

West ends Indians' season



Pitcher Cody Seibel tags out West Bend East catcher Zach Decent trying to get back to third in a pickle in the seventh inning of Saturday's sectional semifinal game in Random Lake. The play kept the game tied at 1-1 and set up Kewaskum's last at-bat heroics again.

Mitch Maersch photo

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RANDOM LAKE - In a season filled with late-inning heroics, Kewaskum's baseball team had just enough magic left to reach Saturday's rain-delayed sectional final.

Then, it all came crashing down.

The Indians beat West Bend East, 2-1, in their last at-bat in a semifinal and lost to West Bend West, 10-0 in a five-inning debacle. West moved to 32-2 on the season and on to Stevens Point for the state tournament while Kewaskum went home with a 27-6 record, a finale unfitting of its outstanding season.

The meeting of the top two seeds in the sectional didn't include any of the drama a fan could have wanted and was somewhat marred by a freak injury that happened on a dead ball.

Down 1-0 in the top of the second inning, Cody Nuernberg was trying to pitch out of a bases-loaded jam when it was ruled he hit leadoff hitter Davis Yach.

The call wasn't loud enough for most anyone to hear however, and the ball got by catcher Bo Seibel. West's Shane Hayes took off from third and Nuernberg came in to cover home. As he went to make the tag, Hayes spike caught Nuernberg in the head on a play that didn't matter given the ball is dead once a batter is hit.

Nuernberg, though conscious and talking, began bleeding from the head and was carted off to the locker room. Kewaskum's bench and fans went nuts, ripping the call.

Cody Seibel relieved Nuernberg and allowed one more run on a walk as West took a 3-0 lead. Kewaskum was never

the same, but it may not have mattered the way Jon Nick was pitching.

"I think really it sparked us for a little bit of a momentum there but just like that it deflated us. Jon started throwing strikes and punching us out and we didn't have enough firepower to relay back and fight back today," said Coach Doug Gonring.

Players said while it was bad enough Nuernberg had to be taken out, the way he left made it worse.

"That was huge. One, the inning should have been over so they never should have scored them two runs in that inning. It should have been over and he never even should have had to leave if he got hit, but he didn't even get hit so he should've been out," said Cody Seibel.

"I think it impacted our team. It kind of chopped the morale down a little bit, but we should have kind of like taken that to heart and went out there and won it for them," said right fielder Tony Gonring.

"It hurt a lot. A couple of things led into that that should have made that not even happen at all, but it was really unfortunate. You don't like to see a teammate go down like that," said sophomore and team home run leader Brad Boegel.

"He was a key part of the team so it's a real bringer downer," said pitcher Mike Schladweiler.

Seibel allowed one run in the fourth and got in trouble in the fifth. Boegel relieved but couldn't stop West's rally and hit Harry Steldt with the bases loaded to end the game via the 10-run mercy rule.

Nick went all five innings for West, striking out nine and allowing three hits and one walk.

Kewaskum's best chance to score came in the first inning. Sam Olla led off with a line-drive single to right field and Cody Seibel grounded a single to the right side that put runners on first and third with one out. Nick then dug deep and struck out the next two batters with heat.

"We get men on first and second, that's fine. What did we do, we over swung. We didn't hit the ball in play again. You don't have to swing at stuff over your hands," Gonring said.

He said he considered a suicide squeeze, but his big hitters in Boegel and Nuernberg were up and figured he'd give them a shot at it.

Nick allowed one runner to second base the rest of the game. He would have set the Indians down in order from the third inning on if a third strike hadn't gotten away, allowing Boegel to reach first.

"He was throwing pretty good, he was hitting his spots and getting some low-ball strikes," said Tony Gonring.

"We just couldn't hit today, first game, too. I don't know," Cody Seibel said.

The Indians struggled down the stretch, coming into the playoffs on a 2-2 streak, and Saturday was no different. Gonring said the trend of striking out too much continued.

In addition, the Indians made five errors, their weakness early in the season. West made none.

In most of the game against West Bend East, the Indians looked as if their season would end right there. The Suns took a 1-0 lead in the fourth and held it until the sixth, when with one out Cody Seibel doubled to the right center wall and Boegel knocked him in with a line drive single to left.

In the seventh, Bo Seibel reached on a liner to right and reached second on a Steve Kudek walk. The Suns changed pitchers from the right handed Tyler Salentine, who pitched a gem for 6 1/3 innings, to the lefty Alec Steinmetz.

With one out and runners on first and second, up came Tony Gonring, the last hitter in the lineup. Gonring had batted lefty the entire game until now. Dad told him to switch around.

A wild pitch moved runners to second and third. With their season on the line, the Suns drew in their infield and outfield. Gonring launched a fly over the left fielder's head and kept Kewaskum's season alive.

"I was just kind of looking for something that I could hit, something just to get in play, score a runner from third. Got a good pitch and put a good swing on it," he said.

"It's a different vision," Doug Gonring said of switching his son to the right side. "All he had to do was make contact and he did and that worked out fantastic at that point."

It made the coach and the dad proud.

"Yeah, I was a proud dad and a proud coach at that time because that's exactly what we needed to happen at that point in time was a contact play," he said. "Tony has struggled offensively considerably over the course of the year. He has put the ball in play pretty well there for a while. He's probably got more RBIs than hits so that means he's doing the right thing."

Schladweiler started for Kewaskum and went five innings, allowing one run on two hits. He struck out four and walked one. Lucas Kopeschka relieved and allowed no runs on one hit and no walks in 1 2/3 innings. Cody Seibel came in and allowed one hit and struck out one, but made a bigger play to prevent a run. In the seventh, with catcher Zach Decent on second after a bloop single and sacrifice, Sun Trevor Pruett singled to left field. Decent tried to score on the play but got caught in a pickle. Kewaskum perfectly executed the play as catcher Bo Seibel threw to Nuernberg

at third, who threw to Cody Seibel halfway down the base path. Seibel made the tag as Decent tried to get back to third.

Gonring was impressed with his pitchers that game. "Both threw the ball well," he said of Schladweiler and Kopeschka.

"I just threw my hardest and gave it all I got because I knew we needed to win that first game and move on to the next one," Schladweiler said. "I felt really good about it, pitching today."

Gonring was less thrilled with how the sectional was run from top to bottom.

"This sectional was run as poor as I've seen. The umpiring has been as poor as - and this isn't sour grapes because West beat the hell out of us. To take some type of momentum and whatever one gets and add this bad of outcome. To get kids hurt and not understand the rules, I mean you've got three of 'em. Three of 'em," he said.

Rain delayed all three games from Friday to Saturday, but Gonring said the field was playable Friday afternoon and evening. Gonring said he walked it for an hour and called all three other coaches to tell them.

"I walked the whole thing. I'm telling you. There was no water on here," he said.

Moving the games made it hard on some players who were scheduled to work on Saturday. Gonring said he left one player's name off the lineup card in the East game.

"I had kids who if they missed going to work they get fired. It's hard going to get off every day when the baseball gets changed on 'em. I said go to work. It's hard enough for a kid to get a job and go play baseball," he said.

Regardless, the future of Kewaskum baseball shines brightly as the Indians only lose four seniors.

"I hope so, started five sophomores today," Gonring said. "Somewhere along the line somebody's going to pay for this stuff."

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