

Piasa Birds Hold Out In Back And Forth Game To Beat Explorers – Brantley Wins First-Ever Start On Mound

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
April 12 2023 7:59 PM



BRIGHTON – There was a good, old-fashioned, back-and-forth baseball game played at Schneider Park Wednesday afternoon between Piasa Southwestern and Marquette Catholic.

The game saw the Piasa Birds take the lead in the first, but not get it back until the fifth, en route to an 11-8 win over the Explorers. With the result, Southwestern improves to 10-4 on the season while Marquette slips to 10-5.

It was Marquette who won the previous meeting between these two teams back on March 20, on a cold and windy afternoon at Gordon Moore Park by a score of 12-2. Piasa's pitchers combined for 11 walks that game.

Wednesday afternoon it was the Explorers' pitching rotation that couldn't lock in on the strike zone, dishing out 11 walks, some that scored base runners.



Sophomore Ian Brantley made his first-ever start on the mound and had some ups and downs along the way. He gave up a hit in the first, but after three groundouts, he finished the frame.

“We got six games this week, so we started a sophomore, his first varsity start in his career, and he pitched pretty well,” Southwestern head coach Brian Hanslow said about Brantley. “Four innings, pretty solid; second inning he got roughed up a little bit for four runs but settled down in the third and fourth.”



The Piasa Birds grabbed a 1-0 lead in the home half of the first. It started when the bases were loaded after Rocky Darr got on via an error and Colin LeMarr and Ryan Lewis each walked. Marcus Payne stepped up and hit a sacrifice fly ball that scored Darr from third to take the lead.

The Explorers wasted no time getting the lead back. Skyler Schuster hit a lead-off single to start the next inning and was moved to second after a sacrifice bunt. Andrew Bober singled to put runners on the corners with one out.

Shaun Ferguson hit a two-RBI double to take a 2-1 lead. After a Charlie Fahnestock double and a Hayden Sherman single both batted in runs, the Explorers went up 4-1.

Marquette's starting pitcher Andrew Zacha went one-two-three in the bottom of the second while Brantley did the same in the top of the third.

The Piasa Birds got back to work in the third offensively. Darr singled and immediately stole second. Lewis doubled, trading places with Darr to make it 4-2. Payne reached on an error and then Hank Bouillon was walked to load the bases with one out. Brantley took a walk, which sent Lewis across to make it 4-3.



Will Fahnstock hit an RBI single to score Scott Vickrey in the top of the fourth and make it 5-3 Marquette.

Bouillon answered back with a two-RBI single to tie the game at five a piece.

Ferguson had a sac-RBI and then Sherman hit a two-RBI double to regain Marquette's lead at 8-5.

Whatever one team did, the other had the answer it seemed.

Marquette changed pitchers to Andrew Roth, but he immediately got himself into trouble.

Piasa clawed back to regain the lead in the bottom of the fifth. Hunter Newell hit an RBI single and later scored after a wild pitch. After Lowis was walked, the Piasa Birds had the bases loaded with one out. Payne then got walked which scored Darr from third. Bouillon then hit into a fielder's choice, which ended up scoring two runs after being misplayed. That hit made it 10-8 Southwestern.

After coming in to pitch in the fifth and giving up two runs, Quinten Strohbeck settled down to strikeout two in the sixth. Southwestern added one more insurance run in the sixth after Payne was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, scoring Newell to get to the eventual scoreline of 11-8.

Payne closed out the game on the mound and went groundout-strikeout-groundout in dominant fashion to seal the deal for the Piasa Birds.

They picked up the win, but Southwestern wasn't without their fielding mistakes either.

"Defensively, we made a few errors today that cost us a couple of runs," coach Hanslow said. "We're better than that, we got to clean that up. Our pitching kept us in the game though and we had enough runs to pull it out."



“Marquette is a very good hitting team, they beat us earlier in the year 12-2, and we struck out a lot,” Hanslow continued. “We didn’t strike out a lot today, but we did leave a lot of runners on base. We had bases loaded four times and I think we only got one or two runs out of that.”

Still, the Piassa Birds took advantage when they needed to.

“We have been hitting better now; we’re improving,” Hanslow said. “We’ve only got two seniors, so we’re still a little bit fresh with some of our guys. Any non-conference win, especially Marquette, is big. That’s our old rival, a lot of these guys don’t know it, but I still do. It’s an important win. Any win we get right now is good. We want to keep on the hot streak.”



The Piasa Birds will take a one-day break before hosting Vandalia in conference action on Friday at 4:30 p.m.

As for the Explorers, they have some things to work out, but will also be right back at it.

“11 walks, what, seven errors,” Marquette head coach Tim Fahnestock said. “We’ve been battling injuries for about three weeks; we have some people out of position. We weathered the storm, but today we got exploited.”

“I told the guys that March and April baseball is not as important as May baseball,” he added. So, we’ll get healthy and keep doing good things. We had a good approach at the plate today which is a positive, but we got to cut down on the errors and the walks.”

The Explorers hop back into conference action as well against Metro-East Lutheran before taking on Collinsville this Saturday.