PHILADELPHIA BULLETIN

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Eagles stand pat two games out, then go 21-36

BY **FRANK IACOBELLI** · PHILADELPHIA BULLETIN

The last time this club played a game in October was 2017. I was there for it, as I was for the four before it, going back to the first one in 2001, my second month on this job.

That makes 15 seasons now. The Eagles finished this one 71-91, seventh in the Sapphire, 11 games behind Denver for the last playoff spot in the Ice Conference.

On deadline day they were two games behind Denver. In August I wrote that Connor should hold, and he held. Nothing was bought and nothing was sold. Then the club went 21-36.

I have been doing this long enough to know that a man who gives advice ought to stay for the arithmetic, so here it is. August was 10-17. September was 7-18. The Eagles lost seven straight from September 25 to October 2, and by then the question I had asked about buying or selling had answered itself.

I would still say hold, mostly. The pieces I said the future was built on, J.P. Schall and Matthew Ryan, Bill Crum and Bobby Bumby, were never going anywhere, and none of them did. But holding has a price, and this winter is when it comes due.

Garrett Hoenie and Eric Marchitto are both free agents now.

Hoenie went 0-3 after the deadline with a 4.19 earned run average, which does not tell you much about him. On September 17 in Chicago he threw eight scoreless innings and struck out 10, and the Eagles lost 2-1 on a double in the bottom of the ninth. He finished the year with 213 strikeouts. He is the one I would try to keep.

Marchitto had a 6.02 after the deadline and finished the year on the injured list.

Now the good part, which I saved for you.

Schall played center field the rest of the way, as I hoped he would. He hit 13 home runs after the deadline and finished with 20 in 86 games. He was a player of the week in the middle of August. On August 22 he hit a home run in the 10th inning to beat San Diego 4-3. In August I told you to keep an eye on center field. I am glad I did.

Matthew Ryan hit 27 home runs and reached base at .358. On September 22 he hit a ball 122.7 miles an hour, the hardest-hit home run by anyone on this club after the deadline.

Armando Jaramillo hit 39 home runs, tied for seventh in the league, from the designated hitter's spot. He goes to arbitration this winter, and he is still Philadelphia's to keep.

The club hit 220 home runs, fourth in baseball. It also batted .227, 31st, and you can do a lot with 220 home runs, but not everything.

Crum finished 10-10 with a 3.78. Bumby finished 12-14 with a 4.18, and on the last day of the season he struck out 10 Toronto hitters over seven innings. Tom Sweda came back from the injured list in August and made seven starts with a 1.17 earned run average. Ricky Magolan saved 31 games and struck out 118 in 69 1/3 innings.

And I will confess my weakness, as I do every year. Jason Howell is 35, and he finished with a 3.66 out of the bullpen. I enjoyed every inning of it.

The Eagles won their last four. On October 3 they beat Somerville, which won 106 games, 4-2 in 12 innings. On October 6 they beat Toronto 11-1, and Jaramillo, Ryan and Todd Kemplin each hit two home runs.

Now the winter, and the price of holding.

The free agents take about $65 million off the books: Hoenie and Marchitto, J.J. Saxton, Mike Owensby, Curtis Legget and a handful of veterans on one-year deals. Only $28 million is committed to next season, and $22 million of that belongs to Mike Dunfee, who hit .194 and is signed through 2034. Schall, Ryan, Jaramillo, Crum, Bumby and Magolan are all still under club control. Connor will have a great deal of room to work with.

Down below, the league's top 100 prospects include three Eagles. Andy Taran is 25th, and Edwin Martinez, who was 72nd in August, is 45th. Nick Hrabar, the catcher taken fourth overall in May, is 85th in his first summer. DSA Reports, in its list dated July 19, has Martinez sixth. The affiliates finished 26th in combined record, which makes it six of the last seven years at 25th or worse.

Connor has two full seasons behind him now. I said in August he would get the same runway I have given every general manager in this job, and he will. I have done this five times before, and I have learned

that the runway is always longer than the fans want and shorter than the general manager hopes.

The 2001 banner is still the only one. It is still very clean.