

Stevenson rocks CC in district final, 7-6

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All season, Livonia Stevenson's baseball team has made a habit of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.

In Saturday's district final baseball game against rival Redford Catholic Central, much more than a victory was snatched.

Stevenson's Billy Rabe delivered a two-run homer in the top of the seventh inning to lead an incredible comeback by the Spartans as they won the Division I district championship with a 7-6 win over the host Shamrocks.

Stevenson, 21-9 overall, meets 13-3 Detroit Henry Ford in the regional semifinals, 1 p.m. Saturday at Lincoln Park.

Rabe's round-tripper, believed to be the first of his varsity career, capped a great day that saw him pitch the maximum of 10 innings in the two games, getting both wins and driving in the game-winning runs against CC (25-7).

After the game, the senior said he wasn't sure it was a home run when he first hit it.

"I was thinking double all the way," he said. "The pitcher hung a curveball and I made solid contact. I was surprised when it went over the fence."

"There's no feeling like the one we have today. This team has so much heart. I'll take heart over ability every day, and we were determined to win today."

Rabe pitched a mercy-rule-shortened five-inning shutout against Redford Union in the semifinals, and was called upon to pitch the final five innings of the final against CC.

Stevenson starter Matthew Courtright gave up five runs in the first two innings as the

BASEBALL

Shamrocks built an early 6-1 lead. Rabe, who describes himself as having a "rubber arm," allowed just one run and four hits in his five innings of work in the final. He struck out the final two batters of the game when CC had runners on second and third with just one out.

"That was the last out he could have pitched today, and you could tell how much he wanted it," Stevenson coach Harvey Weingarden said of his ace pitcher. "It was total heart by this team today like it has all season."

"This was our 21st win of the season, which is a new school record, and I think 12 or 13 of them have been by one run. These guys just keep battling and that's been a big part of our success."

CC coach John Salter said Stevenson deserved a lot of credit for the way the team battled back after digging such a big early hole.

"Rabe's a very good pitcher and he held us down for those last five innings," he said. "He's got a good fastball and a good breaking ball and had nice control. We knew we needed more runs after we were up 6-2, but we just couldn't get them across."

CC looked like the team ready to move on early in the game, jumping out to a big early lead. Redford's Ryan Gallagher drew a bases-loaded walk in the bottom of the first to put the Shamrocks ahead 1-0.

After a sacrifice fly by Rabe tied the game, CC responded with four runs in the bottom of the second to take a commanding 5-1 lead. Sophomore Mike

Monterey started the rally with an RBI single, and two batters later, senior Ryan Rogowski hit a two-run double to right that scored two more. Gallagher followed up with a run-scoring single that gave the Shamrocks what appeared to be a comfortable lead.

Rabe allowed just one run when he was pitching, that coming in the third inning, when junior Kyle Groneau singled home sophomore Derek Brooks to make it a 6-2 game.

The Spartans waited until the top of the fifth to start their comeback. Junior Brett Rosbury led off the inning with a single and the fourth straight inning Stevenson put the leadoff batter on base — and sophomore Brian Alpert followed with a single.

Starting pitcher Ed Conz was then pulled in favor of Monterey, who appeared close to working his way out of a jam. He got the next batter to fly out to right, and Brian Shekell's single resulted in a play at the plate where CC catcher Eric Vojtkofsky tagged Rosbury out, keeping the score 6-2 with two outs.

However, Stevenson catcher Jason Christopoulos singled in a run, and Greg Dumont drew a bases-loaded walk to make the score 6-4. An error one batter later made it 6-5 before CC's Jeff Schulz got the final out of the inning.

Despite not taking the lead, it was apparent momentum and confidence were on the side of the Spartans. Rabe had little trouble getting through the fifth and sixth innings, setting up his dramatic final performance.

"I knew it was my last season, and I wanted to leave it all on the field," Rabe said. "Everyone on this team did their part to get

us here."

"This team always has another goal in sight," Weingarden said. "The seniors have a lot of baseball left in them."

•STEVENSON 10, REDFORD UNION 0: The Spartans encountered much less resistance in their semifinal victory over the Panthers than they did in winning the district championship.

Stevenson piled up four runs in the fourth and fifth innings to bring a quick end to the game against RU, 10-0. The Panthers' season ends the season with

an 18-12 record.

Rabe went the distance, allowing just three hits with five strikeouts. Senior Bill Marsack slammed a three-run home run in the fourth inning to pave the way for the victory. He also drove in the game-ending run in the bottom of the fifth.

Senior Christopher Severson, Christopoulos and Alpert each added RBIs for the Spartans.

Chris Rigley, Shawn Meyers and John Hageman picked up the only hits for the Panthers.

•REDFORD CC 3, FARMINGTON 1:

Schulz pitched a gem for the Shamrocks in the district semifinals, helping them gain some revenge on the team that ended their 2001 season.

Creppeau and Vojtkofsky picked up back-to-back hits in the third inning to give CC an early 2-0 lead. Rogowski executed a suicide squeeze bunt to perfection in the fifth that scored Brooks to give the team a 3-0 advantage.

The Falcons (17-24) picked up their lone run in the bottom of the fifth when sophomore Jeff Fischer's sacrifice fly scored junior Andy Brown.

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talk about building a successful program and developing a family atmosphere with athletes from a variety of backgrounds.

The academy also will include a breakout session on topics ranging from developing a positive relationship with parents, heat related illness, creative and

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