



Bears set goal of winning regional, making Legion World Series bid

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
July 31 2017 1:33 PM



RANTOUL – Friday night, the Metro East Bears clinched a spot in this coming week's American Legion Great Lakes Regional baseball tournament in Napoleon, Ohio.

Saturday morning, the Bears wound up going to the regional as champions.

Issac Garrett stepped up to the mound and threw eight innings of four-hit ball and gave up just an earned run while the Bears broke from a 1-1 first-inning tie and went on to defeat Danville less than 24 hours after they had upended them to win the Illinois American Legion state championship at Rantoul's Wabash Park.

The Bears will now face the Indiana state champions first in the regional, which gets under way Wednesday in the town some 45 miles outside of Toledo; the tournament runs through Aug. 6, with the winner moving into the American Legion World Series Aug. 10-15 in Shelby, N.C.

“They got it done,” said Bears manager Ken Schaake. “It was a team effort all around and I couldn't be happier for and more proud of them; they played the way they were supposed to play all week. Issac really stepped up big-time; we wanted to get him in to pitch in the (District 22 and Fifth Division) tournaments but things happened where he didn't get to pitch. He never complained and he's a good teammate.

“Issac shut down a really good-hitting team.”

The Bears got their first run in the top of the first when Dylan Burris led off with a single and went to second on a passed ball; with two out, Blake Vandiver stepped up and singled home Burris to give Metro East the early lead. Danville countered with a run of their own in the bottom of the first, but the Bears grabbed the lead back in the third when Burris walked to start the inning and was sacrificed over by Kade Burns; Joel Quirin then singled in Burris to give the Bears the lead back.

After Quirin went to second on a wild pitch, Vandiver stepped up and delivered a hard-hit double to right to bring in Quirin; one out after that, Steven Pattan singled to score Vandiver and up the lead to 4-1 through three innings. The next inning, Konnor Loewen reached on an error and went to second on a wild pitch before Burns walked to put runners at first and second. Quirin then singled home Loewen to increase the lead to 5-1 in favor of the Bears.

Things stayed that way until the eighth, when Loewen was hit by a pitch and went to third after a pickoff try went awry; Burns then stepped up and doubled in Loewen to make it 6-1, and then in the top of the ninth, Vandiver was singled in by Corey Price, who was thrown out when he drifted too far off first after the hit. Pattan then singled but was thrown out at second on a fielder's choice, Tate Wargo reaching first on the play. Wargo then stole second and went to third when the ball got away, bringing up Storm Coffman, who singled in Wargo for the final Metro East run.

Seavers had reached the pitch count limit and was replaced by Zach Seavers, who retired Danville in order to give the Bears the state title.

Garrett threw 120 pitches and struck out three to get the win; Seavers only needed 14 pitches to dismiss Danville in the ninth, striking out one. Vandiver led the way with a 2-for-3 day at bat with two RBIs and two runs scored, while Burns was 1-for-3 with a double and a RBI. Burris was 1-for-3 with two runs scored, Quirin 2-for-5 with two RBIs and a run scored, Price 2-for-5 with a RBI, Pattan 3-for-5 with a RBI, Wargo 1-for-5 with a run scored, Coffman 1-for-5 with a RBI and Loewen two runs scored.

“We think we have as good a chance of getting to the World Series,” Schaake said. “One of the eight teams will be going there, so why not us? So long as we play our game, we’ll be fine.”

2017 ILLINOIS AMERICAN LEGION

BASEBALL TOURNAMENT – RANTOUL, ILL.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26

GAME 1: Danville 1, Arlington Heights 0

GAME 2: Barrington 5, Peoria 1 (10 innings)

GAME 3: Metro East 6, Rantoul 4

THURSDAY, JULY 27

GAME 4: Peoria 7, Rantoul 1 (Rantoul eliminated)

GAME 5: Danville 7, Barrington 5

GAME 6: Metro East 8, Arlington Heights 1 (Arlington Heights eliminated)

FRIDAY, JULY 28

GAME 7: Barrington 10, Peoria 0 (7 innings – Peoria eliminated)

GAME 8: Metro East 10, Danville 6

GAME 9: Danville 10, Barrington 5 (Barrington eliminated)

SATURDAY, JULY 29

GAME 10 (FINAL): Metro East 8, Danville 1

METRO EAST WINS ILLINOIS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BOTH METRO EAST AND DANVILLE ADVANCE

TO AMERICAN LEGION GREAT LAKES REGIONAL,

NAPOLEON, OHIO, AUG. 2-6