

Crawdads clinch 1st-Half Championship

Written by Sraff Reports
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The Hickory Crawdads clinched the 1st-Half Northern Division Championship and a 2011 SAL Playoff berth with a 5-3 victory against the Charleston RiverDogs before 1,991 fans at L.P. Frans Stadium on Saturday.

The Crawdads victory, combined with Kannapolis beating Greensboro 1-0, in 12 innings on Saturday, clinched the title for Hickory. It marks the first time since 2002 that the 'Dads have won the first half division championship, and only the second time in team history.

Charleston (25-44) got on the board in the top of the first inning as Rob Segedin and Gary Sanchez had back-to-back RBI singles that gave Charleston a 2-0 advantage. Nick Tepesch settled down and threw four scoreless innings after that. Meanwhile, Charleston pitcher Mikey O'Brien and reliever Kramer Sneed retired 18 of the 19 Crawdads they faced through the first six innings.

The RiverDogs added a third run on an RBI double by J.R. Murphy in the seventh before the Crawdads (40-27) began chipping away in the bottom of the inning against O'Brien. With two outs and the bases empty, Christian Villanueva kept the inning alive with a walk. Andrew Clark followed with a two-run homer cutting the deficit to just 3-2.

Hickory completed the comeback with three runs in the bottom of the eighth against losing pitcher Kelvin Perez (0-4). Jake Skole led off with a single and went to third on a two-base error committed by shortstop Jose Mojica on a Jhonny Gomez grounder. Gomez was retired at second on the play, but it moved the game-tying run just in scoring position just ninety feet away. Teodoro Martinez brought in Skole with an RBI double down the left-field line, tying things up at 3-3. Martinez then charged home on an RBI triple by Jurickson Profar, who scored on an RBI grounder by Odubel Herrera, giving the Crawdads a 5-3 lead.

Ryan Rodebaugh picked up his tenth save with a scoreless ninth inning. Joe Van Meter (5-0) picked up the win in relief.

NOTES: The Crawdads close the first half of the season against the Charleston RiverDogs on Sunday at 5 p.m. for Craw"DADS" Day! All dads will get a FREE ticket to Sunday's game, with a pre-game father-child catch on the field from 4 - 4:30 p.m. It is also Prostate Cancer Awareness Day.