

Cougars sweep No.2 Trojans at 'Herk' Field

Written by Jim Ecker

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Bill Herkelman did not want to make any fancy speeches Monday night. In fact, he was afraid all the fuss being made about the newly christened "Herk Field" at Kennedy would detract from the games being played between the Cougars and Iowa City West.

Hundreds of his friends, former Kennedy players and admirers were delighted to honor the loveable "Herk," the man who spent 52 years in a classroom and a major portion of his life as a Kennedy head coach and now an assistant.

Kennedy renamed the field in Herkelman's honor Monday as a lasting tribute to his contributions to the Cougars and the game he loves.

"It's just tremendous," he said following the ceremony, which was held between games of the doubleheader. "To have all my family here. I didn't even know they were coming.

"My dad is 99 years old. He got down in the dugout. He's just all over the place. He's just unbelievable. That was really something."

Herkelman, 76, compiled a 318-224 record in 16 seasons as Kennedy's head coach from 1977 to 1992, with five Metro titles, two Mississippi Valley Conference championships and two trips to the state tournament. He's also

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served two stints as one of Kennedy's assistant coaches, originally from 1968 through 1976 and again from 2005 to the present.

For the record, Kennedy swept the Mississippi Valley Conference doubleheader from the second-ranked Trojans with a pair of 1-0 victories.



Sammy Lizarraga tossed a neat four-hit shutout in the first game and Zach Daniels tossed a six-hit shutout in the second contest.

They had special Herkelman T-shirts and Herkelman baseball cards at the ballpark. A long line of his former players joined him on the field during the ceremony, along with this year's team, the Iowa City West ballclub, family members and special guests.

Herkelman's wife, Kristine, and his father, Buster, joined the man of honor on the field, along with Herkelman's children and grand-children.

Kennedy athletic director Aaron Stecker and Kennedy baseball announcer Rich Paterson said a few words in Herk's honor as the Coach smiled and soaked it in, but he never took the microphone himself.

"Oh no-no-no-no," he said later. "No speeches."

Herkelman knew the field was going to be named in his honor this season, but said he did not

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know it would be Monday night until the day it actually happened.

"I don't want to take anything away from the game," he said after Kennedy's 1-0 victory in the opener. "It was a heck of a game, that first game. I hope people don't overlook that game.

"That pitching. And two good teams. Two of the better teams in Iowa playing each other. One to nothing. I hope this doesn't take away from that game."

Herkelman said Kennedy played its games at Noelridge Park in 1968 before the newly opened school could build its own field. "We put up a picket fence out there in left field," he recalled.

Bret Hoyer, who succeeded Herkelman as Kennedy's head coach in 1993, invited Herkelman to get involved with the program again nine years ago and Herk has been by Hoyer's side ever since, including the state championship year in 2010.

Herkelman and Hoyer have been inducted into the Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. Now Herkelman has his name on the field with a handsome new sign, but he expects Hoyer will be honored himself by Kennedy at some point.

"I think in about 20 years they're going to have to have Hoyer's name on there, too," he said. "He'll get his name up there, too. They better, anyway."

Herkelman retired from the classroom in 2012, but has not set a timetable for retiring as a coach.

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"My dad is 99," he said. "I'm only 76."