

Cougars foiled by SE Polk at state

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - It was the type of game Kennedy baseball teams have won dozens of times over the years under Bret Hoyer.

Tense, low-scoring, dramatic.

This time, the Southeast Polk Rams managed a slight edge and tripped the third-ranked Cougars, 1-0, in the opening round of the Class 4A state tournament at Principal Park in Des Moines.

Southeast Polk (30-13) will face Dubuque Hempstead (37-5) in the semifinals Friday. Johnston (23-16) will play Iowa City West (33-9) in the other semifinal.

Kennedy, which finished ahead of Hempstead and Iowa City West as the Mississippi Valley Conference champs, fell short and finished 31-7.

Southeast Polk scored an unearned run in the first inning after Kennedy pitcher Sammy Lizarraga and first baseman Jimmy Cunningham failed to connect on a pickoff throw, allowing Anthony Schneider to reach third base as the ball rolled into foul territory.

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Schneider scored on an infield grounder to give Southeast Polk a 1-0 lead in the top of the first inning, after just two batters had come to the plate.

As it turned out, that was enough.

Kennedy put runners at second and third with nobody out in the sixth inning, but the threat ended when Tyler Dralle hit the ball hard into a 4-6-3 double play.

Three outs later, it was over as the No.6 seed defeated the No.3 seed.

"We battled and did a great job," said Hoyer. "The defense wasn't what we were accustomed to all year (three errors), but we only gave up one run. We just couldn't get a key hit to score some runs.

"We certainly put ourselves in position to win the game and we just hit some balls right at them."

Derek Jacobus beat out an infield single to begin the bottom of the sixth inning. Zach Daniels hit a liner to left-center and the Cougars ended up with runners at second and third and nobody out when the ball popped out of the center fielder's glove on a diving attempt.

"I felt real good there," said Hoyer.

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