THE BEACON REPORT

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Beacons' bats freeze at .176; Crabs close it in five

BY **MARTY SOWERBY** · THE BEACON REPORT

Nine runs in five games. The lineup that reached base at .350 against Cincinnati reached at .256 against Baltimore, hit .176, and hit one home run, in the first inning of Game 2. Run differential for the series: minus-12. Record: 1-4.

Win probability added puts the series in four bats. Troy Hutchinson, Edgar Tyler, Scott Jacobs and Bryan Moorman, the middle of the order, combined for 11 hits in 77 at-bats, a .143 average, and minus-1.42. The whole lineup finished at minus-1.29, which means the rest of it, taken together, was a small net positive. The largest single swing of the series belonged to Danny Stanescu.

That was Game 5, in Boston. Baltimore had scored once in the first. Jon Valdez, in Game 4, and Tyler Jackson, in Game 5, had held the Blue Crabs to one run in 12 and a third innings between them, and in the seventh inning of Game 5 Joey Benton doubled two runs home and Boston led 2-1. Stanescu took the ninth, got two ground balls, gave up a double to Matt Lamberson and a two-run home run to Victor Barboza. One inning, minus-0.64. Baltimore won 3-2 and the series ended there.

JP's plan, as he gave it to me before the series: Nick Luke closes once he is ready, and Jackson, Bill Ramirez and Juan Hernandez start Games 1 through 3, which lines Hernandez up for a seventh game. The rotation went exactly to plan. Jackson lost Game 1, 5-2. Ramirez won Game 2, 5-4, after a four-run first inning that included Tyler's home run. Hernandez gave up six runs in four innings in Game 3, an 8-0 loss to Roy Bell. Luke pitched once, two innings of that game, with Boston already down six. The seventh game never came up.

The losses ran 5-2, 8-0, 1-0 and 3-2. In two of them the staff allowed one run through eight innings and lost anyway. Valdez threw six scoreless innings in Game 4. Jimmy Gant walked three in an inning and a third

and gave up Danny Gaona's single in the seventh, the only run, and J.R. Cannon recorded the rest. Cannon pitched in three games and allowed one hit in four and two-thirds innings, with seven strikeouts. Jackson struck out 13 in 12 and a third innings across two starts.

Then there is Tyler. He went 13-for-26 against Cincinnati and 2-for-20 against Baltimore. Two weeks ago I wrote that arbitration is where his Cincinnati series gets priced. Arbitration will see this series too, and the 162 games before both of them, and the 162 games are the only sample worth paying for.

Carlos de la Rosa went 0-for-13 and walked six times, an on-base percentage of .316 without a hit. With runners in scoring position Boston went 7-for-40. Eitan Menahem led the club in win probability, plus-0.38, went 6-for-18 and stole three bases, and has a bone bruise in his wrist that will keep him out two to three weeks into a winter that no longer needs him.

The winter, then, in roster mechanics. Only $10.2 million of this year's payroll reaches free agency: Rich Rhinehart, David Torres, Eric Donaldson, Benton and Wally Gulledge. Ten players are eligible for arbitration, among them Tyler, Hernandez, de la Rosa, Ramirez and Tetsuo Nagata, who made $10.6 million this year. Jackson, 13-6 with a 2.90 earned run average and 224 strikeouts, has two years of service and is renewed by the club. The payroll already committed for 2033 is $134.7 million, $19 million of it to Luke, who is signed through 2034.

This was the franchise's second October in Boston and the first in which it won a series. That counts. So does the model, which said all summer that this roster was about six wins worse than its record, and finally got five games in which to be right.

Projected wins for a team that scores nine and allows 21 in five games: about one. Actual: one. I liked the model better when it was losing.