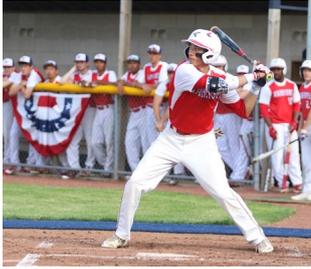


Leonard powers Warriors by Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 24 May 2016 04:53 -



Trey Leonard has spent most of the spring with the Cedar Rapids Washington track team and helped the Warriors finish second in the 4x100 relay at the state meet on Saturday, so he rarely practiced with the baseball squad prior to the start of the season with the Metro Tournament on Monday.

The lack of practice did not hurt him a bit.

Leonard came out swinging Monday and went 5-for-5 with a three-run homer and five RBIs as the Warriors smacked the undermanned Xavier Saints, 15-6, in the quarterfinals at the Jefferson field.

Leonard scored four runs, smacked two balls off the outfield fence and had two stolen bases in his virtuoso performance. He saw the ball well and hit it hard all day.

"It looked like a beachball," he said. "It was a good hitting day. The swing felt good and obviously it showed with where the ball went."

Prairie trimmed Spencer VanScoyoc and the third-ranked Jefferson J-Hawks, 3-2, in the second game Monday night at Jefferson. Kennedy beat Linn-Mar, 13-5, and Mount Vernon edged Marion, 3-1, in the first-round games at Mount Vernon.

The tournament continues Tuesday at both sites. Xavier and Jefferson are scheduled to meet at 5 p.m. at Jefferson, with Washington and Prairie meeting in the winner's bracket at 7 p.m.

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Linn-Mar faces Marion at 5 p.m. at Mount Vernon, with Kennedy meeting Mount Vernon in the winner's bracket at 7 p.m.

Leonard, a fleet outfielder who committed to Louisville two years ago as a freshman, took as many practice swings as he could to prepare for the baseball season.



"At every opportunity, after track practice I'd try and get a couple of cuts in," he said. "We built a batting cage (at his house) a couple of years ago, so now if I'm bored or I'm free, me and my dad will get some swings in and keep the swing going good."

Leonard lined a double off the fence in the first inning, hit another shot off the outfield fence in the second inning for a long single, collected two more singles in the fourth inning when Washington batted around and scored seven runs, and finished his onslaught with a three-run home run in the sixth inning.

Leonard attended a camp at the University of Louisville in November of 2013. The Louisville coaches liked what they saw and he visited the college again a few months later. Louisville offered a scholarship at that point and he gladly accepted before he'd even played a game for the Washington varsity.

"It was an unbelievable opportunity," he said. "It was kind of a dream come true. I'd see them in the College World Series, being ranked in the top-5 usually all the time.

"It's still kind of a dream. I'm happier that I'm getting closer to being there."

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Leonard hit .404 for Washington as a freshman in 2014 and hit .367 last year as a sophomore. So far this season, he's batting 1.000.

Johnny Dobbs collected four RBIs for the Warriors with a pair of two-run singles Monday. He was also the winning pitcher, tossing 4 1/3 innings before moving to first base.

Bryce Schulte belted a three-run homer for Xavier in the bottom of the first inning to give the Saints a 3-2 lead. Washington took a 4-3 lead in the second inning and made it 11-3 in the fourth.

The Saints pulled within 11-6, but the Warriors plated four more runs for the 15-6 victory.

New Xavier Coach Bob Cataldo used a make-shift lineup in the Metro opener. Some of his top players have been busy this spring with the Xavier track and soccer teams, and Cataldo elected to begin the year with players who have been practicing with the team all along.

"That's why I was really happy with the guys who played tonight," he said. "They played hard, they didn't quit, they didn't roll over."

Cataldo said "nine or 10" baseball players have missed a significant number of practices due to their commitments in other sports. He plans to incorporate them into the mix in the weeks ahead.

"We don't want to be playing our best baseball now," he remarked. "We want to be playing our best baseball in July."