

THE TROP REPORT

Official Dispatch of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays · "A New Ballclub in the Sunshine State"

FINAL: 68–94 (.420)

5TH, AL EAST · 29 GB

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Rays Finish 68–94 in Their First Season; Three Straight Wins at Yankee Stadium Cap a 10–15 September

McGriff ends with 35 home runs and 95 RBI, Hernandez saves 31 and Franco hits .305 at 40, while the farm system sends home a long shelf of awards

BY RAY DELGADO · TROP REPORT STAFF WRITER

The inaugural season of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays ended on September 27 with a 4–2 loss at Yankee Stadium and a record of 68–94, fifth in the American League East and 29 games behind division-winning Toronto. There is no postseason in St. Petersburg this year. The club scored 671 runs and allowed 833, a difference of 162, and went 38–43 at the Trop and 30–51 on the road. September itself went 10–15: 3–7 at home and 7–8 away.

The month began on the road in Minnesota, where the Rays dropped two of three before taking the series finale 3–2 behind Rolando Arrojo and a Roberto Hernandez save, then lost two of three at Oakland and split two at Seattle. The homestand that followed was the problem. Texas scored 15 in a 15–11 win on September 11, Toronto beat Tampa Bay 11–7 on the 19th, and the Rays lost five of six between September 16 and 21, including both games against the Yankees at the Trop and the opener at Boston.

"Three of four in the Bronx is not a pennant race, but it is a way to leave town."

The best baseball of the month came at the very end. At Yankee Stadium the Rays beat the 94-win Yankees 7–4 behind Tony Coles on the 24th, then 3–0 on the 25th as Arrojo threw a shutout and Jim Mecir closed it out, and 4–3 on the 26th with Jason Johnson on the mound and Dan Carlson finishing. Dennis Springer lost the finale 4–2. Hernandez saved six games in September without allowing an earned run in nine innings, and finished the year with 31 saves and a 3.20 ERA.

Individually the year belongs to a short list. Fred McGriff, 34, finished with 35 home runs and 95 RBI, the club's best in both categories, and hit .275 in 621 at-bats. Julio Franco, 40, hit .305 with a .388 on-base percentage and was named AL Player of the Week on September 7. Harry Judd, 22, hit .276 with 15 home runs, 66 RBI and 37 stolen bases, and Quinton McCracken hit .298 with 53 RBI. On the roster side, the only September changes were Mihnea Piersic coming up on the 1st (he went 7-for-26) and Bubba Trammell, who had 25 home runs before his August 16 injury, now showing on the Durham roster.

BY THE NUMBERS

68–94

Final record: 38–43 at home, 30–51 on the road

10–15

September: 3–7 at home, 7–8 away

35 HR

McGriff's total, with 95 RBI — both tops on the club

31 SV

Hernandez's saves, 3.20 ERA; six in September, no earned runs

3 of 4

Won at Yankee Stadium, Sept. 24–27

FINAL AL EAST

Club	W	L	GB
Toronto	97	65	—
NY Yankees	94	68	3.0
Baltimore	93	69	4.0
Boston	93	69	4.0
Tampa Bay	68	94	29.0

ON THE FIELD

A Veteran Core Carries the Bats; a Young Rotation Carries the Innings

McGriff led the club in homers, RBI and at-bats, and Franco's 15 steals and .388 on-base percentage came with an 11-homer, 45-RBI season at second base. Judd's 37 steals were the most on the club. Russ Morman hit .313 with nine home runs in 179 at-bats, Randy Winn .282 with 16 steals, and Miguel Romero, 20, finished at .235 with 12 steals. In September McCracken hit .355, Franco .315 and Winn .302.

The cold side was Scott McClain, who hit .212 for the year and .154 in September, Paul Sorrento (.224, 11 HR), Kevin Stocker (.186, though his glove rated best on the club at short) and Tim Laker, who went 2-for-22 down the stretch and ended at .185. John Flaherty hit .250 in 392 at-bats behind the plate.

Each of the five regular starters threw at least 185 innings. Coles went 12–13 with a

4.05 ERA, Arrojo 12–13, 4.41 (3–1, 1.98 in September), Springer 11–15, 4.90, Alvarez 8–13, 4.23, and Johnson 9–14, 4.78, including a 1–5, 6.82 September. Springer's long-threatened designation for assignment has now gone seven pulls without happening. Tommy Adelstein (5.50) and Albie Lopez (5.80) were the weak links in the pen; Mecir finished at 5.77 but allowed only two earned runs in 9⅓ September innings.

Hernandez: six saves, nine innings, no earned runs in September. The club still went 10–15.

THE SEPTEMBER LEDGER

DATE	MOVE	DETAIL
Sep 1	Roster	1B Mihnea Piersic, 21, called up from Durham; LF Carson Miller optioned back. Rosters expanded to 40, but no other call-ups followed.
Sep 7	Award	2B Julio Franco named AL Player of the Week.
Sep	Signed	RHP Roberto Rodriguez and RHP Carlos Gastelum, both 16, signed as international amateurs.
Sep	Roster	RF Bubba Trammell now shows on the Durham roster, healthy, with no games since his August 16 injury.
Sep 27	Final	Season ends 68–94. No trades or free-agent signings were made after the July 31 deadline.

STATE OF THE CLUB

Rotation: Alvarez, Coles, Arrojo, Johnson and Springer; Saunders was out all year.

Bullpen: Hernandez closes, with three years and \$3.6M still to run; Mecir, Carlson and Lopez round it out.

Lineup: McGriff (through 2002), Franco and Judd lead; Piersic and Romero are the young bats.

Offseason: The manager's chair is still open. Draft pool Oct. 11, combine Nov. 8, draft Nov. 10.

DOWN ON THE FARM & THE AWARDS SHELF

Thirty-eight players across the organization took home honors this year, and the end-of-season Farm System Review (Vol. 1, No. 6) lists every one. In the Southern League, Orlando's Jimmy Pratt and Ian Hampton won Great Glove awards on September 29, and Aubrey Huff took a weekly award on August 10. At Short-A Wappingers Falls, Taylor Price was Batter of the Month for July and August and Player of the Week on August 31, Chris Smith won weekly awards on August 17 and September 7, and Donald Rossborough took one on the 14th and was named playoff series MVP on the 23rd.

Princeton third baseman Wayne Bradshaw won a Great Glove on September 30 and was an Appalachian League All-Star, and GCL outfielder Jacob Hutchinson earned a Platinum Stick on the 21st. Eric Wicklund, Joe Hall and Damaso Marte represented the organization at the July 5 Futures Game. Earlier in the year Mihnea Piersic was Hi-A Batter of the Month for June, and Harry Judd, Jesus Ruiz and Danny Quinones each took a monthly award at Orlando before moving up.

Wappingers Falls went 49–29, the best record in the New York–Penn League, and leads Auburn 1–0 in the league final. None of the other six clubs reached its league playoffs: St. Petersburg (78–65) and Orlando (73–67) finished second in their divisions, and Charleston (70–72), Durham (59–85), Princeton (33–39) and the GCL (24–36) finished third or fourth. September's big-league monthly awards are announced October 1, and the amateur draft pool arrives October 11.