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Ware perfect, Dynamite pay for Hernandes; Vancouver sweeps

BY **CAMILLE OSSORIO** · DENVER HERALD

The Rochester trade cost two first-round picks, two seconds, a third and three prospects: Ryan Hamaker, Odilon Keating and Luis Quinones. It brought back Vince Hernandes, Lyle Egner at half price and Jorge Garcia. Grade it after a month and the answer is that nobody can yet. Hernandes, on $55 million in the last year of his contract, hit .320 in Rochester and is at .265 here in 42 plate appearances. Egner is at .247 with three home runs. Garcia is at .173 with no home runs in 81 plate appearances. It was built for October. Everything Jay does in July is.

It also finished the shopping. The payroll is $252.4 million, the highest in the league, against a $145 million average. I asked him if he was done buying.

> *"I'm always happy to make a deal when I can, but I'm pretty limited at this point by not being able to take on additional salary," he said.*

That is a Denver general manager telling you the number is full, which I have not heard often in 15 years. The other small moves fit: Carlos Norena from Chicago for Gustavo Perez, who was the only Denver name on the game's Top 100. Chris Jones to Boston for a seventh-round pick. There is no Denver name on that list now. Those are the receipts for this season, and they come due later.

The club is 64-41, tied with Somerville and Montreal for the best record in baseball, 12 games clear of Rochester in the Jade. Jay called it a 92-win team in March. A .610 pace is 99. On the numbers the record is earned: plus-91, and the same arithmetic I used in May says exactly 64-41.

Matt Ware has been the story. On July 6 in Galveston he retired all 27 batters, 4-0, a perfect game, in a season when he was also Pitcher of the Month for April and for July. He is 12-4 with a 1.79, tied for the most wins in baseball. He has 106 strikeouts in 135 and two-thirds innings, which means the defense is doing a great deal of the work, and I will keep saying that until it stops mattering. Marco Ruiz is 10-8 with a 2.77 and 160 strikeouts, and in May I called him the best value on the staff at $10 million this year. He still is. Jonathan Miller is 11-3. The starters have a 3.06 earned run average, the best in the league. Ware, Ruiz, Egner and Victor Baez all went to the All-Star Game. Baez is hitting .342 with a .435 on-base percentage and 73 runs, and his contract looks better every week.

The other side of that ledger is the same one as in May. Eighteen blown saves. Thirty-eight saves spread among pitchers none of whom has more than six. Eddie Alonso has pitched in 59 of 105 games, 100 and a third innings, with 21 holds. Jay's stopper is on pace for about 155 innings of relief. I have been doing this long enough to ask what that arm looks like in Game 5. Keith Presley, who had four saves, tore his UCL on July 19 and will miss about 13 months. David Varas is 9-2 in 64 and two-thirds innings.

The home run numbers hold up: 150, second in baseball. Matt Hoogerhyde has 25, and he is hitting .239. Jared Pink has 14 and is hitting .145. Kevin Porter is back on the injured list at .180, with $30 million going out the door.

Two cautions, same as in May. Denver is 18-21 against clubs with winning records and 46-20 against the rest. And the club just lost three straight in Vancouver, 7-5 on Sunday the last of them, after going 6-0 at home in the week before that.

I asked Jay if anything about this team worried him.

> *"The only thing I'm worried about is facing an 82-80 club in the playoffs," he said.*

San Juan won the title at 82-80 last year. That is the most honest thing he has said to me this season, and October is when the Rochester trade gets its grade.

Three in Kansas City, then Memphis and Southland at home.