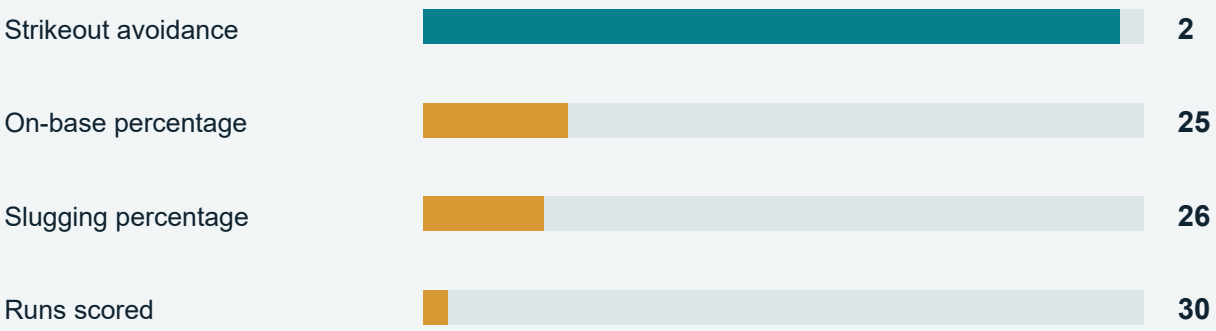
Toronto needs damage, then depth

A full Blue Jays review for 2027

Richard Brown | Stadium & Street | October 30, 2026

Completed 2026 regular-season data. Roster and market checks: October 30. Independent analysis and proposed decisions, not a club announcement.

CONTACT WAS NOT THE MISSING INGREDIENT



MLB rank: 1 is best. Bar length represents rank, not a performance gap.

Source: MLB StatsAPI, 2026 regular season. Checked October 30, 2026.

1. The decision

Toronto should pursue a targeted retool: buy a substantial corner-outfield bat, add a starter who can carry a meaningful workload, and preserve enough depth to avoid turning every short start into a bullpen emergency. The first expenditure should address damage and reaching base. This was the lowest-scoring team in baseball, even though only one club struck out less often. Contact was already present. Too much of it produced too little. [1,2]

Seiya Suzuki is the preferred hitting target in this review. Michael King is a conditional starting-pitching target, with a strict price limit and a fair allowance for regression. Steven Kwan is a secondary trade inquiry, not the centerpiece. His on-base ability and defense would help, but Toronto needs power, and a trade would consume talent as well as payroll. No asking price or willingness to deal is assumed. [3,4,5,6]

The working budget is an additional $46-58 million in annual salary commitments across the primary hitter, starter and depth purchases. That is this review's allocation, not ownership's approved budget or an estimate of final contracts. It requires a materially larger payroll than the current public estimate. If that allocation is unavailable, buy the hitter first, use the shorter pitching alternative in Plan B, and accept the remaining risk openly.

Do not trade the best long-horizon prospects merely to make the winter look decisive. Do not count rehabilitating pitchers as guaranteed opening-day innings. Do not make a full-season projection out of Brett Bateman's 181 major-league plate appearances. And do not let the size of Vladimir Guerrero Jr.'s contract obscure either his disappointing 2026 or the evidence that supports some recovery.

The case against another substantial investment is strong: the club already carries expensive commitments, several important players have uncertain workloads, and its two most effective relievers could allow more runs next year even while pitching well. That is why this recommendation has price ceilings, a fallback and a midseason exit decision. It is a plan to improve the roster's chances, not a forecast of an October finish.

2. What the season actually established

Toronto finished 79-83, fifth in the AL East and five games behind the final wild-card position. Its 648 runs scored and 694 allowed produced a minus-46 differential. The standings suggest proximity. The underlying scoring balance says the club needs a real improvement, not simply the same season with better timing. [1,2]

Measure	2026 Toronto	MLB rank
Record / run differential	79-83 / -46	5th AL East
Runs / home runs	648 / 152	30th / 30th
OBP / slugging	.310 / .381	25th / 26th
OPS	.691	28th
Strikeouts / walks	1,149 / 459	2nd fewest / 29th most
ERA / runs allowed	3.90 / 694	9th / 10th fewest
Walks allowed	594	24th fewest
Starter / relief innings	749.1 / 686.2	Role split, not rank

The offense's .310 on-base percentage ranked 25th; its .381 slugging ranked 26th. The 152 home runs ranked last. There were only 459 walks, second fewest. Low strikeout totals can be valuable, but the next hitter must add something beyond putting another ball in play. A lineup that rarely walks and rarely drives the ball gives itself little margin when singles fail to cluster.

The pitching picture is more encouraging, but incomplete. Toronto's 3.90 ERA ranked ninth and its 694 runs allowed ranked tenth. It also issued 594 walks, the seventh-most total. The club can preserve good run prevention while improving command and workload distribution. It should not assume a repeat of every favorable run-prevention outcome.

Against left-handed pitchers, Toronto had a .298 OBP and .361 slugging percentage over 1,777 PA. Against right-handers, it had a .315 OBP and .390 slugging percentage over 4,267 PA. Both sides need improvement; the left-handed pitching split makes a credible right-handed bat especially useful. These are team results against pitcher handedness, not proof that every individual needs a platoon partner. [2]

3. A run target that can be tested

A practical planning objective is to reach roughly 720-740 runs while keeping runs allowed in the 670-700 range. Those are desired outcomes, not statistical projections. They would change the run differential from minus-46 to between plus-20 and plus-70. Reaching only the low end would still leave little cushion for a difficult division or a strong wild-card field.

