

Hook, Line and Sinker

With Tony Hooker

It wasn't supposed to go down like this. After a three-year post season drought, the St. Louis Cardinals were supposed to re-ascend to the top of the NL Central and compete for playoff glory, maybe even make a World Series appearance for the first time since 2013.

But alas, after a scorching 20-10 start that had us atop the majors in, the birds are mired in a two-month slump that has afflicted almost the entire lineup.

Although the blame can be laid at the feet of just about anyone in the organization, the main culprit is an anemic offense that has fallen off the charts over the course of the last two months.

How bad has it been? According to an article by the superb Bernie Miklasz in "The Athletic" (which is a worthy investment for stats geeks like myself) The Cardinals team batting average of .243 is the lowest since the DeWitt family purchased the organization. They're 21st in OPS (on base plus slugging percentage) and 25th in slugging percentage. (slugging percentage is a measure of the batting productivity of a hitter. It is calculated as total bases divided by at bat, so a double is twice as good as a single, etc.)

Using OPS as the metric, Miklasz discerned that of all the regulars, only Paul DeJong is above his career average. You read that correctly. Of all the Redbirds regulars, EVERY SINGLE ONE other than DeJong is below his average over the last three seasons. When looking at individual players, it's especially painful that two players who signed lucrative extensions during the spring have had the most precipitous drops. Paul Goldschmidt is at -.35, and Matt Carpenter is at -.45. Ouch.

A commercial from the 90's spoke about members of the opposite sex "digging the long ball", and unfortunately for the Redbirds those aren't coming with any sort of frequency, as they rank 22nd in the majors in

home runs per game and, perhaps even more tellingly, they rank 28th in doubles.

The problems really start at the top of the lineup. From 2013-2018, the Cardinals leadoff hitters were the best in the big leagues in on-base percentage and runs created, and they were third in slugging and in OPS. This season, the leadoff hitters for the Cardinals are last in the

majority in batting average, are 23rd in OBP and 29th in slugging percentage. Ugly.

The Cardinals are among the league leaders in hitting fastballs, but they have hit the fewest homers in the league against change ups and breaking pitches. So, naturally, that's about all they see and to this point they've been unable to adjust. Teams are going to extreme

lengths to rearrange their pitching rotations so that "finesse" pitchers, those guys without the blazing heaters who get by on changing locations and throwing off speed stuff, can face the Cardinals, with good reason. St. Louis ranks dead last in slugging percentage and OPS when facing the junk ballers.

So, what does all the stats nerd stuff I've quoted above mean for the rest of the season? At this point, not a lot. Despite such anemic production, the Cardinals are in third place,

three games behind the Cubs and two behind the Brewers, who have been scuffling as well.

The Cubs have been getting by with solid pitching as they rank 3rd in the National league, but their two best starters, per FanGraphs WAR (wins against replacement) stats are Cole Hamels and Kyle Hendrix, and they're both currently residing on the injured list.

The Brewers pitching has been suspect for most of the season, and they're currently ranked 12th of 15 NL teams in

ERA. Ultimately, this is shaping up to be a dog fight and if any of the three teams put together a winning streak of any substance, they might be able to separate themselves. Stranger things have happened, and the Cardinals need just look up the road to the Blues to see that total mid-season turn-arounds are possible. At least it should make for compelling viewing as we roll into the 4th of July and beyond. Who'll make a run? Who'll falter? Stay tuned.



The Harvest Ridge Wind Farm wants to thank everyone for your time, attention, and effort during the permitting process.

We look forward to being a good community partner for the life of the project.

For construction updates, please visit <https://updates.harvestridgewindfarm.com> or call us at 1-800-970-6841.



