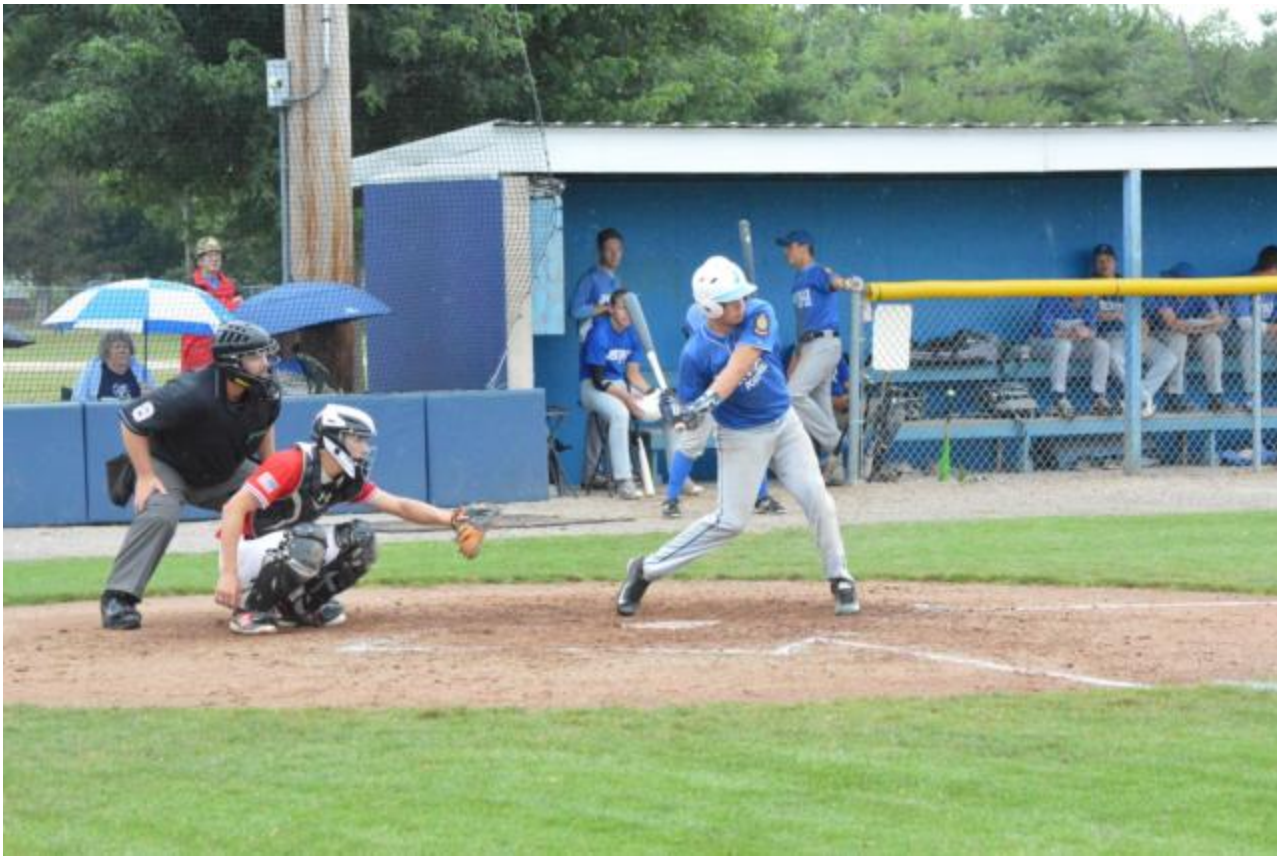




Clayton's four hits, Hampton's pitching lead Bears to 2-0 triumph over Jerseyville

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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JERSEYVILLE – This weekend's scheduled **Firecracker Classic baseball tournament**, which had 15 teams from Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas slated to be competing at three venues over Independence Day weekend, was called off Friday thanks to the weekend's forecast of rain and thunderstorms.

What had been scheduled to be the tournament's opening game between **Jerseyville and the Metro East Bears** American Legion game, was still played at Jerseyville's Ken Schell Field Saturday morning.