The scale matters. Adding 30 runs to the offense while allowing 20 more leaves a minus-36 differential. Even a useful acquisition can disappear inside deterioration elsewhere. The preferred plan therefore pairs a batting upgrade with innings protection and treats internal recovery separately from purchased production.

Illustrative outcome	Runs scored	Runs allowed	Differential
2026 actual	648	694	-46
Offense +30, prevention -20	678	714	-36
Low end of desired outcome	720	700	+20
Middle desired outcome	730	685	+45
High end of desired outcome	740	670	+70

These scenarios use the same 2026 baseline. They do not assign a WAR value to a signing, turn a run total into a promised win count, or add a player's entire historical production as if he were replacing an empty roster spot. New players replace someone else's plate appearances or innings. The relevant gain is the difference in those opportunities, after lost defense, displaced at-bats and outgoing talent are considered.

4. The current roster is different from the season roster

The October 30 official roster feed contains 39 names, including seven on the 60-day injured list. That is 32 other entries plus seven IL60 players, not 39 occupied places on a settled opening-day roster. Offseason reinstatements, options, arbitration, minor-league assignments and acquisitions still have to be resolved. An Active label in this snapshot is a roster designation, not a guarantee of health or a major-league job. [7]

The October 29 transaction log records eight free-agent elections, including George Springer, Shane Bieber, Max Scherzer and Patrick Corbin. Kevin Gausman, Daulton Varsho and Jeff Hoffman departed earlier. Those names can explain the 2026 season; they cannot quietly supply the 2027 rotation, center field or late innings. Arjun Nimmala is also outside the current Toronto prospect plan. [7]

Historical contributor	Toronto 2026 sample	October 30 distinction
George Springer	517 PA, 15 HR	Elected free agency Oct. 29
Shane Bieber	55.2 IP, 4.37 ERA	Elected free agency Oct. 29
Max Scherzer	84.2 IP, 5.74 ERA	Elected free agency Oct. 29
Patrick Corbin	80.0 IP, 5.51 ERA	Elected free agency Oct. 29
Kevin Gausman	127.1 IP, 4.38 ERA	Traded; outside returning roster
Daulton Varsho	365 PA, 7 HR	Traded; outside returning roster
Jeff Hoffman	48.0 IP, 3.94 ERA	Traded; outside returning roster

Spencer Arrighetti, Jose Soriano, Josh Smith and John Klein have different Toronto-only and full-season lines because they played elsewhere during 2026. Their evaluations below use combined major-league seasons where specified. Their contributions to Toronto's team totals remain Toronto-only. That distinction is especially important for Soriano: his 177.1 full-season innings offer a different workload baseline from his 54.1 Toronto innings.

Bo Bichette is a Mets player in the official current records, not a Toronto free-agent reunion option. This report does not treat a former Blue Jays identity as present availability. [7]

5. Guerrero: a rebound case, not an excuse

Guerrero hit .260/.332/.356 with nine home runs in 609 PA. That production would be a problem for any everyday first baseman expected to anchor the lineup. His 2024 and 2025 seasons are useful context, but the organization has to diagnose the 2026 version rather than budget for the best one. [3]

Season	PA	OBP / SLG	HR	xSLG	Barrels / BIP
2024	697	.396 / .544	30	0.578	13.7%
2025	680	.381 / .467	23	0.506	12.2%
2026	609	.332 / .356	9	0.400	6.9%

Statcast supports a partial recovery case. His 2026 expected slugging was .400, above the actual .356, and expected wOBA was .331 against an actual .305. But the underlying quality also fell: his barrel rate declined from 13.7% in 2024 to 12.2% in 2025 and 6.9% in 2026. The expected numbers do not say that a .544 slugging season is waiting to reappear automatically. [4]

The pitch-type evidence makes the development discussion concrete. Guerrero's 2026 wOBA against sliders was .190, with a .279 expected mark; against cutters it was .159, with a .302 expected mark. Against four-seamers and sinkers, his actual marks were .384 and .385. These are outcomes on plate appearances ending with those pitches, and their samples differ. They justify a focused review of pitch selection and contact against lateral movement. They do not establish a mechanical defect from a spreadsheet. [4]

Keep him at first base, where the current range table credits six outs above average. Make his recovery an internal project rather than the entire offseason. Adding another hitter who can walk and drive mistakes gives Toronto a second way to score if Guerrero improves only modestly.

6. Okamoto supplies power; the infield still needs choices

Kazuma Okamoto's 33 home runs accounted for 21.7% of Toronto's total. His .452 slugging percentage was supported by .446 expected slugging and a 13.1% barrel rate. The power is a more defensible foundation than a hope that a low-power player will abruptly change character. His 183 strikeouts in 636 PA, however, leave a 28.8% strikeout rate and a .310 OBP. [2,3,4]

He did substantial damage against four-seam fastballs: a .404 wOBA and .392 expected wOBA in that pitch category. Cutters were a weaker area at .209 and .228. A 38.8% whiff rate on cutter swings gives the coaching staff a defined problem to investigate. The response should preserve his best contact rather than pursue contact for its own sake.

Ernie Clement's .285 OBP over 621 PA and minus-five OAA complicate the case for simply returning every infielder to the same workload. His 58 strikeouts are excellent contact evidence; they do not erase the other results. Toronto should retain a multi-position role while making second-base playing time a competition, rather than guaranteeing another 600-plus PA at the outset.

