MILWAUKEE SENTINEL-PRESS

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Mobsters lead baseball in OPS, take over the Topaz

BY **DANNY KOLAR** · MILWAUKEE SENTINEL-PRESS

Brent Chute has stolen 10 of the 17 bases this club has taken all year. Seventeen. In May I told you there were nine and that 31 clubs had more, and they have nearly doubled it, and the 31 clubs still have more. Huron has 190. If you are keeping score at home, Chute's legs are the fastest thing on this roster and he was the Batter of the Month for July.

It turns out you don't have to run if nobody can get you out. The Mobsters lead baseball in on-base percentage, slugging percentage and OPS. They lead it in walks with 392. They are 62-43, first in the Topaz, first in the Fire, a game up on San Juan and two up on Oklahoma City, and they have won five straight. This is the first time they have been this far over .500 all year. I had this club around .500 in the spring, and I told you so, and I have been covering this team long enough to know that is usually when they come and get you.

Since my May piece they are 37-20. They went 16-8 in July. They went 9-3 this sim, swept Toronto, swept Philadelphia here, and lost two of three in Somerville. They have played 28 games against the other conference and won 19.

I asked Ryan last month about being somewhere between the slump and the hot streak.

> *"18-15 is meeting expectations yes," he said. "We can do better but we've met minimum expectations over the last month or so."*

They did better. They've gone 9-3 and I would like to hear him call that minimum. The man once called me fake news on the record, so I am going to assume he read that and laughed.

Then I asked if Jesus Espinosa was his best hitter.

> *"Well he certainly is statistically our best hitter right now, and has been since he was called up in 2027," he said. "He's special."*

Espinosa is hitting .321 with a .405 on-base percentage, and Ryan is right. Chute is at .294 with 27 home runs and 83 runs, tied for the league lead. He went to the All-Star Game with Trevor Faria.

Which brings us to the bad news. Faria strained an ACL on July 25 and will miss five or six weeks. He was hitting .316 with 67 runs batted in. You don't replace that with Rich Estrada. Andy Trainer, the best starter on the club in May, is on the injured list too, after 11 starts at 2.39.

The rest of the rotation has been fine. Alex Sanchez has come down to a 3.31 from a 4.30. Ricky Castillo has 10 wins. Paul Tremblett, 7-9 on the minimum, has walked 24 men in 112 innings. Chris Calvert, 36, has 17 holds and six saves, and Steve Summey, 85 strikeouts in 56 and a third innings, has seven saves, so if you know who the closer is, call me.

The shortstop is still hitting .192. Karl Perkins has a five-year deal and a batting average that makes me want to apologize to him personally. The club's payroll is $197.1 million, second in baseball.

I was wrong about the 2030 club until it was too late. This one has hit better than anybody in the league for four months, and the whole town keeps asking me what I think. I think Faria had better be back by Labor Day.

Galveston comes in for three. Then Fort Collins and Rochester on the road.