

American Legion team splits with Ellis



Third baseman Preston Krzycki tried to tag a runner during the front half of the Colby American Legion team's home doubleheader against Ellis on Wednesday. The runner was safe.

By Andy Heintz

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The Colby American Legion baseball team snapped a three-game losing streak on Wednesday, splitting a doubleheader with Ellis at the Colby Recreational Fields.

The Eagles won the first game 8-5 and lost the second 10-1. The second game had to be called after four innings due to lightning.

Braden Sager turned in a solid effort from the mound in the first game. He buckled down and threw two scoreless innings in the sixth and seventh to help Colby pick up the win.

Sager looked impressive in the first, getting Ellis out in order. However, the Railroaders were the first to get on the scoreboard: a runner scored from third on a bloop single to right in the top of the second. Later, with runners on first and second and one out, second baseman Todd Kane fielded a grounder, stepped on the bag and fired to first baseman Nathan Quagliano for a double play.

Sager pounded a single between the short and third early the bottom of the second. Catcher Jake Thompson went in to run for Sager.

Later, Thompson scored when the Railroaders' catcher tried to throw him out at third. The throw was too far to the left and it went into the outfield, allowing Thompson to score.

Ellis reclaimed the lead in the top of the third, when a runner scored on a grounder between short and third.

The game continued to seesaw back and forth in the bottom of

the third. Outfielder and pitcher Corey Sager, Braden's older brother, hit a sacrifice fly to right, scoring shortstop Jordan Rasmussen. Then Braden Sager drove in a run with a grounder that took a hop and skipped over the shortstop's glove.

The boys clung to their one-point lead until the top of the fifth. An Ellis batter hit a soft grounder to the left of the mound that Braden Sager picked up and fired to first. The throw was low and in the dirt; the ball took a hop and got by Quagliano, allowing a run to score. The next Ellis hitter drove in two runs with a single up the middle, giving the Railroaders a 5-3 lead.

The Eagles rallied the sixth. Braden Sager jumped all over a pitch, lining a one-run single into right. Later, Quagliano slapped a two-run single to make it 6-5 Colby. Braden Sager threw a quick one-two-three inning.

The Eagles picked up a few insurance runs. Krzycki scored on a wild pitch and Sam Kendrick drove in a run with single up the middle to make it 8-5. Braden Sager ran into a little trouble in the middle of the seventh. He was able to get one batter to ground out to him with two outs and runners on first and second, however, and the boys prevailed 8-5.

"We hit really well," Braden Sager said. "The sticks were there tonight. We read their pitcher well."

Corey Sager said the team wasn't as nervous as they were at the tournament in Columbus, Neb., last weekend.

"We came out loose," he said. "We saw the ball better."

The Railroaders' offense jumped on Colby early in the second game. Starting pitcher Brock James had trouble finding the strike zone in the opening moments. He walked Ellis' lead-off batter.

James' control problems led to him walking one batter with the bases loaded. Coach Krzycki replaced James with Corey Sager.

The Railroaders' next hitter singled past the outstretched glove of Braden Sager at third, scoring two runs. Sager got the next batter to hit a grounder to him that he threw to his younger brother for a force at second. Braden Sager fired to first for a double play, ending the inning.

The Eagles scored a run in the bottom of the inning, but the Railroaders struck again in the second. Ellis loaded the bases, thanks to a pair of singles and a walk. Then the runner on third scored on a passed ball, increasing the lead to 4-1. A two-run double to left extended the lead to five. Braden Sager fielded a grounder, tagged third for a out and fired a high throw to first. The ball deflected off the top of Quagliano's glove, allowing two more runs to score and extending the Railroaders' lead to 9-1.

Quagliano relieved Sager on the mound, but Ellis got another run before the inning ended. The Eagles' offense was rendered silent in the second and third. The Railroaders picked up another run in the third, held Colby scoreless in the fourth and secured a 10-1 win.

Colby's record now stands at 6-5. The boys will play Goodland in a doubleheader starting at 6 p.m. next Thursday at home.

Softball team keeps improving

By Andy Heintz

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The Sweet Thunder, a 12-and-under Colby girl's softball team, has really improved its pitching since the opening game against Goodland three weeks ago, says coach Alan Sager.

At the start of the year, he said, the pitchers were walking about eight of 10 batters, but now they are only walking one in 10 batters. The coach said Skyler Mengel, a veteran pitcher from the Colby High varsity softball team, has been working with the five pitchers: Danielle Foster, Desi Schippers, Darby Sager, Brooklyn Bange and Tessa Krzycki.

Sager said the girls have been hitting well and getting on base.

"They have a job, and that's to get on first base," said Sager. "They can score eight to 10 runs in an inning when they put their minds to it."

The Sweet Thunder's record sits at 4-5. The girls went 2-1 in a tournament in Hays last weekend, and they went 1-3 in a tournament in Dodge City two weeks ago. The girls started there season by splitting games with Goodland.

The team comprises 12 players: Miranda Kern, Foster, Sager, Krzycki, Bange, Elissa Zerr, Gabby Wilson, Cayla Carter, Courtney Reilley, Schippers, Kylie Ritter and Brielle McKee. Sager, Andy Schippers and Donald Zerr are the

coaches.

The team will be playing in a Father's Day tournament in Russell on Saturday and Sunday, then will compete in Beloit on Saturday, July 3. The girls face the Regional VI Championship tourney starting Friday, July 9, at Hill City.

K-State official excited about Big 12

MANHATTAN (AP) — Kansas State athletics director John Currie is bullish about the future of the downsized Big 12.

Currie says that with 10 teams, the conference will be stronger athletically and more lucrative for the member schools.

Currie spoke at a news conference Wednesday, one day after Texas announced it would remain in the conference despite the departures of Colorado

and Nebraska.

Currie says Kansas State was among the five schools that agreed to give up some future revenue to Texas, Texas A&M and Oklahoma if necessary to keep the conference alive.

But Currie believes the league will generate enough additional revenue that those payments won't be required.

Los Angeles Lakers star basing season on game

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kobe Bryant yawned when he leaned back on the Los Angeles Lakers' bench to watch his teammates running through their final practice of the season.

That cool outer demeanor revealed none of the urgency running through Bryant's head. He knows the singular stakes when the Lakers host the Boston Celtics in Game 7 of the NBA finals Thursday night, and he isn't afraid to raise them even higher.

"I've said the whole season, (if) you don't win a championship, it's a failure," said Bryant, who hopes to have his hand full with a fifth championship ring. "It's as simple as that."

Nine months of preparation and eight weeks of postseason play for the NBA's two most decorated franchises will culminate in one pressure-packed game at Staples Center.

Such showdowns once occurred regularly in the finals, including four previous trips to Game 7 for these teams, but this is the finals' first Game 7 since 2005 and just the third in 22 years.

It's a dream scenario for kids playing hoops in their driveway. It's a crucible of history both for Bryant's Lakers and the Celtics' veteran core. It's also simply an incredibly cool experience, according to the players who are mentally able to savor it.

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