



NATIONALS

Barry Svrluga's analysis and projected rotation

1
RHP
John
Patterson

2
RHP
Shawn
Hill

3
LHP
Matt
Chico

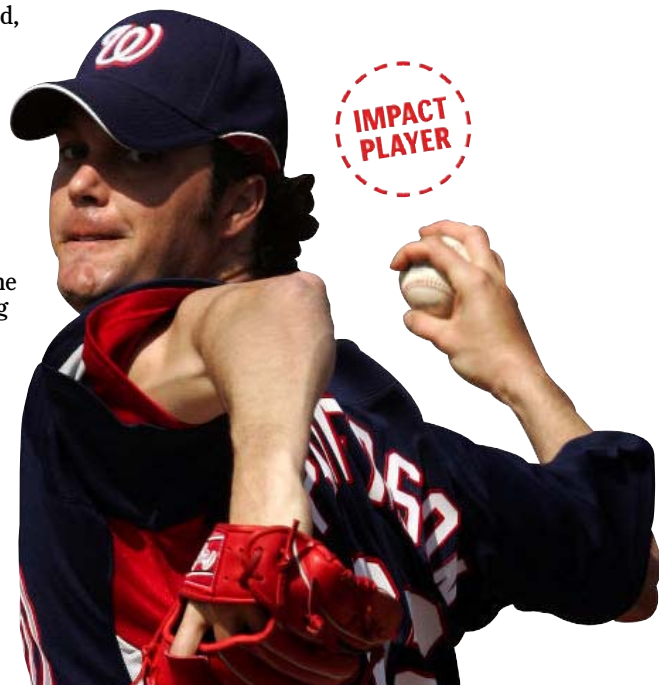
4
RHP
Jerome
Williams

5
SP
The
Committee

CL
RHP
Chad
Cordero

[SP] John Patterson *Right-Handed No. 1 Starter*

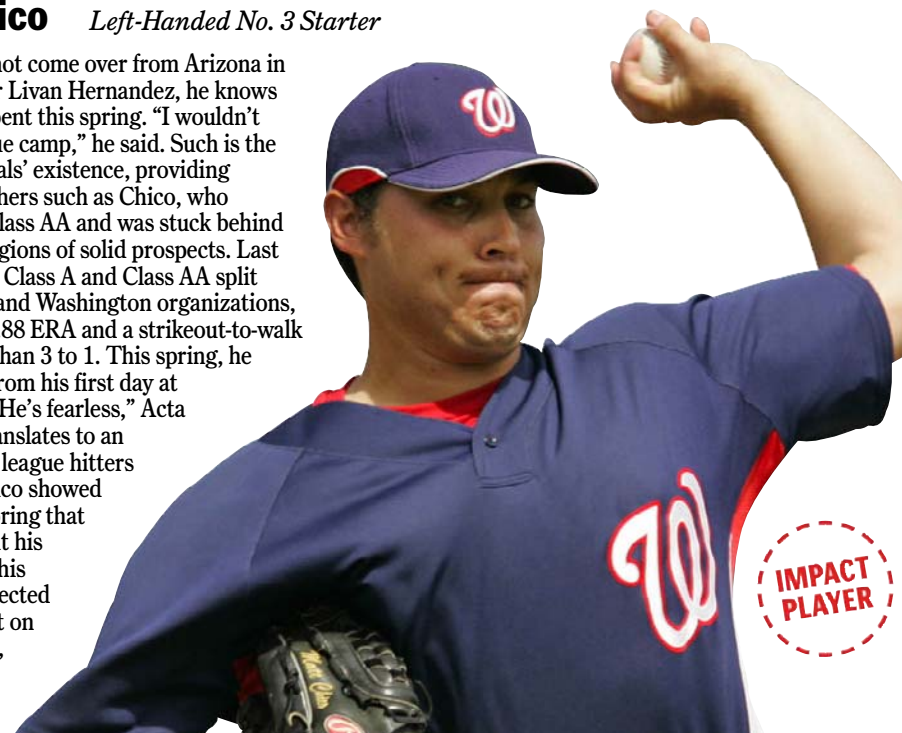
Let's review his career numbers: 17-20 record, 4.09 ERA, zero professional seasons with 200 innings. Now, his standing on this team: The unquestioned No. 1 starter. "It's the opportunity to pitch on Opening Day and be the head of a staff," Patterson said. "I have the ability to do it." Ability, though, isn't the question. Durability is. He has been on the disabled list once in each of his three seasons with the Montreal/Washington franchise. Last year, he made eight starts and posted one win, lasting all of 40 2/3 innings. Patterson, though, remains tantalizing. "He has the potential to be a No. 2 — or even a No. 1 — starter in this league," GM Jim Bowden said. He has a solid fastball in the low- to mid-90s, a curveball and a slider that can be out pitches when they're on, and a change-up that he's still developing — a legitimate four-pitch arsenal. Yet at 29, this could be Patterson's most important season, one in which he either learns to carry himself and a staff, or his career — full of potential — is stalled yet again.



