

## Konigsmark helps J-Hawks top Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 07 July 2015 22:39 -

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Tyler Konigsmark has turned his life around at Cedar Rapids Jefferson this year by buckling down in the classroom and taking care of his responsibilities on a daily basis.

As a result, he's helped the Jefferson baseball team climb to No. 2 in the Class 4A rankings and move within two victories of clinching its first Mississippi Valley Conference title in 10 years.

Konigsmark pitched five strong innings Tuesday night as the J-Hawks topped No. 8 Kennedy, 6-2, at Herkelman Field to sweep the two-game MVC series against the Cougars.

Jefferson has a two-game lead on Iowa City West in the Valley Division with four games left in the league campaign. The J-Hawks have an 18-4 record in the conference and Iowa City West is 16-6. Kennedy and Linn-Mar are still mathematically alive at 11-7, but longshots at this point.

Konigsmark, a senior, did not play varsity baseball for the J-Hawks until this year due to academic problems as a sophomore and junior. Now he's back on course and has accepted a full ride from Bossier Parish Community College in Shreveport, La.

"I had a little trouble my sophomore year with Spanish and my junior year I got into trouble by not going to classes," he said. "This year I got myself in a better position with living and stuff and made it a positive year."

Konigsmark has been living with his uncle, Dave Konigsmark, a former Jefferson athlete who has played a prominent role in pointing Tyler in the right direction. "He's helped me out quite a bit this year," he said.

"Everybody told me to never give up and told me to keep battling and I got through it. Coach (Kyle) Rodenkirk has been on me ever since. It's been a really good year."

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Konigsmark has compiled a 4-2 record and 2.36 ERA for the J-Hawks and is hitting .241 as a part-time starter on offense.

"He's a pretty cool story," Rodenkirk said. "He really turned his life around and really opened some eyes.

"I knew he had the stuff, he just had to dial it in and get back down to earth here. His life has changed around pretty quick."

Konigsmark said Spencer VanScoyoc, one of his teammates at Jefferson, helped him get the full scholarship to Bossier Parish Community College, which is located in Shreveport, La. According to Konigsmark, the VanScoyoc family contacted a scout on Konigsmark's behalf and invited the scout to watch Konigsmark pitch in practice.

"He lives in Atlanta and came up and saw me and said he liked what I had," Konigsmark related. "He got me an offer down there with one of his good friends."

The scout watched Konigsmark pitch and immediately called the coach at Bossier. When practice ended, the scout handed his cell phone to Konigsmark so Konigsmark could talk to the Bossier coach himself.

"He handed the phone to me and said I've got your future college coach waiting for you," said Konigsmark. "The coach said he wanted to give me a full ride. It was a big surprise."

Konigsmark allowed two runs on six hits in five-plus innings Tuesday, with two strikeouts and three walks. Sophomore Jarred Wood pitched two scoreless innings to secure the victory.

VanScoyoc went 2-for-3 with two doubles, an RBI and two runs. Manny Olutunde was 2-for-3

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with two RBIs. Cam Frazier also went 2-for-3.

Jefferson raised its overall record to 26-6. Kennedy fell to 20-8 with its third straight loss.

Jefferson will finish its conference schedule with doubleheaders against Cedar Falls and Dubuque Hempstead, seeking its first league title since 2005.

"They're no cupcakes," said Rodenkirk. "They're going to be right there. It's going to be a fun end to the season, I'll tell you that much."

**Jefferson** □ **200 022 0 - 6**

**Kennedy** □ □ **002 000 0 - 2**

W - Konigsmark. L - Hargens.