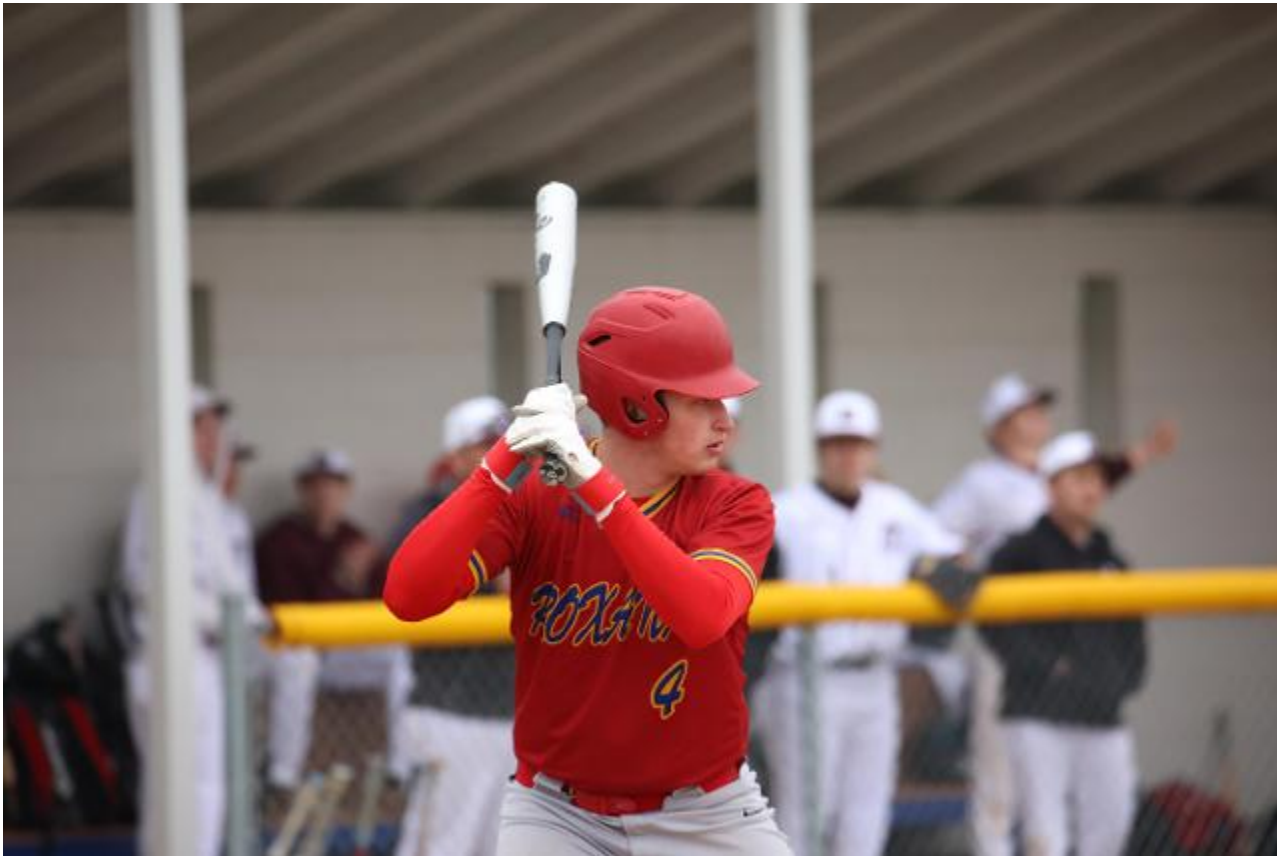


Shells Score Six In First, Power Past Oilers 13-3

by Nathan Tucker
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WOOD RIVER - Tuesday afternoon was a picturesque day for high school baseball in Wood River. Beautiful warm weather, a big crowd on hand at Norris Dorsey Field rooting on their Oilers, but it was the cross-town Roxana Shells that spoiled the day. The Shells bookended the ballgame with a bunch of runs, winning 13-3 over Nick Dorsey's Oilers.

