KVGS-AM AND THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW

OCTOBER 6, 2033 · THE LAS VEGAS HIGH ROLLERS BEAT

High Rollers finish last at 70-92; Molina hits No. 250

BY **SONNY PARDO** · KVGS-AM AND THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW

Seventy and 92. Last in the Jade, 27 games behind Denver. The best thing that happened this year came on the last day of the season, at home against Fort Collins. Arturo Molina hit his 250th career home run. Nice moment. Molina hit 27 this year and drove in 94, and he is owed $26 million next year. He earned his part.

Now the rest.

August was 8-19. The first sim after the deadline went 2-10. Jared Akin, the one starter I told you in August you could trust, hurt his arm against Kansas City on August 10, and he is out 10 to 11 months. So add him to Don Fraker and Roger Thomas. That is three pitchers on the injured list who will not throw a pitch until next summer, and Fraker is owed $20 million in each of the next two years. In August I said nobody was taking that contract. Nobody did.

Then September came, and something happened. I asked Eric what changed. The club went 8-4 in the sim that ended September 11 and won all three home series. Then it went to Galveston on September 16 and shut out a playoff club three nights in a row: 3-0, 2-0, 1-0. Chris Pedersen, Jose Alvares, Alex Rodriguez. September finished 14-11, the only winning month the High Rollers had all year. My guess is the schedule, mostly, and some young arms getting outs. Then the club lost two of three in New Orleans, and on September 28 it was eliminated.

Here is the plan, one more time. The starter goes 18 batters and hands it to the army. This year the starters threw 654 innings. Only two clubs in the league got fewer out of theirs. The starters had a 4.84

earned run average, 29th. Nick Platt made 37 starts and threw 150 innings. That is four innings a start, and he went 3-11. In September I asked Eric whether Platt has a spot in next year's rotation after he gave up one earned run in 14 and a third innings. In his last five starts after that, Platt had a 6.35.

And the army? Better than May, same as I said in August. Motoshi Tanabe pitched in 84 games, threw 118 and two-thirds innings, struck out 165 and saved 17. Dave Limauro struck out 105 in 62 innings. Rich Lappin, 24, saved 12 with a 2.95. Leo Advincula, 36, had a 2.95 too. Those are real pitchers. They pitched a lot of innings because they had to. A team that goes 21-28 in one-run games does not have an army. It has a bullpen that is tired by August.

They could run. The High Rollers stole 236 bases, second in baseball. Jose Bautista stole 63, second in the league, scored 100 runs and hit .285. Jimmy Witowski stole 37. Jeff Bass, 34, stole 49.

They could not hit. The club got on base at .302, 26th. Manuel Salas hit 27 home runs and .210. Carlos Muniz hit .179. J.J. Ellenberg, in the last year of his deal at $18 million, was player of the week on August 1 and finished with 20 home runs. He is a free agent next month.

Back in 2018 this franchise won 117 games.

The good news, and I mean it again: the farm. On the game's Top 100 at the end of the season, Joe Smyre is 54th, Jason Hertzog 75th and Josh Giffin 84th. In March there were none. Three is not a farm system. It is a start.

In March the man said .500. It was not close. In July Eric asked if I wanted to discuss a 7-2 sim. I did. We are still discussing it.