

Hoyer gets 500th as Cougars win MVC title

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 09 July 2011 01:58 - Last Updated Saturday, 09 July 2011 02:05



WATERLOO - The Cedar Rapids Kennedy baseball team returned from Waterloo Friday night with a Mississippi Valley Conference title, a coaching milestone and three more home runs by Austin Christensen.

The seventh-ranked Cougars destroyed Waterloo West, 18-3 and 20-3, to win the Mississippi Division title in the MVC and give Coach Bret Hoyer his 500th victory in 19 years as Kennedy's head coach.

Kennedy finished the conference race with a 21-5 record, two games ahead of Dubuque Wahlert, to capture the seventh league title in school history and the fifth in the last nine years.

"That's one of our goals all year: Win the conference," said Christensen, who slugged the 16th, 17th and 18th homers of his record-breaking campaign. "It's been a battle the last couple of weeks with Wahlert, and now the most important part of the season starts next week."

Christensen was referring to the Class 4A playoffs, which start July 15, but the Cougars have an intriguing matchup with the Solon Spartans Saturday night and a doubleheader with No.6 Pleasant Valley on Tuesday before the playoffs begin.

Saturday night's game against Solon is a battle of state champions. Kennedy won the Class 4A title last summer and Solon captured the Class 2A crown before moving this year to Class 3A, where they are ranked No.1 in the state.

The game is scheduled for 7 p.m. at Kennedy Field.

"I'm really looking forward to the challenge," Hoyer said. "I know our kids are excited about it. It

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should be a lot of fun."

Hoyer collected his 500th victory at Kennedy in the first game Friday night. He's now 501-257 in 19 years with the Cougars and 565-295 in 22 years overall.

"I'm pretty happy about it," Hoyer said about the milestone. "I've been around a bunch of great coaches and some very talented players. I just try not to get in their way."

The Kennedy players were aware of the milestone. "He's a great coach," Christensen said, "and I know he'll get a lot more, too."

Christensen smashed two home runs in the opener, with a two-run shot to right field in the first inning and a two-run blast to center in the fifth. He walloped another two-run homer in the nightcap, this time to left field.

Christensen is hitting .534 (unofficially) with 18 homers and 50 RBIs in 36 games. He struggled somewhat in recent games, but found his stroke against the struggling Waterloo West pitchers.

"I've been getting a little frustrated with myself, and that's what you can't do in baseball," he said. "You've got to stay confident."

"I just went up there and tried to relax and have good swings on the ball. Baseball is a very simple game. You've got to keep it simple."

Terrell Sykes went 3-for-4 with three runs and two RBIs in the opener. Griffin Michael was 3-for-5 with two runs. David Yancey went 2-for-4 and hit a solo home run and Devon Jacobus was 2-for-4 with two RBIs.

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Kennedy (28-8) won the first game in six innings, then made a quick getaway by taking the nightcap in five innings. The Cougars scored nine runs in the first inning of the nightcap and cruised from there.

Logan Ambrosy went 3-for-5 with a single, double and triple. He scored three runs and collected five RBIs.

Sykes drove in three runs, Jimmy Lizarraga scored three runs, Michael had two more hits and Josh Jahlas had two hits. Yancey and Judson Rhoades had two RBIs.

Alex Hayden and Nick Appleget were the winning pitchers. Hoyer would have used Christensen in the nightcap if the Cougars had needed their ace on the mound to clinch the conference title, but the Cougars claimed the crown when they won their opener and Wahlert lost the first game of a doubleheader against Xavier.

Christensen is scheduled to be the starting pitcher against Solon Saturday night in the battle of state champs.

"It's one that we've been waiting for all year," he said. "Obviously, they're one of the best teams in the state, no matter what division. They have a lot of studs on their team. It will be a fun game to play."

Solon has a 31-3 record this season and is 72-5 the past two years. The Spartans returned their entire starting lineup from last season, including University of Iowa signees Derrick Loveless and Nick Day.

"We're definitely excited," Michael said. "We've played with them in different fall leagues and stuff. They're excited, we're excited, and we're hoping there's going to be a lot of people there."

Kennedy has compiled a 60-18 record the last two years, including a 32-10 mark last season.

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Waterloo West fell to 7-29 overall and 5-21 in the conference.

Game 1

KENNEDY (18)

Sykes, 2b, 4 3 3 2, A. Christensen, rf, 3 4 2 4, Jacobus, 3b, 4 1 2 2, Michael, ss, 5 2 3 1, Bell, 1b, 5 1 1 1, Yancey, lf, 4 2 2 1, Maiers, c, 3 1 0 0, Ambrosy, cf, 0 0 0 0, Jahlas, cf, 4 2 1 1, Benson, dh, 2 2 1 1. Totals 34 18 15 13.

WATERLOO WEST (3)

Brown, cf, 3 1 1 1, Vaughn, ss, 3 1 2 0, Fricke, c, 1 0 0 1, Paige, cr, 0 0 0 0, Bush, 1b, 3 0 1 1, Stokes, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Trebon, p, 2 0 0 0, Ruffcorn, 2b, 0 0 0 0, Kullen, rf, 3 0 0 0, Fisher, dh, 2 1 1 0, Heyerhoff, 2b/p, 0 0 0 0, P. Christensen, lf, 2 0 0 0. Totals 21 3 5 3.

Kennedy 321 066 - 18 15 0

Waterloo West 000 120 - 3 5 7

Hayden, Taylor (6) and Maiers. Trebon, Heyerhoff (6) and Fricke. W - Hayden. L - Trebon. 2B - Sykes, Jacobus, Michael, Jahlas, Brown, Fisher. HR - A. Christensen 2, Yancey. SB - Sykes, Christensen, Bell, Jahlas 2.

Game 2

KENNEDY (20)

Sykes, 2b, 1 2 1 3, Hayden, 2b, 1 0 1 0, Rhoades, ph, 1 1 1 2, A.Christensen, rf, 2 1 1 2, Unash, ph, 1 0 0 0, Jacobus, 3b, 2 1 0 0, Winters, ph, 1 0 0 0, Michael, ss, 4 2 2 1, Johnson, ph, 0 0 0 0, Bell, 1b, 3 1 1 1, Seubert, ph, 1 0 0 0, Taylor, 1b, 0 0 0 1, Yancey, lf, 3 2 2 2, Benson, ph, 0 1 0 0, Ambrosy, cf, 5 3 3 5, Jahlas, dh, 3 3 2 1, Lizarraga, c, 0 3 0 0. Totals 28 20 14 18.

WATERLOO WEST (3)

Brown, cf, 2 1 1 0, Paige, ph, 1 0 0 0, Vaughn, ss, 2 2 2 0, Fricke, c, 2 0 1 2, Paige, cr, 0 0 0 0, Bush, 1b, 1 0 0 0, Stokes, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Kullen, rf, 2 0 0 0, Fisher, dh, 2 0 0 0, Heyerhoff, 2b, 2 0 0 0, P. Christensen, lf, 1 0 0 0, Carlson, ph, 1 0 0 0. Totals 18 3 4 2.

Kennedy 942 05 - 20 14 1

Waterloo West 201 00 - 3 4 3

Appleget, Lloyd (4), Yancey (5) and Lizarraga. Brauer, McClain (2) and Fricke. W - Appleget. L - Brauer. 2B - Sykes, Michael, Bell, Yancey, Ambrosy, Vaughn. 3B - Ambrosy. HR - A. Christensen. SB - Sykes.