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Softball team slips past Campbellsport in tough Division 2 regional opener

After scoring a 19-9 win over Campbellsport on May 4, the Port Washington softball team had good reason to be confident entering a rematch in a WIAA Division 2 regional quarterfinal game May 24.

Even so, Port coach Steve Schmidt expected a tougher challenge in the teams' second meeting, and his forecast came true.

Hanging on in a seesaw game, the host Pirates emerged with a 6-5 win that advanced them to semifinal play.

"It was nice to pull out a win. The girls were excited," Schmidt said after seeing his squad lose a 3-0 lead and overcome a 4-3 deficit.

"We started out strong, then gave back the lead, but did a good job of fighting back."

Trailing, 4-3, the Pirates moved back in front for good with a three-run rally in the bottom of the fifth inning.

Consecutive singles by Ali Bichler, Stephanie Volesky and Maggie Schmit fueled the comeback, with Schmit's RBI hit tying the game. A run-scoring single by Jill VandeBoom and a sacrifice fly by Taylor Miller gave Port a two-run cushion.

The Cougars got one run back in the sixth and threatened to score in the final two innings, but Bichler managed to escape further damage. She capped her complete-game pitching effort by stranding two runners in each frame.

Bichler gave up 12 hits, struck out two batters and walked two.

"Ali has been battling through some injury problems this season, but she hung in there," Schmidt said.

The Pirates grabbed an early lead with a three-run second inning.

After Volesky singled, Schmit reached on a fielder's choice. A grounder hit by Miller was misplayed, setting the stage for a two-run double by Celia Van Pietersom. Kelsey Brockman's RBI single made it 3-0.

Campbellsport scored once in the third inning and took the lead in the fourth on a three-run homer by Brianna Grunwald.

Van Pietersom, Schmit and Volesky each finished with two hits for Port, which improved its season record to 9-8.

Campbellsport, which finished 8-15, was led by Grunwald and Hailey Zawgi with three hits apiece.

This week, the Pirates continued tournament play Tuesday with a regional semifinal game against top-seeded Mayville. The winner will face the winner of a game between Kewaskum and Kettle Moraine Lutheran in a regional final Thursday on the home field of the highest-seeded team.

Regional champions will advance to sectional play, starting with a semifinal game Monday, June 4.

Kettle Moraine Lutheran 10, Grafton 6

The Black Hawks saw an early lead disappear in a Division 2 regional-semifinal loss that snapped their eight-game winning streak and ended their season May 24.

Grafton held a 3-1 lead after scoring on an error in the first inning and getting a two-run homer by Lauren Lennon in the third. Lennon blasted a ball over the left-center-field fence after Taylor Thiede singled.

However, Lutheran responded with a six-run rally in the bottom of the third and never trailed again. The Chargers had only three hits in the inning but were aided by a walk and an error.

"We put ourselves in a pretty big hole," said Grafton coach Ken Hunt, whose team committed nine errors in the game.

Lutheran's lead grew to 10-3 when it scored three runs in the sixth.

The Hawks made things interesting with a three-run seventh. Sarah Fischer, Amanda Hunt and Kate Lennon each had singles during the rally, which was helped by a Lutheran error, but the comeback ended with a runner tagged out at third base.

"We made a lot of mistakes in this game," coach Hunt said. "The only thing I can attribute it to it is inexperience."

Grafton outhit Lutheran, 10-7, led by 2-for-4 efforts from Lauren Lennon, Thiede and Hunt. Lutheran got two hits apiece from Morgan Koth and Alyssa Wolf.

Wolf and Hunt each pitched a complete game. Hunt struck out 11 and walked six.

The loss left the Hawks with a 12-11 season record. Lutheran improved to 16-8 and advanced to a regional semifinal game Tuesday against Port.

Image Information: PORT WASHINGTON'S Shay Paradowski slid home in an attempt to beat the tag of the Campbellsport catcher during a WIAA Division 2 regional quarterfinal game. Port rallied to pull out a 6-5 win. Photo by Sam Arendt