

Express steams past Fort Morgan

Morales tosses no-hitter in first-game win

By JEREMY WOZNICK

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Andres Morales' no-hitter highlighted the WESTCO Express junior legion baseball team's doubleheader sweep over Fort Morgan, Colo., on Saturday afternoon at Cleveland Field in Scottsbluff.

In addition to not allowing a single hit or run, Morales struck out six and didn't walk any in a 15-0 first-game win.

"He just threw strike after strike and got ahead of everybody," Express coach Brian Ross said of Morales' performance. "He located his pitches well and they didn't put very good swings on his fastball. It's been a little over a week since he last pitched and I think that little break helped him."

While he mowed down the Fort Morgan lineup, Morales also received plenty of offensive support as the Express bolted to a 9-0 lead in the first inning. WESTCO added two more runs in the third before ending the game early by plating four in the fourth.

The Express pounded out 10 hits in the contest. Morales and Tharyn Curtis both finished with two hits each. Liam Kautz drove in three, while Ty Wilson knocked home two. Curtis and Kautz both scored three runs each. Wilson, Morales and Jacob Schmid all scored two runs each. Curtis, Wilson and Leighton Freeze each drew a pair of walks.

In the second game, Curtis and Wilson both blasted home runs to propel the Express to an 8-3 win. Both homers came in the bottom of the second inning and lifted WESTCO into a 6-1 lead.

The Express added single runs in both the third and fourth innings to round out its scoring.

Wilson and Freeze both led the Express offensively with two hits and two runs scored each. Freeze had a double. Curtis and Tyler Mickey drove in two runs each. The Express finished the game with six hits.

Mickey earned the win on the mound. He struck out four and allowed just one hit in three innings of work. Ty Dunkel and Freeze both pitched one inning in relief. Dunkel struck out three and Freeze fanned two.

“All of our pitchers threw strikes and we made plays behind them,” Ross said. “Offensively, we had very good at bats as a team. As a whole, I thought we played two pretty solid games.”

The offensive success enjoyed by the Express in both games was a stark contrast to Wednesday’s one-run output against Alliance. Ross said that shows his ball club still needs to be more consistent.

“We just need to stay consistent,” Ross said. “Offensively, we’ll have great games and then a game or two later we’ll really struggle. When we can stay consistent, I think we can be a pretty good team.”

The wins extended the Express’ winning streak to four in a row. The Express is now 22-12 on the season overall.

WESTCO will return to action on Tuesday at Alliance. The Express will then host Chadron on Wednesday before hosting Alliance on July 11 to close out the regular season.

The Class A, Area 7 Tournament will be hosted by the Express at Cleveland Field July 14-17.

Game One

Fort Morgan 000 0 — 0 0 1

Express 902 4 — 15 10 1

WP — Morales. LP — Rodrigues.

2B — Wilson, Mickey.

Game Two

Fort Morgan 100 20 — 3 1 0

Express (22-12) 331 1x — 8 6 2

WP — Mickey. LP — Phlug.

HR — Curtis, Wilson. 2B — Freeze.

