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Rocks Massive Rally Falls Short, Drop Opener 11-7
Brandon Downes Blasts Second Grand Slam of Season in Loss

Wilmington, DE—Although down 11-1 after the top of the fourth inning, the Wilmington Blue Rocks (39-67/12-25) did not give up hope against the Salem Red Sox (63-43/20-17). They scored six runs in their next four times at the plate, but came up a little short in their comeback bid while dropping the opener 11-7. The rally effort was highlighted by **Brandon Downes'** second grand slam of the season and Todd Eaton kept the Blue Crew in the game with three shutout innings out of the bullpen.

Rocks starter **Corey Ray** gave up a pair of runs in the top of the first inning with **Jayce Ray** driving home a run with a single and the second run coming plateward after an error by **Brian Bien**. The boys from Frawley cut the deficit in half by taking advantage of an error as Downes drove in a run with a groundout. However, Salem blew the doors open with eight runs in the second inning including a bases clearing triple by **Jose Sermo**.

The Rocks could have rolled over with the Sox up 11-1 after they tacked on another tally in the top of the fourth inning, but they had no such thoughts. Downes began the bottom of the second with a double down the right field line and after **Elier Hernandez** singled to put runners at the corners, Downes came home on a wild pitch. The Blue Crew could do no more damage in the fourth, but Downes did all the damage he could in the fifth.

Carlos Diaz got things started by whacking an 0-2 breaking ball up the middle and moved up 90 feet after a walk by **Cody Jones**. **Anderson Miller** rolled a ball between first and second to load the bases. Downes walked to the plate next and after falling behind in the count early, was able to work the count full before launching a grand slam over everything in left to cut the lead to 11-6. It was Downes' second grand slam of the season and has now done it both times at Frawley Stadium. The comeback continued in the seventh inning when Miller took five pitches for a walk and although the next two men were retired, Hernandez sent him home with a triple to right-center to make it an 11-7 game. However, the comeback stalled there as the Rocks could not break the scoreboard in the eighth and ninth innings.

Ray gets the loss as he went just 1.2 innings in his shortest outing of the season at any level and drops to 6-5. **Daniel McGrath** started and takes the victory for Salem although he gave up six runs in five innings he evens his record at 5-5. The homestand continues with game two of the series on Tuesday night and the first pitch is scheduled for 6:35 p.m. The Blue Crew will try to respond with RHP **Andy Ferguson (0-1, 3.52)** against the Sox's flamethrower RHP **Michael Kopech (0-1, 1.61)**. Fans interested in attending the game can purchase tickets at the Frawley Stadium ticket office or call the Blue Rocks at **302-888-BLUE**. Those wishing to listen to game can hear Matt Janus' call by tuning in to WGLS-GM 89.7 Rowan Radio or by going to the Rocks website at BlueRocks.com

PEBBLES OF KNOWLEDGE:

Brandon Downes broke the tie atop the Blue Rocks homerun leader board in a big way on Monday night. The New Jersey native came into the game tied with **Ryan O’Hearm** as both boppers had produced seven long balls with the Blue Crew during the 2016 campaign. That stalemate ended in the bottom of the fifth inning when Downes came to the plate with the bases loaded and pulverized a ball to left that cleared both sets of walls. It was the outfielder’s second grand slam of the season and he also pitched in a pair of doubles. His first slam was also the team’s first, which he produced back on May 20 in the third inning against the Keys in an 8-2 Rocks victory. The other member of the Blue Crew to blast a dinger with the bases loaded was **Wander Franco** who did it down in Potomac on July 4th in a 12-1 Rocks win.

The leadoff batter was key for the Rocks in their comeback attempt. On four separate occasions they were able to get their leadoff man on and each time they did so they were able to bring him home. **Cody Jones** reached via an error in the first inning and scored the first run of the game for the Rocks when **Brandon Downes** drove him in with a grounder after a sacrifice bunt by **Anderson Miller**. In the fifth inning Downes started thing with a double before a single and wild pitch pushed him across the plate. The fifth inning began with a pair of singles and a walk before Downes’ grand slam brought the Blue Crew to within five and topping things was Miller in the seventh when he walked and scored on a triple by **Elier Hernandez**.

The bullpen once again did its best while keeping the Rocks in the game. Although **Kyle Kubat** allowed all three of his inherited runners to score and gave up three of his own runs, he was still able to eat an important 3.1 innings. Once he handed the ball over the **Todd Eaton** it got even better. Eaton lasted three full frames for the Blue Crew, giving up just a pair of hits and one walk while striking out three batters. It was his longest outing for the Rocks and he ceded the ball to **Brennan Henry** who continued his fine stuff as of late. Henry faced the minimum in the ninth including notching a pair of strikeouts. Dating back to Sunday’s game, the bullpen has tossed 11.1 innings in their last two games, giving up just three runs and walking only three batters. During that stretch they have also struck out 11 opposing batters.

