NORTHERN COLORADO SUN

OCTOBER 6, 2033 · THE FORT COLLINS ROOSTERS BEAT

Roosters win 10 straight, fall one game short

BY **DALE KIRKPATRICK** · NORTHERN COLORADO SUN

The streak began on September 19, in the 14th inning of a game against Galveston that Fort Collins won 12-11, and it ended on October 1, in the 10th inning of a game in Cincinnati that Fort Collins lost 4-3. In between the Roosters won 10 straight: three from Galveston, three from Rochester, three from Tampa Bay and the first one in Cincinnati, 7-3. On the night of September 30 they were 73-84, one game behind Toronto and Rochester for the last wild card in the Ice, with five to play.

They lost four of the five. The last two were in Las Vegas, 2-0 and 3-2. The club finished 74-88, tied with New Orleans for sixth in the Jade.

The mechanism is the same one that has governed this club all year. During the streak the Roosters allowed 34 runs in 10 games. Eight of the wins were by three runs or fewer. Brian Holder, 25, saved four of them. The bullpen that carried the first four months carried the last one too: Gilbert Woodside finished with 85 appearances, 130 and a third innings and 32 holds; Melvin Canales with a 2.22 in 72 games; Holder with 10 saves, eight of them after the deadline, and 22 holds. Fort Collins relievers have now been among the league's best for a full season on a payroll that does not pay relievers.

The offense remained what it was in May and in August. The club hit 126 home runs, fewest in baseball, and scored 574 runs, 29th. Andres Maldonado, the one consistent bat, had a setback in his rehabilitation in late August and played 31 games after the deadline. Tim Urbach hit .178 after August 1. Gordie Herb hit .195 there and .216 on the season. Mark Cobb kept the on-base percentage at .335 and hit one home run after the deadline. When the pitching allowed three runs, the club lost. That is the whole explanation, and I do not have a better one.

Tim sold, as he said in July he would. On August 1 Bill Barker went to Oklahoma City, with half his remaining salary, for two minor league catchers, Norm Weatherly and Ricky Hernandez, and two picks: Oklahoma City's 2035 second-rounder and 2034 fifth-rounder. Barker has 17 saves and a 1.21 earned run average for them since. Adam Dirks went to Toronto for a 2034 fifth. In September I asked Tim whether he got enough for Barker. The return was two Triple-A catchers and a second-round pick that will be made in 2035.

I also asked about Jesse Beck, who is owed $28 million a year through 2037. After the deadline he made 12 starts with a 2.73 earned run average, 75 strikeouts and 14 walks. He finished at 3.19 with 190 strikeouts in 169 and a third innings, and 6-10. The record is the offense. The rest is a pitcher the club can build on. Jose Alvarado had a 2.85 in his last 12 starts.

Now the farm, briefly. R.J. Blum came back up in August and stayed. He made nine starts after the deadline with a 3.88 and won the 5-1 game against Tampa Bay on September 27. He walked 16 in 46 and a third innings, which is the number I said in August mattered. Cory Pineda, 24, played center field after the deadline and hit .295 with a .385 on-base percentage in 45 games. On the game's Top 100 at the end of the season, Fort Collins has Carlos Bueno 11th, Jose Aguilar 17th, Leo Gatica 42nd, David Santiago 43rd, Stephen Bennett 71st and Rich Rico 95th. Gatica and Santiago are at Salt Lake. They are starting pitchers. The club does not need starting pitchers as badly as it needs a bat.

That has been the sequence since spring. The arms arrive first. The 10-game streak was what it looks like when they arrive at the same time as a hot bullpen. The four losses after it were what it looks like when they do not have anyone to drive in a run.

The club came within a game of the field with five to play, which is closer than I expected in May and further than I would have liked on September 30.