

Volcanoes rally to defeat Senators in seven innings

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Despite the Volcanoes leaving eight runners on base for the game, Nick DiBenedetto came through for his team when they needed it most.

Trailing 3-1 in the bottom of the sixth, DiBenedetto knocked a two-out, three-run run single to give the Volcanoes the 4-3 victory against the Salem Senators in a seven-inning contest on Friday, June 18.

“That was a clutch hit by Nicky. He has been clutch for us all year,”

Volcanoes manager Tony Torcato said. “You can't get better than that.”

After a pair of runners reached on free passes with two outs in the top of the second, Senators outfielder Jordan Myrow stepped to the dish to try and give his team the early lead.

Myrow got a hold of a fastball, launching it into the gap in left center field. Volcanoes left fielder Nick Adgar appeared to get to the spot in time, but the ball glanced off his glove and fell harmlessly to the outfield grass, allowing both Senators runners to score.



Senators base-runner Jordan Drake gets tagged out at the plate by Volcanoes catcher Gabriel Cotto.
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By Charles Preston

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The Senators held the 2-0 advantage until the bottom of the third, when the Volcanoes got their first run of the game on a swinging-bunt RBI-single by Tony Holton.

It would be the only run that Senators starting pitcher A.J. Burke would surrender as the tall right-hander would throw five innings, giving up just four hits and striking out six.

In the top of the fourth, the Senators got back-to-back singles by Angeddy Almanzar and Jordan Drake to begin the inning. After a sacrifice bunt from Myrow, Almanzar was able to score on a balk by Volcanoes pitcher Eric Ezersky to put the Senators up 3-1.

Later in the inning, the Senators got a little too aggressive on the base paths, which ended up costing them a run. After Danner Salsberry got hit by a pitch, the Senators second baseman attempted to steal second, forcing a throw from Volcanoes catcher Gabriel Cotto. Salsberry was called safe on the play, but on the throw, Drake tried to score from third and was cut down at the plate on a rifle from Volcanoes shortstop Garrett Kueber.

In the top of the fifth, Mavericks League CEO Mickey Walker made his debut on the mound for the Volcanoes. Despite not pitching for two years, Walker was the Greater Valley Conference Player of the Year for McNary in 2014 and pitched collegiately at St. Martin’s University.

“It felt great. It is a dream come true to play for the Volcanoes. It feels good to play baseball again,” Walker said.

After giving up a base hit to the first batter he faced, Walker forced the

next batter to fly out to right field, then fanned the next two hitters to get out of the inning.

“It took me a little while to get going, with the adrenaline pumping and everything. I went 2-0 on the first two batters and that is never a good formula, and both of those at-bats ended in hard-hit balls. But the next two at-bats I was able to get ahead in the count,” Walker said. “My fastball was feeling pretty good and I was able to blow it by them.”

“Mickey is a great pitcher. It was fun seeing him out there. He had some pretty good zip on his fastball and he threw well. I can’t wait to see him throw in the future,” Torcato added.

After trailing for nearly the entire game, the Volcanoes offense finally broke through in the bottom of the sixth when Alan Vazquez replaced Burke on the bump.

With one out in the inning, Cotto was hit by a pitch and Bryan Ruby followed with a sharp single. After Vazquez struck out the next batter, he issued a walk to Kueber to load the bases, which brought DiBenedetto to the plate.

DiBenedetto worked the count to full before fouling off a trio of pitches. On the fourth payoff delivery, the Volcanoes first baseman roped a line drive into the left center field gap that fell for a hit. Since it was a full count, runners were going at the start of Vazquez’s motion to the plate, so all three runners were able to score on the single to give the Volcanoes the 4-3 lead.

“I was ready for the fastball. He throws the ball hard, so I knew he was probably trying to go with that,” DiBenedetto said. “I was super excited



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