

Two Rivers short-circuits Rockets' stellar season

Written by MITCH MAERSCH
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Opportunistic foe pulls away for regional win that dashes playoff hopes of CG-Belgium baseball team

A rough ending didn't dampen another stellar year for the Cedar Grove-Belgium's baseball team.



The Rockets lost to Two Rivers, 6-1, in a WIAA regional final last Friday, closing out a season in which they posted a 14-6 record and won their third straight Central Lakeshore Conference title.

"Not a disappointing season," Cedar Grove-Belgium coach Mike Ruppel said.

"This was the best group of kids I've ever worked with. It was a pleasure to go to practice every day."

Even so, Two Rivers (the No. 11 seed) gave Cedar Grove-Belgium (No. 3) a 2013 finale to forget.

The Purple Raiders steadily pulled from a 1-1 tie, built a 4-1 lead by the third inning and added two insurance runs in the sixth.

Defensive miscues hurt the host Rockets, who committed four errors in the game, including three in the sixth inning.

Cedar Grove-Belgium starting pitcher Drew Emperley wasn't sharp from the start and lasted 2-2/3 innings. He gave up four runs on five hits, struck out two and walked two.

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Reliever David Niebauer allowed two unearned runs in 4-1/3 innings.

The Rockets' lone run came in the first inning. After Christian O'Donnell reached on an error, he moved to second base on a sacrifice and came home on Brandon O'Neil's double to tie the game.

Cedar Grove-Belgium had runners on base in most other innings but couldn't come up with a clutch hit.

"We just couldn't put our hits together when we needed them," Ruppel said.

"It was too bad. We needed to play a clean game and hit well, and our starting pitcher wasn't sharp."

Brennan Willert was 2-for-4 for Two Rivers, which outhit the Rockets, 9-7.

The Raiders improved to 7-14 before losing to Sheboygan Falls in a sectional semifinal.

CG-Belgium 8, Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah 0

The host Rockets breezed to a regional-semifinal victory July 10, defeating winless Elkhart Lake for the fourth time this season.

Cedar Grove-Belgium scored three runs in the first and never looked back. O'Donnell led off with a double, and Emperley, Bares and O'Neil followed with singles.

The other five runs came in the fifth. After O'Donnell walked, Emperley, Bares and Tyler Falk singled.

O'Neil followed with a double, and Justin Obbink and Niebauer added singles.

Emperley and Brett Michaels each went 3-for-4 and drove in a run.

Obbink pitched a complete game, scattering seven hits, striking out four and walking three.

The Rockets committed only one error.

"It was nice to come out and play a clean game," Ruppel said.

"We were hoping we would come out and play that way against Two Rivers, but that didn't come to fruition."

Cedar Grove-Belgium enjoyed another solid season despite having only two seniors — O'Donnell and O'Neil. On their way to a share of the CLC title, the Rockets ran off a 10-game

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winning streak.

"They saw the fruits of their labor, and what more can you ask?" Ruppel said.

Image Information: CEDAR GROVE-BELGIUM pitcher Drew Emperley looked for the catcher's sign during Friday's game against Two Rivers. Photo by Sam Arendt