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Defiance baseballers top Van Wert, 6-1

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Tim McDonough
April 26, 2011

By TIM McDONOUGH

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VAN WERT — Just over halfway through the Western Buckeye League baseball season, and Defiance is still the team being chased. Defiance, ranked No. 4 in the state in the latest state baseball poll, moved to 5-0 in the WBL after a workman-like performance in a 6-1 victory on the road

at Russell Fisher Field in Van Wert on Tuesday.

The Bulldogs (12-1), got another solid outing on the hill from junior righty Anthony Kidston, Jake Thomas blasted his first home run of the year, Kurt Belau added his third and Defiance ran its win streak in league games to 46 straight.

“We’ve taken care of business in the league so far, but we’ve got some toughies coming up in Shawnee, Wapak, Bath and Kenton,” stated Defiance mentor Tom Held who improved to 104-9 in WBL games in his 13 seasons. “It’s really going to get tougher with league games going on during tournament, but we like where we are right now.”

Thomas, filling in at the top of the order for Ryan Cordray who was out sick, put the Cougars (3-5, 2-2 WBL) in a hole with one swing of the bat when he blasted a Tyler Paige offering over the fence in left for a 1-0 lead. The visitors looked like they were going to break the game open early when the ‘Dogs put together five hits in the top of the first frame. Paige minimized the damage, however, by holding DHS to just two runs.

“Jake got us on the board right away and we got the early lead. Then we thought maybe we could break it open, but give Paige credit for competing and keeping his team in the ballgame,” Held said. “He threw a nice curveball, he off-speeded us to death and had us out on our front foot after those first few hitters. He did a nice job.”

With the early lead, Kidston went out and impressed. Despite giving up an unearned run in the bottom of the second, he kept Van Wert off the basepaths and off the scoreboard. In improving to 4-0 on the year, Kidston struck out 12 and walked just two in six innings of work. The Cougars had just two hits off Kidston, a single to left and an infield single.

“Anthony did a nice job of throwing strikes, getting ahead of our hitters and his breaking stuff was just nasty,” said Van Wert coach Charlie Witten. “We had one solid hit and that was on one of his fastballs ... we just couldn’t hit any of his breaking stuff or off-speed stuff today.”

With a strong wind blowing at him, Kidston felt his off-speed stuff could be effective.

“When you’ve got a 30-mile-per-hour wind blowing in your face, I knew that throwing my off-speed stuff would be to my advantage,” Kidston said. “JT (Thomas) came up big in place of Ryan (Cordray) tonight and it’s so much easier going out to pitch when you’ve already have a lead like that. I felt comfortable right from the beginning.”

Joe Gentile scored in the third on a ground-out RBI by Gabe Vittorio to push Defiance in front 3-1, before the Bulldogs took command in the fifth. A two-run blast to center by Belau made it a 5-1 game, while Austin Hancock scored on another ground-out RBI by Vittorio. Both Gentile and Hancock had three hits in the game for the Bulldogs.

“It was a 3-1 game when Kurt hit the two-run homer, and that was

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huge,” Held said. “Kurt has been in a kind of a funk, he’s been getting under the ball, so hopefully he can start to pull out of that. But with the wind blowing out like it was, those were some really big runs because one swing of the bat and Van Wert could have been right back in it.”

After Kidston exited after six innings, senior right Jake Sanchez came on and struck out the side to close out the game for the Bulldogs. Over his last three appearances, Sanchez has recorded nine straight Ks.

“When I go out there all I’m thinking about is getting ahead in the count so I can keep hitters guessing,” Sanchez said. “When I do that, everything is in my favor and with such good defense behind me, I’m feeling very comfortable.”

Said Held: “Jake came in and struck out three more guys, he’s throwing with a lot of confidence and he’s really embracing his role. There’s going to be some bigger games ahead and we feel good about him going out there in the late innings. It’s easy to send him out there because he’s really enjoying that role.”

Defiance returns to action on Thursday at home against Toledo Central Catholic at 5 p.m., before hitting the road Friday in a crucial WBL encounter at Shawnee at 5 p.m.

Linescore

Defiance 201 030 0 - 6 10 0

Van Wert 010 000 0 - 1 2 4

Records: Defiance 12-1 (5-0 WBL), Van Wert 3-5 (2-2 WBL).

Winning pitcher: Anthony Kidston (6 innings, 1 run, 2 hits, 12 strikeouts, 2 walks). Other: Jake Sanchez.

Losing pitcher: Tyler Paige (7 innings, 6 runs, 10 hits, 6 strikeouts, 1 walk).

Leading hitters: (Defiance, 10 hits) - Jake Thomas home run; Joe Gentile 2 singles, double; Kurt Belau home run; Austin Hancock 3 singles.

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