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MLB odds: Can anyone stop Houston in the American League West?

By [Jared Shlensky](#) | Last updated 2/15/23

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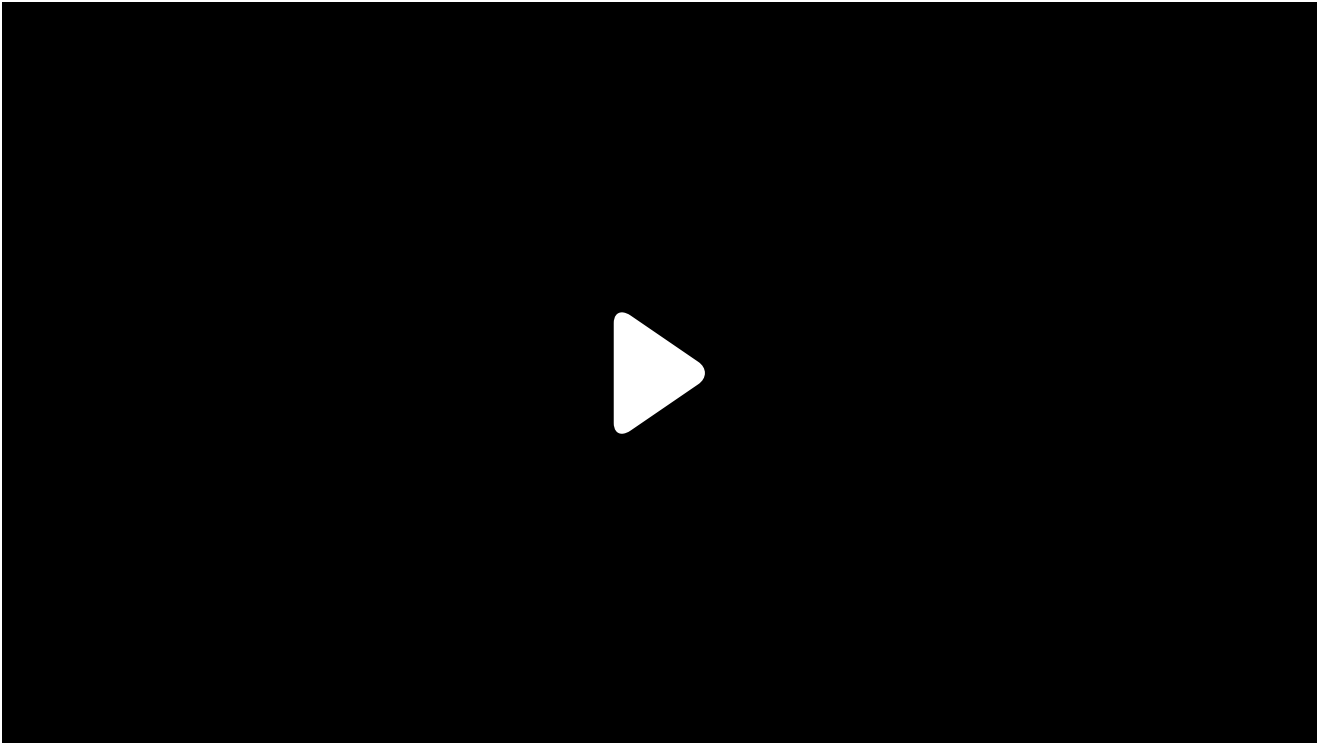
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There's no disputing the [Houston Astros](#) have dominated the American League West the

last six seasons, but will 2023 be the same? That's the million-dollar question. And as much as we'd love to say those cheaters — yeah, we still remember the whole sign-stealing scandal and haven't forgotten about it, and don't plan on getting over it — aren't the frontrunners to repeat as division champions for the third straight year, that would be a lie.

There's no denying the Rangers and Angels vastly improved their rosters this offseason via free agency and that the Mariners are no longer an under-the-radar ball club after winning 90 games and a playoff series last season, but the Astros are still the team to beat. Houston has won 95 games and the AL West in five of the last six seasons, so betting against them is just simply a bad idea.



