

Sports

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SECTION B



Dave LaBelle • Staff Photos

Ryan Klostermann leaps into the arms of Isaac Then after the Bobcats won the Class 3A state title as their teammates race to join the celebration.

SWEET REPEAT

Bobcats win Class 3A state championship

BY MIKE PUTZ
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For the second year in a row, the Class 3A State Baseball Tournament championship trophy will find its home in the display case at Western Dubuque High School.

Isaac Then scattered six hits over 5 2/3 innings and the Bobcats used a four-run second inning to take a lead they never relinquished on their way to a 6-2 win over North Polk at Duane Banks Field, in Iowa City, July 21.

The game matched the top-seeded Bobcats against the second-seeded Comets, one of three Raccoon River Conference teams to qualify for the Class 3A tournament.

It also matched Then against North Polk's Reece Wrage. Then came into the contest with a 7-3 record with 74 strikeouts in 58 1/3 innings, while Wrage brought a 10-0 record with 82 strikeouts in 51 1/3 innings.

Both teams stranded base runners in scoring position in the opening inning before the Bobcats struck for four runs in the bottom of the second. Hunter Quagliano walked to start the frame. Bradyn Delaney was hit by a pitch and Tanner Anderson walked to load the bases. After Wrage struck out Colton McIlrath, Jake Goodman sent a 3-2 pitch into center field, scoring Quagliano. A walk to Brett



From left, Connor Maiers, Colton McIlrath, Isaac Then, Caleb Klein and Hunter Quagliano celebrate the Bobcats' state championship.

Harris scored courtesy runner Ben Wernimont. Caleb Klein reached on a fielder's choice, driving in Anderson. Goodman scored on a passed ball and the Bobcats led 4-0.

With one out in the top of the third, North Polk's Reggie Postel tripled, scoring on Austin Parkins' sacrifice fly.

North Polk made a pitching change to start the bottom of the third, electing to go with lefthander Drew Owen.

In the bottom of the fourth, Western Dubuque scored a pair of runs with two outs. Goodman drew a one-out walk from Owen. After Harris flew out to center field, Klein delivered a triple to right center, scoring Goodman. Then followed with a single inside

the third base line, driving in Klein and giving the Bobcats a 6-1 lead.

The Comets scored in the top of the sixth when Charlie Bunkers singled off Then to lead off the inning, then advanced to second on a ground out. Isaac Zoske's single put runners on the corners. Nick Cox's grounder was mishandled, allowing Bunkers to score and Cox to reach first.

Ryan Klostermann replaced Then, who had reached his maximum number of pitches. Klostermann retired Wrage to end the Comet threat.

Klostermann retired North Polk in order, striking out Postel and Parkins to end the game.

Western Dubuque made the most of five hits, with Then go-

ing 2-for-4 with an RBI. Klein went 1-for-4 with two RBIs, Goodman 1-for-3 with an RBI and Quagliano 1-for-2, with Harris adding an RBI.

Western Dubuque finished the season 36-9 and North Polk 29-6.

"I'm elated," said coach Casey Bryant. "It's a relief. I don't like this being ranked No. 1 stuff. It throws a lot of expectations at teenagers and you have to really work hard to get through that with them. I'm happy for our guys because they had to work really hard to get here. We have a big appreciation for any team that's won two in a row and have been ranked No. 1 all year long and had to fight all that. It's overwhelming at times, but we

made it through it and I'm just happy for our guys."

Bryant said the Bobcats planned to lay off the high pitch that Wrage has had success with all season.

"We knew Wrage lived at the top of the strike zone. Wrage is really good and our game plan was to lay off that pitch and put the pressure on the umpire to call it a strike or a ball. Tonight, it was a ball. Then we fouled off a lot of tough pitches and made him really work. The strike zone was a little tighter tonight than normal and that helped us out. We looked up and he's (Wrage) got 70-some pitches."

Bryant said Then was his usual self. "Isaac is just a battler. How many kids have won two sub-state finals and two

state championship games in state history? Probably just a handful. You have to be really good to do that. The bigger the moment for him the better he is. That's the way he's always been. He's a competitor and a warrior and it doesn't surprise us a bit.

"That's our team too. They work hard and just grind it out. They are lunch pail kids. That's what our whole community is about. We don't have any superstars."

The Bobcats look to have a strong program for years to come.

"We have 90 kids in our program grades 8-12," Bryant explained. "We have a strong youth program with great coaches and a good commissioner who runs the program. I think it's a testament that we are doing things the right way. I guess it's a sign for kids who love baseball that if they work really hard and get involved with Bobcat baseball, they are going to have some special moments."

Bryant had good things to say about the IHSAA's seeding measures, with three other Dubuque County teams (Wahlert Catholic, Beckman Catholic and Cascade) making the state tournament. "Dubuque County did well. They have great teams every year, but usually we have to play each other to get to state, so nobody knows it. It's nice to see that the new seeding process is set up. It's a huge positive so those teams that have great programs that are 10 miles down the road don't have to play each other in the first round anymore."

Bobcats fall in state quarterfinals

BY BETH LUTGEN
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Fourth-seeded Norwalk tallied 12 runs on 11 hits to defeat fifth-seeded Western Dubuque, 12-2, in the quarterfinals of the Class 4A State Softball Tournament at Harlan and Hazel Rogers Sports Complex in Fort Dodge, July 17.

"I was real happy with how we played offensively," coach Rex Massey said. "I mean, we would have scored more runs if it had been a closer game. We would have been able to bunt and move runners and do a few things. But when things don't go your way, you always look at how your kids respond. And I thought our kids responded well, they stayed in the game and continued to fight until the last out."

The Bobcats earned the early lead in this one. Carson Koerperich singled, advanced on a Hannah Hoefler single and scored on Kiya Steger's fielder's choice.

Norwalk led off the game with a solo home run by Nyah Hulbert and added three more runs on three more hits for the 4-1 advantage.

The Warriors tallied six runs on five hits in the second inning to extend their lead to 10-1.

WD cut into the lead in the third inning. Erica Ernzen led off with a single to center-field and advanced as Hoefler singled and scored on a Steger single.

Norwalk scored two runs on two hits in the fourth to extend its lead to 12-2. The Warriors shut WD down 1-2-3 in the fifth

inning to end the game by mercy rule.

The Bobcats had seven hits in the loss. Hoefler batted 2-for-3, Haley Wulfekuhle 2-for-2 and Steger was 1-for-3 with two RBIs. Ernzen and Koerperich each had one hit.

Steger took the loss. In one inning, she struck out two, walked two and allowed eight earned runs on two hits. Hoefler pitched 2 2/3 innings of relief. She struck out four, walked two and allowed four earned runs on four hits. Baylee Neyen pitched 1/3 of an inning and struck out one.

The Bobcats battled throughout the game, never giving up.

"Everything we preach from the beginning of the season is attitude and effort," Massey said. "We are here to put a show on for our fans. They just want us to give it everything they have and these kids have done that all year. We surpassed expectations quite a bit, but it always stinks to feel that defeat."

"We've definitely been through ups and down this season, but we progressively have gotten better and fought through everything," Ernzen said. "We're just happy to see each other succeed. We are a team that never gives up."

Massey was appreciative of the solid play by all of the Bobcats, giving extra credit to the seniors.

"Our seniors get a lot of that credit. Erica Ernzen had a great season and a great game today. Anna Haverland has been our spark plug all season long. Gabby Kaiser was one of the few that was here two

years ago with us. And you know Maci Cook. Those seniors really kept the team together. They do so much to develop team chemistry and camaraderie. Kudos to them for committing five years of their lives, five summers to play the game of softball," he said.

With the loss, the Bobcats moved to consolation play where they fell to top-seeded North Polk, 8-2. The Comets was upset in the quarterfinals by eighth-seeded North Scott, 7-4.

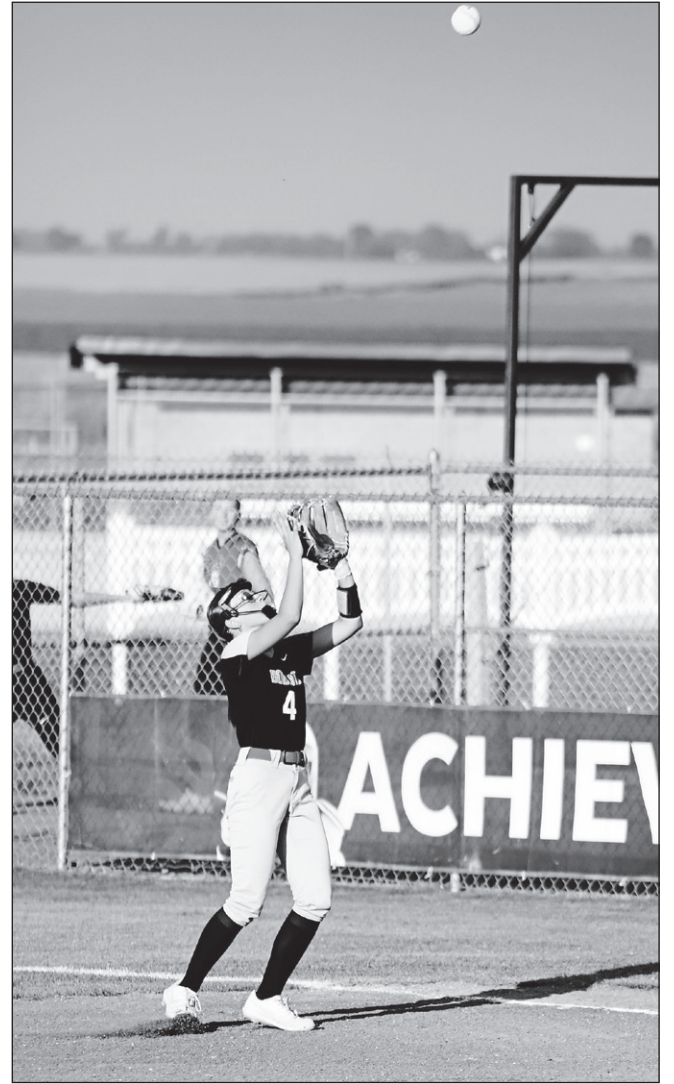
Western Dubuque scored both of its runs in the first inning. Koerperich hit a double, Hoefler walked and Steger reached on an error to load the bases. Koerperich and Hoefler both scored on a single by Morgan Hosch. Two strikeouts ended the inning, stranding two runners on base.

