LA PRESSE SPORTIVE

OCTOBER 28, 2032 · THE MONTREAL MACHINE BEAT

Machine squanders five-run lead, falls to Moneyline in six

BY **ÉTIENNE CHARBONNEAU** · LA PRESSE SPORTIVE

On Saturday night at Machine Stadium it was 33 degrees under a clear sky, the coldest of the three nights the series spent here, with the wind running across the field from right to left at 12 miles an hour, and after two innings the Machine led Somerville 5-0. Jon Morales hit a two-run home run in the first. Two batters later Gabe Rocke hit another, his only hit of the series. In the second Ryan Weigold stole second and Yuigo Sakaguchi singled him home. The series was tied at two games apiece, and Montreal was 21 outs from going to Somerville needing one win in two tries.

It did not get them. Sam Kelly, who had won the first game of the series, gave up three solo home runs, two in the fifth and one in the sixth, and a sacrifice fly made it 5-4 in the seventh. In the ninth Steve Caron came in with one out and a man on first, got the second out, and then Eli Jones doubled to deep right-center and the man on first came all the way around. In the 10th Caron walked one batter, hit the next, and Randy Sorto put an 0-2 pitch over the wall in left. Somerville 8, Montreal 5.

Game 6 was Monday, in Somerville, 41 degrees and cloudy. Dean Salvucci was hit by a pitch in the top of the first and left with a bruised finger. John Kropp, who had left Game 2 in the first inning with a stiff back, started and threw four pitches before his hamstring went. He will miss about four weeks. The bullpen pitched the last eight innings, Montreal had seven hits and no runs, and the season ended 4-0.

I would rather remember the two wins, and they deserve it. Game 1 was in Somerville, where Salvucci hit a two-run home run and walked three times, Tom Fotter doubled home three runs in the sixth, Kelly won and Chris Griffiths saved it, 7-5. Game 3 was here on the 21st, at 34 degrees, partly cloudy, and Jong-su Im allowed two hits in six and two-thirds innings and struck out nine. Weigold had three hits. Griffiths finished it, five outs, and Montreal won 3-0. Im has now pitched 12 and a third innings this October and nobody has

scored against him. He struck out 12 against Galveston and nine against Somerville, and I would put that beside anything the 2005 staff did in its October, and I have been waiting a long time to have something to put beside it.

Weigold went 11-for-24, the most hits by anyone in the series. Salvucci reached base 11 times in 23 trips to the plate, with two home runs and six walks. Morales went 2-for-19 and Rocke 1-for-21. The Machine hit .212 as a club and scored 19 runs in six games.

Somerville has now beaten this club in October three times, in 2007, in 2009 and this week. Montreal won the first meeting, in 2003. And for the second year running the Machine won a series and then went out in this round, last year to Denver, this year to a club that won 106 games.

For three seasons I have been late to this team. I was late in 2030 and late last year, and two weeks ago I was still saying I would believe in this one next spring. So, on time for once: the Machine is a good baseball team. It swept the club with the second-best record in baseball and took the club with the best record to six games, and it did that with one of its starters gone in the first inning twice.

Most of it comes back. Im is signed through 2036, Salvucci through 2034, Sakaguchi through 2036. Weigold has signed for five more years, $55 million in all, beginning next season. Griffiths is signed through 2036 and Kelly through 2035. The club already has $135.8 million committed for 2033. Kaden Allen, Danny Guzman, Bobby Simmons, Matt Jacobs, Mike Demeter, Jose Vicncio and Alex Villarreal reach free agency, $26.8 million of this season's salary between them, and Kropp has a month to mend.

I have written that I remember the weather from the 2030 series better than the baseball. For the record, it was 41 degrees and cloudy in Somerville on Monday, with the wind blowing in from right. I wrote it down out of habit. This time I remember the baseball too.