

Big innings lift Walford to sweep

Written by Mike Condon

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WATKINS - The Walford Hogs came into Sunday's doubleheader with Watkins at the bottom of the Iowa Valley League standings.

Coach Kevin Moser has had to juggle his roster for a variety of reasons and it showed as the Hogs got off to a 1-7 start through the first four weeks of league play.

That changed on Sunday. Walford used a five-run fourth-inning outburst in the opener to post a 6-1 win, then rallied from a 7-2 deficit in the nightcap, scoring six again in the fifth inning en route to an 11-7 triumph at Gabe Kuester Memorial Ball Park.

After a pair of tough losses last week at home to Red Top, the Hogs showed Sunday they will be a force as the second half of the league schedule begins next week.

"A lot of these guys are college ballplayers and they know how to fight and never give up," Moser said.

The roster has changed quite a bit since the opening week of the season. Moser admitted it was tough to build any real team chemistry.

"We actually had some players here that left to play in another league this summer," he said. "That hurt us because they left about a week before we were able to get the (University of Iowa) guys and then some of them wanted a week off to have a little break and take some time to go home and see their families and I understood that and had no problem with it."

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The injection of Corbin Woods, Mitchell Boe and Matt Hoeg into the regular lineup, along with Elijah Wood on the mound, almost resulted in wins last week against defending league champion Red Top.



The Hogs took a 1-0 lead in the top of the fourth of Game 1 when Bryce Grimm's perfectly-executed suicide squeeze plated Tyler Butz. In the fifth, Boe tripled home a run and Hoeg followed with a line drive homer to left. Grant Walker and Woods also drove in runs, upping the lead to 6-0.

"I really like the way we battled in that inning," Moser said. "Watkins was really pushing us hard."

Wood pitched five shutout innings for the Hogs, allowing just three hits. Former Linn-Mar and Coe player Jack Strellner had two hits for Watkins.

In the nightcap, Watkins took a 2-0 lead before the hosts exploded for seven runs in the fourth. Brady Stramer's double was the big hit in an inning where the first two Mudhens' batters were retired.

However, the visitors came right back to score six runs in the fifth. Watkins starter Luke Franzenburg deserved a better fate in the inning as the Mud Hens committed three errors behind the 37-year-old left-hander.

"Luke's a good friend of mine and that was tough for him in that inning," Moser said. "He's a heck of a competitor. We took advantage of the mistakes."

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Grimm, Woods, Walker and Brennan Hammer all had doubles in the inning for Walford.

Mitch Moser, the coach's son, went 4-for-4 with four singles and did a solid job out of the bullpen to limit the damage in Watkins' big inning. Stramer had two hits for Watkins (3-7)

"I like the way we are set heading into the second half of the season," Moser said. "I really think we have our pitching set and that is a key. We've got a great mix of left-handers and right-handers.

"I think we will be a really tough team to play against in the second half."

Both teams are on the road next Sunday for 1 p.m. twinbills. Watkins travels to Williamsburg while Walford will play at Fairfax.