

UTAH PIONEERS



2023 Instructions

Introduction

Welcome to playing against the 2023 **Utah Pioneers**. Last year, as projected, we won the Central Division before a quick exit in the 2-3 seed playoff losing to eventual champion Santa Barbara in 6 games. This year, Utah tried to rebuild in the draft, but is projected to only win between 42 to 45 games. Hitting is a notch lower, and pitching is a slight tick better than last year. Fielding again is solid. Utah's starting pitching is 'ok', and it has a few quality relief pitchers capable of closing out games. Lots of LH arms on the pitching staff, which is by design. The Utah media guide hypes Cy Young winner Alcantara, and AL Rookie of the Year- J-Rod, and NL Rookie of the Year- Harris.

Path to the Playoffs

The Pioneers seek to win by outscoring opponents. I believe Utah will be in the top 4 in PCL hitting, home runs, slugging and runs scored. I think we will be amongst the leaders in DPs made. Pitching will be in the lower worst third of the league. Utah ball produces victories in the form of a 7-5 win, and likely will have higher runs scored when playing home games at the hitter friendly bandbox called the **Sandy Sandlot**. I think we have enough talent to get close to a .500 record.

2023 Active Roster

Hitters N=15

2025	Casali, Curt	Catcher (starter vs. LH)
2023	Varsho, Daulton*	Catcher (starter vs. LH) & OF
2025	Solano, Donovan	1B (starter)
2026	Alberto, Hanser	1B/INF
2023	Edman, Tommy+	2B (starter vs RH) & SS
2024	Rodgers, Brendan	2B (starter vs. LH)
2024	Hoerner, Nico	SS (starter)
2026	Vargas, Ildemaro	3B/INF
2026	Bregman, Alex	3B (starter)
2023	Reynolds, Bryan+	LF (starter)
2026	Rodriguez, Julio	RF/CF (starter)
2026	Harris, Michael*	CF (starter vs. RH)
2024	Carlson, Dylan+	RF (starter vs. LH)
2026	Azocar, Jose	OF/PR
2025	Dickerson, Corey	DH (starter vs. RH)

Pitchers (N=11)

		ROTATION
2023	Alcantara, Sandy	#1 Starter
2024	Luzardo, Jesus*	#2 Starter
2026	Martinez, Nick	#3 Starter/rare Swing vs. RH
2024	Lauer, Eric*	#4 Starter
2024	Peterson, David*	#5 Starter/rare Swing vs. LH
		BULLPEN
2025	Vesia, Alex*	Closer (innings 8-9)
2023	Minter, AJ*	Set-up/Closer (vs. mostly LH) (innings 8-9)
2023	Loup, Aaron*	Middle Relief (innings 6-7)
2026	Barnes, Matt	Early Relief (innings 4-6)
2025	De Jong, Chase	Set-up Relief (innings 6-8)
2026	Elder, Bryce	Middle Relief (innings 6-7)

Minors

Belt, Brandon	2024	WTF?	
Marquez, German	2024	WTF?	
Bender, Anthony	2025		

Overview

The OF is talented with **J-Rod, Harris, Reynolds, and Carlson**. **Alcantara** is the best pitcher I've had since starting the Utah club and will have at least 18 CG. Good defense up the middle with "1"s at SS, 2B, and CF. "2"s exist at every other position except 1B. E ratings are also low. Your team will get base runners on, and I'm hopeful the defense turns 2-3 DPs per game. Innings pitched overall is a little thin, and consequently, my starters will need to pitch a minimum number of innings. **Alcantara** will be asked to pitch ~20 CGs.



Starting Line-ups

Lineup 1 vs. LH (want to bat LH)		Lineup 2 vs. LH (Standard Lineup)		Lineup 3 vs. RH (want to bat LH)		Lineup 4 vs. RH (Standard Lineup)		Lineup 5, vs. R N/A	
	N/A	DH	Edman+	CF	Harris*	CF	Harris*		
		RF	Carlson+	SS	Hoerner	SS	Hoerner		
		CF	Rodriguez	RF	Rodriguez	RF	Rodriguez		
		2B	Rodgers	C	Varsho*	C	Varsho*		
		C	Casali	LF	Reynolds+	3B	Bregman		
		LF	Reynolds+	DH	Dickerson*	DH	Dickerson*		
		3B	Bregman	3B	Bregman	LF	Reynolds+		
		1B	Solano1/Alberto	1B	Solano1	1B	Solano1		
	SS	Hoerner		2B	Edman+	2B	Edman+		
		All LH Pitching		J. Gray; LeBlanc; T. Williams; Stroman; Bassitt; Eflin; Barria; Kelly; Wright; Ohtani; P. Lopez; Webb		All Other RH pitchers			

