

Bolick Dominates WHS

Written by Mike Kelly
Thursday, 17 April 2014 07:33

Hibriten High senior Drew Bolick was nearly untouchable Wednesday night. The right hander, who has signed with Western Carolina University, had a no-hitter for 5.1 innings before Colby Illich of the Pioneers broke it up with a solid single to center field in the sixth inning.

But despite losing that battle, Bolick (3-4), who was simply superb Wednesday night, won the war as Hibriten (10-8 overall; 6-5 Northwestern 3A-4A Conference) downed WHS 4-1 in a NW3A-4A Conference game at Wilson Park in Lenoir, N.C.

"The no-hitter crossed my mind," Bolick said. "But I didn't talk about it in the dug out. I'm sorry I lost it, but we won the game, and that's what counts the most. It's a big win for Hibriten baseball, especially to beat Watauga."

"He's pitched in some bad luck this season," Hibriten coach Terry Henthorne said. "But he's our number one guy and he's gone up against the other team's best. Tonight, he was throwing hard, and he still had good velocity in the seventh inning. He wanted to finish the game. He wasn't coming out."

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Bolick scattered two hits, walked three and struck out nine. The Pioneers finally broke through in the seventh. A pair of walks and an infield single by Carson Isaacs loaded the bases with one out. But Utah Jones, who didn't start Wednesday night, reached on a fielder's choice, scoring Matt Lambert with WHS' only run.

The Pioneers (7-10; 4-7) also helped Bolick out by hitting into two double plays, and they also had a runner picked off at second base.

Meanwhile, the Panthers also maintained their grip on fourth place, and home-field advantage in the opening round of the NW3A-4A Tournament, which begins May 6. Hickory remained a game behind Hibriten for that No.4 seed as the Red Tornadoes (5-6 NW3A-4A) blasted St. Stephens 13-3 in five innings.

And the Panthers also pulled off their first season sweep of the Pioneers since the schools became conference rivals in 2009-10. The Pioneers have lost two in a row at Wilson Park.

"And I was pacing in the seventh inning when they loaded the bases," Henthorne said. "Watauga is a well-coached team. Pete Hardee does a great job with his players. They're going through a tough stretch right now, but they have the ability to turn things around. I'm just glad Drew was able to shut them down in the seventh."

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The Panthers play at Freedom tonight, and they still have Patton (April 29) and Hickory (May 2) left on the schedule following the Easter holiday break.

"There's nothing settled yet," Henthorne said. "It's nice to be in a position, where we're the ones being chased. Getting home field advantage in that first-round tournament game would be huge for our program. But this is a very competitive league. You've got to come to play every night. A letdown of any kind can be very costly."

The Panthers scored all the runs they needed in the first inning. A pair of singles, three walks and two WHS errors opened the door and gave Hibriten a 3-0 lead.

Lambert (2-1) suffered the loss. He struggled with his control from the start and left after the third inning. Lambert scattered two hits, but he walked five and was victimized by a shakey defensive effort.

WHS pitching only gave up four hits, but the Pioneers made five errors Wednesday night. They've now made 42 errors in 17 games this season.

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The loss leaves WHS three games under .500 with six games left on the schedule. And the Pioneers, who slipped into sixth place in the NW3A-4A Conference standings, are possibly looking at their first losing season since 2007.

WHS returns home to play Patton tonight. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on AM 1450, WATA and GoBlueridge.net.

NOTES: WHS coach kept Carson Isaacs, Jones, Jesse Illich and Colby Illich out of the starting line up Wednesday night. All those players came on in the third inning.....With Bolick's nine strikeouts Wednesday night, the Pioneers have now struck out a 117 times in 17 games this season.....The last pitcher to throw a no-hitter against WHS was Jacob Hoyle of St. Stephens in 2011. Ironically, Hoyle, now playing at WCU, lost that game 1-0 on a bases-loaded walk.....Before that, the last pitcher to no-hit WHS was Matt Payne of Alexander Central in 2005.

NORTHWESTERN 3A-4A CONFERENCE

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BASEBALL

Fred T. Foard 4, Patton 2

Hibriten 4, Watauga 1

Hickory 13, St. Stephens 3, 5 inn.

South Caldwell 6, Freedom 0