

Week of Monday, July 8, 2024

The Henderson County Senior Softball League had two travel teams in action this week. On Monday, July 8th, the Henderson County Older Sluggers welcomed the Lake Keowee Eagles to Jackson Park for a pair of Clayton 68+ contests. The Older Sluggers coached by Stan Steinberg were sponsored by **Hunter Automotive Group** for these games. The Eagles stood in third place in the Clayton League and they brought a competitive team to Jackson Park. The Older Sluggers hit the visitors with a five-run inning in their first at-bat to take the early lead. Lake Keowee would not go down easily as they repeatedly battled back to keep the game close. After five innings of play, Henderson County held an 11-8 lead. At this point, the score and the game took a major shift in favor of the Older Sluggers. Henderson County scored five runs in the sixth while holding the Eagles scoreless to stretch the lead to 16-8. In the top of the seventh inning, the floodgates opened as Henderson County scored eleven runs. The Eagles managed to get five runs in the bottom of the frame but when the final out was made the Older Sluggers had secured a lopsided 27-13 victory. Don Ward was the winning pitcher. The Older Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.714 while drilling a pair of doubles and a home run. Bob Drew (5-5) and Rick Sweeney (4-4) were perfect at the plate to lead the offensive charge but they had plenty of help from Jerry Austin (3-4 with a double and a home run), Jim Zitney (3-4), Mike Warner (3-4), Scott Searle (4-5), Tim Epley (4-5), and Sonny Johnston (4-5 with a double).

Maybe it was the heat or maybe it was the late offensive onslaught from game one but something took the energy from Lake Keowee in game two. The Eagles scored three runs in the first couple of innings but did not score for the remainder of the game and was called after six innings of play. Meanwhile, the Sluggers were putting up twenty one runs and cruised to a 21-3 romp over the Eagles. Don Ward was again the winning pitcher. David Keith came on in the last two innings in relief to give Don a break from the heat and humidity. The Older Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.821 in the second game and increased their power output with four doubles, two triples, and two home runs. Virtually everyone in the lineup had a productive day at the plate led by perfect outings from Sonny Johnston (3-3 with a double and a triple), Scott Searle (3-3), Bob Drew (3-3),

Jim Zitney (3-3 with a double), Jerry Austin (3-3 with two home runs and a hearty thank you to Scott Searle for running for him), Gary Ayers (3-3), David Keith (2-2), and Gary Warren (2-2). Near-perfect outings at the plate came from Gene Reiser (2-3 with a triple), Don Ward (2-3 with a double), Mike Warner (2-3 with a double), Tim Epley (2-3), and Roger Helm (1-2 with a walk). With the pair of wins Henderson County ran their record to 17-2 on the year in the Clayton 68+ League and strengthened the hold on first place. Lake Keowee remains in third place with a 9-9 record and five of their losses coming from the Older Sluggers.

On Wednesday, July 10th, the Henderson County mixed 60+ Sluggers traveled to Sandy Andrews Memorial Park in Marion, NC to play the High Country team from Boone. The mixed Sluggers were coached by Bud Bonnema and sponsored by **Skyland Barber Shop** for these games. It was another hot day and the teams agreed to bat in two-inning segments until the last inning to speed up the game. After each two-inning segment, Henderson County always had the lead as they picked up the 14-8 victory. Gary Warren got the win on the mound. The offense was led by perfect outings from Roger Helm (4-4), Sonny Johnston (3-3), Kirk Hall (3-3), and Bud

Bonnema (3-3). Also aiding the cause at the plate were Rob Kennedy (2-3 with a home run), Don Chambers (2-3 with a double), and Gary Warren (2-3 with a double).

In game two the mixed Sluggers started out as hot as the weather as they produced nine runs in their two-inning opening segment. Unfortunately, the offense seemed to wilt as they sun beat down and the Sluggers could only produce six runs over the next five innings. Meanwhile, High Country continued to apply pressure throughout the game and when they scored five runs in the bottom of the sixth the game was tied at 15-15. Henderson County was unable to score in the top of the seventh and High Country managed to push across the winning run on a weak dribbler with two outs and runners on first and third for a walk-off 16-15 win.

Don Chambers was the hard-luck loser on the mound. Bob Drew (3-3) and Frank Johnson (3-3) led the offense with help from Sonny Johnston (2-3 with a triple), Rob Kennedy (2-3 with a double), Don Chambers (2-3 with a double), Tom Welbourn (2-3 with a home run), and Gary Warren (2-3). After the split on the day, the record for the mixed 60+ Sluggers stands at 10-2 for the year.

The schedule next week has the Older Sluggers traveling to Parker Meadows in Franklin for a pair of Clayton 68+ games against the Older Bones on Monday, July 17th. On Wednesday, July 19th, the mixed 70+ Sluggers will travel to Sunset Park in Greenville, SC to face the Upstate South Carolina 70+ squad.

he Henderson County Senior Softball League is always looking for new players age 50 and older (35 and older for ladies). Regular league games are normally played on Monday and Friday mornings at 9:30 on fields 8 and 9 at Jackson Park in Hendersonville. For additional information call 828-260-2130 or go to Henderson County Senior Softball at <https://hcssoftball.com>.