

Daniels tames Keller and Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 26 May 2014 21:12 - Last Updated Monday, 26 May 2014 21:28

The Major League scouts came to watch Mitch Keller Monday, but Zach Daniels stole the show.

Daniels tossed a superb one-hitter as Kennedy topped Keller and the Saints, 5-0, in the semifinals of the Metro Baseball Tournament at Ken Charipar Field.

Linn-Mar will face Jefferson in the other rain-delayed semifinal Tuesday at 5 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Stadium, with Kennedy facing the winner at 7 p.m.

Keller has been assured by Major League teams he'll be selected in the early rounds of the draft June 5 and scouts flocked to Xavier High School for another look at his 95 mph fastball and sharp-breaking curve.

Keller did not disappoint, but the Cougars scored a run against him in the top of the sixth inning for a 1-0 lead and he moved to shortstop in the seventh inning after having thrown 101 pitches.

Kennedy scored four more runs in the top of the seventh to bust it open, and meanwhile Daniels was unhittable with a steady diet of fastballs and breaking balls at the knees.

Daniels carried a no-hitter into the bottom of the seventh with a 5-0 lead. He struck out the first batter, but Matt Clarahan hit a high chopper that Kennedy shortstop Derek Jacobus charged and tried to field on a short hop on a do-or-die play.

The ball caromed off Jacobus' glove and was rightfully called a base hit. It would have taken a

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spectacular play to get the out, but Jacobus thought it should have been an E6 and a no-hitter for Daniels.

"That's an error. You know that's an error," Jacobus insisted after the game, trying to help his pitcher.

Daniels would have liked the no-hitter, especially against Keller and the Saints, but he wasn't upset by the ruling and had some fun with it.

"Oh, I think it's an error," he said with a good-natured smile. "It's a routine play for him."

Daniels cannot match Keller's fastball, but he had terrific control for most of the game. He walked one batter, hit another and allowed an infield hit the entire game and needed only 74 pitches in seven tidy innings.

The Saints got only one batter as far as second base all day.

"Every pitch was working," said Daniels. "I was just trying to hit the mitt and locate my pitches, because I don't throw over-powering fastballs."

Daniels had a good season for Kennedy last season as a sophomore, but he raised his game to another level Monday when all of the eyes initially were on Keller.

"I wasn't worried about him," said Daniels. "I was just trying to get our team to the championship tomorrow."

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The Cougars were aggressive in the batters box, taking good cuts (for the most part) at Keller's fastballs and making him work on the mound. Keller needed 59 pitches to get through three innings as the Cougars worked the pitch count.

"We were ready for him," said Daniels, who had two hits against Keller. "We've seen him before, so we were just trying to jump on the fastball."

Daniels led off the top of the sixth inning with an infield single against Keller. He advanced to second base on a grounder, stole third base and scored when Sammy Lizarraga hit a hard ground ball to the right of Xavier second baseman Colin O'Connell.

O'Connell made a nice back-hand play on Lizarraga's ground ball and got the out at first base, but Daniels scored easily to break the scoreless duel.

Daniels retired the side 1-2-3 in the bottom of the sixth. The Cougars scored four times in the top of the seventh for a comfortable 5-0 lead, giving Daniels a chance to breathe a lot easier in the bottom of the seventh.

"Zach Daniels threw a great game," said Keller. "He kept it down and we couldn't touch him. He did really good."

Kennedy Coach Bret Hoyer visited Daniels on the mound after Clarahan got his scratch hit, just to make sure everything was OK.

"He really got better as the game went along," said Hoyer. "That's a good sign."

"They're a terrific team, and for him to throw a one-hitter is really encouraging."

Keller struck out six batters in six innings, with four of the strikeouts coming on sharp curveballs. He allowed only four hits and walked two batters.

Keller is accustomed to pitching in front of Major League scouts at Perfect Game showcases and other events, so he wasn't bothered by having the radar guns in town Monday. "Twenty scouts is kind of normal now," he said.

"That didn't really affect me at all."

Keller figures he has a win-win situation as the draft approaches. He'll either like what happens in the draft and sign a professional contract, or he'll leave for summer school at the University of North Carolina June 15 and get ready for his college career.

"If the money is right and the round is right, then I'll go to pro ball," he said.

Keller has spoken with numerous Major League teams and might visit the Milwaukee Brewers and Kansas City Royals May 31 and June 1 to meet with the general managers and team personnel. He thinks a basic agreement could be reached quickly once he's drafted.

"On draft day, once I hear my name, we'll already have a deal done, basically," he said.

Kennedy defeated Mount Vernon, 6-1, and Xavier belted Prairie, 13-2, in five innings in the opening round Monday at Xavier.

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Linn-Mar blanked Washington, 2-0, and Jefferson topped Marion, 5-1, in the opening round at Jefferson. Linn-Mar and Jefferson never got started in the semifinals and will meet at Veterans Memorial Stadium Tuesday at 5 p.m., with the winner facing Kennedy in the finals at 7.

GAME 1

KENNEDY (6): Jacobus, ss, 4 1 1 0, Daniels, 2b, 4 2 2 0, Stevens, rf, 3 2 2 1, Lizarraga, dh, 3 0 0 1, Sass, 3b, 4 0 1 2, Moa, lf, 4 0 0 0, Cunningham, 1b, 2 0 1 0, Dralle, ph, 1 0 0 0, Brewer, cf, 2 0 0 0, Divis, c, 2 0 0 0, Fifield, cr, 0 1 0 0. Totals 29 6 7 4.