North Polk answered with four in the first, one in the second and fourth and two in the sixth for the 8-2 victory.

Koerperich batted 2-for-2 with a pair of doubles and one run. Morgan Hosch and Kaitlyn Thole had one hit.

Neyen took the loss. In three innings, she struck out five, walked two and allowed five earned runs on four hits. Steger pitched three innings. She struck out one, walked one and allowed three earned runs on three hits.

The Bobcats end the season with a 29-11 overall record and tied for sixth in the state tournament (only one consolation round is contested, the state no longer plays off for overall fifth and seventh-place finishes).



Erica Ernzen prepares to catch a pop up.



Hannah Hoefler throws the ball in after making a catch in the outfield. Hailey Wulfekuhle backs up the play.



Kiya Steger fires a pitch during the state quarterfinals.



Kaitlyn Thole works behind the plate for the Bobcats.

Beth Lutgen • Staff Photos

STATE CHAMPS

Blazers capture seventh state title

BY BEC WILLENBORG
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Fire trucks and flashing lights, horns, cheers and applause welcomed the 2023 Class 2A State Baseball Tournament champion Beckman Blazers home July 21, following the Blazers 7-1 win over Underwood in the title game at Carroll that afternoon.

The title is the seventh in school history and the first since 2017. That one was won by present coach Ryan Mabe's mentor and predecessor, Fred Martin, in his first year at the helm. The feat was repeated by Mabe, with both coaches having 19-year-old assistants at their side, Connor Klostermann for Martin and Nick Schmidt for Mabe.

"But this isn't about me at all," claimed Mabe. "This is about the kids, I'm just so proud of them. I don't know how I got here. If you would have told me this five, 10 years ago, I would have said, 'You're crazy.' But to be in this spot is just a blessing. And like I just said, I'm just so happy for the kids.

"We talked all season about three things. It was the tradition of Beckman baseball, something that's just already there for them. We've got to keep that going for His glory, playing for something bigger than ourselves. And then James Hall came along, another thing that was playing for something bigger than ourselves. And lastly, leaving a legacy and these guys did that. They checked all three boxes."

The title game told the Blazer story. Down again (1-0), as they were in all three tourney games, they roared back in the bottom of the third. Dylan Recker led off with a walk and stole second. Drew Thier singled and took second on a passed ball, setting the stage for Luke Schieltz to hit a RBI single to plate Recker. After Luke Sigwarth ground out, Nate Offerman punched a sacrifice fly to score Thier. Matthew Florence tagged another, plating Schieltz and the Blazers led, 3-1. It turned out to be all they would really need.

Sigwarth's mound work held

Underwood scoreless through the next two frames. The junior, who had thrown just 5 2/3 innings all summer, gave up one run on seven Eagles' hits, walking three and fanning three for the win. Rob Kronlage came in for the save, throwing a mere 10 pitches to whiff all three batters he faced in the sixth, one pitch more than an immaculate inning, then whiffed the second batter in the seventh, striking out four of the eight he faced. Sigwarth caught the final out in right field, from Ryker Adair, to preserve their win.

But the Blazers had added four runs to give both pitchers a safety cushion, in the sixth. Jake Schmidt coaxed a one-out walk from reliever Adair and Recker singled, as did Thier, filling the bags. Schieltz did it again, as he had done all tourney, drilling an RBI single to plate both Schmidt and Recker, 5-1. That chased Adair for Easton Robertson, who promptly walked Sigwarth intentionally, then threw a wild pitch to Offerman that moved the runners and scored Thier, 6-1. Offerman tagged a sacrifice fly to plate Schieltz and it was 7-1.

Mabe added, "It was a heck of a job by Sigwarth. He threw 5 2/3 innings all year, but we knew he had it in him. I told him Monday he had the ball Friday if we got there and you know, it worked out that way. I happened to have Rob in my back pocket because I was able to pull him yesterday. So then he, in that first inning, 10 pitches, three strikeouts. It was a good change of pace. I mean Sigwarth's bringing probably low-to-mid 80s and then Rob has that good curveball. They kept them off balance.

"Actually, I thought the team was a little tense those first few innings. Yesterday, we were super loose and confidence was sky high. Today, they were a little more tight, just a little more. And then once we found it, we just had to get it, had to scratch them across. You get that first run on the board, you just feel more comfortable. And then you get the lead, even more comfortable, like now we're ready to play our game. They showed a lot of poise, a lot of guts."

Schieltz, who was named the IHSSN's Class 2A Tournament

MVP, added, "This win means everything. Beckman has a great tradition, a long tradition of winning titles. And we're just happy we could continue that because we know we're playing for something bigger than ourselves and bigger even than just that tradition, as we've shown the entire season through James (Hall) and everything else that we've been playing for this year.

"I think we all just have the utmost confidence in everyone. We all believed that we could do it, from our first game when we were down against Pella to our semifinal to today, everyone just believed in everyone else and we continued to play team baseball and that's what got us this win today."

Kronlage concurred, adding, "I'm just glad we got to make it here this year. You know, starting off the season, we didn't start off very hot. But then we picked it up and we made state and I can't ask for a better way to go out as a senior."

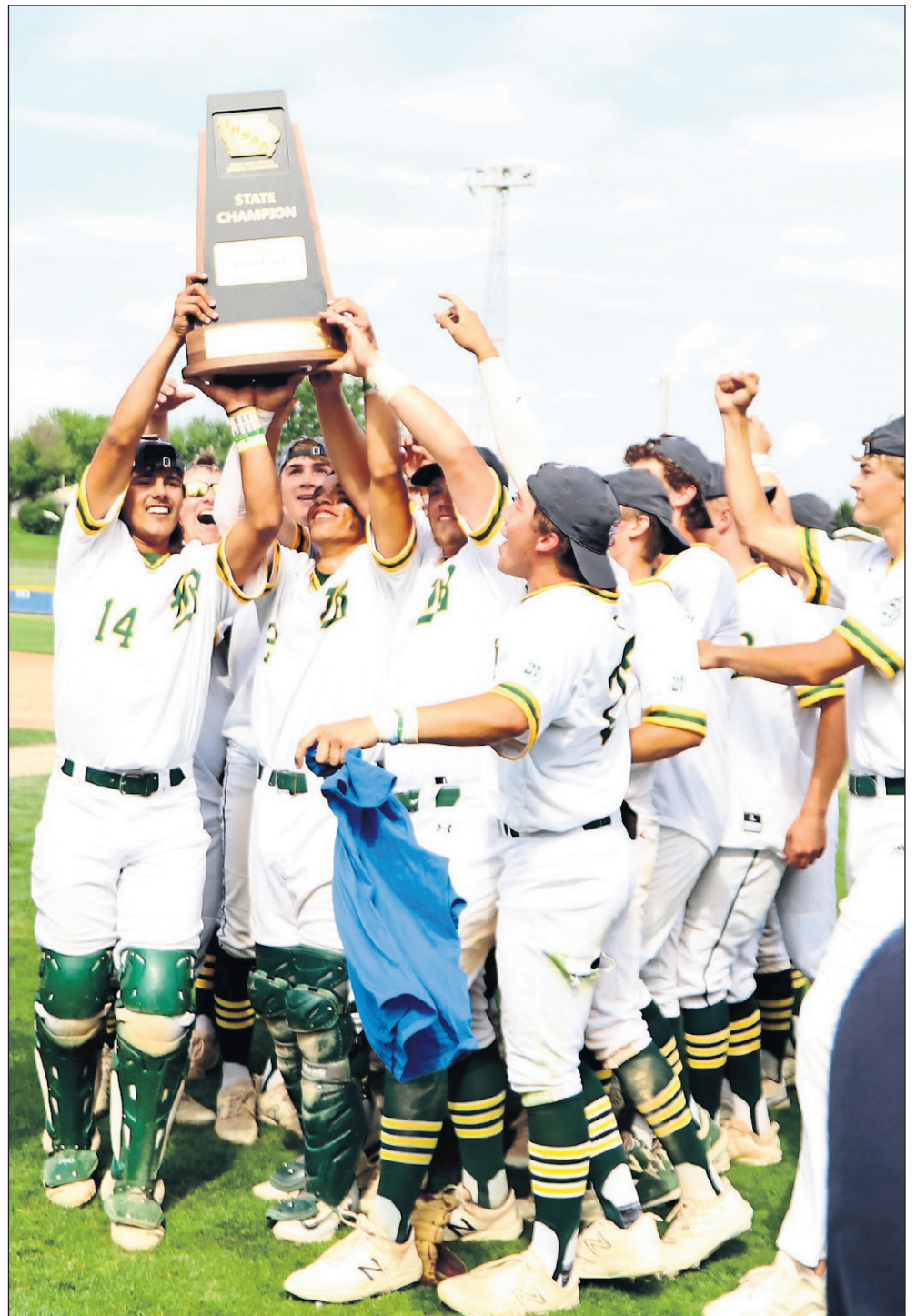
Asked about his three-batter, 10-pitch inning, he said, "Yeah, it was pretty hype. I definitely enjoyed that and it was probably the best part of the tournament, for me. But for the team, the best was we started hitting, we got our bats going for the tournament more than we have all year. We came up at a good time in the year to start hitting the ball."

