

Hines helps Saints get 1st MVC victory

Written by Jim Ecker

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New Xavier baseball coach Bob Cataldo had never seen Jacob Hines pitch before this season, but he remembered Hines from middle school and decided to put him on the varsity this year as a sophomore.

Smart move.

Hines tossed a complete game Friday night as the Saints trimmed Linn-Mar, 4-2, in the second game of their doubleheader at the Linn-Mar field for their first Mississippi Valley Conference win of the season.

Hines allowed only three hits and kept the ball around the plate all night.

"I used to coach Regis eighth grade basketball and Jacob was one of the kids I coached in eighth grade," Cataldo said. "I knew what kind of competitor he is."

The Saints had dropped 11 straight conference games this season, including a 6-3 loss to Linn-Mar in the first game Friday, but they've showed a lot of improvement the last three weeks and finally got their reward.

"It's definitely nice," said Hines. "The team is playing a lot better. The results may not show it yet, but we're playing a lot better."

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"The infield is making plays, the outfield is making a bunch of plays as you saw tonight. And the chemistry is coming along."

Hines, a southpaw, did not allow any hits after Linn-Mar scored both of its runs in the third inning. He walked two batters, struck out one and kept his pitch count in the 80's.

"That's the key to the game: Just throw the ball around the plate and let our defense do the work," said Cataldo. "Kids get involved, they're excited, they're part of the game. You saw it in the at-bats, you saw it in the energy in the team. Jacob did a great job competing."

Cataldo visited the mound after Hines issued a one-out walk in the bottom of the seventh, bringing the tying run to the plate. He reminded Hines that Linn-Mar would probably take a strike before swinging, so it would be smart to throw a first-pitch strike and get ahead in the count.

Cataldo then patted Hines on the fanny and jogged back to the dugout.

"You play the odds," said Cataldo about throwing the first pitch over the plate in that situation. "That's what he did with the next two batters and it paid off."

Hines, now 2-0 with a 3.32 ERA, got the last two outs on an infield pop fly and a grounder to shortstop Gabe Lux.

Xavier took a quick 2-0 lead in the first inning of the nightcap on a walk by Nick Stark, a single by Sean Murphy and a triple by Bryce Schulte. The Saints made it 4-0 in the second inning on a single by Nick Kamin, a double by Stark, an RBI single by Murphy and an RBI grounder by Schulte for his second RBI of the ballgame.

The Saints did not score again, but Hines was worthy of the task. Linn-Mar scored twice in the third inning on a walk and two singles, but the Lions did not get a hit the rest of the game.

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Jake Brandt pitched 5 2/3 innings for Linn-Mar in the first game and got the victory, allowing three runs on five hits. Andrew Kraus tossed 1 1/3 innings in relief for the save.

Ben Diestler had three hits for Linn-Mar in the opener. Kirby Kerr had two hits and two RBIs. Rylan Lechner also had two hits.

Murphy had two hits for Xavier in the first game. Adam Tvedt allowed five runs in four innings and Ethan Holverson allowed one run in the last two innings.

The split left Xavier at 3-15 overall and 1-11 in the conference. Linn-Mar is 6-15 overall and 3-9 in the league.