The big inning was what did the Rocks in on Monday night. The Salem Red Sox scored eight runs in the top of the second inning as starter **Corey Ray** could not get out of the frame. The eight runs scored by the Sox were the second most plated by an opposing team in an inning this season. The only team to score more against the Rocks during the 2016 campaign in a single inning was the Potomac Nationals who shoved in nine runs in the third inning of their game on July 5. That Nationals went on to win that 14-1, which was also one night after the Rocks produced their largest inning of the season when they scored seven in the 8th inning on July 4th, highlighted by **Wander Franco’s** grand slam.

THEY SAID IT

MANAGER JAMIE QUIRK:

“We swung the bats well today, ten hits, very good. They capitalized when we had runners in scoring position. We did a nice job getting guys in and getting guys over. We had a lot of quality at bats (Sunday night) 5-11 with runners in scoring position which is excellent. I credit it to concentration. Getting after it and keeping the line moving. Don’t try to be a hero and do your job whatever it takes and let the next guy do his job. “

“He (**Zach Lovvorn**) got a little careless. He pitched very well but he threw 30 plus pitches in that fifth inning, which cost him being able to finish it. He hit a guy, went inside on a guy he didn’t particularly have to at that point. He walked a guy on a breaking ball, which was not smart. He’s not a guy who walks many people but he got a little mentally lazy I think. His pitch count got up, when a pitcher throws 30 plus in an inning that’s it. He got it during the inning and I had to go get him. I’d have loved to give him one more guy to get out of there in a tie game and see if we could score for him but the pitch count didn’t allow it.”

“It’s just baseball, rules are the same, they have to throw it over the plate. (**Mike Hill**) got sent up here for a reason, he’s been playing well. It was a nice day for him. We’ve heard good things about him, haven’t got to see him a whole lot obviously. We saw a little bit in spring training. He did a very nice job it’s nice to add another left hand bat in the lineup, which really helps even out our lineup all the way down. I’m looking forward to having him around, he did a good job today.”

“Bullpen’s are usually competition within themselves, when you have that it’s usually a good sign. (**Jake Kalish**) is coming off the great outing he had in Lynchburg in a crucial situation late in the game when he had to pick up (**Louis Rico**). He picked up (**Zach Lovvorn**) (Sunday night) with the bases loaded and got a guy with 70 RBIs and struck him out. He did a great job there and gave us two more innings. They had right handers coming up so I went to (**Jake Bodner**), he’s continued to pitch well, his last two outings have been outstanding. I went to Rico because he had a poor outing last time I wanted to give him some confidence so I threw him right back out there and he responded and got the save.”

ROCKS INFIELDER MIKE HILL

“Fine actually, there were only a couple of flights that were only an hour long so I feel pretty good... When I got here I told myself I’m not going to waste any time and I was going to jump on the fastball as soon as I saw it and they pretty much threw me fastballs all night. My first couple of at bats I think I only saw three pitches, but I just hit the fastball and it was that easy.”

“It felt great, but I hit it more on a line so I know this is a big ballpark and I know it plays big, so I actually wasn’t watching it. Off the bat I watched it, but then I just put my head down and started running and I was looking at the dugout and everybody was signaling home run so at that point I didn’t watch it so I couldn’t play it off like it was a home run, but it was a good swing and it felt good.”

“I always batted without gloves growing up, but I changed it in college because I played summer ball and it’d get really hot and my hands would get sweaty and I realized I was going to need (batting gloves) in the future. I’d been using them in pro ball and then all of a sudden I was like, ‘that’s enough.’ I wasn’t doing too well so I figured let’s try something new and I started using no batting gloves and right away I started to take off.”

“The stance kind of came from watching video of Anthony Rizzo and it was all over MLB Network last year, talking about his two strike approach and I just happened to notice that he was open. It wasn’t as open as I am and I didn’t realize that, but he was a little open and I just tried that, ‘you know what, I’m going to open up a little bit so I can see the ball a little better and I can get both eyes on the pitcher,’ and it turned out to be way more open than Rizzo, but that was how it changed, just watching the video on him.”

“Yeah, that’s how it works. Every guy will tell you that they look at video on professional hitters and again, it’s not what he does, but it just kind of sparked something in my head, and I figured, let’s try this out, let’s try to turn. Because I had a tendency to turn too much in closed to where you could almost see my numbers, the pitcher, my full numbers and that’s not good so I just made an extreme adjustment and it just turned out to look like that.”

“I’m looking forward to just continuing to take good at bats. To continue to move up and help this team win. We’ve still got a whole month so let’s see what we can do,”