



GAMEDAY

MAY 2024

LETTER FROM THE TEAM

Hey Fans!

May has arrived and we are so excited for this summer of Hillcats baseball. April was full of exciting moments, memorable plays and players, and great atmospheres at the ballpark.

We had so much fun as we cheered on Matt “Tugboat” Wilkinson to his fifteen strikeout performance. Then later that week, we had our highest attended game in years as we celebrated all of the local youth programs in the area. We also partied on Opening Day with all of the festivities that go along with welcoming back baseball.

In May, we expect things to get bigger and better. We kick things off with our first Copa weekend of the season. The team rebrands as the Limonadas de Hill City and will look to honor Hispanic heritage in the game of baseball. Later in the month, we’ll highlight some causes our team is passionate about, such as mental health, autism awareness, and skin cancer. Then to wrap up May, we’ll throw it back to the 1990s as we continue to celebrate our 30th anniversary of Hillcats baseball.

We’ve got a great month planned ahead of us, and the season is still only beginning. Won’t you join us? Make sure to stop one of us in the ballpark and introduce yourselves. We’d love to get to know you by name.

Sincerely,
The Lynchburg Hillcats



CLARIK



THE TUGBOAT DOCKS IN LYNCHBURG

When the Opening Day Roster was announced, many locals and Guardians fans were excited about the bevy of top-30 prospects in the Hill City.

With the likes of Ralph Velazquez, Jaison Chourio, and Angel Genao, fans had ample reason to be excited. Even in the pitching room, Alex Mooney and Jackson Humphries became the talking point.

Yet, a month into the season, it's none of those names who have endeared themselves to the fanbase.

Insert "Tugboat".

Matt Wilkinson, who's affectionate nickname has already gone viral on social media, was drafted by the Guardians in the 10th round of last summer's MLB Draft out of Central Arizona College. He found his way to Arizona after growing up in Canada, where he said he always had a dream different than his peers.

"Just being a kid from Canada having a different dream than others, playing baseball has been cool," Wilkinson said. "The experience at college, the lifestyle, and being in the states has been awesome."

In college, he put up incredible numbers, boasting a 1.38 ERA over the span of two seasons in Arizona. He also finished his career 15-4 in 137 innings.

Though those numbers are impressive, it's another stat that drew the eyes of the Guardians front office: Strikeouts.

At Central Arizona, strikeouts were his bread and butter. He finished his two year career with 221 strikeouts. That was good for a 14.52 k/9.

Those numbers have not changed since arriving in Lynchburg. If anything, they have helped him grow in notoriety. Through the month of April, he registered 41 strikeouts in 20.1 innings of work. That is good enough for two strikeouts an inning.

Then, on April 25th, the Tugboat had the game of his life.

Facing the Myrtle Beach Pelicans, Wilkinson would strikeout 15 batters in six no-hit innings. It was the first time in Lynchburg history that this feat had been accomplished, and only the fifth time in Minor League Baseball history.

In addition, those numbers put him alongside a few Major League Baseball legends: Warren Spahn, Clayton Kershaw, Max Scherzer, Don Wilson, and Nolan Ryan. Ryan achieved the mark three times during his illustrious career.

“Being in the same names as those guys makes me want to keep working even harder to get to where I want to be,” Wilkinson told MiLB.com.

“It’s what I try to do every time,” Wilkinson said. “You just have to try not to make that moment too big for yourself and just do whatever you can to help the team win. That’s what I did tonight.”

His mark won him favor in Lynchburg and on social media, where videos of his start circled the Internet highlighting his unique physique and swagger. His nickname circled the baseball world as people began to meet the Hillcat hero.

But where did the nickname come from?

“My dad’s best friend growing up,” Tugboat said with a smile. “Doing the base races (in Little League), I guess I was going so slow and the nickname stuck ever since. I love it, I embrace it.”

Clearly, the Tugboat is built to live in the hearts of the Hillcats faithful.



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LYNCHBURG YOUTH MOVEMENT

By: Connor Young

There is a youth movement in the Bank of the James Stadium in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Seven different Hillcats have yet to have reached their 20th birthday; but don't be fooled, these teenagers sure can play baseball well beyond their years. 4th ranked Guardians prospect Ralphy Velazquez, 5th ranked Jaison Chourio, 8th ranked Alex Clemmey, 11th ranked Angel Genao, 13th ranked Jackson Humphries, 23rd ranked Rafael Ramirez Jr., and slugging catcher Manuel Mejias all are still technically teenagers!

