

Obscure Fantasy Focus: Catcher **Francisco Alvarez** suffered a sprained thumb ligament in June, broke his left pinky on a hit-by-pitch during the rehab assignment, and then posted a .941 OPS with eight homers in 41 games over the second half. I remain extremely optimistic on the future of the Mets backstop, who will be just twenty-four-years old in 2026.

NEW YORK METS

What a strange year.

The Mets ended July in first place of the NL East, a half-game ahead of their rival Phillies and a million miles ahead of the rest of the division. I haven't looked, but you'd guess that their chances of ending up in the playoffs were probably somewhere in the neighborhood of 90%. Maybe higher than that.

Everything was going right: Juan Soto and Francisco Lindor were playing like MVP candidates, and Pete Alonso, Brandon Nimmo, and Jeff McNeil were having terrific years. On the pitching side, David Peterson and Clay Holmes were doing great, Edwin Diaz had an ERA that started with a 1, and while Kodai Senga had recently hit the IL, the Mets had Nolan McLean waiting in the wings. There was no reason to worry.

At the time, the Mets were scoring 4.3 runs per game, not an elite rate but enough to get by, as they were allowing 3.9 runs per game. Their expected record was a little lower than their actual record, but not significantly far apart. Everything was going exactly to plan.

And then the calendar flipped to August, and the Mets offense went *insane*:

Month	R/G	OPS
April	3.8	.742
May	4.0	.743
June	4.2	.735
July	4.4	.685
August	6.3	.866

If the Mets lineup of hitters in August were a player, that player would've ranked 8th in the NL in OPS last year, right between Freddie Freeman and Michael Busch. It was best offensive month any team in

baseball had last year by a considerable distance: the next best offense by OPS was the May Dodgers, who had an OPS of .839.

And – as you'd expect and already know if you're a Mets fan – they lost the season.

While the Mets bats were battering, the other side collapsed:

Month	RA/G
April	3.0
May	3.6
June	5.1
July	4.2
August	5.5

It was a strange sequence: the Mets allowed 156 runs (4th-most in the majors in August), but only 137 of those runs were earned, which means they were committing errors that were extremely costly. Allowing 19 unearned runs in 28 games is nearly three-quarters of an unearned run every game.

And the pitching staff was having bad luck, too: their ERA was 4.97 (the 6th highest among all 30 teams), but their Expected ERA was just 3.71, the 8th best mark in the majors. FanGraphs' WAR metric agreed with the xERA: they had the Mets pitching staff as the 8th-best rotation in baseball in August.

There were other lucky dimensions at play. Mets pitchers stranded only 62% of opponent baserunners, the lowest mark in the majors. Opponent batting average on balls in play was .308, the fourth-highest mark in baseball but not an outlandish figure.

On the other hand, Mets pitchers were doing a very good job of keeping the ball in the yard (the third-