



# Shells Come Back And Walk-Off Wednesday Thriller To Beat Panthers

by Nathan Tucker  
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ROXANA - Roxana hosted Jerseyville in varsity baseball on Wednesday afternoon at Roxana Park. The Shells needed every inning they could get, and a little bit of luck, and won by way of a seventh-inning walk-off single from Kaden Bloemker.

“Baseball’s a funny, funny game,” said Roxana Shells head coach Jerry Wheaton following the walk-off win. “It’s a game of give and take. We get a swinging bunt in the seventh (from shortstop/pitcher Kyle Campbell) and then (Kaden Bloemker) got the game-winning hit there.

“(Bloemker)’s a senior, he’s 0-15 coming into that plate appearance but he’s only had one strikeout. Which means he’s been putting the ball in play, but just running into some bad luck. He needed that. We needed that,” Wheaton said.

Bloemker’s timely slump-breaker capped a wild game at Roxana Park on Wednesday. The Shells took a 2-0 lead in the first inning by keeping the line moving with four singles, including two RBI singles from Caiden Davis and Aidan Briggs.





“We’re very young, we’re very inexperienced at the varsity level,” Jerry Wheaton said of his ballclub after the win. “But if you look at our scores in our games, the one thing our kids don’t do is they don’t give up. We got up 2-0 today and then dug ourselves a hole after. We’re still trying to figure out how to win as a young group.”

As alluded to, Roxana starter Nick Cotter ran into trouble with his team in the lead, loading the bases with no outs to start the second inning. Cotter walked Pete Barten with the bases loaded for Jersey’s first run of the ballgame.

The Panthers added another on a play that caused confusion at the ballpark at Roxana Park. A dropped fly ball and miscommunication on the basepaths saw Tanner Brunaugh come in to score, and Andrew Hansen was ruled out via tag after he had stayed at second base, thinking the fly ball had been caught, while his teammate Pete Barten was standing on second alongside him.

Following the game-tying error, Ethan Klunk would poke a single to add a third for the visiting Panthers to flip the game in their favor. Jerseyville starting pitcher Zach Weiner would help his own cause in the third inning with an RBI single that drove home the pinch-running Aiden Taylor.

“He battled out there and gave us a chance,” Jersey Panthers head coach Darren Perdur said of his starter after the game. “He wasn’t the reason that we didn’t compete the way we should have today.”

Perdur doesn’t mince words when talking about his ball club. It hasn’t been a good start for the Panthers, now at 1-5 on the new season, but Perdur expects more from the Panthers, especially against the one opponent they’ve won against this season.

“We don’t want to walk anybody,” Perdur continued on his starter after the game. “But he (Weiner) competed. It’s a young season, it’s his second outing, we’ll keep working.”

Drake Goetten’s RBI double in the 4th stretched Jerseyville’s lead to 5-2, but the Shells were quick to erase the deficit in the following frame. Three doubles, from Max Autery, Kael Hester, and Mason Crump plated two runs to make it a 5-4 game. A Caiden Davis grounder was thrown away and Crump scored from second to tie the game at five.

Roxana’s Dalton Carriker scored on a wild pitch in the 6th that gave Roxana a 6-5 lead before the seventh and final inning. Jerseyville then tied the game in the top of the seventh when a Griffin Williams ground out scored Easton Heafner from third base.

Thinking that the pitcher and catcher were taking too much time and not paying attention to him on third base, Panthers outfielder Tanner Brunaugh made a daring

attempt to steal home. Despite his enthusiasm, Brunaugh was out at the plate on a bang-bang play, ending the top of the seventh.

“We always tell our kids to be heads-up for that,” Perdun said following the game. “If you see a chance to go for it, go, and he evidently thought he could see a chance there. It just didn’t work out.”

Instead of a winning run on third base with a chance to take the lead and the game, the inning ended with the score level at six.

As mentioned previously, Kyle Campbell comes up to bat with two outs in the bottom of the seventh and hits a swinging-bunt single that bounces off home plate. Campbell then steals second base, and the slumping Kaden Bloemker sent the crowd at Roxana Park home happy with a walk-off single to center field.

“Today man, we got beat,” said Jerseyville head coach Darren Perdun. “You know, they just wanted it more than us today, that’s a scrappy young team over there.”

The win is just the second in the new season for Roxana, who travels to Breese Central on Thursday and has a triangular double-header at Alton on Saturday, facing the Redbirds and Plano.

Perdun’s Jersey Panthers are 1-5 following the loss, and host Southwestern at Ken Schell Field on Thursday. The Panthers also host Rock Falls for a doubleheader on Saturday.