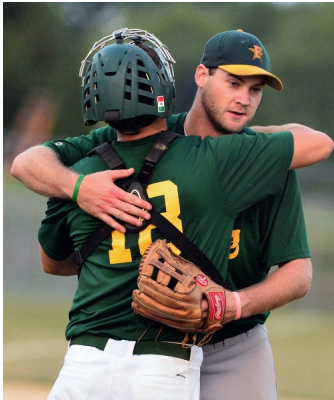


Bell sparkles in IABA state tourney

Written by Jim Ecker
Monday, 07 August 2017 04:57



WALFORD - Cody Bell has been pitching to Chico Lizarraga for about 15 years now.

First it was the Junior Cougars, then Kennedy High School, then Mount Mercy University, now the Fairfax Stars.

"Yup. A long, long time," Lizarraga said Sunday night.

It's been a winning combination every step of the way.

Bell tossed another strong game Sunday as Fairfax trimmed Red Top, 2-1, in a winners bracket game of the IABA state tournament at Walford.

Bell pitched a five-hitter with seven strikeouts for the Stars, who won the Iowa Valley League title this season and are 3-0 in the IABA tournament heading into the final round next weekend.

"Cody was brilliant tonight," said Lizarraga. "He had his stuff working. Fastball both sides of the plate, off-speed pitch, behind in the count. He had his 'A' game tonight."

Bell threw 97 pitches in the seven-inning contest, never once shaking off his catcher and long-time pal.

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"I usually don't," he said. "It usually doesn't turn out too well for me if I do that."

Bell carried a 2-0 shutout into the seventh, but Red Top got a double from Billy Kass and a two-out, two-strike RBI single by Cal Clark to make it 2-1. Bell rared back and struck out Reid Bonner for the final out with his third strikeout of the frame.

"I felt good," said Bell. "My arm is fresh. I hadn't pitched in a few weeks.

"We've got a lot of pitching on this team, so I'm able to stay fresh, for the most part. When I'm pitching, I'm completely rested and healthy."

Lizarraga broke his left cheekbone and suffered nerve damage when he was hit by a pitch on the final day of the IVL season last Sunday, but he was back behind the plate less than a week later.

"As soon as they told me I wasn't having surgery, I knew I could catch. It will be OK," he said with a smile. "Catchers are tough."

Lizarraga wore a batting helmet with a special flap to protect the left side of his face, but the bigger danger was getting hit by a foul ball off the mask when he's catching.

"He took one yesterday," said Bell. "He said it didn't hurt too bad. He got lucky on that one.

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When it comes to baseball, Bell County is a powerhouse. The county's baseball players have been making a name for themselves in the IABA state tournament. The county's baseball players have been making a name for themselves in the IABA state tournament. The county's baseball players have been making a name for themselves in the IABA state tournament.