

SPORTS

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SOFTBALL: LEBANON 7, HOLSTON 4

Lady Pioneers remain perfect, 7 in a row

By Anthony Stevens

LEBANON, Va., (April 5, 2018) – It was as close as anyone has come to the Lady Pioneers this season, but it wasn't close enough. Lebanon won their seventh consecutive game this season with a 7-4 victory over John Battle in non-district play at Shelia Adams Field on a very cold Thursday evening.

The Pioneers had averaged almost 15 runs a game, while allowing a total of four runs in their first six contests. The preseason pick to win the Mountain District equaled that output but could never seriously threaten the Pioneers.

"I'm pleased with the girls and the start we've had," second-year Lebanon coach Dennis Price said. "We didn't play exceptionally well tonight, we struggled defensively a little and we didn't run the bases like we had been. But other than that, we hit the ball and that's what brought us through tonight. We got some big hits at crucial times."

Lebanon shortstop Kara Long had a big night, going 3-for-3 at the plate with a triple and two RBIs. Long got the Pioneers started in the first inning with a leadoff single and stole second. She scored when

Morgan Hamm ripped a single to left field for a quick 1-0 advantage.

"I felt really good, as a lead-off batter I knew I had to get on base," said Long. "I knew my teammates would move me around to score. I had a lot of confidence, scoring early was important, the first run calmed our nerves because we know John Battle has a tough team."

"All the girls are playing hard, we gave up some runs (tonight) but we're doing the best we can. Our coaches are coaching us well and all the girls are doing great."

Lebanon (7-0) added two more runs in the second. Abby Compton singled up the middle and Averie Price followed with a long run scoring triple to center. Long added a RBI single and the Pioneers were up 3-0.

In the third, Hamm walked and Kayla Bollinger singled. Both scored on a hit to center by Haley Finney. They added their final two runs in the fourth, when Price walked and Long tripled. Long crossed the plate for a 7-0 lead on a double by Hamm.

"Lebanon was in control of the game from the get-go," John Battle coach Eric Senter said.

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ANTHONY STEVENS Photo

Sydney Bailey rounds second for John Battle as Lebanon shortstop Kara Long keeps her close and center fielder Averie Price backs up the play.

BASEBALL: LEBANON 6, PATRICK HENRY 0

Matthew Buchanan one-hitter leads Lebanon

By Anthony Stevens

LEBANON, Va. – It seemed like a long time coming, but the Pioneers picked up win number four. In his first varsity start freshman Matthew Buchanan threw a one-hitter as Lebanon topped Patrick Henry 6-0 at a chilly, wet, "Doc" Adams Field on Friday afternoon.

"Finally, finally, finally, it's been a rough week," said Pioneer mentor Doc Adams. "Any win is a good win, we played a good ballclub today too, they were undefeated. We needed a win and we got it."

Adams couldn't have asked for any more from the freshman. Buchanan definitely proved to be a stopper, ending a two-game Lebanon losing streak. How tough was he? He took a no-hitter into the sixth inning. Patrick Henry (5-1) speedster Jackson Cruise hit a grounder up the middle, that Lebanon shortstop

Preston Steele dove to stop and fired to first, just a second late.

But the Rebels never seriously threatened Lebanon. They only got a runner as far as second base once. Buchanan totaled nine K's and only walked two. The ball left the infield once the entire game, in the third when Cruise flew out to right fielder Cole Buchanan.

"I was pretty comfortable," stated Matthew Buchanan. "I threw a few curves and one change-up, but it was mostly fastballs. Locating was the key, mixing up the pitches and studying what the batters were trying to do and recognizing their weaknesses. But really it all came down to location."

When Buchanan reached 90 pitches, the Pioneers went to another freshman, Steele to throw the final inning. He was equally impressive, finishing with two strikeouts.

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PRESTON BALL PHOTOGRAPHY Photo

Freshman Matthew Buchanan on the mound against Holston was almost perfect, allowing one-hit and striking out nine in the win at "Doc" Adams Field.



MIKE LOONEY/www.mikes-pics.smugmug.com Photo

Hartley Hilton (7) gets into second base as Holston's Logan Trent awaits the throw. Hilton had two hits, including a two-run homer against the Cavaliers.