Offerman said the keys to the team's success were that "we just kept fighting and didn't give up. We all know we have the grittiest team. We play teams that have bigger guys, like 6-foot or 6-5, 250 pounds. That doesn't matter. We're just going to hit the ball, we're going to run, we're going to play gritty and we're just going to win games.

"But we also know there's more to it than that, to life that is. There's James Hall and I'd give all this up to keep that kid succeeding. I told him I'd burn this hat, I'd throw it away just for him to win."

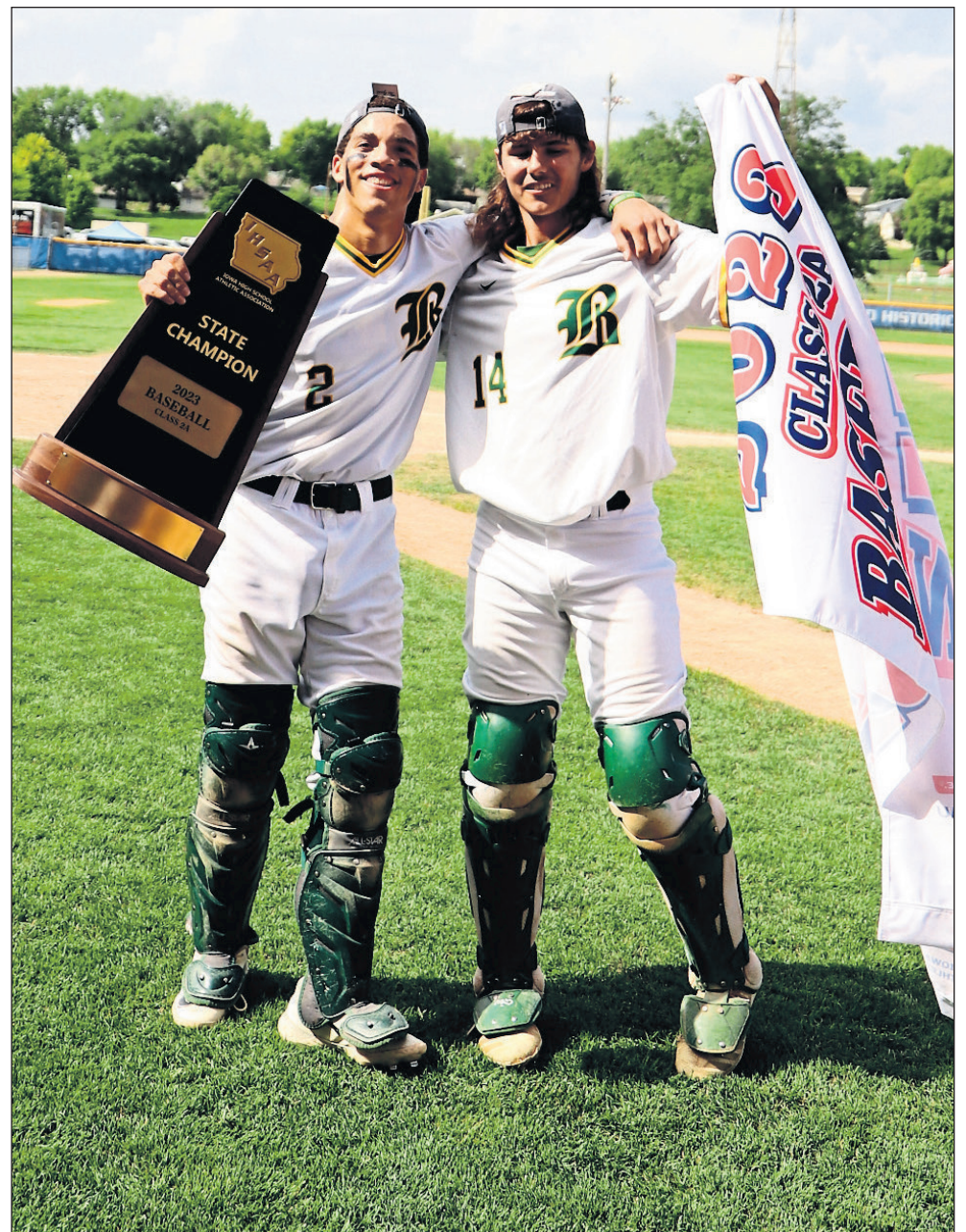
Individual stats for the game included: Schieltz 3-for-4, three RBIs, two runs scored, Thier 2-for-3, two runs, Schmidt 1-for-1, one run, Recker 1-for-2, two runs, Offerman two RBIs, Florence one RBI.

The team retires with a record of 25-9, oh, and a state title.



Beth Lutgen • Staff Photos

Evan Domeyer, Matthew Florence and the Blazer team present their state title trophy to their fans.



Matthew Florence and Evan Domeyer (14) present the state championship trophy and banner to the Beckman fans.

The Blazers celebrate as Luke Schieltz marks Beckman as the state champion on the Class 2A bracket.



Blazers roll past Underwood in state semifinals

BY BEC WILLENBORG
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A five-run first inning was all Beckman needed to bounce West Lyon from the Class 2A State Baseball Tournament semifinal game July 20 at Carroll. But the top-seeded Blazers added six more runs for an 11-2 victory and a shot at second-seeded Underwood in the championship game July 21.

West Lyon put up two runs in the top of the first but that didn't faze the Blazers. Lead-off Luke Schieltz singled to left, advanced when the pitcher's attempt to get him at first went long and landed on third, needing only Nate Offerman's single to plate. Matthew Florence drew a walk, chasing the WL starter, Evan Faber and putting one of the four Ver Meers, Mason, on the mound.

Jackson Oberbroeckling hit a shot back to Ver Meer that he couldn't control, scoring Offerman for the tie, 2-2. Eli Kluesner loaded the bags with a shot to short that was also bobbled. Jake Schmidt's sacrifice fly to right plated Florence and Dylan Recker was hit-by-pitch to reload the bases, opening the way for Drew Thier's single to right that scored both Oberbroeckling and Kluesner and handed the Blazers a lead they never lost, 5-2.

"The guys just right away put pressure on them," said coach Ryan Mabe. "When they made their mistakes, we capitalized. Tuesday (the quarterfinal game) we left a lot of guys on base. Today we took advantage and actually drove guys in. It was a heck of a ballgame. They were really loose coming in today. I could tell they were confident and ready to go."

Rob Kronlage faced three Wildcat players in the second and needed just 12 throws to



Beth Lutgen • Staff Photo

The Blazers celebrate their state semifinal win.

put them down. Luke Sigwarth opened the Blazer half with a shot to first that was bobbled by the baseman, notching the third of the team's five errors in the game. Offerman got another hit, to the hole in right center, to plate Sigwarth and came in when Florence lofted a fly ball to right, making it 7-2.

Thier came in to relieve Kronlage to start the third and got the first batter to fly out, walked the second and whiffed the next two. "That was a little bit of strategy there, just giving them someone new to face," said Mabe. "They went through the order once and then we can use Rob for tomorrow. But Drew did a great job when he came

in. I told him to just put up zeroes, just fill the zone. You've got a bunch of defense taking care of everything behind you. And that's what he did, just zero after zero."

It didn't hurt that the West Lyon pitchers were struggling. The Blazers' side of the third saw Thier begin with a walk and Schieltz beat a bunt to first when the pitcher slipped while corraling the ball. Sigwarth loaded the bases with a single to center. Offerman's sacrifice fly plated Thier. Schieltz came in when Florence hit one to the shortstop and he bobbled the catch and Sigwarth scored on a passed ball during Oberbroeckling's at bat, 10-2.

Thier gave up two runners to start the fourth, but went 1-2-3 with the next to end. After three Blazers went down in the bottom, Thier came back and walked the first WL batter. He got the second to fly out, but hit the next, putting two on base. A Gage Blauwet line drive to short saw Offerman grab it and toss it to second for an inning-ending double play.

In the bottom of the fifth, the Blazers threatened to end things early. Sigwarth walked, sending in a fourth WL pitcher, Tyler Kock, who saw Offerman tag him for a single to right. He got his first out when pinch hitter Adam Oberbroeckling whiffed and his cousin Jack-

son did the same for number two. But Kluesner filled the bags with a walk and Sigwarth scored on a bobbled hit to second, 11-2. A fly to right from Dylan Recker ended things with batters on the bases.

Thier needed eight pitches to put down the side in the sixth and the Blazers took advantage of a walk to pinch hitter Isaac Barrick and a long single down the right field line to Schieltz. But pinch runner Evan Domeyer was tagged at home to end that threat. Sigwarth was intentionally passed with Schieltz on third. During Offerman's at bat, Sigwarth stole second and then he and Schieltz attempted a double steal that caught

Schieltz between third and home. Sigwarth made it safely to third but then made a slight move to home and was tagged for a double play.