The Lynchburg Hillcats and the Carolina League are known as the “first stop to the big leagues” so you certainly will see a plethora of young guns throughout the league. However, the Hillcats core of teenagers is an outlier this season.

You will be hard pressed to find teams that have as much impact teenagers on their club as the Lynchburg Hillcats throughout the Carolina League. 6 of their 7 top 30 prospects in the Cleveland organization are made up of the aforementioned teenagers, so not only are they young, but they are also teeming with potential.

Ralphy Velazquez was the 1st round draft pick of the Guardians in 2023 out of high school. The Californian has picked up play in the Carolina League in record time. In his second week in Lynchburg, he was named the Carolina League player of the week.





The Ralphy craze certainly has hit the Hill City as he has become a fan favorite of the Hillcat faithful. Every time the Lynchburg two-hitter comes up to the plate you will hear an echo of “Ralphy!” chants reverberate through the Bank of the James Stadium.

Alex Clemmey was taken just one round after Ralphy in 2023 and the two continue to be tied together as they both take on their first professional season in Lynchburg right out of high school.

His top prospect teenage counterpart Jackson Humphries is less of a stranger to Lynchburg as he was with the team for part of the 2023 season. However, Humphries knows what it is like to be drafted out of high school as well he skipped out on college and was drafted out of high school in 2022.

Rafael Ramirez Jr. Has a name baseball fans might be familiar with as his father, Rafael Ramirez, made quite a career in professional baseball. He played 12 years in the big leagues with the Atlanta Braves and Houston Astros. So, Rafael, had a front row seat to what big league living looked like, and the flashy middle infielder is dedicated to making it to the same pedestal his father once sat at, and it all starts in the ‘Burg.

For Jaison Chourio, Angel Genao, and Manuel Mejias, not only are they teenagers but professional athletes living in America for the first time. Genao is originally from the Dominican Republic while Mejias and Chourio are both natives of Venezuela. Chourio has a blueprint of how to navigate that transition in his brother Jackson Chourio who just signed a multi-million-dollar contract at just 20-years-old with the Milwaukee Brewers but making that move to a new country and a new culture at such a young age is challenging to say the least.



A close-up portrait of an elderly man with white hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue collared shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

REMEMBERING DAVE ELMORE

Remembering the Legacy of David Elmore: A Visionary and Inspirational Leader

Palm Desert, CA - It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of David Elmore, a visionary entrepreneur, and a cherished member of the professional sports community. Dave leaves behind an immense void in the world of business, philanthropy, the Olympics, and his profound impact on professional baseball and hockey. He will be remembered not only for his remarkable achievements, but also for his unwavering commitment to these sports and their global significance.

Dave Elmore created the Elmore Sports Group, a conglomerate of Minor League Baseball teams, professional hockey clubs, facility, concessions and special event management companies.

David Elmore's passion for professional baseball was exemplified through his ownership of numerous minor league teams across the country. His entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to sports transformed communities and brought the joy of baseball and hockey to fans of all ages.

As the founder and owner of several minor league baseball teams, including the Eugene Emeralds, Colorado Springs Sky Sox, Rocky Mountain Vibes, Inland Empire 66ers, Amarillo Sod Poodles, San Antonio Missions, Idaho Falls Chukars and Lynchburg Hillcats, David Elmore established a lasting legacy in the world of sports. Through these teams, he created opportunities for aspiring players, entertained countless fans, and contributed to the growth and development of the sport. He was inducted into the Pacific Coast League and Texas League Halls of Fame and was recognized as King of Baseball in 2016.

Beyond his involvement in professional baseball, David Elmore's visionary leadership extended to various sports ventures. Dave Elmore had a passion for hockey, owning the Utah Grizzlies and the Idaho Falls Spud Kings. Dave along with his wife, Donna Tuttle, moved the Grizzlies from Denver to Utah, and aided West Valley City in the development of the Maverik Center in Salt Lake City, a state-of-the-art sports and entertainment arena which hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics. This multi-purpose facility became a hub for sporting events, concerts, and community gatherings, providing an unforgettable experience for attendees and contributing to the local economy.

As we mourn the loss of David Elmore, let us also celebrate his profound contributions to professional baseball, the sports industry, and the Olympic movement. His visionary leadership, unwavering commitment, and entrepreneurial spirit have left an indelible mark, igniting the passion for sports in communities and fostering a legacy of excellence and inclusivity.

