NORTHERN COLORADO SUN

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Roosters' bullpen holds, bats don't; Tim says sell

BY **DALE KIRKPATRICK** · NORTHERN COLORADO SUN

The bullpen remains the part of this club that works, and it has now had to work a great deal. Fort Collins relievers have thrown 431 innings with a 2.98 earned run average, third-best in the league. The starters have thrown 524 with a 4.27, 24th. Put those two lines side by side and you have the summer. Gilbert Woodside has pitched in 54 games, 86 and a third innings, with 98 strikeouts and 20 holds. Melvin Canales has a 1.87 and went to the All-Star Game with Andres Maldonado. Bill Barker has 20 saves and a 1.64. Adam Dirks is 4-0.

Fort Collins held the last playoff spot in the Ice when I wrote in May. It reached 26-24 on May 24, and that was the high-water mark. It went 8-17 in June, losing eight straight from June 10 to June 18. It went to 42-56 by July 23. It has gone 5-2 since, and it is 47-58, sixth in the Jade, 17 games behind Denver and four behind Tampa Bay for that last spot.

I asked Tim, with the club 11-22 over its previous 33 games, whether he was selling.

> *"Yes the Roosters are looking to sell expiring contracts," he said. "I was really hoping we would have a better year but no we are still stuck in neutral."*

That is a plain answer. The expiring contracts on this roster are mostly veterans signed for one year in the winter. Danny Kimball, 34, is 4-5 with a 4.12. Sergio Soto, 32, is hitting .266 with 25 stolen bases. Luis Nieto was player of the week on May 30 and is hitting .221 with 13 home runs. Dirks and Luc Frangilli are in the last year of their deals as well.

The mechanism of the losing is the same one I described in May. Fort Collins has scored 365 runs, 30th in the league, with 91 home runs, also 30th. It has been shut out 13 times. Maldonado is the exception: .280 with 16 home runs. Mark Cobb, signed in March for the on-base percentage, has brought his to .336, though with three home runs in 285 plate appearances. John Kovacs, who is at .256, broke a finger and is on the injured list. Travis Chase and Tim Urbach are at .213. The record on the road is 18-33.

In the rotation, Jesse Beck has a 3.48 and 115 strikeouts in 103 and a third innings, and he is 4-6. Jose Alvarado has allowed 22 home runs. Alejandro Contreras is 5-9 with a 4.43.

That brings us to the first of the three starters I said were coming from Salt Lake City. R.J. Blum, sixth on the game's Top 100, came up for two starts in Fort Collins, with an 8.00 earned run average in nine innings, six strikeouts and six walks, and he is back at Salt Lake. He is 2-8 with a 3.57 there in 18 starts, and the 27 walks in 108 and a third innings are the number that matters: he cut them by a good deal from last year. Two starts tell you nothing about a pitcher, and I would caution anyone against reading them.

Leo Gatica (40th, 3.40) and David Santiago (42nd, 3.93) are still at Salt Lake, each with 18 starts. Carlos Bueno is 15th, Jose Aguilar 22nd, Stephen Bennett, this year's first-round pick, 61st, and Rich Rico 92nd. With Blum, that is seven Fort Collins names on the list, which is the same count as May.

The sequence, then, has not changed. The arms arrive first, and a selling club in August is the right place to let them take their turns. The hitting this club needs still does not have a date on it.

Three in Memphis, then Milwaukee and Virginia at home.