

Young Cougars swept by No.1 Ankeny

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 02 July 2013 22:51 -

The Cedar Rapids Kennedy baseball team may have the youngest pitching rotation in Class 4A this year.

Coach Bret Hoyer has three sophomores and a freshman in the four-man rotation, a highly unusual situation for the Cougars, but the kids have done all right.

The young Cougars battled top-ranked Ankeny in a doubleheader at the Kennedy field Tuesday night and were saddled with a pair of losses, 7-4 and 6-1, but Hoyer likes what he's seen of his Kiddie Corps on the mound this year.

Kennedy is 15-11 overall and 12-6 in the Mississippi Valley Conference with the substate tournament a little more than two weeks away.

"We've said before, we're very surprised at how effective our pitching has been this year, knowing how young our four starters were going to be," said Hoyer. "We didn't know what the four starters would be able to do for us, and they've been a pleasant surprise."

Sophomores Zach Daniels and Blake Hargens helped Kennedy sweep a doubleheader from No.10 Xavier Monday. Sophomore Jimmy Lizarraga and freshman Jackson Behn gave the Cougars a chance against Ankeny, but the Hawks were too strong and too salty for Kennedy.

Behn has faced No.1 Ankeny, No.3 West Des Moines Valley and Iowa City High (among others) this season. He tossed a shutout against City High, allowed only one unearned run in six innings against Valley, and allowed two runs in five innings against Ankeny before getting tired and giving up two more runs in the sixth. Ankeny socked two home runs against him.

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The big freshman likes getting the ball against tough teams. "You've got to come out strong. You can't be intimidated," he said.

Behn is flattered that Hoyer lets him face quality opponents.

"It shows he has confidence in me," said Behn. "It makes me feel good and I can go out there and compete. I like that."

"He's really come a long way," said Hoyer. "He's not intimidated by anybody. He's going to focus on hitting the mitt."

Unfortunately for the Cougars, this probably will be Behn's only year on the varsity baseball team. His family is moving to Omaha this summer and he'll be changing schools.

"It sucks, because I love playing with these guys," he said. "I've got to go with it, I guess."

Behn said he's not sure if he'll be able to finish the season at Kennedy, but Hoyer is hopeful he'll be able to stay through the end of the campaign.

"We've got room at our house. He's more than welcome to stay with us," said Hoyer, noting he'd have to check the IHSA rules. "I'd like to think we'll figure something out."

Behn has a 2-4 record and 2.35 earned run average. Daniels is 4-1 with a 1.73 ERA. Lizarraga is 3-2 with a 3.40 ERA. Hargens is 1-1 with a 2.23 ERA. Collectively, they have a 10-8 record and have accounted for two-thirds of Kennedy's wins. Senior David King has the other five victories, all in relief.

Kennedy brought the tying run to the plate in the bottom of the seventh inning of the opener

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before falling, 7-4. The Cougars allowed two unearned runs in the game and failed to capitalize on opportunities.

"That first game was ours for the taking," said Hoyer. "Sammy (Lizarraga) pitched a lot better than the game went."

Tony Maiers hit a two-run double to pull the Cougars within 6-4 in the sixth inning, but the rally ended there. Derek Jacobus and Matt Stevens had two hits.

Lizarraga had two hits in the nightcap. Maiers had an RBI double.

Jacobus injured his ankle in the seventh inning of the opener, left the game and did not play in the nightcap. He said it's the same injury he had during the basketball season. Jacobus plays center field, shortstop and pitches for Kennedy and is one of the top hitters.

Kennedy will face more stiff competition on Saturday when it hosts North Scott at 11 a.m. and meets No.4 Johnston at 3 p.m.

"It's going to make us better," said Hoyer. "We've got to get to the point where we start ignoring the name on the jersey of our opponent and play ball the way we're capable of playing."

GAME 1

ANKENY (7): Buenting, ss, 3 1 2 2, Hurst, dh, 4 0 0 0, Allenback, cf, 0 0 0 0, Jones, 2b, 4 1 3 0, McKinney, 1b, 3 1 1 1, M.Johnson, 3b, 4 1 2 1, Olson, c, 4 0 1 0, Ledvina, cr, 0 0 0 0, Clayberg, rf, 3 0 0 0 0, DeAngelo, ph, 1 0 0 0, Schweers, p, 3 0 2 0, Carey, cr, 0 2 0 0, Morrissey, p, 0 0 0 0, Shultice, lf, 3 1 1 0. Totals 32 7 12 4.

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KENNEDY (4): Jacobus, cf/ss, 3 1 2 0, Daniels, ss/2b, 4 0 1 1, A.Johnson, lf/cf, 4 0 1 0, Staton, 1b/lf, 3 1 0 0, Stevens, rf, 4 1 2 0, Maiers, c, 3 0 1 2, Moa, cr, 0 1 0 0, Skow, dh, 3 0 0 0, Lizarraga, p, 0 0 0 0, Jurgensen, p, 0 0 0 0, Smetzer, 2b, 1 0 0 0, Cunningham, 1b, 2 0 1 1, Sass, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Pauls, 3b, 0 0 0 0. Totals 30 4 8 4.

Ankeny 121 110 1 - 7 12 4

Kennedy 001 003 0 - 4 8 3

Schweers, Morrissey (7) and Olson. Lizarraga, Jurgensen (7) and Maiers. W - Schweers. L - Lizarraga. 2B - M.Johnson, Maiers. 3B - Buenting, Jones. SB - Buenting, M.Johnson, Ledvina, Carey 2, Jacobus, A.Johnson, Stevens.

GAME 2

ANKENY (6): Buenting, ss, 3 1 2 0, Hurst, dh, 4 0 1 0, Allenback, cf, 0 0 0 0, Jones, 2b, 3 0 0 1, McKinney, 1b, 4 2 2 2, M.Johnson, p/3b, 4 1 2 1, Lenzini, cr, 0 1 0 0, Clayberg, rf, 3 1 1 1, Doornenbal, c, 4 0 3 1, Carey, cr, 0 0 0 0, Wall, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Morrissey, p, 3 0 1 0, Schultice, lf, 4 0 0 0. Totals 32 6 12 6.

KENNEDY (1): Daniels, ss, 4 0 1 0, Johnson, cf, 4 0 1 0, Staton, 1b, 3 1 0 0, Stevens, rf, 3 0 0 0, Maiers, c, 3 0 1 1, Fifield, cr, 0 0 0 0, Skow, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Lizarraga, 2b, 3 0 2 0, Moa, lf, 3 0 0 0, Cunningham, dh, 3 0 0 0, Behn, p, 0 0 0 0, King, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 29 1 6 1.

Ankeny 100 102 2 - 6 12 5

Kennedy 000 001 0 - 1 6 1

M.Johnson, Morrissey (7) and Doornenbal. Behn, King (6) and Maiers. W - M.Johnson. L - Behn. 2B - Buenting 2, Clayberg, Doornenbal, Maiers, Lizarraga. HR - McKinney, M.Johnson. SB - Wall, A.Johnson 2.