STADIUM & STREET

THE 2027 ROSTER PROJECT / ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

Turn the Cardinals' auditions into a roster

Buy pitching stability. Keep the young hitters in play.

77	-29	3
WINS	RUN MARGIN	COSTED PATHS

An independent review of the roster, defense, pitching, farm system and financial choices.

A preferred plan. Two tested alternatives. A clear account of what could go wrong.

Richard Brown | November 3, 2026

Completed 2026 regular season. Roster and market checks November 3.

Independent analysis. Proposed prices and workloads are scenarios.

stadiumandstreet.com

READING GUIDE

Start with the decision. Then test the evidence.

The opening brief states the recommendation and its price. The main analysis tests the roster and the alternatives. The back of the report preserves the player register, definitions and sources.

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A single public edition is suitable for forwarding. The analysis makes no claim of club affiliation or access to private baseball information.

ANALYSIS / 01

The recommendation: buy time without taking it away

The Cardinals have two kinds of uncertainty. Young hitters need enough major-league work to show what they can become. A pitching staff that allowed 749 runs needs help before those auditions can add up to a winning season. Spending the entire winter budget on a familiar middle-of-the-order name would address only part of that problem.

Our preferred plan purchases three defined jobs: Edmundo Sosa for a share of third base and middle-infield coverage, Tyler Mahle for 26 starts and 140 innings, and Taylor Clarke for 60 relief innings. The proposed annual prices are $6-8 million, $14-16 million and $4-6 million, respectively. Add a $6-8 million depth reserve. Total annual additions are $30-38 million, inside an estimated $100.05-112.05 million player-allocation envelope. These are S&S negotiating ceilings, not reported offers or a verified ownership budget.

Mahle receives a proposed two-year, $28-32 million contract. Sosa and Clarke receive one-year offers. Including both Mahle years and the first-year reserve, the proposed new commitment is $44-54 million. The reserve is money available for needs that emerge; it earns no invented hits, innings or wins in the analysis.

Sosa's 350 plate appearances leave 350 for Blaze Jordan, 450 for Joshua Baez and meaningful catching opportunities for Leo Bernal and Jimmy Crooks. A more expensive alternative substitutes Eugenio Suarez for Sosa, buying power while reducing Jordan's and Nolan Gorman's auditions. The internal-only alternative spends $6-8 million on depth and accepts substantially greater pitching and developmental risk.

None of these plans assumes a trade return, a prospect sale or the disappearance of an existing salary. The Cardinals can improve without dealing from their farm system, but the preferred plan must remain conditional on price, contract status and public availability checks. If Mahle cannot supply the proposed workload or his price rises beyond the ceiling, the club must revisit the rotation allocation rather than award his innings to an unnamed replacement.

The argument for restraint is substantial: St. Louis won 77 games, and several of its most interesting hitters have fewer than 200 major-league plate appearances. The answer is a measured investment in stability, with explicit opportunities for those hitters, rather than a claim that three signings make the Cardinals a finished contender. [1,2,4,11,13,14]

ANALYSIS / 02

Three seasons show how little the baseline has moved

St. Louis went from 83 wins in 2024 to 78 in 2025 and 77 in 2026. The run margin improved in the most recent season, from minus-65 to minus-29, because the offense scored 31 more runs while the staff allowed five fewer. That is progress. It still leaves a team that was outscored over a full season.

The 2026 Cardinals scored 720 runs, 16th in MLB, and produced a .691 OPS. Their 4.26 ERA ranked 20th. The gap between 684 earned runs and 749 total runs allowed also matters: preventing runs includes defense, positioning, receiving and avoiding the sequences that extend innings. Earned-run accounting cannot isolate responsibility for all 65 unearned runs.

Season	Record	Runs for / against	Margin	OPS / ERA
2024	83-79	672 / 719	-47	.704 / 4.04
2025	78-84	689 / 754	-65	.693 / 4.29
2026	77-85	720 / 749	-29	.691 / 4.26

31 MORE RUNS, FIVE FEWER ALLOWED

2025 margin: -65 / 2026 margin: -29



A 36-run improvement still left a negative season margin.

Source: MLB regular seasons. November 3, 2026 edition.

The offense's 167 home runs, 511 walks and 1,306 strikeouts describe a club with useful pieces but no overwhelming scoring advantage. The pitching staff walked 564 batters. Building a more reliable roster requires attention to both the quality of contact allowed and the free baserunners that turn ordinary contact into expensive innings.

A 77-win record is an outcome, not a direct estimate of next year's talent. The completed season is the starting evidence. The remainder of this report separates retained production from departures, young-player samples from established workloads, and proposed improvements from results that have already happened. [1,2,3]

ANALYSIS / 03

Burleson, Walker and Herrera are the offensive foundation

Alec Burleson hit .279/.343/.473 with 26 home runs in 670 plate appearances. His .374 expected wOBA exceeded his .353 actual wOBA, and his expected slugging percentage was .522. Those figures support keeping him in the primary first-base role. They do not promise a particular batting average or another 30 points of production next year.

Jordan Walker supplied 29 home runs and a .466 slugging percentage in 667 plate appearances. His .344 actual wOBA and .340 expected wOBA were close. His offensive improvement therefore deserves more weight than a short hot stretch would. The separate question is how to limit the cost of his right-field defense without losing the bat.

Ivan Herrera's .353 on-base percentage gave him value even with a .382 slugging percentage. His 76 walks in 717 plate appearances supplied a skill the younger lineup cannot assume it will reproduce immediately. The proposed 620 plate appearances lower his total burden while preserving a central C/DH role.

Player / MLB ID	STL PA	AVG / OBP / SLG	HR	BB / K; role
Iván Herrera / 671056	717	.241 / .353 / .382	19	76 / 138; C/DH
Alec Burleson / 676475	670	.279 / .343 / .473	26	55 / 121; 1B
Jordan Walker / 691023	667	.269 / .327 / .466	29	50 / 174; RF
JJ Wetherholt / 802139	619	.242 / .339 / .365	17	64 / 104; 2B/SS
Masyn Winn / 691026	532	.232 / .308 / .317	5	48 / 116; SS
Nathan Church / 701675	470	.247 / .290 / .364	10	25 / 81; CF/LF
José Fermín / 665877	370	.248 / .309 / .355	6	30 / 50; Utility
Nolan Gorman / 669357	302	.184 / .272 / .308	9	33 / 98; 3B/DH competition
Pedro Pagés / 686780	211	.217 / .275 / .312	4	14 / 56; C
Blaze Jordan / 691458	199	.247 / .276 / .382	3	7 / 30; 3B/1B audition
Victor Scott II / 687363	195	.193 / .270 / .253	2	16 / 46; CF
Bryan Torres / 663494	189	.229 / .309 / .331	4	18 / 39; OF/IF depth
Thomas Saggese / 695336	180	.235 / .294 / .352	4	13 / 49; IF
Jimmy Crooks / 699625	149	.179 / .255 / .336	5	9 / 48; C
Joshua Báez / 695491	108	.230 / .278 / .510	7	4 / 33; LF; 108-PA sample
Leo Bernal / 699024	102	.284 / .333 / .474	5	7 / 25; C; 102-PA sample
Lars Nootbaar / 663457	183	.234 / .333 / .354	3	24 / 40; Departed; STL stint only

This table uses Cardinals-only statistics. Lars Nootbaar's 183 plate appearances belong to the historical 2026 lineup, not to a retained 2027 depth chart. The same separation applies throughout the pitching analysis. A player who helped create last year's total cannot be counted again after leaving the organization.

