

2021 Preseason Power Rankings

Overall Rank. Team (Division Rank)

1. Twins (Cardinal B&S 1)

Last season, they spent four games of the regular season without back-to-back MVP winner, Spencer Bogad, but with the league being back to Memorial Day weekend, the Twins will be at full strength throughout Season 19. On paper, this roster is the best in the league 1-5, top to bottom. Both Edloe Donnan and Cory McCarthy are coming off of incredible years at the plate, and for Edloe, it was also his best season on the mound as he looks to settle into the number two pitching role behind ace, Will Rath. Captain of the Twins, and former MVP Chris Meador is a 4x National Fielder of the Year and will continue to hold down the left side of the field while batting leadoff. Reigning MVP Spencer Bogad will look to continue his dominance, as the Twins will be in a fight to the finish with the Royals for the division crown. Even if they get the division title and a high playoff seed, do they have enough in place to be the first team in SWBL history to break the curse of the preseason number one seed?

2. Royals (Cardinal B&S 2)

The 2021 Royals have many storylines heading into Season 19. Last year, this franchise did not participate in the SWBL, as only Gus and Sam were able to attend. In the offseason, they added former SWBL all-star, Auston Steffes to be their main fourth option, with the hope Ty Butler would be back in the saddle behind the Skibbes for the team. Disaster struck though right before the Draft, as Ty Butler went down with a broken wrist, making him questionable for Season 19. With this news, the Royals signed former teammate, Tyler Flakne to the roster and drafted Tyler's cousin, rookie, Leon Cherry to help fill the void in case Ty can't be of service. Along with Kevin Skibbe and non-playing roster invite, Trent Steffes, the Royals will roll with their biggest roster to date in 2021. Last year with Paul and Steve joining with the Skibbe brothers as the Braves, they garnered the number one seed after the regular season before falling short to the Expos run, and they look to get back to finding playoff success and into the finals in Season 19.

3. Expos (Glendale CDJR 1)

Only one word can describe what this franchise did in 2020: Incredible. The highest win total in their franchise history as they finish 6-4 in the regular season, winning their final three games of the season against the Rockies, Twins, and Royals to claim their first playoff berth ever. With three playoff wins to the Championship title, that gives the SWBL back to back 3-game winners in the playoffs, as the Wild Card game is proving to be a great warm up for the past two Champions of the league. The rotation of reigning CY Wiffle, Jimmy Nelson, and Playoff MVP, Brett Spencer was incredible down the stretch, and they will take that confidence to their victory lap tour that will be 2021. Manager, Kevin Wiethuchter pulled out all the right moves on his way to being nominated for National Wiffle's Manager of the Year award. John Leicht settled into his role as every day right fielder, and Evan Close and Matt Germer were amazingly clutch in the playoffs to give them their main lineup of four. This year, Matt Egerstrom returns for the Expos in an off the bench role, as the Expos will look to prove that Season 18 was not a

fluke and they are here to stay. For this team to get back to the playoffs and make a run, their offense will look to improve, finishing second to last in 2020 on that side of the ball, but what last year proved was that pitching can win championships in this hitter's league.

4. Brewers (Koetting Eye Center 1)

Finally, the Brewers made it back to the championship game, only to run into Jimmy Nelson's knuckleball and an untimely double play to end a rally and their season that could have been. Patrick Gatti was second in MVP voting after an incredible season on both sides of the ball, but with him being out for 2021, the Brewers will rely heavily on franchise cornerstones, Kyle Cornell and Peter Leicht to get them through the year. Peter did well on the mound for the Brewers last season, leading the team in wins, and between Pete, rookie Ryan Briggs, and returning teammate Jimmy Stout, they will look to find a combination to compliment Kyle Cornell who seemingly will step up as team ace. Derek Cornell will return to the lineup in possibly his rumored, last year on the Brewers, as they look to make their way back to the championship game and win all of their first titles in their careers. Joining them on their quest will be another former teammate, Curran Collins, and for the first time since 2008, returning to The Blur, league founding father, Andrew Leicht will make his triumphant return. The Brew Crew wanted to be in the first tier for the division draw and they got their wish with a vengeance, in drawing arguably the easiest division of Season 19 with two non-playoff teams below them. The Brewers will open up Season 19 with the first ever fully produced game in SWBL history, against the Expos in a rematch of the 2020 finals; a game that all eyes will be on.

5. Rockies (Glendale CDJR 2)

Perennial playoff, Hall of Fame franchise, the Rockies, find themselves in a similar position to 2020, where they are pre-ranked to end in the same position, back-to-back years. Without Brett Spencer or Grant Boyd in 2020, the Rockies still made the playoffs, and were close to moving on to the semis, but a dreaded error that will haunt the Rockies and Kyle Breda, is still going through everyone's mind...and his legs. Captain, Blake Spencer stepped up on the mound and he and Breda will take most of the innings for the Rockies, with a little help from rookie, Chad Young. Brian Kenney won back the Platinum Hands award and will continue his dominant play in LF for the franchise, and the return of Grant Boyd will add depth on every side of the ball. The core of the Rockies will be back in their four-man lineup for the first time at full strength since they won their first franchise championship, which will be great for their team chemistry as they head into one of the most grueling divisional schedules any team could have. Even with the defending champs in their division in the tier above them, you almost have to assume the Rockies will find a way into the playoffs like they always do.

