

Hamilton's Hamilton shuts down Steam, 7-1

Ben Thomas breaks up John Hamilton's shutout bid with a two-out, ninth-inning double.

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HAMILTON, Ohio—One night ago, four hits were good for eight runs for the Cincinnati Steam, but five hits brought home just one run on Friday evening as the Hamilton Joes defeated the Steam 7-1 behind a brilliant pitching effort from John Hamilton (Charlotte). Hamilton (1-0) cruised through the Steam lineup in a complete-game effort, allowing just a walk in addition to the five hits behind an offensive attack that registered four hits in each of the second, third, and fourth innings. The loss snapped the Steam's streak of 11 consecutive games allowing five runs or fewer.

Mike Jefferson (Louisiana Tech)—and the Steam (4-2) staff as a whole—had a rare off-night, as the southpaw gave up eight hits and four earned runs (both career-highs with the Steam) in 3.0 innings. He did punch out five, giving him 51 in 37.0 career innings with the Steam. Jefferson's career rate of 12.41 strikeouts per nine innings is a soon-to-be Steam record (needs 3.0 more innings to qualify), and his 51 strikeouts rank third in Cincinnati annals, trailing only Charlie Leesman (53) and current Steam pitcher Brian Sand (56).

Hamilton retired 12 consecutive Steam hitters before Michael Morris (Tennessee Tech) doubled over the head of Wally Gerbus (Eastern Michigan) with two outs in the eighth inning. In fact, at one point 15 consecutive batters in the game failed to reach base as Nathan Mutsch (Xavier) settled down after giving up three runs in the fourth and Sam Dawes (Miami) worked 2.0 perfect innings of relief to close out the game. The Joes did not have a baserunner after the fifth inning.

Jefferson (0-1) sent the Joes down in order in the first inning on two strikeouts before Gerbus led off with a single in the second. Jefferson then caught Gerbus leaning on a pickoff attempt, but the lefty's throw to Ben Thomas (Xavier) at first was wide, allowing Gerbus to just crawl back in safely. (Jefferson picked off two Hamilton runners on the same move in the season opener.) The mistake proved costly, as Jefferson proceeded to walk Kyle Weldon (Miami) and then yield an RBI base knock to Kevin Park (Dickinson State). Patrick Curtin (Tiffin) singled to load the bases before an opposite-field single by James Sheltroun (Akron) and a sac fly by Jimmy Brenneman (Lincoln Trail) put the Joes up by a 3-0 count.

Four Hamilton (6-1) batters singled again in the third, but a ground-ball double play limited the damage to just a run. But with Mutsch on the mound in the fourth inning, four hits were again good for three scores as the Joes pushed the lead to 7-0. From then on, offense was at a premium, as neither team had a runner advance past second base until Thomas ripped a double down the line with Cory Farris (Kentucky) on second in the ninth inning to get Cincinnati on the board. Thomas had the only multi-hit game for the Steam, notching two hits and nearly three, as his ground ball in the second inning was initially ruled a hit before being changed to an error.

Gerbus led Hamilton on offense, going 3-for-5 with three runs scored and an RBI. Curtin also had three hits for the Joes, who saw just one of their 13 hits go for extra bases.

It will be a quick turnaround for the Steam, as the Cincinnati bunch travels to Delaware Saturday for a 1:00 p.m. doubleheader at Ohio Wesleyan University. The Steam lead the all-time series with the Cows 8-3, but the two teams have not faced off since the 2008 season. Delaware has managed just nine runs in five all-time home games against Cincinnati.