IMPACT
PLAYER

[SP] Matt Chico *Left-Handed No. 3 Starter*

Had this 23-year-old not come over from Arizona in last August's trade for Livan Hernandez, he knows how he would have spent this spring. "I wouldn't have been in big league camp," he said. Such is the essence of the Nationals' existence, providing opportunities for pitchers such as Chico, who hasn't played above Class AA and was stuck behind the Diamondbacks' legions of solid prospects. Last season, in 27 starts at Class A and Class AA split between the Arizona and Washington organizations, he went 12-6 with a 2.88 ERA and a strikeout-to-walk ratio that was better than 3 to 1. This spring, he made an impression from his first day at Washington's camp. "He's fearless," Acta said. Whether that translates to an ability to retire major league hitters is another matter. Chico showed at times during the spring that he could do so without his best fastball. He uses his change-up, has resurrected a curveball that he put on the shelf in years past, and is refining his slider.



IMPACT
PLAYER

2006 STATISTICS				VITAL STATISTICS			
Games: 8	Innings: 40.2	ERA: 4.43	Walks: 9	Strikeouts: 42	Number: 22	Age: 29	Experience:
Wins: 1	CG: 0	Runs: 21	Hits: 36	HB: 3	Height: 6-5	Bats: Right	3 years 126 days
Losses: 2	Shutouts: 0	Earned: 20	Homers: 4	WP: 0	Weight: 208	Throws: Right	Salary: \$850,000

2006 MINOR LEAGUE STATISTICS				VITAL STATISTICS			
Games: 27	Innings: 153.1	ERA: 2.88	Walks: 40	Strikeouts: 125	Number: 47	Age: 23	Experience: None
Wins: 12	CG: 0	Runs: 56	Hits: 138	HBP: 3	Height: 5-11	Bats: Left	Salary: \$380,000
Losses: 6	Shutouts: 0	Earned: 49	Homers: 14	WP: 15	Weight: 190	Throws: Left	

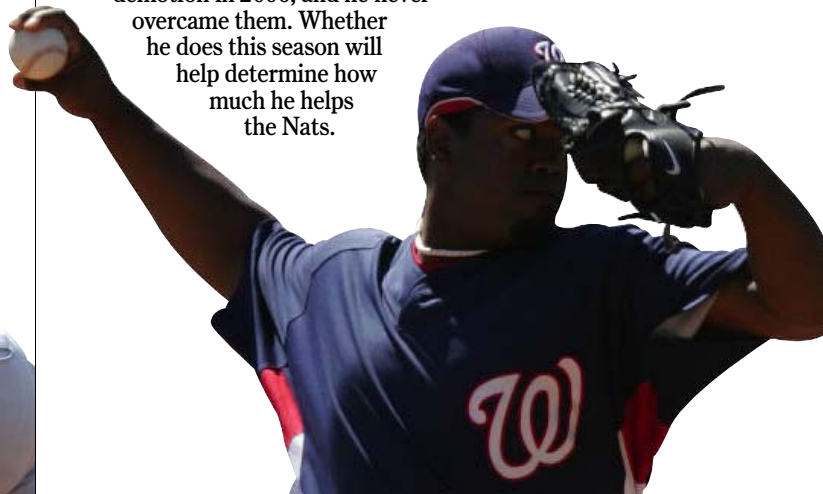
[SP] Shawn Hill *Right-Handed No. 2 Starter*

"We never had any doubt about Shawn," Acta said. "The only question was his health." Perhaps a strange thing to say about a pitcher who is 2-5 with a 6.90 ERA in nine major league starts. But Hill comes equipped with a valuable commodity — natural movement. His two-seam fastball sinks naturally, and it makes him a dangerous, groundball-inducing pitcher. Throw in a developing curveball and change-up, and Hill believes he can put arm problems behind him and win in the majors.