6. Yankees (Koetting Eye Center 2)

Unbelievably, the feast or famine pattern of the Yankees continues. They become just the second team in the franchise era to not make the playoffs after winning a championship, as they look to once again bounce back as their history indicates. Never has this franchise finished below .500 in a season, and hard-hitting captain, Scott Pohle will do everything he can to make sure that will never happen again. Last season they went without John Calloway, and in this past offseason, the Astros lured John away for a different league view, and the Yankees will roll

with the same lineup that finished 4-6 in 2020. Sam Bakula had arguably, one of his worst seasons of his career at the plate, as he looks to turn it around for a team that is hungry for more offense. Kevin Pohle stepped up for this team at the plate and on the field, cementing himself as the everyday right fielder, winning the Gold Hands for the position. Jackson Crosley might have been this team's best hitter last season, but had a major setback on the mound that he could not ever quite dig himself out of, finishing with his worst pitching numbers in his career. Scott has been their workhorse year in and year out, and for this team to make it back to playoffs and make a run, he will need some help from his 4-man roster, as they look to bounce back in arguably the easiest division heading into Season 19. Something that could definitely help turn the tides back in their favor.

7. Astros (Glendale CDJR 3)

It seems like every year, Bryan Benware assembles his best roster yet, only for something to go wrong during the season. This year, it is definitely the best chance for the Astros to make a run not just for a playoff spot, but possibly even a championship run. After landing David Olderman last offseason, who was not able to play during the pandemic, Bryan is excited he will return to slide in behind ace Cam Smith for the Stros in 2021. Then, Benware follows it up this offseason with the second biggest signing in the franchise era, luring John Calloway away from the Yankees to create a special lineup for the Astros for Season 19. John will quickly make an impact taking over left field duties and hitting leadoff for the team. Cole Layton will handle right field for the Astros, hoping to build upon his rookie of the year win in 2020. Cam Smith is getting better every single year and is a player that can easily break open any game on either side of the ball, and Keaton Adams has proved he is an All-Star in this league, in every sense of the word. Benware has said he is going to do whatever is best for the team even if that means giving himself and Jeremy Worrell limited playing time, as the Astros look to improve on their best record yet in 2020, and finally get over the hump and snag a playoff spot. Having David Olderman and John Calloway on this team in the color orange for the first time will be something special to watch on The Blur for Season 19.

8. Athletics (Cardinal B&S 3)

It has been too long since we have last seen Captain, Alex Heck at The Blur, and this year the heart of this franchise will return. Along with Steve Hays and Paul Castellano, they look to bring back some of the magic they found in 2016 as franchise of the year and American League champs. The biggest loss will be the absence of Mike Karl for the second year in a row, but the Athletics have drafted three rookies to fill the void and give them all chances to step up and make an impact for the rebuilding franchise. Paul Castellano will be this team's workhorse in hitting, pitching, and fielding, but will definitely need help if this team is going to improve upon this preseason ranking. All three of the rookies will be looked upon to fill roles wherever needed throughout the weekend. Josh Rogers gives this team an experienced bat and a talented number two arm as long as he can get used to medium unscuffed balls. Jordan Smith has the personality to fit right into this Athletics squad and shows promise on both sides of the ball, and Chris Vorbeck already has a connection with this team having baseball experience with the squad. Paul and Steve tasted success last year on the Braves, garnering the number one seed heading into playoffs, and you know they will do anything to get back there with this

under the radar team. With the magic of Alex Heck returning, anything is possible as they look to shock the world once more.

9. Marlins (Koetting Eye Center 3)

The sixth 0-10 team in the history of the SWBL, the Marlins are still looking for their first win, and will do anything they can to achieve it. Last year was the first year for this franchise, with Luke Bakula as the lone Marlin with any experience. Luke had a very cold start to 2020 on both sides of the ball, and will look to step up as a leader for this team, early and often, during Season 19. Captain, Eli Erickson and Sam Rudnick finished in the top 5 of the Rookie of the Year voting, and both have a bright future in this league as they look to continue their improvements at the plate. Josh Anthony and Trent Davis added pitching depth with the occasional at bat, as they look to continue to adjust on the mound for the Marlins. Also, the Marlins have drafted their first ever player to the franchise in Corey Pohle, friend of the team and cousin of superstars Scott and Kevin Pohle of the Yankees. Corey has played in a bench role in the SWBL before, and brings baseball experience to this squad, as he looks to make an impact and get the Marlins to their first win. The floor continues to be quite low for this team, but they can only go up from last year as they want to prove they can play with the SWBL veterans. Playoffs might still be a couple of years away, but the Marlins can look at the impact the reigning Champions, Expos made to the league last year, who were themselves an 0-10 team just 5 years prior to their incredible title run.