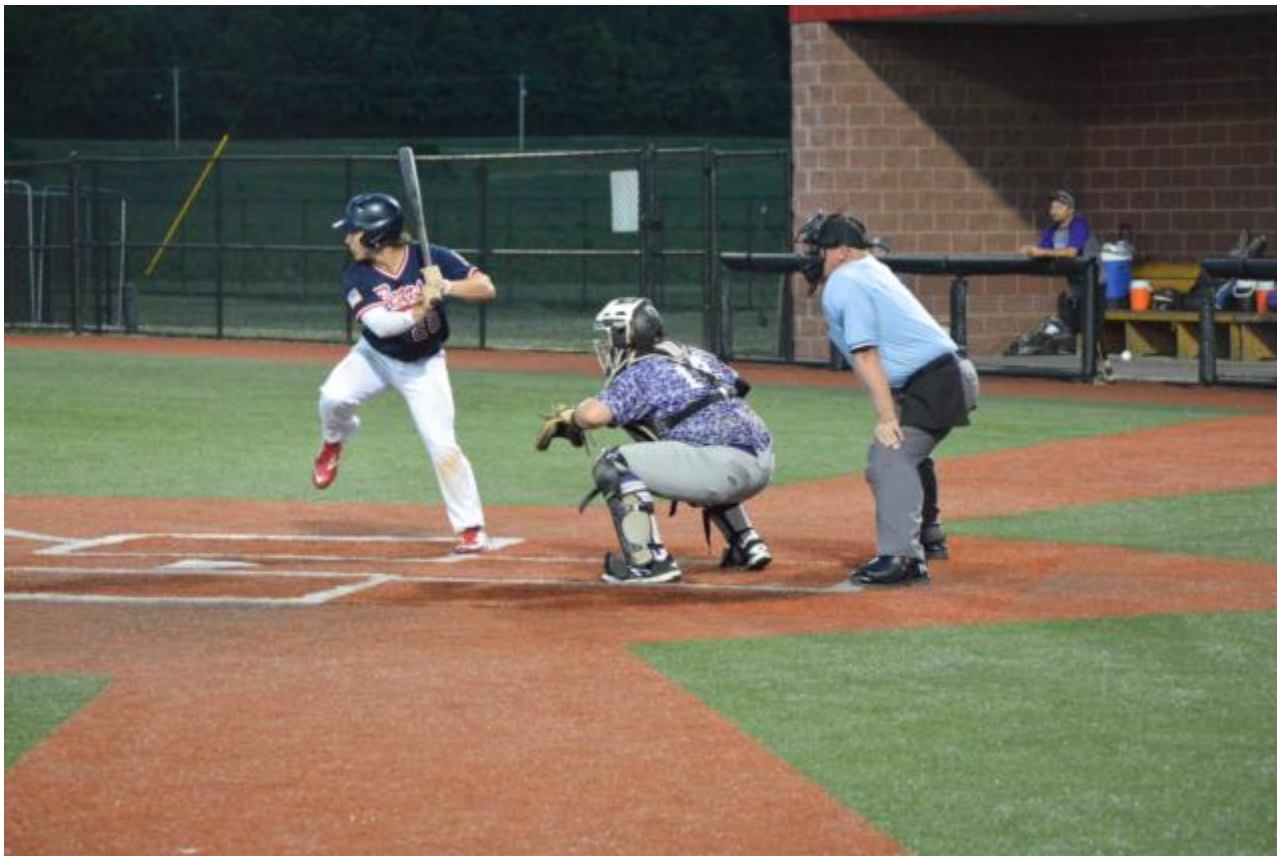


Five-run second inning helps propel Bears ahead in state tourney

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
July 28 2017 7:15 AM



RANTOUL – The Metro East Bears established things early with a five-run bottom of the second and went on to eliminate Arlington Heights 8-1 Thursday evening in the Illinois American Legion state baseball tournament at Wabash Park in Rantoul.

The Bears advanced to a 2 p.m. Friday winner's bracket contest against Danville for the right to advance to Saturday morning's final; should the Bears lose, they would have to play a 5:30 p.m. elimination game against either Peoria or Barrington for a spot in the

final, which is set for 10:30 a.m. Saturday; a second game, if needed, would be played at 2 p.m. Saturday.

“We had a really good day at the plate,” said Bears manager Ken Schaaake. “We got to a 6-0 lead on them (through four innings) and if you can get a lead on someone like that, it can make things tough on them. We just kept the ball in play and if you can do that, good things will happen.”

Andrew Frank threw the first seven innings, with Tyler Lewis tossing the final two innings. “After Andrew settled in, he really helped contain their offense,” Schaaake said.

The Bears started out the second inning loading the bases on Arlington Heights pitcher John Carpenelli with one out when Tate Wargo stepped to the plate and delivered a RBI single to bring home Corey Price to make it 1-0 before Will Messer stroked a bases-clearing triple that scored Steven Pattan, Cole Hansel and Wargo to up the lead to 4-0; Kade Burns then singled in Messer to make it 5-0 in Metro East's favor and the Bears were on their way.

Wargo opened the fourth with a single off Arlington Heights reliever Brendan O'Brien, then stole second and went to third on a wild pitch before Messer grounded to first to score Wargo for a 6-0 lead before they loaded up the bases again in the sixth when Hansel hit a one-out double to center, going to third on a Wargo single to put runners at the corners. Messer then was hit by a pitch to reach base before Dylan Burris doubled home Hansel and Wargo to make it 8-0 and put the Bears firmly in control. Arlington Heights got their only run in the top of the eighth before closing out the game to advance.

Frank threw 100 pitches and struck out three while conceding three hits to get the win; Lewis threw 37 pitches and struck out four while giving up an earned run on a hit.

Messer led the way on offense for Metro East with a 2-for-3 day with two triples, four RBIs and a run scored, with Hansel going 2-for-4 with two runs scored and Burris 1-for-5 with two RBIs, Burns 1-for-4 with a RBI, Blake Vandiver 2-for-3, Price 1-for-4 with a run scored, Pattan a run scored and Wargo 2-for-3 with a RBI and three runs scored.

In Thursday's other games, Peoria got out to a quick lead and eliminated host Rantoul 7-1 in the day's opening game while Danville relegated Barrington to the loser's bracket when they scored three in the top of the ninth to overcome a 5-4 Barrington lead and win 7-5.

Barrington and Peoria square off in an elimination game to open the day at 10:30 a.m., while the Bears and Danville – who have met twice before this season – play at 2 p.m.

for a spot in the final; that game will be followed at 5:30 p.m. with the loser taking on the Peoria-Barrington winner in an elimination game.

Kade Burns will get the ball for the Bears this afternoon. “Danville's a solid team,” Schaake said. “They can hit balls to the fence and over the fence; we'll have our work cut out for us.”

Whoever emerges from Saturday's final advances to the Legion Great Lakes Regional beginning Wednesday and running through Aug. 6 at Mercy Field in Napoleon, Ohio, some 45 miles from Toledo; the Great Lakes champion moves into the American Legion World Series Aug. 10-15 in Shelby, N.C., near Charlotte.