

The Hardball Times Season Preview 2008

Jason Varitek (Catcher)

PA	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SO	BB	SB	CS	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	Fld	F\$
487	61	107	23	2	16	60	104	65	1	1	.260	.364	.442	.806	C	\$1

When Varitek's offense bottomed out in 2006, it looked like there was at least a decent chance that he was simply going through what many 34-year-old catchers have gone through before him. But he bounced back nicely in 2007 and while his days of posting an OPS+ in the 120 range are probably gone, he's still capable of producing league-average offense. That's all the Red Sox really need from him.

Kevin Youkilis (First Base)

PA	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SO	BB	SB	CS	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	3 Yr	Fld	F\$
556	73	131	35	2	13	65	95	71	2	2	.280	.381	.447	.828	-.025	B	\$6

Youkilis saw a nice bump in his production from his first full season in the majors to his second, but that's probably the ceiling of what he can do. It's unlikely that he'll ever hit more than 20 homers, so he's going to be a viable starter at first base only as long as he can get on base nearly 40 percent of the time. Fortunately for him, patience is something that should be fairly consistent from year to year, so there's no reason to expect him to decline too much any time soon.

Pitchers

Josh Beckett (Starting Pitcher)

W	L	ERA	TBF	IP	Hit	HR	SO	BB	HBP	3 Yr	F\$
12	8	3.79	759	184	174	18	164	50	6	0.12	\$18

After a tough first year in the AL, Beckett adjusted nicely and performed even better than his years in the NL indicated he should. In addition to having excellent stuff and a nice repertoire of pitches, Beckett is one of the few pitchers who seem to have the ability to step up and pitch their best in the most important games. As long as he can stay healthy, he should be one of the better pitchers in the game for quite some time.

Clay Buchholz (Starting Pitcher)

W	L	ERA	TBF	IP	Hit	HR	SO	BB	HBP	3 Yr	F\$
8	7	4.71	594	137	136	16	128	57	6	-0.12	\$1

Buchholz grabbed everybody's attention by throwing a no-hitter in his second major league start, but he didn't come out of nowhere. He has a devastating curveball and is easily Boston's best under-25 pitcher. His control deteriorated in his major league stint (he walked only 35 in 125 minor league innings and then walked 10 in 23 innings in the majors), but he was so hard to hit that it didn't matter.

Manny Delcarmen (Relief Pitcher)

W	L	ERA	TBF	IP	Hit	HR	SO	BB	HBP	3 Yr	F\$
4	4	4.14	302	70	67	5	62	31	3	-0.04	\$1

Delcarmen throws very hard, and last year he turned hard pitches into hard pitches to hit. He still struggles with his control, but his ability to blow batters away earned him the chance to pitch more important innings as the season went along. He's unlikely to continue to allow quite so few hits, but he should still be a dependable reliever.

Brendan Donnelly (Relief Pitcher)

W	L	ERA	TBF	IP	Hit	HR	SO	BB	HBP	F\$
3	2	4.02	198	47	45	4	35	17	2	\$1

Donnelly was pitching well for the Red Sox before suffering an injury that required Tommy John surgery. With his age (36), the fact that he was mentioned in the Mitchell report in December and the fact that he won't be able to pitch again until at least August (by which time he'll be 37), it's entirely possible that he doesn't have much of a career left. If he can maintain his solid control and not lose much off his stuff, however, somebody will take a shot on him.