

Gallo's Two-Run Blast Carries 'Dads To Victory

Written by Staff Reports
Sunday, 02 June 2013 11:57

The Hickory Crawdads were one out away from losing their fourth straight game by one run Saturday night, before an already back-and-forth affair escalated into an extra-innings showdown. The 'Dads rallied for the lead in the top of the ninth, lost it in the bottom of the frame before finally prevailing with two-runs in the 10th for an 11-9 win over the Rome Braves at State Mutual Stadium.

A game that featured three ties, three lead changes and a season high 30 combined hits saw the Crawdads head to the ninth looking down the barrel of another one-run loss. Down 8-7, Akins led off the inning with a swinging strikeout, but Braves catcher Tyler Tewell had the ball pop out of his glove an roll away allowing Akins to reach first base. Akins would go on to steal second base and take third on an error, but two strikeouts later he was still standing at third with the 'Dads down to their final out.

Enter Nick Vickerson, who lined a double inside the third base bag to plate Akins and tie the score at 8-8. Jorge Alfaro followed with an RBI single to center to score Vickerson and put Hickory ahead 9-8. Crawdads manager Corey Ragsdale brought in his closer Alexander Claudio to finish out the win, but with one away Rome left fielder Josh Elander crushed a solo home run to left-center field to re-tie the game at 9-9.

Undeterred, the 'Dads led off the 10th inning with a double by Ryan Rua to bring up Joey Gallo with the go-ahead run at second. Previously 0-4 on the night, Gallo came through in the clutch with a towering 2-run bomb to dead center field, lifting Hickory back ahead at 11-9.

Given a second chance to secure the win, Claudio worked around a leadoff ground rule double to strike out the side and secure the Crawdads 11-9 win. Prior to the late inning drama, the Crawdads led off the game with a run in the first on a Rua RBI double to take a 1-0 lead. The Braves tied the score at 1-1 in the second, before the 'Dads rallied for two more tallies in the third to go ahead 3-1.

The advantage would last until the bottom of the fourth, when the Braves plated six runs on six hits to chase 'Dads starter Tyler Smith and take a 7-3 lead. Hickory began chipping away at the deficit in the fifth when Nick Williams smoked a 2-RBI triple to left to make the score 7-5. The Crawdads completed the comeback the next inning, with Akins and Joe Maloney each picking up RBI doubles to tie the game at 7-7.

The Braves would score a run in the bottom of the seventh off of 'Dads reliever Ryan Bores to take their 8-7 lead, and set up the late-game theatrics. All nine Crawdads hitters finished the game with at least one hit, while seven of the nine had a run scored or RBI. Williams led the hit parade going 3-5 with a triple and 3 RBI. Maloney also had a 3-hit game finishing 3-5 with two doubles and an RBI, while Akins (2-5, 2B, 2 R), Rua (2-5, 2 2B, RBI), and Vickerson (2-5, 2B, 3 R) all finished with multi-hit games as well.

Claudio (3-1) earned the win after blowing the save while Braves reliever Frank Lafreniere (3-3) took the loss after allowing the Crawdads runs in the 10th. With the win Hickory (30-24) improves to 6-0 on the year in extra-inning games and moves to within a game of first place Hagerstown in the SAL North Division. Rome (29-24) remains three games back in the South Division with the loss.

The Crawdads will go for the four-game split with the Braves Sunday afternoon, with first pitch scheduled for 2:00 pm.

NOTES: The Crawdads will conclude their 7-game road trip with one more game in Rome on Sunday before returning home on Tuesday, June 4th for a 3-game series against the Lakewood

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Blue Claws.....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: Joey Gallo, Hickory Crawdads