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THE 2027 ROSTER PROJECT / PITTSBURGH PIRATES

Keep the Pirates' offense intact

Retain the power. Reduce the strain on the pitching staff.

82
WINS

+28
RUN MARGIN

3
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 recommendation: protect the gain, then prevent runs

The Pirates added 184 runs to their offense in one season. They also allowed 94 more. That combination explains both the opportunity in an 82-win team and the danger of assuming that a young rotation will take care of the rest. Pittsburgh finally had enough offense to make its pitching matter. The winter should preserve that progress while making the staff's workload more sustainable.

The preferred plan retains Brandon Lowe on a proposed three-year, $66-75 million contract and Gregory Soto on a proposed two-year, $14-18 million contract. Add a $6-8 million depth reserve. Annual additions are $35-42 million, bringing the estimated player-allocation envelope to $134.19-145.19 million. Counting all proposed guaranteed years and the first-year reserve, the new commitment is $86-101 million. These are S&S negotiating ceilings, not reported offers or a verified ownership budget.

Lowe is a free agent. His pending $23.15 million qualifying offer creates a separate one-year branch, not proof that he is returning. If he accepts, substitute that salary for the proposed multiyear allocation. With Soto and the same reserve, annual additions become $36.15-40.15 million. No plan counts both contracts or credits Lowe's production before he is retained.

The strongest objection to the preferred plan is that Pittsburgh would spend heavily to keep two players from a team that missed October. That objection matters. Lowe's 35 home runs helped transform the lineup, but his expected contact measures were less impressive than his results, and his defensive history contains large swings. Soto adds strikeouts without fully solving the bullpen's walk problem. The plan earns its case through defined jobs, limited terms and the young players it leaves room to develop.

If Lowe's market exceeds the ceiling, the alternative buys Eugenio Suarez for one year at $12-14 million, moves Nick Gonzales primarily to second base and retains Soto. That costs $25-31 million annually including the reserve. The internal-only path costs $6-8 million, replaces Lowe's work with existing infielders and accepts a meaningful offensive downside. The report tests all three rather than treating the cheapest path as equally productive. [1,2,11,12,13]

ANALYSIS / 02

The offense moved faster than the pitching

Pittsburgh went from 583 runs in 2025, last in MLB, to 767 in 2026, sixth. The club's OPS rose from .655 to .734. Its record improved by 11 wins, from 71-91 to 82-80. Those are substantial gains, even though a winning record did not bring a postseason berth.

The other side of the ledger explains why the improvement stopped there. Runs allowed rose from 645 to 739. ERA increased from 3.76 to 4.14, moving from seventh to 16th in the league-wide comparison. The net run margin improved by 90, from minus-62 to plus-28, but the Pirates surrendered much of the offense's advance through weaker run prevention.

Season	Record	Runs for / against	Margin	OPS / ERA
2024	76-86	665 / 739	-74	.672 / 4.15
2025	71-91	583 / 645	-62	.655 / 3.76
2026	82-80	767 / 739	+28	.734 / 4.14

184 MORE RUNS, 94 MORE ALLOWED

2025 margin: -62 / 2026 margin: +28



The 90-run net gain produced a winning season, but no playoff berth.

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

The practical goal is to preserve most of the 2026 offense while recovering some of the lost pitching and defensive value. It would be a mistake to assume that all 184 additional runs are now permanent. Lowe is unsigned, several young hitters have short major-league records, and the lineup's actual contact results exceeded expected measures in several places.

The pitching challenge is equally specific. Starters supplied only 786.2 innings, leaving 658.1 for relievers. The bullpen walked 312 batters, about 4.27 per nine innings. Adding one late-inning arm will not remove that burden if starters continue to leave so much of the season uncovered. [1,2,3]

ANALYSIS / 03

A lineup with a foundation worth preserving

Bryan Reynolds supplied 699 plate appearances with a .365 on-base percentage and 89 walks. His 17 home runs were useful, but the ability to reach base repeatedly was the more important foundation. The proposed plan preserves a major role while shifting some of his workload to designated hitter.

Oneil Cruz produced a .280/.368/.486 line and 20 home runs in 419 plate appearances. His 139 strikeouts still impose a cost, but the power and on-base performance support a primary center-field job. A 540-plate-appearance allocation asks for more availability than in 2026 without assuming a full 700-appearance season.

Gonzales hit .303 and reached base at a .367 rate in 608 plate appearances. His six home runs show why he cannot simply replace Lowe's power. His contact skill nevertheless belongs in the lineup. The hard question is which infield position permits Pittsburgh to keep that offense without accepting too much defensive loss.

Player / MLB ID	PIT PA	AVG / OBP / SLG	HR	BB / K; role
Bryan Reynolds / 668804	699	.261 / .365 / .424	17	89 / 162; LF/DH
Brandon Lowe / 664040	656	.260 / .331 / .493	35	62 / 189; FA; retention conditional
Nick Gonzales / 693304	608	.303 / .367 / .388	6	43 / 99; 2B/3B
Jake Mangum / 663968	479	.276 / .331 / .363	5	25 / 93; OF
Ryan O'Hearn / 656811	451	.265 / .330 / .440	18	35 / 99; 1B/RF/DH
Spencer Horwitz / 687462	451	.244 / .344 / .364	10	54 / 73; 1B
Oneil Cruz / 665833	419	.280 / .368 / .486	20	47 / 139; CF
Jared Triolo / 669707	362	.238 / .307 / .302	3	28 / 72; IF
Konnor Griffin / 804606	339	.272 / .324 / .404	6	20 / 82; SS
Henry Davis / 680779	298	.172 / .272 / .313	10	28 / 63; C
Esmerlyn Valdez / 699013	287	.232 / .345 / .510	17	42 / 108; RF
Marcell Ozuna / 542303	280	.203 / .286 / .327	8	27 / 80; Released; historical only
Rafael Flores Jr. / 804668	163	.264 / .331 / .527	11	15 / 45; C/1B
Endy Rodríguez / 682848	159	.267 / .373 / .467	7	23 / 41; C; hip surgery
Jacob Gonzalez / 694378	130	.203 / .238 / .366	5	4 / 22; IF depth
Nick Yorke / 694377	117	.212 / .284 / .279	1	9 / 26; 2B/IF
Tyler Callihan / 682997	107	.211 / .283 / .389	3	9 / 38; IF/OF

Ryan O'Hearn and Spencer Horwitz give the Pirates useful first-base and DH options, especially against right-handed pitching. Adding another first baseman would create a playing-time conflict before it solved the

middle-infield decision. The acquisition priority therefore stays with Lowe's job or a third baseman who changes Gonzales' assignment.

Marcell Ozuna's 280 Pirates plate appearances remain part of the historical season. He was released in August and receives no retained playing time here. The same rule applies to every departed contributor: last year's team totals describe what happened, while the 2027 workload tables describe who could actually do the work. [1,4,14]

ANALYSIS / 04

How much of the offensive improvement should carry forward?

Lowe's .824 OPS followed two seasons at .784. His 2026 workload was also larger: 656 plate appearances compared with 553 in 2025 and 425 in 2024. A retention price should reflect his ability to supply scarce middle-infield power, while acknowledging that repeating the career-scale workload and 35 home runs is uncertain.

Reynolds returned to a .789 OPS after .720 in 2025, close to his .791 mark in 2024. That longer record makes his rebound a stronger foundation than a two-month rookie surge. Cruz's .854 OPS was well above his .676 in 2025 and .773 in 2024. His upside is real; a forecast that uses only the most recent season would still be too aggressive.

