THE BEACON REPORT

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Beacons win 92, open in Galveston without Hernandez

BY **MARTY SOWERBY** · THE BEACON REPORT

Ninety-two and 70, plus-111, the first wild card in the Ice and the fifth seed. Galveston finished 79-83 and is the fourth seed, because it was second in the Jade and we were third in the Sapphire. So the club with 13 more wins opens with two on the road. That is the format, and nobody voted against it, but it is worth knowing what it costs. Boston was 53-28 at home this year and 39-42 everywhere else.

The math of the last two months is plain. On August 1 the club was 60-45, four games out of the division. It went 32-25 the rest of the way and finished six out. The high-water mark came on September 20, 87-62, after a sweep in Chicago and two wins over Toronto at home. From there it went 5-8, and four of the losses came in extra innings or by a run. The extra-inning record finished 7-11. I wrote in August that a thin roster gets exposed in exactly those games. It did, and it was still good enough for 92.

The best week of the year was the first week of September: a 12-1 win in Philadelphia, three straight in Somerville, 3-2, 4-2 and 2-1, then three straight at home against Montreal. Seven wins in a row, the longest of the season. In September I asked JP whether we could catch Somerville from five back. The answer turned out to be no, by six.

The deadline deal was the Virginia one. JP sent Jim Reiser, Tom Mandich, Carl Johnson and a 2034 third-round pick to Richmond for Ken Henderson and Matt Scott. Henderson made nine starts here with a 3.78 and won the last game of the season, 5-3 over Baltimore. Scott struck out 24 in 16 and two-thirds innings and pitched in high-leverage spots, four holds and a save. Reiser was a $14 million one-year deal hitting .219. In model terms Boston swapped a corner bat it did not need for two pitchers it did. That part worked.

The rest of the rotation is where October gets hard. Juan Hernandez, 15-7 with a 3.25 and 208 strikeouts, the best starter this club had all year, left the October 2 game in Montreal after four and two-thirds innings without allowing a hit. The diagnosis is elbow inflammation, and the club says he could miss as much as two months. Mike Fuentes, 2.56 in 102 innings, is still out. Konrad Palaszewski is out. That leaves Anthony Anderson, 7-2 with a 3.03 after the deadline and 11-4 with a 2.48 overall; Bill Ramirez, 4.21 after the deadline; Henderson; and Tyler Jackson, who has given up 11 home runs in 59 innings since August 1 and 30 on the year.

Now the part that is on me. In August I said my model had not had Josh Owens getting this much better this fast. It did not have him getting this much worse either. Owens pitched 20 and two-thirds innings after the deadline with an 8.71 earned run average, 18 walks and six home runs. He went from the surprise of the summer to the hardest innings to give out on the staff. My model gets a new input over the winter.

The bullpen is not much safer. Danny Stanescu finished with 30 saves and a 2.60, but after the deadline he had a 4.29 and five blown saves in 23 games. Jimmy Gant has moved to relief and has four saves there. Kyler Baxley has a 2.22. Those are the three I would trust, in reverse order.

The offense will carry what it can. Luis Martinez finished at .297 with 43 home runs and 119 runs batted in, fifth and second in the league. He is a free agent in November, and this is the last month of the deal. Edgar Tyler hit .333 after the deadline with 13 home runs and 51 runs batted in in 57 games, was Batter of the Month for August, and finished with 107. He has a sore knee and had a setback with it on October 2, and he has played every game anyway, .364 in the last sim. Danny Hernandez, back from a knee sprain, was player of the week on September 19.

Galveston has Ashton Turner, who hit .340 with 33 home runs and 50 steals and was worth more wins than anyone in the league. We swept four in Galveston in June, 29 runs to 16. The clubs have never met in October. Games 1 and 2 are down there on the 7th and 8th, and Games 3, 4 and 5 are here.

In July JP told me injuries had used up most of his depth. He has used the rest of it since.