

Hyannis Comes Up Short in 14 Inning Marathon at Orleans

By: Dylan Vazzano

ELDREDGE PARK, ORLEANS, MA – A Cape League classic unfolded inside Eldredge Park on Wednesday, as it took 14 innings to decide a winner between the Hyannis Harbor Hawks and the Orleans Firebirds. Deep into the steamy summer night, Orleans (10-1) finally put a lid on the marathon of epic proportions, after Cody Kulp (Shippensburg) raced around from second to score on a Brandon Trinkwon (Santa Barbara) error to give the Firebirds a 6-5 victory, their eighth in a row to become the first team on the Cape with ten wins.

With runners at first and second and one down in the final frame, Pi'ikea Kitamura (Hawaii) smacked what looked like a routine grounder to the shortstop Trinkwon. However the sophomore from Tustin, CA could not handle it cleanly, and then in his haste threw the ball away, allowing Kulp to score all the way from second with the game-winning run.

"It's just a tough game tonight, but we battled throughout," said Brett Michael Doran, (Stanford) who played a key role in the contest with two hits including a grand slam in the game's opening stages. "We competed for 14 innings and there's no way you can be upset with our effort."

Doran's long ball helped propel Hyannis (1-10) to a commanding 5-0 lead in the top of the second inning. Orleans' starting pitcher Kyle Hunter (Dartmouth) had retired the first four batters of the game before Blake Austin (Auburn) reached on a Kitamura throwing error with one down in the second. The Firebirds defensive miscue opened the door to a Harbor Hawks hit parade, as the next four batters collected base knocks, capped off by the Doran slam.

Brad Zebedis (Presbyterian) kicked things off with a liner to right to plate Austin, which was promptly followed by a Zach Alvord (Auburn) single, and then a Jeff Shalk (UAB) opposite field knock to load the bases with only one away. Up stood Doran, who smoked a 2-1 Hunter offering over the wall in left center to give Hyannis the early 5-0 advantage.

The five run lead would prove to be short lived after Orleans began to chip away in the bottom of the second. JT Riddle (Kentucky) began the comeback trail with a two-run no doubter beyond the wall in right to cut the deficit to 5-2. An inning later, it was Reed Gagnani's (Virginia) turn to light up the scoreboard, as the Richmond, VA native ripped a solo homerun to left center to bring the Firebirds within two.

In the bottom of the fifth, the comeback had officially been completed. Daniel Aldrich (College of Charleston) led off the frame with a single to right, followed by an Angelo La Bruna (Duke) double into right center to put runners on second and third with none out. A Blake Austin pass ball snipped the Hawks lead to 5-4, before Hyannis starting pitcher Scott Firth (Clemson) compound the problem by walking the next two batters in Jay Gonzalez (Auburn) and the aforementioned Pi'ikea Kitamura. The final base on balls, the fifth of the game for Firth, signaled an end to his outing as out came Hawks' Manager Chad Gassman and in came reliever Carson Cross (UConn).

A fielder's choice, a pickoff, and a strikeout later, the inning was over and the game was knotted up at 5-5.

Cross would serve as an opening act for what each bullpen had in store for its grand performance. Zero upon zero upon zero upon...well you get the idea. Arm after arm with a resounding script all too similar. They came, they saw, they conquered, leading to an offensive doldrums that blanketed over Eldredge Park.

The Firebirds' Dylan Clark (Elon), 3.2 innings of one hit baseball. Cross, 3.0 innings of one hit, five strikeout ball. Trevor Gott (Kentucky), a scoreless inning. Andrew Smithmyer (East Carolina), 1.1 without a run. Kyle Crockett (Virginia), 4.0 innings, one hit, six strikeouts. Just to name a few.

When it was all said and done, 14 relievers combined to throw nine innings without surrendering a single *earned* run. The Trinkwon error finished off the lengthy affair, as Jimmy Hodgskin (Troy) suffered a tough luck loss, while Dylan Covey (San Diego), by virtue of recording one out in the top of the 14th earned the win.

"Tonight showed we have the ability to compete with anyone," said the Hawks' Brad Zebedis, the offensive star of the game with four hits in six trips to the plate. "We played the top team in the league and it took 14 innings to decide an outcome. There are a ton of positives that came out of tonight, and you can even say it's a good loss, if that makes sense."

Hyannis will have a day off Thursday (6/28) before returning home to McKeon Park on Friday (6/29) to take on the Wareham Gatemen. First pitch is scheduled for 7:00pm.