

## Prairie swipes wild twinbill from Warriors

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 03 July 2013 23:15 -

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Landen Akers was standing on third base with two outs in the top of the seventh inning Wednesday night when Cedar Rapids Washington assistant coach Javier Rivera came over from the third-base coaching box with a startling idea.

"Steal home," Rivera told Akers.

Huh?

"Yeah, I thought it was risky at first," said Akers, a speedy sophomore. "But then I thought I had a chance. I had to go."

It appeared Akers beat the tag at home plate to score the tying run in a wild ballgame, but home-plate umpire Bret Miell called him out to end the game.

Prairie won, 12-11, to sweep the Mississippi Valley Conference twinbill at Prairie.

The Hawks won the first game, 8-4, and moved into a tie for first place in the Valley Division with Linn-Mar.

Prairie survived a wild finish.

"I thought I was safe. I thought I got past the tag. Safe," said Akers.

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All of the Warriors thought Akers was safe. Clearly safe, in fact.

Washington Coach Tony Lombardi, who was coaching at first base, calmly questioned the call and asked Miell what he saw.

"He said, 'I saw the catcher make the catch and put the tag on the front of the spikes of the baserunner,'" Lombardi related. "I was standing on first base and had a different vantage point."

Brennan Hammer was pitching in relief for Prairie in the seventh inning. The Warriors scored a run to pull within 12-11 and had runners on second and third when Rivera thought Akers had a good chance to steal home against the lefthanded Hammer with Alec Nichols batting.

"I timed it, with Landen's speed and the time of the kid who was pitching," said Rivera. "I said, 'Keep your eyes on his front toe. As soon as his front toe moves, you're going.'"

Hammer, facing away from third base, was caught by surprise on the pitch to Nichols with the count 1-and-2.

"I didn't hear a thing," said Hammer, who made a last-second adjustment when he realized Akers was headed home. "I tried to get the pitch out (from home plate) and give our catcher a chance."

Prairie catcher Corbin Day made the tag and got the call.

"It's a heartbreaking way to lose a game," said Rivera. "But the type of team we have, that's the type of baseball we have to play."

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"I would not have called that in the championship game of the state tournament. No way. But I thought we had a chance."

Washington (8-12, 10-16) stole eight bases in the ballgame. Akers had four of them. And nearly a fifth.

"I thought we made a play there to extend it," said Lombardi. "Now, it doesn't mean we win the game anyway."

The Warriors carried a 10-5 lead into the bottom of the sixth inning, but the Hawks exploded for seven runs to grab a 12-10 advantage. Mitch Peters snapped a 10-10 tie with an RBI double and Day made it 12-10 with an RBI single.

Washington bounced back in the top of the seventh and made it exciting, despite playing shorthanded these days. The Warriors lost two of their best players season when A.J. Puk and Zach Gillis left early for college, but they gave Prairie a stiff challenge.

"They just battled and battled and battled," said Lombardi. "There's no die in them, there's no quit in them."

Hammer pitched six innings in the opener and he got the victory. He played right field in the nightcap and answered the call when Prairie Coach Matt Thede needed a relief pitcher in the seventh inning of Game 2.

"He asked me if I had anything left," said Hammer. "I didn't have much, but I had enough to help the team out. I thought I could go an inning."

The eighth-ranked Hawks are in the thick of a five-way pennant race in the Valley Division and need every victory they can get. Prairie and Linn-Mar are tied for first place with 14-6 marks in the conference with Cedar Falls, Xavier and Dubuque Wahlert in pursuit.

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"The game was huge for us," said Hammer. "We couldn't afford to split tonight."

Hammer does not think the Hawks have ever won a Mississippi Valley Conference baseball title.

"Not that I know of," he said. "There are banners in the gym for teams that have won conference titles for all the sports and there's not one for baseball up there. That's kind of our goal."

Lucas Matsuda went 6-for-9 for Washington in the doubleheader.

### GAME 1

WASHINGTON (4): Matsuda, lf, 4 0 2 1, Loeffelholz, 2b, 4 0 0 0, Dostal, c, 3 2 1 0, Burdt, rf, 3 1 1 1, Dobbs, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Akers, cf, 4 1 1 0, Lombardi, ss, 3 0 2 0, Nichols, 1b, 3 0 2 0, Troendle, p, 3 0 0 0. Totals 30 4 9 2.

PRAIRIE (8): T.Mougin, ss, 4 1 1 1, Hammer, p, 3 0 1 1, Benson, cr, 0 1 0 0, Milks, p, 0 0 0 0, Butz, 3b, 4 2 1 2, Votroubek, 1b, 3 0 2 1, Benson, pr, 0 0 0 0, Beckman, dh, 4 0 3 1, N.Mougin, c, 0 0 0 0, Davison, lf, 4 0 0 0, Peters, rf, 4 0 1 0, Stallman, cf, 3 1 1 0, Becker, 2b, 1 3 1 0. Totals 30 8 11 6.

Washington 201 001 0 - 4 9 4  
Prairie 220 220 x - 8 11 2

Troendle and Dostal. Hammer, Milks (7) and N.Mougin. W - Hammer. L - Troendle. 2B - Dobbs, Votroubek. SB - Dostal 2, Akers, Stallman, Becker 2.

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### GAME 2

WASHINGTON (11): Matsuda, lf, 5 3 4 1, Loeffelholz, p/2b, 3 0 0 0, Harrington, cr, 0 0 0 0, Dostal, c, 4 3 3 2, Burdt, 1b, 4 0 0 1, Dobbs, 3b, 5 1 2 1, Akers, rf, 4 2 3 1, Lombardi, ss, 2 2 1 1, Nichols, 2b/ph, 2 0 0 0, Christensen, p, 0 0 0 0, Harrington, p, 0 0 0 0, Troendle, cf, 3 0 1 1. Totals 32 11 14 8.

PRAIRIE (12): T.Mougin, ss/p, 4 2 1 2, Hammer, rf/p, 3 2 1 1, Butz, 3b/ss, 4 1 2 1, Votroubek, 1b, 4 0 1 0, Benson, pr, 0 1 0 0, Beckman, dh, 3 0 0 1, Davison, lf, 2 1 1 2, Peters, cf, 4 2 1 1, Day, c, 3 0 1 1, Benson, cr, 0 2 0 0, Meyer, cr, 0 0 0 0, Becker, 2b, 3 1 2 1, N.Mougin, 3b, 0 0 0 0, Adams, p, 0 0 0 0, Milks, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 30 12 10 10.

Washington 400 222 1 - 11 14 4

Prairie 121 107 x - 12 10 5

Loeffelholz, Christensen (6), Harrington (6) and Dostal. Adams, Milks (1), Adams (4), T.Mougin (6), Hammer (7) and Day. W - T.Mougin. L - Harrington. Sv - Hammer. 2B - Matsuda, Dostal, Dobbs, Lombardi 2, Peters. SB - Matsuda, Dostal 2, Akers 4, Lombardi, T. Mougin, Benson, Becker.