



PawSox take advantage of Bulls' generosity

A four-run third inning, which is helped by Durham, is the springboard to a victory by Pawtucket.

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DURHAM, N.C. -- Now Durham knows how it feels.

After benefiting from a handful of walks, passed balls and wild pitches to win on Thursday, the Bulls gave Pawtucket a similar number of freebies in a four-run third inning last night.

The PawSox gladly accepted the gifts en route to a 9-5 win in front of 10,021 fans at Durham Bulls Athletic Park.

The win and split of the four-game series evened Pawtucket's record (8-8) and halved its eight-game southern road trip.

After a rocky relief effort hurt the PawSox on Thursday, lefty Abe Alvarez took the pressure off the bullpen and kept Durham (10-6) off balance during his five innings last night. He used a fastball that was barely above 80 mph and a slower curve and changeup to record two strikeouts and induce 10 fly-ball outs. Alvarez, who allowed an unearned run in the fifth, improved to 3-0 this season and is 14-6 in his PawSox career.

"Today was a battle, and I was getting behind guys," he said. "This team is a really good offensive team, and I want to get ground balls to keep my infield involved. But when you get guys out like that (pop-ups), I'll take it."

Pawtucket's third inning was highlighted by Hee-Seop Choi's one-out bases-loaded single to left that scored leadoff man Ron Calloway. It was the eighth straight game in which Choi had reached base.

The PawSox scored three more runs in the frame without a hit. Alejandro Machado came in on a wild pitch by Durham starter Jason Hammel (1-1), and Dustin Pedroia scored on a passed ball. Enrique

Wilson's sacrifice fly scored Choi but ended the inning as Luke Allen was thrown out at second anticipating a throw home.

Cla Meredith replaced Alvarez and sailed through a 1-2-3 sixth, striking out two.

After Choi's third homer of the season -- a two-run shot to left -- made it 7-1, Meredith came out for the bottom of the seventh and struggled.

He walked No. 9 hitter Fernando Cortez to start the seventh, and then gave up three straight run-scoring hits to make it 7-4.

Shortly thereafter, Enrique Wilson's first error of the season allowed Delmon Young to score from third and chased Meredith after 1 2/3 innings.

Veteran lefty Mike Holtz came in and struck out Kevin Cash to end the inning.

"Not that he's the closer, but our (chance) to save the ballgame was in the seventh inning," manager Ron Johnson said. "And then we stretched him and he ended up finishing."

In the eighth, the PawSox got two of those runs back on catcher Jim Buckley's first homer of the year, over the 32-foot-high wall in left, which made it 9-5.

Holtz earned his first save of the year by closing the game with 2 1/3 scoreless innings.

The PawSox return to McCoy Stadium to face Buffalo tonight (6:05) in the opener of six-game homestand.

Online at: http://www.projo.com/pawsox/content/projo_20060422_22pawsox.2204ea62.html