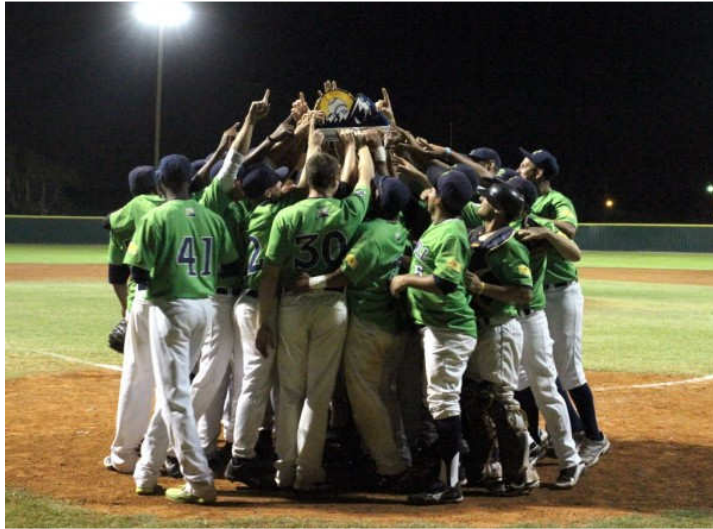


We are the champions! Invaders take first Pecos League title

Posted by [Karen Boehler](#) on August 19, 2011 · [4 Comments](#)



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — The Roswell Invaders hoist the championship trophy after defeating Ruidoso 4-2.

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CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — Jake Bruns hits a single and Joey Friedman goes from one corner to the other to get in scoring position.

In May 2011, professional baseball returned to Roswell for the first time since 1959.

Three months and 74 games later, the Invaders brought the city its first ever pro baseball title with a 4-2 victory over Ruidoso

Thursday.

“It was a long, exhausting, tiring season at different points throughout the year,” said Manager Chris Paterson. “I’m glad it’s over with, but at the same time I’m sad it’s over with. These are great people I’ve been around all year. Great players.”

Great players that time and again came back from the brink to earn a victory, which is what they again did Thursday.

It was a pitcher's duel all the way, with Oso ace Mike Jackson facing off against Invader Matt Rossignol. Rossignol had a slightly shaky start, giving up a solo home run to Jason Hyland in the first.

"I just left it up a little bit," he said of the pitch. "At the beginning I wasn't in my groove yet, and I left a couple of pitches up and luckily I just got out of it then the third or fourth inning I found where I wanted to be and I was able to go from there."

But for a while, it looked like that was all Ruidoso would need, as Jackson pitched a no-hitter through three and a one-hitter through five. (Trivon Howard singled to open the fourth then Clifton Thomas appeared to have hit a shot just fair down the right-field line. But after Howard came home and Thomas made it to third, the umpire ruled the hit was foul and Thomas eventually flew out.)



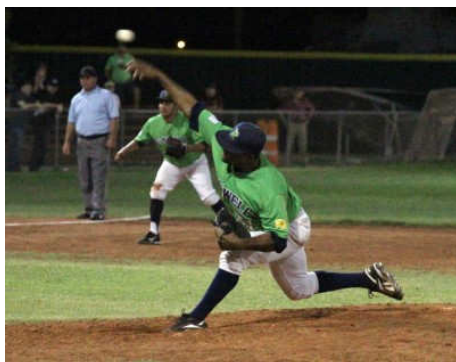
CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — Josh Cakebread hits a sacrifice RBI to give the Invaders a two-run lead in the bottom of the eighth inning.

The Invaders finally got on board in the bottom of the sixth, taking a 2-1 lead that delighted the noisy crowd of more than 350 that packed Joe Bauman Stadium.

Mike Miller, one of the stars of Wednesday's game, led off with a single and advanced on a ground out by Trivon Howard. But Thomas came to bat and, on an 0-1 pitch, hit a shot out of the park.

"It was a great feeling, but without the support from my teammates I wouldn't have been able to do it," Thomas said. "They kept me up the whole game. I was down. I was struggling. I wasn't feeling it after those first two at bats and Trey and all them, they just told me to keep it up, my time's going to come, and it came."

But the Osos weren't done yet, taking advantage of a throwing error by third baseman Brian Ramirez — another of Wednesday's stars — to tie the game on a single by Sean Proni.



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — Josh Grady delivers the pitch with one out and a runner on first...

That ended the day for Rossignol, but Dakota Laufenberg came in and, after giving up a single to Chris Juarez, got

Drew Peterson to ground into a fielder's choice and struck out Eddie Browne.

