

# **Cole Brannan, Carrollton too much for Calhoun in rivals' baseball clash**

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
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**HARDIN** - A crucial third inning was the difference as the **Carrollton Hawks** beat the **Calhoun Warriors**, 12-2 in six innings on Thursday afternoon in Hardin.

**Cole Brannan** pitched a complete game, while striking out 14 batters, walking four, and gave up five hits.

“I’ve got into my mid-season kind of groove, if you want to call it,” Brannan said.  
“Once I get into it, it’s hard to stop.”

Brannan is now 7-1 on the season with a 1.29 ERA and already one win shy of equaling the number of wins he had last year.

As for the Hawks they now have 19 victories, which is what they finished with last season and have nine games left until the playoffs.

They’re 19-4 and 5-0 in WIVC South play.

“The kids are a year older and that makes a big difference,” **Carrollton coach Greg Pohlman** said. “When they’re freshman they can be a little intimidated, but they learned how to win last year and this year our work ethic is above approach. We come to practice, we work hard.”

Calhoun goes to 13-11 on the season and 6-1 in the conference.

“It was a tale of two things, they put the ball in play and we struck out 14 times and you’re not going to win any games doing that,” Calhoun coach **Casey Longnecker** said.

Carrollton freshman, **Nathan Walker** went 3-for-4 with three singles.

Alex Bowker, Jeremy Watson, Kolton Bottom, and Kyle Watters each had two hits apiece.

“I’ve been working hard in the cages the past couple of weeks and coach has been helping me out with my swing,” Watters said. “I’ve just been seeing the ball better.”

As a team the Hawks swatted 16 hits.

Their bats started out strong as they got two runs in the first inning off Calhoun pitcher, Easton Clark.

In the third inning with two outs and nobody on, the Hawks rallied and got the bases loaded for **Blake Struble**.

With two strikes, Struble fended off a fastball and blooped the pitch in between the pitcher's mound and third base, and beat the throw to first base.

“I just saw it and hit it, and it found a hole. Got lucky,” Struble said.

That was one of three hits for the sophomore as he went 3-for-4 on the day.

Carrollton sprung together two more runs with the ball never leaving the infield, to give them a 5-0 lead.

In the bottom of the third, Calhoun came alive and scored on an RBI single from **Ty Bick**.

After Bick stole second base, the Warriors had runners in scoring position with the heart of the order up with Mitchell Bick, but Brannan bared down.

He proceeded to strike out Bick and then Wes Klocke to escape a potential comeback by Calhoun.

“We pitched out of it, we got into trouble,” Pohlman said. “When you got somebody like Cole on the mound and a pretty good defense behind him we feel like we can get out of any situation at any time.”

Carrollton added two more runs in the fifth inning and then put together a five-run sixth inning that gave them a 12-1 lead.

The Warriors pieced together one last run in the bottom half of the inning, but Brannan struck out the final batter to end the game via the 10-run rule.

“We go on mini runs, but we haven’t sustained a good run. We play well during the week and get to weekends we play a mostly 2A schedule, and we’ve taken some lumps. We’re waiting to catch fire,” Longnecker said. We’re a little short on pitching right now with two of our better pitchers out.”

One of those pitchers is Mitchell Bick.

He’s allowed to hit, but can’t pitch because of a shoulder problem and it’s not clear if he will be able to throw any time soon.

“I hope the best for him,” Brannan said. We’re kind of buddies and we’ve been waiting for this game. I just wish his shoulder would get better so he can pitch against us, but it didn’t turn out that way.”

Calhoun will play at Piasa Southwestern this Saturday at noon.

Carrollton squares off against Bunker Hill at GCS Stadium, home of the Gateway Grizzlies at 6 P.M. on May 2.





[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)