In the last, Thier gave up an opening double to right from Blauwet. Next up Spencer Ver Meer was called out due to batter interference when he leaned into a pitch. Thier coaxed a fly to left but did not hit the next batter, Faber. A simple pop fly to center ended things.

"I felt pretty good out there today," added Thier. "A couple of times I couldn't find the strike zone early in the count and then I lost them. But other than that it felt good and we're just really excited to get to the championship. That's our whole goal. We're putting it together right now and our defense is really, really good."

Mabe added, "These kids really do deserve it (to get back to the championship game). I don't, I mean I'm a first-year guy. There's guys that put so much time into this thing that don't get here. And for me to do it — God's good. I mean, He must have a plan for me. I would never have imagined it. But I'm just happy to be here, for these guys."

"Their confidence was super high today. I could just tell we've been together all day. We left at nine this morning and ever since then, I mean, I can tell they were loose. They're fun, they're confident. They think their destiny is to win it all."

Thier got the win in four innings, allowing no runs on one hit, fanning five, walking two. Kronlage allowed two runs (one earned) on one hit. Offerman was 3-for-4 with three RBIs, Schieltz was 3-for-5 with Sigwarth, Florence (two RBIs), Kluesner, Schmidt (two), and Thier (two) adding hits.

Bobcats hold back Wahlert, return to title game

BY MIKE PUTZ
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Five down, one to go.

A three-run fourth inning gave the Western Dubuque Bobcats a 4-3 lead they wouldn't relinquish, as the Bobcats defeated the Wahlert Catholic Golden Eagles, 7-4, July 19, in a Class 3A State Baseball Tournament semifinal game at Duane Banks Field in Iowa City.

The win has the Bobcats one game away from repeating as Class 3A champions. As for five down, one to go, it's all about coach Casey Bryant's math equation with his team.

"I told them we need to win six in a row at the end of the season," he explained after Monday night's win over Harlan.

Wahlert struck pay dirt first, scoring three times in the top of the second, with the big hit a two-run inside-the-park home run by Ryan Brosius.

Western Dubuque answered with a run in the third when Brett Harris singled off a 1-2 pitch from Brosius, driving in Colton McIlrath.

Western Dubuque's fourth inning began with a one-out walk to Connor Maiers, who scored on Hunter Quagliano's double off the left field wall, with Quagliano advancing to third on an error by the left fielder, cutting the Golden Eagles' lead to 3-2. After Brayden



Dave LaBelle • Staff Photo

Jake Goodman receives the throw from catcher Bradyn Delaney, but the runners slides in safely ahead of the tag.

Delaney reached on a fielder's choice, Tanner Anderson's grounder to short scored Quagliano. McIlrath greeted Wahlert reliever Jack Walsh with a single, scoring courtesy runner TJ Cook and the Bobcats led 4-3.

Western Dubuque added another run in the fifth, when Maiers' sacrifice fly scored Caleb Klein, who doubled with one out before moving to third on an errant pick-off play.

Trailing 5-3 in the sixth, the Golden Eagles' Foti Rigopoulos drew a walk from Bobcat reliever Brett Harris with one out. But Harris coaxed a ground ball from Owen Wallace that turned

into a 6-3 double play, ending the Wahlert threat.

The Bobcats added two more in the sixth. After a walk to McIlrath, Jake Goodman sent a 1-0 pitch from Walsh over the left-field fence, giving the Bobcats a 7-3 lead.

Brosius was hit by a pitch to lead off the Wahlert seventh, eventually scoring on a two-out single from Patrick Fitzgerald before Harris struck out Bryce Rudiger to send the Bobcats to Friday's championship game against North Polk.

Bryant said his team didn't panic when they trailed.

"We weren't making a lot of mistakes. We had a misread on Brosius' hit, our right fielder (Quagliano) didn't see it, but we weren't kicking the ball around. We were kind of slow starting, but our goal was to relax and just play clean baseball, because we played really bad both times against Wahlert this year and if you do that, they are going to beat you."

Western Dubuque had seven hits, led by McIlrath 2-for-2 with an RBI and Klein 2-for-4. Goodman was 1-for-4 with two RBIs, Quagliano and Harris 1-for-3 with an RBI. Maiers and Anderson added RBIs.

Clayten Lindecker started on the mound for Western Dubuque, allowing three hits and walking two. Harris allowed one hit over the final four frames, walking three and striking out three.

"The strike zone tonight was incredibly small, but it was small for both teams," Bryant said. "Clayten has a great slider that kind of bites the corner of the plate and they weren't giving it to him tonight. It's a great pitch. Nobody can hit it and nobody has hit it all year. But if he keeps throwing it there and they call it a ball, we have to make a change, because his fastball is flattening out and Wahlert was on to him. So we thought give Brett a chance. He's been great for us all year. I know the moment's not too big for him."

Bryant reflected on reaching the finals for a second year in a row.

"I told our guys win or lose, we have had a great year and nobody is going to take that away from us. People have no idea how hard it is to get to the state championship game. You have to play really good baseball, you have to have a lot of great kids who have bought in, who play hard and love the work. And we do."

And as for the math equation? "Five down, one to go," he said. "That's the plan. We got punched in the face tonight, but we didn't stay down."

Blazers survive 8-inning marathon to top Pella Christian in state quarterfinals

BY BEC WILLENBORG
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Maybe it was the 29-3 wins in three games to get there that left the Beckman boys with enough battle to take an eight-inning, 5-4, decision over Pella Christian at the Class 2A State Baseball Tournament opener, July 18, at Merchants Park in Carroll.

Then again, maybe it was just the boys. "I'm so proud of them," glowed coach Ryan Mabe. "We've been just kind of taking care of business and to show that we can battle back in games like this was huge.

"The guys just believed the whole time. I mean, we were right there but just couldn't break through. We got guys on base every inning. I was just trying to tell them when I met with them before the big inning, to keep on grinding, keep getting guys on base and eventually you're going to breakthrough."

And breakthrough they did. Luke Schieltz, who had already tagged a triple in the game, doubled in the bottom of the seventh with two outs and two strikes to plate Jake Schmidt and tie the game at 4-4, forcing the extra frame.

"I told my guys in the dug-out you live for these kinds of moments," said Schieltz. "You want to be that guy up there at bat, to have a chance to be in that big moment. You know every guy wants to be in that moment and some guys maybe don't and I told them, if I get up there, I'm going to tie this game for us and we're going to keep playing or maybe even win it. They just trusted me, like they have all year. I got a curveball



Beth Lutgen • Staff Photo

Dylan Recker slides safely into third base against Pella Christian in the state quarterfinals.

in the dirt, probably something I shouldn't have swung at, but I got the barrel to it and it stayed fair. So it worked."

In the eighth, Nate Offerman, who had gone the distance and was running out of pitches, fanned the first batter in three, allowed the next two, Luke Fynaardt and Grant Kelderman, a base hit before whiffing Simon Belzer in four pitches and giving up a ball that Luke Sigwarth fielded in right

and fired to catcher Matthew Florence for the tag of Fynaardt and the third out.

Then it was the Blazers' turn. Jackson Oberbroeckling drilled a two-strike single up the middle, Eli Kluesner bunted toward third and reached safely on the miscue from the baseman. Schmidt repeated the bunt and the pitcher faked the throw to third giving Schmidt just enough time to reach safely and load the bags with no

outs. Dylan Recker whiffed but Drew Thier took six pitches to send a bouncer to third. He fired home to tag Oberbroeckling but the throw to first for the double play dropped and Kluesner raced around third to home for the winning run.

"That inning was just huge," added Kluesner. "I mean, we were down by what three runs and we just never hung our heads, always kept our chins up because we knew we had Nate

on the mound, probably one of the best pitchers in the state, and we just put the ball in play and good things happened. No, I haven't seen two bunts (for hits) in a row much, but that's anything can happen and you just got to do what you got to do."

The Blazers had had a multitude of opportunities in this one. They loaded the bases in the second and left them stranded, did the same in the fourth after scoring a run for a 1-0 lead but left all the corners full.

That lead disappeared in the fifth, when Pella laced five straight singles, going up 4-1, before Offerman got Eliot Menninga to strike out in three balls and Caleb VanArendonk to ground out to first.

It didn't take long for the Blazers to answer. Florence singled to left and stretched it to a double and Oberbroeckling walked, sending starter Corbin Westerkamp to short and reliever Lincoln Vander Molen to the mound. Kluesner singled to plate Florence and send pinch-runner Brady Salter to second, making it 4-2. Schmidt took first on a fielder's choice that tagged Salter at third, but Recker's at bat contained a passed ball that advanced both runners and a sacrifice fly to left plated Kluesner, making it 4-3.

They had another chance in the sixth, after Offerman faced just three batters. Schieltz pounded a towering triple to right that flew over the fielder's head. Sigwarth sent one the same way that the fielder dropped for an error and Offerman walked to load bases again, all with no outs.

The first of those came on a

questionable call at the plate when Florence singled to second and Schieltz was called out at home. The second was a strikeout by Oberbroeckling and the third, a catch of a Kluesner ball just over the foul line in deep left.

In the seventh, Offerman gave up a two-out hit to VanderMolen but stranded him when he whiffed Menninga. That set up the Blazers' seventh-inning heroics.

