



NEW YORK STANDARD

MAY 24, 2032 · THE NEW YORK EMPIRE BEAT

Worst offense in baseball, and a farm system to match

BY GIL AMSTERDAM · NEW YORK STANDARD

Thirty-four and eighty-six.

That is not the Empire's record. That is the combined record of every affiliate this organization owns that has actually started its season.

Buffalo is 14-22 and last in Triple-A. Rochester is 13-23 and seventh in Double-A. Albany is 2-22. Oswego is 5-19. Four clubs, four divisions, and three of them are sitting in last place at this moment. Low-A and rookie ball have not opened yet, so this is the whole of it: the farm system this front office has spent four years telling you to be patient about is playing .283 baseball at every level currently playing baseball.

And understand when it happened. The Empire went 15-21 inside the Sapphire, a division containing two other clubs that are also 19-29, and 4-8 since the crossover.

Now the big club, which is 19-29, dead last in the Ice Conference, 30th of 32 in the league, and has scored 159 runs. That is the fewest of any team in baseball. Not the fewest in the division. The fewest anywhere. The offense ranks 29th in batting average, 30th in on-base percentage, 30th in slugging. There is no category in which this lineup is average.

Travis Eaton is 35 years old and is being paid \$40.8 million this season, the largest salary in this division and one of the largest in the league. He is hitting .248 with three home runs and 11 runs batted in. Ron Stone is 33 and is being paid \$20 million and is hitting .253. Andy Mroczkowski is being paid \$16.2 million and is hitting .152. Rob Nabors has 142 plate appearances and a .127 batting average and a .187 slugging percentage, and he is still in the lineup, which tells you what is behind him.

Those three contracts total \$77 million. The entire rest of the roster costs \$26 million. This is a \$103.3 million payroll, 29th in the league, last in this division, and three-quarters of it is tied up in men in their thirties on a team that lost 101 games last year and is on pace to lose 98 more.

Joe G. has run this club since 2017. Since November 1 he has made zero trades. Not a bad one. Not a salary dump. Zero. A 101-loss team went through an entire offseason and the first eight weeks of a season in which it has the worst offense in baseball, and nothing moved.

Here is what makes it worse, and this is the part that should genuinely make somebody in that building uncomfortable: this club has pitching.

The starting rotation has a 3.35 earned run average, second-best in the entire league. Second. Chris Colvin is 22 years old, makes the league minimum, has a 2.37 earned run average and 62 strikeouts in 60 2/3 innings, and came over in a trade 12 months ago. Joe Pruitt has a 1.38 earned run average and a 0.88 WHIP in four starts. Austin Morley has a 3.52. Eric Johnson has a 4.21 earned run average and a record of 0-7, because this team does not score, and 0-7 will follow him around for the rest of his career as though it were his fault.

Then the game reaches the seventh inning. The bullpen has a 5.42 earned run average, 31st of 32. It has 11 saves and 11 blown saves. Eddie Cullison has appeared 25 times, has a 7.77 earned run average and a 2.14 WHIP, and has been given six save opportunities. Jeremy Christian has a 7.11. Freddie Pritchard and Ken Motes are both at 5.54.

Second-best rotation in baseball. Second-worst bullpen. A 50 percent save rate. This club is 11-7 in one-run games, which is the only piece of luck it has had all year and which is actively hiding how bad the late innings have been.

The road record is 7-17.

So the questions, and they have been asked in this space and not answered: Why is a last-place team with the worst offense in baseball paying a 35-year-old \$40.8 million and a 33-year-old \$20 million? Why, with a rotation pitching that well and both of those men on expiring-soon deals, has this front office not made a single phone call that resulted in anything? What exactly is the plan that requires holding Eaton and Stone through a second straight hundred-loss season, and who is going to say it out loud?

Those questions have been asked in this space for a month. After fifteen years of Joe G. running this baseball team, the answer is going to come from the standings or not at all.

There are two things in this organization worth keeping. Colvin is one. The other is Edgar Valentin, a 16th-round pick in 2029 who is 20 and has a 3.00 earned run average at Double-A, and who is the best young arm this organization owns.

After that it thins fast. Justin Timms, last year's first-round pick, has a 3.79 at Buffalo. Greg Tucker has 40 strikeouts in 40 1/3 innings there. Jim Pfahl has barely pitched. Mike Fesperman is hitting .362 at Rochester and Sam Lantz is slugging .614 at Buffalo, and those are fine numbers belonging to men nobody is building a team around.

And then you are back at 34-86.

Tear it down. All of it. Eaton, Stone, Mroczkowski, anyone over 30 with a pulse and a contract, and do it before the deadline instead of after, and stop telling this city about 2021. The ring was 11 years ago. Nobody on this roster was here for it. This is the worst offense in baseball in a building that seats more people than almost any other, and the only good things happening are a 22-year-old who was somebody else's idea and a 20-year-old nobody in this city has seen.