The preferred lineup needs more from its supporting cast, but it does not need to displace its three established run producers merely to make an acquisition look consequential. A third baseman fits because that position still contains an unresolved audition. Another first baseman or a full-time DH would compete with jobs that already have credible occupants. [1,4,5,11]

ANALYSIS / 04

Wetherholt and Winn make defense part of the plan

JJ Wetherholt hit .242/.339/.365 in 619 plate appearances. His .347 expected wOBA and .435 expected slugging percentage were stronger than his .318 actual wOBA and .365 actual slugging. More important to the current roster structure, his tracked defensive season produced 25 Outs Above Average across 552 opportunities.

Masyn Winn's offense was much thinner: a .232 average, .308 on-base percentage and .317 slugging percentage in 532 plate appearances. He also produced 19 OAA, following 21 in 2025. The Cardinals have an unusually valuable range foundation in the middle of the infield. They should preserve it while seeking offensive growth, rather than treat Winn's weak slugging percentage as the whole player.

Batter	wOBA	xwOBA	SLG / xSLG	Interpretation
Alec Burleson	0.353	0.374	0.473 / 0.522	Contact quality supports primary first-base role
JJ Wetherholt	0.318	0.347	0.365 / 0.435	Expected power exceeds actual; no automatic rebound
Jordan Walker	0.344	0.340	0.466 / 0.462	Power growth supported; defensive cost remains
Iván Herrera	0.329	0.336	0.382 / 0.390	On-base skill supports C/DH workload
Masyn Winn	0.283	0.297	0.317 / 0.329	Defense carries a limited offensive baseline
Blaze Jordan	0.284	0.317	0.382 / 0.425	Positive contact signal in a small MLB sample
Joshua Báez	0.335	0.303	0.510 / 0.446	Seven-HR burst ahead of contact estimate
Leo Bernal	0.351	0.347	0.474 / 0.487	Promising 102-PA sample; large uncertainty
Jimmy Crooks	0.264	0.294	0.336 / 0.397	MLB transition remains unresolved
Nolan Gorman	0.260	0.278	0.308 / 0.351	Expected offense still weak
Nathan Church	0.288	0.283	0.364 / 0.354	Useful range; modest bat

Wetherholt's extension through 2034 gives the club a longer planning horizon, but it does not eliminate the need to test his offensive development. His 2027 allocation is discussed separately from the contract's average annual value. A long agreement and a promising expected-statistics line answer different questions.

The sensible expectation is not another exact 25-OAA season. Defensive measurements vary with opportunities, positioning and execution. A roster plan should survive a smaller positive contribution while retaining the advantage of two capable middle infielders. That is especially relevant for a staff relying on balls in play rather than overwhelming strikeout rates. [5,7,9,15,16]

ANALYSIS / 05

The platoon evidence argues for selective help

The Cardinals' overall OPS was .697 against left-handed pitching and .688 against right-handed pitching. That is not evidence of a universal left-handed-pitching crisis. The useful question is which individual matchups constrain the lineup and whether a specific addition improves those choices.

Burleson's .549 OPS in 206 plate appearances against left-handers contrasted sharply with .939 in 464 against right-handers. Walker moved in the opposite direction, with .863 against left-handers and .769 against right-handers. Herrera also did more damage against left-handers. Those differences argue for selective rest and substitutions, not for replacing the entire lineup against a particular starter.

Batter / full MLB season	LHP: PA / OPS	RHP: PA / OPS
Iván Herrera	220 / .823	497 / .697
Alec Burleson	206 / .549	464 / .939
Jordan Walker	175 / .863	492 / .769
JJ Wetherholt	220 / .654	399 / .732
Masyn Winn	141 / .714	391 / .594
Nathan Church	106 / .596	364 / .671
José Fermín	166 / .735	204 / .605
Nolan Gorman	49 / .491	253 / .598
Blaze Jordan	76 / .823	123 / .556
Joshua Báez	43 / 1.051	65 / .613
Jimmy Crooks	21 / .730	128 / .569
Edmundo Sosa	138 / .835	112 / .564
Alec Bohm	192 / .816	437 / .644
Luis Rengifo	134 / .570	220 / .677
Eugenio Suárez	129 / .714	369 / .748

Sosa's .835 OPS against left-handers in 138 plate appearances is a useful fit signal. His .564 against right-handers and only seven walks in 250 total plate appearances limit the case for an everyday offensive role. The preferred plan buys flexibility and a share of third base, with the right to adjust his role if the small-sample advantage does not persist.

Blaze Jordan and Joshua Baez also hit left-handers well in small samples. Their splits are reasons to keep testing, not proof that the problem is permanently solved. Allocating a veteran's work carefully leaves those tests available. Single-season platoon splits should guide an initial lineup experiment, then yield to a larger body of performance and current health. [1,8,11]

ANALYSIS / 06

Keep the range; stop giving it back at the corners

The Cardinals' middle-infield advantage coexists with substantial corner concerns. Walker posted minus-8 OAA in 2026 after minus-4 in each of the prior two seasons. Burleson improved to zero at first base after negative earlier years. Preserving Burleson's primary first-base assignment is therefore preferable to creating new outfield exposure just to fit another bat.

Victor Scott's 17 OAA in 2025 and four in 2026 support a role as a center-field and late-game option, but his .253 slugging percentage limits how much offense can be assumed. Nathan Church offered two OAA in 2026 with a .364 slugging percentage. The proposed arrangement gives Church most of the center-field starts and retains Scott's range without treating either as a complete offensive solution.

Fielder	2024 OAA	2025 OAA	2026 OAA	2026 opportunities
JJ Wetherholt	No row	No row	+25	552
Masyn Winn	+3	+21	+19	492
Alec Burleson	-8	-4	0	378
Jordan Walker	-4	-4	-8	341
Nathan Church	No row	+4	+2	319
Victor Scott II	+3	+17	+4	160
Blaze Jordan	No row	No row	+2	178
Nolan Gorman	-6	-8	0	170
José Fermín	-3	+2	-1	257
Thomas Saggese	0	0	0	156
Joshua Báez	No row	No row	-3	50
Edmundo Sosa	+4	+5	+4	210
Alec Bohm	+5	-2	-11	435
Luis Rengifo	-7	-4	-2	193
Eugenio Suárez	+3	-6	-7	127

Player	2026 STL defensive innings	2027 allocation
JJ Wetherholt	SS 96.2; 2B 1101.1	Keep primary 2B; cover SS sparingly
Masyn Winn	SS 1141.1	Retain primary SS
Alec Burleson	1B 1324.2	Keep at 1B; do not recreate outfield exposure
Jordan Walker	RF 1306.1	RF with late-game coverage
Nathan Church	LF 253.0; RF 23.0; CF 809.0	Primary CF, selective corners
Victor Scott II	LF 26.1; RF 7.0; CF 477.2	CF range option; bat must earn more
Joshua Báez	RF 28.0; LF 171.1	LF audition; not a CF projection
Blaze Jordan	1B 58.0; 3B 399.0	3B/1B; share rather than guarantee full-time role
Iván Herrera	1B 2.0; C 447.0	C/DH, not an assumed everyday receiver
Leo Bernal	1B 28.0; C 140.2	Larger catching audition
Jimmy Crooks	C 311.1	Preserve second catching development path

Sosa's OAA sequence of plus-4, plus-5 and plus-4 is a reason to prefer his flexible role over a larger power-first commitment. Suarez's sequence of plus-3, minus-6 and minus-7 identifies the price of the alternative. Alec Bohm's minus-11 in 2026 also matters when comparing a familiar third-base name with the actual defensive problem.

