

New-look J-Hawks split with Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 16 June 2014 22:17 -



Kyle Rodenkirk spent two long years as the head baseball coach at Anamosa High School where he was saddled with a 12-65 record, then he took over the Jefferson J-Hawks last season and came home with a 12-27 mark at his alma mater.

That left his overall record as a head coach at 24-92, which is nothing to brag about.

"A couple of years ago I was like, 'Man, am I just a bad coach?'" he said Monday night.

The answer, of course, is no. Rodenkirk is not a bad coach and the J-Hawks have been proving it this season.

Jefferson rallied for four runs in the bottom of the seventh inning to clip Xavier, 6-5, in the first game of a Mississippi Valley Conference doubleheader at Jefferson Monday.

The Saints took the nightcap, 4-2, in a game that ended in the top of the seventh inning due to lightning and threatening weather.

The split left the J-Hawks at 11-5 overall and 6-3 in the MVC.

"It's good to be rewarded," said Rodenkirk. "But something my grandpa (Ken Charipar) told me on his death bed, he said 'When you coach, it's not all about wins and losses.' It's about the 500 Get-Well-Soon cards he got from his former players.

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"It's the camaraderie," said Rodenkirk. "That's what it's really about. But yeah, it's good to be rewarded for all the work you put in."

Jefferson scored the winning run on an unusual play with two outs in the bottom of the seventh inning with the bases loaded. Marcus Colbert broke from third base as though he were trying to steal home on the pitch, but Ben Johnson pushed a perfect bunt on the right side for a single and the game-winning RBI.

It was an unusual "squeeze" bunt with two outs and seemed to confuse the Xavier defense, which simply had to field the bunt and get Johnson at first base to retire the side and send the game to extra innings.

"You don't see that too often," Rodenkirk acknowledged about a two-out squeeze bunt.

"I like to gamble," he said. "I was surprised they didn't pick up the ball."

Spencer Hunt hit a home run for Jefferson in the first game and Ryan Flaherty belted a homer for the Saints (10-7, 5-5).

Xavier was winning the nightcap, 4-2, heading into the top of the seventh inning. Adam Pick walloped a towering three-run homer to make it 7-2 and Matthew Clarahan followed with a solo shot to make it 8-2.

The game was stopped shortly after due to the weather. Unfortunately for the Saints, everything that happened in the top of the seventh is wiped from the books and the final score was 4-2 in six innings, according to the National Federation of High School rulebook.

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Bryce Grimm hit a solo homer for Xavier in the fifth inning. Nolan Even took a no-hitter into the sixth inning for the Saints before allowing two runs on three hits.

Game 1

Xavier 020 002 1 - 5 5 0
Jefferson 001 001 4 - 6 8 4

Game 2

Xavier 101 020 - 4 4 1
Jefferson 000 002 - 2 3 2