The Kirkwood Eagles spent all week watching it rain and trying to keep warm, anxious to play winning baseball again after losing a series at NIACC last weekend.

They responded in championship form Saturday.

The Eagles swept a doubleheader from second-ranked DMACC, 4-3 and 3-1, to scramble the ICCAC conference standings and get back in the race.

"As a coach, you are nervous about how you're going to respond," Kirkwood boss Todd Rima remarked after the twin-killing. "I feel we have great kids and they'll respond the right way. And they did."

Collin Belk and Jean Carlos Rosario pitched complete games for Kirkwood on a chilly, partly sunny afternoon. Rosario beat former Cedar Rapids Washington ace Dakota Freese in the nightcap.

The Eagles rallied with two runs in the bottom of the seventh inning in the opener to force extra innings, then won in the eighth inning on a throwing error.

Belk allowed two runs in the top of the first inning of Game 1 and had to escape a bases-loaded jam in the second, but he settled down and raised his record to 6-0.

"It definitely started out a little slow, but I found it and we got the win, so I'm happy about it," said Belk. "Last weekend we dropped three games (out of four) to NIACC so we were a little down, but we picked it up and we got two wins against the No.2 team."

Belk helped himself in the top of the eighth with two terrific plays on the mound. First he pick a runner off first base with a quick move, then he snared a vicious line drive and turned it into a

double play to end the inning.

"Belk just battles," said Rima. "The kid just finds a way to win. You want a guy like that on your side."

Kirkwood had runners at second and third with two outs in the bottom of the eighth inning. Eric Schenck-Joblinske struck out for the apparent third out, but the pitch was in the dirt and the DMACC catcher hit Schenck-Jobliske with the throw to first base and Dennis Colon scored from third with the winning run.

Kirkwood scored twice in the seventh on an RBI double by Wilfredo Feliz and an RBI single by Dairo Gonzalez.

There's a good race in the ICCAC now with NIACC (7-2), DMACC (9-3), Kirkwood (7-3) and Southeastern (6-4) all battling for first place.

Kirkwood (19-5 overall) and DMACC (26-5) are scheduled for another twinbill Sunday at 1 p.m. at Kirkwood, weather permitting.

More than a half-dozen Major League scouts flocked to Kirkwood Saturday to watch Freese pitch for the Bears in the second game. The lanky right-hander struck out nine batters with a sizzling fastball and sharp curve, but he hurt his own cause with a few problems with control.

Freese uncorked a wild pitch to help Kirkwood score a run in the first inning, and he hit two straight batters in the fourth inning to help the Eagles score their other two runs.

Freese, a redshirt freshman, spent last season at LSU Eunice but did not pitch due to academic reasons. He transferred to DMACC and had a 5-0 record before suffering the loss Saturday. He has struck out 68 batters in 43 1/3 innings.

One scout clocked his best fastball at 92 mph. DMACC's radar gun said 94, and another scout had Freese as high as 96.

"There were a bunch of scouts here for Game 2 for a reason, to see Freese," said Rima. "He's special."

Rosario was special for Kirkwood as well. He pitched a tidy four-hitter and allowed only one runner to get beyond second base.

"That's the best game I've pitched in two years at Kirkwood," said Rosario, a righthander from Puerto Rico. "I feel comfortable. I feel that my team supports me."

He threw strikes the entire game, except when he hit three batters and walked one.

"That's the best Rosario has been all year," said Rima. "I thought his command was really good. His changeup was really good."

Kirkwood collected only four hits in Game 2, but pushed across three runs on a pair of sacrifice flies and a throwing error.

The Eagles struggled last season with a 21-33 record, but they've nearly matched that victory total at 19-5 this year.

"I think a lot of it is us just not being selfish," said Belk, who was on the team last year. "If you need a bunt, get a bunt down. If you need a sacrifice fly, get a sacrifice fly. Everybody does what's good for the team."

DMACC arrived with a lusty team batting average of .338, but the Bears went only 11 for 54 against Belk and Rosario for a .204 batting average in the twinbill.

Kirkwood wasn't much better at 13 for 51, but the Eagles found a way to get a pair of important victories.

GAME 1

DMACC (3): Medina, cf, 3 1 2 0, Williams, lf, 4 1 1 0, Overbeck, 3b, 3 0 0 0, B.Molitor, dh, 2 1 0 1, Serratore, c, 2 0 0 1, Leuschke, c, 2 0 0 0, Coghlin, 1b, 4 0 2 1, Collins, pr, 0 0 0 0, S.Molitor, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Wolfe, ss, 4 0 2 0, Fiala, rf, 2 0 0 0, Hamer, p, 0 0 0 0, Ayala, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 29 3 7 3.

KIRKWOOD (4): Schenck-Joblinske, lf, 5 0 1 0, Feliz, cf, 2 1 1 1, Gonzalez, 3b, 4 0 1 1, Brodzinski, c, 4 1 2 0, Rodriguez, 1b, 4 0 1 0, Merced, dh, 4 0 0 0, Adams, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Colon, ss, 4 1 2 1, Hagarty, rf, 2 1 1 0, Belk, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 32 4 9 3.

DMACC 200 010 00 - 3 7 1
Kirkwood 000 100 21 - 4 9 1

Hamer, Ayala (7) and Serratore, Leuschke (3). Belk and Brodzinski. W - Belk (6-0). L- Ayala (5-1). 2B - Schencke-Joblinske, Feliz, Colon. 3B - Medina.

GAME 2

DMACC (1): Medina, cf, 4 0 0 0, Williams, lf, 2 0 0 0, Collins, ph, 1 0 0 0, Overbeck, 3b, 2 0 0 0, B.Molitor, c, 3 0 1 0, Coghlin, 1b, 3 1 1 0, S.Molitor, 2b, 3 0 1 0, Utley, dh, 2 0 0 0, Wolfe, ss, 3 0 1 1, Fiala, rf, 2 0 0 0, Freese, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 25 1 4 1.

KIRKWOOD (3): Schenck-Joblinske, lf, 3 0 0 0, Feliz, cf, 3 1 1 0, Gonzalez, 3b, 2 0 0 1, Brodzinski, dh, 3 0 1 0, Rodriguez, 1b, 2 1 1 0, Merced, c, 2 1 0 0, Adams, 2b, 2 0 1 0, Colon, ss, 0 0 0 1, Hagarty, rf, 2 0 0 0, Rosario, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 19 3 4 2.

DMACC 000 100 0 - 1 4 1
Kirkwood 100 200 x - 3 4 0

Freese and B. Molitor. Rosario and Merced. W - Rosario (2-1). L - Freese (5-1). 2B - Coghlin. SB - Medina, Feliz, Adams, Colon.