THE STRAIGHT LINE

OCTOBER 28, 2032 · THE SOMERVILLE MONEYLINE BEAT

Moneyline erase five-run hole, finish Machine in six

BY **PRIYA RANGANATHAN** · THE STRAIGHT LINE

Five to nothing after two innings, on the road, in a series tied two games apiece. That was Game 5 in Montreal on Saturday night, at 33 degrees. Bob Reyes gave up two-run home runs to Jon Morales and Gabe Rocke in the first inning and another run in the second, and Sam Kelly, who had beaten Somerville in Game 1, had a five-run lead to work with.

Somerville took it back one run at a time. Randy Sorto and Nate Johns hit solo home runs off Kelly in the fifth, and Phil Butterfield hit another in the sixth. Eli Jones brought Sorto home with a sacrifice fly in the seventh. In the ninth, with two out and Jose Lopez on first, Jones doubled to deep right-center off Steve Caron and Lopez came all the way around to tie it. In the 10th Caron walked Butterfield and hit Steve Frey, and Sorto hit an 0-2 pitch over the wall in left. Chris Charvet had struck out five in two scoreless innings in the middle of all that, Alex Rangel pitched the ninth and Gilberto Toledo the 10th, and Somerville won 8-5.

Two nights later, at home, Jason Sage and six relievers shut Montreal out 4-0, and that was the series, four games to two.

After my last piece JR wrote back about the strikeout-to-walk line. The stat he meant, he said, is strikeout rate minus walk rate. "Call it whatever you want: the 2032 Moneyliners were in another galaxy." I ran it for every staff in the league's 32 seasons, 980 of them. This year's staff struck out 29.7 percent of the batters it faced and walked 8.6 percent, a gap of 21.1 points. No other staff has reached 20. Kansas City in 2026 is second at 19.5, and last year's Somerville staff is third. Measured his way, it is the best staff in league history, and not narrowly.

Against Montreal the same staff walked 27 men in six games, after 15 in five against Denver, and two starts account for 12 of them. JR told me before the series that Reyes would start Game 1 at home because he

had "almost too much rest," and that Chase Martin would start Game 3 in Montreal, "as we need a big start" there. Reyes walked six in five and two-thirds innings and lost Game 1, 7-5. Martin allowed one hit in four and two-thirds, struck out 10, walked six, and lost Game 3, 3-0, because Jong-su Im allowed nothing for six and two-thirds. Reyes finished the series with 11 earned runs in 11 and two-thirds innings. His other start was Game 5, the one that began 5-0, and Somerville won it anyway.

What carried the rest was Sage and the bullpen behind him. Sage started Games 2 and 6 and allowed two runs in eight innings, with 13 strikeouts. In Game 2 Jason White followed him with three and two-thirds scoreless innings and Joel King saved it, 4-2. In Game 6 Sage went four and the bullpen got the last 15 outs without a run. Bob Nelson, back from the herniated disc, faced one batter and struck him out. Over the six games the relievers threw 25 and a third innings and allowed four earned runs.

The lineup hit .236, and most of the damage came from four men. Sorto went 6-for-25 with two home runs, both in Game 5, and five runs batted in. Butterfield hit two home runs and reached base 40 percent of the time. Jones drove in seven, four of them with one swing in the second inning of Game 1. Lopez sprained his ankle running the bases in Game 2, went 7-for-21 for the series anyway, hit a two-run home run in Game 6 and was named Player of the Game. Frey struck out 11 times in 22 at-bats.

Chase Posey came off the injured list and played Game 6, and went 0-for-4. JR had told me Posey might get the nod in a seventh game. The series did not need one.

This is the first October since 2030 in which Somerville has won two series. It is also the eighth time in 32 seasons the club has been one of the last four standing. Four of the previous seven trips reached the final, and all four of those finals belonged to someone else.

Baltimore is next, and the numbers point both ways. Somerville won the first eight meetings this season. Baltimore won the last four, in July and September, by a combined 16-7, and last October it swept Somerville in the first round. The franchises have met six times in October, counting the two when Baltimore's club was the Washington Generals, and each side has won three.

It starts at Moneyline Stadium on Thursday and Friday, moves to Baltimore for three beginning Sunday, and comes back here on November 4 and 5 if it has to. Baltimore beat Boston in five, and its staff allowed nine runs.

Jared Stephens is out three to four weeks with a dead arm. Antonio Reyna is still not back.

Twenty-one point one, the best mark any staff in this league has posted, and Baltimore has beaten that staff four straight times. Process against results: it is the column I have written more often than any other, and the one I would most like to stop writing.