

Colby splits wild 70-run pair

By R.B. Headley
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Ouch! Saturday's doubleheader hurt in so many ways from 70 runs being scored to Colby K-18 pitcher Zack Hart breaking his hand.

Hart was actually hitting when an inside fastball struck more bone than bat. Though he barely made a sound, everyone watching this battle between Colby and McCook, Neb., knew the ensuing handshake did not look good.

"Yeah, we lost a pitcher. It will be six weeks so he'll be out for the rest of the season, and he'd been doing a good job," coach Brian Quagliano said as Hart had gone 3-0 to start his K-18 pitching career. "He was doing a good job. Someone will have to step up and fill that No. 2 spot on the mound."

Teammates did step up before the five-hour wild roller-coaster ride finally ended on another humid Saturday afternoon. After McCook won the opener 16-15, game two literally delivered crazy lead changes with every half-inning.

Colby led 3-0, trailed 6-3, led 9-6, trailed 14-9, led 17-14 and then saw McCook force a 17-17 deadlock just 3 1/2 innings into this contest.

"It was wild. It seemed like nobody wanted to win it," Quagliano confirmed. Colby was also struggling to stay on track with four starters missing due to wrestling camp.

Yet K-18 had only lost two games all season before Saturday, the boys weren't about to lose two in a row.

Sure enough, pitchers Rex Branum and Casey Quagliano. They permitted only one more McCook run with Branum earning his first victory and Quagliano recording the save.

Colby's defense also made all the key plays during those final two frames.

Meanwhile, none of Saturday's 70 trips around the bases was more memorable than what Alex



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
Colby K-18 teammates encourage starting pitcher Shevin Martin, third from left, during game two of the home doubleheader against McCook, Neb., Saturday afternoon. Pitchers from both teams needed as much help as possible as a combined 70 runs were scored.

Vap accomplished.

Vap drew a two-out walk and promptly moved to second when McCook's pitcher balked.

An errant pitch sent Vap hustling into third base. Now the visitors were really rattled, and another wild throw allowed Vap to slide home safely for an 18-17 Colby advantage.

"Alex is pretty quick, and he's very smart on the basepaths," coach Quagliano observed. "He knows when to go, and that was a huge run for us. We were able to get it done after that."

Colby added another three runs, two more on pitches eluding the McCook catcher. It all added up to a 21-18 triumph for K-18's 17th win in 20 games this season.

The crazy finish also gave Colby a 3-2 season victory over these tough Nebraska foes. McCook won the first meeting on May 25,

but Colby came back and swept a doubleheader at McCook last week.

"These last two games (Saturday) gave some of our younger players a chance to shine," coach Quagliano said.

Shevin Martin started Saturday's second game on the mound and shut out McCook through that first inning. However, a couple of Colby fielding errors helped ignite the six-run McCook second.

Colby quickly answered with six after Brady Slinger was "plunked" by an inside pitch.

Martin, Branum, Hudson Stramel and Casey Quagliano all singled home runs to give Colby a 7-6 lead. Vap's grounder plated another run, then Tyler Schritter ripped an RBI-triple over the McCook center fielder's head.

McCook's eight-run third made it 14-9, only to see both Stramel

and Quagliano crushed two-run doubles. Colby caught the visitors at 14-14 thanks to young catcher Jonah Thompson drawing a bases-loaded walk.

Thompson caught all 12 innings of both games as first-string catcher Austin Hart attended wrestling camp.

"Jonah's going to be a good catcher. He just needs to build up that throwing arm a bit," coach Quagliano said. "He'll probably catch both games again tonight."

Colby K-18 hosts another doubleheader when league foe WaKeeney visits for a 6 p.m. twinbill. Those wrestling campers aren't expected to play the opener, but don't think it will stop K-18.

"We swept WaKeeney at their field last time we played," coach Quagliano concluded. "I think we'll do okay again with what we have."



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press

Colby K-18's Brady Slinger didn't get bothered when an inside pitch plunked off him Saturday afternoon against McCook, Neb. He scored a run and helped Colby capture the 21-18 victory.

