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Regents climb out of 27-52 hole, fall three short

BY **WENDELL BARR** · CINCINNATI REGISTER

October 3, in Denver. Denver 9, Cincinnati 6. That one ended it.

The Regents finished 75-87. They were 27-52 on June 27. They went 48-35 after that, which over a full season is a 94-win pace, and it left them three games short of the last wild card in the Ice. They finished tied with Rochester for fourth in the Jade, 22 games behind Denver. A hundred wins last year. Seventy-five this one.

I said in August they would probably play well the rest of the way, because it was that kind of year. They did. They won 10 of 12 in the middle of September: two of three from Tampa Bay, three straight in Rochester, two of three from New Orleans, three straight from Las Vegas. On the night of September 25 they were 71-82 and two games out with nine to play. Then they lost two of three in Galveston and the race went with them.

In September I asked Chris why Eric Chini, Shane Carignan and Pat Colonna were still here after he had made them available.

> *"I tried to give these guys a way out to play for a contender," he said. "They decided to stick with the team and give it their best shot and they've put their money where their mouth is. We've played inspired baseball since the trade deadline and have almost pulled ourselves up from the grave. I don't think anyone would have (rightly) given us a shot to make the postseason after the horrific start to the season we had."*

He is right about the grave. He is right about nobody giving them a shot. I did not.

Colonna hit .299 after the deadline with 10 home runs. Chini hit .243 there and finished at .210 with 22 home runs. The one who did go was Danny Badillo. On August 1 Chris sent him to Toronto for Nick Knight, a young pitcher, Jason Jones, a young shortstop, and a 2034 second-round pick. Badillo went to the playoffs with Toronto. The Regents went to Galveston and lost.

Then I asked whether this was the team he brings back next year.

> *"Unless some of these guys can reconsider their stance on free agency," he said, "probably not."*

Here is what that means. Chini, Colonna, Carignan, Jody Woffinden and Danny Sotelo all reach free agency this winter. Together that is $28.6 million coming off. Two of the big contracts are staying. Juan Martinez in left field is owed $32 million next year, and he hit 33 home runs and slugged .567 after the deadline. Matt Kopacka at shortstop is owed $15 million next year and the year after, and he hit .191 this season and .156 after the deadline. One of those is a problem.

Luigi Oliver is the one I would keep at any price, and he costs the minimum. He hit .342 after the deadline and finished at .298, playing center field 158 times.

The pitching was good all year and the record never showed it. The Regents allowed 600 runs, fourth-fewest in baseball. They scored 629. A club that outscores its opponents by 29 does not lose 87 games unless it goes 22-29 in one-run games and 7-25 against the rest of its own conference outside the Jade, and this one did both. Matt Burke was the Ice Conference Pitcher of the Month for September, 3-1 with a 1.50. He finished 8-12. Nick Addison finished at 2.73 after moving into the rotation. Chris Hartke had a 1.67 after the deadline, and Jordan Montanez a 1.08. The other Juan Martinez, the 36-year-old pitcher, made 29 starts on $800,000 and will be a free agent. I will miss the box scores.

Jaylen Jenkins made 12 starts after the deadline with a 3.46 and walked 38 in 67 and two-thirds innings. He is 25. Nobody from this organization is on the game's Top 100 at the end of the season.

In March I said I had seen better springs turn into worse summers. This year I watched a worse spring turn into a better summer. The spring counted too.