

Late Start Equals Impressive Win over Kell JV 17-4

February 28, 2024

It was one of those games that you wanted to be on THIS side of in a game. Not only did the game start later than the scheduled time- first pitch was at 8:35pm- it took an inning for the Pope bats to start... more on that in a minute. The game start delay was due to the varsity game running over due to a rain stoppage and had both JV teams warming up for longer than expected.

Ellis Couch picked up the win for the Greyhounds in his first start of the season. Until this evening, Couch had made two relief appearances. The right-handed freshman gave up three hits over 3 and two thirds innings tallying 1 earned run, 2 strikeouts, and 5 walks.

In the bottom of the 1st, Couch was throwing hard but gave up back to back doubles to Kell. There was a sense in the crowd that the evening was going to be late and long for the Greyhounds. Couch, however, shook it off, caught his breath, struck out the number four and five batters, and shut down what could have been a huge inning for the Longhorns with a tapper back to the mound. The Greyhounds ended the inning down 0-3.

The 2nd inning was an offensive explosion by the Greyhounds with seventeen batters going to the plate. The Hounds capitalized on walks- 4 total, hit by pitches- 3 total, a sac fly, well places hits- 4 singles and 1 double, and clutch performances that led to an additional 6 runs being plated with two outs.

Everett Espe led off the inning with a walk, **JC Slavis** singled, and **Hal Mitchell** squared up to bunt his entire at bat and ended up drawing a walk. **Greg Gastley** singled over the second baseman's head scoring both Espe and Slavis. **Chandler Mathis** was hit by a pitch loading the bases. **Ryan Healy's** full count walk sent Mitchell home tying the score at 3-3.

Aaron Best's sac fly to the left fielder scored Gastley breaking the tie score. **Parker Troughton** was hit by a pitch loading the bases, again. **Thomas Williams'** carefully placed a line drive between third base and the shortstop into left field allowed Mathis to score and runners on second and third. **Maddox Corya** saw some great pitches and struck out for the second out of the inning.

The young pups weren't ready to turn it off with two outs. With the score 5-3 and the lineup already batted around, **Everett Espe** came up for his second appearance of the inning. Espe hit a grounder to the second baseman who bobbled it allowing Espe to reach on the error and **Ryan Healy** to score. **JC Slavis** hit a 1-2 pitch for a double deep to left field that cleared the bases of Williams, Troughton, and a hustling Espe. **Hal Mitchell** walked again in the inning... this time by getting clocked by a pitch.

The Longhorns changed pitchers at this point. Gastley welcomed the new pitcher to the game by swatting a 1-2 pitch in front of the center fielder. Slavis made the turn and put on the jets to

cross the plate from second. **Chandler Mathis** worked a 3-2 count for his second walk of the inning, as well. **Aaron Best's** pop up to the shortstop ended the inning with a score of 11-3 Pope. Scoring 11 runs in an inning confused the single digit score board for a minute. The press box was stumped but finally decided on recording a number 1 in the second inning space.

The Longhorns made some noise to start the bottom of the second, but Couch and the defense weren't going to stand for that. A fielder's choice and two ground outs had the Kell sit down quickly. A Stretch Armstrong move by Corya at first picked up the second out of the inning and some fancy footwork by Best to Corya posted the third out.

Each team had quiet showing in their respective half innings at the plate in the third. The Hounds had a two out double by Corya to deep left center but left him stranded. Couch efficiently saw just four batters in his half.

Speaking of doubles, **JC Slavis** hit his second of the evening- a very noisy, one sky high to the deepest part of the park- to lead off the inning. Gastley garnered his third single on the evening over the head of the second baseman to move runners on the corners. Gastley was replaced on the basepaths by **Jack Healy**.

The Longhorns trotted out their third pitcher of the evening. **Chandler Mathis** at the plate was served up a walk not before Slavis took home on a wild pitch. J Healy wasted no time in changing his scenery by moving to second on the same pitch and then relocated, again, by stealing third. **Ryan Healy** worked the count full and took first to load the bases. The Greyhounds patiently capitalized on four full pitch counts to walks in the game.

With the bases loaded and one out, **Aaron Best** gained his second RBI of the evening by walking, as well. The three consecutive walks spelled new pitcher for Kell. Kell's pitcher #4 for the evening was greeted by a **Parker Troughton** single with the bases loaded. Mathis and R Healy scored and Best took third. Best crossed the plate two pitches later on a wild pitch. **Thomas Williams** walked followed by a long sac fly to right field by Corya allowing Troughton to score. At the end of Pope's 4th inning, it was 17-3.

Couch took the mound at the bottom of the 4th. He quickly got batter #1 out and a couple of hiccups later, #4. There was a single, a fielder's choice, a walk, and an error in the field that plated one run for Kell. Couch left the mound to a round of applause for his performance and runners on the corners.

The freshman right hander, **Davis Johnson**, came in in relief. It was Johnson's fourth appearance of the season. He added to the roller coaster of emotions on the evening by peppering in the drama of walking the first batter he saw, loading the bases. He dialed in to get the third out with a check swing third strike to end the inning.

The Greyhounds had a quiet top of the 5th with a 14 run lead. A walk and three fly ball outs and the teams change up.

Jacob Israel took the bump to close out the game- his second of the season. He was the model of efficiency shutting down the Longhorns 1-2-3 throwing thirteen pitches- nine of them for strikes. He forced a line out to Williams in at first for out 1 and then declared, enough of this, and stuck out the next two batters- the first looking and the second swinging.

The 11-hit night snapped a 5 game streak of single digit performances for the Greyhounds. It was a great team effort with a nod to a strong eye at the plate garnishing 10 walks on the evening.

The JV Greyhounds return to action on Thursday night hosting the same Kell team. Game time is slated for 6pm.