

Double-header splits posted by Norton Legion

Warm up for weekend Zone tourney

By DICK BOYD

The Norton American Legion baseball team warmed up for this weekend's Zone Tournament in Goodland by splitting double-headers at Goodland on Wednesday, July 18 and here against Colby on Friday, July 20.

GOODLAND

Playing without starters Logan Keiswetter, Nathan Morse and Garrett Tacha, Norton lost the opener 13-3 to Goodland.

After three innings, the home team led 5-0. Norton scored two runs in the top of the fourth inning when Chris Davis, Jordan Durham, Todd Zink and Logan Runnion all singled and Davis and Durham came home to make the score 5-2.

Goodland added one run to their total in the bottom of the inning.

The Blue Jays scored their final run in the top of the fifth when Aaron Daniels, Matt Stanley and Davis all singled and Daniels tallied to make the score 6-3.

Two more runs by Goodland in the bottom of the fifth and five more in the bottom of the sixth on a grand slam home run and three Norton errors made the final 13-3.

Norton had nine hits, three walks and nine strike outs. Leading hitters for the Blue Jays were Daniels, 2 for 3 and Davis, 2 for 2. Winning pitcher was Rome.

Durham made his first pitching start of the season for Norton and took the loss. He allowed just four hits, walked four and struck out four.

"Jordan pitched decent for his first start, throwing strikes and not walking many but our six errors hurt," said Norton head coach Joe Durham. "Goodland is a good team and every time we made an error, they scored."

"Our defense let us down. We committed too many errors. Our bats didn't come alive until the fourth inning and we were already down by five runs."

In the nightcap, Norton did not let the memory of the loss in the opener affect them as they went out and played outstanding ball in winning 6-2.

The Blue Jays took a 1-0 lead in the top of the first inning when pitcher Todd Zink hit a two strike fastball for a single. A passed ball

got him to second and he stole third. Davis hit a long fly ball to right field and Zink was able to tag up and score.

Norton was unable to score in the top of the second and third innings; however, and Goodland scored once in the bottom of the third to tie the score at 1-all. Davis replaced Zink on the mound for Norton late in the second inning.

The Blue Jays won the game with four big runs in the top of the fourth. Logan Tuxhorn singled, Andrew Soderlund was hit by a pitch and advanced, Daniels singled, Zink smashed a triple and Durham singled. Tuxhorn, Soderlund, Daniels and Zink all scored to put Norton on top 5-1.

Another Blue Jay run in the top of the fifth made it 6-1. Jacob Bracht and Runnion both singled and Bracht scored.

One run by Goodland in the bottom of the fifth made the final 6-2.

Norton had nine hits, three walks and nine strike outs in the game. Losing pitcher was Rome. Leading hitters for Norton were Daniels and Zink, both 2 for 3.

Zink was the winning pitcher. Goodland had just two hits in the game, six Cowboy batters walked and four struck out.

"Todd did everything we asked of him," said coach Durham. "He was throwing strikes and letting the defense make the plays. He baffled the Cowboys with his off speed pitches with an occasional fastball thrown in. He got us almost into the third inning where I was able to bring in Chris and his combination of fastballs and off speed pitches kept the Goodland hitters off stride. Watching Todd's array of off speed pitches and then having to face Chris's fastball, the Cowboys could not catch up with Chris's fastball."

"Logan Runnion got his first start at first base and contributed to the win. Brian Ulmer is a young player who is getting better every game along with Andrew Soderlund and Aaron Pulec at second."

COLBY

Norton took a 2-0 lead over Colby in the bottom of the second inning. Durham and Morse both walked, Stanley singled and both

Durham and Morse crossed home plate.

In the bottom of the third, the Blue Jays added another run to their total when Daniels, Davis, Tacha and Durham all walked and Daniels made it home.

Colby broke into the scoring column in the top of the fourth inning when the Eagles tallied three runs on three hits and three walks to tie the game at 3-all.

Norton jumped back into the lead with two big runs in the bottom of the fourth. Stanley led off with a single but the next two batters were out. The top of the batting order came up for the Jays and Daniels, Zink and Davis all singled and Tacha walked. Stanley and Daniels both scored to make it 5-3 in favor of the home team.

The fifth inning was scoreless and Colby was also three up, three down in the top of the sixth.

Norton tallied four insurance runs in the bottom of the sixth when the Blue Jays batted around. Daniels was hit by a pitch to start if off, then Zink, Davis and Tacha all walked, Durham singled and Stanley walked. Daniels, Zink, Davis and Tacha all scored to extend the Norton lead to 9-3.

Colby was able to score three runs in the top of the seventh on two hits and a walk but it was too little, too late and the Blue Jays prevailed 9-6.

Norton had seven hits, 14 walks and 10 strike outs. Leading hitters for the Jays were Daniels and Stanley, both 2 for 2. The losing pitcher was Dinkel.

Winning pitcher was Davis, who gave up seven hits, walked six and struck out 10 batters.

"Chris did a great job of pitching a complete game," said Norton coach Durham.

"Outstanding fielding plays by our outfielders Matt Stanley and Todd Zink excited our large home crowd and kept us ahead in the game. Our players watch Sports Center and the catches by Matt and Todd would have been a top play nominee. From the start, we came out ready to play. Center fielder Zink made all three outs to start the game. The second inning was big. Scoring first and shutting them down gave our team more confidence and, from then on, our team



Norton pitcher Chris Davis fired another fastball as a Colby player ran past Norton shortstop Logan Tuxhorn toward third during the Blue Jays' 9-6 win over Colby in American Legion action here Friday night. Davis pitched the entire game, giving up just seven hits and striking out 10.

-Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

played great.

"A diving catch by Stanley in the fourth inning was the play of the game. If Matt had missed that ball, it would have rolled all the way to the fence and they would have scored more runs. That was when you heard our team members heave a big sigh of relief. It was the first time I've seen our pitcher turn and salute an outfielder on our team."

The nightcap was a different story as coach Durham shuffled players around to give them more experience prior to this weekend's Zone Tournament. The result was a 12-1 loss to the Eagles.

Colby scored five runs in the top of the first, three in the top of the second and four in the top of the fourth.

Norton's only run came in the bottom of the fourth. On a slow roller hit in the infield, Morse beat out the throw that got by the first baseman and advanced to second. After a walk by Stanley and stolen base by Morse, Logan Runnion hit a fielder's choice that scored Morse.

Norton had just two hits in the game. In addition to Morse's single, Davis singled in the first inning and made it to third with two stolen bases. Four Blue Jays walked and eight struck out. Schlick was the winning pitcher.

Tacha started on the mound for Norton and was relieved by Morse in the top of the third inning. Tacha was the losing pitcher. Colby had eight hits, four walks and seven Eagles struck out.

"Little things hurt us on defense in this game plus Colby's tall, left-

handed pitcher Schlick kept us off balance all game," said coach Durham. "We witnessed a young man who is only a sophomore and boy is he a good one. I expect great things for that young man."

"Our win over Colby in the opener gave us a winning season in Legion baseball for the first time in a long time. This isn't bad for a team that has had to play through losing a good player to an accident, playing teams that have been playing since April in high school baseball, having injuries all year long to starters and having to miss practices due to field problems."

"This team has bonded together better than any team I have been associated with and you can credit that to the leadership of our older players. Of the 16 players we have on our team, all have been ready and willing to play since the Holdrege Tournament. The Holdrege tourney was a turning point in our season. We lost all five games but the players saw that they could compete with any team if they didn't make the little mistakes that had cost them wins in other years."

"Strong pitching by Logan Keiswetter and Chris Davis along with quality starts from other players, Nathan Morse, Garrett Tacha, Todd Zink and Jordan Durham allowed other players to get more playing time and improve their game. With a lead off hitter in Aaron Daniels, with an on base percentage close to .700, and solid defense by Matt Stanley, Logan Tuxhorn, Jacob Bracht, Andrew Soderlund, Aaron Pulec, Logan

Runnion and Brian Ulmer and the coaching of Steve Jeltz and Blake Wolf, who was injured in a motorcycle accident, our team has made fewer errors than in the past two years."

"Our goal this year was to play 50 games, something we didn't accomplish due to rain outs and harvest and camps but we were able to get in close to 40 games. From day one to where we are now is the difference between night and day. The games became our practice and our boys have learned from their mistakes and try not to make the same mistake twice. Our team learned that they could come from behind and win, something they were not able to accomplish in other recent years."

Next action

Norton will compete in the annual Zone Tournament this Friday, Saturday and Sunday in Goodland.

Other teams in the tournament, in addition to Norton and Goodland, will be Colby and Scott City.

Norton is seeded No. 2 and will play No. 3 seed Scott City at 5 p.m. on Friday. Colby is seeded No. 1 and Goodland No. 4. The tournament winner will advance to the American Legion State Tournament.

"We are looking forward to playing in the tournament," said coach Durham. "All of the other teams in the tournament have high school baseball and all have winning records. We have played all three and know we are capable of playing with them, having defeated two of them."

Lady Storm 1-2 in state play

By DICK BOYD

The Norton Lady Storm 18-and-under fast pitch softball team completed their 2007 season by competing in the Class C State Tournament in Emporia on Saturday where they won their opener but lost the next two contests.

In the opener at 8 a.m. on Saturday, they won a tight 4-3 contest with the Newton Shredders. Next, they played the Augusta Mavericks at noon and were defeated 8-0. The loss dropped them into the loser's bracket and they lost 7-0 to the Topeka Flames in an 8 p.m. contest.

NEWTON

In the game with Newton, the Shredders scored twice in the top of the first inning and Norton tallied once in the bottom of the stanza to make it 2-1. Courtney Balthazor walked, Kayla Foley singled, Chantille Campbell was hit by a pitch and advanced, Kylie Cooper got on base with a fielder's choice and Lacey Roe singled. Foley was the only Norton runner to score.

Newton was three up, three down in the top of the second and Norton tied the score at 2-all with one run in the bottom of the inning. Tori Nuzum singled and scored.

The Shredders went back on top with one run in the top of the third and Norton was scoreless in the bottom of the inning.

The Lady Storm held Newton scoreless in the top of the fourth and scored twice in the bottom of the inning to win 4-3. Roe singled, Janie Gunther got on base via an error and both scored.

Newton had one more chance to score when they batted in the top of the fifth but the Lady Storm shut them out.

Norton had four hits, two walks and four strike outs. Leading hit-

ter for Norton was Roe, who went 2 for 2.

Normandin was the winning pitcher. She allowed just two hits, walked six and struck out four batters.

"We played great in this game," said Norton team manager Darin Campbell.

He said, "Normandin pitched great and our defense was wonderful. We battled back for the win."

AUGUSTA

The Lady Storm did not get a hit in the game with Augusta until the top of the fourth inning when Ashley Nuzum and Foley both singled but neither was able to score.

Norton's final two hits came in the top of the fifth when Amy Nicholson and Brittney Anderson both singled but, again, could not score.

Augusta picked up three runs in the bottom of the second and five in the bottom of the third inning.

In addition to four hits, Norton had one walk and eight strike outs.

Losing pitcher was Ashley Nuzum. She gave up seven hits and walked three batters.

"We didn't play nearly as well against Augusta," said manager Campbell. "Our six errors really hurt but they also did a good job of hitting through the gaps in our defense."

TOPEKA

The game with Topeka was still scoreless after two innings. The Lady Storm got their only two hits in the game in these two innings and Topeka was held hitless.

Ashley Nuzum singled in the first inning and Campbell singled in the second inning.

In the bottom of the third inning, Topeka scored two runs on one hit, two walks and an error.

Topeka tallied their five final

runs in the bottom of the fourth on four hits, two walks and four errors to make it a 7-0 game.

In addition to two hits, Norton had three walks and seven Lady Jays struck out.

Normandin was the losing pitcher. She started the game and was relieved by Ashley Nuzum in the fourth inning. Norton pitchers allowed just four hits and walked five batters. The Lady Storm had nine errors in the contest.

KQNK Radio of Norton broadcast all three games play-by-play for the local fans unable to make the trip to Emporia.

"Errors really hurt us again in this game," said manager Campbell.

"We came into this tournament pretty hopeful but you play up to your ability or you get beat. We played well in the first game but not well enough in the next two."

"Many thanks to our players, coaches, parents, fans and the news media who followed us this year."

"We had a great season but our girls are already looking forward to next year. Lacey Roe will be the only player we lose due to the age limit."

"The Jaycees Field will be completely refurbished so we hope to have some home games next season."

Coaches for the Lady Storm this season were Kirk Foley, Erin Hill and Maggie Foley.

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