CINCINNATI REGISTER

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Regents allow fewest runs in baseball, sit 19-29

BY **WENDELL BARR** · CINCINNATI REGISTER

May 15, at Boston. The Regents lost 8-2 and finished a four-game sweep, their seventh straight loss. They were 16-26. They are 19-29 now, seventh in the Jade, 14 games behind Denver, and five games out of the last playoff spot in the Ice Conference.

Here is what makes that hard to explain. No club in baseball has allowed fewer runs than Cincinnati's 157. The Regents have scored 165. They have outscored their opponents and they are 10 games under .500.

I asked Chris about it in April, when it was 92 scored and 65 allowed and 11-13.

> *"It's mind-boggling isn't it?" he said. "We have no trouble scoring runs or keeping them off the board. So far we've just not combined those numbers into wins. I think the numbers speak for themselves and hopefully we'll see a return to the mean."*

The mean has not come. The club is 8-16 since. A team that scores and allows what this one has should be about 25-23. It is six games worse than that, and most of the difference is in close games. The Regents are 6-12 in one-run games.

Chris also said this, about the 4-8 sim that came before it: "You're gonna get a 4-8 sim in this division from time to time - we just don't want to make it a habit. If it becomes a habit then we'll deal with it." The sims since have gone 5-7 and 3-9.

The pitching is not the problem. The bullpen's earned run average is 2.69, second in baseball. Chris Hartke has a 0.87 in 20 and two-thirds innings. Nick Addison has a 0.65. Josh Baker has a 2.83 as a starter and Jordan Montanez a 2.77, and Montanez is 1-5. Danny Sotelo has nine saves.

The problem is the lineup. Joe Duemler, second in the MVP vote, is hitting .227. Eric Chini, three Platinum Sticks, is at .202 in the last year of his contract. Matt Kopacka, paid $17 million this year, is at .222. Luigi Oliver is at .201 in center. The club is 27th in runs.

Juan Martinez, the left fielder, has 11 home runs, and Danny Badillo has eight. Mauricio Dominguez, the catcher who was 41st on the game's prospect list in March, has played his way into the lineup and is hitting .271 with a .486 slugging percentage. He is the best news of the spring.

The draft added Jay Ricks, a shortstop, at No. 23.

I said in March that I have seen better springs turn into worse summers. I did not expect it to start in May. Last year this club won 100 games and Chris said it overachieved a little. This year the run differential says it has underachieved a lot. Either way the standings do not care.

Two at home with Philadelphia, then four in Montreal and three in New York. The schedule does not get softer.