

Westland ballclub headed to World Series

By BRAD EMONS
STAFF WRITER

Going to the American Amateur Baseball Congress Mickey Mantle-age World Series has become old hat for manager Jerry Pletcher.

Pletcher is making his ninth appearance since 1977, but for his Westland Federation America squad, it's a new and exciting experience for his latest crop of 16-16 year-olds, who play Springfield, Ill., in the first-round of the eight-team double-elimination tourney in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Winning five of six games, Westland America ran its overall record to 42-5 by winning the AABC North-Central Regional title Sunday with a 12-4 victory over the Kentucky Colonels in Coldwater.

Team fools manager

"This team is very surprising," Pletcher said. "Four weeks ago, they were playing, I would have said, 'No way.'"

"But all of a sudden we're playing outstanding defensive baseball. And we hit more home runs (14) in 11 district and regional

games than we had all season long. We've really started to hit the ball."

Westland America is also getting the job done on the mound.

Drafted Brian Berryman proved to be a wise pick-up from the Redford Mickey Mantle team.

The right-hander from Redford Union High opened the Coldwater regional Aug. 4 with a complete-game, four-hit 2-1 victory over Janssen's Refrigeration of Sterling Heights. In seven innings, Berryman struck out eight and walked five.

Berryman beats Kentucky

Berryman came back with three days rest on Sunday to eliminate the Colonels, scattering nine hits and three walks.

He allowed just one run before retiring in the seventh when he allowed three runs.

But by that time Westland America had the game well in hand.

Co-tourney MVPs Jason Copeland and Mike Brusseau (Redford Catholic Central), the team's shortstop-second base double-play combination, provided the

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offensive spark.

Copeland, who batted .534 for the tourney with three homers, went 4-for-5 with an RBI. Brusseau, meanwhile, contributed three hits and three RBI.

"He (Brusseau) just made some outstanding plays," Pletcher said. "It's been five years since I've had anybody make those kind of plays."

Tape-measure job

Marcus Williams contributed a mammoth two-run homer to spark a nine-run Westland America upswing in the third. Berryman also had a two-run round-tripper during the surge, giving his team a 4-1 lead.

Berryman and third baseman Kevin Wynn, both whom made all-tourney, each collected two hits.

"Brian threw a nice game against one of the tougher teams (Janssen's) in the tourney," Wynn said. "But he also hit the ball well and played well in the outfield (right and left). He also

threw out a runner trying to stretch a single into a double."

Lopsided victory

Westland America avenged Saturday's 8-4 loss to Flint Grossi with a five-inning 17-1 mercy-rule win in the first game on Sunday.

Brusseau went 4-for-4 with six RBI, while pitching the final two innings.

Williams cracked a three-run homer and Sullivan followed with a solo shot for a back-to-back effort in the first. All-Tourney pick Mark Taylor went 3-for-3, including two doubles and two RBI, while Mike Williams (Farmington High) added two hits.

Copeland, who pitched the first three innings, picked up the win.

On Friday, Westland edged TSI of Macomb County, 4-1, as Marcus Williams outduccled hard-throwing Gary Kinzie.

Williams, a 6-foot-5 right-hander out of Detroit Henry Ford, struck out eight and allowed just four hits in seven innings.

He also helped his own cause with an RBI double and RBI single.

Reliever comes through

On Thursday (Aug. 5), Westland trimmed the Wyoming Royals, 7-4, as Mitch Jabczynski earned the save. He hurled the final 1 1/2 innings in relief of starter Brandon Robinette, who gained the decision. Trying to protect a 6-3 lead, Jabczynski walked the first batter he faced with the

bases loaded in the sixth, but got out of the inning before retiring the side in the seventh.

Copeland homered twice and knocked in three runs to pace the offensive attack.

On Wednesday, Nick James (Westland John Glenn) singled in a run and Brusseau scored the game-winner in the seventh (on a Janssen error) to give Westland and Berryman the 2-1 triumph.

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Travelers run out of tourney heroics

By DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Of three area teams in the tournament, the VFW Travelers made the strongest bid for the AABC regional championship in Battle Creek.

"The Travelers, with 11 players from communities serviced by the Observer and Eccentric newspapers, were one game away from the final when they were eliminated Sunday.

