

Xavier, Prairie roll in Metro openers

Written by Guy Martino

Tuesday, 22 May 2012 01:02 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 May 2012 01:22

Baseball season has come knocking again. The clanging of aluminum bats marks the beginning of summer, and opening day never fails to bring feelings of excitement and nervousness.

The days and hours leading up to the Bob Vrbicek Metro Tournament were filled with preparation and speculation. Come game time it was time to play baseball, and relax. The Xavier Saints were very relaxed.

Calm minds and strong bats helped the eighth-ranked Saints cruise to an 11-1 victory over the Mount Vernon Mustangs Monday in the opening round at Marion.

The ninth-ranked Prairie Hawks topped Marion, 8-2, in the second game.

Xavier and Prairie will meet in the semifinals Tuesday at 5 p.m. at Marion, followed by Marion against Mount Vernon at approximately 7 p.m.

The Saints rode the arm of pitcher Mack Mattke and put the mercy rule into effect during the fifth inning when Corbin Woods smashed a walk off three-run home run.

After a three-run first inning, Xavier Coach Dave Schemmel knew his team was simply playing baseball.

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"There are always those first-game jitters," said Schemmel. "But I told them in the outfield before the game that the first team to relax and put the ball in play has the advantage and I thought we did a good job with that in the first inning."

Jordan Ratz got the Saints on the board with an RBI single in the first. Zach Brown followed Ratz with authority, roping a two-run double past the left fielder.

Three runs were more than enough for Mattke, who allowed only two hits and struck out 11. He mixed a potent slider with a quick fastball and had Mount Vernon hitters confused all evening.

"For the first time he has really thrown in a game situation (this year), I thought he did a nice job," said Schemmel. "He has a really nice slider that is tough to hit in high school, but I want him to work in his changeup and fastball more."

By the time the fifth inning rolled around, the Saints had a hefty lead. Woods strolled to the plate and immediately sent a pitch soaring over the unusually tall left-field fence. This plated three runs and put the Saints up 11-1, abruptly ending the game.

"My first at-bat I popped out on the first pitch so later in the game I was just trying to relax and sit back," said Woods. "There were definitely some nerves out there, but I am glad we were able to get the win for Mack."

Woods went 2-for-4 with four RBIs and first baseman Adam Pick went 3-for-3 with two runs scored for the Saints.

IN THE NIGHTCAP, the Marion High School baseball team got a chance to welcome Prairie to its home, but the Prairie Hawks were not good houseguests. Behind a strong performance by pitcher Bryce Alberts and a balanced offensive attack, Prairie won by six runs.

The pre-game jitters also hit home with these two teams, but Prairie was able to push them

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aside and come out swinging.

With the bases loaded in the first inning, Prairie's Tyler Butz walked and sent in the game's first run. With the bases still loaded, Tyler Votroubek hit a sharp grounder to Marion's shortstop, who had a sloppy exchange with the second baseman and failed to register the forceout at second. Two runs scored on the play.

"I think we took some pressure off of our pitcher when we were able to manufacture those three runs early," said Prairie Coach Matt Thede.

The Indians threatened in the third inning when second baseman Mitch Wagner poked an RBI double down the right field line, making it 3-1. But Prairie pitcher Alberts proved to be too much. He got the win by going 6 1/3 innings, allowing only two runs on eight hits.

"I told him to put us on his back this year," said Thede. "We are going to ride him and hope to keep guys off balance and throw enough strikes to give our defense a chance."

Butz lined a two-RBI single in the bottom of the fifth to push the lead to 5-1. And in the sixth, lefty Prairie leadoff hitter Jason Velvick crushed a homer over the right field fence, scoring three more runs.

Wagner drove in another run for the Indians in the seventh, but it was too little, too late. Spencer Dean relieved Alberts and closed the game for Prairie.

Wagner went 3-for-4 with two RBIs for the Indians and Velvick was 2-for-4 with three RBIs and three runs scored for Prairie.

"Overall, I think it was a great battle between two great teams and pitchers," said Thede. "I am excited to see what these guys are going to do this season."

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GAME 1

MOUNT VERNON (1)

Timm, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Ryan, ss, 3 0 1 0, Welch, c, 3 0 1 0, Kray, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Eldred, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Younggreen, p, 2 0 0 0, Pisarik, cf, 2 0 0 0, Durgin, lf, 2 0 0 0, Dahlstrom, rf, 2 1 0 0, Helms 0 0 0 0 Meaney 0 0 0 0. Totals 23 1 2 0.

XAVIER (11)

Grimm, cf, 4 1 0 0, Woods, ss, 4 1 2 4, Mattke, p, 3 1 1 1, Meaney, cr, 0 0 0 0, Ratz, rf, 3 1 1 1, Pick, 1b, 3 2 3 0, Brown, 3b, 3 1 1 2, Hammerberg, dh, 3 1 2 1, Helms, c, 0 0 0 0, Harriot, lf, 3 1 1 0, St. Andrews, 2b, 3 2 1 0. Totals 32 11 12 9.

Mount Vernon 001 00 - 1 2 1

Xavier 300 35 - 11 12 2

Younggreen, Eldred (5) and Welch. Mattke and Helms. W- Mattke L- Younggreen.
2B-Woods, Mattke, Brown. HR-Woods (1). SB- Woods.

GAME 2

MARION (2)

Wagner, 2b, 4 0 3 2, Stekl, ss, 4 0 1 0, Biery 1b, 4 0 0 0, Johnson, c, 4 0 0 0, Davila, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Hedtke, p, 2 0 1 0, Schnieders, ph-lf, 1 0 0 0, Charipar, dh, 3 1 0 0, McGarvey, rf, 3 0 0 0, Cannoy, cf, 3 1 3 0. Totals 31 2 8 2.

PRAIRIE (8)

Velvick, cf, 4 3 2 3, Hammer, rf, 4 1 1 0, Carlson, 2b, 4 1 1 0, Butz, 3b, 3 0 1 3, Votroubek, 1b, 3 0 2 0, Peters, lf, 3 0 0 0, Alberts, p, 3 1 2 0, Steffens, dh, 3 0 0 0, Mouglin, ss, 3 2 2 0, Pond, c, 0 0 0 0. Totals 30 8 11 6.

Marion 001 000 1 - 2 8 2

Prairie 300 023 x - 8 11 0

Hedtke, Lockner (6) and Johnson. Alberts, Dean (7) and Pond. W- Alberts. L- Hedtke.
2B-Wagner, Mouglin. HR-Velvick (1). SB-Velvick, Stekl 2.