

Games: 23 & 24
 Date: Wed. 7/16/08
 Written: Tues. 7/22/08

Giveth and Taketh Away

If there was ever a double header that we desperately needed, this was it. It was a perfect opportunity to put some distance between us and the last place team Squirrel Cage (who we were playing), and to pick up some ground on the second place team, Papa O's. Going into these games the standings were as follows:

Economos 17 – 5
 Papa O's 13 – 9
 Black Jacks 8 – 14
 Squirrel Cage 6 – 16

As the night went on it seemed like a game of Give and Take. We'd give some, and take some back. Then give some more and take even more back.

Game 1

Squirrel Cage 7
 Black Jacks 13

	<u>Line Score</u>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T
Squirrel Cage	2	0	1	4	0	0	0	7
Papa O's	1	0	0	0	12	0	x	13

Every time we play these guys I'm very confident, but always leery to take them too lightly. Whenever we have done that over the years it comes back to bite us. They aren't very good, but they do have enough talent to capitalize on too many mistakes and score some runs if you let them. The trick is to get that first win out of the way. After that they usually either lose interest or get real dejected. I give them credit because they kept coming at us all night long.

They got out to quick two run lead in the first inning. We came back with one, when Diamond Dave led off with a double. He went to third on Lee's fly out and then scored on Joe's sacrifice fly. After one we were down two to one.

The second inning went scoreless for both teams. I began to have this real bad feeling of a very slow start with the bats, which has been or nemesis over the past few weeks.

In the third the Cagers plated one more for a three to one lead. We went down again with no runs on one hit. After three the score was three to one, with us behind.

In the fourth Squirrel Cage put some hits together and came away with four runs extending the lead to seven to one. Again, we went down with no runs, for the third consecutive inning. It really looked like bats were just not going to wake up. There is an old superstition in softball, that when you are not hitting, you go and kick all your bats all over the place to wake them up. I have no idea what the success rate is for that move, but Lee sure gave it a try. He kicked all the bats all over the place and yelled, "It's time to wake up!"

I'll be goddamned! It worked. I mean it really worked!!

Scags led things off by reaching base on an error. Dave moved him to third by singling and going to second on the throw. Lee came up and knocked both runners in with a single. The score now was seven to three. Joe kept things going with a single, putting two runners on. Ebs singled in Lee for another run. Two batters made outs, so there were two men on with two men out.

Franchi came up and lined a huge double to left to clear the bases. We were now down by one. I walked to keep things going. Then Trice stepped up to the plate. As I was standing on first I remembered him saying two things. 1. I've got my stroke back 2. Get on base. I'll bring you around. Well, he was right on both counts because he blasted a long home run well over the left centerfielder's head to drive in three runs and give us the lead nine to seven. You gotta like a guy who not only talks the talk, he walks the walk. But, we weren't done yet. Scags, up for the second time singled. Dave followed with his own single and Lee followed suite driving in his third run of the inning. Then Joe stepped up and reminded us how much we missed his bat. He crushed a long, high drive over the right fielder's head for the second three-run homer of the inning. When it was all said and done, we had our biggest inning of the season scoring twelve runs. We were now up thirteen to seven.

Both teams went quietly in the sixth with no runs. Then it was all up to T Rice in the seventh. We had a six run lead and needed a quick inning. We got it and walked away with a nice come from behind thirteen to seven lead. In this game, we gave them a nice lead and then took it away!

Box Score

	<u>AB</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>BB</u>	<u>2B</u>	<u>3B</u>	<u>HR</u>	<u>RBI</u>
Dave LF	4	3	3	0	1	0	0	0
Lee 2B	4	2	3	0	0	0	0	3
Joe LC	3	2	2	0	0	0	1	4
Ebs SS	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	1
Bones 1B	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Marty RC	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Franchi 3B	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Pete C	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Trice P	3	1	2	0	0	0	1	3
Scags RF	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0

Big Hitters: Dave, Lee, Joe (HR #2), Ebs, Trice (HR #1)

Game 2

Black Jacks **15**
Squirrel Cage **13**

Line Score

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>T</u>
Black Jacks	2	0	4	1	2	4	0	2	15
Squirrel Cage	1	0	0	2	0	5	5	0	13

The first game win was for sure a huge relief for everyone. Our confidence seemed to be back, but maybe a little too much. Keep in mind the give and take theme.

Dave led things off with a single. Two batters later Ebs moved him along with another single. Then Bones stepped up and crushed a long triple to right bringing in both runners for a quick two to nothing lead. Squirrel Cage got one run back in the bottom of the first, so after one we led two to one.

Both teams were quiet in the second, so the score stayed two to one going into the third. Lee led off with a single and Joe made it two in a row. Ebs then came up and hit a moon-shot triple over the right center fielder's head, bringing in two runs. Bones proceeded to single in Ebs for the third run. Two batters later Franchi brought in the final run of the inning with a sacrifice fly.

T Rice kept the Cagers quiet in the bottom of the third again. After three we were up six to one.

In the fourth we pushed one more run across on a sacrifice fly by Joe. But Squirrel Cage came back with two of their own to cut our lead to seven to three.

We kept at it in the fifth. With two men on Trice helped his own cause once again by crushing a long triple to left center, bringing in Marty and me. He then proceeded to shut down the Cagers again in the fifth, giving us a nine to three lead after five.

In the sixth we started looking for a slaughter rule win. Dave led off with a double, and then Lee reached on an error. Joe stepped up and hit booming triple to right center bringing in two runs. The Ebs crushed our third homer of the night bringing in two more runs. This pushed our lead to thirteen to three.

