

Junior Legion team finishes successful 26-10 season

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
July 24 2015 4:00 PM



VALMEYER – Alton American Legion Post 126's junior baseball team gave it all they had, but fell just short and lost to Highland 3-2 in an elimination game of the Illinois American Legion District 22 junior baseball tournament Wednesday afternoon at Borsch Field.

The loss ended Post 126's season with a record of 26-10. Highland advanced to the championship round against Fairview Heights, but both teams will advance to the Illinois Fifth Division tournament beginning Friday in Salem.

“It was a really good game,” said Post 126 manager Dennis Sharp. “Highland's got a really good team and they deserve to move on.”

Tuesday, the Legionnaires fell to Fairview Heights 3-1 to send them to the elimination game against Highland. Fairview Heights and Highland both will advance to the Illinois Fifth Division junior tournament beginning Friday in Salem and running through Monday, with the state tournament set for July 30-Aug. 2 in Quincy.

Sharp cited Storm Coffman, Steven Nguyen, Steven Patten and Braden Flanagan as his best four players in the tournament. “Storm was our pitcher against Belleville and he did a fantastic job,” Sharp said. “Steven Patten threw a good game against Bethalto and we've had some good performances at the plate from Steven Nguyen and Braden.”

Sharp praised the tournament organizers and the venue, Borsch Field, as being first-rate. “They've all done a really nice job,” Sharp said.

The Junior Legionnaires got a good pitching performance from Coffman in the game against Highland, but a lack of timely hitting hurt Post 126. “We didn't hit well,” Sharp said. “We had a couple of situations where we had runners at second and third twice and didn't score. We just hit the wall today, that's all.

“When one part of the lineup isn't hitting well, other parts can take up the slack. That just didn't happen today; that's baseball for you sometimes.”

Despite the loss, the team remained competitive and stayed in it until the very end, Sharp felt. “We competed hard and that's a tribute to our kids,” Sharp said. “We've got some really competitive kids, and they're kids that play the game the right way. Every place we've went, we've always gotten complements on how competitive we are and how well-mannered and sportsmanlike our kids are.

“We've got a good group of kids here and I'm really proud of them. They represent us very well.”

Sharp feels there are valuable lessons that could be learned – and not just in baseball either – by playing Legion baseball. “Legion ball really teaches you a lot of lessons,” Sharp said. “It's kind of life itself. Nothing's handed to you in Legion baseball, like in life; you have to go out and earn it.

“There's some really good teams in our district and everything we got this year, we earned.”