



CINCINNATI REGISTER

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Three starters under 3.65, and a 28-20 record behind them

BY WENDELL BARR · CINCINNATI REGISTER

March 29, at home, against Las Vegas. The Regents won 2-1, and then won the next one, and then won the third, and a sweep on opening weekend is a pleasant thing that means nothing whatsoever.

Eight weeks later the record is 28-20. Third in the Jade, four games out of first, and five games clear of the last postseason place in the conference. That is the best this club has looked on the twenty-fourth of May since it played in Georgia.

Here is what is behind it, stated plainly, and then the part where it gets put in its proper place.

The starting rotation has a 3.63 earned run average, fifth-best in the league. Josh Baker is 5-2 with a 2.80 and a 0.93 WHIP. Matt Burke is 4-2 with a 3.60. Chris Hartke, signed in January for five years, has a 3.51.

Nobody on this roster is on the injured list. Three men have been all year, and the longest stint was 14 days in February.

The lineup strikes out less than any team in baseball but one. Three hundred forty-six times in 48 games. It puts the ball in play, it hits .258, sixth in the league, and it has scored 234 runs, fifth-most. Joe Duemler has 12 home runs and 39 runs batted in, both among the top ten anywhere. Eric Chini has a .342 on-base percentage and 29 runs batted in. Juan Martinez has 33 runs batted in and is being paid \$25 million to produce them, which he is doing.

Against the rest of the conference outside this division, the record is 9-3.

That is twelve games, and twelve games is all anybody has. Cincinnati went 19-17 inside the division, which is the record of a .500 club, and 9-3 since, which ties Galveston and Fort Collins for the best mark in the Jade.

Two months of evidence says average. Two weeks says first place. You already know which of those a newspaper wants at the top of the page, and you have been reading this one long enough to know it will not be there.

The club swept four straight in Toronto. It won seven in a row from May 10 through May 17. It is 13-7 in May.

All of that is true and all of it is in the record book and none of it is a prediction.

October 9 of last year, in Baltimore, one game for a whole season, and the Regents lost it 10-2 and went home. The autumn before that they were 86-76 and missed. The autumn before that they were the Durham Dragons and finished 80-82 and seventh. The last time this franchise played a postseason game was 2009. The two banners hanging in this ballpark were won in 2002 and 2003 by the Atlanta Smashers, a team that stopped existing when most people reading this were children, and Cincinnati has been asked to feel something about them for two years now without much success.

Twenty-two years. Nobody currently in that clubhouse was playing professional baseball when it started.

So what is different, if anything. Chris B. has run this club since 2028, which makes him the fifth general manager to preside over some portion of the drought and the seventh this franchise has had. He made one move of consequence this winter, signing Hartke, and made one trade, selling two draft picks to Tampa Bay on New Year's Eve for six million dollars. He has not tried to fix this roster in a hurry and the roster has gone 28-20 anyway, which is either patience or luck and will not be distinguishable until August.

There is a thing worth noticing about the way the wins have come. The club is 20-14 against teams currently under .500 and 8-6 against teams over it, which is a fairly ordinary split, not a hollow one. It is 14-10 at home and 14-10 on the road, exactly. It is 6-6 in one-run games. There is no obvious piece of luck propping this up. It is a team playing about as well as it has looked.

The bullpen has 17 saves and five blown, and Danny Sotelo has a 1.35 earned run average, and Danny Day has a 2.25 with 32 strikeouts against five walks. Nick Addison is 23 and is 6-0 in relief with a 4.39, which is a record the rest of the summer will take apart.

Downstairs there is less. Indianapolis is 12-24 and St. Augustine is 6-18. The two lowest levels have not opened yet. Mike Didier has a 2.23 earned run average at Lexington and is the only arm down there who might matter to this particular season.

The names the organization is counting on are at Indianapolis and the bats are not hitting. Angel Malona is batting .250 there. Josh Boucher is at .231 up at Lexington and Mauricio Dominguez at .200. Sean Riddle is slugging .621 in High-A, and that is the whole of the good news.

The best young player in this organization has not played a game. Bobby Avila is 16 and at Goodyear, which does not open for weeks. This town has spent twenty-two years learning what a farm report like that one turns into.

The schedule from here turns harder. Galveston is 32-16 and Fort Collins is 30-18 and both of them are in this division and both will be seen a great many times between now and September.

People have been stopping men in this town on the street to ask whether this is the year. The honest answer is that it is May, that the pitching has been very good and the health has been perfect and neither of those things is promised past July, and that the last time anybody wrote a hopeful column in this city about this baseball team it was followed by 22 years in which there was nothing to write about at all.

The record is 28-20. Look at it. It is a fact, and it is a good one, and that is as far as this goes today.