The slaughter rule after six innings is ten runs. So, in order to end the game we needed to hold them to no runs. Unfortunately, that idea when right out the window. The Cagers got a bit hot, putting a bunch of hits together. Before we knew it they had scored five runs, cutting out lead in half. After six we now lead thirteen to eight.

The way we were hitting we figured we'd tack on a few more runs and put this thing out of reach. But, unfortunately, that did not happen. We picked a bad time to do scoreless. Going into the bottom of the seventh we still lead thirteen to eight.

With a five run lead I was thinking we should be fine. I did not think we would give up five runs in two consecutive innings. Boy was I wrong. We all went in the toilet and almost flushed the game away. As Franchi so eloquently put it, "For the first time in quite a while we looked like a bunch of idiots!" We gave them five runs on a silver platter with some very costly mistakes in the field. What two innings ago looked like a slaughter rule win, turned into an extra inning nightmare.

For those who don't know, the rule for extra innings is each team starts out with a runner on second base and no outs. This is done to try and promote scoring. So, Lee took second base in the top of the 8th. With one out Ebs moved Lee to third with a single. Then Bones brought in Lee with a sacrifice fly to take a one run lead. Marty then walked to put runners on first and second. Then Franchi stepped up and knocked in a big run with a single for a two run lead. We went into the bottom of the 8th up by two.

We needed a big inning from Trice and solid fielding to hold the two run lead. In other words, we had to stop looking like a bunch of idiots. Thank God we did! Squirrel Cages went away empty, giving us a 15 to 13 win. In a game we almost gave away, we took back. Whew!

Box Score

	AB	R	H	BB	2B	3B	HR	RBI
Dave LF	5	2	3	0	1	0	0	0
Lee P	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Joe LC	4	2	2	0	0	1	0	3
Ebs SS	5	4	4	0	0	1	1	4
Bones 1B	4	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
Marty RC	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Franchi 3B	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	2
Pete C	5	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Trice P	4	0	2	0	0	1	0	2
Scags RF	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0

Big Hitters: Dave, Joe, Ebs (HR #1), Bones, Trice

Coach's Corner

.500 record

If we exclude the four games we lost by forfeit we are actually at the .500 mark with a 10 – 10 record. Unfortunately, the forfeit losses do count, so we are actually 10 – 14.

However, after sinking to a horrendous 1 – 9 record on May 18th, we have come storming back, going 9 and 5 in the last 14 games. We've also won six out of our last seven. I think it's safe to say we've managed to turn the season around. But there's still work to be done.

Homerun chase

For the first time all year, there were three home runs hit in one night. Joe hit his second, tying for the team lead. Trice and Ebs hit their first putting them in the chase with a bunch of other guys.

Finding our homes

Slowly but surely we are finding defensive homes for everyone. I think we've found our infielders and outfielders for the most part, with a few tweaks as needed here and there. This creates comfort and confidence, which is important.

Steady Lineup

The batting order is also becoming steady. We have a nice top five or six, with lots of interchangeable parts after that. We needed consistency here too, and we finally seem to be getting it

Helping himself

I gotta tip my hat to Trice again. He told me he got his stroke back, and he sure did. He not only pitched well again, he went 4 for 7 with a triple, home run and 5 RBI. Way to go T.

3, 4 & 5

Our three, four and five hitters knocked in seventeen of our twenty-eight runs on the night. So, do you think the lineup is working?

The Challenge

So, where to do we go from here with only three weeks left in the regular season and the play-off tournament? How about these challenges?

1. Beat Economos
2. Finish with an overall record of .500 or better
3. Finish in second place in the regular season
4. Win the play-off tournament

Personally, I think if we can find a way to take care of number one, the rest could very well just fall into place.

No predictions here gang.....just a challenge to the team.

Comic Relief

The Rule is...

There was a weird play at second base. With runners on first and second a ball was hit to Ebs at short. He stepped on second for a force play then threw to first trying to get a double play. The runner on second held up and never went to third. He then acted like he was out because he started to walk towards the infield away from the bag. Then someone on his team yelled and he got back to second in time. I thought he was out because he wandered out of the base path.

Ump: He's safe

Pete: He was wandering out of the base path

Ump: So
Pete: Doesn't that mean he's out. You can't go out of the base path like that.
Ump: The rule applies only if you are trying to avoid a tag or a play on you while running. Otherwise you are safe.
Pete: And you're safe if you're wandering around because you have no idea what the fuck is going on around you.
Ump: Exactly. You hit the nail right on the head with that play.

Pete could have made it to second

Joe was giving Scags a hard time about his speed, and naturally my name was brought into it.

Joe: You only made it to second base?
Scags: Yep
Joe: Even Pete could have made it that far.
Scags: Yeah, but I made the turn.
Joe: Oh okay.
Pete: That's just a waste of time and energy. What do you want to do that for? You just wind up going back anyway. That's just stupid.

Not in Pete's league

Pete: Nice night guys. Not counting those forfeits we are back at the .500 mark.
Franchi: Yeah, but those losses do count in the standings.
Lee: Not in Pete's league they don't.

Why Must I surround myself with a bunch of idiots....

Pete: Man those last few innings were brutal
Lee: Yeah, we gave them a lot of runs in that last inning.
Franchi: I'd say for the first time in a long time, we really looked like a bunch of idiots.

The End.....

Next Games

Date: 7/23
Opponent: Economos
Times: 8:30 & 9:30

The G.M. Has Spoken.....

Pete