Key: + Switch * LH

Additional Notes on Lineups & Guidelines on Positions

- Catcher:** **Varsho** starts vs. RH, and with UTP winning, **Varsho** goes to LF and he's replaced by **Casali** for defense late in the 8th or 9th. **Casali** starts vs. LH.
- First Base:** **Solano¹** starts and stays in vs. all pitching. Can be replaced by **PH late (do compare) and replaced by Alberto** on defense when Utah leads by 5+ runs in 7th, 8th or 9th. Ignore this strategy in the last game of the series. **Casali** is the 3rd string 1B. **Solano** has 278 ABs with a .339 OBP, but also a 1-8 injury on his card. Pull him after 3 ABs in games where Utah is up 5+ runs and replace with **Alberto**. I'll monitor his ABs, and start **Alberto** in a handful of home games vs. LH pitchers should there be a usage problem.
- Second Base:** Simple platoon. **Edman** starts vs. RH pitching. **Rodgers** starts vs. LH pitching, and both can pinch hit for the other should you bring in a LH, or RH. I like Rodgers playing defense in this position in the 8th or 9th when I have the lead. **Vargas** is the 3rd stringer at 2B.
- Shortstop:** **Hoerner** starts, and stays in vs. all pitching; **Edman/Vargas** replaces him if injured.
- Third Base:** **Bregman** starts, and stays in vs. all pitching; **Vargas** is 2nd string.
- Right Field:** **J-Rod** starts vs. RH and stays in vs. all pitching; **Carlson** starts vs. LH pitching. **Azocar** is 3rd string.
- Center Field:** Simple platoon. **Harris** vs. RH pitching. **J-Rod** vs. LH pitching. **Azocar** is 3rd string.
- Left Field:** **Reynolds** starts, and stays in vs. all pitching. **Varsho** goes from C to LF for defense late. **Azocar** is 3rd string.

1- Whenever Solano comes to bat from the 7th on, AND Utah is up +5, PH for him (do compare), and Alberto replaces on defense. In the last game of the series, disregard this strategy.

WHEN YOUR LEFTY STARTER EXITS THE GAME REPLACED BY A RIGHTY stopped here

Use **compare feature** with all platoon players (i.e., Varsho/Casali; Edman/Rodgers; Harris/Carlson), and replace if justified by the comparison. I am pretty aggressive with this at the beginning of the inning....go with the best match-ups early starting in the 4th inning, and continue with this approach for the remainder of the game (but only for my platoon players) and I realize that if you flip LH & RH pitching back and forth, that may put UTP at a disadvantage later in the game. Start and Stay Aggressive. **My DH Dickerson should never hit vs. LH pitching. Harris should never hit vs. LH pitching.**

WHEN YOUR RIGHTY STARTER EXITS THE GAME REPLACED BY A LEFTY

Use **compare feature** with all platoon players (i.e., **Varsho/Casali (C)**; **Edman/Rodgers (2B)**; **Harris/Carlson (OF)**; **Dickerson/Compare with Bench (DH)**, and replace if justified by the comparison. I am pretty aggressive with this....go with the best match-ups early starting in the 4th inning, and continue with this approach for the remainder of the game (but only for my platoon players) and I realize that if you flip LH & RH pitching back and forth, that may put UTP at a disadvantage later in the game. Start and Stay Aggressive.

IF UTP IS TRAILING GOING INTO THE 4TH-9TH: Use **compare feature** for any and all platoon players when you make pitching changes.

IF UTP IS WINNING GOING INTO THE 8TH or 9TH: Bring in the best defense available for those position players not likely to bat in the 8th or 9th inning and then assess again in the 9th. **Varsho** can head to the OF (replace **Reynolds**) when **Casali** comes in to catch late. **Casali** replaces **Reynolds** in the batting order.

When switching out players, find the best pinch hitter for the situation first – do not just use the guy you are going to replace the position player with.

Double-Switching

I like the double-switch. Situations include when bringing new players in for defense...