Andres Gimenez is different. His .291 OBP and .359 slugging leave an offensive cost, but plus-19 OAA and 14 range runs prevented provide substantial evidence for keeping him in the middle infield. The recommendation is to preserve that defensive strength and buy offense elsewhere. Moving him solely to make a new acquisition fit must be evaluated as a defensive change, not a free gain. [3,4]

Josh Smith provides another infield candidate, but his full-season .203/.290/.321 line is not an established offensive upgrade. Charles McAdoo's 106 MLB PA and Sean Keys' 67 are auditions, not settled answers. Okamoto starts at third, Guerrero at first, Gimenez at shortstop, and Clement leads a second-base competition with Smith and the younger alternatives. Those are proposed assignments, not announced club roles.

7. Catching is a strength worth protecting

Alejandro Kirk hit .278/.351/.415 in 313 PA; Brandon Valenzuela hit .222/.307/.372 in 271. The current Statcast framing table credits Kirk with approximately 7.1 framing runs and Valenzuela with 8.3, over 1,918 and 1,906 shadow-zone taken pitches respectively. The similar opportunity counts make the comparison useful, while the metric remains one part of catching defense. [3,4,8]

Start with a workload model of roughly 95 catching starts for Kirk and 67 for Valenzuela, then adjust to actual availability and performance. This is a proposed allocation totaling 162, not a claim that either can safely handle a specified load. Keep some of Kirk's offensive value through carefully chosen DH appearances, while recognizing that DH is also needed by the corner bats.

Valenzuela's .313 expected wOBA, slightly above his actual .303, gives the second catcher a stronger underlying batting case than the .222 average alone suggests. Kirk's .308 expected wOBA was below his actual .333. Neither result calls for a wholesale reversal of roles. Together they support a credible tandem without paying for a third established starter's salary.

Shawn Ross is on the current roster but has only five major-league PA in the saved season data. Keep a third-catcher depth path in the organization; do not count a five-PA sample as insurance equivalent to an experienced major-league backup. Framing does not include the whole throwing, blocking, receiving or game-calling contribution, and this report does not invent values for those missing components.

8. The outfield: one purchase, one competition, one health contingency

Bateman earned a meaningful opportunity. His .329 average and .402 OBP came with a .312 expected wOBA against a .368 actual mark. A 1.6% barrel rate and .338 expected slugging put a limit on the early offensive excitement. His plus-four OAA in 113 opportunities is encouraging range evidence, but not a full-season defensive guarantee. [3,4]

Use him as the leading center-field candidate, with a real spring competition and a second capable center-field option. Nathan Lukes offers a useful left-handed alternative: .277/.327/.387 over 450 PA and plus-two OAA. His .293 expected wOBA compared with .317 actual suggests caution about making the 2026 line the minimum expectation.

Myles Straw's decision is a cost comparison. His $8 million club option carries a $1.75 million buyout. [9] That leaves a nominal $6.25 million difference before any other contractual offsets. This review favors declining the option and pursuing a less expensive center-field depth solution, provided the club can actually secure one. His plus-four OAA is useful; a .304 OBP and .342 slugging make him difficult to justify as a substantial offensive allocation.

Anthony Santander, Addison Barger and Jonatan Clase remain on the official IL60 snapshot. Build conditional roles for them, with a fallback that works when they are unavailable. Public reporting describes recovery schedules, but the roster decision needs current baseball availability, not an assumption that a calendar estimate is a promise. [7,10]

Santander would receive the first DH opportunity when available, with occasional outfield use determined by the club's evaluation. A healthy Barger competes in right field and at third; he does not receive a guaranteed 2027 production line from 28 PA in 2026. Yohendrick Pinango's .396 slugging and 8% barrel rate are worth developing, while minus-four OAA in 87 opportunities argues for careful defensive placement. Davis Schneider's 29 walks in 156 PA show a skill, but his .145 average and 51 strikeouts make him a specialist candidate rather than a lineup solution.

9. A lineup that fits on the field

The proposed alignment separates ordinary starters, competition and contingencies. It also prevents the same DH plate appearances from being promised to Santander, Suzuki, Guerrero, Kirk and a returning Barger at once.

Position	Proposed lead	Alternative / condition
C	Kirk / Valenzuela	95 / 67 starts as a workload model
1B	Guerrero	Okamoto or Keys as needed
2B	Clement leads competition	Smith; McAdoo must earn a role
SS	Gimenez	Clement / Smith coverage
3B	Okamoto	Barger when available; Keys audition
LF	Lukes / available Santander	Pinango; defense affects assignment
CF	Bateman leads competition	Secure second CF if Straw declined
RF	Suzuki if acquired	Healthy Barger; Lukes / Pinango
DH	Santander when available	Rotate rest; no duplicate PA promises

Under Plan A, Suzuki is primarily a corner outfielder, not an expensive DH-only addition. His 2026 plus-five OAA and four range runs prevented over 263 opportunities support considering that role, though his new club would still need its own field evaluation. DH time remains a relief valve for the rest of the roster.

The batting-order priority is to put dependable on-base skill ahead of the best power. Suzuki and a recovering Guerrero belong near the top; Okamoto belongs where his extra-base hits can bring runners home. Bateman's place should depend on whether he sustains quality at-bats after pitchers adjust. Do not give him a permanent leadoff assignment merely because .402 is the largest OBP in a short season table.

Against left-handers, the right-handed acquisition supplies the most direct improvement without demanding an unverified platoon conversion from a young hitter. Against right-handers, Lukes, a healthy Santander, Bateman and Gimenez provide lineup flexibility. Individual handedness splits must be reviewed before deciding actual platoons; the team-level split alone is insufficient.