Now do we expect the 'Stros to win the division by 16 games like they did a year ago? Absolutely not. But you'd be taking a huge risk if you choose to bet against them. Houston (-215) is once again a heavy favorite to win the AL West followed by Seattle (+320), Texas (+900), Los Angeles (+1200) and Oakland (+25000).

Despite the betting lines being so high on the remaining four teams to win the West, betting on anyone other than Houston is dangerous. We know little bit of money on the other four teams to win the division results in a high return, but don't do it. We're that confident Houston's American League dominance is far from over, and it starts with beating the teams in your division, which the Astros have had little difficulty doing since 2016.

Oakland Athletics

To win the Division: +25000

Win Total: Over 60 (-110)/Under 60 (-110)

Oakland was the worst team in the American League last year, and the sportsbooks don't

expect much from Billy Beane's Athletics again this season. Everywhere you look for the most part, Oakland is projected to finish with the worst record in the American, let alone the AL West. The A's have some young talent on their roster — Ramon Laureano, Cristian Pache, Nick Allen, etc. — but this team is far from ready to compete for the division title.

The A's pitching might catch some off guard, but Oakland stunk offensively last season — last in OPS (.627), slugging (.346), OBP (.281) and hits (1,147) — and we're not overly optimistic Oakland's offense will be much better this year. That's a problem, especially when you look at the rest of the division's lineups. The A's should be better than they were a year ago, but betting on Oakland to do anything meaningful — win the division or make the playoffs (+3500) — is just way too risky for our liking.

Los Angeles Angels

To win the Division: +1200

Win Total: Over 80 (-110)/Under 80 (-110)

Every year the Angels make moves in the offseason — free agent signings, trades, releases, etc. — and yet, every year Los Angeles misses out on the playoffs. This team has had high preseason expectations for the last couple of seasons, yet no results. Why should this year be any different?

We know Anthony Rendon is expected to be healthy for the start of the season and that Tyler Anderson should immediately be the Angels' No. 1 starter after having a career year with the Dodgers last season, but we're not taking the bait. This team has gotten very little offensive production outside of Mike Trout and Shohei Ohtani for a while now, and don't even get us started on the bullpen. To put it kindly, it's been below average for quite some time.

The starting rotation was a pleasant surprise, but every year something else goes south in a hurry, and we're not convinced this season will be any different. It's hard to believe Trout has yet to play in the playoffs, especially when you consider the most versatile player in baseball (Ohtani) is on his team, but the sad reality is there's been no consistency outside of those two for quite some time. Sorry, Angels fans, we don't see a playoff team here, let alone a .500 ball club.

Texas Rangers

To win the Division: +900

Win Total: Over 81.5 (-110)/Under 81.5 (-110)

Could Texas be MLB's biggest surprise like Seattle was last year. Maybe, maybe. The Rangers (+180) are still a longshot to make the playoffs, at least according to the sportsbooks, and to be honest, we're kind of surprised. Texas should give Seattle a run for second place in the West, and if this team stays healthy — specifically Jacob deGrom — the Rangers could

sneak up on some people.

Corey Seager and Marcus Semien need to have bounce back seasons, but if they do and Nathaniel Lowe and Adolis Garcia produce offensively like they did last season, this team should have no trouble scoring. Everyone knows deGrom is the best pitcher in baseball when he's on the mound, it's just a matter of whether or not he can consistently take the ball every fifth day. If he does, and Andrew Heaney and Nathan Eovaldi pitch well, this team should be OK.

The bullpen finished with the 12th-best ERA last season, and adding Ian Kennedy should only make the Rangers back end that much better. Replacing Matt Moore certainly won't be easy, but Kennedy, Joe Barlow, Jose Leclerc and Brock Burke are more than capable of picking up the slack in 2023.

The Rangers are still nowhere near as good as the Astros, but expect them to make the AL West more competitive than some may expect.

