THE BEACON REPORT

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Beacons lock up Hutchinson, add Reiser late, open vs. Empire

BY **MARTY SOWERBY** · THE BEACON REPORT

Four years and $64 million for Troy Hutchinson, starting in 2034. One more year for Bill Ramirez at $11 million, also starting in 2034. And then, with 12 days of spring left, one year and $14 million for Jim Reiser, who hit 29 home runs for Rochester last season in 487 plate appearances and was worth 4.2 wins. That is the whole winter. No trades. Two extensions and one signing, the last of them arriving after most clubs had set their rosters.

Reiser is the move that changes the 2033 projection. He was the fifth-most valuable position player on a Rochester team that led the league in runs, and Boston's most valuable position player by the same measure last year was Hutchinson, at 2.9. On a one-year deal he costs nothing past October. The fit is less clean. Danny Hernandez plays right field and is signed through 2035 at $15.6 million a year. Carlos de la Rosa played left every day and got on base at .383. Edgar Tyler, back at $3.25 million after arbitration, drove in 130 runs as the designated hitter. Somebody who played 650 times last year is going to play less. My guess is Reiser splits time between right field and designated hitter. The real lineup arrives with tonight's game.

The question this winter was never the lineup. It was 14. Boston won 92 games, one more than in 2031, and finished 14 games back both years. Somerville won 106. Baltimore won 94. Run differential: Boston plus-44, Baltimore plus-115, Somerville plus-249. On run differential alone last year's Beacons were closer to an 86-win team than a 92-win one, and I wrote in October that the model had them about six wins worse than their record all summer. Reiser helps with Baltimore. He does not help with Somerville, which kept Bob Reyes and Alex Rangel this winter for a combined $229 million.

So what moves the number is the rotation, and the rotation is the one place on this roster with real upside left in it. Tyler Jackson is 25, threw 198 and two-thirds innings with a 2.90 earned run average and 224

strikeouts, and was worth 5.9 wins. He has two years of service and makes $500,000. Juan Hernandez struck out 228. Ramirez struck out 192 and now has 2034 settled. Behind them, Jon Valdez and Anthony Anderson combined for 316 innings at an ERA just under five.

Which brings me to Josh Owens. The game's own Top 100 prospect list, as of this morning, has him first. Not first in the system. First in the league. He was the seventh overall pick in 2027, he is 24, and last year at Triple-A he threw 86 and two-thirds innings with a 3.01 ERA, 22 walks and five home runs allowed. His strikeout rate at that level was 6.4 per nine, which is the number I keep coming back to and which no list I have seen has held against him. DSA Reports had him second in December. He is in big-league camp. If he takes Anderson's turn, the back of the rotation gets better.

The bullpen does not get Nick Luke back yet. He missed the end of last season with an oblique, pitched two innings in October, and on March 17 in Galveston came out with a bone spur in his elbow. The estimate was five weeks. He is owed $19 million this year and $23 million next. Danny Stanescu is signed through 2034 at $13 million a year. He gave up the two-run home run that ended the Baltimore series.

The money, briefly, because it will matter in November. Payroll is $180.9 million against a $198 million budget. At least ten contracts end after this season, including Eric Tangney's $25 million (Montreal still pays part of it), Luis Martinez's $16.8 million, Reiser, Valdez and Scott Jacobs, who hit 21 home runs as the catcher. Committed beyond 2033: $87.8 million. Next winter this front office will have more room than it has had since the club came to Boston. JP built 2033 with that in mind: one-year money for Reiser, nothing long for anybody over 30.

Spring went 17-14 with four ties. The schedule opens at home, three against New York, the club that lost 107 games last year, then three against Chicago.

The roster is good and the division is better. Two of the last three Octobers have included Boston anyway. The leverage chart on the 2032 Division Series says the season ended on one pitch to Barboza in the ninth inning of Game 5. Every one of those charts I have built since 2019 has a pitch like that in it somewhere.