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The Radford University baseball team played four home games this past week against rivals. First up was a Wednesday night tilt with in-state 81 rival James Madison University. Over the weekend they had a three game series vs. Big South Conference rival Coastal Carolina.

On Wednesday night vs. JMU, the Highlanders got off to a quick start. They scored three runs in the first inning. Patrick Marshall drove in the first run of the game with a single. Zach Woolcock added another single to make it 2-0 and Blake Sipe drew a bases loaded walk for the third run. After JMU scored three runs in the second to take tie it, RU took the lead with a RBI ground out by Alexander Lee. In the third, RU loaded the bases and Woolcock scored on a wild pitch to make it 5-3. Josh Gardiner hit a sacrifice fly to centerfield to score another run. Then RU added three more runs including a double by Marshall to score five runs in the third to take a 9-3 lead.

RU would add three more runs in the fifth. After Josh Gardiner got on base, Lee singled to score him. Then Patrick Marshall delivered the big blow with a two run homer to right field.

“It was a good team win. We came out strong, we were relentless on the bases, our offense and defense was solid,” said Patrick Marshall. On the home run Marshall added, “I was trying to get a good pitch to hit, something hard to hit. He made a mistake over the plate and I just made him pay for it.”

The Highlanders beat the Dukes with a final score of 14-5. Mitchell MacKeith got the win to improve his record to 2-1.

“In that five run third inning we took advantage of some walks, we had some big hits in that inning, we stole some bases. Prior to that it was disappointing we didn’t hold the three run lead but then we put up a five spot which was huge for us,” said head coach Joe Raccuia.

This past weekend Radford hosted Coastal Carolina for a three game series. Coastal had won six consecutive Big South tournament titles until they lost to Liberty last year. This would be a tough series for RU. On Friday night Coastal Carolina took the first game of the series 8-3. On Saturday the Highlanders bounced back in a big way in front of a crowd of 465 fans for alumni day.

Tyler Costello took the ball looking to help the Highs even up the series. The Chanticleers jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the first inning on a wild pitch by Costello. In the third inning the Highlanders answered. After Blake Sipe got on base, Aaron Scoville singled to right field to score Sipe and tie the game at one. RU took the lead in the sixth when an error by Coastal’s shortstop Zach Woolcock on a ground ball that allowed Patrick Marshall and Alexander Lee to score, 3-1 Highlanders. Coastal would score two runs in the seventh and one run in the eighth inning to take a 4-3 lead. In the bottom of the eighth with two outs Hunter Higgerson hit a solo home run over the leftfield fence to tie the game at 4 and put the Radford fans into a frenzy!

“On the on deck circle I was looking to get a pitch that I could drive, that pitch was there and I put a good swing on it. I felt like this home run really helped our offense and our pitching for the rest of the game,” said Higgerson.

The game-tying home run by Higgerson set up some ninth inning heroics. With hits by Chris Coia and Josh Gardiner, Alexander Lee came to the plate with two on and two outs. On a two ball and two strike count Lee drilled the ball to right field to score Coia and give the Highlanders the dramatic 5-4 win!

"I was looking for a good pitch to hit, preferably a fastball and I got one in the 2-1 count and I took it so it went to 2-2. I was trying to get it done early on but didn't get the pitch I was looking for so when I got to 2-2 I had to battle off the next few pitches to get one I could hit," Lee said. "This win is extremely exciting. We come out and try to win every game and play hard for our coaches and teammates and the guys that won't be able to play next year. It is now my last month playing and we got some big games coming up and winning this game was huge."

The walk-off single was huge indeed for the Highlanders in a thrilling game.

"I thought Tyler Costello was playing like himself, competing for every pitch and battling himself out of jams and showing his leadership on the mound. There was a flow in that game back and fourth that when you're struggling and both teams are struggling, you ride off emotions a little bit and Higgerson picked us up with the home run which was a huge hit. Coia's stolen base, and Lee with the two strike RBI hit, a walk-off, we needed it badly," said head coach Joe Raccuia. "You hope that they never pack it in, anything can happen and all it takes when you're in a close game is when you play defense and you pitch all it takes is one swing, like we had with Higgerson, to get you right back into it."

On the big crowd, Raccuia added, "That was the first time in a long time that I've seen a crowd at RU into it from pitch one. Hopefully it's something to build off of."

Unfortunately the Highs dropped game three on Sunday afternoon 9-3 but they hope to use Saturday's win as motivation for the rest of the way. On Thursday they open up a three game series with Big South foe Campbell at the RU baseball stadium. First pitch for that game is set for 6:30.