

Sports



DeSales' Jim McDermott slides home with the tying run in the bottom of the eighth inning, as the Saints stage a dramatic 8-7 win over Pavilion to capture the Class C baseball championship.

Saints' late rally wins Class C title

By Richard A. Kiley

Before the Section 5 Class C tournament got underway last month, DeSales coach Frank Payne was concerned that some of his players might have difficulty hitting against a caliber of pitchers they had not seen during the regular season.

So the crafty eighth-year coach asked his son Michael — who is a pitcher for nearby Hobart College — if he would pitch a few batting practices during the tourney to give the Saints an idea of what to expect from some of the better opposing hurlers.

His son obliged, and the Saints returned the coach's favor by winning his second sectional title in five years, as fourth-seeded DeSales nipped 10th-seeded Pavilion, 8-7, in extra innings to win the Class C baseball championship at Silver Stadium on Saturday, June 11.

The ninth-hitter in the DeSales batting order, Ron Cecere, plated the title-clinching run with a single to center, scoring Jeff Taney in the bottom of the eighth inning.

Payne's Saints entered the bottom of the eighth trailing by a run. With two strikes on him, leadoff hitter Jim McDermott was hit by a pitch and then stole second. He moved to third on a single by Taney and scored the tying run on a fielder's choice.

Taney moved to third on the fielder's choice and scored the game winner on Cecere's single, the ninth-hitter's third hit of the day.

Joe Vedora, who pitched the first 4 1/3 innings as well as the final inning, picked up the win for DeSales (14-3).

The Saints last won the Class C title back in 1984. They took the Class B baseball crown in 1974.

Payne said the wild game, which featured several lead changes down the stretch, seemed to turn when McDermott got on base to lead off the eighth inning.

"The turning point of the game was when McDermott got hit by a pitch with two strikes," Payne said. "He's my best baserunner; I don't know if anyone else could have scored on the play. He runs hard."

With McDermott on third base, Pavilion pitcher Steve Kosarko pitched the fatal comeback and looked McDermott back to third base, before flipping the ball to first to get the out. But McDermott, who may be the most fleet-footed of all the Saints, raced home and beat catcher Craig Higley's tag to tie the game at 7-7.

Taney did some heads-up base running of his own, going from first to third on the play to set up Cecere's winning hit.

DeSales trailed Pavilion 3-0 after one inning, but the Saints rallied to tie the game in the bottom of the third inning. Alex Onarato walked

and scored two batters later on a single by Matt Cannon to make it 3-1. Cannon enjoyed the friendly confines of 500 Norton St., collecting three singles and walloping a triple off the wall. In addition to his one RBI, he also scored a run for DeSales.

DeSales then tied the game on RBI singles by Steve Vedora and Frank Payne.

The Saints took their first lead in the bottom of the fourth inning, when Taney singled with one out and moved to third on a single by Cecere. Taney then came home on a single by Dean Askin, and Joe Vedora's single scored Cecere to give DeSales a 5-3 advantage.

Pavilion pulled to within one run in the top of the fifth, when Kosarko singled and scored on a triple by Travis Smith. Payne came on to pitch and didn't allow the Golden Gophers to get the equalizer.

Thanks to some shabby defensive play by the Saints, Pavilion took a 6-5 lead in the top of the seventh. Kosarko scored the tying run on an error before the Golden Gophers added another to take the one-run lead into the bottom of the inning.

Two outs away from defeat, Cannon lined a triple off the wall and scored on a sacrifice fly by Steve Vedora, to tie the game at 6-6.

Payne said he could see Kosarko tiring as the game moved into the late innings.

"He'd been pitching a lot of innings, so I told the kids to take some pitches early in the game," Payne said. "Then we jumped on him when we saw that he didn't have good control of his curveball and he went to his fastball."

Pavilion was the real surprise in this year's quest for the Class C crown, riding on the coat-tails of Kosarko: The Golden Gopher pitcher did it with his arm — striking out more than 30 batters in the three games prior to the one against DeSales — and his bat to propel his team into the championship game. He struck out seven DeSales hitters.

Both teams had 12 hits and made an error during the marathon game, which was scheduled to begin at 4 p.m. but was delayed nearly two hours because earlier sectional games had dragged on.

Originally, the DeSales-Pavilion game was to be played at 1 p.m., but the Class AA championship game between Waterloo and Batavia was moved from 4 p.m. to 1 p.m. because Batavia had its senior prom Saturday night.

That was fine with Payne, who had his son, Mike, pitching batting practice on Saturday morning.

"I figured the game wasn't going to start until four, so why not have the kids take eight or 10 swings Saturday morning instead of just sitting around waiting to play," Payne said.



DeSales catcher Matt Cannon talks things over with pitcher Joe Vedora.

The win capped what Payne called an amazing season. He lost 10 of 14 starters from last year's 5-7 team, which failed to qualify for the sectionals. The Saints coach also lost his entire pitching staff and his catcher to graduation. All-League center fielder Joe Anastasi likewise departed in the graduation exodus.

The Saints jumped out to an impressive 6-0 start, but Payne believed it was because Finger Lakes West opponents weren't taking his club seriously.

"They were always saving their best pitchers when ever we played them, but when we were 6-0, the league realized we were better than they thought we were," Payne said.

DeSales advanced to the championship game by beating top-seeded Fillmore, 8-7, on Tuesday, June 7.

Taney's two-run double in the fifth inning scored what proved to be the game-winning run, as the Saints rallied from a 3-0 deficit to nip the Eagles (15-3) in another thriller. Taney finished with 3 RBIs.

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