

APRIL RECAP · OPENING MONTH

Hou Dazzles, Soto Mashs as Tigers Go 11-9, Half a Game Behind Chicago

Detroit opens its title defense a half game behind the White Sox, with a one-hit shutout, a hitting streak that finally ended and a retirement announcement to show for April.

By Marcus Delaney, Tigers Beat Writer

DETROIT — April 2032

Detroit's title defense reached the end of April at 11-9, good for second place in the American League Central, a half game behind the White Sox (12-9). The Tigers went 5-5 over their first ten games and 6-4 over their second ten, finishing the month on a two-game losing streak, and they scored 75 runs while allowing 69, a +6 run differential that squares with the record. It is a respectable start rather than a dominant one for a club that won 107 games and the World Series last year. Texas (14-5), Toronto (14-6) and the Yankees (13-5) own the league's best marks, while Minnesota (8-11) and Cleveland (7-13) trail Chicago by three and four and a half games.

The month's signature moment belonged to Guo-fang Hou. On April 16 he pitched a complete-game shutout of the Los Angeles Dodgers, allowing one hit, striking out 14 and throwing 120 pitches in a 6-0 win. He finished April 3-1 with a 2.04 ERA and a 0.68 WHIP, with 43 strikeouts against just two walks in 35.1 innings, and his only loss was a 3-2 decision in his final start. With Tarik Skubal now in Toronto after December's trade, Hou has stepped squarely into the top spot in the rotation. Jackson Jobe (1-2, 2.93 ERA, 29 strikeouts in 30.2 innings) and Pat Dellinger (2-1, 3.18) supplied steady work behind him, Andrew Weems went 1-1 with a 3.38 ERA in two starts, and Alex Philpott (1-1, 5.87 ERA) struck out 29 in 23 innings but gave up 15 earned runs. Cristopher Sanchez returned from the injured list to make one start, working 4.2 scoreless innings with 7 strikeouts; the injury log shows a minor day-to-day issue dated April 20, and he did not pitch again in April. As a group the starters posted a 3.20 ERA with 10 quality starts.

Fourteen strikeouts, one hit, no runs: Hou's April 16 start was the month's high-water mark.

Juan Soto was the offense. He hit .309/.472/.655 with 6 home runs, 11 RBI and 17 walks in 17 games (12 of them as the designated hitter, 5 in right field), good for a 1.127 OPS; the next best among Tigers with 50 or more plate appearances was Thayron Liranzo's .830. Liranzo drove in a team-high 12 runs on 3 homers and a .481 slugging percentage, while Justin Crawford led the club with 20 hits and 11 stolen bases, hitting .294. Crawford's 22-game hitting streak, which began September 18 of last season and carried 13 games into 2032, ended April 25 with a hitless day. Kevin McGonigle hit .258 with 7 doubles and 8 steals, Walker Jenkins hit .250/.311/.446 with 6 doubles, and Michael Arroyo reached base at a .360 clip in all 20 games at second base even though only 1 of his 18 hits went for extra bases.

Not everyone kept pace. Max Clark hit .170/.200/.245 and Louis Wood .176/.176/.235 with 23 strikeouts and no walks in 51 at-bats. Ethan Petry, last season's 41-homer first baseman, hit .232/.308/.377 with 2 home runs and 16 strikeouts in 69 at-bats, though his 10 RBI trail only Liranzo and Soto on the club.

The bullpen was a split screen. Closer Bradgley Rodriguez converted 6 of 7 save chances with a 1.08 ERA and 12 strikeouts in 8.1 innings, and Mason Fluharty did not allow a run in 7 appearances (8.2 innings, 12 strikeouts). But Alfredo Zarraga went 1-2 with a 9.00 ERA, and Keeler Morfe (7.20) and Juan Torreyeva (5.68) were shaky. One game stung most: with Detroit's bats silent, Jackson Jobe and Drew Sommers combined for 8.2 scoreless innings, only for Zarraga and Torreyeva to allow 6 runs while

BY THE NUMBERS

RECORD

11-9

.550 · 2nd, AL Central

GAMES BEHIND

1/2 game

behind Chicago (12-9)

RUN DIFFERENTIAL

+6

75 runs scored, 69 allowed

APRIL STANDOUTS

Soto (DH/RF)	.309, 6 HR, 1.127 OPS
Hou (SP)	3-1, 2.04 ERA, 43 K
Rodriguez (CL)	6 SV, 1.08 ERA
Crawford (CF)	11 SB, .294 AVG
Fluharty (RP)	0.00 ERA, 12 K

recording a single out between them in a 6-0 loss. In all, the relief corps posted a 3.97 ERA with 8 saves and 1 blown save.

The month’s biggest piece of news was not a result. On April 19 the in-game wire ran the item “Detroit’s Bellinger to Retire”: Cody Bellinger, 36, will retire after the 2032 season and plans to spend his time hunting and fishing. Bellinger, a Tiger since 2027 with 330 career home runs and 1,110 RBI, went 2-for-13 in 6 April games (.154/.154/.231) and has not retired yet; he remains on the active roster.

No Tiger collected an American League weekly or monthly award in April. Texas took the league’s April honors, with Henderson named the AL’s best hitter and Mancini its best pitcher and newcomer of the month. The organization’s lone honor came on the farm, where Double-A Erie center fielder Chris Robinson, acquired from the White Sox in December for Israel Linares, was named the Eastern League’s top player on April 19 and finished April hitting .351 with 3 home runs and 12 RBI (26-for-74 in 19 games). Detroit made no trades in April; its last deal was the March 12 swap that sent Dameury Rhoades and Juan Morales to the Cubs for Justin Nelson and a prospect. Reliever Angel Bello remains on the 60-day injured list and is out for the season.

May opens with the Tigers a half game behind the White Sox and 142 games left on the schedule. A scouting report on a division rival ahead of a three-game series landed April 29, the same day the news wire reported that Tampa Bay and Detroit talks were heating up on a trade proposal; nothing has been completed. The trade deadline is July 31. For now the questions are simple: whether Hou can keep missing bats at this rate, whether Soto’s bat can carry an offense still waiting on Clark, Wood and Petry, and whether the bullpen can put one ugly 6-0 loss behind it.

APRIL BATTING (REGULAR SEASON, 20 GAMES)

Player	G	AB	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG
Soto	17	55	17	6	11	0	.309	.472	.655
Liranzo	16	52	12	3	12	0	.231	.349	.481
Crawford	17	68	20	1	4	11	.294	.333	.412
McGonigle	17	66	17	0	8	8	.258	.286	.394
Arroyo	20	72	18	0	8	3	.250	.360	.264
Petry	19	69	16	2	10	0	.232	.308	.377
Jenkins	18	56	14	1	5	4	.250	.311	.446
Clark	15	53	9	1	8	2	.170	.200	.245
Wood	15	51	9	1	1	0	.176	.176	.235

APRIL PITCHING

Pitcher	W-L	SV	IP	ERA	WHIP	K
Hou	3-1	0	35.1	2.04	0.68	43
Jobe	1-2	0	30.2	2.93	1.04	29
Dellinger	2-1	0	17.0	3.18	1.29	10
Weems	1-1	0	10.2	3.38	1.50	7
Philpott	1-1	0	23.0	5.87	1.30	29
Sanchez	0-0	0	4.2	0.00	0.43	7
Rodriguez	0-1	6	8.1	1.08	0.96	12
Fluharty	1-0	1	8.2	0.00	0.92	12
Zarraga	1-2	0	6.0	9.00	1.50	5