Top 10 Starting Pitchers in 2026

Chris Callender

December 10, 2025

1 Abstract

Welcome to the "Top 10 Players in MLB" Series, where we examine the top 10 players at each position. This idea is inspired by "MLB's Top 10 Right Now." Let's start this series with starting pitchers.
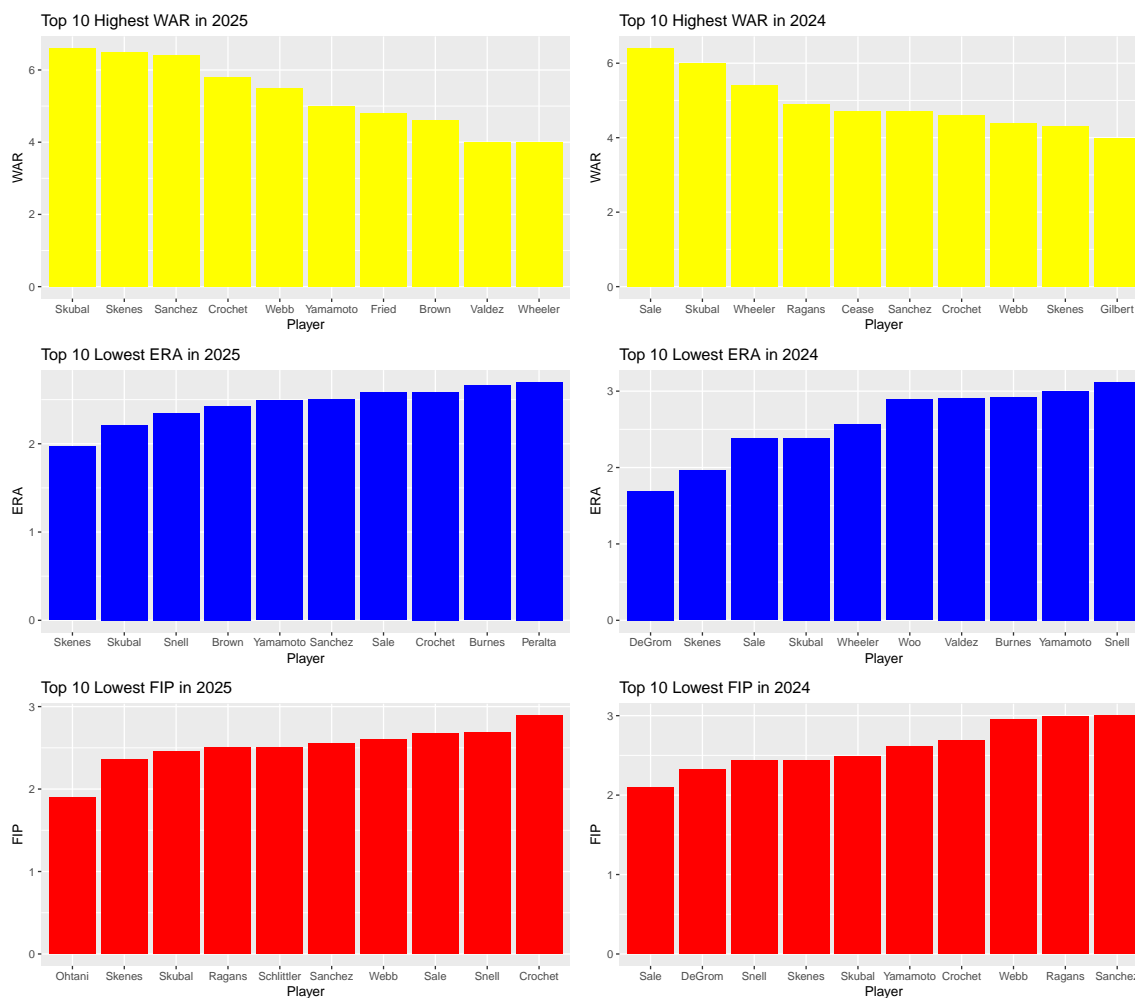
2 Introduction

Top 10 SP in 2026:

1. Paul Skenes
2. Tarik Skubal
3. Garrett Crochet
4. Cristopher Sanchez
5. Gerrit Cole
6. Logan Webb
7. Max Fried
8. Chris Sale
9. Jacob Degrom
10. Zack Wheeler

3   Explanation

Note: For WAR, we will use fWAR, unless it specifically states bWAR.

Let's take a look at some graphs showing the WAR, ERA, and FIP leaders the past two seasons. We gathered data from some of the best pitchers in MLB, and just looked at those players. So it is possible for the top 10 players in the graphs to not actually be the top 10 overall, since we are only looking at about 30 players, not the entire MLB.

