

# Baseball

## ★ The Sporting News MINOR LEAGUE AWARDS ★

### Rende: A Manager Who 'Gets Results'

When Sal Rende began his baseball career, he seemed a sure thing to make the major leagues. He was named most valuable player as a rookie in the New York-Penn League, then made the Southern League all-star team his second year as he led the league in runs batted in.

After that, Rende's playing career stalled. Now, he appears to be headed for the majors as a manager.

This season, Rende, 35, led the Omaha Royals to the American Association championship and to victory over Rochester (International) in the Triple-A Classic. For his efforts, Rende was selected THE SPORTING NEWS Minor League Manager of the Year.

The American Association title was Omaha's first since 1978. "This year surprised me," Rende said. "I didn't think we could be as good as we ended up being. This has to be my most satisfying year."

Rende has had some other good marks in a seven-year managerial career. His composite winning percentage is .565 (524-403) and five of his seven teams have finished first or won league playoff titles.

"Sal got some quality years out of our veteran people, and that's always a good indicator of a good motivator," Joe Klein, director of player development for the parent Kansas City Royals, said of Rende's performance at Omaha. "He gets results."

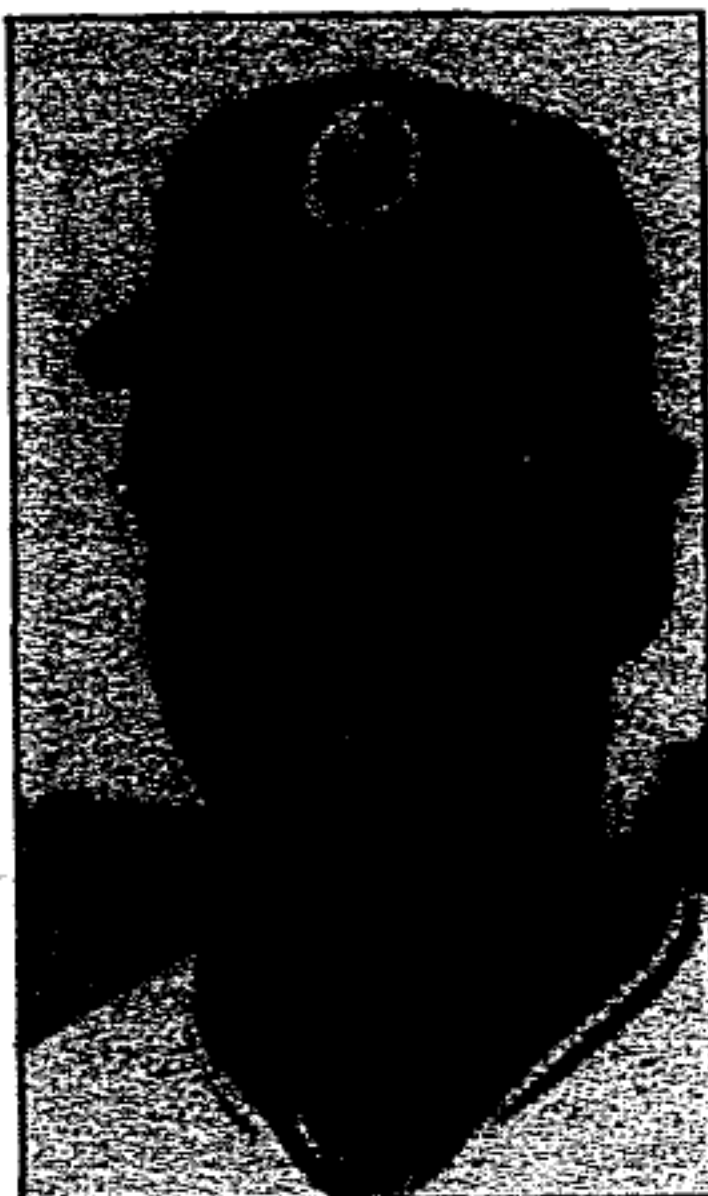
Rende won this year despite being forced to change his entire starting rotation between the start and end of the season. He used 43 different players, a total necessitated by the frequent calls from the parent Royals for injury replacements.

"The guys we had this year really enjoy playing the game," Rende said. "I think a lot of them knew they were looking at one more shot at the big leagues, and that gave them something to hang on to."

Rende's style? "I like to start out kind of tough and set the rules and ease up as the year goes on," he said. "I'm honest with my players, and I think they appreciate it. I like for them to have fun. It's also a business, but if you play 146 games and don't have any fun, it's going to seem like an awful long summer. I just let them play."

Rende understands one major difference between managing in the minors and majors. In the minors, a manager must develop prospects as well as try to win. Sometimes, it's hard to mix the two approaches.

