end the year to drop his average under .300. Still, he does have ample power and a nice swing, and with a full season of at-bats he could provide a very nice return on your investment.

David Freese

Reports are that both of his surgically repaired ankles are improving at a rate that could see him on the field as an everyday option early in the year. Freese has hit well in the majors with a .299 average, but his power is average at best, he never takes the extra base, and he rarely drives the balls into the gap. He is best left on waivers as an in-season pickup.

Brent Morel

A third round selection in 2008, Morel owns a .305 minor league average in more than 300 games. A gap hitter in the mold of Martin Prado, Morel will have a tough time carving out a role of fantasy relevance in single leagues unless he earns a starting role. A solid defensive third baseman, he has a legitimate shot at substantial work in 2011 with the White Sox.



Maicer Izturis

He's seen his average vacillate the past four years going from below average to being an asset, and that makes him a bit hard to figure. Izturis has shown an ability to steal a bag, he's averaged 10 thefts a season the past five years, and his career .275 average would be moderately effective on a fantasy squad. He'll be solid in a support role, but he won't be a starter.

Jose Lopez

Now on the Rockies, Lopez is nearing the point in his career in which he might be classified as the next Ronnie Belliard. Lopez was pitiful in Seattle after 3-straight years of solid production, but there is a chance he could return to being an effective big leaguer. Keep in mind though that his approach at the plate is poor, he isn't a 25 homer bat, and that his career average is .266.

Alberto Callaspo

After hitting .300 for two years, Callaspo fell all the way down to .265 which included a poor .249 performance with the Angels. You can blame part of that failure on some bad luck in the BABIP column so his average will rebound, but it doesn't figure to get to that point that he will be a desirable corner infield option given that that he has little power or stolen base speed.

Mike Moustakas

Named the *Minor League Player of the Year* by the Sporting News and USA Today, Moustakas hit 36 homers, to tie for the minor league lead, while knocking in 124 runners and hitting .322. Mike has only 225 at-bats at Triple-A which is a concern, but the Royals would risk little in letting him run with the starting spot at third base if he performs well in Spring Training.

Danny Valencia

Valencia has 130 games of Triple-A experience during which time he has hit .288 with 65 RBI. On the downside he doesn't have much pop with only seven homers in that time, a total he matched in half a season with the Twins. He won't be a difference maker in 2011, or potentially ever, but there was a guy named Joe Randa who had a pretty good career with similar skills.

Jorge Cantu

You want Cantu on your roster earlier in the year. In 2009 he had seven homers and 22 RBI in April, and last year he powered five homers leading to 23 RBI in April. Unfortunately, he was nothing other than a league average hitter the rest of the way both times, and the only way he will be a useful fantasy option is if he can convince his team to start him on a daily basis.



Dayan Viciedo

Viciedo hit .308, and he blasted five homers after going deep 20 times in just 86 games at Triple-A, so he must be a wonderful prospect, right? Sort of. Dayan can hit, but he also never walks (two in 106 PAs) and strikes out more than a fifth of the time, and that combo is deadly. With an unsustainable BABIP mark (.365), Viciedo has no shot to once again hit .300.

Mark Teahen

Sometimes we are all guilty of blindly accepting a premise just because others hold that position. In this case, conventional wisdom is that Teahen is a good major league hitter when, in fact, he isn't. Average at best, Teahen has never hit 20 homers, never had 70 RBI, never scored 80 runs and never hit more than .290. Let someone else overspend for that lack of production.

Casey Blake

He'll be 38 this season, and that is the age many of us are icing our knees merely from sitting at a computer desk all day. He did produce 17 homers with 64 RBI, the fifth straight season he has reached those figures, but he also saw his average drop to a five year low. Nearing 40, there is no reason to expect anything other than, at best, a repeat of his production from last season.

Mat Gamel

Gamel lit up Triple-A pitchers for 11 homers and 48 RBI in 75 games in 2009, and last season he was even better hitting .309 with 13 homers and 67 RBI in 82 games. Alas, he has done nothing in the big leagues to this point to lead anyone to believe he is ready for a full-time gig, including posting a whopping strikeout rate of 43.4 percent. He might still needs seasoning.

Brandon Inge

A wonderful athlete who plays great defense, Inge simply doesn't have a good bat. People will focus on his 27 homer outing in 2009, but remind yourself that five times in the past seven years that Inge has hit 16 or fewer bombs, and that over his last 777 at-bats he has gone deep only 23 times. When you couple that with a career .237 batting you have a bad major league hitter.

Jeff Baker

Baker is a nice player, though at this point it's certainly looking like his die is cast as a part-time player. The outlier at this point is clearly his 2008 performance, though he has settled in as a decent league specific option given his positional flexibility. It's tough to envision a way that he would be able to reach 400 at-bats, and that obviously caps his fantasy value substantially.



Melvin Mora

A part-time option in 2009, Mora may get a shot at a more substantial role with the D'backs. Mora won't kill your batting average, he has hit at least .270 in seven of eight seasons, but his power has declined substantially the last few years marking him as a risk in all but NL-only leagues. Don't reach for the 38 year old as there is little reason to recommend him.

Jayson Nix

There is no denying that Nix has some serious pop. In fact, he's blasted 26 homers over his last 586 at-bats. To compare, Adrian Beltre had 28 homers last season in 589 ABs. At the same time, Nix is a K-machine, more than once every four at-bats, and that wild approach at the dish simply doesn't play very well in a part time role. He could surprise if given everyday work.

Matt Dominguez

A 2007 first round selection, scouts think Scott Rolen when they watch this kid. Given that he's in the Marlins' organization, there is a decent chance that he will be given an opportunity to see significant action early in the year, even though he has never played above Double-A. The power is developing, but as of now he may be a liability at the big league level.

Juan Francisco

This kid has got plenty of raw power, and he hit at least 23 homers from 2007-09. Last year he dipped to 18 bombs but that was because he had only 308 at-bats at Triple-A before the Reds came calling. The Reds called on him in the 2010 playoffs when Jim Edmonds was hurt, so clearly they have few concerns about his ability to hit big league pitching.

Brandon Wood

The perfect example of a team ruining a players career. Year after year Wood was a minor league star, and season after season the Angels refused to give him a spot in the everyday lineup or to deal him. The end result is that Wood now owns one of the worst batting lines in the history of baseball at .169 with 11 homers, 33 RBI and a .458 OPS over 450 at-bats.

Brooks Conrad

Famous for his epic defensive meltdown in the playoffs, Conrad showed some solid pop last year. Conrad also offered an impressive .378/.462/.733 line in 69 at-bats with runners on base. However, his future is likely as one of those guys who wears out his welcome eventually, is moved on to another team, and repeats that cycle. We wish him luck in that endeavor.



Andy Marte

Stop us if you have heard this before – the guy is talented but a failure having hit .218 with a .635 OPS over the course of 301 major league games. He does have 20 homers and 96 RBI over 838 at-bats, and someone always gives him a shot at playing time, but he seemingly always fails. Don't make the mistake of depending on him in the fantasy game.

Wes Helms

He must be doing something right as he has gotten more than 200 at-bats in nine of 10 seasons despite being a full-time player only once. Helms does a wonderful job hitting lefties to the tune of a .280/.356/.459 slash line, but against righties he looks an awful lot like Pedro Feliz (.248/.301/.389). Even if he tears it up, there is no way his playing time will increase.

Pedro Feliz

Is there a worse hitter in the bigs who saw 400 at-bats last year? It's shameful that the Astros and Cardinals allowed that to occur given five homers and a .240 OBP. He's fallen so far from the guy who was a 20-HR bat from 2004-07 that he isn't even a single league option at this point. For pure shock value, his career OBP matches Nick Swisher's 2010 batting average of .288.

Omar Vizquel

Unwanted by fantasy players in 2010, Vizquel was so solid that he earned another 1-year deal from the White Sox. Far from a pity deal, Vizquel was solid at the dish and helped out at multiple positions in the field. With his speed on the decline, Vizquel may have little fantasy value, but he is just 201 hits from the magical total of 3,000. We wish him luck.

Nick Punto

Always good for double-digit steals even if he's often a batting average disaster, Punto failed to reach at 13 thefts for the first time since 2004. Never fear though, he still lived down to expectations in the batting average category hitting under .240 for the fifth time in eight seasons. He'll miss opening day with the Cardinals after sports hernia surgery.

Brendan Harris

After three years in Minnesota, Harris will now call Baltimore home. A spunky team player willing to do anything to remain in the bigs, Harris has had only one season of relevance and that was when he went .286-12-59 in 2007. Alas, he owns a career slash line of .260/.318/.383 and simply isn't anything other than a guy scrapping for a big league paycheck.



Andy LaRoche

He's never been able to live up to the potential he flashed in the minors, and at this point it wouldn't be at all surprising if he found it difficult to find a roster spot in the big leagues. His biggest failing has been an inability to transition his on-base talents in the minors into major league success, a fact clearly seen when you glance at his career OBP mark of .304.

Felipe Lopez

Lopez handled 2010 like he didn't care if his playing career was extended. He performed poorly with the Cards who gave him a shot at significant playing time before he was moved to the Red Sox for four games late in the year. Pay him little mind on draft day as anything other than a potential source of a decent batting average – his other skills are middling at best.

Josh Fields

There is no disputing the fact that this guy has a power bat. In 713 career at-bats he has gone deep 34 times with 107 RBI, but there are a couple of huge negatives. First off, he has found it almost impossible to stay healthy. Second, when on the field he does a great job keeping fans well ventilated given that he has struck out once every 3.03 at-bats.

Geoff Blum

Mr. Blum was born 25 days after, and about 10 miles from where Ray Flowers entered this world. Nearing the end of his effective days in the bigs, Blum saw his at-bat total receded last year, and with it his one calling card – his power – also dipped. Blum can still pop the odd long ball while being able to play all over the infield, but he is no Ray Flowers.

Josh Bell

Bell is a decent prospect who figures to have a long professional career, but he also doesn't own any outstanding skills. One of the biggest negatives on the back of his ball card is the fact that he is a profound strikeout force who really doesn't have anything other than moderate power. Bell may not be Brandon Inge, but at the moment that isn't a bad comparison to draw.

Wes Hodges

Hodges, originally a third basemen, has been spending time at third base in the minors trying to add some versatility to his game. Wes really struggled in 2009 posting a mere .690 OPS, and things only marginally improved in 2010 when that number jumped to .738. Already 26 years old, that prospect label is fading fast for this former 2006 2nd round draft pick.



Conor Gillaspie

Taken by the Giants in the first round in 2008, Gillaspie hit .286 with four homers and 67 RBI at High-A in 2009, and he followed that up with a .287-8-67 line in Double-A in '10. No one doubts that he will be able to hit for average in the bigs, but there are questions about whether or not he will be able to drive the ball effectively enough for a corner infielder.

Josh Vitters

Considered the most polished hitter in high school in 2007 when he was drafted 3rd overall, Vitters is one of the top prospects looking to make his mark in the upper minor leagues. Vitters hit a mere .223 with seven homers in 206 ABs in Double-A, so if he is seen in Chicago this season before September you know things will have gone horrible wrong with the big league club.

Chad Tracy

Let's get into the hot tub time machine shall we. The year was 2005, back when Kelly Clarkson was skinny and she had the number one song in the country (Since U Been Gone). That year Tracy hit .308 with 27 homers and a .911 OPS. Over the last four seasons he has hit a total of 24 homers with an OPS of .719. Those were the days weren't they?