3.1 Skenes and Skubal

Skenes and Skubal are the easy picks for numbers 1 and 2. Many people would put Skubal number 1, but I went with Skenes because he is younger, and is already dominating at 23 years old. Skenes led the MLB in ERA and FIP in 2025, and was only .1 behind Skubal for WAR. I think he has a very high ceiling with even more room for improvement. However, I do think putting Skubal at number 1 is a very good choice, as well, since he has led the AL in WAR, ERA, and FIP the past two seasons. He also has over 200 strikeouts in both of those seasons. You really can't go wrong either way.

3.2 Crochet

Crochet had by far the best season of his career in 2025, finishing second in Cy Young voting, behind Skubal. He had a 2.59 ERA, 2.89 FIP, and 5.8 WAR. I expect Crochet to have another excellent season, being the ace the Red Sox, a playoff-contending team, needs.

3.3 Sanchez

Sanchez finished second in Cy Young voting in 2025, behind Skenes, and led all pitchers in bWAR. He also had a 2.50 ERA and 2.55 FIP. You may not think of him as a top pitcher, like Skenes or Skubal, but he definitely deserves to be high on this list.

3.4 Cole

This may be a surprising pick to some, but I think when Cole returns from Tommy John surgery, probably in May or June, he will once again be one of the best pitchers in baseball. He had arguably the best season of his career in 2023, winning his first Cy Young Award. He was not nearly as effective in 2024, but this may have been due to his injury, which caused him to miss the entire 2025 season. We may see something similar to Verlander in 2022.

3.5 Webb

Webb is an extremely consistent pitcher who pitches many innings each season. You can count on Webb to pitch 30 games and 200 innings each season, which he has done the past 3 seasons. He was in the top 10 in Cy Young voting in all 3 of those

seasons, and in the top 4 twice. He may not be as good as some other pitchers in baseball, but he is very reliable, and in my opinion, very underrated.

3.6 Fried

Fried had a 2.86 ERA, 3.07 FIP, and 4.8 WAR in 2025. Fried has been a very good starter his entire career with a 3.03 ERA and a 3.25 FIP. He had one of his best seasons with the Yankees in 2025, and I expect him to have another great season in 2026.

3.7 Sale

Sale has been great with the Braves, winning a Cy Young in 2024. He has dealt with injuries recently, missing the majority of the 2021 and 2022 seasons. His 2.58 ERA, 2.67 FIP, and 3.6 WAR in 2025 were good, and I expect Sale to have a solid 2026 season.

3.8 Degrom

Degrom was one of the best pitchers of all time earlier in his career. However, he has consistently dealt with injuries and shortened seasons. He threw 172.2 innings in 2025, his first season with over 100 innings pitched since 2019. He has been very good, even during those shortened seasons, posting a 2.45 ERA and 2.52 FIP since 2020, along with 12.7 WAR in 77 starts. If Degrom can stay healthy, he is easily a top 10 pitcher.

3.9 Wheeler

Despite suffering a season ending injury in August 2025, Wheeler is expected to be ready for the 2026 season. Despite the shortened season, he was very good with a 2.71 ERA, 3.00 FIP, and 4.0 WAR. He has been consistent throughout his career with a sub 3 ERA in 5 of his last 6 seasons.

4 Conclusion

This was a very difficult list to make. There are so many great pitchers in baseball, and it is hard to pick just 10. Let's also include some honorable mentions. These are some great pitchers, and could be included in some lists, but I decided to leave

them out of this list.

Honorable Mentions (in alphabetical order):

- Dylan Cease

- Logan Gilbert

- Shohei Ohtani

- Cole Ragans

- Carlos Rodon

- Cam Schlittler

- Yoshinobu Yamamoto

These honorable mentions are in alphabetical order and are not ranked by quality.

Schlittler may be a surprising pick here, but he was excellent last season, albeit a small sample size. He has an excellent fastball and I think Schlittler could have a breakout season next year.

5 Appendix

Here is the complete data table. It shows data from the 2024 and 2025 seasons, as well as projections for the 2026 season.

