



NORTHERN COLORADO SUN

MAY 24, 2032 · THE FORT COLLINS ROOSTERS BEAT

Last in home runs, last in steals, second in the division

BY DALE KIRKPATRICK · NORTHERN COLORADO SUN

Two facts about the way this baseball team scores runs.

The Roosters have hit 40 home runs. That is tied with Phoenix for the fewest of any club in The Big League. Not the fewest in the Jade Division, the fewest of all 32. They have also stolen 10 bases, which is the fewest outright, one behind Spokane and four behind anybody else.

A team that cannot hit the ball out of the park and will not run is 30-18 and in second place, two games behind Galveston, seven games clear of the last postseason position in the conference, and fifth in the league.

The mechanism is worth laying out, because it is unusual and it is not luck.

This lineup walks. One hundred sixty times in 48 games, eighth-most in the league, and it has struck out 377 times, sixth-fewest. It hits .253, 10th, and its on-base percentage of .325 ranks fourth in all of baseball. It slugs .386, 23rd. So: it reaches base at a rate almost nobody matches, it advances a base at a time, and it has scored 209 runs, 20th. The offense converts a very high on-base percentage into a middling run total, which is what happens when nothing goes over the fence.

A club built this way ought to be fragile against unfamiliar pitching, since a lineup that scores by accumulation depends on knowing what is coming. Fort Collins went 21-15 inside the division. In the twelve games since, against pitchers this lineup has not seen: 9-3, tied for the best crossover record in baseball.

Twelve games is twelve games. But it points the opposite way from what the construction would predict, and that is worth tracking rather than explaining.

The run prevention is the other half, and it is the better half.

Fort Collins has allowed 38 home runs, which is the fewest of any team in the league. The pitching staff's earned run average is 3.74, 11th, and its 187 runs allowed rank seventh. Jesse Beck has 71 strikeouts in 55 innings, eighth-most in the league, with 13 walks. Alejandro Contreras and Jose Alvarado are both under 4.00 across 10 starts each. Roger Lippincott is 4-1.

The bullpen has 19 saves and four blown, and that ratio is the quiet engine of the whole season. Bill Barker has 15 saves, second-most in baseball, with a 1.71 earned run average and four walks in 21 innings. Brian Holder is 24, has a 1.12 earned run average and seven holds. Elijah Best has a 2.19 and seven holds. Gilbert Woodside has eight holds and has walked four men in 26 innings. Four relievers, and the club is 10-6 in one-run games because of them.

The roster additions this winter were three men and one of them mattered. Chris Goers signed on March 3 for one year at \$25 million and is hitting .274 with a .490 slugging percentage and nine home runs, which is more than any other Rooster. Javier Camarillo, signed March 17, is hitting .278 with a .359 on-base percentage. Tim Urbach is hitting .173. No trades were made in the offseason and none have been made since.

Now, the part of this organization that has changed the most, and it is not in Colorado.

At High-A, Mission Viejo is 18-6 and the lineup is the reason. Cody Boaz was the third-round pick in 2027 and is hitting .444 with a .529 on-base percentage and a .861 slugging percentage, seven home runs in 86 plate appearances. Matt Korman is hitting .380 at the same level and Jake Hines .324. Cory Pineda is at .352 with a .453 on-base percentage and is the one of that group the organization has been developing as an everyday player. John Kovacs is hitting .372 with seven home runs at Albuquerque.

The arms are the organization's actual asset, and they are spread across three levels. R.J. Blum is at Salt Lake City, 1-3 with a 4.93 earned run average and 29 strikeouts in 38 1/3 innings, and he is the most highly regarded pitcher in this system by a considerable distance. Nobody in this organization is grading him off 38 innings. Humberto Flores has a 1.26 across 14 1/3 at the same level. Aaron Asher, the second-round pick in 2027, has a 0.38 across 24 innings there.

At High-A, David Santiago has a 1.96 and 23 strikeouts in 23 innings. Carlos Abreu has not thrown enough for the numbers to carry meaning yet. John Sayer, the 15th overall selection in 2029, has a 1.01. Eric Reilly was the fifth overall pick in 2028 and has a 2.16 with 28 strikeouts in 25 innings. Kevin Dilley has a 1.82 at Salt Lake City.

Below that, Carlos Bueno and Johnny Hillard are at Grand Junction, which has not opened its season. Neither has thrown a competitive inning in 2032 and both will be discussed here at length when they do.

Mission Viejo is 18-6 and Salt Lake City is 15-21, so the top and the middle of this system do not look alike, but the two levels that matter to the next 24 months are producing at a rate this organization has not

seen in some years.

That is the whole report, and here is the only interpretive sentence in it. The last time the Roosters played a postseason game was 2019. There have been 13 of those trips in franchise history and the deepest any of them went was a conference round, and the 2015 club won 105 games and was the number one seed and did not reach a final either. A good record in May has not historically been the constraint here.

What is different about this particular 30-18 is where it is coming from: a bullpen with four reliable arms under contract at or near the minimum, a rotation allowing fewer home runs than anyone, and a system whose best pitcher is at Triple-A with two first-round selections still at High-A behind him. Those are the components that hold up in October, when the home runs the club does not hit matter less and the four relievers matter a great deal more.

The record against teams currently over .500 is 7-9. Against teams under it, 23-9. Both of those numbers will move.