SAN DIEGO UNION POST

OCTOBER 8, 2032 · THE SAN DIEGO SEALS BEAT

Seals stand pat all year, miss October by two

BY **TRINA BOSANKO** · SAN DIEGO UNION POST

Two games.

That is how far the Seals finished from the last playoff spot in the Fire Conference. Eighty and 82, against three clubs that got in at 82-80.

Zero.

That is how many trades San Diego made to close the gap. Not at the deadline. Not all season. In May and again in August I printed the complete list of what this front office had done since November 1, and it was one name, Justin Curry. The season is over. It is still one name.

In August I wrote that San Diego should buy a bat, and that if it would not buy, it should sell Chujiro Doi while a contender would still pay for him. It did neither. The club went 29-28 the rest of the way.

On the morning of October 4 the Seals were one game out with three to play. They had just won five straight. They went to Phoenix and lost 7-3 and 4-0, and on October 5 they were done. They won the last game 7-1, which counted for nothing.

One game out with three to play is exactly the situation a bat is for.

In May, Alex asked me to put a more positive spin on the Seals. "Talk about Doi being top 2 in batting average and Al Charles dominating the league in strikeouts," he said.

Fine. Here is Charles, and it is not spin.

He struck out 343 batters. The next pitcher in the league had 232. Only one man in the history of this league has struck out more in a season, and that was Nick Henson, twice, in 2017 and 2018. Charles also won

17 games, tied for the most in baseball, with a 3.57 earned run average over 211 2/3 innings. After the deadline he struck out 119 in 74 innings.

His deal ends this year. With four years in the big leagues he goes to arbitration, and he is San Diego's for one more season. After that somebody is going to pay him. It should be this club.

Doi is the other half of the request, and the half that did not hold. He hit .218 after the deadline and finished at .255. He is 34 and a free agent.

The bats that did hold belong to Trey Wood and Jack Withers. Wood hit .301 with 13 home runs after the deadline, finished with 33 and 100 runs batted in, and won a game against Mexico City on September 29 with a home run in the 10th. Withers drove in 102, tied for 10th in the league, and hit .301 after the deadline. Tyler Elgie hit the hardest ball any Seal hit all season, a home run at 122.6 miles an hour on September 7.

Here is the other list.

Craig Turcios hit .203 with a .245 on-base percentage, and he is owed $12 million next year. Ron Lembo pitched two and two-thirds innings this season. He is owed $9.5 million next year. Craig Noftall hit .226. Joaquin Manriquez hit .204. Both are 34, and both are free agents.

And the road. In August the road record was 18-33. It finished 30-51. At home the Seals were 50-31. Same team, two worlds.

Now the bill.

About $42 million walks out in free agency, and the one player this club can least afford to lose is part of it. Withers is a free agent. So are Doi, Noftall, Manriquez, and Ezequiel Acevedo, who saved 34 games with a 2.07 earned run average. Charles and Wood go to arbitration. About $54 million is already committed to next season, $21.5 million of it to Turcios and Lembo.

Do not look below for help. The affiliates finished 27th in combined record. Fremont went 34-98. Medina went 48-84. Jessie Hughes is third on the league's top-100 prospect list. He went 6-1 with a 1.27 in 10 starts at Jackson, then 2-6 with a 7.23 in 13 starts at Medina. Jesus Vasques hit .192 at Medina. DSA Reports, in its list dated July 19, had Hughes 51st and Aaron Buggage 75th.

Wood and Withers were both drafted by San Diego, and so was Gordie Wheeler, who had a 2.64 earned run average after the deadline. Charles came in a trade in 2031. Three of the four best things about this team were grown here, which does not happen here often, and one of them can walk this winter.

So spend. Keep Withers. Sign Charles before arbitration turns into free agency. Buy the bat you did not buy in August.

Two games. One name since November. That is the season.