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Mowin 'em down with playoff blanks

Redbirds hold playoff foes to just three hits

MARINETTE — The championship game showdown never materialized. The way the Marinette Redbirds pitched, it may not have mattered.

Marinette won its third consecutive Wishigan League playoff championship Saturday at Pedersen Ball Park.

After a 9-0 demolition of Felch, the Redbirds defeated the Tri City North Stars 8-0.

Tri City North advanced to the title game with a 5-1 victory over regular-season champion Escanaba.

Jake Gasser fired a one-hitter against Felch. Then, it was Brian Kushava's turn to spin a two-hit shutout in the tourney title game.

"That's the two best pitching performances in playoff history," Redbirds coach John LaCourt said.

Kushava struck out eight and walked three. A pair of three-run innings and stellar defense helped his cause.

"Not only did our pitching dominate, we put together excellent offense and defense," according to LaCourt. "We had key hits and key defense in both games. Overall, our best performances of the sea-

son." Todd Olsen singled and scored in the second inning against Tri City. In the third, Kushava, Gasser and Olsen strung together consecutive hits. Ben LaCombe was hit by a pitch and Dustin Kovar singled in a run.

Singles by LaCombe and Scott Hmielewski set the stage for the three-run fifth. Kovar, Nick Brukart and Adam Francour drew walks.

Kovar singled in the final run in the sixth.

Against Felch, Gasser fanned eight, walked none and allowed just two baserunners all game. That prompted the Felch coaching staff to inquire about his services for a Labor Day tournament.

Brukart singled and scored on a Kushava base hit in the first. In the third, Steve Campbell hit a one-out double and scored on Brukart's base hit.

Olsen singled to lead off a three-run fourth. Kovar and Hmielewski walked and Brukart lined a three-run double into the gap.

Olsen hit an RBI groundout to score Francour in the fifth. In the sixth, Ryan Kruse was hit by a pitch, Campbell walked, Ryan



EagleHerald/Jody Korch

Marinette Redbirds' Jake Gasser fires a pitch during Saturday's 8-0 semifinal win over Felch at Pedersen Ball Park. Gasser pitched a seven-inning shutout. (Color reprints: www.ehextra.com)

Johnson singled in a run and Kushava hit into an RBI fielder's choice.

The Redbirds ended their season at 13-5.

"It's a good way to end the season, and I am looking forward to next season," LaCourt said.

Marinette 9, Felch 0

WP — Jake Gasser 7 IP, OR, 1H, OW, 8K

LP — Tyler Otis 3 1/3 IP, 5R, 5H, 4W, 2K

Leading hitters (Marinette): Nick Brukart 3x3, 4 RBIs, Steve Campbell

1x3, 2B, Ryan Johnson 1x2, RBI; (Felch): Dave Anderson 1x3

Felch 000000 0 — 0

Marinette 101313 x — 9

Marinette 8, Tri City North 0

WP — Brian Kushava 7 IP, OR, 2H, 3W, 8K

LP — Brad Jalonen 2 1/3 IP, 4R, 4ER, 6H, 2W, OK

Leading hitters (Marinette): Dustin Kovar 3x3, 2 RBIs; Todd Olsen 2x3, RBI; Kushava 2x4, Ben LaCombe 1x2; (Tri City): Aaron Adriano & Eric Marta 1x3

Tri City 000000 0 — 0

Marinette 013031 x — 8

New force to be reckoned with in the WSFL

Timberjacks prove they are title contenders in one-point loss

By TOM KAESER

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MENOMINEE — "We're going to prove something tonight," an M&M Timberjacks player said as his team broke the team huddle for Saturday night's showdown with the Fox Valley Force.

Point proven but a gut-wrenching point short. The Wisconsin State Football League defending champions dodged a last-minute drive into the red zone to escape Farmers & Merchants Bank & Trust Field with a 14-13 win.

Trailing by a point with 7:50 left, the Timberjacks got the ball back on a roughing the punter flag and drove to a first down at the 8, hammering the Force with blast plays.

A penalty dropped the T-Jacks back to the 13. After clawing out five yards on a pair of runs, the Timberjacks faced a fourth-and-goal at just outside the five.

Coach Joe Plautz opted to go for the field goal, but Randy Hoheneder's 22-yard attempt veered to the left with 1:08 left in the game.

"We knew we had to go with the field goal," said Plautz. "We're a running team and throwing the ball we would be fighting an uphill battle. We made a lot of mistakes and had a lot of chances. We had a couple of penalties inside the 10 that just killed us."

A crowd that braved ominous skies and a 30-minute weather delay was treated to a helmet-rattling battle of wills.

"There were no losers in this game," said a relieved Force offensive coach Dave Adamovich said. "The fans were the winners. (The Timberjacks) have 27 players and they're all warriors. They're the class of the league."

The Force sprung speedy Tyler Mickelson on a trap play for a 69-yard scoring jaunt late in the first quarter, but the TD was wiped out by an illegal block.

The Timberjacks (2-1) capped off a six-play, 60-yard drive on their next series by catching the Fox Valley secondary on its heels.

Facing a second-and-nine, Aric Chaltry rolled to his right and found Zak Shutte open on the right sideline for a 48-yard scoring bomb. Randy Hoheneder added the extra point with 2:36 left in the first period.

The Force drove to the T-Jacks 39 on their next possession, but Joel Wortner and Ryan DeLaurelle put the wraps on the Fox Valley running game.