10. Range matters more than a clean-looking error column

OAA estimates outs made above or below an average defender given the opportunities. It is cumulative and position-sensitive. The associated range-run estimate is not total defensive value. The table here is the current full-season MLB view; Josh Smith's row spans two clubs. A missing value is not zero. [4]

Player	OAA opportunities	OAA	Range runs
Andres Gimenez	462	+19	+14
Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	321	+6	+4
Ernie Clement	566	-5	-4
Kazuma Okamoto	414	-2	-2
Myles Straw	217	+4	+4
Brett Bateman	113	+4	+4
Nathan Lukes	218	+2	+2
Yohendrick Pinango	87	-4	-4
Josh Smith (2 clubs)	206	-2	-2
Seiya Suzuki	263	+5	+4
Steven Kwan	378	+6	+5

The practical lesson is to preserve Gimenez's range, maintain credible center-field coverage, and avoid paying twice for a hitting gain that is partly surrendered in the field. Clement deserves a fair role competition because both sides of his 2026 record matter. Pinango's opportunity count is too small to call him permanently deficient, but large enough to make defensive development part of his job description.

There is no defensible single-number team upgrade from adding these rows. Changing positions changes opportunities. Catcher framing uses another scale and another responsibility. A new corner outfielder can change who plays DH or center field, and that displacement must be evaluated in the actual alignment.

11. Starting pitching: the innings shortage behind the ERA

Toronto received only 749.1 innings from starters, 4.63 per team start. The bullpen supplied 686.2 innings, 47.8% of the total. The 3.58 relief ERA was a major contribution, but that workload is a fragile way to operate a season. [2]

Cease is the rotation's strongest base: 169 innings, 239 strikeouts and a 2.40 ERA. His 2.92 expected ERA still supports an excellent season. The 78 walks are the opening for improvement. His slider generated a 44.2% whiff rate; the smaller changeup category generated 48.4%. The repertoire offers several ways to finish a hitter, but those rates should not be confused with the percentage of all pitches that produce a miss. [3,4]

Yesavage has a credible second-step case after 97.2 innings and a 3.69 ERA. His splitter and slider each generated whiff rates near 39%, and his expected ERA was 3.37. The 47 walks in 401 batters faced leave room to become more efficient. The workload plan should expand gradually from what he actually completed, rather than plug in 180 innings because the club needs them.

Soriano's full-season 177.1 innings matter after the trade, but so does his 4.45 expected ERA against a 3.91 actual mark. His Toronto segment was 54.1 innings with a 5.30 ERA. The larger sample supports his role; the smaller one is a reason to examine what changed, not an excuse to discard the full season. His curveball and splitter were stronger bat-missing weapons than his sinker. Command and pitch location remain central to translating those weapons into efficient starts.

Arrighetti's 110.2 combined innings came with a 4.96 ERA, 64 walks and a 5.30 expected ERA. His curveball produced a 40.3% whiff rate, but opponents' expected wOBA against his four-seamer was .424. Make him compete for the back of the rotation with a specific fastball and command improvement plan. His presence is depth, not proof the fourth and fifth jobs are solved.

12. A complete innings ledger

The central planning case below totals 1,440 innings, close to Toronto's 1,436 in 2026. Individual ranges are workload scenarios, not medical advice or independent projections. The ranges should not be summed as if every low or high outcome occurs together. Each inning appears only once in the central case.

Assignment, no duplicated innings	Scenario range	Central IP
Cease	150-185	170
Yesavage	115-160	145
Soriano	145-185	165
Acquired starter	130-180	160
Arrighetti / competing depth	70-150	100
Recovery / additional starter pool	70-200	130
Miles, swing role	65-110	85
Varland	60-75	70
Rogers	55-75	65
Fluharty	50-75	65
Fisher	50-85	65
Other bullpen / optionable depth	160-300	220
Total central case	Ranges not additive	1440

The acquired starter's 160 central-case innings replace 90 assigned to the Arrighetti/depth block and 70 assigned to the recovery/depth block in the no-acquisition case. They are not added on top of 1,440. The no-acquisition case therefore requires 190 innings from the former block and 200 from the latter, which exposes how much must go right without another established starter.

Berrios, Bowden Francis, Cody Ponce and Jake Bloss remain IL60 names in the current snapshot. Berrios' 2027 contract decision is also unresolved. Give none of them a guaranteed opening-day rotation slot. Any return contributes to the pooled depth allocation and reduces someone else's burden. It does not create a bonus layer of innings that can be counted twice. [7,9]

Spencer Miles' 95.2 innings and 2.73 ERA give him a useful swing role. His 3.06 expected ERA is supportive. Keep an 85-inning central allocation rather than force him into a single label. Braydon Fisher and Mason Fluharty can cover multiple innings when appropriate, but their own relief work should not simultaneously appear in a separate starting total.

EVERY INNING NEEDS AN OWNER



1,440 total innings. Central allocation only; not a workload guarantee.

Source: S&S scenarios informed by MLB 2026 workloads, October 30, 2026.

13. Protect the bullpen without buying a new closer

Louis Varland and Tyler Rogers combined for 149 innings with excellent results. Varland struck out 97 and walked 23; Rogers struck out 40 and walked 22. Their methods differ, and their value should not be reduced to a saves competition. The central plan uses them for 135 innings, modestly below their combined 2026 workload. [3]

Varland's 2.37 expected ERA and Rogers' 2.88 both sit above their actual 1.27 and 1.77. That does not make either season illegitimate. It does make a second consecutive sub-2.00 ERA from both an aggressive budget assumption. Better starting depth can matter more than another expensive ninth-inning name.

