



Local Matters.

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Panther offense shines in sweep

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Published: 06.19.09

Marvin Olberding

Woodland Park's American Legion baseball team has shown the ability to put a lot of runs on the board, and that ability was on full display in a doubleheader sweep over Thomas Jefferson, June 16 at Meadow Wood Park.

The Panthers scored in 10 of their 13 innings at the plate, including all seven frames in the first game, in which they were the "road" team in a 12-3 win.

In the nightcap, Woodland Park used three-run innings in the first and fourth, and scored one on a Ryan Cannella bunt single in the second inning to hold on for a 7-6 victory.

Over the two games, the Panthers racked up 27 hits, 14 of which went for extra bases, including four home runs and 10 doubles.

In addition to putting up numbers every inning of the first game, the Panthers got a complete-game effort from Louie Niel on the mound. The right-hander allowed three earned runs and seven hits while walking two and striking out one.

While Niel's numbers may not have been overwhelming, Panther manager Chris Winstead said the way his pitcher did it was very impressive.

"He was very, very efficient," Winstead said of Niel's performance. "He was getting ahead of hitters early. I think he only threw somewhere around 75 pitches in 7 innings. He wasn't wasting a lot of pitches. He went right at them, and we played good defense behind him."

In addition to his performance on the mound, Niel has displayed some versatility in the field, which Winstead said will help the club later in the summer as well as next spring.

"We just found out recently that Louie can play shortstop, and so that's a new move," Winstead said. We found that out when we played Manitou, and that really helps us because when Jared [Huggins] comes in to pitch, we can move Louie back to shortstop and keep [Josh] Logsdon at second base.

Three Panther hitters backed up Niel with three-hit games: Cannella, Huggins and Logsdon, and eight batters recorded at least one hit. Huggins doubled, hit a homer and drove in six runs, while Cannella and Taylor Watters each had two doubles in the win.

The Spartans jumped out early in the second game, scoring two in the top of the first off Watters, but Woodland Park answered right back in the bottom half of the inning.

A two-run double by Charlie Jones – one of three two-baggers hit by the Panther clean-up hitter on the day – and an RBI from Niel gave the Panthers the lead, 3-2.



The Panthers aggressive offense is leading to some victories. Photo courtesy of Terri Huggins

Thomas Jefferson used the middle of its lineup to rally with two outs in the top of the third to come back from a 4-2 deficit and reclaim the lead. After a leadoff single and a two-out walk, the Spartans came through with back-to-back doubles to take a 5-4 lead.

The Panthers took the lead for good in the bottom of the fourth, however. After Watters rang up two strikeouts in the top of the inning on the mound, he followed it up with a two-run homer in the home half to give the Panthers a 6-5 lead, which was immediately followed by a solo shot from Huggins.

Huggins took over in the top of the fifth on the mound and, despite giving up a seventh-inning solo homer, closed the door on the Spartans, allowing just two hits and striking out six in the final three frames to close it out.

Winstead said that, with a trio of doubleheaders coming up - at Littleton and Boulder, June 22 and 26, respectively, and Elizabeth at home on June 24 - he feels confident in what he's seeing from his 6-6 club.

"I think we're getting ready to hit our stride and make a run now," Winstead said.

U-14 to host, play in national tournament

The Woodland Park Under-14 Super Series team qualified for the Super Series Nationals with a 2-1 performance at super regionals June 13-14, also at Meadow Wood Park.

The Panthers entered the weekend as the No. 1 seed and finished third. Woodland Park needed to make the top-4 to qualify for Nationals.

Meadow Wood Park will be the site of Super Series Nationals, July 11-18.

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