Player	Season	Team	Level	Age	W	L	SV	G	GS	IP	K/9	BB/9	HR/9	BABIP	LOB%	GB%	HR/FB	vFA	ERA	xERA	FIP	xFIP	WAR
Brown	2024	HOU	MLB	25	11	9	0	31	30	170	9.48	3.18	0.95	0.307	0.766	0.489	0.127	96.1	3.49	3.3	3.58	3.47	3.2
Brown	2025	HOU	MLB	26	12	9	0	31	31	185.1	10	2.77	0.83	0.262	0.82	0.481	0.114	96.6	2.43	3.17	3.14	3.19	4.6
Brown	2026	FGDC	PROJ	27	12	10	0	31	31	184	9.78	2.97	1.02	0.3	0.736	NA	NA	NA	3.63	NA	3.54	NA	3.6
Burnes	2024	BAL	MLB	29	15	9	0	32	32	194.1	8.38	2.22	1.02	0.269	0.755	0.482	0.116	NA	2.92	3.33	3.55	3.55	3.8
Burnes	2025	ARI	MLB	30	3	2	0	11	11	64.1	8.81	3.64	0.98	0.253	0.806	0.503	0.14	NA	2.66	3.83	3.94	3.73	0.7
Burnes	2026	FGDC	PROJ	31	3	3	0	8	8	47	8.92	2.81	0.98	0.307	0.719	NA	NA	NA	3.86	NA	3.61	NA	0.7
Cease	2024	SDP	MLB	28	14	11	0	33	33	189.1	10.65	3.09	0.86	0.263	0.694	0.398	0.091	96.9	3.47	3.31	3.1	3.44	4.7
Cease	2025	SDP	MLB	29	8	12	0	32	32	168	11.52	3.8	1.13	0.32	0.69	0.366	0.119	97.1	4.55	3.46	3.56	3.56	3.4
Cease	2026	FGDC	PROJ	30	12	10	0	32	32	187	10.52	3.29	1.09	0.289	0.749	NA	NA	NA	3.6	NA	3.57	NA	3.8
Cole	2023	NYY	MLB	32	15	4	0	33	33	209	9.56	2.07	0.86	0.261	0.804	0.396	0.094	96.8	2.63	3.46	3.16	3.6	5.3
Cole	2024	NYY	MLB	33	8	5	0	17	17	95	9.38	1.04	0.73	0.273	0.768	0.387	0.097	95.9	3.41	3.6	3.69	3.99	1.8
Cole	2026	FGDC	PROJ	35	8	8	0	23	23	131	9.16	2.64	1.35	0.287	0.735	NA	NA	NA	4	NA	4.04	NA	1.9
Crochet	2024	CHW	MLB	25	6	12	0	32	32	146	12.88	2.03	1.11	0.318	0.736	0.451	0.144	97.3	3.58	2.84	2.69	2.38	4.6
Crochet	2025	BOS	MLB	26	18	5	0	32	32	205.1	11.18	2.05	0.29	0.843	0.483	0.141	96.5	2.59	2.91	2.89	2.64	5.8
Crochet	2026	FGDC	PROJ	27	14	9	0	32	32	195	11.14	2.32	0.91	0.3	0.759	NA	NA	NA	3.01	NA	2.84	NA	5.7
DeGrom	2024	TEX	MLB	36	0	0	0	3	3	10.2	11.81	0.84	0.84	0.37	0.948	0.37	0.083	97.7	1.69	2.51	2.32	2.8	0.4
DeGrom	2025	TEX	MLB	37	12	8	0	30	30	172.2	9.64	1.93	1.36	0.23	0.836	0.378	0.138	97.6	2.97	3.36	3.64	3.37	3.4
DeGrom	2026	FGDC	PROJ	38	12	10	0	31	31	185	10.45	2.02	1.2	0.288	0.747	NA	NA	NA	3.46	NA	3.32	NA	4.3
Fried	2024	ATL	MLB	30	11	10	0	29	29	174.1	8.57	2.94	0.67	0.282	0.725	0.588	0.117	94.2	3.25	3.69	3.33	3.33	3.4
Fried	2025	NYY	MLB	31	19	5	0	32	32	195.1	8.71	2.35	0.65	0.279	0.74	0.524	0.087	95.8	2.86	3.4	3.07	3.41	4.8
Fried	2026	FGDC	PROJ	32	13	9	0	31	31	189	8.5	2.59	0.9	0.299	0.75	NA	NA	NA	3.34	NA	3.52	NA	3.6
Gilbert	2024	SEA	MLB	27	9	12	0	33	33	208.2	9.49	1.6	1.12	0.236	0.695	0.451	0.129	96.8	3.23	3.13	3.27	3.11	4
