



THE SOMERVILLE MONEYLINE

A Franchise History of The Big League — 2001 to 2031

Twenty-six Octobers. Four final series. No trophy. The surest bet in baseball.

In the style of Geoffrey C. Ward

PROLOGUE

The Straight Bet

Of all the ways there are to wager on a baseball game, the moneyline is the honest one.

There is no spread in it, no handicap, no margin to hide behind. The moneyline asks a single question and permits a single answer: who wins? A bettor who takes the favorite on the moneyline is not saying the favorite will win handsomely. He is saying only that the favorite will win, and he is paid very little for being right, because everyone already knows.

That is the bet this franchise has been for thirty-one years. Everyone already knows.

When The Big League opened its books in the winter of 2000, the club that set up in Somerville took a name out of the wagering pages, and it has spent three decades being the most literal team name in professional baseball. The Moneyline win. They win in April and they win in August. They have won at least ninety games in twenty-one different seasons. Their worst summer in thirty-one years was 72-90, a record most franchises would recognize as an ordinary bad year and this one has never sunk below. Across the whole life of the league, no club has a better winning percentage.

They have reached the postseason twenty-six times in thirty-one seasons.

They have never won a championship.

Four times they have stood on the last field of the year with the trophy in the room, and four times they have watched another club carry it out. Twenty-six Octobers. Zero rings. It is the largest gap between regular-season excellence and postseason emptiness in the history of The Big League, and it is not close.

This is the story of the surest bet in baseball, and of the thirty-one years it has failed to cash.

I

The Favorite, Immediately

2001 – 2006

Most franchises need a decade to become anything. Somerville needed a season.

The 2001 Moneyline won ninety-one games and went to October in the first autumn the league ever had.

D.J. Marksbury, a right-hander who would give this club fifteen years, won the Ice Conference Cy

Young Award that first season. Chris Jackson was named Most Valuable Player of the wild card series. The pattern was set before anyone knew it was a pattern: a very good team, a comfortable October berth, and an early exit.

There was one down year, a 77-85 stumble in 2002, and then the club simply started winning and did not meaningfully stop. Ninety-three wins in 2003. Eighty-six and another October in 2005. Somerville was not yet the juggernaut it would become, but it had already established the thing that makes this history strange: a floor. Even the bad seasons were .500-adjacent. Even the mediocre teams were interesting in September.

What it had not yet established was any evidence that it could win a series that mattered.

II

The First Two That Got Away

2007 – 2009

Then came the first real one, and the first real wound.

The 2007 Moneyline won a hundred games and the division, the best club the franchise had yet assembled, and they rode it all the way to the final series of the year — and lost. Elias Huerta was named Most Valuable Player of the conference round; Frank Escobar took the division round. The hardware piled up on the way to the last door, and the last door did not open. Huron took the championship.

Two years later they did it again. The 2009 club won eighty-nine games, third place, nobody's idea of a juggernaut, and put together the best postseason run in franchise history to that point — Keaton Deatherage the wild card MVP, Escobar again in the division round, Mike Jaimes in the conference round, three series won by three different men — and lost the final series to San Diego.

Two championship series in three seasons. Two losses. In hindsight, a franchise that goes to the last round twice before its tenth birthday should expect to win one eventually, by simple repetition. That is the reasonable expectation, and it is the expectation this franchise has spent twenty-two years disproving.

III

The Machine

2010 – 2019

What Somerville built in the 2010s was not a peak. It was a plateau, and it was remarkable.

The decade opened quietly. Eighty-three wins and a wild card in 2010, with Elias Huerta winning a Gold Glove. Eighty-one and eighty-one in 2011, dead level, the only summer of the ten that missed October. Nothing in either year suggested what was coming, which is how it has always gone here.

