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Defiance wins 50th straight WBL baseball game

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May 13, 2011

By TIM McDONOUGH

mcdonough@crescent-news.com

BATH TOWNSHIP-- Halfway to 100.

That's where Defiance finds itself after wrapping up another perfect 9-0 slate in the Western Buckeye League. The Bulldogs (19-3) got there after breaking open a close game at Lima Bath with six runs in the fourth inning on the way to a 12-1 win over the Wildcats on Thursday ...

their 50th consecutive victory in WBL action.

Defiance senior hurler Kurt Belau got himself out of a bases loaded jam in the second inning, and Anthony Kidston supplied the run support, driving in seven runs with a grand slam, a two-run homer and a RBI ground-out in the victory.

"It wasn't a 12-1 kind of game, they get a base knock early and the score could have been flip-flopped," stated Defiance mentor Tom Held, who is now 108-9 in WBL games in his 13 years at DHS. "Once again, if you're going to get to Kurt Belau, you better do it early because once he establishes his breaking ball, he's tough to beat."

Belau, now 7-0 on the season, was given an early lead with one swing by Kidston.

Ryan Cordray led-off the top of the first with a sharp single, and just two batters later Kidston sent a Keaton Sullivan offering over the fence in left-center field for a quick 2-0 advantage. In the second frame, the visitors made it 3-0 when Gabe Vittorio scored on a Bath error on a ball hit by Jake Thomas.

In the bottom of the inning, Bath made two quick outs before Cory McNett singled to right and Jeremy Chandler and Myles Holliday earned back-to-back walks. With lead-off man Kyle Zimmerman at bat for the Wildcats, Belau got the Bath hitter to strike out looking and preserve the lead.

"I thought Kurt Belau did an excellent job of keeping our guys off-balance, but in those situations early we needed to come up with a big hit," stated Bath coach Brian Jesko. "Today we weren't able to get that big hit and it was a momentum killer. You need all the runs you could get against a quality team like that, but Belau threw the ball well today.

"There's a reason their record stands the way it does and there's a reason they've won 50 games in the league in a row," continued Jesko. "That's because of quality coaching, quality pitching, quality hitting and quality defense."

Belau admitted that striking out Zimmerman was a big confidence booster for himself.

"It was huge getting that strike out, that helped me settle down," Belau said. "After that we really got the sticks going and we just kept scoring runs."

A Nate Heffer double in the bottom of the third inning plated teammate Johny Simindinger to cut the deficit to 3-1 in favor of the Bulldogs after three innings, but Kidston came up even bigger in the top of next frame.

A Gabe Vittorio single started the fourth for Defiance, followed by a bunt single by Mike Ramirez that sent Vittorio to second. A sac bunt by Thomas unfortunately went back to Sullivan who fired quickly to third to get Vittorio, but the visitors still had a pair of runners on with one out. When Ryan Cordray struck out looking, Bath looked like it might escape unscathed, but it didn't quite turn out that way.

Shea Murray, who had already struck out twice, came up and coaxed a walk from Sullivan to load the bases for Kidston. The junior sent another Sullivan offering over the fence in left-center for a grand slam, giving

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Defiance the 7-1 advantage. A single by Joe Gentile and a two-run blast by Belau off Sullivan made it 9-1, putting DHS in command.

"I felt good heading up to the plate there, I made pretty good contact on the first one (home run), but I just went up there looking for a good pitch to hit," said Kidston who now has a team-leading six home runs and team-leading 27 RBI. "I was hoping to get something into the gap to score a few runs, but he threw a hanging curveball on that first pitch and I hit it out."

Said Jesko: "Kidston was awesome today, he had the two-run homer, the grand slam, the infield single ... we couldn't figure out a way to get him out. Before he hit the grand slam we were trying to get the two-hole hitter ahead of him, but we walked him paid for it. That was the momentum changer. We were only down two until Kidston's blast."

Defiance added three runs in the top of the fifth, and Belau set Bath down 1-2-3 in the bottom of the inning to finish off the final WBL victory of 2011 for the 'Dogs. A sweet victory according to Thomas, the senior left fielder.

"It's an unbelievable feeling, especially to get to 50 straight WBL wins," Thomas said. "It was a great way for us seniors to finish off the WBL this year, and 50 wins in a row in the league means a lot to the program."

With the goal of winning the WBL met, Defiance now turns it attention to the Division II sectional finals today when it plays Napoleon at 5 p.m. at Defiance's Booster Field.

Concluded Held: "Every day is a new day, but it's always better to go into the next game after a win. This game is so mental, and every time you have positives happen to you it's going to carry over to the next one. I think we're playing our best baseball of the season right now, so let's go play, have some fun and see what happens."

Linescore

Defiance 210 63 - 12 11 0

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Records: Defiance 19-3 (9-0 WBL), Lima Bath 13-10 (5-3 WBL).

Winning pitcher: Kurt Belau (5 innings, 1 run, 5 hits, 7 strikeouts, 3 walks).

Losing pitcher Keaton Sullivan (4 innings, 10 runs, 9 hits, 5 strikeouts, 2 walks). Other: Myles Holliday.




Leading hitters: (Defiance, 11 hits) - Anthony Kidston single, 2 home runs, 7 RBI; Kurt Belau home run; Mike Ramirez 2 singles. (Lima Bath, 5 hits) - Nate Heffner double.

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