

Stroschein helps Lions trip No. 1 Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 18 June 2012 23:19 -

Linn-Mar junior Austin Stroschein was so excited about walloping the ball with the bases loaded against top-ranked Kennedy Monday night that he tripped over first base and fell flat on his face.

He got up grinning.

Stroschein socked a grand slam at a key moment to help the 10th-ranked Lions split a Mississippi Valley Conference doubleheader at Kennedy in a showdown for first place.

The Cougars won the first game, 4-1, behind a strong performance by right-hander Nick Appleget, but Linn-Mar rallied from a 5-0 deficit to grab the nightcap 7-6.

Kennedy snapped Linn-Mar's 10-game winning streak in the opener, then Linn-Mar snapped Kennedy's nine-game winning streak in the nightcap. The split left both clubs 11-3 in the Mississippi Division of the MVC, locked in a three-way tie for first place with Iowa City High with 12 games left in the league campaign.

The Cougars were leading 5-1 in the sixth inning of the second game when Stroschein strode to the plate with the bases loaded and nobody out. He ripped the first pitch he saw from Kennedy's Zach Johnson to deep center field.

"I wasn't expecting it to go out, so I was just trying to get as many bases as I can," said Stroschein. "Yeah, I tripped a little bit on first base. I wiped out."

He dusted himself off with a big smile and was able to trot around the bases, tying the game at 5-5. Kennedy thought he missed first base and appealed, but the umpire said Stroschein hit the bag when he tripped and Stroschein heartily agreed.

Stroschein helps Lions trip No. 1 Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 18 June 2012 23:19 -

It was Stroschein's first homer of the season, but he slugged four round-trippers last year and normally makes it around the bases without getting his uniform and face all dusty.

Linn-Mar took a 7-5 lead in the top of the seventh inning with two runs. Travis Kvach led off with a pinch-hit single, stole second base and scored on a short passed ball for a 6-5 lead. Michael Redmond scored an insurance run on an RBI single by Mitch Stickney.

Kennedy pulled within 7-6 in the bottom of the seventh on a solo home run by Logan Ambrosy. The Cougars put runners on first and second with one out, but Keaton Blackford relieved Justin Wyant and got the final two outs.

Alex Hayden hit a rocket to left field with two outs for the Cougars, but Nate Greve made a leaping catch to end the game and give the Lions (16-7) a precious split.

"I knew Greve was there," said Blackford. "I didn't think the ball was out and Greve is fast. For some reason I just knew it was going right to him. So I felt good about it."

Linn-Mar Coach Chad Lechner was happy to go home with a split.

"That's fantastic," he remarked. "We said to the kids in between innings, 'I know it's hot, but you guys are still playing for a conference title if you split with them. I mean, you're right there.'"

Kennedy (18-3 overall) touched Wyant for five runs in the first two innings of the nightcap, but Wyant buckled down and gave his team a chance to rally.

"He's kind of taken on that M.O., where he seems to get stronger as games wear on," said Lechner.

Stroschein helps Lions trip No. 1 Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 18 June 2012 23:19 -

Blackford pitched one inning in relief in the first game and was ready to pitch again in the nightcap with the game hanging in the balance. He took the ball from Wyant with a 7-6 lead, runners on first and second and only one out.

"I love the situation," he said. "The crowd's in every pitch, especially against Kennedy, the top-ranked team. I always love playing Kennedy. You have to love those moments."

Cody Bell took a 5-1 lead into the top of the sixth inning for Kennedy in the nightcap, but Coach Bret Hoyer went to his bullpen after Bell allowed a leadoff single. Bell had thrown only 66 pitches at that point, but Hoyer decided it was time for a change to give his relief pitchers some work in a key game.

"We've never asked Cody to go that far. We thought, 'Well, this is an opportunity to get those guys some work,'" said Hoyer. "Our guys who have been pitching at the end have done real well this year. This one got away from us."

Johnson and Devon Jacobus, two of Kennedy's top relief pitchers, gave up five runs in two innings as the game slipped away from the Cougars.

Appleget (5-0) pitched a complete game for Kennedy in the opener. He spaced five hits, struck out seven batters and allowed an unearned run in the 4-1 verdict. Appleget topped Greve, one of Linn-Mar's top pitchers who took the loss.

Derek Jacobus drove in two runs for Kennedy in the opener.

GAME ONE

LINN-MAR (1)

Greve, p/lf, 3 0 1 0, Kvach, cr, 0 1 0 0, Bogert, rf/cf, 3 0 0 0, Redmond, cf/2b, 3 0 0 0, Stickney, lf/rf, 3 0 1 1, Stroschein, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Banks, c/ss, 3 0 0 0, Stolley, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Roth, 2b, 3 0 2 0, Ollinger, c, 0 0 0 0, Blackford, dh/p, 3 0 1 0, Strellner, ss, 0 0 0 0. Totals 27 1 5 1.

Stroschein helps Lions trip No. 1 Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 18 June 2012 23:19 -

KENNEDY (4)

Jahlas, cf, 3 0 1 0, Ambrosy, rf, 3 0 1 0, Bell, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Dv Jacobus, 3b, 1 1 0 0, Staton, pr, 0 0 0 0, Lizarraga, c, 2 0 1 0, Smetzer, cr, 0 2 0 0, Lloyd, dh, 1 1 0 0, Hayden, 2b, 2 0 0 0, Dr Jacobus, ss, 1 0 0 2, A.Johnson, lf, 2 0 0 0. Totals 18 4 3 2.

Linn-Mar 100 000 0 - 1 5 0

Kennedy 030 001 x - 4 3 2

Greve, Blackford (6) and Banks, Ollinger (6). Appleget and Lizarraga. W - Appleget (5-0). L - Greve (5-2). 2B - Roth, Lizarraga. SB - Jahlas.

GAME TWO

LINN-MAR (7)

Greve, lf, 4 0 1 0, Bogert, cf, 2 1 1 0, Redmond, 2b, 4 2 1 0, Stickney, rf, 3 2 2 1, Stroschein, 3b, 4 1 2 5, Banks, c, 3 0 0 0, Ollinger, ph, 1 0 0 0, Stolley, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Strellner, ss, 3 0 0 0, Wyant, p, 2 0 0 0, Kvach, ph, 1 1 1 0, Blackford, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 30 7 9 6.

KENNEDY (6)

Jahlas, cf, 4 1 2 0, Ambrosy, 1b/rf, 3 2 2 1, Bell, p/1b/3b, 2 0 1 1, Staton, cr, 0 1 0 0, Smetzer, pr, 0 0 0 0, Dv Jacobus, 3b/p, 2 1 1 0, Staton, pr, 0 0 0 0, Lizarraga, c, 4 0 1 1, Smetzer, cr, 0 1 0 0, Lloyd, rf, 3 0 2 0, Z.Johnson, p, 0 0 0 0, Maiers, p, 1 0 0 0, Hayden, 2b, 2 0 0 1, Dr Jacobus, ss, 3 0 0 1, A.Johnson, lf, 3 0 0 0. Totals 27 6 9 5.

Linn-Mar 000 104 2 - 7 9 1

Kennedy 410 000 1 - 6 9 0

Wyant, Blackford (7) and Banks. Bell, Z.Johnson (6), Dv Jacobus (7), Maiers (7) and Lizarraga. W - Wyant (4-1). L - Dv Jacobus (0-1). S - Blackford (1). 2B - Stickney, Jahlas. HR - Stroschein, Ambrosy. SB - Kvach, Ambrosy, Staton.