THE OKLAHOMAN SPORTS DESK

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Outlaws trade two first-rounders for Chapman, add Hoenie and Oda

BY **MARGUERITE YOO** · THE OKLAHOMAN SPORTS DESK

Oklahoma City lost its two most valuable pitchers this winter. Alex Cardenas, 15-6 with a 3.31 and worth 5.1 wins, signed with Big Horn for three years and $34 million. Shane Drew, who saved 44 games, signed with Oahu for three years and $48 million. Rees replaced them with money and draft picks.

The money went to Garrett Hoenie, a starter from Philadelphia, for two years and $31.6 million. Hoenie struck out 213 batters in 179 innings last year with a 4.12 earned run average. His results have not yet matched his strikeouts. The picks went to Chicago, twice. In February the Outlaws sent the Black Sox a 2033 third-round pick and a 2034 second for Shizuma Oda, a closer who saved 28 games, with Chicago paying half his salary. At the end of February they sent Oklahoma City's first-round picks in 2033 and 2034, plus the catcher Steve Welch, for Dave Chapman, a center fielder who was worth 4.4 wins, again with Chicago paying half.

Two first-round picks for one player is a price. I ran the comparison. Chapman's 4.4 wins would have made him the second-most valuable position player on last year's Outlaws, behind only Jeremy Porten. He is 27 and in the last year of his contract, and the Outlaws pay $7 million of it. Rees chose 2033 over the picks.

The reason is the standings. Oklahoma City won 95 games last year and finished third in the Topaz, five games behind Virginia and two behind Kansas City. How do you close that gap? The roster says Rees's answer is one more good bat, one more good arm in the rotation and a closer.

Porten is the center of all of it. He hit .327 with a .423 on-base percentage and 46 home runs, the most in baseball, finished second in the Most Valuable Player vote and won the Platinum Stick at first base. He is 26 and signed through 2036. Brian Lee had a 2.40 earned run average and struck out 186 in 165 innings. The

lineup around Porten is the one that went 2-for-23 with runners on second and third in October: David Ramirez, Manny Jimenez and Ted Ketron are all signed through 2034.

I keep a model of how this club's Octobers end. It has never found a variable that separates the Outlaws from the clubs that win. It does find one thing about 2032. In four postseason games Porten walked seven times and never scored. You cannot fix that with a trade. You can put a better hitter behind him, and Chapman is the attempt.

The farm is thin. Mark Barnes, a position player, is 35th on the game's Top 100 this morning, the only Oklahoma City name on it. DSA Reports ranked the system 22nd in December. The 20th pick in this week's draft, which would have been Oklahoma City's, now belongs to Chicago.

The payroll is $185.7 million against a budget of $222 million.

Spring went 18-13 with four ties. The season opens in Kansas City, the club that finished two games ahead, then Milwaukee comes in. Rees bought this season. The first three games are against the team he bought it to catch.