MILWAUKEE SENTINEL-PRESS

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Mobsters sell a pick for $7 million, add nobody, open vs. Bandits

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

Here is the whole winter in Milwaukee. In December, Denver paid the Mobsters $7 million in cash for their second-round pick in this year's draft. In January, Ryan signed Kyle Moore, a 24-year-old second baseman, for $1.1 million. That's it. That's the list. I've had busier winters shoveling my driveway.

I asked Ryan whether another move was coming. He was his usual self.

> *"Nope," he said, "we're broke and Kyle Moore probably wont even play at the TBL level this year."*

So the only major league free agent Milwaukee signed is, by his own general manager's account, not going to play in the big leagues this year. I've covered this guy for a long time and that might be the most honest thing a GM has ever told me on the record.

He isn't really broke, but he's close. The payroll is $199.2 million against a budget of $216 million, and $354.4 million is committed past this season, among the most in the league. The money was spent before the winter started. Alex Sanchez is owed $25 million this year. Jesus Espinosa, who played 170 plate appearances last year before he got hurt, is owed $23.5 million this year and next. He's healthy this morning. Karl Perkins, who won the Platinum Stick at shortstop and was worth 5.3 wins, starts a five-year deal this season at $18 million. Paul Stepp, the catcher, is 33 and in the last year of his deal at $19.3 million.

When I asked Ryan what the target was after 82 wins and a first-round exit, he gave me three words: "more than that." In October he'd told me this team has no major weaknesses that need plugging. "Baseball is

a streaky game," he said, "and sometimes that works out to your benefit and other times you end the season disappointed."

Fair enough. Here is what streaky looked like last year. Milwaukee scored 690 runs and allowed 632, which is the run differential of an 88-win team, and won 82. It won the first two games of the Virginia series and lost four of the next five. So there's an argument that the 2032 Mobsters were better than the 2032 record, and Ryan is making it by bringing the same team back.

The same team is decent. Trevor Faria hit .268 and got on base at .367 and was worth 5.7 wins at third. Willie Cuevas hit 25 home runs. Brent Chute drove in 104 and won the Great Glove in right. Alex Sanchez had a 3.06 earned run average in 197 innings. The bullpen loses Bruce Leon, who retired at 36. Steve Summey, who struck out 105 in 87 innings, is a few days from being ready.

The farm won't bail anybody out. DSA Reports had it 21st in December. Jason Klamm, a second baseman, is 62nd on the game's Top 100 this morning, and Manuel Ruiz is 99th. Klamm strained a hip flexor running the bases last week. Milwaukee picks 17th in the draft and then waits a while, because its second-rounder now belongs to Denver.

Two championships, five championship series, and still no face to this team. Faria might be the closest thing, and nobody outside Wisconsin could pick him out of a lineup. That's fine by him, and it's fine by me.

Spring went 17-13. Southland comes to town tonight, the club that lost 96 last year and signed 11 relievers to try to lose fewer. Then it's three in Oklahoma City. Ryan says more than 82. I've seen him be right about stranger things.