

Frustrating day for Kirkwood baseball

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 18 April 2018 05:44 -



The Kirkwood Eagles suffered a heap of frustration, one stinging defeat and an agonizing tie during a long day at the ballpark Tuesday.

The eighth-ranked Eagles dropped the first game of their doubleheader against NIACC, 8-3, when the Kirkwood pitchers issued 11 walks and the Kirkwood batters struck out 14 times in seven innings.

The Eagles then had to settle for a 1-1 tie with NIACC in a game that lasted 11 innings and ended in darkness at 8 p.m. The Eagles squandered numerous chances, leaving the bases loaded in the 9th, 10th and 11th innings and stranding 18 runners.

"We had chances," said Kirkwood Coach Todd Rima.

The first game took three hours. The second game lasted 3 1/2 hours and settled nothing. And when it was all over, the Eagles had dropped out of first place in the ICCAC standings and fallen a half-game behind Southeastern.

"Game 1 they were better than us," said Rima. "I didn't think we pitched it very well. We didn't play as well defensively as we had (with four errors). We gave them too many free bases, and you can't do that against good teams in our league.

"And then in Game 2 we just couldn't get a big hit. We out-hit them 13-4 and can't get a hit in a clutch situation. That's stuff that we have been doing this year. I think it also has to do ... their pitchers did a good job against us."

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Kirkwood fell to 10-3-1 in the conference, with Southeastern sitting a half-game ahead at 12-4. The Eagles have a better winning percentage at .769, compared to .750 for the Blackhawks, but SCC is listed in first place on the conference website.

Kirkwood and NIACC do not meet again in the regular season, so Game 2 goes into the books as an official tie.

Kirkwood has a 1-4-1 record in its last six games, dropping its overall mark to 26-8-1 after a 25-4 start.

Brandon Williamson, a 6-foot-5 left-hander from Welcome, Minn., made the Eagles feel unwelcome in their own park in the first game by striking out 13 batters in six innings. He struck out the side in the second, third, fourth and sixth innings before calling it a day, allowing just one run on two hits.

Kirkwood got its only clutch hit in the doubleheader with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning of the nightcap. The Eagles trailed 1-0 when Korry Howell hit a single to left field, driving in Cal Clark with the tying run.

The Eagles proceeded to load the bases in the bottom of the ninth, but did not score again. They loaded the bases again in the 10th with one out, but the next two batters struck out. They filled the sacks again in the 11th with one out, but the next two batters struck out again.

At that point the players would have needed flashlights and candles to see their way around the unlighted field and the umpires told everyone to go home and get warm.

Kirkwood wasted a lot of good pitching in Game 2. Adam Ketelsen limited NIACC to one unearned run in 6 ²/₃ innings, Cameron Cowan gave up only one hit in 3 ¹/₃ innings, and Cameron Leff tossed a scoreless inning in the 11th. They struck out 13 batters and allowed only four hits, but it was not good enough for a victory.

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"We just have to get better," said Rima. "Hopefully we can get some (good) weather and get outside and practice and kind of get into a little bit of a rhythm again.

"We need to play a little better," he said. "We weren't as sharp as we have been, but tip your hat to them. I thought they played awfully well."

Howell went 4-for-6 in the second game. Izaya Fullard was 3-for-5. Taylor Jackson and Kal Youngquist had two hits.

NIACC raised its records to 19-17-1 overall and 9-6-1 in the conference.

GAME 1

NIACC **012 003 2 - 8 5 0**
Kirkwood **000 010 2 - 3 4 4**

L - Long.

GAME 2

NIACC **000 001 000 00 - 1 4 0**
Kirkwood **000 000 001 00 - 1 13 1**