MEMPHIS DELTA TIMES

MAY 23, 2033 · THE MEMPHIS BLUES BEAT

Blues win 16 at home, six away; sit at 22-26

BY **OTIS FRAYNE** · MEMPHIS DELTA TIMES

On the fourth of May, after a sweep of Southland here, the Memphis Blues were 17-16. A winning record in May. I have covered this franchise for 32 years and I wrote that number down twice to be sure of it.

They are 22-26 now, sixth in the Topaz, six games behind Huron and two games short of the last playoff spot in the Fire Conference. Since that day they have gone 5-10. That is a bad two weeks. It is also a club that lost 108 games last year sitting two games under .500 in late May, and I have not been able to write that sentence in a long time.

The whole season is in two numbers. At home the Blues are 16-11. On the road they are 6-15. They swept Huron here in April and swept Southland here in May, and they went to Milwaukee and Spokane and did not win a game.

They play close games and they win them, 10-5 in games decided by one run, until the game goes past nine. Then they are 1-5. In April I asked Eric whether that was bad luck or the bullpen.

> *"Bullpen, for sure," he said. "Still figuring out what we got."*

He has found some of it. Joe Cardinal has six saves and a 2.45. Andy May has eight holds and a 1.71. Reynaldo Perez has a 2.28. Ben Cowhey has nine saves and a 5.68. Raul Carrillo, who had not allowed a home run in 30 innings, is hurt and will miss the rest of the year.

The rotation is the trouble, and it was the trouble in March. The starters have a 5.31 earned run average, 30th of 32. D.J. Bakker, who came from Virginia for two years and $10 million, has a 6.43. Travis Byrd has a

5.51, Mike Rosen a 5.69. Kyle Croitoru, at 4.39, has been the best of them. Max McIntyre has been on the injured list since the third of April.

Nachman Cohen is hitting .330 with 29 runs batted in. Jonathan Murrell, 25, a fifth-round pick, is hitting .274 with six home runs and 28 runs batted in. Vicente Chavez was hitting .301 when he went on the injured list. Ivan Sanchez, the center fielder from Denver, is at .275. Mike Jenkins, who was 30th on the game's Top 100 in March, is the everyday second baseman and is hitting .267.

I asked Eric who else needed to step up behind Cohen.

> *"Literally everyone else needs to step up," he said. "Schnake is MIA and desperately needed to relieve the pressure from the young guys."*

Casey Schnake is hitting .235 with five home runs. He is paid $20 million this year and next. He has played every game. This club has hit 35 home runs, the fewest in baseball, and it needs the man who was its most valuable player last year to hit like it.

Chris Faulk is 11th on the game's Top 100 this morning and Efrain Rosales is 10th. Faulk is at Triple-A Chula Vista. Allan Owens, 21, is hitting .353 in 38 plate appearances at High-A Monument. Xavier Brown, the first pick in the draft, has not played yet.

Two in San Diego. Then home for four with Vancouver and one with Spokane. Home is where this club wins. It would be a good week to stay there.