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THE 2027 ROSTER PROJECT / SAN DIEGO PADRES

Rebuild the Padres' starting rotation

Fund the innings that a contender needs.

91	+41	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.

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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 decision: buy enough starting pitching to protect the bullpen

San Diego won 91 games with a bullpen that supplied 683.2 innings. Its next roster cannot be built by assuming that relief corps will absorb another season of short starts while several of the pitchers who carried the rotation leave. Michael King, Walker Buehler, Nick Pivetta, Griffin Canning, Casey Mize and Robbie Ray are free agents. Joe Musgrove's successful October appearances came in relief, after he missed the regular season. Yu Darvish remains a separate medical and contractual uncertainty. The rotation is the first purchasing decision. [1,8,9,10,11]

The preferred plan is to retain King and Mize, add Nick Martinez and retain Ty France at first base. That requires $70-81 million in annual additions, including an $8-10 million reserve. The resulting allocation is $279.99-294.99 million before benefits, competitive-balance tax and operating costs. This is an expensive proposal because the existing contracts, arbitration estimates, buyouts and a conservative Darvish contingency already consume $209.99-213.99 million. It is an S&S spending case, not an assertion that ownership has authorized that budget.

The cheaper alternative replaces King with Tyler Mahle and France with a part-time Paul Goldschmidt arrangement. Its total is $261.99-275.99 million. The internal path is also fully costed at $217.99-223.99 million, but assigning innings to the remaining pitchers reveals significant performance and workload problems. A low price does not make that path an adequate contender's roster.

Adrian Morejon's $23.15 million qualifying offer is a separate binding contingency if he accepts it. The main plans initially assume he declines, without assuming he signs elsewhere or that San Diego receives any particular compensation. Acceptance raises the preferred plan to $303.14-318.14 million unless another proposed purchase is removed. His value is substantial. The rotation still needs its innings. [8]

ANALYSIS / 02

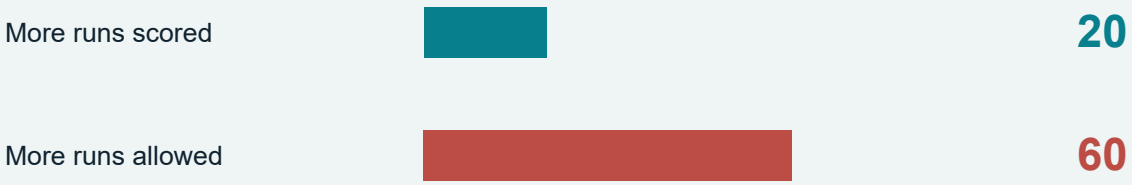
Ninety-one wins, but a thinner run margin

The Padres went 91-71, scored 722 runs and allowed 681. They finished 15th in runs scored and 10th in ERA among MLB clubs. The plus-41 run margin was smaller than the plus-81 of 2025 and the plus-91 of 2024. San Diego added 20 runs of offense from 2025 while allowing 60 more. The extra win in the standings should not obscure the erosion underneath it. [1]

Season	Record	Runs for / against	Margin	OPS / ERA
2024	93-69	760 / 669	+91	.744 / 3.86
2025	90-72	702 / 621	+81	.711 / 3.63
2026	91-71	722 / 681	+41	.717 / 3.99

20 MORE RUNS, 60 MORE ALLOWED

2025 margin: +81 / 2026 margin: +41



The run margin declined by 40 from the prior season.

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

The Division Series against Milwaukee ended in four games. San Diego's three losses came by one, one and two runs. Close postseason games justify examining every run-producing and run-preventing choice, but four games cannot establish the whole offseason agenda. The longer record points to starting pitching first, then replacing France's production if he leaves and improving the weakest everyday offensive positions. [2]

The simple run-ratio illustration later in this report translates the 2026 scoring totals into about 85.7 wins. That does not erase the actual 91 or prove that close-game success was luck. It shows the size of the cushion in the aggregate runs. A roster that loses substantial starting work and a productive first baseman has little reason to assume that cushion will widen on its own.

San Diego's best answer is to preserve its established advantages while funding the jobs that are actually vacant. Moving an elite reliever into the rotation by spreadsheet, crediting a recovering starter with a full

season or using an unsigned player in two clubs' preferred lineups would conceal those vacancies rather than solve them.

ANALYSIS / 03

Who is on the roster now

The November 3 initial roster feed contains 35 names, including three players on the 60-day injured list. Four listed players have since become free agents through documented option decisions: Pivetta, Canning, Lucas Giolito and Miguel Andujar. The club also announced the selection of Luis Gutierrez's contract on November 2. Reconciling those announcements produces 32 current major-roster names, including two 60-day injured-list listings. This is a dated roster reconciliation, not a claim that all 32 occupy ordinary 40-man slots simultaneously. [3,8,9,10]

Current major-roster player / MLB ID	Bats / throws	Administrative status
Bradgley Rodriguez / 699134	R / R	Active
Bryan Hoeing / 663773	R / R	Injured 60-Day; recovery gate
David Morgan / 688158	R / R	Active
Dustin Harris / 687957	L / R	Active
Ethan Salas / 806956	L / R	Active
Fernando Tatis Jr. / 665487	R / R	Active
Freddy Fermin / 666023	R / R	Active
Gage Workman / 669398	L / R	Active
Garrett Hawkins / 678184	R / R	Active
Gavin Sheets / 657757	L / L	Active; recovery gate
Hunter Stratton / 676702	R / R	Active
JP Sears / 676664	R / L	Active
Jackson Merrill / 701538	L / R	Active
Jake Cronenworth / 630105	L / R	Active
Jase Bowen / 687749	R / R	Active
Jeremiah Estrada / 669093	S / R	Active; recovery gate
Jhony Brito / 666745	R / R	Active
Joe Musgrove / 605397	R / R	Active; recovery gate
Kyle Hart / 606996	L / L	Active
Luis Campusano / 669134	R / R	Active
Luis Gutierrez / 692294	L / L	Nov. 2 contract selection; API reconciliation pending
Manny Machado / 592518	R / R	Active

Current major-roster player / MLB ID	Bats / throws	Administrative status
Mason McCoy / 669200	R / R	Active
Mason Miller / 695243	R / R	Active
Randy Vásquez / 681190	R / R	Active
Rodolfo Durán / 660710	R / R	Injured 60-Day; recovery gate
Samad Taylor / 669392	R / R	Active
Sung-Mun Song / 823550	L / R	Active
Wandy Peralta / 593974	L / L	Active
Will Wagner / 695238	L / R	Active
Xander Bogaerts / 593428	R / R	Active
Yuki Matsui / 673513	L / L	Active

Darvish is handled separately on the restricted list. Bryan Hoeing and Rodolfo Duran remain on the 60-day injured list in the snapshot. Administrative activation does not establish a player's ability to handle a particular 2027 workload. Musgrove, Sheets, Jeremiah Estrada and Mize each require a different health and workload assessment before their proposed roles become an Opening Day plan. [3,11,12]

Gutierrez's selection protects an organizational arm. It does not make him a major-league starter ready for 150 innings. His 2026 work included only 19.1 innings at Double-A and seven at Triple-A after time on the injured list. The plan gives him a limited later relief audition, with no assumption that he opens in the rotation. [8,13]

Every named acquisition candidate is separate from the retained roster. A current-team label on an individual player page can lag a transaction or option announcement. The dated official free-agent register and transaction history govern the classification here, with the actual publication date requiring a fresh reconciliation. [3,14]

ANALYSIS / 04

The lineup: Tatis sets the standard, but several jobs need more

Fernando Tatis Jr. produced a .289/.358/.470 line across 704 plate appearances. His 25 home runs were valuable, but the larger advantage was a durable, productive hitter whose contact quality supported the result. Jackson Merrill supplied 26 home runs and a credible center-field contribution. Manny Machado hit 30 home runs while his average fell to .217. The offense needs more than isolated power from its expensive core. [1,4]

