



THE VANCOUVER VANDALS

A Franchise History of The Big League — 2001 to 2031

*Three Cy Youngs, three Most Valuable Players, a hundred-win summer. And the word
that stuck was the one about wreckage.*

In the style of Geoffrey C. Ward

PROLOGUE

The Name They Were Given

The Vandals were not, on the evidence, especially destructive.

They came down out of the north, crossed into Africa, took Carthage, and built a kingdom there that stood for a hundred years — a working state with a navy and a treasury and cities that kept their aqueducts running. In 455 they sacked Rome, which is the only thing anybody remembers, and even then the contemporary accounts say they took the gold and left the buildings standing. It was thirteen centuries later that a French bishop, needing a word for senseless wreckage, reached back and borrowed their name. They had been dead for a millennium and could not object.

So the word does not describe what they did. It describes what was done to their reputation, which is a different thing, and a colder one.

The Vancouver Vandals have played thirty-one seasons in The Big League. They have won two thousand three hundred and four games and lost two thousand seven hundred and nineteen, the second-poorest record of the thirty-two clubs now in the league. They have never played for a championship. They have lost a hundred games in a season five times, and in 2025 they lost a hundred and eleven, seven games worse than any other summer in club history.

That is the sack of Rome. That is the part everyone remembers.

What is harder to see, and what this history is for, is that twice in those thirty-one years this franchise assembled something genuinely magnificent, and both times it stood up, and both times it came apart before it could finish. The buildings were real. They simply did not last long enough for anyone to name them after.

I

Kerrigan

2001 – 2003

The Vandals arrived in 2001 as a charter member and went to October in their first season, which almost nothing in the next thirty years would have predicted. Eighty-four wins, a wild card, and a first-round exit. They won eighty-seven the following year and missed. They won eighty-six in 2003 and went further than they have ever gone since.

All three of those seasons belonged to one man.

Andy Kerrigan was the Vandals' first great player and is still, by the plainest measure the game keeps, their best. In 2001 he went 14-9 with an earned run average of 2.81 and was named Cy Young Award winner of the Fire Conference. In 2002 he went 16-7 at 2.24 and won it again. In 2003 he went 19-12 at 2.30, struck out three hundred hitters, and won it a third consecutive time.

Three straight. No other pitcher in this franchise's history has won it twice.

The 2003 October was the closest the Vandals have come. They took the wild card round, with Dan Altfillisch named its Most Valuable Player. They took the divisional round, with Bill McCarren named its Most Valuable Player. And in the conference championship series, one round from a trip to the final, it ended.

Kerrigan pitched seven more years in Vancouver. He was excellent in 2004 and good in 2005 and never right again after that — a 5.90 earned run average in 2007, 4.78 in 2009, 5.96 in 2010 on a club that lost ninety-five. He left with a hundred and thirteen wins, a hundred and sixteen losses, 1,965 innings and 45.0 wins above replacement, all of it in one uniform, most of it for teams that could not use it.

He appeared on the Hall of Fame ballot for seven years, peaked at 29.2 percent, and exhausted it in 2028. He will not be eligible for the Veterans Committee until 2036.

II

The Long Rain

2004 – 2013

Ten consecutive losing seasons. It is the longest such run in the franchise's history and, for a stretch in the middle of it, the least eventful decade any club in the league put together.

Sixty-nine wins in 2004. Sixty-three in 2005. Seventy-six in 2006. Fifty-eight in 2007, which stood as the worst season in club history for eighteen years. Sixty-five, sixty-nine, sixty-seven, seventy-five, seventy-nine, seventy-four. The general manager who had built the 2003 club, a man named Dylan, was gone during 2006. A man named Bob replaced him and stayed nine years.

The decade produced almost no hardware — Chad Drews took a Silver Slugger in 2006, Jon Snyder the Fire Conference Cy Young in 2011, Jared Scott a Gold Glove in 2013 — and it is worth saying plainly that the club was not badly run so much as it was simply not good. Harold Frew played eleven seasons at third base and hit .250 for teams that finished sixth. George Bierley played nine and hit .275. Javy

Carranza saved three hundred and forty-four games across ten years, more than any pitcher this franchise has employed, and finished with a 2.79 earned run average and almost no leads worth protecting.

And Jon Snyder took the ball. Eleven seasons, 2,326 innings, two thousand strikeouts, a hundred and thirty-three wins — every one of those the franchise record — and a career earned run average of 3.84 on clubs that reached October twice in his tenure. He won the Cy Young in 2011 for a team that finished sixth at 75-87.

That is the shape of the long rain: excellent men, doing excellent work, in a city where nobody was keeping score.

III

Gilbride

2014 – 2016

Then, without much warning, it turned.

Eric Gilbride came up at the end of 2013, a second baseman, twenty-nine games. In 2014 he hit .311 with twenty-eight home runs and ninety-six runs batted in, produced better than eight wins above replacement, and won the Fire Conference Rookie of the Year, a Gold Glove, a Silver Slugger, and the Most Valuable Player award of the conference — all four in the same summer. The Vandals won eighty-eight games and a wild card and went out in the first round, and nobody in Vancouver much minded, because the club had gone eleven years without a reason and had just been handed one.