Kevin Frandsen

Frandsen hit .340 over his first 97 at-bats last year and people got excited. Unfortunately he hit a mere .111 over his last 63 at-bats. In the end, Frandsen was what we thought he was – a below average major leaguer. Frandsen is versatile, and always gives 100 percent, but the only skill he really possesses is an ability to put the bat on the ball while avoiding the strike out.

Gregg Dobbs

Dobbs has found his way to more than 1,000 big league at-bats, and though you wouldn't know it because his work has been so hit or miss, he has averaged 15 homers and 81 RBI per 550 at-bats. He'll never be more than a part-timer though as he tends to be exposed when run out there often. He is a useful member of a big league squad, if not a fantasy one.

Miguel Cairo

He only seems as old as a mummy from Egypt. Cairo is in actually only 36 years old, though the 2010 season will be his 16th in the big leagues. Cairo has been on 10 teams during his nomadic travels, but he shouldn't be on any mixed league squads in 2011. Moreover, he has no value in NL-only leagues either, so relegate him to the museum collection.



Alex Liddi

Though Liddi hit only 15 homers last season he displayed solid gap power with 37 doubles. Unfortunately he also struck out 145 times while walking only 50 times, though he still has a ways to go in his development. The Mariners will remain patient with the Italian born hitter who was the Mariners '09 Minor League Player of the Year (.345-23-104-97 at High-A).

Lonnie Chisenhall

He doesn't always grade out well in scouts eyes, but you would be hard pressed to find a scout who doesn't think he will hit in the bigs. He may never develop an ideal power stroke, but his left handed swing illicit oh's and ah's in batting practice when you hear the sound the ball makes off his bat. He could end up appearing in the big leagues in the second half.

Donnie Murphy

After failing to find any success in his first four seasons in the majors, Murphy was finally able to do something with the Marlins. Rather impressively, he has produced 50 RBI over his last 265 at-bats over three seasons, but there is a huge issue – his strikeout rate rivals that of Mark Reynolds as he has whiffed 122 times in 369 at-bats, or once every 3.02 at-bats.

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By Ray Flowers

SHORTSTOP CAPSULES

Hanley Ramirez

Even in a “down” season, Hanley was third at the position in average and second in OPS. He also posted his fourth straight 20-20 effort though he did have a 4-year low in homers, runs, hits and doubles. He's also had back-to-back efforts of less than 35 thefts, quite the drop off for a guy who was over 50 steals in '06-'07. Still, he is locked in as a top-3 overall option for 2011.

Troy Tulowitzki

His OPS led the position and was .096 points clear of Hanley Ramirez, and Tulo was just one point from the 25th season of .950 from a shortstop in league history. Even with injury, Tulo has still produced a .295-27-92-89-11 line the past two years, and there is only one other performer who can match that – Albert Pujols. As a result, Tulo is certain to be a top-10 selection.

Jimmy Rollins

Rollins was hurt last season, and for the first time since forever he failed to appear in 135 games. Rollins has appeared in more than 154 games in eight of his 10 seasons, and that is significant given that per 162 games in his career he has averaged 17 homers, 72 RBI, 108 runs and 37 steals. If he's undervalued after a down '10, make sure you pounce.

Jose Reyes

Per 162 games in his career Reyes has swiped an average of 58 bases. However, over the past two seasons he has appeared in 169 games and stolen only 41 bases which raises the question – is he still deserving of being drafted as an elite talent at short? Be wary of overpaying for Reyes though do so at your own peril as the free agent to be will be highly motivated in 2011.

Derek Jeter

When all is said and done Jeter is Mr. Yankee and still a fine fantasy option. Jeter will be hard pressed to approach his .314 career average, but he has scored at least 85 runs with double-digit thefts and homers in each of the past 15 years. No other shortstop in history has more than seven such seasons. Jeter is no longer elite, but he is still well above serviceable.

Alexei Ramirez

In three seasons there has been a whole lot of consistency in this Cuban born infielders totals. Alas, he has never learned to take a pitch, and those swing and miss ways help to keep his average a bit lower than it should be (.283 career) while limiting his ability to score runs since his OBP is less than the league average. Expect more of the same in the coming campaign.



Stephen Drew

For the first time Drew hit double-digits in steals, and the results was one of four efforts last year in which a player had double-digit homers, doubles, triples and steals. Drew has never taken the next step to fantasy stardom, but if you add together his best yearly totals you end up with a 5x5 line of .291-21-67-91-10. Who wouldn't take that from their shortstop?

Elvis Andrus

He offers no run producing skills, and his power is non-existent, but he still has plenty to recommend him as a starting option. He plays for a good hitting team, in a good park, and led AL shortstops in steals (32). Andrus was also one of only two shortstops in the game to score 85 runs while stealing 30 bags (Hanley Ramirez) so don't overlook him because of his faults.

Yunel Escobar

Last year was ugly. After two solid efforts that had him on the cusp of the top-10 at the position, Escobar receded like the tide as his entire game fell apart. Not so quiet whispers of selfishness were heard when he was dealt to Toronto, but you just don't lose "it" when you are his age. Escobar represents a tremendous buy low option who can be had for little on D day.

Rafael Furcal

The little fella with a cannon of an arm had a solid season, though for the second time in two years he failed to appear in 100 games. Furcal last had 10 homers, 50 RBI or 30 steals in 2006, and that is a lifetime ago in the fantasy game. Given his back woes and advancing age, paying full price for a 150-game effort is decidedly risky with the Dominican dandy.

Ian Desmond

Only four shortstops had 10 homers, 15 steals last year – you might have heard of the others; Ramirez, Reyes and Jeter. Desmond showed his youth with a poor approach at the dish, but he murdered lefties (he hit .300) and was a strong hitter at night time (.295 vs. .219 during the day). Desmond has a shot to be a strong option at half the cost of other shortstops in 2011.

Starlin Castro

The good is that Castro was fourth at the position in average despite being just 20 years old. The bad news is that he had fewer homers than Erick Aybar, was awful on the base paths with a 56 percent stolen base rate, and that he closed out the year on a down note hitting .232 over his last 23 games. Someone will likely pay top dollar for a guy who might be merely solid in 2011.



Jason Bartlett

It was just a year ago that Bartlett was a top-50 fantasy option. Can he recapture that form in San Diego? It seems unlikely as his LD-rate and BABIP that season were totally out of whack with his career levels, but that doesn't mean that it would be impossible for him to approach his career .281 mark. It should also be pointed out that he stole 20+ bags a year from 2007-09.

Yuniesky Betancourt

If you want a slam dunk trivia question for bar night, try this one. *Who led AL shortstops in RBI in 2010? Betancourt with 78.* No way anyone will get that one right (Jhonny Peralta had more RBI, but he had only 29 while playing short). Don't get too excited about his '10 performance as he had never hit 10 homers before, and he has hit just .252 the past two seasons.

Alcides Escobar

Sent packing in the Zack Greinke deal, Escobar will be given another chance to live up to the hype. A stolen base threat in the minors, Escobar has a mere 14 steals in his big league career. If he doubles that total, as he could, while getting a bit more luck (his BABIP seemed artificially low), he should have no problem surpassing the fantasy value of a ton of shortstops.

Juan Uribe

The Dodgers overpaid giving him three years and \$21 million, but as the joke goes around the office, Uribe qualifies at every position so he is a fine option in the fantasy game. He has legit power though that is offset by a .256 career average and no stolen base speed. Don't be like the Dodgers and lavish him with a key role on your squad – though don't ignore him either.

Marco Scutaro

Scutaro was never going to recapture the form he showed in '09, but honestly, he got pretty darn close to our surprise. If he plays everyday he has demonstrated more than enough skill to be a viable fantasy option, but at the same time there is little upside given a career .267 average, only one season of more than seven steals, and a career best of 12 homers.

Miguel Tejada

The Giants lost Juan Uribe so they went out and replaced him with a similar performer. Uribe has more power than Tejada, but Miguel still has a decent enough bat to warrant interest. Tejada has knocked in at least 66 runs while scoring 71 times in each of the past 12 seasons. He won't win you anything, but you know what you are getting when you call out his name late.



Asdrubal Cabrera

Last year was a step back from a guy how busted into fantasy prominence in 2009. Cabrera doesn't take many walks, and he clearly has little power, so he'll need to steal bases and produce a good average to have fantasy value. Given that he has 10 steals in 256 games if you remove 2009, he had better return to his .300 hitting ways if you're considering him as a starter.

J.J. Hardy

The Orioles have floundered at shortstop for years, and they hope they have solved that issue with the acquisition of Hardy. In 2007-08, the last time he was healthy, Hardy hit 50 homers with 154 RBI. Since then, he has 17 homers and 85 RBI. If he can keep his back on track, no small feat, Hardy could end up being a nice value at a position that lacks pop.

Jed Lowrie

Lowrie is a nice major league ball player. In limited work over three seasons he has displayed enough pop at the dish to be taken seriously. Especially intriguing is his total of 41 doubles in just 499 at-bats which when combined with his homer total of last season raise the level of interest in his game. The only question is – will he get enough PT to be a mixed league option?

Alex Gonzalez

Don't be swayed by the early season success in the homer department – Gonzalez isn't a good option. He has hit .248 in his career, has only two 20-homer efforts in his career and has stolen a total of four bases his past four seasons. Someone will almost certainly overpay for the homers, but don't be that person or you will almost assuredly be left holding an empty sack.

Cliff Pennington

Admit it. You had no idea that Cliff had one less steal than Jose Reyes in '10. Pennington also scored the same amount of runs as Juan Uribe and his OPS was better than Jason Bartlett. Admittedly we are reaching a bit, but the fact of that matter is that Cliff was a solid middle infield option in AL-only leagues last year, and there is little reason to think he won't be again.

Erick Aybar

In each of the past four years Erick has seen his stolen base total go up. The same can be said in the runs scored column. However, he has also hit less than .255 in two of those four years, and he has hit a mere 14 homers in his career. Aybar should see his line drive rate rebound, it was a three year low, and with that his average should be able to rebound (career .274).



Jason Donald

A third round draft selection in 2006, Donald is looking to make a name for himself with the Indians. Injured in 2009, Donald hit decently at Triple-A last season before being promoted to the big league club. A converted shortstop, Donald is likely to fill a role as a utility infielder on a top tier club. Luckily for him, the Indians are nowhere near being such a club.

Paul Janish

Paul is a solid defender who could have a long career because of the leather, but he'll never be a fantasy star. Through 536 career at-bats Janish has hit .226 with seven homers, 47 RBI and 64 runs. If you hit like that you have better have a great glove. Even if he secures a smie full-time role Janish is nothing more than a league specific option at best.

Everth Cabrera

This guys is speedy, and in two seasons he has swiped 35 bags. However, as the old saying goes, you can't steal first base, and last season Everth's OBP was dreadful (.279). There are serious questions about whether or not he will even open up the year in the majors, so make sure you aren't blinded by his solid rookie effort – it's his upside if everything breaks just right.

Orlando Cabrera

One of the more consistent options at shortstop for the past decade, Cabrera finally is losing steam. Cabrera still posted a 10th straight season of 10 steals, but he failed to record eight homers and 70 runs for the first time since the 2002 season. Cabrera, never a patient hitter at the dish, has also seen his OBP fall the last two years. Don't count on the clock turning back.

