

Errors, Stranded Runners Doom Steam in 13-5 Loss to Joes

Eight Cincinnati players combine for 14 hits, but Steam commit four errors and leave 16 on base in third consecutive loss to Hamilton.

July 8, 2010

WESTERN HILLS, Ohio—The Steam offense continued its recent upturn on Thursday night, collecting double-digit hits (14) for the sixth time in eight games, but 16 of Cincinnati's 24 baserunners found themselves stranded on the basepaths as Hamilton powered past Cincinnati, 13-5, at Western Hills High School. The game started an hour late due to rains in the area and lasted more than three hours for the second consecutive night.

Just when the Steam bats turned it up a notch, the usually reliable aspects of this Steam (11-10) team—namely pitching and defense—had a tough night, as Hamilton (15-7) collected 14 hits and scored in each of the first five innings, while four Cincinnati errors led to seven unearned runs. It marked the first time since July 24, 2008 (and just the fourth time in team history) that Cincinnati committed four errors in one game.

Some bright spots did shine through in the loss, as Michael Morris (Tennessee Tech) singled twice to extend his hitting streak to 13 games (he now has 13 hits—including five multi-hit games—in his last seven games for a .464 batting average), while Nathan Smith (Furman), despite an off-night due to a bout with wildness, yielded two earned runs to extend the Steam's streak of starters allowing two earned runs or less to 12 straight games. And not to mention Ben Thomas (Xavier), who continues to get on base at an incredible rate; the first baseman reached in all five plate appearances (three singles, a walk, and a hit-by-pitch) and has now reached base safely in seven consecutive plate appearances, 18 of his last 24 (.750 on-base percentage), 20 of his past 27 (.740), and 22 of his last 31 (.710). Thomas' .472 on-base clip this summer would rank second in Steam history (behind only Zach Hurley's .507 mark in 2008) while his .443 career on-base percentage is already a Cincinnati record.

In 33 games since July 8 of last season, Thomas is hitting .371 (43-for-116) with 30 RBI with the Steam.

Smith threw just 21 of his 45 pitches for strikes as the Steam fell into an early hole, trailing 4-0 after the Joes had batted three times. A Kyle Weldon (Miami) sac fly brought home a run in the first and that appeared to be all Hamilton would get, but Morris dropped a two-out fly ball to right to allow a second run to cross. Then in the second, Smith got two quick outs, but a walk to Zach Brenneman (Lincoln Trail) came back to haunt after Phil Bauer (Xavier) brought him around with a base knock. The runs snapped Smith's streak of 9.0 consecutive innings without allowing an earned run.

Markus Kuykendoll (Xavier) relieved Smith in the third and gave up a run to make it 4-0, but Cincinnati came charging back with a five-spot in the bottom of the inning to take the lead, capitalizing on the Joes' failure to turn two sure double plays. Two walks and a single loaded the bases with no outs, prompting Hamilton to pull starter Patrick Curtin (Tiffin) in favor of Robert Ramer (Purdue). An RBI single by Tim Issler (Ball State) brought home a run before Noah Zipko hit a tailor-made double play ball right at shortstop Ryan Rua (Lake Erie). Rua flipped to the covering Bauer at second, but Bauer's throw to first was in the dirt, allowing Zipko to reach. Ryan Bellamy (Xavier) then collected an RBI on a single to left to make it 4-3 before Morris put a ball in play that again should have been a double play. This one went to Weldon at first, who threw to Rua at second, but Rua's throw pulled Ramer off the bag at first and the ball squirted away, allowing Zipko to score the tying run and Morris to advance to second. Jon Edgington (Miami) then gave the Steam a brief lead when his line drive to first went off the glove of the leaping Weldon for an RBI hit.



1B Ben Thomas

An unearned run in the fourth allowed the Joes to tie the score, as Bauer singled through the right side with two out, but the ball eluded Morris for an error, which allowed Bauer to move to second. Wally Gerbus (Eastern Michigan) then plated a run with one of his four hits on the night. The two-through-five hitters went a combined 11-for-16 with eight RBI on the evening for Hamilton.

Hamilton broke the game wide open in the sixth, an inning in which Cincinnati would have escaped with just one run crossing—after the Joes had loaded the bases with nobody out—were it not for an error that prolonged the attack. Sam Dawes (Miami) replaced Kuykendoll after the first three batters all reached and got ahead of Chris Pearson (Evansville) 0-2 before the catcher delivered a sacrifice fly to put the Joes up 6-5 (the run was the first inherited runner a Steam pitcher had allowed to score all season, and also the first run allowed by Dawes all summer). Dawes then punched out Randy Jones (Northern Kentucky) for the second out, but after a walk loaded the bases, Dawes had trouble fielding Bauer's weak grounder back to the mound; everyone was safe on the error, with Kevin Park (Dickinson State) scoring to give the Joes a 7-5 lead. From there, two hits and another error led to four more unearned runs, as Hamilton led 11-5.

Kuykendoll allowed five runs (two earned) in 2.0 innings to take the loss (0-1), while Dawes would go on to pitch three more innings and finally allowed his first earned runs of the season in the eighth. Brent Wagner (Northern Kentucky) worked a perfect ninth to wrap things up.

Cincinnati threatened a few times against Ramer (2-0), but home plate eluded the Steam each time. In the sixth, a Thomas walk and a Bryan Rose (Northern Kentucky) double put two on for new pitcher Tripp Davis (NJIT), who walked the first batter he faced (Issler) before falling behind 2-0 on Noah Zipko (Campbell). But Davis battled back, getting Zipko to ground into an inning-ending force out. Cincinnati then put two on in each of the seventh, eighth, and ninth innings, but two double plays erased any hopes of a comeback.

Eight different Steam players notched at least one hit (with Edgington, Thomas, Issler, Bellamy, and Morris each collecting multi-hit games) and the 14 Steam hits were the most since Cincinnati had 15 on July 7 of last year (also against Hamilton), but Hamilton still managed to make it 3-for-3 against the Steam this season after Cincinnati swept the season series a year ago.

Friday night's contest pits the Steam against the Xenia scouts at Western Hills High School, with the first pitch set for 7:05 p.m. The Scouts have never scored more than five runs in a game at Cincinnati and have plated just 30 runs in nine all time road games versus the Steam. Cincinnati has captured nine of the past 11 matchups between the two squads.