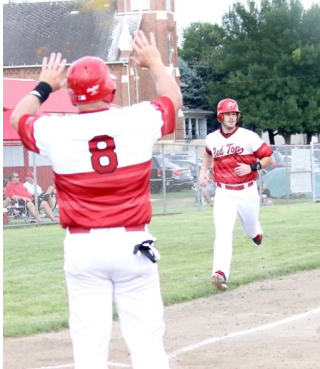


Red Top claims IABA state title

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 15 August 2016 05:04 - Last Updated Monday, 15 August 2016 05:07



NORWAY - When it comes to a battle of attrition, it's hard to beat Red Top with a state title on the line.

Actually, it's darn near impossible.

Red Top fought back through the loser's bracket this weekend and whipped Walford in back-to-back games to claim the fourth IABA state baseball title in program history.

Red Top also stormed back through the loser's bracket last year to claim the 2015 crown with a recipe of success that includes depth, versatility, strong pitching and experienced players.

Red Top whipped Walford, 12-3, in the first championship game Sunday at the famed Norway diamond to hand Walford its first loss of the tournament, then Red Top topped the Hogs again 7-1 for the title.

"We just fight," said Red Top Manager Adam Sadler. "We're confident, but we know that Walford is a good team and Norway is a good team and there are a lot of good teams in this tournament."

None of them were better than Red Top, which also won the Iowa Valley League title this season by a wide margin.

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"We're prepared, but we're loose," said Sadler. "We've been in these situations before. We have a lot of veterans, so I think that's the key for us."

Walford edged Red Top, 2-1, in a winner's bracket game last weekend, but Red Top fought back with five straight victories in the loser's bracket and finished the tournament with a 6-1 record.

"A loss isn't going to make us fold. Our guys are confident," said Sadler. "We know we can come back from a loss. We've got the pitching depth, we've got the bats."

Kirkwood sophomore Drew Yanecek gave Red Top six strong innings in the championship game. He allowed only three hits and left with a 4-1 lead.

Yanecek tipped his cap to Red Top catcher Tyler Howe, a former minor league in the New York Mets organization who is the head coach at Northeast Goose Lake High School. Yanecek said it's a pleasure working with a catcher who has so much experience and knowledge.

"He tells me how to approach a game mentally and how to go after hitters," Yanecek said. "He takes the game to a whole other level. Honestly, I've gotten a lot better this summer just working with him."

Ben Rettenmeier, another Kirkwood product who was a star pitcher at Wartburg College a few years ago, turned in one of the most remarkable pitching performances in the state tournament this year. He tossed a complete game in a 5-2 victory over Norway on Saturday, then tossed 1 1/3 innings in relief against Walford in the first championship game Sunday and threw another inning to finish the second championship affair.

"I don't know, I just like to be on the mound all the time," he said. "I bounced back well. I wasn't

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sore at all today and I wanted to keep going."

Eric Schenck-Joblinske, yet another Kirkwood grad who just finished his baseball career at Iowa, belted a three-run home run for Red Top in the first game Sunday and hit another three-run blast in the second game. He joined Red Top for the latter stages of the Iowa Valley League season and gave them a big bat in the tournament.

"I'm just trying to have fun, to be honest with you," he said. "I'm done playing (in organized baseball). I've finished my career."

Schenck-Joblinske has been hired as a graduate assistant at Texas-Arlington and plans to work toward a master's degree while helping the baseball program there this year.

Casey Pauli, one of the veterans for Red Top, had a pair of RBI singles in the second championship game to help his club take a 4-0 lead in the fourth inning. Pauli helped Cedar Rapids Prairie win the Class 4A state title this summer as their first-base coach and now he's finished the summer with another IABA state crown.

"It's awesome," said Pauli. "There's nothing better than playing baseball with a great group of guys. We had a great team over at Prairie and continuing on with Red Top is fun."

Red Top third baseman Nick Day, who hit .545 and drove in nine runs, was named the MVP of the state tournament. He also excelled on defense.

Walford was short-handed for the tournament, especially in the pitching department. Several of their top pitchers are from Marshalltown Community College, but Marshalltown began practice this past week and those pitchers were not able to play for the Hogs.

Parker Bolt, who pitched the first three innings for Walford in the first game Sunday, was the starting pitcher again for the Hogs in the second contest and pitched a complete game.

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Bryce Grimm, another former Kirkwood player and Xavier grad, belted two solo home runs for Walford in the first game Sunday. Tyler Butz, a Kirkwood and Prairie grad, hit a solo home run for Walford in the second game.

Norway finished third in the tournament.

SATURDAY

Red Top 9, Osage 2

Quad City Cardinals 4, Quad City 76ers 1

Red Top 5, Norway 2

Walford 2, Quad City Cardinals 0

SUNDAY

Walford 6, Norway 1

Red Top 12, Walford 3

Red Top 7, Walford 1