These are full-season OAA observations across the positions in each underlying row, not position-specific forecasts. The opportunity counts preserve scale: Joshua Baez's minus-3 came in only 50 tracked opportunities, while Winn's plus-19 came in 492. The Cardinals should seek improvement at the corners while allowing for uncertainty in every young player's estimate. [7,9]

ANALYSIS / 07

Catching is an allocation problem, not a single vacancy

Pedro Pages, Jimmy Crooks, Herrera and Bernal provide four different combinations of receiving evidence and offensive uncertainty. Pages caught 532.1 Cardinals innings and produced approximately 3.2 total catching runs in the inspected Statcast table. Crooks had positive framing evidence but hit .179/.255/.336 in 149 major-league plate appearances. Bernal's 102-plate-appearance sample is too small to establish his offensive level.

Catcher	2026 STL catching IP	Framing runs	Receiving decision
Pedro Pagés	532.1	+3.3	Keep veteran cover; full catching value +3.2
Jimmy Crooks	311.1	+4.2	Positive framing; MLB bat must catch up
Iván Herrera	447.0	-1.0	Share C/DH workload; framing near neutral
Leo Bernal	140.2	+0.9	Small receiving sample; larger audition conditional

The preferred plan allocates 55 catching starts to Bernal, 45 to Crooks, 32 to Herrera and 30 to Pages across the season. That is a depth map, not a proposal to carry four catchers on the active roster at once. Options, health, performance and roster rules must determine the actual combinations available on any day.

Herrera receives most of the DH starts. That preserves his on-base contribution while testing whether Bernal and Crooks can carry more of the receiving work. Their strong Triple-A offensive seasons earn opportunity, not an automatic projection of their minor-league rates into the majors.

The table uses framing runs consistently for all four catchers. The inspected qualified total-value table included Pages, but not equivalent total-value rows for the other three. Missing total values are not zero. Framing is one part of receiving, and it must not be added to a total that already includes it. [1,9,10,12,22]

ANALYSIS / 08

The rotation has innings, but its best ERAs need testing

Michael McGreevy made 31 starts and supplied 168.2 innings with a 3.95 ERA. Andre Pallante contributed 162 innings and a 3.83 ERA. Kyle Leahy reached 140 innings and a 3.66 ERA. Those are meaningful workloads for a developing team. They do not remove the need for another starter.

McGreevy's 5.37 expected ERA and Leahy's 4.89 were materially higher than their actual ERAs. Pallante's 4.15 expected ERA was closer to his result. Expected ERA is not a forecast or a verdict that every favorable outcome must reverse, but it is a warning against budgeting the same run prevention without examining contact quality and defense.

Pitcher / MLB ID	GS / STL IP	ERA / full MLB xERA	K / BB / HR	Treatment
Michael McGreevy / 700241	31 / 168.2	3.95 / 5.37	115 / 48 / 21	Retain innings; contact-quality warning
Andre Pallante / 669467	29 / 162.0	3.83 / 4.15	110 / 50 / 12	Ground-ball foundation; preserve infield range
Kyle Leahy / 681517	30 / 140.0	3.66 / 4.89	132 / 41 / 15	Starter progress; expected ERA warns against ace pricing
Matthew Liberatore / 669461	31 / 155.0	5.23 / 5.02	154 / 55 / 28	Compete for starter/bulk work
Quinn Mathews / 687273	9 / 49.1	3.83 / 3.84	46 / 20 / 5	Larger MLB opportunity; monitor walks
Dustin May / 669160	21 / 109.0	4.38 / 4.45	106 / 35 / 7	Departed; STL stint only
Hunter Dobbins / 690928	8 / 54.0	3.67 / 3.95	52 / 24 / 7	Post-surgery; no opening workload
Max Rajcic / 691008	0 / 9.0	5.00 / 3.30	8 / 6 / 1	UCL reconstruction; no opening workload

Matthew Liberatore struck out 154 in 155 innings but allowed 28 home runs and finished with a 5.23 ERA. The plan gives him a starter/bulk role instead of treating all 31 of his previous starts as an entitlement. Quinn Mathews receives a larger opportunity, subject to command and workload checks after 99 Triple-A innings and 49.1 in the majors.

The starter group as a whole produced 829 innings with a 4.17 ERA, 706 strikeouts and 273 walks. The preferred plan purchases a moderate volume of outside work and redistributes the remaining starts. It does not require one prospect to become an immediate ace or count an injured pitcher as a healthy fifth starter. [1,6,11,12]

ANALYSIS / 09

Why Mahle is a better-defined purchase than a headline

Mahle's full 2026 season comprised 149 innings, 27 starts, a 3.99 ERA, 137 strikeouts and 46 walks. His 3.95 expected ERA broadly supported that full-season result. His 1.99 ERA in 54.1 Atlanta innings should not erase the 5.13 ERA in 94.2 San Francisco innings. Buying only the most attractive stint would produce a misleading valuation.

The proposed contract is two years and $28-32 million, with an annual allocation of $14-16 million. The workload budget is 26 starts and 140 innings, slightly below his most recent major-league workload. The offer is contingent on current availability and medical review the public cannot perform. No private health conclusion is implied.

Freddy Peralta is a different purchase. His full 2026 line was 169 innings and a 4.42 ERA, with a 3.84 expected ERA. The published Mets review tested a three-year, $60-72 million ceiling. Applying that same annual $20-24 million range here would require a separate resource decision, not an assumption that he can be acquired alongside Mahle within the current plan.

Michael King's 185 innings and 3.21 ERA warrant an inquiry, but his 4.42 expected ERA prevents a simple ace label. Nick Pivetta's 34.2 innings are too small a recent workload to substitute automatically for 140. Jakob Junis supplied only one start in 54.1 innings. A list of recognizable free agents is not a rotation budget. [6,11,20,21]

ANALYSIS / 10

The bullpen needs fewer free baserunners

The Cardinals' relievers worked 613.2 innings with a 4.40 ERA and 291 walks, approximately 4.27 per nine innings. The issue is not merely who pitches the ninth. Too many relief innings began or continued with runners reaching without contact.

Riley O'Brien saved 38 games, but his 64 innings included 29 walks and a 4.99 expected ERA against a 4.08 actual ERA. Gordon Graceffo's 2.67 ERA in 81 innings was accompanied by 36 walks and a 4.60 expected ERA. Both deserve roles. Neither should be treated as a guarantee of another favorable run-prevention season.