MOULTRIE-DOUGLAS COUNTY FAIR 2019

220 JURGENS PARKWAY
P.O. BOX 116
ARTHUR, IL 61911

2019 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

<p>SUNDAY, JULY 7 1-4 p.m. ENTRIES All Domestic Arts (Merchants Bldg.) 6 p.m. Ag Olympics (South Grandstand) 6:45 p.m. Opening Ceremony Presentation of American Flag - Scouts 7-8:30 p.m. Church Service (North Grandstand) Free parking (Sponsored by Arthur Ministerial Association) In case of rain, moved to old gym.</p>	<p>MONDAY, JULY 8 8 a.m.-4 p.m. 4-H Pets-Goats-Rabbits-Poultry 5 p.m. Jr. Market Gilt & Barrow Show 6-10 p.m. Carnival Rides 7 p.m. Jr. Miss Pageant (North Grandstand) (Admission \$7)</p>	<p>TUESDAY, JULY 9 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. 4-H Swine-Cattle-Sheep 5 p.m. Jr. Breeding Gilt and Barrow Show 6-10 p.m. Carnival Rides 7 p.m. Miss & Little Miss Fair Queen Pageants (North Grandstand) (Admission \$7)</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY, JULY 10 6-10 p.m. Carnival Rides POP Night \$15 (Pay-One-Price) 6:30 p.m. 4-H Project Auction 6 p.m. Render Flaw Band (Christian Music) (FREE-North Grandstand) 7:30 p.m. Carrollton (Gospel Music) (FREE-North Grandstand)</p>
<p>THURSDAY, JULY 11 6-10 p.m. Carnival Rides POP Night \$17 (Pay-One-Price) 5 p.m.- Midnight Beer Tent Open 5 p.m. Kiddie Pedal Pull Registration 6 p.m. Kiddie Pedal Pull (non-sanctioned @ Tennis Courts) 6 p.m. ITPA Tractor Pull (Admission \$10, Children 6-12: \$5, 5 & under Free) (South Grandstand) 6:30 p.m. Me & Him FREE-Midway Stage</p>	<p>FRIDAY, JULY 12 9 a.m. Breeding Sheep Show 5 p.m. Beer Tent Open "Matt Poss" 7:00 p.m. "Big Al" Wetzel 6-11 p.m. Carnival Rides POP Night-\$20 (Pay-One-Price) 7 p.m. Battle Creek (Country) FREE-Midway Stage 7 p.m. Heart of Amish Country Pro Rodeo (South Grandstand) Admission \$15 Kids 6 to 12 \$5 5 & under FREE</p>	<p>SATURDAY, JULY 13 10 a.m. Beef Cattle Show 10 a.m. Baby Pageant (Exhibition Bldg. Admission \$5) 10 a.m. National Regional Junior Dorset Show, followed by Market Lamb Show 5 p.m.-1 a.m. Beer Tent Open 7:00 p.m. -Beer Tent "Second Hand Smoke"</p>	<p>SAT. JULY 13 cont. 7:30 p.m. Feudin' Hillbillies (Opening for Russell Dickerson) 9 p.m. Russell Dickerson (Country) (North Grandstand) Gates open 6:30 p.m. Admission @ gate \$25 -Beer sold at concert- 10:30 p.m.- Beer Tent Feudin' Hillbillies</p>

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CELEBRATING FREEDOM 2019

Firework Show provided by Melrose Pyrotechnics

Sunday, July 7th

Richman Park in Villa Grove

Fun For The Entire Family!

Garrett & The Geezers
Performing 5pm-7pm

Lou Dibello Band
7pm-9pm

Concessions will be available at the event

Big Al's Shake-Ups
Buds BBQ Friday-Sunday
VG Chamber of Commerce: Pork Burger Booth
Villa Grove State Bank Ice Cream Booth

- VFW Color Guard
- 3pm VG Fire Department Touch a Truck
- 2-4pm Home Run Derby
- 3pm Mr. Steve Balloons, Magic & More
- 3pm-Dusk Inflatables
- 4pm Bike Parade
- Bands Start at 5pm
- Kiddie Tractor Pull 5pm-6pm
- Fireworks at Dusk

Bike Parade at Richman Park : 4pm

(3) Grand Prizes will be drawn for:

Family 4 pack of tickets to Holiday World!
Decorate your bicycle and parade around the park!
- Free event - Everyone is welcome to participate
Find us on Facebook at : The Villa Grove News for more info

Mr. Steve: Balloons, Magic, and More!
3pm

Union Pacific Railroad proudly supporting America's Veterans