

Every year, one question always arises: Will we have enough impact players for a Rookie of the Year award?

But every year, there ends up being someone that rises to the top, whether we knew about them or not. The Athletics have provided us with some great talent the past couple of years in Chris Vorbeck and Evan Kuo, guys that were relatively unknown outside their franchise. The crossover players from MOWiff have provided other franchises with some talent that has lended itself to award winners as well with the Astros and Rockies.

Team Turnover is the key. The Astros of old, consistently had to find new talent before finding a core. The Rockies had to fill spots due to retirement and COVID. The former Royals franchise had to fill a fourth spot every single year down the stretch. No matter what the reason was, there has always been a chance for someone fresh to step up and make an impact.

Heading into Season 21 though, this could be the first year where we see minimal to zero changes to rosters. We have given out a Rookie of the Year award for 19 years in a row, and this could very well be the first year since Season 1 where we put that trophy away during the ceremony on Memorial Day.

In this Commissioner's opinion though, new blood is always a good thing. Even having returning blood like a Chris Neumann, giving that spark to your team's likability and drinking debauchery efforts is worth something in this unique weekend league. So, I have compiled a list of four guys that I think could fit in and find a spot on a roster, and make an impact for their team in Season 21. Maybe this sparks a franchise to think about it, and give a chance to improve their roster in some way during Memorial Day Weekend, 2023.

## **1. Trent Steffes**

Trent is the former Franchise Captain of the SWBL Diamondbax (2017-2019), winning the 2019 award for Franchise of the Year, and 2017 National Wiffle Fun Team of the Year. Trent is a committee member to the two most well known wiffleball tournaments, Commissioner of the MNWA, and captain of the HRL Mariners in Minnesota. He is widely regarded as one of the most well known wiffers in the country, and best friend to all who encounter him. One of the nicest guys you will meet, Trent would add immense personality to any franchise in the SWBL, not to mention, probably make you some killer jerseys to boot. Trent was, and still is committed to the SWBL, coming down injured in 2021 to watch his brother play with the Royals, and has so many great relationships with members of the league. Even if playing time is limited, this man will be a devoted member of your franchise. If a team needs pitching help, Trent has refined his game as a medium style pitcher, and is willing to be a PO for a franchise in 2023. Or if a left-handed hitter is what you seek, he hit 6 bombs in 2018 in 34 AB on a weak roster for the DBax, and has only gotten better since then.

### Great Fits for Trent in 2023:

Astros – Cam Smith and Jim Stout are besties with Trent, and their chemistry on and off the field would be undeniable. Giving one of Cam's starts to Trent on the mound wouldn't be a bad thing either as Cam can focus more on the offensive side to finally have his breakout moment.

Expos – Trent’s experience would have an immediate impact on this team, and would fall right into the Expos antics off the field. He could help eat innings and give this team a new look on the mound who saw both franchise starters finish above 10.00 in ERA, plus could provide the clutch offensive spark needed, having more recent competitive wiffleball ABs than anyone else on this squad.

White Sox – The Sox need pitching, and I am not sure they will find it from current SWBL players in free agency. Trent gives them a different look on the mound and wouldn’t need to take any at bats from the rest of the squad. Off the field, Trent and Jackson are two peas in a pod and their mojo could carry them to their first playoff win.

Yankees – I would’ve said the Orioles with the Sam and Brett connection, but with a deep rotation already, and John picking up the extra at bats when the time is right, I switched to the Yanks who only have a roster of 4. Trent would jump right in and meld into this team’s personality, being the ultimate teammate and cheerleader for the big four defending champs. And gives them a just in case guy on the mound if they want to hide Gus a bit from playoff contending teams.

*Prediction: Astros*

*Wild Card: White Sox*

*Probability of 2023 Contract: 55.420%*

## **2. Sam Eichenlaub**

Newly appointed MOWiff front office member, and solid rookie on an unlucky roster in 2022, Eichenlaub should be the next Sam in the league. He is ready to prove himself and was a great addition to the 2022 Summer League Champs, Pesky Pine Trees. Sam is also one of those guys that will have a positive effect on any franchise with his sparkling personality. He will be any team’s top cheerleader and would be willing to help out the league in any way throughout the weekend. Not to mention, he is a great two way player, hitting and pitching very well in his first taste of Summer League play at The Blur, with experience also in MOWiff and Yellowbatz.

### Great Fits for Sam in 2023:

Rockies – Sam and Jason Worstenholm are great friends, and as long as Jason returns in 2023 to the Rockies, this could be that dynamic duo the franchise is missing to get them back to playoff contention. Sam also adds a reliable arm that they desperately need next season.