VFW, which won four straight games after losing its first, suffered its second loss when Youngstown (Ohio) scored a run in the bottom of the 11th inning to break a 1-1 tie.

The Travelers had a stellar pitching effort by Scott Kapla, who returned late Saturday from Pennsylvania where he had played with Hines Park Lincoln-Mercury in the AAABA regional and drove to Battle Creek in time for the 12:30 p.m. Sunday start.

Kapla (Canton) went the distance, scattering six hits, despite having been bothered by a sore arm while pitching for Hines Park earlier in the summer.

"After every inning, I kept asking him 'Scotty, how do you feel?'" VFW manager Dick Henry said. "He kept saying 'I'll go another inning.'" He ended up going all the way.

"I figured he took us this far; it was his game to win or lose. I had nobody on the bench who could

throw any better than he was at that point."

The Travelers scored first and should have won the game in seven innings, according to Henry, Jeff Lance (Redford), who had two hits, scored the run on a single by Derek Besco (Westland).

Youngstown tied the score in the fourth when a miscommunication caused a flyball to drop between third base and left field, allowing a runner to score from first. VFW left 14 runners on base in scoring position.

Dave Kasper (Canton) made a big defensive play in the bottom of the seventh to preserve the tie and send the game into extra innings. His throw from center field gunned down a runner at home plate, and his brother struck out the next batter to end the inning.

"The tournament director (Woody Bohker) said it was one of the best Connie Mack games and two of the finest pitching performances he had ever seen," Henry said.

"From a coach's standpoint, it was a killer, from a spectator's standpoint, it was something to watch.

"I don't think I've ever been so drained after a game. I don't know if the kids could have played another game."

Youngstown advanced to the final but lost to Fort Wayne, 4-3.

The Travelers had to fight for their survival after losing their first game on Wednesday of last

week to Youngstown, 8-5.

VFW had its own on the mound — Aaron Scheffer (Westland), who signed with the Seattle Mariners last week. Henry said he thought that event distracted Scheffer, who had seven walks and was not helped by a handful of errors.

"He was a little nervous," Henry said. "His mind had been on the contract and (Seattle) talking with him, so he was not quite himself."

The Travelers rebounded with a 3-1 win over Saginaw Means Stamping by Bryan Besco (Westland) pitching Thursday.

The addition of pitcher Steve Hornsberger, who was drafted from the Brighton team for the regional, proved to be a great move by VFW. He was the winning pitcher in relief in the next three games.

"He's not a real big kid, but he's a gamer," Henry said. "He has a nice breaking ball; he's sneaky quicky. He comes up and comes at you. He'll challenge you in a heartbeat."

Hornsberger entered with VFW trailing 5-1 Friday against the Royals from Wyoming, Mich. He shut the door while the Travelers rallied to win 8-5. The Bescos, Brian Hicks (Garden City) and Dave Kapla had key hits.

VFW was losing Saturday to the Kansas City Creelers when Hornsberger did it again, working the last two-plus innings as the

Travelers came back to win 6-5 with a six-run sixth inning.

Bryan Besco hit a three-run homer and Brad Willey, a draftee from Kensington Valley, a two-run shot in that inning for VFW.

The Travelers next faced Macomb Steeles, the top-rated team in Michigan, and produced more late-game heroics, erasing a 7-1 deficit with a six-run seventh and winning 8-7 in 10 innings.

Lance's solo homer was the winning hit. Derek Besco had a two-run triple and Dave Kapla a two-run double in the seventh, and Scheffer had a run-scoring single to tie.

Hornsberger was on the mound again at the end to get his third win in as many games, working the last three innings.

"I was wondering 'Who do I have left' to pitch? Henry said. "He jumped up and said 'Coach, I think I can give you another inning or two.'"

"I said 'Isn't your arm stiff? You've pitched in relief the last two games.' He said 'It doesn't make any difference now, coach. I think I can give you what you want.' I said 'Ok, go out there and do it.'"

Other area players on the team are Rick Wynn (Walled Lake/Central), Chuck Taylor (Southfield/Detroit-Jesuit), Juan Sanchez (Detroit/Redford Catholic Central) and Dave Susalla (Redford/CC).

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