

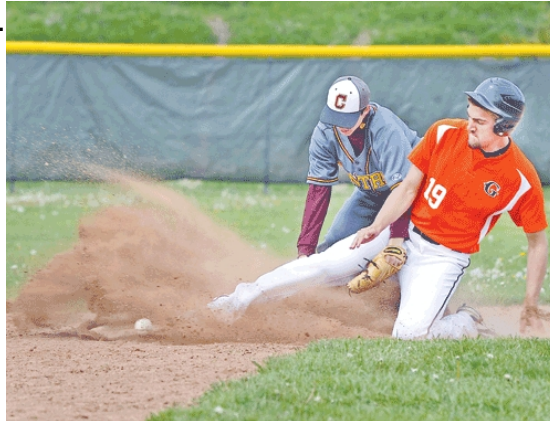
Hawks hit the diamond running

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
Wednesday, 29 May 2013 15:48

Solid all-around play, no-hitter highlight Grafton's 4-0 start to baseball season

Grafton High School baseball coach Brian Durst probably couldn't have dreamed of a better start to the season after what happened last week.

Combining timely hitting with solid pitching and defense, the Black Hawks opened play with four wins in as many nonconference games, including a 10-2, 13-1 sweep of West Allis Central in a home doubleheader Saturday.



The previous day, Grafton blanked Howards Grove behind a no-hitter by sophomore Bryce Fisk.

"We're putting up a lot of runs, but have gotten excellent pitching and also really, really steady defense," Durst said.

"We did a really good job up and down the lineup."

In Saturday's opener, Grafton broke open a scoreless deadlock with a seven-run fourth inning. After Central got two runs in the fifth, the Hawks answered with a three-run outburst in their half of the same frame.

Nathan Koehler pitched the first four innings for the win. He struck out six and walked two.

The Hawks' offensive leaders were Beau Benzschawel, Brett Rasmussen and Adam Cibulka with two hits apiece. Benzschawel and Cibulka each drove in two runs.

In the second game, Grafton held a 3-0 lead after three innings and turned the game into a rout with a 10-run fourth. During the fourth, the Hawks sent 16 batters to the plate and each either had a hit or scored.

Grafton's 16-hit attack included a 3-for-3 effort by Rasmussen, who had a double. Adding two hits apiece were Benzschawel, Al Nennig and Bryan Sternig. Benzschawel had a double and three RBI, and Nennig scored three runs.

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Grafton 11, Howards Grove 0

Fisk became the first Hawk to throw a no-hitter since his brother Conor Fisk pitched a five-inning perfect game in a 10-0 win over Brown Deer on May 29, 2010.

The younger Fisk had to throw 110 pitches to finish the gem on the road, overcoming an early bout of wildness. He struck out 12 and walked six, but allowed only one walk after the third inning.

“It didn’t feel like a no-hitter until we got through five innings because Howards Grove had a lot of base runners,” Durst said. “But Bryce did a great job of settling down and got into a good rhythm.”

The closest Howards Grove came to getting a hit was in the seventh inning. A ball hit down the third-base line struck the bag and popped in the air before Cibulka grabbed the ball and got the out with a strong throw to first.

Grafton grabbed a 3-0 lead in the opening inning and added four runs in the fourth and two runs in the fifth.

The Hawks collected 13 hits, including a 3-for-4 effort by Choo Weisflog, who scored three runs and had two RBI. Nennig went 2-for-5 with a double and two RBI and scored three times, and Nate Lukas was 2-for-3 and a double and RBI.

Grafton 15, Kiel 1 (5 inn.)

The Hawks wasted no time taking control in their season opener, scoring six runs in the first inning and nine runs in the second.

Lukas pitched the first three innings for the win, striking out seven and walking three. He was supported by a 16-hit attack that included 3-for-3 performances by Weisflog, Nennig and Benzschawel, Grafton’s third through fifth batters, respectively.

Benzschawel drove in four runs, and Weisflog and Nennig each had three RBI and scored three times.

Kiel had only two hits.

This week, Grafton was scheduled to open North Shore Conference play Tuesday against West Bend East and will play at home against Whitefish Bay on Thursday and at West Bend West on Friday. The Hawks will then host Cedarburg on June 3 and play at Slinger on June 4.

All games start at 5:30 p.m.

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Image Information: A HARD SLIDE allowed Grafton's Al Nennig to jar the ball loose and reach base safely during a nonconference doubleheader against West Allis Central last Saturday. Grafton swept the twin bill, 10-2 and 13-1, to improve its season record to 4-0. Photo by Sam Arendt