NEW YORK STANDARD

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Empire hit August with Eaton, share baseball's worst record

BY **GIL AMSTERDAM** · NEW YORK STANDARD

It is August 1. Travis Eaton is still in the lineup.

In May I wrote that if that was the case on this date, the front office would have spent the whole season deciding not to decide. Here is the season. The Empire are 42-63, last in the Sapphire, 22 games behind, last of 16 in the Ice, tied with Virginia and Memphis for the worst record in baseball. Nobody is worse.

Eaton is 36 and hitting .257 with six home runs and a .356 slugging percentage. The contract pays him $40.8 million, and it ends in October. He is better than he was in May. He is not good enough to bring back anything that matters. There is one sim left before the deadline.

Joe's club has gone 22-35 since my last piece. It went 9-16 in June and 9-15 in July. It was outscored 39-9 on one six-game road trip last month and has won 16 of 54 away from home. It has allowed 132 more runs than it has scored. It has scored 362, 31st of 32, with a .293 on-base percentage, also 31st. It is 3-9 in extra innings. It has blown 19 saves. It is 18-38 against clubs with winning records, and a game under .500 against the clubs without them. In May I called this a bad club that beats other bad clubs. I was too kind. It has stopped beating them.

In March I did not expect much. I expected more than this.

The free agents are worse than the record. Josh Foster, three years and $55.5 million, is hitting .189 with six home runs. Steve Schwarz, three years and $21 million, is hitting .169, and he fractured his thumb on July 26. Perry Lyttle is at .199. Joe Weiner is at .214 and slugging .310, and he is 24 and was a first-round pick. Manny Ruiz has hit 17 home runs and is hitting .189, which answers the question I asked in May. He does one thing.

The one good thing that happened to this lineup in the last 10 weeks just ended. Cole Rapin, 28, on the minimum, hit .293 with 12 home runs and a .358 on-base percentage. On July 24 he broke a bone in his elbow running the bases. He is out about nine months. Sam Entwistle, .275 with 11 home runs, is what is left, and he is day-to-day. So are Foster and Weiner.

On the mound, Chris Colvin, 23, has a 3.54 and 125 strikeouts and is stuck pitching for this team. Joe Pruitt has a 4.07. Jeremy Christian has been useful in relief. Greg Tucker has a 5.60 in 22 starts. Justin Timms, the 15th pick in 2031, has a 3.40 in 10 starts, the one young arm giving anybody a reason to buy a ticket. Donovan Walker, Sam Lantz, Austin Morley and Bryan Stewart are on the injured list. Staff earned run average: 4.48, 29th.

Below the big club it gets worse. Oswego is 16-65. St. Lawrence, in Rookie ball, is 1-27. That is not a typo. David Torres, the fourth pick in this year's draft, is 37th on the game's Top 100, and Billy Lozoya is 85th. Jessie Marino is 5-0 with a 2.50 at Buffalo. Those are the names.

I covered the 2004 and 2010 Griffins in this town. Those clubs knew what they were trying to do on August 1. This one had a whole year to sell a $40.8 million contract and comes up on the deadline with nothing to show for it. The record is Joe's, the payroll room he did not use is Joe's, and whatever happens to Eaton in the next sim is Joe's.

Three in Phoenix, then San Diego and Mexico City at home.