For the Bears, who were coming off a tough 4-3 District 22 loss to Belleville Tuesday night, the fact that at least one of the four tournament games they had been assured of playing was being preserved – the Bears had lost several other games this season due to cancellations – gave them a chance to bounce back from Tuesday's loss.

That they did, getting two runs in the top of the first and making them stand up thanks to an excellent outing on the mound from **Brandon Hampton** and a **four-hit day** from **Collin Clayton** as the Bears defeated Jerseyville 2-0 in a nine-inning game.

Hampton didn't give up a hit until the bottom of the seventh when Collin Carey and Cole Berry had back-to-back singles; Hampton struck out five and walked two before giving way to Drake Hampton in the eighth and Devin Colley in the ninth.

“Brandon Hampton has been a hard worker all year,” **Bears manager Ken Schaake** said. “He takes to heart whatever you say to him and tries to make the improvement; he's a totally different pitcher from the first game against Festus (Mo.) about 2-3 weeks ago as to what he was today. He has more velocity on his ball; you can see that when he pitched in Ste. Genevieve and you could see that today.

“He has a little more composure; he still has a little trouble with walks, but to hold this team basically hitless – they had some fly balls and some ground balls – but the hardest-hit ball, I think, was the single by (Jerseyville's Drake) Kanallakan in the last inning. Other than that – I don't want to say they were routine plays – whatever they hit, Collin Clayton made the great play out in right-center and Brandon was pitching a pretty good game; he had good control and hitting his spots.”



Jerseyville's Drake Kanallakan got the ball and kept the Bears at bay himself except for the top of the first; Clayton led off with a single and advanced to second on a grounder by Chance Foss, then came home when Drake Hampton doubled to put the

Bears up 1-0. Tyler Stamer then drove in Drake Hampton with a single for a 2-0 Metro East lead.

“This was a good effort by the kids and we had a couple or three players who don't normally get to play or playing in different positions, and they really stepped up for us,” Schaake said, “whether they got hits for us or not, they played good defense; (Jacob) Kanallakan made a good play running into foul territory from right field, (Tate) Wargo was steady on defense at second base and (Maverick) McSparin made a couple of nice plays on bad throws at first base to get the tag and kept us in the ball game.”

“(Drake Kanallakan) was real good; even the hits they scored off of in the first inning, (Clayton) hit the ball hard and the other one that got down inside the line was hit off the end of the bat,” said Jerseyville manager Darren Perdun. “They had one hard-hit ball and unfortunately for him, they scored two runs, so he pitched great.”

A key moment came in the bottom of the seventh when, following the one-out singles from Carey and Berry, Chace Tallman attempted a sacrifice to get the runners over; Hampton fielded the ball and fired to first, but the ball got away from McSparin and bounced into the outfield, bringing home Carey.

Or so it seemed; the umpires ruled that Tallman had run inside the baseline and interfered with Hampton's throw to first and declared Tallman out, sending Carey back to second and Berry back to first. The decision didn't sit well with Perdun and the Jerseyville supporters.

“That was kind of like our hitting (on the day); it's disappointing that the call was made,” Perdun said. “I felt our guy was on the baseline and I'm sure a lot of other people did, but that's neither here nor there. It does make it a different game, but you can't control that; you can only control what you can control. It was a tough call that went against us, obviously.”

Brandon Hampton went on to retire Daniel Williams to close out the inning and gave way to Drake Hampton, who struck out the side in the eighth before giving up a walk and single to John Woelful and Drake Kanallakan to bring in Colley, who retired the three batters he faced to preserve the win.

Clayton led the Bears with a 4-for-4 day with a run scored; Drake Hampton was 2-for-4 with a RBI and double and Stamer was 2-for-4 with a double and RBI.

The Bears went to 12-4 on the year with the win, while Jerseyville fell to 6-9 on the season; the Bears will take on Ballwin, Mo., in an added game at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at Alton High's Redbird Field before playing Kirkwood, Mo., at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at

Hoppe Park in Edwardsville, then traveling to Belleville East for a 5:30 p.m. Friday game against the Lancer summer team.

