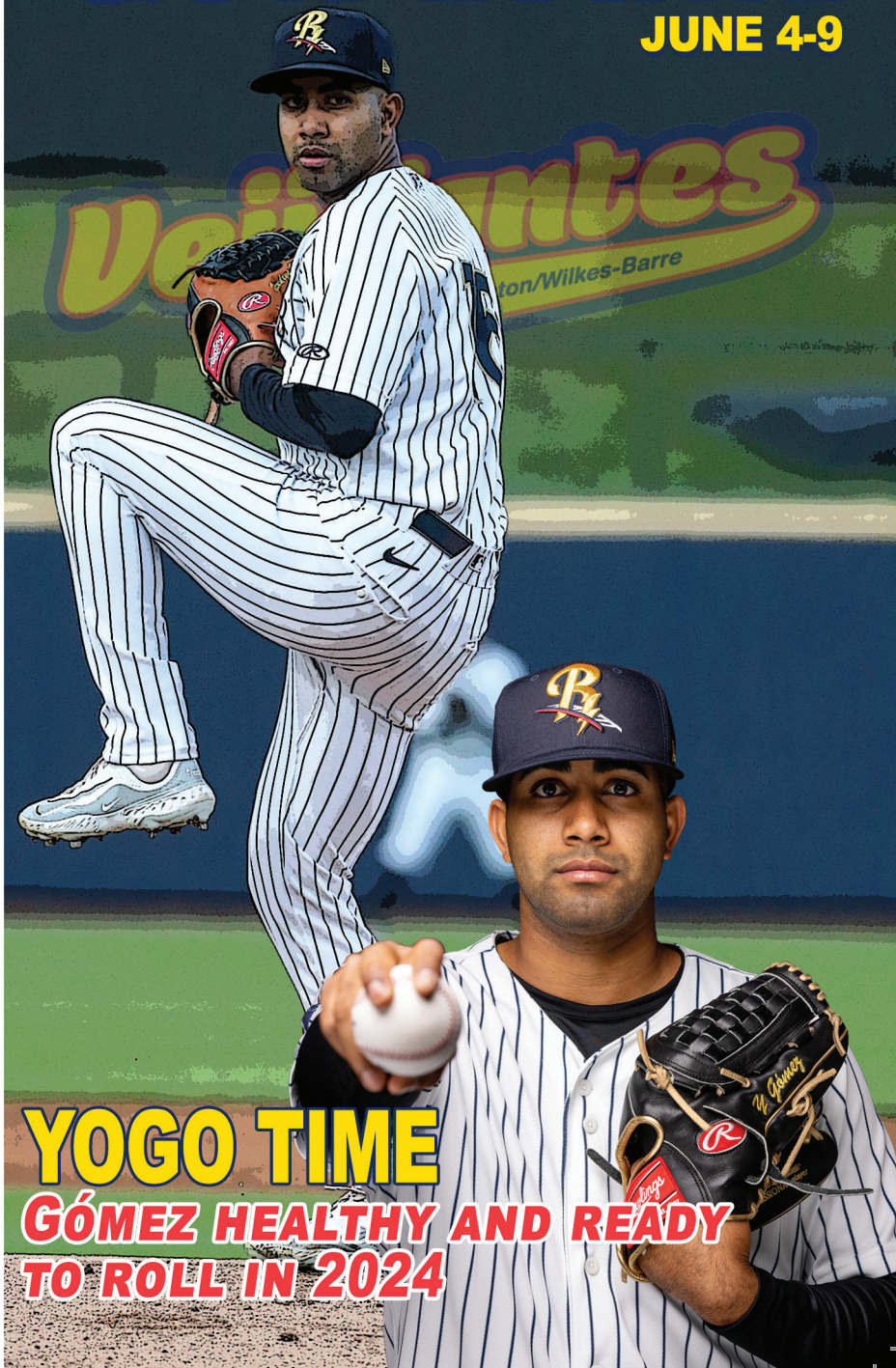




OFFICIAL GAME DAY PROGRAM OF THE
SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE RAILRIDERS

GUIDE RAIL

JUNE 4-9



YOGO TIME

**GÓMEZ HEALTHY AND READY
TO ROLL IN 2024**

YOGO TIME: GÓMEZ HEALTHY AND READY TO ROLL IN 2024

Pitcher Yoendrys Gómez made his Major League debut last September and his RailRiders debut this year. The right-hander is ready to excel in Triple-A and get to the bigs to stay.

by Emily Messina



A lot of things have changed for Yoendrys Gómez since he was first signed by the Yankees in 2016. When he was 17 years old, the Yankees found him at MM Baseball Academy in Venezuela. It was a big jump for a young kid and every year has brought its challenges, but Yoendrys persevered.

Gómez made his Major League debut at the end of last season, a moment he said he will never forget. His English has grown tremendously and he has the confidence to do some interviews in his second language.

And, after six partial seasons of baseball, Yoendrys is looking to compete for a full season of work. He began with a healthy start in 2024 and knows that this year will be different for him.

After spending the majority of his first three summers in Rookie ball, the pandemic hit just as Gómez was slated

to begin at full-season ball. But, the Yankees took a chance and added him to the 40-man roster, one of just four players they chose to protect from the Rule 5 Draft.