Pitcher	STL IP	ERA / full MLB xERA	K / BB	Treatment
Riley O'Brien	64.0	4.08 / 4.99	64 / 29	Closer, but 29 walks require attention
Gordon Graceffo	81.0	2.67 / 4.60	63 / 36	Keep multi-inning role; do not project 2.67 ERA
Justin Bruihl	77.2	3.59 / 4.48	53 / 28	Left-handed coverage
George Soriano	66.0	4.23 / 4.57	66 / 35	Walk reduction needed
Luis Gastelum	36.2	4.42 / 4.57	44 / 12	Opportunity with controlled workload
Ryan Fernandez	23.0	3.52 / 3.55	28 / 11	Healthy competition for middle/setup work
Matt Svanson	43.1	7.27 / 6.03	41 / 21	Command/contact repair
Cade Winquest	13.2	3.95 / 2.43	16 / 8	Small MLB sample; conditional role
Cooper Hjerpe	12.1	4.38 / 3.84	15 / 9	Development workload
Ryne Stanek	62.2	4.02 / 4.09	65 / 32	Departed FA; option declined
JoJo Romero	43.0	3.35 / 4.45	43 / 16	Departed; STL stint only

Clarke fits a modest control-oriented purchase. His 73 innings included 45 strikeouts and 14 walks, approximately 1.73 walks per nine. The countercase is strong: his 2.96 ERA was well below a 4.42 expected ERA, and his strikeout rate was only about 5.55 per nine. The proposed one-year, $4-6 million ceiling buys middle-relief volume, not a shutdown closer.

Andrew Kittredge is an alternative at a one-year, $5-7 million ceiling, with a different injury and workload assessment. He is not silently added beside Clarke. The internal group must still earn its assignments through better command and sustained effectiveness; a small outside signing cannot repair every middle inning. [1,6,11]

ANALYSIS / 11

The farm system should create options, not fictional certainty

Joshua Baez hit 34 home runs with a .901 OPS in 461 Triple-A plate appearances, then seven more in 108 major-league plate appearances. That earns a substantial left-field audition. His 136 Triple-A strikeouts and 33 major-league strikeouts remain part of the same record. The plan tests the power against a larger major-league sample rather than extending a seven-homer burst into a full-season forecast.

Blaze Jordan produced a .921 Triple-A OPS in 252 plate appearances, followed by a .382 major-league slugging percentage in 199. His contact-quality evidence was encouraging, but an everyday third-base job should still be earned. Sharing the position with Sosa gives the Cardinals a usable alternative if the bat or defense needs more work.

Player / MLB ID	2026 level and sample	Readiness decision
Joshua Báez / 695491	AAA: 461 PA, .901 OPS, 34 HR; 37 BB / 136 K	LF opportunity; distinguish from Jesus Baez
Blaze Jordan / 691458	AAA: 252 PA, .921 OPS, 11 HR; 19 BB / 29 K	Shared 3B/1B opportunity
Jimmy Crooks / 699625	AAA: 236 PA, 1.006 OPS, 15 HR; 39 BB / 67 K	Receiving plus offensive transition
Leo Bernal / 699024	AAA: 432 PA, .831 OPS, 16 HR; 51 BB / 86 K	Catching audition, not a guaranteed starter
César Prieto / 693409	AAA: 360 PA, .865 OPS, 12 HR; 25 BB / 46 K	IF depth; needs better MLB translation
Thomas Saggese / 695336	AAA: 249 PA, .786 OPS, 10 HR; 26 BB / 56 K	Utility competition
Colton Ledbetter / 807742	AAA: 477 PA, .767 OPS, 13 HR; 42 BB / 131 K	Non-roster outfield development
Rainiel Rodriguez / 823787	AA: 402 PA, .999 OPS, 23 HR; 41 BB / 77 K	19-year-old AA bat; no April production credited
Jesús Báez / 800305	AA: 257 PA, 1.033 OPS, 25 HR; 10 BB / 41 K	AA power; third-base conversion not assumed
Quinn Mathews / 687273	AAA: 99.0 IP, 3.27 ERA; 120 K / 61 BB	Larger MLB workload; 61 AAA walks matter
Jurrangelo Cijntje / 701388	AAA: 52.2 IP, 4.61 ERA; 62 K / 27 BB	Limited MLB audition; command test
Liam Doyle / 824604	AA: 103.0 IP, 3.76 ERA; 130 K / 54 BB	Small late-season allocation only if ready
Tanner Franklin / 815119	AA: 32.1 IP, 3.34 ERA; 42 K / 13 BB	32.1 AA innings; no opening workload
Pete Hansen / 677337	AAA: 101.1 IP, 4.53 ERA; 95 K / 35 BB	Non-roster depth; not a settled rotation answer
Brycen Mautz / 802408	AAA: 85.2 IP, 3.78 ERA; 89 K / 65 BB	Starter/bulk work after command improvement
Hancel Rincon / 684516	AAA: 77.2 IP, 3.82 ERA; 101 K / 32 BB	Relief depth; 77.2 AAA IP

Rainiel Rodriguez's .999 OPS and 23 home runs in 402 Double-A plate appearances are significant development evidence for a 19-year-old. Jesus Baez hit 25 home runs in Double-A and 14 in High-A, 39

across the two levels. He is a different player from outfielder Joshua Baez. Neither his combined power total nor a possible position discussion justifies inventing an immediate major-league third-base role.

Liam Doyle's 103 Double-A innings included 130 strikeouts and 54 walks. Jurrangelo Cijntje worked 133 innings across Double-A and Triple-A, with command still part of the development question. The preferred plan gives them limited, conditional major-league starts. It does not require their arrival on Opening Day or assume their minor-league ERAs will transfer. [12,23]

ANALYSIS / 12

Injury uncertainty belongs outside the opening workload

Hunter Dobbins underwent right-elbow surgery involving his UCL and flexor tendon. Matt Rajcic underwent UCL reconstruction. Their public injury records justify excluding them from the opening workload rather than filling a rotation slot with a hopeful return date. No private medical prognosis is available to this analysis.

Richard Fitts' season included an extended minor-league injured-list period. Tekoah Roby's later administrative activity does not establish that he can carry a major-league pitching load. Fitts and Roby receive no opening innings in these scenarios.

An administrative active label after the season is not a medical clearance. Conversely, zero opening innings is not a declaration that a pitcher will miss every game in 2027. A verified return can improve the depth chart later, at which point the existing allocations should be revised rather than counted twice.

