

## Pitcher's Duel Walks Away from 'Dads

Written by Staff Reports  
Saturday, 04 May 2013 21:40

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The Hickory Crawdads and Savannah Sand Gnats were locked in a great pitcher's duel for most of the evening Saturday night, but everything changed in the 8th when the 'Dads bullpen lost their command and subsequently the game 9-2 in front of 2,142 fans at L.P. Frans Stadium.

Hickory's Connor Sadzeck and Savannah's Rainy Lara combined for one of the best-pitched games at L.P. Frans this year. Both right-handers breezed through the first four innings with both clubs combining for just 5 base runners. 'Dads center fielder Lewis Brinson even added some flair to the early shutout with two spectacular catches in the fourth, including a jumping catch at the wall to rob Sand Gnats first baseman Jayce Boyd of a home run.

Finally in the fifth, it was the Crawdads who scored the first tally to take a 1-0 lead. Joe Maloney was able to reach base thanks to a two-out error by Savannah center fielder Eudy Pina and shortstop Luis Marte came through with an RBI single to left. The lead would be short lived however, as the Sand Gnats played some small ball in the sixth to re-tie the game at 1-1. Pina led off the inning with a double to left and was sacrificed over to third on a bunt by Chad Zurcher. One out later, Zurcher was able to score on a wild pitch by Sadzeck. The earned run was actually the first against Sadzeck since April 11th, a string of more than 25 innings.

Following a scoreless seventh, Hickory went to the bullpen and brought in John Kukuruda to try to keep the game tied. Kuk unfortunately was never able to find his command, as the righty allowed a walk and single before falling behind Pina and eventually walking him intentionally to load the bases with nobody out.

Desperately trying to save the game, Crawdads manager Corey Ragsdale called upon his best reliever Alexander Claudio. Thrust into a do-or-die situation, Claudio allowed a bloop, 2-RBI single to Zurcher to give Savannah a 3-1 lead. It all fell apart from there, as the 'Dads committed two errors and Claudio allowed two infield hits resulting in two more Savannah runs and a 5-1 deficit.

The Sand Gnats would tack on four more runs in the ninth on a grand slam by Kevin Plawecki to take a 9-1 lead, before Jorge Alfaro hit a solo homer in the bottom of the ninth to end the scoring. Alfaro's homer was the 1,999th in Crawdads franchise history, moving the club within one blast of their 2,000th.

Lara (4-1) earned the win for the Gnats after allowing just an unearned run on four hits and six strikeouts over seven superb innings. Sadzeck took a no-decision after going a career long seven innings himself while giving up just one run on four hits and four strikeouts. Kukuruda (2-1) took the loss for the 'Dads after giving up three runs without retiring a batter in the eighth. The Crawdads (16-12) and Sand Gnats (18-9) will face off again Sunday at 5:00 pm in game two of their 4-game series.

NOTES: The Crawdads now sit just one home run shy of hitting their 2,000th homer in franchise history. Make sure to come out to L.P. Frans Stadium over the rest of the home stand for a chance to witness history and win some cash! One lucky fan in attendance for the record setting blast will take home 2,000 dimes (\$200) and also get to meet the home run hitting Crawdad for a photo and autographed ball...Cinco de Mayo!: Come celebrate Cinco de Mayo at L.P. Frans! All margaritas, Bud Light Lime-A-Ritas and Coronas are just \$2 at the Crawdads' Cafe...Individual Tickets for all Crawdads home games are available right now at [Hickorycrawdads.com](http://Hickorycrawdads.com) or by calling (828) 322-3000! Group outings, corporate partnerships, Buffalo Wild Wings Claw Club memberships and Ticket Books are also available right now by calling the Front Office at (828) 322-3000.