RÉCORD CIUDAD

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Outscored by eight, Luchadores still oust Rams in seven

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Forty runs for Big Horn and 32 for Mexico City. Seventy-nine hits for Big Horn and 61 for Mexico City. Mexico City won the series four games to three.

Start with the defense, because that is where I started last time. Against Oklahoma City, 97 balls were put in play and 24 fell for hits, and I wrote that for one week the defense was better than its season. Against Big Horn, 213 balls were put in play and 73 fell, a .343 average on balls in play. For this week the defense was worse than its season, and on a sample twice as large.

The series was won on sequencing, which is the word I use for what other writers call clutch, because it describes what happened without claiming to know why. With runners in scoring position Mexico City went 18-for-60, .300, and Big Horn 23-for-86, .267. Big Horn had 26 more at-bats in those spots and turned them into five more hits. And three of the four wins came at Luchadores Park, two of them in extra innings, both ended by a three-run home run in the last at-bat.

Game 3 took five hours and 41 minutes. Big Horn led 6-5 in the eighth, and John Underwood put three men on, two of them by walks, and then walked Lorenzo Valenzuela on a full count to tie it. Nobody scored again until the 13th, when Big Horn took an 8-6 lead. In the bottom of the inning Mario Rivera tripled in two runs and Fernando Lopez hit a three-run home run. Lopez hit three in the series. Game 4 was 5-4 Big Horn in the eighth, and Ian McIlree singled in the tying run and Josh Jacobsen doubled in two more off Matt Scott. Joseph Vandercook got the last seven outs without allowing a hit. Game 5 was 3-3 from the seventh until the 11th, when Ryan Metcalf hit a three-run home run off Devonte Streeter, 416 feet to right-center.

My last piece ended on Arturo Rivera's eight days of rest, and he started Game 1. He threw six scoreless innings and Mexico City lost 1-0, on a home run by Josh Ferguson off Eduardo Linares in the eighth. On

August 30, the last time Rivera had faced Big Horn, he threw seven scoreless innings and Mexico City lost 1-0. Two starts, 13 innings, no runs, no decisions, two losses. He started Game 5 as well and allowed three runs in six and a third.

Game 7 was in Big Horn on Tuesday. Ricky Falk allowed two runs in five and two-thirds innings, T.J. Slaughter doubled in the tying run in the third and Michael Klaassen followed with a two-run home run, and Metcalf singled in the fourth run in the fifth. Big Horn had 12 hits and scored three. Harry Smith pitched the eighth and Steve Parker the ninth, and it ended 4-3.

Parker has now pitched seven innings this October and nobody has scored on him. Last time I wrote that three good innings did not undo 26 appearances after the deadline. Seven is a better argument than three. It is still seven. John Shephard won Games 3 and 5. Brad Straut gave up eight runs in eight and two-thirds innings over six appearances, and Matt Day five in three and a third.

The staff's earned run average for the series was 4.77. It struck out 51 batters in 66 innings, a little under its season rate, and it walked 19. This staff gave its runs up in bunches: 21 of Big Horn's 40 came in Mexico City's three losses, 14 of them in one game.

Rocky Brito sprained his ankle in Game 2 and will miss about six weeks.

San Juan is next. It came back from three games to two down against Virginia, winning twice on the road, and it won the season series against Mexico City three games to one. The first two games are here, on Thursday and Friday; three are in San Juan from Sunday; the last two, if needed, are back here the following Thursday and Friday. The franchises have met once in October, in the 2015 first round, when this club was the Chupacabras and San Juan's was in Louisville, and Mexico City won in six.

This is Mexico City's second straight conference championship series. Last year it lost that round to Virginia in seven. It has never played in a final.

Thirty-two runs scored, 40 allowed, four wins. No model I would publish picks that. I pick this club too high every spring, and this October it went further than I would have picked it.