B

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home



VOTE FOR PLAYER OF THE YEAR

The Lynchburg Hillcats are excited to bring back one of the traditions from our past this season.

Lynchburg and Arthur's Jewelry are teaming up to bring back the Hillcats Player of the Year! Fans in attendance at Bank of the James Stadium will have the opportunity to place their vote for which Hillcats's player they believe deserves the award.

As part of the award, both the player and one of the fans that voted for them will receive a free watch, courtesy of Arthur's Jewelry. The award and the watch will be handed out at Fan Appreciation Night on September 1st.

Arthur's Jewelry is a family owned and operated jewelry store located in Bedford, Virginia. Located at 111 N Bridge St., Arthur's Jewelry is the community's home for engagement rings, fine jewelry, and diamonds.

Fans can cast their vote for Player of the Year by visiting the promotions booth located on the concourse during any of the Hillcats home games in 2024.

The advertisement features a photograph of a baseball game in progress. A batter in a red jersey is swinging a bat, while a catcher in a white and red uniform is crouching behind home plate. An umpire in a blue shirt is also visible. The background shows a green field and a blurred player in the distance. Text at the top reads "OFFICIAL INFIELD PLAYING SURFACE OF MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL" and "Minor League Baseball trusts DuraEdge." Below this, it says "And you can, too." The Lynchburg Hillcats logo is prominently displayed. A QR code is provided with the text "Scan for resources to help keep your infield performing all season long." The DuraEdge logo, which includes the text "DURA-EDGE" and "ENGINEERED SOILS", is also present. The MLB logo is in the bottom right corner. At the bottom of the ad, it repeats "OFFICIAL INFIELD PLAYING SURFACE OF MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL" and includes a small disclaimer: "Major League and Minor League Baseball trademarks and copyrights are used with permission of Major League Baseball. Visit MLB.com and MiLB.com."

EXCERPT FROM: PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL IN THE HILL CITY

By: Vince Sawyer

“My introduction to the world of professional baseball came when I was 9 years old during the 1946 World Series between the Boston Red Sox and the St Louis Cardinals. We listened to the games on a battery powered radio while harvesting potatoes in my dad’s garden. Growing up I followed both the Red Sox and the Boston Braves, and I remember seeing one Red Sox game and one Braves game.

After my family moved to Lynchburg in 1969 I learned that the city fielded a professional team in the Carolina League. We attended a few games while our children were young, and more when they were in junior high and high school. People shared their memories of the Lynchburg Cardinals and their favorite players. I began asking questions about Lynchburg’s professional baseball history. When did professional baseball begin in Lynchburg? Who were the Lynchburg Cardinal players who later played in the Major Leagues? Were any of those players inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown?

My curiosity got the better of me, and I began to look for answers by reviewing microfilm copies of old newspapers in the Lynchburg Public and Jones Memorial libraries. Here is some of what I learned.

Beginning in 1886, Lynchburg has fielded 90 teams, and in Virginia only Richmond and Norfolk have fielded more teams than the Hill City. Prior to 1943, when the local team was owned by the St Louis Cardinals, the team names were: “Lynchburgs”, Hill Climbers, Tobaccoists, Shoemakers, Grays, and “Senators”. Since 1943 our teams have been connected with 11 different Major League organizations: (1943-1955) St. Louis Cardinals, (1959) Washington Senators, (1962-1969) Chicago White Sox, (1970-1974) Minnesota Twins, (1975) Texas Rangers (& Braves), (1976-1987) New York Mets, (1988-1994) Boston red Sox, (1995-2009) Pittsburgh Pirates, (2010) Cincinnati Reds, (2011-2014) Atlanta Braves and (2015-Present) Cleveland Indians. In 1995, as we began our affiliation with the Pittsburgh Pirates, the Lynchburg Baseball Coporation asked the public to choose a name for our team, and “Hillcats” was the fans choice. That’s our team’s name regardless of our Major League affiliation.

In 1886 we fielded a team in the Virginia League, which also included teams from Danville, Norfolk, Petersburg and Richmond. When the League disbanded in August, Lynchburg was in first place with a 19-6 record. One of the Lynchburg players was sold to the Washington Senators for a reported \$1,000.



