RÉCORD CIUDAD

OCTOBER 17, 2032 · THE MEXICO CITY LUCHADORES BEAT

Henson charges mound, then wins two; Luchadores sweep OKC

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Ninety-seven balls in play by Oklahoma City hitters over four games, and 24 of them fell for hits. One hundred by this lineup, and 38 fell. Add nine home runs for the Luchadores against four, and you have most of a sweep of a 95-win club before anyone's name comes into it.

The defense made no errors in the four games. A figure built on 97 balls in play is a sample I would not usually print. The season figure is built on more than 4,000, and it says opponents hit .292 on balls in play against Mexico City this year, 17th in the league. By that measure the defense I have described for 16 years was average in 2032. Against Oklahoma City, for one week, it was not.

In my last piece I wrote that since August 2 this club had gone 3-12 against teams that made the postseason, and that 15 games was a small sample. Four games is a smaller one, and it went the other way.

Game 1, here, went 4-2. Ed Waterman, starting ahead of Arturo Rivera, allowed one run in five and a third innings and was named Player of the Game. Ryan Metcalf and Jonathan Coon hit solo home runs. Eduardo Linares came on in the sixth with a 2-1 lead, gave up the tying run and left with a sore shoulder. In the bottom of the inning Michael Klaassen hit a two-run home run that left the bat at 117 miles an hour. Brad Straut got seven outs and Steve Parker the last three.

Game 2 went 9-1, and it is the game people will remember for the wrong reason. Rivera allowed one run in six and a third. In the bottom of the seventh, with the Luchadores up 4-1, Metcalf hit a two-run home run off Josh Aikins, and Aikins hit the next batter, Dave Henson. Henson went to the mound. The benches emptied, and Henson and Aikins were both ejected. Mexico City scored three more runs in the inning without him.

Henson played the next two games. In the 10th inning of Game 3 in Oklahoma City, with two outs, Brendan Bosarge on third and the score 2-2, he doubled to right, and the Luchadores won 3-2. In Game 4 he hit a two-run home run in the fourth, and with the score 4-4 in the eighth, after Metcalf had tied it with a home run, he hit another one, 402 feet, to give Mexico City the lead for good. It ended 6-4. Over the series he went 6-for-15 with two home runs and five runs batted in, and his win probability added, +0.80, was more than three times that of any other hitter on either club.

The rest of the lineup divided the work unevenly. T.J. Slaughter went 10-for-18 and drove in nobody. Metcalf hit three home runs. Fernando Lopez, who hit 43 during the season, went 2-for-17 with seven strikeouts, and Lorenzo Valenzuela went 1-for-13. With runners in scoring position the club hit 7-for-36. The home runs did the scoring.

The staff allowed nine runs in four games and walked 18 men in 37 innings, five of them in Danny Kuntz's four and a third in Game 4. In the regular season this staff struck out fewer batters than any in the league. It struck out 33 in the series, which is close to its season rate, and it won anyway.

Before the series I asked who had the ninth inning, given that Parker had a 5.34 earned run average and four blown saves after the deadline and Harry Smith had a 1.35. The answer, for one week, was everybody. Parker saved Game 1 and pitched the ninth and 10th of Game 3 without allowing a hit. Smith got 11 outs across three games and allowed no runs. Joseph Vandercook saved Game 4. Matt Day, who came from Boston at the deadline, threw three and two-thirds scoreless innings. Three innings from Parker do not undo 26 appearances. They are three good innings.

The Divisional series opens in Big Horn on Monday: two games there, three here from the 21st, and the last two, if they are needed, back in Big Horn on the 25th and 26th. The season series was 6-6. Mexico City won five of the first six and lost five of the last six. Big Horn won the Ruby by a game and beat Huron four games to one.

The clubs have met once in October, in this round last year, and Mexico City won it four games to two.

Rivera has not pitched since Game 2. The last time he faced Big Horn, on August 30, he threw seven scoreless innings with 10 strikeouts, got no decision, and watched the Luchadores lose 1-0 on a bases-loaded walk in the ninth. By Monday he will have had eight days off. That is the number I would start with.