In 2015 he hit .327 with 8.8 wins, won a second Silver Slugger and a second Gold Glove, and took the Most Valuable Player award of the wild card series as the Vandals won a playoff round. In 2016 he hit .312 with thirty-five home runs, 8.9 wins, a third Silver Slugger, a third Gold Glove, and a second conference Most Valuable Player award.

He was not alone. Carlos Ruiz, a shortstop, arrived the same year Gilbride did and hit forty home runs, then fifty, then sixty-two — the 2016 season, at .276 with sixty-two home runs and a hundred and fifty-five runs batted in, is the largest single year any Vandal has produced. Christian Loredó came up in 2016. Andy McGuigan came up in 2016. Emmanuel Gaona came up in 2017.

The 2016 Vandals won ninety-eight games, the second-best season in club history. They won the wild card round behind McGuigan and the divisional round behind Ruiz, and lost the conference championship series to the Oahu Paddlers, who went on to win the championship.

And then Gilbride's body gave out. A hundred and eleven games in 2017 at .279. A hundred and one in 2018 at .251. He was traded to Denver after that and played three more years as an ordinary hitter. He was twenty-eight years old when he stopped being great and he had, by then, won two Most Valuable Player awards, three Silver Sluggers, three Gold Gloves and a Rookie of the Year in a span of four summers.

IV

The Best Team They Ever Had

2017 – 2018

Here is the strange part, and the cruel one. The Vandals lost their best player to decline in 2017 and immediately got better.

The 2017 club won a hundred games and the division title, both firsts in franchise history. Andy McGuigan hit .341 with thirty-seven home runs. Christian Loredó hit .285 with forty-one. Carlos Ruiz hit fifty. Jon Snyder, in his ninth season, went 18-7.

They lost in the first round.

The 2018 club won ninety-six and the division again, and it was, on the evidence, better than the 2017 club. Christian Loredó hit .347 with fifty-five home runs and a hundred and forty runs batted in, produced ten wins above replacement, and was named Most Valuable Player of the Fire Conference. Ruiz drove in a hundred and fifty-one. McGuigan hit .345. Gaona hit .281 out of right field. Four Vandals won Silver Sluggers that season — Ruiz, McGuigan, Gaona and Loredó — and three more won Gold Gloves, in Collin Thayer, Carlos Herrmann and Bobby Waddell.

They lost in the first round.

Two hundred and ninety-four wins across three seasons. Two division flags. Conference Most Valuable Players in 2016 and 2018. Seven Silver Sluggers and four Gold Gloves. Two playoff series won, both in 2016, and nothing at all in the two years the club was at its best.

That is the whole of it. There is no scandal in it, no collapse, no injury that explains it. A very good team went to October three times and did not get past the first weekend twice. It happens, and it is nobody's fault, and it is the reason this franchise's greatest era leaves so little behind.

V

The Sack

2019 – 2027

What followed was the fastest and most complete disassembly of a contender the league has seen.

The 2019 Vandals won seventy-eight games. Loredó hit .358 and it did not matter. In 2020 they won sixty-six. In 2021 they won seventy-five, and by the end of that summer Christian Loredó was playing for Las Vegas, Andy McGuigan was playing for Kansas City, and Carlos Ruiz was on his way out. All three would go on producing for years — Loredó has been an above-average bat for a decade since, and hit .308 with forty-three home runs in 2029 for another club — and none of it happened in Vancouver.

Then: 61-101 in 2022. Seventy-six wins in 2023. 61-101 again in 2024. And in 2025, fifty-one wins and a hundred and eleven losses, the worst season in the history of the franchise by seven games. Sixty-four wins in 2026. Sixty-three in 2027.

Five last-place finishes in six years. A general manager named Chris held the chair through all of it, from 2015 through 2028 — the rise, the two flags, the dispersal, and most of the wreckage.

There was almost nothing to hold onto. Jeff Daniel stole two hundred bases across six seasons and won a Silver Slugger in 2026 on a club that lost ninety-eight games. Joel Smith hit .265 for four years. That is the ledger of a decade.

VI

Ground Cleared

2028 – 2031

A man named Ben took over during 2028 and has spent four years doing the unglamorous work.

The 2028 club won seventy-four. The 2029 club fell back to sixty, which was the fourth hundred-loss season in eight years. And then it started to move: seventy-seven wins in 2030, and in 2031, seventy-nine wins, third place in the Ruby Division, and a wild card berth — the first postseason appearance in Vancouver in thirteen years.

They lost in the first round, in a year Denver took the championship. But the drought ended, and it ended with a club whose best years are in front of it rather than behind.

That is where this history closes: not on a banner, and not on a collapse, but on a seventy-nine-win team that got into October for the first time since Loredó and McGuigan and Ruiz were young.

VII

What the Vandals Built

Thirty-one seasons. Eight Octobers. Two division flags. Two trips to the conference championship series, in 2003 and 2016, and no further. No championship series. No trophy.

It is the thinnest record in the Ruby Division and one of the thinnest in the league, and there is no way to argue it into something else. But the thinness is not the same as emptiness, and the two should not be confused.

