

Grafton gets no mercy from Mercs

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Fast start can't save Express as Lakes season ends with 9-1 loss to Cedarburg in Northern Division final

The Grafton Express knew they were underdogs entering a Land O' Lakes baseball showdown with Cedarburg last weekend.

Early in a Northern Division playoff final Saturday, that didn't seem to matter to an upset-minded team that jumped to a 1-0 lead over host Cedarburg.



But the suspense quickly ended when the Mercs scored three runs in the third inning and continued to pull away for a 9-1 victory that sent them into the league's grand championship playoffs.

Cedarburg, which finished two games ahead of Grafton in the Northern Division during the regular season, had the benefit of two home games against the Express in last weekend's division playoff final.

Thanks to Saturday's win, the Mercs didn't need a second contest.

Grafton started fast with a first-inning run on back-to-back triples by Max Pruefer and Robbie Doring.

However, Cedarburg pitcher Taylor Piel settled down and retired the next eight batters he faced. Piel went the distance, scattering seven hits.

In the third, the Mercs did all the scoring they needed.

Nick Boehnlein started the rally with an infield hit and scored on Brandon Nedoma's single. John VandenBerg followed with an RBI double and scored on Ross Zahour's single to put Cedarburg up, 3-1.

In the fifth, the margin grew to 4-1 when Nedoma walked and scored all the way from second base on John Regnitz's infield grounder.

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Cedarburg broke the game open with a two-run sixth on RBI singles by Brian Bert and Nedoma.

In the seventh, the Mercs capped the scoring with three runs. After an error allowed one run to come home, Boehnlein added a two-run double.

Cedarburg finished with 15 hits, including three each by Nedoma and Jake Wallock.

Leading Grafton were Mike Pruefer and Dustin Kesner with two hits apiece.

With the win, the Mercs will return as the Northern Division representative in the grand championship playoffs that start Saturday, Aug. 24.

Rounding out the four-team field are Burlington (Southwest), Muskego (East) and Pewaukee (West).

A modified double-elimination format will be used in the tournament. A team has to lose twice to be eliminated, but teams cannot play each other for a second time until they have faced all other tournament teams at least once.

In opening games at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Cedarburg will host Pewaukee while Muskego hosts Burlington.

At 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 25, Cedarburg will play at Burlington while Muskego faces Pewaukee at a site that was undetermined as of early this week.

Image Information: CEDARBURG'S BRANDON NEDOMA scored as Grafton catcher Justin Kesner tried to corral a late throw to the plate during a Land O' Lakes baseball playoff game Saturday. Host Cedarburg rallied to win the Northern Division final, 9-1. Photo by Sam Arendt