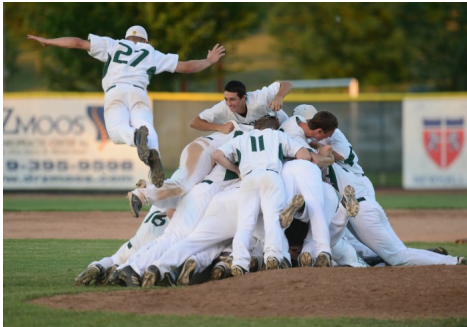


Jacobus boys help Cougars make state

Written by Tom Fruehling
Wednesday, 23 July 2014 22:45 -



The Kennedy baseball tradition continues.

By beating Davenport West, 5-1, at home Wednesday night the third-ranked Cougars (31-6) go back to the Class 4A state tournament next week for the seventh time in the last nine years.

And like their last appearance at Principal Park in Des Moines two years ago, when they lost to Fort Dodge in the semifinals, there will be two Jacobus boys in the lineup.

In 2012, it was Devin the senior and Derek the sophomore. Now Derek's the upperclassman and his burly little brother Dalles the 10th grader.

"Devin taught me so much," said Derek, who had one of seven Kennedy hits Wednesday and knocked in a run. "Now I'm trying to do the same for Dalles.

"I've been in some pressure situations. I try to be a leader for the younger guys."

Kennedy is seeded third for the state tournament and will face Southeast Polk (29-13) in the opening round Wednesday at 8 p.m. in Des Moines.

Dubuque Hempstead and Iowa City West also made the Class 4A tournament, putting three

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Mississippi Valley Conference teams in the field this year.

With the Cougars nursing a 2-1 lead on crafty Davenport West lefty Tommy Dorton, who was 9-0 coming into the substate final, the elder Jacobus tried to buck up his kid brother when he led off the fourth inning.

"He just told me not to feel any pressure," explained Dalles. "He said he'd seen me hit and knew I could do it. So he said, 'Just do it.'"



On a 2-2 count, he uncorked a line-drive double to the fence in left-center and scored on a single by Kyle Brewer. When big brother Derek brought home Matt Stevens later in the inning, it gave the Cougars a 4-1 cushion.

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"I've been seeing nothing but curveball after curve all year," said Dalles, who was promoted to the varsity several weeks ago. "Maybe it's because I'm a bigger kid.

"So when I saw a fastball, I just pulled 'er and was able to get two out of it. It felt great."

Big brother was proud.

"He gets big hits in big situations," said Derek. "He steps up to the occasion."

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Kennedy Hall of Fame Coach Bret Hoyer said he knew Dorton would be a tough customer on the mound.

“He had something like 105 strikeouts this season and only 15 walks,” Hoyer noted. “He does a nice job keeping the ball down.

“But we did a great job taking pitches and fouling of a lot of balls. And we got hits when we needed ‘em.”

Meanwhile, the Cougars played some stellar defense and had their usual scintillating pitching performance, this time a shared effort from Sammy Lizarraga and Zach Daniels.

Senior third baseman Ben Sass turned in the play of the night in the third inning by stabbing a sharply hit grounder to his right, stepping on the bag for a force-out and firing to first for a double play.

He not only saved a hit, but he squelched a potential Falcon rally.

“With two runners on and no outs, that was a big play,” said Hoyer. “We made the plays on defense again tonight.”

Sass, who said he made the bang-bang play by instinct more than anything, also had a big hit in the first inning to put the Cougars on the board.

With one out, Daniels roped a liner to left and took second when the fielder made a lazy throw back to the infield. Daniels scored when Sass smacked one up the middle.

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“Their pitcher is a tough left-hander with a good fastball and curve,” Sass said. “But I thought we battled him hard all night.”

Kennedy’s own pitchers battled hard as well in tag-team fashion.

Lizarraga worked the first five frames, giving up just three hits and an unearned run in the second inning. Daniels mopped up, allowing a single in the sixth but mowing down the side in the seventh.

“Pitching and fielding have won games for us all year,” pointed out Derek Jacobus, who once again made a number of slick plays at shortstop. “And tonight we got enough hitting to get us to Des Moines.”

This will be Kennedy's 11th trip to the state tournament during Hoyer's 22 years as head coach. The Cougars won the state title in 2010.