KVGS-AM AND THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW

AUGUST 1, 2033 · THE LAS VEGAS HIGH ROLLERS BEAT

High Rollers go 3-9 after 7-2 sim; Fraker, Thomas gone

BY **SONNY PARDO** · KVGS-AM AND THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW

Did you enjoy the 7-2 sim? Good. Hold on to it, because here is what came next: 3-9. Swept at home by Oahu. Two of three lost to Big Horn, Mexico City and Myrtle Beach. The High Rollers are 2-8 over their last 10 and 45-60 on the season, seventh in the Jade, 19 games behind Denver and six behind Tampa Bay for the last playoff spot in the Ice.

I bring up the 7-2 because Eric brought it up. I asked him two questions last month. Don Fraker tore his labrum and is out about a year. Roger Thomas tore his rotator cuff and is out about a year. I asked him what that changed. Here is the man who runs this franchise.

> *"I'm not sure what the market for a $20 mil a year player with a torn labrum out for 12 months is," he said. "But there is a chance that may effect him being traded. Solid question."*

On Thomas: "There is no replacement for Thomas. The SP market is dry as a nuns.....ummm, sense of humor."

And then: "Solid questions after a 7-2 sim. Do you wish to discuss that?"

Sure, Eric. Let's discuss it. What was the record after the 7-2 sim? 3-9.

Now, is he right about Fraker? He is. Fraker won Reliever of the Year last year with a 1.94. He had a 4.42 this year in 38 and two-thirds innings, and Las Vegas owes him $20 million a year for two more years

after this one. Nobody is taking that. That part of the plan is over.

You remember the plan. Eighteen batters from the starter, then the army of lights-out relievers. I gave it a hard time in May, when the bullpen had a 4.36 and the club was 2-10 in one-run games. Fair is fair: the army has gotten better. The bullpen's earned run average is down to 3.84. Motoshi Tanabe has been everything Eric said, 88 innings, 121 strikeouts, four home runs allowed, a 3.07. Rich Lappin, 24, on the minimum, has a 3.13 and nine saves. John Harvey is 4-1 with a 3.04. The club has gone 28-29 since my last piece, which is a .500 team. Eric said .500. In May I told you this club needed to go 64-50 the rest of the way to get there. It is 28-29 toward that.

So what is the problem now? The starters. The rotation has thrown 406 innings, and the bullpen has thrown 527, and the guys who throw those 406 have a 4.81 earned run average, 29th in baseball. Nick Platt has made 24 starts and thrown 96 and a third innings. That is four innings a start. He is 1-7. Tetsuo Nagata, who had a 1.93 in May, is 0-4 with a 5.19, 14 home runs allowed, and he is hurt. Jared Akin is the one you can trust: a 3.53, 6-9, on $500,000. Then Thomas went down. There is no replacement, the man says.

And they still can't win the close ones. It was 2-10 in May. It is 12-19 now. That is better, and it is still the record of a losing club.

They can run, I'll give them that. The High Rollers have stolen 154 bases, second in baseball. Jose Bautista has 39, hitting .299. Jeff Bass has 34 at age 34. Arturo Molina has 66 runs batted in. J.J. Ellenberg, in the last year of his deal at $18 million, was player of the week on August 1 and has 11 home runs.

Back in 2018 this franchise won 117 games, and I know, I know. I am only going to say that the 2018 club did not need a discussion after a good week.

Here's the good news, and I mean it. The farm is winning. Wynn is 22-6. Luxor and Mandalay Bay lead their divisions. Back in the spring nobody from this organization was on the game's Top 100. Joe Smyre is 75th now, and Jason Hertzog is 86th.

Three in Oklahoma City, then San Juan and Kansas City at home. We can discuss those too.