SPOKANE CHRONICLE

AUGUST 1, 2033 · THE SPOKANE SASQUATCHES BEAT

Montano starts twice; Sasquatches sell Holman, add Miller

BY **HAL ONDRUSEK** · SPOKANE CHRONICLE

Jonathan Montano has started a game in Spokane. He has started two of them. In May I said that was the next thing I was waiting for. He has pitched in 21 games now, 103 and a third innings, and he is 8-6 with a 4.35 earned run average. He is 23. The rest of the season will be spent finding out whether he is a starter, and I intend to watch all of it.

The Sasquatches are 47-58, seventh in the Ruby, 12 games behind Myrtle Beach. San Diego is behind them. In April Sly told me this club was "gaining assets while competing for last place." As of this morning it is not winning that competition. Fifty-one wins last year. Forty-seven on the first of August. That is a pace of 72.

The record overstates it some. The club has allowed 520 runs and has been outscored by 122, the second-worst margin in baseball. It has walked 385 men, the most in the league. The rotation has a 5.28 earned run average, 30th of 32. But it also went 14-11 in June, with sweeps of Chicago and Rochester here and a five-game winning streak. July went 9-15. It is 28-23 at home.

The assets part has gone as Sly said. On the Fourth of July he sent Tyler Holman to Phoenix. Holman was 3-10 with a 5.67 here. He has a 2.59 there, with two walks in 31 and a third innings, and I do not enjoy reading that. Spokane got a 2034 fourth-round pick, a 2035 third, Chris Ma and Tristan Miller. Miller, a first baseman, is 22. He went to Triple-A Walla Walla and is hitting .273 in 48 plate appearances, and he is 81st on the game's Top 100. That is why you make the trade.

I asked Sly who else was available.

> *"I am always up for trading expired or high demand guys for the right price!" he said.*

Expired guys, this club has. Francisco Ojeda signed for a year in March, hit .184 for me in May and is now at .239 with 22 home runs. Ferdinand Kuik, the other one-year man, has 16 home runs and 60 runs batted in. Tom Everette, Alex Penate and Ryan Cerny are all in the last year of their deals. Those are men a contender could use for a month, and I would expect a telephone to be ringing.

Justin Hebert broke a finger and is out about seven weeks. I asked who catches.

> *"Will Schopf does, he's defensively great he will keep us straight behind the plate," Sly said.*

Schopf is hitting .236 with 33 strikeouts in 114 plate appearances. A rebuilding club can live with that for seven weeks. Joe Kavka is on the injured list, at .262. Jeremy Olivas is at .219.

Keith Davis has fallen to 5.86. Luis Meza is 2-10. Josh Windley has a 4.26. Matt Griffin, 3-0 with a 2.57, has been the best arm in the bullpen. Vince Collins is 8-4.

Now the farm, which is the only reason anyone should be reading this far. The standings are hard to look at: Sandpoint 30-63, Tacoma 24-57, Princeton 27-54, Bend 6-22. All four are last in their divisions. The list is better. Dan Freeman, a second-round pick in this year's draft, is 34th on the game's Top 100. Aaron Myers, 18, is 53rd. Ricardo Morales, 62nd, had 16 saves at Walla Walla and has come up to pitch four games for the big club. Frank Mercer, the seventh pick, is 98th.

Morales has struck out seven in four and a third innings, and I would like to see more of that.

Somerville is here for three. Then Philadelphia and Boston on the road, and I would expect the telephone to keep ringing.