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'It never gets old' for DHS

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Tim McDonough
May 8, 2011





By TIM McDONOUGH

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WAPAKONETA -- And the Western Buckeye League titles just keep on piling up.

Defiance secured its 21st WBL title in school history, its 15th outright, its fifth straight without sharing it, and its 10th under mentor Tom Held in 13 seasons on Saturday afternoon at Wapakoneta, when the Bulldogs rolled to an 11-1 win over the Redskins in six innings.

The victory, the 49th consecutive in WBL play for Defiance (17-3, 8-0 WBL), gave the Bulldogs a two-game lead in the league with one game to play. DHS will look to finish off another perfect slate in the WBL Thursday when it travels to Lima Bath.

"It never gets old ... it's why you compete. It's rewarding, it's fun and it's hard to believe sometimes," stated Held about winning another league championship and adding to the WBL win streak. "To me, each year is a new year and I know we've strung some together, but this one is about the 2011 team and the 2011 seniors. It's their championship.

"When you have guys who care every year and they go out and fight for it, then you can string some together. This year's team is no exception," continued Held. "I know it's a cliché, but we only care about the game we're playing today. That's how we do it and that's how we've gotten here."

Leading 2-1 after one inning of play, the visitors broke the game open with six runs in the top of the third against the Redskins (13-5, 5-2 WBL).

In the frame, the Bulldogs sent 10 men to the plate, had a pair of infield hits, took advantage of a pair of hit batsmen, one Wapakoneta error, a RBI sacrifice fly and a two-run single off the bat of Ryan Cordray to score the six runs and take an 8-1 lead.

Just last season, Wapakoneta had taken an 8-1 lead at Defiance in WBL play, only to see the Bulldogs rally for an 11-8 win. Wapakoneta mentor Jason Brandt didn't forget and reminded his team of that fact.

"After we got down 8-1, we reminded the boys that we had an 8-1 lead

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at Defiance last year and lost, unfortunately for us," said Brandt. "I thought our guys battled hard all day long, but we just didn't do what we needed to do to beat a very good Defiance ballclub today."

Making it hard on the Redskins was Defiance junior Anthony Kidston. The junior rightly allowed only one run (unearned), while striking out 13 and walking three.

"I had never seen him pitch until today, but his change-up was phenomenal," Brandt said. "I'm not sure he threw his curveball consistently for strikes, but it was close enough that our guys had to swing at them to protect the plate. He just had great command and he worked ahead all day long."

Said Held: "Anthony was very good today against a very good hitting team. I think five or six of those guys have started for three years over there. Whenever you can shut down a Wapak team that had been scoring a lot of runs a game, especially lately, that's impressive. Today he was able to get all three of his pitches across (for strikes) and when that happens, it's hard to hit anyone at any level."

Kidston was happy to do his part.

"It felt good to be out there and it was a great day to pitch," Kidston said. "On the way here there wasn't a lot of talking on the bus, guys were getting mentally prepared and we came out ready to play. I think as a team we did everything we could have hoped for."

The Bulldogs added three more runs in the top of the sixth to take the 10-run lead, and then had to weather a bases-loaded jam in the bottom of the inning before holding on for the win.

After the home team loaded the bases on a pair of infield singles and walk, Kidston struck out Dustin Gerlach and Zach Ferenbaugh to end the threat and secure the outright WBL crown, a title that is special to this year's seniors.

"This is our first goal every year, and I know there were some doubters, but we did it by sticking together," said senior right fielder Mike Ramirez. "We knew we could do it, we were ready and we went out and did it."

Cordray and senior first baseman Kurt Belau agreed with Ramirez.

"It means a lot to all of us seniors, we wanted to win it outright again and we were ready," Cordray said. "Even when we were up 8-1 we knew we had to keep fighting and we knew we had to keep playing together. That's how we win, as a team."

Concluded Belau: "When we were freshman, Wapakoneta put it to us over here, so to win here and win the WBL title feels great. We knew we had a big opportunity today and we came out focused and ready to play. It was good to beat a good team like that to clinch the title."

Defiance is back in action Tuesday at Sylvania Southview at 5 p.m.

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Records: Defiance 17-3 (8-0 WBL), Wapakoneta 13-5 (5-2 WBL).

Winning pitcher: Anthony Kidston (6 innings, 1 run, 3 hits, 13 strikeouts, 3 walks).

Losing pitcher: Kaleb Coil (2 1/3 innings, 5 runs, 4 hits, 2 strikeouts, 2 walks). Others: Jordan Martin, A.J. Etzkorn.

Leading hitters: (Defiance, 7 hits) - Shea Murray home run; Anthony Kidston single, triple. (Wapakoneta, 3 hits) - Johnny Crawford double.

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