The internal-only plan increases the burden on healthy developing pitchers. That is its largest cost, even when its cash cost is lower. If several pitchers fail their readiness checks, the Cardinals will need more outside coverage than the nominal depth reserve can be assumed to purchase. [4,18,19]

ANALYSIS / 13

Test the alternatives by the job they would take

Candidate / MLB ID	Full 2026 MLB evidence	S&S ceiling / decision
Edmundo Sosa / 624641	250 PA, .712 OPS, 9 HR; 0.307/0.328 wOBA/xwOBA	Preferred flexible 3B: 1 year / $6-8M
Tyler Mahle / 641816	149.0 IP, 3.99 ERA, 3.95 xERA; 137 K / 46 BB	Preferred starter: 2 years / $28-32M
Taylor Clarke / 664199	73.0 IP, 2.96 ERA, 4.42 xERA; 45 K / 14 BB	Middle relief: 1 year / $4-6M
Eugenio Suárez / 553993	498 PA, .740 OPS, 26 HR; 0.324/0.303 wOBA/xwOBA	Power alternative: 1 year / $12-14M
Alec Bohm / 664761	629 PA, .698 OPS, 15 HR; 0.309/0.327 wOBA/xwOBA	Pass as preferred 3B; price must reflect range cost

Candidate / MLB ID	Full 2026 MLB evidence	S&S ceiling / decision
Luis Rengifo / 650859	354 PA, .636 OPS, 4 HR; 0.289/0.304 wOBA/xwOBA	Conditional depth only; knee and offensive gates
Michael King / 650633	185.0 IP, 3.21 ERA, 4.42 xERA; 159 K / 70 BB	Alternative inquiry; no assumed ace-level recovery
Nick Pivetta / 601713	34.2 IP, 2.86 ERA, 3.20 xERA; 42 K / 8 BB	34.2-IP season; not a reliable volume substitute
Freddy Peralta / 642547	169.0 IP, 4.42 ERA, 3.84 xERA; 156 K / 63 BB	Alternative: prior S&S ceiling 3 years / $60-72M; not added
Andrew Kittredge / 552640	48.1 IP, 3.54 ERA, 4.01 xERA; 40 K / 11 BB	Alternative relief: 1 year / $5-7M
Jakob Junis / 596001	54.1 IP, 3.64 ERA, 4.42 xERA; 38 K / 18 BB	Do not purchase 150 starter innings from relief sample
Hoby Milner / 571948	42.0 IP, 3.64 ERA, 5.09 xERA; 25 K / 10 BB	Pass as main relief upgrade; weak strikeout/contact case

Suarez supplies the clearest alternative power argument: 26 home runs in 498 plate appearances. He also struck out 169 times, and his .303 expected wOBA trailed his .324 actual mark. A one-year, $12-14 million offer would buy a larger everyday third-base role, with 500 plate appearances and an explicit defensive cost. It is a different roster choice from Sosa's 350-plate-appearance flexibility.

Bohm's .249/.315/.383 line and minus-11 OAA do not establish a superior answer at an unknown price. Luis Rengifo's full-season .636 OPS and late knee injury make him a conditional depth inquiry, not the preferred purchase. His .784 OPS with San Diego cannot erase the .534 Milwaukee stint that preceded it.

The cross-club comparison is deliberate. The Phillies review priced Sosa as a one-year, $6-8 million fallback. St. Louis uses the same ceiling for a larger but still limited job, with Jordan and Gorman as the displaced incumbents. The prepared Twins review considers Kittredge at $5-7 million; the Cardinals do not claim a different market price simply because the club changes.

The prepared Guardians analysis passes on Suarez because its 1B/DH opportunity is crowded. St. Louis has a more direct third-base opening, but the opportunity is not free: Jordan and Gorman lose work, and range can suffer. Prior published and prepared editions remain separately dated. No analysis assumes a shared target can sign for multiple clubs, and no proposed free-agent purchase includes outgoing prospects. [11,20,21]

ANALYSIS / 14

The payroll starts with obligations, not available cash

Wetherholt's eight-year, $112.5 million guarantee covers 2027-34. The 2027 allocation used here is $2.75 million: $2.5 million salary plus $0.25 million of allocated signing bonus. The deal's $14.0625 million average annual value is a different measure. Possible incentives and the timing of actual bonus payments must not be mixed into a single salary figure without explaining the basis.

Obligation	2027 allocation	Definition
JJ Wetherholt	$2.75M	$2.5M salary plus $0.25M allocated signing bonus
Eight-year term	$112.5M	2027-34 guaranteed base deal; incentives separate
CBT average	$14.0625M	Different basis; not substituted for annual allocation

Player	Estimate, $M	Basis
Andre Pallante	7.50	Published projection; unsigned
Nolan Gorman	3.40	Published projection; unsigned
Alec Burleson	8.30	Published projection; unsigned
Matthew Liberatore	3.60	Published projection; unsigned
Masyn Winn	3.30	Published projection; unsigned
Jordan Walker	5.10	Published projection; unsigned
Ivan Herrera	5.50	Published projection; unsigned
Pedro Pages	1.30	Published projection; unsigned
Kyle Leahy	2.80	Published projection; unsigned
TOTAL	40.80	Nine cases retained; no assumed trade/non-tender savings

The nine arbitration estimates total $40.8 million. They are published projections, not agreements. The analysis retains Gorman and every other listed case unless a verified transaction changes the roster. A hypothetical trade or non-tender cannot create automatic savings while leaving the player's work in the lineup.

Existing trade obligations add $13 million: $9 million associated with Nolan Arenado in Arizona and $4 million with Willson Contreras in Boston. Those payments consume resources even though neither player is in the Cardinals' lineup. The pre-arbitration, minor-league and callup allowance is an S&S range of $12-16 million, not a claim that every minimum-salary roster slot has already been filled. [13,14,15,16]

ANALYSIS / 15

Three plans with three actual prices

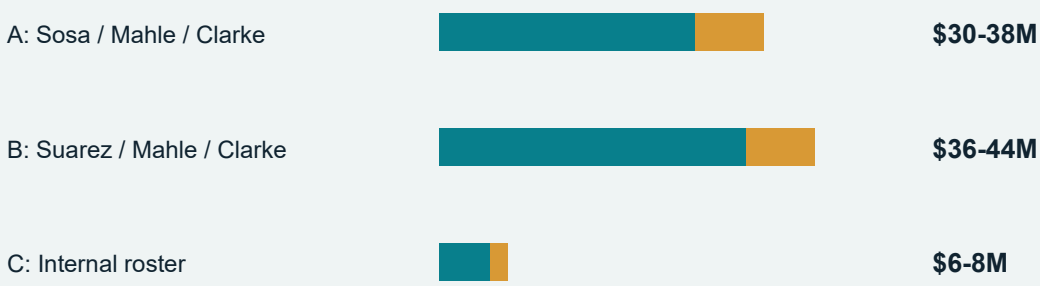
Component	Annual allocation	Definition
Wetherholt contract	$2.75M	2027 salary and allocated signing bonus
Arbitration pool	$40.80M	Nine estimates
Existing trade obligations	$13M	Arenado to Arizona $9M; Contreras to Boston $4M
Buyouts carried	$1.50M	Stanek $1M reported; Urias $0.5M listed
Pre-arb, minors and callups	$12-16M	S&S allowance; includes minor-league roster salaries
Existing-roster envelope	$70.05-74.05M	Before proposed additions; benefits/tax excluded

The existing-roster envelope is $70.05-74.05 million before proposed additions. It includes $1.5 million in carried buyouts. The older payroll option rows require reconciliation: Ryne Stanek's declined option is treated as a reported $1 million buyout rather than a retained $6 million salary, and Ramon Urias' released status does not support retaining a $4 million option salary.

Plan	Annual additions	Total allocation	New commitment*
A: Sosa + Mahle + Clarke	$30-38M	$100.05-112.05M	$44-54M
B: Suarez + Mahle + Clarke	$36-44M	$106.05-118.05M	$50-60M
C: Internal roster	$6-8M	$76.05-82.05M	$6-8M

New commitment includes both years of Mahle's proposed contract in Plans A and B, the one-year hitter and reliever offers, and the first-year depth reserve. It is not identical to 2027 payroll. Plan C includes only the reserve. Existing obligations are already in the total annual allocation.

