SPOKANE CHRONICLE

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Sasquatches finish 64-98, 13 wins better than last year

BY **HAL ONDRUSEK** · SPOKANE CHRONICLE

The last game of the season was a 2-0 win at home over Vancouver, a playoff club, on October 5. Josh Windley started it. It was the 64th win of the year, which is the fewest in baseball and 13 more than last year's club won. I have learned in this job to keep both of those numbers together.

Sixty-four and 98. Last in the Ruby, 27 games behind Myrtle Beach. The worst record in the league. Also, by 13 games, not the worst season this franchise has had, which was last year's.

August was the hard month. The club went 5-22, and it lost 10 straight to finish the month. Since August 1 it went 17-40. In September I asked Sly what he took from that stretch. What I took from it is that a rebuilding club with this pitching staff will have a month like that, and it had one. September was 10-15, and better to watch.

In August I also wrote that I expected the telephone to be ringing at the deadline. Sly had told me he was always up for trading expiring contracts for the right price. The deadline came and went without a trade. I was wrong about the telephone, or about the price, and I do not know which. Francisco Ojeda, the one-year signing, finished with 32 home runs and 76 runs batted in. He hit .204 after the deadline. Ferdinand Kuik finished with 20 home runs. Both deals end this month. Tom Everette's season ended on September 26 with a broken bone. In September I asked Sly whether Ojeda is part of next year's team. That one will be decided in November.

Here is what the club's numbers were this year, without decoration. It scored 569 runs, 31st in baseball. It got on base at .290, last. It gave up 803 runs, tied with Memphis for the most. Its starters had a 5.13 earned run average, 31st. That is a club two or three years from contending, and it played like one.

The part worth your attention is the young pitching that pitched. Jonathan Montano, 23, the eighth pick in 2031, pitched in 32 games and threw 166 innings, most of them behind somebody else's start, and finished 11-11 with a 4.39 and 151 strikeouts. I said in May I was waiting to see him start. He started three times. The club seems to have decided he is more useful to it as the second pitcher in a game for now, and 166 innings from a 23-year-old is hard to argue with. Ricardo Morales came up from Walla Walla and struck out 22 in 17 and a third innings after the deadline, and walked 14. Windley, 26, made 33 starts and finished with a 4.11.

Below the big club, five Spokane names are on the game's Top 100 at the end of the season. Dan Freeman, this year's second-round pick, is 24th, at Bend. Aaron Myers, 18, is 51st. J.D. Koelling is 62nd. Frank Mercer, the seventh pick, is 80th, and Tristan Miller, who came from Phoenix in the Holman trade, is 98th at Walla Walla. Of the five, Miller is the only one above A-ball. That tells you the timeline better than anything I could add.

I covered the 2008 championship here. I have covered every season since, including the last two, which were the two worst. The club that won in 2008 beat a franchise that has since become two other clubs, and I am still the only person who writes it down correctly. This rebuild will be written down correctly too. It is two years in. It won 13 more games than the year before. That is the honest size of it.

Next season the question is the same one I asked in March: when does the first of these arms pitch a full year in Spokane. Montano is closest. Morales is next.
