

Lions knock out Warriors, 5-0

Written by Mike Condon
Friday, 19 July 2013 21:50 -

One got the feeling the baseball team to score first would keep its season alive.

Both Linn-Mar and Cedar Rapids Washington had chances through the first four innings of Friday night's Class 4A substate quarterfinal at Linn-Mar.

It was the Lions finally breaking through in the top of the fifth. Kyle Mortensen's RBI single to center plated Caleb Reimer with that all-important first run. Linn-Mar added another in the inning, two more in the sixth and one in the seventh en route to a 5-0 victory.

The win lifts Coach Chad Lechner's team to 25-15 and into Monday night's substate semifinal against Cedar Rapids Kennedy. The Cougars advanced with a 7-6 win Friday night over Iowa City High. Monday's game will be at Linn-Mar, beginning at 7 p.m.

Washington finished its season at 13-22.

"Once we got the first run, we definitely relaxed," said Lions senior catcher Austin Banks. "We've got a lot of seniors on the team and we know how to play in the postseason. I thought we played pretty well once we got that first run."

The Warriors missed a big chance in the second. Johnny Dobbs reached on a one-out error, then stole second. Landon Akers followed with a grounder towards right that was cut off nicely by Linn-Mar second baseman Jimmy Roth, but Roth slipped as he tried to square his body to make a throw. Akers stole second and Washington had two runners in scoring position with one out.

"If we get a timely hit there, we put a little pressure on them," said Washington Coach Tony

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Lombardi. "We had a chance to get the first run and we didn't do it. We had second and third with one out and couldn't get it in."

Lions' starter Austin Stroschein wasn't sharp early, but made the big pitches when he needed them. He got Rocky Lombardi on a pop out to second and, after walking Chris Harrington to load the bases, retired losing pitcher Matt Troendle on another fly ball to Roth at second.

"This is kind of the way I have pitched all year," Stroschein said. "It seems like I have got stronger as the games have gone along. Every outing that seems like what happens."

Troendle matched Stroschein through four innings. He helped himself by picking a runner off first and turning a popped up bunt into a double play.

"That's the way it goes a lot of times with high school kids," Lechner said. "(Troendle) did a good job keeping us off balance. We were anxious up there. He doesn't throw real hard, but does a really good job of hitting his spots."

The Lions showed some patience in the fifth. Reimer led off with a single and moved to second on a Justin Wyant sacrifice bunt. Mortensen was next and he waited on a Troendle offering and drove it to center field, bringing home Reimer. Mortensen took second when the ball was misplayed in center for an error. After moving to third on a Jack Strellner single, Mortensen scored on a Mitch Stickney sacrifice fly to center.

Stroschein wasn't about to let the lead get away. All he allowed the rest of the way was a single to Noah Dostal, who had three of Washington's six hits, in the sixth and a two-out infield single to Troendle in the seventh.

Linn-Mar scored two more in the sixth. Banks' ringing double to left-center plated Roth, who led off with a single and a steal of second. Courtesy runner Wes Gaiser came home on Ben Larson's sacrifice fly to center. Stroschein drove in the final run in the seventh when his single to right brought home Strellner with the fifth run.

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Friday's game was the final one as head coach for Tony Lombardi at Washington. In the spring, he resigned as both football and baseball coach in the wake of a state investigation by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners on charges filed by a group of Washington parents saying he mistreated students with improper language and improper conduct. A hearing on the charges will be held, but no date has been set.

"It was a positive year for us," Lombardi said. "We got off to a pretty good start, then lost a couple of good seniors (A.J. Puk and Zac Gillis) who had prior commitments to college baseball and college football. It took us awhile to adjust to losing those guys and by the end of the year we were playing pretty well."

Lombardi admitted not coaching will be a difficult adjustment for him, saying he is "preparing" for that. He said any future coaching is "undecided" at this point. The plan for now is to be a fan in the stands.

"It's a sad day for me," he said. "Now I have a chance to be a dad. I've got a son (Rocky) who had a good summer with football so I am going to have to go watch him, cheer for him and become a great Warrior booster."

Linn-Mar split a doubleheader with Kennedy on Monday. Lechner indicated he plans to start Wyant, who threw a five-inning no-hitter in a 12-0 win. Kennedy won the opener, 3-2, denying the Lions a share of the Mississippi Valley Conference Valley Division title.

"There's debate whether you want somebody to see the same pitcher twice within a week," Lechner said. "It works both ways. The pitchers get to see their batters. We know he will go out and compete like crazy for us. We feel good about our chances with him on the mound."

The winner plays second-ranked Iowa City West in the substate finals on Wednesday at West.

LINN-MAR (5): Mortensen, cf, 4 1 1 1, Strellner, ss, 2 1 2 0, Stickney, rf, 3 0 1 1, Stroschein, p,

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3 0 1 1, Roth, 2b, 4 1 1 0, Banks, c, 4 0 2 1, Gaiser, cr, 0 1 0 0, Ollinger, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Reimer, dh, 3 1 1 0, Kane, 1b, 0 0 0 0, Wyant, lf, 2 0 0 0, Larson, cr-lf, 0 0 0 1. Totals: 28 5 10 5.

WASHINGTON: (0): Matsuda, lf, 4 0 0 0, Loeffelholz 3 0 0 0, Dostal, ss, 3 0 3 0, Burdt, rf, 3 0 0 0, Dobbs, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Akers, cf, 3 0 1 0, Lombardi, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Harrington, dh, 2 0 0 0 0, Nichols, 1b, 0 0 0 0, Troendle, p, 3 0 1 0. Totals: 27 0 6 0.

Linn-Mar 000 022 1 - 5 10 1
Washington 000 000 0 - 0 6 2

Stroschein and Banks. Troendle and Loeffelholz. W - Stroschein. L - Troendle. 2B - Dostal, Dobbs, Banks. SB - Dobbs, Akers, Troendle, Strellner, Roth.