



THE DENVER DYNAMITE

A Franchise History of The Big League — 2001 to 2031

Six championships, the most in the league. Eleven second-place finishes.

In the style of Geoffrey C. Ward

PROLOGUE

The Charge

Denver was built by men who needed to move rock. The city sat where the plains ran out and the Front Range began, and everything that made it rich was on the other side of that wall, and the only way through a wall of granite is to drill a hole, pack it, run a fuse and stand well back. A stick of dynamite is not a violent thing to look at. It sits in a crate in a shed and does nothing at all, for weeks, for a season, for as long as you leave it there. Then, for about a second, it is the most powerful object in the county.

The Denver Dynamite have won six championships in The Big League, more than any other club in the league's thirty-one years. They have also finished second in their own division eleven times, and in three of those six championship seasons they were not even the best team on their own street.

That is the whole story, and it is worth saying plainly at the start, because a franchise this good is usually remembered for the wrong reasons. Denver does not win the long argument. Denver wins the short one.

I

Thin Air

2001 – 2007

The Dynamite opened in 2001 with sixty-seven wins and finished sixth, and then they finished fifth, seventh, seventh, sixth, fifth and seventh. Seven seasons, no Octobers, five of the first five under .500. It is the longest postseason drought in franchise history and nothing since has come close to it.

The bottom was 2004: fifty-seven wins and a hundred and five losses, the second-worst season the club has ever played. Tom Lemieux was the best pitcher on those early teams, a fourteenth-round pick who threw seven hundred and twenty-three innings in four years with a 3.09 earned run average and finished 32-46 because nobody scored for him. Vincenzo Padovano and Sam Saewert took turns at first base. Tommy Jones played five years at shortstop and hit .234. Andres Capuchino went 32-48. Three general managers came and went in five seasons: Hemlock G, then Barry L for part of 2002, then Joe P.

There were two pieces of good news in that decade and neither one arrived on schedule. In 2003 a tenth-round pick out of the previous year's draft, two hundred and sixtieth overall, threw six innings in

three appearances. His name was Ricardo Anguiano and he would be in the Hall of Fame by 2022. And in 2005 the club hired a general manager named Jay Ausburger, who is still there twenty-seven years later.

By 2006 the Dynamite won eighty-five games. In 2007 they slid back to seventy-six. Then the drilling stopped and the charge went in.

II

Horsfall

2008 – 2015

Aaron Horsfall was the twelfth pick of the 2003 draft, a first baseman out of the club's own system, and he came up in June of 2008 and hit .333 with thirty-seven home runs and eighty-eight runs batted in a hundred and nine games. He was named Rookie of the Year of the Ice Conference. Denver won ninety-two games, finished second, and went to October for the first time.

They went out quickly that year, and they missed altogether in 2009 at eighty-five wins, and then for six seasons the Dynamite were as good as anyone in The Big League.

In 2010 they won ninety-one and finished one game behind the Galveston Gremlins, took the wild card round behind Mike High and the division round behind Horsfall, and lost the conference championship series. Jeremy McMartin had come over from the Atlanta Smashers, now the Cincinnati Regents, and hit .294. Eric Ryan won fifteen. The club drew nearly three million.

The Autumn of 2011

A hundred and nine wins and fifty-three losses. The first division title in franchise history, in the eleventh season of trying.

Horsfall hit .332 with forty-four home runs, a hundred and thirty-two runs batted in and forty doubles, and was named Most Valuable Player of the Ice Conference. McMartin hit .330 with thirty-four home runs. Antonio Reyes, an undrafted outfielder who had come up the year before and hit .346 in fifty-five games, played a hundred and forty-six and hit .314 with fifty-two doubles. Anguiano, back in Denver after four years away, went 19-7. George Reed, in the middle of three seasons that produced a 53-17 record in this uniform, won the ball games nobody else could.

They beat the Milwaukee Mobsters for the championship. Horsfall was the most valuable player of the series. Three and a half million people came to Dynamite Stadium, the most the club had ever drawn.

They did it again in 2012. A hundred and two wins, Anguiano at 23-5 with a 3.15 earned run average, Horsfall at .334 with two hundred and twenty-four hits, Reyes with sixty doubles and a hundred and nine runs batted in, and a win over the Big Horn Rams in the final, with Shikou Yasutake taking the series. Back-to-back. Only the Atlanta Smashers, in 2002 and 2003, had done it before them.

Then it curdled, the way these things do, one piece at a time and all at once. Ninety-nine wins and a division title in 2013, and out in the first series they played. Ninety-two in 2014, a wild card round won, Antonio Reyes hitting .349 with two hundred and twenty-seven hits and fifty-eight doubles, which is the finest season any hitter has had for this club. Then nothing.

