

Cedar Falls ousts Lions in thriller

Written by Mike Condon

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Long after hearing their final postgame talk of the season, the Linn-Mar baseball team was still milling around the home plate area of their home diamond.

The Lions simply did not want to leave the field Monday night.

"This is the kind of team you'd like to always have one more game with," said Linn-Mar Coach Chad Lechner. "They are such a great group to be around."

Try as they might, the Lions could not come through to earn one more game. Steven Skidmore's RBI single in the top of the 11th inning plated Dakota Schiefelbein with what proved to be the winning run as Cedar Falls ended Linn-Mar's season with a 7-6 victory in a Class 4A substate semifinal.

The victory moves the Tigers (22-13) opposite top-seed Kennedy (28-11) in Wednesday's substate final set for 7 p.m. at Kennedy's Herkelman Field.

Linn-Mar closes its season at 24-12.

"After the game, I told (the players) that I was awful proud of them," Lechner said. "I thought they gave everything they had. They left their hearts on the field and made some pretty gutty plays in some key situations."

The Lions rallied twice after the Tigers had taken the lead. They trailed 3-0 after a two-run triple

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from Cedar Falls left-fielder Jace Lang and an RBI single from Trey Bonner.

Linn-Mar got two back in the bottom of the inning and took a 5-3 lead in the third. Doubles from Taylor Yoke and Brandt Ollinger were the key blows in the inning.

Cedar Falls drew even in the fourth and took a 6-5 lead on Matt Turcotte's two-out bloop single just inside the right-field line.

The Lions used three two-out singles, the final one coming from Manny Jeffery, to tie the game at 6-6.

The Tiger bullpen kept the Linn-Mar offense in check over the final five innings, allowing just two singles. Meanwhile, the Lion defense turned double plays in the ninth and 10th to keep Cedar Falls off the board.

Senior Andrew Gassmann turned in his longest stint of the year on the mound, going 4 2/3 innings. He gave up the single to Skidmore in the 11th.

"I just wish we could have found a way to win this one, but that's baseball," Gassmann said. "I don't feel at all satisfied, but I feel we gave it our all."

Gassmann is one of nine Lion seniors who closed their careers on Monday night.

"That senior group set the bar high both on the field and off the field," Lechner said. "They showed the way for the young groups and they should be proud of all they have accomplished."

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Hayden Schultz, Austin Marchesani (3), Brady Corson (6), Zack Thompson (10) and Matt Turcotte. Manny Jeffery, Ryan Wyant (6), Andrew Gassmann (7), Jake Brandt (11) and Brandt Ollinger. WP - Thompson (3-3). LP - Gassmann (3-1).