"Offerman was just a horse for us today," added Mabe. "Schmitt (assistant coach Nick) was like, 'Do you want to take him out?' I'm like, 'I can't.' You know you just got to ride the horse you got in there. So he just did a heck of a job. He's done it all year for us. This is 10 wins. I think he's the only pitcher in 2A with 10 wins and will probably be the only one at the end of the year. He's probably our MVP and I'm just proud of the way he's been working."

Schieltz added, "This win means a lot. We've got big expectations coming into this, not only from us but from our community around us. They support us so much. They do so much for us and it feels good to get a little back to them."

Schieltz and Schmidt ended 2-for-4, with one RBI (Schieltz). Kluesner was 2-for-5 (one), while Offerman, Florence, Oberbroeckling and Recker (two RBIs) all got hits. The Blazers scored five runs on 10 hits and nine walks, and committed one error. Pella Christian scored four runs on 11 hits, one walk and made four errors. Offerman took the win in eight, allowing four runs (three earned) on 11 hits and fanning seven.

Bobcats defeat Harlan as quest for repeat begins



Dave LaBelle • Staff Photo

Connor Maiers speeds into third base.

BY MIKE PUTZ
mike.putz@wcinet.com

In their 10-0 five-inning win over Harlan in their opening game of the Class 3A State Baseball Tournament at Duane Banks Field in Iowa City July 17, the Western Dubuque Bobcats traded in their signature cowboy hats for hard hats.

The Bobcats punched in, went to work and methodically took apart the Cyclones with aggressive base running, quality at-bats and solid pitching from Isaac Then.

Coach Casey Bryant said his team's game plan was a simple one.

"We were trying to be real aggressive on balls in the dirt and be aggressive on the base paths, grind out at-bats like we normally do and put a lot of pressure on the other team."

Harlan had runners in scoring position in the first and second innings, but failed to score. In the second, Bryant took a conference and spoke to his team.

"There were a couple ground balls that didn't leave the infield and they got base runners on. I told them to get locked in, be aggressive and go after the baseball. If we are going to make mistakes, let's make sure they are aggressive ones."

In the Bobcats' half of the second, designated hitter Conner Maiers led off with a single before moving to second, third and home on wild pitches. Hunter Quagliano walked, moved to second on a wild pitch

and advanced to third on a ground out from Bradyn Delaney, before scoring on a ground out from Tanner Anderson. Colton McClrath singled, stole second, advancing to third on a throwing error by Harlan catcher Hayden Soma, before reaching on a throwing error, giving the Bobcats a 3-0 lead.

Western Dubuque added three in the third. Caleb Klein led off with a single and Then was hit by a pitch before Maiers' single loaded the bases for Quagliano, who was hit by a pitch, scoring Klein. A sacrifice fly from Delaney scored courtesy runner TJ Cook. After a single by Anderson loaded the bases, McClrath's sacrifice fly plated Maiers and the Bobcats led 6-0.

In the fourth, with one out, Then singled and Maiers walked. After Quagliano flew out to right field for the second out, courtesy runner Cook and Maiers advanced on a wild pitch. When Harlan catcher Soma threw to third attempting to get Cook, the ball skirted into left field, allowing Cook to score. A single by Delaney scored Maiers and Western Dubuque led 8-0.

In the fifth, McClrath greeted Harlan reliever Braydon Ernst with a single, advancing to second on an error by right fielder Stephen Leinen. Jake Goodman's single scored McClrath. Goodman stole second, advanced to third on a Brett Harris ground out and scored on an infield grounder, sliding under the tag and giving the Bobcats a 10-0 win.

Then threw 67 pitches, recording seven

strikeouts and allowing three Cyclone hits.

Western Dubuque finished with 10 hits. Maiers was 2-for-2 with three runs scored, McClrath 2-for-2 with an RBI. Goodman finished 1-for-3 (RBI), Delaney 1-for-2 (two RBIs) Quagliano 1-for-1 (RBI), Anderson 1-for-3 (RBI), Klein 1-for-4 (RBI) and Harris 1-for-4.

Bryant said being in the state tournament a year ago helped his team.

"I think it helps tremendously, at least for the first game, because our guys know what to expect. They know how intense it is. You are going to get punched in the face and it's all about how you respond."

Bryant also said the Bobcats' schedule plays a role in the post-season.

"Our strength of schedule is second or third in Class 3A. We're used to having things go haywire on us because the other teams are so good that we play that they are going to do some things and make plays and hit the ball. Even if you make a great pitch, sometimes they are going to get a hit. You have to figure out how to pick each other up and overcome that stuff. I think our regular season had definitely prepared us to play well in a big environment."

The message from Bryant going forward is familiar, one he used with last year's state tournament team.

"We tell them we want six wins at the end of the season and we're four down with two to go. The message is let's keep doing what we're doing."

Bobcats compete at state softball



Todd Hunt • Staff Photo

Western Dubuque's state-qualifying softball team: front from left, Ellie Feldmann, Taylor Witzel, Maci Cook, Erica Ernzen, Gabby Kaiser, Anna Haverland, Emma Strief and Morgan Hosch; back row, assistant coach Ashley Gansen, Raquel Fern, Hailey Wulfekuhle, coach Rex Massey, Carson Koerperich, Kaitlyn Thole, Hannah Hoefler, Kiya Steger, Melanie Runde, Evelynn Koopmann, Evelyn White, assistant coach Dusty Berning (behind), Baylee Neyen and assistant coach Holly Klein.



Todd Hunt • Staff Photo

Baylee Neyen pitches for WD during the consolation game.



Beth Lutgen • Staff Photo

Coach Rex Massey leads a conference during the state quarterfinals.



Beth Lutgen • Staff Photo

Carson Koerperich attempts to tag out Norwalk's Kaylee Cary during the state quarterfinals.



Beth Lutgen • Staff Photo

Anna Haverland throws to the cutoff.



Beth Lutgen • Staff Photo

Hailey Wulfekuhle sends the ball back to the infield.



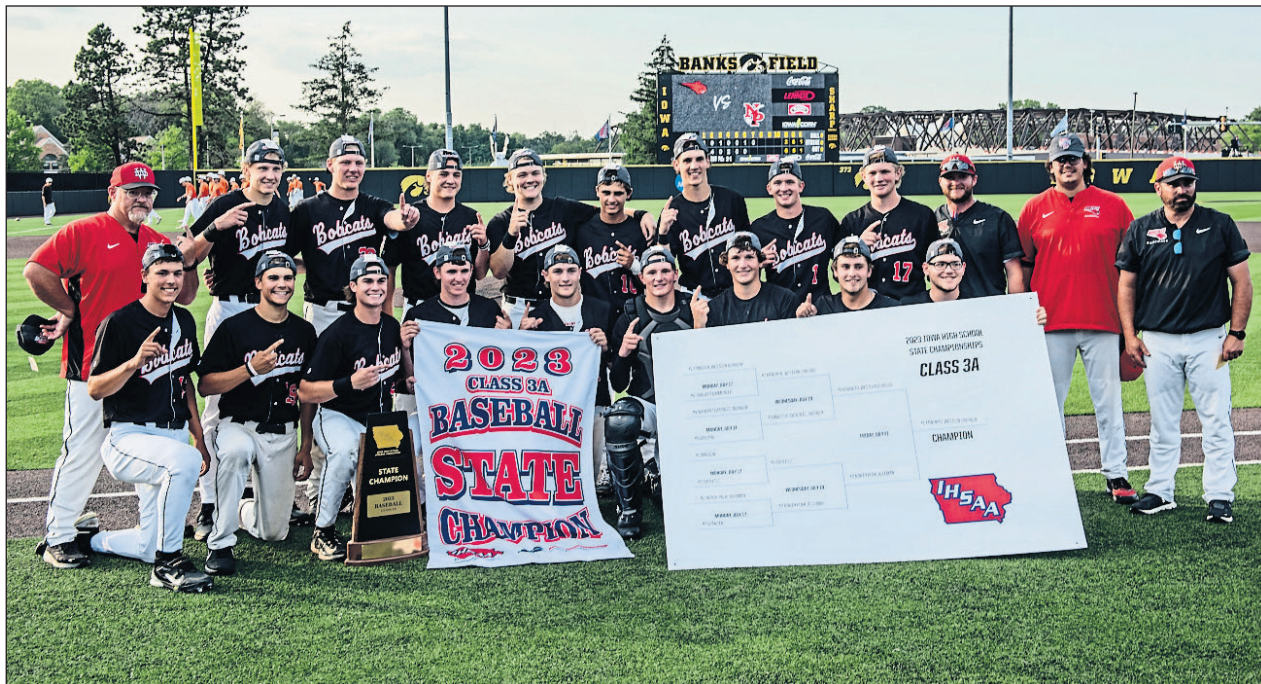
Todd Hunt • Staff Photo

Assistant coach Dusty Berning congratulates Morgan Hosch after she hit a two-run single during the consolation game.

