

Ponder Hardware vs. State Farm

Championship Quarterfinals

Tuesday, 5/23/'23

Tuesday night of the playoffs brought two powerhouses to the plate: #4 seed Ponder Hardware, who had beaten #5 seed State Farm 18 – 16 during the regular season. Could they repeat?

Veteran umpire Bob Collins led the umpire crew with John Basse at 1st and Ed Cawley at 3rd. I don't remember any controversies but then there was that one incident at third and as we tried to figure out what happened Bob calmly walked back to home plate explaining that "those weren't the drones we were looking for." And I don't remember what happened, but I know Bob took care of it.

Stan 'Paco' Isbell kept the book and Linda Cawley operated the scoreboard. Johnny B had the mic and we were on...

If the first inning was any indication, it looked like State Farm had a different view of the world. State Farm jumped out of the gate with 5 runs. They didn't have an out in the inning and the crowning blow was a 3-run home run by the cart-weary Ken Ford. Ponder gave it a go but Bill Reece got caught at third on a Ward to Gauthier to Lorenc throw that nailed Bill at third base. That didn't deter Bill, he later ran for a hitter and tried it again, this time at home base and was safe. Ponder picked up 3 to make it 5 – 3 after one inning.

Mick Calverley led off for State Farm in the second and seemed to have an easy single over SS. Wait a second. Bob Riley charged the ball, fielded it on one hop and fired a strike to 1B just missing catching Mick Calverley who was understandably surprised by the bullet from the left center. Tracey Ginnings (2/3), Joe LeCroy (2/3) and Tom Doty (2/3) all singled to get 4 runs for State Farm. Carol Rumberger, who was perfect at the plate (3/3), tried to get something started for Ponder but it fizzled as Pete Grasser caught Randy Catron's line drive up the middle and State Farm was up 9 – 3 after 2 innings.

Ponder Hardware's defense stiffened every inning and gave up only 2 in the 3rd. Dianna highlighted the 3rd inning with a shot that burned the outfield and went all

the way to the fence before Bill Smiley could corral it and get it in, holding the speedy Dianna to a triple. No biggy, are you kidding, it was huge. Bryce Treece (3/4, Dbl, 2 RBIs) returned the favor with a double to the fence and Jerry Hinson (3/4, Dbl, 2 RBIs), even with a bad back tacked on a couple RBIs for 3 runs in the third for Ponder and after 3 it was 11 for State Farm and 6 for Ponder Hardware.

In the top of the 4th, Johnny G singled and turned on the jets to turn it into a double and ended up scoring one for State Farm off of Ken Ford's (3/3, Dbl, HR, 5 RBIs) double. Ponder Hardware got singles from Smiley, Rumberger and 'Curly' Ty Nelson but it didn't produce any runs. Professor Bill Reece ended any hopes of more runs when he caught a line drive off the bat of Frank Kaker (2/4, Dbl).

State Farm was back at it in the 5th. Gary Warrick (2/3, RBI) singled and Steve Ward (3/3, Dbl, HR, 4 RBIs) homered to put two on the board. David Popejoy put an end to the rally with a juggling catch of Joe LeCroy's line drive. Ponder Hardware came right back with doubles from Mike Braam and Bill Reece (3/4, 2 Dbls, 2 RBIs). Bryce Treece (3/4, Dbl 2 RBIs) and Jerry Hinson singled to ensure 2 runs for Ponder Hardware in the 5th.

State Farm headed to the 6th inning with a 14 – 8 lead. State Farm picked up 2 more runs with a two out rally that was stopped with a backhand pick up by Ty Nelson on a hard-hit ground ball.

Carol Rumberger tried to rally Ponder Hardware in the 6th with a sharp line drive over the infield but it was not to be. No runs for Ponder in the 6th and we saw the Flip Flop rule invoked. Bob Riley (3/4, Dbl, Trip, 2 RBIs) tried to start a rally but it was all State Farm, and I don't think there's a team at The Robson that would have beaten State Farm. It was **State Farm's** night.

State Farm 17 – Ponder Hardware 8 and on to the semifinals for State Farm.

Johnny B

