

# Hawks capture first of two in WIVC-South baseball title series with Warriors 8-4

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
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HARDIN - There is no official WIVC South championship series, but since the 2015 season, the conference has come down to the Calhoun Warriors and the Carrollton Hawks. In 2015, the Warriors outlasted the Hawks by sweeping them. Last year the two schools split the series and finished as co-champions.

Tuesday afternoon, it was Carrollton who came out on top over Calhoun winning 8-4 in Hardin on Tuesday afternoon courtesy of early run support and timely pitching late in the game.

The Hawks lineup was potent once again. Kolten Bottom went 3-for-4 with a RBI and a double. Nathan Walker was 2-for-4 with four RBI, including a three-run triple.

Wes Klocke reached base every time he came up to bat for Calhoun and finished 1-for-1 with a single, two walks, a RBI and two runs scored. Gunner Armbruster, the nine hitter, went 2-for-3.

Carrollton started things off with two runs in the top of the first inning when Bottom singled to right field, and Alex Bowker alertly rounded third base and scored after the Calhoun cut-off man mishandled the incoming throw. Jerrett Smith then singled home Bottom.

Bottom, a 2016 IHSA all-stater took the mound for the Hawks, but he would find this particular outing to be difficult.

“Give Calhoun credit, they put the ball in play and struck out very few times,” Carrollton coach Jeff Krumwiede said. Bottom is a pitch-to-contact pitcher. Unfortunately, we weren’t able to turn those ground balls into outs.”

In the bottom of the first, Conner Gilman laced a line-drive to left field, and despite Walker making a great effort to stab his glove at the ball, he couldn’t grab hold of it. Easton Clark scored on the error from second base, but Bottom held his nerve and got his way out of the jam preserving a 2-1 lead.

After an inning of no runs, the Hawks cranked up their production in the top of the third with another two-run inning. Still, the Warriors added one in the bottom half when A.J. Hillen brought home Wes Klocke from third on a sacrifice fly to make it 4-2 Hawks.

In the top of the fourth inning, Blake Struble, Jeremy Watson, and Bottom hit a series of singles to load the bases for Walker and on the first pitch he roped a line drive into the right-field gap all the way to the fence clearing the bases for a three-run triple. That hit ultimately proved to be the difference.

“I was just glad that the people in front of me got on so I could have the opportunity to hit that,” Walker said.

After the four-run fourth inning, it seemed as though it would be business as usual for the Hawks with a seemingly comfortable 8-2 lead, but that wasn’t to be.

“When we pushed across those last four, we felt like we could relax and wouldn’t have to play a perfect game to get a W and that’s how it worked out,”

Chandler Sievers was pegged for seven earned runs and 11 hits, but credit must be given to the junior hurler, who refused to give up mentally and managed to shutout the Hawks the rest of the way and gave his team a chance for a comeback.

In the bottom of the fifth Calhoun threatened with two men on base with nobody out, but the Hawks executed a 4-6-3 double play. However, during the next at-bat, a passed ball brought the runner from third home and cut the deficit to 8-3.

With one out in the bottom of the sixth inning, Reese Friedel launched a solo home run over the left field fence to make the score 8-4 and temporarily rattled the Hawks. After

the home run, Armbruster and Ty Bick reached base. Despite the pressure building up Bottom struck out Clark but walked Klocke to load the bases for Gilman, who had been hitting the ball hard every time up.

Krumwiede decided to make a pitching change and entrusted Bowker to get the Hawks out of the inning with the bases loaded. Bottom logged 5 and ? innings with three earned runs, three strikeouts, three walks and six hits.

With a 0-2 count on a hanging breaking ball, Gilman hit a deep high fly ball to left field, but Walker was there for the catch to end the inning.

“That’s what he’s done is showing the ability to work quickly and throw strikes. He got ahead 0-2 right away,” Krumwiede said. “I wish he wouldn’t have hung that pitch where he did for Gilman because he came really close to tying the game on that. You gotta have a better location on that pitch, but you can’t argue with the result.”

In the seventh inning, Bowker quickly sent the Warriors down to notch the save and give the Hawks their 18th win of the season and now have an impressive 18-3 record. Calhoun drops to 15-9.

Carrollton looks to claim their first WIVC South outright title since 2012 against the Warriors Thursday in Carrollton at 4:30 pm. Before that, both teams will play separate games today. Calhoun travels to Brussels for a 4:30 pm game with their rivals and Carrollton hosts Pittsfield at 4:30 pm as well.

“Both teams probably think they can play better and they’ll get that chance on Thursday,” Krumwiede said.