"Most of the development and coaching is done before the game," Rende said. "That's when we get the work in. You try not to have players do anything in a game that they're not comfortable with. It's a little easier on them if they're not pressing to do



Sal Rende "just let them play" in winning at Omaha.

something different." Does Rende wish he was still a player?

"I look around and I see a lot of guys who are 35 still playing," Rende said. "But I didn't think there was any room for me and I got a chance to go in another direction. Now, I've got seven years up on a new career. I know I can manage a lot longer than I played."

ROB RAINS

### Pay Attention to Offerman

By ROB RAINS

Just tell Steve Boros that the topic of conversation is shortstop **Jose Offerman**, and there is no need to ask any more questions.

"It's amazing what **Jose** is capable of doing," the Los Angeles Dodgers' field coordinator says. "He's one of those players who is worth the price of admission. If he has a day when he goes 0 for 4, he will still do something that will get your attention."

"He will make it clear to you that is one of those players who comes along very rarely. He has star quality and you can see it and recognize it. I don't think I have ever seen him play a game that I did not see him do something special. He just has that quality about him."

The 21-year-old **Offerman** was called up by the Dodgers at the end of August. When he left Albuquerque, he was hitting .326 and led the Pacific Coast League with 60 stolen bases. The Dukes went on to win the PCL championship.

For his performance, Offerman was selected THE SPORTING NEWS Minor League Player of the Year.

"He was the real catalyst on that club," Boros said. "He wasn't going to continue to hit .400 in the PCL, as he did early, but he continued to play well. His style of play set the standard for the whole team."

**Offerman**, who also was named the PCL's most valuable player, is still learning and is not

assured that he will open the 1991 season as the Dodgers' shortstop. Although he was only 9 for 58 (.155) in his month in the majors, he still figures prominently in the club's future.

"He's still got a lot to learn," Boros said. "But he can be an impact player at the major league level. Sometimes the game has come too easy for him and he's got so much talent he loses interest. It's almost like it's so easy



Jose Offerman... a player "worth price of admission."

that he gets bored, but Albuquerque Manager Kevin Kennedy handled that well."

The only negative statistic about **Offerman** is that he committed 36 errors in 117 games for the Dukes, but Boros finds a way to turn even that into a positive note.

"He gets to a lot of balls that other players wouldn't reach," Boros said. "If he continues to work and looks at the major leagues as a challenge, he'll continue to get better."

Charley Blaney, the Dodgers' director of player development, agrees with Boros about Offerman's talent and ability.

"He has done everything we have asked of him so far," Blaney said. "Everything about him stands out. He can run, throw, field and hit. He has tremendous instincts. Everything is about average, and he is an outstanding young man. We're proud to have him as a Dodger."

Despite his big season, Offerman was not named as the Dodgers' minor league player of the year. That award went to San Antonio outfielder Henry Rodriguez, who hit .291 with 28 homers and 109 RBIs and was named the Texas League's MVP.

Boros almost sounded apologetic about not picking Offerman.

"Rodriguez was a bigger surprise, and I guess **Jose** has already done so many great things that we just kind of expect it of him," Boros said.

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# Minor League Baseball

## Offerman Exciting Dodgers

### Shortstop's Skills Called 'as Good as Any in the Game'

By ROB RAINS

ST. LOUIS—Jose Offerman had not played even one game in the minor leagues for the Los Angeles Dodgers when other teams began to inquire about him.

"It was after the 1987 season and we were talking about trading Bob Welch to Toronto," recalled Steve Boros, the Dodgers' assistant field coordinator. "We started talking about other players, and the Blue Jays brought up Jose's name. He hadn't even left the island (the Dominican Republic). He had played one season at the academy, and they already knew about him."

That trade didn't come off, and if the Dodgers' projections for Offerman are correct, he will be playing shortstop for them for years to come.

"He's probably the most exciting shortstop I've seen since Tony Fernandez," Boros said. "There's no telling what he might be able to do."

Offerman has roared through the Dodgers' farm system since he left his native San Pedro de Macoris, the Dominican baseball hotbed, in 1988. As a rookie with Great Falls (Pioneer), he hit .331 and stole 57 bases in 60 games. Offerman then split the 1989 season between Bakersfield (California) and San Antonio (Texas). He hit .306 and stole 37 bases in 62 games in Class A and had a .288 mark with 32 steals in 68 games in Double A.

After 40 games this year with Albuquerque, the 21-year-old Offerman was among the Pacific Coast League leaders with a .370 average and was leading the league with 21 steals.

"He has all the ability to be an impact player in the big leagues," said Kevin Kennedy, manager of the Dukes. "He's doing everything we hoped he would do."

That includes perfecting his skills as a leadoff hitter, improving his bunting and, especially, working on his defense.

