

Grizzlies dominate Foxes, tied for first place

A night after playing with professionals, the Cheyenne Grizzlies came out and looked as professional as they have all season, dominating the Fort Collins Foxes 10-2 and claiming a first-place tie with the Fort Collins in the MCBL standings.

Starting pitcher Mike Lessig shut down Foxes hitters while the Grizzly offense exploded for 10 runs on 11 hits in the win.

"I think they're (the Foxes) the second best team in the league to us so it's good to always battle with those guys," head coach Aaron Holley said. "What we're doing better now is, first of all, we didn't make an error defensively until that last inning, and secondly, we limited our walks, which is huge."

Lessig pounded the zone, throwing several first-pitch strikes and continually getting ahead in the count.

"Mike got ahead of hitters early," Holley said. "He threw less than 100 pitches in seven innings. When you get a pitching performance like that, that sets the tone. He came out, struck out two in the first inning, was throwing strikes and we just rolled from there."

After one trip through the lineup, Lessig set down all nine hitters he faced in just 27 pitches, striking out four. In all, he finished the night hurling seven frames allowing just three walks and two hits, both coming in the fourth inning. He struck out 10 batters.

"I felt great (Thursday night)," Lessig said. "My arm was a little tight from the tryout (Wednesday) but it loosened up and I was throwing strikes, which is important. I had two pitches working well today; I was able to get ahead of guys with my fastball and keep guys off-balanced with my curveball."

Cheyenne's offense got behind Lessig early, scoring twice in the second, twice in the third and once in the fourth.

In the fifth, they took advantage of six Fort Collins walks to bat through the order and put up four runs to make it 9-0. In that inning, the Foxes used three pitchers.

"We got on base 14 times from free bases," Holley said. "When we weren't getting hit or walking, though, we had good approaches at the plate. Guys are starting to understand certain things about themselves and how different teams are going to pitch them. They're getting a lot more comfortable off the plate."

Eight different plays recorded hits Thursday, including K.C. Judge, who went 3-for-4 with a walk, two runs scored and an RBI, Mike Wido, who drove in two runs and Mike Hendricks, who went 2-for-3 with a walk, a run scored and a run driven in.

"With lefties I'm usually letting the ball travel a little more," Hendricks said. "That was just my plan, see a fastball out and drive it to opposite field, especially with runners on, trying to put something on the right side."

The Grizzlies have now won three in a row and six out of their last seven games, including consecutive wins against the Foxes after dropping the first three meetings against Fort Collins.

Chad Correa relieved Lessig throwing a 1-2-3 eighth and Taylor Fallon finished the game, allowing two runs, both coming unearned.

“I think we knew we could beat them earlier in the year, we just had a couple bad games where we made a few errors early in the game and got ourselves behind,” Hendricks said. “(Thursday night) we jumped on them right away.”

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