Fluharty's 2.83 expected ERA supports his 3.30 actual result, and he remains an important left-handed option. Fisher's 44 walks in 75.2 innings make strike throwing a priority despite a 3.21 ERA. Brendon Little struck out 44 in 28.1 innings but walked 25. His 3.32 expected ERA was far below the actual 6.35; the walk rate still makes him a volatile choice for inherited runners.

The lower-cost objective is to add strike-throwing depth and preserve a route for current organizational pitchers to win jobs. Cellucci, Rodriguez, Klein, Dallas, Lee and Tiedemann have small or mixed major-league samples. Their exact season lines are in the appendix. A scoreless September sample is not enough to award a full season of high-leverage work. [3]

14. The farm offers help, not an immediate cure

Toronto has several plausible internal contributors, but their jobs differ. Keys is a bat to evaluate against major-league pitching. McAdoo and Pinango are position-player depth with meaningful Triple-A samples. Dallas and Van Eyk can support a rotation-depth pool. Perry and Johnny King remain development investments with limited Double-A work. These are not interchangeable trade chips or interchangeable 2027 innings. [11,12]

Player / level	PA or IP	Results	Interpretation
Sean Keys / AAA	226 PA	.422 OBP / .622 SLG	Bat deserves extended evaluation
Sean Keys / AA	209 PA	.411 OBP / .581 SLG	14 additional HR at this level
Charles McAdoo / AAA	385 PA	.366 OBP / .465 SLG	Infield competition
Yohendrick Pinango / AAA	308 PA	.351 OBP / .455 SLG	Corner depth; defense matters
Chad Dallas / AAA	71.1 IP	3.15 ERA / 73 K	Depth, not guaranteed MLB starts
CJ Van Eyk / AAA	112.0 IP	4.02 ERA / 77 K	112 IP supports a depth role
Nolan Perry / AA	31.0 IP	2.32 ERA / 39 K	Limited upper-level sample
Johnny King / AA	21.1 IP	2.95 ERA / 27 K	Development, no MLB guarantee

Keys hit 28 home runs across Double-A and Triple-A, with on-base percentages above .400 at both levels. His 67 MLB PA were much less productive. That contrast supports another opportunity and an honest adjustment period. It does not support clearing an established position simply because the minor-league OPS is attractive.

McAdoo's 16 Triple-A homers and .366 OBP in 385 PA make him part of the infield competition. Pinango's .351 OBP and .455 slugging in 308 Triple-A PA supply another credible development path. The organization should define which defensive position each can hold before treating offense alone as a roster solution.

The current Pipeline top five are JoJo Parker, Nolan Perry, Johnny King, Cole Carlon and Will Brick. Parker is at High-A, Perry and Johnny King at Double-A, and Carlon and Brick at rookie level. Their published arrival estimates are developmental forecasts, not booking dates. The preferred spending plan avoids using this entire group to acquire one season of a complementary player. [11]

For Perry, 31 Double-A innings with 39 strikeouts and 15 walks are encouraging. For Johnny King, 21.1 Double-A innings with 27 strikeouts and 12 walks are also encouraging. Both remain small upper-level samples. Carry them as potential future alternatives, not the answer to an opening-day rotation shortfall.

15. Three acquisition files

Seiya Suzuki: the preferred bat

Suzuki's October 29 free-agent election is in the official transaction record. His 2026 season combined a .368 OBP, .473 slugging percentage, 26 home runs and 81 walks in 634 PA. His 2024 and 2025 lines show that the power and walks did not originate in a brief late-season streak. [3,7]

The caution is in the underlying contact: .340 expected wOBA against .366 actual, and .427 expected slugging against .473 actual. He should be priced as a good hitter with regression risk, not a guaranteed repeat of the most favorable outcome. His plus-five OAA in the current full-season table supports a corner-field fit, while age and physical evaluation still matter over a multi-year contract. [4]

The proposed ceiling is three guaranteed years and $60-72 million, with a $20-24 million annual planning charge. This is a negotiating limit for the analysis, not an agent demand, market forecast or reported offer. If the bidding requires substantially more term, use the money differently. Do not turn one good fit into a requirement at any price.

Michael King: useful volume, conditional availability

MLB.com reports King's opt-out; the club has not confirmed it. [5] The official person feed still identifies San Diego, so this is a conditional market path, not a completed change of affiliation.

King threw 185 innings in 32 starts with a 3.21 ERA in 2026, after 73.1 innings in 2025 and 173.2 in 2024. The recent volume is valuable. The 2026 strikeout-minus-walk rate was 11.8%, and expected ERA was 4.42. A buyer should pay for credible rotation work, not assume it is acquiring a second Cease. [3,4]

Use a three-year ceiling of $66-78 million, or $22-26 million annually for planning. A club medical review and confirmation of market status are necessary before any actual commitment. If a fourth guaranteed year or a richer annual price is required, prefer the shorter-term volume alternative. Toronto already has enough unresolved future pitching workload to make restraint valuable.

Steven Kwan: a secondary inquiry

Kwan is currently with Cleveland and is under club control through 2027. [6,7] His .382 OBP, 85 walks and plus-six OAA would improve particular parts of Toronto's roster. His three home runs and .349 slugging would not directly solve the largest power deficit. [3,4]

A trade makes sense only if the acquisition price leaves Toronto able to add power and pitching. Reserve $10-13 million as an analyst's arbitration-cost envelope, not an agreed salary. Do not offer Parker, Perry or Johnny King merely to acquire this one complementary season. That is a proposed Toronto limit, not evidence that Cleveland would accept a smaller package. If the actual asking price requires a core player or multiple leading prospects, end the inquiry.

