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AL East at mid-August 2026: Rays running away on close games while Yankees and Red Sox own the run differentials

Tampa Bay leads the AL East by six games at 72–46 despite the division's worst run differential among contenders; the Yankees (+82) and Red Sox (+83) out-pitch everyone but trail. FanGraphs gives the Rays a 78.5% division title chance and 100% playoff odds.

7 min read · 10 sources

2026 season | AL East | New York Yankees | playoff odds | run differential | standings

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The 2026 AL East has settled into two tiers as of Tuesday, August 11: Tampa Bay is running away with the division at **72–46 (.610)**, six games clear of the Yankees, while Boston lurks two behind New York in the wild-card pecking order; Baltimore and Toronto are effectively out at 15.5 and 16 games back. The twist is that the standings and the underlying numbers disagree — the Rays lead the division while posting the worst run differential of the three contenders, and the Yankees and Red Sox have nearly identical +82/+83 marks that say both are better than their records.

Standings snapshot, through Monday Aug 10

All five teams had played 118–120 games when Monday's slate closed. Records, differentials and expected records come from MLB.com's official standings page, updated Aug 11 at 1:16 AM ET[1], corroborated by ESPN[2] and Breakaway Stats[3].

TEAM	W-L	PCT	GB	WCGB	L10	STREAK	RS	RA	DIFF	X-W/L
Tampa Bay Rays	72–46	.610	—	—	8–2	W7	529	479	+50	64–54
New York Yankees	66–52	.559	6.0	+6.5	5–5	L1	531	449	+82	68–50
Boston Red Sox	64–54	.542	8.0	+4.5	7–3	L3	524	441	+83	68–50
Baltimore Orioles	57–62	.479	15.5	3.0	4–6	L1	533	570	-37	56–63
Toronto Blue Jays	57–63	.475	16.0	3.5	6–4	W1	471	529	-58	54–66

6.0
Rays' division lead (GB)

+83
Best AL East run diff (BOS)
NYY +82

78.5%
Rays' FanGraphs division odds

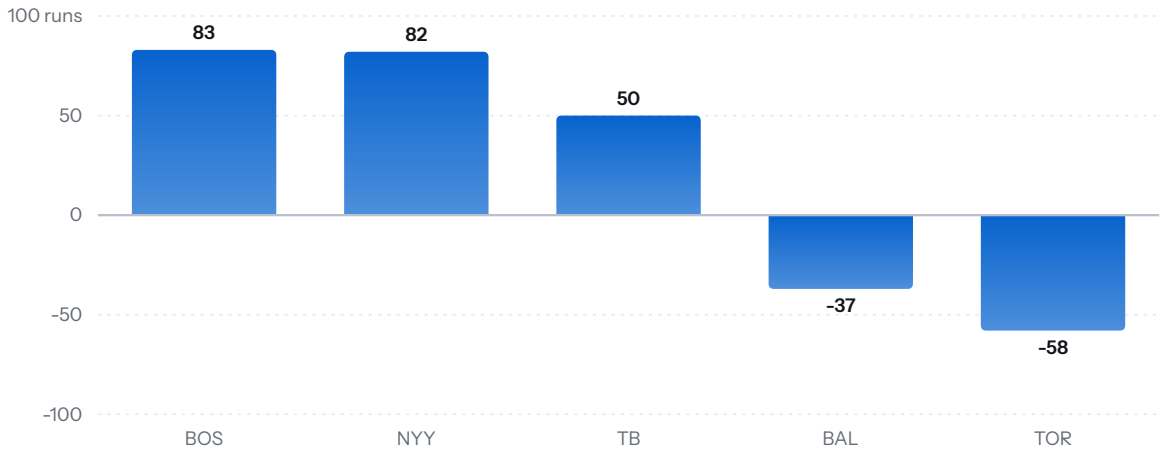
100%
Rays' playoff odds (FG)

Boston's L3 streak masks the season's best run: the Red Sox are 32–7 since June 25, a stretch that included winning streaks of 15 and nine games and pulled them back from a 32–46 start[4]. The Yankees' lone loss in the L10 was Sunday's 2–1 defeat to Atlanta[4].

