

MLB

Cueto's 2-hitter sends Royals over Mets for 2-0 lead

By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Johnny Cueto smothered the New York Mets with another big October outing. And the pesky Kansas City Royals kept fouling off Jacob deGrom's best pitches, wearing him down with persistence and prowess.

Cueto never faltered. And as deGrom wore down, the Royals pounced.

Eric Hosmer hit a tiebreaking, two-run single with two outs in a four-run fifth inning that included 14 foul balls, and the Royals rallied to beat the Mets 7-1 Wednesday night and take a 2-0 World Series lead.

Nineteen hours after Hosmer's sacrifice fly won a 14-inning thriller, Cueto pitched a two-hitter, varying his delivery with occasional quick pitches and keeping the Mets off

balance. An excited crowd stood on its feet for long stretches on the rainy night. Some fans wore wigs resembling Cueto's long, dark dreadlocks — including the Royals' mascot, Slugerrr.

With Kansas City two wins from its first title since 1985, the teams take Thursday off. New York's Citi Field hosts its first Series game Friday, when rookie Noah Syndergaard starts for the Mets and Yordano Ventura for the Royals.

Forty-one of the 51 teams to take 2-0 leads in best-of-seven World Series have gone on to win the title, including nine straight since Atlanta stumbled against the New York Yankees in 1996.

Kansas City had the best contact hitters in the major leagues this season, missing on just 19.7 percent of its swings, according to STATS. The Dodgers and Cubs swung and missed 58 times in their first three

World Series Gm 2



postseason outings, but he got just three swings and misses against the Royals — his career low. Of his 94 pitches, 23 were fouled off by the Royals.

Cueto has struggled on the road, where opposing fans taunt him by repeating his name in a sing-song voice. But since the Royals acquired the free-agent-to-be from Cincinnati in July, he's been Johnny on the spot at Kauffman Stadium. He pitched two-hit ball over eight innings to win Game 5 of the Division Series against Houston, and Kansas City lined up its Series rotation to have Cueto starting

Games 2 and 6 at home.

Cueto struck out four and walked three. Both hits off him were soft singles by Lucas Duda, an infield hit to third that took advantage of the shift in the second inning and an opposite-field RBI single to left in the fourth. Cueto let loose some emotion at the end of the eighth inning, when Alcides Escobar made a nifty play to retire Juan Lagares for the final out. As Escobar sprinted past him, Cueto exchanged a flamboyant high five with the shortstop.

After Yoenis Cespedes flied to center for the final out, Cueto pointed to the sky and was congratulated by catcher Salvador Perez. Cueto pitched the first Series complete game by an AL pitcher since Minnesota's Jack Morris won Game 7 against Atlanta in 1991.

DeGrom, 3-0 in the postseason coming in, allowed four runs,

six hits and three walks over five innings in a hairy matchup of pitchers with contrasting long locks. Pitching with seven days' rest, deGrom held Kansas City to one hit through four innings but got in trouble in the fifth, when he walked Alex Gordon on a 3-2 slider leading off.

Alex Rios followed with a single and Escobar fouled off a pair of bunt attempts before driving and 0-2 slider up the middle for a tying single.

Ben Zobrist's grounder advanced the runners, and Lorenzo Cain fouled off four pitches before a flyout to short center. Hosmer singled off the mound into center field for a 3-1 lead, and Kendrys Morales' singled in another run.

Gordon added an RBI double in the eighth off Jon Niese, a ball off the glove of shortstop Wilmer Flores.

PREPS: Irrigon looks to keep postseason bid strong against Pilot Rock

Continued from 1B

scheduled for 7 p.m.

second. "Heppner is such a tremendous team that plays to the whistle on every single play. They maximize their talent because of that."

And just like they did in a 37-12 over Irrigon two weeks ago, Bailey said he'll need his players on the sidelines to recognize Heppner's formations from their film study and call them out to the players on the field.

"If we're correct 50 percent of the time I'm going to be happy," he said. "Right now we have 32 kids on our roster and it's going to take all 32 kids to get this victory. It's not just the 11 guys that are our on the field."

"We're going against history here."

Heppner is coming off a 61-14 win over Irrigon and beat Weston-McEwen 20-12 in last season's match-up before advancing all the way to the state final. A Weston-McEwen win could force a three-way tie for the CBC crown if Stanfield is able to beat Culver. Kickoff is

CULVER at STANFIELD — The Culver Bulldogs (3-5, 1-3 CBC) will still be clinging to some slim playoff hopes when they come into Stanfield for Friday's game.

