

Warriors play with heart, but fall to talented Valmeyer baseball squad 11-6 in sectional

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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GREENVILLE - A coach can't ask for much more when his/her team puts their best effort on the field. That's what the Calhoun Warriors did against the vaunted Valmeyer Pirates in the IHSA Class 1A Greenville Sectional semifinals.

But it wasn't enough as the Warriors bowed out to the Pirates 11-6 at Robert E. Smith Field in Greenville on Wednesday night. Valmeyer will take on the Carrollton Hawks at 11 a.m. on Saturday in Greenville for the right to go to the Super Sectionals.

"It's one of the top teams in the state, and I thought we went punch-for-punch with them," Calhoun head coach Casey Longnecker said. "We had too many walks, hit batters and too many errors. Against good teams like that, you can't have that. That was the difference in the ball game."

Conner Gilman went 2-for-3, and Brandon Baalman went 2-for-4 at the plate.

The Warriors came out strong.

In the bottom of the first inning Gilman ripped a grounder just under the glove of Valmeyer pitcher Cole Juelfs glove and fielded by second basemen Andrew Whipple, but Gilman beat out the throw, and Ty Bick scored the first run of the game that a large contingent of Calhoun supporters enjoyed.

Chandler Sievers shutout Valmeyer in the first two innings, but in the top of the third, the Pirate bats were ready to pounce the second time around the lineup. They plated four runs, and it could've been worse, but Sievers worked his way out of the inning with the bases loaded.

“In regular season games these guys would have dropped their heads and made things worse, but they fought back and answered the bell every time,” Longnecker said. “You can't ask for anything else than that.”

The Warriors picked up their pitcher in the bottom half with a huge two-out rally, including a two-run single by sophomore Trenton Buchanan that tied the game up at four apiece. However, Valmeyer retook the lead in the fourth on a bases loaded passed ball, but once again Sievers

Calhoun had the bases loaded with one out in the bottom of the fourth but couldn't do any damage, but they would get another chance in the fifth.

With runners on second and third with one out, Gunnar Armbruster hit a sacrifice fly to left field that scored Easton Clark and then Bick gave the Warriors the go-ahead lead on a shallow fly ball that was just out of the reach of Ryan Brinkman's glove. Calhoun had six more outs to advance, but once again Valmeyer would answer back in a big way.

Sievers hit four batters and walked one, but it was Calhoun's defense that committed five errors, which is usually punished in the playoffs and that was the case last night.

“One through nine they are all solid hitters,” Longnecker said. “We gave them few too many freebies, and that was the big difference in the game. It seemed we put too many guys on base.”

A double-steal tied the game, and then Tyler Kempfer hit what would be the game-winning RBI as he nearly hit a Sievers pitch over the face, but it was instead a two-run double, and that would be the end of Sievers night. He logged five innings struck out three and gave up eight earned runs and nine hits.

Drew Baalman came into pitch, and Valmeyer added two more runs before the inning was over.

Calhoun got men on base but failed to score in each of the last innings.

The Warriors finished with a record of 21-17, but this season will be remembered as the season Calhoun won their first ever regional championship. That will be something that the young guns waiting for their turn can look forward to achieving more often going forward.

“I told the young guys that we got here, we got over the hump and we have to strive to do it every year,” Longnecker said. “We have to work our butts off and get back to the same place next year.”



