

Kennedy strolls by Linn-Mar at state, 13-1

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 25 July 2012 21:24 - Last Updated Wednesday, 25 July 2012 22:16

DES MOINES - The expected pitcher's duel between Alex Hayden and Jake Stolley turned into an unexpected victory parade for the Kennedy Cougars Wednesday night.

The Cougars took advantage of 10 walks and drubbed Linn-Mar, 13-1, in the quarterfinals of the Class 4A state baseball tournament on a warm night at Principal Park in Des Moines.

Hayden and Stolley, two of the best pitchers in the state, matched zeroes for three innings as fans settled back for a low-scoring game, but Kennedy reached Stolley for two runs in the fourth inning and tacked on three more runs in the fifth for a fat 5-0 lead.

It got out of hand from there as the second-ranked Cougars (33-6) advanced to the semifinals Friday night. Linn-Mar retired with a 29-12 mark.

Kennedy will play Fort Dodge or Dowling Catholic in the semifinals. Fort Dodge and Dowling played one inning Wednesday night before their game was suspended until 10 a.m. Thursday due to lightning and rain with Fort Dodge holding a 1-0 lead.

Every starter reached base for Kennedy and Coach Bret Hoyer was able to yank Hayden after five scoreless innings with an 8-0 lead, making it easier for Hayden to pitch again in the tournament if needed. Nick Appleget and Adam Lloyd tossed one inning apiece for the Cougars, and Hoyer said he'll decide later who starts in the semifinals.

Hayden threw only 66 pitches and would love to pitch in the championship game Saturday, should the Cougars make the finals. "Hopefully, yeah," he said. "I don't know what Coach is

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thinking, but hopefully I can pitch on Saturday."

Linn-Mar's first two batters got hits against Hayden (11-2) in the bottom of the first inning, but Hayden wiggled out of trouble with two fly balls and a strikeout. In retrospect, that missed opportunity came back to haunt the Lions when Kennedy grabbed its 2-0 lead in the fourth inning.

"It was a good game at the beginning," Linn-Mar Coach Chad Lechner said. "We came out and were playing well at the beginning.

"In a game like this, that first momentum shift is hard to come back from. We had a chance early to take some momentum and didn't come up with the hit and Kennedy did."

Logan Ambrosy drew a one-out walk for Kennedy in the fourth inning and scored all the way from first base when Devon Jacobus singled to right and the ball scooted past Linn-Mar right fielder Mitch Stickney for a 1-0 lead. Jacobus reached third base on the play and scored on Hayden's single to center.

Hayden escaped another mild jam in the bottom of the fourth with a strikeout and a snappy 4-6-3 double play that went from Devon Jacobus to Derek Jacobus to Cody Bell.

That's when the parade began in earnest.

Josh Jahlas scored all the way from second base on an infield single by Bell as the Cougars made it 5-0 in the fifth inning and chased Stolley (7-2) from the mound. Kennedy scored three more runs in the sixth inning for an 8-0 bulge and scored five more times in the top of the seventh for a 13-1 lead, with Ambrosy walloping a two-run triple.

The pitcher's duel evaporated quickly.

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"We prepared really well," said Bell, went 3-for-5 with three RBIs. "We knew what they were going to throw and we were able to jump on them the second time through the order.

"We were able to figure out where he (Stolley) was pitching us and we were able to take it to right field or maybe scootch off the plate if they going inside. We were able to adjust to that really well."

Stolley was touched for five runs (four earned) in 4 2/3 innings. He allowed five hits and struck out five batters, but also issued five walks. Justin Wyant pitched one inning for Linn-Mar and allowed three runs on two hits and three walks, then Nate Greve pitched the final 1 1/3 innings and allowed five runs on four hits and two more walks.

"They started stringing hits together and it just went downhill from there," said Stolley, who plans to join the Northwestern University baseball team as a walk-on.

The three Linn-Mar pitchers allowed 13 runs on 11 hits and 10 walks. There were also three wild pitches, an uncharacteristic performance for the Lions.

"I think we sort of beat ourselves," Greve said. "We didn't take the momentum, we didn't execute. It's a hard loss."

The Cougars are famous for being patient hitters and working the count. The strategy worked to perfection, but Lechner had trouble explaining 10 walks by his normally accurate pitchers.

