

St. Boniface Baseball Team Completes Season With Second-Place Finish In SIJHAA State Tourney

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October 19 2020 1:28 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - The baseball team at St. Boniface Catholic School completed a very successful 9-5-1 season by advancing to the Southern Illinois Junior High School Athletic Association's Class M State Baseball Tournament, finishing second with a 4-1 loss to Christopher Elementary School in the final played on Oct. 13. The Blue Jays advanced to the final with a win in the quarterfinal on Oct. 7, defeating Aviston Elementary 11-1, and defeating Albion Middle School 6-4 in the semifinal Oct. 10.

St. Boniface overcame a slow start to get to the final, combining good pitching and solid defense to get to the championship game.

"We started playing good baseball at the right time," said Blue Jay head coach Nathan Kreke, "and we made a good run throughout the tournament. Yes, I'm very proud of all the kids. We had 15 players on our roster, five seventh graders, and 10 eighth graders, and they all made positive contributions all season."

The Blue Jays relied on the pitching of Dane Keeven, Jesse Hattrup and Ben Leardi, and all pitched very well throughout the campaign. The two top hitters on the club were lead-off man Ty Etcheson and clean-up hitter Caleb Conrad, and both provided key hits and RBIs as the season went on.

"Ty was our lead-off hitter, and he came up with some big hits," Kreke said, "and Caleb was our clean-up guy, and he came up with some big hits as well."

One of the biggest keys to St. Boniface's success was solid, airtight defense, along with timely hitting that drove in big runs when the Blue Jays needed them.

"Our defense was especially outstanding during the season," Kreke said, "and that's why we were able to go on a big run as we did."

The defense and pitching were the cornerstones of the team during their campaign, and it surely made a difference for the team.

"What set us apart from our opponents was pitching and defense," Kreke said. "We were able to score timely runs, and our pitching and defense were outstanding."

As far as the eighth graders' future goes, many of them will be going on to play for Father McGivney Catholic's baseball team, with a couple of players going on to Edwardsville High School to play basketball and tennis. Kreke is very proud of his players accomplishments during the season, and both he and the team will enjoy the wonderful memories of the 2020 season.

"It's been a very exciting few weeks," Kreke said, "and I'm very proud of the kids for what they were able to accomplish. We got off to a slow start, but as the season progressed, they just got better and better each game. We were able as a group to make some great memories."