THE STRAIGHT LINE

OCTOBER 17, 2032 · THE SOMERVILLE MONEYLINE BEAT

Martin fans 23; Moneyline hold champs to .139

BY **PRIYA RANGANATHAN** · THE STRAIGHT LINE

Twenty-two hits in 158 at-bats. Denver hit .139 against this staff over five games and struck out 55 times, and the defending champions went home in the first round.

Chase Martin started Games 1 and 5 and struck out 12 and then 11. The 12 in Game 1 are a club record for a postseason game. He allowed four runs in 12 innings and was named Player of the Game both nights. Jason Sage gave up one hit in six innings in Game 2. Bob Reyes gave up one hit in seven and a third in Game 3, and the one run he allowed scored on a wild pitch. Mark Buescher, the fourth starter, threw four and two-thirds scoreless innings in Game 4. The starters allowed five earned runs in 30 innings.

> *"Denver is a team we can easily lose to, if we don't pitch," JR told me before the series. "It's a game between the pitcher and catcher for us, and they need to dominate."*

He also told me this is arguably the best pitching staff in the league's history, with the most strikeouts and, by far, the best strikeout-to-walk ratio. He is right about the strikeouts. The staff's 1,784 this season are the most in the league's 32 seasons, and the record they broke, 1,742, was this club's own from last year. The ratio, 3.45 strikeouts per walk, is very good and is not a record: 48 staffs have done better, the best of them Denver's in 2013. Against Denver this week the ratio was 55 to 15.

The one loss was Game 4 in Denver, and it came out of the bullpen that had the best earned run average in baseball this season. Phil Butterfield hit a three-run home run in the sixth, after a 54-minute rain delay, and Somerville led 3-0. Bob Nelson gave up a run in the sixth and a home run in the seventh and left with a herniated disc. Jason Shannon walked two and gave up the tying hit, Jose Nolasco's sacrifice fly off Joel

King put Denver ahead, King walked in another run, and Denver won 5-3. Nelson is expected to miss about two weeks.

Game 3 is the one I will remember. Denver led 1-0 into the eighth on the wild pitch. Randy Sorto, who was the designated hitter that night, tied it with a home run. Nobody scored again until the 12th, when Fernando Medina stole second, took third on a wild pitch and scored on Dave Tyler's double to right. Chris Charvet got the last two outs. Somerville won 2-1.

The lineup hit .210, and the hitting came from a short list. Butterfield went 7-for-19 with five doubles, a home run and six runs batted in, and was Player of the Game in the loss. Tyler went 4-for-22, and two of the four were the winning hit in Game 3 and the run-scoring single that made it 5-3 in the seventh inning of Game 5. Eli Jones tripled in the go-ahead run just before that. Mike Bellina went 0-for-12.

Two weeks ago I asked JR who would play the corners with Antonio Reyna and Chase Posey both out, and his answer was Sorto. "Sorto might be a star," he said, "and these injuries forced my hand." Sorto started all five games, in left, at designated hitter and in right, went 4-for-20, scored five runs and hit the home run that saved Game 3. Todd Taylor started the first four in right. Reyna, 37, is still out with the back, and Posey is listed about a week away.

This is the third time Somerville has beaten Denver in October, in eight meetings, and the first time it has won a series of any kind since 2030.

Next is Montreal.

The Machine swept Galveston, the club with the second-best record in baseball. The schedule is the usual two-three-two: Monday and Tuesday at Moneyline Stadium, the 21st through the 23rd in Montreal, and the 25th and 26th back here if needed. Somerville won the season series 7-5.

The clubs have met three times in October. Montreal swept Somerville in the 2003 first round. Somerville won the 2007 quarterfinal in four and the 2009 quarterfinal in seven.

Montreal beat Somerville three straight in August and lost three straight to it in September.