KANSAS CITY STAR-JOURNAL

MARCH 28, 2033 · THE KANSAS CITY SCOUTS BEAT

Scouts keep Mettler through 2038, sign Saxton, open vs. Outlaws

BY **CORBIN DIETRICH** · KANSAS CITY STAR-JOURNAL

Rookie ball, the Kansas club, last summer: Jimmy Glover made 14 starts there with a 2.83 earned run average in his first professional season. This morning he is second on the game's Top 100 prospect list. Second in the whole league. He is 20 and was the third overall pick last May.

That is where this franchise always starts. For once the big-league news is just as good.

Jared Mettler signed an extension this week. Five more years, starting next season: $5.3 million in 2034, $11 million in 2035, then $20.5 million in each of 2036, 2037 and 2038. That is $77.8 million for the 25-year-old who won the Fire Conference's Most Valuable Player award last year, the first in franchise history, with 43 home runs, 98 stolen bases and the Platinum Stick in center field. He makes $500,000 this season. In 21 years of covering this club I have watched it develop players and sell them. It is not selling this one.

Ben Taylor, who won Reliever of the Year with 43 saves and a 2.07 earned run average, was already signed through 2037. Dan Espeseth, who won the Great Glove in left field and hit 32 home runs, is back. So is most of the club that went from 75 wins to 97.

The one big addition was J.J. Saxton, a second baseman from Philadelphia, for five years and $95 million, $19 million a year with a player option. Saxton hit 27 home runs last year and .208, and struck out 163 times in 514 plate appearances. He is 27. The power is real. So is the average. The Scouts are paying for the first and betting the second improves in a better lineup.

Brad also signed Joe Case, a starter, for a year and $4.5 million, and a handful of veterans on short deals. The players who left were mostly role players. Francisco Ojeda, who hit 41 home runs and was worth 3.0 wins, signed with Spokane for a year. Sergio Soto went to Fort Collins.

Can the club do 97 again? The run differential last year, 685 scored and 617 allowed, belongs to a club that wins about 89 or 90. The rest came from close games and walk-offs, 10 of them after the deadline. Those do not repeat on command. The rotation is the same: Freddy Echeverria, owed $35.2 million this year, Nate Peterson, who threw 223 innings, Jason Bell. The best of them, Peterson, had a 3.30.

The farm behind them is deep. Five Scouts are on the Top 100 this morning: Glover 2nd, Jon Crawford 16th, Ryan Patton 72nd, Pedro Huante 80th and Dante Muro 94th. Crawford, a first baseman, was the 16th overall pick in 2031 and hit .259 in the Kansas rookie league. Carlos Castillo, the catcher I keep telling you about, is seventh in the system. The Scouts pick 22nd in the draft this week.

The payroll is $132.2 million against a budget of $198 million. Committed beyond this season: $292.2 million. I wrote for 20 years that this club could not afford to keep anybody. This winter it kept the best player it has ever had, and it paid a free agent from another club $95 million. It may be the best club here since 2026.

Spring went 17-10 with eight ties. The season opens at home tonight against Oklahoma City, which won 95 games and finished behind Kansas City in the Topaz, then Memphis comes in. Glover is in rookie ball this morning. I will go see him in April.