



PawSox' Serrano takes Bulls by horns

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DURHAM, N.C. -- As Pawtucket right-hander Jimmy Serrano climbed through the minors during the last eight years, his E.R.A. rose along with him.

Last year, pitching in Triple A for both Cincinnati and Oakland, he allowed just under four runs per nine innings. This year, after two starts for the PawSox, he arrived at Durham Bulls Athletic Park for yesterday's 11 a.m. start with a 9.35 E.R.A.

After six shutout innings -- featuring six strikeouts -- that number is now down to 5.52.

Backed by a solid offense, Serrano teamed with Manny Delcarmen and Mike Holtz to deal Durham its first shutout loss of the season, 6-0. Serrano kept up his pace of striking out a batter per inning (14 Ks in 14 2/3 innings).

With busses lining up on Jackie Robinson Way to shuttle home thousands of school children in attendance on "education day," Holtz kept up the strikeout pace by whiffing the side to end the game. The Pawtucket pitchers recorded 11 of their 27 outs by strikeout.

"This is what I expect every time I go out," said Serrano (1-1). "It's a good step in the right direction."

Serrano's shutout was only truly threatened when Durham put runners on second and third in both the second and fifth innings. A soft grounder ended the first rally and Willie Harris helped Serrano by running down Delmon Young's drive to the 400-foot sign in center to end the fifth.

The heart of Durham's order -- B.J. Upton, Young and Elijah Dukes -- went a combined 1-for-11.

"I know those guys are good. You hear what they can do, and you definitely don't want to see what they can do," Serrano said.

The early start didn't faze Serrano or first-baseman Jeff Bailey, who went 3-for-3, including a two-run homer over the 32-foot wall in left that gave the PawSox a 2-0 lead in the fourth.

"You've just got to act like it's a 1 o'clock game, mentally. You've got to quit complaining and go play," said Bailey. "Sometimes it's better. You don't have time to think about your swing too much and get in your own head."

The PawSox scored single runs in the fifth and sixth innings, with their two-run eighth punctuated by a long homer to right-center from designated hitter Hee-Seop Choi.

Pawtucket is now 7-7 thanks to its 3-3 road trip, which concludes with 7 p.m. games tonight and Friday.

"I thought it was an outstanding effort by our boys today," PawSox manager Ron Johnson said. "The quality hitters they have in this lineup really magnifies the outings by Serrano, Delcarmen and Holtz."

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