Edgar Renteria

After stealing \$18 million from the Giants over the last two years, Renteria made that pain go away with a big playoff season including that huge World Series knock. Of course, that doesn't change his fantasy outlook which, at this stage of his career, is poor. About the best that can be said about Edgar is that he won't ruin your batting average which is hardly an endorsement.

Ronny Cedeno

In nearly 575 career games Ronny has hit .245 with a pathetic OBP of .284. Maybe if you have 20 homer power a team will be willing to overlook that in a middle infielder, but Cedeno has hit a mere 31 homers in his career. Cedeno has also limped to a .592 OPS in road games in his career, and that and a basket of chicken wings will quench your hunger at dinner time.



Brendan Ryan

A move to the Mariners would appear to give Ryan a legitimate shot to open up the year as a starter for the club. He's flashed some speed the past two years, and that should continue, but don't fool yourself – he is in the bigs for his glove. Still, middle infielders who can steal 15 bases aren't overly abundant which gives Ryan a lot of AL-only value late in drafts.

Ramon Santiago

Santiago has more than 1,500 at-bats in his career which must be a reflection of his glove and versatility because his offensive production is below par – by a lot. We are talking about a guy with 20 homers and 136 RBI in his career, not to mention that he owns a .248/.317/.335 slash line. Last year is as good as it get, and even that is barely worth something in AL-only leagues.

Ivan DeJesus

Ivan had an impressive season at Triple-A in 2010. He hit .296 with seven homers, 70 RBI, 89 runs and six steals in 130 games. He then went to the AFL where he continued to good vibes hitting .321 with an .411 OBP. The Dodgers don't have a spot for him, and they may not want him rotting on the bench, but he could get a shot with Chin-lung Hu no longer in the mix.

Robert Andino

Andino will have a tough time finding work early in the season as his club has a handful of similarly skilled middle infield options. It's not like you can blame them for bringing players in, not after Andino has limped to a .592 OPS in his young career. Unless he emerges with a significant role his value will be muted even in single league scenarios.

Wilson Valdez

Valdez saw more time than anyone expected last season because of the near season long injury woes of Jimmy Rollins. He didn't embarrass himself at the dish, but he also did nothing other than keep a spot warm in the lineup. Valdez stole 49 bases in 2003 in the minors which makes you wonder why he has only 11 steals in 263 games at the big league level.

Jamey Carroll

In four of the last five seasons Carroll has hit at least .276, not at all bad for a utility player (it also happens to be his career average). Carroll is versatile and can step in whenever his team needs him, and he has used that skill to record at least 44 runs in each of the past six years. You could do a lot worse with one of your final selections in league specific scenarios.



Anderson Hernandez

Hernandez doesn't own a single outstanding offensive skill. In fact, he has little power (four career homers) and just 10 thefts in 240 games (despite ample speed), while his OPS has just barely passed the .600 mark at .614. Moreover, it's not like his minor league track record screams out stardom either as he has barely hit .260 with a .658 OPS while ridding buses.

Bobby Crosby

In 2004 Crosby was decent. He hit just .239, but he flashed power with 22 homers, 64 RBI and 70 runs scored. He's played six seasons since without ever hitting 10 homers, and he has also never bettered the RBI and runs scored totals either. Crosby is a poor hitter you should avoid at all costs as he is likely to do more harm than good even if given playing time.

Trevor Plouffe

A first round selection in 2004, Plouffe has spent the last two seasons at Triple-A with decent results, that is if you think an average campaign of .252-13-55-53 in 416 at-bats is decent. Problem is, he seems to be blocked at the big league level by the signing of Tsuyoshi Nishioka which leaves his 2011 outlook a bit muddled unless something changes before Opening Day.

Jack Wilson

Wilson's season ended with hand surgery for a broken bone in his right hand when he slipped in the bathroom. No joke. Wilson hasn't had a fantasy viable season since 2007, and at this point of his career all he can really hang his hat on is his glove. That means there is no reason whatsoever for you to spend any more time on Wilson after reading this review.

Brandon Hicks

A good defensive player with moderate power, Hicks' problem is that he really isn't a very good hitter. In more than 1,300 career at-bats he has hit a mere .238, and that includes only 261 at-bats at the Triple-A level. Clearly, he just hasn't been able to take his offensive game to the next level. Most people know his name, but there just isn't any "game" to warrant calling his name.

Diory Hernandez

With Martin Prado being moved to the outfield, perhaps Diory will be able to break camp with the club. However, 13 hits in 94 career at-bats doesn't help his cause. If we look at his minor league track record he does a solid job of putting the bat on the ball, but he lacks any outstanding skill that will ever mark him as a must own fantasy commodity.



Eduardo Nunez

For a while this offseason the Yankees were publicly “comfortable” with the idea of Nunez starting at short if they were unable to bring Derek Jeter back. Thankfully this nightmare scenario was avoided and Nunez is back to being a backup. Nunez had a decent Triple-A season hitting .289 with 23 steals, but 2010 was his first season above Double-A.

Angel Sanchez

Sanchez hit .305 in Triple-A in 2009 causing a lot of hope that he might had figured it out at the dish. Unfortunately, his performance dipped a bit last season as he dipped to .274 before getting the call to the bigs. No spring chicken, the window is rapidly closing on Sanchez if he wants to be anything more than a late inning replacement at the big league level.

Cesar Izturis

He first strode onto a major league field in 2001, and since then he has been a solid major leaguer. Of course, there is a long way to go from that to being a fantasy staple. Signed to a 1-year deal by the O's, Izturis' role will be merely to back up Brian Roberts and J.J. Hardy, though it's not like either one of those fellas has been a bastion of health of late.

Jose Iglesias

A slick fielder who scouts rave about for his cannon arm, Iglesias also has excellent instincts in the field. Alas, that and a bag of peanuts will leave you with a bag of peanuts in the fantasy game. Iglesias doesn't project as anything other than a bottom of the order bat when he reaches the big leagues, and with only 57 games at Double-A that may not be until late in 2011.

Chase D'Amaud

A youngster with good instincts, D'Amaud is named after D'Artanian of Three Musketeers fame (that's a total fabrication). Chase has a solid approach at the dish, but his performance at the dish has yet to catch up as he hit a mere .247 with six homers in 132 games at Double-A. He is likely a few years away from contributing in the big leagues.

Grant Green

Green should one day be a star in the big leagues. The A's watched him destroy High-A pitching last year to the tune of a .318-20-87-107-9 line with about the only complaint being 117 strikeouts. Given that he finished his career with the sixth highest batting average in USC history, that's hardly a surprise. He should only be rostered in keeper leagues at this point.



Dee Gordon

The son of Flash Gordon, not the comic book hero but the ace reliever whose real name is Tom, Dee is a flashy shortstop who brings an incredible set of wheels to the table that has resulted in 126 thefts the past two years. His strikeout total is a bit high given his lack of pop (one per 6.46 at-bats), but with speed like he has playing time will equal tons of fantasy value.

Zack Cozart

A 2nd round selection in 2007 after a solid career at Mississippi, Cozart has attacked one level of the minors each of the last three years. In 2010 he performed admirably at Triple-A with the highlight being a near 20/20 effort (17 homers, 30 steals). However, he also hit only .255 with a .310 OBP proving that his approach might be best served by some more time in the minors.

Tommy Manzella

The additions of Clint Barmes and Bill Hall have relegated Manzella to his rightful spot on the bench. Showing a bat about as advanced as a 19 year old at Single-A, Manzella was a disgrace last year in half a season of work. He can field, but like so many others this far down on the shortstop list, his bat obviously isn't the reason he is on a major league roster.

Chin-lung Hu

Hu has hit well in his minor league career nearly boasting a .300 average, and he rarely strikes out, but the same can be said for a ton of Triple-A ball players looking for their big break at the major league level. Now that he is a Met, his shot of substantial playing time is almost nil given that the Mets are hoarding middle infielders like a kid with presents on Christmas morning.

Tyler Greene

No one expects Greene to play a significant role in 2011 despite the fact that he has some pretty nice wheels which could be an asset in the fantasy game. Greene also boasts moderate power for a shortstop, though he has also struck out more than 28 percent of the time during his minor league career. It will take a couple of injuries for him to find a prime time role.

Drew Cumberland

A first round draft pick out of high school, Drew has slowly been moving through the minor leagues the past four years. He's still yet to appear in a game at Triple-A, not to mention the fact that he only has 54 at-bats at Double-A. He has hit .315 with a solid 0.69 BB/K mark while also flashing 40-steal potential, but he would benefit from some more seasoning.



Pete Kozma

Kozma failed to impress at Double-A in 2010 hitting .243 with 72 RBI in 132 games. There have been concerns about his approach at the dish as he sometimes appears to lack a plan of attack, and that is reflected in his mediocre slash line in more than 425 games (.243/.319/.355). The Cardinals addition of Ryan Theriot means Kozma likely won't be seen until September.

Steve Tolleson

Tolleson is one of those spunky little guys everyone can root for. Coming over from Minnesota, Tolleson had about two good weeks late in the year to help out AL-only leaguers, and that's about all you should expect from a player who is likely more about organizational depth than he is about star power. A good guy with no role, he shouldn't be selected on draft day.

Juan Castro

Let's see if we can be positive. He's appeared in almost 1,100 big league games. He's hit .262 on turf in his career (504 at-bats). Uh yeah, that is some slim pickings. All you really need to know about Juan is that he hasn't hit .240 in any month of the season in his career. Please tell us that you will use this knowledge to avoid him on draft day.

Josh Wilson

When one Wilson went down in Seattle they simply replaced him with another. Josh predictably struggled at the dish hitting .227, which just so happens to be his career average. Honestly, we could give a half-hearted thumbs up with Josh if his OBP (.278) was his batting average (.227), but since it wasn't he was a huge drain on AL-only squads in 2010.

Adam Everett

At one time thought of as one of the top-5 defensive shortstops in the game, Everett had only two seasons (2004-05) where he was one of the top-25 fantasy shortstops on the offensive side of the field. Everett was released last season and spent a long while looking for a team to hook up with. He signed with the Indians in mid-December in an attempt to extend his career.

Craig Counsell

Craig signed a 1-year deal to serve as an insurance policy in case Yuniesky Betancourt realizes he isn't as good as he looked last season. Counsell can also play second when Rickie Weeks is hurt, and you can't beat his veteran presence. However, none of that means you should look his way in any league – he isn't even a recommended option in NL-only scenarios.



Darwin Barney

A college star (he was named to the 2007 College World Series All-Tournament team), Barney hit .611 as a high school senior. Barney also was on Team USA before before he was drafted by the Cubs. Barney was leading the PCL in hits when he was promoted last season thanks to the trade of Mike Fontenot. The kid can hit, but is there a role for him in Chicago?

Brian Bocoock

In more than 1,500 minor league at-bats BB has failed to hit .230. He must have power then, right? Nope, he has 12 homers. Speed? He has a bit of that including a 42 steal season in 2007 in the low minors, but with a career OBP of .304 it matters little. Bocoock does have a solid glove but the chances of him being fantasy relevant mirror your chance to date *Jessica Biel*.

Ray Flowers can be heard daily on Sirius/XM Radio on The Fantasy Drive, 5-8 PM Eastern, on Sirius 211 and XM 147. Ray's baseball analysis can be found at www.baseballguys.com and his minute to minute musings can be located at the <http://twitter.com/BaseballGuys> .