Then it locked in, and it stayed locked in. Ninety-six wins in 2012, with **Matt Clark**, newly arrived from the Boston Boom, now Chicago, taking the wild card round. Ninety-nine in 2013. Ninety-one in 2014, Adam Santoyo carrying a round and Gold Gloves going to Frank Escobar and Jaylen Boyd. Ninety-nine wins and the division in 2015. Ninety-six in 2016. A hundred in 2017. Ninety-four and another flag in 2018, with Clark taking the wild card round and Arturo Garcia the divisional with a Gold Glove in his hand the same autumn. Ninety-two in 2019.

Ten straight postseason berths from 2012 through 2021. Two division flags inside the decade. A club that never once finished below .500 and fell short of ninety wins only twice, both times before the run had properly begun. This is the hardest thing in baseball to do, harder in its way than winning a title, and Somerville did it for ten years without visible strain and without once being the story anybody told.

The Men Who Held It Up

The machine ran on a small number of very durable people.

Matt Clark came from the Boston Boom, now Chicago, in 2012 and became the offensive center of the club, taking Silver Sluggers in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 — four straight — and hitting 187 home runs in Somerville. **Ryan Roach** gave the franchise twelve seasons and 1,434 games, second only to Nelson Reyes, with Silver Sluggers of his own in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. **Travis Plath** won Gold Gloves in 2012 and 2013. **Arturo Garcia** won one in 2018 and a division series MVP in the same October. Marksbury pitched here through 2013 and left with 144 wins and 2,260 strikeouts.

None of them is a name the league tells stories about. That is precisely the point. Somerville did not assemble stars and hope. It assembled a great many very good players, kept them a long time, and won ninety-five games a year while everyone else churned.

And every autumn it went to October and came home.

The Third One (2020)

The 2020 club won ninety-nine games and the division, and it looked, at last, like the year.

They won three series to get there. **Doug Linder** took the wild card round, **Ryan Crader** the division round, **Brian Gore** the conference round — again three different men, again the hardware accumulating on the road to the last door. Joe Warfield won a Gold Glove. And in the final series they met Huron, the same franchise that had beaten them in 2007, and lost again.

Thirteen years apart, the same opponent, the same result. There is no useful lesson to draw from that and the club has never pretended otherwise.

V

Reyna, Posey, and the Best Team in Baseball

2021 – 2029

The decade that followed produced the two best players in franchise history and the best regular-season baseball this franchise has ever played, and it produced no championship either.

Antonio Reyna came over from Toronto in 2024 and became, in eight seasons, the finest hitter Somerville has ever employed: a .294 average, 284 home runs — the most in franchise history — 904 runs batted in and 1,326 hits in Moneyline colors. He won the Ice Conference Most Valuable Player award in 2024 and again in 2026, took Silver Sluggers in 2024, 2025, 2026, 2028 and 2029, and was named division series MVP in 2024. **Chase Posey** came in 2023, never played anywhere else, hit .293, and won the conference MVP in 2027 — giving this franchise three MVP awards in a four-year window.

And in 2024 the Moneyline won **a hundred and eleven games**.

One hundred and eleven. It is the best regular season in franchise history and the fifth-best any club has ever played, behind Las Vegas's 117-win 2018 and three great Huron summers. They led the division by a wide margin, they had the reigning MVP in the middle of the order, and they lost in October. Reyna won the division series and the season ended anyway.

They followed it with ninety-six wins, then 90, then 97, then 94, then 102 in 2029 and another division flag. Nine consecutive postseason berths. No championship series in any of them.

VI

The Fourth One, and One More Try

2030 – 2031

In 2030 they got back to the last series, and lost it to Milwaukee.

They had won only eighty-eight games that year, third place, the least imposing of their contenders. It did not matter — they beat everyone in front of them, with **Eli Jones** taking the wild card round, **Mike Bellina** the division round, and Posey the conference round, and then they lost the one that counts. A fourth championship series. A fourth defeat. 2007, 2009, 2020, 2030: roughly once a decade, this franchise reaches the final field, and roughly once a decade it comes home empty.

Then 2031, and a hundred and five wins, and the division, and the second-best regular season the franchise has ever played.

