



HURON DAILY BEACON

MAY 24, 2032 · THE HURON HERONS BEAT

A 13-2 start, and 33 games of evidence against it

BY LORRAINE PETROSKY · HURON DAILY BEACON

Nobody scored on this team in the first game it played, and nobody beat it for a week after that, and there are people in this town who had already decided what the summer was going to be by the second Saturday in April.

The Herons opened with a shutout in Southland and did not lose until the fourth day of the month. On April 14 they were 13-2, eleven games over, the best record in the conference and the best start this franchise has had in some years, and the sort of fortnight that makes a certain kind of person begin doing arithmetic on a 162-game pace.

Since April 14 the record is 15-18.

Both of those things happened. Neither of them is going to explain October, and anybody claiming otherwise in the last week of May is guessing in a louder voice than the evidence permits.

Still, the ledger is the ledger, and here is what is in it.

Twenty-eight and twenty. Third in the Topaz, four behind Milwaukee, three clear of the last postseason position in the conference. Twenty-two and fourteen inside the division. Fifteen and six at home and 13-14 on the road, which is a gap of nine games in a split that usually runs closer to three.

There is a tidy coincidence buried in those two stretches, and this column has never been able to leave one alone. Huron went 22-14 inside the Topaz and has gone 6-6 since the crossover. The hot fortnight and the cold month both happened against the same seven clubs, and the moment strangers arrived the team turned into exactly what a coin is.

This club has stolen 86 bases. That is the most of any team in The Big League. Danny Perez has 20 of them and is 24 and makes the league minimum. Armando Ramirez has 14, Egidio Vercesi 11, Garrett Roll 12 in 29 games, Chris Sandvik 10. Six different men in double figures on the bases by the end of May is not something this franchise has done before, and it has come with a .319 on-base percentage, 12th, and a .421 slugging percentage, seventh, on a lineup batting .244.

Six shutouts thrown. One suffered.

The rotation is five men between 3.27 and 5.59 and has thrown 275 innings, which is a great deal for late May. Nick Agins is 5-3 with a 3.47 and 67 strikeouts. Joey Payne is 5-2 with a 3.27 and makes the league minimum. Kenny Springer has a 5.59 and Rocky Gerling a 4.73, and those two are the reason the staff's earned run average sits 14th rather than fifth.

The bullpen has 16 saves and five blown. Jose Erbetto has 13 of those saves, sixth-most in the league, with a 2.53 earned run average, and he has been in this organization since he was 17 years old. Emmitt Moffatt has a 1.50. Matt Miller has a 2.08. Jesse Gallis has 28 strikeouts in 21 innings.

Armando Ramirez was signed on Christmas Eve for four years at \$20.4 million. He has a Most Valuable Player award, a Rookie of the Year, a Platinum Stick and two Great Gloves, and he is hitting .250 with a .354 on-base percentage, nine home runs, 30 runs batted in and those 14 stolen bases at 31 years old. That is a good signing and it looks like one.

Manny Pineda is owed \$35.2 million and is hitting .212. Billy Cover is hitting .146 in 159 plate appearances. Yuji Kishi signed on New Year's Eve for five years and \$10.8 million and then spent 49 days on the injured list starting Opening Day, and has seven games to his name.

Three transactions this winter, and every one of them spent draft capital. Huron's 2032 eighth-round pick went to Denver for Sigismund Bayer. Three million dollars went to Somerville for its 2032 sixth-rounder. And on Opening Day, two fifth-round picks, 2033 and 2034, went to Southland for two teenage pitchers, Perry Servidio at 18 and Ricky Hill at 19. That last one is the only genuinely interesting thing the front office did, and nobody will know for six years whether it mattered.

Downstairs, a coincidence. Manitoba is 16-8, and nearly every name in this organization worth writing down later is on that one roster. Matt Ray is hitting .291 with a .386 on-base percentage and five home runs and is the best of them. Danny Bradley has given up two earned runs in 11 innings at 20. Kevin Duca is on that roster too, and Ruben Martinez with 21 strikeouts in 20 2/3.

The bigger numbers are at Lansing. John Nash is slugging .693 with nine home runs and Miguel Contreras .703. Andrew Emmons has a 1.75 across 51 innings there and Josh McCoy a 1.19. Miguel Dominguez is hitting .413 at High-A, Eric Hawley .400, and Mike Chavez .333 at Windsor.

Three championships in this town were won by men nobody in this section was writing about in May. That is not an argument for any of these names. It is the reason not to rank them yet.

Now the part that matters, which is the part that has been true here for 20 years and which nobody in this city wants to hear in May.

In 2017 this club won 115 games and did not win a championship. In 2020 it won 84, fewer than any champion in the history of this league, and won the whole thing. Twenty postseason appearances, six championship series, three rings, more Hall of Famers than any franchise in baseball, and no discernible relationship between what happens between March and September and what happens afterward.

Thirteen and two meant nothing. Fifteen and eighteen means nothing. Twenty-eight and twenty means the club will probably be there in October, and being there in October is the only thing a summer is capable of deciding.

What decides the rest of it keeps its own ledger, and it has never once shown its work.