

Timely Hitting and Solid Defense Leads Hawks to Road Win Over Roxana

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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ROXANA - Earlier this week, Carrollton coach Jeff Krumwiede stressed the importance of his young Carrollton Hawks team to eliminate mental mistakes and put the ball in play to perform consistently.

Behind perfect defensive display with well executed timely hitting, the Hawks beat the Roxana Shells 6-2 at Roxana Park in a non-conference game on Friday afternoon. Carrollton stays undefeated at 5-0.

The Hawks needed to be solid defensively as the Shells put the ball in play 22 out of their 30 at-bats and they rose to the occasion.

“We just kept surviving the whole game,” Krumwiede said. “I’m not anxious to play Roxana again the way they swing the bats impressed me. All the way through the order, they swing the bats well. We just got some breaks today because a lot of balls were hit right at us and even when we made a low throw, Hunter dug it out. We were very fortunate.”

Junior starting pitcher, Garrett Settles picked up for the win despite finishing with no strikeouts and allowed four walks through five and one-third innings. However, he allowed two earned runs and repeatedly found ways to get out of trouble by inducing ground balls and pop flies. His defense also had his back.

Along with Flowers making important key plays were shortstop Lane Schnettgoecke and center fielder Nathan Walker.

“Garrett’s got a lot of movement and normally has good command and he’s a bulldog up there, and he gave us exactly what we needed today,” Krumwiede said. “A couple of those line drives were right at Walker and some hard grounders right at Schnettgoecke that we were even able to turn into double plays. Flowers made a couple of great plays at first base that turned into outs that could have been errors against the fence. We made the plays on defense tonight and had to because of the way Roxana hit the ball.”

Roxana falls to 3-2, and despite the loss, head coach Jerry Wheaton was happy with the way his lineup put the ball in play all game long, but just weren’t able to break through.

“We just couldn’t get the big hit when we needed it,” Wheaton said. “I want my guys being aggressive. I want them to put the ball in play. Striking out four times as a team in seven innings, 21 outs and only four of them are strikeouts; I can’t be mad about that. The ball didn’t drop when we needed it to. They made some nice plays. That center fielder (Walker), he’s an all-state kid, and he makes it look easy out there.”

Offensively, Carrollton succeeded due to getting men on base and taking advantage of multiple mistakes by Roxana.

In the top of the second inning, Ethan Brannan struck out swinging, but the ball was dropped, and the throw took Jacob Acker slightly off the first base bag, and Brannan was safe. Freshman second basemen, Gus Coonrod singled into shallow right field scoring Brannan. Two batters later, another freshman, Grant Pohlman drove in Coonrod with a double into the right-field gap. Pohlman would score on a wild pitch to make it 3-0 Hawks.

“We scratched the first run when Gus Coonrod stuck his bat out on a curveball and showed the older boys what to do with a curveball,” Krumwiede said. “Just stick the bat out, take it to right field and drive a run in, and Gus Coonrod had a great situational at-bat for us right there. There’s a lot of good things in this game for us.”

In the bottom half of the inning, the Shells loaded the bases with nobody out and reduced the Carrollton lead to 3-1 on an RBI single by freshman Connor House. With the 3-0 lead on the verge of quickly evaporating, Settles showed off his bulldog mentality by retiring the next three hitters.

In the next inning, Gavin Huffman and Braeden Wells hit back-to-back singles but Settles got Weston Renaud to pop out and Acker to ground into a 6-4-3 double play. House, Huffman, and Wells all ended up going 2-for-4 at the plate.

Huffman, who toed the rubber for Roxana, struck out 11 batters in five innings of work.

“Gavin threw a heck of a baseball game today,” Wheaton said. “Threw the ball well, located it, changeup was pretty filthy today, and he can mix his pitches and throw his off-speed stuff. He kept his head up, threw the whole day today, threw five innings for us. Eleven strikeouts in five innings is pretty darn good.”

However, with two outs and nobody on in the fourth inning, he plucked Pohlman on an 0-2 pitch and walked Schettegocke on 3-2 pitch that was inches away from a punchout. Up next stepped Walker, and validated his all-state stature once again by lacing a line drive into right field that got all the way to the wall for a two-run triple making the score 5-1.

In the top of the fifth, Flowers added some insurance for the Hawks as he launched a solo home run over the right field fence to make it 6-1. Flowers finished 3-for-4 at the plate and Walker 2-for-4.

Walker came in to replace Settles in the sixth and recorded four strikeouts while allowing one hit to close things out.

“There’s a lot of good things in this game for us,” Krumwiede said. “We’re a young team, and we have a lot of issues here and there, but our guys did a good job today. Offensively, we know we’re going to be challenged. We’ve got to scratch things out and get those Gus Coonrod types of base hits with two outs and 3-2 walks to Schettegocke to get Walker up there. Those things have to fall in place for us to be able to compete, offensively. We know we have pitching that can keep us in games whether it’s Brannan or Jones or Walker or Settles.”













