

# Pioneers eye conference lead

Maybe this is the way championship baseball was meant to be played — with each game of a four-game set decided in the final at-bat — but couldn't the teams involved at least appease their fans by winning on their own fields?

Oakland University seemingly put itself out of the Great Lakes Conference baseball race by losing a double-header at home to Grand Valley State Saturday, 5-2 and 4-3, the latter in eight innings. But the Pioneers returned the favor Sunday at GVSU, knocking off the Lakers 3-2 and 8-3.

The split of the four-game series left OU within a half-game of the GLIAC lead, Ferris State and Hillsdale are 5-3, the Pioneers are 5-4 and GVSU is 5-5. OU plays Ferris — the defending GLIAC champion — in a pair of home-and-away twinbills this weekend. OU hosts Ferris at 1 p.m. Saturday, then plays in Big Rapids at 1 p.m. Sunday.

In what seemed an effort to make the series with the Lakers as dramatic as possible, OU saved its best for last. The Pioneers trailed 3-2 going into the bottom of the seventh inning of Sunday's second game. After Dave Spak lined out, Damon Salisbury got an infield hit, and Dave Walczyk followed with a bunt single.

JEFF CLARK, GVSU's all-time save leader, relieved Ed Finch, but Tim Bradley beat out an infield single to load the bases. Randy Bailey, however, popped out to shortstop, leaving it up to Dennis Milobar — who was mired in a three-for-17 slump and hadn't hit a home run since opening day.

Until Sunday, Milobar slugged a long fly over the center field fence for a grand slam homer, and the Pioneers escaped with the victory. Derek Smith evaded his pitching record at 2-2, going all seven innings and allowing three runs (one earned) on five hits and five walks, striking out five. Finch took the loss.

OU scored first in the first, getting a run on singles by Tom Perkins and Mike Gunn and Rob Alvin's double play. GVSU retaliated with two unearned runs in the fourth without a hit, taking advantage of two walks and two OU errors.

The Pioneers tied it in the sixth on Bailey's double, a balk by Finch and Tom Perkins' sacrifice fly. The

Lakers recaptured the lead on Len Pikel's sacrifice fly in the bottom of the sixth, making it 3-2. Bradley had two hits for OU.

IN SUNDAY'S first game, Pat Sawowski scattered seven hits and five walks to improve his record to 4-0. Only one of the two runs he allowed was earned, and he fanned six. The Pioneers struck for two runs in the first on Damon Salisbury's bases-loaded single. The Lakers got one back on Jeff Terpir's single in the bottom of the first, but Spak pushed OU's lead back to two runs with a run-producing single in the sixth.

An error by Spak allowed GVSU's Chris Looney to reach second base in the seventh, and Tim Fritz's single scored him to make it 3-2. But Sawowski got out of the inning without further incident. Gunn had two hits and scored two runs for OU; Terpir had two hits for GVSU.

On Saturday, four consecutive Laker batters got hits in the eighth inning, resulting in three runs and the 5-2 triumph. Scott Nearpass started the rally with a single, Tim Smith tripled him home, Terpir singled in Smith, Looney singled and, after Fritz hit into a double play, Dennis Cantrell knocked in a run with a base hit.

OU's runs came in the first inning. Perkins reached base on an error and Alvin slammed his 11th home run of the season, tying the OU single-season record set by Dennis Weinert in 1979. The Lakers tied the game with two runs on four straight hits after two were out in the third. Pikel and Nearpass both had run-scoring singles.

DUANE MOORE was the losing pitcher (he's 4-1), going the distance for OU and giving up 13 hits and five earned runs. Matt McMahon was the winner.

In Saturday's second game, the Pioneers struck for three seven-inning runs but came up one short in the 4-3 loss. The Lakers had pushed across four runs in the fourth when the first five batters reached base. Looney knocked in one run with a base hit, and Dennis Cantrell drove in two more with a single.

OU's final-inning rally started with a Spak single. Chris Bobo was

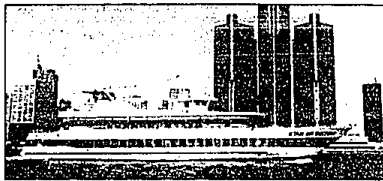
safe on an error, and Bailey singled to load the bases. After Bradley hit into a force play at home, GVSU pitcher Tim Schuppe tossed a wild pitch, allowing one run to score. Dave Walczyk followed with an RBI single.

Russell relieved Schuppe and got Perkins to bounce to second base, but the ball was booted and another run scored, making it 4-3. Gunn

grounded out, though, to end the game.

Tom Vandermeer, starting in place of Scott Tucker whose back stiffened during warm-up, was the losing pitcher. He surrendered four earned runs on six hits and three walks. Schuppe got the victory, and Russell earned the save. Spak and Bailey each had two hits for OU. OU is 18-11 overall; GVSU is 18-16.

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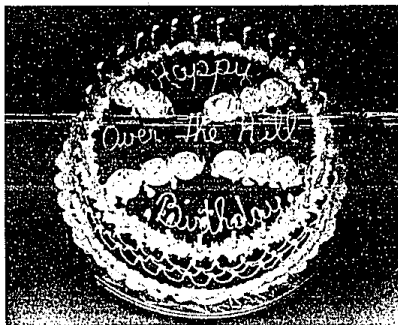
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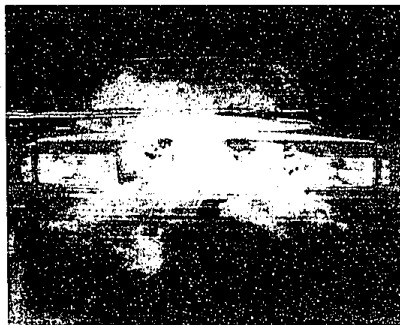
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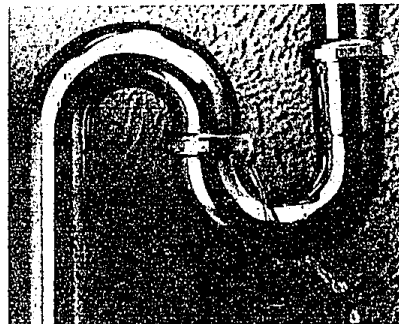
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