

## SHORTSTOP AMERICAN LEAGUE

**1. Bobby Witt Jr., ROYALS** – Is he the best player in the American League? Certainly, a contender: won a Gold Glove at shortstop, went 30/30 on homers and stolen bases and won a batting title. Had 98 extra base hits last year, including 11 triples. Was better during the second half (1.054 OPS), a fact that should convince every pitcher to sign with KC. You get the sense that he's going to be one of *those* players, one of the great ones.

**2. Gunner Henderson, ORIOLES** – What does a guy have to do to rate first in this league? Henderson followed up his Rookie-of-the-Year campaign with a season that merits MVP consideration, and he can't even rank first. An absolutely brilliant player, he was a little ahead of Witt at the All-Star break, but had a mini slump in July and August to let Witt get ahead of him. Might shift to second base in 2025, but we're rating him with the shortstops for now.

**3. Corey Seager, RANGERS** – Followed up an excellent 2023 season with another fine year, but with the Rangers drifting out of contention, he didn't push it. Should continue to rank among the best at this position, though he is a tier – or at least half a tier – below Witt and Henderson.

**4. Zack Neto, ANGELS** – A rising star: hit 23 homers and stole 30 bases while playing excellent defense for the Halos. His OPS+ of 113 was a marked improvement from 2023, and while his line drive rate went down, he hit more flyballs in 2024, which is a positive. A building block – maybe *the* building block – for the Angels as they try to move back to respectability.

**5. Carlos Correa, TWINS** – If he is healthy, he rates right up with Seager as one of the elite shortstops in the game, but health is always a question mark with Correa, who missed out on two big extensions because of concerns about his ankle. He was terrific when he played last year (152 OPS+ in 86 games), but he is a question mark when it comes to health.

**6. Bo Bichette, BLUE JAYS** – The Jays are making a habit of having a star player fall off the table every year. Last year it was Bichette's turn: he entered the season with a career .826 OPS, and left with that total under .800, brought down by a .598 mark. I think he rebounds: Bichette is simply too good of a hitter not to

get back. But last year was a rough trial for a player I really enjoy watching.

**7. Anthony Volpe, YANKEES** – A candidate to rise on these charts: his error in the World Series was by far the least egregious of the three the Yankees committed: I think an ordinary throw would've hit Hernandez on the back at least half the time. A talented player who should improve as a hitter.

**8. Ha-Seong Kim/José Caballero, RAYS** – Ranked here because Kim won't be back until mid-season, but he's a terrific player. Caballero did a lot more for the Rays than they were expecting: can't *really* hit (.225 career batting average), but he has enough pop, speed, and defense to be at least a passable middle infielder. Led the league in stolen bases and caught stealing.

**9. Jeremy Peña, ASTROS** – Probably on par with Volpe, but a little older, so there's less chance of the bat improving significantly. You can win a pennant with a shortstop of the caliber of Peña or Volpe, as the Astros and Yankees have demonstrated. Time will tell if you can win a World Series with 'em.

**10. J. P. Crawford, MARINERS** – Had a terrible year at the dish, posting a .625 OPS after finished 2023 at .818. His outlook for 2025 is somewhere between those numbers: he is still a good defensive player, and he walks enough to have value even if he doesn't hit 19 homers.

**11. Trevor Story, RED SOX** – No one seemed more gutted about his dislocated shoulder than Story, who really wants to make good on the contract Boston gave him. I'm rooting for him: though his heyday with Colorado is a long way in the past, Boston sure could use a right-handed hitter to balance the lineup, and Story can still swing it.

**12. Brayan Rocchio, GUARDIANS** – A finalist for the Gold Glove at shortstop, a fact that would surprise you if all you knew about Rocchio's defense was what you saw during the ALCS. A switch-hitter who could improve as a hitter: will rank higher next year.

**13. Jacob Wilson, A'S** – Hit .455 in Double-A and .398 in Triple-A last year, which is the kind of work that gets you a call up to the majors. His first go-around did not impress (.629 OPS), but Wilson will get