

## Stars closing in on IVL repeat

Written by Metro Sports Report

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WILLIAMSBURG - "We knew today was big."

Stars player/coach Chico Lizarraga's comment as he packed away his catcher's gear reflected his team's mindset here Sunday.

Williamsburg came into the Iowa Valley League doubleheader one game behind the Stars in the league standings. The Red Sox resurgence had them thinking about a league title.

Cody Bell ended those thoughts, showing the mindset referenced by Lizarraga with both his arm and his bat.

In the opener, Bell escaped a no-out, bases-loaded situation as the Stars came away with a 3-2 victory. The nightcap saw Bell blast a three-run homer to break open a close game, as the Stars completed the sweep with a 10-4 triumph.

The wins pushed the defending league champions to 11-5 with two weeks remaining in the regular season. Williamsburg, which lost two games earlier in the season to rain, fell to 7-7.

"These wins put us where we want to be," a tired, but happy Lizarraga said after the sweep. "We got off to a little bit of a slow start this year, but our hitting and pitching have come around and we're playing good baseball at the right time."

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One guy coming around is Bell. Last year's league MVP, Bell flashed his many talents on Sunday. He entered the opener, replacing Austin Czerwiec in the seventh with one runner on. Bell hit Cam Frazier with a pitch and Hogan Penny reached on a bunt single to load the bases.

"At that point I just wanted to throw strikes and try and get ahead," Bell said. "Once I found it, I had my command from that point on."

Bell proceeded to strike out Nolan Arp and Truman Schmitt before getting Garrett Saunders, who had homered earlier in the game, to pop out weekly to second to end the game.

"We got off to a good start, scoring three runs, but (Williamsburg) kept chipping away," Lizarraga said. "We put in Bell for the seventh inning and we had confidence he would get the job done."



Bell and John Thomas had RBI singles in a two-run first. The lead grew to 3-0 when Jacob Henry singled home Thomas, who had doubled, with two outs in the fourth.

Neil Marshall doubled home Arp in the Williamsburg fourth. Saunders led off the sixth with his shot over the wall in left, setting the stage for the seventh.

Henry went 3-for-3 and Thomas 2-for-3 in the victory.

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The offenses for both teams started off hot in Game 2. Alex Hayden's two-run single gave the Stars a 3-0 lead in the top of the first. Williamsburg batted around in its half of the first, scoring four times to take the lead.

From that point on, Stars starter Blake Hargens settled in. He didn't allow a hit over the next four innings before giving way to Blake Willenborg who allowed just one hit over the rest of the way.

Bell's three-run homer, a blast that cleared the fence in left with ease, capped a five-run fourth for the Stars. They added two more runs in the fifth. Adam Stolley went 3-for-4 and Thomas 2-for-4.

"We've been here before," Bell said after the sweep. "We all knew what was at stake today and we went out and got the job done."

The Stars continue their run for the title next Sunday with a 1 p.m. twinbill against Watkins at Kennedy. Williamsburg travels to Norway for a 5 p.m. doubleheader.