Any negatives about Offerman would have concerned his frequent errors. He had a combined total of 50 errors in his two leagues last year. Some of those were the result of mental mistakes and many were because of poor throws.

This year, he had committed only nine errors in 40 games.

"We want him to make the routine play and he does that," Kennedy said. "Some of his errors in the past have been from a lack of concentration. He's ironed those (problems) out."

Charlie Blaney, the Dodgers' director of minor league operations, and Boros like what they have seen of Offerman's defense.

"His biggest improvement has been consistency in the field," Blaney said. "He's working very hard at it and we're very pleased with his progress. He's always had great range."

Added Boros, "He still has some things to learn, but he's getting close. His skills are as good as any shortstop in the game."

Offerman also is working on improving his English. He took classes at home last winter and during spring training.



Jose Offerman has roared through the Dodgers' farm system since leaving the Dominican Republic in 1988.

"I'm happy with the way I'm playing," Offerman said. "Last year, I made too many errors and this year I'm concentrating more on my throws. I feel very relaxed."

On offense, all the Dodgers want from Offerman is more of what he has provided so far. Offerman will never be a power hitter, although Boros believes he will get stronger and perhaps develop into a player who could hit 15 homers a year.

"The kid can do a lot of things,"

Boros said. "He's a very disciplined hitter and there isn't much more you could ask for in the way of physical tools."

Added Kennedy, "He can beat you so many ways—with his bat, his legs or his defense. He can make the great play going to his left or right. He has a chance to be an impact player, not just a good player."

"If he plays like he's playing now, he could be in the big leagues this year."

Said Boros, "He is a legitimate basestealing threat who can steal 50 or more in the big leagues. He's a switch-hitter who hits .300. He can make spectacular plays in the field and has a great arm and great range. He is a tremendously gifted athlete."

"I'd like to see him concentrate a little better, but you could probably say that about any young player. Sometimes he looks as if he takes things for granted in the field, but that will improve with maturity."

Boros knows that Offerman believes in himself.

"He's very confident and always has been that way," Boros said. "He has a special gift to play baseball and I think he knows that. He knows in his heart he is destined to be a star player. There is an aura about him that you find with star-potential players."

"He still has to play championship caliber baseball in Dodger Stadium to fulfill his promise. We have to wait and see him do that. But I'm glad we've got him."

## NOTEBOOK

ST. LOUIS—A decision by Rochester (International) third baseman Leo Gomez to wear glasses fulltime has produced some positive results.

Gomez, one of the Orioles' top prospects, was leading all Triple-A hitters with 11 home runs through May 23. He hit 18 homers last year with Hagerstown (Eastern).

"He's worn glasses off the field, and this year he started wearing them to play. He's had success, so I don't think he'll take them off," said Doug Melvin, the Orioles' assistant general manager.

Melvin has not been surprised by Gomez's performance, with or without glasses.

"He's a pure hitter and has hit wherever he's played," Melvin said. "There's not many of those around in the minors."

Gomez had a career high of 19 homers in 1987 with Hagerstown, then in the Carolina League. He led the league with a .326 average, drove in 110 runs and was named the Orioles' organizational player of the year.

What has concerned Melvin is Gomez's defensive play.

"I told him, 'I'm never going to ask you about your offense. I want to know about your fielding,'" Melvin said. "He has made great strides and is doing an outstanding job."

Ed Kenney Jr., director of minor league operations for the Red Sox, knew this might be a poor season for the Winter Haven (Florida State) club. But he never thought it would be this bad.

After 46 games, the Red Sox were 7-39, a woeful .152 percentage, and were 18½ games out of first place, the worst record in the minors. Winter Haven was 1-22 at home.

"We didn't think it would be quite this tough," Kenney said. "We put our young players in that league, and I think our average age is probably 18 to 19 while it's 26 or 27 for other clubs. 'We've never been concerned with winning or losing in the organization; we're concerned with development. But it's not a good atmosphere to play in. The kids are holding up well, and I think in the second half of the season, they will get better and not be as overmatched as they were in the beginning.'"

Said Manager Dave Holt, who had a 52-87 record with the Winter Haven club a year ago, "It's been frustrating. You can see from the improvement we've made that a year from now we won't be making the same mistakes. We just have to keep them working hard and try to achieve goals, even if they're small and modest."

Carl Randle of the Gastonia (South Atlantic) Rangers pitched the season's second no-hitter in the minors when he beat Greensboro on May 19. Randle, 22, struck out 10 and walked five. Mike Dunne of Las Vegas (Pacific Coast) had the year's first no-hitter before he was recalled by the Padres. . . . Tom Goodwin, one of the Dodgers' top prospects, was promoted from Bakersfield (California) to San Antonio (Texas). He hit .293 and had a league-high 22 stolen bases in 32 games with Bakersfield. "He deserved the opportunity to play there (in Double A)," said Charlie Blaney, the Dodgers' director of minor league operations. "We had some things we wanted him to work on last year in rookie ball and this year in A ball, and he's done that." In another California-to-Texas promotion, the Brewers moved pitcher Cal Eldred from Stockton to El Paso. Eldred was 4-2 with the Ports and had a league-high 75 strikeouts in 50 innings. Both Goodwin and Eldred were first-round picks in last June's draft.

Righthander Dave Proctor, the Mets' No. 1 draft selection in 1988, was sidelined for the season after undergoing elbow surgery. . . . Pitcher John Ericks, the Cardinals' first-round pick in '88, was placed on the Arkansas (Texas) disabled list with a sore elbow. Ericks was 1-2 for the Travelers with a 9.39 ERA in four starts. Ericks was expected to miss only one start. . . . Louisville (American Association) third baseman Geronimo Pena may miss up to a month after suffering a severe cut on his throwing hand. Several stitches were required to close the wound.

The Orioles promoted pitcher Mike Linskey from Hagerstown (Eastern) to Rochester (International). Linskey had gone 7-1 for Hagerstown and won nine games for the Suns in the second half of the 1989 season after a promotion from Class A.

ROB RAINS

## Teen-age Dreams

At the start of the 1990 season, 158 teen-agers were on the roster of full-season minor league clubs, not counting those players in extended spring training. The youngest is 17-year-old Julio Bruno, an infielder with Charleston, S.C. (South Atlantic), an affiliate of the Padres. Some top youngsters have turned 20 since the season began. Following is a look at the 10 best prospects who are still in their teens:

1. **Kiki Jones**, 19, pitcher in the Dodgers' organization, with Bakersfield (California).
2. **WJ Cardero**, 18, shortstop, Elgin, with Jacksonville (Southern).
3. **Roger Saltsford**, 18, pitcher, Merrimack, with San Bernardino (California).
4. **Earl Casanueva**, 18, outfielder, Clearwater, with Port St. Lucie (Florida).
5. **Tim Lincecum**, 18, pitcher, Everett, with Seattle (Northwest).
6. **Alan Gutierrez**, 18, outfielder, Cardinals, with Savannah (South Atlantic).
7. **Mark Johnson**, 18, pitcher, Yakima, with Everett (Northwest).
8. **Tim Lincecum**, 18, pitcher, Everett, with Seattle (Northwest).
9. **Tim Lincecum**, 18, pitcher, Everett, with Seattle (Northwest).
10. **Tim Lincecum**, 18, pitcher, Everett, with Seattle (Northwest).

## Triple-A Leaders

(Through games of May 27)

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION		INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE		PACIFIC COAST	
BATTING AVERAGE					
Carter, Buffalo	.338	Torve, Tidewater	.321	Offerman, Albuquerque	.381
Gilkey, Louisville	.325	Whiten, Syracuse	.320	Smajicira, Tucson	.367
Redfield, Denver	.318	Gomez, Rochester	.314	Hill, Vancouver	.358
Garcia, Nashville	.308	Hughes, Tidewater	.298	Ortiz, Tucson	.347
Barnes, Nashville	.307	Grabbe, Richmond	.296	Lopez, Albuquerque	.345
HOME RUNS					
Martinez, Omaha	10	Gomez, Rochester	11	Willard, Vancouver	11
Bierley, Iowa	9	Mexilus, Columbus	9	Williams, Las Vegas	10
(Several tied at 7)		Mashring, Pawtucket	9	Soriano, Portland	9
		Holles, Rochester	8	Shewins, Edmonton	9
		Leyritz, Columbus	8	Medina, Colorado Springs	8
EARNED-RUN AVERAGE					
Kemp, Buffalo	2.06	Polley, Richmond	1.32	Cook, Portland	1.51
Lopez, Nashville	2.40	Valera, Tidewater	1.33	Young, Tacoma	2.38
Taylor, Buffalo	2.49	Searcy, Toledo	1.78	Champerino, Tacoma	2.58
Filion, Omaha	2.59	Jones, Columbus	2.14	Olivares, Portland	2.90
Blankenship, Iowa	2.77	Weston, Rochester	2.35	Ward, Colorado Springs	3.11
VICTORIES					
Filion, Omaha	8	Searcy, Toledo	7	Young, Tacoma	5
Taylor, Buffalo	7	Eiland, Columbus	5	Champerino, Tacoma	5
Blankenship, Iowa	6	Avery, Richmond	5	McChesne, Phoenix	5
Clark, Omaha	6	(Several tied at 4)		Hill, Vancouver	5
(Several tied at 5)					