HURON DAILY BEACON

OCTOBER 17, 2032 · THE HURON HERONS BEAT

# Smith's balk ties it; Rams finish Herons in five

BY **LORRAINE PETROSKY** · HURON DAILY BEACON

Forty-one degrees, cloud, a rain delay of 28 minutes in the fifth. In the seventh inning of Game 5, at home, Huron led Big Horn 2-1. Danny Hess tripled on the first pitch. Jimmy Smith came set with the tying run on third and moved, and the umpire waved Hess home.

Two outs later Huron walked Bill Raymond on purpose, and Brian Freimuth and Brad Battiste singled, and it was 4-2. Chris Sandvik hit a home run in the eighth. It ended 4-3. Big Horn won the series four games to one.

Two weeks ago I wrote that the regular season and October keep separate books, and that October had not opened its book yet. It opened it and closed it in six days.

It wrote some strange things in it. Huron won 51 games at home this year and 31 on the road, and in this series it won one of the two it played in Big Horn and lost all three it played here. In Game 2, at Big Horn, Sandvik singled home the tying run off John Underwood in the ninth, and Danny Perez doubled two more home in the 10th, and Huron won 5-3. Then the club came home to its own ballpark and its own crowd, three nights running, and scored seven runs in three games.

I also wrote, before the series, that the ledger owed Nick Agins four or five wins after the deadline, when he had a 1.85 earned run average and went 3-6, and that it pays its debts in October if it pays them at all. Agins started Game 2. He went six innings, struck out nine, walked nobody and was named Player of the Game. He did not get the win. Jose Erbetto did, in the 10th. The ledger paid the club and not the man.

Joey Payne pitched seven and two-thirds innings in Game 3 and allowed two runs, on four hits. Huron lost 2-1. Egidio Vercesi's home run was the only run the Herons scored that night.

Smith was the pitcher this club bought in July for a first-round pick, two third-rounders and David Amejorado. He had a 2.82 earned run average in 11 starts after the deadline. He started Games 1 and 5 and lost both. In Game 1 he gave up a home run to Raymond in the first inning and six runs in three and a third. In Game 5 he gave up three runs in six innings, one of them on the balk. His contract ends this season, and he is a free agent.

The lineup hit .222. Dan Boyd, who hit .310 after he came back from the injured list, went 1-for-20. Garrett Roll went 2-for-16. Sandvik hit two home runs and Perez hit one and drove in three, and Armando Ramirez went 7-for-19 with three doubles and a triple. It was not enough of any of it.

On October 9, the day of Game 2, Justin Evans slid on the tarp during the rain at practice and broke his hand. He will miss two to three months. Huron won that night.

This was Huron's 21st postseason. It is the third time in four years it has gone out in the first round, in 2029 and last year to Virginia, and now to Big Horn, which this franchise beat in 2017 and lost to in 2028.

The winter is not short of decisions. Smith is a free agent. So is Billy Cover, the catcher. So are four more pitchers: Emmitt Moffatt, Steve Benton, who started Game 4, Dennis Hansen and Matt Miller. About $22 million in salary goes with them. What stays is $122.6 million already committed for 2033, and the largest single piece is Manny Pineda's, $35.2 million, in the last year of his deal. Agins starts his new five-year contract. Perez, Payne, Sandvik, Erbetto and Dan Gallatin go to arbitration.

The 2020 club won 84 games and the championship. This one won 82 and lost in five. The two numbers are two apart, and neither of them decided anything in October.