RICHMOND DISPATCH-LEDGER

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Rebels sign Hart, keep Powell, trade a first for Henderson

BY **BO THREADGILL** · RICHMOND DISPATCH-LEDGER

Last October Virginia came home up three games to two on San Juan, with two chances to finish it. In Game 6 Dustin Potter did not allow a hit for six innings. Then San Juan won Game 7 and went on to win everything. The Rebels had won 100 games. In October Kaden told me it had felt like the season at times, that injuries had come and gone and the club had carried momentum into October, and then, plainly: "Didn't work out."

This winter I asked him what he took from it, a 100-win team beaten by an 82-win one. He has been on both sides of that.

> *"That's a team that won 82 and won the championship," he said. "2031 we were a team that won 81 and took Denver to a game 6. Doesn't matter how many games you win once you're in the dance. Don't overlook an opponent."*

He is right, and I have the scars to prove it. Two years ago this club went 18-8 in September, won three straight Game 7s on the road and played for the championship. Last year it won 100 and went out in the second round. Nobody in this city should need a lecture about what a regular season does and does not buy you.

So the winter was about getting back to the dance, and about one need in particular. Kaden signed Tim Hart, the Chicago third baseman, for five years and $73 million, $14.6 million a season through 2037.

> *"Simple, we needed power, he has it," Kaden said. "We like his defense at 3rd too, should fit right into our lineup and fix a key issue."*

Hart hit 29 home runs for the Black Sox last year. No Rebel hit more than Danny Meza's 27. Chris Wilson, who hit .294 and was worth 3.7 wins in left field, is a free agent this morning and unsigned. In October Kaden said he would love to have Wilson, Joey Powell and D.J. Bakker back. Powell came back, for three years at $3.5 million a season, and he won the Great Glove at third base last year. Bakker signed with Memphis.

So Virginia has two third basemen, the Great Glove winner and the man brought in to hit. One of them will have to move.

The rotation lost Mike Dibrell, who won 15 games and signed with Big Horn, and Albin Giolitti, who went to Toronto in the deal for Ken Henderson. That deal cost something. Virginia sent Giolitti and its first- and fifth-round picks in this year's draft for Henderson, a 31-year-old who threw 204 innings for the Griffins with 228 strikeouts and a 3.70 earned run average, and who is in the last year of his contract. Toronto still pays 35 percent of it. Jeff Parmelee and Matt Scott, both veterans, signed on. Zeke Tovar, who saved 38 games and threw 117 innings out of the bullpen, is back.

The payroll is $186.7 million against a budget of $216 million. Danny Meza is the highest paid, at $28 million. The farm has three names on the game's Top 100 this morning: Jim Gaudreau 79th, Enrique Guzman 81st and Dave Alfaro 92nd. Virginia's pick in the first round, the 28th, belongs to Toronto now.

Spring went 12-12 with 11 ties, which is about right for Virginia.

Huron comes to Richmond tonight. The Rebels have put the Herons out of October twice in four years, in 2029 and again in 2031, and the Herons will not have forgotten either one. Then the Rebels go to San Juan, to the Humidor, for the champions' home opener. Kaden says don't overlook an opponent. There is no chance of that this week.