

Kirkwood baseball team has tough day

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood baseball team began Friday in a tie for first place in the ICCAC conference standings, but by the time the long frustrating day was over the Eagles had slipped all the way to fourth.

Now the Eagles have to bounce back in a rare "triple-header" against 19th-ranked Southeastern Saturday afternoon to climb back on top of the standings on the final day of the regular season.

Kirkwood wasted a terrific effort by right-hander Joe Funkhouser and lost the first game of Friday's doubleheader to Southeastern, 1-0, at the Kirkwood field.

The second game was suspended by darkness with the score tied, 8-8, after eight innings. The Eagles had an 8-2 lead after five innings, but saw it slip away.

Kirkwood and Southeastern will resume the suspended game at noon Saturday, followed by the regularly scheduled doubleheader.

If the Eagles win all three times Saturday, they can clinch at least a tie for first place. If they lose all three games, they can fall all the way to fifth place.

The start of Friday's doubleheader was delayed for 20 minutes after the valve on the water pipe

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behind the mound was damaged, creating a minor flood and a mess that had to be cleaned up.

Once that was resolved, Southeastern scored an unearned run in the top of the first inning and rode that single tally to a 1-0 victory as Kirkwood stranded a string of runners at second base.

"They took advantage of one mistake and that's how they scored the run," noted Kirkwood Coach Todd Rima.

Funkhouser did not allow an earned run and was the hard-luck loser in a key ballgame.

"I thought Funkhouser battled," said Rima. "That's who he is. He's a bulldog out there and gave us an unbelievable effort."

Things looked promising for Kirkwood when they scored three runs in the bottom of the fifth inning of the second game for an 8-2 lead, but Southeastern scored four times in the top of the sixth thanks to a bad infield throwing error and a pair of walks that loaded the bases to make it 8-6.

The visitors tied the game in the eighth inning, 8-8, on a two-run homer.

"We let an inning get away from us," said Rima. "Good teams, if you allow them extra outs and give them free bases, they take advantage of it."

Southeastern leads the conference standings with a 14-7 record. NIACC and Iowa Central both swept their doubleheaders Friday and are tied for second place at 14-8. Kirkwood is now fourth at 13-8, with DMACC in fifth place at 14-10.