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Scouts whiff 69 times; 82-win Stogies send KC home

BY **CORBIN DIETRICH** · KANSAS CITY STAR-JOURNAL

Dan Espeseth was this club's third-round pick in 2025, 89th overall. Three years later he hit three home runs in five postseason games, two of them in Game 3 in San Juan, and he was named Player of the Game in a 6-2 loss. It was one of the few things that went right.

San Juan won it four games to one. The Scouts won 97 games this season, 15 more than the Stogies, and went home on October 13.

The first game went the way the season had. Freddy Echeverria held San Juan scoreless for four and a third innings at home, Mike Sullivan hit two home runs, Jason Bell threw three scoreless innings in relief, and Kansas City won 6-0. Sullivan was named Player of the Game. He came here in a trade in 2029 and hit seven home runs all season.

Then Echeverria's shoulder turned out to be the story. He came out of that start with inflammation in it, and he is expected to miss about six months. He is in the first year of a five-year, $191.6 million contract. In July Brad told me he expected him to turn to form in the second half. He was better after the deadline than before it, and now he is likely to miss the start of next season.

From there San Juan's pitching took over. Kansas City lost 2-0 on the second night, when Frank Smith allowed one run in four and two-thirds innings and the lineup got five hits. In San Juan it lost 6-2, 5-2 and 6-3. Nate Peterson, who had a 2.46 earned run average after the deadline, gave up five runs in five and two-thirds in Game 3. Oscar Almaraz lost Game 4 and Bell lost Game 5.

The Scouts struck out 69 times in five games, more than any club in the first round, including the two that played seven, and hit .226. With runners in scoring position they went 7-for-37. Jared Mettler went 4-for-

20 with nine strikeouts and a home run. Francisco Ojeda went 4-for-19 with 10. Sergio Soto went 0-for-6 and struck out five times. Luke Davis went 0-for-10.

The club that won 10 games on the last swing of the night after the deadline, nine of them in extra innings, did not play an extra inning this week. The closest game was the 2-0 loss. Ben Taylor, who saved 43 games, never got into one. I have spent two months writing about how this team wins close games. It did not get any.

In August I said this one would wait until October had its say. It has. The 2026 club went to the final. This one went out in five.

The winter is the most interesting one this franchise has had in years, and most of it is about money that is not committed yet. The club has only $64 million on the books for 2033, and more than half of that is Echeverria's $35.2 million. Soto and Ojeda are free agents, and between them they were paid $33 million this year. Ojeda hit 41 home runs, tied for fifth in the league, and the 300th of his career came in a Kansas City uniform. Taylor starts a new five-year deal next season. Mettler, who hit 43 home runs and stole 98 bases on $500,000, can be renewed by the club one more time, which means the biggest contract question on this roster can wait another year if Brad wants it to.

And below the big club, the names are all still here. Jimmy Glover, 19, is 10th on the league's top 100 prospects. Jon Crawford, 20, is 17th. Dante Muro is 72nd and Pedro Huante 87th. Carlos Castillo, the catcher I keep telling you about, is 17 and still at the rookie level. Glover finished his first professional summer at the rookie level in Kansas. If Brad wants to use the money, he does not have to use the farm to do it. That has not been true here very often.