

Week of Monday, September 9, 2024

The Henderson County Senior Softball League had three teams in action this week with all of the games on the road. On Monday, September 9th, the Henderson County Older Sluggers went down the mountain to Nettles Park in Pendleton, SC to face the Lake Keowee Eagles in a pair of Clayton 68+ League contests. Henderson County was coached by Stan Steinberg and sponsored by **Advanced Dermatology and Skin Surgery, PA** for these games. Lake Keowee is always tough to play at Nettles Park and these games proved that to be true. In game one, the Eagles scored five runs in the top of the first and managed to stay on top for the better part of the game. The game went to the top of the seventh inning tied at 14-14. Lake Keowee scored one run in the top of the seventh and had the bases loaded with two outs. One of their top hitters was at the plate and he foul-tipped the ball which was snagged by the catcher Tim Epley. That was a pivotal turning point as Henderson County scored two runs in the bottom of the inning for a walk-off 16-15 victory. David Keith picked up the win on the mound as he came in mid-game in relief of the starter Don Ward. The Older Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.625 and were led at the plate by Jim Zitney who had a perfect day (4-4 with a double). Six other players were one out away from perfection in the game: Bob Drew (3-4), Rick Sweeney (3-4), Scott Searle (3-4), Tim Epley (3-4 with a double), Gary Warren (2-3), and Don Phipps (2-3) who returned to action after a long recovery period for an injury he sustained early in the season.

As if game one wasn't close enough game two went to extra innings after the two teams were tied 15-15 at the end of regulation play. Once again Lake Keowee took the early lead and the teams battled throughout with the lead changing hands a couple of times. Henderson County was the visitor in game two so they led off the top of the eighth inning and lived up to their nickname of Sluggers as they exploded for twelve runs to take a 27-15 lead. The Eagles battled back with four in the bottom of the inning but could get no closer as Henderson County took a hard-fought 27-19 win. David Keith once again captured the victory on the mound. Henderson County had a team batting average of 0.686 in game two and was led by Scott Searle (6-6) with a perfect outing. Several players were near perfection including Bob Drew (4-5 with a home run), Don Ward (4-5), Rick Sweeney (4-5 with a double), Jim Zitney (4-5 with a double), David Keith (4-5), and Stan Steinberg (2-3 with a double and two walks). With the pair of wins Henderson County extended their record to 29-3 in the Clayton League and maintains their hold on first place. After coming home with two wins that could easily been two losses the Older Sluggers received news that our good friends in Franklin earned a split with the second-place Rabun County Relics. With four games remaining in the regular season and a three-game cushion in the loss column, the magic number is two for the Older Sluggers to win the regular season title and capture the #1 seed in the post-season tournament.

On Tuesday, September 10th, the Henderson County Exhibition Sluggers traveled to the Thomas K. Ellis Sports Complex in Johnson City, TN to face the Tri-Cities 65+ travel team. The Exhibition Sluggers were coached by Sonny Johnston and sponsored by **Postage Express** for these games. In game one the Exhibition team battled hard but came out on the short end of the stick losing 18-11 to Tri-Cities.

Danny Davis took the loss on the mound. The team batting average for the Sluggers was 0.528. Norm Royo led the way (3-3 with a double). Also aiding the cause were Frank Johnson (3-4), Gene Reiser (3-4

with a double), Scott Searle (3-4), Randy Bowman (1-2 with two walks), and Kevin Doyle with a home run.

Game two produced a similar score but Tri-Cities had to go to extra innings to capture a 17-11 victory. Tri-Cities loaned the Sluggers a pitcher named Junior for the second game so he was the hard-luck loser. The team batting average rose to 0.564 in game two with Kevin Doyle leading the charge (4-4 with two home runs). Jim Zitney (3-4) and Norm Royo (3-4 with a triple) aided the offensive effort. The season series with Tri-Cities ended with each team taking sweeps at their respective home fields and recording a record of 2-2.

On Wednesday, September 11th, a mixed 60+/70+ Henderson County squad traveled to Sandy Andrews Memorial Park in Marion, NC to face the High Country team from Boone, NC. This mixed team was coached by Danny Davis and Bud Bonnema and sponsored by **Kiefer Family Chiropractic** for these games.

The Mixed Sluggers came out of the gate firing and never let up as they rolled to a 25-3 romp over High Country. The team batting average for the game was 0.850 as the mixed Sluggers scored five in every inning and did not bat in the 6th or 7th inning of the double flip-flop win. David Keith was the winning pitcher. Seven batters had perfect days at the plate in the first game: Jim Wicker (4-4), Sonny Johnston (4-4), Rob Kennedy (4-4), Frank Johnson (4-4), Kirk Hall (4-4), Cliff Coggins (3-3), and David Keith (3-3).

Game two was similar to the first game in that the Mixed Sluggers again put up twenty-five runs. Although High Country had a better offensive showing it wasn't enough as they fell to the Sluggers 25-13. The Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.771 in game two and once again had seven batters with perfect days at the plate: Bud Bonnema (4-4), Danny Davis (4-4), Don Phipps (3-3), Sonny Johnston (3-3), Rob Kennedy (3-3), Frank Johnson (3-3), and David Keith (2-2 with two walks). David Keith again picked up the win on the mound with Danny Davis coming in to close out the game over the final two innings. The two wins avenged the losses the Sluggers suffered the last time the two teams met and the Mixed 70+ finished up an outstanding season with a 14-2 record.

Next week the Henderson County 68+ Older Sluggers are scheduled to make the trek to Tiger, Georgia on Monday, September 16th to battle the Rabun County Relics in a clash of the top two teams in the Clayton 68+ League. The current weather forecast indicates a possibility that these games could be affected.

The 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>.