



THE KANSAS CITY SCOUTS

A Franchise History of The Big League — 2012 to 2031

Four Cy Youngs in four years, and one series short of the end of the trail.

In the style of Geoffrey C. Ward

PROLOGUE

The Jumping-Off Place

Everybody who went west left from here.

The Santa Fe Trail started at the Missouri landing. So did the Oregon and the California. For thirty years in the middle of the nineteenth century the whole restless idea of the American continent funneled through a few muddy blocks on the south bank of one river, and men bought oxen and flour and rifles and pointed themselves at country they had never seen, and the town got rich outfitting them and stayed exactly where it was.

The man they hired to go first was the scout. He rode out ahead of the wagons, found the water and the pass and the place the river could be crossed, and came back and told them. Then he rode out ahead again. He was the most necessary man in the party and the only one guaranteed not to be there when the thing was finally built.

The Kansas City Scouts joined The Big League in 1970 and lost for nine years. Then, for six seasons, they had as good a pitching staff as anybody in this league has ever assembled: four consecutive Cy Young Awards, three of them to the same man. They won three division flags and got within one series of a championship.

They have never won a trophy, and the arms that got them that close are mostly gone.

I

Nine Years

2012 – 2020

An expansion club is not owed anything and this one was not given anything.

Seventy-six wins in the first season, then seventy-four, then sixty-eight, and then 2015: forty-eight wins and a hundred and fourteen losses, which is the worst season in franchise history and one of the worst anybody has played in this league. Sixty in 2016. Sixty-four. Sixty-six. Seventy-five. Seventy-five. Nine consecutive seasons out of October, which remains the longest drought this club has known, and it is nearly half its life.

Attendance fell from two and a third million in the first year to under one million six hundred thousand by 2017. The general manager's chair turned over four times in eight years: Dylan B, then Leo C, then Gregory A, then Seb B.

There were good hands. Al Orellana and Tom Bruna won Gold Gloves in 2013 and again in 2014, Antonio Contreras won one in the middle of the 48-win season, Tony Fuentes in 2018, Jim Blackman in 2019. Joaquin Verdugo won a Silver Slugger in the very first year. Alex Martinez caught seven hundred and eighty-five games. Joe Christman and Brad Miller made two hundred and fifty starts between them and finished a combined seventy-one and a hundred and twenty.

And then, quietly, in the last two bad years, the pieces arrived. Shane Wilson came up in 2019 and hit .274 with thirty-two home runs. Nate Stutts took over center field. Brad Wilson, a fourteenth-round pick, four hundred and twenty-third overall in the 2015 draft, made his first starts in 2020. Brad J took the general manager's chair the same year and has held it since.

In 2020 the Scouts won seventy-five games and finished sixth. Shane Wilson hit .301 with thirty-six home runs and a hundred and thirteen runs batted in and won a Silver Slugger and a Gold Glove.

II

The First Flag

2021 – 2022

The 2021 Kansas City Scouts won ninety-seven games and the division.

They had won seventy-five the year before and sixty-six the year before that. It is a twenty-two-game improvement onto a club that had never finished above fifth in nine attempts, and the ballpark responded: three million three hundred and eighty thousand people came out, up a million from the season before and the second-largest gate the franchise has ever drawn.

Shane Wilson hit .283 with twenty-seven home runs and a hundred and twenty runs batted in and won another Silver Slugger. Kevin McClendon went 42-23 across four seasons. Brad Wilson took the ball every fifth day.

They lost in October, and in 2022 they fell back to eighty-two wins and missed. Then the arms showed up all at once.

III

Four Cy Youngs

2023 – 2026

Arturo Rivera threw fifty-eight innings in 2022. In 2023 he went 14-6 with an earned run average of 2.67 and two hundred and fifteen strikeouts and won the Cy Young Award of the Fire Conference. In 2024 he went 13-13 with a 2.77 and two hundred and seventy strikeouts and won it again. In 2025 he went 17-15 with a 2.70 and three hundred and fourteen strikeouts and won it a third consecutive time.