BASEBALL: HOLSTON 11, HONAKER 7

Errors doom Tigers in loss to Holston

By Anthony Stevens

HONAKER, Va., (April 3, 2018) – After winning their opener, the Tigers have now dropped three straight. They played well and took two tough losses to Tazewell and Eastside. On Tuesday, against Holston, Honaker should have put a notch in the win column. The Cavaliers rallied from a 7-4 deficit in the seventh inning for a 11-7 non-district win.

"We simply did not get the job done," Honaker coach Chris Anderson said. "I thought Holston did a good job of keeping the pressure on us defensively and we didn't respond."

The seventh was a disaster for the Tigers. Seven unearned runs crossed the plate for the Cavaliers. Holston had three hits in the inning, but there were two walks, a hit batter and three costly errors.

Lead-off man Logan Trent walked to start the seventh for the Cavs. Dylan Richardson was hit by a pitch, Machenzie Rasnick reached on an error, Leo Ezzell walked, Tommy Gregor and Carson Blackburn reached on back-to-back errors and Levi Price added a sacrifice fly. Five runs had scored for Holston without a hit. The Cavaliers then had three consecutive hits and the damage was done.

"A lot of that starts with me as coach," stated Anderson. "I didn't have my team ready for that inning. We did not perform in that inning like we should have to beat a team like Holston that is solid fundamentally."

It was a great come from behind win for Holston (6-1). After a season opening loss to an outstanding Abingdon club, they have now won six in a row.

"This was a big, big win for us," Holston coach Bryan Hughes

said. "This was pretty sweet. Honaker is a team we expect to see in the regional playoffs, they have a good ball club and Chris does an excellent job."

"I know they have some kids hurt and have had to move some people around. But when you put it in play, good things happen. We've finally started to hit it all the way through the lineup."

The Cavs took the lead in the first, when Ezzell launched a two-run double.

Honaker answered in the bottom of the second. Levi Miller singled to left and Hunter Combs walked. After a pop out, Chase Miller loaded the bases with a single. Blake Stinson followed with a sacrifice fly and Chris Marshall hammered a two-run double for a 3-2 advantage.

Holston tied it at 3-3 in the third on a RBI single by Gregor.

The Tigers went back up in the fifth. Hartley Hilton walked, stole second and advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt by Jacob Compton. Hilton then put Honaker up 4-3 when he scored on a sac fly by Shawn Tiller.

The back-and-forth contest was tied by Holston on a sac fly by Ryan Millinger in the top of the sixth.

It appeared the Tigers had won it in the bottom of the inning. Bryson Kendrick walked then scored on a sac fly by Stinson. Marshall walked, and Hilton added some insurance with a mammoth two-run homer to left that left the park quickly to go up 7-4, but it wasn't enough.

With district games this week, the Cavs used their three and four pitchers in their rotation to start. Dylan Richardson went the first three innings and Blackburn pitched the next three to get the win. Their ace Ezzell came in to slam the door in the seventh.

"Richardson and Blackburn

did exactly what we wanted them to do," commented Hughes. "Blackburn is just a sophomore. Ezzell is our 'go to' guy. I expect Trent (who played shortstop) to be my closer, but I have two more games this week and I wanted them both (Trent and Ezzell) to be ready, that's the reason I went like I did today. When you play three in a week, you have to be careful with your pitching."

Marshall went the first four innings for the Tigers and Stinson took the loss pitching the final three innings. Stinson, Marshall and Hilton drove in two runs each. Honaker left nine runners stranded.

"Anytime you leave runners on base and waste opportunities it's going to come back to bite you," Anderson remarked. "Errors and walks will bite you as well, we just didn't play a clean game tonight and Holston took advantage of it."

Holston 11, Honaker 7
Holston 201 001 7—11 11 0
Honaker 030 013 0—7 9 4
 Richardson, Blackburn (4), Ezzell (7) and Steele. Marshall, Stinson (5) and Compton. W—Blackburn (1-0). L—Stinson (0-3). HR—Hilton (H), 6th, one on.



MIKE LOONEY/www.mikes-pics.smugmug.com Photo

Blake Stinson on the mound for the Tigers.