Hoheneder connected with Wortner for a 38-yard completion as the Timberjacks marched to the 8 before

See T-JACKS, B3



EagleHerald/Rick Gebhard

The M&M Timberjacks' Randy Hoheneder runs behind a block by Dan Ries for a first down in their game against the Fox Valley Force Saturday night. (Color reprints: www.ehextra.com)

Kitna sharp again in Lions' win over Bengals

CINCINNATI (AP) — Suddenly, the Cincinnati Bengals need help on offense.

Pro Bowl receiver Chad Johnson strained his left shoulder Sunday night during the Detroit Lions' 27-10 victory over the Bengals, who now have their top two receivers and their starting tailback limited by injuries.

Johnson landed awkwardly on his left side after cornerback Brian Kelly intercepted a pass thrown his way on Cincinnati's first series. He rolled on the field in pain for several seconds, then went to the locker room for an examination. He did not return.

Detroit got the better of it in the first quarter, when both teams played their starters.

Jon Kitna had a perfect passer rating of 158.3 for the second straight game. Playing in the stadium where he started the Bengals' resurgence in 2003, Kitna was much better than Carson Palmer, the No. 1 draft pick who took his place in Cincinnati.

Right away, Kitna tested a redesigned Bengals defense that has the cornerbacks aggressively covering receivers. He threw a 40-yard pass to Calvin Johnson on the opening play, letting the receiver beat cornerback Leon Hall on a sideline route.

Kitna threw a 27-yard touchdown pass to Johnson, who ran past cornerback Johnathan Joseph for an easy score.

Dodgers take joy out of Brewer comeback

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The euphoria that filled Milwaukee's dugout after a game-tying rally in the ninth inning quickly disappeared when Andre Ethier came to bat again.

Ethier hit his second homer of the game and the Los Angeles Dodgers recovered to beat the Brewers 7-5 on Sunday after Ryan Braun capped Milwaukee's error-aided comeback against Chan Ho Park with a two-run homer in the top of the ninth.

"Me and Matt Kemp were out there looking at each other when they tied it up, saying, 'What the heck's going on?' It's a big emotional swing, but you've got to jump right back on it and stay mentally tough in that situation," Ethier said. "We've had to come up big in some situations. And when they present themselves, don't back down. Go up there, tough it out, really grind out that at-bat and make the most of it."

Jason Johnson pitched 2 1/2 innings of two-hit ball after relieving starter Clayton Kershaw, and was two outs from his first major league save when Torre brought in Park after a single by Jason Kendall. Pinch-hitter Craig Counsell followed with a grounder toward the hole that first baseman James Loney misplayed, and he compounded the error by throwing it past first base with Park covering the bag.

Ray Durham singled home two runs and Braun drove an 0-2 slider to left field for his team-high 31st homer.



The Associated Press

The USA's Erin Cafaro, Lindsay Shoop, Anna Goodale, Elle Logan, Anne Cummins, Susan Francia, Caroline Lind, Caryn Davies and coxswain Mary Whipple, from right, power their boat at the start of the women's eight race at the Beijing 2008 Olympics Sunday.

A great eight for rowers

BEIXIAOYING TOWN, China (AP) — The United States has won the gold medal in women's eight rowing, finally knocking off Romania and another crew for a win in the sport's signature event.

Erin Cafaro, Lindsay Shoop, Anna Goodale, Elle Logan, Anna Cummins, Susan Francia, Caroline Lind, Caryn Davies and coxswain Mary Whipple won on Sunday in 6 minutes, 5.34 seconds. They laughed and screamed as they crossed the finish line.

Femke Dekker, Marlies Smulders, Nienke Kingma, Roline Repelaer van Driel, Annemarieke van Rumpt, Helen Tanger, Sarah Siegelaar, Annemiek de Haan and coxswain Ester Workel of the Netherlands won silver in 6:07.22.

Men's 400 Reigning Olympic and world champion Jeremy Wariner and rival LaShawn Merritt easily qualified for the Summer Games 400-meter semifinals Monday morning.

Both built big leads and jogged home to win their respective heats. Wariner won the last of seven heats in 45.23 seconds, while Merritt led the fifth heat in 44.96.

"No surprise. He's ready. I'm ready. Time to go," Merritt said. "We're here. It's the Olympic Games. It's time for a showdown — a throwdown."

The once-invincible Wariner's biggest concern here figures to be Merritt, who beat him twice this year — including at the U.S. Olympic trials.

Wariner played down the rivalry, saying, "That's not on my mind right now."

Men's Volleyball

Americans Todd Rogers and Phil Dalhausser are in the beach volleyball final four after beating Germany 21-13, 25-23.

The reigning world champions and gold medal favorites beat Eric Koreng and David Klemperer on Monday. The Americans will play the winner of Georgia and the Netherlands on Wednesday for a spot in the gold medal game.

The other U.S. team, Jake Gibb and Sean Rosenthal, plays Brazil later Monday.

Gymnastics

Shawn Johnson keeps making memories in Beijing. Bad ones, even if she doesn't act like it.

Two days after losing the all-around to teammate Nastia Liukin, Romania's Sandra Izbasa — the very last competitor — grabbed the floor exercise gold that was almost in the American's hands. Liukin got bronze in the event. Johnson barely flinched when Izbasa's mark came up, and the 16-year-old American also had a hug for the winner.

"I just stayed calm and had a great time out there," Johnson said. "I love to perform."

China's Cheng Fei lost for the first time in three years in women's vault. North Korea's Hong Un Jong won it. American Alicia Sacramone was fourth.

Women's Basketball

Tina Thompson scored 10 points during a 21-0 run, sending the U.S. women past New Zealand 96-60. The Americans went 5-0 in pool play, winning by an average of 43 points.

the brothers three

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