By Ray Flowers

OUTFIELD CAPSULES

Ryan Braun

In four seasons Braun has been a wondrous talent posting across the board production with five year *lows* of .285-25-97-91-14. Last year, Braun was one of four men who hit each of those marks – and remember those are his *worst* numbers in four years. Braun cut his strikeouts to a career best level in '10 which hints at a potential repeat of his '09 levels (.320-32-114-113-20).

Carl Crawford

The Red Sox gave him \$142 million to be their spark plug, and the move to Fenway should solidify his position as a top-10 overall option in 2011. Be wary of the inflation that will occur with people thinking he is *Ty Cobb*, and remember as players age they tend to regress in the steals column. Still, you can bid full price and know you are getting a thoroughbred.

Matt Holliday

His middle name should be *consistency*. The past five years the *worst* numbers that Holliday has produced would yield a .312-24-88-94-9 line. The worst. Hitting alongside Albert Pujols had plenty of benefits, but the fact of the matter is that Holliday is a star in his own right. Some hitters might engender more excitement than Matt, but this guy is a flat out fantasy star.

Carlos Gonzalez

CarGo had a dynamic season of excellence in 2011, and he will certainly be the top outfielder off the board in many leagues. Given that, how surprising is it to learn that on the road last season, Gonzalez was nothing more than an average outfielder (.289/.322/.453)? Given his massive home/road splits it would be wise to expect a slight regression in 2011.

Nelson Cruz

Cruz hit more homers than Alex Rios, had more RBI than Joe Mauer and stole more bags than Ian Kinsler – and he appeared in just 108 games. There is obvious concern about the fact that his hamstring continually caused him issues in '10, perhaps lax conditioning is to blame, but there is no doubting that Cruz is capable of a massive fantasy season if everything breaks right.

Josh Hamilton

The AL MVP is worth a top-10 selection based on talent, but there are concerns. Hamilton has averaged a mere 111 games the past two seasons – is his body brittle after years of abusing it? Josh hit .401 against righties, .390



at home, and .384 after the All-Star break courtesy of an unsustainable BABIP mark. You'll pay dearly to roster him – but will the investment pay off?

Matt Kemp

He was awful last year and still was just one steal short of going 20/20. In fact, he was one of only six players in the game to hit 25 homers, knock in 85 runs, score 80 runs and steal 15 bases. Look for his batting average to rebound as well --- his BABIP was .295, a mere .049 points below his career mark. If things break right, he could go 30/30.

Andrew McCutchen

Two things hold McCutchen back. First, he will never be a big home run threat. Second, he plays for the Pirates. In two seasons Andrew has established himself as a dynamic fantasy force, and if he was in a Yankees uniform the media would already be calling him a superstar. The fact of the matter is that McCutchen is a star – even though he wears a Pirates' uniform.

Shin-Soo Choo

With his military obligations out of the way, Choo is free to continue to torment big league pitchers, something he has done with aplomb the past two seasons. Even though his slash lines are nearly identical the past two years, the fact that he was able to cut his strikeout rate last season is encouraging. He's a near lock for 20/20, and not many can make that claim.

Jason Heyward

Displaying uncommon strike zone discipline for a youngster, Heyward finished with the 4th best OBP in the NL. He struggled with a thumb injury in the middle of the year, but he still produced a rather dynamic 5x5 line that hints at future greatness. With each season of experience his performance figures to grow, and no man alive lashes line drives with as much ferocity.

Alex Rios

Proving that he didn't lose his game in the second half of 2009, Rios rebounded with a strong campaign that saw him produce the only big league season of 20 homers, 85 RBI/Runs and 30 steals. He once again tanked in the second half hitting .258 with six homers, so if anything, it might be wise to considering moving him in a deal around the mid-season mark.

Justin Upton

Ongoing woes with his shoulder are a certain concern with Upton, and it limited him for a good portion of 2010. Upton is immensely talented, and still very young, but his plate discipline is a bit lacking (a BB/K mark of 0.41 for his career points to that). Even so, there is always the chance that Upton could explode and be a top-10 performer as he possesses that kind of talent.

Andre Ethier

Owner of movie star looks and one of the smoothest swings in the game, Ethier's production dipped a bit in '10. However, his slash line last year (.292/.364/.493) was virtually identical to his career numbers (.291/.363/.491) signaling that he really didn't fall off at all. If you hitch your wagon to this pony you can be assured of solid production with little to worry about.



Hunter Pence

As consistent a performer as the game has seen the past three years, Pence's upside continues to be capped by a GB/FB ratio that has rested between 1.50 and 1.65 the past four seasons. Given that number, it would be nearly impossible for him to hit 30 homers. Pence also owns a rather poor 15.4 percent career line drive rate, so don't go expecting more than a .285 average.

B.J. Upton

There are only two players with at least 40-steals each of the past three years – Michael Bourn and Upton. B.J.'s average has languished under .250 the past two years, but the uber-talented athlete has still scored a ton of runs in addition to flashing moderate power. Just entering his prime (he's 26), if he can cut down his strikeouts a bit he could explode like he did in '07.

Ichiro Suzuki

In his 10 seasons in the bigs he has always hit .300, had 200 hits, and stolen 25 bases. He had also scored 100 runs in 8-straight seasons until the Mariners decided to stop scoring runs the last two years. Given his lack of power and run production, it's vital that his runs scored mark rebounds. Stable and safe, it would be wise to put his '09 average out of your mind as he ages.

Jayson Werth

The Nationals paid \$126 million for a guy who has never hit .300, has had one 30 homer season and not a single 100 RBI effort. Werth is talented no doubt, but he leaves a good hitter's park and a great lineup for Washington where neither is the case. This is not to say you should avoid Werth, he owns a very stable skill set, but temper expectations for the new gazillionaire.

Jay Bruce

Huge potential and a dynamic finish (.338-15-29 over his last 43 games) will have Bruce on everyone's list of breakout candidates in 2011. There is no disputing that the youngster could be a huge run producer, and he has seen his walk rate improve each year, but the strikeouts are a concern. An All-Star effort is certainly possible, so bid with confidence on the young slugger.

Shane Victorino

One of the most consistent performers in the game from 2007-09, Victorino provided the same value as always last season, though his actual performance shifted a bit. You can count on the steals, 25 or more in 4-straight years, and he'll always score runs, but it would be wise to expect some give back in the homer category while his average should rebound (career .279).



Chris Young

One of two players who went 25/25 (CarGo was the other), Young had a year that was similar to his '07 effort (.237-32-68-85-27). The one improvement he made was to shorten his swing in 2-strike counts which enable him to reach a career best in average and a career low in his K-rate. He'll never win a batting title, but his production is well worth taking on that low average.

Jose Bautista

After hitting 43 homers in 2007-09 he bettered that mark by 11 last season. He hit 28 homers in 2008-09. He bettered that mark in the second half of 2010. We could go on, but the point is obvious; Bautista was so far out of the realm of his career track record last season that positing a repeat is impossible. He should provide plenty of power, but don't pay full price.

Nick Markakis

One of three men in the history of the game with 43 doubles in 4-straight years, Nick's fantasy value tanked as he produced runs like a second baseman. Nick did post his lowest K-rate since his rookie season, and the second best walk rate of his career, which is great news as he hit at least .290 for the 4th straight year. Expect a mild rebound making him a solid value.

Mike Stanton

This youngster owns as much raw power as any person on earth. Stanton did his best Adam Dunn impersonation, minus the walks, in two thirds of a season. There is little doubt he should eclipse 30 homers with health, but there are questions about his ability to improve in the average category given his propensity to strike out (more than a third of his at-bats in '10).

Torii Hunter

One of the more consistent producers in the game, Hunter has hit 20 homers with at least 12 steals in four of the past five seasons. He's also been a consistent run producer with at least 74 runs and 78 RBI in each of the past five years. With each passing year it will become more difficult for him to reach all those levels, but he is still producing at a solid clip.

Drew Stubbs

Nearly demoted at mid-season for his struggles, Stubbs ended up producing a season that Mike Cameron would be proud of. That is an apt comparison. Stubbs is athletic and has a chance to reel off multiple 20/20 seasons, but he strikes out a ton which will limit his batting average upside. Don't be swayed by the low average, the other four categories should be dynamite.



Denard Span

Span knows how to get on base, despite last seasons drop in OBP, and he is one of just four players in baseball who have stolen 20 bases while scoring 85 times each of the past two years. Given that Span basically matched his career line drive, ground ball and fly ball rates in '10, the smart money is on a batting average rebound when his BABIP normalizes.

Delmon Young

Finally. After years of teasing with his talent, Delmon finally had a breakthrough season posting a ton of career bests. Encouraging is the fact that he posted the lowest K-rate of his career, and that for the second straight year his HR/F ratio was in double-digits. He doesn't have any more power to give, but his average could improve coming off his worst LD-rate ever.

Adam Jones

The last two years Jones has produced nearly identical numbers. Unfortunately, he had 108 *more* at-bats last season than the year before which means his production was actually down. He once again had trouble against lefties (.666 OPS), but of bigger concern is the fact that he simply cannot control the strike zone making it difficult to predict major growth in the coming campaign.

Corey Hart

A trade candidate who wasn't playing everyday at the start of the year, Hart went out and reached career bests in homers, RBI and runs (31-102-91). Unfortunately he stopped stealing bases (seven) and posted the worst K-rate of his career. It's hard to review the data and think he has a chance to be any better than he was last season, but there's nothing wrong with his '10 performance.

Juan Pierre

Coming off a career best steal total, the perception is that Pierre rediscovered the fountain of youth. The truth is that he simply displayed the same skills that he did in 2008-09, it's just that he was given a full-time role once again. As he ages the steals will lesson, and there could be some concern about an average rebound, but for now he is a fairly safe option.

Jacoby Ellsbury

Disastrous. That word would describe Ellsbury's '10 effort that was marred from start to finish with rib cage issues. Everyone assumes that Ellsbury will be healthy at the start of the year, but he was unable to ever get healthy last year amidst all kinds of rumors that he didn't really care. An immense talent capable of second round production, he's a true wild-card this season.



Bobby Abreu

No longer a fantasy ace, Abreu remains an excellent selection on draft day. In each of the past 12 seasons he has scored 85 runs, hit 15 homers, stolen 20 bases and knocked in 75 runs. *That is the longest such streak in baseball history.* In each of the previous eight years his line drive rate was over 19 percent making last years 16.6 percent mark look like a bit of an outlier.

Ben Zobrist

Zobrist has been a tremendous fantasy weapon the past two years, though his '10 performance would certainly be classified as disappointing. Even though his average dropped, his BB and K rates were virtually unchanged. However, his power fell well off as his HR/F rate from 2008-09 dropped by more than 50 percent. Expect a rebound in the homer category when things normalize.

Michael Bourn

Bourn posted 40+ steals for a third straight year while pretty much splitting the difference of his '08 and '09 batting averages. Bourn knows his skill set so all he does is beat the ball into the ground and run. He did a better job making contact in '10, and that is vital given that his OBP is barely better than league average. He has limitations, but the steals give him tons of value.

Colby Rasmus

Rasmus made nice strides in his second season increasing his walk rate which led to a big time jump in his OBP. He also drove the ball more effectively and hit double-digits in the steals category. However, there are two huge negatives. (1) He struck out in nearly a third of his at-bats. (2) He hit nearly 49 percent of his batted balls into the air. Even if he continues to grow as a hitter, if he strikes out that much while hitting so many fly balls, greatness will elude him.

