

Healthy Butz delivers for Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 25 March 2016 21:05 -



Tyler Butz was playing catch before the first game of the season for the Kirkwood Eagles last year in Kansas when he felt a sharp pain in his right elbow.

He played anyway that day and appeared in a few games after that on Kirkwood's spring trip to Florida, but an MRI revealed that he'd torn the ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) in his elbow and needed surgery.

Butz, a Cedar Rapids Prairie grad, was granted a medical red-shirt for the 2015 campaign and returned this season as a third-year sophomore to try and resurrect his baseball career.

Butz and the Eagles are sure glad he did.

Butz delivered a two-out, two-run double in the bottom of the seventh inning Saturday to give Kirkwood a 4-3 victory over Ellsworth in the first game of an ICCAC conference double-header at the Kirkwood field.

The Eagles won the second game, 7-3, in the conference opener.

Butz was mobbed by his happy teammates after his line drive with the bases won the game.

"It was pretty special," said Butz, "especially the first game back here. I couldn't ask for anything more."

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"It feels really good to be able to play again."

Butz, a right-handed batter, hit his shot to the opposite field and had a good look when it landed just inside the foul line.

"She was about three or four inches fair. It was pretty close," he said, smiling. "I think the wind kind of held it up there."

Butz was the DH and hit fourth in the lineup Saturday, but his arm has recovered and he also plays first base for Kirkwood (15-7, 2-0). He's batting .326 this season with 11 RBIs in 16 games.

"You know what? I couldn't be happier for him," said Kirkwood Coach Todd Rima. "For him to get that hit, in that situation, I think that's exactly what he needs. He's fought through a lot of adversity the last 12 months."

Butz could have left Kirkwood after two years for a four-year college, but he wanted to give baseball another shot with the Eagles.

"In that scenario, we always leave it up to the kid and what they feel is best," said Rima. "He sat down with his family and thought this was the best thing for him to do."

"We're glad that he's here. We're a better baseball team because he's here."

Kirkwood got strong pitching in both games of the double-header against Ellsworth (3-20, 0-2).

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Nick Drahozal allowed only one earned run in six innings in the opener and Zach Morrissey got the victory in relief. Ethan Howard allowed only two earned runs in the nightcap and got the victory, with relief help from Drew Yanecek, Ben Milks, Morrissey and Daniel Checo.

"That's the strength of our team," said Rima. "We have a lot of depth on the mound."

Kirkwood catcher JT Sole, a transfer from the University of Iowa, belted a solo home run for the Eagles in the first game. Brandon Brittain had two hits in the opener with a double.

Bryce Grimm and Luke Hassman had two hits for Kirkwood in the nightcap.

Kirkwood and Ellsworth are scheduled to play another twin-bill Saturday at 1 p.m. at Kirkwood.

Game 1

Ellsworth R H 210 000 0 - 3 5 1
Kirkwood R H E 011 000 2 - 4 6 2

W - Morrissey. L - Amos

Game 2

Ellsworth R H 000 200 100 - 3 7 3
Kirkwood R H E 100 103 02x - 7 8 1

W - Howard. L - Bentley.

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