

All-State Series - **Eisenhower's Kraft Shines In First Game**

Justin Kraft didn't learn until Saturday morning that his services would be needed on a different team and at a much earlier time in the All-State Baseball Series.

No worries. The Eisenhower pitcher knew it was going to be a good day the moment he threw his first curveball.

With two pitchers on Team B unable to attend the Series until today, Kraft was switched from Team D to cover the shortage and he responded in Saturday's first game at Parker Field with four innings of one-hit pitching against some of the best high school seniors in the state.

"As soon as I got on the mound and threw that first curveball I felt great," said the 5-foot-10 right-hander. "I located my fastball, got ahead in most counts and worked in my curveball. I wish it felt like that every day." Kraft, who's headed to Centenary College in Louisiana next fall, entered the eight-inning contest in the fifth and retired 10 of the first 11 batters he faced with five strikeouts. He was a pitch away from a no-hitter in his four innings of work but an error and a double produced an unearned run in the final inning.

"Yeah, I was aware I hadn't given up a hit when I went out there in the eighth," Kraft said with a modest smile. "Didn't quite get it, but I feel lucky to do as well as I did against such good hitters. I think it helped a lot to be pitching here. I love throwing off this mound."

Shifting Kraft offset the absence of Gatorade Player of the Year Greg Peavey of Hudson's Bay and Mark Purser of Mount Spokane, both of whom are expected to play today.

Kraft's nifty work, however, wasn't enough to offset an early deficit for Team B. Brandon Strange of Mark Morris clubbed a two-out, three-run home run in the third inning and Team A eventually prevailed 7-4. Davis' Saby Martinez joined Kraft on Team B and not only went 2-for-3 with a double, stolen base and run scored but also provided one of the game's big-play highlights.

In the fifth inning with two outs, Martinez chopped a high bouncer up the middle for what appeared to be a routine single. But rounding first base he noticed the centerfielder wasn't exactly charging the ball so he took off for second and surprised the defense with how easily he made it.

For baseball fans around Yakima, they've seen Martinez turn his speed loose before against an unsuspecting defense. But the large contingent from the westside let out a collective "Whoaaaa" when he set sail for second with his long, swift stride.

"That was fun. I love going for two," Martinez said with a proud smile. "I always look to see how hard the outfielder is coming in, and when I got two steps passed the (first base) bag I decided to go for it. It was close but I got in there."

East Valley's Chase Livingston started for Team B and threw four innings. The game could have been tied 3-3 when he left, but Strange's big homer in the third came after an infield throwing error with two outs.

La Salle's Michael Pleger is on the Team A roster but graduation precluded him from playing on Saturday. Jackson pitcher Geoff Brown, who was drafted in the 23rd round by the Kansas City Royals on Friday, started for Team A and gave up a run in the first inning and a leadoff home run to Mariner's Braden Degamo in the second. But the University of Washington recruit settled down and retired six straight batters, including a run of four consecutive strikeouts.

Kamiak's Riley Henricks, a second baseman headed to the University of Portland, was 2-for-3 with two doubles, a run and three RBI while hitting out of the leadoff spot for Team A.

TEAM B 110 100 10 - 4 7 3

TEAM A 123 000 01 - 7 8 0

Chase Livingston, Justin Kraft (5) and Braden Degamo, Matt Beers (5); Geoff Brown, Tyler Westensee (4), Zach Gallagher (6), Nick Hammons (8) and Matt Swan, Andy Racus (5).

Highlights - Team B: Saby Martinez (Davis) 2-3, 2b, sb, run; Braden Degamo (Mariner) 1-2, solo HR; David Wagner (Highline) 1-2, run; Erik Hoium (Centralia) 1-3, 2b, sb, run, RBI; Justin Kraft (Eisenhower) 4 IP, 1 hit, 5 K, 2 BB. Team A: Riley Henricks (Kamiak) 2-3, 2 2b, run, 3 RBI; Tyler Thompson (Richland) 2-3, RBI; Zach Gallagher (Camas) 2-3, 2b, 2 runs; Brandon Strange (Mark Morris) 1-4, 3-run HR; Geoff Brown (Jackson) 3 IP, 5 K.

All-State Series - State Champs Come Up Big In Second Game

They know how to win.

