

Poor defense dooms Marion in playoffs

Written by Jon Klinkowitz

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SOLON – The Marion Indians' inexperience caught up with them when they needed it the least in a Class 3A district championship baseball game Monday.

Marion committed five errors, leading to seven unearned runs in an 8-3 loss to Duquibue Wahlert to end the season at 24-17.

The Golden Eagles (20-19) advanced to the substate final at 7 p.m. Wednesday at DeWitt Central.

"I'm not shocked, I'm disappointed," Marion Coach Steve Fish said. "I love this team. They're fun to coach. I think we had six sophomores out there and some quality seniors."

The Indians started strong, taking a 3-0 lead in the second inning.

They scored in the first inning without the benefit of a hit after Wahlert starting pitcher Alex Savary walked leadoff hitter Maverick Miller on four pitches. Miller stole second on the first pitch to No. 2 hitter David Kuhn, who then hit into a ground-out to short to advance Miller to third. Miller scored on another grounder to short by John Carstensen.

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Mitch Wiese led off the second inning with a first-pitch home run to left. Baylor Fish tripled and scored on a wild pitch later in the inning.

"We played good to get ahead right away," said Carstensen, one of two seniors in the starting lineup. "Unfortunately just a couple things fell apart and we ended up where we were.

"They, just frankly, out-hit us and made plays when they needed to and they just seemed to find a lot of gaps. Some days there's not much you can do."

The Golden Eagles scored a run on a sacrifice fly in the second inning, but things got ugly for the Indians in the third. A walk, three errors and a pair of hard-hit singles gave Walkert a 4-3 lead.

A single, another error and a double led to another run in the fourth. Two more errors, a hit batsman and a double steal broke the game open with three more runs in the fifth.

"I couldn't have scripted a better start, but with the young people we have, some nights we play like this," Fish said. "We struggled a little bit with some walks and we made some errors, which isn't a good combination against a good team.

"But Wahlert's a scrappy team with disciplined hitters and I knew they were going to be hitting the ball. I knew we were going to have to play good defense, and that didn't happen."

Wahlert brought in left-handed pitcher Austin Savary in the third inning and Marion's offense fell flat.

Junior Bobby Vanderlind led off the fourth with a single to center and advanced to second on a passed ball. Sophomore Owen Carstensen also singled and stole second to put runners on

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second and third with one out, but a strikeout and foul pop ended Marion's final threat.

Savary retired the final 11 Marion batters of the game.

"He was very good at hitting his spots," John Carstensen said. "Pitched us outside, pitched the right guys inside.

"He was a crafty pitcher, didn't try to overpower anybody. When a guy hits his spots like that, it just makes it hard to hit the ball hard and on the ground."

Carstensen will attend Kirkwood Community College in the fall and hopes to continue to play baseball there, but 17 underclassmen return for the Indians.

"We have a lot of sophomores dressing up and juniors," Wiese said. "I feel like the next two years are going to be good for us."

Marion 120 000 0 – 3 4 5
Dubuque Wahlert 013 130 x – 8 9 0

Brady Donohue, Tyler Ellertson (3) and Maverick Miller; Alex Savary, Austin Savary (3) and Garrett Thul. W – Austin Savary, L – Donohue. 2B – Isaac Evans (DW), 3B – Baylor Fish (M). HR – Mitch Wiese (M).