RÉCORD CIUDAD

AUGUST 2, 2032 · THE MEXICO CITY LUCHADORES BEAT

Luchadores fall to 0-5 in extras; bullpen comes back to earth

BY **XIMENA OCAMPO RUVALCABA** · RÉCORD CIUDAD

Zero and five. That is Mexico City's record in extra innings this season, the only club in the league without an extra-inning win. Two of the five came in the last three days, at home against Rochester, one in 13 innings and one in 11. Rochester swept the series, and the Luchadores have lost four straight.

In May I wrote that this club was being carried by four relievers, that the arrangement had worked for 48 games, and that there was no historical version of it that had not eventually cost somebody something. The cost has arrived on schedule. The bullpen's earned run average was 2.54 then, the lowest in the league. It is 3.50 now, 14th.

Three of the four men I named have come back toward the rest of the league. John Shephard had a 0.95 in May. He has a 3.40 now, across 82 innings. Ed Waterman has gone from 1.88 to 3.20, and Harry Smith from 2.25 to 3.15. Steve Parker, who had not allowed an earned run on May 24, has a 1.86 and 29 saves, tied for third in the league. He is the one piece that has held.

The record follows the bullpen. The club was 30-18 and first in the Ruby in May. It went into the All-Star break at 51-39, two games ahead of Big Horn. Since the break it is 6-9 and Big Horn is 11-4, and the Luchadores are 57-48, three games behind. They remain sixth in the Fire Conference and five games clear of the first club outside the field.

Then the week got worse. Three regulars and a starting pitcher are hurt and not yet placed on the injured list. T.J. Slaughter, who is hitting .321, will miss about a month. So will Dave Henson, who has 18 home runs and took a player of the week award on July 5. Joel Favela is out longer than that, and Antonio Santiago, who has not pitched since April, is not close. Ryan Metcalf is on the list.

That leaves the two parts of this roster that have not moved.

Arturo Rivera is 11-2 with a 2.66 earned run average and a 0.94 WHIP across 21 starts. He is 35. Every number I have on him says the same thing it said in May, which is that the four-year, $126.2 million signing has returned exactly what it was priced to return.

Fernando Lopez has 30 home runs, tied for third in the league, and 71 runs batted in. Metcalf has 21 home runs and a .213 average, which is the same profile I described in May and asked readers not to misread. He is 25 and signed through 2035 at less than $5 million a year, and I still believe that contract is the most valuable in this division.

Lorenzo Valenzuela is hitting .213, up from .180. The on-base percentage is .261. I wrote in May that somebody in that office would have to decide how many runs the glove is worth and whether it is enough. I have not seen a defensive figure for him this season that I trust enough to print, so that arithmetic stays with them.

The starters are 18th in the league at 4.30. Behind Rivera, Ricky Falk has a 4.28 and Danny Kuntz a 4.46. Eduardo Linares, the other January signing, has a 5.20 and is on the injured list.

So, the deadline, which closes with the next sim. The front office has made no trades this season and has posted nothing on the league's trade board. Before this week I would have said that was correct: a club in playoff position with the best starter in its division does not need to chase. The injuries change the arithmetic. A lineup missing Slaughter, Henson, Favela and Metcalf for much of August, and a bullpen that has thrown 401 innings, is a club that needs one reliever and one bat more than it needed either in July. The payroll is $171.6 million, seventh in the league, so money is not the constraint. The prospects are.

And that is the correction I owe. In May I wrote that the pipeline had stopped producing. The affiliates are 30th in the league in combined record, as they have been somewhere between 27th and 30th every year since 2025. But records were the wrong measure. DSA Reports, in its list dated July 19, has Kevin Clarke 12th and Ian McIlree 19th among the league's prospects. The league's own top 100 has four Luchadores on it: Antonio Velazquez 32nd, Clarke 68th, Matthew Cochran 69th and McIlree 82nd.

Clarke was hitting .214 at Ciudad Juárez when I last wrote. He is at .257 with 10 home runs and a .347 on-base percentage there now, at 21. McIlree has been promoted to Tijuana and is hitting .307. Velazquez, 19, has finally thrown pitches that count, six starts at Mexicali with a 4.35 earned run average and 18 walks in 31 innings.

The model I have defended for 16 years found those players. It would be inconsistent of me to trust it on gloves and doubt it on prospects, and the two outside lists agree that the talent is there. That makes the deadline harder, not easier. The players a seller would ask for are the ones this system has spent 20 years learning how to find.

Fifty-seven games remain, 30 at home. Thirty-nine are inside the Ruby, and six of those are against Big Horn. The club is three games back with six to play against the team it is chasing, and three of its regulars are hurt.