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photos by STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Lathrup's Mike Carithers (7) is tagged out by Seasholm shortstop Jason Silva (8) in the first inning of Saturday's district baseball game at Royal Oak's Memorial Field.

Squeezed out!

Kimball tips Groves, Lathrup for district title

By Marty Budner
staff writer

There was only one thing that stopped Royal Oak Kimball — the state's No. 1-ranked class A baseball team — in district action Saturday at Memorial Park.

That was the 1 o'clock whistle from Royal Oak Fire Station No. 4 at the southwest corner of the park. It blew so loud umpires were forced to halt play because neither Kimball or Groves could hear anything.

Other than that, it was the Knights' day. Kimball, the master of bunts, stroled to an 8-0 semifinal victory over Birmingham Groves then won the district championship immediately afterwards with a 6-3 decision over Southfield-Lathrup. Lathrup advanced to the finals with a 5-1 win over Birmingham Seasholm in the district's first game that morning.

Coach Frank Clouser's team, which won the state title in 1972 and has been runner-up on three other occasions, now plays the winner of the Holly district at Memorial Field this Saturday. The Holly district is being played today after getting rained out over the weekend.

"We made some mistakes today, but we executed fairly well on offense," said Clouser, who has coached the Knights for 15 years. "We got our bunts down and that's what we wanted."

"Our pitching has carried us all year, and that's what got us through this double-header. We only allowed three runs in two games and that's not bad. We got through the double-header without using one of our top pitchers — James Kosnik — who has a sore shoulder."

"When you go up against a team (Lathrup) that you don't know much about it's tough," he said. "But, (Gary) Peters pitched an excellent game against Groves."

Kimball now owns a 24-3 overall record (its losses to Troy Athens, Rochester Adams and Grosse Pointe North).

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Southfield-Lathrup failed to take advantage of its opportunities in this game.

The Chargers took a 1-0 lead after the first inning, but that was the last lead they had. They also scored single runs in

both the fourth and sixth innings, but left seven runners stranded.

Kimball tied things at 1-1 in the second inning on a base hit by Gary Pierce. The Knights mustered four runs in a wild fourth inning on three hits, two errors, two walks and two bunts.

Peters, who had eight total bases in the game, blasted a 400-foot home run to left center-field in the fifth inning for the Knights' sixth run.

Lathrup managed eight hits, including two by second baseman Al Ghosh who hit the ball hard all afternoon. Scott Shafer had a run-scoring double in the fourth, knocking in Ron Rechter who had doubled to lead off the inning.

Pete Ammon and Randy Carey led off the fifth with back-to-back singles, but Mike Carithers struck out and a double play (Harvey Friedenberg struck out and Ammon was nailed trying to steal third base) ended the threat.

Carithers and Rob Goldstein had the other Charger hits.

District washouts

Although many district baseball tournaments went on as scheduled, Friday's steady rainfall forced postponement of some of Saturday's play. Those games are slated for today.

Among the district games which were rained out was the Class A Holly tournament, which included Rochester Adams, West Bloomfield, Clarkston and Waterford Kettering. Adams plays Clarkston 11 a.m. today in the first round, while West Bloomfield and Kettering book up around 1 p.m. The championship game is slated for 3:30 p.m. The winner of that district plays Royal Kimball Saturday in a regional at Memorial Park in Royal Oak.

Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook had its Class B District washed out and play is scheduled for today. The 10 a.m. game features Cranbrook against St. Clair Shores South Lake, while Avondale and Madison Heights Lamphere play at 12:30 p.m. The championship game is scheduled for 3 p.m.

Southpaw Scott Kline went the distance and took the loss.

"It's been an up-and-down season for us," said Lathrup coach Bob Marten. "We beat some good teams and lost to others we shouldn't have. We gave Kimball four runs and that was the game."

"Kimball is a very good team, and you can't make mistakes against them," he said.

Lathrup finished with an 11-12 overall record.

SEMIFINAL GAMES

Lathrup's Scott Shafer allowed only four hits and picked up the victory over Seasholm. Maple hurler Brett Bohatuk took the loss.

Lathrup scored twice in the first inning on a single by Carithers. Kline and Ammon had run-scoring singles in the fifth inning, and the Chargers added an unearned run in the seventh.

Shafer and Carithers each had two hits for Lathrup. Seasholm failed to take advantage of 11 walks and left 11 men on base. Bohatuk, Marc Spencer, Mark Sackett and John Shumaker had the lone Maple hits.

"We just couldn't get the clutch hit with men on base," said Seasholm coach Don Sackett, whose team finished with a 12-10 overall record. "We made a couple of mistakes on defense — we had a shaky first inning and that was the game."

