NEW YORK STANDARD

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Empire stumble to 11-40 away from home

BY **GIL AMSTERDAM** · NEW YORK STANDARD

Eleven and forty.

That is the Empire's record away from home this season. Fifty-one road games, eleven wins. No club in baseball has a road record within four games of it. At home they are 27-27, which makes this a .500 team in its own building and a disaster everywhere else.

The whole record is 38-67. Last in the Sapphire, 34 games behind Somerville. Last in the Ice Conference. Thirtieth in the league. It is the worst record this team has had all year, because it is this morning's record, and it has lost four straight. Since my May piece it is 19-38.

In May I wrote that this club had the worst offense in baseball. It still does. Three hundred forty-seven runs, fewest in the league. Thirty-first in batting average, thirty-first in on-base percentage. It has been shut out 12 times.

In May I also wrote that it had the second-best rotation in baseball, and that that should make somebody uncomfortable. Nobody has to be uncomfortable about that anymore. The starters' earned run average was 3.35 then. It is 4.56 now, 23rd. Joe Pruitt, who had a 1.38 in four starts, never made a fifth and is on the 60-day list. Austin Morley is 1-8 with a 5.68. Eric Johnson, who was 0-7 through no fault of his own, is 3-13 now, and some of it is his fault.

Chris Colvin is still the one. He is 22, he makes the minimum, he has 135 strikeouts in 120 1/3 innings, and his earned run average has gone from 2.37 to 3.96 because he has spent two months pitching in front of this.

The bullpen was 31st. It is 30th. Congratulations to everyone involved. Eddie Cullison, who had a 7.77 and six save chances in May, now has 13 saves, a 5.29 earned run average and a 1.82 WHIP, and he is still getting the ball.

Travis Eaton is hitting .274 with a .351 on-base percentage, which is better than May, and he has nine home runs. He is 35. He is paid $40.8 million this year and $40.8 million next year. Ron Stone is hitting .221 with 17 home runs on $20 million through 2033. Andy Mroczkowski is hitting .199 on $16.2 million, and his deal ends this year. Rob Nabors has 308 plate appearances and a .162 average.

Now the deadline, which closes with the next sim.

In May I asked why a last-place team was carrying $77 million in three men in their thirties, and why nothing had moved. Those are still the questions. Nothing has moved. The Empire have not made a trade this season. Not one.

But this week, finally, somebody said something. Joe posted it on the league's trade block, where every general manager in the league could read it:

> *"Will move just about anyone on the TBL roster. Very few I won't."*

Good. It is two months late and it is still good. Earlier this season he posted to the want list that he was looking for "an entire bullpen," and the bullpen is still here, so forgive me for waiting to see what "just about anyone" means.

Here is what it has to mean. Eaton, if anybody will take any of $81.6 million over two years for a 35-year-old second baseman, and somebody should be getting on the phone to find out what half of it looks like. Stone. Mroczkowski tomorrow, for whatever comes back, because he is gone in October anyway. And not Colvin. Colvin is one of the "very few." If he is not, somebody in that building should be fired, and I will write the name.

It matters because there is almost nothing underneath to fall back on. The affiliates had the worst combined record in the league last season, 32nd of 32, and they are 32nd again this year. The league's own list of its top 100 prospects has two Empire players on it: Justin Timms at 71st, who has a 5.12 at Buffalo, and Jessie Marino at 94th, a 21-year-old at Albany. DSA Reports, in its list dated July 19, likes Marino more, at 27th, and has nobody else from this system in its top 100.

Edgar Valentin, the 20-year-old I called the best young arm in the organization in May, is closing now at Rochester, with 14 saves and a 1.75. That is a good line. It is not a rotation.

Fifty-seven games left. Twenty-seven at home, which is the one piece of luck the schedule has handed this club, and 30 on the road, which is the other thing. Thirty-nine inside the Sapphire.

At the current pace this team loses about 103. Last year it lost 101. The ring was 2021. Tear it down, and this time, since the general manager has finally said the words out loud, do it before the deadline instead of after.