16. Contracts, options and the correct financial base

Guerrero's agreement runs 14 years for $500 million. Cease's is seven years for $210 million; Okamoto's is four years for $60 million. Kirk's five-year extension is worth $58 million, Santander's five-year agreement $92.5 million, Gimenez's seven-year agreement $106.5 million, Rogers' three-year deal $37 million and Ponce's three-year deal $30 million. These are nominal contract guarantees from their respective announcements, not a single-year cash requirement. [13-20]

RosterResource estimates Toronto's 2027 payroll at $249 million. Its annual columns include prorated signing bonuses and are not a cash-flow statement. The table below preserves that planning basis, with rounded figures. Arbitration figures are modeled estimates, not signed contracts. Service-time information on the source is dated through 2025, so it is not used here to manufacture exact remaining option years or 2027 free-agent dates. [21]

Player / category	2027 estimate, $M	Basis / unresolved point
Guerrero	40.21	Salary plus prorated bonus
Cease	33.29	Same basis; deferrals affect cash
Gimenez	23.57	Same basis
Berrios	24.71	Pending opt-out decision
Okamoto	17.25	Salary plus prorated bonus
Santander	21.00	Same basis; cash differs
Rogers	13.67	Salary plus prorated bonus
Kirk	12.33	Same basis
Ponce	12.00	Same basis
Straw	8.00	Option, not unconditional
Eight modeled arbitration cases	27.30	Unsettled; aggregate estimate
Other costs / pre-arbitration	Included in source estimate	Not a complete cash ledger
Source headline total	249.00	Rounded public estimate, not budget

Cease illustrates the accounting problem. Reporting describes $30 million in 2027 salary, including $9 million deferred; the $21 million non-deferred salary component is neither his complete annual cash cost nor his tax charge. [22] His nominal guarantee, annual accounting allocation and discounted tax valuation are distinct. Conflicting public tax valuations are not resolved by selecting whichever number leaves more apparent spending room.

Berrios remains in the budget pending his decision. Straw's option must be treated as a decision, not an unconditional commitment. Declining it replaces an $8 million option with a $1.75 million buyout before any other offsets, reducing this illustrative baseline by $6.25 million. The adjusted planning starting point is therefore approximately $242.75 million. [9,21]

That starting point is still an estimate. It does not establish ownership's spending limit, operating cash, profit, a tax bill or space under an assumed 2027 threshold. Any real transaction must also account for incentives, benefit charges, retention or reimbursement terms, and applicable compensation rules. They are not invented as zero-dollar costs here.

17. Plan A, Plan B and Plan C

All three plans start from the same approximate $242.75 million planning base after the proposed Straw decision, assume Berrios remains under contract, and use annual salary commitments rather than tax AAV or actual payment timing. Signing bonuses, deferrals or back-loading would require a new reconciliation. The ranges are budgeting choices, not market quotations. [21]

Plan	Annual additions	Illustrative total	What it buys
A: targeted retool	$46-58M	$288.75-300.75 M	Primary bat, starter, depth
B: shorter pitching term	$32-42M	$274.75-284.75 M	Primary bat, volume alternative, depth
C: preserve flexibility	$8-14M	$250.75-256.75 M	Depth and developmental opportunity

Plan A is recommended only if ownership can support it and both primary targets satisfy the price and availability conditions. Its $46-58 million addition comprises $20-24 million for the bat, $22-26 million for the starter and $4-8 million for depth. It protects the top prospect group and spends cash to address two different weaknesses. The failure mode is expensive regression or another year of limited availability.

Plan B keeps the $20-24 million batting allocation, replaces the premium starter pursuit with an $8-12 million short-term volume allocation, and uses $4-6 million for depth. Its $32-42 million addition sacrifices some pitching certainty to reduce long-term exposure. An unsigned role is an unresolved need, not a fictional player who can be counted at a chosen price. If the market cannot supply that role, reduce the claimed coverage and move to Plan C.

Plan C adds $8-14 million in short-term depth, gives the young hitters a defined opportunity and holds major prospect capital. Its cost is competitive: the present offense may remain too weak, and the pitching plan still needs a large recovery/depth contribution. This is the honest fallback when the desired players, price or ownership allocation are unavailable. It should not be presented to fans as the same contention plan at a discount.

Kwan is an alternative inquiry, not an extra acquisition silently added to every budget. If he becomes the chosen outfielder, recalculate the salary, talent cost, lost playing time and remaining power need before proceeding.

18. The strongest case against the recommendation

The strongest objection is that Toronto could spend toward $300 million on this accounting basis and still have an ordinary offense, a fragile rotation and limited midseason flexibility. Suzuki's expected production trails his actual 2026 output. King has a large gap between ERA and expected ERA. Guerrero may improve without returning to his 2024 level. Several existing salaries cannot be wished away.

That objection changes the conditions, not the diagnosis. Toronto's current core includes useful range defense, a capable catching tandem, an excellent lead starter and power from Okamoto. A complete dismantling would discard those strengths while the existing guarantees remain. A selective retool is defensible if it adds skills that are missing and refuses to spend beyond its limits.

The countercase wins if the acquisition prices exceed the ceilings, the health assessment leaves too little credible starting coverage, or the club's approved budget cannot support both the hitter and basic pitching depth. It also wins if actual trade offers provide a stronger long-term return than this review can establish publicly. Those conditions require a different plan; they do not justify inventing an available bargain.

