

Hollingsworth hurls J-Hawks past Cougs

Written by Mike Koolbeck

Tuesday, 05 July 2011 23:01 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 July 2011 02:18



Kennedy Coach Bret Hoyer cut straight to the point when asked the difference between the Cougars' 15-5 win Monday at Jefferson and their 6-4 loss to the J-Hawks Tuesday night at Kennedy.

"The pitching," Hoyer said. "(Bailey) Hollingsworth is a good pitcher who threw well. Alex (Larson) is a good pitcher who didn't throw well. It's pretty simple."

Jefferson's Hollingsworth scattered six hits, allowed two home runs and did not strike out a batter Tuesday night against the Cougars. Yet he was dominant, mixing in fastballs and curves that kept the Kennedy hitters off-balance, resulting in 13 flyball outs, seven groundball outs and one line drive out.

"I was pitching to contact," said Hollingsworth (3-3), who came into the game with a 6.15 ERA yet has been the J-Hawks' most consistent pitcher over the past two weeks. "I wasn't too worried about striking anybody out and I let my defense do all the work. I got a lot of help from my fielders."

The J-Hawks (10-21, 8-16) were the beneficiaries of some friendly ground ball hops and made several exceptional plays. Right fielder Jake Schmidt hauled in a foul fly down the line for the second out in the bottom of the seventh, then raced into the right-center field gap and stretched out his 6-foot-4 frame to rob Griffin Michael of a possible game-tying double for the

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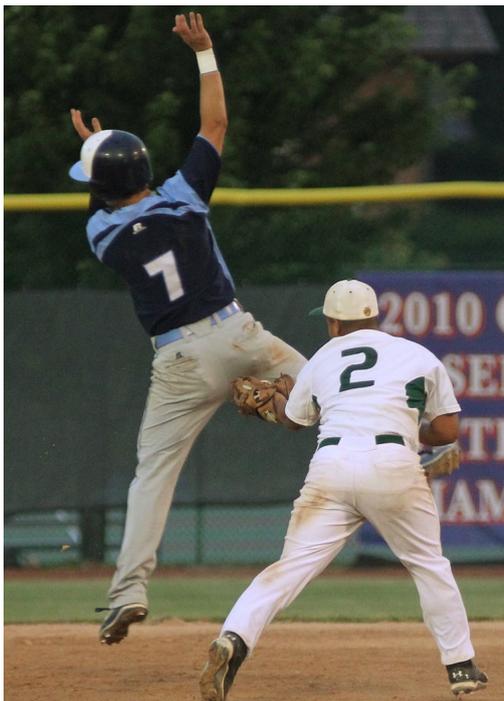
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game's final out.

"At first I thought, 'Oh, no,' " Hollingsworth said of Michael's drive. "Then I saw Jake reach up with his really long arms and haul it in and it felt great."

While Hollingsworth and J-Hawk backers held their breath, Schmidt said he had a bead on the ball when it left the bat.

"I knew (Michael) was the kind of hitter that could hit it there, so I was kind of creeping over that way," Schmidt said. "I was just trying to sprint as hard as I could, hoping I could get there. If I had to lay out, I would have."



Another big difference in the game was the Jefferson offense, which got untracked Tuesday before the J-Hawks were down 15 runs. Tanner Unkel led off the game with a double, stole third and scored when catcher Jim Lizarraga fired the ball into left field for an error.

"Tanner got on and set the tone right away for us," Jefferson Coach Mike Kuba said. "We were able to catch them on their heels in the first inning."

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Kennedy tied the game up in the bottom of the first on a two-out double steal, Terrell Sykes scoring from third after courtesy runner Josh Jahlas drew a throw to second base while stealing.

The J-Hawks reclaimed the lead in the fourth inning on Hollingsworth's one-out RBI single.

Jefferson then tacked on four unearned runs in the sixth inning to take command of the game, 6-1. Michael Rooney singled leading off the inning and stole second base. He was still there two outs later when Hoyer decided to intentionally walk Hollingsworth. Schmidt came up and smashed a hard grounder off the glove of first baseman Logan Ambrosy for a run-scoring error. Colten Jourdan followed with an infield single that plated another run and Christian Knox smoked a two-run double to cap the rally.

"That infield single before the double probably hurt the most," Hoyer said.

Jourdan was batting for the first time in the game. Designated hitter Jordan Dee fanned his first two at-bats, so Jourdan batted against reliever Nick Appleget and found the hole between short and third.

