

Rangers Roundup & Gazette

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Rangers Put a Scare in First-Place Yankees

JONES COUNTY, GA. Baseball fans, the Rangers are coming on strong. They came up short Monday night against the Yankees, losing 12-8, but they played their hearts out and gave the league-leading Yanks their toughest game of the season.

The Rangers jumped on the Yankees early, scoring four in the 1st inning, and they held the lead through the top half of the 4th. The game was tied at seven apiece going into the bottom of the 5th, when a combination of nervous Ranger defense and strong Yankee hitting made it 12-7 Yanks. The Rangers mounted a two-out rally in the 6th but could push only one run across.

Still, the boys in Ranger blue can hold their heads up high (just as long as they keep their eyes on the ball at all times! ☺). Yankee Coach Brandon Cox told the *Roundup & Gazette*, "Wow, those Rangers are really improved from when we saw them before. Tonight was the longest our ballclub has trailed this year. We were really tested. Great game!"

Once again the Rangers had some shaky fielding both early and late. The two Yankee runs in the 1st came courtesy of overthrows and missed catches by infielders. And a bobble or two in the 5th helped the Yankees take a commanding lead heading into the last inning.

Coach Lizzy had this to say, however: "I really like our team. These guys hung tough! We got more wins coming soon!"

Game 6 Line Score	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>E</i>	
Rangers	4	10	2	1
Yankees	2	2	0	3 5 x
	9	19	0	

The Rangers rapped out 17 base hits, and they broke out the lumber (er uh, aluminum) especially early on. In the four-run 1st leadoff man Drake Daughtry doubled, William Allen Whiddon and Kyler Blair followed with hard base-knocks, Gregory Hunter and Justin



Franks reached base, and then with the bases loaded, Will Pritchard pounded one of the hardest-hit balls we've seen this year. But dang it, the Yankee fielder, deep in right field, somehow, amazingly, caught the ball! Coach Curt was once again looking for a police officer to report a crime. "Hey, can they do that?" he asked. "I mean, wasn't that Atlanta Brave Jason Heyward who caught that ball?"

But still the 1st inning wasn't done, as fireplug Chandler Sharp smashed a single to drive in two runs. The Rangers came one batter shy of "hitting around" in the inning. Way to hit that ball, boys!



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Shortstop William Allen Whiddon and first baseman Drake Daughtry both had four-for-four nights at the plate, with Drake scoring all four times and William Allen scoring twice and driving in two runs.

Pitcher and cleanup hitter Kyler Blair went three-for-four with a run scored and two RBI's. Catcher Jesse James Dixon was two-for

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Rangers Push Yanks Hard

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four, and third baseman Justin Franks continued his heating-up streak with two hits in three at-bats. Chandler Sharp's two-RBI single was easily his biggest hit of the year.

But once again, despite the offensive fireworks, it's the defense that has Coach Chip excited about this improving Ranger ballclub.

"Our guys kept us in position to win this thing by making plays in the field," Coach Chip said. "Once we can put together six straight innings of the kind of defense we've been playing in our best three or so innings, we're going to make some noise in this league!"

Donnie Hayle made a crucial throw in from right-center to 2nd base, Justin Franks forced a runner out at third in the 5th, and Drake Daughtry made several outstanding plays, running hard to catch a popup in the 1st and gobbling up grounders and making unassisted putouts in the 1st, 2nd, and 4th innings.

Most impressive for the Rangers fielders was the 4th inning, when the guys really kept their cool once the Yankees geared up their comeback. After the Yanks tied the score at 7-7, with the crowd roaring at every play and tension mounting, Justin Franks got the first out with a pinpoint throw to catcher Jesse Dixon, who tagged out the sliding Yankee runner at the plate. In a great big cloud of dust, my friends! Way to hold that ball, Jesse!

Still 7-7, with one out now, Drake charged a groundball and tagged the runner ten feet from first base. The next Yankee batter singled sharply to left field, where Zack Chance made his best play of the year, throwing a rocket-ball to second to keep the runner from advancing past first. The Yankees' third-base coach may have even said, "That Zack kid has a cannon for an arm!" Hey, he might have said it—it's possible!



The defensive player of the game was a unanimous coaches' choice for game-ball winner: Kyler Blair. Aside from his steady offensive production, leading the team with 16 RBI's, he was rock-solid at pitcher.

Kyler fielded one groundball and made a good throw to first for an out in the 1st, and in the 3rd he bobbled another grounder but kept his cool and threw a dart for another putout at first. Twice more he fielded balls cleanly and made solid throws, one where the runner was safe by just half a whisker, and another when the runner distracted the Rangers first baseman and he lost the handle on the ball.

Probably most impressive was Kyler's grabbing a popup in the 3rd with the bases loaded and the score 5-4 Rangers—with all the commotion and roaring from the stands and base-runners scrambling back to every base, he very calmly held the ball till order was restored. The next Yankee hitter struck out, and the Rangers were still sitting pretty with that 5-4 lead. Attaboy, Kyler, keep it up!

Stat Watch: Team Leader Board

<i>Batting average</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>AVG.</i>
Drake Daughtry	20	19	.950
William Allen Whiddon	19	14	.737
Kyler Blair	19	13	.684
Jesse Dixon	20	12	.600
Gregory Hunter	15	8	.533
Justin Franks	17	7	.412

<i>RBI (Runs Batted In)</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>RBI</i>
Kyler Blair	6	16
William Allen Whiddon	6	13
Jesse Dixon	6	5
Justin Franks	6	3
Gregory Hunter	5	3
Chandler Sharp	6	3

<i>Runs Scored</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>R</i>
Drake Daughtry	6	18
William Allen Whiddon	6	10
Jesse Dixon	6	8
Kyler Blair	6	5
Gregory Hunter	5	2
Justin Franks	6	2

<i>Home Runs</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>HR</i>
Jess Dixon	6	2
William Allen Whiddon	6	1
Drake Daughtry	6	1

On Deck: We have a voluntary practice Wednesday at 5:30 for all who can make it; next game Saturday against these same Yankees, gametime @ 10:00 a.m., pre-game practice @ 9:15. **See all you Rangers who can make it Wednesday at 5:30!**