

RESEARCH NOTE / 02

Organizational Philosophy Analysis

Los Angeles Dodgers

Andrew Friedman era | Independent qualitative assessment | October 2026

Central interpretation. The Dodgers appear to combine player-development resources, roster flexibility, selective acquisition of established stars, and pitching depth to sustain contention across multiple seasons. This is an interpretation of observable decisions, not a statement of confidential organizational policy.

Executive summary

A recurring feature of the Dodgers under Andrew Friedman is the use of multiple pathways to build and maintain a competitive major-league roster. Internal development supplies players and replacement depth, while trades and free-agent acquisitions add established performance. The organization also makes frequent use of roster flexibility to respond to injuries, changing roles, and uncertain player outcomes.

On offense, the analysis focuses on strike-zone decisions and contact skills as acquisition and development indicators. On the pitching side, it examines pitch-level strengths and deployment choices. In both cases, player-development capacity is treated as a possible source of added value rather than proof that any single profile will improve.

The primary tradeoff is that system-wide resilience can introduce individual uncertainty. Frequent role changes, roster movement, substantial payroll commitments, and the need for continuous player-development results create costs that must be evaluated alongside performance.

Analytical framework

Decision area	Observed approach / interpretation	Main unresolved question
Offense	Value zone judgment and contact as indicators of a potentially repeatable offensive foundation.	How much independent predictive value do those traits carry after age, level, and impact are controlled?
Pitching	Identify strong individual pitches and consider changes in pitch mix and role.	Can a pitch-level advantage be preserved across workloads and opponent adjustments?
Roster construction	Use depth, flexibility, and optionable players to replace missing performance.	What is the cost of churn, role disruption, and 40-man constraints?
Acquisitions	Combine internal production with major trade and free-agent investments.	When is buying established performance preferable to prospect risk?

1 | Offensive acquisition and development

This evaluation places particular emphasis on hitters who demonstrate strike-zone judgment, manageable swing-and-miss, and the ability to produce competitive plate appearances. These traits may support a more predictable offensive baseline, but walk and strikeout rates cannot independently establish chase rate, contact quality, or future productivity.

Max Muncy: a useful case, but not proof of exclusive Dodgers development

Muncy's move from Oakland to Los Angeles illustrates the possible value of pairing an existing plate-discipline foundation with changes in offensive approach. Contemporary reporting documents mechanical work Muncy undertook with his father before joining the Dodgers and subsequent refinements to his offensive approach within the organization [1]. It would therefore overstate the evidence to attribute his entire power transformation to Dodgers coaching.

The broader principle remains relevant: an evaluator may find players whose underlying skills are better than their current outcomes. Whether improvements are attributable to coaching, player-led changes, health, opportunity, or all of the above must be established rather than assumed.

Will Smith and the role of internal development

Will Smith provides a separate example of a homegrown player whose offensive contribution became an important part of the major-league roster. His progression can be examined as evidence that established organizational development processes may contribute to both floor and ceiling. Without a comparative study, however, it cannot establish that the club systematically develops power more effectively than every other organization.

2 | Pitching acquisition and deployment

A pitch-level approach identifies characteristics such as velocity, movement, release properties, extension, location, and a pitch's ability to generate misses or weak contact. Rather than treating a pitcher's prior ERA as a complete description, an evaluator can ask whether a different mix or deployment would better exploit existing strengths.

Evan Phillips is an illustrative hypothesis: his success as a Dodgers reliever invites a closer look at sweeper/slider usage, pitch quality, and role fit. A validated case study would compare season-by-season usage and performance against a relevant baseline before crediting a specific pitch-mix adjustment with the improvement.

Durability still matters. The organization can value pitchers capable of providing a stable workload while also building replacements for periods of injury or inconsistent performance.

3 | Risk management and organizational depth

A 162-game season creates exposure to injury, workload limits, performance regression, and uneven prospect development. Carrying an optionable group of pitchers and versatile position players gives an organization more ways to respond to those events without making a full roster reconstruction.

Minor League options allow eligible players to move off the active roster without being removed from the 40-man roster, subject to existing rules and limits [2][3]. This is a capacity-management tool, not a literal expansion of the 26-man active roster.

Mechanism	Potential benefit	Associated cost or risk
Optionable depth	Access to replacement innings and short-term positional coverage.	Player role uncertainty, restrictions on options, development continuity.
Defensive versatility	Ability to cover multiple positions without a one-for-one replacement.	Possible performance tradeoffs at less familiar positions.
Injured list management	Maintains roster functionality during medically necessary absences.	Availability cannot be planned precisely; roster rules still constrain decisions.
High-end talent acquisition	Higher current expected contribution in key lineup/rotation roles.	Payroll, aging, injury risk and foregone alternatives.

4 | How the model has evolved

The working interpretation is one of expansion rather than replacement: the Dodgers continue to develop players while also using financial capacity to acquire established stars. The acquisitions of Mookie Betts, Freddie Freeman, Shohei Ohtani and Yoshinobu Yamamoto show the prominence of the latter channel in the current roster-building mix.

Sustained success generally reduces access to the top of the amateur draft. That does not imply a decline in scouting or development quality. The organization’s ability to sustain a pipeline while making expensive major-league acquisitions is a central feature of this interpretation. The club’s official front-office profile also describes an emphasis on farm-system and organizational development [4].

5 | Tradeoffs and failure modes

- Roster churn: movement between roles or levels may affect player routine, preparation, and confidence. This is a plausible cost, not an established causal explanation for any one player’s results.
- Development dependence: a model built around extracting more from players requires sustained coaching, data quality, and organizational continuity.
- Pitcher availability: replacement depth reduces exposure but does not eliminate the cumulative cost of injuries.
- Postseason uncertainty: consistent decision quality cannot guarantee outcomes in short series.

Interpretation & remaining tests

Working conclusion. A large component of sustained contention may come from having several viable ways to replace or improve roster value, rather than expecting individual players to remain healthy or develop on schedule.

What would strengthen this analysis

- Create a comparable dataset of plate-discipline metrics for Dodgers acquisitions versus league or peer-team baselines.
- Measure pitcher pitch-mix changes before and after acquisition, accounting for role, handedness, velocity and sample size.
- Track player option usage, injured-list days, depth replacements and corresponding team performance by season.
- Compare payroll allocation and prospect outputs with other consistent contenders using a common time window.

Scope and limitations

This is qualitative organizational analysis developed from public information and the author's interpretation. It is not an internal operations document, a validated causal study, or a claim of access to proprietary Dodgers practices. Stronger causal conclusions require a specified sample, comparator, and alternative explanations.

References & document basis

[1] MLB (2018), Muncy development and adjustments

<https://www.mlb.com/news/how-max-muncy-has-become-a-sluggish-for-dodgers-c281819544>

[2] MLB Glossary, Minor League options

<https://www.mlb.com/glossary/transactions/minor-league-options>

[3] MLB Glossary, 40-man roster

<https://www.mlb.com/glossary/transactions/40-man-roster>

[4] Dodgers official profile, Andrew Friedman

<https://www.mlb.com/dodgers/team/front-office/andrew-friedman>