THREE ANNUAL SPENDING PLANS



S&S annual additions. Each includes a $6-8M depth reserve.

Proposed ceilings and reserve. No signing, health or performance guarantee.

Plan A is the preferred balance: $30-38 million in annual additions and a $100.05-112.05 million total allocation. Plan B increases annual additions to $36-44 million and total allocation to $106.05-118.05 million. Plan C finishes at $76.05-82.05 million, with development and internal pitching carrying much more of the improvement burden.

These envelopes exclude benefits, tax and other club operating expenses. They are neither official cash-flow forecasts nor luxury-tax calculations. The full cost of ownership's operation is not known. The recommendation is therefore a conditional baseball resource plan, not a statement that an identified amount of cash is available. [13,14,17]

ANALYSIS / 16

Keep changing obligations visible

Difference or contingency	Treatment	Reason
Stanek old option row	Use $1M reported buyout, not $6M option	Decline reported November 1; older payroll row lags
Urias old option row	Carry $0.5M buyout; no $4M salary	Released September 18; no retained roster slot
Wetherholt signing bonus	$0.25M allocated annually	Cash payment timing is separate; not a second $2M charge
Benefits, tax, other expenses	Excluded from allocation bridge	Not a full club budget or official CBT calculation
Arbitration settlement changes	Replace estimate once agreed	No double counting settlement and projection
Trade or non-tender	Recalculate return and replacement work	No invented salary dump or prospect proceeds

Stanek illustrates why a static salary table is insufficient. The older option listing and the later decline report describe different states. The model carries the reported buyout and preserves the basis, rather than keeping the option salary or dropping the obligation entirely. The same discipline applies when arbitration estimates become settlements.

Wetherholt's allocated bonus is not a second cash payment. If actual payment timing is needed, a separate cash schedule is required. Allocating one eighth of the signing bonus across the guaranteed term is useful for comparison, but it must not be described as proof of when the money leaves the club.

The $6-8 million reserve remains available for depth, injury responses and roster competition. Its purchasing power is uncertain. No reserve line can stand in for an identified starter's 140 innings or a veteran's 350 plate appearances. If the club uses the money, the acquired player's role and displaced work need a new calculation. [13,14,15,17]

ANALYSIS / 17

Allocate the plate appearances before counting improvement

Player	PA	Opportunity
Herrera	620	C/DH
Burleson	620	1B/DH
Walker	620	RF/DH
Wetherholt	600	2B/SS
Winn	560	SS
Church	430	CF/corner OF
Joshua Baez	450	LF/RF audition
Scott	220	CF
Sosa	350	3B and middle-IF cover; only if signed
Blaze Jordan	350	3B/1B audition
Bernal	330	C/1B/DH
Crooks	240	C/DH
Pages	140	C cover
Saggese	210	IF/DH
Gorman	140	3B/DH; no assumed trade
Fermin	140	IF/LF
Pereira	90	OF depth
Prieto	60	IF depth
Torres	30	OF/IF depth
TOTAL	6,200	Season coverage, not 19 simultaneous active hitters

The 6,200-plate-appearance budget is a season coverage exercise. It includes time in the minors, injuries, rest and roster changes. It does not propose a 19-hitter active roster. Each acquisition reduces some combination of incumbent work, and each young player's opportunity must exist in a plausible defensive or DH assignment.

Change from A	PA adjustment	Consequence
B: Sosa to Suarez	-350 / +500	More everyday power; reduced flexibility
B: Jordan / Gorman	-100 / -50	250 / 90 PA; reduced auditions
C: remove Sosa	-350	No acquired production credited
C: Jordan / Gorman	+120 / +110	470 / 250 PA
C: Fermin / Saggese	+80 / +40	220 / 250 PA
TOTAL	6,200 in every plan	Every acquisition displaces actual work

Plan B replaces Sosa's 350 plate appearances with 500 for Suarez. Jordan falls from 350 to 250, and Gorman from 140 to 90. The additional power therefore comes with a real information cost: the club learns less about two internal alternatives while accepting a larger defensive risk at third base.

Plan C removes Sosa and returns 120 plate appearances to Jordan, 110 to Gorman, 80 to Jose Fermin and 40 to Thomas Saggese. That is a coherent internal experiment. Its outcome depends on improvement from hitters whose major-league evidence is limited or weak. It should be chosen for its price and development value, not presented as the same expected lineup at a discount.

The proposed core workloads are also bounded. Herrera, Burleson and Walker each receive 620 plate appearances rather than automatic career-high totals. Wetherholt receives 600 and Winn 560. Those allocations leave room for actual coverage instead of requiring the best players to appear every day. [1,8,9,12]

ANALYSIS / 18

Every defensive position needs 162 starts

Pos.	162-start allocation	Purpose
C	Bernal 55; Crooks 45; Herrera 32; Pages 30	Season depth; not four simultaneous active catchers
1B	Burleson 145; Jordan 10; Bernal 7	Preserve best established bat
2B	Wetherholt 140; Sosa 10; Fermin 8; Saggese 4	Keep elite range foundation
3B	Jordan 65; Sosa 75; Gorman 12; Saggese 10	Defined veteran share plus real audition
SS	Winn 140; Wetherholt 10; Sosa 10; Saggese 2	Retain range, cover rest/injuries
LF	Joshua Baez 110; Church 20; Pereira 15; Fermin 10; Torres 7	Power opportunity with cover
CF	Church 90; Scott 65; Pereira 7	Range before unsupported corner-to-CF conversion
RF	Walker 140; Joshua Baez 10; Pereira 5; Church 7	Keep power, improve late-game protection
DH	Herrera 120; Burleson 8; Walker 8; Gorman 12; Crooks 5; Bernal 3; Saggese 6	Protect Herrera bat while sharing receiving

The defensive map exposes the tradeoffs that a generic depth chart can conceal. Herrera receives 120 DH starts and 32 behind the plate. Burleson owns first base. Wetherholt and Winn retain the middle infield. Joshua

Baez gets most of the left-field work, while Church and Scott divide center field with limited additional coverage.

In Plan B, Suarez takes 110 third-base starts, Jordan 35 and Saggese 17. Sosa's ten second-base starts move to Fermin, and his ten shortstop starts move to Saggese. Suarez also takes Gorman's 12 DH starts. That preserves 162 at each position while making the loss of flexibility explicit.

In Plan C, Sosa's 75 third-base starts move to Jordan for 35, Gorman for 30 and Fermin for ten. His second-base and shortstop coverage again moves to Fermin and Saggese. The team retains a complete map, but more of it depends on internal performance.