The next three seasons were certainly impressive but blemished by injury. In 2021 he worked through shoulder injuries and a UCL repair held him quiet for part of 2022. He was, however, a member of the Double-A 2022 Eastern League Championship team and pitched part of the second no-hitter in their franchise history.

Gómez had a late start to 2023 with shoulder tendinitis, but he came back with a vengeance to post a 3.58 earned run average in 65.1 innings. The righty impressed with just 37 walks to 78 strikeouts in Somerset.

At the end of a tougher year, the Yankees were giving opportunities to younger players that would not usually have seen time. With rosters in the big leagues expanding in September, the Yankees were not in a place for playoff contention. It was Everson Periera, Austin Wells, and Jasson Dominguez who got the early calls from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. But, the Yankees turned to Yoendrys in the second to last series of the season. He became the first player the Yankees called up straight from Double-A since they took on the Patriots as their affiliate in 2021.

“Injuries have been tough,” Gómez said. “And when you go through a moment like that so many things go through your mind. But at the same time, I never gave up and I kept working until I had an opportunity.”

Gómez made the absolute most of his Major League Debut on September 28. He pitched two innings out of the bullpen to close out a 6-0 loss to Toronto. Gómez allowed just one hit and no free passes while striking out four. He sent Kevin Kiermaier back to the dugout for his first career strikeout.

It was the first time that Yoendrys came out of the bullpen, aside from one appearance in the Gulf Coast League back in 2018. It was no different to Gómez, who just wanted to do his job for the Yankees. Whether they wanted him as a starter or reliever, he just wanted to throw in the game. But, he did say that he was grateful to see some familiar faces in the bullpen before his debut. He had the chance to talk to former teammates Jhony Brito and Randy Vasquez and watch the way other players worked when their names were called.

“When the bullpen coach called my name, my heart was moving fast. And I tell myself: relax, get ready, and throw strikes,” he remembered. “But then you get on the mound and everything goes away and you make pitches.”

While Gómez made it look like just another outing, his four K’s marked the most by a Yankees reliever in his Major League debut since Nick Nelson did the same on August 1, 2020, versus Boston. And, it marked the longest scoreless relief outing by a Yankees pitcher making his Major League debut since Miguel Yajure tossed 3.0 scoreless innings on August 31, 2020, versus Tampa Bay. Because the game was international, Gómez was not able to have his family there but knew he was supported from afar. It was an incredible way to end a



successful 2023 campaign.

“When you think about all the work that you have to do to get to this moment...” Gómez said through a translator to YES Network after the game. “Ever since I was a little kid, that dream of becoming a big leaguer. It was a great experience.”

Yoendrys had one appearance in big league Spring Training but was assigned to begin the season on the Triple-A roster. In eight starts with the RailRiders, the 24-year-old holds a 3.62 earned run average in 27.1 innings of work. Gómez has 18 walks to 33 strikeouts. He has not allowed more than four earned runs in any start thus far. He credits this early success to extra work with his catchers and pitching coach. Triple-A is about making adjustments quickly and he is focused on making every pitch count.

“We talk before the game about all the hitters, but in the moment, on the mound, I see what happens and process it,” he explained. “If the hitter looks bad with one pitch, I throw it again, or I change the sequence.”

Gómez, however, has not pitched more than four frames in one outing and has maxed at 72 pitches. Gómez says he is being built up slowly because of his limited work in his prior seasons. Each outing he has increased his pitch count and is trending in the right direction.

“I’ve been working more on my slider, trying to throw it for more strikes,” Gómez said to MiLB.com earlier this summer. “I would also like to use my changeup more because I don’t use it a lot.”

As he works through everything that is thrown his way, Yoendrys has always had the biggest smile in the clubhouse. He is a friendly face who is excited to be playing baseball. He gets along with every catcher and appreciates all the different things they bring to the game. The challenges he has faced have only made him stronger and more dedicated. As much as his numbers showcase this, the growth of his second language, English, is also proof of that. He says there are no communication issues on the mound or in the bullpen. Gómez even said as much as his teammates helped him with his English, he has helped them work on their Spanish. He specifically appreciated the extra effort that Will Warren and Tanner Tully have made. Playing at the minor's highest level is another beast for Yoendrys to conquer.





“I’ve never played here in Triple-A, so I am going to continue developing my abilities to get better so they call me up again,” Gomez emphasized.

On May 24, the day he was slated to start for SWB, Gómez received the good news. Word came down that the Yankees needed another arm. As New York placed righty Nick Burdi on the 15-Day Injured List, the big club chose to recall him for bullpen depth.

Yoendrys headed to the bullpen again and heard his number for the ninth inning. It was a different situation for the rookie as this time he was entering with an 8-0 Yankees lead. Gómez looked right at home as he struck out the side, including former Yankee Tyler Wade. It took the righty just 13 pitches to get through the inning and keep his scoreless ERA in the bigs. This time he was able to have family in attendance to celebrate this special moment with him.

He was optioned back to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre a few days later, rejoining their rotation. It will assuredly not be the last opportunity in the Majors for Gómez. But for now, RailRiders fans get the chance to see a future star right in their own backyard.

Photo Credits: Tim Dougherty