Gilbert	2025	SEA	MLB	28	6	6	0	25	25	131	11.89	2.13	1.37	0.276	0.781	0.389	0.148	95.5	3.44	3.06	3.35	2.95	2.6
Gilbert	2026	FGDC	PROJ	29	11	9	0	29	29	166	9.83	2.1	1.13	0.286	0.748	NA	NA	NA	3.39	NA	3.39	NA	3.2
Ohtani	2023	LAA	MLB	28	10	5	0	23	23	132	11.39	3.75	1.23	0.239	0.803	0.455	0.167	96.7	3.14	3.81	4	3.58	2.3
Ohtani	2025	LAD	MLB	30	1	1	0	14	14	47	11.87	1.72	0.57	0.325	0.759	0.414	0.071	98.2	2.87	2.49	1.9	2.45	1.9
Ohtani	2026	FGDC	PROJ	31	9	7	0	24	24	125	10.48	2.79	1.13	0.29	0.754	NA	NA	NA	3.45	NA	3.48	NA	2.8
Peralta	2024	MIL	MLB	28	11	9	0	32	32	173.2	10.36	3.52	1.35	0.278	0.796	0.367	0.131	94.4	3.68	3.84	4.16	3.93	2.3
Peralta	2025	MIL	MLB	29	17	6	0	33	33	176.2	10.39	3.36	1.07	0.243	0.855	0.373	0.104	94.7	2.7	3.47	3.64	3.85	3.6
Peralta	2026	FGDC	PROJ	30	11	10	0	31	31	178	10.12	3.32	1.26	0.285	0.74	NA	NA	NA	3.91	NA	3.95	NA	2.9
Ragans	2024	KCR	MLB	26	11	9	0	32	32	186.1	10.77	3.24	0.72	0.29	0.747	0.407	0.081	95.5	3.14	3.31	2.99	3.46	4.9
Ragans	2025	KCR	MLB	27	3	3	0	13	13	61.2	14.3	2.92	1.02	0.354	0.644	0.368	0.123	95.6	4.67	2.68	2.5	2.45	2.1
Ragans	2026	FGDC	PROJ	28	12	9	0	29	29	172	11.01	3.25	0.93	0.292	0.761	NA	NA	NA	3.22	NA	3.22	NA	4.2
Rodon	2024	NYY	MLB	31	16	9	0	32	32	175	10.03	2.93	1.59	0.284	0.792	0.338	0.134	95.4	3.96	4.12	4.39	4.09	1.6
Rodon	2025	NYY	MLB	32	18	9	0	33	33	195.1	9.35	3.36	1.01	0.228	0.764	0.435	0.111	94.1	3.09	3.31	3.78	3.89	3.2
Rodon	2026	FGDC	PROJ	33	10	9	0	28	28	162	9.71	3.27	1.29	0.287	0.736	NA	NA	NA	4.03	NA	4.06	NA	2.2
Sale	2024	ATL	MLB	35	18	3	0	29	29	177.2	11.4	1.98	0.46	0.314	0.798	0.448	0.063	94.9	2.38	2.79	2.09	2.64	6.4
Sale	2025	ATL	MLB	36	7	5	0	21	20	125.2	11.82	2.29	0.79	0.313	0.826	0.39	0.093	94.9	2.58	2.83	2.67	2.98	3.6
Sale	2026	FGDC	PROJ	37	12	8	0	28	28	169	10.98	2.36	0.97	0.298	0.75	NA	NA	NA	3.19	NA	3.03	NA	4.1
Sanchez	2024	PHI	MLB	27	11	9	0	31	31	181.2	7.58	2.18	0.54	0.313	0.712	0.574	0.093	NA	3.32	3.55	3	3.19	4.7
Sanchez	2025	PHI	MLB	28	13	5	0	32	32	202	9.45	1.96	0.53	0.298	0.798	0.583	0.092	NA	2.5	3.01	2.55	2.77	6.4
Sanchez	2026	FGDC	PROJ	29	13	10	0	32	32	201	8.74	2.27	0.8	0.303	0.748	NA	NA	NA	3.16	NA	3.21	NA	4.8
Schlittler	2025	NYY	MiLB	24	6	6	0	15	14	76.2	11.62	3.05	0.47	0.35	0.724	0.478	0.083	NA	2.82	NA	2.51	2.67	NA
Schlittler	2025	NYY	MLB	24	4	3	0	14	14	73	10.36	3.82	0.99	0.284	0.845	0.364	0.116	97.8	2.96	4.11	3.77	3.77	1.3
Schlittler	2026	FGDC	PROJ	25	9	9	0	26	26	148	8.57	3.45	1.18	0.29	0.729	NA	NA	NA	4.07	NA	4.22	NA	1.8
Skenes	2024	PIT	MLB	22	11	3	0	23	23	133	11.5	2.17	0.68	0.284	0.856	0.513	0.106	98.9	1.96	2.52	2.44	2.54	4.3
