

Strausborger leads Steam to sweep of Copperheads, 6-2 and 9-5

The Steam center fielder went 5-for-8 with five RBI on the day

July 27, 2009

Game One (7 innings)

WESTERN HILLS, Ohio—Two Steam players reached milestones in Cincinnati's 6-2 game one victory over Southern Ohio on Monday at Western Hills High School, as Brian Sand (Cincinnati) tied the Steam's all-time wins record and Ryan Strausborger (Indiana State) became the Steam's all-time hits leader after a 2-for-3 day.

Strausborger also scored twice (bringing his league-leading season total to 37) and stole three bases to take over the league lead with 19. He now has 112 hits in his Steam career (after the doubleheader) in 355 at bats (.315 average), passing Zach Hurley (Ohio State), who needed 343 at bats to collect his 108 hits (.315 average). Strausborger leads the league in hits as well with 49.

Sand (3-0) worked around two first-inning runs to record the victory, pitching 6.0 innings and giving up just the two runs on seven hits. Sand struck out a season-high six and walked just one, throwing 83 pitches (56 strikes). He ties Joey O'Gara (Indiana) and Steven Davis (Kent State) for first place on the Steam wins list with seven; Sand, like O'Gara, has never suffered a loss in his Steam career (14 appearances, eight starts).

Kevin Jordan (Northern Kentucky) finished off the game in the seventh, striking out the side after allowing a leadoff infield single.

Copperheads starter Greg Frederick (Penn State Beaver U.) struggled mightily with command in the loss, throwing 50 of his 103 pitches out of the strike zone. Frederick (0-2) gave up five earned runs on six hits, six walks, and a hit batter in 5.0 innings of work.

T.J Jones (Cincinnati) drove in two runs in the game with a long fifth-inning double. Trace Voshell (Ohio) scored twice and notched a base hit, and Brad Gschwind (Miami) drove in a run and scored another. Drew Schmidt (Xavier) scored a run but saw his seven-game hit streak end.

Eight different players recorded the eight hits in the game for the Copperheads, with Trent Moses (Southeast Missouri St.) and Jake Plata (Akron) driving in the only two runs.

The Copperheads claimed an early 2-0 lead, reaching base twice in the first inning via hit-by-pitch. Jerod Yakubik (Ohio) singled off the wall in right with one out, and Sand hit Justin Marrero (Sinclair C.C.) with a pitch to put two runners on. Moses then hit a line drive over the head of Gschwind to bring home Yakubik for the first run of the game. After another hit batter loaded the bases, Plata hit a sacrifice fly to deep left-center to put the Copperheads up by a 2-0 count after a half-inning.

Frederick walked the first two Steam batters of the game on nine pitches, leading to a run. After Strausborger and Schmidt each looked at four balls, Jon Edgington (Miami) struck out looking, but Ben Thomas (Xavier) followed with a ground ball down the third base line that hopped over a diving Moses at third, bringing home Strausborger. Thomas has now driven in 88 runs this year with the Musketeers and the Steam (in just 74 games). That translates to 193 RBI over a 162-game season (the MLB record for RBI in one season is 191, set by Hack Wilson of the Cubs in 1930).

It was the same story to start the second inning for Frederick, who walked Voshell and plunked Jones to begin the inning. But Frederick needed just three more pitches to work out of the jam, as Tim Issler (Ball State) bunted into a force play and Strausborger grounded into an inning-ending 4-6-3 double play.

For the third consecutive inning, Frederick either walked or hit the first two batters, as he handed out free passes to Schmidt and Edgington to start the third inning. Thomas moved both runners up with a ground ball to the right side, and Gschwind drove home Schmidt with a ground ball to third to tie the game at two.

The Copperheads mounted a threat in the fourth, but Sand escaped damage when Edgington gunned down Taylor Davis (Morehead State) at the plate to end the inning. The Southern Ohio third base coach elected to send Davis from second on Chad Geier's (Indiana Tech) ground ball base hit to left despite the fact that Davis, who does not run well, was two steps shy of third base when Edgington picked up the ball.

The Steam gathered no free passes in the fourth but still scored to take the lead, this time on the strength of three base hits. Voshell extended his hitting streak to seven games with an opposite-field single to start the frame, and one out later, Issler singled over the shortstop's head to put two runners on. A wild pitch moved both runners up, and the Steam took advantage, as Strausborger knocked a base hit through the left side to bring home Voshell and put the Steam up 3-2. Cincinnati failed to add to the lead, however, as Schmidt and Edgington each hit shallow fly balls to end the inning.

Cincinnati added to the lead in the fifth inning on Jones' double. With two outs and runners on the corners, Jones hit a high drive to center field. Center fielder Jake Plata put his head down and sprinted toward the warning track but still could not catch up to the ball, as it sailed over his head for a two-run double, putting the Steam up 5-2.

