

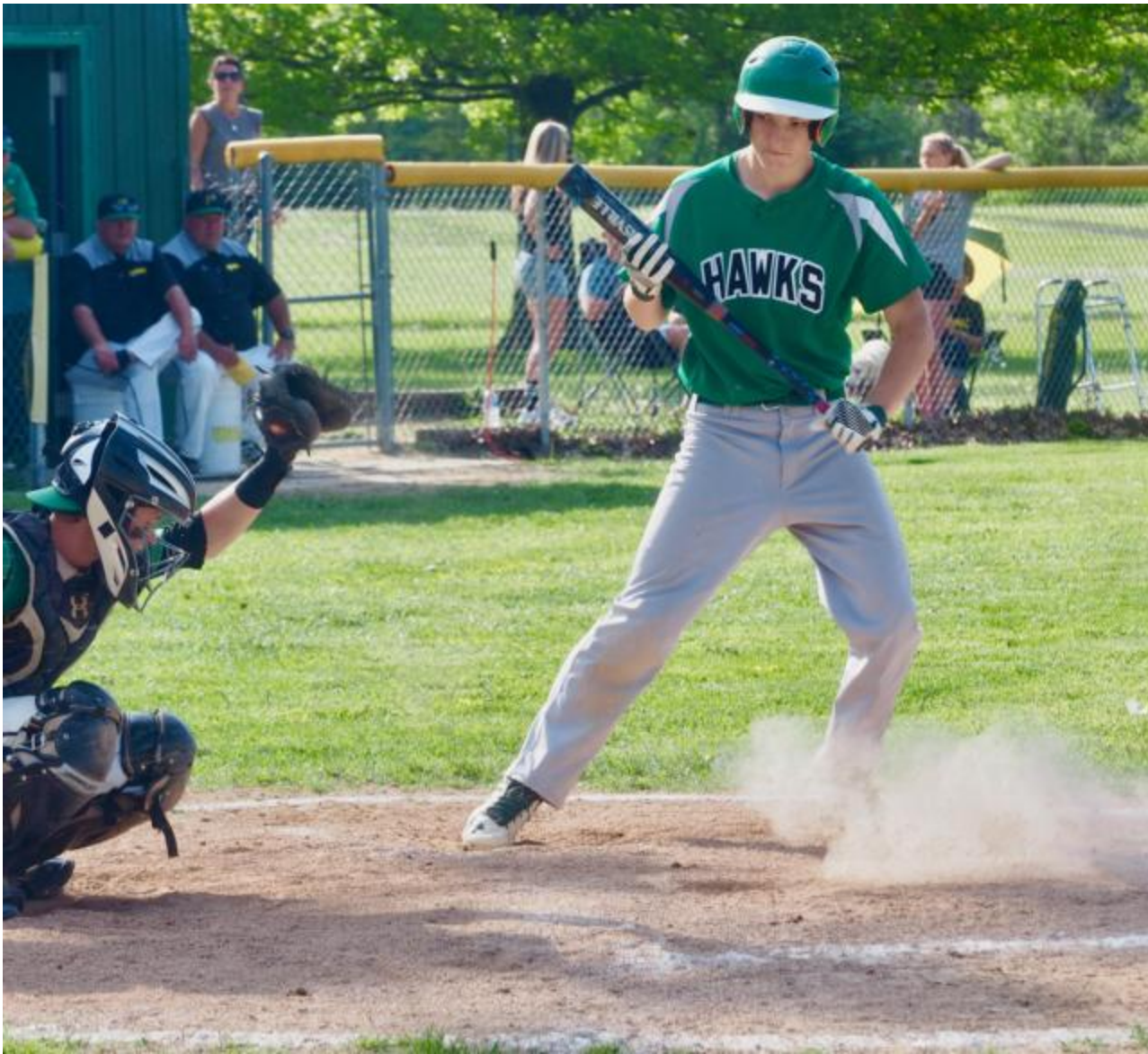
Birds trip Hawks with big seventh-inning rally

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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PIASA - You have to be good to go on a long winning streak, but that also requires some out of control fortune, in other words, luck.

The Southwestern Birds profited off some against the Carrollton Hawks.

