

Prairie pitchers baffle Kennedy in 5-2 win

Written by Jim Ecker

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Spencer "Wild Thing" Dean got his nickname at Prairie High School the last few years when he had trouble throwing strikes in ballgames.

It used to be an insult. Now it's a compliment, because Spencer "Wild Thing" Dean is pitching very well for the Hawks this season.

"I don't mind it," he said Monday night. "Maybe last year it might have bothered me when I was having a rough game, but this year I've been pitching pretty well and helping the team out.

"I just laugh when I hear it now. It's pretty entertaining."

Dean pitched the seventh inning and got the save Monday as Prairie clipped the error-prone Kennedy Cougars, 5-2, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game at Prairie.

Prairie pitchers collected 13 strikeouts in the seven-inning game. Mitch Adams fanned eight batters in five innings, set-up man Ben Milks struck out the side in the sixth inning and Dean whiffed two more in the seventh.

Dean is also a starting pitcher, but Coach Matt Thede likes to use him as a relief pitcher to give him more work between assignments. Dean throws hard and likes coming out of the bullpen to save games.

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"I like it a lot," he said. "I love closing."

Dean, a senior, moved into the College Community School district from Louisville, Ky., prior to his sophomore year. He could throw hard, but could not guarantee where it was going.

"Last year and sophomore year when I first moved here, I had some control issues," he said. "There would be games where I was on and games where I was way off.

"I've settled down, but they still yell 'Wild Thing' at me."

The "Wild Thing" nickname comes from the character Charlie Sheen played in the movie "Major League." Sheen portrayed Ricky "Wild Thing" Vaughn in the popular flick, which had a happy ending for that "Wild Thing."

Thede is grooming Milks as the set-up man and Dean as the closer for the postseason tournament as he develops a pitching staff that also features Brennan Hammer, Adams and others.

"We've got to get confident doing it," said Thede. "This is the way we've got to do. This is the way we want it to be, by design."

Adams fooled the Cougars (2-5, 1-3) with his stuff. All eight of his strikeouts were called third strikes as the Cougars stood there with their bats on their shoulders.

Kennedy also had trouble on defense. The Cougars committed three straight errors in the first inning, handing Prairie (6-4, 2-1) three easy runs.

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Another error helped the Hawks score two more runs in the third inning. All told, the Cougars finished with five errors and had only three base hits, a sure formula for defeat.

Prairie committed a two-run throwing error in the fifth inning, helping Kennedy draw within 5-2, but it was Prairie's only fielding miscue of the night.

Sammy Lizarraga pitched a complete game for Kennedy. He struck out six batters and allowed only four hits, but all those errors (including one of his own) spelled defeat.

"Lizarraga kept us off-balance, for the post part," said Thede. "He shut us down pretty good, but our pitching carried us through."

Trey Beckman hit a two-run single in the fifth inning to give Prairie a 5-0 lead.

The same two teams are scheduled to meet Tuesday night at Kennedy in a single game at 7 p.m.

KENNEDY (2): Jacobus, ss, 3 0 0 0, Johnson, cf, 2 1 0 0, Staton, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Maiers, c, 3 0 0 0, Lizarraga, p, 3 0 1 0, Smetzer, rf, 3 0 1 0, Sass, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Daniels, 2b, 1 1 0 0, Stevens, lf, 3 0 1 0. Totals 24 2 3 0.

PRAIRIE (5): T.Mougin, ss, 3 1 1 0, Hammer, rf, 3 1 0 0, Davison, lf, 2 1 0 0, Votroubek, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Butz, 2b, 2 1 0 0, Stallman, cf, 3 1 1 0, Beckman, dh, 3 0 1 2, N.Mougin, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Day, c, 2 0 0 0, Peters, ph, 1 0 0 0. Totals 25 5 4 2.

Kennedy 000 020 0 - 2 3 5
Prairie 302 000 x - 5 4 1

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Lizarraga and Maiers. Adams, Milks (6), Dean (7) and Day. W - Adams. L - Lizarraga. 2B - Stallman. SB - Johnson, Daniels, Stallman.