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Legion Season Ends At State Tournament



ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/ FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Vermillion's Jake Odens slides safely into home in the opening game of the Class B Legion baseball tournament in Salem.

BY MICHAEL HAMMOND AND ELYSE BRIGHTMAN

Vermillion Legion Post 1 baseball team traveled to Salem last weekend to represent region 3B in the Class B state tournament.

Vermillion played for a record of 2-2 over four days in the double-elimination tournament. They were sent home Monday night by McCook-Miner in a heartbreaking, walk-off fashion. McCook-Miner went on to beat Humboldt in the title game and will represent South Dakota in the Central Plains Div. II tournament in LeSeur, Minnesota from August 6-9.

Vermillion didn't go home empty handed as Post 1 was recognized with the sportsmanship award.

Vermillion 8, Garretson 4

On day one of the tournament, Vermillion defeated Garretson Post 23, 8-4, last Friday.

Vermillion jumped to an early lead in the top of the second inning scoring three runs thanks to two Garretson errors and a sacrifice fly by Nate Robertson. In the third, Post 1 was able to keep the momentum going with a single by Jack Brown that plated Cole Anderson, who had just stolen a base. Garretson brought in a run in the bottom of the third with a double from Cole Fiegen.

Vermillion scored the rest of their runs in the fourth inning with hits from Jake Odens, Carter Kratz and Anderson, along with walks from two players to take an 8-1 lead.

Odens started the game for Vermillion, pitching five innings and allowing one run on six hits and three walks to earn the win before giving way to Kratz in the sixth.

"I wanted to win," Odens said. "That was my mindset before the game even started."

Kratz pitched two scoreless innings before allowing a run in the eighth inning.

In the ninth inning, Garretson was on the comeback trail scoring two runs thanks hits to three and an error.

The play of the game was from Odens, who moved to right field and grabbed a ball that got by the first baseman to throw out the runner at second to end the game.

"I was just reacting," Odens said. "I didn't try to do too much and it worked out."

Vermillion coach Jason Gault was pleased with the victory in the tournament's first game.

"I thought (Odens) did a good job keeping the ball down," Gault said. "I thought our hitters did a good job of hitting strikes in their zone with guys on base."

The win put Vermillion in the winners bracket to face Humboldt Post 62, who defeated Tabor, on day two of action.

"The key is going to be pitching," Gault said. "We have Hunter Christopherson on the mound, he's kind of like Jake, and he's got a good fastball and a great off speed pitch."

Vermillion 6, Humbolt 8

Vermillion dropped game two 8-6 to Humbolt Post 62 in the second day of the tournament Saturday.

Vermillion got on the board in the top of the first inning when Christopherson reached base on an error that brought home Anderson.

Humbolt answered with three in the bottom of the frame and two more in the bottom of the second.

Vermillion made it a one-run game in the third when Brown launched a double to deep leftfield to score two runs then came around to score on a single by Joe Miller. The inning ended 6-5 in favor of Humbolt.

The next three innings of the game turned into a pitching duel between Vermillion's Christopherson and Humbolt's Blake Svoboda as the two pitchers let up a combined two hits.

After three scoreless innings, Vermillion took a one-run lead in the seventh. Brown was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded to tie the game at five, and Christopherson then drew a bases loaded walk.

Things were good for Post 1 until the bottom of the eighth when Humbolt's Danielson hit a single that drove in the go-ahead run. Two batters later, Masterson was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded that walked in the eighth run.

James came in to pitch and threw three strikes on three pitches for the final out of the inning.

In the ninth, Vermillion's attempts fell short as the team left one man on base and the game ended 8-6.

Christopherson threw a total of seven and two-thirds innings with eight runs on 11 hits, four strikeouts and one walk. Anderson came in to record one hit and no outs before being replaced by James.

Brown doubled and Kratz, Miller and Jefferson Galvin each had a single for Vermillion's only four hits of the game.

"I think we needed to try and math them offensively and we needed a couple of more hits during those middle innings to really blow it open," Gault said.

Vermillion 10, Groton 0

Vermillion remained alive in the double-elimination tournament by beating Groton Post 39, 10-0, in six innings in Salem on Sunday.

Ethan James threw a gem for Vermillion while the bats came alive after a slow day at the plate in their Saturday loss.

Vermillion put a run on the board early in the first inning after Brown drove in Anderson with a double. Post 1 added two in the third inning with another RBI from Brown, who hit a single, and a run scoring fielder's choice hit by Miller.

