

'Dads Win Wild 12 Inning Affair

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In a game that saw five ejections, four lead changes, a reversed walk-off home run, and nine total runs in the final inning, the Hickory Crawdads overcame a 4-run 12th inning deficit by scoring five in

the bottom of the 12th to walk-off with a 7-6 win over the Kannapolis Intimidators at L.P. Frans Stadium.

In one of the wildest and most bizarre games ever played at L.P. Frans Stadium, the Crawdads went through the emotional gamut during a season long 12-inning game that also lasted a season long three hours and 57 minutes.

A fairly routine contest went into the 7th inning tied at 1-1, thanks to the solid pitching by Luis Parra for the 'Dads and Kyle Hansen for the Intimidators. Everything changed in the top of the seventh, when Kannapolis center fielder Kale Kiser singled to right field with one out. Second baseman Micah Johnson followed with his own single to right seemingly moving Kiser from first to third base, but field umpire Brian Peterson ruled that Kiser was out due to runner's interference. The call immediately brought Kannapolis manager Tommy Thompson out to argue, a fight that would eventually get Thompson ejected.

The Intimidators would go on to score the go ahead run in the inning and take a 2-1 lead, but not before DH Jason Coats was also ejected for arguing balls and strikes after striking out looking to end the frame.

The Crawdads would respond with their own bizarre inning in the bottom of the 8th. David Lyon and Luis Marte led off the frame with potential groundouts that became infield singles, before DH Nick Urbanus was hit in the helmet by a 95 mph fastball. The hit-by-pitch, which fortunately deflected off of Urbanus' helmet brim and left him uninjured, loaded the bases with nobody out. The 'Dads would tie up the game one batter later when Nick Vickerson picked up on RBI fielder's choice groundout.

The 2-2 tie would go into the bottom of the ninth, when Crawdads center fielder Jordan Akins led off the inning against Intimidators reliever Adam Lopez. Akins proceeded to hit what was ruled a game-winning, walk-off home run down the left field line, giving Hickory an apparent 3-2 win. Amidst the 'Dads celebration, however, the umpires convened to discuss the ruling and eventually overturned the home run call in favor of a foul ball.

Crawdads manager Corey Ragsdale and pitching coach Ryan O'Malley were both ejected arguing the call, while the rest of the 'Dads were forced to walk back on the field to resume the game. The Crawdads would go on to leave the winning run on third base in the ninth, sending the contest into extra innings.

The contentious contest would remain tied at two until the top of the 12th, when Kannapolis broke through against Hickory reliever Jose Valdespina. The Intimidators plated four runs in the inning, two earned, on two hits, a walk, a hit batsman and a costly error by second baseman Ryan Rua to go ahead 6-2. In yet another unusual twist, Vickerson was actually brought in from left field to pitch in the inning. The normal position player got Kannapolis left fielder Justin Jirschelle to ground out to short and send the 'Dads to the bottom of the 12th down by four.

The Crawdads didn't give up however. Newly inserted center fielder Lewis Brinson walked in his first at-bat of the game, while the now relief pitcher Vickerson also walked along with Joey Gallo

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to load the bases with nobody out.

The Intimidators would go to the bullpen again and bring in right-hander Zach Isler to try to salvage the game. The rally continued for the 'Dads however, as Rua singled to left to score both Brinson and Vickerson and narrow the score to 6-4. Following an infield pop out by Nomar Mazara, Akins once again stepped to the plate with a chance to win the game. In a bit of poetic justice, the formerly scorned outfielder came through with a 2-RBI, game-tying triple to right to even the score at 6-6.

The improbable comeback was concluded in the next at-bat, when Akins scored the winning run on a wild pitch to give Hickory the amazing 7-6 win.

Vickerson (1-0) earned the win for Hickory while pitching for the first time this season. The normal position player also finished the game 2-5 at the plate with an RBI, a walk and a run scored. Isler (2-2) took the loss.

The incredible win is the 5th straight victory for the 'Dads and keeps Hickory (26-19) only two games back of Hagerstown for first place in the SAL North Division. Kannapolis (15-28) falls 12 games back with the loss. The 'Dads and Intimidators will match up again Friday night at 7:00 pm in game two of the four-game series.

NOTES: Friday is the first Fireworks Friday of the season and Salute to Veterans Night with all active and retired military personnel receiving up to 10 free tickets! Saturday will feature the zany antics of the Zooperstars while the first 1,000 fans with paid attendance will take home a free mouse pad courtesy of Blue Ride Energies and 1290 AM WHKY. Finally, Sunday is another Bark at the Park while the Fur Circus will be in attendance as well! Check out the Crawdads promotions page for full details of every home game this season....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.

Photo Courtesy: Ryan Rua, Hickory Crawdads