However, they won't be able to sneak past the Tigers (7-1, 3-1) who still have a chance to tie for the Columbia Basin Conference title. The Tigers scored 62 points in a win over Pilot Rock last week, and that was without leading rusher Tyler Monkus, who was hurt on the game's first series.

He's back fully healthy to face the Bulldogs, though, and the only two teams to hold the Tigers to less than 30 points this season have been Heppner and Weston-McEwen. Together those two defenses have allowed just 196 points this season. Culver has surrendered 325 on its own and is giving up 43 a game in CBC play.

Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m.

PILOT ROCK at

IRRIGON — The No. 12 Knights (5-3, 1-3 CBC) are looking to stop a three-game skid as they remain primed to earn one of the four at-large playoff berths available in Class 2A this season.

Irrigon's offense has been slowed in recent weeks, averaging just 13 points in a pair of losses after averaging 48 a week during its 5-1 start. Pilot Rock (0-7, 0-4) hasn't been slowing anybody down lately, however, and is giving up 51.3 points a week since entering league play. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. in Irrigon.

VALE at UMATILLA — Umatilla has a chance to secure a spot in the state playoffs with a win, which would also give them one of the great upsets of the season as No. 5 Vale (6-1, 2-0 EOL) enters the game averaging 43.4 points a game.

No. 18 Umatilla's defense is ranked third in the Eastern Oregon League allowing 25.9 points a game, and the offense is second with an even 25. Vale's closest game of the season was a 34-20 win

over Baker in Week 4, and it has outscored its EOL opponents 119-20 in the last two weeks. Umatilla (5-3, 1-1) is 2-1 at home this season and coming off a 35-24 road win over rival Riverside. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m.

RIVERSIDE at NYSSA — Riverside lost its chance at a playoff spot last week with a 35-24 loss to rival Umatilla, but could still complicate the playoff race with a win over the Nyssa Bulldogs (4-3, 1-1 EOL).

Nyssa has the historical edge in this match-up, but comes into the game averaging just 20.6 points on offense to Riverside's 19.9. The Bulldogs boast a much more dominant defense, though, and are giving up 20.7 on average while the Pirates (2-5, 0-2) are allowing 35.8. Nyssa lost to Vale last week 49-8. Vale beat Riverside 70-12 two weeks ago. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. (MT)

ARLINGTON / CONDON at PERRY-

DALE — Arlington's defense is coming off its worst statistical performance of the season in a 58-33 loss to Sherman that put the Honkers on the verge of playoff elimination. It was the first time an opponent had score more than two touchdowns on the Honkers (4-2, 3-2 SD4), which would need a win this week plus a Dufur loss to secure an automatic playoff berth since Dufur holds the head-to-head tiebreaker.

Short of that scenario, Arlington would need to move up several spots in the OSAA ranking to claim the only at-large berth, and a win over No. 5 Perrydale (7-0, 5-0) would certainly help them do that. The Pirates have the district's No. 1 defense averaging 54 points a game and beat Sherman 52-20 last week. Arlington still has the No. 1 defense giving up 16.7 a game, but Perrydale is only giving up 19.5. Kickoff is scheduled for 5 p.m. in Perrydale.

SOUTH WASCO at IONE — The visiting Redsidés will be trying for

their first win of the season in a game that has no playoff implications. Ione (2-5, 1-4 SD4) will again be without leading rusher Henry Padberg (knee) but got quarterback Jason Juarez (shoulder) back in a limited capacity for last week's 50-14 loss to Dufur.

The Cardinals have struggled to find consistency this season, but have more going for them than South Wasco (0-7, 0-5), which is being outscored 59-14 on average this season. The Redsidés lost 36-0 to Mitchell/Spray/Wheeler last week. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. in Ione.

MONUMENT / DAYVILLE at ECHO — It'll be a catfight to stay out of the Special District 1 cellar in an afternoon game on Friday.

The Echo Cougars (2-6, 0-4 SD1) haven't won since Week 3 of the season and are coming off a 54-6 loss at Pine Eagle, but the Monument/Dayville Tigers (1-7, 0-5) haven't won since their season opener and come in off a 98-8 drubbing at the hands of Crane.

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