One of my favorite teams is the 1895 Tobacconists. That team featured three players who stand out for different reasons. One of them was James William “Kit” McKenna, a Lynchburg native son and the first Hill City player to make it to the Major Leagues. After pitching for the Lynchburg Hill Climbers in 1894 and the Tobacconists in 1895, McKenna progressed through higher levels of professional baseball and eventually debuted with the National League’s Brooklyn Bridegrooms in 1898. There is a mounted tablet outside of the stadium recognizing his accomplishments.

A second standout member of the 1895 team was Vic Willis, another pitcher and one of two former Lynchburg players to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Willis made his Major League debut in April of 1898, played eight years for the National League’s Boston Beaneaters/Braves, four years with the Pittsburgh Pirates, and one year with the St. Louis Cardinals. In 1902, Willis started 46 games and completed 45, still a Major League Record to this day. His 22-11 record in 1909 helped the Pittsburg Pirates win their first World Championship.”

Vince Sawyer plans on releasing a book soon on the history of baseball in Lynchburg, Virginia.

LYNCHBURG HILLCATS
2024
PROMO CALENDAR

- 4** Specialty Jerseys 
- 6** Limonadas Nights 
- 11** Fireworks Shows 
- 12** Giveaways

27
Theme
Nights

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2024 WEEKLY PROMOS

20 ADMIT ONE TUESDAY GAME
FREE TICKET TO NEXT TUE GAME
GIVEAWAYS

20 WEENIE WEDNESDAY
HOT DOG DISCOUNTS
FIREWORKS

20 THIRSTY THURSDAY
BEVERAGE DISCOUNTS
KIDS EAT FREE
POSTGAME BASERUNNING

20 FREEBIE FRIDAY
GIVEAWAYS

30 SPARKLING SATURDAY
FIREWORKS

30 SAND-COME SUNDAY
KIDS EAT FREE
POSTGAME BASERUNNING

Weekly Promos



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SIGN UP FOR THE YOUTH BASEBALL CLINIC

It's that time again! The Lynchburg Baseball Corp. will be conducting the 34th annual Youth Baseball Clinic at Bank of the James Stadium on Monday, July 15th and Tuesday, July 16th from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Boys and girls ages 6-14 are invited to attend and will receive quality instruction while learning the fundamentals of baseball from local coaches.

Participation fee: \$125 per child. (\$100 for Southpaw Kids Club members & season ticket holders)

Each child is required to bring his/her own bat, glove, cap, bag lunch, water bottle, and workout clothing.

Each child will receive a clinic t-shirt and one complimentary GA ticket to the Hillcats baseball game on Sunday, July 14th.

Lunch from Jersey Mike's will be provided to campers on Tuesday, July 16th.

Parents are encouraged to stay and watch the clinic from the stands.

Registration is not guaranteed until payment has been received by the Hillcats. Please download, complete, and email the registration form to hallred@lynchburg-hillcats.com. For more information, please call (434) 528-1144 x 8122.



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APRIL 12



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MAY 2



JULY 13



JUNE 13



AUG 16



SOUTHPAW'S KIDS CLUB

APRIL 26



JUNE 2



JULY 1



AUG 1



AUG 28



*SHOW THIS CARD AT THE BOX OFFICE ON THE DAY OF THE GAME FOR A FREE GENERAL ADMISSION TICKET!



SOUTHPAW'S FUN ZONE

Title: Spanish Baseball Terms Worksheet for Kids

Instructions: Match the English baseball terms on the left with their corresponding Spanish translations on the right.

Baseball Terms:

Ball
Bat
Run
Helmet
Base
Pitcher
Catcher
Umpire
Outfielder
Shortstop
Infielder
Hit
Walk
Safe
Strikeout
Home run

Spanish Translations:

a. Almohadilla
b. Árbitro
c. Base por bolas
d. Bate
e. Carrera
f. Casco
g. Cuadrangular
h. Guardabosque
i. Jugador del cuadro
j. Lanzador
k. Pelota
l. Ponche
m. Quieto
n. Receptor
o. Sencillo
p. Torpedero

Match the baseball terms with their Spanish translations:

Ball _____
Bat _____
Run _____
Helmet _____
Base _____
Pitcher _____
Catcher _____
Umpire _____
Outfielder _____
Shortstop _____
Infielder _____
Hit _____
Walk _____
Safe _____
Strikeout _____
Home run _____

Answers:
k, d, e, f, a, j, n, b, h, p, j, o, c, m, l, g



Limonadas

DE HILL CITY

