

Weeks delivers big hit for Red Top

Written by Mike Condon
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WATKINS - Red Top's Ben Weeks has been in the Iowa Valley League since 2009.

Over those nine seasons, he has had plenty of at-bats against Watkins left-hander Luke Franzenburg.

On Sunday, the two IVL veterans matched up again in the second game of a doubleheader at Gabe Kuester Memorial Ball Park in Watkins.

With the game tied 1-1 in the top of the eighth, Weeks cracked a two-out RBI double off Franzenburg to right-center field, plating Trey Beckman with what proved to be the winning run in a hard-fought 2-1 victory for visiting Red Top to secure a split of the twinbill.

Watkins, behind six strong innings from University of Iowa left-hander Kyle Shimp, took the opener, 4-2.

Weeks, who played in high school at Solon before a collegiate career at Kirkwood and Winona State, said he wasn't looking for any particular pitch from Franzenburg when he came up in the eighth.

"I've played against Luke for quite a few years now, so I'm pretty much in tune with what he throws," Weeks said. "He's still a real tough pitcher and he was throwing a one-run game. I was just up there thinking a hit scores the go-ahead run."

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Franzenburg was a workhorse for the Mud Hens. After pitching a 1-2-3 seventh inning to gain the save in the opener, he was back on the mound for Game 2 and was brilliant. The Mud Hens grabbed a 1-0 in in the fourth when DJ Utley scored on a bases loaded walk to Austin McFarland.



Franzenburg allowed just seven hits over eight innings, three of which were infield hits. After Weeks scored on a Reid Bonner single in the fifth, Franzenburg struck out Spencer Wiskus and Beckman with the bases loaded to keep the game tied. He worked around trouble in the sixth and seventh before yielding the unearned run in the eighth.

Red Top got outstanding pitching as well as the trio of Shane Ritter, Jack Greene and Ben Rettenmeier held the hosts to only three hits over eight innings, none after the fourth.

The split kept Red Top mathematically alive to tie for the IVL title. At 10-6, they trail Fairfax (14-2) by four games with four to play. Fairfax clinched at least a tie for the title Sunday with a sweep over Williamsburg.

Weeks said the Red Top players know the league title is likely out of reach, but there is still the IABA state baseball title to be had during the first two weeks of August.

"We've been through it before," he said. "We've won the last two (state titles) so we know what it takes. We just have to keep grinding and keep our momentum going into the state tournament.

"I would say this is the best (Red Top) team I have ever played for," Weeks continued. "We've had a lot of the same guys for a long time and it's great to see your best friends once a week

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and come out and play some baseball."

Watkins (7-9) got an RBI double in a two-run first inning from Utley to jump ahead in the opener. Red Top tied the game at 2-2 in the fourth, but Watkins took the lead for good on an RBI ground out from Jonny Frese and added an insurance run in the sixth when Luke Farley scored on a throwing error.

Red Top hosts Walford next Sunday at Norway while Watkins faces a tough assignment on the road against league leader Fairfax. Both doubleheaders begin at 1 p.m.