The Shells silenced the hundred or so Oilers fans in attendance with a monster first inning, scoring six runs before recording a single out. Capping the first-inning runs was a three-run homer from Aidan Briggs. Like all home runs at Norris Dorsey Field, it was an inside-the-parker, as there is no outfield fence at the home of the Oilers on the EAWR campus.

“Anytime it’s 6-0 with nobody out in the first, it’s kind of hard to come back,” said EAWR head coach Nick Dorsey following his team’s defeat. “A lot of things really didn’t go our way today. They (Roxana) hit the ball really well. We hit okay, pitched okay, played okay defense. We did nothing great. It’s hard to win that way.”

The Shells tacked on another run to make it 7-0 in the second, Mason Crump lined an RBI single to drive in Kael Hester. For an Oilers team struggling to put together strong offensive outings, seven runs seemed insurmountable.

Credit goes to EAWR starter Drake Champlin, who battled back after the tough start and followed up the first two innings with two scoreless innings that included striking out the side in the fourth.

“(Champlin) came back for us,” Dorsey said postgame. “Got some quick outs in the first after he settled in, and after that, he pitched the way he’s capable of. He’s still a young kid. He gave us five strong innings today.”

Roxana head coach Jerry Wheaton also praised Champlin’s fight in a game he could have given up in. Champlin, just a sophomore, has plenty of innings ahead of him in his high school career.

“He battled for four more innings after the first and threw a lot of strikes,” Wheaton said of the opposing pitcher today. “His fastball was good, he was hitting spots and as the game went on, he got even better.”

The best offensive inning for the Oilers was the fourth, where they scored two of their three runs. EAWR strung together two singles and two doubles, including Champlin helping his own cause with an RBI double in the inning.

When Champlin left the mound after five innings, Roxana’s offense woke back up. The Shells scored five more runs in the final two innings, with control issues for Wood River’s Nick Cotter leading to free base runners for the visiting Shells.

Trevor Girhing pitched a solid five innings for Roxana, he gave up seven hits but limited Oiler base runners to that as he didn’t walk a single batter through five. Girhing,

a sophomore like his opponent Drake Champlin, looked in control as he managed his team's large lead.

"He's a bulldog," Shells head coach Jerry Wheaton said following the win. "He gets himself in tough situations and he really grinds and gets himself out of jams. He's able to do that because he throws so many strikes. When he works down in the zone, he's really good. When he works up in the zone, he gets hit hard sometimes, but he mixes his pitches up enough between his fastball, changeup, and breaking pitch."

"He just continues to battle every day." Wheaton continued. "He's a sophomore, he was a varsity pitcher for us last year. Right now, he's one of our conference pitchers because he just battles and throws a lot of strikes for us."

The Oilers added a run in the bottom of the seventh, but as head coach Nick Dorsey said, it's hard to come back from down 6-0 with no outs in the first, and the late run only made it a 13-3 contest.

EAWR falls to 2-8 with the loss, with both their wins coming against non-conference opponents that they won't see again this season. Nick Dorsey thinks this is an Oilers team capable of bigger and better things.

"Right now I don't think we have the record we're capable of having," Dorsey said on his EAWR team to start the season. "But we can't harp on the past. You can't control the past, I think we have a group of boys that can really battle and put something together, maybe make a run late in the season. You never know, you may catch lightning in a bottle."

The win pushes Roxana to 5-5 on the season, before a tough week of games coming up, including a doubleheader against a tough Nashville club in non-conference play on Friday.

"The schedule's starting to get busy," Wheaton said. "We're gonna find out which guys can hang and which guys can't. We're moving up guys from JV to Varsity, every day is a new lineup for us depending on who's pitching. We're just having a lot of fun right now, with the young kids, they love baseball, they love being around each other. It's going to be a lot of fun moving forward."