19. Execution and the point at which to change course

First resolve the actual option and tender decisions, with a roster count that includes upcoming reinstatements. Retain financial room for a center-field fallback if Straw is declined. Establish which injured players can participate in baseball activities and which roles need independent coverage. Public estimates are not a substitute for the club's medical and performance evaluations.

Next pursue the bat and starter in parallel within their separate ceilings. Protect against a winter in which a prolonged premium pitching pursuit consumes the money or timing needed to address the league's lowest-scoring offense. Confirm any applicable draft or international-pool consequences before treating a free-agent agreement as a cash-only acquisition.

At spring camp, use position-specific decisions: Bateman's center-field readiness, second-base competition, Barger and Santander availability, and Arrighetti's fastball/command progress. Give Keys and McAdoo substantive playing time without guaranteeing a major-league role from minor-league numbers. Preserve a third-catcher path and at least two alternatives beyond the nominal five starters.

During the season, track the offense's walks, extra-base damage and strikeout rate together. Review the starting innings share and walk rate, not just wins or the closer's save total. Compare Guerrero's barrel rate and performance against breaking/cutting pitches with the dated baseline. Assess young hitters over meaningful opportunities while retaining scouting context; no one number is an automatic demotion trigger.

By the midseason trade decision, buy only if actual performance and remaining depth support the case. If the offense remains near the bottom and the innings plan depends on repeated emergency starts, protect future value and consider selling shorter-control assets. No public evidence establishes another club's offer, so this report does not invent a return package or claim a trade will be available.

For 2028-29, the objective is to let real development replace short-term purchases. Perry, Johnny King and Parker need development space; Keys, McAdoo and the current young pitchers need evaluated roles. A multi-year free-agent agreement should bridge that process without obliging the club to keep an underperforming veteran in the lineup solely to defend the original decision.

20. What would make this a better club

The most persuasive 2027 Blue Jays would draw more walks, turn more contact into extra bases, preserve their middle-infield and catching strengths, and ask less of the bullpen. That combination is more concrete than hoping that several familiar names return to their best seasons together.

Buy the missing skill first. Put a price on the pitching insurance. Keep the young players' opportunities real. If the market prevents the preferred plan, say exactly which weakness remains. Toronto can build a more credible contender from this roster, but it has to begin with the team that actually exists.

Appendix A. Current player register and role baseline

Official October 30 roster designations. MLB person IDs disambiguate names. Season lines below are full-season major-league totals, including other clubs where applicable. A dash means no MLB sample in the saved season data. IL60 identifies the current 60-day injured-list designation. Active is the feed label, not a medical clearance or guaranteed opening-day job. [3,7]

Current player / MLB ID	Official status	2026 MLB sample / proposed role
Addison Barger / 680718	IL60	28 PA; .214 OBP, .091 SLG; Conditional RF / 3B
Alejandro Kirk / 672386	Active	313 PA; .351 OBP, .415 SLG; Catching tandem
Andres Gimenez / 665926	Active	508 PA; .291 OBP, .359 SLG; Shortstop
Anthony Santander / 623993	IL60	No 2026 MLB sample; Conditional DH
Bowden Francis / 670102	IL60	No 2026 MLB sample; Recovery pool
Brandon Valenzuela / 678218	Active	271 PA; .307 OBP, .372 SLG; Catching tandem
Braydon Fisher / 680755	Active	75.2 IP; 3.21 ERA; Multi-inning relief
Brendan Cellucci / 676454	Active	8.2 IP; 0.00 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Brendon Little / 663893	Active	28.1 IP; 6.35 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Brett Bateman / 703520	Active	181 PA; .402 OBP, .424 SLG; Center-field competition
CJ Van Eyk / 669310	Active	11.2 IP; 5.40 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Chad Dallas / 689149	Active	14.1 IP; 5.02 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Charles McAdoo / 807727	Active	106 PA; .302 OBP, .392 SLG; Infield competition
Chase Lee / 695445	Active	9.2 IP; 6.52 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Cody Ponce / 664074	IL60	2.1 IP; 3.86 ERA; Recovery pool
Davis Schneider / 676914	Active	156 PA; .310 OBP, .315 SLG; Specialist competition
Dylan Cease / 656302	Active	169.0 IP; 2.40 ERA; Rotation lead
Ernie Clement / 676391	Active	621 PA; .285 OBP, .364 SLG; Second-base competition
Jake Bloss / 814005	IL60	No 2026 MLB sample; Recovery pool
John Klein / 804619	Active	8.1 IP; 2.16 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Jonatan Clase / 682729	IL60	25 PA; .360 OBP, .545 SLG; Conditional outfield depth
Jose Berrios / 621244	IL60	No 2026 MLB sample; Recovery pool; option unresolved
Jose Rodriguez / 692064	Active	4.2 IP; 0.00 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Jose Soriano / 667755	Active	177.1 IP; 3.91 ERA; Rotation
Josh Smith / 669701	Active	243 PA; .290 OBP, .321 SLG; Utility competition
Kazuma Okamoto / 672960	Active	636 PA; .310 OBP, .452 SLG; Third base power
Louis Varland / 686973	Active	78.0 IP; 1.27 ERA; Late innings
Mason Fluharty / 689254	Active	62.2 IP; 3.30 ERA; Left-handed relief

