

Colby Gamecocks Finish Third at State

by Derek White
Free Press Contributor

GAME 1

The Colby Gamecocks American Legion baseball team made a resounding statement Friday in their Kansas State Tournament opener, upsetting the No. 3 seed Seneca Legion with a thrilling 12-8 comeback win on July 25 in Hiawatha.

Seeded sixth entering the tournament, Colby weathered early trouble and stormed back with an eight-run rally in the seventh inning to take control of the game for good. Eloy Ruelas led the offensive effort, going 3-for-4 at the plate with three singles and two stolen bases.

The Gamecocks got on the board first in the top of the first inning, scoring on a wild pitch. But Seneca responded forcefully in the bottom half, scoring four runs on a mix of walks, singles, and a groundout to grab a 4-1 lead.

Undeterred, Colby chipped away. A Talon Andreasen RBI single tied the game at 4-4 in the top of the fifth, though Seneca briefly reclaimed the lead in the bottom of the frame.

That's when the Gamecocks delivered their decisive blow in the seventh inning.

With Seneca clinging to a 7-4 lead, Colby erupted for eight runs on eight hits. Conner Surmeier's two-RBI double tied the game and helped fuel the massive rally. Keegan Glassman added a two-run double of his own, and timely singles from Ruelas, Brayden Foss, Max Kersenbrock, and others kept the momentum going.

Brayden Foss earned the win on the mound for Colby after relieving Surmeier in the first inning. Foss worked five innings, allowing four runs on six hits while striking out two. Ruelas also pitched in relief and held Seneca scoreless over the final 1.1 innings to close it out.

At the plate, Colby tallied 11 hits. Alongside Ruelas's three-hit game, Kersenbrock,

Glassman, and Surmeier each drove in two runs. Foss also had two hits and reached base three times. Colby's aggressive base running was another key, highlighted by Ruelas stealing second and later scoring on a heads-up steal of home.

Seneca collected 10 hits of their own and were led by Derek Wurtz and Evan Olberding, who combined for four hits and four RBIs.

Despite their early 4-1 deficit and falling behind again in the fifth, Colby's relentless effort and late offensive explosion pushed them through to the semifinal round, continuing their postseason run.

With the win, Colby advances to face the winner of the game between Concordia and Marysville.

The Gamecocks' thrilling victory sets the tone for what could be a deep tournament run—and proves that no seed is safe when Colby's bats come alive.

GAME 2

Behind a complete-game performance from Braxton Withington and a strong start at the plate, the Colby Gamecocks American Legion team defeated Iola Post 15 by a score of 4-2 on Saturday, July 26 in the second round of the Kansas American Legion State Tournament in Hiawatha.

The Gamecocks, seeded sixth in the state bracket, wasted no time jumping out to a lead. After an Iola error allowed Eloy Ruelas to reach base, Colby strung together three straight singles from Brayden Foss, Max Kersenbrock, and Talon Andreasen. The latter two each drove in a run to give Colby an early 2-0 lead.

Kersenbrock and Andreasen proved to be a tough one-two punch in the middle of the Gamecocks' order, both going 2-for-3 at the plate with an RBI apiece.

On the mound, Withington was dominant. The right-hander tossed all seven innings, allowing just four hits and two

earned runs while striking out nine and walking only one. He stayed composed even when Iola attempted a late push in the sixth inning, clamping down with back-to-back strikeouts to maintain the lead.

Colby padded their advantage in the fourth inning. With runners on base following a walk and a single, a passed ball and an error allowed two more Gamecocks to cross the plate, extending their lead to 4-0.

Iola fought back with single runs in the sixth and seventh, including RBI groundouts from Dominic Smith and Grady Dougherty, but couldn't mount a full comeback against Withington's efficient pitching.

In the field, Colby played error-free baseball, with Kasen Stramel recording a team-high nine defensive chances behind the plate.

The Gamecocks totaled seven hits in the game, with contributions from Foss, Ruelas, and Withington in addition to Kersenbrock and Andreasen. The victory sends Colby to the semifinal round of the state tournament, continuing a Cinderella run that started with their opening win over No. 3 seed Seneca.

For Iola, Cole Mathes pitched into the sixth inning, allowing four runs (only one earned) on seven hits. Blake Ellis and Dougherty each recorded two hits for the Indians, who also turned a double play in the loss.

With the win, Colby remains unbeaten in the tournament and will face a semifinal opponent yet to be determined. One thing is clear—this Gamecock team is peaking at the right time.

