EL NUEVO DÍA DEPORTES

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Potter fans 10, Stogies take Game 7 to reach final

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

The Humidor held its first three conference championship series games last Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, for crowds of 46,576, 46,785 and 46,406. They saw a 3-2 loss, a 4-2 win and a 5-1 loss, and the club flew back to Mexico City ahead three games to two and lost Game 6 there. On Friday, in Game 7, Dustin Potter struck out 10 in six innings, Dylan Cuffie doubled three times, and San Juan won 8-1.

The Stogies are in the final.

Game 7 was scoreless into the fifth. Then Scott Moore singled home Mike Sims, Chris Whittington doubled home Moore and Cuffie, and it was 3-0. Jesse Thomas homered off Potter in the bottom of the inning, and that was all Mexico City got. In the sixth Sims tripled home Willie Martinez and Nate Cronin singled Sims in. Mike Boller added a sacrifice fly in the eighth and Frank Mildner a two-run home run in the ninth. Steve Peterson struck out the side in the seventh, and Nate Parker pitched the last two innings without allowing a hit.

Cuffie went 4-for-5 on Friday, and the three doubles tie the club's record for a postseason game. For the series he went 17-for-29 with seven doubles. Whittington went 11-for-25 and drove in 10 runs, and Moore scored eight times. As a team San Juan hit .319 and had 79 hits in seven games, 21 of them in the 11-2 win that opened the series.

The 3-1 lead went with two starting pitchers. Matt Bigby left Game 5 after three innings with a ruptured tendon in his finger, and he is expected to miss about four months. Isaiah Logan, who had won Game 2, gave up three home runs and got three outs in Game 6 before his back tightened up; he is listed as day-to-day for about a week. Jonathan Mendoza won Game 4 with seven innings, and Potter, who lost Game 3 at the Humidor, won the one that mattered most. He has made six starts this postseason and struck out 48.

The bullpen covered for both injuries. San Juan's relievers threw 30 and two-thirds innings in the series and allowed four earned runs. Parker pitched five and two-thirds without allowing a run, and Peterson four, with seven strikeouts. Bill Snyder, who missed the start of the series with a dead arm, was back to pitch the eighth inning of Game 4.

Somerville is next. It won 106 games, the most in the league, and San Juan won 82. No two clubs have met in a final with that many wins between them. The fewest wins any champion of this league has had is 84, by Huron in 2020, and the club Huron beat in that final was Somerville.

The series opens at Moneyline Stadium on Sunday and Monday. Games 3, 4 and 5 are at the Humidor on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the first games of a final ever played in San Juan, and Games 6 and 7, if needed, go back to Somerville on November 14 and 15. The clubs played three times in July, all in Somerville, and the Moneyline won two of them in extra innings, 5-4 and 2-1, before San Juan won the third, 4-2.

This franchise has played in one final before, in 2006, when it was in Louisville, and it won that one. On Wednesday the people who filled the Humidor last week get a final of their own.