

Lopez Leads 'Dads To Victory In Debut

Written by Staff Reports

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Starting pitcher Frank Lopez made his Hickory Crawdads debut Tuesday night and quickly established himself as a force to be reckoned with in the South Atlantic League, as the southpaw shutdown the Lakewood BlueClaws and rode a 3-run home run by Jorge Alfaro to a 4-1 Hickory win at L.P. Frans Stadium.

The Crawdads looked like they might take a step back in the pitching department with ace C.J. Edwards on the disabled list, but at least for one night Lopez made his best Edwards impersonation with 5.1 no-hit innings to start his outing. The lefty would end the night allowing only an unearned run on one hit, two walks and six strikeouts over 5.1 innings pitched.

The Crawdads offense would do the rest, with Alfaro providing the big blast in the third inning in the form of his 10th home run of the year. The 3-run bomb to left-center field broke open a scoreless game and gave the 'Dads a 3-0 lead.

Lakewood would get their only run of the game in the sixth, when Hickory reliever Jose Leclerc allowed an inherited runner to score from third on a wild pitch to make the score 3-1. Leclerc would settle down after that, going 1.2 scoreless innings with just one hit allowed.

The 'Dads would tack on the final run of the game in the eighth, when left fielder Nick Williams plated Nick Vickerson with an RBI double to left to make the score 4-1. Closer Alexander Claudio would do the rest, as the All-Star reliever got the final six outs of the game for his team-leading 9th save of the season.

Lopez (1-0) earned the win for his dominant debut while BlueClaws starting pitcher Kevin Walter (0-1) took the loss after allowing three runs on four hits, three walks and five strikeouts over his five innings on the mound. Alfaro finished the night 1-4 with his 3-run homer, while Williams went 2-4 with two doubles and an RBI.

With the win the Crawdads (31-25) stay just one game back of first place Hagerstown in the SAL Northern Division, while the BlueClaws (23-33) fall nine games back of the pace. The 'Dads and 'Claws will face off again Wednesday night at 7:00 pm in game two of their three-game series.

NOTES: The Crawdads are back home on Wednesday and Thursday this week. Wednesday is Unemployment Night while Thursday is Outfitters Uniforms and Shoes Healthcare Appreciation Night along with Thirsty Thursday and Fan vs. Food....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: Jorge Alfaro, Hickory Crawdads