MILWAUKEE SENTINEL-PRESS

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Mobsters win nine straight, lose seven, settle at 25-23

BY **DANNY KOLAR** · MILWAUKEE SENTINEL-PRESS

Trevor Faria has driven in 36 runs, fourth-most in the league, and he has done it on a team that has stolen nine bases all year. Nine. Thirty-one clubs have more. Brent Chute has six of the nine. The other eight regulars have three between them. The Mobsters do not run. They walk, they wait, and they let Faria drive them in.

Milwaukee is 25-23, fourth in the Topaz, three games behind Huron and a game clear of the last playoff spot in the Fire Conference. If that sounds like nothing happened, you missed April.

The club got swept at home by Southland on Opening Day weekend. Then it won nine straight: three in Oklahoma City, three against Memphis here, three in Virginia. Three sweeps in nine days. Then it lost seven straight, including three in Kansas City and three at home to San Juan. Since the end of that, it is 15-12. Baseball is a streaky game, Ryan told me in October. I didn't know he meant inside of three weeks.

In April, after the 3-9 stretch, I asked him whether it was a slump or something more.

> *"A slump," he said. "What do you want me to say? We want to win more and expect to win more and are currently disappointed with our record but have high hopes and expectations going forward."*

Fair enough. The run differential is plus-28, 212 scored and 184 allowed, which is a little better than 25-23. The club is 4-7 in one-run games. It's 6-10 against teams with a winning record and 11-9 against everybody else. That's the whole argument for and against.

Faria is hitting .292 with a .392 on-base percentage. Jesus Espinosa, healthy all year after last year, has played all 48 games and is hitting .283. Brent Chute is at .273 with seven home runs. The team is second in the league in walks and fourth in on-base percentage.

Karl Perkins is hitting .189. He won the Platinum Stick at shortstop last year and this is the first year of his five-year deal. Paul Stepp is at .232 in the last year of his. Between them they are paid $37.3 million this season.

The pitching is the reason the record isn't worse. The bullpen has a 2.97 earned run average, fourth-best in baseball. Chris Calvert, 35 years old and still at it, has 32 strikeouts in 26 and a third innings. Steve Summey is back from the injured list and has four saves. Ryan Moynahan has five. Josh Brown and Lorenzo Gomez haven't allowed a home run between them.

Andy Trainer, 24, a second-round pick, is 4-1 with a 2.00 in nine starts. He has been the best starter on the club and it isn't close. Alex Sanchez, paid $25 million this year, is 3-4 with a 4.30.

Jason Klamm is up to 40th on the game's Top 100, from 62nd in March. He is at Triple-A Queen City with Manuel Ruiz, 90th on the list, who is hitting .330 there. The Mobsters took Nate Hamil, a pitcher, 17th in the draft.

Two in Spokane, then Big Horn comes in for four. Faria will come up with somebody on base. On this team, he always does.