EL NUEVO DÍA DEPORTES

NOVEMBER 16, 2032 · THE SAN JUAN STOGIES BEAT

Stogies erase 0-2 hole, win title in Somerville

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

It was 37 degrees at Moneyline Stadium when Game 7 began on Monday, in front of 46,786 people and a home club that had won 106 games. Isaiah Logan pitched the first five innings and Somerville did not score in any of them. Frank Mildner hit a ball 422 feet in the fourth, Willie Martinez lifted a fly ball deep enough to center for the second run, and D.J. Zaccardelli got the last five outs. San Juan won 2-1.

The Stogies are the champions of The Big League.

The first two games went the other way. Jonathan Mendoza struck out eight in Game 1 and lost 3-1, all three Somerville runs coming in the first inning. In Game 2 Chris Whittington hit a two-run home run in the first, San Juan led 3-0 going to the bottom of the sixth, and Somerville scored six times in that inning.

Then the final came to San Juan, three games in three days, and the Humidor held 46,694, 46,738 and 46,697. On Wednesday Logan threw six scoreless innings, Martinez singled in the fifth, and Evan Gentz beat the throw home from center for the only run of the game. On Thursday Dustin Potter struck out seven, Mildner hit a three-run home run in the third, and San Juan won 7-3. On Friday, in the rain, Mendoza struck out eight in four and two-thirds innings, Nate Parker got eight outs without allowing a hit, and solo home runs by Martinez and Mildner off Chase Martin were enough to win 2-0.

Game 6 on Sunday nearly ended it early. Whittington doubled in a run in the first and Mildner hit a two-run home run, and it was 3-0. Somerville scored six in the sixth. Martinez homered in the seventh, Danny Cunningham pinch-hit in the eighth and hit one 444 feet, and the club lost 6-5 after the tying run reached base in the ninth.

Martinez was named the most valuable player of the series. He went 10-for-21 with two home runs, five runs batted in and four stolen bases, and scored three times in Game 4. Mildner went 8-for-22 and homered

in each of the last four games. He is 24.

Logan's back tightened up in Mexico City on November 4, in the sixth game of the conference championship series. Six days later he pitched Game 3, and on Monday he pitched Game 7. In 11 innings in the final he did not allow a run. Zaccardelli saved three of the four wins. In 11 appearances this postseason he saved nine games and did not allow a run.

Those three, Logan, Zaccardelli and Mildner, were each paid $500,000 this year.

San Juan won 16 postseason games and lost 10. It beat a Kansas City club that won 97, a Virginia club that won 100, Mexico City, and Somerville, and it won three Game 7s along the way, in Virginia, in Mexico City and in Somerville, all of them on the road. Eighty-two wins is now the fewest for a champion of this league, two fewer than Huron had in 2020.

This franchise's other championship came in 2006, when it played in Louisville. Both have come under Chuck, who took over the Rivermen right before the 2005 playoffs and won the title the next year. This October he was on vacation, with no way to reach his club, for the whole run. Jay, who took over Denver the same year Chuck took over this club, saw "some nice symmetry" in that, and wrote that Chuck, "a quarter century later, ghosts them right before the playoffs to impel them onto another miracle run." Chuck had his own explanation partway through. "Being on vacation with no way to access my team," he wrote to the league, "seems to be the key to success."

The winter brings decisions. Mendoza, who went 3-1 with a 1.78 earned run average in six postseason starts, is a free agent, and so is Martinez. Matt Bigby will spend the first part of it recovering from the finger tendon he ruptured in Mexico City. Potter is signed through 2035.

Three games of a final have been played in San Juan, and San Juan won all of them. The fourth win came in Somerville, in the cold, and it counts the same.