

Williamsburg claims 1st title since 1977

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WILLIAMSBURG - Zach Brown summed up the day perfectly.

"Make sure you talk to Lloyd," said the long-time Williamsburg first baseman. "I know there is nobody happier about this than him."

Brown was referring to long-time Williamsburg general manager Lloyd Brockshus, who has been part of the Iowa Valley League franchise in one role or another for 53 years. During that time there have been several lean years, but not this year.

The Red Sox had not won an IVL title since 1977, according to official league records, but that drought ended Sunday following some anxious moments in Williamsburg.

Williamsburg built a 3-0 lead in the opener against Red Top, only to see the Toppers rally for a 4-3 victory. That meant the Red Sox had to get a win in the nightcap to secure the title.

Again, the hosts built a 3-0 lead only to see Red Top rally twice to tie the game. With the contest knotted 4-4 in the sixth, Williamsburg scored four times off reliever Lecari Elion, the key hit a two-run double from Nick Sueppel. They held on in the seventh to win, 8-5.

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With the split, Williamsburg finished with a 12-6 mark and a .667 winning percentage, edging out the Stars, who thought they had won the title last week, only to have to forfeit two victories to Williamsburg for using an ineligible player.

The Stars swept Norway Sunday, 5-3 and 3-2, to finish at 13-7 with a .650 winning percentage, losing the crown by 17 percentage points. Williamsburg played two fewer games because a home doubleheader was canceled due to wet grounds earlier this season.

Red Top finished league play at 10-10



Was Brockshus happy with the title? You bet he was.

"This is one of the best groups I've ever had," said Brockshus, who spent the day working in the concession stand, leaving game management to others in the dugout. "They're great, just good kids."

Brown has been part of the Williamsburg program for the past several years and played for some teams that struggled.

"I've been around here for awhile and it's fun to be with a group this year that just loves to play the game," said Brown, who went 2-for-4 with an RBI in the nightcap. "We've had teams where, midway through the season, people just stop showing up because we haven't gotten off to good starts."

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"This year has been awesome," he continued. "We've have guys who come, have a good time and play hard. It's pretty special."

Williamsburg captured its fourth Iowa Valley League title in franchise history, adding to crowns in 1969, 1970 and 1977.

The Red Sox had ace Tanner Jansen on the hill in the opener. He was staked to a 3-0 lead after Cedar Rapids Jefferson graduate and future Iowa Hawkeye Brayden Frazier launched a long home run over the left-field fence.

Jansen was in control until Red Top got two runs in the fourth on a two-run homer from Izaya Fullard, another future Hawkeye. The Toppers tied the game at 3-3 on a Ryan Rumpf sacrifice fly in the sixth.

Spencer Wiskus led off the seventh for Red Top with a pinch-hit single off Jansen. Williamsburg went to the bullpen and brought in Dustin Meierotto.

After a bunt moved Wiskus to second, Taylor Jackson hit a grounder that deflected off the glove of a lunging Frazier at third into left field, scoring Wiskus.

Jack Greene pitched two scoreless innings of relief to get the win for Red Top.

To their credit, the Red Sox did not hang their heads after a tough loss.

"We came out and scored first," said Red Sox Coach Jim Arp, who ran things from the dugout. "I thought with the big start, we might be in good shape, but give Red Top credit, they battled back."

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"Even then, our guys didn't give up either. We missed out on some chances, but we got some big hits when we needed them."

Once again, Williamsburg built a 3-0 lead, scoring single runs in the first, second and fourth. Brayden Frazier doubled in the second and scored on a single by older brother Cam Frazier that went just out of the reach of a leaping Fullard at third.

In the fourth, Brayden Frazier had a one-out double and scored on Brown's single to left.

Jackson came through again for Red Top in the fifth. His two-run double cut the lead to 3-2 and he scored the tying run on a ground-out.

Williamsburg regained the lead in the bottom of the inning as Sueppel singled home Hogan Penny. Ethan Copeland tied it up in the top of the sixth with a double that plated Noah Dostal.

Then came the key inning for Williamsburg in the bottom of the sixth. Garrett Saunders' bloop single to right gave the Red Sox the lead for good. Penny walked with the bases loaded and Sueppel put the game away with a two-run double to left.

Travis Bowman came on in the sixth to get Williamsburg out of a jam, then closed the game with a pair of strikeouts in the seventh.

"Our relief pitching has been pretty good," Brockshus said. "One of the most improved players from last year is Travis Bowman. He's been with me ever since he's been a freshman at Coe College and he did a tremendous job finishing it off today."

Next up for both teams is the IABA state tournament, which begins next weekend.

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"It will be different being a part of that," Brown said. "I know we are looking forward to it. It will be fun to see what we can do."

FINAL LEAGUE STANDINGS

Williamsburg	12-6
Stars	13-7
Walford	11-9
Red Top	10-10
Watkins	6-12
Norway	6-14