Player / MLB ID	SD PA	AVG / OBP / SLG	HR	BB / K; status
Fernando Tatis Jr. / 665487	704	.289 / .358 / .470	25	64 / 130; RF core
Manny Machado / 592518	677	.217 / .303 / .407	30	76 / 144; 3B core
Jackson Merrill / 701538	664	.254 / .303 / .440	26	41 / 160; CF core

Player / MLB ID	SD PA	AVG / OBP / SLG	HR	BB / K; status
Xander Bogaerts / 593428	606	.231 / .332 / .344	13	77 / 109; SS, declining offense
Ty France / 664034	500	.295 / .363 / .502	21	37 / 108; Free agent; preferred retention
Jake Cronenworth / 630105	425	.225 / .308 / .321	7	38 / 97; 2B/1B, weak offense
Gavin Sheets / 657757	419	.212 / .313 / .397	17	49 / 85; Foot recovery
Freddy Fermin / 666023	265	.203 / .274 / .315	4	21 / 56; Defense-first C
Miguel Andujar / 609280	254	.259 / .303 / .423	5	11 / 38; Free agent; option declined
Luis Campusano / 669134	248	.265 / .363 / .433	8	30 / 53; C/DH, framing weakness
Ramón Laureano / 657656	206	.203 / .286 / .374	7	20 / 65; Free agent
Samad Taylor / 669392	175	.316 / .390 / .408	2	18 / 45; OF/utility audition
Sung-Mun Song / 823550	154	.191 / .291 / .244	1	19 / 31; IF audition
Luis Rengifo / 650859	145	.291 / .375 / .409	4	15 / 25; Free agent
Jase Bowen / 687749	103	.146 / .188 / .250	2	3 / 41; OF development
Dustin Harris / 687957	100	.322 / .364 / .422	0	5 / 13; LF/OF audition
Rodolfo Durán / 660710	91	.146 / .222 / .305	3	7 / 24; Forearm recovery
Will Wagner / 695238	45	.257 / .422 / .286	0	10 / 7; IF depth
Ethan Salas / 806956	40	.256 / .275 / .462	2	1 / 9; C development

France's .865 OPS in 500 plate appearances made his first-base job one of the useful pieces around that core. His departure would remove both the bat and a strong 2026 defensive result. Replacing him with more Cronenworth or Sheets is possible as a lineup assignment, but neither player's 2026 offense was equivalent. Cronenworth had a .629 OPS; Sheets had a .710 OPS and a pronounced split by pitcher handedness.

The left-field opportunity is more open. Samad Taylor and Dustin Harris earned consideration with shorter productive stretches, while Jase Bowen's Triple-A offense did not translate in his first substantial San Diego sample. A real competition among those players is sensible. Paying a premium merely to eliminate the competition would take money from a rotation with much larger vacancies.

The catching decision is a division of labor rather than a simple batting leaderboard. Freddy Fermin supplies the strongest established receiving value. Luis Campusano supplies more recent offense with weaker framing. Ethan Salas needs a developmental path that does not make him responsible for solving the offense immediately. Those three roles can coexist across a full season without requiring three catchers on every active roster.

ANALYSIS / 05

Expected contact and the danger of paying for the best year

Tatis' .379 expected weighted on-base average exceeded his .358 actual wOBA. Merrill's .347 xwOBA also exceeded his .320 actual mark. Those are encouraging contact signals around two players who already have central jobs. They support patience with the core without guaranteeing a particular rebound or run total. [4]

Batter	wOBA	xwOBA	SLG / xSLG	Reading
Fernando Tatis Jr.	0.358	0.379	0.470 / 0.500	Contact supports star-level offense
Manny Machado	0.310	0.328	0.407 / 0.420	Expected production better; no automatic rebound
Jackson Merrill	0.320	0.347	0.440 / 0.491	Room beyond actual results
Xander Bogaerts	0.306	0.325	0.344 / 0.376	Expected offense still modest
Ty France	0.373	0.327	0.502 / 0.421	Large actual/expected gap limits price
Jake Cronenworth	0.287	0.275	0.321 / 0.308	Both measures weak
Gavin Sheets	0.315	0.316	0.397 / 0.381	Actual and expected contact align
Freddy Fermin	0.265	0.270	0.315 / 0.315	Defense carries the case
Luis Campusano	0.353	0.327	0.433 / 0.391	Shorter sample exceeds contact estimate
Samad Taylor	0.356	0.309	0.408 / 0.328	Do not extrapolate .316 average
Sung-Mun Song	0.250	0.253	0.244 / 0.267	Weak initial sample
Dustin Harris	0.326	0.314	0.383 / 0.360	Small sample; useful audition
Ethan Salas	0.316	0.227	0.462 / 0.316	40 PA, no established MLB offense
Paul Goldschmidt	0.330	0.311	0.452 / 0.414	Part-time alternative, not France equivalent

France requires the opposite caution. His .373 wOBA was far above his .327 xwOBA, and his .865 OPS followed .670 and .680 seasons. That combination supports retaining a useful first baseman at a controlled price, not treating the 2026 peak as a permanent new level. The proposed two-year, $24-28 million ceiling reflects the value of a clear job and the risk of regression.

Machado's expected contact was better than his actual result, but a .328 xwOBA is not an automatic return to an elite offensive season. Bogaerts' .325 xwOBA was also better than his actual .306. Their contracts remain part of the roster whether those gaps close or not. The practical response is to improve the surrounding jobs and manage their defensive and designated-hitter workloads, not to credit hypothetical rebounds as purchased production.

Campusano and Taylor had actual results above their expected-contact estimates. Harris' sample was also small. Those players can earn larger opportunities, but the plan should retain checkpoints. A favorable short stretch is an invitation to test a role, not evidence that the role is filled for six months.

ANALYSIS / 06

Three-year trends and matchup decisions

Tatis' OPS has stayed between .814 and .832 over the last three seasons, with much larger workloads in 2025 and 2026 than in 2024. That is a stronger base for planning than a single hot finish. Machado and Merrill have more recent offensive decline to reverse, while Bogaerts has not reached a .720 OPS in any of the three seasons shown. [1,5]

Hitter	2024 MLB PA / OPS	2025 MLB PA / OPS	2026 MLB PA / OPS
Fernando Tatis Jr.	438 / .832	691 / .814	704 / .828
Manny Machado	643 / .797	678 / .795	677 / .710
Jackson Merrill	593 / .826	483 / .774	664 / .743
Xander Bogaerts	463 / .688	552 / .719	606 / .676
Jake Cronenworth	656 / .714	515 / .744	425 / .629
Ty France	535 / .670	490 / .680	500 / .865
Gavin Sheets	501 / .660	545 / .746	419 / .710
Freddy Fermin	368 / .685	347 / .636	265 / .589
Luis Campusano	299 / .642	27 / .222	248 / .796
Paul Goldschmidt	654 / .716	534 / .731	380 / .765

Batter / full MLB season	LHP: PA / OPS	RHP: PA / OPS
Fernando Tatis Jr.	161 / .987	543 / .782
Manny Machado	160 / .700	517 / .714
Jackson Merrill	183 / .742	481 / .744
Xander Bogaerts	158 / .644	448 / .687
Ty France	138 / .853	362 / .869
Jake Cronenworth	93 / .625	332 / .630
Gavin Sheets	71 / .454	348 / .764
Freddy Fermin	75 / .549	190 / .605
Luis Campusano	53 / .812	195 / .791
Samad Taylor	50 / .764	125 / .812
Sung-Mun Song	13 / .267	141 / .558
Jase Bowen	51 / .604	52 / .266

Batter / full MLB season	LHP: PA / OPS	RHP: PA / OPS
Dustin Harris	23 / .599	129 / .757
Paul Goldschmidt	183 / .966	197 / .590
Rhys Hoskins	125 / .643	192 / .708

Sheets' .764 OPS against right-handers and .454 against left-handers provide a useful reason to limit his exposure against left-handed pitching, although the latter sample was only 71 plate appearances. Goldschmidt's .966 OPS against left-handers and .590 against right-handers make the alternative plan a part-time arrangement. It would be misleading to call him a direct 500-plate-appearance replacement for France.