In 2015 Denver won seventy-eight. Horsfall hit .277 and left for San Antonio. McMartin hit .290 and retired, with a thousand and sixty-six games and a .301 average in Denver and a Hall of Fame plaque waiting for him in 2020. The whole core aged out in the same two winters.

III

Fifty-Six

2016 – 2017

Fifty-six and a hundred and six.

It is the worst season in the history of the franchise, and it came fourteen months after a ninety-two-win team, and it happened to a club with the same general manager who had built the ninety-two-win team and would build the next four championships. One million seven hundred and seventy-seven thousand people came out, the smallest crowd Denver has ever drawn.

Sixty-seven wins in 2017. Two years, forty-nine games under .500 for every hundred and sixty-two played.

Two things worth keeping from that wreck. Jim Sobieski, the twenty-fifth pick of the 2013 draft, made his first thirty-six starts in 2017 and struck out two hundred men on a ninety-five-loss team. And Jay Ausburger did not lose his job, which in most organizations he would have.

IV

Fourteen Octobers

2018 – 2031

Since 2018 the Denver Dynamite have gone to the postseason every single year. Fourteen straight. They have won four championships in that stretch and lost two finals, and they have finished second in the Jade Division nine times.

The turn was immediate, and it came out of the wreck rather than around it. Jim Sobieski had thrown his first thirty-six starts on the ninety-five-loss team; by 2018 he was the front of a rotation. Halfway through that season Denver took Tyler Worthen off the Durham Dragons, now the Cincinnati Regents, a first-round pick who had not yet found the strike zone anywhere else, and he found it in the thin air. Ninety-one wins and a wild card berth, one year after sixty-seven.

Then a hundred and three in 2019, and a third-place finish, because Las Vegas won a hundred and six and Denver's own division had become the hardest place in baseball to finish first. Worthen went 17-5 with a 2.22 earned run average. Paullo Corredoura, an undrafted first baseman in his first full season, carried the wild card round, and would carry three more rounds before he was finished.

A hundred wins in 2020, second place, Aaron Vizenor taking the wild card round and Jason Blanc a Gold Glove. Two straight hundred-win summers and two Octobers that ended early, which nobody in Denver thought much about at the time. It was already becoming the shape of the thing.

And then 2021, which is the season everyone in this organization would like back.

One Hundred Eleven

The 2021 Dynamite won a hundred and eleven games and lost fifty-one. It is the best record in franchise history by one game and it has never been beaten. Paullo Corredoura was the best hitter, Worthen went 16-3 with a 2.53, Sobieski won fifteen, and Denver ran away with the division by a margin nobody had managed against them in a decade.

They were eliminated in the first series they played, and no player on the roster won a postseason honor of any kind that October.

The next year they won ninety-five, finished second behind the Tampa Bay Cannons, and won the whole thing.

The Back Door

Denver won championships in 2022, 2023, 2028 and 2031. Three of those four clubs did not win the Jade Division.

2022 is the purest version of it. Ninety-five wins, second behind the Tampa Bay Cannons, and then four rounds without losing one: Corredoura took the wild card, Chris Stewart the division, Frank Pedroza the conference, and Tim Doherty the final against the Big Horn Rams. Four rounds, four different men carrying them, and a club that had finished the summer five games behind the Tampa Bay Cannons, who had the best record in the conference and went out before the final.

2023 was the other kind of season entirely. A hundred and ten wins, the division taken outright, and a team that was plainly the best in baseball from April onward. Justin Gagliardi and Tim Doherty both took Silver Sluggers and Doherty a Gold Glove with it; Kevin Porter carried the division round and Corredoura the conference; Gagliardi finished it against the San Diego Seals. Of the six championships this franchise has won, it is one of only three taken from first place, and the only one since 2012.

Then the two that got away. In **2024** they won ninety-six, finished six games behind Rochester, ran through three rounds anyway — Porter the wild card, James Jimenez the division, Tim Shriver the conference — and lost the final to the San Antonio Chiles Picantes, now the Myrtle Beach Mermen. In **2025** they won a hundred and six, finished three behind Rochester, and did the same thing again: Dan Ochs, Tim Gooch and Frank Pedroza taking the three rounds, and the Virginia Rebels taking the last one. Two Octobers, six series won, and nothing to show for either.

2026 was the best team Denver had put on the field since 2021 and it drew the largest crowd in the club's history. A hundred and nine wins, the division, three million six hundred and thirteen thousand people through the gates, a Silver Slugger for Travis Williams, a Gold Glove for Jose Quintanilla, and Corredoura carrying one more round. It ended in the conference championship.

In **2027** they finished 99-63, the identical record to Rochester, and were placed second. Paul Stepp and Kevin Porter took Silver Sluggers. October ended early again.

