

Wood hopes to pitch for Hawkeyes

Written by Jim Ecker
Sunday, 03 July 2016 20:14



FAIRFAX - Elijah Wood was nervous before he pitched for Walford in the Iowa Valley League on Sunday because he knew Iowa Coach Rick Heller was sending one of his assistants to watch him throw, but he channeled that nervous energy into a strong outing that might land him a spot with the Hawkeyes.

Wood struck out seven batters in four innings and was the winning pitcher as Walford dumped Fairfax, 11-1, in the second game of their doubleheader at the Fairfax field.

Walford won the first game, 3-1, and jumped ahead of Fairfax into second place in the Iowa Valley League standings.

Wood, a 6-foot-4 left-hander, lives in Ainsworth, which is just a short 20-minute drive from Iowa City, and he grew up cheering for the Hawkeyes. He attended Washington High School and pitched the last two years at Marshalltown Community College, so now he's looking for an NCAA Division I school to continue his career.

Heller has not offered a scholarship yet, but the Iowa coach will probably get a favorable report from Sunday's game.

"I would very seriously consider it," said Wood. "It's close to home, I could come home and go deer hunting every weekend. It would be really cool if I could get in there. I hope they liked what they saw today."

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Wood had a modest 3-5 record and 4.66 ERA at Marshalltown this past season, but those numbers should come with an asterisk. He had surgery this past December to remove a seven-inch blood clot in his left shoulder, a problem caused by a rib that affected the blood flow.

"They cut me open and took my top rib out," he said.

Austin Stroschein, a Linn-Mar grad who also pitches for Walford, had a similar operation in November of 2014 to remove two blood clots in the upper part of his right arm.

Wood lost 25 pounds as a result of the medical problem, but he declined an offer to take a red-shirt season at Marshalltown this past year and returned to the mound in February even though he wasn't at full strength.



Wood said he's approaching full strength now - and full velocity on his fastball that has reached 90 mph. He also throws a slider, change-up and curveball with good command.

Wood has an offer from Eastern Illinois University, but it's no secret he'd like to pitch for Iowa. South Dakota State watched him pitch this summer and he's also heard from Virginia Tech. He made a trip to North Carolina-Greensboro last month, but that's not going to work out.

"I want to find a school as soon as I can," he said.

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"I'm going to go where I'm going to be happy and what I think is the best opportunity. I really want to get into a really good program and work out and train and get bigger and better and hopefully throw way harder."

He knew the Hawkeyes would be watching Sunday.

"I was nervous. The stuff that goes through your mind," he said. "It's stressful, but I tried to hold it all together and go out there and perform and do what I need to do."

"They were here today watching and hopefully they liked what they saw. I had a pretty good outing today, I thought. I was pretty happy with myself."

Wood struck out seven of the first 10 batters he faced. He allowed one run on three hits in four innings before calling it a day.

Walford has five players from Marshalltown Community College on its roster with Wood, Logan Holtz, Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Rafael Puente and Diogenes Ceballos. Holtz, from Center Point-Urbana, has signed with South Dakota State. Gonzalez, Puente and Ceballos are all from the Dominican Republic and were freshmen at Marshalltown this year.

Stroschein pitched five strong innings for Walford in the 3-1 victory in the first game Sunday. He struck out nine batters and allowed only two hits in five innings and left with a 2-0 lead. Gonzales pitched the last two innings for a save.

Bryce Grimm singled, stole second and scored on an RBI double by Holtz to give Walford a 1-0 lead in the third inning. Holtz scored on a single by Brennan Hammer to make it 2-0. Grimm doubled in the top of the seventh and scored on a wild pitch to make it 3-0.

Matt Stevens drove in Lucas Larson with a two-out single in the bottom of the seventh to make it 3-1, but Gonzalez ended the game with his fifth strikeout in two innings.

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Cody Bell pitched a complete game for Fairfax in the opener and had two hits. Stevens also had two hits.

Andrew Walker went 2-for-3 with three RBIs for Walford in the second game. Corbin Woods, Grimm and Tyler Butz had two hits. Blake Mahoney scored three runs and Hammer had two RBIs. Woods had two long doubles in the double-header and was 3-for-8.

Puente pitched three innings in relief for Walford in the second game and retired nine straight batters.

Walford raised its record to 7-5. Fairfax fell to 5-5.

GAME 1

WALFORD (3): Wood, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Grimm, cf, 4 2 2 0, Holtz, rf, 4 1 2 1, Hammer, lf, 3 0 1 1, Stenberg, c, 3 0 0 0, Ceballos, dh, 3 0 0 0, Butz, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Mahoney, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Mougins, ss, 3 0 0 0. Totals 30 3 6 2.

FAIRFAX (1): Daniels, ss, 4 0 0 0, Yancey, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Bell, p, 3 0 2 0, J.Lizarraga, c, 3 0 0 0, Larson, 3b, 3 1 1 0, Stolley, lf, 3 0 0 0, Maier, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Knox, rf, 2 0 0 0, Stevens, cf, 3 0 2 1.

Walford □ □ 002 000 1 - 3 6 1

Fairfax □ □ 000 000 1 - 1 5 3

Stroschein, Gonzales (6) and Stenberg. Bell and J.Lizarraga. W - Stroschein. L - Bell. S - Gonzales.

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GAME 2

WALFORD (11): Woods, 3b, 4 2 2 0, Grimm, cf, 5 0 2 1, Holtz, rf, 4 1 1 1, Ceballos, 2b, 1 0 0 0, Hammer, lf, 4 0 1 2, Stenberg, c, 4 1 1 0, Butz, 1b, 4 2 2 0, Mahoney, 2b, 1 3 1 0, Stroschein, ph/rf, 1 0 0 0, Walker, dh, 3 2 2 3, Mougin, ss, 4 0 0 0. Totals 35 11 12 7.

FAIRFAX (1): Daniels, ss/p, 2 0 1 0, Yancey, 2b, 3 1 1 0, Bell, 1b/3b, 3 0 0 0, J.Lizarraga, c, 3 0 0 0, Larson, 3b/ss, 3 0 1 1, Stolley, lf, 2 0 0 0, Maiers, dh, 2 0 0 0, Knox, rf, 2 0 0 0, Stevens, cf, 2 0 0 0, Milks, 1b, 0 0 0 0. Totals 22 1 3 1.

Walford ▯ ▯ 123 130 1 - 11 12 0

Fairfax ▯ ▯ 000 100 0 - 1 3 4

Wood, Puente (5) and Stenberg. Koningsmark, Lloyd (4) and J.Lizarraga. W - Wood. L - Koningsmark. S - Puente.