

MLB - 2010 Fantasy Baseball Tampa Bay Rays Team Preview

Written by Buck Davidson

Monday, 25 January 2010 13:00 - Last Updated Monday, 25 January 2010 13:55

We have many great articles planned leading up to the 2010 Fantasy Baseball season including sleepers, busts, rookies, strategy, full player rankings and projections all wrapped up into a nifty draft kit to help you win your league next year. Stay tuned for more, but for now, here's a team preview for you.

Ask a question about your fantasy team in our [FORUM](#) . Leave a comment about this article down below.

2009 RECORD: 84-78, 3rd in AL East

The Rays failed to defend their AL pennant last season, but Tampa Bay fans took heart in the fact that their team posted the second-best record in franchise history. The team also moved to lock up some of its young talent, though work remains to be done in that regard. Tampa Bay was and is one of baseball's more entertaining teams to watch, and it's indeed a pity that so few fans took the time to cheer on the team in person last year. Perhaps another season of winning baseball will serve to woo some additional fans to St. Petersburg, and the pieces are certainly in place for that to happen. It's an uphill struggle against big spenders like the Yankees and Red Sox, but perhaps the 2010 Rays will once again be The Little Team That Could -- and Did.

Stat table note: The better the ranking number, the better the stat, in all categories. For example, for the SO cat for hitting, a #2 ranking means that the team tallied the second fewest strikeouts. For the BB and SB cats for pitching, the #1 teams allowed the fewest bases on balls and steals.

Hitting Stats	BA	R	HR	BB
199	263	803		
642				
1229				
194				
AL	8			
5				
5				
3				

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13

1

MLB

11T

7

6

4

26

1

Pitching

BAA

ERA

HR

BB

Stats

257

4.33

183

515

1125

90

AL

3

6

11T

3

5

4

MLB

8T

15

24T

5

15

12

LINE-UP

1. Bartlett, Jason SS
2. Crawford, Carl LF
3. Longoria, Evan 3B
4. Pena, Carlos 1B
5. Zobrist, Ben 2B
6. Upton, B.J. CF
7. Burrell, Pat DH
8. Joyce, Matt RF
9. Navarro, Dioner C

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The Rays offense was marginally better in 2009 than in their pennant-winning '08 season. Some poor pitching was what spelled doom for the defending AL champs. **Bartlett** posted career highs in just about every offensive category, but some doubt lingers as to whether he can replicate those fine numbers in 2010.

Crawford

was, well, Carl Crawford, again -- swiping 60 bases and smacking 15 homers while batting .305.

Longoria

is a fantasy stud that warrants late-first/early-second round draft status.

Pena

missed most of September but still managed 39 bombs and 100 RBIs -- but he'll have to boost that ugly .227 average to win fantasy favor this year.

Zobrist

blew up like no one imagined he could, but like Bartlett, there's a chance it was all a mirage. Speaking of which, no one's sure which

B.J. Upton

will show up this year, but whichever version makes it in is a virtual lock for 40-plus steals. He could be playing for a big free agent deal, so the upside is there.

Burrell

looked lost and rather elderly last season, while

Joyce

and platoon-mate

Gabe Kapler

are placeholders until uber-prospect

Desmond Jennings

is ready to roll -- which could be as early as this season. Willy Aybar is a decent bench player that can fill in at 1B, 2B, 3B, and DH, which is helpful late in deep AL-only leagues.

Shoppach

is a decent AL-only C2 that can possibly get you 10 HRs.

STARTING ROTATION

1. Shields, James RHP
2. Garza, Matt RHP
3. Price, David, LHP
4. Niemann, Jeff RHP
5. Davis, Wade RHP
6. Sonnanstine, Andy RHP
7. Hellickson, Jeremy RHP

The Rays staff went from magnificent in 2008 to mediocre in '09, but there's reason to believe

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that this group will bounce back in 2010. **Shields** was well above his career norms, but he was just too good in '07 and '08 to think that his '09 numbers will repeat this year.

Garza

has wicked stuff, but he pitched in terrible luck last year, winning just eight games despite a 3.95 ERA and .233 BAA. He's a great buy-low candidate. The much-hyped

Price

had a rocky start, but he recovered nicely in the second half. That .241 BAA should tell you something.

Niemann

lacks overpowering stuff, but his 13 wins led the team.

Davis

showed a bit of his stuff late in the season, notching 36 Ks in 36.1 IP, along with a solid 3.72 ERA. It was no accident -- this kid is good.

Sonnanstine

figures to split the season between AAA and MLB, while Hellickson (who is reckoned to have a shot at the rotation in 2011) should start at AAA.

BULLPEN

1. Soriano, Rafael RHP
2. Wheeler, Dan RHP
3. Balfour, Grant RHP
4. Howell, J.P. LHP
5. Cormier, Lance RHP
6. Choate, Randy LHP
7. Thayer, Dale RHP

The bullpen took a quantum leap backward in 2009, mainly due to the lack of an established closer. That all changed when the Rays traded for **Soriano**, who converted 27 of his 31 save chances for Atlanta last season. If he can stay healthy, Soriano should be in line for 35-plus saves and could be a great value on fantasy draft day.

Wheeler

figures to have the eighth inning, though Rays manager Joe Maddon isn't afraid to juggle his relievers as the situation dictates.

Howell

and

Balfour

will also be in the mix, and both should account for a fair number of holds.

Cormier

should reprise his role as the long relief and mop-up man, while

Choate

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and

Thayer

should battle it out for one of the final roster spots.

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