

Baseball Heaven

### **The Box Score**

Riverhead and Westhampton entered today's game with identical records. After the game, they stayed tied as the final score in this one was 3-3 as both teams stayed at 9-4. The bullpens worked a combined five scoreless innings. Jason Coules hit the game's only home run in the third inning, his first one the season. The two teams head into the second game of the double header a half game back of Sag Harbor for first place in the standings.

### **More Than the Box Score**

Jason Coules tallied two of the three RBIs for Riverhead and he did it in different ways. Coules' ability to recognize situation was evident in this one. In the third inning, he took a first pitch fastball with no one on base well over the wall in left field. However, in the fifth, Coules came to bat with a runner on second and his team down 3-1. He changed his approach knowing that he only needed a base hit to get the job done. Coules took a slider back up the middle and would score the game tying run later that inning. The sophomore centerfielder sets up his stance with his hands just a bit out in front of his chest and his elbow twitching. The twitch helps him gain rhythm, alleviating his path from set to load and keeping him ready to hit any type of pitch. His ability to keep his hands in the hitting zone for so long makes it hard to

believe that he would ever swing and miss. The most impressive thing about the Fordham prospect is that he never takes a pitch off. He's always engaged. Even when he was rounding first on his RBI single he saw the ball through and took second base once it got passed the cutoff man. On second base, Coules stares intently at the pitcher looking to pick up some kind of tendency that could allow him to steal third. It comes as no surprise that Coules is batting .556 early on this season, with 13 stolen bases as well. It's also worth noting that the Tomcats are 4-1-1 since he entered the lineup.

### **Game Plan**

Righthander Nick DeSalvo took the mound for Riverhead and did a great job of keeping his team in the game. He works from the stretch with a real tall and lanky delivery. DeSalvo seemed to know exactly what he wanted to do from start to finish in this one. In this day and age, it seems like starting pitching is more about getting outs however you can, while in the past it was about working deep into games. DeSalvo brought a much more old-time game plan today. The first time through the order he primarily used his fastball. He was retiring batters quickly, with a lot of ground ball outs, and liked to go to a high heater with two strikes. The second time through DeSalvo started to show his slider and use that as a put away pitch. Once the sixth and seventh innings came around DeSalvo brought out a changeup that he used fairly effectively fading down and away to lefties. The only real problem he ran into was, in that third inning, when he first brought out his slider he could not find a feel for it. He could not finish the pitch and it came out flat, so naturally hitters were able to jump on his fastball. The Aviators

scored three runs that inning but were neutralized the rest of the game. The good DeSalvo slider came an inning later with depth and hard bite. Thanks to finding his secondary pitches the LIU product worked 6.2 innings and gave his team time to rally from a 3-1 hole to tie the game.

### **Bottom of the Order**

David Franchi hit in the nine-hole for Westhampton, but that doesn't mean he didn't have an impact on the game. In the early innings, Franchi ranged to his backhand and forehand sides making the shortstop position look easy. However, Franchi may have been the beneficiary of a great matchup at the plate. The lefthanded slap hitter slapped a couple of balls to the opposite field against the power fastball of DeSalvo. He had a base hit to the left side and scored a run in the third inning. Franchi did an excellent job of knowing his role. He worked annoying at bats throughout the game and really shortened up with two strikes. He eliminated his front step completely and focused on hitting the ball the other way. The only time Franchi was retired was on a hard-hit fly ball straight at the left fielder. The NYIT sophomore also showed toughness as he worked an eight pitch walk in the seventh that forced DeSalvo from the game. If Franchi can play a sound shortstop and really grind it out in the batter's box, he can provide a helpful role for Westhampton the rest of the season.