MILWAUKEE SENTINEL-PRESS

OCTOBER 17, 2032 · THE MILWAUKEE MOBSTERS BEAT

Mobsters blow 2-0 lead, fall to Rebels in seven

BY **DANNY KOLAR** · MILWAUKEE SENTINEL-PRESS

David Archuletta is 35, made $1.3 million this year, and closed for the 2030 champions. Before the series I asked Ryan who was closing with Chris Calvert and Chris Grubb both hurt. He said he was still figuring it out, that Archuletta had pitched poorly back then and was pitching poorly now, "but he did his job and did it pretty well in the playoffs."

Archuletta saved Game 1 in Virginia, 7-6, and Game 2, 8-4. Four outs, three strikeouts, no hits. Ryan called it.

Then the series went five more games and Archuletta never pitched again, and Milwaukee won one of them.

The first two were the club everybody in this town has been waiting on since July. In Game 1 Katsuyoshi Sakamoto hit a three-run home run in the second, Jeremiah LaCombe threw three and a third scoreless innings in relief, and Brent Chute singled home two in the fourth for the lead. In Game 2 Moises Aguilar hit a three-run home run, Paul Stepp doubled in two in the eighth off Zeke Tovar, who saved 38 games for Virginia this year, and the Mobsters went home up 2-0.

Ryan also told me Virginia had "been hit pretty bigly with injuries," and that "we've got a real shot to advance." He was right for two days.

Here is the rest of it. Virginia 11, Milwaukee 1. Virginia 6, Milwaukee 1. Milwaukee 7, Virginia 1. Virginia 8, Milwaukee 1. Virginia 7, Milwaukee 1. In every game Milwaukee lost, it scored exactly one run. I have been covering this team since 2007 and I have never seen a club so consistent about something it would rather not be consistent about.

In August, when I asked who would start Game 1 of a playoff series, Ryan said "Sanchez obviously." Alex Sanchez started Game 3 and Game 7. He got 15 outs in the two of them and gave up 13 hits, seven walks and nine runs, and he lost both. Paul Tremblett, who started the opener, pitched the one win here, Game 5: five and a third innings, one run, Player of the Game. Aguilar hit another three-run home run in the eighth to put it away. That was the night Chute hurt himself running the bases. He is going to be out a little over a month, which is fine, because so is the season.

About the clutch gene. Two weeks ago I asked whether the boys still had it. "We still have the clutch gene," Ryan said, and then he added that it "won't help when you've got guys falling left and right to injuries." After the deadline this club hit .215 with runners in scoring position, the worst in baseball. In the series it hit .192. If the gene is still here, it has not come up with men in scoring position since the deadline.

Virginia hit .320 for the series. Milwaukee hit .209. Willie Cuevas went 9-for-28 with two home runs and Aguilar drove in seven, and after that it gets thin. Trevor Faria, who reached base at .367 all year, went 3-for-25.

In 2030 I spent September telling you this club was not good enough to win anything, and it won the whole thing. This September I said it limped in. I was right about September and wrong about two days in October, which in this job is a pretty good month.

Now the winter, and it is mostly already paid for. The club has $185.5 million committed for 2033. The players who reach free agency, Archuletta, LaCombe, Grubb, the reliever Alex Garcia and a few bench pieces, add up to under $10 million. Sanchez is signed through 2035 at $25 million next year. Karl Perkins and Ramiro Ortiz have new five-year deals that start next season. Jesus Espinosa, who has not played since May 11, is owed $23.5 million in 2033. Calvert is signed through 2034.

So almost everybody is coming back. That includes the lineup that scored one run four times in a week, and the man who started two of those four games. Ryan has never once told me he was worried about anything. I will ask him anyway.