WD repeats as Class 3A state champs

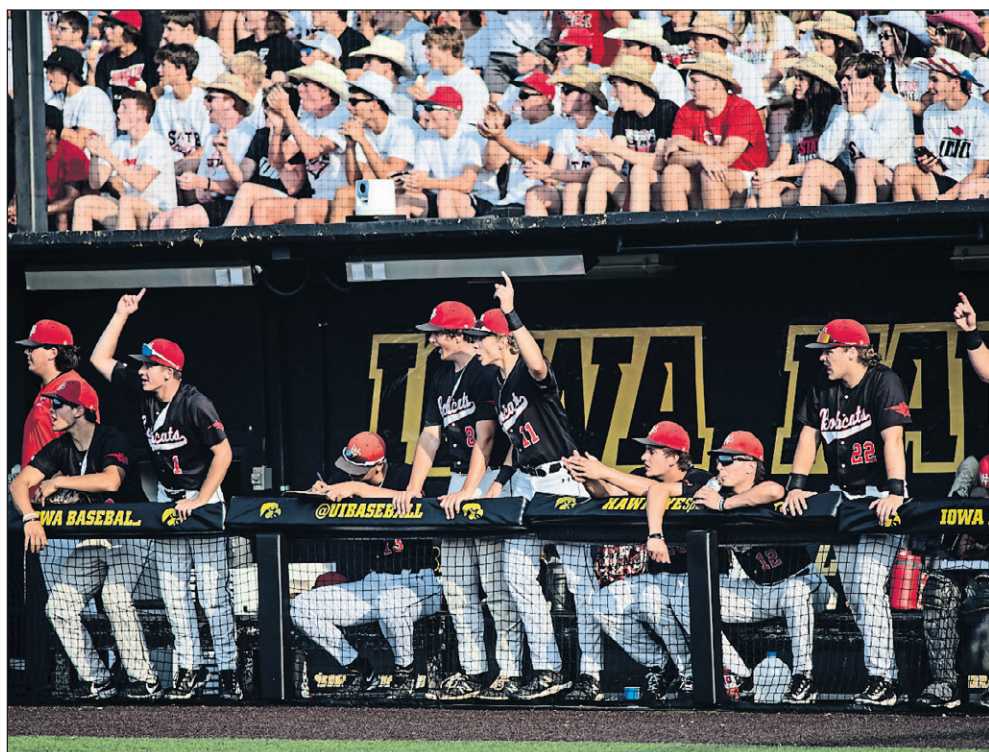


Colton McIlrath makes a sliding grab at shortstop and throws the runner out during the title game.

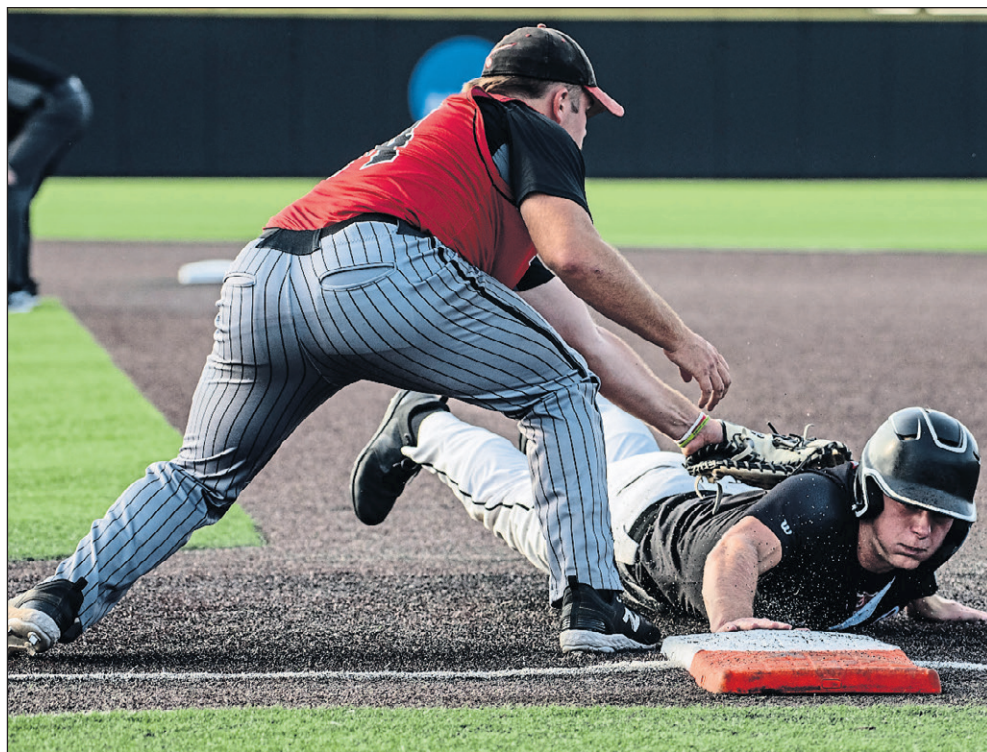


Dave LaBelle • Staff Photos

Western Dubuque's state championship baseball team: front from left, Thomas Blair, Connor Krogman, Connor Maiers, Colton McIlrath, Caleb Klein, Brayden Delaney, Isaac Then, Ryan Klostermann and Nick Rhomberg; back row, assistant coach Mike Cook, Tanner Anderson, TJ Cook, Clayton Lindecker, Hunter Quagliano, Ben Wernimont, Jake Goodman, Jonah Markham, Brett Harris, assistant coach Jesse Lawler, assistant coach Connor Durdin and coach Casey Bryant.



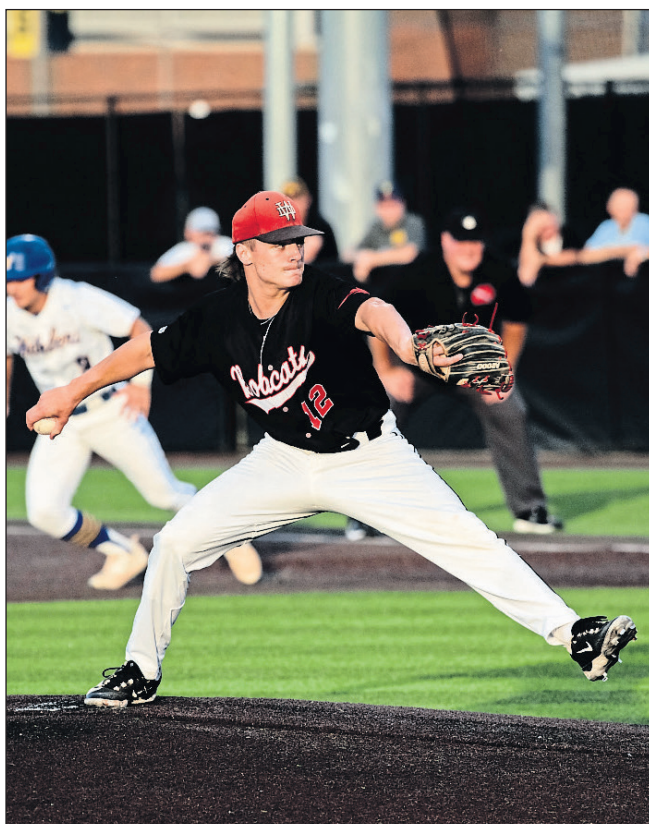
The Bobcat bench livens up the state quarterfinal game.



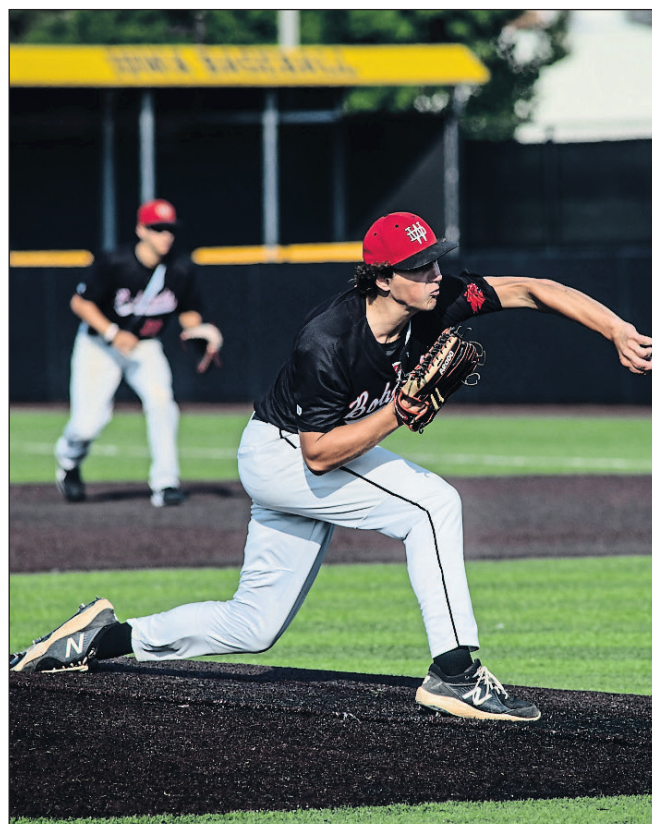
WD courtesy runner TJ Cook dives safely back to first as North Polk's Reece Wrage attempts to tag him out on a close play.



Brayden Delaney makes a great catch on a foul ball late in the game.



Clayton Lindecker fires a pitch against Wahlert.



Isaac Then pitches WD's state quarterfinal win.

Perrenoud pitches Epworth to tournament title

BY JIM LEITNER
Telegraph Herald

Cole Perrenoud would rather not dig himself an early hole. But it didn't seem to bother him much in the Epworth Semi-Pro Baseball Tournament last week.

The right-hander shook off a two-run deficit in the first inning, then didn't allow another run the rest of the way in pitching Epworth to a 5-2 victory over Zwingle in the championship game July 21. Perrenoud, who also overcame an early three-run deficit against Pleasant Grove earlier in the eight-team tournament, limited Zwingle to five hits and struck out 11.

