

No. 5 Prairie sweeps No. 9 Lions

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:26 - Last Updated Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:31



Cedar Rapids Prairie has never won a baseball title in the Mississippi Valley Conference in school history, but Coach Todd Rima and the fifth-ranked Hawks are getting mighty close.

Prairie took a big step toward an MVC crown Wednesday night by sweeping a twinbill from No. 9 Linn-Mar, 5-4 in eight innings and 3-0, at the Oak Ridge Middle School complex.

The Hawks have a 17-3 record in the Mississippi Division for a comfortable four-game lead over Dubuque Hempstead, which is sitting in second place at 12-6 with just two weeks left.

Prairie boasts a 24-4 overall mark, just four victories away from breaking the school record of 27.

"We've done a great job to this point. But we're not done," said Rima, in his first year as head coach.

"This team can be as good as it wants to be. And they do want to be great. They're working at it, but we've got a lot of work to do yet. We've got to continue to get better.

"But, are we excited about where we're at?," said Rima. "Yeah, we're excited, but we've got to continue to grow."

No. 5 Prairie sweeps No. 9 Lions

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:26 - Last Updated Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:31

It's hard to know who has the best baseball team in the Metro area right now.

Linn-Mar swept No. 2 Jefferson on Monday, now Prairie has swept Linn-Mar, and two weeks ago Jefferson swept Prairie. And there's also eighth-ranked Kennedy, giving the Metro four clubs in the top 10 in Class 4A.

"It's exciting for the Metro area," said Rima. "I think you've got teams that are all very good and can make a run in the tournament. And we played a very good team tonight in Linn-Mar."

Prairie has made great strides this season, going from 14-22 last year to 24-4 this year with at least 11 games to play. The Hawks are very capable of winning 30 games or more.

"I think we've worked way harder," said Jalen Rima, the coach's son who had a huge hit to rescue Prairie in the first game Wednesday. "Last year we kind of slacked off because we didn't think we were going to be the best. And this year we actually came together and talked to each other and worked hard to get to this point."

Prairie trailed, 3-1, with two outs in the top of the seventh inning of the opener when Rima came to the plate with runners at first and second. He promptly smashed a double over the left fielder's head to drive in Coen Brown and Cooper Reittinger with the tying runs.

"We joked in the house today that he hadn't had a double all year and it might be time for it," Coach Rima said. "He got his first one at the right time. Maybe I should have told him that earlier."

Rima scored on an infield error to give the Hawks a 4-3 lead, but Linn-Mar countered in the bottom of the seventh to force extra innings. Prairie broke

No. 5 Prairie sweeps No. 9 Lions

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:26 - Last Updated Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:31

the tie in the eighth inning on an RBI single by Corbin Day to drive in Blake Viall.

Tyler Nunemaker was the star of the second game for Prairie. He pitched a three-hit shutout in the 3-0 victory to finish the sweep. Nunemaker, a junior, has become an ace pitcher this season with a 5-1 record and 1.48 ERA. Opponents are batting a measly .142 against him.

"Honestly, all I had to do was get the ball to the plate," said Nunemaker. "My defense was incredible. They played fantastic."

The Hawks know how close they are to winning a Mississippi Valley Conference title and relish the thought.

"It would be incredible," said Nunemaker. "We're already having a fantastic year as it is. We want to be the best team ever at Prairie."

Adam Bradley went 4-for-4 with a double and three RBIs for Linn-Mar in the first game. Manny Jeffery had two hits for the Lions. The losses dropped Linn-Mar to 16-8 overall and 10-6 in the conference.

Rima went 4-for-8 in the doubleheader with a double, triple and three RBIs, raising his batting average to .341.

GAME 1

Prairie 000 001 31 - 5 6 2

No. 5 Prairie sweeps No. 9 Lions

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:26 - Last Updated Wednesday, 01 July 2015 22:31

Linn-Mar 000 030 10 - 4 9 4

W - Street. L - Ollinger.

GAME 2

Prairie 010 020 0 - 3 6 0

Linn-Mar 000 000 0 - 0 3 2

W - Nunemaker. L - Wyant.