

Kammin, Red Sox roll in IABA tourney

Written by Jim Ecker
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WATKINS - Zach Kammin has added some extra sizzle to his fastball since having Tommy John surgery in May of 2017.

As it turned out, he was much too fast for the Muscatine Flames in the 2018 IABA state tournament on Saturday.

Kammin fanned eight batters and pitched a no-hitter for 5 1/3 innings as the Williamsburg Red Sox doused the Flames, 7-0, in the second round of the tournament in Watkins.

The Red Sox also blanked the Calmar Cats, 10-0, in the opening round Saturday and earned a bye into the second week of the state tournament next weekend in Norway.

Williamsburg General Manager Lloyd Brockshus took Kammin out of the game with one out in the sixth inning to protect Kammin's talented right arm after he had thrown about 60 pitches.

You don't usually yank a pitcher when he's tossing a no-hitter, but the Red Sox have been nursing Kammin all season and Brockshus did not want to risk a physical setback with a 7-0 cushion.

"I wanted to keep going, but I don't want to push my arm," said Kammin. "This is the most I've pitched ever since the surgery. I don't want to push it, especially with my college season coming

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up."

Kammin, who hails from Woodstock, Ill., got hurt in his first outing for Coe College in March of 2017 during their spring trip to Florida. He pitched 1 1/3 innings that day and that was it for the season as a sophomore.

"I felt the pop in my elbow and threw two more fastballs and I was like, 'Yeah, it doesn't feel too good,'" he related.

Kammin had the Tommy John surgery two months later in May of 2017 and made it back for the 2018 campaign at Coe, although gingerly. He made eight appearances, all in relief, and threw a total of 10 innings all season, allowing only two earned runs with seven strikeouts.

Kammin is preparing for his fourth year at Coe, but he's received a medical redshirt for the 2017 season and can pitch for two more years with the Kohawks if he wants.

"Yeah, I'm more than likely going to do a fifth year at Coe," he said.



Kammin was superb on Saturday. He mowed down the first 16 batters he faced before hitting Rockolo Hernandez on a 3-2 pitch with an inside fastball. That was Muscatine's first base-runner in the ballgame, but Brockshus went to the bullpen to bring in ace closer Travis

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Bowman.

Kammin did not want to leave, but knew it was the smart thing to do. "It's the best I've felt this whole summer," he said.

Bowman was touched for an infield single in the sixth inning for Muscatine's only hit in the ballgame. Kammin and Bowman combined on a one-hitter with 11 strikeouts.

Remarkably, Kammin has added about four miles per hour to his fastball since the surgery and is popping it pretty good these days.

"Unofficially about 90 miles per hour," he said. "Before Tommy John I was about 86. The highest I've been clocked (since the surgery) was 89, but I'd say 90 unofficially."

Kammin threw mostly fastballs. They were nasty and nearly unhittable. The Flames did not get the ball out of the infield until Diego Iribarren hit a fly ball to center field for the final out in the fifth inning.

"Fastballs. And I hit my locations really well," said Kammin. "I threw a couple of sliders in there to throw them off, but fastballs mainly."

Williamsburg catcher Nick Sueppel called for the heater and rarely had to move his mitt.

"He was incredible," said Sueppel. "He was spotting up, first-pitch strikes almost every time. A low pitch count threw the first couple of innings. He just kept going."

"I wish we could have left him in, but I know he's battling and coming back from an injury and everything. He's a great kid, on and off the field. I'm glad to have him as my teammate. Great

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guy."

Sueppel had some good advice for Kammin at one point when the lanky 6-foot-3 right-hander momentarily lost the strike zone.

"At one point, I think he got down 3-and-0 and I kind of walked out to the mound and said, 'You might as well just throw it down the middle, because they ain't going to be able to hit you.'"

Williamsburg won the Iowa Valley League title this season for the first time since 1977. Now the Red Sox are trying to capture the IABA state championship for the first time since 1988, according to Brockshus.

"I love it," said Sueppel. "We've got a great team. I think we can go a long ways. Hopefully we can take state. That would be awesome."

Kammin and Muscatine pitcher Jake McKee were locked in a scoreless battle through three innings before the Red Sox broke through with a run in the bottom of the fourth. Sueppel got it started with a sharp single, then the Sox loaded the bases with walks to Zach Brown and Joe Antons before Ryan Arp lofted a sacrifice fly.

The Flames changed pitchers in the fifth inning and the Red Sox rocked Joe Morrison for six runs in the fifth to take control. Hogan Penny started the rally with a double, then Nolan Arp and Truman Schmitt followed with RBI singles to make it 3-0.

Brown hit a double to put runners on second and third, then Antons delivered an RBI single to make it 4-0. Antons hit a single to make it 5-0, and another run scored on the play on an error. Garrett Saunders finished the rally with a two-run triple to make it 8-0.

The state tournament will continue Sunday with four games in Rock Island, Ill. Nine teams are still alive in the tournament and three clubs have been eliminated.

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Perhaps the most surprising result on Saturday happened in Walford, where the Muscatine Road Runners beat the Stars 5-4 in the opening round. The Stars, the 2017 state champs, rebounded with a 9-1 victory over the Allison Cats in the second round of the double-elimination tournament.

There was another surprising outcome in Rock Island, where the Norway Bandits belted Red Top 13-3 in six innings. The Bandits finished last in the Iowa Valley League standings this year.

Walford and Norway have 2-0 records and will meet at 6 p.m. Sunday in Rock Island.

SATURDAY'S RESULTS

At Walford

Muscatine Road Runners 5, Stars 4
Walford 7, Allison Cats 0
Stars 9, Allison Cats 1
Walford 2, Muscatine Road Runners 1

At Watkins

Muscatine Flames 4, Watkins 1
Williamsburg 10, Calmar Cats 0
Watkins 9, Calmar Cats 0
Williamsburg Red Sox 7, Muscatine Flames 0

At Rock Island

Red Top 8, Whiteside County Wildcats 1

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Norway 8, Quad City 76ers 4

Whiteside County Wildcats 3, Quad City 76ers 1

Norway 13, Red Top 3

SUNDAY, AUG. 5

At Rock Island

Noon - Red Top (1-1) vs Stars (1-1)

2 p.m. - Muscatine Road Runners (1-1) vs Watkins (1-1)

4 p.m. - Muscatine Flames (1-1) vs Whiteside County Wildcats (1-1)

6 p.m. - Walford (2-0) vs Norway (2-0)

* Williamsburg (2-0) draws bye to next weekend