

2018 Preseason Power Rankings:

Overall Rank. Team (Division Rank)

1. Rockies (Sandbar 1) – The SWBL #1 preseason curse this year is on the Rockies. As arguably the most successful overall team in the franchise era, this team could be the first to break the curse and go back to back in 2018. The same squad of five will return and look to dominate the regular season atop the easiest division in the league. Brett's injuries are fully healed, BK is coming off a historic season in the field, Blake is due for a bounce back to MVP form, and Grant and Breda are the best role players in the league. This team has depth in every aspect of the game and will once again, extend their streak and make a run in the playoffs.

2. Yankees (Cardinal Blinds 1) – Last season, the pinstripes went 9-1, falling short to the Rockies in the playoffs, as they look to build into Season 16. We all know Kevin Pohle's graphics are fire, but he also had an incredible on field performance as well, that went under the radar in 2018. Scott was the MVP heading deep into Saturday and Jackson won his first CY Wiffle of his career. The Yankees have big bats in their lineup behind Scott, with Sam Bakula, and a newly signed John Calloway, as they look to get back to the championship. Scott will need another stellar season to backup Jackson on the mound, as the most on and off team in the franchise era history looks to build on last season's successes.

3. Royals (Glendale 1) – You know you have a special season when you go 10-0 in the regular season, win your first playoff game in franchise history, and have two of your players finish in the top 2 of the MVP voting. Now, in 2018, the Royals have question marks surrounding their squad. Gus and reigning MVP, Sam continue to prove they are one of the best one-two punches, on both sides of the ball in the SWBL, but Ty Butler and preseason Rookie of the Year favorite, Mike Boyles need to step up to give more at bats to their go to guys. Another Skibbe (Kevin) joins the

mix for the Royals, but may only see action in limited games. Losing Tyler Flakne will be a big blow to their roster, but this team still has the talent to make it to the playoffs, and when firing on all cylinders can beat any team in the league.

4. Twins (Cardinal Blinds 2) – To anyone who doesn't know Jimmy Cole, the Twins addition of him to their roster could be a head scratcher. Why would you sign someone who did horrendous in their first season in the SWBL? Jimmy is one of the best hitters in the country and the Twins are banking that, on a team that can get him more at bats, he will come into his own. Captain, Chris Meador is a winner, plain and simple, and looks to get back to the Championship in Season 16. Spencer Bogad regressed slightly last season, but will be a huge part of the Twins' success in 2018. With Will Rath in the rotation, this team boasts three solid pitchers, and with Edloe, the team has hitting depth to rival the Rockies. All their eggs are in the Jimmy Cole basket; let's see if they can put together something magical.

5. Brewers (Glendale 2) – Time and time again, these power rankings read, that the Brewers are the best overall team on paper. They have top to bottom depth in every aspect of the sport. 4 solid pitchers, possibly the best 1-2-3 hitting trio, speed and fielding to boot. But, why can't they finish the season on a win? Every year it seems like another Brewer is in the top 3 of MVP. If just two of Peter, PG, and Kyle can hit at the same time, this team will find success, while just one, won't cut it. Stout and Olderman lead their rotation and with the return of Stephen Carter, along with John Doerries, this team is stacked even in their medical depth! If all the pieces fall together, the Brewers will be hoisting their first Championships of their careers, and to be honest, I'm not sure there is anyone else people want to see more holding the trophy if it isn't them.

6. Athletics (Cardinal Blinds 3) – What can we expect from the A's franchise in 2018? Probably the most up and down team in a two-year stretch ever in the league's history, going from a 2nd place finish/Franchise of the Year Award in 2016 to our first ever, 9th place finisher in 2017. They have the tools to be successful. Luke, Steve, and Paul provide workhorses on the mound that can give you quality starts almost every time. All five players can hit, and they are a team with possibly the most heart. You saw their demeanor quickly change, loss after small margin loss in 2017, but the Athletics hope it was just a fluke as they head into Season 16. It doesn't help that they are in the most difficult division in the league, but when this team is at their best, they have proven they deserve to play with the big boys and could shock the world again and make a playoff push.

7. Diamondbax (Sandbar 2) – Heading into their sophomore campaign as a franchise in the SWBL, the DBax look to improve on their 3-7, 6th place finish in 2017. Devin Nelson and Handsome Mat are the keys to this organization's success, and captain Trent Steffes hopes they will play all ten games in 2018, after losing them to injury and family emergency. With both of them in the lineup, this team will stay competitive. The Steffes brothers can provide a much needed spark, just ask Auston "Brett's Daddy" Steffes, and Andrew Lindor is a new fan favorite. The biggest concern is the rotation as they lost their ace and workhorse, Jimmy Cole to the Twins. Trent went out and signed rookies, Chris Neumann and Evan Bischoff to bolster the roster on all sides of the ball, and with wiffleball guru, Brandon Corbett as Equipment Manager, this team will have experience, and now just need to put it all on the field.

8. Astros (Glendale 3) – Bryan Benware is at it again this offseason, wheeling and dealing to put the best roster on "the Blur" he can for Season 16. With the PA guys out, the Astros sign possibly the biggest household name in NWLA history, Stephen

Farkas. The question remains, can he adapt to the 53 MPH speed limit to become this team's much needed, workhorse ace. After Farkas (still unknown), the pitching depth gets really rough. On the hitting side, Benware was a top-5 player in average in 2017, Jeremy Worrell made the NWLA Third Team Rookie list, and with rookies Farkas and Chris Oberlohr (for five games), this will be a lineup that can hang with many teams. Then you add to the roster Cam Branson, Rob Walters, and Matt Rosener who can provide a spark on every side of the ball and are some of the best talkers in the league. The Astros may look rough in the first half of the season, but when Oberlohr shows up, Benware hopes they can play spoiler and go for more than two wins in 2018.

9. Expos (Sandbar 3) – The Expos may be surprised to see themselves here after finishing in 7th place in 2017, but it was a unanimous decision by the front office. When it comes down to it, all the teams around them improved, and the Expos stay their same hapless selves. John Leicht, Evan Close, and Jimmy Nelson are bright spots on this roster, but the lack of trying on this team is just too prevalent to expect anything much more than last place and *maybe* one win. Even in the easiest division in the league, it's hard to find many chances for wins on their schedule. Positive things to note: Matt Egerstrom and his voice are back in 2018, Jimmy Nelson has a top three knuckle ball that is continuing to confuse hitters, and Matt Germer broke up perfect game bids from Sam Skibbe and Brett Spencer in 2017. Who knows, maybe Kevin knows something we all don't and thinks this is the roster to stay at the 7th place position, because anything higher would blow everyone away, and Gus would probably even wager his go to bet, and run around the house naked if they did.

Good luck to all teams in Season 16.

Happy Wifflin'!