Seattle Mariners

To win the Division: +320

Win Total: Over 89 (-110)/Under 89 (-110)

Are the Mariners a one-year wonder? That's yet to be seen. Seattle went from postseason long shot a year ago, to a team that is projected to make the playoffs and finish right around 90 wins again. But they'll have to do it with a target on their back, and for some teams, that's not easy. Seattle is no longer an under-the-radar team. They've garnered the attention of Major League Baseball, and rightfully so.

Reigning American League Rookie of the Year award winner Julio Rodriguez will need to replicate a great 2022 season. And same goes for Eugenio Suarez, who hit 31 home runs last year. If Rodriguez can avoid the sophomore slump, and Suarez and catcher Cal Raleigh can continue to provide the thump in the middle of the order, Seattle should be ok offensively.

But Seattle didn't get to the postseason last year because of its offense, it was because of its pitching. Robbie Ray, Chris Flexen, Logan Gilbert and Luis Castillo all made 25+ starts and posted ERAs below four, and they'll need them to be just as good if this team is going to be in the playoffs year after year.

And as hard as it may to believe, the Mariners' bullpen was even better than its starting staff last year. Seattle posted the sixth-best bullpen ERA in 2022, and if the game was close past the sixth inning, chances were pretty darn high that the M's were going to come away with a win. Paul Sewald, Penn Murfee, Andres Munoz and Erik Swanson each made 55+ appearances and finished with an ERA under three. That's pretty damn good, and if all four are on the ball again in 2023, look out.

Seattle is the best team in this division outside of Houston, but they've still got a long way to go to get to the mountain top. We could see the Mariners making a legit run at a division title in 2024 or 2025, but the AL West still runs through Houston.

Houston Astros

To win the Division: -215

Win Total: Over 96.5 (-110)/Under 96.5 (-110)

What is there really to say about the Astros? They've unequivocally been the best team in baseball since 2017. Two World Series titles, four World Series appearances, five Division titles, six straight ALCS appearances and 95+ wins in five of the last six seasons.

Yeah, we know you don't want to hear it, but it's true. Doesn't matter who's managing this club or serving as the team's General Manager. These guys just keep on producing, year after year. And guess what? We don't see that changing anytime soon.

This team's biggest challenge will be replacing reigning AL Cy Young award winner in Justin Verlander. However, if the 2022 postseason taught us anything, it's that Cristian Javier and Framber Valdez are more than ready. Valdez set an MLB record last year with 25 consecutive quality starts, and Javier allowed just one earned run and two hits over 12.2 innings in the postseason. They're more than capable of anchoring the top of the rotation, followed by Jose Uriquidy, Lance McCullers Jr. and Luis Garcia.

As for the bullpen, that was arguably Houston's biggest concern entering the 2022 postseason, but once the playoffs started, it was its biggest strength. 'Stros relievers posted a 0.83 ERA and 0.75 WHIP, held opponents to a .126 batting average and struck out 70 hitters over 54.1 innings in the postseason. Five different pitchers didn't allow a run out of the bullpen in the playoffs, and no matter who was pitching, strikeouts were no problem.

And we already knew the Astros could hit. Jose Altuve, Kyle Tucker, Alex Bregman, Yordan Alvarez, they're all elite hitters. And now 2020 AL MVP Jose Abreu is on the team, plus a healthy Michael Brantley. Yeah, scoring runs and hitting for power, that won't be a problem for Houston.

No matter how you look at it, Houston is the team to beat in the AL West. Even putting money on Houston to repeat as American League (+260) or World Series (+600) champs is a good bet, too.

Team to win AL West: Houston Astros (-215 odds)

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Jacob deGrom's latest injury confirms Mets made right decision

Spring training is just getting under way, and Jacob deGrom is already injured. After a recent bullpen session, deGrom told the Rangers medical staff that he had "tightness" in his right side, per the Dallas Morning News. This is just the latest chapter in deGrom's long injury history. Over the past three seasons, the right-handed ace pitched in only 38 games for the New York Mets because of various

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Packers 'have all but moved on' from Aaron Rodgers?

