

SOUTHLAND TRIBUNE

OCTOBER 6, 2033 · THE SOUTHLAND MASKED BANDITS BEAT

Boettcher hits 11 homers in 21 games; Bandits finish 73-89

BY **GERALD MABRY** · SOUTHLAND TRIBUNE

Steve Boettcher came up from the farm in September and played 21 games for the Southland Masked Bandits. In those 21 games he hit .372, got on base at .443 and slugged .859. He hit 11 home runs and drove in 27. He was the Fire Conference Rookie of the Month for September, and he was the Fire Conference player of the week twice, on September 19 and again on October 3, when he went 11-for-25 with five home runs. He is 22. He is 15th on the game's Top 100 at the end of the season.

I have covered this franchise for 30 seasons, 28 of them in St. Louis. I have seen a lot of September call-ups. I have never seen one do that.

The club finished 73-89, sixth in the Topaz, 30 games behind San Juan. That is seven better than last year. It was eliminated on September 24, which in this franchise's history counts as staying relevant. In August I told you the Bandits were 14-7 in one-run games and 5-0 in extra innings and still losing, and I said I had never seen a club go wrong in that direction. After August 1 they went 6-6 in one-run games and 2-5 in extra innings. So it went wrong in the ordinary direction instead. I found that a relief.

Anthony did what he said he would. He said in July that it was time to turn over the roster and that he wanted prospects over picks. On August 1 he sent Chris Goers, Emmitt Moffatt and Dan Gonzalez to Big Horn, keeping half of what each is owed, for Big Horn's 2034 first- and second-round picks and two players, Randor Hernandez, 21, at High-A, and Steve Fox. He sent Jean Dupont to Denver for four players, among them Isaiah Warren, who made 11 starts here with a 3.67. He sent Angel Diaz to Toronto for a 2034 third-round pick and Jahiem McDonald to Chicago for a 2035 seventh. In September I asked Anthony which of the men coming back he was most excited about. Warren is the only one who has pitched here so far.

The club that was left played at about the same pace as the club that was there before, which tells you something about the men who left. Jose Chavarria hit .296 after the deadline. David Jensen hit .287 with 10 home runs. Cam Dempsey hit 12. Morgan Alison, the $10 million signing in May, hit .327 after the deadline, which is too late and not his fault. The club batted .254, fifth in baseball, and hit 169 home runs, 22nd.

The pitching remained even, in the sense that it was bad everywhere. The staff had a 4.41 earned run average, 28th. Emmanuel Martinez went 6-2 with a 3.60 after the deadline and finished 12-15. Billy Perez struck out his 2,000th batter on September 27 in Kansas City, at 32, and finished with a 5.83. Brock Nickerson had a 0.95 after the deadline and finished 5-0 with a 1.74. Justin Cruz saved 27 games and had a 7.25 after the deadline. Abdul Adel, the 100th prospect on the list in August, made his first four big-league starts and had a 9.14. In September I asked what Anthony wanted to see from him. More innings, I would think.

The last week had the shape of this franchise. Southland went to Kansas City on September 26 and swept three, 3-2, 7-2 and 4-2. Kansas City finished one game out of the playoffs. This club has never won a playoff series in 33 seasons. It is very good at deciding who else does not get to play in one.

There are 10 Southland names on that Top 100 list: Christian Lombera seventh, Blake Lee 13th, Boettcher 15th, Jay Greenwood 21st, Geoff Fawcett 33rd, Tony Aldana 40th, Chad Brown 41st, Zack Maurer 78th, Arturo Lopez 81st and Chris Fay 91st. Boettcher and Aldana are already here. Frank Danczyk played every one of his 2,266 games for this franchise and never saw October. I would like these men to have better luck, and I have been told luck is not how it works.