France was productive against both sides in 2026. Merrill's .742 and .744 OPS marks were almost identical. Those players do not need a platoon imposed simply because it creates a tidy lineup chart. Cronenworth's weak results against both sides also mean that a platoon alone would not solve his offensive problem.

A matchup plan needs defensive coverage and enough usable plate appearances behind it. Goldschmidt's preferred matchups can complement Sheets, but that pairing still competes with Cronenworth for first-base work and with several established hitters for DH time. The funded alternative explicitly reallocates those opportunities instead of adding a name to an already full batting order.

ANALYSIS / 07

Defense: preserve the strong positions, examine the weak ones

Machado's plus-12 Outs Above Average, Merrill's plus-seven and Tatis' plus-four were meaningful 2026 contributions. Bogaerts remained positive at plus-three. These are reasons to avoid a reflexive defensive reshuffle while rebuilding the pitching staff. The infield and outfield should help the new starters turn contact into outs. [4]

Fielder	2024 OAA	2025 OAA	2026 OAA	2026 opportunities
Fernando Tatis Jr.	-1	+8	+4	416
Manny Machado	-1	-6	+12	401
Jackson Merrill	+12	+3	+7	442
Xander Bogaerts	+5	+7	+3	509
Ty France	-11	+10	+8	330
Jake Cronenworth	0	0	-5	423
Gavin Sheets	-7	-4	-4	192
Samad Taylor	0	0	-2	108
Sung-Mun Song	No row	No row	+4	158
Jase Bowen	No row	No row	+1	91

Fielder	2024 OAA	2025 OAA	2026 OAA	2026 opportunities
Dustin Harris	No row	0	+1	85
Will Wagner	+1	-3	-3	18
Gage Workman	No row	-2	-3	28
Paul Goldschmidt	0	-3	+6	157
Rhys Hoskins	-5	+1	-7	115

The three-year ranges matter. Machado moved from minus-one to minus-six to plus-12. France moved from minus-11 to plus-10 to plus-eight. Those swings argue against treating one year as a fixed forecast. They also argue against dismissing the current evidence merely because it is inconvenient to an existing opinion of the player.

Cronenworth's minus-five and Sheets' minus-four require attention when evaluating the internal first-base alternative. Moving more innings to those players may cover the lineup card while surrendering some of the run prevention France supplied. Goldschmidt's plus-six came in 157 opportunities, fewer than half of France's 330, so the two totals cannot be read as equal full-season guarantees.

Song's plus-four in 158 opportunities is useful evidence for an infield audition. Wagner's minus-three in 18 opportunities and Workman's minus-three in 28 are too small to define their careers, but they do not justify declaring either an established range upgrade. The report preserves the opportunity counts so that a compact defensive number does not become a claim larger than its sample.

ANALYSIS / 08

Position assignments have to match actual experience

The 2026 fielding record includes Tatis at both right field and second base, with 930 innings in right and 413 at second. This plan returns most of his defensive work to right field, while giving Song and Wagner a genuine chance to challenge the weakest infield offense. That is a choice about where to concentrate a productive player, not a claim that Tatis cannot play the infield. [6]

Player	2026 SD defensive innings	2027 assignment
Fernando Tatis Jr.	RF 930.0; 2B 413.0	Primary RF, selected DH
Manny Machado	3B 1210.0	Primary 3B, selected DH
Jackson Merrill	CF 1362.1	Primary CF
Xander Bogaerts	SS 1298.1	SS with performance review
Ty France	3B 6.0; 1B 1030.1	1B if retained
Jake Cronenworth	3B 48.0; SS 22.0; 2B 781.1; 1B 56.0	2B/1B
Gavin Sheets	1B 332.0; LF 273.0; RF 22.0	1B/LF/DH after recovery
Samad Taylor	2B 9.0; RF 32.0; LF 290.1	LF/CF and utility coverage

Player	2026 SD defensive innings	2027 assignment
Sung-Mun Song	2B 179.0; 3B 94.1; SS 116.0	2B/3B/SS audition
Jase Bowen	LF 132.0; CF 27.0; RF 124.1	OF development
Dustin Harris	LF 106.0; CF 8.0; RF 75.0	LF/OF opportunity
Will Wagner	3B 10.0; 2B 25.0	IF depth
Gage Workman	3B 2.0; LF 3.0	Limited IF role

Merrill remains the primary center fielder. Bowen has 300.1 Triple-A center-field innings in addition to his 27 San Diego innings, making him the larger backup share in the proposed map. Taylor had 40 Triple-A center-field innings in 2026 and only a very small earlier MLB sample there. His seven proposed center-field starts are limited coverage, not a declaration that he is an established everyday defender at the position. [6,13]

Harris' current evidence is in the outfield. The internal first-base map therefore uses Cronenworth and Sheets, rather than inventing a major-league first-base role for Harris. Harris receives additional offense through the outfield and DH competition. A future first-base trial could change that judgment, but it is not assumed in the funded plan.

Every position receives 162 starts later in the report. That accounting is necessary because several useful hitters prefer overlapping jobs. It is not a promise that the exact shares will survive injuries, performance changes or roster decisions. The purpose is to expose a missing position before the season rather than hide it behind a list of bats.

ANALYSIS / 09

Catching: use Fermin's glove without accepting every weak plate appearance

Fermin caught 660.2 innings and produced approximately plus-three framing runs and plus-nine overall catching runs in the qualified Statcast fielding-value table. His .589 OPS makes it difficult to expand his role solely because of the glove. The choice is how to retain his run prevention while improving the rest of the catching offense. [1,4,6]

Catcher	2026 catching IP	Framing runs	Overall catching value / decision
Freddy Fermin	660.2	+3.0	+9.0 runs
Luis Campusano	447.0	-4.4	No qualified row
Ethan Salas	73.0	-1.1	No qualified row
Rodolfo Durán	246.2	-1.1	No qualified row

Campusano's .796 OPS in 248 plate appearances gives him the offensive side of the competition, but approximately minus-4.4 framing runs in 447 catching innings limit the case for simply making him the full-time starter. Catching work and selected DH opportunities can be distributed separately. The plan does not count his bat as free offense without the defensive tradeoff.

Salas had 300 Double-A plate appearances, 105 at Triple-A and 40 in the majors. The .949 OPS at Triple-A is encouraging but brief. His MLB expected-contact sample was much weaker than the actual .737 OPS. The proposed 180 plate appearances and 27 catching starts are a developmental opportunity, with an explicit fallback to Campusano and Fermin if more minor-league work is needed. [13]

Duran's forearm injury prevents treating him as guaranteed opening coverage. No plate appearances are allocated to him in the main plan. A healthy return would create a new competition, with another catcher's workload removed. The absence of a qualified overall catching-value row for the other catchers is recorded as missing information, not as zero defensive value.