Hitter	2024 MLB PA / OPS	2025 MLB PA / OPS	2026 MLB PA / OPS
Brandon Lowe	425 / .784	553 / .784	656 / .824
Bryan Reynolds	692 / .791	654 / .720	699 / .789
Oneil Cruz	599 / .773	544 / .676	419 / .854
Nick Gonzales	387 / .709	408 / .661	608 / .755
Ryan O'Hearn	494 / .761	544 / .803	451 / .770
Spencer Horwitz	381 / .790	411 / .787	451 / .708
Henry Davis	122 / .454	283 / .512	298 / .585

Expected wOBA and expected slugging describe the quality of contact and other measured offensive events. They are not next-season projections. The comparison is useful because several Pirates produced substantially more power than those estimates suggested, including Lowe, Esmerlyn Valdez and O'Hearn.

Batter	wOBA	xwOBA	SLG / xSLG	Interpretation
Bryan Reynolds	0.349	0.355	0.424 / 0.443	Established on-base foundation
Brandon Lowe	0.355	0.331	0.494 / 0.445	Actual power exceeds contact estimate
Nick Gonzales	0.339	0.327	0.388 / 0.386	Contact skill; defensive assignment matters
Oneil Cruz	0.371	0.352	0.486 / 0.472	Strong production in 419 PA
Esmerlyn Valdez	0.368	0.332	0.510 / 0.440	Power ahead of contact estimate; 287 PA

Batter	wOBA	xwOBA	SLG / xSLG	Interpretation
Konnor Griffin	0.320	0.316	0.404 / 0.404	Reasonably aligned small-sample offense
Rafael Flores Jr.	0.367	0.350	0.527 / 0.506	Power upside in only 163 PA
Endy Rodríguez	0.370	0.338	0.467 / 0.403	Good short sample; surgery limits opening role
Ryan O'Hearn	0.336	0.314	0.440 / 0.396	Preserve platoon/DH value
Spencer Horwitz	0.319	0.310	0.364 / 0.345	On-base value with limited power
Jake Mangum	0.310	0.285	0.363 / 0.331	Actual offense ahead of expected contact
Henry Davis	0.267	0.290	0.313 / 0.342	Expected offense also below desired level

Reynolds' .355 expected wOBA was slightly above his .349 actual figure. Lowe's .331 expected figure was below his .355 actual figure. Valdez's .510 slugging percentage compared with a .440 expected slugging estimate. These gaps argue for a range of outcomes, not a deduction of a fixed number of runs from each player.

The MLB statistics and Savant tables use their own sample definitions. For Lowe, MLB reports 656 plate appearances and .493 slugging; the saved Savant row uses 655 and .494. The report preserves that small source difference rather than silently replacing the primary season line. [1,5,6]

ANALYSIS / 05

Build platoons around evidence, not handedness alone

Lowe had a .910 OPS against right-handed pitching and .648 against left-handers. That is an argument for selective rest and a capable right-handed infield alternative. It is not an argument for discarding a middle infielder who can do major damage across the larger share of the schedule.

O'Hearn's split was similarly pronounced: .839 against right-handers and .620 against left-handers. Horwitz produced .734 and .596. A lineup that starts both against every left-handed pitcher would ignore a clear opportunity to use its bench more intelligently.

Batter / full MLB season	LHP: PA / OPS	RHP: PA / OPS
Brandon Lowe	211 / .648	445 / .910
Nick Gonzales	195 / .681	413 / .790
Konnor Griffin	91 / .832	248 / .690
Oneil Cruz	139 / .847	280 / .858
Bryan Reynolds	239 / .807	460 / .779
Ryan O'Hearn	140 / .620	311 / .839
Spencer Horwitz	90 / .596	361 / .734
Jake Mangum	134 / .678	345 / .700

Batter / full MLB season	LHP: PA / OPS	RHP: PA / OPS
Esmerlyn Valdez	111 / 1.011	176 / .761
Jared Triolo	143 / .662	219 / .574
Henry Davis	92 / .426	206 / .658
Rafael Flores Jr.	78 / .924	85 / .800
Endy Rodríguez	28 / .547	131 / .901
Mauricio Dubón	210 / .675	409 / .743
Edmundo Sosa	138 / .835	112 / .564
Eugenio Suárez	129 / .714	369 / .748
Alec Bohm	192 / .816	437 / .644

Cruz's 2026 splits were unusually balanced, with an .847 OPS against left-handers and .858 against right-handers. His 139 plate appearances against lefties are still one season's evidence, but they support letting him earn a broader role rather than automatically treating him as a platoon player.

Valdez and Rafael Flores Jr. hit left-handed pitching well in short samples. Their roles should grow through repeated exposure, not through a promise that those exact split lines will persist. Konnor Griffin's stronger result against lefties also came in only 91 plate appearances. Small-sample success earns an audition, not a permanent exemption from adjustment.

The bench has a job beyond resting starters: protect vulnerable matchups without turning the lineup into a daily experiment. Jake Mangum's ability to cover three outfield positions and Jared Triolo's infield coverage help preserve that flexibility. Neither needs to be presented as a middle-of-the-order replacement for Lowe. [1,7]

ANALYSIS / 06

Range is a roster decision, not a fielding percentage

Gonzales finished at minus-11 Outs Above Average in 2026, while Griffin was minus-7. The young left side of the infield therefore carries a development task that cannot be dismissed because both players can hit. The response should include positioning, instruction and workload management, with actual performance determining whether the assignment remains viable.

Lowe's plus-15 in 2026 followed minus-14 in 2025 and zero in 2024. That volatility is a warning against pricing the most recent defensive number as a permanent skill level. Retaining him can preserve an established second baseman, but the financial case should not require another plus-15 season.

Fielder	2024 OAA	2025 OAA	2026 OAA	2026 opportunities
Brandon Lowe	0	-14	+15	507
Nick Gonzales	+2	+4	-11	406

Fielder	2024 OAA	2025 OAA	2026 OAA	2026 opportunities
Konnor Griffin	No row	No row	-7	274
Oneil Cruz	-1	0	-1	237
Bryan Reynolds	-13	-2	-3	258
Ryan O'Hearn	-2	+5	-3	179
Spencer Horwitz	+2	+1	-5	231
Jake Mangum	No row	+6	-1	285
Esmerlyn Valdez	No row	No row	+2	126
Jared Triolo	+3	+6	0	299
Nick Yorke	-2	0	+1	77
Mauricio Dubón	+10	+19	+6	449
Edmundo Sosa	+4	+5	+4	210
Eugenio Suárez	+3	-6	-7	127
Alec Bohm	+5	-2	-11	435

OAA estimates outs relative to average from the opportunities tracked by Statcast. The table preserves both prior seasons and current opportunities. It does not equate a small-sample plus-2 with a full-season plus-15, or add every individual figure to an independent team defensive total.

Reynolds was minus-3, Horwitz minus-5 and O'Hearn minus-3. Those values help explain why DH time is a resource. Moving a player there may reduce a defensive burden, but it uses an opportunity another hitter could have received. The defensive-start allocation makes that tradeoff visible.

The Suarez alternative is a power purchase, not an asserted range upgrade. His minus-7 in 2026 follows minus-6 in 2025. Moving Gonzales to second could improve the fit of the infield, but the report cannot simply add an imagined number of saved runs to justify the signing. [8,9]

ANALYSIS / 07

Give each defender an actual assignment

Gonzales played 884.1 innings at third base, 236 at second and 32 at shortstop in 2026. The preferred plan keeps a substantial third-base role while giving Triolo more work there. The alternative plan moves Gonzales principally to second and assigns third to Suarez. Those are different rosters with different risks.

