

## **Recap: Despite late rally, Bees drop extra-inning thriller to Suns on the road**



This Thursday, May 27 the New Britain Bees hit the road for the first time in 2021, taking on the Pittsfield Suns. Following an Opening Day that saw both teams score double-digit runs for their respective victories, Game 2 of the young season was a pitching duel. Ultimately, as the game was decided in a Home Run Derby, the Suns were able to win by a final score of 3-2 to drop the Bees to 1-1 this season.

Thursday's game initially seemed like it would play out very similarly to Wednesday's, but in the end it came down to pitching. In the bottom of the first inning, Bees' starter Joe Nemchek walked the leadoff hitter, center-fielder Jack Cooney. A Nemchek wild pitch and a passed ball by catcher Jimmy Sullivan allowed Cooney to reach third, and with the Suns threatening, shortstop Alexander Aguila stroked an RBI-groundout that got Pittsfield the 1-0 lead. Nemchek was able to settle down and work out of the inning, however.

From there, the two teams had a good old fashioned pitching duel. Pittsfield starter, Izaiya Mestre was brilliant, finishing his outing with 9 strikeouts while allowing only one single and a walk over 6 innings pitched. In fact, the 6-foot-1 righty was in line for the win until New Britain staged a ninth-inning rally to force extra innings.

After Mestre and relievers Grant Nicholson and Jackson Atwood combined for 8 scoreless innings, Pittsfield handed the ball to the righty Cabot Maher to get the final 3 outs, a decision that proved costly. Up 2-0 in the ninth, Maher

quickly gave up a single to second baseman Zach Donahue and a walk to Jimmy Sullivan before he hit Todd Petersen with a pitch to load the bases. Right-fielder Alec Ritch and left-fielder Jack Scher tied the game with a walk and a hit-by-pitch respectively before Maher was ultimately able to escape the inning while the game was still tied.

The game went to extras, but due to FCBL league rules, only one extra inning is allowed before the game is settled in a home run derby where each team has ten chances to hit the ball out of the ballpark off a neutral pitching coach. Unfortunately for the Bees, the rally ended there as Suns catcher Mike Gervasi knocked the decisive ball out for the 3-2 walk-off victory.

Despite the loss, the Bees pitchers fared very well on Thursday. The starter Nemchek and relievers Nicholas Cannata and Alex Rosario allowed only one earned run over ten innings. Though they ultimately won, Pittsfield mustered only 5 hits, 4 walks and 2 runs while striking out 7 times. Head coach Donnie McKillop said the pitchers gave them exactly what they needed to win.

The Bees offense however, aside from the final two innings, was generally shut down by the Suns staff. Before loading the bases in both the ninth and tenth innings, New Britain had only 1 hit and 2 walks, and they finished the game with a whopping 17 total strikeouts at the plate. The offense came alive towards the end though, as 7 batters reached base safely in the final two frames. “It was a good battle,” McKillop said. “We capitalized on some of their mistakes but came up short in some big at-bats... We’ll be ready for the next one.”

With a 1-1 record, the Bees are back in action tomorrow, Friday, May 28 at the New Britain Stadium as they host the 1-1 Brockton Rox at 6:35 p.m. Eastern. Kevin Seitter will get the start for the Bees.