These are coverage assignments rather than a day-by-day schedule. Actual lineups must satisfy active-roster, option, health and positional constraints. The map's purpose is to prevent the same job from being promised to several players or an attractive bat from being credited with playing time that does not exist. [9]

ANALYSIS / 19

A complete innings budget has to survive a failed signing

Pitcher	Starts / IP	Workload condition
Mahle	26 / 140	Conditional signing and health; below 149 prior MLB IP
McGreevy	29 / 160	Below 168.2 prior MLB IP; effectiveness gate
Pallante	29 / 160	Near 162 prior MLB IP
Leahy	27 / 145	Modest increase from 140; track recovery
Mathews	25 / 125	Below 148.1 combined MLB/AAA innings; command gate
Liberatore	15 / 75	Plus 30 relief IP; 105 total
Cijntje	7 / 35	Limited audition after 133 combined AA/AAA IP
Doyle	3 / 15	Late-season readiness only; no guaranteed April job
Mautz	1 / 5	Plus 30 relief IP; command must improve
TOTAL	162 / 860	Coverage scenario, not a health forecast

Pitcher / coverage	IP	Condition
Clarke	60	Only if signed; below 73 prior all-role IP
OBrien	60	Reduce 64-IP closer burden; command gate
Bruihl	55	Below 77.2 prior IP
Soriano	55	Walk reduction required
Graceffo	70	Below 81 prior IP; expected ERA warning
Gastelum	45	Combined MLB/AAA preparation

Pitcher / coverage	IP	Condition
Fernandez	45	Health and command checks
Svanson	30	Recovery from 7.27 MLB ERA
Hjerpe	30	Earn role beyond 12.1 MLB IP
Winquest	30	Small-sample translation
Mautz	30	Additional to five starter IP
Liberatore	30	Additional to 75 starter IP
Rincon	25	Minor-league evidence; no assumed ERA
Other healthy depth	15	Unfilled coverage with no assigned performance
TOTAL	580	860 starter + 580 relief = 1,440 innings

The preferred plan covers 162 starts with 860 starter innings and adds 580 relief innings, 1,440 total. It is an illustrative season volume, not a prediction of exactly how many innings the club will play. Liberatore's 75 starter and 30 relief innings are separate parts of a 105-inning allocation. Mautz similarly has five starter and 30 relief innings.

Plan C change	Workload adjustment	Consequence
Remove Mahle	-26 GS / -140 IP	No outside starter credited
Liberatore	+10 GS / +55 IP	25 GS / 130 starter IP, plus 30 relief
Cijntje	+8 GS / +40 IP	15 GS / 75 starter IP
Doyle	+4 GS / +20 IP	7 GS / 35 starter IP
Mautz	+4 GS / +25 IP	5 GS / 30 starter IP, plus 30 relief
Remove Clarke	-60 relief IP	No outside relief credited
Graceffo, Fernandez, Gastelum, Winquest, Hjerpe, Rincon	+10 relief IP each	Higher internal workload and translation risk
NET	162 GS / 1,440 IP	Equal volume budget; different risk and quality

Without Mahle, Liberatore takes ten additional starts and 55 starter innings, Cijntje eight and 40, Doyle four and 20, and Mautz four and 25. That replaces all 26 starts and 140 innings on paper. It also concentrates more responsibility in pitchers with unresolved command, readiness or effectiveness questions.

Removing Clarke shifts ten relief innings each to Graceffo, Ryan Fernandez, Luis Gastelum, Cade Winquest, Cooper Hjerpe and Hancel Rincon. Those six pitchers collectively replace all 60 of Clarke's proposed innings, with greater internal development risk. No performance is assigned to the 15 innings of other healthy depth.

The internal-only path is structurally complete but less resilient. A workload table can show where innings must come from; it cannot make a pitcher ready to supply them. Release checks must reconcile current health, options and organizational status before these allocations can be described as an actionable roster plan. [1,4,6,12]

ANALYSIS / 20

What would have to improve for the standings to change

Illustrative change from 2026	RS / RA	Margin	Simple run-ratio wins*
Unchanged runs	720 / 749	-29	77.8
Score 20 more; prevent 20	740 / 729	+11	82.2
Score 30 more; prevent 40	750 / 709	+41	85.5
Score 50 more; prevent 50	770 / 699	+71	88.8
Offense flat; allow 30 more	720 / 779	-59	74.6

The illustration uses 162 multiplied by runs scored squared, divided by runs scored squared plus runs allowed squared. It is a simple run-ratio comparison, not a player projection, schedule model or forecast.

At the unchanged 720 runs scored and 749 allowed, the simple ratio produces 77.8 wins. Scoring 20 more and preventing 20 moves it to 82.2. Scoring 30 more while preventing 40 moves it to 85.5. The size of those changes shows why a single power purchase is an incomplete solution.

The offense could improve through Wetherholt's contact quality translating more fully, Walker sustaining his progress, and one or more young hitters establishing themselves. Run prevention could improve through stronger command, better corner coverage and a healthier supply of competent innings. Those mechanisms are plausible, but their simultaneous success is not guaranteed.

The downside is equally concrete. If the offense stays flat and 30 more runs are allowed, the same illustration falls to 74.6 wins. That can happen if favorable pitching ERAs move toward weaker contact indicators and young depth cannot absorb the missing innings. The preferred plan purchases some protection against that outcome; it does not remove it. [1,2,5,6]

ANALYSIS / 21

The strongest countercase: let the young roster answer first

The best argument against Plan A is that a 77-win club should avoid paying for modest veteran improvements before its young hitters establish the next core. Sosa could take work from Jordan, Mahle could reduce opportunities for developing starters, and Clarke's low strikeout rate could make his control advantage less useful than it appears. None is a risk-free purchase.

Plan C answers that argument honestly. It keeps the internal auditions large, preserves cash and prospects, and leaves the club free to act after more evidence arrives. It also asks Liberatore, Cijntje, Doyle and Mautz to absorb the 140 innings that the preferred plan buys from Mahle. The value of that information must be weighed against the chance of spending another season without enough reliable pitching.

The recommended compromise is to keep the veteran commitments short and the jobs limited. Sosa does not receive 600 plate appearances. Clarke does not receive a closer guarantee. Mahle's proposed two-year term is the largest new obligation, justified by a defined rotation workload rather than a claim that he transforms the staff.

If the market does not permit those limits, the Cardinals should choose the internal path explicitly. A different name at a materially higher price is a different plan and deserves a new comparison. The most useful winter is one that improves the roster while making the next set of decisions clearer.

ANALYSIS / 22

Current roster, departures and definitions

Current major-roster player / MLB ID	Bats / throws	Administrative status
Alec Burleson / 676475	L / L	Active
Andre Pallante / 669467	R / R	Active
Blaze Jordan / 691458	R / R	Active
Bryan Torres / 663494	L / R	Active
Brycen Mautz / 802408	L / L	Active
Cade Winquest / 685464	R / R	Active
Cooper Hjerpe / 687309	L / L	Active
César Prieto / 693409	L / R	Active
Everson Pereira / 677592	R / R	Active
George Soriano / 666277	R / R	Active
Gordon Graceffo / 700669	R / R	Active
Hancel Rincon / 684516	R / R	Active
Hunter Dobbins / 690928	R / R	Active; no opening workload
Iván Herrera / 671056	R / R	Active
JJ Wetherholt / 802139	L / R	Active
Jimmy Crooks / 699625	L / R	Active
Jordan Walker / 691023	R / R	Active
Joshua Báez / 695491	R / R	Active
José Fermín / 665877	R / R	Active
Justin Bruihl / 677865	L / L	Active
Kyle Leahy / 681517	S / R	Active
Leo Bernal / 699024	S / R	Active
Luis Gastelum / 703725	R / R	Active
Masyn Winn / 691026	R / R	Active
Matt Svanson / 694335	R / R	Active
Matthew Liberatore / 669461	L / L	Active
Max Rajcic / 691008	R / R	Active; no opening workload