There's a brand-new indication that the Green Bay Packers will look to trade quarterback Aaron Rodgers this offseason. NFL reporter Bob McGinn of Go Long said on Friday that the Packers "have all but moved on from" Rodgers. McGinn added that Green Bay is now "more confident than ever to start Jordan Love." McGinn isn't the first person to offer such a take. On Jan. 29, ESPN NFL insider Adam

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Kevin Durant explains why he asked for a trade from Brooklyn, and it has

been a disaster

Kevin Durant played with the Brooklyn Nets for two and a half seasons. Technically, he's been in Brooklyn for four seasons, but his first year with the Nets was a wash as he rehabbed from an Achilles injury, and he only played half of this season before being traded to the Phoenix Suns. Durant is now going to try the super team thing again out west, and

the result will be a disaster

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Adrian Peterson spoke with Damar Hamlin over 'disrespectful' jacket

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Breaking down Rui Hachimura's trade to the

NBA

Utah Jazz Waive Recent First-Round Pick On Thursday

Acquiring him in the offseason trade that sent All-Star center Rudy Gobert to the Minnesota Timberwolves, the Utah Jazz have decided to waive 2020 first-round pick Leandro Bolmaro, according to The Athletic's Shams Charania. Shams Charania: "The Utah Jazz are waiving guard Leandro Bolmaro, sources tell me and @Tjonesonthenba. Bolmaro, 22, was drafted 23rd overall in 2020 by the

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Steelers should grant Mike Munchak's wish to return to NFL coaching

The Pittsburgh Steelers have a need on their coaching staff. There's not a particularly big opening, but they could use a veteran mind or two. In recent weeks, they have lost a few crucial members from the 2022 staff. Linebackers coach Brian Flores headed to the Minnesota Vikings to become their defensive coordinator. Earlier this week, John Mitchell retired

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Derek Carr is reportedly 'high' on AFC team's list

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NFL

Bills' Damar Hamlin tries to put end to jacket controversy

Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin has taken to Twitter in an attempt to put to bed any controversy regarding a jacket he wore during Super Bowl LVII: Hamlin, who nearly lost his life when he went into cardiac arrest during a "Monday Night Football" game on Jan. 2, and medical professionals who helped keep him alive were honored ahead of the Super Bowl LVII matchup between the Kansas City Chiefs and

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QB Justin Fields has one request for Bears' future stadium

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Pro Bowl RB could be a free-agent bargain for Broncos

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'Negativity sucks the joy right out of players': Jonathan Huberdeau's

Things appear to be reaching a boiling point between Jonathan Huberdeau's camp and the Calgary Flames. Late Thursday night, Allan Walsh — who represents Huberdeau and 28 other NHL clients with Octagon Hockey — took clear aim at the Flames organization in a post on Twitter. "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over

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Cavaliers career ends

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NBA

Ben Roethlisberger gives opinion on controversial Super Bowl LVII holding

Former Steelers WR JuJu Smith-Schuster got the first ring of his career with the Kansas City Chiefs, winning Super Bowl LVII vs. the Philadelphia Eagles, and he was a part of maybe the most controversial play in the game. His former teammate, retired QB Ben Roethlisberger, gave his take on the holding penalty that set up Kansas City to kick the game-winning

[Read More: NFL.com](#)

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Entertainment

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3 Wide Receivers Named Possible Free Agency Targets For Steelers

There is a lot of optimism surrounding the Pittsburgh Steelers entering the 2023 off-season. The team did a total 180-degree turn in the second half of the season, as they started 2-6 but ended the season 9-8. That extended Mike Tomlin's impressive streak of consecutive seasons to start a coaching career without a losing season to 16. If he wants to see that streak continue to

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3 Free Agents The New York Giants Should

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Chiefs 'tricked' 49ers into costly false start on field goal Sunday

The San Francisco 49ers had a real chance to pull off a huge turnover against the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday. But when the time came to kick a big field goal before the half, a false-start penalty pushed them back out of range. The end result was a missed chance and eventually, a loss. "For us to have that false start on the field goal, I was obviously so excited because they muffed the punt the

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