THE STRAIGHT LINE

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Moneyline commit $279 million to Reyes, Rangel and Shannon

BY **PRIYA RANGANATHAN** · THE STRAIGHT LINE

$279 million. That is what Somerville committed this winter to three pitchers, and not a dollar of it is paid this season. Bob Reyes signed for five years and $140.8 million, Alex Rangel for four years and $88 million, Jason Shannon for three years and $50 million. All three deals begin in 2034. JR spent the winter buying the next five years of the staff that allowed 530 runs last year, the fewest in baseball.

The 2033 roster is what it was in November, minus Chris Charvet and Joel King. Charvet, who pitched in 14 of the club's 25 postseason games, signed with Oahu for three years and $51.6 million. King went to New Orleans for one year and $20 million. Nobody of note came in. Two trades sent nine minor leaguers to Tampa Bay for late-round picks in 2034, and Dale Downer went to Chicago. Spring went 21-9 with five ties, the best record in camp. It means about as much as it ever has.

Readers ask me every winter whether this roster is getting old. So I ran it. Weight every player by what he was worth last year, and Somerville's average age comes out at 27.5, a little younger than the middle of the league. The value on this club is young. Dave Tyler was worth 5.5 wins at shortstop at 25. Chase Martin struck out 222 in 143 innings and then set the single-postseason record with 66. Steve Frey, the Ice Conference Rookie of the Year, hit 39 home runs. Randy Sorto, second in that vote, hit .292.

The money is not young. Chase Posey is 32 and is paid $43.2 million this season and next, for a 2.5-win season with nine home runs. Antonio Reyna is 37, won the Platinum Stick as the designated hitter, hit 34 home runs, and is in the last year of his deal at $32.8 million. Tim Snyder is 36, saved 35 games with a 2.48, and is in the last year of his at $22 million. Those three are $98 million of a $205.3 million payroll. Reyna and Snyder come off after this season. Posey comes off after next.

So the answer to the question is both. The players who win games here are young, and the players who cost the most are not, and the extensions this winter went to three pitchers who are all under 30.

The farm agrees with that reading. Five Somerville prospects are on the game's Top 100 this morning: Kevin Miller 37th, Sebastian Croslin 38th, Dustin Geene 43rd, Elliott Staley 47th and Willie Schultz 69th. Croslin struck out 12.4 batters per nine innings at High-A with a 1.86 earned run average and is in big-league camp, along with Geene and Staley. Miller, a right fielder, hit 23 home runs at High-A and is the best position player in the system. The pitchers will arrive first.

There are two questions for this club every spring now. Does the regular season still matter after 105 wins in 2031, 106 last year and no title? And what has to change in October? JR's roster answers the second one: very little. By everything I can measure, that is right. Last October I worked out that a club in Somerville's position in each of its 27 postseasons would have won about 2.6 titles by now, and that winning none comes up about once in 17 tries. Nothing JR could have bought this winter changes that arithmetic by much. Keeping the best staff in baseball together for five more years is about as much as a front office can do about it.

The first question is harder. The regular season is the one thing this franchise has always won. It opens this one in Montreal, the club it beat in six in the divisional round, and then goes to Baltimore, the club it beat in seven. Six games on the road, against the two clubs it put out last October.