"I about fell out of the batters box. I was pretty excited when I made contact," said Jourdan, who had only two hits in 11 at-bats and no RBIs coming into the game. "I had to step up. I don't get too many at-bats. I had to do something with it."



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Knox's blow provided the winning margin.

"I had struck out and popped up before that, so I knew had to flush that, like the coach always says," Knox said. "It was my time and I had to take it."

Those runs proved crucial when the Cougars came back with three runs in the bottom of the sixth inning. After retiring the first two batters on a pitch apiece, Hollingsworth left a fastball over the plate and Devon Jacobus took it the opposite way over the right-field wall for a home run. Cody Bell singled and David Yancey drove a ball over the center-field wall for a two-run home run that pulled the Cougars within 6-4.

"I missed my spot on David's and Devon, he earned his," Hollingsworth said.

That led to some seventh inning drama. Ambrosy singled leading off the inning. He was still at first two outs later when Austin Christensen, who has 15 home runs this season, was scheduled to hit. Jefferson pitching coach Gordy Nordgren visited Hollingsworth on the mound and asked him if he'd rather pitch to the lefty-swinging Christensen, or on-deck batter Michael, who was one of Hollingsworth's teammates growing up playing USSSA ball.

"He asked me and I said Christensen and he said, 'Too bad,' " Hollingsworth said.

"We were not going to let (Christensen) tie it," Kuba said of the strategy that brought the potential winning run in Michael to the plate. "We knew (Christensen) was the right man at the right time and we weren't going to allow that tonight."

The gambit paid off when Schmidt tracked down Michael's drive.

"Jake did a great job playing the gaps and the line," Kuba said. "He made two great plays for us right there at the end."

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And Jefferson came away with its best win of what has been a disappointing season.

"It was a great seven innings of baseball," Kuba said.

"This was the defending state champ, you really can't get much bigger of a win than that," Hollingsworth said.

While Jefferson reveled in the win, Kennedy (26-8, 19-5) was left to lick its wounds. The Cougars' lead over Dubuque Wahlert for the Mississippi Division title was shaved to a half-game when the Golden Eagles beat Hempstead, 6-5, Tuesday night. Wahlert can move into a tie with a win at Hempstead Wednesday night. The conference season concludes Friday. Kennedy plays a doubleheader at Waterloo West and Wahlert hosts Xavier.

"We flush this one and we move on," Hoyer said. "We know we have to sweep Waterloo West for the conference championship. We know we're going to have to have a great effort - in both games. We can't count on Wahlert to lose. We have to win out."

Jefferson plays North Scott Wednesday night in a JV/varsity doubleheader at Veterans Memorial Stadium starting at 5 p.m. The J-Hawks close out the conference season Friday with a home doubleheader against Waterloo East.

Jefferson and Kennedy meet again a week from Friday in a Class 4A substate tournament first round game at Kennedy.

JEFFERSON (6)

Tanner Unkel, 2b, 3 1 1 0, Michael Rooney, cf, 4 1 2 0, Alex Larson, ss, 4 1 1 0, Jordan

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McCormick, 1b, 2 0 0 0, Bailey Hollingsworth, p, 2 0 1 1, Drake Vanous, cr, 0 1 0 0, Jake Schmidt, rf, 3 1 0 0, Jordan Dee, dh, 2 0 0 0, Colten Jourdan, c, Aaron Gruwell, cr, 0 1 0 0, Christian Knox, lf, 3 0 1 2, Sam Techau, 3b, 3 0 1 0. Totals 27 6 8 4.

KENNEDY (4)]

Terrell Sykes, 2b, 4 1 2 0, Austin Christensen, rf, 3 0 0 0, Griffin Michael, p-ss, 3 0 0 0, Josh Jahlas, cr, 0 0 0 0, Devon Jacobus, ss-3b, 3 1 1 1, Cody Bell, 3b-1b, 3 1 1 0, David Yancey, lf-p, 3 1 1 2, Matt Maiers, dh, 3 0 0 0, Jim Lizarraga, c, 0 0 0 0, Logan Ambrosy, 1b-lf, 3 0 1 0, Nick Appleget, p, 0 0 0 0, Austin Benson, cf, 3 0 0 0. Totals 28 4 6 3.

Jefferson 100 104 0 - 6 8 1

Kennedy 100 003 0 - 4 6 2

Hollingsworth and Jourdan. Michael, Appleget (6), Yancey (7) and Lizarraga. W - Hollingsworth (3-3). L- Michael (4-3). 2B - Unkel, Knox, Techau. HR - Jacobus (9), Yancey (5). SB - Unkel (20), Rooney (10), Jahlas (3).