This franchise developed a pitcher who won three consecutive Cy Young Awards, and another who won a fourth and threw more innings than anyone in club history. It developed a second baseman who won a Rookie of the Year, two Most Valuable Player awards, three Gold Gloves and three Silver Sluggers before his twenty-eighth birthday. It put a hundred-win team and a ninety-six-win team on the field in consecutive years, with the conference's Most Valuable Player in the second of them and four Silver Sluggers in that one lineup.

None of it converted. That is the fact, and it is the reason the word attached to this club is the one about wreckage rather than the one about the kingdom in Africa that stood a hundred years.

But the aqueducts were real. Somebody built them, in the rain, in a city that had every reason to stop watching and mostly did. And in 2031, for the first time in thirteen years, the Vandals went back to October, which is the only argument any franchise ever gets to make.

The Ledger

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

Home: Vandals Stadium, Vancouver — capacity 45,000

Conference: Fire Conference, Ruby Division

All-time regular-season record (2001–2031): 2,304–2,719 (.459)

Postseason appearances: 8 in 31 seasons

League Championships: 0

Championship series appearances: 0

Conference championship series appearances: 2 — 2003, 2016

Division titles: 2 — 2017, 2018

Best season: 2017 (100–62)

Worst season: 2025 (51–111)

Most Valuable Players: 3 — Eric Gilbride (2014, 2016), Christian Loredó (2018)

Cy Young Awards: 4 — Andy Kerrigan (2001, 2002, 2003), Jon Snyder (2011)

Rookies of the Year: 1 — Eric Gilbride (2014, Fire Conference)

Hall of Famers: 3 — Rich Gordon (inducted 2015), Alex López (2020) and Shane Markward (2029), none of whom played more than a season and a half in Vancouver

General managers: Dylan B (2001–2006), Bob C (2006–2015), Chris S (2015–2028), Ben V (2028–)

Hundred-loss seasons: 5 — 2007, 2022, 2024, 2025, 2029

Ninety-win seasons: 2 — 2016, 2017

Longest postseason drought: 13 seasons (2019–2030)

Pillars of the Franchise

Andy Kerrigan, SP (2001–2010) — The greatest player in franchise history and the only man in it to win three Cy Young Awards. Fire Conference Cy Young in 2001, 2002 and 2003, with earned run averages of 2.81, 2.24 and 2.30 and a three-hundred-strikeout season in the last of them. Ten years, 1,965 innings, 1,948 strikeouts, 45.0 wins above replacement, all of it in Vancouver. He carried the only deep October this club has had. He exhausted his Hall of Fame ballot in 2028 at 29.2 percent and is not eligible again until 2036.

Carlos Ruiz, SS (2014–2021) — The bat at the center of the good years. Eight seasons, 1,183 games, three hundred and sixty-one home runs and nine hundred and fifty-six runs batted in, with 42.8 wins above replacement — more than any position player the club has had. His 2016, at sixty-two home runs and a hundred and fifty-five driven in, is the biggest season in franchise history. Silver Sluggers in 2014, 2016 and 2018, and the Most Valuable Player of the 2016 divisional series.

Christian Loredó, LF (2016–2021) — Six seasons, a .318 average, two hundred and two home runs, and the finest single year any Vandal hitter has had: .347 with fifty-five home runs, a hundred and forty runs batted in and ten wins above replacement in 2018, which won him the Fire Conference Most Valuable Player award. He hit .358 the following season on a club that finished fifth, and was gone by the middle of 2021.

Eric Gilbride, 2B (2013–2018) — The most decorated four-year run in club history. Rookie of the Year, Most Valuable Player, a Gold Glove and a Silver Slugger in 2014, all in the same season; a second Most Valuable Player in 2016; three straight Gold Gloves and three straight Silver Sluggers from 2014 through 2016; a wild card series MVP in 2015. He hit .301 with 32.5 wins above replacement in Vancouver and was finished as a star before he turned twenty-nine.

Jon Snyder, SP (2009–2019) — The franchise record holder in wins (133), innings (2,326) and strikeouts (2,001), and the winner of the 2011 Fire Conference Cy Young Award on a club that finished sixth. Eleven seasons, one uniform, and an 18-7 record for the hundred-win team of 2017.

Andy McGuigan, 3B (2016–2020) — Five seasons at .322 with a hundred and ninety-six home runs, including .341 in 2017 and .345 in 2018. Silver Sluggers in 2017 and 2018 and the Most Valuable Player of the 2016 wild card series.

Javy Carranza, RP (2001–2010) — Three hundred and forty-four saves, more than any other pitcher in club history, with a 2.79 earned run average across ten seasons for teams that rarely led.

Harold Frew, 3B (2001–2008, 2011) — Nine seasons and 1,149 games through the leanest stretch the franchise has had, a Silver Slugger in 2002, and a hundred and forty-one home runs on clubs that averaged seventy-two wins.

Emmanuel Gaona, RF (2017–2022) — Six seasons, a .281 average, and a Silver Slugger on the 2018 division winner. The last man standing from the good teams.

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