THE OKLAHOMAN SPORTS DESK

OCTOBER 6, 2033 · THE OKLAHOMA CITY OUTLAWS BEAT

Outlaws win 93, open at Big Horn for fourth October

BY **MARGUERITE YOO** · THE OKLAHOMAN SPORTS DESK

Ninety-three and 69. Plus-94. The first wild card in the Fire and the fifth seed. Oklahoma City won two more games than Big Horn this year, and on Friday it plays Game 1 in Big Horn, because Big Horn finished second in the Ruby and Oklahoma City finished third in the Topaz behind two clubs that won 98 and 103. Those are the rules. They have also put this club against Big Horn in October for the fourth time.

The three earlier ones are a chart of their own. In 2012, 2013 and 2030 Oklahoma City met Big Horn in the postseason, and all three series went seven games, and Big Horn won all three. This year the clubs split four games in May, 20 runs apiece. I have no model for that. I have a record of it.

The season since August 1 was steady. The club went 33-24 after the deadline, 16-11 in August and 14-11 in September. It went 8-4 in the sim that began September 12. Then it lost two of three in San Juan and was swept in Richmond, the last of those 11-1, before sweeping Memphis to finish. A four-game losing streak in the final week did not cost it anything in the standings. I would rather it had happened in June.

The bat that carried it was the one I have written about all year. Jeremy Porten won the Fire Conference batting title at .320, with 32 home runs and 100 runs batted in, and he hit .324 after the deadline. Manny Jimenez was the Fire Conference Batter of the Month for August and hit .310 with 16 home runs and a .606 slugging percentage after the deadline. He finished with 34 home runs and 103 runs batted in. David Ramirez stole 46 bases. The club batted .255, third in baseball. The bottom of the order is what it was: Josh Miller hit .190 after the deadline, and Dave Chapman, the outfielder who cost two first-round picks, finished with a .279 on-base percentage.

Garrett Hoenie is the pitching story. I said in May that his results had caught up to his strikeouts. In August they passed them. He was the Fire Conference Pitcher of the Month for August and had a 2.24 with 96 strikeouts in 72 and a third innings after the deadline, and he finished at 11-10 with a 3.01 and 205 strikeouts. Eleven wins is a run-support number. The rest is a pitcher. Alex Garcia finished 14-7 with a 3.24 and a 4.92 after the deadline, which is the number I would watch on Friday.

The ninth inning changed hands on August 1. Rees sent two Triple-A catchers, Norm Weatherly and Ricky Hernandez, and two picks, a 2035 second-rounder and a 2034 fifth, to Fort Collins for Bill Barker, with Fort Collins keeping half his salary. Barker saved 17 games in 23 appearances here with a 1.21 earned run average and blew one. Across both clubs he has 37 saves and a 1.49. In September I asked Rees what Jake Metzker's role is now. Metzker pitched 16 innings after the deadline with a 1.69, five holds and two saves. In the box score he is the setup man.

I also asked about Brian Lee, who made his first two starts of the year in early September. He made four more after that with a 4.35. Justin Queen and Jonathan Cooper took the other turns. Cooper had a 5.75 after the deadline.

Oklahoma City has been to the postseason 23 times before this one, more than any club that has never played in a final. It has lost all four conference series it has reached. Its 2031 club won 100 games. Its 2032 club won 95 and was swept in the first round. This one won 93, with a lineup that hit .255 and a closer with a 1.21 since he arrived.

None of that is a forecast. It is the context the forecast will be graded against. Games 1 and 2 are in Big Horn, where the Rams were 55-26. Games 3, 4 and 5 are here, where Oklahoma City was 51-30.