ANALYSIS / 10

The rotation vacancy is larger than one ace

The Padres' starters supplied 752.2 innings with a 4.42 ERA in 2026. The bullpen supplied almost as many innings. King alone delivered 185 innings; Buehler supplied 153.2. Losing those workloads would leave an enormous gap before considering the other free agents. [1,7]

Pitcher / MLB ID	GS / SD IP	ERA / full MLB xERA	K / BB / HR	Treatment
Michael King / 650633	32 / 185.0	3.21 / 4.42	159 / 70 / 20	Free agent after opt-out
Walker Buehler / 621111	32 / 153.2	4.63 / 4.30	131 / 57 / 22	Free agent
Randy Vásquez / 681190	23 / 140.2	3.90 / 5.54	87 / 37 / 16	Retained; large expected-ERA warning
Griffin Canning / 656288	11 / 88.2	5.68 / 4.69	87 / 41 / 14	Free agent after option decline
Casey Mize / 663554	10 / 44.2	7.46 / 3.87	25 / 19 / 13	Free agent; full-season evidence is better
Robbie Ray / 592662	9 / 43.0	5.02 / 4.82	33 / 27 / 7	Free agent; walk risk
Nick Pivetta / 601713	8 / 34.2	2.86 / 3.20	42 / 8 / 2	Free agent; flexor recovery
Lucas Giolito / 608337	5 / 29.2	5.16 / 5.62	18 / 23 / 4	Free agent; elbow recovery
JP Sears / 676664	6 / 32.2	4.68 / 5.16	25 / 11 / 6	AAA/MLB performance gate
Kyle Hart / 606996	4 / 64.0	4.92 / 3.65	59 / 26 / 5	Retained; starter/bulk depth
Jhony Brito / 666745	0 / 9.0	3.00 / 3.39	6 / 1 / 2	Recovery and workload gate

Vasquez is the most established retained starter in the current snapshot, but his 3.90 ERA came with a 5.54 expected ERA and 87 strikeouts in 140.2 innings. That is a reason to seek stronger support around him, not a reason to label him the new rotation anchor. Sears' 7.49 Triple-A ERA and 4.68 San Diego ERA likewise make a large automatic promotion risky. [4,13]

Hart's retained $2.5 million option supplies flexibility. It does not turn his 64 major-league innings into a demonstrated 150-inning starting season. Brito's 45.1 Triple-A innings and nine MLB innings after recovery support a measured opportunity. They do not support treating a full starter workload as already available. [9,13]

The preferred plan purchases or retains 465 starter innings across King, Martinez and Mize, with all three roles conditional on contracts and health. The remaining 375 starter innings are spread across Vasquez, Sears, Hart, Brito, Ian Koenig and Jagger Haynes. That still contains risk, but it makes the young and recovering pitchers support a rotation rather than constitute most of it.

ANALYSIS / 11

King, Martinez and Mize each solve a different problem

King is the preferred lead starter at three years and $75-84 million. He has delivered 173.2 and 185 innings in two of the last three seasons, with a shorter 2025 in between. His 2026 ERA was 3.21, but his 4.42 xERA and 70 walks argue for a ceiling rather than an unlimited retention bid. The case is to preserve a substantial proven workload while acknowledging that the run prevention may regress. [1,4,5,10]

Martinez is a command-and-volume purchase at two years and $26-30 million. His 180 innings and 26 walks address a specific problem: the retained staff does not contain enough demonstrated starting work. His 109 strikeouts and 3.98 xERA also explain why the proposal should not price him as if a 3.10 ERA will necessarily repeat. He is assigned 165 innings, below his completed 2026 workload.

Mize is a separate retention bet at two years and $24-28 million. His 7.46 ERA in 44.2 San Diego innings was poor, but his full season was 131.1 innings with a 4.32 ERA and 3.87 xERA. The full-season strikeout and walk totals, 110 and 38, provide a more useful starting point than treating the final club-specific sample as the whole player. The ankle recovery still needs confirmation before assigning 26 starts. [3,4,5]

Candidate / MLB ID	Full 2026 MLB evidence	S&S ceiling / decision
Michael King / 650633	185.0 IP, 3.21 ERA, 4.42 xERA; 159 K / 70 BB	Preferred retention: 3 years / $75-84M
Nick Martinez / 607259	180.0 IP, 3.10 ERA, 3.98 xERA; 109 K / 26 BB	Preferred SP: 2 years / $26-30M
Casey Mize / 663554	131.1 IP, 4.32 ERA, 3.87 xERA; 110 K / 38 BB	Retention: 2 years / $24-28M
Tyler Mahle / 641816	149.0 IP, 3.99 ERA, 3.95 xERA; 137 K / 46 BB	Alternative SP: 2 years / $28-32M
Michael Soroka / 647336	116.0 IP, 3.41 ERA, 4.12 xERA; 114 K / 29 BB	Lower-volume fallback: 1 year / $8-10M
Ty France / 664034	500 PA, .865 OPS, 21 HR; 0.373/0.327 wOBA/xwOBA	Preferred 1B retention: 2 years / $24-28M
Paul Goldschmidt / 502671	380 PA, .765 OPS, 18 HR; 0.330/0.311 wOBA/xwOBA	Part-time alternative: 1 year / $5-7M
Rhys Hoskins / 656555	317 PA, .682 OPS, 13 HR; 0.305/0.297 wOBA/xwOBA	Pass as primary replacement; weak contact case
Adrian Morejon / 670970	86.0 IP, 2.83 ERA, 2.34 xERA; 107 K / 28 BB	$23.15M QO decision pending; no assumed new deal

Candidate / MLB ID	Full 2026 MLB evidence	S&S ceiling / decision
Robbie Ray / 592662	165.2 IP, 3.59 ERA, 4.82 xERA; 140 K / 84 BB	Pass as first choice; 84 BB and 4.82 xERA
Nick Pivetta / 601713	34.2 IP, 2.86 ERA, 3.20 xERA; 42 K / 8 BB	Medical inquiry only; no funded innings

Mahle is the principal alternative to King, at two years and $28-32 million for a proposed 140 innings. Soroka's lower price and 116-inning 2026 season make him a smaller-workload fallback, not an equivalent replacement. Ray's 84 walks and 4.82 xERA weaken his case as the first answer. Pivetta's 34.2 innings and flexor history require a medical inquiry before a meaningful workload can be funded. None of those choices should be evaluated on ERA alone.

ANALYSIS / 12

The bullpen is an advantage worth protecting

Mason Miller struck out 129 batters in 70 innings with a 1.67 ERA. Bradgley Rodriguez supplied 74 innings with a 2.19 ERA. Matsui and Peralta return on exercised options. That is a substantial retained relief foundation, even before any Morejon decision. [1,4,9]

Pitcher	2026 SD IP	ERA / full MLB xERA	K / BB	Treatment
Adrian Morejon	86.0	2.83 / 2.34	107 / 28	Free agent; $23.15M QO pending
Wandy Peralta	77.1	3.61 / 4.32	50 / 23	$4.45M option retained
Bradgley Rodriguez	74.0	2.19 / 2.37	81 / 20	Young high-leverage core
Mason Miller	70.0	1.67 / 1.70	129 / 26	Closer; keep workload in relief
Yuki Matsui	64.0	1.83 / 3.03	68 / 36	$6.5M option retained
Jason Adam	34.1	2.62 / 3.78	22 / 10	Free agent
David Morgan	33.1	3.78 / 3.81	39 / 22	Middle-relief opportunity
Jeremiah Estrada	31.0	3.48 / 3.42	38 / 16	Shoulder recovery gate
Alek Jacob	5.0	5.40 / 3.08	6 / 2	Outrighted depth, command concerns

Miller stays in relief in this plan. Converting his 70 high-quality innings into an assumed starter season would introduce a new workload problem while weakening the part of the staff that already works. The proposed 65 innings preserve his closing role and leave room for normal rest and availability changes.

Morejon's 86 innings, 107 strikeouts and 2.34 xERA make him a valuable pitcher, not a luxury to dismiss. The financial question is whether a $23.15 million acceptance or a later negotiated contract can coexist with the rotation purchases. The report gives acceptance an explicit cost and a 70-inning role, with other relief innings removed. It does not count him as both departed payroll and retained performance. [8]

Estrada's shoulder recovery, Hoeing's flexor-tendon recovery and Musgrove's limited post-rehabilitation workload remain separate questions. They should not be combined into a generic claim that the bullpen will

get healthy. Each conditional role has a named replacement, and the combined failure of several recoveries would make the proposed reserve more important.