2028 brought the fourth trophy, and it came the familiar way. A hundred wins, second again, and a run in which Victor Baez took the wild card round, D.J. Lord the division, Morgan Alison the conference and Kevin Porter the final against the Spokane Sasquatches. Porter had hit .285 with thirty-two home runs and ninety-three runs batted in that summer, the best season any Denver infielder has played, and he saved the rest of it for October.

In **2029** they finished 98-64. So did Rochester. Denver was second. Porter took another Silver Slugger and another wild card round, and the season ended before the final.

In **2030** Dustin Potter went 15-6 with a 2.14 earned run average and two hundred and seventy strikeouts and won the Cy Young Award of the Ice Conference, the first in franchise history. The club finished second, won two rounds behind Rich Rhinehart and Manny Jimenez, and lost the conference championship.

And in **2031** they won ninety-six games, finished second by four, and beat the Virginia Rebels for the sixth championship in franchise history. Mark Cobb took the wild card round, Morgan Alison the division, Tom Everette the conference, and Justin Roush the final. It was the third time in ten years that Denver had won a title without winning its own division, and by then nobody in the organization found it strange.

v

What the Standings Do Not Say

Two thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven wins against two thousand two hundred and thirty-five losses. A .555 winning percentage, second only to Somerville among the thirty-two clubs of The Big League. Nine seasons of a hundred wins or more. Twenty Octobers in thirty-one years. Six trophies, which is more than anybody.

And eleven second-place finishes, two of them at the identical record as the club that finished ahead. Six division titles in thirty-one years, fewer than the number of championships.

There is a reading of that record which says Denver has been lucky, that a club which cannot win a hundred and sixty-two-game race has no business winning six short ones. There is another reading, and the men who have played here would give you this one: a hundred and sixty-two games measures a roster, and seven games measure a team, and the Dynamite have been beaten in the standings by clubs they were never once afraid of in October.

Three and a half million people come to Dynamite Stadium every year now, and have for more than a decade. In 2026 they came three million six hundred and thirteen thousand strong, the largest gate in the club's history, to watch a team that would be eliminated before the final.

The charge sits in the shed. It sits there all summer, while Las Vegas and then Rochester go by in the standings. Then somebody lights it, and the mountain moves.

The Ledger

Franchise founded: 2001 (charter member, The Big League)

Home: Dynamite Stadium, Denver — capacity 45,000

Conference: Ice Conference, Jade Division

All-time regular-season record (2001–2031): 2,787–2,235 (.555) — second-best in The Big League

Postseason appearances: 20 in 31 seasons

League Championships: 6 — 2011, 2012, 2022, 2023, 2028, 2031 — the most in league history

Championship series appearances: 8 — 2011 (won over the Milwaukee Mobsters), 2012 (won over the Big Horn Rams), 2022 (won over the Big Horn Rams), 2023 (won over the San Diego Seals), 2024 (lost to the San Antonio Chiles Picantes, now Myrtle Beach Mermen), 2025 (lost to the Virginia Rebels), 2028 (won over the Spokane Sasquatches), 2031 (won over the Virginia Rebels)

Division titles: 6 — 2011, 2012, 2013, 2021, 2023, 2026

Best season: 2021 (111–51)

Worst season: 2016 (56–106)

Most Valuable Players: 1 — Aaron Horsfall (2011)

Cy Young Awards: 1 — Dustin Potter (2030)

Rookies of the Year: 1 — Aaron Horsfall (2008)

Hall of Famers: 3 of its own — Aaron Horsfall (inducted 2026), Jeremy McMartin (2020), Ricardo Anguiano (2022). Victor Rivera, inducted in 2022, played 608 of his 1,760 career games in Denver but belongs to Huron; Hector Campos, inducted in 2030, played 415 of his 1,597 here across two stints and belongs to Tampa Bay

General managers: Hemlock G (2001–2002), Barry L (2002), Joe P (2003–2005), Jay Ausburger (2005–)

Second-place finishes: 11

Hundred-win seasons: 9 — 2011, 2012, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2025, 2026, 2028

Hundred-loss seasons: 2 — 2004, 2016

Longest postseason streak: 14 seasons (2018–2031, active)

Longest postseason drought: 7 seasons (2001–2007)

Best attendance: 3,613,890 (2026)

Lowest attendance: 1,777,380 (2016)

Pillars of the Franchise

Aaron Horsfall, 1B (2008–2015) — The best player in franchise history and its only Most Valuable Player. Eight seasons, 1,231 games, a .312 average, 296 home runs and 905 runs batted in, with five Silver Sluggers, the 2008 Rookie of the Year of the Ice Conference, the 2011 MVP and the most valuable player of the 2011 championship series. He hit .332 with 44 home runs in 2011 and .334 with 224 hits in 2012. First round, 12th overall, 2003. He left for San Antonio after 2015 and finished with 511 career home runs. Inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2026.

