

Outlaws baseball crowned champs at tournament in Arizona

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The Outlaws took first place for the third straight year at the Chandler Prep Baseball Classic, which was held in Chandler, Arizona, Thursday through Saturday, March 26-28. Sisters was undefeated at the tourney.

Sisters started with a five-inning, 15-6 victory over Valley Christian on Thursday.

Cody Kreminski's grand-slam over the left-center field wall on a fastball in the second inning was the big highlight of the game. The ball landed in a swimming pool, and Kreminski drove around the neighborhood, and knocked on doors until he retrieved the ball as a memento of his big hit.

Justin Harrer was the winning pitcher of record. Alex Olivier had a good showing at the plate and went 2/3. Kremenski went 2/3.

Later in the day, the Outlaws recorded a 14-4 win in five innings over Harrisburg.

Freshman Zach Morgan had his first start and win on the mound.

"Zach was able to throw strikes, get ahead in the count, and had a good curve-ball," said Coach Steve Hodges. "He didn't allow extra-base runners, and only had two walks."

Jon Luz and Ryan Funk went 2/3 from the plate, and Olivier went 2/2.

On Friday, the Outlaws defeated Chandler Prep 13-3 in five innings of play.

Sisters threw a variety of pitchers. Funk started on the mound and was the winning pitcher of record. Olivier threw well for the Outlaws, and Hayden Parsons came in to finish.

Harrer went 2/2 with a triple in the third. Justin ripped a shot down left-center field and was so quick he made it to third and drove in a run.

Alec Gannon laced a triple to right-center field in the third and also drove in a run. Alec finished the game with a throw from left field to put the runner out at home.

Funk went 3/3 with two RBI.

Sisters was seeded No. 1 as they headed into the finals on Saturday. The Outlaws once again matched up with Valley Christian, but this go-round faced their No. 1 and No. 2 pitchers, which made it a whole different ball game. Sisters came out on top with a 3-0 win in the semi-final game.

The Outlaws scored two runs in the first, one in the third, and had zero errors in the contest.

Luz started the Outlaws off with a single in the first, and Harrer drove him in with a double down the left-field line. Justin stole third and a sacrifice-fly from Kremenski scored Harrer.

Sisters' final run of the contest came in the third. Harrer hit a single and stole second base, and Morgan drove him in with a single.

Luz and Morgan combined for a three-hitter. Jonathan pitched a solid five innings for the Outlaws and Zach pitched the final sixth and seventh innings for the save.

"We played exceptional defense," said Hodges. "Justin (Harrer) had eight assists for put-outs, which was a big part of our defense in this game."

The Outlaws matched up against 3A-powerhouse Santiam Christian (SC) in the championship game and earned a 5-1 win to take home the trophy.

Hodges said, "We tend to run into them (SC) down here. It's always a good game and this was no exception. They are always in the state playoffs and have won several state championships. They beat us last year when we were getting ready for the state playoffs. We wanted to return the favor, and we did."

Sisters scored five runs off nine hits and zero errors, and

the Eagles scored one run off five hits and three errors.

Harrer went the distance for the Outlaws on the mound and recorded the win. Justin had an impressive 11 strikeouts in the game.

"Justin really had a good fastball going," said Hodges. "He had good velocity, and he threw as hard in the seventh as he did in the first."

A key moment in the game came in the second inning. Santiam Christian had scored one run, and had runners on first and third, with no outs. Justin stayed calm and in control, and threw out the side.

"That was a turning point in the game," said Hodges. "It was pretty amazing. It was a big momentum shift."

Sisters scored three runs in the third. Luz got on base with a single, and stole second, and Harrer followed with a double to left-center field to score Luz. Funk drove in Harrer with a single. The Outlaws' third run came when Odin Thorson got on base via an error, stole second, and then scored on an error.

The Outlaws final two

runs came in the fifth. Olivier reached first on an error, stole second, and was driven home by a double from Harrer. Justin stole second base and Kremenski drove him home with a base-hit to finish the scoring.

Sisters brought home the trophy for the third straight year.

"It's always nice to play five games in three days, and it gives the guys time to get comfortable in the lineup," said Hodges. "And, to only have five errors for the tournament is pretty impressive," stated Hodges. "To play defense that solid this early in the season is certainly one of the reasons we're having success."

"To win the tournament and be 6-0 is certainly a confidence-builder. It makes believers out of the young guys. They know they're on a team that can compete. It was a good team-building week and sets the tone for the year. I'm very happy with the team's progress. They're in the right mind-set to compete for the league title once again."

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