EL NUEVO DÍA DEPORTES

OCTOBER 28, 2032 · THE SAN JUAN STOGIES BEAT

Stogies slam their way past 100-win Rebels

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

On Saturday the Humidor was full again, 46,789 people at 74 degrees, and for five innings Mike Dibrell did not give them a hit to stand up for. Virginia scored in the first inning, when Chris Wilson stole third and came home on a ground ball, and that was the game. Virginia 1, San Juan 0. The people in the building went home with their club down three games to two and two games to play in Virginia, where it had lost the opener 8-1.

It did not lose again.

On Monday, in Virginia, Dustin Potter did not allow a hit for six innings. He struck out nine, walked one, and in the second inning got a double play on a 3-2 pitch to erase the only other man who reached against him. Chris Wilson led off the seventh with an infield single, and Potter's night ended there, with a 6-0 lead. Most of that lead came from one swing. In the fourth, with the bases loaded, Jim Mosier hit a grand slam to right off John Johnson, and later added a sacrifice fly. Five runs batted in for Mosier, and San Juan won 6-0.

On Tuesday, in the seventh game, Jonathan Mendoza allowed one hit in six and a third innings. It was 0-0 in the seventh when Mosier singled, Danny Cunningham doubled as a pinch hitter, and Mike Boller walked to load the bases for Scott Moore. Moore had missed a month with a concussion and was playing his second game back. He hit an 0-2 pitch 420 feet to left-center. Chris Whittington homered two batters later, Frank Mildner hit a three-run home run in the ninth, and Bill Snyder got the last five outs. San Juan 9, Virginia 3.

That is two grand slams in two elimination games, both on the road, by a club that finished the regular season 82-80. Two weeks ago it beat a Kansas City team that won 97. This week it beat a Virginia team that won 100.

San Juan's first two wins came earlier. San Juan won Game 2 in Virginia on two hits, one of them a two-run home run by Nate Cronin in the eighth inning, and Nate Parker and D.J. Zaccardelli made the 2-1 lead

hold. At the Humidor on Thursday, at 81 degrees, Whittington had four hits including a home run, Willie Martinez stole second and third in the same inning and scored on a ground ball, and Mendoza struck out eight in a 5-2 win. Then came two losses, 5-1 and 1-0, and the long flight north.

Potter has now made four starts this October. He has struck out 31 batters and walked one. Mendoza, who was sent down in the summer after a 6.21 earned run average, has won two games in this series and allowed two runs in 13 innings. The staff allowed 20 runs in seven games against the club that won more games than anyone in the Topaz.

The lineup hit .194 and still scored when it counted. Whittington went 8-for-29 with two home runs. Mosier and Moore drove in nine runs between them, eight of them on two swings. Boller reached base nine times in 24 trips to the plate.

San Juan had never won a postseason series until two weeks ago. Now it has won two, and it is one of the last four clubs playing. This franchise has been this far once before, in 2006, as the Louisville Rivermen, and that October it won the championship.

Mexico City is next. The Luchadores came back from two games down to beat Big Horn in seven. It opens in Mexico City on Thursday and Friday. Then the series comes to the Humidor on Sunday, October 31, for three, and goes back to Mexico City on November 4 and 5 if it needs to. San Juan won the season series three games to one. The franchises have met once in October, in the 2015 first round, when Mexico City's club was the Chupacabras and this one was still in Louisville, and Mexico City won in six.

Snyder came out of Tuesday's game with a dead arm and is expected to miss about a week. Evan Gentz and Marvin Lewis remain on the injured list.

On Sunday the Humidor holds its first conference championship series game. Nobody here has to borrow Louisville's October anymore.