

# THE NATIONALS

Barry Svrluga's analysis and projected rotation

**SP**

Odalis Pérez  
LHP

**SP**

Matt Chico  
LHP

**SP**

Tim Redding  
RHP

**SP**

Jason Bergmann  
RHP

**SP**

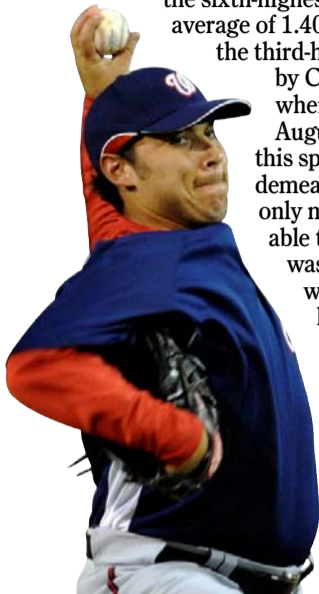
Shawn Hill  
RHP

**CL**

Chad Cordero  
RHP

## [SP] Matt Chico *Left-Handed Starter*

No National League rookie made more starts than Chico's 31 in 2007, and none pitched more than his 167 innings. But there were, too, plenty of flaws. His 3.99 walks per nine innings was the sixth-highest rate in the National League, his average of 1.40 homers allowed per nine innings the third-highest. Manny Acta, though, stuck by Chico all through last season — even when he was sent to the minors in August. The manager, too, was adamant this spring that Chico's unflappable demeanor — and the fact that he was the only member of last year's rotation to be able to take the ball every fifth day — was part of his evaluation. "This guy went out there and didn't embarrass himself or us," Acta said. His ERA (4.63) was actually a tick better than the league average for a starter (4.64). Plus, he tweaked his mechanics in the spring — bringing back a high leg kick that added some velocity, as well as bite to his curveball.



2007 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 31	Innings: 167	ERA: 4.63	Number: 47	Height: 6-0	
Wins: 7	Hits: 183	Runs: 96	Age: 24	Weight: 205	
Losses: 9	Homers: 26	Earned: 86	Experience: 1 year	Bats: L	
CG: 0	Walks: 74	HB: 5	Salary: \$409,000	Throws: L	
Shutouts: 0	Strikeouts: 94	WP: 7			

## IMPACT PITCHER



BY RICKY CARIOTTI — THE WASHINGTON POST

## [SP] Tim Redding *Right-Handed Starter*

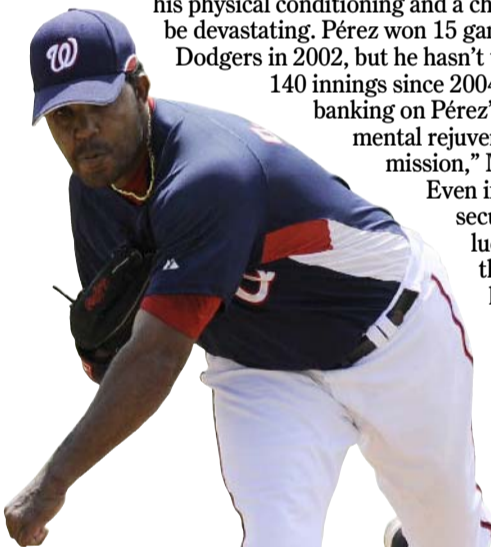
Perhaps no moment showed more clearly why Redding was destined for this rotation than a March 18 game against the Tigers. Redding felt horrible — a headache, stuffed sinuses — yet he threw five scoreless innings. The reason: "His fastball," Manny Acta said. Redding didn't have very good command of his breaking stuff, but he throws the ball hard enough — 92-93 mph — and spots it well enough that he can survive on his fastball. This is a huge difference from last spring, when Redding petered out of spring training, passed through waivers and ended up at Class AAA Columbus. But after he was recalled July 3, Redding posted a 3.64 ERA over 15 starts. He entered the last week of spring with back spasms, but vowed to be ready.



