EL NUEVO DÍA DEPORTES

MAY 23, 2033 · THE SAN JUAN STOGIES BEAT

Stogies win seven of eight in extras, trail by one

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

On the first of April the champions came home to the Humidor and swept Virginia, the club they beat in seven games last October. That was the best weekend of the spring here, and the season since has been a good team doing good-team things in an uneven way.

San Juan is 27-21, tied with Kansas City for second in the Topaz, a game behind Huron. The Stogies have won nine series and lost four. They have swept Virginia twice and Milwaukee once. They have also been swept three times: twice by Huron, six games without a win, and once here by Southland.

They keep winning late. San Juan is 7-1 in extra innings and 9-5 in one-run games. In April, at 6-0, I asked Chuck what the secret was.

> *"Who knows?" he said. "Luck so far, it will likely even out."*

It has evened out by one game. I asked him too how a club that won the title with 82 wins gets to more this year.

> *"Just keep taking it one series at a time," he said.*

The run differential is plus-11, which is smaller than the record. That gap is the luck Chuck is talking about. He is honest about it, and it has been fun to watch anyway.

Dustin Potter has been the best pitcher on the island. He is 4-1 with a 2.33 earned run average and 65 strikeouts in 54 innings. Isaiah Logan has a 3.12 and a 2-5 record that he did not earn. Jonathan Mendoza,

who came back for four years after last October, is 0-3 with a 4.47. D.J. Zaccardelli has eight saves and a 2.42 and has become the man at the end of the game.

Chris Whittington, last year's Rookie of the Year, is hitting .300 with 29 runs batted in. Frank Mildner, 25, has 10 home runs, the most on the club. Mike Sims is at .281 and Mike Boller at .276.

Adam Rall is here. He was 12th on the game's Top 100 in March, and he has played 33 games at the big-league level and is hitting .286. I wrote in March that the farm was strong. Now it is helping.

Jamie Bliss, the right fielder signed for five years, has played 11 games. He is on the injured list. Dylan Cuffie, the 34-year-old shortstop, has played 45 games and is hitting .184.

Matt Giglio is 35th on the Top 100 now, Jeff Blanchard 80th and Brandon Jones 76th. Daniel Shuping is still hurt. With the last pick of the first round, the champion's pick, San Juan took Joe Edmunds, a center fielder.

Two in Big Horn this weekend. Then Myrtle Beach comes to the Humidor for four, and with Myrtle Beach comes Willie Martinez, the Most Valuable Player of the final, who signed there two days into the season. He is hitting .278. The people here have not forgotten him. I expect they will stand up.