Then, as happens so often in baseball, the goat in one inning becomes the hero the next. With one out, Ramirez doubled then came home on a single by Brycen Bell.

"It was unfortunate I wasn't able to pick up Brian, because I felt like I could get out of it even though that happened, but that's all right," Rossignol said. "He came out and got a big double later on and he picked up for himself."

Saying he was a "little bit" worried after the error, Ramirez said he was determined to get the run back.

"I just knew we had to come back and get a run back our next at bat, and just like I said, I just needed to get on base somehow and find a way to score, and Brycen drove me in with a great hit. There was no stopping me, because I had to score on that play."



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — ... Brycen Bell grabs the grounder and flips to Cakebread at second, who tags and throws to first and ...

As Ramirez — not known especially for his speed — round third, Paterson was signaling "go" as hard as he could while the crowd was screaming "run." Ramirez said he gave it all he had.

"Oh, yeah, definitely. Because I gave up a run to tie it and I had to come back and score that run to get us in the lead."

And even though it wasn't needed — Josh Grady faced only six batters in the eighth and ninth combined — Roswell added another run in the eighth off reliever Andrew Plotkin, scoring on singles by Joey Friedman and Jake Bruns and a sacrifice by Josh Cakebread.

Grady gave up a single to Josh Valle in the ninth but a 6-4-3 double play ended the game and season, and started the celebration.



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — ... it's time for an Invader championship celebration!

"Matt Rossignol stepped up and just threw a great performance," Paterson said. "There was that solo home run, but he settled down and he held them for the rest of the game. Dakota came in and got a good out. Helped us



out a lot. Then Grady, Grady was fresh. Grady came in throwing some fire out there and we managed to fend them off.”

And the hitting?

“Cliff stepped it up when he needed to,” the manager said. “Brian just continued his streak. Joey had a nice hit there for some insurance at the end and Brunsy had a few hits as well. The guys were just playing hard and left it all out there today. They did too. Ruidoso is a great team. I respect them so much. A lot of class. A lot of great players who fought to the end. Those players were kicked. Stomped on. Everything else. They could have easily rolled over but they had a lot of fire on that team and those guys kept playing hard all year and they’re great players.”

CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — Kevin Hoef jumps on top of the celebration.

“They’re a pretty good club and that was a great ball game,” said Ruidoso manager Tim Ferguson. “They beat us. We stuck with our best out there in Mike Jackson and he battled. It was a great game, and tonight they were just a little bit better than us, and that’s what it comes down to.

Grady started the season as a starter, then moved up briefly before coming back to Roswell. And he said he didn’t mind moving into a relief position.

“It feels great. It feels real great,” he said. “I was with the El Paso Diablos for a couple of weeks, and when I went up there, I pitched out of the pen, I was a relief pitcher. So when I came back here, I told Chris, ‘You know, I feel comfortable coming out of the pen. I feel more viable toward the team coming out of the pen,’ especially since our closer went down with tendonitis in his elbow. So I pretty much took his role. It feels great to help out the team in this situation.”



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — Manager Chris Paterson joins his team as they celebrate.

Laufenberg, who got the win with only eight pitches, was almost speechless.

“It feels amazing. These guys are like family to me and I can’t even explain it in words. It’s just that crazy

right now,” he said.

And, as the announcer said after league commissioner Andrew Dunn presented the Invaders with the championship trophy, there was one more honor to announce.

Ramirez was named MVP of the post season.

“It feels great,” he said. “It’s a great honor to have with all these great players in this little playoffs we had in this league, it’s a great honor to have because there’s so many players who could have deserved this award just as much as I did.”



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — Manager Chris Paterson is given the trophy by Pecos League commissioner Andrew Dunn.

And as to the team victory?

“It’s a great feeling,” Ramirez said. “We’ve worked hard all summer. Most of us have been here since Day 1 and to end with the same core of guys since spring training, it’s a great feeling to have.”

Paterson was as happy as his players, especially knowing his team had done something no other team will be able to do.

“First Pecos League championship. We’ll always be able to hold that in our pockets,” he said. “It’s a great feeling. The last few years I keep being the bridesmaid instead of the bride. I keep finished running up in all the championships in all the winter leagues and stuff like that. This is my first championship in a while, so it’s nice.”

[Box score](#)

[Stats/Play-by-Play](#)



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — Brian Ramirez is named the series MVP.



CCSR photo by Arnold J. Roe — The players will leave Roswell, but the 2011 Pecos League championship will stay.