

CLIPPER SPORTS

Braves lose in provincial baseball Sr A final

By Tony Zerucha

The Springfield Braves fell just short of winning Baseball Manitoba's Senior A Provincial Championship on home turf, losing the final 5-3 to Virden.

The Braves opened the tournament with a 5-4 win over the Carman Cardinals on July 17. Andrew Blocker led off the game with a single, stole second and scored on an error. Adam Kirk, who reached on that miscue, scored on Devan Lambert's groundout. The Redbirds got one back with a bases-loaded walk in their turn.

That 2-1 score held until the sixth inning, when Aidan Brook hit a two-run homer to give Springfield a 4-1 edge. Carman replied in the bottom of the frame with two of their own to make it a 4-3 contest. Springfield added a fifth run in the top of the seventh when Cole Cassie singled, stole second and scored on Blocker's single. The Cardinals scored once in the bottom of the seventh and had the tying run on third, but Kenny Lavallee came in from the bullpen to induce two groundouts and save James Walker's win.

Springfield followed that up with a 20-4 triumph over the Thompson Reds on July 18. Hitting in the leadoff spot, Blocker reached base five times, stole two bags and scored three runs. Shortstop Joel Warkentin drew three walks, stole two bases and scored three times, while Brook singled, tripled and drove in three. Third-sacker Owen Blocker went one for one with three runs.

The Braves sent 14 batters to the plate in a nine-run first

inning. Starter Trevor Gray went three innings, while Preston Weiss mopped up.

That earned Springfield a July 19 playoff date against the Carberry Royals. The Braves started quickly, as their first four batters scored to give them a 4-2 lead after one inning. Up 4-3 in the third, the Braves tacked on two more, thanks to RBI singles from Warkentin and Cassie to make it 6-3.

Carberry scored seven runs over the next two innings to take a 10-6 lead into the bottom of the sixth. With one out, right fielder Scott Harris doubled, and Brook walked. Pinch hitter Matt Osborne and Trevor Gray singled in runs to make it 10-8, and a Lambert grounder made it 10-9. Lavallee, who entered the game in the fifth inning, singled in the tying run.

Springfield set down the Royals three straight in the top of the seventh. Left fielder Jeremy Voth led off the bottom of the seventh with a walk before being replaced by pinch runner Dylan Plett. That paid quick dividends when Plett stole second. Andrew Blocker walked, and a wild pitch advanced both into

scoring position.

After a strikeout, Brook was intentionally walked. That brought up Jordan Armstrong, who had entered the game an inning earlier. Armstrong laced a single, giving the Braves a berth in the finals. *1

The Braves faced the Virden Oilers in the 4 p.m. finals. The Oilers struck with three runs in the first inning, but the Braves clawed back with single scores in the second and third innings to make it 3-2.

Virden scored a big run in the fifth inning, when leadoff batter Braeden Lewis reached on an error and was driven in by second baseman Dexter Whittle. Gray singled in Armstrong in the top of the sixth to make it 4-3, but an error and wild pitch gave the Oilers an insurance run in the bottom of the sixth. Springfield went three up, three down in the top of the seventh to make the final 5-3 for Virden.

In Winnipeg Senior Baseball League play, a four-game winning streak has the Braves in firm control of third place as the regular season winds down. At 12-5, Springfield is 3.5 games

ahead of the fourth-place South Winnipeg Longhorns and two behind the second-place West Winnipeg A's.

On July 21, home runs from Aidan Brook and Dylan Plett led the Braves to a 20-5 romp over the Pembina Phillies. Trey Sellen went four for five at the plate with five runs scored and two stolen bases, while Brody Welsh swiped a pair and scored three times. Plett, Josh Ireland and Andrew Blocker also had three hits. Plett worked four innings for the win.

The offensive barrage continued in a 16-2 win over the South Winnipeg Longhorns on July 23. Player-coach Ty Zebinski led the way with three hits and five runs batted in. Ireland scored four times, with Plett and Welsh crossing the plate three times each. Welsh twirled three scoreless frames for the win.

Things were tighter in a 4-1 win over the North Winnipeg Pirates on July 25, as Springfield broke open a 1-1 tie with a three-run sixth inning.

The final regular season game is in Dugald on July 30 at 7 p.m. against the Phillies.



File photo

Andrew Blocker reached base five times, stole two bags and scored three runs in the win over Thompson.

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*1 Correction, That brought up Adam Kirk, who had re-entered the game in place of Jordan Armstrong. Kirk laced a single, giving the Braves a berth in the finals.