Skenes	2025	PIT	MLB	23	10	10	0	32	32	187.2	10.36	2.01	0.53	0.273	0.824	0.443	0.063	98.2	1.97	2.63	2.36	3.03	6.5
Skenes	2026	FGDC	PROJ	24	13	10	0	32	32	196	10.99	2.39	0.81	0.297	0.759	NA	NA	NA	2.91	NA	2.77	NA	5.8
Skubal	2024	DET	MLB	27	18	4	0	31	31	192	10.69	1.64	0.7	0.273	0.8	0.457	0.088	97	2.39	2.72	2.49	2.83	6
Skubal	2025	DET	MLB	28	13	6	0	31	31	195.1	11.1	1.52	0.83	0.273	0.806	0.41	0.101	97.7	2.21	2.72	2.45	2.66	6.6
Skubal	2026	FGDC	PROJ	29	14	9	0	32	32	202	10.92	1.96	0.92	0.289	0.772	NA	NA	NA	2.81	NA	2.79	NA	5.9
Snell	2024	SFG	MLB	31	5	3	0	20	20	104	12.55	3.81	0.52	0.266	0.709	0.42	0.065	96.1	3.12	2.55	2.43	3.01	3.1
Snell	2025	LAD	MLB	32	5	4	0	11	11	61.1	10.57	3.82	0.44	0.314	0.769	0.487	0.073	95.1	2.35	3.23	2.69	3.09	1.9
Snell	2026	FGDC	PROJ	33	12	8	0	29	29	173	11.01	3.94	1.04	0.291	0.757	NA	NA	NA	3.53	NA	3.58	NA	3.5
Valdez	2024	HOU	MLB	30	15	7	0	28	28	176.1	8.63	2.81	0.66	0.276	0.771	0.606	0.14	95.9	2.91	3.41	3.25	3.08	3.7
Valdez	2025	HOU	MLB	31	13	11	0	31	31	192	8.77	3.19	0.7	0.297	0.729	0.586	0.123	95.4	3.66	3.74	3.37	3.34	4
Valdez	2026	FGDC	PROJ	32	12	10	0	31	31	190	8.44	2.96	0.76	0.31	0.733	NA	NA	NA	3.47	NA	3.47	NA	3.7
Webb	2024	SFG	MLB	27	13	10	0	33	33	204.2	7.56	2.2	0.48	0.315	0.717	0.568	0.079	92.8	3.47	4.3	2.95	3.28	4.4
Webb	2025	SFG	MLB	28	15	11	0	34	34	207	9.74	2	0.61	0.346	0.743	0.532	0.099	92.7	3.22	3.58	2.6	2.78	5.5
Webb	2026	FGDC	PROJ	29	13	11	0	32	32	202	8.45	2.12	0.76	0.309	0.731	NA	NA	NA	3.32	NA	3.15	NA	4.1
Wheeler	2024	PHI	MLB	34	16	7	0	32	32	200	10.08	2.34	0.9	0.246	0.801	0.426	0.103	95.5	2.57	2.85	3.13	3.3	5.4
Wheeler	2025	PHI	MLB	35	10	5	0	24	24	149.2	11.73	1.98	1.14	0.267	0.824	0.399	0.142	96	2.71	2.48	3	2.73	4
Wheeler	2026	FGDC	PROJ	36	8	6	0	21	21	126	10.39	2.25	1.04	0.289	0.756	NA	NA	NA	3.2	NA	3.21	NA	3
Woo	2024	SEA	MLB	24	9	3	0	22	22	121.1	7.49	0.96	1.04	0.24	0.768	0.406	0.094	95	2.89	2.71	3.4	3.75	2.2
Woo	2025	SEA	MLB	25	15	7	0	30	30	186.2	9.55	1.74	1.25	0.238	0.804	0.408	0.128	95.7	2.94	3.06	3.47	3.33	3.6
Woo	2026	FGDC	PROJ	26	12	11	0	32	32	198	9.03	2.04	1.21	0.284	0.741	NA	NA	NA	3.59	NA	3.67	NA	3.3
Yamamoto	2024	LAD	MLB	25	7	2	0	18	18	90	10.5	2.2	0.7	0.305	0.757	0.479	0.093	95.6	3	3.43	2.61	2.86	2.9
Yamamoto	2025	LAD	MLB	26	12	8	0	30	30	173.2	10.42	3.06	0.73	0.243	0.785	0.528	0.108	95.3	2.49	2.72	2.94	3.05	5
Yamamoto	2026	FGDC	PROJ	27	11	8	0	28	28	161	9.46	2.75	0.97	0.299	0.745	NA	NA	NA	3.44	NA	3.45	NA	3.6