Sports

Photo of the Day | Cheerleading



The UConn cheerleading team forms a pyramid on the field at Pratt & Whitney Stadium in East Hartford, CT. The cheerleading team performed at every football game last year.

PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Why The New York Yankees Are Waiting On Fernando Cruz

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When the New York Yankees activated pitcher Clarke Schmidt from the 60-day injured list on Wednesday, they made a curious corresponding move to clear a 40-man roster spot.

Instead of transferring reliever Fernando Cruz onto the 60-day IL, they designated fan favorite Oswaldo Cabrera for assignment.

The team made a similar move when outfielder Aaron Judge returned on Sept. 7. Instead of transferring Cruz to the 60-day IL, former top 100 prospect Chase Hampton was designated for assignment and subsequently claimed off waivers by the Washington Nationals.

Cruz has been on the 15-day IL since Aug. 26 after being diagnosed with a partial tear of the ulnar collateral ligament in his throwing arm. While surgery was on the table and still may be at a later date, the right-hander has decided instead to wait it out and attempt to return to the field this season, according to Greg Joyce of the New York Post.

Cabrera has played every defensive position besides catcher in the majors and has posted a solid .288/.345/.444 slash line for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre this season. Combine that with the fact that the 27-year-old is being paid just $1.2 million in his first offseason of arbitration and has one option year remaining, and there's a good chance that Cabrera will also be lost via waivers.

There are arguments as to why Hampton and Cabrera were expendable. Hampton had scuffled to an 8.88 ERA in 55 frames across three different minor league affiliates in 2026 after returning from Tommy John surgery. Cabrera appeared in just three MLB contests for the Yankees in 2026 after a broken ankle wiped out most of his 2025 season.

Still, an organization wants to avoid losing assets for free. Exposing both to waivers is a telling indicator that the Yankees think Cruz might have a chance to get back on the mound this season; at least, they are hoping he does. Cruz returning is a contingency the Yankees are counting on after not swinging a deal for bullpen help at the 2026 trade deadline.

Though the Yankees led MLB bullpens with a 3.11 ERA on the season going into Wednesday, most of the heavy lifting has been done by just four arms.

Closer David Bednar is tied for fifth in baseball with 34 saves. The pending free agent has already appeared in 61 games this season, a number inching ever closer to his career-high 69 appearances from a year ago.

Setup men Paul Blackburn and Brent Headrick have been revelations this year, each maintaining a sub-2.00 ERA. Both are also among the top 10 in innings thrown by a reliever. Blackburn is fifth with 78 2/3 relief frames under his belt, while Headrick is tied for seventh with 75 2/3.

The fourth truly reliable member of the Yankees bullpen this season had been Cruz, who spun 54 2/3 innings to the tune of a 3.13 ERA across 61 games in his second season as a Yankee. The former Cincinnati Red joined Bednar, Blackburn, Headrick and long reliever Ryan Yarbrough as the only five pitchers in the Yankees' bullpen with both a positive WAR mark and at least 30 innings thrown for the team.

With a 0.1 WAR mark and 3.58 ERA, Yarbrough is the consummate depth arm, though he profiles best as the last pitcher in a postseason bullpen. Tim Hill has been typically durable but has struggled to a 4.79 ERA in 56 1/3 innings. 2025 deadline acquisitions Camilo Doval and Jake Bird were both traded away at this year's deadline after posting suspect results. Late season additions Michael Fulmer and John Schreiber have both been steady in their initial auditions but have not been around long enough to fully prove their mettle in high leverage situations, with Schreiber showing more promise than the 2016 Rookie of the Year.

Schmidt himself is returning from a 14-month absence after last pitching in the big leagues on July 3, 2025. That layoff was the result of the internal brace procedure performed on his UCL just days later. The right-hander will be inserted into the bullpen mix and can be a leverage option but will first need to shake off the rust, as demonstrated by his return on Wednesday in which he allowed two hits and struck out two in 2/3 of an inning.



Clarke Schmidt walks on the field. He has been activated from the 60-day injured list and is now healthy.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @CLARKESCHMIDT ON INSTAGRAM

Even with the internal brace now an option, UCL tears generally come with a minimum six-month layoff for pitchers. There are exceptions, as pitchers like former Yankees ace Masahiro Tanaka rehabbed a partially torn UCL in 2014 through a process of a platelet-rich plasma injection, arm exercises and a throwing program. Tanaka suffered the injury in early July and returned in late September after a layoff of over two months while continuing to pitch with a partially torn UCL.

Cruz has been cleared to forego surgery by a doctor and received a cortisone shot, according to Brandon Kuty of The Athletic. Cruz said that he would begin throwing at the end of last week, according to Jorge Castillo of ESPN, though that had not occurred as of Sept. 13 according to MLB.com.

At 36 years old, the clock is ticking on Cruz's MLB career. Justin Verlander and Max Scherzer were MLB's only two players over the age of 39 on 2026 Opening Day. Cruz will be 37 for the majority of next season.

Whether Cruz undergoes potential surgery now or this offseason, at least a large chunk of his 2027 season would most likely be wiped out. The looming lockout has the potential to cancel the 2027 season for everyone. Between those two factors, there's a solid chance that the next time Cruz pitches after 2026, he is 38 years old.

With the Yankees holding the third best odds in the league to win the 2026 World Series according to ESPN and the bullpen the clear weak link on the roster, it makes sense both Cruz and the Yankees are holding out hope that the reliever makes a much-needed reappearance in October.