BALTIMORE LEDGER-STAR

NOVEMBER 7, 2032 · THE BALTIMORE BLUE CRABS BEAT

McHan, Bell shelled; Crabs fall to Moneyline in seven

BY **ROSALIND FEENEY** · BALTIMORE LEDGER-STAR

Jake McHan got five outs in Game 7 in Somerville on Friday. In the second inning Eli Jones doubled home three runs and Steve Frey hit a two-run home run, and by the time Steve Westbrook came in for McHan it was 5-0. Bob Reyes allowed one hit in six innings. Victor Barboza homered in the eighth for the only Baltimore run, and Somerville won 7-1 and took the series four games to three.

The series turned on four starts, two each from McHan and Roy Bell. Bell got one out in Game 1, and Somerville scored nine runs in the first inning, eight of them charged to him. He started Game 5 as well and allowed four runs in five and a third. McHan gave up five runs in four and a third in Game 3, which Baltimore won anyway, and five more on Friday. Between them, four starts, 11 and two-thirds innings, 21 earned runs. Sam Kutka and Antonio Amaya made the other three starts and allowed four earned runs in 17 innings.

That left the bullpen to pitch more of the series than the rotation did, 35 and a third innings to 28 and two-thirds, and it allowed six earned runs. Westbrook, who started the game that ended the Rochester series and won Game 4 in Boston, came out of the bullpen twice here, for four and two-thirds innings behind Bell in Game 1 and two and a third behind McHan on Friday. Matt Locher saved Games 3 and 6 with two innings each. The home run Frey hit off him in the eighth inning of Game 3 was the first run scored against Locher this October, after 10 and a third scoreless innings. Johnny Cunnane, Manny Venegas, Michio Tanaka and Mike Van Voorhis pitched 11 and two-thirds innings between them and did not allow a run.

Kutka and Amaya started three games in this series and Baltimore won two of them. Bell and McHan started four and Baltimore won one.

The hitting came on two nights. Baltimore scored 10 in Game 2, when David Peck hit a grand slam off Chris Charvet in the fourth, and seven in Game 3, when Peck hit a two-run home run in the first and Matt Lamberson broke a 5-5 tie with a two-run home run in the sixth. In the other five games it scored eight runs. The club hit .191 for the series and struck out 79 times. Danny Gaona went 2-for-29 and Justin Clay 3-for-25. Peck, who went 3-for-21 against Boston, went 8-for-29 here with seven runs batted in.

Game 6 was Kutka's, his second win of the series. He walked four and struck out eight in five and two-thirds innings, Gaona tripled home a run in the fourth, and Locher got the last six outs of a 3-1 game. Somerville had two hits, both in the first inning.

This is the third conference championship series Baltimore has reached since the club came home in 2023, and all three have ended in this round. The two clubs have now met seven times in October, and Somerville has won four.

The winter starts with $115.5 million already committed for 2033. B.J. Reyna, who made $17 million this season and finished it on the 60-day injured list, reaches free agency, and so do Francisco Rodriguez, who went 4-for-11 with a home run in this series, and Tomas Ramirez. Cunnane, who saved 41 games, and Fabio Cardia, who hit .309 as the designated hitter, are eligible for arbitration. Westbrook is signed through 2034 and Bell through 2033, and McHan is under club control.

Game 4 is the one that will stay with people here. Amaya allowed one hit in five and a third innings, Cunnane struck out five in two, and it was 0-0 into the 12th. Baltimore had three hits all game and none after the fourth inning. In the 12th, off Jonathan Martins, Jose Lopez stole third and Arturo Garcia singled him home, and Somerville won 1-0. A win would have put Baltimore up three games to one with Game 5 at home.