Strausborger scored his second run of the game in the sixth inning. He doubled to begin the frame, stole third base standing up, and crossed the plate on an Edgington groundout.

Game Two (9 innings)

Cincinnati scored three times in the first inning in game two and never looked back, defeating the Copperheads 9-5. Matt Weber (Findlay) tossed 6.0 shutout innings for the victory, and Strausborger homered to tie Tommy Nurre (Miami) for the Steam's all-time home run record (7). The Steam (21-11) have now won seven of their last eight, while the Copperheads (14-15) have dropped six of seven. Cincinnati has now won seven straight games versus Southern Ohio.

Weber (2-1) struck out four and yielded five hits in the start, the third start this season in which Weber has held the opposition scoreless. He walked just one in the game and has now walked one batter or fewer in four of his five starts. Weber needed just 71 pitches to finish his six innings, recording a five-pitch inning and a six-pitch inning along the way.

Nate Lambert (Centre College) made his Steam debut on the mound, giving up a run on three walks in the seventh inning in relief of Weber.

Southern Ohio's starter struggled for the second consecutive game, uncharacteristic of a team whose starting pitchers entered the doubleheader with a combined 2.31 ERA. Nick Egan (Ohio) started and yielded seven earned runs on seven hits in 4.0 innings of work. Egan walked two and struck out three, falling to 0-1 on the year.

Strausborger went 3-for-5 in the game, falling a triple shy of the cycle (the fourth time this season Strausborger has come up one hit short of the cycle). Gschwind and Ryan Bellamy (Xavier) each had two hits, with Bellamy also driving in two (he now has seven RBI in his last two games). J.R. Reynolds (Ohio) doubled, drove in a run, scored a run, and drew a walk in his fourth start of the year, and Jones and Issler each scored twice.

Strausborger is now the holder of 28 Steam career and single-season records (the most by any Steam player). He holds the career marks in at bats, runs, hits, doubles, triples, home runs, grand slams, extra-base hits, total bases, stolen bases, stolen base attempts, times picked off, assists, and fielding double plays and the season records in runs, doubles, triples, grand slams, extra-base hits, total bases, strikeouts, sacrifice flies, stolen bases, times caught stealing, stolen base attempts, stolen base percentage, times picked off, and assists.

Cincinnati got off to a good start in game two, scoring three times in the opening inning. Gschwind drew a one-out walk, and Edgington followed with a single past a diving Zach Thoma (Western Michigan) at second. Bobby Freking (Xavier) was hit by an Egan pitch to load the bases, and Cody Elliott (Ball State) brought home Gschwind with his first sacrifice fly of the season. Bellamy drove home two more runs with a single to left, giving the Steam a 3-0 cushion. Egan threw 29 pitches in the inning after Frederick tossed 30 in the opening inning of game one.

Strausborger launched a two-out solo home run off of Egan in the second inning to tie Nurre and put the Steam up 4-0. Gschwind followed with a double off the wall in left, but was stranded when Edgington grounded to third.

The Steam broke the game open in the fourth inning, scoring three times to go up by a score of 7-0. Jones drove another ball over the head of Plata in center, this time for a leadoff triple. Issler followed with a walk, bringing up Reynolds, who laced a double in the gap in left center to plate Jones. Strausborger then hit a long drive to left that eluded a diving Yakubik. Both Issler and Reynolds both scored on the play, but Strausborger was tossed out trying to stretch his hit into a triple.

Freking drove in a run in the sixth after drawing a bases-loaded walk from Rob Moffat (Toledo), who walked three batters in the inning.

Strausborger drove in another run in the seventh inning to put the Steam up 9-1, hitting a single off the glove of Marrero in right to drive home Jones, who had reached on an error to begin the inning.

After Lambert walked three in the seventh, Andy Dietz (St. Catharine College) entered the game and walked three more batters in the eighth (after giving up two doubles to begin the inning) and had to be lifted without retiring a batter. He walked in two runs to make the score 9-3 before Jordan relieved him and gave up a single to Sam Mahoney (Northwest Florida St.) that plated the fourth Southern Ohio run. Another run came home on a fielder's choice before a 6-4-3 double play off the bat of Jeff May (North Carolina) ended the inning.

Michael Schum (Wright State) finished off the game in the ninth, marking the sixth consecutive outing in which he has not allowed an earned run.

The next game for the Steam will be on Tuesday night against the Lima Locos. First pitch from Simmons Field in Lima is set for 7:00 p.m. Cincinnati returns to the friendly confines of Western Hills High School one final time on Friday, July 31 for a 4:35 doubleheader versus the Xenia Scouts. The Steam have plated 31 runs in their past three games against Xenia (all wins).