



KVGS-AM AND THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW

MAY 24, 2032 · THE LAS VEGAS HIGH ROLLERS BEAT

The bullpen has thrown 261 innings. It is May.

BY SONNY PARDO · KVGS-AM AND THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW

Want to know what is wrong with this baseball team? It is one number, and it is not on the scoreboard.

Las Vegas starting pitchers have thrown 177 innings this season. That is the fewest of any rotation in the league. The bullpen has thrown 261. That is the most in the league, 25 more than second place, and it is not close enough to argue about.

Forty-eight games. Two hundred sixty-one relief innings. Do the arithmetic on what that looks like in August.

Now, is the bullpen any good? Yes. That is the maddening part. The relief corps has a 3.31 earned run average, ninth-best in baseball, and only four blown saves all year. Don Fraker has a 1.25 earned run average and 69 strikeouts in 50 1/3 innings, the 10th-highest strikeout total of any pitcher in the league, and he is a reliever, which should tell you how often he has been asked to pitch. Darius Valentine has a 2.55. Leo Advincula has a 2.74 and four walks in 23 innings. Rafael Abila has a 1.69. These men have been excellent and they are being used like a rotation because the rotation cannot finish the fifth.

And what about that rotation? The starters have a 5.57 earned run average, 30th of 32. Eduardo Carrillo is 1-5 with a 6.87 and has walked 29 men in 36 2/3 innings. Joe Stensland is 0-5 with a 7.01. Evan Lehman is 36 years old, has a 4.97, and has given up eight home runs in 38 innings. Roger Thomas has been the only steady one at 3.45, and Tyler Davis has a 5.79. That is the group being sent out every fifth day, and every fifth day the phone rings in the pen by the fourth inning.

Back in 2018 this club won 117 games and its starters went deep enough that the manager could keep a bullpen for the games it needed one. That roster is gone and the point stands anyway: you cannot win with five men who cannot get you to the seventh.

The record is 21-27, sixth in the Jade, 11 games behind Galveston, two behind the last postseason spot. The run differential is minus-7, so this is not a catastrophe, it is a club losing the close ones. Six and eight in one-run games. Eight and sixteen on the road.

And here is the note nobody on the show wants to hear. Las Vegas went 16-20 inside the division and is 5-7 since the crossover. So the rotation did this against the Jade, and then did it again against everybody else, and there is no soft stretch coming to bail it out.

The lineup has been fine and has one genuine star and one genuine surprise. Arturo Molina is hitting .319 with a .390 on-base percentage, a .527 slugging percentage and 10 home runs, and he took a player of the week award on April 19. J.J. Ellenberg is at .284 with 26 runs batted in and took one on April 26. Jeff Bass is 33 years old and has 27 stolen bases, and took one on April 5. The club has 81 steals, second-most in baseball, and if you like watching men run, this is the most entertaining bad team in the league.

Three player of the week awards in eight weeks, by the way, and the club is six games under. Individual trophies in April have never told you a thing about this baseball team, and they are not telling you anything now.

The surprise is Frank Williams, who is 24 and hitting .324 with a .559 slugging percentage and 11 stolen bases in 40 games, and who nobody outside this organization had heard of on Opening Day.

The disappointments, and there are real ones: Manuel Salas is hitting .188. Jason Aarsvold, who won a Rookie of the Year award in this uniform, is hitting .183. Jose Bautista was signed in January for three years and \$14 million a year and is hitting .204 with a .299 slugging percentage, and that is the only free-agent move this front office made all winter. No trades since November. Not one.

Here is what that means with 114 games to play. There are two months until the deadline. This club is two games out of a playoff spot with the worst starting rotation in the conference, and the front office's entire offseason was one outfielder hitting .204. Ross Colson is owed \$20 million and has been hurt since March 16. Mark Doster, Erik Bardin and Jay Townsend have all already left the organization this season.

Ask anybody who has called the show in the last three weeks what they want. They want a starting pitcher. There is no version of the next four months where this club matters and does not get one, and the last time this front office was asked to move quickly on anything, Christian Loredó filed for free agency on December 2, 2029 and Las Vegas signed his replacement on January 19. Seven weeks. The man had won this town a Most Valuable Player award.

One more thing, and it is the genuinely good news, so stay with it.

Luxor is 21-3. Venetian is 23-13 and in first. Mandalay Bay is 18-6. Every level that has opened is winning at a rate nobody else in this division can match.

So who is actually doing it? Not the names you have been hearing on this station. Eric Archie has allowed one earned run in 14 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings at Luxor. Jeff Adam is 4-0 with a 0.49. Ken Grossman has 33 strikeouts in 31 $\frac{1}{3}$. Cameron Stetler is at Mandalay Bay and is the arm this organization would least like to lose. Four pitchers, and not one of them has been mentioned on a Las Vegas broadcast this year.

Now the ones who have. Josh Dillard, 16th overall in 2028, is slugging .699 at High-A. Tim Lankford, eighth overall in 2025, has a 2.16 at the same level. Matt Holecek has a 1.21. Alex Serrano is hitting .398 at Venetian, Danny Zavaleta .390, Javy Tirado slugging .681 at Bellagio. Good numbers, every one, and most of them belong to men this organization is not building around.

That is a pipeline. It is real and it is deep and it is two years from mattering.

The question for this summer is whether the men running this club understand that a 3.31 bullpen throwing 261 innings in May is not a strength. It is a warning, and it is written down where anybody could read it.