MOUNT VERNON (1): Ryan, ss, 4 1 0 0, See, c, 4 0 2 1, Eldred, p/3b, 2 0 2 0, Cochrane, cr, 0 0 0 0, Dew, 3b/p, 3 0 0 0, Pisarik, cf, 2 0 0, M.Wirfs, lf, 2 0 0 0, Hale, 1b, 0 0 0 0, C.Wirfs, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Dahlstrom, rf, 2 0 0 0. Totals 24 1 4 1.

Kennedy 003 011 1 - 6 7 2
Mount Vernon 000 010 0 - 1 4 5

Hargens, Neuhaus (6) and Divis. Eldred, Dew (4) and See. W - Hargens. L - Eldred. 2B - Daniels, Stevens, See, Eldred. SB - Jacobus 2, Daniels, Sass.

GAME 2

PRAIRIE (2): Day, c, 3 0 1 0, Rima, pr, 0 0 0 0, Beckman, lf, 3 0 0 0, Mouglin, 3b, 1 1 0 0, Cadena, 1b, 2 1 1 2, Hook, dh, 2 0 0 0, Benson, cf, 1 0 0 0, Kilpatrick, 2b, 1 0 0 0, Boldt, rf, 2 0 0 0, Clark, ss, 2 0 0 0.

Totals 17 2 2 2.

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XAVIER (13): Grimm, cf, 2 0 1 0, Schmidt, pr, 0 1 0 0, Keller, ss, 4 3 2 1, Pick, p, 2 0 1 1, Even, cr/p, 0 2 0 0, Clarahan, dh, 3 2 0 0, Flaherty, 1b, 0 0 0 0, Vega, 3b, Baldus, pr/3b, 1 1 0 0, Drahozal, lf, 2 0 0 0, Robinson, rf, 3 1 1 2, Dlouhy, 2b, 3 1 1 1, Arp, c, 3 1 2 2. Totals 24 13 8 8.

Prairie 000 20 - 2 2 3
Xavier 371 2x - 13 8 0

Milks, Alberts (2), Franklin (3) and Day. Pick, Even (5) and Arp. W - Pick. L - Milks. 2B - Keller, Dlouhy, Arp. HR - Cadena. SB - Benson.

GAME 3

MOUNT VERNON (11): Ryan, ss, 3 2 2 1, See, dh, 2 2 1 0, Eldred, 1b, 4 1 3 0, Dew, 3b, 4 2 2 1, Pisarik, cf/p, 3 0 0 1, M.Wirfs, lf, 2 2 1 2, Booth, 2b, 3 1 1 0, O'Connor, c, 4 0 0 0, Cochrane, cr, 0 0 0 0, Dalstrom, rf, 4 1 1 0. Totals 29 11 11 5.

PRAIRIE (6): Day, c, 4 0 1 0, Rima, cr, 0 1 0 0, Beckman, lf, 3 1 0 1, Mougin, 1b/p, 3 1 1 3, Grade, cr, 0 0 0 0, Yanecek, 3b, 4 0 1 1, Cadena, dh/p, 3 0 0 0, Benson, cf, 2 1 0 0, Kilpatrick, 2b, 2 1 0 0, Boldt, rf, 2 1 0 1, Spengeler, ph, 1 0 0 0, Clark, ss, 3 0 0 0. Totals 27 6 3 6.

Mount Vernon 200 171 0 - 11 11 1
Prairie 060 000 0 - 6 3 2

Ketelsen, Pisarik (4) and O'Connor. Havel-Pisarik, Mougin (3), Milks (5), Hogan (5) and Day. W - Pisarik. L - Milks. 2B - Ryan, Mougin. SB - Yanecek, Benson 2.

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GAME 4

KENNEDY (5): Jacobus, ss, 3 1 1 0, Daniels, p, 4 1 2 0, Stevens, rf, 4 0 1 0, Lizarraga, c, 4 0 1 1, Brewer, cr, 0 0 0 0, Sass, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Moa, lf, 2 1 1 0, Cunningham, 1b, 2 0 0 0, Dralle, cf, 3 1 1 1, Fifield, 2b, 3 1 0 0. Totals 29 5 7 2.

XAVIER (0): Grimm, cf, 3 0 0 0, Keller, p/ss, 2 0 0 0, Schmidt, cr, 0 0 0 0, Pick, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Clarahan, ss, 3 0 1 0, Hammerberg, p, 0 0 0 0, Callahan, p, 0 0 0 0, Robinson, rf, 3 0 0 0, Baldus, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Drahozal, lf, 2 0 0 0, Powers, dh, 2 0 0 0, O'Connell, 2b, 0 0 0 0, Arp, c, 1 0 0 0, Even, cr, 0 0 0 0. Totals 21 0 1 0.

Kennedy 000 001 4 - 5 7 1

Xavier 000 000 0 - 0 1 3

Daniels and Lizarraga. Keller, Hammerberg (7), Callahan (7) and Arp. W - Daniels. L - Keller. 3B - Dralle. SB - Jacobus, Daniels, Moa