

## Meyers belts 2 slams for Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 09 July 2016 06:19 -

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Sam Meyers had never hit a grand slam in a baseball game before Friday night.

Now he's done it twice.

Meyers belted two slams in the same game Friday as the Saints slaughtered Waterloo West, 24-0, in 3 1/2 innings in the nightcap of their Mississippi Valley Conference doubleheader at Ken Charipar Field.

The Saints also coasted in the first game, 12-0, in 4 1/2 innings.

Meyers socked his first grand slam in the bottom of the first inning of the nightcap when the Saints scored 15 runs. With such a big early lead, Coach Bob Cataldo began emptying his bench and used a pinch-hitter for Meyers in the second inning.

"I didn't want him to get a big head," the coach joked later.

Cataldo had already decided to give Meyers another chance to hit in the third inning, and sure enough Meyers deposited another grand slam over the fence in left field for two slams and eight RBIs in one game.

Meyers really enjoyed that second trip around the bases, especially when he spotted his teammates gathered at home plate to greet him after his remarkable feat.

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"I just saw them smiling and I couldn't stop smiling myself," he said. "I was just laughing and having a good time. That's what baseball is: Having fun."

The Saints are certainly having fun now. Once mired with a 3-20 record, they've won eight of their last 10 games and have raised their record to 11-22-1 with the postseason approaching.

"It's crazy," said Meyers. "We're getting hot. We all knew we could do it, we all knew we were this good."

"We're just coming together as a team," he said. "We were playing individual baseball at the beginning of the year. Now we're really kind of clicking. The team chemistry has gone way up."



The Saints sent 21 batters to the plate in the first inning of the nightcap. They scored their 15 runs on six hits, five walks, four hit-batters and three errors by Waterloo West.

The Saints scored three more times in the second inning and added six runs in the third. Cataldo used pinch-hitters for all nine of his starters and did everything he could to minimize the onslaught, but he couldn't tell his players to make an out on purpose.

Bryce Charipar, who pitched three scoreless innings in the nightcap, got the victory and collected a three-run double. Nolan Butkowski also drove in three runs for the Saints.

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Meyers hit both of his home runs to left field.

"The first one, I wasn't sure it was out because it was at the tallest part of the fence, so I didn't know if it was far enough,' he said. "But the second one I could tell it was gone.

"I was seeing the ball really well tonight. I could feel it off the bat."

Meyers did not mind yielding his spot in the lineup to a pinch-hitter with the game already out of hand.

"I really wasn't that upset," he said. "There are guys in there that have been practicing hard and they deserved at-bats too. We were up quite a bit."

Butkowski got the Saints started in the first game when he homered on the first pitch he saw as the leadoff batter in the bottom of the first inning. The Saints scored two more runs in the second inning, six runs in the third and three more in the fourth.

Butkowski, Sean Murphy, Bryce Schulte, Nick Stark and Jake Guckenberger all had two hits in the opener. Butkowski drove in four runs, Murphy drove in three runs and Guckenberger had two RBIs.

Schulte tossed a four-hit shutout with six strikeouts for the victory.

The Saints are a different ballclub now after a rough start to the season, but Cataldo does not wish he could push a button and start the year all over.

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"No," he said, "because I don't think you get to this point without going through what we went through in that part of the season. You'd like to play your best baseball at all times, but that's not reality.

"We had a lot of growing pains, a lot of coming together that had to happen," he said. "I think when you get beat up enough, as a team you start to look around and say, 'This is all we got.'

"It's the guys on the bench, it's the guys on the field, it's the guys in the uniform that you have to rely on, and I think that helped us going through some of that. It's amazing how often these kids got knocked down and just got back up."

The Saints finished the MVC campaign with an 8-17-1 record in league games. Waterloo West fell to 7-30 overall and 4-22 in the league.

Xavier will host Clinton in a makeup game Monday night. Tuesday night's scheduled game against Davenport Assumption has been switched to a sophomore doubleheader.

The Saints open the Class 3A district tournament next Friday at 7 p.m. against DeWitt Central in DeWitt.