HURON DAILY BEACON

OCTOBER 8, 2032 · THE HURON HERONS BEAT

Herons close 12-6, slip into October at 82-80

BY **LORRAINE PETROSKY** · HURON DAILY BEACON

The 2020 club won 84 games and the championship. This one won 82 and is in the room.

On September 15 the Herons were 70-74, four games under .500, the lowest they had been all year. From there they went 12-6. On October 5 they beat Virginia and could no longer be caught. On October 6 Zach Foster, who came to the plate 32 times after the deadline, hit a two-run home run in the bottom of the ninth to beat Virginia again, 6-4, for nothing but the pleasure of it. Huron finished 82-80, tied with Milwaukee and San Juan, and all three are in.

In August I wrote that the books are only opened for the clubs in the room, and that Huron was three games from the door. It walked through on the second-to-last day.

August was the reason it took that long. The club went 9-18 in the month, its worst of the season, and lost five straight from August 8 to 13. It went 8-19 on the road after the deadline. For the season Huron was 51-30 at home and 31-50 away, and I have stopped calling that a gap. It is two different teams that share a uniform. In September I asked Daniel how the club would win the 15 road games it had left. It won five of them, and won 13 of its last 18 at home.

The pitcher this club paid for in July did his part. Jimmy Smith, who cost a 2034 first-round pick, two third-rounders and David Amejorado, made 11 starts after the deadline with a 2.82 earned run average, and finished his Huron season 5-4 with a 2.94 in 13 starts. Joey Payne had a 2.74 after the deadline.

And Nick Agins, whom the club signed this summer for five more years and $151 million, had a 1.85 earned run average in 12 starts after the deadline and went 3-6. I have looked at that line several times. It does not change. He finished 11-10 with a 2.58, a 0.98 WHIP and 221 strikeouts, ninth in the league. The

ledger owes him four or five wins, and in my experience the ledger pays its debts in October, if it pays them at all.

On deadline day the club also sent $4 million to Chicago for Chicago's 2034 fifth-round pick.

Manny Pineda, whom Daniel promised in July would stay in the lineup "towards the bottom" unless he regressed, did not regress. He hit .314 after the deadline. On September 26 he stole the 300th base of his career. On October 2 he singled home the winning run in the 10th against Milwaukee. Dan Boyd came back from the injured list and hit .310. The club stole 306 bases this year, the most in baseball.

There were five walk-off wins after the deadline, and four of them took extra innings. Besides Pineda's, there was Billy Cover's home run in the 12th against New Orleans on August 16, Armando Ramirez's bases-loaded walk in the 16th against Memphis on September 4, and Chris Sandvik's home run in the 10th against Kansas City on September 17.

Now Big Horn.

The Rams won the Ruby at 91-71. The series opens there October 8 and 9, comes here for Games 3, 4 and 5 from the 11th, and goes back to Big Horn for 6 and 7 if needed. That is two games on the road to start, for a club that won 31 of 81 away from home this year. Big Horn won three of four from Huron in May and outscored the Herons 21-7.

They have met twice in October. Huron won the 2017 quarterfinal, four games to one, in the year it won 115 and did not win the championship. Big Horn won the 2028 quarterfinal in seven. Huron has won three championships, in 2007, 2015 and 2020. Big Horn had been to 15 postseasons before this one and won a championship in none of them.

Six finals and three championships on this beat have taught me that the regular season and October keep separate books. This year the regular season said 82-80. October has not opened its book yet. I will be there when it does.