RICHMOND DISPATCH-LEDGER

OCTOBER 28, 2032 · THE VIRGINIA REBELS BEAT

Rebels' bats stall at .177; Stogies take Game 7

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

It was 47 degrees at Rebel Stadium on Tuesday night, partly cloudy, with the wind out to right at eight miles an hour, and for six innings of the seventh game, in front of 46,315 people, nobody scored. D.J. Bakker allowed two hits in five innings. Jonathan Mendoza allowed one in six and a third. It was 0-0 going to the seventh.

Jim Mosier singled off Jeremy Hart. Danny Cunningham, pinch-hitting, doubled him to third. Aaron Gillespie came in and walked Mike Boller to load the bases, and Scott Moore, playing his second game back from a concussion, hit an 0-2 pitch 420 feet to left-center. Two batters later Chris Whittington hit another one out. Chris Wilson doubled two runs home in the bottom of the inning and Jesus Sifuentes homered in the eighth, and it was 5-3, and then San Juan scored four in the ninth. San Juan 9, Virginia 3.

In my last piece I wrote that Virginia had played four seven-game series in two Octobers and won all four. This was the fifth.

The way it got there is going to stay with people. Virginia won Game 1 at home, 8-1, with seven runs in the fourth inning and six good innings from Mike Dibrell. It lost Game 2, 2-1, on two San Juan hits, the bigger one a two-run home run by Nate Cronin in the eighth. It split two in San Juan and then won Game 5 there, 1-0, when Wilson stole third in the first inning and scored on Pio Takami's ground ball, Dibrell did not allow a hit for five innings, and Zeke Tovar finished it. Up three games to two, coming home with two chances.

On Monday Dustin Potter did not allow a hit for six innings. Wilson led off the seventh with a ground ball that nobody could get to in time, and that was the only hit Potter gave up, and by then Mosier's grand

slam in the fourth had made it 4-0 on the way to 6-0. Two nights, two San Juan starters, two hits between them in 12 and a third innings.

Before the series I asked Kaden about Allen Crowe, who had pitched in five of the seven games against Milwaukee without allowing a run, and he did not hedge.

> *"He's definitely in the mix for high leverage innings," he said. "He was saving our ass last series, we need that kind of production out of the pen."*

Crowe pitched one inning in Game 3, in San Juan, and came out of it with a herniated disc. He will miss six or seven weeks. Kaden also told me Jon O'Rourke would be back for this series and would pitch "somewhere around game 3, we'll see. It's going to be shuffling. We'll persevere." O'Rourke started Game 6 and gave up one run in three and a third innings. And he said Meza and Bergeman would stay in the lineup, and they did. Danny Meza went 7-for-24 with three doubles and a home run, the best line on the club.

The rest of the lineup is what I will remember, and not kindly. Against Milwaukee the Rebels hit .320. Against San Juan they hit .177. Eight of their 20 runs came in Game 1, seven of them in one inning. Chris Schmotzer struck out 11 times. Joey Powell, who had 12 hits against Milwaukee, had four. With the game close from the seventh inning on, Virginia went 3-for-35.

The pitching did its share and more. Dibrell won twice and allowed one run in 12 and a third innings. Bakker, Tim Breckenridge and Albin Giolitti all pitched to an earned run average under 1.50. Over seven games the staff allowed 24 runs, nine of them in the last three innings of Game 7.

Now the winter. Wilson and Powell, who carried this club through the first round, both reach free agency, along with Bakker, Chris De Lorenzo and O'Rourke, and Jacob Hickenbottom and Curt Graham, who did not pitch in the big leagues this year. Together the seven account for $49 million of this year's payroll. Schmotzer, Sifuentes and Phil Church have all signed five-year deals that start next season, and Meza is signed through 2034.

I wrote about three road Game Sevens last October until I ran out of ways to do it. This one was at home, and it went the other way, and the man who did it had not played in a month until Monday. Next man up, Kaden says. On Tuesday the next man up was San Juan's.