

Clark injured as No. 10 Eagles split

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 26 April 2018 04:51 -



Cal Clark looked like he'd just fought 15 rounds with Rocky Balboa Wednesday afternoon, but the Kirkwood second baseman vowed to play baseball again this season after suffering six fractured bones in his face after being hit by a pitch against Indian Hills.

The accident happened in the first game of the doubleheader at Kirkwood when Clark was hit by an inside fastball that caught part of his batting helmet and part of the left side of his face.

He stayed at the ballpark for awhile after being treated by the Kirkwood trainer, but then went to the hospital with his mother and returned to the park a few hours later.

Clark's left eye was black-and-blue and completely shut due to the injury. The left side of his face was swollen and he was still trying to staunch a bloody nose.

He appeared to be in good spirits, everything considered, and was embraced by his worried teammates upon his return to the field.

Kirkwood split the twinbill with Indian Hills, winning the second game 6-1 after dropping the opener 6-4.

"I feel OK," he insisted. "It's obviously pretty sore, but it will go away soon."

"I have six fractures, a couple in my nose and a couple under my eye. It's probably going to require surgery, but hopefully I can get that done next week and get some sort of facial protection and be back for the conference tournament."

The regional tournament is scheduled for May 9-14 in Clinton. That's only two weeks away, but

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Clark wants to play. The sophomore from Cedar Rapids Prairie is hitting .314 with four homers and 36 RBIs and has been a steady hand at second base all season.

Clark enjoyed the best day of his college career on Monday when he hit a grand slam and collected nine RBIs in a doubleheader against Northeast Community College, then two days later he was knocked for a loop in his very next plate appearance.

"I will not be giving up," he vowed. "This group of guys - it's the most fun I've had playing the game. A lot of talent, but the big thing is we're a family.

"I know they're going to pick me up. We've picked each other up when we've had injuries early in the year. And I'm very excited to try and get back and get ready to play."

Clark was obviously startled after being hit by the pitch, but stayed on his feet as Coach Todd Rima and the trainer rushed to his side.

"It got on me faster than I could react, obviously," he said. "I've never not been able to get out of the way of a ball before.

"I was a little shocked when it happened," he continued. "Unfortunately it didn't get all of my helmet, but it caught part of my helmet and part of my face.

"But that's just baseball," he said. "It's bound to happen at some point in my life, probably, and we'll see where we go from here."

Clark has signed to play NCAA Division I baseball at Houston Baptist and has been a two-year starter for Kirkwood.

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"The thing about Cal is, you know what you're getting every day," said Rima. "He's really turned himself into a leader. He shows up at the ballpark every day and gives great effort. An unbelievable student.

"Cal represents what it is to be a Kirkwood Eagle," said Rima. "And to see him get hurt, that's a bummer. You hate to see that happen to anybody, and you really hate to see it happen to somebody who represents the program the way he does."

Chili Moseley, one of the most versatile players at Kirkwood, moved from right field to second base after Clark got hit and will become the regular second baseman with Clark on the disabled list. Kirby Kerr, a freshman from Linn-Mar, replaced Moseley in right field.

Kirkwood owned a 4-0 lead after five innings of the opener with solo home runs by Korry Howell, Taylor Jackson and Ellison Hanna, but Indian Hills scored two runs in the sixth inning and added four runs in the seventh for the 6-4 victory.

Jake McLaughlin pitched five strong innings for the Eagles in the first game before walking two batters in the sixth and being replaced. He was charged with two runs and had a no-decision.

Howell went 3-for-4 in the first game and went 3-for-3 with two doubles and two RBIs in the second game, raising his batting average to .366. He belted rockets all day long.

"He was unbelievable," said Rima.

Jackson, Hanna and Ross Kramer had two hits in the opener. Izaya Fullard hit a home run and drove in three runs in the nightcap.

Cal Stalzer (5-3) pitched four strong innings for the Eagles in Game 2 and got the victory. He allowed one run on five hits, with eight strikeouts and no walks.

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Nate Barnes, Trey Cowley and Kaden Wadle did not allow any runs in the final three innings.

Kirkwood raised its record to 32-10-1 with the split. Indian Hills left town at 24-17.

GAME 1

Indian Hills 000 002 4 - 6 9 1

Kirkwood 110 200 0 - 4 11 1

L - Rodruck.

GAME 2

Indian Hills 000 100 0 - 1 7 0

Kirkwood 310 002 x - 6 5 0

W - Stalzer.