ANALYSIS / 13

The development system: distinguish an audition from an answer

San Diego has players who deserve opportunities, but the upper-minors record does not support filling every opening internally. Koenig's 27 Triple-A innings at a 2.33 ERA followed 121.1 Double-A innings at 4.60. He is a reasonable starter reserve. Haynes' 5.80 Triple-A ERA and 20 walks in 40.1 innings require more caution. [13]

Player / MLB ID	2026 level and sample	Readiness decision
Ethan Salas / 806956	AAA: 105 PA, .949 OPS, 3 HR; 14 BB / 10 K	105 AAA PA plus 40 MLB PA; development, not instant star
Jase Bowen / 687749	AAA: 222 PA, .962 OPS, 13 HR; 21 BB / 59 K	AAA offense did not translate in 103 MLB PA
Dustin Harris / 687957	AAA: 135 PA, 1.039 OPS, 6 HR; 14 BB / 12 K	Earn LF/1B work; MLB sample only 100 PA
Samad Taylor / 669392	AAA: 258 PA, .879 OPS, 8 HR; 30 BB / 54 K	Useful multi-position candidate
Will Wagner / 695238	AAA: 303 PA, .745 OPS, 6 HR; 42 BB / 52 K	OBP-oriented IF depth
Mason McCoy / 669200	AAA: 570 PA, .767 OPS, 10 HR; 57 BB / 125 K	Emergency SS coverage
Carlos Rodríguez / 677578	AAA: 547 PA, .791 OPS, 6 HR; 55 BB / 61 K	Low-strikeout OF alternative
Marcos Castañon / 676203	AAA: 495 PA, .781 OPS, 17 HR; 33 BB / 88 K	IF depth behind established positions
Braedon Karpathios / 701682	AA: 510 PA, .797 OPS, 17 HR; 60 BB / 162 K	AA production with substantial strikeouts
Romeo Sanabria / 703804	AA: 408 PA, .831 OPS, 10 HR; 53 BB / 91 K	1B depth; not an established France replacement
Ian Koenig / 701617	AAA: 27.0 IP, 2.33 ERA; 22 K / 5 BB	27 AAA IP after 121.1 AA IP; starter reserve
Jagger Haynes / 695247	AAA: 40.1 IP, 5.80 ERA; 31 K / 20 BB	AAA performance gate before MLB rotation
Luis Gutierrez / 692294	AA: 19.1 IP, 4.19 ERA; 22 K / 7 BB	Injury-limited season; selected Nov. 2, no rotation claim
Victor Lizarraga / 694205	AA: 87.1 IP, 7.52 ERA; 70 K / 56 BB	7.52 AA ERA and 56 BB; no opening MLB work
Garrett Hawkins / 678184	AAA: 31.1 IP, 5.46 ERA; 30 K / 29 BB	29 BB in 31.1 AAA IP; no assumed high leverage
Kruz Schoolcraft / 828244	A: 79.1 IP, 5.90 ERA; 82 K / 57 BB	A-ball development; no 2027 MLB innings
Ty Harvey / 829210	A: 197 PA, .639 OPS, 3 HR; 24 BB / 56 K	A-ball development; no MLB catching assignment
Elliot Lascelles / 828900	A: 64 PA, .835 OPS, 0 HR; 7 BB / 10 K	64 A-ball PA; long-term development

Gutierrez's protected roster place follows an injury-limited year. Victor Lizarraga's 7.52 Double-A ERA and 56 walks in 87.1 innings do not justify an opening major-league rotation assignment. Garrett Hawkins' 29 walks in 31.1 Triple-A innings likewise require a control improvement before he receives important relief work. Organizational need cannot substitute for those improvements.

Salas, Bowen, Harris and Taylor are nearer offensive opportunities, but their samples differ. Salas' strongest upper-level stretch was brief. Bowen hit well at Triple-A and struggled in the majors. Harris and Taylor have not yet established full-season everyday production. The plan creates room for them while preserving the ability to change the allocation when the evidence changes.

Kruz Schoolcraft, Coleman Borthwick, Ty Harvey and Elliot Lascelles belong in the long-term development discussion. They receive no 2027 major-league workload in this report. Kash Mayfield, Braden Nett and Ryan Bergert are no longer current Padres prospects in the reconciled affiliations and are excluded from the internal solution. That separation matters when evaluating the cost of prior acquisitions and the actual depth available now. [3,13]

ANALYSIS / 14

Contracts: the starting point is already expensive

The annual allocation bridge carries eleven contracts or contractual contingencies totaling about $161.44 million. Machado, Bogaerts, Tatis, Musgrove, Merrill and Cronenworth account for most of it. Matsui, Peralta, Song and Hart add defined roles. Darvish is carried at $15 million, representing $14 million salary plus an allocated portion of the original signing bonus, until his 2027 status is resolved. [15,18,19]

Player / MLB ID	2027 allocation	Basis
Manny Machado / 592518	$39.091M	Salary plus allocated signing bonus
Xander Bogaerts / 593428	$25.455M	Salary plus allocated signing bonus
Fernando Tatis Jr. / 665487	$25.714M	Salary plus allocated signing bonus
Joe Musgrove / 605397	$20.000M	Guaranteed salary; no starter IP assumed
Jackson Merrill / 701538	$7.111M	Salary plus allocated signing bonus
Jake Cronenworth / 630105	$12.286M	Salary plus allocated signing bonus
Yuki Matsui / 673513	$6.500M	Retained player option
Wandy Peralta / 593974	$4.450M	Retained player option
Sung-Mun Song / 823550	$3.333M	Salary plus allocated signing bonus
Kyle Hart / 606996	$2.500M	Exercised club option
Yu Darvish / 506433	$15.000M	$14M salary plus $1M allocated bonus; hold until status resolved
TOTAL	$161.440M	Includes Darvish contingency; not annual cash or CBT

This allocation method follows the salary-plus-allocated-bonus basis used in the roster payroll source. It is not the same as cash paid during the year, contract average annual value for tax purposes or an official club budget. In particular, allocating an old signing bonus does not imply that the bonus is paid again in 2027.

Darvish's unpaid restricted-list status in 2026 does not establish that his 2027 salary will also be unpaid. The conservative treatment is to carry the cost and assign no innings. A later verified contractual change could reduce the allocation. It should be recognized only when it actually occurs, rather than used now to make a preferred free-agent package look affordable. [11,18,19]

Musgrove's $20 million is retained even though no starter innings are assigned. This is the essential difference between a contract commitment and a workload projection. A team can owe the salary while still needing to buy the innings elsewhere.

ANALYSIS / 15

Arbitration, buyouts and the real opening allocation

The eight arbitration estimates total $24.6 million. Miller's projected $8.1 million and Sheets' $6.5 million are the largest cases. The figures are published projections, not agreed salaries. Hoeing and Brito remain in the cost bridge even though their health and roles require caution. [16]

Player	Estimate, $M	Basis
Gavin Sheets	6.50	Published projection; unsigned
Luis Campusano	1.70	Published projection; unsigned
Mason Miller	8.10	Published projection; unsigned
Freddy Fermin	2.60	Published projection; unsigned
Bryan Hoeing	0.80	Published projection; unsigned
JP Sears	2.80	Published projection; unsigned
Jeremiah Estrada	1.30	Published projection; unsigned
Jhony Brito	0.80	Published projection; unsigned
TOTAL	24.60	Eight cases; medical status does not erase cost

Component	Annual allocation	Definition
11 contract allocations	$161.440M	Includes $15M Darvish contingency
Arbitration pool	$24.60M	Eight MLB Trade Rumors estimates
Buyouts carried	$11.95M	King 5; Andujar 2.9; Canning 1.8; Giolito 1.5; Marquez 0.75
Pre-arb, minors and callups	$12-16M	S&S allowance, including organizational depth
Existing-roster envelope	$209.99-213.99M	Before additions; excludes benefits/tax/operations

The $11.95 million buyout allowance carries King at $5 million, Andujar at $2.9 million, Canning at $1.8 million, Giolito at $1.5 million and German Marquez at $750,000. The Andujar and Canning figures include the reported escalators. Hart's exercised option is counted as salary, without also charging its unexercised buyout. [10,15,17]

Marquez's release does not erase the listed contractual obligation, and his later affiliation does not make him a retained San Diego pitcher. Conversely, retaining King on a new contract would not automatically erase the buyout triggered by the old deal. The preferred plan conservatively carries both unless an actual new agreement changes that treatment.

