

Slugging Slammers Meet Their Match in Evansville

By: Ryan Paris

JOLIET, IL - Slammers Stadium is a notorious pitcher's park. The right field wall is deeper than most MLB stadiums. Games here routinely have final scores like 2-1 or 3-2.

But for whatever reason, the last few games in Joliet (19-18) have challenged that notion. Tonight's wild contest was no different.

Evansville's (17-19) Pavin Parks, whose name sounds like an environmentally destructive job, started off the game by pitching three innings of shutout baseball and hitting a three run homer into the parking lot. Ohtani-esque.

The Otters then scored five runs in the fourth inning to lead 7-0, seemingly headed for a comfortable win.

Through one turn of the lineup, Jose Contreras was the only Slammer with a hit. But the second time through, things shifted.

Ian Battipaglia notched the team's second hit of the game to lead off the fourth inning. After that, the floodgates opened. The Slammers put together six consecutive hits to produce five runs of their own. Parks didn't finish the inning.

That's ten runs scored in one frame. Ten runs that netted no difference.

Evansville kept their foot on the gas in the fifth, forcing Kines out of the game before he could face Parks for a third time. A new pitcher didn't seem to matter too much though, as Parks crushed another run scoring double. The inning ended with Evansville up 9-5.

The Otters continued to pour it on as the Slammers stagnated. Up 11-5 in the bottom of the seventh, it felt like Joliet had one more chance.

There was really only one man for the job: up stepped Jose Contreras. With the bases loaded, down in the count, he made contact and sent the ball toward left field. As it whistled through the plaid blue sky, the crowd collectively rose.

The line drive had just enough juice to get past Keenan Taylor's glove, turning into a bases clearing double. Contreras tried to stretch it into a triple but made the third out at third base.

And still, Evansville added another run in the eighth to put them up 12-8. However, Joliet just would not go away. Brandon Heidal walked, Dylan Goldstein singled, and Antonio Valdez, who had been 0-for-3 to that point, knocked both of them in with a double down the left field line. 12-10.

To lead off the top of the ninth, a new ball game once again, up stepped Pavin Parks. Can you guess what happened next?

Pavin Parks hit another ball into the parking lot. Five earned runs as a pitcher; Five runs batted in as a hitter. 13-10, Otters.

This last Evansville surge proved decisive. Friday Night Lights in the ballpark fittingly finished with a football score.

Joliet trailed by seven, decreased the deficit to two, let it balloon back up to six again, and once again brought it to two. They say basketball is a game of runs. They don't usually say that about baseball.

The Slammers continue their series with the Evansville Otters tomorrow. First pitch is at 6:05 PM.

For information on season tickets, premium suites or group outings, please visit the Slammers' official website at www.jolietslammers.com.