

Grizzlies' offense explodes against Grays

The Fourth of July fireworks came a few days early in Cheyenne, as the Grizzlies exploded for 17 runs on 21 hits in a 17-8 win over the visiting Greeley Grays Thursday evening.

Cheyenne took an early 1-0 lead in the first inning, but the offense really got going in the second inning when Cheyenne brought 17 batters to the plate. Fourteen reached and 13 scored, resulting in a 14-0 lead after two innings.

The inning began with a Mike Henrichs single to right field. Second baseman Mike Wido lined a shot just over third base and into left field to put runners on second and third a batter later. Then, with Kevin Logan at the plate, Henrichs scored on a wild pitch, and Wido was brought across on Logan's fielder's choice. He would reach and advance to second on a throwing error before Jose Jauregui singled, followed by Mike Domenick being hit to load the bases. Grays' starter Jarron Cito brought across the third run of the inning with a walk to Jefre Johnson.

"When you get ahead, it's so nice," Johnson said. "We all get to take a little bit of a breather. When you're up 10, the pitchers get to go out there and just let it fly. It changes the atmosphere in the dugout a little bit. You still go out there and do your business, but you play relaxed."

Ryan Javech then doubled to deep left-center, clearing the bases, and two batters later, Andy Athans singled to bring home Mike Lessig and chase Cito out of the game.

Things didn't get better for the Grays, though, as Cito's reliever allowed the first six batters he faced to reach base before getting the third out of the inning. Henrichs doubled, his second hit of the inning, Wido singled, Logan doubled, Jauregui and Domenick walked and Johnson brought home all three with a bases-loaded triple.

"For the most part, we go into the game with a game plan and have a good idea of what types of pitches a pitcher has and when he typically throws certain pitches," head coach Luke Wetmore said. "We try to communicate with each other and do a good job of taking away a pitcher's pitch.

"If you have a guy on the bump that throws a fastball and curveball and his changeup isn't very good, if you take away one of those first two pitches, now he's only got one pitch and a not very good pitch. You make him one dimensional and can really attack him. We hit the gaps on a couple of curveballs, 0-2, because we were sitting on it and waiting for it."

In the game, each starter reached base at least once, with eight of them scoring and seven driving in runs.

Johnson and Javech, batting fourth and fifth in the lineup, combined for seven hits and 10 RBI in the game.

"I got fortunate to get up with guys in scoring position," Johnson said. "I got a few pitches that were left a little up and I took advantage of that. I stayed patient and it paid off."

The game was especially special for Johnson, who was planning in front of his father, who is in town for the weekend.

“It’s great,” he said. “Instead of talking to him on the phone about how I did, he’s here to see it. Being successful at the plate (Thursday night) was kind of icing on the cake.”

Cheyenne extended its lead to 15-0 after three innings, but two runs in the fourth for Greeley and five in the fifth, made it 16-7, closing the book on starting pitcher Bryce Reid.

Reid was nearly perfect through three innings, allowing just one hit and striking out five. He needed just 36 pitches to get through the first three innings, and got ahead in the count with first-pitch strikes to 11 of the first 12 hitters he faced.

Reid picked up his team-leading fifth win, working five innings, allowing seven runs (five earned) on six hits and four walks, while striking out five.

“He probably lost a little focus after being up 14-0,” Wetmore said. “Most college kids do. He was absolutely dominant through those first three innings, though. For the most part our pitchers threw strikes. When you’re in the strike zone, and you let your defense make plays, we’re going to get outs.”

Chad Correa worked three innings of relief, allowing just two base runners and striking out four batters. It was his second consecutive appearance where he has worked three innings without surrendering a run.

Nick Colbert worked for the second night in a row, allowing a leadoff home run to third baseman Tyler Wallace before retiring the side.

The Grizzlies have now scored in double digits in three of their past four games and are averaging nearly nine runs a game this season, leading the MCBL.

“We already have pretty quality hitters, but most of the time, what I talk to them about is doing their job with runners in scoring position,” Wetmore said. “We have unselfish guys, so they’re stepping up to the plate with the mindset of helping the team out. We talk about being team-first guys and getting the hands inside the baseball. It’s not rocket science or anything.”

Cheyenne has nearly doubled its opponents, outscoring them 184-94 on the season.

“We’re a team that can do something when we’re not hitting well because we have great team speed, but when we’re swinging the bats well, it just makes it that much easier to put things together and get wins.”

Cheyenne hosts the second-place Fort Collins Foxes Friday at Pioneer Park at 6:30 p.m. The Grizzlies lead the Foxes by a half game in the standings.

Nic Hallisey
Cheyenne Grizzlies Intern
nic.cheyennegrizzlies@gmail.com