Sure, Brewster's Brodie McCormack and Sehome's Kai Hatch have had a lot of help from their friends during prep athletic careers that have seen each athlete reach the pinnacle of his sport or sports. But neither was it entirely coincidental that they both delivered key blows in Team D's 8-6 victory over Team C on Saturday in the All-State Baseball Series at Parker Field.

Hatch, who two weeks earlier had pitched his Mariners to a 6-1 win over Selah in the Class 2A state title game in Wenatchee, hit a two-run home run in the fourth inning.

McCormack, who last March helped his Bears win a Class 1A basketball title in the SunDome - his second such crown to go with two baseball championships - drove home the winning runs with a two-out, seventh-inning single.

Statistically, at least, they were the difference in an otherwise even contest that concluded the series-opening doubleheader just before the rains came.

The series concludes today with Team C meeting Team B at 10:25 a.m., followed by a championship showdown between Team D and Team A at 1:35 p.m.

"I've got four rings," McCormack said proudly of a prep career that concluded last month with a postseason baseball loss to Naches Valley. "It's great to win state championships, but this is a lot of fun, too. Just playing with a lot of different guys and getting to meet people from around the state.

"One of the best things about my high school career is I've done a ton of traveling over the last four years, and I've met a lot more people than I would have just sitting at home."

Thanks to McCormack's base hit up the middle off Burbank's Ryan Ricard, Woodinville's Ryan Shelton and Moses Lake's Corey Hitchcock - who had singled and walked, respectively - were allowed to sit at home with the deciding runs.

Three innings earlier, Hatch had come through, also with two out. Meridian's Bryan Black, the hitter preceding Hatch, had hammered a ball to deep left-center that was caught.

But Hatch's drive off Tahoma ace Kirk Wetmore cleared the barrier in left. Eastmont's Jacob Huylar, who had started the inning with a walk, also scored, leaving Team D with a 6-5 lead.

"I hit it good," Hatch said, "but the guy before me had hit a bomb that didn't go out. I wasn't sure with the wind, so I just put my head down and ran."

Team D tied it on an RBI single by Tahoma's Riley Tubbs in the sixth. It had scored twice in the second and three times in the third - the latter rally keyed by Chris Sturdivant's two-run double - for a 5-4 lead.

"State tournaments are a lot more tense," said Hatch, "but even in a game like this you can still tell when it's time to get serious."

Team C had strong local representation, including Drew Belton and Zack Swart of Naches Valley, Brooks Archer of Selah and Lawrence Cacchiotti of La Salle.

Swart and Belton had a single each while Archer flew out twice and Cacchiotti popped to the catcher and lined out to left.

While no Team C player had more than one hit, Team D's Hatch was 2-for-2 with a double in addition to his homer, Shelton was 2-for-4 with a triple, Bothell's Cody Atkinson was 2-for-3 with a double and an RBI and Lakeside's Anthony Froemke was 1-for-2 with two RBI.

TEAM D 031 200 20 - 8 12 1

TEAM C 023 001 00 - 6 12 1

Jordan Chambers, Chris Dennis (4), Jason Dunn (7) and Joe Paxton, Ben Mednicoff (6); Kirk Wetmore, Devin Grindy (5), Ryan Ricard (7), Grindy (8) and Joe Benish, Lawrence Cacchiotti (6).

Highlights - Team D: Ryan Shelton (Woodinville) 2-4, 3b; Cody Atkinson (Bothell) 2-3, 2b, RBI; Jordan Chambers (Sehome) 1-2; Brodie McCormack (Brewster) 1-2, 2 RBI; Brandon Amundson (Sedro Wooley) 1-4, 2b; Jacob Huylar (Eastmont) 1-1, 2b; Kai Hatch (Sehome) 2-2, 2b, HR, 2 RBI; Anthony Froemke (Lakeside) 1-2, 2 RBI. Team C: Connor Moore (Mead) 1-3; Drew Belton (Naches Valley) 1-3; Riley Tubbs (Tahoma) 2-3; Zack Swart (NV) 1-2; Matt Hart (Todd Beamer) 1-2, RBI; Chris Sturdivant (Redmond) 1-2, 2b, 2 RBI; Devin Grindy (Camas) 1-2; Brett Bielec (North Mason) 1-2, 2b; Mike Guthrie (Foss) 1-2; Ben Snarski (Bellarmine Prep) 1-1; Kirk Wetmore (Tahoma) 1-1.