Player	2026 PIT defensive innings	2027 allocation
Brandon Lowe	2B 1181.0	Retained 2B only if contract clears
Nick Gonzales	2B 236.0; 3B 884.1; SS 32.0	A: 3B/2B; B/C: primary 2B
Konnor Griffin	SS 664.1	Primary SS, measured development
Oneil Cruz	CF 756.1	Primary CF; preserve coverage
Bryan Reynolds	RF 152.0; LF 939.0	LF with a defined DH share
Esmerlyn Valdez	1B 1.0; LF 49.0; RF 503.1	RF opportunity
Ryan O'Hearn	1B 335.1; RF 335.1	1B/RF/DH, especially against righties
Spencer Horwitz	1B 871.2	Primary 1B share
Jake Mangum	CF 492.1; LF 329.2; RF 164.1	All three OF positions
Jared Triolo	1B 27.0; 3B 260.1; SS 527.2; RF 24.0; CF 1.0	More 3B and SS cover
Rafael Flores Jr.	1B 89.0; C 269.1	C/1B opportunity
Henry Davis	C 744.2	Receiving cover; bat must improve

Griffin remains the primary shortstop. A nine-year contract does not eliminate the need for ordinary development, and minus-7 OAA does not establish that a young shortstop must immediately move. The plan gives him 140 defensive starts, with Triolo and Ronny Simon providing coverage rather than requiring Griffin to play every inning.

Valdez receives the largest right-field opportunity. His positive OAA in a limited sample is encouraging, but the assignment is justified by a combination of offensive potential and an available job. O'Hearn and Jhostynxon Garcia supply alternatives without forcing another full-time outfielder onto an already crowded roster.

Pos.	162-start allocation	Purpose
C	Flores 75; Davis 65; Endy 22	Endy later only; if unavailable Flores +10, Davis +12
1B	Horwitz 100; OHearn 50; Flores 9; Endy 3	If Endy unavailable, Horwitz takes three
2B	Lowe 125; Gonzales 27; Yorke 10	Retention conditional
3B	Gonzales 95; Triolo 50; Gray 7; Brannigan 10	Limit exposure; no assumed immediate Gray readiness
SS	Griffin 140; Triolo 17; Simon 5	Young starter with established coverage
LF	Reynolds 110; Mangum 25; Garcia 15; Baddoo 12	DH relief for Reynolds
CF	Cruz 120; Mangum 35; Baddoo 7	Preserve actual center-field coverage
RF	Esmerlyn Valdez 120; OHearn 20; Garcia 15; Mangum 7	Power audition with cover
DH	Reynolds 40; OHearn 60; Horwitz 25; Valdez 10; Cruz 10; Gonzales 10; Flores 4; Endy 3	If Endy unavailable, Flores takes three

Every listed position totals 162 starts, including designated hitter. These are planning allocations, not a prediction of the actual schedule. Endy Rodriguez's catching and DH starts are conditional later-season work

after surgery. If he is unavailable, Flores and Henry Davis absorb the catching work, and existing first-base/DH players absorb the remainder. [4,9,10]

ANALYSIS / 08

Catching is an audition with a health constraint

Davis hit .172/.272/.313 in 298 plate appearances. His offensive record has improved from an extremely low base, but a .585 OPS still creates a substantial lineup cost. His qualified Statcast catching fielding value was approximately plus-2.7 runs, including more than framing. That defensive contribution deserves credit without being used to erase the bat.

Flores hit 11 home runs in 163 major-league plate appearances. The exciting result sits beside a .704 OPS and four home runs in 276 Triple-A plate appearances. He deserves more major-league work, but a projection built entirely from the MLB power burst would be fragile.

Catcher	2026 PIT catching IP	Framing runs	Receiving decision
Henry Davis	744.2	+0.2	Full qualified catching value +2.7; weak bat
Rafael Flores Jr.	269.1	+0.7	Larger audition; limited receiving sample
Endy Rodríguez	273.2	+1.0	Post-surgery; no opening role, conditional later work

Rodriguez underwent hip labrum surgery in August with a reported seven-to-nine-month recovery period. The offseason roster's active label does not establish opening-day readiness. The plan assigns him no opening role and only 100 conditional later plate appearances. If he cannot return during the season, Flores and Davis each gain 50.

Framing runs are only one component of receiving. The smaller samples for Flores and Rodriguez do not support a precise ranking of their complete catching value. Pittsburgh should measure receiving, throwing, blocking and offensive performance together as the roles develop. A guaranteed veteran catcher would displace those auditions; no such acquisition is funded in the preferred plan. [1,9,10,15,24]

ANALYSIS / 09

The rotation can improve without an expensive new name

Paul Skenes produced 200 strikeouts and 49 walks in 174.1 innings. His 3.82 ERA exceeded his 3.30 expected ERA. The roster should be built around his ability to prevent runs and work deep into games, without treating a statistical gap as a promise that he will recover a particular number of runs.

Braxton Ashcraft's 173 strikeouts and 35 walks in 165.1 innings make him a second important foundation. His 3.65 ERA and 3.45 expected ERA point in the same broad direction. Together, Skenes and Ashcraft give the Pirates a reason to spend on retention and support rather than immediately purchase another expensive starter.

Pitcher / MLB ID	GS / PIT IP	ERA / full MLB xERA	K / BB / HR	Treatment
Paul Skenes / 694973	32 / 174.1	3.82 / 3.30	200 / 49 / 20	Rotation foundation; maintain recovery
Braxton Ashcraft / 677952	28 / 165.1	3.65 / 3.45	173 / 35 / 22	Strong strikeout/command evidence
Bubba Chandler / 696149	30 / 154.0	4.50 / 4.30	140 / 80 / 15	80 walks are the main improvement task
Jared Jones / 683003	21 / 101.2	3.72 / 3.18	123 / 31 / 12	Build workload carefully
Mitch Keller / 656605	22 / 115.2	5.29 / 5.51	89 / 42 / 15	Contract retained; performance must improve
Carmen Mlodzinski / 669387	12 / 123.0	3.95 / 4.89	97 / 44 / 10	Starter/bulk flexibility
Hunter Barco / 682995	0 / 17.2	7.64 / 6.51	14 / 13 / 4	Minor-league depth; MLB command unresolved
Thomas Harrington / 802419	0 / 0	No MLB season	No MLB season	AAA results do not establish readiness

Bubba Chandler's 80 walks in 154 innings are a much more concrete development priority than a general appeal for maturity. His 4.50 ERA and 4.30 expected ERA show that command improvement must translate into actual outs. The plan preserves his opportunity but does not award him a breakout season in the financial case.

Jared Jones supplied 101.2 major-league innings with 123 strikeouts, 31 walks and a 3.72 ERA. His proposed 140 innings represent an increase that requires a managed progression and current availability checks. Mitch Keller's 5.29 ERA and 5.51 expected ERA provide a different warning: the retained contract cannot be assumed to produce a rebound simply because the salary is already committed.

No Keller trade is necessary to make the preferred budget balance. A trade could become sensible at an actual price, but subtracting his contract and adding an invented return would conceal the roster's cost rather than solve it. [1,6,11]

ANALYSIS / 10

More starter innings would change the bullpen's job

The proposed rotation allocation is 870 innings, 83.1 more than Pittsburgh's 2026 starters supplied. That is a consequential target. It requires a fuller contribution from the top five and useful depth starts, not merely a healthier label next to a roster name.

