

Aces Score Six in Fourth, Beat Braves

by Matt Tymann

July 2, 2008 HERNDON—With four runs in the first two innings, and starting pitcher Keith Hessler throwing a perfect game through three, things looked good for the Herndon Braves early in Wednesday's game against the Alexandria Aces.

Unfortunately, all that matters is how they look at the end of the game.

After getting the first out in the third, Hessler gave up a walk to Phil Blakely, and the Aces quickly followed that up with four consecutive singles, scoring three runs. All told, Alexandria (7-12) scored six runs in the fourth, gaining a lead it would never relinquish on its way to an 8-5 victory.

Alex Ferrera got things started off right for the Braves (8-13), as he hit a solo home run off of Aces' starter Ryan Burke in just Herndon's second at-bat of the day. Then, in the second, after a Drew Gehringer groundout had scored Michael Cheatham to give the Braves a 2-0 lead, Ferrera hit a two-out double to score two more runs. That gave Herndon their 4-0 lead through just two innings.

Ferrera reached later in the game on a walk, making him the only Brave to get on base three times in the game. Connor Mullee was the only other Herndon player to reach twice, recording a single and a double. His double came in the bottom of the fourth, and scored Gehringer, cutting the Braves' deficit to 6-5.

The Aces got their final two runs in the top of the seventh inning, on an Andrew Brouse home run. John Skaggs, who had walked in the previous at-bat, scored on the play. After scoring five runs on seven hits in the first four innings, Herndon managed just one hit in the final five, a Shane Davis single in the fifth. The team's late-inning struggles magnified the importance of the six base-runners it left stranded in the first four innings, potential runs that seemed like they might be unnecessary at the time.

Burke came out after those first four innings, and was replaced by JT Odom. Odom worked three innings of one-hit ball, striking out four and walking just one, and earned the win to improve to 2-0 on the season. Despite the great start, Hessler received the loss for Herndon, dropping his record to 0-2.

The Aces' win ties the season series between the two teams at two games apiece. Herndon and Alexandria, which is in its first season of existence, are competing for the first annual Commonwealth Cup, to be awarded to whichever team wins the season series. The teams next meet at Alexandria's Four Mile Run Park on Friday, July 11 at 7:00 PM.

The Braves have this Thursday, July 3rd, off as the team will host the second annual Braves' Golf Classic at Virginia Oaks Golf Course in Gainesville. Herndon's next game is this Saturday evening at 7:00 PM, against the Youse's Maryland Orioles. The Orioles

currently lead the Cal Ripken Sr. League with a 17-5 record, and hold a 4-0 lead in the season series against the Braves. Jaeson Hudnall (2-0, 1.99 ERA) is the probable starter for Herndon