

THE FLUSHING LEDGER

Queens' Home for Mets Baseball Since the Bad Old Days

SPORTS · BASEBALL

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2030

CITI FIELD, FLUSHING, N.Y.

GAME RECAP · METS BEAT

Soto Detonates a Walk-Off Slam, Mets Hold Off the Nats to Stay Two Up

Down to their final out with the lineup's cold bats doing what they've been doing all week, New York needed one swing to save the weekend — and Juan Soto delivered the biggest one Citi Field has seen all year, a bases-loaded, one-out grand slam that turned a 4-1 deficit into a 5-4 win and kept a pesky Washington club two games back in the East.

By **Marisol Kwan**, Mets Beat Writer · *The Flushing Ledger*

For eight and two-thirds innings on Sunday, this looked like exactly the kind of game the Mets have been quietly losing all month — a rival that refuses to go away, a lineup that can't buy a hit when it matters, and a deficit that was starting to feel less like a hole and more like the whole story. Washington had built a 4-1 lead behind home runs from J. Perez and D. Romo, New York's middle of the order was doing its best impression of a lineup on empty, and a Nationals club that has spent the last two weeks nipping at New York's heels in the standings looked poised to close the gap to one. Then Jackson Holliday reached on a throwing error to open the bottom of the ninth, two more Mets found their way aboard, and Juan Soto stepped in against left-hander Adrian Morejon with one out and the bases loaded. One pitch later, Citi Field was a different building — a walk-off grand slam to left-center, a 5-4 final, and a two-game division cushion that, for one more night, held.

A LINEUP STILL SEARCHING

The larger story here isn't really the ninth inning — it's everything that made the ninth inning necessary. Ryan Clifford went 0-for-4 and is now hitting .178, a number that looks more like a bad month than a bad week at this point, and he wasn't alone in the deep freeze. Spencer Torkelson (1-for-4, now .241), Francisco Lindor (1-for-4, now .232) and Y. Rodríguez (1-for-4, now .192) combined to go 3-for-12 with no runs driven in. Outside of Soto and a productive Jackson Holliday (2-for-4, a run scored, a stolen base), this lineup has become a two-man show more nights than not lately, and Sunday nearly cost them a series against the one NL East team playing well enough right now to make that a real problem.

Garrett Crochet didn't make it easy on the offense to bail him out, either. New York's ace worked into the sixth but left trailing 4-1 after allowing both of Washington's home runs, finishing with 6 hits and 4 earned runs over 5.2 innings against 9 strikeouts — swing-and-miss stuff paired with a couple of mistakes that Washington didn't miss. From there, Reid Detmers, G. Jax and C. Gomez

combined for 2.1 scoreless innings to keep the deficit at three, quietly the difference between a laugh and a game the Mets could still steal in the ninth.

THE NATS WON'T GO AWAY

Washington has been the story nobody in Flushing wanted to write about this month — a club picked to finish behind New York that has instead played its way into the middle of the division race. Kyle Bradish was excellent for six innings on Sunday, and J. Perez's first-inning two-run shot off Crochet was exactly the kind of quick-strike damage that has let the Nationals hang around against better rosters all season. Had Sunday gone the other way, that gap at the top of the NL East would have been down to a single game heading into next week. It didn't, but the margin for error keeps shrinking, and this lineup's recent cold spell is the reason why.

“It's nice to step up when your team needs you.”

— JUAN SOTO, ON THE WALK-OFF GRAND SLAM

ONE SWING, TWO GAMES

Whatever else is true about this lineup right now, Soto has made a habit of being the answer when nothing else is working. He finished 2-for-4 with the homer, a walk, four runs driven in and a run scored, and it's the second time in recent weeks he's turned a game the Mets had no business winning into one they walked off the field celebrating. Edwin Díaz worked a scoreless ninth around the chaos to pick up the win, his record now 3-4, while Morejon — who got Holliday to reach only on the error, then couldn't put out the fire that followed — took the loss. New York moves to 48-29 and stays two games clear in the East. The lineup's slump didn't go anywhere overnight. For one Sunday, it didn't have to.

GAME SNAPSHOT

Final	Mets 5, Nationals 4
W / L	Díaz (3-4) / Morejon
Mets record	48-29
NL East standing	1st, 2.0 games up on WSH
Soto	2-4, HR, BB, 4 RBI
Holliday	2-4, R, RBI, SB
Clifford	0-4 (now .178)
Crochet	5.2 IP, 6 H, 4 ER, 9 K

Walk-off grand slam: Soto off Morejon, bottom 9th, one out, bases loaded, to left-center.