

Kennedy falls to IC West in semis

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 31 July 2015 22:19 - Last Updated Saturday, 01 August 2015 21:10



DES MOINES - The 30 Herkelmans on the Kennedy baseball team walked slowly out of Principal Park in Des Moines Friday night with a whole bunch of crazy mixed-up emotions running through their souls.

There was sadness and disappointment, naturally, but also a great deal of pride for surviving a traumatic week that included the sudden death of assistant coach Bill "Herk" Herkelman.

The sixth-ranked Cougars made too many errors and too many mistakes and lost to eighth-ranked Iowa City West, 5-2, in the semifinals of the Class 4A state tournament.

Kennedy (30-12) committed three errors in the second inning, handing Iowa City West a gift 3-0 lead, and the Cougars were never able to overcome their early mishaps.

Herkelman, 77, died last Friday. His funeral services were Tuesday and the Class 4A state tournament began Wednesday, quite a task for a bunch of high school kids who loved the man.

"It's been crazy," said Kennedy senior Zach Daniels, who threw a whopping 122 pitches in defeat. "I'm definitely going to miss this team, but we've got to move on."

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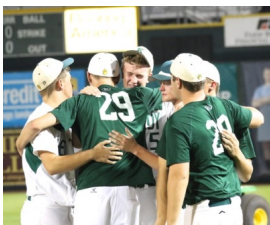
All 26 of Kennedy's players and all four of the coaches wore No. 29 T-shirts during pre-game drills and then under their game jerseys in tribute to Herkelman, who spent 36 years with the Kennedy baseball program as either an assistant coach or head coach.

Head coach Bret Hoyer, who called Herkelman the godfather of Kennedy baseball, was extremely proud of the way his players handled their sad duties the past week and kept moving forward.

"I'll just remember the support the kids gave the coaches," he said. "It was special."

Daniels struck out the first two batters in the top of the second inning and nearly fanned Shane Sturtz, the No. 9 batter in the lineup, to end the inning, but Daniels did not get the call on a close pitch and Sturtz ended up drawing a walk.

"I thought I got him on a fastball and that would have gotten us out of the inning," said Daniels. "It just went out of control from there."



Sturtz stole second base and scored when a routine grounder by Kevin DeLaney went between Kennedy second baseman Sammy Lizarraga's legs for an error. Daniels tried to pick DeLaney off first base, but made a bad throw and DeLaney raced all the way around the bases as the ball rolled into the bullpen.

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Daniels brushed Izaya Ono-Fullard with a pitch and gave up a single to Spencer Wiskus, putting runners at first and third. Connor McCaffery hit a ground ball to Kennedy third baseman Bryce Church, but Church threw the ball into right field in an attempt to force courtesy runner Mason Carter at second base and Ono-Fullard trotted home to make it 3-0.

"We've got to make routine plays and we didn't," said Hoyer. "It's unfortunate. It might have been a different ballgame had we made the plays we normally make."

Kennedy pulled within 3-1 in the fourth inning on a sacrifice fly by Kyle Brewer, driving in Tyler Dralle. The Cougars put runners on first and second with one out in the fifth, but Tanner Lohaus got two strikeouts to end the threat.

Iowa City West scored twice in the top of the seventh for a 5-1 lead on a two-run, two-out single by Joe Scott. Daniels could have escaped the inning unscathed, but an errant throw on a possible double play kept the inning alive.

Kennedy scored in the bottom of the seventh on a double off the left-field wall by Bryce Church and a wild pitch to make it 5-2, but that was the end of the line.

Kennedy played in the state tournament for the 16th time and reached the semifinals for the ninth time.

"It's indescribable how proud I am of them, particularly with what we went through at the end of the season," said Hoyer. "It was a special group of players."

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Iowa City West (34-11) will face Southeast Polk (32-13) in the finals Saturday night.

Iowa City West 030 000 2 - 5 8 1

Kennedy 000 100 1 - 2 5 3

W - Lohaus (8-2). L - Daniels (4-2). S - Ono-Fullard.