Defense Matrix – Best Defense in Bold – Look to use in the 8th inning onward with a lead

C	1B	2B	SS	3B	LF	CF	RF
Casali	Solano	Rodgers	Hoerner	Bregman	Varsho	Harris	J-Rod
Varsho	Alberto	Edman	Edman	Vargas/Alberto	Reynolds	J-Rod	Carlson
	Casali	Vargas	Vargas		Azocar	Varsho	Varsho/Azocar

1B	Solano starts, and stays in; you can PH for him in the 7 th -9 th when UTP is 5+ runs up to protect him from injury.
2B	Edman or Rodgers start, and the non-starter PHs for the other if you switch LH/RH pitchers. Vargas is 3 rd string.
SS	Hoerner stays in always. If Hoerner gets injured, Edman plays SS, with Vargas/Rodgers at 2B.
3B	Bregman stays in always. Vargas is 2 nd string.
RF	J-Rod starts in RF vs. RH, and slides over to CF vs. LH. Carlson starts in RF vs. LH.
CF	Harris starts vs. RH, and J-Rod starts vs. LH. When UTP is up, Harris can enter the game late vs. LH for defense.
LF	Reynolds starts and stays in LF; Replace late with Varsho for defense if Utah is winning < 3 runs.
C	Varsho starts vs. RH, and Casali starts vs. LH. I like Casali catching in the 8 th or 9 th if Utah is winning < 3 runs.
DH	Dickerson starts vs. RH; Edman starts vs. RH; Azocar/Carlson can PH for Dickerson vs. LH pitching.

MISCELLANEOUS

Pinch hitting / Pinch running

- **Pinch Hit Guidelines:** Use **compare feature**. PHs better in the clutch include: **Harris**; **Vargas** (Ω)

Pinch Run: The 2023 Utah starters can run. **Azocar** (1-16) can PR and put him on 2B in extra innings for anyone who's speed is less than that.

Game Strategies

- **Typical stealing decisions:** Steal 2nd at 70%; 65% at the bottom of the order, and 60% if there are 2 outs and a clutch hitter (Ω) is batting. **Carlson** (17%), **Edman** (22%), **Harris** (22%), **Hoerner** (19%), **Reynolds** (19%), **Rodriguez** (31%), **Vargas** (14%), and **Varsho** (20%) all have the **green light** to steal...even when I am behind. Be aggressive, like an affluent woman at Nordstroms. For all the above, try to get the lead and steal 3rd at 75%. **Azocar** gets the lead about 70% of the time, and gets picked off 30%. As Eastwood would ask..."Do you feel lucky, eh punk?" Maybe steal second with **Azocar** if the man at bat has lots of S** on his card, and the game is tied late.
- **Who to H&R and when:** Only **Hoerner** (B) has bat control. Try with him if infield is in, and facing your closer?
- **Sacrifice:** Like typing class, this isn't taught anymore. Only **Varsho** is an "A" bunter. He bats 4th in the lineup.

- **Squeeze Plays:** Like the card catalog in the library, this isn't used anymore. You could try with **Varsho** vs. your stud closer, and the tying run is on 3rd? Your judgement call.
 - **Scoring:** Run home at 65% with one out or less; 45% with two outs; 30% with two outs and a weak hitter is batting next. If UTP is trailing by more than three runs after the 5th, take a more conservative approach (add +5%) in running to home with less than two outs.
 - **Runners / Trailers:** To second at 50%+, but to third at 70%+. Otherwise, send a lower percentage trailer only when we are down by a run or tied, from the 7th inning on.
 - **Throwing Guidelines:** Cut the throw off from the outfield early in the game unless runner is heading home with a safe chance at 55% or less. Let the throw through even if the runner is as high as 65% with two outs and the 8th or 9th hitter is due up.
 - **Defense:** Always get the sure out on Defense Option plays, unless runner represents the go-ahead run and his safe chance is less than 35%. Same with the trailing runners.
 - **Intentional Walks:** Use your best judgment. I do not like being too aggressive with this – but there are guys/situations...**(i.e., Pujols)** ...or similar stud-types (OPS > 1.0) up to bat, and the winning run is presently on 2nd, I'd walk him.