Pitcher	Starts / IP	Workload condition
Skenes	32 / 180	Modest rise from 174.1 MLB IP; health/recovery gate
Ashcraft	30 / 170	Near 165.1 prior MLB IP
Chandler	28 / 145	Below 154 prior IP; command must improve
Jones	26 / 140	Build from 101.2 MLB IP; readiness gate
Keller	24 / 125	Contract retained; 5.29 ERA/5.51 xERA require improvement
Barco	10 / 50	AAA command and health gate
Harrington	5 / 25	AAA 6.02 ERA does not guarantee readiness
Wietgrefe	5 / 25	151.1 combined AAA/AA IP; conditional audition
Mlodzinski	2 / 10	Plus 65 relief IP; flexible coverage
TOTAL	162 / 870	Coverage scenario, not a health forecast

The 162 starts include 32 for Skenes, 30 for Ashcraft, 28 for Chandler, 26 for Jones and 24 for Keller. Hunter Barco, Thomas Harrington, Connor Wietgrefe and Carmen Mlodzinski cover the remaining 22. The plan does not assume that every depth starter is ready for a permanent rotation job.

Wietgrefe's combined 151.1 innings at Double-A and Triple-A create a plausible depth foundation. Harrington's 6.02 Triple-A ERA requires improvement before he can be called a reliable replacement. Barco's 41 walks in 78.1 Triple-A innings, followed by 13 in 17.2 MLB innings, make strike throwing the gate to a larger role.

If the rotation falls 80 innings short, those innings must be reassigned to bulk relief or an actual acquisition. The reserve can finance a response, but the report credits it with no automatic production. If a starter becomes a material health concern, Pittsburgh should revisit the whole allocation before spending the same money on optional offense. [1,6,16]

ANALYSIS / 11

Retaining Soto helps, but command still has to improve

Mason Montgomery struck out 105 batters and walked 26 in 68.2 innings. His 2.88 ERA and 2.53 expected ERA make him one of the strongest reasons to trust the bullpen's upper end. Yohan Ramirez added 102 strikeouts in 85 innings, but 44 walks show why that ERA alone does not settle the reliability question.

Luke Weaver's Pittsburgh sample was only 16.1 innings with a 4.96 ERA. Across his full season with the Mets and Pirates, he worked 60.1 innings with a 2.69 ERA, 65 strikeouts and 16 walks. The full-season record is the appropriate basis for evaluating his retained role, while the club-only line remains in the historical table.

Pitcher	PIT IP	ERA / full MLB xERA	K / BB	Treatment
Mason Montgomery	68.2	2.88 / 2.53	105 / 26	Major leverage candidate; retain relief volume
Yohan Ramírez	85.0	2.86 / 3.32	102 / 44	Strong strikeouts, but walks remain
Luke Weaver	16.1	4.96 / 3.08	20 / 5	Retained under contract; use full-season evidence
Gregory Soto	67.0	3.63 / 3.03	79 / 29	FA; preferred retention candidate
Evan Sisk	44.2	3.02 / 3.76	50 / 25	Useful left-handed depth; 25 walks
Wilber Dotel	42.1	4.46 / 3.81	41 / 16	Develop middle relief
Lake Bachar	28.0	2.57 / 3.39	32 / 15	Starter/bulk mix; small PIT sample
Brandon Eisert	16.2	4.86 / 3.76	17 / 6	Left-handed coverage
Noah Murdock	3.1	0.00 / 2.79	4 / 3	Small MLB sample; AAA depth evidence
Khristian Curtis	21.0	4.71 / 3.73	13 / 12	Command/development work
Antwone Kelly	18.2	4.82 / 5.12	14 / 8	Depth, not guaranteed late innings
Isaac Mattson	38.2	5.35 / 6.23	36 / 18	Claimed by Seattle; not retained
Kirby Yates	15.0	1.80 / 3.39	13 / 5	FA and retirement reported; not retained

Soto supplies a specific missing job: 60 innings of left-handed relief with strikeout ability. He worked 67 innings with 79 strikeouts, 29 walks and a 3.63 ERA in 2026; his expected ERA was 3.03. A proposed two-year, $14-18 million retention price reflects that role. It does not make him a low-walk pitcher or guarantee the ninth inning.

Pitcher / coverage	IP	Condition
Weaver	55	Under contract; full-season evidence matters
Yohan Ramirez	70	Below 85 prior MLB IP; control gate
Montgomery	65	Keep leverage relief role

Pitcher / coverage	IP	Condition
Soto	60	Only if retained; below 67 prior IP
Sisk	45	Walk reduction needed
Mlodzinski	65	Plus ten starter IP
Eisert	35	Left-handed depth
Bachar	40	Starter/bulk history; use total workload
Dotel	35	Middle relief development
Murdock	30	Small MLB sample; AAA evidence
Curtis	25	Command gate
Kelly	20	Depth with walk concerns
Barco	10	Plus 50 starter IP
Other healthy depth	15	Unfilled coverage, no assigned performance
TOTAL	570	870 starter + 570 relief = 1,440 innings

Change from retained-Soto plan	IP adjustment	Consequence
Remove Soto	-60	No retained relief production credited
Sisk / Eisert	+15 / +15	60 / 50 IP
Montgomery / Murdock / Dotel	+10 / +10 / +10	75 / 40 / 45 IP
If Adam replaces Soto	Adam 45; internal +15	45-IP health-conditioned purchase, not 60 from a 34.1-IP baseline
TOTAL	570 relief IP	Same volume; different workload and performance risk

The 570-inning relief allocation is smaller than the 2026 workload because the rotation plan absorbs more of the season. Without Soto, Evan Sisk and Brandon Eisert each gain 15 innings, Montgomery and Noah Murdock each gain 10, and Wilber Dotel gains 10. The total stays intact, but the concentration of risk changes.

Jason Adam is a distinct alternative at a proposed one-year, $6-8 million ceiling, conditional on health and a current contract check. His 34.1 innings in 2026 do not justify assigning him Soto's 60. An Adam branch uses 45 innings and distributes the remaining 15 internally. John Schreiber's 26 walks in 60.1 innings make him a less convincing answer to the staff's command problem despite his 3.28 ERA. [1,6,12]

ANALYSIS / 12

The farm offers choices, not free production

Valdez's 13 home runs and .914 OPS in 237 Triple-A plate appearances support his major-league opportunity. His 17 MLB home runs then established that the power could appear against better pitching. The task is to preserve enough contact and defense for that power to remain valuable over a longer season.

Flores, Garcia, Simon and Jack Brannigan occupy different readiness levels. Simon's .898 Triple-A OPS supports an infield depth chance. Brannigan's .680 at the same level leaves more offensive work to do. A good prospect label should not erase those differences when assigning the next 200 plate appearances.

Player / MLB ID	2026 level and sample	Readiness decision
Esmerlyn Valdez / 699013	AAA: 237 PA, .914 OPS, 13 HR; 41 BB / 51 K	Protect RF audition; separate Esmerlyn from Enmanuel
Rafael Flores Jr. / 804668	AAA: 276 PA, .704 OPS, 4 HR; 46 BB / 69 K	MLB power burst exceeds AAA line
Termarr Johnson / 702261	AAA: 406 PA, .655 OPS, 8 HR; 68 BB / 101 K	Walks alone do not establish MLB readiness
Mitch Jebb / 694991	AAA: 250 PA, .839 OPS, 8 HR; 28 BB / 40 K	Utility depth candidate; no automatic 40-man slot
Jhostynxon Garcia / 691373	AAA: 287 PA, .768 OPS, 10 HR; 23 BB / 68 K	OF depth; MLB transition unresolved
Ronny Simon / 682927	AAA: 499 PA, .898 OPS, 7 HR; 65 BB / 85 K	IF depth after strong AAA season
Jack Brannigan / 687394	AAA: 196 PA, .680 OPS, 3 HR; 27 BB / 49 K	3B coverage; bat must improve
Murf Gray / 809092	AA: 195 PA, .879 OPS, 9 HR; 29 BB / 43 K	Small late-season 3B audition only if ready
Edward Florentino / 821273	A+: 435 PA, .844 OPS, 24 HR; 65 BB / 115 K	A+ development; no 2027 opening production
Wyatt Sanford / 815608	A+: 341 PA, .974 OPS, 17 HR; 48 BB / 100 K	A+ development; no shortstop replacement assumption
Seth Hernandez / 815825	A+: 46.0 IP, 3.33 ERA; 68 K / 24 BB	46 A+ IP; no MLB workload credited
Connor Wietgrefe / 809733	AAA: 84.2 IP, 3.08 ERA; 65 K / 27 BB	Measured depth starts after 151.1 combined AAA/AA IP
Thomas Harrington / 802419	AAA: 101.2 IP, 6.02 ERA; 99 K / 42 BB	6.02 ERA; improvement required
Hunter Barco / 682995	AAA: 78.1 IP, 3.79 ERA; 80 K / 41 BB	Command must improve
Antwone Kelly / 699008	AAA: 91.1 IP, 4.24 ERA; 71 K / 49 BB	Depth after 91.1 AAA IP
Derek Diamond / 682981	AAA: 43.0 IP, 3.14 ERA; 39 K / 8 BB	43 AAA IP; potential internal relief path

