

LE DIAMANT.

Le quotidien du baseball montréalais · Montreal's baseball daily

MONTRÉAL · DIMANCHE 1ER JUIN 1969 · SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 1969

EXPOS 24-24 · 4TH, NL EAST · 8 GB

10 ¢

LES EXPOS · LE MOIS DE MAI

Back to Even

Sixteen wins in twenty-five games, five in a row to close the month, and a ball club that finally learned how to win the close ones. The Expos are a .500 team, and nobody in this city is laughing anymore.

PAR ÉMILE GAGNON · LE DIAMANT BASEBALL COLUMNIST

Last month I told you the one-run games would even out. I did not expect them to even out this fast. In April the Expos went 1-6 in games decided by a single run. In May they went 7-4. Add a five-game winning streak to close the month, including a three-game sweep of the Dodgers, and the expansion club everyone wrote off in April is 24-24, fourth in the National League East and 5½ games clear of the Mets.

Saturday's 6-5 win over San Diego, before 14,229 at Jarry Park, was the one that got them there. It wasn't pretty. It didn't need to be. For the first time since the opening week of the season, the Expos have as many wins as losses.

WHAT WENT RIGHT

Start with Rusty Staub, who is no longer a promising young hitter. He is simply a great one. Staub hit .347 in May with a .453 on-base percentage and seven home runs, and he sits at .319 for the year. Behind him, Maury Wills found his legs and his bat at the same time: .420 for the month, six stolen bases, and still the best glove on the club by the numbers the front office keeps.

Donn Clendenon still strikes out too much, 49 times now, more than anyone on the club. But when he connects, the ball leaves Jarry Park. Nine of his eleven home runs came in May. Manny Mota is back from the disabled list and back at second base, and on May 7 the front office claimed outfielder Ted Savage off waivers from Cincinnati to give the bench a right-handed bat.

"Andy Simpson was hired to teach young pitchers. It is working."

The real story is on the mound. Last month I worried about Mike Wegener's walks and Bill Stoneman's home runs. In May, Wegener went 4-1 with a 2.06 earned run average and Stoneman went 4-1 at 2.73. Andy Simpson was hired to teach young pitchers. It is working.

Mudcat Grant keeps doing Mudcat Grant things: a 2.81 ERA, two shutouts, and somehow a 2-5 record. If any pitcher deserves a bottle of wine from his hitters, it is Grant.

Suite en page 2 · Continued on page 2 →

BY THE NUMBERS

May record	16-9
One-run games, May	7-4
May runs for / against	120/90
Win streak	5
Wills, May	.420
Avg. home crowd, May	12,026

NL EAST · JUNE 1

Pittsburgh	33-17
St. Louis	30-19
Chicago	27-23
Montréal	24-24
New York	19-30
Philadelphia	15-32

LES HONNEURS DE MAI

NL Batter of the Month: Willie Mays, San Francisco.

NL Pitcher of the Month: Dick Hughes, St. Louis.

NL Rookie of the Month: Dave Roberts, San Diego.

Our own: John Boccabella (WPB), FSL Batter of the Month. Joe Mook (WPB), FSL Player of the Week, May 12.

And the bullpen stopped bleeding. Roy Face saved six games in May. Jerry Robertson struck out twelve men without walking one, and Carl Morton, who couldn't find the plate in April, put up a 2.08 ERA.

WHAT STILL WORRIES ME

Not everyone came along for the ride. Bob Bailey hit .190 in May, and Mack Jones hit .156. That's the two corner spots, first base and left field, where a club is supposed to get its power. Bailey still leads the team with 28 runs batted in, and Jones still draws his walks, so neither is a lost cause. But a contender can't carry both slumps at once.

Don Shaw remains the only left-hander in the bullpen, and he has walked 13 men in 10 innings. Staub, for all his hitting, has been a below-average right fielder. And one office at Jarry Park is still empty. Two months into the season, the Expos still have no manager. They went 16-9 without one, but young clubs need a teacher in the dugout, and this front office has been looking since spring.

DOWN ON THE FARM

John Boccabella is making it hard to ignore him. The West Palm Beach catcher is hitting .358 with 13 home runs

and 52 runs batted in, and the Florida State League named him its Batter of the Month. In Montreal, backup catcher John Bateman is hitting .220 and hasn't drawn a walk all year. You can do that math yourself. On the mound, 22-year-old closer Bob Reynolds has nine saves and a 2.41 ERA, and 18-year-old lefty Balor Moore has 74 strikeouts in 63 innings. Les nôtres open the Gulf Coast League season on June 24.

WHAT COMES NEXT

The trading deadline is June 25, and the telephone is ringing. Contenders always want a shortstop who can hit .360, a second baseman who hits .400, and a veteran starter with a 2.81 ERA. My advice to the front office is short. Hang up. This club is finally winning, and the men who are winning it are Wills, Mota and Grant. Find a left-handed reliever who throws strikes, hire a manager, and let June play out.

Pittsburgh is eight games up and playing like the best team in the league, so let's not get carried away about a pennant. But the Cubs are only two games ahead of us. A month ago this team was 8-15. Today it's 24-24. On est revenus. We're back. Now let's see how far up we can go.

L'ÉTAT DU CLUB

- Strength:** Staub and Wills at the plate, and a rotation that grew up in May.
- Worry:** Bailey and Jones in the same slump, and one lefty in the pen.
- Watch:** the deadline on June 25, Boccabella's bat, and the manager's office.
- Next:** June, with the Cubs two games ahead.

LES NÔTRES · HOMETOWN WATCH

Hank Zacharias, OF	4-for-18, now GCL
Michel Dostaler, RHP	GCL, Jun 24
Mac McSween, LHP	GCL, Jun 24
Bill MacKenzie, C	GCL, Jun 24

MAY'S BEST DAY

May 29, Jarry Park. Expos 8, Dodgers 0. A three-game sweep of Los Angeles, and the third win of a streak that would carry the club back to .500.