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# KeizerSports

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## Volcanoes clinch first half division title

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
*Of the Keizertimes*

For the first time since 2015, the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes will be in the Northwest League playoffs.

Yorlis Rodriguez hit an RBI-double in the top of the 12th, then came into score on a base hit by Simon Whiteman, helping give the Volcanoes the 4-3 victory over the Boise Hawks on Sunday, July 21. The win allowed Salem-Keizer to clinch the first half crown in the NWL South division and earn a spot in the post-season.

"It feels good to give this back to the community, because they have waited a long time for this," said Mitche Graf, the Volcanoes President of Businesses Operations. "Now we have to finish the job."

The Volcanoes finish the first half with a 26-12 record, two games better than the second place Hillsboro Hops.

"It's a great feeling. I'm really proud of everyone on this staff and the hard work that we have put in so far," Volcanoes manager Mark Hallberg said. "We have a talented group of guys that we're developing."

Salem-Keizer grabbed the early advantage in the top of the first to go up 1-0. Whiteman led off the contest with a double. But after a free pass was issued to Hunter Bishop, Franklin Labour lined into a double play. Logan Wyatt, however, was able to drive in Whiteman with an RBI-single to left field.

The Volcanoes struck again in the top of the sec-

ond thanks to a solo bomb from Armani Smith to put his team up 2-0. It was Smith's second home run of the season.

On the mound, Volcanoes starter Kervin Castro was phenomenal in his first four innings of work as the young right-hander from Venezuela gave up just one hit to the Hawks. But in the bottom of the fifth, Boise got on the board with an RBI-double by Daniel Cope to cut the lead to one.

Castro left the game after five innings, giving up just three hits and one run. He gave up no walks and struck out four.

Boise came back to tie the game in the bottom of the eighth thanks to another RBI-double, this time courtesy of Aaron Schunk, which forced the game to go into extra innings.

A new rule implemented in the minor leagues last season is that when a game goes into extra innings, the player that was the last out of the previous inning starts the frame at second base — this rule was enacted to speed up the pace of play when a game goes past the ninth inning.

Neither team was able to take advantage of the runner in scoring position in the 10th or 11th innings, but the Volcanoes finally capitalized in the top of the 12th.

Rodriguez's double to left field scored Alexander Canario to give the Volcanoes the 3-2 lead. Two batters later, Whiteman came through with an key RBI-single that allowed Salem-Keizer to get

a much-needed insurance run.

In the bottom of the frame, Hallberg brought in reliever Deiyerbert Bolivar to try and get his first save of the season.

A pair of wild pitches allowed a run to score from



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Volcanoes right-hander Jesus Ozoria threw five innings and gave up just one run against Boise on Thursday July 18. Ozoria is tied for second in the Northwest League lead in wins (3).

second, but Bolivar struck out the side to seal the deal.

Even though the Volcanoes have already clinched a playoff spot, they still plan to attack the second half of the regular season with the same ferocity that they did in the first half.

"We're just going to keep putting time, energy and effort into the things that got us here," Hallberg said.

Graf added: "We're very happy with what we accomplished, but the work has just begun. We have another half of a season in front of us, and

from a business standpoint, this is when the work really begins. This is when we roll up our sleeves. We have a lot of great promotions left and some phenomenal games left against some very competitive teams."

Franklin Labour was a key reason for the Volcanoes success in the first half of the season, leading the Northwest League in home runs, RBIs and runs scored.

Labour, who hails from the Dominican Republic, signed a \$70,000 minor league contract with the Giants as a 17-year old back in 2015.

He spent his first two years as a professional in the Dominican Summer League playing rookie ball. Labour played one more year of rookie ball in Arizona in 2018 before moving up to short season A-ball this summer.

One of things he most likes about playing for the

Volcanoes is that there is a lot more public interest once you move on from playing in the rookie leagues.

"The main difference is the fans. When you're playing in front of fans, you feel the energy that you just don't have in the lower levels," Labour said. "(Keizer) is a beautiful city and the fans have just been great."

While Labour had decent numbers in his first three seasons in the minors, what really jumps out about this summer is the power numbers that he's putting up.

In his first three seasons in the minor leagues, Labour only hit seven home runs. But in just 35 games with the Volcanoes, his 14 dingers are almost twice as much as the next highest home run hitter in the NWL (and more than two teams have for the entire season).

Since increasing the launch angle of his swing — which has become a trend in all of professional baseball — Labour has taken himself from a line-drive hitter to one of the most powerful-slugging prospects in the Giants organization.

"I've been driving the ball more in the air this year," Labour said. "All throughout my career, I've been making a lot of hard contact, but I was a low line-drive hitter. I hit the ball with the same pop, I just put it in the air and it goes out more."

While the change in approach has had a lot to do with Labour's success, Volcanoes skipper Mark Hallberg also believes that having three professional seasons

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KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

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## Labour on pace to make history for Salem-Keizer

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
*Of the Keizertimes*

On Sunday, July 21, the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes clinched the Northwest League First Half title and automatically earned a playoff spot — it is the first time since 2015 that the Volcanoes have reached the postseason.

One of key reasons to the Volcanoes success is their incredible offensive production. Salem-Keizer is leading the NWL in every major hitting category and has the three of the top four home run hitters in the league.

But the man at the top of that list is Volcanoes outfielder Franklin Labour, who

has taken the NWL by storm ever since getting the call up to short season A-ball by the San Francisco Giants — the Volcanoes Major League affiliate.

As of Tuesday, July 23, Labour leads the league in homers (14) RBIs (33) and runs scored (35). He also leads the league in slugging (.703) and in OPS (1.108).

With over a month left in the regular season, Labour appears that he will easily break the Volcanoes single-season home run record — which is held by Adam Witter, who hit 16 bombs back in 2006.

"I just try and be more re-

no chance that ball was staying in the yard," Keeker said.

Olsen had another chance to do some damage in the top of the third. After a two-out infield single by Zane Aicher, Eben Meyer and Ian Martin were both walked to load the bases. But Silverton pitcher Gage Mack got Olsen to groundout to the first baseman, ending the inning.

Despite a solid performance on the bump, giving up just two hits and two earned runs, McNary starter Logan Ready was issued the loss in this one.

Ready retired the side in order in each of the first two innings, but he started to get in trouble in the bottom of the third.

An infield hit from Cole Mucken was compounded by a McNary throwing error,

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## Celts can't extend summer season



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Eric Olsen (middle) gets congratulated by teammates after hitting a solo homer in the second inning. It was McNary's only run of the game as they fell to Silverton 7-1.

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
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With a trip to the state tournament on the line, the McNary D1 summer league team couldn't get the job done as they fell to Silverton 7-1 on Wednesday, July 17, bringing their season to an end.

"We had some traffic on the bases and some guys in scoring position, we just couldn't get them in," McNary assistant coach Jordan Keeker said. "That's kind of dictated the rest of the game."

Even though they only had four hits for the game, one of them was a monster solo home run by Eric Olsen, who launched a first-pitch fastball into the trees over the left field fence in the top of the second.

"That was a pretty cool moment for Eric. There was

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