

Kirkwood puts Iowa Lakes in 'Funk'

Written by Jim Ecker

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Joe Funkhouser has great respect for his older brother and tries to emulate him on the pitching mound.

That's smart, because Kyle Funkhouser is pitching in the minor leagues these days after helping Louisville make two trips to the College World Series.

Funkhouser pitched eight scoreless innings Saturday as the Kirkwood Eagles topped Iowa Lakes, 6-1, in the second game of a conference doubleheader at the Kirkwood field.

Hunter Lee tossed a five-hit shutout in a 4-0 victory in the opener for Kirkwood, which climbed within one game of the conference lead with the sweep.

Funkhouser, a 6-foot-1, 235-pound right-hander, is a bulldog on the mound for the Eagles. He pitches quickly, challenges hitters and will throw all day if you let him.

"I kind of got that from my brother," he said. "The same mentality. I want to get the ball and go.

"I think our team feeds off that. A quicker pace and get back in (the dugout) faster."

Kyle Funkhouser was an All-American pitcher at Louisville, where he set school records for victories, strikeouts and innings pitched. The Detroit Tigers picked him in the fourth round of the

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2016 draft and gave him \$750,000 to sign, and he's now pitching for West Michigan in the Class A Midwest League.



"I was always his bat boy when I was younger," Funkhouser said. "I never really got to experience playing with him. He was always at such a high level.

"I try to pitch like him," he added. "I don't have the velocity he does. He has a power arm. I kind of got his mentality: I don't want to lose."

Funkhouser communicates regularly with his brother.

"We're very close," he said. "We shared a room when we were younger, up until my oldest brother went away to school. When I was little, I was kind of the pest and he always had to put me in line."

Funkhouser, who is from Oak Forest, Ill., transferred from Moraine Valley Community College to Kirkwood at mid-semester this year after pitching for Moraine Valley last season.

He began the season in the bullpen in long relief, but Kirkwood Coach Todd Rima liked what he saw and put him in the starting rotation last weekend against Iowa Central.

Funkhouser has made two starts for the Eagles and the results have been impressive. He has not allowed a single run in 13 innings and is 2-0 with a 0.00 ERA as a starter, having allowed only seven hits in two starts with eight strikeouts.

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Overall, Funkhouser has a 4-2 record and 2.12 ERA for the campaign.

"He competes, throws three pitches for strikes," said Rima. "And he believes he can get any hitter out with it. That gives us a chance every time the ball is in his hands.

"We're glad that he's here. He brings something different to our pitching staff and he's been a big bonus for us."

Neither of Kirkwood's starting pitchers Saturday were on the team this past fall. Lee transferred here from Central College in Pella and also has been a big addition to the staff with a 4-2 record and 2.42 ERA.

"Our pitchers were great today," said Rima. "Lee gave us a great start and Funkhouser followed it with eight strong innings.

"Those two guys have picked us up big-time. They've been great additions for us."

Lee struck out five batters in the opener and did not walk anyone. Only one runner got into scoring position in the entire game.

Lee starred at Des Moines Lincoln, where he was 5-1 with a 0.49 ERA last year.

Korry Howell had two hits and scored two runs for Kirkwood in the opener. Chili Moseley put down two perfect bunts that were big plays when the Eagles scored twice in the first inning and twice again in the sixth.

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Lorenzo Elion went 3-for-4 in the second game and did a sensational job at third base in the doubleheader. On one play, he snared a vicious line drive and fired across the diamond for a double play to get the Eagles out of trouble.

Howell, an excellent shortstop, had three stolen bases in the second game. That gives him 34 stolen bases this season, good for a new school record and third-best in the country.

Howell and Elion, a pair of freshmen from Illinois, give Kirkwood a strong left side of the infield at shortstop and third base. Nothing got past them Saturday as the Eagles excelled on defense.

Kirkwood raised its records to 27-12 overall and 9-5 in the conference. The Eagles trail Southeastern (10-4) by just one game in the league standings with 10 games left in the race.

NIACC (10-6) and Iowa Central (11-7) are also just one game behind Southeastern. DMACC (10-8) trails by two games in the incredibly tight ICCAC standings.

Kirkwood and Iowa Lakes (14-25, 1-11) are scheduled for another doubleheader Sunday at 1 p.m.