Striegel, Rooney deliver J-Hawk split

Written by Mike Koolbeck
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WATERLOO -- Drew Striegel found himself batting in a clutch situation for the fourth time in Jefferson's last five baseball games when he stepped into the batters box Monday night in the top of the seventh inning against Waterloo West.

For the second time he delivered, stroking a bases-loaded two-run single through West's drawn in infield.

And for the first time, the J-Hawks made it stand up.

Striegel's hit and Michael Rooney's seven strong innings on the mound sent Jefferson past West, 6-4, in the second game of a Mississippi Valley Conference doubleheader at Danny Vansyoc Memorial Field.

Waterloo West won the first game, 3-2, scoring the winning run on a sacrifice fly in the bottom of the seventh inning. That loss was Jefferson's fourth straight and all were by one run. It was the third consecutive walk-off loss.

"It shows we can play with anybody, but maybe we just kind of play to our opponents' level," said Striegel, whose grand slam against Xavier last Friday gave the J-Hawks a three-run lead in the top of the seventh inning. The Saints came back with four runs in the bottom of the seventh, and then won the second game with a hit in the bottom of the seventh. "It was nice knowing that we could go over to Xavier and they're at the top of the rankings and we could hang with them and almost give them a loss."

Perhaps that Xavier experience was a necessary lesson for the J-Hawks, Coach Mike Kuba said.

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"That was tough," Kuba said. "Who would've thought that we would lose three straight games like that. But the kids didn't give up and they battled back.

"We haven't folded from last Friday to now and we very easily could have. We've had guys in key spots that have been able to get us up again."

Tanner Unkel, who had three hits in the nightcap, led off the Jefferson seventh inning with a single. Rooney and Alex Larson followed with beautiful bunts that turned into base hits and loaded the bases.

Cleanup hitter Jordan Dee was at the plate with a 1-ball, 0-strike count when Kuba decided to gamble and put on a squeeze play. Dee missed the sign and flied out to medium right. Unkel, who was two-thirds of the way to the plate when Dee swung, was unable to tag up and score.

That brought Striegel to the plate. He spanked a sharp grounder just to the left of West shortstop Derrick Vaughn, who dove and missed the ball. Two runs scored.

"Things turned out just fine," Kuba said.

Jefferson still had to get three outs in the bottom of the seventh and for a team that had lost three straight in that frame, that was no guarantee.

"Roon was throwing great all day. His breaking ball was really good," Striegel said. "I was little more comfortable coming into the seventh with him, I think."

"I didn't throw much last week, so my arm was 100 percent ... I felt good and I knew I could get

them out," said Rooney (2-4), who came into the game with a 7.00 ERA in just 20 innings pitched. The slender senior southpaw struck out seven and induced eight groundball outs. "They got some runners on, but we got out of it."

Not without an anxious moment or two.

Rooney got the first two outs on a liner and grounder to Unkel at second base. But Vaughn singled and sophomore designated hitter Zach Fricke followed with a single to put runners at first and second. Cleanup batter Conrad Bush stepped to the plate. After fouling off three pitches, he launched another foul ball just past the Jefferson dugout that fell in the field of play behind Dee, the J-Hawks first baseman, who had overrun it.

Striegel, Jefferson's senior catcher, made a trip to the mound to reassure Rooney, who was working on his first complete game of the season.

"I haven't told Drew this, but I was real glad to see him go right out to Roon and calm him down," Kuba said. "That's leadership there."

Rooney made his next pitch and Bush again popped it high into the twilight sky. This time the ball barely left the hitting circle. Striegel camped under it and made the catch for the third out.

And a victory.

"Our bats are starting to come alive and are outfielders are making some amazing catches," Striegel said. "We need to get the bats going more consistently and I think we're back on track for the substate and, hopefully, going a long way."

The J-Hawks sent 10 men to the plate and scored four runs in the top of the second inning. Sam Techau, Unkel, Rooney and Dee had RBI singles.

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West scored twice in the bottom of the fourth to tie the game, 4-4.