"After giving up a couple of runs in the first inning, I kind of flipped the script and really got locked in," said Perrenoud, the tournament MVP after going 2-0 with a 2.50 ERA, 21 strikeouts and 12 hits allowed in 14 innings of work. "I just got in that mindset of, 'No matter who's in the box, I'm going to be better than him in this at-bat.'"

"Zwingle has been the team to beat around the area pretty much all summer. They've been hot. I just wanted to throw strikes, get on top, not give up any free passes and let the defense do the work. The MVP is a nice award, but it takes the team to win the tournament. And it means a lot to win this

first one."

Epworth, which recently worked on extensive upgrades at Centennial Park, expanded its tournament from four teams to eight this season. Rather than charging an admission fee, the Orioles ask spectators to make a donation in the name of a family in need. This week, they raised \$3,000.

"That's something I'm really proud of, that we can do something like this for the community," manager Tyler Hoerner said. "That's what we're all about."

Zwingle opened the scoring in the top of the first after Maguire Fitzgerald led off with a single and Thomas Brannon drew a one-out walk. David Janes

followed with a two-run double for an early 2-0 cushion.

The Orioles responded with a bases-loaded two-run double of their own by Dylan Pardoe in the bottom of the fourth. Austin Hosch led off the inning with a single, Colin Kreiter reached on an error and Bryce Hoerner wore a pitch to set the table for Pardoe.

Epworth took its first lead of the game in the bottom of the sixth. Bryce Hoerner led off with a base hit and Noah Thein reached on a one-out hit batsman before John Cornelius laced a two-run double. He scored to make it 5-2 when Chris Gansen reached on an error.

"My previous at-bat, it was a similar scenario and I struck out on three pitches," Cornelius said. "I wasn't too happy with myself, and, in the dugout, I told myself that, if I was in that same situation again, I wasn't going to miss it."

"I just wanted to put the ball in play any way possible. I got a hold of it, and before I knew it, I was standing on second base with a double. It's huge for my teammates and myself to win this. Any time you host a tournament, you want to put on a show for your fans and give them a reason to keep coming back to support you."

Sports Brief

LOCALS WILL PARTICIPATE IN ALL-STAR SERIES

Three local athletes and one coach were chosen to participate in the Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association's All-Star Series in Carroll, July 27-29.

Beckman's Luke Schieltz will compete on Small Schools East. Western Dubuque's Caleb Klein and Isaac Then will be on Large Schools East. WD coach Casey Bryant will be an assistant coach on the Large Schools East Squad.

The schedule of games follows. Thursday, July 27: 5 p.m. — Small Schools West vs. Large Schools West; 7 p.m. — Small Schools East vs. Large Schools East; Friday, July 28: 10:30 a.m. — Large Schools West vs. Small Schools East; 12:30 p.m. — Large Schools East vs. Small Schools West; Saturday, July 29: 10 a.m. — Small Schools West vs. Small Schools East; 12:30 p.m. — Large Schools East vs. Large Schools West.

The Final Score

GOLF

DGCC MENS LEAGUE: WEEK 14

Pettinger-Boeckenstedt	34	8
Reicher-Reicher	33.5	8.5
Olberding-Schmitz	30.5	11.5
Hoeger-Digmann	27.5	14.5
Ertl-Boeckenstedt	25.5	16.5
Olberding-Willenbring	25	17
Cannon-Fitzgerald-White	23.5	18.5
Clausen-Smith	22.5	19.5
Jacque-Offerman	21.5	20.5
Engler-Schlarman	21.5	20.5
Kruse-Deutmeyer	20.5	21.5
Engelken-Frye-Domeyer	20.5	21.5
Tauke-Salter	20	22
Wieneke-Meyer	19.5	22.5
Drey-Beckett	19	23
Bell-Theisen	18.5	23.5
Kreeb-Gansemer	18.5	23.5
Manchester-Hinerichsen	18.5	23.5
Ruden-Steger	16.5	25.5
Knepper-Schroeder	16	26
Westhoff-Schnier	15.5	26.5
Boeckenstedt-Prier	14.5	27.5
Knepper-Recker	8.5	33.5
Bell-Overman	7.5	34.5

Low scratch: Tom Olberding 33; Olberding/Matt Schmitz 68

Low net: Jeff Boeckenstedt, Jeff Jacque 30; Ron Drey/Charlie Beckett 63

Weber-Boge	31.5	10.5
Olberding-Wessels	28.5	13.5
Salter-Brehm	25.5	16.5
Alden-Trumm	25.5	16.5
Olberding-Bockenstedt	25.5	16.5
Boeckenstedt-Wolf	25	17
Oberbroeckling-Donahue	25	17
Maiers-Maiers	24	18
Wachendorf-White	24	18
Weber-White	23.5	18.5
Oberbroeckling-Oberbroeckling	22	20
Gibbs-Fangman	21	21
Goerd-Nefzger	20.5	21.5
Healey-Huston	19.5	22.5
Manchester-Doyle	18.5	23.5
Osterhaus-Blush	18	24
Hinerichsen-Hoeger	18	24
Boeckenstedt-Singsank	16.5	25.5
Willenborg-McCool	16	26
Meyer-Loeffelholz	16	26
Jones-Bockenstedt-Hummel	15.5	26.5
Parsons-Wedewer	15.5	26.5
Engelken-Ames	15.5	26.5
Lueken-Callendar	9.5	32.5

Low scratch: Justin Weber 29; Weber/Ryan White, Casey Wachendorf/Randy White 73

Low net: Weber 29; Terry Manchester/Jade Doyle 63

ROLLING KNOLLS LADIES GOLF LEAGUE -7/5

Feldmann-Lammers-Oberbroeckling	25.5
Goldsmith-Kruse-Lansing	24
Klaren-Reinert	23.5
Hawkins-Wessels	23
Deutmeyer-Link	20.5

Kraus-Rubner-Knepper	20.5
Boge-Ries	19.5
Loeffelholz-Ries-Schuchman	19.5
Oberbroeckling-Tegeler	19.5
Deutmeyer-Goedken	17
Deutmeyer-Jaeger-Putz	17
Knipper-Osterhaus-Rahe	16.5
Kramer-Tobin	16
Lapage-Neyen	14.5
Boeckenstedt-Boeckenstedt	13.5
Friedman-Jacque	12
Klosterman-McAllister	11.5
Lammers-Lammers	10.5

SEMI-PRO

AMERICAN LEGION POST 528 SEMI-PRO TOURNAMENT

Play-in results

Balltown 2, Zwingle 0
Dubuque 2, Epworth 0

First-round

Cascade Reds 5, Holy Cross 0
Key West 3, Farley 1
Dyersville 3, Rickardsville 0
Cascade Legends 5, East Dubuque 1
Bernard 4, Monticello 1
Worthington 7, Pleasant Grove 0
Peosta 8, Balltown 2
Bellevue 2, Dubuque 1

Quarterfinals

Reds 2, Worthington 0
Cascade Legends 6, Bernard 5
Tuesday, July 25: 6:45 p.m. — Bellevue vs. Key West; 8:15 p.m. — Peosta vs. Dyersville

Semifinals

Thursday, July 27: 6:45 p.m. — Reds vs. Cascade Legends; 8:15 p.m. — winner of Tuesday's quarterfinal games

Finals

Friday, July 28: 6:30 p.m. — consolation; 8 p.m. — championship

DYERSVILLE SEMI-PRO TOURNAMENT

First-round pairings

Wednesday, Aug. 2: 6:45 p.m. — Dyersville vs. Holy Cross; 8:15 p.m. — Epworth vs. Bernard
Thursday, Aug. 3: 6:45 p.m. — Pleasant Grove vs. Monticello; 8:15 p.m. — Worthington vs. Balltown
Friday, Aug. 4: 6:45 p.m. — Peosta vs. Rickardsville; 8:15 p.m. — Zwingle vs. Cascade
Saturday, Aug. 5: 5:30 p.m. — Farley vs. Bellevue; 7 p.m. — Key West vs. Dubuque Packers

Youth movement leads Worthington to tournament title at Rickardsville

BY JIM LEITNER
Telegraph Herald

The kids are more than just all right in Worthington this summer.

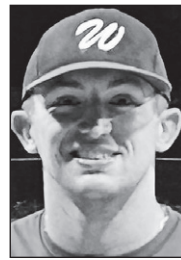
Behind a youth movement, the Cardinals have become one of the hotter teams in the middle of the semi-pro baseball season. And, on July 18, they handled Farley, 9-4, in the championship game at Rickardsville to claim their first tournament title since winning the four-team Placid title two years ago.

Worthington won the Rickardsville Tournament for the first time in the 45-year history of the event and won a 16-team tournament for the first time since Holy Cross in 2001.

"It just feels different this year," said co-tournament MVP Tyson Tucker, who went 7-for-14 and picked up a pair of pitching wins for the Cardinals. "I've been playing on this team for seven years, since I was 16, and this has been the most fun I've had. The way we've been hitting and the way we've been fielding, we know we have a chance to win every game we play."

"Credit our manager, Josh Engler, for bringing in a young group of guys who are fired up to play. It's a whole different attitude."

Other than veteran catcher Ben Ogden, the Cardinals' regular lineup includes no players over the age of 23. And it took the youngsters a while to learn how to win this



TYSON TUCKER

season.

Worthington started the season 3-10 but improved to 15-12 with the championship at Rickardsville. The Cardinals also advanced to the final of their own tournament, reached the semifinals at Epworth and recently won

their first-round game at Cascade.

