

4 IVL teams scrambling for IABA title

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 11 August 2018 21:33 - Last Updated Saturday, 11 August 2018 21:59



NORWAY - The Norway Bandits have thrown the IABA state tournament into a mad scramble for the title.

The Bandits upset Williamsburg, 8-7, Saturday night in a wild ballgame that ended under the Musco lights in Norway, handing the Red Sox their first loss in the tournament.

Four Iowa Valley League teams are still alive in the state meet and all four teams have one loss in the double-elimination event, setting up a free-for-all Sunday for the crown in Norway.

Williamsburg (2-1) will face Red Top (4-1) in the first semifinal at 1 p.m., with Norway (4-1) meeting Walford (3-1) in the other semifinal at 3 p.m.

The winners will collide at 5 p.m. for the 2018 IABA state title.

Williamsburg won the IVL championship this year while Norway finished in last place, but that did not matter Saturday night in the fourth and final game at Norway.

The Red Sox jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the bottom of the first inning, but the Bandits responded with a five-spot of their own in the third inning with the big blow a two-run homer by Riley Braughton.

Williamsburg took a 6-5 lead in the fourth inning, but Braughton belted a three-run homer in the sixth inning to give Norway an 8-6 lead. The Red Sox made it 8-7 in the bottom of the sixth,

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setting up a dramatic finish in the bottom of the seventh.

Williamsburg put runners on first and second with two outs in the bottom of the seventh. Cam Frazier hit a rocket up the middle that appeared headed to center field for an RBI single to tie the game, but Norway shortstop Jason Matthews dove far to his left, snared the ball on one hop and flipped to second base for a force play to end the game.

Norway won a pair of games Saturday, dumping the Muscatine Road Runners 11-1 in six innings before stunning Williamsburg.

Red Top also won twice Saturday, trimming the Muscatine Flames 7-5 and clipping Walford 6-1. Levi Usher belted a grand slam homer for Red Top against Walford and the Toppers got a special performance on the mound by Ben Rettenmeier, who pitched two innings to get the save against the Flames and then tossed a complete game against Walford.

Norway and Red Top played twice on Saturday, whereas Williamsburg and Walford had only one game. That might suggest that Williamsburg and Walford will have an edge in the pitching department on Sunday, but this year's tournament has shown that anything can happen.

All four teams that are still alive in the tournament are from the Iowa Valley League. The surprise omission are the Stars, who won the state title last year.

SATURDAY'S RESULTS

Red Top 7, Muscatine Flames 5
Norway 11, Muscatine Road Runners 1 (6)
Red Top 6, Walford 1
Norway 8, Williamsburg 7

SUNDAY'S SCHEDULE

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At Norway

1 p.m. - Williamsburg (2-1) vs Red Top (4-1)

3 p.m. - Norway (4-1) vs Walford (3-1)

5 p.m. - Championship game