

Wild Sixth Inning Highlights Braves' Victory

by Matt Tymann

July 6, 2008 HERNDON—So, who had Sean Holliday in the pool for Sunday's key game-tying run?

After Connor Mullee was beamed in the helmet by a Brett Jones fastball, and forced to leave the game, the injury-depleted Herndon Braves had no choice but to use Holliday, a pitcher, as his pinch-runner. Two Brett Jones wild pitches and a Matt Simone sacrifice fly later, Holliday was crossing home plate, and erasing the College Park Bombers' one-run lead.

Eric Woodrow was the Brave who came through with the biggest (and only) hit of the sixth, a two-out, two-RBI single that put Herndon ahead for good, 6-4. But Holliday's pinch-running efforts symbolized the sixth, an inning in which the Braves scored what proved to be the winning three runs on just one hit, all after losing one of their best players to a head injury.

Mullee had lain on the ground for almost ten minutes, not motionless, but bleeding from a cut on the side of his head. Trainer Laura Brady came out with gauze, but could not fully stanch the bleeding. Mullee was taken to a local hospital for stitches, but is not expected to sustain any long-term damage.

Later in the sixth, Jones gave way to reliever Tyler Doughty after throwing three straight balls to Alex Ferrera, including the two wild pitches that advanced Holliday to third. Four Braves in all received a free pass in the inning, with Ferrera, Michael Cheatham, and Shane Davis all walking. Ferrera and Cheatham would each come around to score on Woodrow's single.

Besides the injury to Mullee, the sixth also saw a Cheatham foul ball rocket into the Bombers' dugout and hit an unidentified player, and two separate baseballs escape from the College Park bullpen and dribble down the first-base line, stopping play. And partway through the inning, home plate umpire Chris Vail called time, ripped off his mask, and confronted the Bombers' bench about their loud complaining at his strike zone.

But none of that mattered much to the Braves (9-14), who took advantage of a distracted Bombers team to score those three runs, and take their only lead of the game, as well as the only one they would need.

Woodrow not only hit the game-winning single, but also knocked in the Braves' first run of the game, scoring Cheatham in the third inning on an RBI groundout. That cut Herndon's deficit to 2-1, as College Park (8-9) had scored two in the first, off a Brian Hangbers home run and a Ryan McDonald RBI double.

The Bombers extended their lead to two in the top of the fourth, but the Braves tied it up in the bottom of the inning, off of a two-run home run by Ferrera. League batting leader Michael Celenza's solo shot in the fifth gave College Park its third lead of the game at 4-3, and set up Herndon for its unorthodox comeback.

Reliever Paul Rodriguez got his team-leading fourth win of the season in just one inning of work, and is now 4-0. Jones took the loss for College Park, dropping to 0-2.

The Braves' win came in the home half of a rare home/road doubleheader. Both games were played at Braves' Field, but due to a lack of field availability, game 2 was recorded as a Bombers' home game. Scheduled starters for game 2 were Pat Devlin (0-0, 3.48 ERA) for Herndon, and Jacob Lago (0-2, 5.05) for College Park.