

SPORTS

Ex-Viking Kendrick MVP as Nationals win NLCS

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It was merely the first inning, yet fans kept rising out of their seats to applaud or yell or twirl their red towels, to chant “Let’s go, Nats!” and “M-V-P!” and various players’ names, enjoying every moment of a seven-run outburst that would, eventually, propel their city to its first World Series appearance in 86 years.

And then, a couple of hours and sev-

eral innings later, as the Washington Nationals were protecting a shrinking lead, those same spectators, 43,976 strong, stood and shouted and reveled some more Tuesday night, giddily counting down the outs needed to finish off an NL Championship Series sweep of the St. Louis Cardinals.

From 19-31 during a mediocre May to the Fall Classic in an outstanding October.

Extending their stunning turnaround, the wild-card Nationals got

RBI’s from middle-of-the-order stars Anthony Rendon and Juan Soto in that breakout first inning, and Patrick Corbin’s 12-strikeout performance and a trio of relievers helped hold on to beat St. Louis 7-4 in Game 4 of a lopsided best-of-seven NLCS.

Now NLCS MVP Howie Kendrick and his teammates get plenty of time to rest and set up their rotation before beginning in a week against the Houston Astros or New York Yankees. Houston leads the best-of-seven AL

Championship Series 2-1 after winning Game 3 at New York 4-1 Tuesday.

“You only learn how to win through mistakes and failures,” Kendrick said. “All those failures paid off today.”

Kendrick was an all-state second baseman for St. Johns River Community College in 2002, the year the Angels drafted him. Recruited by Sam Rick out of West Nassau High School, Kendrick is the first former St.

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Johns player to reach the World Series.

The last time the World Series came to the nation’s capital was 1933, when the Washington Senators lost to the New York Giants in five games. The lone baseball championship for the city was in 1924, when the Senators defeated the Giants.