EL NUEVO DÍA DEPORTES

OCTOBER 17, 2032 · THE SAN JUAN STOGIES BEAT

Stogies stun 97-win Scouts for first San Juan series win

BY **NÉLIDA CRUZ BETANCOURT** · EL NUEVO DÍA DEPORTES

On Monday it was 87 degrees at the Humidor when the first pitch of Game 3 was thrown, and 45,515 people were in the building, and most of them were standing before anybody had swung a bat. I wrote before the series that they would be. On Tuesday there were 46,516. On Wednesday there were 47,127, the most of the three, and in the seventh inning Chris Whittington, the young man who won two games in two nights against Huron in September, hit his second home run of the night, and the building did not sit down again until it was over.

San Juan beat Kansas City four games to one. It is the first postseason series this city has ever won. The franchise came here in 2028, went to October that year and the next, and lost in the first round both times. Its last series win before this one was in 2018, in Louisville.

It did not start that way. Game 1 in Kansas City went 6-0 the other way. Dustin Potter struck out nine in four and two-thirds innings and gave up a two-run home run to Mike Sullivan, and the Scouts pulled away against the bullpen.

The next night the pitching took over and did not give the series back. Isaiah Logan threw four scoreless innings. Steve Peterson threw three more without allowing a hit and was named Player of the Game. Mike Boller, back from his oblique, hit a home run in the fifth, Nate Cronin singled in another run in the seventh, and D.J. Zaccardelli finished a 2-0 win.

Then the series came home.

In Game 3 Frank Mildner hit a two-run home run 417 feet in the fourth and Willie Martinez hit another in the fifth, and San Juan won 6-2. Matt Bigby struck out seven in four innings before he left with a strained back, and Tom Edwards struck out five in two innings. In Game 4 Mildner homered again, in the first, and

Dylan Cuffie hit a two-run home run in the seventh and was named Player of the Game, and Jonathan Mendoza, who was sent down in the summer after a 6.21 earned run average, threw four and a third scoreless innings with seven strikeouts. It ended 5-2. In Game 5 Potter went six innings and struck out seven, Whittington drove in four, and Bill Snyder got the last four outs of a 6-3 win.

The staff struck out 69 batters in 44 innings. Potter struck out 16 in his two starts and walked nobody. Zaccardelli saved three games. Over five games Kansas City scored 13 runs.

The lineup did not hit much for average, .224, but it hit seven home runs, and they came from the young men I have been asking you to watch since spring. Mildner, 24, hit two. Whittington, 24, hit two, both on the last night. Cronin went 7-for-14. Cuffie reached base half the time he came up.

Chuck made no trades this season and posted nothing on the trade board, and I wrote in August that trusting the young hitters was the right answer. The men who won this series were mostly the ones who were here in April.

Scott Moore has not played since his concussion on September 27, and Evan Gentz and Marvin Lewis are still on the injured list. Bigby's back is the new worry.

Next, Virginia.

The first two games are there on Monday and Tuesday, and then the series comes here, to this crowd, on Thursday the 21st for three. If it goes six or seven, it goes back to Virginia on the 25th and 26th. San Juan won the season series seven games to five. Virginia won 100 games and beat Milwaukee in seven.

These two franchises have met twice in October, both times in the first round, and both times before this club came to the island. The Louisville Rivermen swept Virginia in 2010. Virginia beat the Louisville Thoroughbreds in six in 2025, on the way to its championship.

On Thursday the Humidor will be full again, and the people in it have now seen their club win a series in October, in this building, which nobody who lives here had seen before last week.