Brown scored in the fifth inning from a sacrifice fly to right field from Miller.

The game was blown open in the bottom of the sixth with three consecutive bases loaded singles from Brown, Christopherson, and Miller making the score 9-0 with only one out in the inning. Two batters later Travis Weber was able to deliver a single that scored Miller for the decisive run, ending the game due to the 10-run rule.

"(We Had) a big day from Jack Brown at the plate really leading our team offensively, getting some big hits with guys in scoring position," Gault said. "We hit the ball early in the count."

"Today (Sunday) our batters attacked the ball in the zone."

Groton was never able to get going offensively due to the brilliant performance on the mound from James, who threw six scoreless innings only allowing one hit, two walks, and two hit batsmen while striking out five batters. No runners were able to get past second base in the game for Groton, who could only put two runners in scoring position.

"Most of all I just wanted to stay in control and let my team know I was going to throw strikes," James said. "I knew they would be behind me the whole time, so just wanted to throw strikes and let them do the rest."

"That's the Ethan James we know and he'll want to throw again (Monday)," Gault said. "He's been a leader for us, just a tough nosed kid, and we couldn't have asked anything else from him."

Brown finished the day 3-for-3 with a walk, three runs scored, and three runs batted in. Christopherson and Weber had two hits apiece, while Miller had two runs batted in.

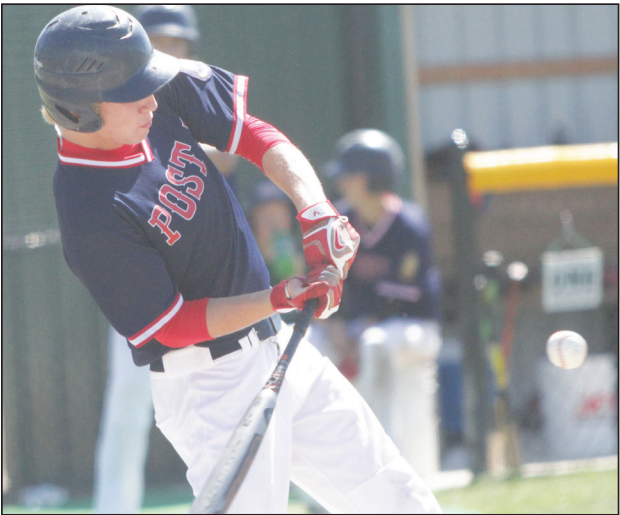
The win put Vermillion against McCook/Miner, who was unbeaten in the tournament, for a spot in the final.

Vermillion 4, McCook-Miner 5

Vermillion was eliminated in a loss to McCook-Miner Post 140 on run scoring error in the bottom of the ninth to end the game 5-4 in the South Dakota Class B Legion State Tournament in Salem on Monday night.

McCook/Miner stuck first with a one-run single from Anthony Tuschen plating Cole Cheeseman in the fourth inning. They added two more in the fifth after an error, a double from Tyler Cleveland and a single from Luke Loudenburg.

Vermillion struggled at the plate most of the game not being able to score any runs until they put three on the board



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Vermillion's Travis Weber makes contact with a pitch in the opening game of the Class B Legion baseball tournament in Salem.

in the seventh.

Vermillion's three runs in the seventh came from a one-run double by Ethan James and a two-run single by Jake Odens to tie the game. In the bottom of the inning, McCook/Miner scored on a bases-loaded 6-4-3 double play to take the lead back, 4-3.

With only one inning to tie the game up Vermillion was able to score a run with two outs in the top of the ninth inning when John Benson scored, after coming into the game as a pinch runner, when the second baseman dropped a fly ball from Weber. In the bottom half of the ninth inning McCook/Miner was able to win the game on a Vermillion error at the same position that allowed Loudenburg to score from second.

"I have always said kids are out there trying not to make any mistakes," Gault said. "There's one thing I know for sure, they didn't give up. They played to the end, and played at their highest level they could possibly play."

This was Gault's last season coaching the Vermillion Post 1 team.

"I think anytime you make it to state it is an achievement," Gault said. "This is a year I will remember for the rest of my life, just the way we played the game and the way we never gave up."

"I tell you what, it's a great way to walk away from the game."

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Cole Anderson slides safely into secondbase during Post 1's win over Garretson last Friday in Salem.