

Wyant tosses gem, but Lions miss title

Written by Jim Ecker
Monday, 15 July 2013 22:36 -

Justin Wyant knew he had to pitch a strong game Monday night for the Linn-Mar Lions to have any chance of winning a Mississippi Valley Conference title.

He performed admirably, but the Lions fell short anyway.

Wyant tossed a no-hitter as Linn-Mar walloped Kennedy, 12-0 in five innings, in the second game of their MVC doubleheader at the Linn-Mar complex.

Kennedy won the opener, 3-2, and that outcome cost the Lions dearly in the conference race.

Dubuque Wahlert rallied for a 3-2 victory over Dubuque Senior Monday night and won the Valley Division title with a 19-7 record. Linn-Mar finished 18-8 in the conference, tied for second with Prairie.

"It's a little bittersweet, but what can you do?," Wyant said after blowing the Cougars away with 10 strikeouts.

There was a flicker of hope for the Lions after they finished playing the Cougars. Dubuque Senior held a 2-0 lead over Wahlert in the sixth inning, which meant the Lions could have tied for the title if Senior held on for the victory.

Linn-Mar Coach Chad Lechner learned shortly later that Wahlert scored two unearned runs with two outs in the bottom of the seventh inning to claim the title.

Wyant tosses gem, but Lions miss title

Written by Jim Ecker
Monday, 15 July 2013 22:36 -

"A conference championship is nice, but I think making it to the state tournament would be a lot more rewarding, I guess," said Wyant.

Kennedy defeated Linn-Mar in the opening round of the Class 4A state tournament last year after the Lions and Cougars tied for a conference title. The Cougars spoiled the party for the Lions again Monday night, and they could meet again in the substate semifinals next week if they both win their substate openers Friday.

"We always like playing tough games with Kennedy," said Wyant.

Wyant walked two batters, but neither runner advanced beyond second base.

Matt Stevens nearly got a base hit for Kennedy with one out in the fifth on a hard grounder, but Linn-Mar first baseman Austin Stroschein knocked it down and tossed to Wyant for the out on a bang-bang play at first base.

Sophomore Blake Hargens pitched an effective game for the Cougars in the opener Monday night. He pitched 5 2/3 innings and left with a 3-2 lead.

Joel Smetzer relieved Hargens with the tying run on third base with two outs and struck out Wyant to end the sixth inning. Smetzer walked a man with two outs in the bottom of the seventh, but he ended the game by inducing a fly ball to center field.

Hargens made the jump from Kennedy's freshman team in 2012 to the varsity this year. He's been a valuable addition and a member of the starting rotation.

"I'm real proud of him," said Kennedy Coach Bret Hoyer. "He's really come along. He's gotten consistent. He's always had varsity-caliber stuff. It was whether he could consistently hit the mitt or not."

Wyant tosses gem, but Lions miss title

Written by Jim Ecker
Monday, 15 July 2013 22:36 -

Hargens held Linn-Mar to five hits. He tried to keep it simple, along with keeping the ball low in the strike zone. "I just knew I had to throw strikes and let my defense work," he said.

Hargens said he worked hard in the offseason to make the varsity and was delighted when Hoyer told him the good news. "I was a little surprised at the start of the year. A little nervous, too," he said.

Tony Maiers went 2-for-3 with an RBI single to help the Cougars win the opener.

Austin Banks and Brandt Ollinger hit back-to-back home runs for Linn-Mar in the second inning of the nightcap. Banks hit an inside-the park homer.

Mitch Stickney, Stroschein, Banks and Ollinger all drove in two runs. Ollinger went 3-for-3.

The split left Linn-Mar with a 24-15 overall record heading into its substate opener against Washington at home Friday night.

Kennedy (21-16, 16-10) will play a doubleheader Tuesday at Pleasant Valley before hosting Iowa City High in the substate tournament Friday night. The Cougars finished second in the Mississippi Division of the MVC behind Iowa City West.

Dubuque Wahlert won 14 straight conference games to win the Valley Division title after starting the conference race with a 5-7 record.

Linn-Mar, Prairie, Xavier and Wahlert all took turns in first place.

Wyant tosses gem, but Lions miss title

Written by Jim Ecker
Monday, 15 July 2013 22:36 -

"It's kind of a crazy year. It's been a wild last two weeks," said Lechner. "We had some ups and downs. Sometimes we've had lights-out performances and sometimes not.

"It's been hard to figure out which way it was going to go sometimes, but for the most part they've done really well this year."

GAME 1

KENNEDY (3): Johnson, lf, 4 0 0 0, Jacobus, ss, 2 1 1 0, Skow, 1b, 2 1 1 0, Maiers, c, 3 0 2 1, Moa, cr, 0 0 0 0, Sass, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Lizarraga, 2b, 2 0 0 0, Pauls, pr, 0 0 0 0, Stevens, rf, 3 0 0 0, Brewer, cf, 3 0 0 0, Smetzer, dh/p, 2 1 1 0, Hargens, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 23 3 5 1.

LINN-MAR (2): Mortensen, cf, 4 0 0 0, Strellner, ss, 3 0 0 0, Stickney, rf, 3 0 1 0, Stroschein, 1b, 4 1 1 0, Roth, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Banks, c, 2 0 1 0, Niemeyer, cr, 0 1 0 0, Ollinger, 3b, 3 0 2 1, Reimer, dh, 3 0 0 0, Hilsenbeck, p, 0 0 0 0, Bettmann, p, 0 0 0 0, Wyant, lf, 2 0 0 0. Totals 27 2 5 1.

Kennedy	102 000 0 - 3 5 1
Linn-Mar	000 101 x - 2 5 2

Hargens, Smetzer (7) and Maiers. Hilsenbeck, Bettmann (5) and Banks. W - Hargens. L - Hilsenbeck. S - Smetzer. 2B - Stickney.

GAME 2

KENNEDY (0): Johnson, cf, 2 0 0 0, Jacobus, ss, 1 0 0 0, Henry, ss, 0 0 0 0, Cunningham, 1b, 1 0 0 0, Skow, 1b/3b, 2 0 0 0, Maiers, c, 1 0 0 0, Althoff, c, 0 0 0 0, Fifield, cr, 0 0 0 0, Sass, 3b/ss, 2 0 0 0, Lizarraga, 2b, 2 0 0 0, Stevens, rf, 2 0 0 0, Brewer, dh/p, 1 0 0 0, Moa, lf, 0 0 0 0, Staton, lf, 1 0 0 0, Jurgensen, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 15 0 0 0.

Wyant tosses gem, but Lions miss title

Written by Jim Ecker
Monday, 15 July 2013 22:36 -

LINN-MAR (12): Mortensen, cf, 3 1 0 0, Jennings, ph/lf, 1 0 0 0, Strellner, ss, 2 2 2 0, Stickney, rf/cf, 1 2 0 2, Stroschein, 1b, 2 0 1 2, Roth, 2b, 3 1 1 1, Banks, c, 3 1 1 2, Bettmann, cr, 0 0 0 0, Ollinger, 3b, 3 2 3 2, Kane, ph, 1 0 0 0, Reimer, dh, 2 1 0 0, Larson, lf/rf, 3 2 1 1, Wyant, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 24 12 9 10.

Kennedy 000 00 - 0 0 4
Linn-Mar 070 5x - 12 9 0

Jurgensen, Brewer (4) and Maiers, Althoff (3). Wyant and Banks. W - Wyant. L - Jurgensen. HR - Banks, Ollinger.