

Vikings Ride Strong Start From Vlcek, Long Balls to Victory Over Oilmen

By: Brandon Januska



For the second straight week, the Vikings turned to workhorse Nolan Vlcek on the mound to try and snap a three-game losing streak and for the second straight week, Vlcek delivered.

Taking on the hottest team in the league, Vlcek (3-0) held the Oilmen to one run in six innings as the Vikings ended the Oilmen winning streak at eight with an 8-4 win on Friday.

"Time for that streak to come to an end," Vlcek said before the game when told that the Oilmen had won eight in a row.

Vlcek struck out six and worked around five walks as he benefited from a defense that made key plays in big moments.

"We had two double plays to get out of the first and second innings," Vlcek said of the defense around him. "Huge plays by [Matt] Merk. In the sixth inning, huge play by [Jorgie] Vazquez at third to get the crazy hop and make the long throw. It was a straight up team win today."

On offense, the Vikings entered Friday as the only team in the Northern League without a homerun, but that changed in the fifth inning when Bryce Nevils launched a ball over the left field scoreboard for a solo shot that capped a four run fourth inning and gave the Vikings a 5-0 lead at the time.

"Just to get the team fired up is the most important thing," Nevils said after the game. "After we got fired up, everyone started hitting."

Caleb Rhodes followed with a two-run homer during a three run sixth inning which gave the Vikings an 8-1 lead.

"This win is big," manager Sullivan Stickann said after the game. "It shows that we can play with any team in this league and now I feel like we are going to be in the next three games too."

The next three games involve two more against the Oilmen sandwiched around a Father's Day showdown with the league leading Lake County Corn Dogs on Sunday. The Vikings are ready for the challenge.

"When [the Vikings] get going, don't get in the way," Vlcek warned the rest of the league.

The Vikings (7-8) return to Oil City Stadium on Saturday for another matchup with the Oilmen (8-4). Will Moell is expected to start on the mound for the Vikings. First pitch is at 7:10.