

SPOKANE CHRONICLE

MARCH 28, 2033 · THE SPOKANE SASQUATCHES BEAT

Sasquatches add Ojeda, draft Mercer seventh, open in Oahu

BY **HAL ONDRUSEK** · SPOKANE CHRONICLE

Jonathan Montano, Triple-A Walla Walla. He is 23, the eighth overall pick in 2031, and this morning he is 15th on the game's Top 100 prospect list. Last year he threw 154 innings at Walla Walla with a 4.32 earned run average and allowed seven home runs. Spokane has still not seen him pitch. He did not pitch in a big-league spring game this year, and he is at Walla Walla this morning.

John Anderson, a pitcher who came over from Memphis in December, is 63rd on the list. He made 23 starts in A ball last year. Ricardo Morales, who saved 21 games at Walla Walla, is 87th. Alan Smith, the outfielder who hit .329 at Bend, is 93rd. Jerry Barrera, a second baseman who came from Baltimore in December, hit 24 home runs between High-A and Low-A last year. And this week, with the seventh pick in the draft, Sly took Frank Mercer, a pitcher.

Toby Newman is not on the list, and he is not Spokane's anymore either. The 16th-round pick who hit better than .320 at two levels last summer, the one Sly told me in May was not in his 2034 plans, signed with Oklahoma City in January.

The big-league club lost 111 games last year, the most in franchise history. The winter did not try to fix that, and I do not think it was meant to. Francisco Ojeda, a first baseman who hit 41 home runs for Southland and Kansas City, signed on March 16 for one year and $7.6 million. Ferdinand Kuik, an outfielder, signed for a year at $4 million. Ed Hatcher, a reliever, signed for two years. Edgar Hernandez, who played every day at third base, signed with Montreal.

Justin Hebert, the catcher, is in the first year of his three-year, $48 million deal. Brian McIntosh is 35 and in the last year of his, at $11 million. David Guerrero, the closer, has an extension for one more year at $9.6

million. The rest of the roster is men on short deals and young players who have not done anything yet in this league.

The payroll is $79.2 million against a budget of $174 million. Committed beyond this season: $35 million. Sly has room. He has chosen not to spend it until the young pitchers are ready to be paid for.

Spring went 10-22 with three ties, the worst record in camp.

For the record, again: Spokane won its only championship in 2008 over the Boston Boom, the franchise that is now the Chicago Black Sox. Not the Beacons. Somebody in the league office will get it wrong this year, and I will write in.

Montano starts at Walla Walla. Mercer starts wherever the club sends him. The Sasquatches start in Oahu tonight, the club that went home with the last playoff spot slipping away after Spokane beat it three straight last September. I was there for those three. They felt like more than they were.