

Struble comes back from injury as Hawks dominate Spartans

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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CARROLLTON - For Blake Struble life hasn't been particularly comfortable in the past seven days.

This past Thursday, during an at-bat a pitch took an awkward, early bounce and hit him square in the nose. He started bleeding profusely and was forced to exit the game and ultimately had to be taken to the hospital for proper treatment.

"It felt like getting blindsided in football. It was terrible. I wanted to stay there, but I had too much blood," Struble said with a smile. "I had surgery on Tuesday, but it's feeling good."

Fast-forward to today, and he's already back on the mound pitching for the Carrollton Hawks and performed near to his standards and wearing a protective mask.

Struble threw a five-inning complete game as the Hawks defeated the North Greene Spartans 16-1 in White Hall on Thursday afternoon. He struck out five, walked nobody, and gave up three hits.

The Hawks improve to 11-3-1, and the Spartans drop to 1-12.

"It felt good to be back on the mound and finally throw again," Struble said.

"He's been a trooper from the start," Carrollton coach Jeff Krumwiede said. "I was worried that we'd lose him for the rest of the season and it depends on the medical professionals and what they decide. From the get-go, he wanted to get back out there, and they seemed to think it would be fine with it as long as he wore the mask. We need him."

Carrollton took down North Greene 12-0 on Tuesday with a no-hitter from Kolten Bottom. Seeing his two top, senior pitchers put in excellent shifts pleases Krumwiede.

"I'm excited about Kolten and Blake. threw like seniors and did the things they need to do this week," Krumwiede said. "We had two games threw two pitchers. That's not the way the first part of the season went. I'm excited about their efficiency. They're getting outs without making lots of pitches, and both of them did a nice job this week."

Leadoff hitter, Alex Bowker was 3-for-3 with two doubles and four RBI. Struble and Kyle Waters finished 2-for-4 each collecting three RBI. Tyler Barnett was 2-for-3.

After getting a run in the first inning, the Hawks plated three more in the top of the second with RBI's from Struble, Gabe Jones, and Ethan Brannan.

Carrollton led 7-0 in the bottom of the third when Jason Brannan lined a solo home run just over the center field fence to account for the Spartans lone run of the day.

In the top of the fifth, the Hawks put on an impressive hitting parade all with two outs.

Barnett and Ethan Brannan drew back-to-back walks then Bowker and Waters hit two straight RBI doubles. Up next was Nathan Walker and he lined a two-run triple into the right-field gap to make it 11-1. Struble would later bring two more runs home with a two-run single and Barnett.

The Hawks have a challenging stretch of games coming up as they host Jersey on Friday and play Dieterich at SIUE on Saturday. Next, they play Calhoun on Tuesday and Thursday and then take on Quincy Notre Dame, currently 11-1 in a doubleheader on Saturday.

“We’re gonna know a lot more about this team by next Saturday afternoon,” Krumwiede said. “Hopefully we’re getting the momentum going so that we can play well throughout the next week-and-a-half. It’s going to be big as far as where we end up seeded and see what our realistic chances are in the postseason.”