



PHILADELPHIA BULLETIN

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The Eagles were 4-13, and then they weren't

BY FRANK IACOBELLI · PHILADELPHIA BULLETIN

There was a stretch in the middle of April when this felt like the beginning of one of the bad ones.

Swept at home by Chicago. Swept in Boston. Swept at home by Montreal. Three sweeps inside two weeks, a 4-13 record on April 17, nine games under, and the kind of April a city like this one develops opinions about very quickly.

They have gone 21-10 since.

The record is 25-23. Third in the Sapphire, six behind Somerville, two games on the right side of the last postseason spot in the conference. It is May, and it does not mean the season, and after thirty-two years of watching this franchise you learn not to make a proclamation on the twenty-fourth of May. But a 21-10 stretch is a 21-10 stretch, and this town has not had many of them lately, and it is worth enjoying for what it is.

What happened was an eight-game winning streak from April 25 through May 3, a sweep in Chicago followed immediately by a sweep of Boston at home, and then a 13-7 May that has not really stopped. Two of three in Baltimore. Two of three in Montreal. A sweep of Galveston. A split in Rochester.

Here is the odd thing underneath both stretches. The 4-13 and the 21-10 happened against the same seven clubs: Chicago, Boston, Montreal, New York, Somerville, Toronto, Baltimore. Philadelphia came out of the divisional stretch at exactly 18-18.

Dead even. The worst two weeks and the best five weeks this club has had in four years, added together, and the answer is a club that is precisely what it is. Seven and five since the league opened up says the same thing in a smaller voice.

Now, about the baseball itself, because the how of this is not what most people would guess.

This team hits home runs. Seventy of them, second-most in all of baseball, and that is not one man carrying it. Todd Kemplin has 10, Armando Jaramillo has 10, Matthew Ryan has nine, J.J. Saxton has eight, Beau Harrington has seven, Curtis Legget has six. Six players with six or more, and none with more than 10. It has also walked 164 times, fifth-most, and stolen 57 bases, sixth-most. The club is eighth in the league in runs scored. For a roster that cost \$112.9 million, 26th of 32, that is a good deal more offense than anybody had any business expecting.

Garrett Hoenie is having the best season of any pitcher in this division and it is not especially close. He is 4-1 with a 2.12 earned run average, he has struck out 84 men in 63 2/3 innings, third-most in the league, and his WHIP is 0.79. Anyone who has watched a lot of baseball here knows how rarely a number like that comes through this ballpark. He is 31, he is in the last year of his contract, and Philadelphia should watch every start he makes between now and September.

Eric Marchitto, signed in February for one year and \$13 million, is 4-3 with a 2.73. Bill Crum and Bobby Bumby are both 24 and both came out of the 2026 draft and both are holding a rotation spot in the high threes, which for a club in the fourth year of a rebuild is exactly the thing you hope to see in May.

And then there is the seventh inning, which is where this club has been giving it back.

The bullpen has a 5.10 earned run average, 30th of 32, and has blown 12 saves against 16 converted. Miguel Mendoza is 37 and has a 9.43 earned run average in 26 appearances. Jake Hegger has a 7.06 and has given up eight home runs in 21 2/3 innings. Thor Jensen has a 5.47 with eight holds. Ricky Magolan has been fine, 12 saves and a 2.16, and Sincere Barksdale has not walked a man all season, and after those two it has been an adventure most nights. This team is 6-7 in one-run games and five games better than that everywhere else, which is the whole story of the late innings in one line.

Most of that bullpen was signed in January. So was a good part of the lineup. Connor P. went out over a single winter and brought in Marchitto, Legget, Harrington, Chris Dogan, Eric Donaldson, Jensen, Jason Howell, Barksdale, Shane Wilson and Mendoza, nearly all of them on one-year deals, nearly all of them on the wrong side of 30. It is not a glamorous way to build a roster. It is a way to find out which veterans still have something without committing a dollar past this October, and half of them have worked, and Hoenie has a 2.12, and the club is 25-23.

He is in his second season in the chair and he inherited a fourteen-year drought and a payroll near the bottom of the division, and there has been no trade made since last November, which some people find damning and which reads here more like a man who has decided not to do anything stupid before he knows what he has. Five general managers have sat in that office since Nick Henson left. This one gets the full season before anybody starts grading him.

Down below, it is thin in the place you look first. Akron is 11-25 and there is not much to say about it.

What there is sits at Laredo. J.P. Schall, last year's first-round pick, is hitting .301 with six home runs and is the best young player in this organization. Edwin Martinez is getting hit around at 5.48. Ian Cathey has barely thrown.

A level down, Craig Jackson is hitting .276 with five home runs at Corpus Christi and Andy Taran has 28 strikeouts in 27 2/3 there. Curt Hawkins has a 5.47 at Akron at 21.

Joe Kaufmann is hitting .323 at Akron and Armando Cruz .317 at Laredo, and Cruz is organizational depth.

Not a wave. But half a dozen men this high up this early is more than this system has had at once in a while, and the ones struggling are struggling in the right places.

Mike Dunfee is 33 and is owed \$22 million a year through 2034 and is hitting .189, and the temptation in a column like this is to make that the paragraph everything turns on. It isn't. It is one bad contract on a club that is two games over .500 in the last week of May for the first time since the drought started, with the best pitcher in the division taking the ball every fifth day and six men in the lineup with six home runs.

Thirty-two seasons on, the 2001 banner is still the only one. The current roster is cheap and young in the rotation and old and borrowed everywhere else, and it was 4-13, and now it isn't, and this seems like a fine thing to watch for a while longer before anybody decides anything at all.