THE GALVESTON GROTTO

MAY 23, 2033 · THE GALVESTON GREMLINS BEAT

Gremlins climb out of 11-game hole behind Turner, Buckmaster

BY **RUTHIE ALCORN** · THE GALVESTON GROTTO

We were 10-3 on April 11. Then we lost 11 in a row.

It started the next day and ran until April 24, and by May 2 we were 12-19. Lance Fitzgerald, who drove in 102 runs for us last year, tore an abdominal muscle running the bases on March 29, the second game of the season, and the estimate was four months. Oscar Mitchell, our Great Glove right fielder, has not played a game. Johnny Peterson, one of our best pitching prospects, strained a hamstring on April 1. Jeff Buckmaster missed starts. Matt Martin broke his foot.

I asked Jeremy in April what happened during the streak.

> *"We are beat up and disoriented," he said. "Need to get back on track soon."*

And how we get through it with seven players hurt: "Guys that weren't expected to play as much or play at all need to step up until we get some guys back."

They have. Since May 2 we are 11-6, and we are 23-25, one game behind Fort Collins for the last playoff spot in the Ice Conference. That is not where a club that won 102 games wanted to be in May. It is a lot better than where we were three weeks ago.

Ashton Turner is the reason. He was the league's Batter of the Month for April, and he is hitting .318 with a .413 on-base percentage, 10 home runs and 13 stolen bases. He has scored 40 runs, more than anybody else here by 16. Jose Veras, who becomes a free agent in the fall, is hitting .310. Edgar Rodriguez is at .276. The rest of the lineup has been the guys Jeremy meant, and some of them have not been ready.

Matthew Barlage is at .204 in right, where Mitchell should be. Martin was at .135 at shortstop before he got hurt.

The pitching has held us up. Buckmaster, in the first year of his new deal, has a 1.45 earned run average in seven starts. Jason Rubin has a 2.22. Jeremy Lowry has a 2.98 and has walked nine men in 51 innings, and early this season he signed an extension through 2038, five years and $36 million starting next year. Greg Wilks has struck out 67 and has a 3.68, which is not the Wilks we saw last year, and he is still the one I want on the mound in a big game. Antonio Perez has nine saves and a 1.45. Jahiem Bryant has a 1.50.

We are 16-8 at home and 7-17 on the road. We are 9-3 in one-run games, which is the kind of thing a team that is beat up does to keep its head above water.

Jeremy talked about the crowds in October, so here they are. Our average home crowd this year is 25,724, 28th of 32 clubs. We are 16-8 in front of them. I know some of you are coming. I know it is not enough yet, and I know what he said it means if it stays this way. I am going to keep asking you to come.

The farm got a little better this spring. Chris Hein, the third baseman, is 21st on the game's Top 100 now, up from 25th in March, and Josh Bassett is 68th. In the draft we took John Pyle, a center fielder, at No. 24. Justin Tidwell, 21, has nine home runs at Double-A Shreveport.

Baltimore comes to the island for two, and then we go to Somerville for four and on to Toronto, back on the road, where this team has not figured it out yet. Fitzgerald is not quite two months into his four. We are hanging on until he gets back.