That is where this history stops, with the Moneyline once again the best team in their conference by record, once again holding a flag, once again carrying the whole accumulated weight into an October that has never once gone their way. They are not a fading club telling itself stories about the past. They are, right now, at this moment, still the favorite.

VII

The Constant

There is one more thing, and it is the most extraordinary fact in this entire history.

For every season the Moneyline have played — all thirty-one of them, from the 91-win dawn of 2001 through the 105-win summer of 2031 — there has been one man in the Somerville dugout: **JR L.**

He has never managed another franchise. Across three decades he has compiled a regular-season record of **2,851 wins against 2,174 losses**, more victories than any manager in the history of The Big League, at a .567 clip that trails only three men who have managed far fewer seasons. He has taken twenty-six clubs to the postseason. He has managed in four championship series. He has lost all four.

No one in the history of this league has won more games. No one has won more and finished with less.

It would be easy, and wrong, to make him the explanation. Four series is a small sample, and the difference between a manager who wins one and a manager who wins none is often a single inning that broke the other way. What is not a small sample is thirty-one years of ninety-win baseball from the same

bench, which is the hardest and least celebrated achievement in the sport, and which he has now done longer than anyone.

He is still there. The bet is still open.

The Ledger

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

Home: Moneyline Stadium, Somerville — capacity 45,000

Conference: Ice Conference, Sapphire Division

All-time regular-season record (2001–2031): 2,851–2,174 (.567) — best in league history

Postseason appearances: 26 in 31 seasons

League Championships: 0

Championship series appearances: 4 — 2007 (lost to the Huron Herons), 2009 (lost to the San Diego Seals), 2020 (lost to the Huron Herons), 2030 (lost to the Milwaukee Mobsters)

Division titles: 7 — 2007, 2015, 2018, 2020, 2024, 2029, 2031

Best season: 2024 (111–51) — fifth-best regular season in league history

Worst season: 2008 (72–90) — the only time the franchise lost 90

Most Valuable Players: 3 — Antonio Reyna (2024, 2026), Chase Posey (2027)

Cy Young Awards: 1 — D.J. Marksbury (2001)

Rookies of the Year: 1 — Ryan Rocha (2001, Ice Conference)

Hall of Famers: 2 — D.J. Marksbury (2020), Ryan Roach (2028)

Managers: JR L (2001–2031)

General managers: JR L (2001–)

Ninety-win seasons: 21

Pillars of the Franchise

Antonio Reyna, OF (2024–2031) — The greatest hitter the franchise has employed, though the first five years of his career belong to Toronto. Two-time Ice Conference Most Valuable Player (2024, 2026), five-

time Silver Slugger, and the centerpiece of the 111-win club. In Somerville: .294, 1,326 hits, 284 home runs — a franchise record — and 904 runs batted in.

Ryan Roach (2014–2025) — Twelve Somerville seasons and 1,434 games, second only to Nelson Reyes. Four consecutive Silver Sluggers from 2015 through 2018, 1,400 hits here and a .264 average. **Hall of Fame, inducted 2028** — the only position player the franchise has sent to Cooperstown, and a reminder that the Somerville plateau was built by better men than its modest single-season numbers suggest.

Matt Clark (2012–2018, 2021) — The offensive engine of the machine years, with four straight Silver Sluggers (2014–2017), 187 home runs in Somerville, and the wild card series MVP award in 2018.

D.J. Marksbury, SP (2001–2013) — The franchise's first star and the winner of its only Cy Young Award, in the league's inaugural season. Thirteen Somerville years, 144 wins, 2,260 strikeouts and a 3.20 earned run average. **Hall of Fame, inducted 2020.**

Chase Posey (2023–2031) — Ice Conference Most Valuable Player in 2027 and conference series MVP in the 2030 run. A .293 hitter who has never worn another uniform.

Travis Plath (2011–2016) — Gold Gloves in 2012 and 2013, 125 home runs in six Somerville seasons, and exactly the quiet competence this franchise was built on.

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