

Christensen's 2 homers break Kennedy record

Written by Jim Ecker

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MARSHALLTOWN - It's too soon to anoint Austin Christensen as the greatest all-around player in the history of Kennedy baseball, but he's certainly the most prolific power hitter of all time.

Christensen blasted two more home runs Monday to break the school record as the top-ranked Cougars bounced Marshalltown, 6-1, in a Memorial Day game at Marshalltown.

Christensen tied Tony Booth (1987-90) for the Kennedy record for career homers when he hit his 25th roundtripper Saturday against Burlington, but now he has the all-time mark with 27.

"It's incredible. He (Booth) was a great hitter," Christensen said. "It's pretty awesome to have it all to myself."

Christensen has been awesome himself this season for Kennedy in the first six games. He's 12-for-17 at the plate for a lusty batting average of .706 with four doubles, two triples, four homers and 14 RBIs.

He's also walked seven times, giving him an on-base percentage of .792. His slugging percentage is 1.882 and his OPS (On Base + Slugging Percentage) is 2.674. Those numbers are completely off the charts for Class 4A baseball. Any baseball, for that matter.

"I've never seen anybody have that kind of start," Kennedy Coach Bret Hoyer commented. "He's not invincible, but he executes good pitches."

Christensen owns Kennedy records for doubles (43), home runs (27), RBIs (134) and extra-base hits (78). He ranks second in hits and third in runs, triples, walks and victories.

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He also ranks third in school history with a 23-6 record as a pitcher, just three wins shy of the school mark of 26 held by Danny Bales (2001-04). He's 2-0 with a 1.56 ERA this season with 21 strikeouts in 9 1/3 innings.

Hoyer is not ready to crown Christensen as the greatest player in school history. Not yet, anyway.

"No, not now," Hoyer said. "He's in the conversation."

Marshalltown Coach Steve Hanson gave Christensen an intentional walk on his first two at-bats, because the Cougars had a runner on second base and first base was open. Christensen led off in the fifth and seventh innings, however, and the Bobcats (3-2) decided to challenge him.

Christensen homered both times. The first home was a laser to left-center that broke the school record, and the second was a blast into the wind in right-center.

"You make a mistake to a good hitter, he's going to hurt you. And he surely did that today," Hanson remarked. "That was no surprise to us."

Both homers came against Jacob Whaley, Marshalltown's top pitcher who flashed an 88 mph fastball Monday. Whaley will play college baseball at Augustanta (S.D.), an NCAA Division II school.

Christensen calmly trotted to first base after the two intentional walks, then he trotted around the bases on his two roundtrippers.

"When I get up there, I want to see pitches. I want to hit the ball," he said. "But whatever helps

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the team win, I don't really care either way."

Alex Hayden (2-0) pitched five strong innings for Kennedy to get the victory. He allowed only two hits, both in the second inning, and escaped a bases-loaded jam with only one run scoring. David Yancey pitched two shutout innings for the save.

Matt Maiers went 2-for-4 with two doubles for Kennedy, including a two-run double in the seventh inning that made it 6-1. Griffin Michael went 3-for-4 for the Cougars and Terrell Sykes was 2-for-3.

Kennedy (5-1) visits No.4 Iowa City West for a Mississippi Valley Conference doubleheader Tuesday in the league opener. The Cougars beat the Trojans, 11-1, in the Class 4A state championship game last July.

KENNEDY (6)

Sykes, 2b, 3 1 2 0, Yancey, lf, 4 0 0 0, Christensen, rf, 2 2 2 2, Michael, ss, 4 1 3 1, Jacobus, 3b, 3 1 0 0, Jahlas, cf, 2 0 0 0, Bell, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Maiers, c, 4 0 2 2, Rhoades, cr, 0 1 0 0, Benson, dh, 3 0 1 1, Hayden, p, 0 0 0 0, Ambrosy, lf, 0 0 0 0. Totals 29 6 10 6.

MARSHALLTOWN (1)

Thompson, cf, 2 0 0 0, Bueghly, cf, 1 0 0 0, Blackford, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Carnahan, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Whaley, p, 3 0 0 0, Mann, rf, 3 1 1 0, Judkins, ss, 3 0 1 1, Wills, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Ingram, c, 1 0 0 0, Hauser, cr, 0 0 0 0, Streeter, lf, 2 0 0 0. Totals 24 1 3 1.

Kennedy 001 110 3 - 6 10 0

Marshalltown 010 000 0 - 1 3 3

Hayden, Yancey (6) and Maiers. Whaley, Wills (7) and Ingram. W - Hayden (2-0). L - Whaley. S - Yancey.

2B - Sykes, Maiers 2, Judkins. HR - Christensen 2 (4). SB - Sykes, Benson.