

THE FLUSHING LEDGER

Queens' Home for Mets Baseball Since the Bad Old Days

SPORTS · BASEBALL

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MONTHLY RECAP · METS BEAT

Fourteen and Fifteen: The Mets Survive the Coldest April of the Dynasty

The lineup went ice cold, the two best hitters in the order missed a combined chunk of the month hurt, and the bullpen blew more save chances than it converted — and somehow, when the calendar turned to May, a three-time division champion was still only a game and a half out of first. Inside a brutal, break-even opening month in Flushing.

By **Marisol Kwan**, Mets Beat Writer · *The Flushing Ledger*

Fourteen wins. Fifteen losses. A team batting average of .226 that would have been treated as a five-alarm crisis in any of the three championship seasons that preceded this one. By the numbers alone, April was the worst month of baseball this roster has played since the current run of division flags began. And yet on the morning of May 1st, the Mets sat fourth in the National League East — two games back of a Washington club nobody picked to be running things in Flushing's neighborhood, and a game and a half behind two teams the Mets could catch by winning a single series. In a division this bunched, .500 baseball with the lineup this cold is not a disaster. It is, in its own strange way, a save.

A LINEUP GONE COLD

Start with the name at the top of the order. Francisco Lindor, the shortstop the Season Preview called "the emotional and statistical spine of this roster," hit .186 with a .286 slugging mark through his first 20 games — two home runs, sixteen strikeouts, and a stretch in the season's second week where he went 12 straight at-bats without a ball leaving the infield. Nobody in the clubhouse is worried about who Lindor is. Everybody in the clubhouse would like him to remember, in May, what he did last September.

He was not alone. Evan Carter, the offseason's marquee outfield addition from Texas, is still searching for his first home run as a Met and was hitting .214 with a .590 OPS through his first twenty games — a jarring start for a player the front office gave up real value to acquire. Hiroshi Ishida was buried in an identical .186 slump before the club moved on from him entirely on April 26th, and rookie call-up Edward Lanzano, thrust into an outfield that got thinner by the week, hit .207 in his first extended big-league look. As a team, the Mets scored 134 runs in 29 games — 4.6 a night, well off last year's pace — while striking out 234 times against just 110 walks.

It wasn't a total blackout. Spencer Torkelson quietly put together the best month of anyone in the lineup, .265 with six home runs and an .858 OPS, and Walker Jenkins, the other prize of the winter's outfield remodel, hit .311 with an .871 OPS in his first fourteen games as a National Leaguer. Trey Snyder was arguably the most consistent bat in the order at third base, hitting .286 with an .876 OPS that barely got mentioned all month because of the noise around everyone struggling above him. Those three carried an offense that, without them, would have been genuinely unwatchable.

WALKING WOUNDED

The lineup's collapse gets easier to understand once you account for who wasn't in it. Juan Soto, the other half of what the preview called this roster's spine, went

down with an injury in the season's first week and did not return to the lineup until the tail end of the month — meaning the Mets played the overwhelming majority of April's toughest offensive stretch without their best all-around hitter. His activation, not coincidentally, lined up with the front office finally clearing an everyday outfield spot for him by moving Ishida to Seattle on the 26th.

Tarik Skubal, meanwhile, was the single best story on the pitching staff and also its biggest injury worry: four starts, an 0.00 ERA, a 0.56 WHIP, and a nagging issue that has kept him day-to-day rather than fully cleared since mid-month. And Emmanuel Rodriguez, acquired from Minnesota on April 11th in the deal that sent out Wyatt Langford, arrived in Flushing already on the injured list with an oblique strain and has yet to appear in a Mets uniform. A club that entered the season with a genuine outfield surplus spent most of April searching for enough healthy bodies to fill it.

"You can live with young guys scuffling in April — that's what April is for. What you can't plan around is your two best hitters missing a combined six weeks between them in the same month, and finding that out in real time instead of in a scouting report."

— A PERSON FAMILIAR WITH THE METS' CLUBHOUSE

THE ARMS HELD SERVE

If the lineup was the story of April, the pitching staff was mostly the relief. The Mets' 3.40 team ERA and 1.24 WHIP were both comfortably above league average, and Garrett Crochet looked every bit like the reigning ace he's been the last two Octobers — 29 innings, a 3.41 ERA, and 32 strikeouts across five starts. Nolan McLean was steady behind him at 2.65, and Skubal's line, injury scare aside, was the best of anyone's.

The soft spots were exactly where the Season Preview warned they might be: Braxton Ashcraft (6.00 ERA) and Reese Olson (6.75) are still the back of a rotation that needs another month to sort itself out, and the club finished the month with only nine quality starts in twenty-nine tries. The bullpen was the more troubling number — blowing five of thirteen save chances, a 38 percent failure rate that stands out badly against a group with this much individual talent in it. Edwin Díaz (0.00 ERA, three saves), Griffin Jax (1.80) and Doug Nikhazy (0.75) were all, on their own numbers, excellent. Late and close, in the moments that decide one-run games, the results didn't match the stuff. That gap is usually the first thing to close once a bullpen settles into its roles — and if it does, several of April's one-run losses look different in May.

STILL BUILDING, ON PURPOSE

None of this changed the front office's approach, which has been consistent since the winter: keep selling into softness, keep adding controllable talent, and don't let one cold month change the long-term math. Left-hander Jackson Humphries arrived from Cleveland on April 8th for a first-base prospect — rotation and bullpen depth at essentially no big-league cost. The Langford-for-Rodriguez swap on the 11th, whatever the injury timing looked like from outside, brought back a higher-graded outfielder on a fraction of Langford's remaining money. And the

Ishida trade on the 26th did two things at once: it moved a struggling, expensive bat for a useful left-hander in Reid Detmers, and it opened the everyday outfield spot Soto needed the moment he was ready for it.

Down on the farm, the pieces the club has been stockpiling all winter and spring keep developing on schedule. Binghamton left-hander Jayden Renner — the name a rival scout called "frontline" back in April — is still the best arm in the system, and Triple-A Syracuse has kept churning out near-ready depth all month. None of that shows up in a 14-15 record. All of it is exactly why nobody around this team is treating that record as anything more than a rough draft.

BY THE NUMBERS — THROUGH APRIL 30

Mets record	14–15 (.483)
NL East standing	4th, 2.0 GB
Current streak	L2
Team batting	.226 / .316 / .401
Runs scored	134 (29 G)
Team ERA / WHIP	3.40 / 1.24
Quality starts	9 of 29 (31%)
Save conversion	8 of 13 (62%)
Nationals	16–13, 1st
Marlins	15–15, 2nd, 1.5 GB
Braves	15–15, 3rd, 1.5 GB
Mets	14–15, 4th, 2.0 GB
Phillies	13–16, 5th, 3.0 GB

Standings through games of April 30. Four of five NL East clubs are within three games of first place.

APRIL TRANSACTION LOG

BROUGHT IN

- LHP Jackson Humphries from Cleveland (Apr. 8) for a minor-league 1B
- OF Emmanuel Rodriguez from Minnesota (Apr. 11), in the Langford deal
- LHP Reid Detmers and a 5th-round pick from Seattle (Apr. 26)

MOVED OUT

- OF Wyatt Langford, two low-level prospects, and a 4th-round pick to Minnesota (Apr. 11)
- OF Hiroshi Ishida and a minor-league RHP to Seattle (Apr. 26)

Continues the winter's transaction log: two expensive veterans (Bellinger, Vientos) moved for controllable pitching and prospects since November.