2007 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 15	Innings: 84	ERA: 3.64	Number: 17	Height: 6-0	
Wins: 3	Hits: 84	Runs: 35	Age: 30	Weight: 195	
Losses: 6	Homers: 10	Earned: 34	Experience: 3 years	Bats: R	
CG: 0	Walks: 38	HB: 4	167 days	Throws: R	
Shutouts: 0	Strikeouts: 47	WP: 1	Salary: \$1 million		

## [SP] Odalis Pérez *Left-Handed Starter*

The Nationals did not seriously pursue the free agent pitchers that hung around deep into free agency, from former ace Liván Hernández to Kyle Lohse to Jeff Weaver. But they did take a chance on Pérez, who went 8-11 with a 5.57 ERA in 2007 with Kansas City. But from the day he first threw in camp, Pérez impressed with his physical conditioning and a change-up that can be devastating. Pérez won 15 games with the Dodgers in 2002, but he hasn't thrown more than 140 innings since 2004. The Nats are banking on Pérez's physical and mental rejuvenation. "He's on a mission," Manny Acta said.



2007 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 26	Innings: 137 1/3	ERA: 5.57	Number: 45	Height: 6-0	
Wins: 8	Hits: 178	Runs: 90	Age: 30	Weight: 225	
Losses: 11	Homers: 14	Earned: 85	Experience: 9 years	Bats: L	
CG: 0	Walks: 50	HB: 4	27 days	Throws: L	
Shutouts: 0	Strikeouts: 64	WP: 3	Salary: \$850,000		

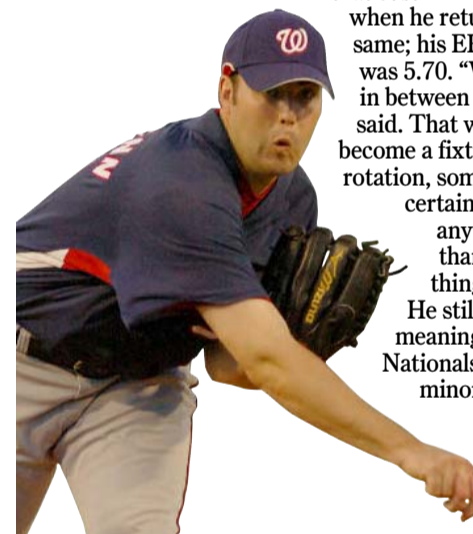
## [SP] Shawn Hill *Right-Handed Starter*

How can a 26-year-old who has never thrown more than 147 innings in any professional season at any level be considered such an important factor? "His stuff," said pitching coach Randy St. Claire, "can be tremendous." When he is healthy — and he will start the season on the disabled list — Hill is the Nationals' best pitcher. His sinker ranks among the best in the game, and it causes opponents to beat it into the ground. "You love playing behind him because you know you're going to get a lot of chances," Zimmerman said. "Plus, he just gets the ball and throws. He works quick, and that helps everyone." In 16 starts last year, Hill gave up three or fewer runs 14 times. So there is but one concern. "His health," Manny Acta said. "That's it." He first walked off the field last season after throwing five no-hit innings against Florida in May. He didn't return until August. Two surgical procedures and countless medical opinions later, he still has soreness in his right arm, though no one knows the reason. The consensus: He will have to pitch through it. If he can, and makes 30 starts, the organization believes the numbers will be impressive.

2007 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 16	Innings: 97 1/3	ERA: 3.42	Number: 41	Height: 6-2	
Wins: 4	Hits: 86	Runs: 42	Age: 26	Weight: 180	
Losses: 5	Homers: 9	Earned: 37	Experience: 1 year	Bats: R	
Saves: 0	Walks: 25	HB: 5	153 days	Throws: R	
Chances: 0	Strikeouts: 65	WP: 2	Salary: \$400,000		

## [SP] Jason Bergmann *Right-Handed Starter*

In Bergmann's first inning of 2007, he threw 50 pitches against the Arizona Diamondbacks en route to walking six men in a loss. In his next seven starts, he struck out 41 men in 45 1/3 innings, held opponents to a .146 batting average and posted a 2.18 ERA — and nearly no-hit the Braves. But he came down with an elbow problem that cost him more than a month, and when he returned, he wasn't the same; his ERA the rest of the season was 5.70. "We hope he's somewhere in between those two," Manny Acta said. That would help Bergmann become a fixture in the Washington rotation, something he knows is not certain. "I'm not guaranteed anything," he said more than once this spring. One thing working against him: He still has options remaining, meaning if he pitches poorly, the Nationals could send him to the minors and call up one of the prospects at Columbus.