Curtis Granderson

Predictably, Curtis failed to match his power totals from 2009. Unfortunately he also fell short in average, OBP, runs, hits, doubles, triples and steals. Granderson continues to limp along against lefties (.674 OPS), and in truth, he would likely benefit from a platoon much like Jason Kubel would. Curtis is a solid selection, but don't let the name on his jersey cause you to reach.

Vernon Wells

Just like Barry Zito, Wells is often judged unfairly because of his monster contract. Wells has had laid a couple of stinkers to be sure, but he still owns a .280 career average, has hit double-digits in steals in three of the last five years, and since the 2002 season he has averaged 25 homers, 89 RBI and 85 runs. How much would you pay for a .280-25-89-85-12 line?



Jason Bay

His first season in New York was marred by poor production and a concussion. At the same time he is a season removed from a terrific effort and each time in his career that he has had at least 500 at-bats he has never failed to hit 21 homers with 84 RBI and 78 runs. He will certainly rebound in '11, so be cognizant that his 162 game career average is .278-30-105-100-12.

Carlos Lee

Overweight and losing bat speed, Lee could play first base in 2011. Don't allow those facts to mislead you – Lee can still be productive at the right cost as he has hit 24 homers with 80 RBI in each of the past 11 seasons. As for the average, some rebound is to be expected as he should rebound somewhat from a career worst line drive rate that was four percentage points low.

Manny Ramirez

Coming off the worst season of his career, questions abound with this slugger. Still, for all the negatives, Manny posted an OBP that was .007 points better than Joe Mauer with an OPS that was .001 point behind Prince Fielder. We've grown exceedingly weary of the Manny being Manny act, but don't let that obfuscate the fact that Manny is still a weapon at the dish.

Carlos Beltran

Like Grady Sizemore, a knee issue has this one time across the boards talent in a bit of limbo. Unlike Sizemore, Beltran finished the year on a high note hitting .321 with five homers in his last 21 games. There are legitimate questions about whether or not he will return to his base stealing ways, and if he will be able to play 150 games, but his bat still seems sound.

Brett Gardner

Eight guys swiped 40-bases last season, but Gardner was the only one of the group with an OBP over .359, so you have to be confident in another strong season on the base paths since he is always on base. Offseason surgery on his wrist was successful, but keep an eye on his work in camp to make sure he is healthy. Now, if he could just lock down the top spot in the order.

Dexter Fowler

Hot one week, ice cold the next, Dexter has produced virtually identical totals across the board the last two seasons with the only true vacillation coming in his steals total (27 and 13). Given that he reached base nearly as many times in '10 as he did in '09 it is a fair assumption to make that he should return to the 20-steal level in 2011, especially with more playing time.



Nick Swisher

Besides marrying the beautiful *Joanna Garcia* (now you have to “google” what she looks like), Swisher also had a great year on the field with a career best average. It will not happen again. Swisher walked fewer than ever before, and had a league average line drive mark, but still saw his hit rate surpass his previous best by more than 10 percent. Buy the power, but that's it.

<http://baseballguys.com/2011/01/25/2011-player-profile-nick-swisher/>

Angel Pagan

With injuries to Beltran and Bay, Pagan stepped forward to have a rather remarkable all-around season. The average is legit, his wheels will help make that possible, and he has enough pop to think a duplicate of his power numbers from last season is possible. Pagan is a solid all-around player to be sure, but his '10 effort might end up being the best of his career so don't overbid.

Alfonso Soriano

Soriano still has enough pop to be worthy of drafting, but injuries have diminished his value substantially. Even more detrimental has been his lack of running the past two years; with 14 thefts the past two years he has failed to reach the mark of 18 that he had attained each year from 2001-08. Throw a mid round pick at him for the pop, but he isn't a difference maker.

Carlos Quentin

Quentin is an odd mixture of talent. He powers the ball with great efficiency thanks to a high fly ball rate (45percent in his career) and strong HR/FB mark (15.5 percent). He also doesn't strike out much for a power hitter. At the same time, he hits too many fly balls to be anything other than a batting average drain given his career BABIP (a mere .251).

Rajai Davis

Have legs, will travel, could be Davis' bumper sticker. With 91 thefts the past two years Davis is 4th in baseball. Davis has even managed to ride his wheels to a .293 average the past two year, the same mark as Dustin Pedroia. However, his BABIP has been all over the place, and we all know he doesn't drive the ball. With a full-time role in Toronto, he's still a fantasy asset.

Nate McLouth

A total disaster in 2010 after basically being a 20/20 performer the previous two seasons. With Ankiel and Cabrera out of the mix, McLouth will be given a chance to reclaim a starting spot with the Braves. McLouth didn't catch too many breaks last year, and given that a lot of his other measures appear “normal” he could rebound. Think 2009: .256-20-70-86-19.



Jose Tabata

After a slow start to his rookie campaign, Tabata took off hitting .322 over his last 73 games. He also finished one hit and one steal from being of being the 7th player in the game with a .300 average and 20 steals. His BABIP mark was huge given his 16.1 percent line drive rate, and you can forget about home runs if he maintains something like his 2.42 GB/FB ratio.

Franklin Gutierrez

While a significant portion of his numbers fell off last season, he somewhat made up for that fact by swiping 25 bases. His K total is far too high for a guy who can't go deep 20 times, and with his inability to consistently get on base, runs could be tough to come by. His wondrous glove will keep him in the lineup, but he is a flawed player at the dish.

Michael Cuddyer

An excellent big leaguer, Cuddyer just isn't a fantasy force. Over the past five years he has had more seasons under 17 homers than above it, and he hasn't hit even .280 the past four seasons. He has been a solid run producer with 80 RBI in four of those campaigns, but middling power totals and a barely league average batting mark leave his value as, well, middling.

Luke Scott

In each of the past three seasons Scott's average and homer total has gone up. However, he has never come to the plate 500 times in a season partly because of his struggles against lefties. Scott is a solid option who will have insanely hot stretches of play, but make sure you check your leagues games played qualifications for 2011 since he may qualify only at DH.

Jason Kubel

For 3-straight years he has been a solid option. However, his average has been all over the place, his run total is merely passable, and he offers nothing on the bases. His at-bat total will continue to be limited as well since he hits lefties with about as much success as a leper would have at club in Manhattan on a Saturday night. Don't expect any improvement in 2011.

Andres Torres

Not many players wait to have their first season of note until they are 32 years old. That raises the real specter of Torres simply having a career best effort. That position is buttressed by the fact that he hit .254 with a .303 OBP over his last 62 games. Sure you can blame his late season appendectomy for some of that, but it would pay to be cautious with the Giants' spark plug.



Grady Sizemore

It all depends on who you ask. Some think he will rebound from significant knee surgery to once again be a 20-70-100-20 force. Others will point out that he has hit a mere .239 with 18 homers and 17 steals over his last 564 at-bats. What do we think? We think the question will be answered by how much you will have to a lot to acquiring his services on draft day.

Austin Jackson

Jackson led baseball in BABIP, and that mark isn't sustainable – not even close. It's also doubtful that he will be able to maintain his 24.2 percent line drive rate. When you add into the mix the fact that he struck out in more than a quarter of his at-bats last season you would be wise to significantly scale back your expectations of further growth in year two.

Magglio Ordonez

Ordonez signed a gaudy 1-year deal to return to the Tigers after reports were that his surgically repaired ankle was fine. His power returned last season, and he has hit .292 or better in each of the last 12 seasons. When healthy he has also been an RBI force with at least 99 RBI each of his last eight seasons of 500 at-bats. He is still a solid option at the right price.

Cameron Maybin

The Padres are the third team to take a chance on the talent that is Maybin. A five tool player, Maybin could go 20/20 this season, or he could find himself in the minors. He tore up Triple-A the last two years hitting a combined .322 with 10 homers, 62 RBI, 65 runs and 13 steals in 115 games hinting that he might finally be ready to break out in a full-time role.

Coco Crisp

Not many players set career best in steals in their ninth season, especially when they appear in less than half the games. Crisp is a nice player, there is no dispute there, but if you pay for a repeat of his steal rate from last season you will end up spending many a night drinking away your sorrows at the local tavern. Don't forget he has played 120 games just once in five years.

Julio Borbon

Borbon was dynamic as a rookie, and a disappointment in his sophomore season. However, if we combine his production the first two years we end up with a line of .286-7-62-90-34 in 595 at-bats. Do you know how many players reached all five of those marks last season? Try one (Carl Crawford). Borbon will be cheap on draft day, and there is considerable upside.



Marlon Byrd

Byrd has proven to be a solid place holder as a depth outfielder. He's hit at least .283 the past four years during which time he has gone deep at least 10 times with 50 RBI each season. However, at this point of his career improvement seems unlikely, and he will always have to look over his shoulder when the next big thing is ready to be promoted to the big leagues.

Raul Ibanez

A strong finish led to a sixth straight year of at least 80 RBI, but there are concerns, particularly the advance of *Father Time*. Ibanez did post a career best walk rate, but at the same time his SLG dipped to a 5-year low, and more than .030 points below his career rate. Put '09 out of your mind, it isn't happening again as his '10 line is his new baseline (.275-16-83-75-4).

Chris Coghlan

His season ended in a post game celebration last year when he tweaked his knee and required surgery. He should be healthy by the start of the year, and the plan is for him to bat leadoff, but can he handle playing center field? While his production was down in year two you can take solace in the fact he closed strong hitting .312 over his last 42 games.

David DeJesus

An injury to to his thumb that required surgery should be completely healed in time for DeJesus to take up the #2 spot in the Athletics order on opening day. DeJesus is an ideal 5th outfielder in mixed leagues for his solid production, but he is no .318 hitter. He's also stopped running the past two years, and with that it would be wise to keep expectations in check.

Alex Gordon

What could have been. Gordon went from an up and coming superstar to being asked to switch positions while toiling in the minors. Proving yet again that no minor league can contain him, Gordon hit .315 with 14 homers and 59 runs scored in 68 Triple-A games. There is no telling what the Royals will do, but you could do worse than Gordon as a late round gamble.

Cody Ross

The Giants playoff hero who was nicknamed *Babe Ross* is a solid major league outfielder, nothing more. A review of his numbers the past three seasons should attest to that fact. There might be an urge to reach given his playoff success, but one month of hot hitting shouldn't wipe out a decade of performance. Tread lightly when evaluating this playoff hero.



Ryan Raburn

Two games short of qualification for second base in most leagues (18 games), Raburn is a decent option in the outfield because of a lack of playing time. He's certainly displayed ample abilities the past two years, but with the Tigers bringing back Magglio Ordonez it's hard to envision Raburn substantially increasing his at-bat total of last season (371 at-bats).

Tyler Colvin

The Cubs love his bat, and it's not hard to see why given the power he flashed last season. He did sport a particularly high HR/F rate of nearly 20 percent, and given a GB/FB rate of 1.09, he'll need to keep that HR conversion rate up to post a strong homer total. You should also be wary of that strikeout total – it's well into the danger zone where it could tank his average.

Johnny Damon

Aging, sans the hair and beard that made him look like a caveman, Damon, durable as ever, appeared in 140-games for the 15th straight season. Damon has also scored 80-runs with at least 10-steals in each of the past 13 seasons, and numbers like that will play in almost any mixed league. Of course, he'll need to convince the Rays to run him out there everyday to be of value.

