

Late Homers Lift 'Dads to Win in Extras

Written by Staff Reports

Thursday, 18 April 2013 08:02

The Hickory Crawdads entered the ninth inning against the Asheville Tourists Wednesday night trailing 5-4 and looking like they would come up just short in their sweep attempt. Jordan Akins and Joey Gallo had other ideas. Akins launched a game-tying solo home run to lead off the ninth and Gallo blasted a go ahead bomb in the top of the 10th to give the 'Dads a 6-5 win and a series sweep at McCormick Field.

The late innings heroics started in the ninth, when Akins stepped to the plate against Asheville closer Raul Fernandez with the 'Dads trailing 5-4. Fernandez promptly blew two 97 mph fastballs past Akins to put the Crawdads outfielder down 0-2, before Akins turned on the third heater and deposited it over the left-center field wall to tie the game at 5-5.

Fast-forward to the top of the 10th and it was Gallo's turn, as the Hickory third baseman crushed a 3-2 fastball from Hickory native Patrick Johnson over the 36-foot wall in right to give the Crawdads their 6-5 lead. The long ball was the second of the night for Gallo, giving him his first multi-home run game of the season and tying him for the league lead with 6 total bombs on the year.

In support of the late game home runs was Hickory relief pitcher Alexander Claudio. Making his fourth appearance of the season, Claudio entered the game in the seventh with the 'Dads down 5-3. The southpaw would go on to toss four shutout innings with just an infield single allowed and five strikeouts. His final 2 Ks came with the tying run on second in the 10th, as he struck out both Drew Beuerlein and Julian Yan to preserve the win.

The back and forth pace of the game started early, with the Crawdads striking in the first on Gallo's first homer over the 42-foot wall in right-center. The Tourists would respond with a tally of their own in the bottom of the frame, however, to tie the game at 1-1.

Hickory re-took the lead in the fourth when Jorge Alfaro hit a 2-RBI double to left to extend his hit streak to 10 games and give the 'Dads the lead back at 3-1. Once again the advantage would be short lived though, as Asheville scored twice in the bottom of the fourth and two more times in the fifth to take their first lead at 5-3.

The score would remain the same until the 8th, when second baseman Ryan Rua started the rally with an RBI double to bring Hickory to within a run at 5-4.

Rua finished the night as one of three Crawdads with a multi-hit game, going 2-3 with a double and an RBI. Gallo joined in with his 2-3 night with two HR, 2 RBI, 2 walks and 4 runs scored, while Akins finished 2-4 with his game-tying solo blast.

Claudio (1-1) picked up the well-earned win for the 'Dads while Johnson (0-1) took the loss making his South Atlantic League debut.

With the victory Hickory (7-7) sweeps their 3-game set against Asheville (6-8) and moves to .500 for the first time this season. The 'Dads will try to extend their season long 3-game win streak Thursday night, when they return home to start a 4-game series against Charleston at 7:00 pm.

NOTES: The Crawdads now return to LP Frans for a 4-game series against the Charleston RiverDogs. The weekend is chalk full of great promotions including Thirsty Thursday and Pajama Night on Thursday. Friday is Bark at the Park Night while Saturday is Rally Towel and Star Wars Night with the first 500 fans taking home a FREE rally towel....Individual Tickets for all Crawdads home games are available right now at 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.

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Photo Courtesy: Joey Gallo, Hickory Crawdads