

Late runs push OV past Rutland

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All a baseball coach can ask for is that their pitcher keeps them in the game. Fraser Pierpont did just that in Otter Valley's 7-2 win against rival Rutland Saturday afternoon at Giorgetti Park.

Pierpont wasn't dominant, but got the key outs when he needed to keep the Otters afloat.

"This was Fraser's first varsity start of his career," said Otter Valley coach Mike Howe. "We talked about hitting spots. It got away from him here and there, but he always came back and always focused on location and he got some really big outs for us."

Pierpont went 4 2/3 innings, allowing two runs and four hits.

The Otters didn't give Pierpont much run support during his outing. Rutland righty Jevan Valente was lights out in five innings of work.

Valente struck out 11 batters, giving up just one run on two hits.

"Jevan was exceptional," Howe said. "You get somebody in that throws in the low 80s like he does, especially on cold days like this, first day out, it's hard."

"He had a great approach," said Rutland coach Geoff Bloomer. "We talked yesterday about the game plan. He's a student of the game, so he wants to know what he's going to do. He threw a lot of off-speed and his fastball was working really well today."

It wasn't until Valente got the hook after the fifth that the Otters really locked in.

Ben Spiro came on in relief of Valente and Otter Valley took advantage.

With Rutland leading 2-1 heading into the sixth, Caleb Whitney led off the sixth with a single and swiped second base to get into scoring position.

Following a Pierpont strikeout, Alex Polli worked a walk and Jordan Beayon singled to tie the game, scoring Whitney. Ethan Blow came up next and grounded out to second base, scoring another run. Beayon came around to score later in the inning.

The Otters kept the foot on the gas pedal in the top of the seventh.

Whitney got on base with a walk, Pierpont singled and Polli was hit by a pitch to load the bases. All three guys would come around to score with Blow picking up a sacrifice fly run batted in the inning.

"We had some good at-bats against (Jevan) and that propelled us for when we were able to get to their bullpen by driving up the pitch count," Howe said. "We took advantage of some opportunities we had."

Rutland had plenty of chances to break the game open in the early innings. A dropped third strike and a Tyler Weatherhogg double put the Ravens in business in the first. Chaska Stannard walked to load the bases, but Rutland couldn't capitalize.

Same story in the second inning, where an error at third, hit by pitch and walk loaded the bases again, but Pierpont worked out of the jam.

All good things come in threes, but that wasn't the case for Rutland. Up 1-0, they had another chance to get across some runs in the fourth. Owen Simpson led off with a single and a pair of walks loaded the bases again, but the story was the same for the Ravens.

"We didn't have the timely hitting," Bloomer said. "We put the ball in play, but we have to keep the foot on the pedal and score some runs. (Otter Valley) made a nice comeback."

A bright spot for Rutland was Weatherhogg, a sophomore, who went 2-for-4.

"He's our youngest player, so I was really excited he had a good game," Bloomer said.

Simpson also had two hits for Rutland. Lane Eddy was the lone Otter to have a multi-hit game.

Blow got the win in relief for Otter Valley.

Otter Valley (1-0) is set for a 2019 Division II state championship rematch with Fair Haven on the road Tuesday at 4:30 p.m.

Rutland (0-1) is at Windsor at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday.