

Metro East Bears bow in first state tourney matchup

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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CAROL STREAM – The Metro East Bears were handed a 10-3 loss to Mattoon in an opening-round game of the Illinois American Legion baseball tournament Wednesday afternoon and were relegated to the loser's bracket.

A second loss would eliminate the Bears, while a win would put them into a game at noon Friday.

“We played well the first two innings and got a head (a 1-0 lead for the Bears), but then they scored four runs in the third and six in the fifth and we couldn't recover,” Metro East Bears manager Ken Schaaake said.

“They were hitting a lot of shots all over the place. We were hitting them too, but ours were generally right at people.”

Jacob St. Peters lasted 4.1 innings before giving way to Connor Melton, who threw two-thirds of an inning. Kory Loew threw the final four innings and blanked Mattoon, but by then, the damage had been done.

Drake Hampton was 1-for-5 for the Bears with a double and two RBIs, while Nick Paulda was 1-for-3 with a double, run scored and a sacrifice and Caleb Buhs had a triple and RBI to lead the Metro East attack.

To win the state title now means the Bears will have to come through the loser's bracket, and while it can be a difficult task, Schaaake believes his team has the character to do it.

“As I told the kids after the game, it's a new day and a new game to play,” Schaaake said. “That's the beauty of baseball. We'll shake off what happened and be ready to play.”