"If I could tell you, it wouldn't have happened, I don't think," he remarked. "That's one of those things you hope doesn't happen to you, and when it does there's not a whole lot you can do.

"You've got to make a team like Kennedy earn their baserunners. And when you don't, most of

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the time they make you pay."

Kennedy executed a double-steal for a run, took extra bases on throws from the outfield, got key base hits and played flawlessly on defense. And once the floodgates opened, the Lions were not able to plug the leaks. The Cougars expected a low-scoring game but were delighted to put a lucky 13 on the board.

"I didn't see that coming, but we all know we're capable of putting up 13 runs," Hayden said. "We knew we could do that, so that's not really a surprise."

Hayden allowed five singles in five innings. He collected only two strikeouts, but did not walk a single batter while throwing 66 pitches. Hayden threw strikes all night and didn't get rattled when Greve and Kevin Bogert led off the bottom of the first with singles.

"I just had to keep my composure and keep throwing strikes," he said. "I was making good pitches. They were just hitting the ball."

The second-ranked Cougars and ninth-ranked Lions tied for the Mississippi Division title in the Mississippi Valley Conference this season with 22-4 records and Wednesday night's encounter was seen as an MVC tiebreaker of sorts. Kennedy also defeated Linn-Mar in the Metro tournament and took the season series from the Lions, 3-1.

Jahlas went 2-for-5 in the leadoff spot for Kennedy with three runs and two RBIs. Ambrosy finished 3-for-4 with three RBIs and two runs. All told, Kennedy's first three batters in the lineup -- Jahlas, Bell and Ambrosy -- went 8-for-14, scored seven runs and collected eight RBIs. Hayden also had two RBIs.

Greve went 2-for-4 for Linn-Mar.

Hoyer was delighted with how the pitching chart turned out for Kennedy with Hayden, Appleget

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and Lloyd all doing their jobs and getting rid of the tournament jitters on opening night. Appleget allowed Linn-Mar's only run in the sixth inning, but by then it was 8-0.

"We couldn't have drawn it up any better from the pitching standpoint. We scripted 5, 1 and 1," he said, referring to the pitching totals. "It worked out pretty well for us that way, just like we practiced. That doesn't happen very often, but it did tonight."

Hoyer wanted to scout the final opening-round game between Fort Dodge and Dowling Catholic before picking his starting pitcher for the semifinals.

Ankeny (41-2) will face West Des Moines Valley (34-9) in the semifinals at 6 p.m. Friday. Kennedy will play Fort Dodge or Dowling Catholic at 8 p.m.

Boxscore

KENNEDY (13)

Josh Jahlas, cf, 5 3 2 2, Cody Bell, 3b-1b, 5 2 3 3, Logan Ambrosy, 1b-rf, 4 2 3 3, Devon Jacobus, 2b-3b, 2 1 1 1, Trenton Suebert, pr, 0 0 0 0, Alex Hayden, p-2b, 3 0 1 2, Jared Staton, cr, 0 0 0 0, Ryan Unash, ph, 1 0 0 0, Jimmy Lizarraga, c, 3 0 0 0, Miles Moa, cr, 0 1 0 0, Adam Lloyd, rf-ph-p, 2 2 0 0, Nick Appleget, p, 0 0 0 0, Derek Jacobus, ss, 3 1 0 0, Andrew Johnson, lf, 3 1 0 0. Totals 31 13 11 11.

LINN-MAR (1)

Nate Greve, lf-p, 4 0 2 0, Kevin Bogert, cf-rf, 4 0 1 0, Michael Redmond, 2b-cf, 1 1 0 0, Mitch Stickney, rf-lf, 3 0 1 0, Austin Stroschein, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Jimmy Roth, 1b, 3 0 1 1, Jake Stolley, p, 1 0 0 0, Justin Wyant, p, 1 0 0 0, Travis Kvach, 2b, 1 0 0 0, Austin Banks, c, 3 0 1 0, Kyle Mortensen, cr, 0 0 0 0, Keaton Blackford, dh, 2 0 1 0, Jack Strellner, ss, 0 0 0 0. Totals 26 1 7 1.

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Hayden, Appleget (6), Lloyd (7) and Lizarraga. Stolley, Wyant (5), Greve (6) and Banks. W - Hayden (11-2). L - Stolley (7-2). 2B - Jahlas, Banks. 3B - Ambrosy. SB - Bell, Ambrosy, Lloyd.