RICHMOND DISPATCH-LEDGER

OCTOBER 17, 2032 · THE VIRGINIA REBELS BEAT

Rebels climb out of 0-2 hole, oust Mobsters in seven

BY **BO THREADGILL** · RICHMOND DISPATCH-LEDGER

It was the sixth inning of the seventh game, on Saturday, 50 degrees at Rebel Stadium with a little wind going out to right, and the Rebels were up 3-1 on Milwaukee and could not stop holding their breath. Chris Wilson came up with nobody on and hit a ball 114 miles an hour into the seats in left. Jesus Sifuentes doubled. Jim Bergeman, playing on a sore knee, reached on an error. Danny Meza doubled. By the time the inning was over it was 7-1, and for the first time in a week nobody in the building had to do any arithmetic.

That was the end of it. Albin Giolitti went five and two-thirds and gave up one run, Allen Crowe and Keith Bornstein and Cory Montgomery got the rest, and Virginia won the series four games to three after losing the first two at home.

Go back to the first two, because the people who were here for them will not forget them either. In Game 1 Mike Dibrell gave up a three-run home run to Katsuyoshi Sakamoto in the second, the Rebels came back to lead 5-4, and Milwaukee scored three in the fourth, two of them on a single by Brent Chute off John Gulbrandson, and won 7-6. In Game 2 it was 4-4 in the eighth when Paul Stepp doubled two runs home off Zeke Tovar, the man who saved 38 games this year, and Milwaukee won 8-4. The Mobsters had beaten this club eight times in 12 during the season, and now they had beaten it twice more in its own park.

Before the series I asked Kaden what Milwaukee does to Virginia that the rest of the Topaz stopped doing.

> *"They have good pitching and play incredible defense, and hit the ball hard when they make contact," he said. "Our BABIP team tends to struggle against them. We're gonna*

> *have to hit the ball hard and keep up with their pitching."*

BABIP is Kaden's word, not mine. What I watched in Milwaukee, in the cold and the rain, was the Rebels hitting the ball hard and having it start to fall in. Game 3 sat through a 69-minute rain delay in the seventh and ended 11-1. Sifuentes drove in four. Giolitti walked five men in four innings and none of them scored. In Game 4 Joey Powell went 4-for-4 and Virginia won 6-1, and Barry Richards left in the fourth with a sprained ankle that will keep him out about five weeks. Milwaukee took Game 5, 7-1, with five runs in the eighth. Then the series came home, and D.J. Bakker, who had a 4.82 earned run average after the deadline, went five and a third in Game 6 and allowed one run, and Pio Takami hit a three-run home run in the second, and Virginia won 8-1.

Over seven games the Rebels hit .320. Wilson went 14-for-31 and scored 11 runs and was Player of the Game twice, in the first game, which Virginia lost, and in the last. Sifuentes went 12-for-29 and drove in 10. Powell went 12-for-28. Bergeman, who has been hurt running the bases three different times this month and keeps getting back up, drove in seven.

Kaden also told me who would start Games 1 through 3, and he named them in order: "Dibrell, Bakker, Giolitti." Then he said what he always says. "Shearon going down sucks, but we're kind of numb to injuries at this point. Next man up." The next man up, it turned out, was mostly Crowe. He pitched in five of the seven games, seven and a third innings, gave up two hits and no runs and struck out 11. I do not know where he was supposed to be on the depth chart in March. I know where he was this week.

Last October this club won three seventh games in a row, all on the road, and I wrote about every one of them. This one was at home. That makes four seven-game series in two Octobers, and Virginia has won all four.

That leaves San Juan, and the Topaz again, in the second round.

It starts here on Monday and goes again on Tuesday, and then the club gets on a plane for three games in San Juan beginning Thursday. If it needs a sixth or a seventh, it comes home for them on the 25th and 26th. San Juan won the season series seven games to five and beat Kansas City four games to one in the first round. The franchises have met twice in October, both times in the first round, when San Juan's club was still in Louisville: the Louisville Rivermen swept Virginia in 2010, and Virginia beat the Louisville Thoroughbreds in six in 2025, the year it won the championship.

Richards is out. Bergeman is listed as day-to-day with the knee. Meza hurt himself running the bases in Game 7 and is listed day-to-day. Next man up. Kaden said it, and this week the whole roster took him at his word.