Termarr Johnson's 68 walks in 406 Triple-A plate appearances are useful evidence of strike-zone judgment. A .655 OPS still leaves a substantial offensive hurdle. Mitch Jebb's .839 OPS in 250 Triple-A appearances makes him an internal option to evaluate, but a major-league roster spot and a stable role are separate decisions.

Murf Gray receives only a conditional late third-base audition. Edward Florentino, Wyatt Sanford and Seth Hernandez remain developmental assets; their A+ work is not counted as opening major-league production. Hernandez's 46 innings are particularly far from a credible substitute for a missing veteran starter's full season.

The preferred plan trades none of these players. Keeping the farm preserves future choices, but it also means that the winter's improvement must come from the actual dollars spent and the incumbents' development. An unnamed prospect return cannot make the payroll cheaper or the lineup deeper. [16,17]

ANALYSIS / 13

Start the budget with the obligations already present

The existing-roster envelope is $99.19-103.19 million before proposed additions. It combines listed salary and allocated signing-bonus amounts, estimated arbitration salaries, specified offsets and buyouts, and a $12-16 million allowance for pre-arbitration players, minor-league roster salaries and callups. It is a planning allocation, not an official competitive-balance-tax calculation or a complete club expense statement.

Player	2027 allocation	Basis
Konnor Griffin	$3.333M	$2M salary + $1.333M allocated signing bonus
Mitch Keller	$18.412M	$18M salary + $0.412M allocated bonus
Ryan O'Hearn	$15M	Guaranteed 2027 salary
Bryan Reynolds	$15.25M	$15M salary + $0.25M allocated bonus
Luke Weaver	$12.50M gross	Then subtract $1.5M bonus adjustment and $6M Mets payment
TOTAL	$64.495M	Gross allocations before listed offsets

Griffin's reported nine-year, $140 million agreement runs through 2034. The 2027 salary is $2 million. This allocation adds one-ninth of the $12 million signing bonus, or about $1.333 million. The reported actual 2027 bonus payment is $3.5 million, so the cash requirement differs from the annual allocation. That difference must remain visible when ownership evaluates funding.

Player	Estimate, $M	Basis
Yohan Ramirez	1.50	Published projection; unsigned
Oneil Cruz	6.30	Published projection; unsigned
Carmen Mlodzinski	1.60	Published projection; unsigned
Jared Triolo	1.80	Published projection; unsigned
Endy Rodriguez	1.20	Published projection; unsigned
Henry Davis	1.40	Published projection; unsigned
Nick Gonzales	3.10	Published projection; unsigned
Jared Jones	2.10	Published projection; unsigned

Player	Estimate, $M	Basis
Paul Skenes	7.20	Published projection; unsigned
Spencer Horwitz	2.50	Published projection; unsigned
TOTAL	28.70	Ten retained cases; no assumed salary dump

The ten arbitration estimates total $28.7 million. Skenes, Cruz and Gonzales account for a significant share, but none of those projected salaries is treated as a signed contract. The budget does not assume a non-tender or trade merely to create room for the preferred plan.

Component	Annual allocation	Definition
Five guaranteed contracts	$64.495M	Salary and allocated signing bonuses
Arbitration pool	$28.70M	Ten published estimates
Weaver adjustments	-$7.50M	-$1.5M allocated bonus adjustment; -$6M Mets obligation
Ozuna buyout carried	$1.50M	2027 obligation; no retained option salary or roster slot
Pre-arb, minors and callups	$12-16M	S&S allowance; includes minor-league roster salaries
Existing-roster envelope	$99.19-103.19M	Before proposed additions; benefits/tax excluded

RosterResource lists Weaver at $12.5 million gross, then a $1.5 million bonus adjustment and a $6 million Mets obligation. The resulting net allocation is $5 million. The official trade announcement confirms cash considerations, while the amount comes from RosterResource. Those are different levels of evidence, and the same payment must never be deducted twice.

The plan also carries a $1.5 million Ozuna buyout shown in the payroll source. It carries neither a $16 million option salary nor a retained DH role. Benefits, taxes and broader operating expenses are excluded, so none of these totals should be presented as the full cost of running the club. [11,18,19,20,22]

ANALYSIS / 14

Lowe is the priority, with a real walk-away point

Lowe supplied 35 of Pittsburgh's home runs from a position that rarely offers that much power. Removing him would leave an immediate production gap and change Gonzales' defensive assignment. The proposed three-year ceiling buys a known job while limiting the length of the commitment.

The offer range is $66-75 million over three years, equivalent to $22-25 million annually. There is no assumption that this price wins the bidding. If the market requires a fourth guaranteed year or a total above the ceiling, Pittsburgh should compare the actual terms against the alternative rather than raise the budget by reflex.

Candidate / MLB ID	Full 2026 MLB evidence	S&S ceiling / decision
Brandon Lowe / 664040	656 PA, .824 OPS, 35 HR; 0.355/0.331 wOBA/xwOBA	Preferred retention: 3 years / $66-75M; separate $23.15M QO branch

Candidate / MLB ID	Full 2026 MLB evidence	S&S ceiling / decision
Gregory Soto / 642397	67.0 IP, 3.63 ERA, 3.03 xERA; 79 K / 29 BB	Preferred relief retention: 2 years / $14-18M
Eugenio Suárez / 553993	498 PA, .740 OPS, 26 HR; 0.324/0.303 wOBA/xwOBA	Power alternative: 1 year / $12-14M
Mauricio Dubón / 643289	619 PA, .720 OPS, 12 HR; 0.317/0.304 wOBA/xwOBA	Conditional bridge: prior S&S ceiling 2 years / $20-24M
Edmundo Sosa / 624641	250 PA, .712 OPS, 9 HR; 0.307/0.328 wOBA/xwOBA	Limited-role fallback: 1 year / $6-8M
Alec Bohm / 664761	629 PA, .698 OPS, 15 HR; 0.309/0.327 wOBA/xwOBA	Pass as preferred 3B; range cost unresolved
Ha-Seong Kim / 673490	147 PA, .359 OPS, 0 HR; 0.180/0.222 wOBA/xwOBA	Recovery inquiry only; no acquired production
Yoán Moncada / 660162	130 PA, .605 OPS, 3 HR; 0.281/0.269 wOBA/xwOBA	Pass as principal 3B answer; knee and offense gates
Luis Rengifo / 650859	354 PA, .636 OPS, 4 HR; 0.289/0.304 wOBA/xwOBA	Conditional depth; not a Lowe replacement
John Schreiber / 670167	60.1 IP, 3.28 ERA, 4.03 xERA; 40 K / 26 BB	Pass as main command upgrade: 26 walks / 60.1 IP
Jason Adam / 592094	34.1 IP, 2.62 ERA, 3.78 xERA; 22 K / 10 BB	Alternative: 1 year / $6-8M; 45 IP only after health check

The one-year qualifying offer is a separate branch at $23.15 million, with the decision due November 17. Acceptance would reduce long-term commitment while preserving the immediate role. Rejection would keep the free-agent decision open. Neither outcome is known at this edition's research cutoff.