Logan Morrison

He'll never be elite, but that doesn't mean he won't be a very good for an awfully long time. In his first exposure to the majors, two numbers stand out. First, he struck out only 10 more times than he walked. Second, his OBP of .390 was .012 points better than Hanley Ramirez. Morrison may hit at the bottom of the order, even though he looks like an ideal #2 man.

Domonic Brown

A five tool star in the making, some compare Brown to *Darryl Strawberry*. There is no disputing the talent, but there are questions about his spot in the starting lineup as well as how long it will take him to adjust to big league pitching. Brown hit 20 homers, stole 17 bases and hit .327 last year in 93 minor league games showing that he could one day be a fantasy superstar.

Josh Willingham

The Athletics needed some right-handed pop in the middle of the lineup so they went out and picked up Josh. He isn't remotely close to being a difference maker, but at the same time he has averaged 20 homers and 66 RBI the past five years even though he has been held to less than 430 at-bats three times. He'll need to stay healthy all year to be a mixed league option.



Juan Rivera

Rivera is a solid major league performer, but solid doesn't win fantasy championships. He's had two seasons of 20 homers and 85 RBI, but he's also hit under .255 with 15 or fewer homers in two of the last three seasons. Well into his 30's, and not exactly the best athlete we have ever seen, Rivera could lose playing time at any point to a younger player.

Ryan Ludwick

After a career best effort in 2008, Ludwick predictably regressed in '09. His numbers dipped even further in 2010, and the concern continues to be at the fore of everyone's minds given that he will call Petco home (he hit .200 with a .639 OPS in 29 games there last season). Pay for his '10 numbers (.251-17-69), but realize he could produce like the '09 version (.265-22-97) at a discount.

Travis Snider

Only 23 years old, Snider owns a tremendous stick. Last season was interrupted by an injured wrist, and that might leave him as a cheap option that could payoff big. Snider has hit over .300 with an OPS above .900 in the minors, and if the Jays just stick him out there and let him play everyday the results will likely be good enough to make everyone plenty pleased.

Brad Hawpe

Here's an amazing fact. *From 2006-09, Hawpe was the only right fielder in baseball who hit .280-20-80 each season.* What happened last year? For the first time in five years his BABIP fell below .341 at .308, and that was a huge part of his failings. A move to Petco won't help at all, but he should play almost everyday, and with that a return to his previous levels is possible.

Eric Young Jr.

Built like his dad, and blessed with similar skills, Jr. may have a shot at ample playing time with Clint Barmes out of the mix in Colorado. If Young can work his way into the lineup on a consistent basis he will be a wonderful source of steals as he has twice eclipsed the 70-steal mark in the minors. He's already swiped 21 bases in 81 games with the Rockies.

Desmond Jennings

Deemed the next Carl Crawford, how could Jennings possibly live up to that this season? That doesn't mean that Jennings won't be targeted in drafts because his skill set is enticing to say the least. After all, he has the wheels to be an immense weapon on the bases, has hit .299 during his minor league career, and he knows how to get on base (his OBP is over .380).



J.D. Drew

If it wasn't for the weight placed on his shoulders when he was drafted, Drew would be seen for what he is – a very good baseball player. In four of the last five years he has gone deep at least 19 times, in each of the past five years he has knocked in 64 runs while at the same time scoring at least 69 runs. His production isn't exciting, but it's consistently solid.

Kosuke Fukudome

In 2008-09, there wasn't a more consistent player than this Japanese import. Last season his slash line offered more of the same though he actually set career bests in average, SLG and OPS – and he also popped more long balls than ever before. Even with all of that, he was still nowhere near being a mixed league option, and that won't change in the coming season.

Jonny Gomes

For the first time Gomes was allowed to play pretty much every day, and predictably he was an effective hitter for the Reds. At the same time, there isn't much more to give. He strikes out a bit too much, doesn't walk enough, and he's not even average against right-handed pitching (career: .233/.309/.438). Don't pay for anything more than what we saw from him in 2010.

David Murphy

Arguably the best fourth outfielder in baseball, Murphy produced a third straight season of note despite never even garnering 435 at-bats in a season. Murphy gives righties fits with his .288/.355/.487 slash line, and it's not like he is deficient against lefties (.264/.305/.383). You know what you are rostering here, and there is plenty of value in that late in drafts.

Matt Joyce

Joyce has been an abysmal failure against lefties in his young career hitting .157 with zero homers in 51 at-bats. Therefore, a best case scenario would obviously only be a platoon role. Still, he has flashed solid skills in that role hitting 25 homers with an .868 OPS in 439 at-bats against righties. A cheap option on draft day who could pay dividends due to the loss of Carl Crawford.

Will Venable

Will stole 14 bases in the first half and 15 in the second to give him plenty of value despite a poor batting average. He was also very productive on a per at-bat basis. The Padres are going to need to generate runs with the loss of Adrian Gonzalez, so Will may be asked to do plenty of running yet again this season which would allow him to at least maintain his fantasy value.



Lorenzo Cain

The Royals believe that Cain's second half emergence was for real as he was one of the key pieces brought back in the Zack Greinke deal. Cain hit for average and flashed speed in 43 games after hitting .317 with 26 thefts in 84 games in the minors. Cain has hit .291 in the minors but it's hard to envision him continuing to hit so well in a full season of work.

Nyjer Morgan

Some guys just don't get it. Given a chance to star on a team while getting rich, Morgan flipped the bird at the world last season seemingly engendering disdain from the fans, the players, and the coaching staff in Washington. If he can keep his head on straight he can be an effective weapon because of his wheels, but he will have to earn everything by being a model citizen.

Roger Bernadina

The trade of Josh Willingham to the A's has opened up an outfield spot with the Nats, and Bernadina will be given a shot at some of those at-bats. Given that Roger has hit 11 homers with 21 steals in less than 500 career at-bats, that would appear to be a good thing. He won't cost a thing on draft day and he could end up returning some nice value.

Michael Brantley

Hitting over .300 in the minors while stealing bases with ease, Brantley profiles as one of those speedy outfield types that, when all is said and done, leads to a cheap 20+ thefts. Playing time is a concern, but there is no denying his wheels or ability to get on base (he has a stupendous minor league 1.34 BB/K mark). Mark him down as someone to consider late in drafts.

Scott Podsednik

Podsednik has hit .300 the past two years, and only 20 men in the game with 1,000 plate appearances in that time are in that group. Podsednik has also swiped 65 bases, tied with Elvis Andrus for 11th in baseball. Clearly Scott has plenty of fantasy upside if he can convince the Jays to give him 500 at-bats, though that's not a certainty given his advancing age.

Michael Morse

After five seasons of being a nobody, Morse became a some buddy last season, albeit in a limited role. It remains to be seen how much his role will grow this season, but taking a look at his career numbers (.291-21-88-73-4 in 618 at-bats) seems to show that he will be able to have an awful lot of success in a full time role if the Nationals choose to go in that direction.



Seth Smith

Smith has posted nearly identical totals the past two years, save for his average which suffered last year. Why the dip there? His walk rate was slightly down, but so was his K-rate. His GB/FB rate was slightly down as well (0.76). The biggest culprit though was an inability to square up the ball which led to a BABIP mark of .256 (career .295) for the Rockies.

Ben Francisco

Per 550 at-bats in his career Francisco has hit 20 homers, knocked in 70 runs and stolen 13 bags. At the same time, he has no shot at that much work in '11, and even if he did, is a .263-20-70-75-10 season that exciting? Francisco could end up getting more at-bats than you think, especially if youngster Domonic Brown struggles out of the gate for the Phillies.

Brennan Boesch

In the first half he channeled his inner *Norm Cash* hitting .342 with 12 homers and 49 RBI. In the second half it was more like Brandon Inge during one of his cold spells (.163-2-18). In total, the production ended up about where his skills dictate Brennan's performance should have been. The question is, will he open the year with a spot in the starting lineup?

Chris Carter

A masher, plain and simple. The last four minor league seasons Carter has averaged 30 homers and 97 RBI despite an average of just 128 games. Likely many young power hitters controlling the strikeout will likely be key. The Athletics have a ton of options in the outfield and Daric Barton at first, but none of them has more talent and game changing skills than this youngster.

Peter Bourjos

Bourjos could be this year's Brett Gardner. Bourjos has speed to challenge for the mantle of quickest player in the AL, and that will leave him as a productive performer in 2011. He'll of course need to up his batting average, but given that he has hit nearly .300 during his minor league days you should feel pretty confident that his prospects there are solid.

Ryan Spilborghs

Never being given more than 352 at-bats in a season has a way of making your final numbers reflect somewhat poorly on your skills. Let's do Ryan a favor and show what his career rate of production would produce with 500 at-bats: .281-14-72-73-11. Spilborghs is a sneaky selection on draft day who could be a mighty effective option with extended playing time.



Mike Cameron

Age and injuries took their toll last season, and it's tough to predict a full rebound for Cameron, especially with playing time concerns. Cameron is always a batting average drain, and if his stolen base potential is limited because of health, his value plummets. A truly risky option in '11, Cameron isn't a good bet to push his normal 15/15 effort in the coming campaign.

Michael Saunders

Saunders doesn't have a full season of at-bats at Triple-A but that didn't stop him from blasting away last season. Unfortunately, Saunders also struck out at a rate that wouldn't look totally out of place on Russell Branyan's baseball card. Saunders could offer something in 2011, but his history suggests that you would be better off investing your resources elsewhere.

Carlos Gomez

With the trade of Lorenzo Cain to the Royals, Gomez appears likely to be given yet another shot at full-time work. There is no disputing that he has 30+ steal speed, or that he plays fine defense. The issue is that he never walks and strikes out as if he were a power hitter. The owner of a career OBP of .293, Gomez is a boom or bust option to consider late in drafts.

Jeff Francoeur

Of course the Royals think they can fix what ails Frenchie. They thought they could do the same thing with Mike Jacobs and Jose Guillen. Apparently they didn't learn their lesson. Ultimately, players who swing at every pitch in the air and never take a walk are doomed to fail. Francoeur will have a hot streak or two, but in the end he is still a middling option.

Melky Cabrera

Honestly, Melky is really a fourth outfielder. He does have solid across the board skills, but he doesn't grade out particularly well in any one area. In fact, if he hadn't been a Yankee, you likely would have never paid him any attention. The outfield situation in Kansas City is a bit muddled, so don't draft him expecting a full season of at-bats this year.

Andrew Jones

For the third time in four years he went deep at least 17 times while failing to hit even .231. Has there ever been an All-Star performer who fell off this quickly? Clearly Jones will never again be even an everyday player, so you are left to merely roster him late when you are looking for some power late in single-leagues, but be wary of that destructive batting average.



Chris Denorfia

A minor league hitting star, Denorfia had never been able to stick in the bigs until last season. Buoyed by a nice run to the finish line that included a .282/.347/.489 line in his last 58 games, Denorfia would appear to be in line to start in the outfield on Opening Day. A solid hitter, Denorfia isn't likely to rise to the level of mixed league prominence even with a full-time role.

Lastings Milledge

There is no doubting his talent, but with each passing year it becomes less likely that Lastings will ever meet expectations. In 623 at-bats the past two years he has hit a respectable .278, but eight homers, 55 RBI, 59 runs and 12 steals just aren't enough to cause anyone to be excited about the prospects of adding the former Mets' phenom to their fantasy roster.

