

Prairie drops the Hammer on Xavier

Written by Guy Martino

Tuesday, 22 May 2012 23:10 -

In the first couple innings of Tuesday's baseball game, Prairie pitcher Brennan Hammer was letting Xavier batters come and go a little too easily.

Then in the third, he slammed the door shut, and deadbolted it.

After allowing five runs in the first two innings, Hammer brought Xavier's momentum and offense to a standstill, and helped Prairie defeat the Saints 10-5 in the semifinal round of the Bob Vrbicek Metro Tournament at Marion field.

Prairie will play Kennedy for the tournament championship Wednesday at approximately 7 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Stadium. Xavier meets Linn-Mar for third place at 5 p.m. at Vets.

Xavier started Tuesday's game swinging hot in the top half of the first inning. With the bases loaded, Tristen Scallon squeaked a grounder under third baseman Tyler Butz's glove, scoring Corbin Woods for the game's first run. The next pitch, Mack Mattke hustled in on a passed ball to make it 2-0 after one inning.

In the second, with two runners on base, Mattke took a 2-2 Hammer pitch and sent it packing. The ball cleared the left field fence with plenty of room to spare, and pushed the score to 5-0.

"We came out a little sluggish," said Hammer.

But that was all Xavier got. Over the next five innings, Hammer and his Prairie friends held the Saints scoreless, and allowed only two more hits.

"I was leaving my stuff up during the first and second inning," said Hammer. "Then I started finding my place in the third, and started to get some pitches to work for me. I was just trying to work low and not leave my curveball up."

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He finished with seven strikeouts, and provided a much needed confidence boost for his team after the early deficit. When the Prairie Hawks saw that Hammer was going to keep them in the game with his pitching, they started hitting and manufacturing runs.

With two outs in the third inning, Bryce Alberts drew a walk and stole second. Mitch Peters lined a double down the right field line, scoring Alberts. Two passed balls later, Peters crossed home plate to pull Prairie within 5-4.

"I think a very big thing was when they got two outs on us and then we plated two runs," said Prairie Coach Matt Thede. "Then Hammer shuts the doors and gives us hope.

"I asked the guys if they had a heartbeat and if they had any life in them, and asked somebody to show me. And that is what they did, they made it happen."

In the fourth inning, Ty Mougín led off with an infield single for Prairie. Jason Velvick knocked a base rip into left field, which the outfielder bobbled allowing Mougín to score. It was a tie game, and Prairie was on the attack.

Hammer followed with a base hit, advancing Velvick to second. A sacrifice bunt by Tyler Butz moved the runners over, and a sacrifice fly by Tyler Votroubek scored Velvick. Alberts smashed the next pitch into the gap, scoring Hammer and pushing the Hawks' lead to 7-5.

"When we started getting runs across the plate and got things going everyone was a lot more confident," said Hammer. "The bats were just rolling."

Mougín, Prairie's No. 9 hitter, came up again in the fifth and smoked a line drive home run past the left field scoreboard. The two-run shot gave Prairie a 9-5 lead. The Hawks added a run in the sixth.

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Spencer Dean and Connor Steffens came in to pitch for Prairie in the sixth and seventh, respectively, to solidify the victory.

“We don’t talk about winning, we talk about the process,” said Thede. “The process of preparing in the offseason and preparing in practice, and so far the process has carried us through on the field.

“I am very pumped for these guys to get the chance to play for a championship tomorrow night. Any time you play for any kind of championship it is fun.”

The second game at Marion also brought some exciting offense. Marion smashed Mount Vernon 15-0 in a shortened four-inning game.

Marion was the home team, so it witnessed ace pitcher Cale Cannoy take the mound for the first time in a year in the top of the first inning. He had an arm injury that limited him to 15 2/3 innings pitched last season. He mowed down Mount Vernon’s lineup, then came Marion’s first inning turn at the plate.

They scored 14 runs in the first inning, and every player had at least one RBI.

“That hitting just got contagious,” said Coach Steve Fish. “Coupled with the way we hit and having Cale out there, it is refreshing.”

Marion finished with 19 hits. Cannoy gave up two to Mount Vernon.

“It gives us confidence and more options for these upcoming games,” said Fish.

Marion plays Washington in the fifth-place game Wednesday at approximately 7 p.m. at Marion.

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Mount Vernon plays Jefferson in the seventh-place game at 5 p.m.

GAME ONE

XAVIER (5)

Grimm CF, 4 1 2 0, Woods SS, 4 1 0 0, Mattke DH, 4 2 1 3, Ratz RF, 4 0 2 0, Pick 1B, 4 0 1 0, Scallon 3B, 3 0 1 0, Tipton 3B, 1 0 0 0, Hines LF, 2 0 0 0, Brown P, 1 0 0 0, Harriot LF, 1 0 0 0, Helms C, 1 1 1 0, Hammerberg C, 2 0 0 0, St. Andrews 2B, 3 0 0 0. Totals 34 5 8 3.

PRAIRIE (10)

Velvick CF, 4 1 1 1, Hammer P, 4 1 1 0, Butz 3B, 4 1 1 0, Votroubek 1B, 4 0 0 1, Alberts LF, 4 2 3 2, Peters RF, 4 1 1 1, Pond C, 4 2 2 0, Digman 2B, 4 0 0 0, Mougins SS, 3 2 2 3, Davidson CR, 0 0 0 0. Totals 35 10 11 8.

Xavier 230 000 0 -- 5 8 1

Prairie 022 321 x -- 10 11 1

Keller, Brown (4), Hines (6) and Helms, Hammerberg (4). Hammer, Dean (6), Steffens (7) and Pond. W - Hammer. 2B- Ratz, Butz, Alberts. HR- Mattke, Mougins. SB- Grimm, Alberts 2, Davidson.

GAME TWO

MOUNT VERNON (0)

Timm P, 1 0 1 0, Eldred P, 1 0 0 0, Ryan SS, 2 0 0 0, Welch C, 2 0 0 0, Kray DH, 2 0 0 0, Drahos LF, 2 0 0 0, Younggreen 1B, 2 0 0 0, Pisarik CF, 2 0 0 0, Hanson 2B, 1 0 1 0, Dahlstrom RF, 1 0 0 0. Totals 16 0 2 0.

MARION (15)

Wagner 3B, 4 2 2 1, Stekl SS, 4 2 2 1, Biery 1B, 4 1 2 1, Johnson C, 4 2 2 2, Davila LF, 4 2 3 3, Cannoy P, 3 1 1 2, Charipar DH, 3 2 3 2, Fuller 2B, 0 0 0 0, McGarvey RF, 3 1 2 1, Connolly CF, 2 1 2 2, Schneiders CF, 1 1 0 0. Totals 32 12 19 15.

Mount Vernon 000 0 -- 0 2 1

Marion (14)00 1 -- 15 19 2

Timm, Eldred (2), Kray (4) and Welch. Cannoy and Johnson. W - Cannoy. L - Timm. 2B- Biery, Davila, Charipar. SB- Timm, McGarvey.