



THE BEACON REPORT

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Three premium picks for a man who has not played a game

BY MARTY SOWERBY · THE BEACON REPORT

Boston is 23-25 and has scored 208 runs and allowed 231. A club that scores 208 and allows 231 wins about 44 percent of its games. This one has won 48 percent of them, which is a game and a half of daylight between what the Beacons have done and what they have actually earned, and the entire gap is explained by two lines in the splits: 6-1 in extra innings and 16-8 against teams currently under .500.

You are sitting exactly on the playoff line as of tonight, eighth of 16 in the Ice Conference, which sounds like a position and is really just a rounding error. It is also a fair description of the last 31 seasons.

That eighth-place standing needs one more thing said about it. Boston took 17 of its 36 divisional games and has gone 6-6 since the crossover, and those twelve games are the only evidence in existence about how this roster stacks against the other 24 teams. A twelve-game sample cannot separate a .450 club from a .550 one. Every league-wide ranking below rests on that, including the flattering ones.

The offense is the part of this that is genuinely interesting, because it is good at one thing and useless at the other. This club is fifth in the league in batting average at .259 and sixth in on-base percentage at .324. It is 20th in slugging and 25th in home runs with 47. It has 22 stolen bases, 28th. So: a lineup that reaches base at a top-six rate, cannot drive anybody in from first, and will not run. Boston has left a great many men standing where they were. The 208 runs, 21st in the league, are not an accident of sequencing or a clutch-hitting problem. They are a slugging problem, and they have been since the first week.

Two hitters are carrying it. Edgar Tyler is at .301 with a .518 slugging percentage and 42 runs batted in, second-most in the entire league, and he came over in a December 2030 trade and is making \$500,000. Troy Hutchinson is at .318. Behind them: Brian Morris at .231, Keith Palavandishvili at .230, Carlos Sanchez at

.207 with a .262 slugging percentage in 188 plate appearances. Danny Hernandez, at \$15.6 million through 2035, has played 29 games.

The rotation is where the season actually went, and it went there in February.

Tyler Jackson is 24, is making the league minimum, has a 2.97 earned run average and has struck out 71 men in 63 2/3 innings, eighth-most in the league. He has the best strikeout-to-walk ratio on the staff by a distance and a 1.02 WHIP, and he is the only starter here who has been unambiguously good. After him it falls apart fast: Anthony Anderson at 6.06, Mike Fuentes at 5.33, Bill Ramirez at 4.50 and 0-5. The rotation's 4.42 earned run average ranks 23rd of 32. The bullpen's is also 4.42, also 23rd, and it has blown 11 saves against 12 converted, which is a conversion rate of 52 percent and is the worst number in this entire report.

Now the injury ledger, which is the actual story and which nobody outside this subscriber list is going to bother to assemble. Eric Tangney, the highest-paid player on the roster at \$25 million, is on the 60-day list and has not pitched. Russ Brown went down February 28 for 74 days. Jon Valdez missed 33 days from February 24. Nick Luke missed 11 days from the same date and another 16 from April 4. J.R. Cannon missed 25 days from February 25. Bill Ramirez missed 32 from March 5. David Torres missed 36 from March 9. Danny Hernandez missed 23 from April 13. That is eight pitchers and roughly 250 man-days, nearly all of it landing before the season was two weeks old. Tangney and Russ Brown are the two still on the list today, at 56 days apiece.

JP Pearson has run this club since 2007 and the offseason response to a 91-win team was three free agents: Danny Stanescu at \$13 million over three years, Tetsuo Nagata at \$10.6 million for one, Rich Rhinehart at \$4.8 million for one. Stanescu has a 6.32 earned run average. Nagata has thrown 15 innings. Rhinehart is 36, has 16 plate appearances, and is hitting .133. No trades were made, in the offseason or since. The roster that won 91 games last year was essentially handed back the same assignment with a slightly older bullpen, and then the bullpen got hurt.

What the model says, and you can have the full table if you want it: this is a .450 team playing .479 baseball on the back of a 6-1 extra-innings record that will not hold, in a division where Somerville is 31-17 and the fifth through eighth clubs are separated by four games. The path to October runs through beating clubs you have gone 7-17 against.

There is one place to look that is not depressing, and it is the reason to keep reading this club in July. Josh Owens, seventh overall in 2027, acquired on the last day of December, has a 2.47 earned run average over 51 innings at Triple-A at 23. Owens is the most valuable asset this organization controls and the acquisition cost is the only line in Pearson's eighteen-month ledger that survives contact with a spreadsheet. Jimmy Gant is the same age in the same rotation with 36 strikeouts in 41 1/3 innings. Joe Tonner is 24 and hitting .333 there. Ethan Murphy, second round a year ago, is slugging .532 at Double-A at 23.

Below Double-A it is a wasteland and the records deserve printing: Glendale 5-19, Overland Park 3-21. The one name that far down is Jeremy Johnson, 19, with a 3.91 at High-A and a development clock that does not intersect with anything this roster needs before 2035. Everything this organization actually controls is stacked on two levels, and both of them are inside 18 months of Boston.

Thirty-one seasons, no championship series. Roland Cook won three Cy Young Awards here between 2009 and 2011 and the club finished under .500 in two of those years, and the argument this site has been making since it was a different site on a different masthead is that Boston keeps producing the individual season and never the team around it. Tyler Jackson is 24 and is currently producing the individual season. What is around him is a 52 percent save conversion rate and a lineup that cannot slug.

The run differential says 21-27. It usually gets what it is owed.