



BAY SPORTS DAILY

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Tampa Bay spent twelve million dollars on draft picks and nobody noticed

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On December 31, this club did something it has never done in the seven years this site has existed. It bought.

Six million dollars to Cincinnati for a 2032 eighth-rounder and a 2033 sixth. Six million dollars to Denver for a 2032 sixth and a 2032 eighth. Twelve million dollars, out the door in a single afternoon, and every cent of it came back as draft picks.

Read that again, because for seven years the joke on this website has been that the Cannons sell cash the way other teams sell relievers. Thirteen million to Phoenix once. Seven to Chicago. This winter Tampa Bay was the buyer, and what it bought was four more swings at the one thing it has ever been good at.

Then, two days later, Leo C. went further. Justin Davis signed here on January 2 for five years at \$23.2 million a season, which is the largest contract this franchise has handed out in living memory and which, at the time, a lot of people including this website assumed was a joke.

He is 6-2 with a 2.81 earned run average and a 1.08 WHIP through 10 starts. He has six of this team's 19 wins.

That is the good news. All of it. Here is the rest.

The Cannons are 19-29 and their offense is the worst in baseball, and not by a little, and not in one category. Batting average: .221, 32nd. On-base percentage: .283, 32nd. Slugging: .351, 32nd. OPS: .635, 32nd. Dead last in all four, out of 32 teams. They have scored 162 runs. They have been shut out six times in 48 games. The run differential is minus-83, the worst in this division.

The individual lines are rough and you have watched every one of them. Juan Rodriguez, signed in January at 36, is hitting .144. Eddie Lozier is hitting .172 with a .242 slugging percentage in 179 plate appearances. Jordan Padilla is at .167. Mário Cabao is at .192 with a .205 on-base percentage, which means he has drawn two walks all season. Felix Ferrer, at \$8.5 million, is at .187. Collin Yates is at .186.

Six regulars under .200. That is not a slump, that is a lineup.

The bullpen has a 5.52 earned run average, which is 32nd of 32, which is last, which means the worst offense in baseball is being backed by the worst relief corps in baseball. James Jimenez is being paid \$19 million, has a 6.94 earned run average and nine walks in 11 2/3 innings, and has 10 saves, because somebody has to. Joe Phillips has an 8.27 and has given up nine home runs in 20 2/3 innings. Darrell Reilly has a 6.28.

Worth knowing when all of this happened, too. Tampa Bay went 14-22 inside the Jade and 5-7 since the crossover. Marginally better against the rest of the league than against the neighbors, which is not a finding, it is twelve games.

And this team is 6-2 in one-run games, which is the single funniest thing in this report, because a club that loses by this much this often has somehow won three-quarters of the close ones. That will not last and when it stops the record will look even worse than the team is.

Two things in the lineup are real and both of them are young.

Chris McMillian is 23, makes \$500,000, was drafted here in 2028, and has 12 home runs, ninth-most in all of baseball, with a .524 slugging percentage. He is the first hitter this organization has developed into something since before the 121-loss season. Devon Cooper is hitting .316. Sean Stahl has 33 plate appearances and three home runs, which is a sample size and not an argument, but it has been fun.

Nobody is getting carried away here. Two good young hitters on a 19-29 club is two good young hitters, and this site has watched too many of those get traded in August to start printing nicknames.

Underneath, though, is the best the system has looked in the seven years this beat has existed, and the names posting the numbers are not the names that matter, which is worth being precise about.

Ryan Affrunti has a 3.67 at Dunedin. Bobby O'Neal has 14 strikeouts in 12 1/3 there. Robby Clem is hitting .275 at Clearwater. Mike Brou has 24 strikeouts in 23 innings at Pasco. Mike Simmons is at Pasco and has barely played. Those five are the group to keep a tab open on, and the two this organization likes best have not played at all: David Drake and Bryan Clausen are both 18 and Sarasota does not open for weeks.

Now the numbers everybody is posting. Nate Marino has a 1.59 over 51 innings at Clearwater. Bret Pirtle has a 1.33 at Pasco. Nick Napier has a 1.59 and Kellen Miller a 1.78 at the same level. Andy Timpson has a 2.50 at Dunedin and is legitimately part of the first group. Josh Pennington is slugging .644. Elliot

Heidelberg, a sixth-round pick last June, has a .468 on-base percentage. Doug Fleury is at .393. Danny Martinson is slugging .542 at Dunedin. Tyler Davis is hitting .356 at Clearwater.

Great numbers. Mostly organizational depth.

Clearwater is 12-24, so it is not every level. But five arms under 2.51 and five bats over .290 across High-A and above is more live talent than this organization has had at one time since it started losing.

The record from here: 41-121, then 43-119, then 57-105, and now on pace for about 64 wins. That is four straight seasons of improvement, if you squint hard, from the worst season any team has ever had in this league.

The deadline is two months out and for once the question is not who gets sold. This club has a \$23.2 million starting pitcher signed through 2036 who is pitching like an ace, a 23-year-old with 12 home runs, four extra draft picks bought with cash, and the worst offense in baseball around all of it.

Somebody in that building has decided the way out of this is through the draft, and has been willing to pay actual money to get more of it. That is a plan. It is the first one this website has been able to describe in a paragraph, and the next eight weeks are about whether the man running it gets to keep going or gets told the offense could not wait.