"We just couldn't field the ball to save our lives early in the season," said Lane Kramer, the other co-MVP at Rickardsville after hitting .667 (10-for-15). "We had a pretty rough start, to say the least. But, all of the sudden, when the tournaments started coming, especially our own, we just started clicking. The defense was on point, we were hitting the ball, and our pitching has been really good."

"Halfway through the year, we started to feel like we were the hottest team in the league. It's just a great group of guys who love baseball."

On Tuesday, Worthington opened the scoring with a pair of runs in the top of the first inning. Isaac Fettkether scored the first run on a first-and-third steal with Jarod Harris, who came across on a base hit by Kramer later in the frame for a 2-0 lead.

The Cardinals stretched the lead to 5-0 in the second, thanks to a sacrifice fly by



LANE KRAMER

Shawn Deutmeyer and a two-run double from Harris.

Farley pulled within 5-2 in the third inning on Brett LaMere's two-run double. But Worthington got those runs back on Ogden's two-run home run after Kramer led off the fifth with

a base hit. Kramer and Ogden then added consecutive RBI singles to knock in Deutmeyer and Harris to give the Cardinals a 9-2 cushion.

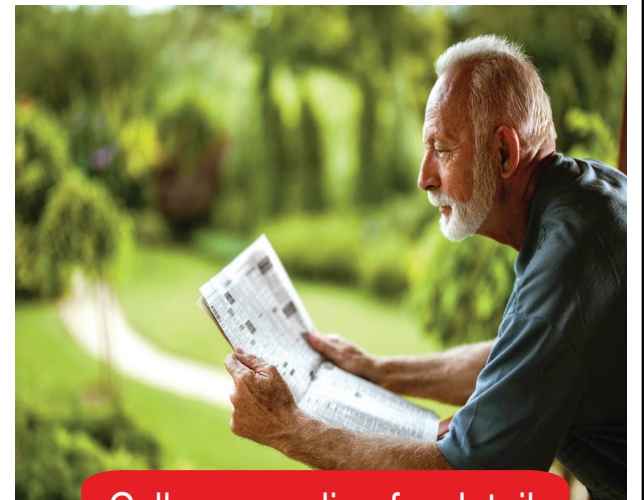
In the bottom of the eighth, Farley inched closer with a pair of unearned runs scored by Alex Sandoval and Derek Hardin. Sandoval started the two-out rally with a single, and George Sherlock contributed an RBI double before Hardin scored when Max Pins reached on an error to make it 9-4.

Kramer finished with three hits, while Ogden and Tucker had two apiece. Tucker earned the pitching win by striking out eight and allowing two runs on four hits in six innings, and Peyton Aldrich finished the game with three innings of three-hit, two-run ball.

LaMere and Sandoval led Farley with a pair of hits each. Brad Bockenstedt took the loss after allowing five runs in an inning and two thirds.

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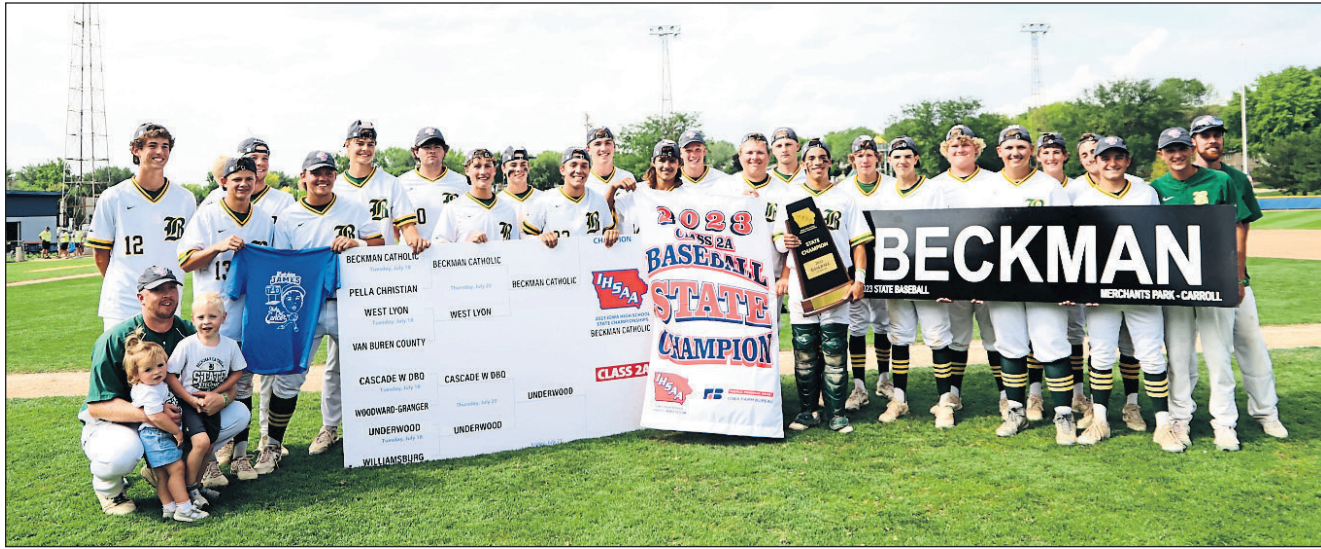
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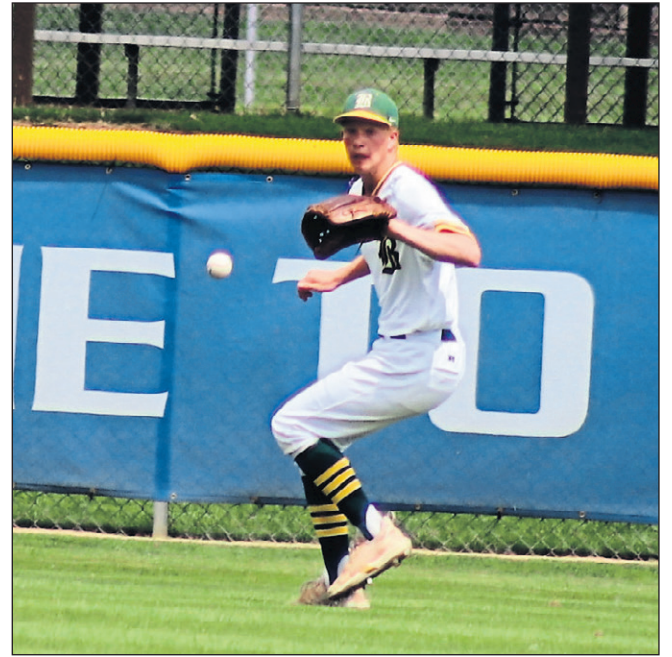
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Beckman wins Class 2A state title



Beckman's state-championship baseball team: from left, coach Ryan Mabe (holding Mackenzie and Matthew Mabe), Carter Hageman, Jake Schmidt, Nate Offerman, Jackson Oberbroeckling, Noah Boge, Adam Oberbroeckling, Luke Sigwarth, Dylan Recker, Luke Schieltz, Eli Kluesner, Evan Domeyer, Spencer Rea, Isaac Barrick, Rob Kronlage, Matthew Florence, Drew Thier, Aiden Engler, Joe Engler, Joe Kielkucki, Mathias McDermott, Brady Salter, Riley White, assistant coaches Nick Schmidt and Ron Broxson.

Beth Lutgen • Staff Photos



Spencer Rea grabs a hit to right field.



Nate Offerman catches an infield fly.



Luke Sigwarth pitches Beckman's win over Underwood.



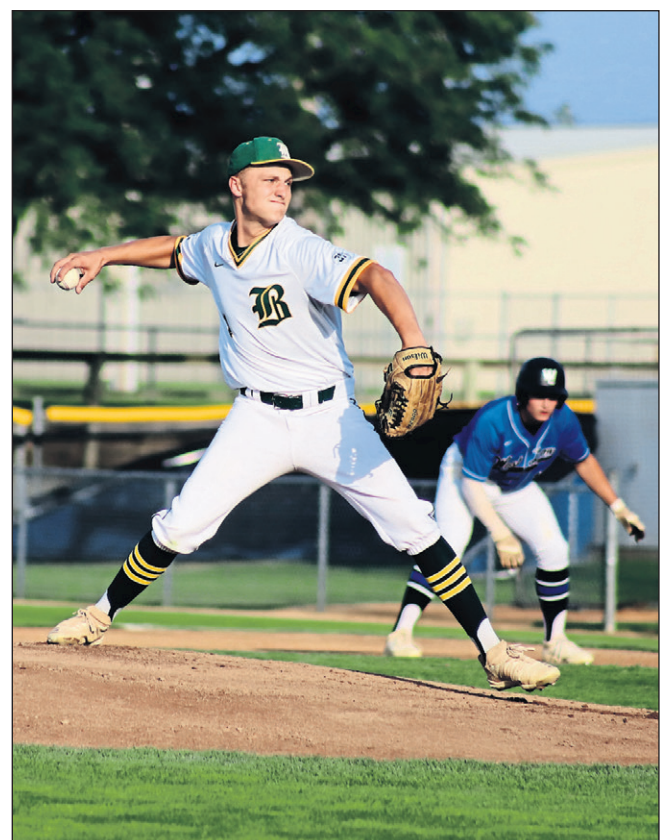
Dylan Recker slides safely into third on a sacrifice fly.



Luke Schieltz grabs a fly ball to centerfield.



Aiden Engler slides safely into third base during the state semifinals.



Rob Kronlage fires a pitch during the state semifinals.