Current major-roster player / MLB ID	Bats / throws	Administrative status
Michael McGreevy / 700241	L / R	Active
Nathan Church / 701675	L / L	Active
Nolan Gorman / 669357	L / R	Active
Pedro Pagés / 686780	R / R	Active
Quinn Mathews / 687273	L / L	Active
Richard Fitts / 690916	R / R	Active; no opening workload
Riley O'Brien / 676617	R / R	Active
Ryan Fernandez / 681676	R / R	Active
Tekoah Roby / 694358	R / R	Active; no opening workload
Thomas Saggese / 695336	R / R	Active
Victor Scott II / 687363	L / L	Active
Eduardo Rivera / 700842	L / L	Acquired from Boston November 3; no principal innings assigned

Player / MLB ID	Classification	2027 treatment
Dustin May / 669160	Free Agent	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
JoJo Romero / 668941	Free Agent	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
Lars Nootbaar / 663457	External Or Historical	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
Ryne Stanek / 592773	Free Agent	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
Ramón Urías / 602104	Free Agent	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
Caleb Ferguson / 657571	External Or Historical	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
Yohel Pozo / 650968	External Or Historical	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
Nelson Velázquez / 676369	External Or Historical	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately
Chase Hampton / 694633	Baltimore waiver claim November 2	No 2027 STL workload; past contributions retained separately

The November 3 major-league roster contains 39 names in both fresh official roster responses. Administrative active status is recorded separately from the medical workload judgments in this report. Organizational minor-league players and external candidates are retained in the research register with MLB IDs, current-team fields and transaction histories.

Baltimore's November 2 waiver claim of Chase Hampton is now confirmed by the transaction record and current Orioles roster. St. Louis acquired Eduardo Rivera from Boston on November 3, and he appears on both current Cardinals roster surfaces. Rivera adds depth but receives no principal innings in this plan. His inclusion in the pre-arbitration and minor-league pool does not create a new assumed salary or guaranteed rotation job.

PA means plate appearances. OPS is on-base percentage plus slugging percentage. wOBA weights offensive events; xwOBA estimates contact-based results with other relevant inputs. Expected ERA is a descriptive Statcast measure, not a promised future ERA. OAA measures tracked defensive range relative to average and is distinct from total defensive or catching run value.

Baseball innings use outs: .1 means one out and .2 means two, not decimal tenths. Rate calculations convert them accordingly. Full-season and team-stint statistics remain separate. Published prices, S&S ceilings, arbitration estimates, allocated salary and actual cash timing are different categories. The acquisition and workload tables are conditional scenarios, with no assumed signatures, private medical knowledge or prospect returns.

ANALYSIS / 23

Sources and research record

The completed 2026 regular season supplies the performance baseline. Roster, transaction, market and contract checks are dated November 3, 2026. Statistical tables come from the cited league and Statcast records; the recommendations, workload allocations, cost ceilings and run-ratio illustrations are Stadium & Street analysis.

[1] MLB: St. Louis 2026 team and player statistics

Completed St. Louis-only regular-season records, with separate team, starter/reliever and handedness queries. Collected November 3, 2026.

Open source

[2] MLB: 2024-26 team comparisons

All 30 teams checked separately for each season. Rankings, run differences and run-ratio illustrations are S&S calculations.

Open source

[3] MLB: Cardinals completed schedule

Completed games reconciled by MLB game ID. St. Louis did not play in the 2026 postseason.

Open source

[4] MLB: Cardinals roster and transactions

November 3 major-league and organizational roster checks, reconciled with individual transactions. Administrative active status is distinct from health and projected workload.

Open source

[5] Baseball Savant: expected batting statistics

Actual and expected wOBA and slugging retain full MLB season scope. These are descriptive estimates, not forecasts.

Open source

[6] Baseball Savant: expected pitching statistics

Full MLB season expected ERA. St. Louis-only actual statistics are separately labeled for pitchers who changed teams.

Open source

[7] Baseball Savant: Outs Above Average

Separate 2024, 2025 and 2026 observations. Combined positions and tracked opportunities are preserved. No individual season is treated as guaranteed future defense.

Open source

[8] MLB: individual handedness splits

Separate official queries for every listed hitter. Full MLB season scope and plate-appearance counts accompany the rates.

Open source

[9] MLB: Cardinals defensive positions and innings

St. Louis position-specific innings. Combined-position OAA is not relabeled as a position-specific measurement.

Open source

[10] Baseball Savant: fielding and catching run value

2026 qualified catching total for Pages, with framing, throwing, blocking and ABS components already included. Missing total-value rows for other catchers are not zero.

Open source

[11] MLB: player identities, histories and current transactions

Official MLB IDs, full-season and club-stint statistics, current-team fields and transaction histories. Lagging fields remain identified for release-date reconciliation.

Open source

[12] MLB/MiLB: Cardinals affiliates and prospect statistics

Memphis 235, Springfield 440, Peoria 443 and Palm Beach 279 checked separately. Level, sample and current organization preserved.

Open source

[13] FanGraphs RosterResource: Cardinals payroll

Observed 2027 salary, existing trade-obligation and buyout columns. Later option decisions supersede old retained-option rows. S&S allowances and excluded costs are identified separately.

Open source

[14] MLB Trade Rumors arbitration projections, syndicated by Yardbarker

Matt Swartz's published estimates. Nine retained Cardinals cases total $40.8 million; none is treated as an agreed salary.

Open source

[15] MLB: Wetherholt extension announcement

Eight guaranteed years, 2027-34, with base guarantee and possible incentives distinguished.

Open source

[16] MLB: Wetherholt contract terms

Contract terms cross-checked with payroll. 2027 salary, allocated bonus and average annual value are distinct measures.

Open source

[17] MLB Trade Rumors: Stanek option decision

November 1 report, citing Derrick Goold, records the option decline and $1 million buyout. Compared with the older official signing announcement and payroll row.

Open source

[18] MLB: Dobbins surgery

Dated public surgery report. No opening workload or private medical prognosis inferred.

Open source

[19] MLB: Cardinals injuries and roster moves

Dated public information, including Rajcic UCL reconstruction, cross-checked with transactions. Administrative offseason roster changes are not health clearances.

Open source

[20] MLB: current free-agent register

Current market classification cross-checked with individual histories and relevant club rosters. Any lagging feed requires a new release-date check.

Open source

[21] Stadium & Street: MLB team-analysis series

Cross-club comparisons by exact job, displaced workload, price ceiling and internal alternative. Shared candidates are competing scenarios.

Open source

[22] Baseball Savant: catcher framing

2026 framing values and pitch samples for Pages, Crooks, Herrera and Bernal. Framing is not equivalent to complete catching value.

Open source

[23] MLB Pipeline: Cardinals prospects

Current prospect context checked November 3. Rankings and minor-league performance do not establish major-league readiness.

Open source

Research, roster and candidate checks were completed November 3, 2026. Individual source dates and statistical periods are preserved above.