Adding a $12-16 million allowance for pre-arbitration players, minors and callups produces the $209.99-213.99 million existing-roster envelope. Benefits, tax and operations remain outside it. No projected trade savings, future tender decisions or unconfirmed salary waivers are used to reduce that base.

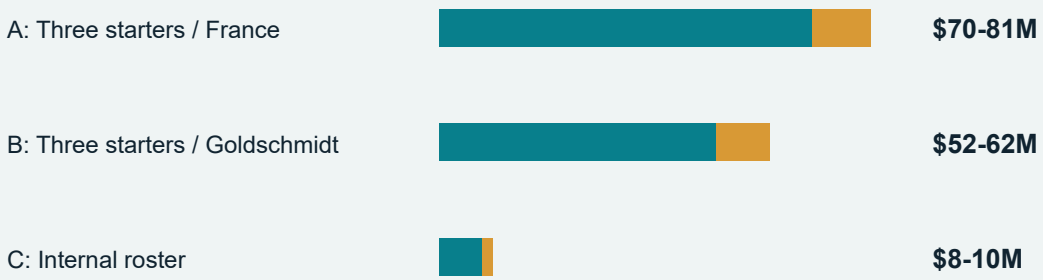
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Three funded plans and the Morejon branch

Plan A buys the clearest collection of jobs: King as lead starter, Martinez as a command-and-volume starter, Mize as a lower-cost retention with better full-season indicators, and France as the primary first baseman. The annual additions are $25-28 million, $13-15 million, $12-14 million and $12-14 million, respectively, plus the $8-10 million reserve. The total new commitment, including that one-year reserve, is $157-180 million across the proposed contract terms.

Plan	Annual additions	Total allocation	New commitment
A: King / Martinez / Mize / France	$70-81M	$279.99-294.99M	$157-180M
B: Mahle / Martinez / Mize / Goldschmidt	$52-62M	$261.99-275.99M	$91-107M
C: Internal roster	$8-10M	$217.99-223.99M	$8-10M

THREE ANNUAL SPENDING PLANS



S&S annual additions. Each includes a $8-10M depth reserve.

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

Plan B is a real concession. Mahle replaces King at $14-16 million annually, and Goldschmidt replaces only part of France's job at $5-7 million. Martinez and Mize remain. The annual additions are $52-62 million, with $91-107 million in new commitment including the reserve. The lower total comes with fewer established lead-starter innings and more offensive work assigned to internal hitters.

Plan C adds only the $8-10 million reserve. It is the explicit no-acquisition outcome if the free agents do not return. It leaves the roster heavily dependent on developmental and recovery outcomes. The workload tables show why it should be treated as a warning about the cost of inaction, not as a recommendation justified by its lower total.

Contingency	Annual change / total	Treatment
Morejon accepts QO	+$23.15M; A $303.14-318.14M	Acceptance is binding cost; reduce other purchases only with explicit workload change
QO accepted, France purchase removed	A $291.14-304.14M	Use C first-base/PA replacement, while retaining A starting pitchers
Morejon accepted, no outside purchase	C $241.14-247.14M	Internal starting pitching still carries major risk
Darvish salary formally not payable	Potential reduction, not booked saving	Conservative $15M allocation remains until contract/status confirmed
Musgrove unavailable	No salary saving assumed	Guaranteed $20M remains; replace 50 relief IP
Hart option retained	No $0.2M buyout added	Count $2.5M salary once
Marquez released	Carry $0.75M buyout	No 2027 SD player workload
All purchases unavailable	Plan C costed, readiness deficient	Reserve does not supply unsigned players or projected wins
Other club costs	Not included	Benefits, tax, operations and official CBT differ

Morejon acceptance adds $23.15 million to any plan that currently excludes him. If France's proposed purchase is removed from Plan A, the resulting allocation is $291.14-304.14 million and the internal first-base changes must also be adopted. If no outside purchase is made, the internal plan with Morejon costs $241.14-247.14 million. Neither branch solves the missing starter workload by itself.

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Six thousand two hundred plate appearances, with alternatives

The batting allocation protects the central jobs while making room for real auditions. Tatis, Merrill and Machado receive the largest shares. Bogaerts remains the main shortstop. France receives 500 plate appearances only if retained, while Cronenworth, Sheets, Taylor, Harris and Song divide the next tier of opportunities. [20]

Player	PA	Opportunity
Tatis	680	RF/DH
Merrill	650	CF/DH
Machado	650	3B/DH
Bogaerts	550	SS/DH
France	500	Only if retained; 1B/DH
Cronenworth	480	2B/1B
Sheets	350	1B/LF/DH after foot recovery

Player	PA	Opportunity
Campusano	300	C/DH
Fermin	260	C
Salas	180	C development
Taylor	350	LF/CF/utility
Song	330	IF/DH
Harris	320	LF/OF/DH
Wagner	220	IF/DH
Bowen	230	OF development
Workman	80	IF depth
McCoy	70	SS depth
TOTAL	6,200	Season coverage, not 17 simultaneous active hitters

These 6,200 plate appearances represent season coverage, including bench, injury and minor-league callup paths. They do not require seventeen hitters on the active roster at once. The smaller shares belong to players who may move between levels or serve as replacements rather than remain on the bench all season.

Change from A	PA adjustment	Consequence
B: Goldschmidt for France	France -500; Goldschmidt +300; Sheets +100; Harris +50; Wagner +50	Part-time right-handed bat, more internal work
C: no France	-500; Sheets +150, Harris +100, Wagner +100, Song +100, Taylor +50	Weaker established offense; preserve 6,200 PA
Sheets unavailable in A	-350; Harris +100, Wagner +100, Song +100, Taylor +50	No opening-day foot clearance assumed
Salas needs more development	-180; Campusano +100, Fermin +80	Greater catching load for established pair
TOTAL	6,200 in every branch	Workload coverage does not imply equal production

Goldschmidt receives 300 plate appearances in Plan B, with the remaining 200 of France's proposed work going to Sheets, Harris and Wagner. Plan C redistributes all 500 to internal hitters. Neither alternative is credited with France's .865 OPS or plus-eight OAA as if the production survived the change in personnel.

If Sheets' foot recovery fails to support his role, the 350 plate appearances move to Harris, Wagner, Song and Taylor. If Salas needs more development, Campusano and Fermin cover the 180. Multiple simultaneous absences would require a new combined allocation rather than stacking every individual fallback on the same players indefinitely.

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A complete starting-pitching map

The preferred plan assigns 162 starts and 840 starter innings. The three proposed purchases or retentions supply 86 starts and 465 innings. Vasquez, Sears, Hart, Brito, Koenig and Haynes supply the rest. No starter innings are assigned to Musgrove, Darvish, Pivetta or an unnamed reserve purchase. [20]

Pitcher	Starts / IP	Workload condition
King	30 / 170	Only if retained; below 185 prior IP
Martinez	30 / 165	Only if signed; below 180 prior IP
Mize	26 / 130	Only if retained and ankle recovered; near 131.1 prior IP
Vasquez	28 / 145	Near 140.2 prior IP; 5.54 xERA requires caution
Sears	20 / 100	Performance gate after 7.49 AAA ERA
Hart	12 / 55	Plus 30 relief IP; increase from 64 MLB IP
Brito	6 / 25	Plus 20 relief IP after 54.1 MLB/AAA IP
Koenig	6 / 30	Plus 15 relief IP; 148.1 AA/AAA innings support depth
Haynes	4 / 20	Plus 20 relief IP; AAA command/performance gate
TOTAL	162 / 840	No Musgrove or Darvish starts; 600 relief IP separate

King's 170 innings and Martinez's 165 are below their completed 2026 totals. Mize's 130 is near his full-season 131.1. Those comparisons make the quantities reasonable planning assumptions, but the contracts and health checks still must clear. A realistic workload estimate cannot make an unsigned pitcher available.