Current player / MLB ID	Official status	2026 MLB sample / proposed role
Myles Straw / 664702	Active	330 PA; .304 OBP, .342 SLG; Club-option decision
Nathan Lukes / 664770	Active	450 PA; .327 OBP, .387 SLG; Outfield rotation
Ricky Tiedemann / 694357	Active	6.0 IP; 1.50 ERA; Compete for organizational depth
Sean Keys / 815873	Active	67 PA; .242 OBP, .328 SLG; Corner-infield audition
Shawn Ross / 676566	Active	5 PA; .200 OBP, .800 SLG; Third-catcher depth
Spencer Arrighetti / 681293	Active	110.2 IP; 4.96 ERA; Rotation competition
Spencer Miles / 693686	Active	95.2 IP; 2.73 ERA; Swing role
Trey Yesavage / 702056	Active	97.2 IP; 3.69 ERA; Rotation development
Tyler Rogers / 643511	Active	71.0 IP; 1.77 ERA; Late innings
Vladimir Guerrero Jr. / 665489	Active	609 PA; .332 OBP, .356 SLG; First base anchor
Yohendrick Pinango / 682818	Active	180 PA; .306 OBP, .396 SLG; Corner-outfield development

Appendix B. Definitions and limits

The performance cutoff is the completed 2026 regular season, game type R. Team tables use Toronto-only totals. Individual profiles explicitly use full-season MLB totals where a player changed clubs. Minor-league rows are team-and-level-specific and are not MLB-equivalent projections. October 30 roster and transaction observations can change after publication.

Pitching notation uses outs: 97.2 means 97 innings and two outs, not 97.2 decimal innings. The innings ledger converts to outs before addition. Toronto's team earned-run total is 622, while individual pitcher and starter/reliever split totals sum to 624. Team and individual earned-run accounting can differ. The report preserves each official definition and does not force their ERA components to reconcile by changing the data.

wOBA weights offensive events by run value. Statcast expected wOBA and expected slugging describe the quality of recorded contact with their published inputs; they are not predictions of next season. Expected ERA expresses expected wOBA on an ERA scale. Whiff percentage is misses divided by swings, not misses divided by all pitches. Barrel rate here is barrels per batted ball, not per PA. [4,23]

OAA and range runs are cumulative opportunity-based measures. They do not capture all defense or eliminate uncertainty in small samples. Catcher framing runs are a separate estimate based on receiving called pitches; they are not a complete catching value. Neither range nor framing is automatically carried forward as a 2027 projection. [4,8]

Ranks use all 30 MLB teams with ties sharing a rank. Lower is better for strikeout totals on offense, ERA, runs allowed, walks allowed, homers allowed and WHIP; higher is better for the other displayed measures. The run scenarios are explicit arithmetic, not a fitted forecast. No win probability, championship probability, profit, attendance uplift or causal coaching gain is claimed.

All proposed contract ranges and playing-time assignments are this review's judgments. They are not reported offers, agreements, club budgets, medical forecasts or evidence that a trade partner will cooperate. Costs use U.S. dollars. Public financial estimates are kept separate from actual cash flow and competitive-balance-tax liability.

Appendix C. Sources

[1] MLB standings, 2026 regular season
Completed season; collected Oct. 29
Open source

[2] MLB team totals and role / handedness splits
StatsAPI season and statSplits records, collected Oct. 29-30
Open source

[3] MLB player season statistics, 2024-2026
Full-season totals; Toronto-only splits retained separately
Open source

[4] Baseball Savant: expected statistics, OAA and pitch arsenals
2026; underlying 2024-25 batting tables also checked Oct. 30
Open source

[5] MLB.com: Michael King market-status report
Checked Oct. 30; source report, club confirmation pending
Open source

[6] MLB.com: Kwan arbitration agreement and control
Jan. 8, 2026; checked Oct. 30
Open source

[7] Official current roster, player records and transactions
October 30 roster; transactions through October 30; external clubs checked separately
Open source

[8] Statcast catcher framing and definition
2026; definition: mlb.com/glossary/statcast/catcher-framing
Open source

[9] MLB options and opt-outs register
October 30 status; Straw and Berrios decisions
Open source

[10] Blue Jays injury and roster report
Dated Sept. 28 report; not used as a medical clearance
Open source

[11] MLB Pipeline Blue Jays prospect register
Current organization / levels checked October 30
Open source

[12] Official MiLB team-season records
Buffalo 422, AAA 11; New Hampshire 463, AA 12; both hitting and pitching
Open source

[13] Blue Jays: Guerrero extension
14 years / $500M
Open source

[14] MLB.com: Cease agreement
Seven years / $210M
Open source

[15] MLB.com: Okamoto agreement
Four years / $60M
Open source

[16] Blue Jays: Kirk extension
Five years / $58M
Open source

[17] MLB.com: Santander agreement
Five years / $92.5M
Open source

[18] MLB.com: Gimenez extension
Seven years / $106.5M
Open source

[19] MLB.com: Rogers agreement
Three years / $37M
Open source

[20] MLB.com: Ponce agreement
Three years / $30M
Open source

[21] FanGraphs RosterResource: 2027 Toronto payroll
Checked Oct. 30; salary / prorated-bonus basis; modeled arbitration figures credited by source to MLB Trade Rumors / Matt Swartz
Open source

[22] Sportsnet, Shi Davidi: Cease financial structure
Dec. 2, 2025; reported salary and deferrals
Open source

[23] MLB Statcast glossary
Expected metrics; OAA and framing definitions linked in the respective leaderboards
Open source

[24] Baseball Savant: range leaderboard
Current full-season rows, including non-qualified samples
Open source

[25] Baseball Savant: pitch arsenals
Pitch-type outcomes; counterpart batter leaderboard also checked
Open source