

Kanallakan keeps Jerseyville Legion in tight game against Danville

July 28 2016 9:50 AM



JERSEYVILLE – Drake Kanallakan had a huge assignment Wednesday night, and he did everything he could to pass it with flying colors.

Kanallakan got the ball for Jerseyville's opening game of the **Illinois state American Legion baseball tournament** at Ken Schell Field and performed magnificently, keeping Danville at bay most of the night.

Danville only broke through for three runs in the bottom of the second (having won a coin flip to be home team for the game), and those three runs were enough to send themselves to a 3-1 win over Jerseyville in Wednesday's final first-round game.

The loss sent Post 498 into an elimination game of the double-elimination tournament at noon today against Quincy, who dropped a 3-0 decision to Fox Lake in the game prior to Jerseyville's. Highland, who won the Fifth Division title late last week, also advanced with a 6-0 win over Mt. Prospect in the day's opener; the tournament runs through Saturday, with the winner advancing into next week's American Legion Great Lakes Regional at SIU-Edwardsville's Roy Lee Field, with the Metro East Bears being host team.

"Drake was phenomenal," said Jerseyville manager Darren Perdun. "He pitched his butt off and our kids played their tails off; I'm sure everyone at the tournament looked at Danville's record and might have heard they won 15 (games) in a row and didn't give us much of a chance, but our kids played their tails off. I can't say anything more than how proud I am of them."

Kanallakan was phenomenal; he wound up giving up seven hits and striking out seven Danville hitters while getting some key plays from his defense that kept Jerseyville in the game; Danville did their homework going into the game and knew what they were going to get from Kanallakan.

"Their coach (Allan Shepherd) does a great job," Perdun said. "After the game, he said 'your pitcher's phenomenal', and I totally agree with him. It's unfortunate we couldn't get a couple of big hits when we needed to, but we were right there; that was a great baseball game. I'm sure it was fun to watch."

"I knew we were going to have a good pitcher," Shepherd said. "We knew we were going to have to come after him, and that kid (Kanallakan) was fantastic. We battled him with one of our best and we got the three runs in one inning (the second); I'm glad we did."

"The whole mantra since we got here is that 'we're 0-0'; when you get to the state tournament, and I've been here a few times, it's 0-0. The runs we scored in the past doesn't mean anything; there's not going to be any bad teams here, there's not going to be bad pitching here. I'll take a 3-1 victory as easily as I'll take a 13-1 victory."

Mark Strebin and Skylar Bolten opened the bottom of the second with a one-out single and double, respectively, to get runners at second and third off Kanallakan before Keegan West singled in Strebin to put Danville on top. Blake Vinson then got an infield

hit to drive in Bolten, and when the ball got away, West charged home for a third run to get Danville to a 3-0 lead. Kanallakan then took over, striking out Chase Vinson to end the inning, then holding Danville at bay, getting big double plays to end the third and fourth innings and getting out of jams in the fifth and sixth before striking out the side in the eighth to keep Post 498 in it.

Dylan Dodd and Josh Kimbro themselves came up with big pitches and big plays from their defense to hold off Jerseyville, but Post 498 finally broke through in the top of the eighth when Daniel Williams reached on an error to open the inning, Kurt Hall singled and Zach Benware walked to load the bases on Dodd; Kimbro came in, but Jacob Webb hit into a fielder's choice to throw Benware out at second, but Williams scored to cut the lead to 3-1. Kimbro then fanned Jon Woeful and Kanallakan to end the threat and retired the side in order in the ninth to send Post 498 to the loser's bracket.

Woeful was 1-for-2 for Jerseyville, with Williams going 1-for-3 and Hall 1-for-3 on the night; Kanallakan gave up two earned runs as Jerseyville fell to 8-14 on the year; Danville went to 32-4-1 on the season and take on Mt. Prospect at 7 p.m. tonight; Highland will meet Fox Lake at 3:30 p.m. today following Jerseyville's game against Quincy.

