

Jefferson holds off Kalida in baseball

Written by Jim Metcalfe

Wednesday, April 03, 2013 11:23 AM -

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DELPHOS — Jefferson's baseball team opened its season by scoring 18 runs in a doubleheader split Saturday versus Van Wert.

The Wildcats continued to pile up the runs on a windy, cold Monday night at Wildcat Field, holding off Kalida 10-6 in non-league action.

The Wildcats (2-1) compiled 10 hits, with leadoff man Ross Thompson going 2-for-3 (with one walking), scoring three runs and stealing two bases, while Zach Ricker (2 runs, 2 runs batted in) and Austin Jettinghoff (2 RBIs) adding 2-for-3 days. Zach Kimmett scored twice and Tyler Wrasman knocked in two.

"We got some good swings and hit today. Saturday, we did it by showing patience at the plate," Jefferson head coach Doug Geary explained. "Today, we put the bat on the ball and got some nice hits. To get this much offense on a cold, windy day is a good day. We didn't take advantage of bases loaded in the opening inning but we did the second."

Tyler Rice got the win with the start, going 3 2/3 innings (3 hits, 1 earned run, 3 bases-on-balls, 6 strikeouts).

Brent Hovest led the 9-hit Kalida (0-1) offense with a 3-for-4 day, scoring twice and stealing a pair of bases, while Austin Smith went 2-for-5. Neil Recker scored twice and swiped three bases.

Kyle Kehres took the loss with three innings as the starter (6 hits, 6 runs, 3 earned, 1 BB, 3 Ks). Rebuilding Kalida — replacing 14 graduated seniors — committed seven errors in the field.

"We have to find some positions with so many new faces. Graduating all those guys means we have a lot of youngsters in there," Kalida mentor Jim McBride noted. "We have to settle in defensively and make some plays there but overall, it was what I expected for our first game."

The visiting Wildcats got on board in the top of the first against Rice. Recker singled sharply to left to start it, then stole second and third. An out later, he scored on a bloop to short right by

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Kehres; an error on the play put the batter at second. Rob Kleman walked. An out later, a wild pitch moved both up and Kyle Vorst walked to load the bases. However, they left them that way, three of 11 base-runners stranded.

Jefferson retaliated with one in the home half against Kehres. Thompson walked in four pitches and swiped second; an error on the play allowed him to head to third and he scored on a wild pitch. An out later, Jettinghoff walked, Kimmitt singled to left and Drew Kortokrax was hit by a pitch to load the sacks. However, a called third strike and a groundout ended that threat at 1-1.

The host 'Cats exploded for five in the second. With two down, Thompson tripled to the fence in right center and Ricker sliced a run-scoring knock to center. In turn, he swiped second and scored on a solid knock to center by Jettinghoff. He stole second and scored as Kimmitt got aboard via an error. Kortokrax followed with a sharp single to center. Wrasman launched a high fly ball down the right-field; with the wind blowing that way and rightfielder Adam Knueve completely losing the orb in the bright sun, it fell for a 2-run triple, plating Kimmitt and Kortokrax for a 6-1 edge.

In the home third, the Jeffcats struggled with their base-running. Seth Wollenhaupt got on via an error but was gunned down by catcher Recker trying to steal. An out later, Thompson also got aboard via an error but was picked off base by Kehres.

In the fourth, Gerding led off by getting aboard on a misplayed grounder but was eliminated at second on a Vorst grounder. An out hence, Vorst stole second. Hovest beat out an infield roller to short and stole second. Knueve walked to juice the bases and end Rice's stint on the mound, moving to third base. On his first offering, Jettinghoff (2 1/3 IPs, 5 hits, 4 earned runs, 2 BBs, 2 Ks) induced Recker to force Hovest at third.

In the Delphos fourth, Ricker grounded a double into left center against Kalida reliever Kyle Landin (3 IPs, 4 hits, 4 runs, 2 earned, 1 BB, 2 Ks). An out later, Kimmitt got aboard on a 2-base throwing error, with Ricker crossing the dish. Kortokrax moved Kimmitt to third with a bounceout, from where he scored on a bloop to short center by Wrasman for an 8-1 Jefferson lead.

Kalida got a run in the fifth. Swift lined up the gut to lead off and stole second. Landin walked

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but was forced at second by Kleman, putting Swift at third. Gerding flied out deep enough to center to get the swift Swift home for an 8-2 deficit. Vorst got aboard on a 2-base throwing error but Randy Zeller's comebacker ended that threat.

Delphos scored its final two tallies in the home half. Wollenhaupt lined a sinking hit to left to start it and advanced on a wild toss. With one down, Thompson beat out a nibbler to third to put runners on the corners and quickly burgled second. Ricker flied out deep enough to right to get Wollenhaupt home and move Thompson to third, from where he scored on a liner to left by Jettinghoff.

The visitors got within 10-5 in the top of the sixth. Hovest ripped a single up the gut and Knueve beat out an infield hit to short. Recker got a free pass to load the bases. Swift bounced wide of first and when the Wildcats were slow to cover the base, he beat out an infield hit to score Hovest and leave the bases juiced. An out hence, Kleman rapped a shot just inside the third-base line, plating Knueve and Recker and putting Swift at third. However, Jettinghoff fanned the next batter and got a nibbler by Vorst in front of the plate that Zach Kimmett fielded and threw to first to end the uprising.

Jordan Herron came on in relief in the Kalida seventh. With one out, Hovest singled up the middle and swiped second. An out hence, Recker got aboard via an error, scoring Hovest for a 10-6 deficit. Recker swiped second but Swift fanned to end the contest.

"We were hoping to get four innings out of Tyler Rice; he's our sixth pitcher but he has the stuff to be our second or third any given day," Geary added. "He also made a big defensive play to get us out of a big inning in the fourth. We have to keep playing good defense like that because that will be one of our keys this year."

McBride wasn't surprised about his team coming back late in the game.

"I expect that; these guys have a lot of pride and athleticism I'd have been disappointed had we not battled back," he added. "I started three freshmen and a sophomore today with some inexperienced juniors and seniors. We just have to shore up our effort but we'll work at it." Jefferson hosts Hardin Northern 5 p.m. Wednesday, while Kalida hosts Miller City Monday.