The risk is not confined to salary. Lowe's power and defensive production both exceeded some of the underlying measures in 2026. The case for retaining him rests on replacing a difficult-to-replace job, not on forecasting another 35 homers and plus-15 OAA. If the club loses him, it must remove his 550 planned plate appearances before reallocating money or projecting the lineup. [1,5,8,12,13]

ANALYSIS / 15

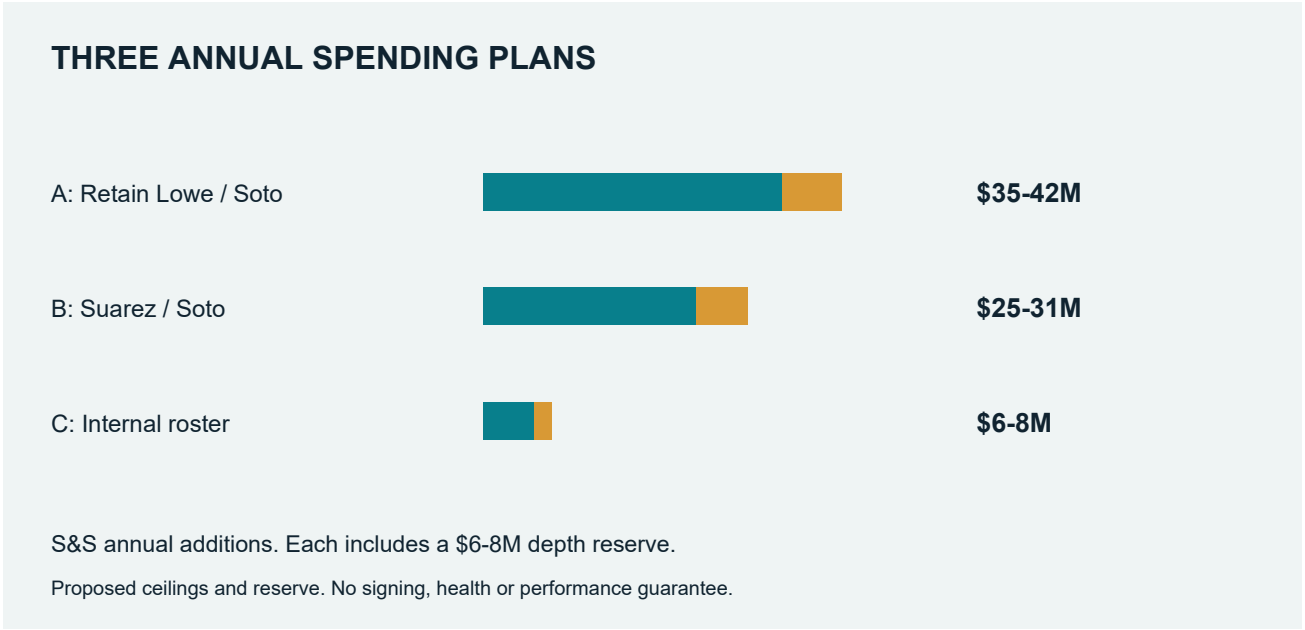
Three funded plans, with distinct consequences

Plan A retains Lowe and Soto, preserves the main young-player auditions and funds a depth reserve. Its $134.19-145.19 million envelope is the largest of the three. The return is continuity in two scarce roles, not a claim that continuity alone produces a playoff berth.

Plan B substitutes Suarez for Lowe, moves Gonzales primarily to second and retains Soto. Suarez's 26 home runs in 498 plate appearances support a power role. His .740 OPS, .303 expected wOBA and minus-7 OAA also explain why a one-year ceiling is appropriate. The plan spends less because it purchases a different, narrower package of skills.

Plan	Annual additions	Total allocation	New commitment*
A: Lowe + Soto retained	$35-42M	$134.19-145.19M	$86-101M
B: Suarez + Soto	$25-31M	$124.19-134.19M	$32-40M
C: Internal roster	$6-8M	$105.19-111.19M	$6-8M

New commitment includes all proposed contract years plus the first-year reserve. The reserve is not a guaranteed player contract. Plan A: Lowe $66-75M, Soto $14-18M, reserve $6-8M. Plan B: Suarez $12-14M, Soto $14-18M, reserve $6-8M. Plan C: reserve only.



Plan C keeps the internal roster after Lowe leaves and spends only the reserve. Gonzales becomes the primary second baseman. Triolo, Simon, Brannigan and a conditional Gray audition cover more third base. The lineup loses a proven source of power and asks more of players who have not yet supplied comparable production.

Contingency	Annual additions / total	Treatment
Lowe accepts $23.15M QO	$36.15-40.15M / $135.34-143.34M	Replace proposed multi-year salary; keep Soto and $6-8M reserve
QO accepted; no Soto	$29.15-31.15M / $128.34-134.34M	Lowe retained; redistribute 60 relief IP internally
QO declined; no acquisitions	$6-8M / $105.19-111.19M	Plan C; do not count Lowe production
Lowe market exceeds ceiling	Do not assume retention	Reprice alternative and remove his PA before spending
Griffin cash timing	Separate from allocated bonus	Reported $3.5M 2027 bonus payment; allocation only $1.333M
Weaver trade offsets	Verify actual obligation at release	No double credit for Mets payment and bonus adjustment
Ozuna released	Carry $1.5M buyout, not $16M option	No retained DH work
Other expenses	Benefits, tax and operations excluded	Not a full club budget or official CBT calculation

The qualifying-offer branches must be evaluated before committing the same money elsewhere. If Lowe accepts and the club declines to retain Soto, the total envelope becomes $128.34-134.34 million. If Lowe leaves, the cheaper internal path is $105.19-111.19 million. Those outcomes differ by a real player, not merely by a line in a budget spreadsheet. [11,12,13]

ANALYSIS / 16

Allocate the plate appearances before signing the player

The preferred plan totals 6,200 plate appearances. It gives Griffin 600, Valdez 500 and Flores 360, while retaining central roles for Reynolds, Cruz and Gonzales. That is enough room to learn about the young players without asking the lineup to be composed entirely of auditions.

Player	PA	Opportunity
Reynolds	620	LF/DH
Cruz	540	CF/DH
Griffin	600	SS
Gonzales	530	3B/2B/DH
Lowe	550	2B; only if retained
Esmerlyn Valdez	500	RF/DH
OHearn	480	1B/RF/DH
Horwitz	430	1B/DH

Player	PA	Opportunity
Flores	360	C/1B/DH
Davis	270	C
Mangum	350	OF
Triolo	280	3B/SS
Endy Rodriguez	100	Conditional later C/1B/DH; no opening work
Garcia	180	OF
Yorke	120	2B/IF
Simon	100	IF
Callihan	60	IF/OF
Baddoo	50	OF
Brannigan	40	3B
Gray	40	Conditional late 3B audition
TOTAL	6,200	Season coverage, not 20 simultaneous active hitters

The allocation is a full-season coverage plan, not a proposal to carry 20 hitters at once. Some depth work occurs after injuries, option moves or later promotions. Gray's 40 appearances are conditional late-season development, and Rodriguez's 100 depend on recovery from surgery.