Run differential: the standings' dirty secret

The headline figure of this race is that **the division leader has the worst run differential of the three contenders**, and by a wide margin:

AL East run differential, Aug 11 2026



Source: MLB.com standings, through Aug 10 games.

Tampa's +50 is a product of modest offense (529 runs scored, third in the division) and merely good pitching (479 allowed) — yet the Rays are 72–46. Their expected record based on run differential is **64–54**, meaning they have outperformed their Pythagorean projection by eight games, the biggest such gap in the division[1][5]. They are winning the close ones: at 41–18 at

home, they have comfortably the best home record in the AL East, and their 8–2 L10 includes a seven-game win streak[1].

The Yankees and Red Sox, by contrast, are both "underperforming" their run differentials. New York's +82 (531 scored, 449 allowed) and Boston's +83 (524 scored, 441 allowed) both project to **68–50**, two to four games better than their actual records[1][5]. Boston's 441 runs allowed are the fewest in the division and among the stingiest in the AL; New York's MLB-best 3.30 team ERA for the season is the engine of its +82[4]. The Yankees are the rare team better on the road (37–26) than at home (29–26)[1].

Playoff odds: three projection systems, one conclusion

FanGraphs' FanGraphs-mode odds (as of Aug 11) give Tampa Bay a **78.5% chance to win the division and 100.0% to make the playoffs**, with an AL-best 9.1% World Series probability — a hair behind the Yankees' 9.5%[6]. Baseball-Reference's 25,000-simulation model (through Aug 10) agrees: Rays 79.2% division, >99.9% postseason[5]. The two New York/Boston teams are nearly locked into wild-card berths; the real battle is the AL's third and final wild-card spot, currently held by Texas.

TEAM	WIN DIV (FG)	CLINCH BYE (FG)	MAKE PLAYOFFS (FG)	MAKE PLAYOFFS (B-R)	WIN WS (FG)
Rays	78.5%	78.5%	100.0%	>99.9%	9.1%
Yankees	15.8%	15.8%	99.1%	99.4%	9.5%
Red Sox	5.7%	5.7%	94.1%	98.4%	6.8%
Blue Jays	0.0%	0.0%	8.4%	8.7%	0.4%
Orioles	0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	6.5%	0.4%

	New York Yankees	VS	Boston Red Sox
Record	66–52	·	64–54
Run differential	+82	·	+83
Team ERA (season)	3.30 (MLB best)	·	~2.90 since Jun 25
FG make playoffs	99.1%	·	94.1%
FG win division	15.8%	·	5.7%
Through Aug 10 games; ERA figures per NY Daily News.			

The odds moved noticeably even in the last week. On Monday morning, FanGraphs had the Yankees at 98.9% playoff odds and 17.3% to win the division, with the Rays at 74.7% and Boston 7.9%[4]; a day of results nudged those to 99.1/15.8, 78.5 and 5.7[6]. DraftKings futures tell the same story: Rays **-20000** to make the playoffs, Yankees -10000, Red Sox -2000, with Boston shortening sharply over the week[7]. For the World Series, DraftKings has the Dodgers (+160)

clear favorites, the Yankees (+750) the top AL team, then Milwaukee (+950), Atlanta (10–1), the Rays (11–1) and Boston and the Cubs (12–1)[8].

KEY FINDING

The Yankees' 9.5% World Series odds top the AL at FanGraphs — the model values their +82 differential and MLB-best ERA more than the six-game division deficit. The Rays' path is the opposite: near-certain division crown, but only the AL's third-best title odds.

What's driving each team

Tampa Bay is having a 2025-Dodgers-style "good, not great, but clutch" season. The deadline brought right-hander Freddy Peralta from the Mets (pounded for seven runs in 3.2 innings in his debut) and catcher Liam Hicks, who hit a grand slam in his first game; reliever Tyler Wells has thrown 3.1 scoreless innings in two outings[4]. The Rays returned to Tropicana Field this season after a year at Steinbrenner Field following Hurricane Milton damage, and under new owner Patrick Zalupski they own the AL's best record[9].