Starts: Alcantara (20); Lauer (20); Martinez (18); Peterson (17); Luzardo (15)

[On the Road Pitching Rotation](#) [Road Games in the WEST](#) [LOOK HERE!!!!!!](#)

On the Road Pitching Rotation		Road Games in the WEST		LOCK HERE.....	
Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3		
Bay Area	Alcantara1	Lauer1	Peterson1		
Pebble Beach	Alcantara2	Lauer2	Martinez1		
Santa Barbara	Alcantara3	Lauer3	Martinez2		
Southern Cal	Alcantara4	Lauer4	Martinez3		

On the Road Pitching Rotation Road Games in the CENTRAL **LOOK HERE!!!!!!**

Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3
Cabo Del Sol	Lauer5	Luzardo1	Peterson2
Oxnard BBs	Alcantara5	Luzardo2	Martinez4
Las Vegas	Alcantara6	Luzardo3	Martinez5

On the Road Pitching Rotation **Road Games in the EAST** **LOOK HERE!!!!!!**

<u>Team</u>	<u>Game 1</u>	<u>Game 2</u>	<u>Game 3</u>
Augusta	Peterson3	Lauer6	Martinez6
Chicago	Luzardo4	Lauer7	Peterson4
St. Louis	Luzardo5	Lauer8	Peterson5
Virginia Beach	Alcantara7	Lauer9	Martinez7

On the Road Pitching Rotation **Road Games in the CENTRAL** **LOOK HERE!!!!!!**

Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4
Cabo Del Sol	Peterson6	Luzardo6	Alcantara8	Martinez8
Oxnard BBs	Peterson7	Luzardo7	Alcantara9	Martinez9
Las Vegas	Peterson8	Luzardo8	Alcantara10	Martinez10



HOME GAMES Pitching Rotation

Team	Game 1	Lauer	Game 3	Peterson
Bay Area	Alcantara11	Lauer10		Peterson9
Pebble Beach	Alcantara12	Lauer11		Martinez11
Santa Barbara	Alcantara13	Lauer12		Martinez12

E GAMES Pitching Rotation		HOME Games vs. the WEN	
Area	Game 1 Alcantara11	Lauer	Game 3 Peterson9
Beach	Alcantara12	Lauer10	Martinez11
ta Barbara	Alcantara13	Lauer11	Martinez12

Southern Cal	Alcantara14	Lauer13	Martinez13
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HOME GAMES Pitching Rotation

Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3
Cabo Del Sol	Peterson10	Luzardo9	Lauer11
Oxnard BBs	Alcantara15	Peterson11	Vesia14
Las Vegas	Alcantara16	Luzardo10	Martinez15

HOME GAMES Pitching Rotation

Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3
Augusta	Alcantara17	Lauer15	Martinez16
Chicago	Luzardo11	Lauer16	Peterson12
St. Louis	Luzardo12	Lauer17	Peterson13
Virginia Beach	Martinez17	Lauer18	Peterson14

HOME GAMES Pitching Rotation

Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4
Cabo Del Sol	Peterson15	Luzardo13	Alcantara18	Lauer19
Oxnard BBs	Peterson16	Luzardo14	Alcantara19	Lauer20
Las Vegas	Peterson17	Luzardo15	Alcantara20	Martinez18

Managing the Starters

This year is a bit different regarding how to manage Utah starting pitching. Each starter will have a **minimum required number of innings to pitch** each game. So, the whole rule of 'remove' after giving up ≥ 5 runs only applies after the minimum innings pitched has been reached, and before the maximum number of innings pitched arrives. **This happens regardless of whether my starters go into dots.** The hope with most of Utah's starters is to tolerate up to about 4 to 5 runs early (< 5 innings) and be able to **turn it over to the bullpen for the last 3-4 innings.** **Alcantara**, even in dots, is better than anything I have in my bullpen except **Vesia**, and **Minter** vs. LH.

