

'Dads Take Two From Suns

Written by Staff Reports

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In their most important series of the season the Hickory Crawdads played some of their best baseball of the year, as the 'Dads swept their doubleheader with the Hagerstown Suns Wednesday night. Joey Gallo blasted 3 home runs to lead the 'Dads to a 6-2 win in game one, while Andrew Faulkner and Cody Kendall combined to shutout the Suns in a 1-0 Hickory win in game two.

Following the rainout on Monday night, the Crawdads entered Tuesday's twin bill just a half game ahead of Hagerstown for first place in the South Atlantic League Northern Division. By the end of the night however, the 'Dads pushed that advantage to 2.5 games with only 6 games left in the first half of the season.

Game one was all about Gallo, as the third baseman became just the second Crawdad ever to hit three home runs in a single game. Gallo kicked off the long ball barrage in the first, when he lined a 2-run shot into the Hickory bullpen in right-center to put the 'Dads ahead 2-0.

The Suns tied up the game with two tallies of their own in the bottom of the frame, but Gallo and company responded in the third with two more runs to take a 4-2 lead. DH Nick Vickerson led off the inning with a walk, followed by Gallo who doubled off the wall in left-center to put runners at the corners with nobody out. Vickerson would eventually score on a passed ball while Gallo came in on an RBI ground out by Ryan Rua.

Fast-forward to the fifth when Gallo struck for his second homer of the game, this time a towering solo blast to right to increase the Crawdads lead to 5-2. Gallo would cap off the historic night in the seventh, when he once again launched a solo homer well beyond the right field wall to put Hickory ahead 6-2.

Gallo finished the game 4-4 with three home runs, a double, four RBI and four runs scored. The slugging third baseman also set a Crawdads single game record with 14 total bases in the win. Gallo's outburst made a winner out of 'Dads starting pitcher Frank Lopez (2-0) who allowed two runs on three hits, one walk and eight strikeouts over his five innings pitched. Closer Alexander Claudio earned his 11th save of the year after striking out six batters over two shutout innings. If offense was the highlight of game one, then the pitching of Andrew Faulkner and Dixon Anderson dominated the nightcap. The two hurlers matched each other zero for zero over the first five innings, with the 'Dads and Suns tied at 0-0 going into the sixth.

Both the Suns and Crawdads were only able to muster three base runners each over the first five frames, with Faulkner striking out seven while Anderson fanned 9. Finally in the top of the sixth inning, Nick Williams broke through against Anderson with a two-out, RBI triple to left to score Vickerson and give Hickory a 1-0 lead.

That was enough for 'Dads reliever Cody Kendall who held the Suns scoreless over the final two innings to give Hickory the 1-0 win and the doubleheader sweep. Faulkner (2-0) earned the win after shutting out the Suns on just one hit, two walks and seven Ks during his five innings pitched. Anderson (4-4) was the hard-luck loser, after he allowed only the one run on two hits, three walks and 11 strikeouts. Kendall (5) earned the save for closing out the game.

The wins move the Crawdads (37-27) 2.5 games ahead of Hagerstown (33-28) and three games in front of West Virginia in the Northern Division. The 'Dads and Suns will match up again Wednesday for another doubleheader, with first pitch of game one scheduled for 6:05 pm.

NOTES: 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

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calling the Front Office at (828) 322-3000.

Photo Courtesy: Joey Gallo, Hickory Crawdads