Change from A	PA adjustment	Consequence
B: remove Lowe; add Suarez	-550 / +500	Different position and defensive tradeoff
B: Gonzales	+50	580 PA; primary 2B
C: remove Lowe	-550	No retained power credited
C: Gonzales / Yorke	+50 / +180	580 / 300 PA
C: Simon / Triolo / Gray	+120 / +100 / +100	220 / 380 / 140 PA; more developmental risk
Endy unavailable all season	-100; Flores +50, Davis +50	Remove conditional work; preserve 6,200 PA
TOTAL	6,200 in every plan	No acquisition creates free playing time

Suarez's 500 appearances replace Lowe's 550, with Gonzales receiving the remaining 50. The internal path distributes all 550 among Gonzales, Yorke, Simon, Triolo and Gray. The bookkeeping is exact because an acquisition cannot create extra games for everyone else.

The proposed lineup also preserves DH flexibility. Reynolds, O'Hearn, Horwitz and Valdez receive meaningful shares. A second expensive bat who needs the same position would require a new allocation and a fresh marginal-value argument. The club cannot justify that purchase by counting both players' preferred workloads. [1,4,9]

ANALYSIS / 17

Repeated targets need different jobs, not different sales pitches

Suarez also appears in the Cardinals' prepared alternative. In St. Louis, he would take a larger third-base role and reduce the auditions for Blaze Jordan and Nolan Gorman. In Pittsburgh, he would replace Lowe's power while moving Gonzales to second. The same one-year $12-14 million ceiling can fit both arguments, but only one club could sign him, and neither plan assumes availability beyond the current free-agent check.

Mauricio Dubon was considered elsewhere as a versatile bridge. His six OAA in 2026 and 19 in 2025 are attractive, but his current defensive work included only 46 innings at third base. A general utility reputation is not enough to make him Pittsburgh's automatic third-base answer. At the prior S&S ceiling of two years and $20-24 million, he remains a conditional alternative, not the preferred Lowe replacement.

Edmundo Sosa is the Cardinals' preferred limited-role infield purchase at one year and $6-8 million. Pittsburgh can test the same candidate, but 250 plate appearances and seven walks in 2026 do not establish a full-season replacement for Lowe. Sosa would compete directly with Triolo and other internal coverage while leaving a larger power gap.

Alec Bohm's minus-11 OAA fails the principal range test for this roster. Ha-Seong Kim and Yoan Moncada require recovery and performance checks before a substantial role could be justified. Luis Rengifo would be a depth inquiry rather than a substitute for 35 home runs. The report gives none of these conditional names purchased production.

Lowe and Soto are retention priorities unique to the Pirates' current decisions. No outgoing prospects or draft selections are assumed in those retention paths. For an external signing, current qualifying-offer and compensation status must be checked before final terms are evaluated. The comparison measures the exact job, displaced incumbent, workload, term and price, rather than choosing a new name merely to make the report look different. [4,8,9,12,21]

ANALYSIS / 18

Test the upside against the cost of losing offense

A plus-28 run margin supports cautious optimism. It does not establish an 88-win floor. The simplest way to see the sensitivity is to vary runs scored and allowed, holding everything else inside a deliberately limited arithmetic model.

Illustrative change from 2026	RS / RA	Margin	Simple run-ratio wins*
Unchanged runs	767 / 739	+28	84.0
Score 20 more; prevent 20	787 / 719	+68	88.3
Offense flat; prevent 35	767 / 704	+63	87.9

Illustrative change from 2026	RS / RA	Margin	Simple run-ratio wins*
Lose 35 runs; prevent 20	732 / 719	+13	82.5
Lose 50 runs; allow 20 more	717 / 759	-42	76.4

Illustrative wins use 162 × RS² / (RS² + RA²). This simple run-ratio calculation is not a player projection, betting forecast or estimate of postseason probability. Actual 2026 wins were 82; the unchanged-run illustration is about 84.

Scoring 20 more runs and preventing 20 produces a plus-68 margin and about 88.3 illustrative wins. Holding offense flat while preventing 35 produces a similar result. Both paths require concrete improvement, not a new label for the existing roster.

Losing 35 offensive runs while preventing 20 leaves a plus-13 margin and about 82.5 illustrative wins. Losing 50 while allowing 20 more moves the illustration down to about 76.4. That is why the internal-only plan cannot be sold as a cost-free version of the preferred plan.

The model does not assign exact run values to Lowe, Soto, Gonzales' position change or Griffin's development. Those effects depend on availability, replacement performance and context. Its purpose is to show how much of the 2026 offensive gain Pittsburgh can afford to surrender while expecting the pitching staff to carry the difference. [1,2]

ANALYSIS / 19

Sequence the winter around decisions that change the roster

First, resolve the Lowe qualifying-offer branch. An accepted one-year contract and a declined offer create different budgets and different negotiating leverage. Pittsburgh should retain a priced alternative while the decision is pending, but not commit the same salary allocation twice.

Second, decide whether Soto's retention terms fit the $14-18 million two-year ceiling. If they do not, compare a shorter Adam proposal with the internal relief distribution and current health evidence. Avoid adding a familiar veteran whose walk profile merely reproduces the bullpen's existing weakness.

Third, reconcile Jones' projected workload, the depth starters' readiness and Rodriguez's recovery before setting the opening roster. The medical record available publicly cannot establish private clearance, and an offseason active designation cannot replace it. The plan's conditional work remains conditional.

Fourth, assign Gonzales, Griffin and the third-base alternatives actual defensive work during preparation. The results should determine whether the preferred alignment is viable. If Gonzales' range remains a material cost at third, the club must revisit the alignment even if Lowe's contract makes second base less available.

Finally, protect the reserve for needs that actually emerge. Spending it early on a redundant first baseman would reduce the ability to respond to a rotation shortage. The reserve's value is the choice it preserves; no wins are credited to it until a player and a job are identified.

ANALYSIS / 20

What would change the recommendation?

An accepted Lowe qualifying offer would replace the proposed multiyear deal immediately. A market price above three years and $75 million would move the recommendation toward the Suarez or internal branch. A new contract, qualifying offer or material health development for any external candidate would require a new comparison before the player could remain in a funded plan.

A substantial reduction in Jones' or another starter's credible workload would move pitching depth ahead of optional offensive spending. The 870-inning starter target is ambitious relative to 2026. If it becomes unrealistic, the bullpen cannot be expected to absorb the missing innings without cost.

A stronger, sustained receiving and offensive performance from Flores would justify a larger catching share. A full-season absence for Rodriguez would remove his 100 conditional appearances and redistribute them to Flores and Davis. Neither change requires pretending that Rodriguez has already recovered or that Flores' first 163 MLB appearances establish his ceiling.

A credible internal third-base emergence could reduce the need for Suarez if Lowe leaves. Gray's Double-A work and Brannigan's Triple-A record do not establish that outcome yet. The cheaper plan becomes more attractive only when a player supplies evidence for the job, not when the budget needs an optimistic assumption.

The preferred plan is a measured effort to keep the offense intact and reduce the strain on the pitching staff. Its strongest countercase is the cost of retention for an 82-win team. That countercase wins if the prices rise beyond the stated limits or the starter workload cannot support the relief plan. It does not win merely because retaining familiar players produces less winter excitement than adding new names.

ANALYSIS / 21

The roster and the departures are different lists

The November 3 major-roster source contains 38 players, all carrying an administrative active designation. That list is a transaction snapshot, not a healthy opening-day roster. Rodriguez remains the explicit no-opening-workload exception because of the documented hip surgery.