Starting Pitcher Overview

Sandy Alcantara (SP) 229 IP (Should have a CG in almost all games) 20 Starts (Min=9 Max=10)	Won the Cy Young in 2022. Lights out vs. LH, and very good vs. RH. Leave him in to pitch into the 9 th ... but if he's in dots in the 9th, and Utah is winning by 1-2 runs AND you have LH hitters coming to bat...then, and only then, do a compare with Vesia and Minter ...and based on that comparison, have the best pitcher pitch the final few outs. Otherwise, Alcantara pitches the ENTIRE GAME regardless of what happens.
Eric Lauer* (SP) 159 IP 20 Starts (Min=4 Max=7**)	He gets 20 starts, but he's my 5 th best starter. Pitches a minimum of 4 innings, and a maximum of 7** (** unless Utah is up by 5+ runs where he can continue pitching batter by batter beyond the 7 th inning...and then remove if the lead drops to less than 5. Pull after the 4 th inning if in dots. Pull after the 4 th inning, if he's given up ≥ 5 runs.
Nick Martinez (SP) 106 IP 18 Starts (Min=5 Max=6)	He's my 3 rd best starter. Pitches a minimum of 5 innings (regardless of dots), and a maximum of 6 innings. Balanced card. You can go to the bullpen in the 6 th if he's in dots or has given up ≥ 5 runs. Comes out after 6 innings even if he has a no hitter.
David Peterson* (SP) 106 IP 17 Starts (Min=4 Max=6)	He's my 4 th best starter. Pitches a minimum of 4 innings (regardless of dots), and a maximum of 6 innings. Better vs. LH hitting. You can go to the bullpen in the 5 th or 6 th if he's in dots or has given up ≥ 5 runs. Comes out after 6 innings.
Jesus Luzardo* (SP) 100 IP 15 Starts (Min=6 Max=7)	He's my 2 nd best starter. Lights out vs. LH, and good vs. RH. Pitches a minimum of 6 innings each start (regardless) and a maximum of 7 innings (regardless). He comes out in the 7 th if he's in dots, or has given up ≥ 5 runs.

Managing the Bullpen (Close Game = +/- 3 runs)

Three Batter Minimum Rule: This year, UTP's bullpen is decent, and follow the guidance below. If you beat the

match-up, so be it. When reviewing who the next three batters are... Early in the game (innings 5-7), **Elder** vs. $\geq 50\%$ RH; **De Jong** vs. $\geq 50\%$ RH; or **Loup*** vs. $\geq 50\%$ LH. In a close game with runners on, **Barnes** can be used to get an out or two in an inning. For late in the game (innings 8-9) I like **Minter*** vs both RH and LH, and **Vesia** as the one inning closer/game-is-tied type of pitcher.

Given this is a DH league, and my starters having a minimum IPs per game, the bullpen gets ready for action in the 5th or later in the game. If a starter gets injured (**Luzardo** has a 4 injury rating), **Elder** comes in to pitch before the 5th.

Relief Pitchers' Roles

Closers (8th and 9th innings)	A committee of two LH pitchers. Minter* (70 IP) is a two-inning guy entering in the 8 th and 9 th inning to close out a tight game that is ± 2 runs or tied. Vesia* (54 IP) is the <u>primary closer</u> who can pitch the 8 th , but mostly insert in the 9 th when Utah is tied or has 1-3 run lead.
High Leverage Situations in Close Games (to get one to three outs with you having runners in scoring positions in a tight game).	Barnes (40 IP; +9 hold rating) early in the game (innings 5-7) and Minter* (70 IP) late vs. $\geq 50\%$ LH lineups. Barnes should be limited to two appearances per series with no more than $1^{2/3}$ innings usage. De Jong is the alternative.
Primary Set-up Pitchers (6th and 7th innings)	Use compare feature to select De Jong (72 IP), Loup* (59 IP) in the tight games. Elder (54 IP) to a lesser degree when facing $\geq 50\%$ RH hitting.
Specialist vs. LH Hitters	Late in the game (8 th -9 th), it's Minter (70 IP). Early in the game (5 th -7 th) use Loup when $\geq 50\%$ LH hitters.
Specialist vs. RH Hitters	Use compare feature for De Jong (72 IP) or Elder (54 IP) when your line-up is $\geq 50\%$ RH.
Long or Early Relief (mop-up)	My starters all have minimum required innings to pitch. Elder can enter early should there be an injury. Luzardo has a 4 injury rating. To finish out a game with leads of ± 5 runs, insert De Jong or Loup or Elder .
Very Rare Events	By mid-season, I'll be monitoring SP Martinez and Petersons' innings, and if they are not starting in a given series, and their usage trajectories are coming in low, they may relieve one inning <u>in a home series</u> if my bullpen is depleted.

Usage Concerns: None. Follow my directions above, and if needed, I can limit IP during my home games. **Alcantara** will complete most, if not all games he starts. His workload eases any usage concerns of my bullpen.

Souvenir
Alley

