

J-Hawks ousted by Burlington, 5-1

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 21 July 2014 21:55 - Last Updated Monday, 21 July 2014 22:03

Veterans Memorial Stadium is a terrific minor league ballpark with all the amenities, but it turned into a haunted house for the Jefferson J-Hawks this season.



Jefferson lost to Kennedy, 20-10, in the championship game of the Metro Tournament to begin the season in May when the Cougars scored 14 runs in the final inning.

The J-Hawks returned to the stadium Monday night and lost to Burlington, 5-1, in the semifinals of the Class 4A substate tournament.

The lights at the Jefferson field were severely damaged in a storm in June and have not been replaced yet, so the J-Hawks moved up the block to Veterans Memorial Stadium for their most important game of the year.

"We got here and there was a little softball game for the mentally challenged and physically challenged," said Jefferson Coach Kyle Rodenkirk. "I told the boys ... I said, 'You know what, if you can't get amped up to play after seeing that. You've got the best arena to play in right here.'

"All the kids were jacked up. They were excited to be here, especially after the Metro Tournament."

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The spacious dimensions at the stadium may have hurt the J-Hawks, who hit several long fly balls that were turned into routine outs. If they had been playing at home, some of those balls might have done some damage.

"It all averages out," said Rodenkirk, unwilling to reach for excuses.

The biggest problem for Jefferson was Burlington junior Landon Summers, who pitched a four-hitter against a potent lineup that often scores runs in bunches. Not this time, however.

"He didn't have a whole lot that was overpowering," said Rodenkirk. "He mixed it up good. They ran some balls down in center field. They had us played perfectly. Things didn't fall our way."

Summers raised his record to 7-0 for the Grayhounds. Burlington (22-15) will face Iowa City West in the substate finals Wednesday night in Iowa City.

Jefferson finished with a 24-15 record, doubling its victory total from last season.

The Jefferson pitching staff was a little banged up entering the postseason and Rodenkirk ended up using freshman Sam Meyers, eighth grader Connor VanScoyoc and sophomore Jared Eivins on the mound Monday night.

Meyers was touched for two runs in the top of the first and lasted only one-third of an inning. Van Scoyoc threw a double-play ball to end the first inning and pitched 4.2 innings, giving up three runs. Eivins got three outs in the seventh.

"I'll tell you what, for an eighth grader, a freshman and a sophomore pitching for us, that's good things to come," said Rodenkirk. "I thought they showed pretty good composure out there for being as young as they are."

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"I'm excited for the future," he said. "The seniors molded the direction the program needs to take. I'm really excited to get back on the field."

Jefferson had only four seniors in the starting lineup Monday.

The J-Hawks hurt themselves by committing three errors. They also had two wild pitches and a passed ball.

Jefferson scored in the third inning on an RBI single by Marcus Colbert, driving in Eivins.

Burlington 210 200 0 - 5 7 1

Jefferson 001 000 0 - 1 4 3

W - Summers (7-0). L - Meyers (1-2).