

Briggs Shuts Down Jersey On Mound, Hits Go-Ahead RBI As Roxana Gets Payback Win Over Panthers

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE – Eleven days ago the Shells and Panthers combined for a 23-run thriller in Roxana. On Wednesday, the teams ran it back.

The second meeting was a low-scoring affair as Roxana picked up the 2-0 win. It was also a much better day for Shells' senior pitcher Aidan Briggs.

After giving up six runs on three hits in a single inning of relief work in the 13-10 loss to the Panthers back on March 16, Briggs was tasked with taking the mound again against the Panthers.

He started on the mound and threw the first six innings, striking out six while getting out of a couple of jams along the way.

“That was a confidence builder for him,” Roxana head coach Jerry Wheaton said. “He struggled last time against these guys.”

Briggs’ day was made a little easier while pitching with a 2-0 lead after two innings. The game got started with Jersey’s pitcher, Easton Heafner, hitting Kyle Campbell with a pitch.

Campbell quickly stole second and then was batted in by an RBI single from Briggs to make it 1-0 after the first inning. Roxana doubled up in the second when Mason Crump hit a bases-loaded single, only scoring one run after a play was made at home plate tagging out Sean Maberry to end the inning. Still, Roxana had a 2-0 lead.

After some trouble in the opening frame, Briggs retired the next eight Jersey batters. The fifth and sixth innings gave him a bit of a challenge though.

Gage Carey hit a leadoff double for the Panthers in the fifth and then moved to third after Luke Swanson reached on a bunt. After Swanson stole second, Carey was in no man's land and was picked off at third. Swanson moved to third after a wild pitch and then John Paul Vogel was walked.

Jersey coach Darren Perdun signed for a double-steal scenario. Briggs caught wind of it while on the mound and stepped off to throw to second. Vogel was safe so the Shells rifled the ball home in time to tag out Swanson. Briggs eventually got a groundout to get out of the inning.

It was a one-two-three inning for Heafner in the top half of the sixth before the Jersey bats came alive again.

Gage Walker doubled, Zach Weiner walked, and then Heafner singled to load the bases with nobody out. Briggs battled back and struck out the next two batters before ending his day with a groundout.

“That’s just a senior that’s been through a lot of success and understanding what winning takes through football, through basketball,” Wheaton said. “Battling through three different sports, this kid has been through a lot, and he’s seen it all. He put the team on his back and I’m really proud of him.”

Landon Sitze came in to close out the game and went strikeout, groundout, strikeout to end the game.

“Sitze has been struggling throwing strikes like he’s accustomed to, so it was a big confidence boost for him as well to close the door like that,” Wheaton said.

Krump had himself a 4-for-4 day with an RBI. Maberry, Briggs, and Dalton Carriker also recorded hits for the Shells as they snapped a three-game losing streak.

This win moved them to 5-5 on the season and was payback for the earlier meeting with the Panthers.

“We kind of owed these guys one,” Wheaton said. “First weekend of the season we were up 7-1, then blew the game in the fifth inning. Our kids were really excited to get some redemption here.”

The Shells are back at home on Thursday, March 28 as they open conference play against Breese Central (4-3).

The Panthers fall to 4-4 on the year and are also back in action on Thursday when they travel to Virden North Mac (0-4). Both games start at 4:30 p.m.