

Alfredo Aceves: A Red Sox Player Profile

The Mexican relief pitcher Alfredo Aceves has a few interesting distinctions to his career. First of all, he played for only two teams in his Major League Baseball career, each bitter rivals, the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees. Aceves was remarkably brilliant for several seasons, even being credited with 10 wins to his name in a season twice in his career, a rare feat for a relief pitcher. Unfortunately, his success came to a screeching halt, and he was never able to right the ship, not appearing in the Major Leagues after his age 31 season.

Despite debuting in the major leagues with the Yankees, Aceves actually began his career as an undrafted free agent with the Toronto Blue Jays. Signed by Toronto in 2001, he started ten games for the organization with their Dominican Summer League team. However, he became homesick, and when he was assigned to that team again in 2002, he decided instead to remain in Mexico and sign with a Mexican League team instead of returning to the Blue Jays.

Aceves would remain in the Mexican League for six seasons, pitching very well in 2002 and 2003 for Yucatan out of the bullpen. He didn't pitch in 2004, possibly for injury-related reasons. When he returned as a full-time starting pitcher in 2005 with Yucatan, he wasn't nearly as good as he'd been as a reliever. In 2006, he would join the Monterrey team, again as a starter, and again be mediocre. In 2007, however, he improved significantly, enough that Yankees scout Lee Sigman saw enough potential for the organization to purchase his contract from the Mexican League after the season. [Sigman compared him with former Milwaukee Brewers pitcher Teddy Higuera](#), another Mexican pitcher who would go on to have a solid career in the Major Leagues.

Things started out bright for Aceves with the New York Yankees. After being signed in the 2007-08 off-season, Aceves rocketed through the Yankees' minor league system, starting at Single-A Tampa and making his MLB debut on August 31, 2008, pitching two scoreless innings in relief. Soon after, Aceves replaced Darrell Rasner in the Yankees rotation, pitching seven innings of one-run ball and earning the win. Overall, Aceves would post 1.3 WAR in just 30 innings pitched.

In 2009, Aceves would begin the season at Triple-A, but rejoin the Yankees on May 4. He would end the season with a 10-1 win loss record, despite starting only one game all season. His 3.54 ERA in 43 games would earn him 1.7 WAR. While Aceves wasn't turning into a front-line starter like Higuera did with the Brewers, Sigman still looked like a genius.

Things were going just fine in 2010 over 12 innings in 10 games. However, despite having a solid 3.00 ERA, it was clear that something wasn't right, as he struck out just 2 batters versus walking 4 batters. While Aceves was never a strikeout pitcher, this was alarming. As it turned out, there was something wrong, as his season ended early because of lower back problems. Even more unfortunate, after the season, Aceves broke his collarbone in a bicycle accident in the off-season, leading the Yankees to non-tender their budding relief ace.

The Boston Red Sox were happy to take a chance on Aceves, however. In 2011, they signed Aceves to a Major League contract, beginning the year with the Major League club. Aceves picked up a hold to his credit in his first appearance on April 8 by pitching a scoreless inning. His next appearance would be rough, giving up two runs, and he'd blow a lead two appearances later, a game the Red Sox would ultimately lose. After just 6 appearances, the Red Sox would option him to Triple-A Pawtucket in order to bring up Matt Albers.

On May 6th, Aceves would return and pitch fairly well for the rest of the year, earning 10 wins to his name along the way. He finished with 55 games pitched, four of them starts, and pitched 114 innings for the Red Sox with a 2.61 ERA. It looked like the Yankees may have given up on Aceves too soon.

In fact, the Red Sox were so thrilled with Aceves, he would end up replacing Andrew Bailey as closer in 2012. Unfortunately, despite eventually earning 25 saves for the 2012 Red Sox, it would be the disaster year that Bobby Valentine managed one of the worst Red Sox teams in recent memory, a team that would finish 69-93. Aceves would blow 8 saves and have an awful 2-10 win loss record with a miserable 5.36 ERA.

Fortunately for Aceves, his peripheral numbers suggest that he was a bit unlucky. The Red Sox defense was abysmal that season and his FIP (Fielding Independent Pitching) suggested his ERA should have been closer to 4.33, based on a solid strikeout-to-walk ratio of 2.42. So, it's not a surprise that the Red Sox gave him another shot in 2013. Unfortunately for Aceves, he lost his full-time bullpen role, becoming more of a depth piece.

The 2013 season saw Aceves bouncing between the Majors and Triple-A whenever the Red Sox needed an extra starter. Unfortunately, while he did have a couple of solid starts, he also threw a couple of stinkers. Aceves would finish the season with a solid 4-1 win loss record in 2013 in six starts and five relief appearances, but wouldn't appear in the Majors after July 14th, being out-righted off of the 40-man roster. He'd spend most of the 2013 season at Pawtucket, overall pitching to a respectable 4.25 ERA over 8 starts and 48 and two-thirds innings.

With all the back and forth, Aceves really never got into a groove. It's reasonable to suspect that had Aceves remained with the Red Sox in the bullpen all year, he may have again found success. The 2013 Red Sox would go on to win the World Series, so at least Aceves got a World Series ring for his troubles. It's just a shame that Aceves didn't get much of a chance with the big league club.

After that, Aceves' career went downhill. He went to Spring Training with the Orioles, but after learning he wouldn't make the Major League team to open the season, he opted out of the contract. Upon hearing this news, the Yankees decided to swoop in and give him a second chance. He'd eventually make it back to the Yankees on May 3rd, but lasted only a month after pitching poorly. Things would only get worse when Aceves tested positive for recreational drugs, earning a 50 game suspension. This would spell the end of his Major League Baseball career.

Aceves would pitch in Mexico in 2015 through 2017, with a team associated with the San Francisco Giants. He'd lose most of the 2015 season by being suspended after a confrontation with an umpire, but pitched reasonably well in 2016 before imploding in 2017, ending his professional baseball career. There isn't really any news about Aceves since 2017, so we can assume that he's retired comfortably with the roughly \$5 million plus he earned during his MLB career.

Overall, Aceves posted 4.2 WAR over parts of seven seasons in the big leagues, with 2.7 WAR coming with the Yankees and 1.5 coming with the Red Sox. It's fair to say that he may have deserved more of a chance to rebound, but relief pitching careers are fickle enough as it is. Saying you spent seven years playing in MLB is something to be proud of, and the Red Sox were happy to have his services.

~ Amelia Desertsong