Felix Pie

Pie is a wild card. Talented but enigmatic, he can look great one day and be a complete disaster the next. Given his massive blowup in winter league ball it's anyone's guess at this point if he will ever be able to hold it together long enough to fulfill the potential that is evident in his game. A speculative buy, you had better have a high threshold for pain if you go all in here.

Mark DeRosa

The highest paid cheerleader in the Giants run to the championship, DeRosa hopes that his surgically repaired wrist will allow him to return to being a productive major leaguer. DeRosa figures to play the outfield, but he could obviously be shifted to the infield if need be. Wrist injuries are notoriously difficult to come back from leaving DeRosa as a risk in 2011.

Pat Burrell

Pat the Bat returned to the Bay Area for a \$1 million after a solid regular season and a disastrous playoffs. Burrell is aging and strikes out a ton, but he does provide plenty of pop. A key to his workload this season will be the health of Mark DeRosa and the weight of Pablo Sandoval. If you buy on Burrell, use last year's numbers as your guide (.252-20-64).

Conor Jackson

If there's an injury or an illness, Jackson has had it the last couple of years. A strapping young man with one of the purest line drive strokes in the game, Jackson has a total of 307 at-bats the past two years when he has closely resembled a backup middle infielder at the dish. It's tough to envision a way he gets 450 at-bats, and without that, he is a huge gamble to roster.



Brandon Allen

At one point the first baseman of the future for the D'backs, that ship may have sailed. Now, Allen is hoping to find his way to playing time in the outfield. Allen's developmental path has been slightly schizophrenic, but he still possesses the ability to change the complexion of a game with one swing making him worthy of late round consideration.

Chris Heisey

Still developing his game, Heisey could eventually become a solid major league player. He's flashed speed, stealing as many as 32 bases in 2008, and the power is slowly developing, but last season, against Triple-A and big league pitching, he was slightly exposed with a K-rate over 28 percent. If he can cut down the whiffs, he could be a regular in the second half.

Fred Lewis

A solid waiver-wire addition in AL-only leagues in '10, Lewis was the same player he was when he was with the Giants. He made some mistakes in the field, failed to hit the ball in the air, but stole enough bases to keep things interesting. Lewis simply doesn't lift the ball well enough to ever be a force at the dish, so don't pay for anything more than he produced last year.

Ryan Sweeney

Three things are obvious with Sweeney. (1) The guy can hit. He owns a career .286 average. (2) He has never developed the power stroke despite his swing and size. Instead he has settled in as a doubles machine. (3) The dude simply cannot stay healthy. Add those three things together are you are talking about a player who should only be considered in league specific scenarios.

Kyle Blanks

The addition of Brad Hawpe to play first for the Padres tells you a couple of things. First, the club isn't sold on Blanks being healthy at the start of the year (Tommy John surgery). Second, the team isn't sold on Blanks being ready to be a prime time contributor this season given his massive strikeout rate (40.4 percent of his at-bats). Only speculators need apply here.

Nate Schierholtz

Schierholtz can field, and he has a cannon for an arm, but you aren't fantasy relevant because of those skills. Nate can hit a bit as well with a .270-9-61-88-10 line in 699 career at-bats, but he just cannot find his way into the lineup on a consistent basis. As such, Schierholtz is nothing more than a single league option who could offer some decent production with playing time.



Nolan Reimold

Nolan had a nice half season in 2009 but 2010 was a disaster, in part because his Achilles tendon wasn't at 100 percent. He spent most of the year in Triple-A where the results were also far from impressive (.249-10-37 in 94 games). No spring chicken at 27 years old, the window is rapidly closing on Reimold being anything other than a solid fourth outfielder.

Matt Diaz

Diaz is now a Pirate, and one would think that could lead to more work than he received with the Braves. Don't count on it. Diaz hit just .223 against right-handed pitching last year continuing a career long trend of struggles against righties (.269/.327/.382). Diaz will be what he was for the Braves, a dynamite option when the club is facing a lefty hurler (career: .335/.373/.533).

Rick Ankiel

The Nationals took a shot on Ankiel with a \$1.5 million, 1-year deal. Ankiel hit 25 homers in 2008, but over the past two years he has gone deep just 17 times in 583 at-bats. On the plus side he produced the best BB-rate of his career last year, though he also stopped driving the ball as his fly ball rate fell 10 percent. If that rebounds, he could push his '08 homer total.

Jarrod Dyson

A 50th round selection in 2006, Dyson advanced to Triple-A last season where he hit .272 and stole 13 bags in just 46 games. And that is how Dyson will earn his big league pay check – with his wheels. Dyson flashed his money makers to the tune of swiping a base every other game last year showing that he might have Rajai Davis type upside in an everyday role.

Milton Bradley

A flat out disaster as always. Bradley is in the last year of a ridiculous contract, and the Mariners can't wait for it's conclusion. For all the skills that he possesses, Bradley has just one season of 20 homer, 70 RBI and 75 runs scored. Lyle Overbay nearly did that last season (he had 67 RBI). Don't waste your time with Bradley unless you want a broken heart.



Mitch Maier

A speedy outfielder who makes solid contact, Maier could have a decent big league career without ever once being fantasy relevant. After seven years in the minors with a .298 average, it's pretty clear that he'll never be anything more than a spare part who will need to luck his way into playing time to offer a substantial return on a draft day investment.

Luis Durango

When you weigh 150 lbs. with weights in your pockets, you know your game is geared toward defense and likely speed. Durango has speed to burn and swiped 35 bases last season in 106 games at Triple-A. He also continued a career long trend of handling the bat well as he has more walks than strikeouts in his career. Add it up, and Durango is someone to keep an eye on.

Marcus Thames

He may not be able to field, but Thames bashes pretty well. In each of the past five years he has gone deep at least 12 times despite never once having 350 at-bats which somewhat obscures the fact that he has hit an average of 33 homers per 500 at-bats in that time. Unfortunately, he'll never be given a shot at 500 ABs, so continue to roster him only as a league specific option.

Erick Hinske

A winner who is prized for his leadership as much as his on the field skills, Hinske is a boring fantasy option who only has value in single leagues when he is playing consistently enough to help in the counting categories. He's carved out a nice career for himself, but he has never even remotely approached his rookie season production (.279-24-84-99-13 in 2002).

Trevor Crowe

Like so many other outfielders, Crowe's game is predicted on his speed while offering little at the dish. Particularly troubling is the fact that he hasn't show that he has worked out a plan of attack against lefties that will allow him to be an everyday player give his .219/.272/.278 slash line against them. He could be this years Nyjer Morgan though. If that excites you bid away.

Jason Bourgeois

Through three years and three clubs, Bourgeois has hit an anemic .215 with a pathetic .561 OPS. He has stolen 15 bases, but really. Nearing 30 years of age, it's highly unlikely he will suddenly morph into a player of note leaving him to struggle to find a bench role with a major league club. He doesn't deserve a bench role on your mixed league roster.



Yonder Alonso

With Joey Votto locked in at first base, the Reds have started to use Alonso in the outfield. If he can handle that position change he could play a role with the big league club in '11 since his stick is first rate. Alonso is patient, sprays the ball to all field, and makes pretty solid contact for a guy with his pop. However, he's only got 101 games under his belt above Double-A ball.

Emilio Bonifacio

Emilio is fast. However, other than about a two week period of time at the start of the 2009 season he has been a completely deficient big league hitter. Don't believe us? If we remove the first seven games he played in 2009 he has hit .242 over his last 608 at-bats. Despite that, the Marlins continue to look for ways to get him into their lineup, so throw some cash at the steals.

Scott Hairston

Non-tendered after the Padres picked up Cameron Maybin, Hairston has plenty of pop which has led to an average of 14 homers the past four years despite only one season of more than 330 at-bats. But that last number tells you all you need to know – teams simply don't trust him to play every day, especially since he has a career OPS against righties of .690.

Shelly Duncan

Duncan has power, and he displayed that fact last season. In his career Duncan has gone deep 10 times with 60 RBIs, decent enough totals given that he has just 375 at-bats. However, he also has hit just .227 with a whopping 114 punchouts which equates to a strikeout every 3.29 at-bats. With that approach he will find it difficult to pick up consistent at-bats.

Jeremy Hermida

This former first round pick was supposed to be a 20/20 threat by now. The only way he is going 20/20 this season is if we use the hit and strikeout category. Hermida is, rather amazingly, just 27 years old, there will likely be someone in your draft who still thinks Hermida can be an impact player. Don't be that person since Jeremy isn't.

Reed Johnson

One thing Johnson brings to the party, other than a never say die attitude, is that he murders lefties. In more than 1,000 career at-bats against them, Johnson has hit .312 with a .836 OPS. So why isn't he an everyday starter? Just take a look at his production against righties for the answer to that (.262/.321/.376). A solid big leaguer, but he has no fantasy value.



Gerardo Parra

Parra's second season wasn't anywhere near as effective as his rookie season as he regressed in just about every significant category. Through two years he has also failed to show that he has any idea how to hit left-handed pitching (.244/.275/.281), and that will continue to be an issue if he desires to be anything other than a fourth outfielder on his own team.

Corey Patterson

After signing a deal with the Blue Jays we are left to ponder – will he be this year's Fred Lewis? Patterson can steal a base and pop a long ball, that much is clear, but he has never learned to utilize those skills properly as he has never figured out how to take a pitch. He'll likely struggle for a role early on, so keep an eye on him once the season gets a rolling.

Gregor Blanco

A spark plug for the Royals after he was brought over from the Braves, Gregor hit .274 with 10 thefts in 49 games. Speed is a valuable commodity in the fantasy game, and that marks Blanco as someone you might give a look to late in drafts. Still, there are likely better ways to spend your loot when people are starting to doze off at the draft table in the late rounds.

Justin Maxwell

A strong power/speed combination highlights Maxwell's game. In just 219 at-bats in the bigs he has hit nine homers with 11 steals, though he has also barely hit above .200. Still, he knows how to take a walk to help in the lean times when the hits aren't falling. A speculative purchase late, Maxwell's value is directly tied to whether or not he can work his way into a regular role.

Aaron Cunningham

Already with his fourth organization despite less than 100 games in the bigs, Cunningham does a lot of things well, but few things that stand out. He does own a .300+ average in the minors, and that projects well at the big league level, but he may never rise above being a league specific option even if he is given substantial playing time.

Austin Kearns

The Indians gave Kearns a 1-year deal to clog up their outfield. Kearns always seems to find his way to semi-regular playing time despite the fact that he isn't anything other than a replacement level bat. He'll have a hot streak or two, and if you time it right you will be pumped, but you would likely be better off trying to predict the lotto's winning numbers.



Willie Harris

Over the past three years Harris has averaged 10 homers and 10 steals a season marking him as a solid league only option. However, he also owns a career .239 average and is coming off the worst season of his career in which he had more than 200 at-bats. He'll find a way to squeeze himself into the lineup, but that doesn't mean you should stretch to get him in yours.

Jon Jay

Jay has spent parts of the last three seasons in Triple-A hitting .295, so a .300 average with the Cards last season seems legit, right? Maybe not. Despite a slightly below average line drive rate of 19 percent, Jay somehow produce a large number in the BABIP column that simple isn't repeatable (.350). When his average recedes you will be left with a very average performer.

Casper Wells

Homers and strikeouts, that's what Wells brings to the table. During his minor league career Casper has averaged more than a punch out per game while hitting all of .250 in parts of six seasons. Last year, in his first taste of Triple-A he hit 21 homers in 103 games, though he also hit .233 with 111 Ks in 103 games. A true swing and miss power option.

