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Firebirds lead baseball in runs, sweep Bandits, trail by one

BY **AUGIE SALCIDO** · ARIZONA REPUBLIC-JOURNAL

Jay Seabolt was a 16th-round pick in 2028... the 500th name called that year. He is 24 now, and he is hitting .345 with nine home runs and a .613 slugging percentage in 40 games. I did not have him on any list of mine in March.

That is how this season has gone in Phoenix. The Firebirds have scored 251 runs, the most in baseball. They are 28-20, second in the Ruby, a game behind Myrtle Beach, and they have won four straight after sweeping Southland here this week.

On April 26 they were 13-13. Since then they are 15-7.

In April, when the club had just gone 4-8 while scoring the second-most runs in the league, I asked Brendan what had happened.

> *"It's great that we are scoring because that was a problem for us last year," he said. "We just need our starting rotation to click into gear now. If they don't we might need to tweak it a bit."*

The rotation has clicked a little. Its earned run average is 4.01, 19th in the league. It is good enough, with this lineup behind it.

Bryce Mosely has 13 home runs, tied for fourth in baseball, and 34 runs batted in, and he is hitting .308. Juan Mujica is at .292 with 12 steals. Joe Lloyd, 25, is hitting .312 and has stolen 13. Octavio Toledo has 11 home runs and a .200 average, which is its own kind of season. Kevin Weasner, the shortstop who came

home, has played every game and is hitting .245. In March I said I would be watching him. I have been... and I still am.

I asked Brendan about Usami Miyamoto, too. He was 1-4 then.

> *"I'm really pleased with Usami's start to his TBL career," Brendan said. "He is very unlucky to be 1-4 and that will improve I'm sure."*

He is 3-6 now, with a 3.30 earned run average and 55 strikeouts in 60 innings, the best earned run average among the starters. So it has improved, and it hasn't. Robby Morales is 4-0 with a 4.45. Roger Lippincott is 5-2. Wally Gulledge, 34 and home again, has 52 strikeouts in 44 and two-thirds innings.

Nathan Dickerson has 12 saves. Arvin Layug and Alex Garcia both have a 2.53, and Garcia, 35, has not allowed a home run.

The farm is up, too. Casey Morris is 25th on the game's Top 100, from 36th in March, and Triple-A Tucson is 24-12 and in first. Willie Villalba is 48th.

I wrote the 2030 division title as a turning point and it wasn't one. I know what I do in May. So I'll just say this... the best offense in baseball plays in Phoenix this spring, and I've waited a long time to type that.

Kansas City is here for two. Then four in Virginia, and on to Huron.
