



MEMPHIS DELTA TIMES

MAY 24, 2032 · THE MEMPHIS BLUES BEAT

Seven one-run games. Seven losses.

BY OTIS FRAYNE · MEMPHIS DELTA TIMES

Fourteen and thirty-four. Worst record in The Big League, all 32 of them. Eighteen games out of first on the twenty-fourth of May, which is not a deficit so much as a different address.

Seven games this season have been decided by a single run. The Blues have lost all seven. Three have gone to extra innings. They have lost all three of those too. Ten times a game has come down to the last thing that happened and ten times the last thing that happened belonged to somebody else, and that is the kind of statistic a person from another town would call bad luck and a person from this one would recognize on sight.

And it happened at home, mostly, among people we know. The Blues went 11-25 against the seven clubs they see most and 3-9 since the crossover. There was no stranger to blame it on.

The winter before this, the front office spent again. Eli Bernal signed on January 15 for five years at \$28 million a season, the biggest commitment this club has made since it got here. Vicente Chavez signed two days later for four years and \$7 million. Adrian Jones came in March. One trade, in March, and it was five million dollars sent to Denver for a fifth-round pick in 2034.

Chavez has been everything anybody could have asked. He is hitting .312 with a .582 slugging percentage, 12 home runs and 36 runs batted in, both of which are among the top ten in the league, and he has played all 48 games. Seven million dollars a year. In a season with nothing else in it, he has been worth the price of admission on his own.

Bernal is hitting .247. He will be paid \$28 million a year through 2036.

That is the shape of the whole ledger, and it has been the shape of it for a long time now. Nachman Cohen is owed \$21.2 million through 2035 and is hitting .206. Casey Schnake is owed \$20 million through 2034, is hitting .264, and has one home run in 215 plate appearances. Gavin Sadler is 37, is owed \$14.6

million, won a Cy Young Award somewhere else a long time ago, made four starts and has been on the 60-day list since. Four men. Eighty-four million dollars.

And underneath them: Jonathan Murrell hitting .182, Joey Price at .186, Nick Carbonaro at .133. The club is 27th in runs scored, 28th in on-base percentage, 27th in slugging. It strikes out less than all but four teams in baseball, which means the outs are going into gloves rather than past them, and there is something about watching a ball get caught that is harder on a crowd than watching a man swing through one.

The pitching has not been the disgrace the record implies. Max McIntyre is 5-3 with a 3.70 earned run average, which on this roster is a small miracle, and five of his wins are more than a third of the team's total. Ben Cowhey has a 2.04. Joe Cardinal has a 3.31 and a 0.92 WHIP. Aaron Rose is 34 and has six saves. The staff's earned run average of 4.66 ranks 26th, which is bad, and 26th is a long way from 32nd, and the record is 32nd.

Five and nineteen on the road. Six and twenty-five against clubs with a winning record.

Eric H. has run this baseball team since 2027, which makes this his sixth season. He arrived in Nashville, he moved with it, he spent \$148 million in a single offseason window once and won 64 games, and he has now spent again and is on course for fewer than that. The record since he got here reads 71-91 in Nashville, then 47-115, then 64-98, and now this.

Ten straight losing seasons. Nine hundred-loss seasons in franchise history. Never once a conference championship series in 31 years. There are cities that have not had a professional baseball team as long as this franchise has gone without playing a meaningful game in the second week of October.

And people keep showing up, which is the part that a column full of numbers will never get at. On a Tuesday in May, at 14-34, they come down to the ballpark and they sit through it, the way this part of the country sits through a great many things it did not ask for and cannot fix. A losing baseball team here is not a sports problem. It is something the whole place carries together, and has carried a long time, and will carry a while yet.

There is a little to hold onto and it is all a long way from Memphis, and most of it is at Madera Highlands, which is losing. Mike Jenkins is hitting .300 there with a .500 slugging percentage, and he is the best thing this organization has made in some years. Roy Newmark is in the same rotation with 33 strikeouts across 38 innings. Pedro Miranda has a 3.38 over 32. At Monument, Sam Atkin and Tom Morrison are the two youngest men this organization has playing anywhere.

The bigger numbers are at Chula Vista. Giovanni Porreca is hitting .316 with 11 home runs, Quinn Stoikos .321, Juan Rojas .326. Gabriel Goldammer is hitting .402 at High-A and Chris Faulk, the 35th overall pick in 2029, has a .429 on-base percentage. Eric Caldwell and Chris French are both under 2.85 at Madera Highlands.

Efrain Rosales is 18 and has not thrown a pitch this year, because Cotati has not opened its season. In a summer like this one a town will take a boy it has never seen and make him carry something, and there is no harm in that so long as everybody involved remembers that is what they are doing.

Three bats at Triple-A, hitting the way this big-league lineup cannot, and not one of them is going to be a better player than he is right now. Somebody should find out whether they can do it here before the summer is out. There is no reason left not to.

Fourteen and thirty-four. It has been worse. It was 47-115 two years ago. That is not a comfort and it is not meant as one. It is just the record, and around here the record is a long story that keeps getting one more chapter.