Written by Staff Reports
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Christian Villanueva powered a five-run third inning with a grand slam, as the Hickory Crawdads cruised to the 9-5 victory against the Lakewood BlueClaws, before 1,551 fans at L.P. Frans Stadium on Sunday evening. The game was delayed in the bottom of the third for 39 minutes due to rain. The Crawdads (30-26) took an early lead right away against losing pitcher Ervis Manzanillo (3-3) in the bottom of the first inning. With a runner at first and one out, Tomas Telis then ripped an RBI double to right-center field, plating Jurickson Profar all the way from first for the 1-0 lead.

Hickory eventually broke the game open, despite a 39-minute rain delay. Jonathan Roof reached on an error and Martinez walked before the rains came. Following the rain delay, Profar ripped a quick single to center that loaded the bases. Telis had an RBI single scoring Roof and Villanueva followed with a grand slam over the left field wall that gave Hickory a commanding 6-0 lead.

The BlueClaws (28-28) rallied in the top of the fourth. Three consecutive singles with one out loaded the bases. Miguel Alvarez drove in Lakewood's first run on a fielder's choice. Consecutive run-scoring singles by Edgar Duran and Carlos Perdomo capped the rally cut the lead in half at 6-3.

Lakewood picked up another run in the top of the sixth. Jeff Lanning and Alvarez sparked the inning with back-to-back singles. Both men advanced to second and third on a sacrifice bunt. Perdomo drove in his second run of the game with an RBI single making it 6-4.

The Crawdads kept the BlueClaws at bay with a rally of their own in the bottom of the sixth. With one out, Jake Skole and Kellin Deglan reached on consecutive singles, putting runners at first and third. And following a pitching change, Roof then welcomed Tyler Knigge with an RBI double off the left field wall that scored Skole. And with runners at second and third, Martinez ripped a two-run double down the left-field line, scoring Deglan and Roof to make it 9-4.

Lakewood scored a run in the top of the seventh on back-to-back doubles by Geancarlo Mendez and Jim Murphy that made it 9-5. But Colby Killian got out of the inning with no further damage being done.

Joe Van Meter (4-0) picked up where Killian left off, tossing two scoreless frames in the eighth and ninth to settling the issue and picking up the win.

NOTES: The Crawdads host the Lakewood BlueClaws for Education Day, presented by Sylvan Learning Center, on Monday at 11 a.m. Gates open at 10 a.m.