

Hawks explode for 21 runs in thrashing of Wolves in Carrollton Regional baseball semis

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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CARROLLTON - One of the hardest things to do in baseball is to maintain a hot streak through the course of a season. Eventually, you're bound to come back down and suffer for some time, maybe a couple of days, a couple of weeks or an entire season.

Fortunately for the Carrollton Hawks, they may be peaking at the right time after a two-week slump as they decimated the Pleasant Hill Wolves 21-1 in the semifinals of the IHSA Class 1A Carrollton Regional on Wednesday. They move on to play either Greenfield or Nokomis on Saturday at 2 p.m.

"I'm excited about the way we swung the bats. A lot of line drives, and that's what we saw at the beginning of the season," Carrollton head coach Jeff Krumwiede said. I'm happy for the guys that some of them seem to have their strokes back, and we know that can be up and down as we move on to Saturday, but we'll continue to do the same things that we've been doing to try to get ready."

Carrollton came out as strong as they could have just about by plating 13 runs in the bottom of the first inning with 17 batters coming up to bat.

Second basemen Kyle Waters went 3-for-3 with two RBI, a single, double and a triple. Nathan Walker pitched two innings of shutout ball allowing one hit and striking out three hitters. He went 2-for-3 at the plate with three RBI and a double and a triple. Jerrett Smith got on base three times going 2-for-2 and the catcher Hayden Stringer was 2-for-3.

"Waters has been up and down this year, but he's always had a nice stroke and even when he's struggling a little bit there's always a chance he can come out it," Krumwiede said. "I put him back in the two-hole two or three games ago because that's where he started the year at. I moved him out of there because he was struggling. I decided to put him back in and see what happens and we haven't lost since. He has the ability to handle the bat, get a bunt down, makes contact, and today he hit a couple of balls hard."

In the bottom of the first inning Alex Bowker led off with a walk, Waters got on base on a bunt single then Walker drove them in on a double to give the Hawks a 2-0 lead. Kolten Bottom walked, Smith singled home Walker, and Bottom scored from third base on a passed ball.

With a 4-0 lead and Tyler Barnett up at the plate, he drew a walk and Smith crossed home plate as ball four went to the backstop, but a moment later, Ethan Brannan got

caught in a run down. However, as he dove back to third, the catcher's throw sailed well over the third basemen, which allowed Brannan and Barnett to score to get the lead up to 7-0.

"We were able to score in a lot of different ways, and aggressive base running is something we need to make sure we're able to do on Saturday as well," Krumwiede said. "I hate it to see the game get out of hand as it did, but again we needed to come out strong, and that's what the guys did."

Later in the inning, Walker hit an RBI triple, and Barnett connected on a bases loaded three-run triple that gave the Hawks their 13th and final run of the first inning.

In the second inning, it was more of the same as Smith and Stringer drove in RBI doubles to deep left centerfield, while Waters drove in Bowker on another RBI triple.

Walker was relieved of his duties by freshman Garrett Settles, who pitched the last two innings. He struck out three and gave up an earned run in the top of the fourth inning.

In the bottom of the third inning some freshmen got in on the act as Hunter Flowers, Lane Schnettgoecke, and Garrett Settles drove in one RBI each.

"We did our best to treat every game like it's the state championship from here on out and I think the guys did that," Krumwiede said.

Ever since the Hawks defeated the Calhoun Warriors 2-1 on April 27 to claim the WIVC South outright crown, they've been in a tailspin. They topped Triopia in a freak game 18-13 when they were ahead 9-1 in the fifth inning, but gave up ten runs. Eventually, the Hawks scored 5 in the seventh inning to hold on. Carrollton then lost three straight games to Routt (2-1), Springfield Lutheran/Calvary (2-1) and Marquette (4-1).

Since then they turned it around with a solid 3-1 extra inning victory over Brown County on the road and two big wins over Staunton and Central A&M this past Saturday. Those two were particularly interesting as Carrollton defeated Staunton 6-4 in 13 innings and then came from behind to beat Central A&M 13-12 after being down 12-1.

"I've been coaching a long time I've been around a lot of sports and a lot of comebacks and crazy finishes, but we're still talking about it," Krumwiede said.

Staunton was the home team and had a runner in scoring position in the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth innings. Carrollton found a way to hold on and eventually produced a crooked number in the top of the thirteenth inning.

“We kept making big pitches and big defensive plays, and finally we put four runs on the board in the top of the thirteenth. Of course, we can’t make it easy; they had the tying run at first base when we won the game,” Krumwiede said with a laugh. “The ability to play defense and pitch in those pressure-packed innings is what was so amazing to me that we survived that. Road teams don’t win extra innings very often when you don’t score until the thirteenth.”

Against Central A&M, the Hawks emptied their bench, enlisted some freshmen to pitch the rest of the game down 12-1 in the third inning and ended up scoring on a walk-off run to win the game.

Carrollton now has their entire starting pitching staff available, which gives Krumwiede a healthy headache if he’ll use Bottom or Blake Struble to take the hill on Saturday, but most importantly the Hawks appear to be back to where they were early in the season by knocking in runs by the bucket load and playing well all-around.

“Everything we had that was down after the Marquette loss we’ve gotten exactly the medicine we needed,” Krumwiede said.