[SP] Jerome Williams *Right-Handed No. 4 Starter*

There was a time, and it was not so long ago, that Williams was one of the rising stars in the National League. He made 21 starts as a rookie for San Francisco in 2003, posting a 3.30 ERA. His career ERA in 70 major league appearances is a respectable 4.03. What Williams needs: confidence. He was bitter about a trade to the Cubs in 2005, then a demotion in 2006, and he never overcame them. Whether he does this season will help determine how much he helps the Nats.



[SP] The Committee *No. 5 Starter*

When the Nationals signed 15-year veteran Pedro Astacio to a minor league contract on March 20, it became clearer than ever: Washington fans are going to see an array of starting pitchers. Change-up artist Jason Simontacchi could regain his spot in the rotation after overcoming a strained groin. Among the other names who could appear at some point: right-handers Jason Bergmann, Tim Redding, Joel Hanrahan and lefties Brandon Claussen and Mike O'Connor, who both will begin the season on the disabled list. The question to ask: Will top prospect Collin Balester appear before the year is out? "We don't want to rush anyone," GM Jim Bowden said. That doesn't mean they won't.



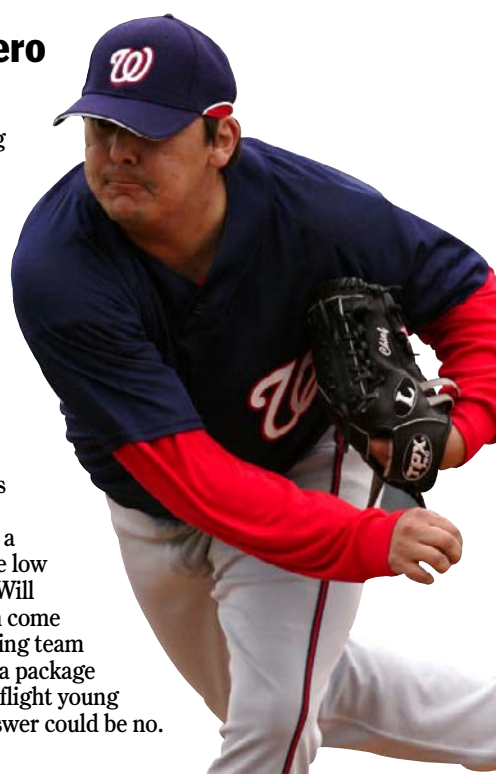
2006 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 6	Innings: 36.2	ERA: 4.66	Number: 41	Height: 6-2	
Wins: 1	Hits: 43	Runs: 20	Age: 25	Weight: 185	
Losses: 3	Homers: 2	Earned: 19	Experience:	Bats: Right	
CG: 0	Walks: 12	HB: 3	153 days	Throws: Right	
Shutouts: 0	Strikeouts: 16	WP: 1	Salary: \$380,000		

2006 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 5	Innings: 12.1	ERA: 7.30	Number: 26	Height: 6-3	
Wins: 0	Hits: 15	Runs: 12	Age: 25	Weight: 240	
Losses: 2	Homers: 2	Earned: 10	Experience:	Bats: Right	
CG: 0	Walks: 11	HBP: 1	2 years 97 days	Throws: Right	
Shutouts: 0	Strikeouts: 5	WP: 0	Salary: \$500,000		

2006 COMBINED STATISTICS			CANDIDATES	
Games: 64	Innings: 246.2	ERA: 5.73	Right-handers:	Left-handers:
Wins: 6	Hits: 270	Runs: 166	Tim Redding	Brandon Claussen
Losses: 18	Homers: 41	Earned: 157	Joel Hanrahan	Mike O'Connor
CG: 0	Walks: 100	HB: 19	Jason Bergmann	
Shutouts: 0	Strikeouts: 170	WP: 13	Jason Simontacchi	

[RP] Chad Cordero *Right-Handed Closer*

This could be a fascinating year for "The Chief," who's quickly gone from young sensation to veteran presence. Though he saved a very respectable 29 games in 33 opportunities in 2006, his ERA of 3.19 was significantly higher than the 2.36 he had posted before last season began. Scouts continue to love his moxie but are wary of his repertoire, which features a fastball that tops out in the low 90s. The larger question: Will Cordero be in Washington come season's end? If a contending team meets the asking price — a package that must include one top-flight young starting pitcher — the answer could be no.



