

Aces Score A Little Early, A Lot Late; Beat Braves

by Matt Tymann

June 24, 2008 HERNDON—Heading into the 9th inning, fans at Braves' Field thought they were in for an exciting finish between their Herndon Braves and the visiting Alexandria Aces. Instead, they got a blowout.

The Aces scored five runs in the top of the ninth, turning a 2-1 lead into a **7-1 lead**, and went on to win by that same margin. Michael Cheatham did single to lead off the bottom of the ninth for Herndon, but Brandon McCreery retired the next three Braves' batters to end the game, and secure Alexandria's fifth win of the season.

The exclamation point to the Aces' big ninth inning was a two-run home run by Andrew Brouse, but much of the damage had been done already. After Adam Clark walked to lead off the inning, Tommy Grandieri, Nate Clark, and Jared Norris followed with three consecutive hits off of Blake Hasebrock. Nate Clark and Norris each picked up RBI, scoring Adam Clark and Grandieri. A John Skaggs sacrifice fly gave him his second RBI of the day, drove in Nate Clark, and set up Brouse for his dagger.

Alexandria (5-5) had scored its first two runs in the first two innings of the game, getting one in the first on a Skaggs single (which also scored Nate Clark), and another in the second on an Adam Clark single which drove in Josh Wilson.

The Braves (4-10) fought back in the fifth, turning a leadoff single from Lee Bolyard into a run, thanks to a wild pitch from starter Kevin Cobb and a groundout from Eric Woodrow. That made the score 2-1, and preceded three straight scoreless innings from both teams.

Both the seventh and eighth innings saw Herndon squander scoring opportunities. Matt Simone tripled with two outs in the seventh, but Woodrow grounded out to Nate Clark at short to end the inning.

In the eighth, the Braves again made a two-out push: consecutive singles by Gant Elmore and Joe Charron put runners on first and third for Connor Mullee, who was hitting .349 coming into the game. Mullee made good contact with the ball, but hit it right to Grandieri in center field. That would prove to be the Braves' last good opportunity to tie the game or take the lead.

Skaggs was the offensive star of the game for Alexandria, as he finished three-for-four with two RBI. Wilson also had two hits, and scored a run. Nate Clark scored two runs and drove in another, and Adam Clark was one-for-two with two walks, an RBI and a run scored.

Simone and Elmore each had two hits for the Braves, who did have seven as a team, to go with four walks. Simone's triple was Herndon's only extra-base hit of the game, however.

Cobb (1-2) got the win for the Aces, giving up just the lone run on three hits and four walks in six innings. He struck out five. Derek Anderson pitched five strong innings for Herndon, giving up just one earned run on three hits and two walks, but did take the loss to fall to 0-2 on the season.

The Braves will travel to Knights Field to take on the Rockville Express (3-10) on Wednesday evening, with the first pitch scheduled for 5 PM. Keith Hessler (0-0, 3.00 ERA) is the scheduled Herndon starter, while Trent DeLazzer (0-2, 2.45) will likely take the mound for the Express.