Jefferson jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the opener when Unkel lined the first pitch of the game over the left-field wall for a home run. The J-Hawks tacked on another run when Rooney, who had walked and stolen second, scored on a wild pitch.

But those were the only runs the J-Hawks managed.

West scored a pair of runs in the bottom of the third on Fricke's two-run single that tied the game, 2-2.

Vaughn led off the bottom of the seventh with a single, stole second and, one out later, moved to third on Bush's single.

Kuba lifted senior starter Jordan McCormick (0-2) in favor of junior Colten Jourdan and Ben Stokes lofted a fly ball to medium center field. Rooney hauled it in, but Vaughn beat his throw to the plate with the winning run.

"We didn't give that game away. They took it from us," Kuba said. "That's one thing we've been talking about. When things are close, we need to be the ones that are taking the game, instead of just hanging on. We have to learn to take it right away from them, and we did a nice job of that in the seventh inning of game two."

Jefferson plays a doubleheader at Dubuque Senior on Wednesday afternoon. The J-Hawks host Hempstead in a doubleheader Friday.

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Game 1

JEFFERSON (2)
Tanner Unkel, 2b, 4 1 2 1, Michael Rooney, cf, 3 1 0 0, Alex Larson, ss, 4 0 0 0, Jordan McCormick, p, 2 0 0 0, Colten Jourdan, p, 0 0 0 0, Drew Striegel, c, 2 0 0 0, Jordan Dee, 1b, 3 0 2 0, Bailey Hollingsworth, rf 2 0 0 0, Chance Tiedtke, dh, 3 0 0 0, Sam Techau, 3b, 0 0 0 0, Christian Knox, lf, 3 0 1 0. Totals 26 2 5 1.

WATERLOO WEST (3)
Alex Brown, cf, 4 1 1 0, Derrick Vaughn, ss, 3 1 2 0, Zach Fricke, p, 4 0 1 2, Conrad Bush, 1b, 3 0 1 0, Ian Brauer, pr, 0 0 0 0, Ben Stokes, 3b, 3 0 0 1, Sam Kullen, rf, 3 0 1 0, Alec McClain, 2b, 3 0 2 0, Graham Paige, c, 3 0 1 0, Peter Christensen, 1 1 0 0. Totals 27 3 9 3.

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Jefferson        200 000 0 -- 2  5  1
Waterloo West    002 000 1 -- 3  9  0
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(Two outs when winning run scored)

McCormick, Jourdan (7) and Striegel. Fricke and Paige. W - Fricke. L - McCormick. 2B - A.Brown, McClain. HR - Unkel. SB - Unkel, Rooney, Vaughn.

Game 2

JEFFERSON (6)
Unkel, 2b, 4 2 3 1, Rooney, p, 4 0 2 1, Aaron Gruwell, cr, 0 1 0 0, Larson, ss, 3 0 1 0, Dee, 1b, 4 0 1 1, Striegel, c, 4 0 1 2, Hunter Scott, cr, 0 0 0 0, Jake Schmidt, rf, 4 1 1 0, Hollingsworth, lf, 4 1 2 0, Drake Vanous, dh, 3 0 0 0, Knox, cf, 0 0 0 0, Techau, 3b, 3 1 1 1. Totals 33 6 12 6.

WATERLOO WEST (4)
A.Brown, cf, 3 1 0 0, Vaughn, ss, 4 1 2 0, Fricke, dh, 4 0 2 0, Ian Brauer, p, 0 0 0 0, Nathan Heyerhoff, pr, 0 0 0 0, Bush, 1b, 2 1 0 1, Stokes, 3b, 3 0 2 0, Kullen, rf, 3 1 0 1, McClain, 2b, 2

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0 0 0, Paige, c, 3 0 0 0, Christensen, lf, 3 0 1 1. Totals 27 4 7 3.

Jefferson   040 000 2 -- 6 12 1
Waterloo West   200 200 0 -- 4   7 0

Rooney and Striegel. Brauer and Paige. W - Rooney. L - Paige. 2B - Hollingsworth, Fricke. SB - Unkel, A.Brown, Vaughn.

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