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Seattle Mariners Look To End Playoff Drought

Matt Price, Sports and Opinion Editor

The 2022 MLB trade deadline concluded Aug. 2 as the Seattle Mariners made an early splash, July 30, in their acquisition of ace Luis Castillo. The trade for Castillo saw the Mariners acquire the best available starting pitcher on the market, beating out the New York Mets, San Diego Padres and Minnesota Twins. The Mariners look to make their first playoff appearance since 2001 with Castillo joining a rotation that already boasts 2021 Cy Young Winner Robbie Ray and rising stars Logan Gilbert and George Kirby.



Jake Nelson

Castillo was a standout pitcher on a subpar Cincinnati squad that held a record of 44-64 as of Aug. 12. The Dominican star holds a career 3.59 Earned Run Average (ERA) with a win/loss record of 45-63 over his past six years with the Reds. Even though his record is below average, Castillo has made the National League All Star team twice in 2019 and 2022 respectively. In his short 2022 stint with the Reds, Castillo held a record of 4-4 with a 2.86 ERA in 14 outings.

The Mariners acquired Castillo in late July for a package that included several promising minor league players like shortstops Noelvi Marte and Edwin Arroyo as well as right hand pitchers Levi Stoudt and Andrew Moore. The trade has already improved Seattle's rotation as they locked him up with a five-year, \$108 million deal, Sept. 26. Adding a proven pitcher in Castillo shows how the Mariners are going all in to break the MLB's longest active playoff drought.

Over the past few seasons, Mariners fans have seen their team acquire more star power with the hopes of entering the postseason. Mike Salk of Seattle Sports Radio discussed the impact of Castillo for the future progress the team should make.

"By going out to get [Castillo], you signify that your franchise is fully invested in trying to win. Jesse Winker and that deal was the beginning and this is the next step. They signed Robbie Ray, then traded prospects for Winker and [Eugenio] Suárez and now they are going out and trading more and better prospects for a pitcher that is one of the best in baseball. He is a legitimate ace," Salk said.

Along with emerging superstar Julio Rodríguez, the M's look to reach the playoffs through the wildcard with a great defensive lineup and pitching rotation. However, fans are hesitant to believe in a playoff berth considering the team's track record of failure over the past 21 years. Despite this, Seattle born comedian Dustin Nickerson thinks that there is good reason to be confident.

"Statistically speaking this has not been the first time that we [the Mariners] have had a good team since 2001. Along the line there have been some great teams and before we have missed it [postseason] by a game. I hope there is a difference between hope and belief. Seattle has the best defense in the American League. They're good," Nickerson told MLB Network.

The post trade deadline Mariners are looking like a playoff team. After hosting the AL East leading New York Yankees, the M's took two out of three games which made multiple baseball tabloids go crazy. In an Aug. 9 outing against Yankees ace Gerritt Cole, Castillo went eight innings, striking out seven and allowing only three hits with zero earned runs. That game saw Castillo become the first Mariner to go eight innings this year.

With Rodríguez set to return from the 10 day injured list and the Mariners bringing up outfielder Jarred Kelenic from Triple-A Tacoma, the lineup is looking set for a hot run through Sept. Lucky for Seattle, they will not play the division-leading Astros for the rest of the season.

Despite the hesitancy to believe in the Mariners, this team has all the pieces it needs for a deep playoff run. With the Seahawks mired in a rebuild following the trade of Russell Wilson to the Denver Broncos, Seattleites might find their attention turning towards baseball in October.