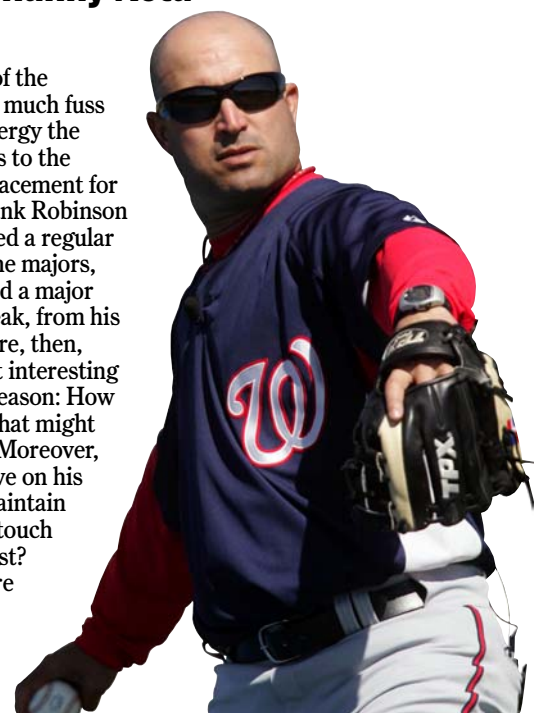
[RP] The Bullpen *Other Relievers*

Jon Rauch broke through with an 85-outing season a year ago, and his confidence is higher than ever. Ryan Wagner appeared to fix himself after he fell apart while with Cincinnati, and may prove to be the steal of the Austin Kearns-Felipe Lopez trade with the Reds. And if the return of Luis Ayala — who has a 2.75 career ERA but missed all of 2006 after elbow surgery — comes by May 1, the Nationals could have three capable setup men. Yet because this could be the team's strength, it also could be the place from which trades are made. Veteran Ray King could be useful for a contender if he pitches well. Rauch falls into the same category. Just like the rotation, the bullpen could be evolving all season.



[Manager] Manny Acta *First Year*

Over the course of the spring, there was much fuss about the new energy the 38-year-old brings to the club. But the replacement for Hall of Famer Frank Robinson hasn't yet managed a regular season game in the majors, much less endured a major league losing streak, from his current seat. There, then, could be the most interesting aspect of Acta's season: How does he handle what might be a rough year? Moreover, do players improve on his watch? Can he maintain the motivational touch in, say, mid-August? We will learn more about him as he learns more about his job.



2006 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 68	Innings: 73.1	ERA: 3.19	Number: 32	Height: 6-0	
Wins: 7	Hits: 59	Runs: 27	Age: 25	Weight: 200	
Losses: 4	Homers: 13	Earned: 26	Experience:	Bats: Right	
Saves: 29	Walks: 22	HB: 3	3 years 30 days	Throws: Right	
Chances: 33	Strikeouts: 69	WP: 0	Salary: \$4.15 million		

2006 COMBINED STATISTICS			MEMBERS (SIX MAKE TEAM)	
Games: 257	Innings: 255	ERA: 3.78	Jon Rauch	Micah Bowie
Wins: 11	Hits: 250	Runs: 124	Luis Ayala	Chris Booker
Losses: 13	Homers: 31	Earned: 107	Ryan Wagner	Saul Rivera
Saves: 4	Walks: 114	HB: 10	Ray King	Levale Speigner
Chances: 12	Strikeouts: 188	WP: 14		

OTHER COACHES			VITAL STATISTICS	
First Base:	Bench:	Hitting:	Number: 14	Age: 38
Jerry Morales	Pat Corrales	Mitchell Page		
Third Base:	Bullpen:	Pitching:		
Tim Tolman	Rick Aponte	Randy St. Claire		