

No. 3 J-Hawks shocked by North Scott

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 17 July 2015 22:05 - Last Updated Friday, 17 July 2015 22:11



Invaders from Pluto, unhappy with the United States for spying on their planet, kidnapped the Cedar Rapids Jefferson baseball team Friday night and took their spot on the field against North Scott.

It was not a pretty sight.

The third-ranked J-Hawks played one of their worst games of the season and were shocked by North Scott, 11-8, in the opening round of the Class 4A substate baseball tournament at Jefferson.

The imposter from Pluto who wore Spencer VanScoyoc's jersey was knocked out of the box in the second inning and charged with seven runs.

The imposters who played defense for Jefferson committed five errors.

There were six walks, three wild pitches, two passed balls and a balk.

Jefferson entered the game with a 29-8 record, favored to make the state tournament for the first time since 1998. North Scott arrived at the Jefferson field with a 17-20 record, including a 6-1 loss to the J-Hawks during the regular season.

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"It's not very often a 6-seed beats a 1-seed, but we have one goal this year and it's to go to state. We're still alive," said North Scott Coach Brad Hanna.

"We just told the kids to keep hanging in there and keep believing they can win, and they put it together tonight. We had no pressure on us tonight. We're the sixth seed. We're not supposed to win."

Jefferson was supposed to win. Everybody knew it, but VanScoyoc struggled on the mound in the second inning when North Scott put eight fat runs on the board to take an 8-0 lead.

"That was an inning that we couldn't do anything right," said Jefferson Coach Kyle Rodenkirk. "It just kind of snowballed from there. Tip your caps to North Scott. They played good."

VanScoyoc began the night with a 5-1 record and 0.64 ERA, having allowed only three earned runs all year in 33 innings, but the Lancers gave him a hard time and chased him to center fielder after the score reached 7-0.

Only four of those runs were earned thanks to a pair of Jefferson errors in the frame, but VanScoyoc contributed to his own demise by walking four batters in 1 1/3 innings.

"You're going to have nights like that when you pitch," said Rodenkirk. "Roger Clemens had pretty bad performances, too, in big games. That's baseball. You just never know what's going to happen. That's why you play the game."

Jefferson pulled within 9-6 in the fourth inning and chased North Scott starter Matt Sacia, but the J-Hawks never got over the hump. North Scott took an 11-6 lead into the bottom of the seventh and withstood a mild two-run rally for the big upset.

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"We game-planned and practiced hard all week and were ready to go. It just happens," said Rodenkirk. "It takes the wind out of your sails when you get down so big so early on."

Jefferson won its first Mississippi Valley Conference title in 10 years this season and had a terrific year, but it was a gloomy bunch of J-Hawks who exchanged farewell hugs in the outfield after the game.

Jefferson shortstop Lucas Larson tried to put the season in perspective, despite the rough ending. "It was a ride," he said. "I'll never forget all the memories with the guys. It was a fun couple of years. I loved it."

Rodenkirk congratulated the seniors for helping turn the program around the last two seasons. He tried to give them a pep talk after the game, to mixed results, reminding them of all they accomplished with the 29 wins and MVC crown.

"I said nobody can ever take that away from you," he remarked. "Yeah, you want to do some damage - and we could have done some damage - in the postseason, but tonight wasn't our night and it's a tough way to go out."

North Scott got a strong performance from Alex Jones out of the bullpen after the J-Hawks got back into the game at 9-6 in the fourth inning. He shut the door for the next three innings before the J-Hawks scored twice with two outs in the seventh.

Cam Frazier went 3-for-3 for Jefferson. VanScoyoc had two doubles. Larson and Colton Knox drove in two runs.

North Scott will face Western Dubuque in the substate semifinals Monday night, with the winner meeting Dubuque Senior in the substate finals next Wednesday night.

North Scott □ 081 010 1 - 11 7 3

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Jefferson ☐ ☐ 020 400 2 - 8 9 5

W - Jones. L - S. VanScoyoc.