

Massner's monster night lifts Norway

Written by Mike Condon

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NORWAY - Kace Massner could have easily been down on Sunday night.

Massner, a redshirt freshman outfielder at the University of Iowa, wasn't one of the players selected to play for the Hawkeyes in the National Baseball Congress World Series in Wichita, Kan., this week.

With his Hawkeye teammates playing in Wichita, Massner took his usual spot in center field for the Norway Bandits as they hosted Iowa Valley League champion Fairfax in a season-ending twinbill.

And did he have a night to remember.

Massner went 6-for-9 in the doubleheader, belting a pair of three-run homers, including a game-tying shot in the bottom of the 10th inning in Game 2, leading the Bandits to a sweep over the Stars, 11-3 and 4-3 in 11 innings.

The sweep allowed Norway to overtake Red Top for second place in the league at 12-8, three games behind Fairfax. Red Top split with Williamsburg on Sunday to finish at 11-9.

Massner obviously would have rather been in Wichita with his Hawkeye teammates on Sunday. If he was disappointed, it certainly didn't show in his play.

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"I just did what I was told," Massner said about not making the trip. "I just keep working every day to get better. I wasn't picked to go to the tournament, but I just came up here with the goal of improving each time I play."

A 6-foot-5, 225-pound left-handed hitter out of Burlington High School, Massner spent last season as a redshirt, rehabbing after undergoing shoulder surgery during his senior year of high school.

"It was a long journey, but I feel a lot better now," he said.



Norway has been a much better team in the second half of the league schedule. The Bandits were 5-5 at the halfway point, but closed 7-3 to pass Red Top for IVL runner-up honors.

After playing earlier in the summer in Quincy, Ill., Massner joined Norway for the second half of the season.

"I like playing in this league," he said. "It is really laid back and relaxed. They play serious baseball, but there isn't a lot of pressure and that allows me to work on the things I need to work on."

In the opener, some sloppy Fairfax defense in the second inning led to four unearned runs for the Bandits. They added two more in the third on a two-run single from Carlos Rivera, and Massner capped a four-run fourth with a tape-measure homer deep over the right-field fence to give Norway a 10-1 advantage.

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"That one felt really good," he said with a smile.

Fairfax suffered a blow near the end of Game 1 when player/manager Chico Lizarraga was hit in the face with a pitch. He was cut and there was swelling.

Lizarraga left to be examined at a Cedar Rapids hospital and there was no report on his condition. It would be a big loss not to have Lizarraga's bat and catching skills available for next week's IABA state tournament if his injuries will not allow him to play.

Game 2 was all about the pitching. Norway's Connor Van Scoyoc and Tony Salato along with Fairfax's Blake Hargens and Adam Lloyd were brilliant on the mound through nine innings. Fairfax threatened in the third, but Cody Williams was thrown out trying to steal home on the back end of a double steal attempt. Norway had only one runner reach third during the first nine innings.

In the visitor's 10th, Tyler Dralle came through with a bases-loaded single, scoring Adam Stolley and David Yancey for Fairfax. Williams scored the third run when Dralle got hung up between first and second before getting tagged out.

Norway's rally in the bottom of the 10th started when Travis Mueller reached on a one-out error and moved to third on a double from Mitch Walser. That brought Massner to the plate and he delivered another blast to right to tie the game.

It finally ended in the 11th. Norway loaded the bases with two outs and Massner at the plate again. Yancey, who came on to start the 11th, bounced a wild pitch back to the screen, allowing Colby Carmichael, who led off the inning with a single, to trot home with the winning run.

"Hopefully we continue to play well," said Massner, who will remain with the Bandits for the IABA tournament. "If we can stay hot, anything can happen in the tournament."