Hart's combined starter and relief work rises to 85 innings. Brito's total is 45. Koenig's 45 and Haynes' 40 are limited major-league opportunities within larger demonstrated minor-league workloads. Those limits reduce the temptation to solve the entire vacancy with a prospect's name and an arbitrary 150 innings.

Mahle's alternative replaces King's 170 innings with 140, while Koenig adds 25 and Haynes five. That preserves the overall innings total but increases the developmental burden. The report does not claim the alternative has the same rotation quality simply because the arithmetic balances.

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Relief coverage and the price of losing the purchases

The relief map assigns 600 innings, substantially less than the 683.2 supplied by the 2026 bullpen. That reduction is one of the benefits the starting-pitching purchases are intended to create. Miller, Bradgley Rodriguez, Matsui and Peralta anchor the plan, with smaller measured opportunities behind them. [20]

Pitcher / coverage	IP	Condition
Miller	65	Closer; below 70 prior IP
Bradgley Rodriguez	65	Below 74 prior IP; protect command
Matsui	60	Near 64 prior IP
Peralta	60	Below 77.1 prior IP
Musgrove	50	Conditional build after only three postseason IP; explicit replacement
Estrada	45	Shoulder recovery; do not assume opening availability
Morgan	50	Measured middle relief
Hawkins	35	AAA control gate
Stratton	30	AAA/MLB depth, not established leverage
Hart	30	Plus 55 starter IP
Brito	20	Plus 25 starter IP
Hoeing	20	Later recovery only; no opening workload assumed
Jacob	25	Roster-selection and command gate
Haynes	20	Plus 20 starter IP
Koenig	15	Plus 30 starter IP
Gutierrez	10	Limited later audition after injury-limited AA/AAA season
TOTAL	600	840 starter + 600 relief = 1,440 innings

Musgrove's 50 innings are conditional on a successful build from his three postseason innings. They are not a medical clearance or a promise that he opens in relief. Hoeing's 20 are a later recovery allowance, with no opening workload assumed. Estrada's 45 require the separate shoulder check. Each has a stated replacement if the role cannot be filled. [11,12]

Change from A	IP / starts adjustment	Consequence
B: Mahle for King	King -30/170; Mahle +26/140; Koenig +4/25; Haynes +0/5	Same 162 starts / 840 IP; less established lead starter

Change from A	IP / starts adjustment	Consequence
C: no King / Martinez / Mize	-86 starts / -465 IP	Vasquez +4/20; Sears +8/40; Hart +10/55; Brito +10/55; Koenig +20/110; Haynes +18/100; Yost +16/85
C readiness warning	Hart totals 140 IP; Brito 100 IP	Large rises after 64 and 54.1 prior MLB/AAA IP; volume map is not a safe clearance
Musgrove unavailable	-50 relief IP	Matsui, Peralta, Estrada, Morgan, Stratton +10 each
Hoeing unavailable	-20 relief IP	Hawkins +10, Jacob +10
Estrada unavailable	-45 relief IP	Morgan +15, Stratton +10, Jacob +10, Hawkins +10
Morejon accepts QO	+70 relief IP	Musgrove -20, Hawkins -15, Stratton -10, Jacob -10, Haynes -10, Gutierrez -5
TOTAL	162 starts; 840 + 600 IP	Every addition displaces work; quality and health remain separate

The no-acquisition path removes 465 starter innings and redistributes them to retained or organizational pitchers. That would raise Hart to 140 total innings and Brito to 100, compared with 64 and 54.1 MLB/Triple-A innings in 2026. Those are material workload jumps, alongside poor recent results for several other candidates. The map is an exposure test, not a safe recommendation to force those totals.

Morejon acceptance adds 70 relief innings while removing 70 from other assignments. If he declines and later signs a different contract, the financial and workload plans must be rebuilt around the actual terms. The reserve is a financial allowance, not a pitcher who has already delivered the missing innings.

ANALYSIS / 20

The defensive map and the displaced jobs

The nine-position map allocates 162 starts at each position, including DH. It preserves Merrill in center and Machado at third, concentrates Tatis in right and leaves Bogaerts at short while evaluating the bat. The first-base purchase determines how much Cronenworth is needed there and how much opportunity opens at second. [20]

Pos.	162-start allocation	Purpose
C	Fermin 75; Campusano 60; Salas 27	Salas absent: Campusano +15, Fermin +12
1B	France 110; Cronenworth 30; Sheets 22	C: Cronenworth 100, Sheets 62
2B	Cronenworth 95; Song 40; Wagner 27	C: Cronenworth 25, Song 80, Wagner 57
3B	Machado 135; Song 20; Workman 7	Protect Machado with DH/rest days
SS	Bogaerts 130; Song 20; McCoy 12	Performance review; no invented trade
LF	Harris 70; Taylor 50; Sheets 25; Bowen 17	Sheets absent: Harris +15, Taylor +10
CF	Merrill 140; Taylor 7; Bowen 15	Retain Merrill in CF
RF	Tatis 145; Bowen 17	Keep Tatis at his established position

Pos.	162-start allocation	Purpose
DH	Machado 20; Tatis 10; Bogaerts 15; Merrill 10; France 20; Sheets 35; Campusano 20; Harris 10; Wagner 10; Song 12	C: France 20 becomes Sheets 20; no duplicate DH

In the no-France path, Cronenworth takes 100 first-base starts and Sheets 62. Cronenworth's second-base share falls to 25, while Song rises to 80 and Wagner to 57. That is a specific chain of displaced jobs. It avoids inventing a first-base role for Harris or leaving the second-base vacancy unassigned.

In the Goldschmidt alternative, his 65 first-base starts replace part of France's 110. Cronenworth takes 25 more and Sheets 20 more. Song and Wagner take the resulting 25 second-base starts, divided 15 and ten. Goldschmidt takes ten of France's 20 DH starts and Sheets takes the other ten. The platoon therefore changes several jobs, not just one name at first base.

If Sheets is unavailable, Cronenworth takes his 22 first-base starts and Wagner covers the resulting second-base work. Harris and Taylor divide the 25 left-field starts, 15 and ten. Harris, Song and Wagner divide the 35 DH starts, 15, ten and ten. Those replacements cover the positions without assuming that the offensive result remains unchanged.

ANALYSIS / 21

Cross-club acquisition discipline

France has appeared in other S&S planning cases, so the repeated name needs a specific explanation. In San Diego he is a retention target for 500 plate appearances and an established first-base job. In Cleveland's alternative he would displace part-time and developmental first-base work, while Tampa Bay's first-base/DH structure made that purchase unattractive. The same two-year, $24-28 million ceiling can fit two different clubs, but the player can sign only one contract. [21]

Martinez's recurring two-year, $26-30 million range is tied to demonstrated innings and command. Here he replaces work from a departing rotation, rather than merely upgrading a fifth starter behind several secure incumbents. San Diego's greater need does not justify inventing a higher market quote. The ceiling remains a negotiating judgment; failure to sign him triggers a different workload plan.

Goldschmidt is a different candidate with a smaller job, not a cheaper way to claim all of France's production. Mahle is a different lead-starter alternative with fewer planned innings than King. Soroka's lower-volume case is tested and left outside the main funded plans. The internal route is fully shown, including the workloads that make it unattractive.

