THE OKLAHOMAN SPORTS DESK

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Stingy Outlaws staff serves up nine homers in sweep

BY **MARGUERITE YOO** · THE OKLAHOMAN SPORTS DESK

Oklahoma City allowed 146 home runs in 162 games this season, the fewest in baseball. Mexico City hit nine off it in four games, and the Outlaws went home from their 23rd postseason without winning a game.

It is the first time this franchise has been swept out of October since 2005, when Louisville did it in three. Of the 22 postseasons before this one, all of which ended in a lost series, 10 ended in a seventh game. This one never reached a fifth.

Alex Cardenas started Game 1 in Mexico City, which answers the question I asked two weeks ago about who takes the ball first without Brian Lee. He struck out seven in four and two-thirds innings and allowed two runs, both on solo home runs. Mike Tarrant tied it 2-2 with a single in the sixth. In the bottom of the inning Tyler Moore gave up a two-run home run to Michael Klaassen, and it ended 4-2. In the seventh, Jeremy Porten took a called third strike, argued it, and was ejected.

Game 2 went 9-1. Jonathan Cooper allowed four runs in five innings. In the seventh, after Ryan Metcalf hit a two-run home run off Josh Aikins, Aikins hit Dave Henson with a pitch, Henson went to the mound, the benches emptied and both men were thrown out. Mexico City scored three more runs in the inning.

The two games here were the close ones. In Game 3 Alex Garcia, who had a 5.42 earned run average when I wrote in August, went six and two-thirds innings, walked nobody, struck out six and was named Player of the Game. Tarrant's two-run home run in the second had the Outlaws ahead. Mexico City tied it in the fourth and nobody scored again until the 10th, when Shane Drew walked T.J. Slaughter and Fernando Lopez and, with two outs, Henson doubled to right. It ended 3-2.

In Game 4 Jeremy Valenzuela went six and two-thirds and allowed two earned runs, and the Outlaws went ahead 4-3 in the seventh when Bryan Carpenter was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded. Jake Metzker started the eighth. Metcalf hit a home run to tie it. Henson hit the next one, 402 feet, to give Mexico City the lead. The final was 6-4.

Relievers took three of the four losses. The bullpen allowed 11 runs and four home runs in 12 and a third innings.

The lineup hit .209. With runners in scoring position it went 2-for-23. Porten reached base 11 times in 18 plate appearances, four hits and seven walks, and scored none of those times. Manny Jimenez, who drove in 102 runs this season, went 2-for-17. Ted Ketron went 1-for-13.

Mexico City hit .380 on balls in play and Oklahoma City hit .247, and four games are too few to say what a gap that size means. The Luchadores hit nine home runs and the Outlaws hit four. For one week in October, Mexico City was the better club.

The winter starts with the rotation. Lee tore the ligament in his elbow on September 5 and is expected to miss most of next season. Cardenas, 33, went 15-6 with a 3.31 earned run average on a one-year deal and is a free agent. So is Drew, 35, who saved 44 games, second in the league, and earned $13.6 million this year in the last year of his contract. Garcia and Cooper go to arbitration, along with several of the young relievers.

The free agents account for about $32 million of this year's payroll. The club already has $135.9 million committed for 2033, most of it in the lineup that went 2-for-23 with men on second and third: David Ramirez, Jimenez and Ketron are all signed through 2034.

Porten is 26 and signed through 2036. He won the home run title this year with 46. He also drew seven walks in four October games and never once came around to score, and that is the number I would put in front of Rees first.