Mud Bog coming to Colby July 13

The Northwest Kansas Mud Bog is set for Sunday, July 13 at the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

Action begins at 6 p.m. with four truck classes competing: Stock, Super Stock, Modifieds and Open.

Entry fee for each driver is \$50 and must be submitted by 4 p.m.

on race day. Fee includes one pit pass.

All drivers and passengers must have Department of Transportation approved helmets.

General admission tickets are available with prices being \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under age 12.

Sluggers take two at Norton

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Shaky starts couldn't stop the Colby Sluggers from dusting off a doubleheader sweep of zone rival Norton, 11-5 and 12-6, Sunday night at Norton.

Norton actually led the opener, 5-2, before Colby rallied with nine unanswered runs.

Game two was also close until a six-run Sluggers sixth finished the sweep.

"That was the backbreaker," coach Jared Hamilton confirmed as his team improved to 10-5 overall this season. They've won four straight at Norton during these past two seasons.

"Norton's a solid club. Their pitching was okay, but we made them throw a lot of pitches and they wore down," Hamilton said. "Our top four guys were very productive in getting on base and getting some steals."

The Sluggers' starting pitching was also very productive. In fact, Jake Thompson and Todd Kane both threw complete-game victories.

A perfect time to rest some other arms since Colby plays at the Hays Wood Bat Tournament this weekend. The Sluggers finished 0-5 in this three-day event last season, so they're looking for better results as playoff time draws closer.

"It will be a really tough tournament in Hays. We'll have to play better than we did at Norton," Hamilton observed. "It's all about wins and losses and getting a favorable seed for the zone tournament. A top three seed is where we want to be."

The Sluggers also prevailed Sunday night despite taking only nine players. With no reserves, they just had to shake off those early mistakes and battle until the final pitch.

"We tend to play make all the plays when our backs are against the wall, but defensively we need to get a little sharper early in



MONICA KANE

Colby Sluggers pitcher and outfielder Todd Kane threw a complete game during the doubleheader sweep of zone rival Norton Sunday night in Norton.

games," the coach concluded.

No stat leaders were available from Sunday's victories.

Colby's next zone games will be a doubleheader at Goodland on Wednesday, July 10.

Colby ball schedule

A glance at upcoming games for Colby legion baseball teams this week.

Tonight

Hoxie at Colby third through sixth grade, 6:30 p.m. doubleheader at Carl Adams Field.

WaKeeney at Colby K-18, 6 p.m. doubleheader at ball complex.

Wednesday

Quinter at Colby third through sixth grade, 6:30 p.m. doubleheader at Carl Adams Field.

Thursday

Colby K-18 at Garden City T

ournament.

Friday

Colby Sluggers at Hays Tournament.

Colby K-18 at Garden City Tournament.

Saturday

Colby Sluggers at Hays Tournament.

Colby K-18 at Garden City Tournament.

Sunday

Colby Sluggers at Hays Tournament.

Colby K-18 at Garden City Tournament.

Murder suspect's ex-mates disagree about murder charges

BOSTON (AP) - Former New England Patriots wide receiver Deion Branch shared his thoughts on former teammate Aaron Hernandez in a recent interview, stressing that his greatest concern was justice being brought for the murder of Odin Lloyd, the victim of the crime with which Hernandez is charged.

"Aaron is a great guy and a

great friend of mine and a great teammate," Branch told *The Albany (Ga.) Herald* in a story published Saturday. "I love him to death, and it was shocking to hear him involved in this situation."

Branch, currently a free agent, was reacquired by the Patriots during the 2010 season (Hernandez's rookie year), after four-plus seasons in Seattle.

"Most importantly, I send my prayers and condolences out to the Lloyd family," Branch said.

Branch's comments are in contrast to comments from former Patriots offensive tackle and teammate Matt Light.

Light, also a former teammate of Hernandez, said he "never embraced -- never believed in -- anything Aaron Hernandez stood for."

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