John Bowker

His nickname should be AAAA. Bowker simply demolishes minor league pitching. In 2009 he hit .342 with 21 homers and 83 RBI – in 104 games. Last season he hit 18 homers, knocked in 46 runs and batted .313 in a mere 76 games. Alas, he has failed to get a hit every four at-bats in the big leagues, though he does still sport some decent power numbers in 544 career at-bats.

Don Kelly

When your best skill might be your ability to take a walk, you might have a hard time making a mark in the bigs. Kelly has 22 more walks than strikeouts in his career, and he has hit nearly .290 in the minors including an impressive .331 with 27 steals in 105 Triple-A games in '09. Alas, he flashed none of those skills last season as he looked totally over matched.

Aaron Rowand

Rowand has had a few nice fantasy efforts ('04 and '08 in particular), but at this stage of his career he is obscenely overpaid 4th outfielder. Rowand has hit at least 11 homers in 7-straight seasons, but he brings little speed at this point and his average has been sub .275 in five of the last six seasons. Rowand is only a single league option at this point.



Ryan Kalish

Are you looking to hit it big in the last round of your mixed league draft? If you are, this is a name to remember. There are a ton of outfield options in Boston that will have to fail or become injured for Kalish to see substantial playing time, but he hit .294 with five homers and 12 steals in just 37 games at Triple-A Pawtucket last season.

Nick Evans

Evans was a disaster at Triple-A in '09, so he began last season at Double-A where he hit well (.294-17-55 in 88 games). He then advanced to Triple-A where he hit over .300 before doing the same with the Mets. High strikeout totals are still a concern, but he does have enough power that if he were able to gain a part-time role he could have league specific value.

Ben Revere

A first round selection in 2007, Revere will one day be an all-star caliber player. Fleet of foot with at 146 steals in less than 350 minor league games, Revere has also battered pitchers to the tune of a .328 average. Revere also never strikes out, just once every 10.78 ABs, and his BB/K ratio is terrific at 0.89. He may not break through in 2011, but his time is coming.

Gabe Gross

Gross is one of those good guys who somehow convinces someone he is worthy of a big league job, something you would never gleam from a career spent hitting .239 with a .716 OPS. Even more shocking than that is the fact that he has hit .155 against lefties in his career which marks him as a mediocre platoon option – and that is a best case scenario.

Cole Gillespie

After hitting .374 in his final year of college, Cole has had a steady progression through the minors. Currently sporting a .284 minor league average, Cole hasn't been able to dial up the power average about 15 homers a year. He can work the count, his OBP is pushing .400, and he also brings some decent stolen base potential with his right-handed bat.

Allen Craig

The addition of Lance Berkman would appear to crush the outlook of Craig. In order to find a spot for him on the club, the Cards plan to give Craig some work at third base (he played the position in the minors), but even if David Freese isn't healthy Craig isn't likely to be asked to play the position on a daily basis. There's not much to see here.



Eugenio Velez

Skilled but flawed – that's likely what the scouting report reads with Velez. He has some pop, but he rarely drives the ball. He is athletic but often has trouble on routes to the ball. He is blazing fast but he couldn't read a pitcher's pick off move if his life depended on it. All skills and no performance, only take a shot if you are desperate for some steals help.

John Mayberry

He hit 34 homers in 1975. Oops, that was his father. Like his father, Jr. is a large man who can drive the ball out of the park. After a decent career at Stanford, Mayberry has slowly moved through the minor leagues without ever truly posting big numbers. There is no disputing the skills, but it remains to be seen what his role will be in 2011.

Chris Dickerson

Dickerson is a useful guy to have around. He has some speed, 20 steals in 173 games in his career, and he also does a decent job of getting on base (.356 career OBP). However, he has little power (eight career homers) and really hasn't performed against left-handed pitching (.624 OPS), so he seems destined to fill the role of extra outfielder.

Fernando Martinez

The Mets had high hopes for this prospect at one point, and to be fair he is just 22 years old, but so far the results have been disappointing. Scouts are now wavering on whether or not Martinez will ever be a star, and he has been limited to a total of 152 games the past two years because of injury. He is a purely speculative investment at this point of his development.

Willie Bloomquist

After a career best 25 thefts in 2009, Willie fell back to earth dipping into single digits. Given that he has hit .264 with 13 homers in his career, steals, and multi-position eligibility are the only reasons to draft this guy. If he doesn't bring the steals there is no reason to roster him. He has averaged 14 steals a season since 2004, so perhaps a slight rebound is in the cards.

Eric Patterson

Speed is this guy's calling card. Eric has stolen as many as 49 bases in a season ('09), and he also owns a .300+ average during his minor league career. His value is also enhanced if he qualifies at second base. Patterson has only 419 at-bats in his career but he has stolen 27 bases, so keep an eye on his playing time for single league scenarios.



Brandon Moss

Moss has yet to gain his footing in the majors but he did punish pitcher's at Triple-A last season with 22 homers and 96 RBI. However, he hit only .266 thanks in part to his poor 0.36 BB/K mark. To put it simply, Moss doesn't do anything that well in the eyes of scouts, so he is going to have to find a manager who loves his effort to get a shot at regular work.

Willy Taveras

A massive stolen base weapon a couple of years ago, Willy has fallen to the realm of irrelevance in near record time. Of course, that's what happens when you knock in 19 runs and post a .272 OBP over a two year period. If Willy can somehow wrangle a significant role he will have value, but don't bet on that happening cause it won't happen in 2011.

Ryan Church

This ship sailed a long time ago. Per 162 games, Church has hit an average of 33 doubles a year. That's good. On the down side he owns a career .264/.336/.431 line that includes only one season of more than 115 games played. Once upon a time Church had a bright future, but at this point the best he can hope to do is to emulate Mark Kotsay.

Brett Carroll

When you have only 283 at-bats and you are 27 years old, you get a pretty decent idea where you sit with an organization. At the same time Carroll has some power, thought it's been a few years since We've seen him play enough to remember. He could crank out a 20 homer campaign with work, but he could also easily get less than 150 at-bats.

Josh Reddick

Reddick was pressed into duty with seemingly every player on the Red Sox roster on the DL. After a rather unimpressive effort at Triple-A (.266-18-65-59 in 114 games) it's not at all surprising that his performance in the bigs was also lacking. Reddick grades out as a prospect with a lot of tools, but he currently is lacking the necessary refinement.

Layne Nix

Nix didn't play much last year, but when he was on the field he was particularly effective, especially when he was utilized on the road (.313/.384/.552). However, his performance took a backseat to his '09 power effort leaving many owners bummed. The power should return a bit, but it will likely be at the expense of his batting average which sits at .243 for his career.



Randy Winn

One of the better switch hitters in modern times, He was at one point a solid 10/20 performer who could hit you at least .285. Those days are long gone. At this point it would be a minor miracle if he convinced any team to give him even 300 plate appearances, so you would be wiser to spend your last round selection on a youngster with some upside.

Jose Guillen

What a classy guy. Already fully implicated the Mitchell Report for HGH, Guillen was involved in yet another HGH incident in '10, though at least this time he was smart enough to have the stuff sent in his wife's name. At this point there is no telling what, if anything, he will be able to offer in 2011. Considering his sorted past, a full-time job is impossible to posit.

Gary Mathews Jr.

The year was 2006. The Cardinals were World Champions, Steve Irwin aka the Crocodile Hunter passed away, and Mathews was a fantasy force (.313-19-79-102-10). Though that wasn't that long ago, it seems like eons ago for Gary, a broken down shell of his former self. Mathews has no chance of returning anything but the smallest reward for a last round investment in league specific setups.

Ray Flowers can be heard daily on Sirius/XM Radio on The Fantasy Drive, 5-8 PM Eastern, on Sirius 211 and XM 147. Ray's baseball analysis can be found at www.baseballguys.com and his minute to minute musings can be located at the <http://twitter.com/BaseballGuys> .



By Ray Flowers

DESIGNATED HITTER CAPSULES

Vladimir Guerrero

Showing he was far from finished, Bad Vlad hit .300 for the 13th time in 14 seasons. Vladimir also reached 27 homers and 91 RBI for the 10th straight season in which he came to the plate 500 times. He doesn't steal bases anymore, and there are concerns about his ability to play every day (he had a .748 OPS in the second half), but the bottom line is he can still hit and he should do quite well in his new home in Baltimore.

Adam Lind

A fantasy darling in 2009, Lind was cursed repeatedly in '10 for his dreadful production. One can posit some back luck as a partial cause, his BABIP rate dipped despite a career average line drive rate, but his K-rate was a career worst – a quarter of his at-bats actually. It remains to be seen if his homer total will return to the mid 30's since it looks like his '09 HR/F rate was a slight outlier.

David Ortiz

He continued his maddening trend of starting off the year slowly, but in the end it was another productive season for the BoSox slugger. Ortiz has been in Boston for eight years and in each of those seasons he has hit at least 23 homers while producing 89 RBI. His average has really fallen off the past three years, but he'll likely once again be a solid homer, RBI man.

Hideki Matsui

Signed to a mere \$4.25 million one year deal by the Athletics, Matsui should be a solid option at the plate. In each of the last five seasons that he has racked up 450 at-bats he has hit at least .271 with 21 homers and 84 RBI, and that doesn't include a sixth year when he hit .287 with 16 homers and 106 RBI. Boring for sure, but Matsui is still a solid option with the lumber.

Jim Thome

Coming off a campaign in which he produced just the third season in baseball history of 25 homers in fewer than 280 at-bats, it is clear that this lumberjack can still jack the ball. So effective was Thome that he produced the fourth best OPS and third best SLG of his distinguished career. When he plays he will go deep, but you have to be concerned about his playing time.



Jack Cust

Cust will fight for at-bats in the Pacific Northwest a year after failing to hit 25 homers for the first time in four seasons. Cust walked and struck out like he always does, but the lack of long ball power was a big surprise. That trend may not turn around in a difficult yard to go deep in. Lost in all of that is the fact that Cust hit a career best .272, though that's hardly promising on its own.

Nick Johnson

At some point you have to realize that *She's Just Not That Into You* (shameless movie reference). Johnson is a talented on base machine, but he has about as much chance of staying healthy long enough to be a fantasy weapon as I do of exactly predicting his at-bat total (good luck getting within 100). You should only call out Johnson's name on draft day if you are a masochist.

Travis Hafner

From 2004-07 Hafner averaged 32 homers and 109 RBI a year. The last three years he has produced 34 homers and 123 RBI – in 932 at-bats. Shoulder woes have ruined what was once a plentiful offensive skill set, and there is no turning back that clock. Give him credit – he has produced two solid seasons the last two years – but that doesn't equate to fantasy gold.

Hank Blalock

How quickly can someone go from hero to zero? Just ask Mr. Blalock. Hank had 25 homers just two years ago, but last year he was unable to convince anyone to give him a shot at substantial work in the bigs. At this point it seems a long shot that Blalock will pick up enough at-bats to be of value even in a league specific scenario, so don't waste a draft pick on him.

Willy Aybar

A part-timer the past two years, his performance those two campaigns was actually solid given that he hit 18 homers, knocked in 84 runs and scored 60 times. At the same time, he hit only .242, had a .702 OPS – below the league average of .751 – and just doesn't appear, at 28 years of age, that he will ever evolve into more than what he currently is – a part-timer.