Expos – Sam was Jimmy Nelson’s teammate on the Empire in MOWiff and they were a great one two punch before Jimmy had to end his run with the fast pitch team. If the Expos draft Sam, they would have a player who could make an immediate impact on the field for the 1-9 squad, and would continue their amazing banter off the field as well.

Athletics – Injured Josh Rogers should hopefully get a chance to come back to the mound for the Athletics in 2023, as he could really be an impact arm for any franchise. Josh was Sam’s captain in MOWiff and they have a great relationship. If Josh can’t pitch a full season’s worth of innings, Sam could provide them that extra support on the mound, plus could be an impact bat if called upon.

Marlins – Sam would fall right into the reigning Franchise of the Year mentality. A team guy first, he would be a huge supporter of the fish. He would get the least amount of playing time probably at first, but seeing the impact Jordan made on this franchise, Sam could very well be their number four hitter leading to another playoff berth.

*Prediction: Rockies*

*Wild Card: Expos*

*Probability of 2023 Contract: 68.99%*

### **3. Ryan Brown**

The 2022 MOWiff Batting Champ can swing it. Ryan was also just named #89 on the Drop 100 List, featuring the best fast pitch wiffleball players in the world. A former wiffle commissioner on the East Coast, the now Arkansas native is ready to travel up for a full season at The Blur. Ryan was a member of the Pesky Pine Trees in Summer League 2021, and was a great fielder with lefty pop. Undrafted in 2022, Ryan is hoping his MOWiff success and connections he has made get him a roster spot for Season 21.

#### Great Fits for Ryan in 2023:

Rockies – The Rockies struggled at the plate in 2022, and Ryan Brown could be a great addition from the left side. With Grant returning, plus Adam and Ryan, that would give them 3 lefty hitters, guaranteeing them to have at least one in the lineup per game. Ryan would for sure check off the Rockies need for a power bat heading into Season 21.

Expos – Ryan’s personality fits very well with this team, and would be a great teammate for the Spos. Not to mention he instantly becomes their best hitter and fielder on the squad. If the Expos were looking to improve upon 1-9, they should seriously consider drafting Ryan with the first overall pick.

Twins – The Twins don’t need to add any pieces this offseason, but Spencer Bogad has seen first hand what Ryan can do with a bat, and truly believes he has the talent to help any lineup in the league. If the Twins wanted some competition in their order, Ryan could push everyone to make them better.

*Prediction: Rockies*

*Wild Card: Expos*

*Probability of 2023 Contract: 50%*

### **4. Ryan O’Rear**

The league always needs another doctor at The Blur right? The traveling Physical Therapist has ties to Missouri Wiffleball with the former Jackson Wiffleball League, and played in MOWiff in 2022, finishing in the top 3 for the Rookie of the Year award. Ryan was also named #62 on the annual Drop 100 list. Ryan has an excellent knuckleball in the medium style, with a good slider as a secondary pitch, and would be a

great pitcher for any franchise. But, his bat could be the big game changer as he could easily win the Rookie of the Year if a team gave him the chance.

#### Great Fits for Ryan in 2023:

Astros – Cole was Ryan’s captain in MOWiff, and they know how good he can be in this style. Is Ryan the bat they need to get them back into playoff contention?

Rockies – I’ll put the Rockies on here again because they need pitching that bad. With Ryan and Chad, they could have two of the top 5 knuckleballs in the league on one squad.

White Sox – Ryan and Jackson were the two starters for the Mambas in MOWiff for 2022, and they could continue that success at The Blur in 2023. Plus, Ryan could be a relied upon bat if someone has trouble getting going or needs a breather.

Orioles – The Orioles roster is the oldest average age in the league. Maybe they sign the doc to help with health throughout the season and get them over the Championship hump. Plus if one of them gets injured, he could be that next reliable hitter that could still make them a top 2 team.

*Prediction: Undrafted*

*Wild Card: White Sox*

*Probability of 2023 Contract: 40%*

Are there many more players that could be added to a roster that we do or do not know about? Absolutely! But with the rumored lack of turnover from Season 20 to Season 21, I could also see none of these players added, or any others that register for 2023. It is great that this league doesn’t have so much turnover year after year, but you wish you could give chances to guys that really want to be a part of something that we all hold so special in our hearts. No matter what, I really hope if rookies or returners don’t make it onto a franchise in 2023, that they still come and hang out, get to know people, join Summer League, make connections, then soon find their way to a roster in the future. Before you know it, the division draw and draft will be upon us, and Season 21 will be just around the corner!