BAY SPORTS DAILY

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Cannons lose 100th, then sink Roosters with three-game sweep

BY **JUNIOR ESCAMILLA** · BAY SPORTS DAILY

In August I wrote, and I am quoting myself here because nobody else will: "We cannot win it. We can absolutely ruin somebody's week."

Reader, we ruined somebody's week.

Fort Collins came to town on October 1 holding the last playoff spot in the Ice Conference by three games, with six to play. The Cannons beat them 1-0. Then 9-3. Then 2-0. The Roosters scored three runs in three days at our place, went home, lost three straight to Denver, and missed the playoffs by one game.

I want to be clear that this was not personal. It was just the only pennant race I have ever covered, and it turns out I cover it from the other side.

Two days before that, on September 29, the Cannons lost their 100th game, 3-2 in Cincinnati on a home run in the bottom of the ninth. So the timeline of this team's season is: lose 100, immediately destroy a contender, then lose three to Galveston to close it out. Very on brand. I made a graphic. It is a sine wave.

Final record: 59-103. In August I said we were on pace for 60. I would like to formally apologize to the 60th win, which never showed up. But 59 is two better than last year, last year was better than 2030, and 2030 was better than 2029, which was the worst season any team has ever had in this league. That is three straight years of the line going up. Slowly. Like a sloth on a ramp. But up.

Now the deadline, which was quiet.

Leo put Mike Vanover, D.J. Lord and Billy Kern on the block with the greatest sales pitch in league history: "Get your rentals that will take you over the hump." Nobody took the hump. All three stayed, and all three are free agents now. Vanover went 0-7 after the deadline and finished 4-18, the third-most losses in

baseball. Bobby Nolt finished 4-17, the fourth-most. Two of the four biggest loss totals in the league belonged to one rotation, and I need you to know I am not making this up for content.

The rest of the after-the-deadline numbers are the kind I screenshot and then delete. The Cannons went 20-37. With men in scoring position they hit .215, 31st of 32, and the only reason it is not 32nd is that Milwaukee was two ten-thousandths of a point worse. I checked twice. We are, technically, not last.

But there are two guys worth talking about, and neither of them has a nickname.

Chris McMillian hit 35 home runs. He had 24 when I last wrote. He hit 11 more after the deadline, including a walk-off against Cincinnati on September 4, and the hardest home run anybody on this team hit after the deadline, 117.9 miles an hour, on October 5. He is 23 and still on the minimum, and the club controls him. Leo, if you are reading this, and you are, I have a suggestion.

Justin Davis finished 14-10 with a 3.56 earned run average over 202 1/3 innings. This team won 59 games. He won 14 of them. In May Leo told me Davis was "a building block for the future, and the plan is for more help to come throughout the duration of the contract." The block is still holding the building up by itself, but it is a very good block.

James Jimenez had a 1.23 earned run average after the deadline and finished with 32 saves. His deal, $19 million this year, ends now, and he is a free agent. Danny Roman, who showed up in June from who knows where, finished with a 2.08 and a 0.90 WHIP, and I have decided he is my favorite player.

Offseason check. About $53 million walks out the door in free agency: Jimenez, Felix Ferrer, Vanover, Kern and a long list of one-year guys. Next year's committed money is $25.5 million, and $23.2 million of that is Davis. That is the whole list. You could fit it on a sticky note.

And the farm, which is my favorite part, as always.

The affiliates finished 21st in combined record. Twenty-first! In August they were 23rd and I made a confetti graphic. I am going to need more confetti. Sarasota, the rookie club, won its division at 46-24.

On the league's top 100 prospects list, David Drake is 18th, up from 22nd, and Mike Brou is 30th, up from 37th. Jeff Raymond fell off it. Drake made a handful of starts at Sarasota that I am still ignoring, and he is hurt right now, but the injury file says he will be fine well before spring. Brou has not pitched since July 25, and the injury file has him out until next summer, which is the worst news in this column and I buried it on purpose. DSA Reports, in its list dated July 19, had Robby Clem 44th and Ryan Affrunti 76th.

Nobody is printing nicknames. Still. But somebody in Fort Collins knows our names now.