Boston's 32–7 heater has been built on a **2.90 ERA since June 25**, the second-best mark in the majors in that span[4]. Their deadline was aggressive: they sent three of their top five prospects to Baltimore for three-time All-Star catcher Adley Rutschman, who was on the IL with left wrist inflammation but could debut as soon as Tuesday[4]. Breakout slugger Curtis Mead fractured his left wrist in his team debut, muting the early returns.

New York's story is Judge-less offense strangling elite pitching: MLB-best 3.30 ERA, but 3.8 runs per game in 59 games since Aaron Judge's May 31 rib fracture, versus 5.2 with him; the Yankees are 30–29 without their captain[4]. Judge has been cleared for light activity and says he'll be back this season, but there's no timeline; Cody Bellinger and Giancarlo Stanton are also out[4]. Deadline additions Luis García Jr. and Heliot Ramos have been cold, while 21-year-old shortstop George Lombard Jr. is 5-for-17 with two homers in five games[4].

Baltimore said it wanted to buy and sell, then only sold — shipping Rutschman, Taylor Ward and Tyler Wells out at the deadline[10]. Their +533 runs scored are the most in the division; the problem is the 570 allowed, worst among the five[1]. FanGraphs still gives them a 9.0% playoff shot, narrowly ahead of Toronto's 8.4%, but both division odds are 0.0%[6]. **Toronto** walked the buy-sell line with six deadline deals, selling Kevin Gausman (to the Cubs), Daulton Varsho and Jeff Hoffman while buying starter José Soriano and taking shots on Jameson Taillon and Spencer Arrighetti; GM Ross Atkins conceded after the deadline that "I feel that I've let them down to some degree"[10].

31 May 2026 — **Judge's last game**
Rib fracture; Yankees go 30–29 without him

25 Jun 2026 — **Red Sox turn**
32–7 run begins; 2.90 ERA over next 39 games

3 Aug 2026 **Trade deadline**
Rutschman to BOS; TB adds Peralta, Hicks; TOR makes 6 deals; BAL sells

10 Aug 2026 **Rays at 71–46**
Yankees 5.5 GB entering Monday; FG: TB 74.7% div, NYY 17.3%

11 Aug 2026 **Current snapshot**
TB 72–46 (6.0 GB NYY); FG: TB 78.5% div, 100% playoffs

Remaining schedule and the wild-card picture

The schedule favors the Yankees. Per Tankathon, New York's remaining opponents carry a **.488 winning percentage — the sixth-easiest slate in MLB** — while Boston's (.492) ranks 18th-hardest and Tampa's (.496) 14th[4]. Critically, the Yankees still have four games each against the Red Sox and Rays, all at Yankee Stadium[4]. That head-to-head runway is why FanGraphs keeps New York's division odds at 15.8% despite the six-game gap.

The more immediate fight is the wild-card order. The Yankees (+6.5 WCGB) and Red Sox (+4.5) hold the top two AL wild-card spots; the third is a five-team scrum featuring Texas (currently in), Detroit, Minnesota, Cleveland and Baltimore[1][7]. As of now the Yankees and Red Sox are projected to meet in the best-of-three Wild Card round — a rematch of last year's series, which the Yankees won but which compromised their ALDS pitching[4]. Winning the division would dodge that round entirely via the bye, which is the practical prize of catching Tampa.

CAUTION

Odds figures shift daily and the sources disagree slightly: NY Daily News' Monday-morning FanGraphs numbers (74.7%/17.3%/7.9%) predate Monday's results and differ from the live page (78.5%/15.8%/5.7%). Treat all percentages as a one-day snapshot, not a forecast set in stone.

Bottom line

Tampa Bay is the class of the AL East on the scoreboard — 72–46, a six-game lead, 100% playoff odds — but its +50 run differential says the lead is flattered by close-game luck, and FanGraphs rates the Yankees' title chances higher. The practical picture: the Rays win the division and take the bye; the Yankees and Red Sox take the top two wild cards and likely play each other in October; Baltimore and Toronto, both deadline sellers, have single-digit playoff odds. The number to watch over the next six weeks is the Yankees' four-game home sets against Boston and Tampa — the only runway either chaser has to make the race real.

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