Jeremy McMartin, RF (2009–2015) — Seven seasons in Denver, 1,066 games, a .301 average, 230 home runs and 752 runs batted in, with four Silver Sluggers. He hit .330 in 2011 and .314 in 2012 on the back-to-back champions. He came from the Atlanta Smashers, now the Cincinnati Regents, and retired after 2015 with 1,826 career games. Inducted in 2020.

Ricardo Anguiano, SP (2003–2005, 2007, 2011–2014) — Three separate stints across twelve years, 212 appearances in this uniform, a 100-45 record and a 3.34 earned run average over 1,284 innings. He went 19-7 in the 2011 championship season and 23-5 the year after, and 20-6 in 2014. A tenth-round pick, 260th overall. Career: 221-128. Inducted in 2022.

Tim Doherty, CF (2020–2031) — More games than any man in club history: twelve seasons, 1,517 of them, a .252 average, 158 home runs, 658 runs batted in and 300 stolen bases, with a Silver Slugger and a Gold Glove in 2023 and the most valuable player award in the 2022 championship series. A fifth-round pick, 152nd overall, in 2016, and the one constant through four titles.

Matt Berrelleza, RF (2020–2030) — Eleven seasons, 1,308 games, a .263 average, 276 home runs and 723 runs batted in, and the best hitter on the club in 2023, 2025 and 2026. He hit 36 home runs in both title-adjacent summers of 2023 and 2026. Second round, 50th overall, 2015.

Kevin Porter, SS (2022–2029, 2031) — Two stints, 1,150 games, a .254 average, 212 home runs and 628 runs batted in, with four Silver Sluggers. His 2028 was the best season any Denver infielder has played: .285, 32 home runs, 93 runs batted in, and the most valuable player award in the championship series. A sixth-round pick, 178th overall, in 2017.

Paullo Corredoura, 1B (2019–2027) — Nine seasons, 1,225 games, a .262 average, 241 home runs and 730 runs batted in. Undrafted. He was the best hitter on the 111-win club of 2021 and the most valuable player of four separate postseason rounds, in 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2026.

Antonio Reyes, RF (2010–2014) — Five seasons and a .326 average, the highest any regular has hit for this franchise, with 875 hits and 102 stolen bases in 676 games. In 2014 he hit .349 with 227 hits and 58 doubles, took his second straight Silver Slugger and was the most valuable player of the wild card round. Undrafted, and gone at twenty-seven.

Jim Sobieski, SP (2016–2028) — Thirteen seasons, more innings than any pitcher in club history: 1,577 of them, 265 starts, a 114-54 record and a 3.62 earned run average. He came up on the 106-loss team and was still there for the 2022 and 2023 championships, finishing his career in the bullpen, where he went 12-0 in 2027. First round, 25th overall, 2013.

Tyler Worthen, SP (2018–2024) — Seven seasons, 186 starts, 72-41 with a 2.91 earned run average, the lowest of any Denver pitcher with a thousand innings here. He went 17-5 with a 2.22 in 2019 and 16-3 in 2021. Acquired from the Durham Dragons, now the Cincinnati Regents; first round, fourth overall, 2012.

Danny Herron, LF (2005–2012) — Eight seasons, 1,095 games, a .262 average and 120 home runs, and a man who walked eighty or ninety times a year on clubs that badly needed someone to reach base. The sixth pick of the 2004 draft, and the bridge from the lean years to the first champion.

Mike High, 2B (2009–2014) — Six seasons, 661 games, 124 home runs, two Gold Gloves and the most valuable player of the 2010 wild card round. Fourth overall in 2005.

Victor Rivera, SS (2011–2014) — Four seasons and 608 games at shortstop on the back-to-back champions, with 101 home runs and the most valuable player award in the 2011 conference championship series. He played most of his 1,760 career games elsewhere and entered the Hall of Fame in 2022 as a Huron Heron.

Dustin Potter, SP (2029–2031) — Three seasons, 105 starts, 42-23 with a 2.79 earned run average and 774 strikeouts, and the first Cy Young Award of the Ice Conference in franchise history, in 2030, at 15-6 with a 2.14. A thirteenth-round pick, 388th overall, in 2018, who had already been a closer, a starter and a Boston Beacon before he got here.

Morgan Alison, LF (2027–2031) — Five seasons, 489 games, a .293 average and 82 home runs, the best hitter on the 2029 club and the most valuable player of a postseason round in both the 2028 and 2031 title runs. Eighth round, 246th overall, 2020.

Compiled from The Big League franchise records, 2001–2031.