Current major-roster player / MLB ID	Bats / throws	Administrative status
Akil Baddoo / 668731	L / L	Active
Antwone Kelly / 699008	R / R	Active
Billy Cook / 695257	R / R	Active
Brandon Eisert / 685126	L / L	Active

Current major-roster player / MLB ID	Bats / throws	Administrative status
Braxton Ashcraft / 677952	L / R	Active
Bryan Reynolds / 668804	S / R	Active
Bubba Chandler / 696149	S / R	Active
Carmen Mlodzinski / 669387	R / R	Active
Endy Rodríguez / 682848	S / R	Active; no opening workload after hip surgery
Esmerlyn Valdez / 699013	R / R	Active
Evan Sisk / 681895	L / L	Active
Henry Davis / 680779	R / R	Active
Hunter Barco / 682995	L / L	Active
Jack Brannigan / 687394	R / R	Active
Jacob Gonzalez / 694378	L / R	Active
Jake Mangum / 663968	S / L	Active
Jared Jones / 683003	L / R	Active
Jared Triolo / 669707	R / R	Active
Jhostynxon Garcia / 691373	R / R	Active
Khristian Curtis / 694753	R / R	Active
Konnor Griffin / 804606	R / R	Active
Lake Bachar / 669199	R / R	Active
Luke Weaver / 596133	R / R	Active
Mason Montgomery / 682254	L / L	Active
Mitch Keller / 656605	R / R	Active
Nick Gonzales / 693304	R / R	Active
Nick Yorke / 694377	R / R	Active
Noah Murdock / 668716	R / R	Active
Oneil Cruz / 665833	L / R	Active
Paul Skenes / 694973	R / R	Active
Rafael Flores Jr. / 804668	R / R	Active
Ronny Simon / 682927	S / R	Active
Ryan O'Hearn / 656811	L / L	Active
Spencer Horwitz / 687462	L / R	Active
Thomas Harrington / 802419	R / R	Active
Tyler Callihan / 682997	L / R	Active

Current major-roster player / MLB ID	Bats / throws	Administrative status
Wilber Dotel / 696062	R / R	Active
Yohan Ramírez / 670990	R / R	Active

Lowe and Soto are free agents and receive only conditional retained workloads. Kirby Yates is also a free agent, with retirement reported on the official Pirates update. Isaac Mattson's Seattle waiver claim is corroborated by the current Seattle roster even though an individual team label lagged. He receives no Pirates innings.

Player / MLB ID	Classification	2027 treatment
Brandon Lowe / 664040	Free Agent Qo Pending	Retention conditional; not currently signed
Gregory Soto / 642397	Free Agent	Retention conditional; not currently signed
Kirby Yates / 489446	Free Agent Retirement Reported	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Marcell Ozuna / 542303	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Isaac Mattson / 676755	Departed	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Camilo Doval / 666808	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Joey Bart / 663698	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Shawn Ross / 676566	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Justin Lawrence / 664875	Free Agent	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Dennis Santana / 642701	Free Agent	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Brandan Bidois / 684049	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Ron Marinaccio / 676760	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Hunter Stratton / 676702	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
José Urquidy / 664353	Free Agent	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Cam Sanders / 676742	External Or Historical	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate
Davis Wendzel / 673995	Departed	No 2027 PIT workload; past contributions separate

Historical statistics remain attached to the team for which they were recorded. They do not imply current affiliation. The individual register retains MLB IDs, current roster evidence and transaction history for every named player. When a cached team label conflicts with an official transaction, the report follows the reconciled transaction rather than inventing a return to Pittsburgh. [4,12,15]

ANALYSIS / 22

Definitions and the limits of the estimates

All season totals are completed MLB regular-season statistics unless a minor-league level or another scope is explicitly stated. Club-only lines and full-season lines are labeled separately. Baseball innings use outs, so 101.2 means 101 innings and two outs, not 101.2 decimal innings. Totals and per-nine rates are calculated from outs.

OPS adds on-base and slugging percentages. wOBA values offensive events on a common scale. Expected wOBA and expected slugging use Statcast's measured-event framework and are not forward projections. Expected ERA is another descriptive estimate; it does not assign responsibility for every run or promise regression in a particular direction.

OAA measures tracked fielding opportunities relative to average. Prior seasons, opportunity counts and actual positions provide context. Catcher framing runs and complete catching fielding value are different measures and must not be added together as independent contributions. A missing qualified row is unknown, not zero.

The payroll envelope uses salary allocations, estimated arbitration amounts, listed obligations and explicit S&S reserves. It differs from actual cash timing and official CBT payroll. All proposed prices are editorial ceilings. There are no assumed completed signings, private medical findings, trade agreements or guaranteed ownership commitments.

The workload plans total 6,200 plate appearances, 162 starts and 1,440 pitching innings. They describe a complete season allocation, not a forecast of every player's availability. Conditional work must be reassigned if its conditions fail. The no-acquisition plan removes purchased production before redistributing opportunities.

Research and roster checks are dated November 3, 2026. The report preserves the original statistical periods and source-specific qualifications. A later transaction or medical update can change the recommendation without changing what the completed 2026 record showed.

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Sources and research notes

[1] MLB: Pittsburgh 2026 team and player statistics

Completed Pittsburgh-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: Pirates completed schedule

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

Open source

[4] MLB: Pirates 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. Pittsburgh-only actual statistics are separately labeled for pitchers who changed teams.

Open source

[7] MLB: individual handedness splits

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

Open source

[8] 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

[9] MLB: Pirates defensive positions and innings

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

Open source

[10] Baseball Savant: fielding and catching run value

Qualified 2026 complete catching value for Davis, with components already included. Separate framing records for Davis, Flores and Rodriguez. Missing qualified total-value rows are not zero.

Open source

[11] FanGraphs RosterResource: Pirates payroll

Observed 2027 salary, allocated bonus, Weaver adjustments and Ozuna buyout columns. Figures are allocations, not full expenses or official CBT payroll.

Open source

[12] 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

[13] MLB: Lowe qualifying offer

November 2 offer of $23.15 million; November 17 decision deadline. Offer does not establish acceptance or retention.

Open source

[14] MLB: Ozuna release

August release reconciled with transaction history. No retained 2027 workload.

Open source

[15] MLB: Pirates injuries and roster moves

Dated public updates on Rodriguez surgery, Yates retirement and Mattson waiver claim. Administrative offseason active status is not medical clearance.

Open source

[16] MLB/MiLB: Pirates affiliates and statistics

Indianapolis 484, Altoona 452, Greensboro 477 and Bradenton 3390 checked separately. Level and sample retained; no prospect ranking converted into MLB production.

Open source

[17] MLB Pipeline: Pirates prospects

Current prospect context checked November 3. Named prospects matched to official MLB IDs and current organization.

Open source

[18] Pirates: Griffin contract announcement

Nine-year extension confirmed by club. Contract duration and financial allocation are separate.

Open source

[19] Associated Press via ESPN: Griffin contract terms

April 16 report: $140M guarantee, $12M signing bonus, $2M 2027 salary and $3.5M bonus payable April 1, 2027. Annual bonus allocation differs from cash.

Open source

[20] Pirates: Weaver acquisition with cash

Official announcement confirms cash considerations; specific payroll offsets are attributed separately to RosterResource.

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 Trade Rumors arbitration projections, syndicated by Yardbarker

Matt Swartz projections. Ten retained Pirates cases total $28.7M; none is treated as an agreed contract.

Open source

[23] MLB: player identities and histories

Official MLB IDs, full-season and club-stint statistics, current-team fields and transaction histories. Lagging labels are reconciled with newer transactions.

Open source

[24] Baseball Savant: catcher framing

2026 framing values for Davis, Flores and Rodriguez; distinct from complete catching value.

Open source

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