GAME 3

The Colby Gamecocks' bid for a perfect run through the Kansas American Legion State Baseball Tournament took a hit Sunday as they fell 3-0 to the Garnett Muddogs in round three of bracket play on July 27. Despite collecting



Braxton Withington pitched a complete game for Colby, throwing 9 strikeouts while giving up 4 hits and 2 runs in 7 innings against Iola.
photo by Derek White

more hits than their opponent, the Gamecocks were unable to push a run across, moving them to the consolation side of the bracket—but still in contention for the title.

Colby (6-seed) matched up with the 5-seed Muddogs in a defensive showdown that saw excellent pitching from both sides. The Gamecocks out-hit Garnett five to four, with Eloy Ruelas leading the way by going 2-for-3 at the plate. Max Kersenbrock, Brayden Foss, and Braxton Withington each added hits for Colby.

On the mound, Ruelas started and battled through five innings, allowing four hits and three earned runs while striking out four and walking four. He was relieved late by Talon Andreasen, who pitched in a tight spot but limited further damage.

The Muddogs broke a scoreless tie in the bottom of the fourth, plating a run on a fielder's choice that brought home Jack Dykes. They added two more in the sixth—one on a hit-by-pitch with the bases loaded and another on a wild pitch.

Colby's best chance to score came in the top of the fourth, when they loaded the bases with one out. However, back-to-back outs, including a foul-tip strikeout, ended the threat. In the sixth, Foss doubled and advanced to third on a single from Ruelas, but a caught stealing and flyout ended the rally.

Brayden Wheat was lights out on the mound for the Muddogs. The right-hander threw a complete-game shutout, striking out nine Gamecock batters without issuing a single walk. He also worked out of multiple jams thanks to a stout defense that did not commit an error.

Defensively, Colby was equally solid, playing error-free baseball and turning a key double play to end a bases-loaded threat in the sixth. Foss had six defensive chances, showing range and reliability in the infield.

Though the loss moves Colby to the backside of the double-elimination bracket, they are far from finished. With two wins already under their belt and momentum from a strong tournament showing, the Gamecocks remain a legitimate threat to claw their way back to the championship game.

They'll now await their next matchup in the elimination bracket, with their hopes for a state title still alive.

GAME 4

The Colby Gamecocks American Legion baseball team's postseason run came to a close on Sunday afternoon with a hard-fought 4-3 loss to Marysville Post 163 in the third-place game of the Kansas American Legion State Tour-

nament.

Colby, the No. 6 seed entering the tournament, put together a remarkable string of performances, upsetting higher-ranked teams and proving their place among the state's best. But in a game that saw four lead changes, it was Marysville who edged out the Gamecocks with a go-ahead single in the top of the ninth inning from Ty Hager.

Despite out-hitting Marysville nine to eight, the Gamecocks couldn't convert key opportunities into a win. Talon Wark led the Colby offense with two hits, while Cobin Curry and Talon Andreasen each collected an RBI. Andreasen's clutch single in the bottom of the eighth tied the game at 3-3, giving the Gamecocks one final surge of momentum.

Curry got Colby on the board in the second with an RBI single that scored courtesy runner Ryan. Marysville responded with runs in the fourth and fifth to take a 2-1 lead. In the bottom of the sixth, Brayden Foss scored on a wild pitch to tie the game again at 2-2.

Marysville regained the lead in the eighth via a bases-loaded walk drawn by Gavyn LeDuc, but Colby answered once more when Andreasen delivered his RBI single to even the score again.

In the top of the ninth, Marysville capitalized on a scoring opportunity when Hager delivered a go-ahead RBI single that ultimately proved to be the difference. Colby was unable to mount a rally in the bottom of the ninth, ending their tournament campaign in third place.

Conner Surmeier started on the mound for Colby and pitched effectively, allowing two runs (one earned) on six hits over 6.2 innings with four strikeouts and three walks. Andreasen took over in relief and worked through several tense innings.

Colby's defense remained steady throughout, turning one double play and playing clean baseball with no errors. Marysville's Ty Smith pitched 7.2 innings and limited Colby's scoring despite giving up eight hits.

Colby finishes the tournament with a 2-2 record, including an opening-round upset over Seneca and a strong win against Iola. Their performance earned them a third-place finish in the state—an impressive result for the underdog squad.

Though their season ends just short of a title, the Gamecocks leave Hiawatha with heads held high, having proven they could compete with the best teams Kansas has to offer.

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