Three in a row. Nobody else in this franchise's twenty years has won one.

Except that in 2026 Marty Kilby went 17-2 with an earned run average of 1.92 and did, which made it four consecutive Cy Young Awards for one club, and by then Rivera had also put up a 16-6 season and would follow it with 15-11 twice more with earned run averages of 3.08 and 2.93. He finished eight seasons in Kansas City with ninety-six wins against sixty-seven losses, an earned run average of 2.98 and one thousand eight hundred and twenty strikeouts.

Behind him: Brad Wilson, the fourteenth-round pick, who made three hundred and thirty starts and threw two thousand and twenty-three innings in this uniform, more than any pitcher the franchise has had, and Joe Greenwell at 55-37, and Dustin Potter closing with a 2.15 earned run average, and Mario Alvarez and Bill Garcia and Ben Taylor behind him.

The Scouts won ninety-five games and the division in 2023, and ninety-four in 2024, and ninety-three in 2025, and ninety-nine and another flag in 2026. Four straight Octobers. Danny Alcala took a round in 2024. Casey Schnake took one in 2025 and won Gold Gloves in 2026 and 2027.

One Series Short: 2026

Ninety-nine wins, the division, and the best baseball this club has played.

Steve Schwarz won a Silver Slugger. Rick Slusser, a twentieth-round pick, six hundred and twenty-ninth overall, taken by the Oklahoma City Outlaws six years earlier, hit his way to Rookie of the Year of the Fire Conference. Marty Kilby won the Cy Young. Three and a half million people came through the gates, the largest crowd in franchise history.

In October Brad Wilson was named most valuable player of the divisional round and Slusser of the conference championship series, and Kansas City reached the Big League Championship Series for the first time and lost to the Rochester North Stars.

It is the only final this franchise has played and it may be a while before there is another.

IV

Riding Back

2027 – 2031

Eighty wins in 2027. Eighty-five in 2028. Seventy in 2029, seventy-two in 2030, seventy-five in 2031. Five consecutive seasons out of October, the second-longest drought in club history and still running.

Rivera's last season here was 2029. Nate Stutts's was 2027. Shane Wilson left after 2023 and would play for four more clubs. Casey Schnake left after 2029 and turned up in Memphis, where he hit .310 in 2031. Alex Rojo won a Silver Slugger in 2028 and was gone the next year. Attendance fell back under two million in 2030.

There is a beginning of something. Jared Mettler, the eighteenth pick of the 2029 draft, came up in 2031, won a Silver Slugger and was named Rookie of the Year of the Fire Conference. Oscar Almaraz won a Gold Glove. Brad J is still in the chair, the longest tenure the franchise has had by a distance.

V

What the Scout Is For

Twenty seasons. One thousand five hundred and forty-eight wins against one thousand six hundred and ninety-two losses, which is .478 and a fair description of a club that spent nine years terrible and six years very good and five more coming back down.

Three division flags. Five Octobers. Four Cy Young Awards in four consecutive seasons, a run only Philadelphia has matched. One appearance in a Big League Championship Series. No trophy, and no Hall of Fame plaque that belongs here: three men in the Hall have worn this uniform and none of them stayed past a season and a half.

What Kansas City had, for six years, was the best pitching in the league and nobody to hit behind it. Rivera's three Cy Youngs came on clubs that scored enough and no more. The 2026 team that won ninety-nine games did it with a rookie right fielder and a shortstop in his third season, and it went as far as pitching alone can carry a club, which turned out to be one series short.

The scout finds the pass. He is not usually there when the town gets built.

