SHERIDAN PRESS AND THE WYOMING WIRE

AUGUST 1, 2033 · THE BIG HORN RAMS BEAT

Rams lose 21 of 32; best bullpen can't stop slide

BY **WESLEY TALLGRASS** · SHERIDAN PRESS AND THE WYOMING WIRE

July was hot in the valley and the Rams were not. They went 8-16. On June 20 they were 44-29 with a lead in the Ruby. They have gone 11-21 since.

The record is 55-50. Big Horn is tied with Phoenix for third in the Ruby, four games behind Myrtle Beach, and the two of them hold the last two playoff spots in the Fire. Mexico City is one game back.

The last two weeks were the worst of it. They went 3-9. They were swept in Galveston and swept in Denver, and they lost seven straight from July 22 to July 29. They came home and lost two of three to Fort Collins. They are 2-8 over their last 10. They have been 6-14 over their last 20.

Johnny told me in April that Wyoming is a place of peace and tranquility, and the other places are not. He has been proved right. The Rams are 35-16 here. They are 20-34 everywhere else. Last sim they made one trip and it went 0-6.

It is not the pitching, or not the part of it you would think. This staff has walked 246 men, the fewest in baseball. It has the best walks-plus-hits rate in the league. The bullpen has a 2.74 earned run average, the best in baseball, and has blown six saves. Malachi Lott went to the All-Star Game at 35 and has nine saves. John Underwood, also 35, is 6-4 with a 2.91. Those two and the rest have kept a lot of games close. The club is still 11-13 in one-run games and 3-6 in extra innings.

Nick Williams is 10-4 with a 2.78, and he has walked 23 men in 119 and two-thirds innings. The money was well spent there. John Morris, 24, on the minimum, is 8-6 with a 3.07. After those two it is the same rotation I wrote about in May. Mike Dibrell has a 4.51. Alex Cardenas, three years and $34.5 million, has

come down to 4.30 from 6.57. Chris Kempner, 36, has allowed 13 home runs in 59 innings. The starters are 21st.

Bill Raymond is hitting .280 with 23 home runs and 23 steals, and he was player of the week on July 18. In a month like this one he has been the same as ever. He went to the All-Star Game with Lott, Williams and Brad Battiste. Battiste has 20 home runs on the minimum. Ernesto Sanchez, who was the surprise of May, has come back to .254 and has 21 home runs. Danny Hess is at .269, a good deal better than the .219 he hit in May, on $30.5 million. Ken Christensen is at .194.

Left field has been a problem. Josh Newman, who had seven home runs in 145 plate appearances, is out five to six weeks with a strained oblique. Cody Verner has a bad knee.

The club has a losing record against winning clubs, 22-30, and it is 33-20 against the rest. That is what I told you in May, and it was the wrong month to be right about it.

The payroll is $190.6 million, third in baseball. The organization is in good order below it: Huntsville is 56-37, Tulsa 58-23 and Miami 52-29, all first in their divisions. Jim Marge is 77th on the game's Top 100. None of that helps in August.

Baltimore comes in for three, and that is the good news, because it is here. Then Toronto and Montreal on the road.