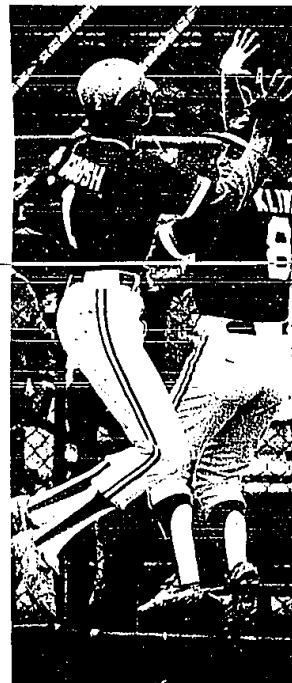
Groves was absolutely powerless in its loss to Kimball. Catcher Chad Switzer, with a fourth-inning, seeing-eye single, and first baseman Chad Switzer, with a second-inning double, mustered the only hits off Peters. Pecar had a seventh-inning walk and that was the only other Groves' runner for the game.

Kimball, which held a fairly safe 1-0 lead through the first four innings, broke things open with a seven-run, fifth-inning rally. The Knights had six hits in that decisive inning.

"The key to the game was that they had their lead-off man on base four times in six innings," said Groves coach Jim Crosby. "Kimball had the kind of game you need in tournament baseball — good pitching and a couple good hitters (infielder Dave Bishop was 4-for-4)."

"We hung in there for a while, but our pitcher (Jeff Mayer) just ran out of gas," he said. "We gave it the best we had, but we were disappointed that we lost."

Groves finished with a 16-11 overall record.



It's a high-five celebration for Lathrup's Al Ghosh (1) and Scott Kline (8) against Seasholm.

Blue Jays topple CC for first district crown

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

Ted Simmons would be proud. Southfield won its first baseball district title over.

The Blue Jays, behind the pitching of Bill Mathews and Steve Sontag along with the timely hitting of Kevin Cleveland, won the championship Saturday with a 3-1 victory over Redford Catholic Central.

The district was played at the diamond where Simmons, the All-Star catcher of the Milwaukee Brewers, made his mark. Baseball at Southfield hasn't been mentioned much since Simmons graduated there in 1956 — until Saturday.

Mathews, a crafty right-hander, won both ends of the district tournament. He hurled the first four innings in a 9-1 semifinal win over Livonia Bentley and came back to pitch six more innings in the win over CC.

Sontag provided solid relief help, including a tension-filled, final inning in the win over CC. He set the side down in order, but not until CC's Chris Parsons was tagged out at second base trying to stretch a single into a double for the final out.

CLEVELAND, meanwhile, was a one-man wrecking crew. He parked a 350-foot solo home run over the right-field fence to give the Jays a 1-0 lead. He later doubled home the tying and go-ahead runs in the fifth inning off losing pitcher John Nissen. Cleveland finished with five hits on the day.

"Kevin hit real well during league play and then he talked off a little, but now he's hitting well again," said Southfield coach Cliff Dubowski. "He's a fast-ball hitter, and the entire team likes to hit fast balls."

"Bill and Steve are smart pitchers," added the fifth-year coach. "They have real good curve balls and knuckle balls."

Southfield will take its deceiving 17-12 record into Saturday's regional at Hazel Park. CC, meanwhile, bowed out at 25-8.

"We were looking for 20 victories this year, and we expected to battle Kimball (Royal Oak) for the title, but we finished five games behind," Dubowski said. "We lost seven, one-run games and should have lost no more than six. We've been inconsistent."

CATHOLIC CENTRAL, which fell into a hitting slump during the final stretch of the season, stopped a Livonia Franklin rally in the seventh inning of the opening game to reach the final, 3-2.

The Shamrocks won the game despite getting just one hit, a second-inning double by John Rogers, the winning pitcher.

CC tallied a pair of runs in the first inning as Franklin starter Rich Wood walked in two runs. Reliever Bill

Haynes had even more trouble. He walked John Connor to start the second inning and was charged with CC's third run of the game.

That brought on junior Mike Wilkins, who shut CC down the rest of the way, giving Franklin a chance to get back into the game.

The Patriots got a run back in the fifth to cut the lead to 3-1.

In the top of seventh, Chris Lewis walked and later scored on Steve Williams' single to make it 3-2. Catcher Mike Johnson, who went 3-for-4, followed with a single and Bob Copeland walked to load the bases with one out.

NISSAN, who replaced Rogers on the mound in the seventh, earned the save when he got Rich Popp on a pop-out and fanned Wilkins to end the game. But the CC victory came with some anxious moments. With Popp batting, third baseman John Connor made a diving, back-hand stab of a wild throw by catcher Ed Ewald, who tried to pick

off Williams, who wandered a little too far from the bag.

Connor earlier had come up with a key play, robbing Wilkins of a hit with runners on base in the sixth inning.

Franklin bowed out on tournament play with a 13-13 record.

In the other semifinal game, Southfield put Bentley away with six runs in the fifth inning, chasing starter John Williams and reliever Mike Luch.

Sontag drove in two runs with a single and Michael Burwell added a two-run double during an uprising.

BENTLEY managed only three hits against Southfield pitchers Mathews, Sontag and Bob Graham. "We were too anxious at the plate," said Bentley coach Marty Kozik, whose team bowed out with a 7-15 record. "Southfield hit the ball real well, and I thought we'd hit because we've been scoring a lot of runs, but we tried to hit the ball too hard and they were popping them up."



Craig Mathews
Paris 2 wins