Down 4-3 with two outs in the bottom of the seventh inning, Kyler Seyfried grounded a ball to Alex Bowker at shortstop, but his throw sailed over Blake Struble's outstretched glove into foul territory. With new life and runners in scoring position, Ben Lewis knocked a 2-0 pitch down the third base line to deliver a walk-off 5-4 victory for Birds in Piasa on Thursday afternoon.

"When Brock and Luke were coming up I knew we had a chance because those guys have been producing all season," Ben Lewis said. "I thought the game was over, but luckily for us, they threw it away and I got a chance."

Lowis came up big for the Birds all day going 2-for-4 with four RBI.

Southwestern, who started the season off with a 1-8 record, is now on a nine-game winning streak and have won 13 out of their last 15. They now stand at 19-12. Carrollton drops to 20-8.

“We’ve got ten seniors, and when you have senior leadership and guys that have been through the battles you win games like that,” Southwestern coach Brian Hanslow said. “Ben Lowis gets the big hit down the line; you can’t say any more. Our seniors stepped up. It’s probably not a game we should’ve won, but we’ll take it.”

Despite having similar enrollment and both communities located about a half-hour away, Carrollton and Southwestern haven’t competed against each other in baseball since 2003. Both have been longtime non-conference rivals, but finally, roughly a year ago the two teams agreed to schedule each other again.

“It was always competitive before, and it’s great to get two close teams, and that rivalry started again,” Hanslow said.

Though his team has some positives to take from competing against a talented 2A school, Carrollton coach Jeff Krumwiede will want to forget about the seventh inning.

“Our defense has been shaky all year. It kills you in big games.” Krumwiede said. It’s gonna be about our defense, but we left 11 guys on base. We still get in these games where we can’t deliver clutch hits, and it’s what you have to do to make the next step. We’re a good team, but to be great, you gotta play defense when you don’t hit and have to hit when you don’t play defense.”

Pitchers Brock Seymour and Kolten Bottom put in decent shifts for their respective teams but started off shaky in the first inning.

Struble lined a two-run double off Seymour. He finished 2-for-3 at the plate.

The Birds lineup would get those two runs back in the next half inning. Luke Golike drove in Jack Little, and then Lowis hit a sacrifice fly that scored Seymour who got on base via an error.

After three innings of scoreless baseball, Southwestern broke the drought with a couple more Hawk errors all with two outs.

Just like in the last inning, Seyfried got on base courtesy of an infield throwing error which allowed him to get to second base. Next up was Lowis and he lifted a high

shallow fly ball to left field, but there was a misunderstanding between two Carrollton players and the ball dropped in for an RBI single.

Seymour was pulled after getting out of a bases-loaded jam due to his pitch count. He struck out and walked five batters while giving up four hits and one earned run.

“He was getting tired, and it’s the first hot day we’ve had,” Hanslow said. He’s gotta cut down on the walks. He had a lot of full counts, and we’ve been talking it, he’s gotta be more efficient. He knows that so we’ll be ready to go .”

The Hawks were happy to see a new face, Ryne Hanslow in the sixth as their bats came back online.

They got three straight hits from Bowker, Kyle Waters, and Nathan Walker. Waters’ single tied the game, and then he scored the go-ahead run when Hayden Stringer hit a sacrifice fly to centerfield with Waters barley beating Dawson Cummings’ tag at home plate.

“Ryne had second and third with no outs and ended up giving two runs, but he got out of a big jam. It could’ve been a lot more. Then our senior lefty Fryman comes in and goes 1-2-3. That us a little spark.”

Bottom’s pitch count was near the IHSA limit of 105 heading into the seventh. After getting Little to fly out, he had to be removed per the rules. Bottom threw six, and one-third innings allowing one earned run and six hits while striking out five and walking one.

“Give our kids credit for battling back and getting base hits. We found a way to get in to take the lead,” Krumwiede said. “If he’s allowed to stay on for two more batters I think we got a different outcome, but we gotta make a change, and our guys have to step up and get it done. Nathan and Gabe knew that it was gonna be them. They did a good job.”

Carrollton – 2-0-0-0-0-2-0 = 4 Runs 7 Hits 4 Errors

Piasa SW – 2-0-0-0-1-0-2 = 5 Runs 7 Hits 2 Errors

WP – Jacob Fryman IP-1 H-0 R-0 ER-0 BB-0 K-1











