

Saints sweep Wahlert on Senior Night

Written by Jim Ecker

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Senior Night always feels better when your mother gets a red rose during the on-field ceremony and your ballclub wins a pair of games to boost its confidence near the end of the season.

That was the story for the Xavier Saints Friday night.

The Saints swept Dubuque Wahlert, 7-6 in eight innings and 11-0 in five innings, in a Mississippi Valley Conference twinbill at Ken Charipar Field.

All nine seniors on the Xavier roster got into the doubleheader and all nine contributed to the victories for the Saints, who are suddenly surging now with five wins in their last six games.

Senior Bryce Charipar, bothered by an injury earlier this year but healthy now, took a one-hitter into the fifth inning of the nightcap and was looking good, but Coach Bob Cataldo removed Charipar and gave seniors Ethan Holverson and Ben Kamin a chance to pitch in the lopsided victory before family and friends on Senior Night.

"They deserved it," said Cataldo, in his first year as Xavier's head coach. "These seniors have been doing everything we've asked since February. They're there at every workout, doing everything possible.

"They might not have Division I skills," he said, "but they've got Division I heart."

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The Saints raised their records to 8-21-1 overall and 5-16-1 in the conference. Wahlert fell to 22-13 overall and 12-10 in the league.

Wahlert tied the opener, 6-6, on a two-run single with two outs in the top of the seventh when the Saints were just one out away from a cherished victory. The game went into extra innings and the Saints prevailed in the bottom of the eighth when Bryce Schulte singled with the bases loaded on a high-chopper that went over the second baseman's head.



Schulte got the victory in relief for his first win of the year.

The Saints dominated the nightcap with five runs in the second inning and five more runs in the fourth for their 11-0 bulge. Charipar allowed an infield single in the first inning, but that was Wahlert's only hit off the right-hander all night. He struck out four batters and had good pop on his fastball.

Charipar, who is Xavier's best overall player, missed several games in early June because the top disc in his back was out of place and pinching his spinal cord. He had to remove himself from several games due to the pain and pressure in his head, but his chiropractor and physical therapist have nursed him back to full health.

At this point, Charipar does not think he'll need surgery.

"Tonight showed that I don't need it," he said. "It didn't hurt at all, so that's a great feeling. It felt good, it felt really good."

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Former Major League pitcher Mike Boddicker, who is one of Charipar's uncles, has helped Charipar with his pitching mechanics, working mostly on his location, changing speeds and grips. And when Charipar is healthy, he can be one of the top pitchers in town.

"He's pretty good," Charipar said about Boddicker, who grew up in Norway. "He knows what he's talking about. He helps me and I try to listen as best I can and be coachable."

Charipar plans to play baseball at Ellsworth Community College and ultimately get a degree in civil engineering at a four-year school.

Sean Murphy went 6-for-7 for the Saints Friday night, including a 3-for-4 showing with two RBIs in the first game and a 3-for-3 performance with two doubles and two more RBIs in the nightcap.

"I'm just trying to do my part as the No. 2 hitter," he said. "I'm just trying to get on base so other guys can hit me in. I didn't even know I was 6-for-7."

"The ball looked like a beachball tonight. I was just kind of locked in."

Gabe Lux, who has solidified the infield as the regular shortstop now, went 2-for-4 in the opener. Jake Guckenberger was 2-for-3 with a double, triple and two RBIs and Schulte drove in two runs.

Sam Meyers went 2-for-3 with three RBIs in the second game. Nolan Butkowski and Kamin also went 2-for-3.

The Saints enjoyed their best week of the season this past week. They swept Waterloo East on Monday, winning both games 12-0, then dropped a tough 2-0 verdict at Dowling on Tuesday.

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They beat North Scott on the road Wednesday night, 9-3, then finished the week with the victories over Wahlert.

"I think the fact that we're playing with extreme confidence right now, at the right time, is a good sign," said Cataldo.