No outgoing talent is assigned because the three funded paths use free agency, retention and internal promotion. That does not mean trades have no cost or that prospects are unavailable in principle. It means no unverified trade partner, package or salary concession is required to make these plans balance. Any actual trade proposal would need its own displaced players, control, salary and outgoing-talent comparison.

The S&S collection compares each candidate by the exact job and price. A player can ultimately sign with only one club; these are competing scenarios, not completed acquisitions. The repeated-candidate audit is intended to improve job fit, not impose a novelty quota that favors a worse player merely because his name is new.

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What would change the verdict

A confirmed Musgrove starter build could reduce the need for one purchased starter, but only after the innings and recovery evidence support that change. A verified Darvish contractual resolution could alter the spending envelope. Neither possibility is booked in advance. Morejon's qualifying-offer decision has a direct date and dollar consequence and should be resolved before treating any preferred allocation as settled. [8,11]

Illustrative change from 2026	RS / RA	Margin	Simple run-ratio wins
Unchanged runs	722 / 681	+41	85.7
Score 20 more; prevent 20	742 / 661	+81	90.3
Score 40 more; prevent 40	762 / 641	+121	94.9
Score 20 fewer; allow 40 more	702 / 721	-19	78.8
Score 40 fewer; allow 80 more	682 / 761	-79	72.2

The run-ratio table uses 162 times runs scored squared divided by the sum of runs scored squared and runs allowed squared. It is a deliberately simple sensitivity illustration, not a win forecast or a player projection. At the 2026 scoring level, adding 20 runs and preventing 20 moves the illustration to about 90.3 wins. Losing 20 runs of offense while allowing 40 more moves it to about 78.8. The size of those changes explains why retaining workload matters.

The strongest countercase is financial: the proposed spending is far above the opening allocation and requires several free agents to accept the stated terms. A club unwilling to fund that scale should choose the cheaper plan honestly, then acknowledge the additional development risk. It should not announce the same competitive expectation while quietly removing the pitchers and first baseman who support it.

My recommendation is Plan A only with the full funding and medical checks. Plan B is the coherent lower-cost alternative. Plan C is a warning that the current commitments do not buy a complete pitching staff. The Padres already have several players capable of carrying a contender. Their offseason task is to supply enough reliable work around them that those strengths can decide games rather than continually rescue the roster.

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Evidence, definitions and dated limits

Performance tables use completed regular-season data unless explicitly labeled otherwise. Club-specific batting and pitching tables do not silently substitute full-season totals after a trade. Expected statistics, platoon splits and the candidate table use full MLB season samples. Innings ending in .1 and .2 mean one and two outs, not decimal tenths. Rankings compare all 30 MLB clubs in the stated season. [1,4,5,7]

Outs Above Average measures range relative to tracked opportunities. It is not interchangeable with framing runs, overall catching runs, defensive runs saved or wins above replacement. Three-year values and opportunity counts are retained because small samples and changing positions can move the estimates substantially. Missing qualified rows remain missing.

All future plate appearances, starts, innings, contracts, reserve amounts and run scenarios are S&S planning assumptions. Current player identity and affiliation are reconciled through MLB IDs, roster records, transactions and named official announcements. An unsigned price ceiling is neither a market quote nor evidence that a player is available on those terms. Medical statements are limited to the cited reporting and the conditional planning response.

Player / MLB ID	Classification	2027 treatment
Michael King / 650633	Free Agent	Retention alternative only; no signed role
Ty France / 664034	Free Agent	Retention alternative only; no signed role
Adrian Morejon / 670970	Free Agent	QO pending; explicit cost/workload branch
Jason Adam / 592094	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Casey Mize / 663554	Free Agent	Retention alternative only; no signed role
Robbie Ray / 592662	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Walker Buehler / 621111	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Ramón Laureano / 657656	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Luis Rengifo / 650859	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Austin Hays / 669720	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Nick Pivetta / 601713	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Griffin Canning / 656288	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate

Player / MLB ID	Classification	2027 treatment
Lucas Giolito / 608337	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Miguel Andujar / 609280	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Germán Márquez / 608566	External Or Historical	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Nick Castellanos / 592206	Free Agent	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Matt Waldron / 663362	External Or Historical	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Ron Marinaccio / 676760	External Or Historical	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Kash Mayfield / 824026	External Or Historical	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Braden Nett / 804556	External Or Historical	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate
Ryan Bergert / 686701	External Or Historical	No retained SD workload; historical contribution separate

The research date is November 3, 2026. Current affiliations, option and qualifying-offer decisions, medical developments and payroll assumptions were reviewed for this November 3 edition. Historical performance remains tied to its original season. The full website version and PDF should present the same evidence and the same funded branches.

[1] MLB regular-season team and player statistics

2024-26 team comparisons and completed 2026 player totals. Club-specific samples are labeled.

Open source

[2] MLB Padres schedule and completed postseason results

Division Series finals and dates, separate from regular-season performance.

Open source

[3] MLB roster, player identity and transaction records

November 3 snapshot; individual MLB IDs, current affiliations, injuries, options, departures and prospect trades reconciled.

Open source

[4] Baseball Savant: expected statistics, OAA, framing and fielding value

2024-26 tracked evidence. Expected statistics use full MLB seasons; defensive tables retain opportunities and missing qualified rows.

Open source

[5] MLB individual year-by-year and platoon statistics

Separate individual queries support the three-year and pitcher-handedness tables.

Open source

[6] MLB Padres fielding by position

Club-specific defensive innings, supplemented by individual histories and El Paso fielding records.

Open source

[7] MLB starter and reliever role splits

Starter and relief innings, ERA, walks and strikeouts are kept separate.

Open source

[8] MLB: Morejon receives qualifying offer

November 2 announcement: $23.15M QO, November 17 decision date, 14 free agents, France not offered QO and Gutierrez contract selected.

Open source

[9] MLB: Matsui, Peralta and Hart return

November 1 retained options and departures. Buyout amounts cross-checked separately.

Open source

[10] MLB: King becomes a free agent

October 30 opt-out, prior contract structure and $5M buyout.

Open source

[11] MLB: Preller and Stammen discuss the offseason

October 14 status reporting on Sheets, Estrada, Darvish and Musgrove; no private medical conclusions.

Open source

[12] MLB Padres injuries and roster moves

Dated recovery reporting and transaction corroboration. Administrative status is not workload clearance.

Open source

[13] MLB minor-league and affiliate statistics

El Paso, San Antonio, Fort Wayne, Lake Elsinore and ACL samples; each player and level remain separate.

Open source

[14] MLB 2026-27 free-agent register

Official free-agent listing reconciled against individual transactions and subsequent option announcements.

Open source

[15] FanGraphs RosterResource: Padres payroll

Salary-plus-allocated-bonus basis, guarantees and buyouts. Stale option salaries are removed and documented escalators added.

Open source

[16] MLB Trade Rumors arbitration projections via Yardbarker

Eight Padres cases total $24.6M. Estimates are not signed salaries.

Open source

[17] RG: Padres option decisions and buyouts

November 2 reporting corroborates Giolito $1.5M, Canning $1.8M and Andujar $2.9M buyouts, including escalators.

Open source

[18] Associated Press via NBC Sports: Darvish restricted list

March 26, 2026 restricted-list status. Future salary treatment is not presumed.

Open source

[19] FanGraphs: Darvish contract payment structure

February 23, 2023 salary and signing-bonus structure. Allocation differs from annual cash and tax AAV.

Open source

[20] S&S planning calculations from the cited MLB evidence

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

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] MLB: Pivetta option declined

November 1 official departure and flexor-injury context.

Open source

[23] MLB: Padres Wild Card roster

September 30 description of Musgrove returning in relief, not a cleared full-season starting assignment.

Open source

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