

NJ Nationals Earn First Win of Young Season

Jeff Lombardi Jr.

EDISON, N.J.- A comeback effort fueled by a five run fifth inning helped the New Jersey Nationals (1-1) avenge their Opening Day loss in a 8-7 victory over the Randolph Chiefs (0-1-1) Wednesday night.

Trailing 5-0 in the home half of the fourth inning, the Nationals offense broke through after a single by freshman left fielder, [Mike McLaughlin](#) (Clifton, N.J./NJCU) scored sophomore second baseman, [Ryan Doerr](#) (Bound Brook, N.J./Ramapo College) who kept the inning alive with a two out single to left field, cutting the Chiefs lead to four.

After surrendering another run in the top half of the fifth inning to give the Chiefs a 6-1 advantage, the Nationals offense exploded for five runs on six hits while batting around in the home half of the frame, to even the score at six.

A leadoff single by freshman third baseman, [Jason Rivera](#) (Clifton, N.J./NJCU) flipped the lineup for sophomore shortstop, [Dan Abate](#) (Wayne, N.J./William Paterson University) who sent a deep dive over the center field fence for a home run, his first of the season making the score 6-3.

The next batter, freshman first baseman, [Dan McLaughlin](#) (Clifton, N.J./NJCU) reached on an error by his first base counterpart. After the next two Nationals hitters recorded outs, advancing McLaughlin to second, Doerr once again singled to left field, scoring McLaughlin. In a pinch hit opportunity, junior [Steve Lazicki](#) (Jackson, N.J./Moravian College) kept the inning alive with a single which was followed by a RBI double by M. McLaughlin, plating Doerr. The next batter, pinch hitter, [Francis Prior](#) (North Caldwell, N.J./NYU) capped the Nationals scoring for the inning as he singled home Lazicki to even the score.

A key shutdown inning in the next frame by the game's winning pitcher, sophomore [Josh Cruz](#) (Bloomfield, N.J./Neumann College) gave the Nationals the opportunity to take the lead in the bottom of the inning.

A leadoff single by Abate, followed by a sacrifice bunt by D. McLaughlin in which he reached base on an error by the pitcher who made a wild throw to first, brought freshman right fielder, [Dan Carter](#) (Bloomfield, N.J./William Paterson University) to the plate with the opportunity to give the Nationals their first lead of the game. Carter would hit a ground rule double that hopped over the fence in the right-centerfield gap, scoring Abate and advancing D. McLaughlin to third. With one out Doerr drove in his second run in as many at-bats with a ground out to second base that scored D. McLaughlin to make the score 8-6.

The Horned Frogs would score a run in the seventh inning to make the score 8-7. After a quiet home half of the inning by the Nationals, Horned Frogs freshman second baseman, [Garrett deMarrais](#) (Oradell, N.J./Stockton University) lead off the eighth inning with a single. In an effort to secure their first win of the season, the Nationals turned to 6'7" sophomore pitcher, [Andrew Scholz](#) (West Orange, N.J./Arcadia University) to slam the door. After a sacrifice bunt advanced deMarrais to second, Scholz would strikeout the next two Horned Frogs hitters to end the contest as the game was called at the conclusion of the eighth inning due to darkness.

On the hill for the Nationals, junior starting pitcher, [Mike Elia](#) (Kendall Park, N.J./Stevenson University) struck out a pair in a scoreless first inning despite a single, walk and hits batsman that loaded the bases. Classmate [Brian Pascale](#) pitched the second inning, allowing four runs; two earned on four hits and a pair of walks. Freshman southpaw, [Kevin Kristner](#) (Verona, N.J./TCNJ) allowed one earned run on a pair of hits and one walk over the next two frames. Cruz picked up the win allowing just two runs; one earned on five hits and three walks while striking out one over three innings of work. Scholz recorded the final three outs while punching out two to earn the save.

The losing pitcher for the Horned Frogs was freshman, [Josh Sadowski](#) (Oak Ridge, N.J./County College of Morris) who yielded a pair of runs; one earned on four hits and one walk over the final two innings.

Abate, Doerr and M. McLaughlin each had a pair of RBI for the Nationals while the latter lead the charge with three hits.

The Nationals will take on the Bergen Mallers on Wednesday, May 30 at Bergen Community College at 5:30 p.m.