The Ledger

Franchise founded: 2012 (expansion)

Home: Scouts Grounds, Kansas City — capacity 45,000

Conference: Fire Conference, Topaz Division

All-time regular-season record (2012–2031): 1,548–1,692 (.478)

Postseason appearances: 5 in 20 seasons

League Championships: 0

Championship series appearances: 1 — 2026 (lost to the Rochester North Stars)

Division titles: 3 — 2021, 2023, 2026

Best season: 2026 (99–63)

Worst season: 2015 (48–114)

Most Valuable Players: 0

Cy Young Awards: 4 — Arturo Rivera (2023, 2024, 2025), Marty Kilby (2026)

Rookies of the Year: 2 — Rick Slusser (2026, Fire Conference), Jared Mettler (2031, Fire Conference)

Hall of Famers: none of its own. Three men in the Hall passed through: Shane Markward for 64 games, Victor Rivera for 58 and Nick Henson for 39

General managers: Dylan B (2012), Leo C (2013–2014), Gregory A (2015–2016), Seb B (2017–2019), Brad J (2020–)

Longest postseason drought: 9 seasons (2012–2020)

Consecutive Octobers: 4 (2023–2026)

Best attendance: 3,493,959 (2026)

Pillars of the Franchise

Arturo Rivera, SP (2022–2029) — Cy Young Award winner of the Fire Conference in 2023, 2024 and 2025, three consecutive seasons. Eight years in Kansas City, 232 starts, 1,532 innings, 96-67, a 2.98 earned run average and 1,820 strikeouts, including a 314-strikeout season in 2025. No pitcher this franchise has had comes near him.

Brad Wilson, SP (2020–2029) — A fourteenth-round pick, 423rd overall, in the 2015 draft, and the most durable arm in franchise history: 330 starts, 2,023 innings, 119-103 and a 3.56 earned run average across ten seasons. Most valuable player of the divisional round in the 2026 run to the final.

Shane Wilson, LF (2019–2023) — The best hitter the club has had. Five seasons, 742 games, a .286 average, 164 home runs and 547 runs batted in, with two Silver Sluggers and a Gold Glove. In 2022 he hit .291 with forty-eight home runs and a hundred and forty-seven driven in. First round, 13th overall, 2015.

Nate Stutts, CF (2019–2027) — Nine seasons, 1,203 games, 140 home runs and 550 runs batted in in center field, through the worst years and the best. Most valuable player of a 2028 postseason round for Huron after he left. First round, 16th overall, 2014.

Marty Kilby, SP (2020–2026, 2028–2029, 2031) — Cy Young Award winner of the Fire Conference in 2026, the fourth in four consecutive years for this club, on a 17-2 season with a 1.92 earned run average. Ten seasons in Kansas City between 2020 and 2031, 156 starts, 56-46 and a 3.82 earned run average.

Rick Slusser, RF (2026–2030) — Rookie of the Year of the Fire Conference in 2026 and most valuable player of the conference championship series that put Kansas City in its only final. Five seasons, 771 games, 153 home runs and 433 runs batted in. He had been the 629th player taken in the 2020 draft, in the twentieth round, by the Oklahoma City Outlaws.

Casey Schnake, 1B (2025–2029) — Gold Gloves in 2026 and 2027 and the most valuable player of the opening round of the 2025 postseason. Five seasons, 616 games, a .247 average and 60 stolen bases from first base.

Steve Schwarz, SS (2024–2028) — Five seasons at shortstop, 531 games, 93 home runs and 113 stolen bases, with a Silver Slugger in 2026 on the ninety-nine-win club.

Alex Rojo, CF (2024–2029) — Six seasons, 534 games, 145 stolen bases and a Silver Slugger in 2028.

Josh Roberts, LF (2016–2024) — Nine seasons and 1,043 games, the one everyday player who was there for both the 60-win season of 2016 and the first division flag five years later.

Andy McGuigan, 3B (2021–2025) — Five seasons, 789 games, a .266 average, 181 home runs and 557 runs batted in, the middle of the order on the first three postseason clubs.

Dustin Potter, RP (2022–2026) — 312 appearances, 100 saves and a 2.15 earned run average across the club's best five years.

Jared Mettler, CF (2031) — Rookie of the Year of the Fire Conference in 2031 and a Silver Slugger in the same season, in 160 games. The eighteenth pick of the 2029 draft, and the best reason to watch what comes next.

Compiled from The Big League franchise records, 2012–2031.