

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

---

The Spectator Online

Newspapers

---

10-8-2021

## Seattle Mariners: So Close, but Room To Improve

Matt Price

*Seattle University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online>

---

### Recommended Citation

Price, Matt, "Seattle Mariners: So Close, but Room To Improve" (2021). *The Spectator Online*. 420.  
<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/420>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Newspapers at ScholarWorks @ SeattleU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Spectator Online by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ SeattleU.



# Seattle Mariners: So Close, but Room To Improve

Matt Price, Sports & Opinion Editor

The Seattle Mariners entered the 2021 Major League Baseball season with the longest streak of not making the postseason in all of American professional sports. Entering the 2021 campaign, the Mariners strived to improve their record after they finished with a disappointing 27-30 record last year.

At the beginning of April, I talked to multiple Mariner fans who thought that the Mariners were going to produce another mediocre campaign. Sports Illustrated even predicted that they would finish the season (69-93), a record worthy of a rebuilding club. However, the Mariners fought on despite the media not believing in them. Heading into the 2021 All-Star Break July 13, the Mariners were exceeding local expectations with a record of 48-43 and sitting seven games back of first place in the American League West. Unfortunately for the Mariners, their chances of winning the division this year were slim. This is because the Houston Astros dominate the division, winning the division title for the fourth time in the last five years.

By the start of Sept., the Mariners sat a measly three and a half games out of the wild card. The Toronto Blue Jays lurked behind at one game back with the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees harboring the two wild-card spots. By Friday, Sept. 30, the race was tight heading into a tough weekend against the Los Angeles Angels at T-Mobile Park. For the best chance of making the playoffs, the Mariners needed to sweep the Angels and hope for the teams in front of them in the standings to lose. For instance, the Blue Jays needed to beat the Baltimore Orioles to jump the Mariners and get into the playoffs.

Ahead by one game, the Boston Red Sox were fortunate to play the underpowered Washington Nationals. Earlier this year, the Nationals traded the likely National League Cy Young winner Max Scherzer and superstar shortstop Tre Turner to the Los Angeles Dodgers, setting themselves up for a rebuild. The Red Sox subsequently swept the Nationals securing their place in the playoffs. Sadly, the Mariners dropped 2 out of 3 games to the Angels ending their season Oct. 3. Even with a sold-out crowd all weekend, the team was not able to push past the mediocre Angels to secure a playoff berth.

Nevertheless, Seattle professional baseball has a bright future with young and highly rated prospects such as starting pitcher Logan Gilbert and outfielder Jarred Kelenic. Gilbert accumulated a 6-5 record with an ERA of 4.68, decent statistics for a rookie pitcher playing his first full major league season. Kelenic, on the other hand, debuted May 13, 2021, putting up a low batting average of .177 in 333 at-bats. With the rookies getting MLB experience and leaving room for improvement, next season could look different.

As the Mariners drastically improved this season from years past, Seattle manager Scott Servais told The Athletic that he was proud of the season his club produced.



“Wow, what a season for the Mariners and our group really taking a step forward organizationally, our future is very, very bright here,” Servais told Corey Brock of The Athletic.

“I say all that and you’re still disappointed today to get that close and not cross the finish line and breakthrough to the playoffs.”

In order for the Mariners to stay in contention, they need to pick up experienced players to continue to compete with top teams in the American League. Their most glaring needs are to fortify their bullpen and the middle of their lineup. The Mariners should look to spend money on veterans to build a team with a better chance to break their abysmal postseason record.

However, their first priority should be locking up star 3rd baseman Kyle Seager. The Mariners hold a player option for his contract, but it is unclear whether or not the team will pick it up. If they don’t, Seager is expected to leave in free agency and possibly go to a rival American League organization. Seager is a legend in Seattle, having spent his entire career playing for the Mariners as their most productive hitter of the past decade.

Personally, I would not be surprised if Seager left. A possible solution for the Mariners, if they do not want to re-sign him long-term, would be to pick up his player option for next season. Then trade him before the 2022 season for young pitching prospects. At the age of 33, Seager is moving closer to the tail end of his career. After putting up 35 home runs and 101 RBIs this season, he could garner a significant amount of interest from teams throughout the MLB.

In baseball, pitching is the key to success. Without any nationally recognized pitchers since Felix Hernandez, the Mariners should look to improve in that area. Furthermore, their bullpen has been okay but is in need of improvement. If Seattle does not improve their pitching, we could see the Mariners out of the mixture of teams fighting for a playoff spot for years to come.