2007 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 21	Innings: 115 1/3	ERA: 4.45	Number: 57	Height: 6-4	
Wins: 6	Hits: 99	Runs: 59	Age: 26	Weight: 205	
Losses: 6	Homers: 18	Earned: 57	Experience: 1 year	Bats: R	
CG: 0	Walks: 42	HB: 2	130 days	Throws: R	
Shutouts: 0	Strikeouts: 86	WP: 4	Salary: \$400,000		

## [RP] Chad Cordero *Closer*

Back in 2005, when Cordero was an all-star and led the majors with 47 saves, he was perhaps the biggest bargain in baseball, earning \$346,500. Now, he is the Nationals' highest-paid player at \$6.2 million. Last year, he became the second-youngest player to reach 100 saves, and only four players have more saves from 2005 to '07 than Cordero's 113. Still, there are questions about Cordero's future. His ERA has risen each of the past three seasons (3.36 last year), as have his walks, and he is a fly ball pitcher who will move into a smaller home park. No Nat has been mentioned more in trade rumors the past two years, and that might not stop this summer. Given that he becomes a free agent following the 2009 season, it's possible that teams could pursue him before the July 31 trade deadline — thus getting a year-and-a-half of service before he could command perhaps \$9 million to \$10 million annually.



2007 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS		
Games: 76	Innings: 75	ERA: 3.36	Number: 32	Height: 6-0	
Wins: 3	Hits: 75	Runs: 31	Age: 26	Weight: 195	
Losses: 3	Homers: 8	Earned: 28	Experience: 4 years	Bats: R	
Saves: 37	Walks: 29	HB: 0	30 days	Throws: R	
Chances: 46	Strikeouts: 62	WP: 5	Salary: \$6.2 million		

## [RP] The Bullpen *Other Relievers*

No bullpen in baseball threw more innings than the Nationals' 590 1/2 last year — an average of 3 1/2 innings every night. That they posted a 3.81 ERA — fourth best in the NL — means there were several effective pieces. No one in baseball has more appearances than **Jon Rauch** over the past two seasons (173), and he is clearly comfortable in his setup role. After missing all of 2006 following elbow surgery, Luis Ayala has more zip on his fastball this spring. Saúl Rivera had a 3.68 ERA and allowed only one homer in 93 innings last year — but this group is deep enough that the club had to consider sending Rivera to the minors to start the season. Even given the stalwarts, no one had a more impressive spring than Joel Hanrahan, a converted starter who was consistently in the mid-90s with a devastating slider. "If he keeps doing that," one official said, "he's your closer. He has to be."



2007 STATISTICS			MEMBERS	
Games: 345	Innings: 373 1/3	ERA: 4.02	Luis Ayala	Jesús Colome
Wins: 25	Hits: 360	Runs: 174	Joel Hanrahan	Ray King
Losses: 17	Homers: 33	Earned: 167	Jon Rauch	Saúl Rivera
Saves: 9	Walks: 158	HB: 6		
Chances: 21	Strikeouts: 267	WP: 16		

## [Manager] Manny Acta *Second Year*

A year ago, everything was a "first" for Acta — first job, first workout, first game, first win. Now, the outgoing 39-year-old has done everything before, and his position within the organization is even more secure. Told by nearly everyone — including the club's top officials — that the Nationals would lose at least 100 games last year, he deftly juggled a ragtag pitching staff and the game's least-productive offense, squeezing out a 73-89 season that was widely deemed a success. The next step for Acta: maximizing the output from a more talented team. The addition of Elijah Dukes would be a challenge for any manager, and Lastings Milledge was sometimes questioned in a veteran Mets clubhouse. Acta said he will continue to have the same rules for everyone, and team officials say the way he handles problems in private is even better than he does in public. Last year, the club picked up his option for the 2009 season. Expect it to pick up the 2010 option before long.



2007 STATISTICS			VITAL STATISTICS	
First Base: Jerry Morales	Bench: Pat Corrales	Hitting: Lenny Harris	Number: 14	Age: 39
Third Base: Tim Tolman	Bullpen: Rick Aponte	Pitching: Randy St. Claire		