

SPORTS

Baseball

From page 1

Casey-Westfield game on Saturday at 10 a.m. at Altamont in the sectional championship.

Arcola 3, Windsor/S-S, 2

Arcola scored all three of its runs in the first two innings. The first run, in the opening inning started with one out when freshman Brevyn Whisman was hit by a pitch. With two outs, classmate Jackson Griffith doubled to right, scoring Whisman.

"I was just sitting on a first pitch outfield and I got it and hit to the right spot," said Griffith. "I found the gap and he scored. It was pretty big."

Arcola coach Mike Phillips said of the hit, "Jackson's shot to right started it off. We are a better team when we can jump out early."

After Jordan Wittenberg, one of seven seniors for the Hatchets, struck out the side in the second, Arcola scored its final two runs of the game as No. 9 batter Austin Kutz, a senior, singled to right on an 0-2 count. Thomas followed with a first-pitch over the fence in right field for a home run.

"He threw a lot of off-speed pitches," said Thomas. "He is really a good pitcher, changing speeds or changing our eye sight. I knew to try and go out there and look for a first-pitch fastball and it was an outside fastball and I took it the other way. I wouldn't say it felt like it was gone, but as I saw it in the air it kept going and I knew it was going to get out."

WSS, a team that won a regional last year and plays a fall season where the National Trail Conference games take place, left two runners on in scoring position in the first, one in the third before scoring in the fourth.

Jordan Wittenburg reached on an error, went to second on a sacrifice bunt by Jackson Gurgel and with two outs scored on first pitch single up the middle by Connor Manhart. WSS threatened in

the fifth with two outs when Carter Chaney walked on a full-count pitch and Tyler Wetherell walked. Chaney stole third, but with runners on the corners Thomas got out of the jam with a strikeout on a full-count pitch.

Meanwhile Wittenberg held Arcola bats silent allowing only a leadoff single by Whisman in the sixth in the final five innings. He finished with 10 strikeouts and no walks on an impressive 82 pitches, 65 for strikes.

"Jordan has been our horse all year," said WSS coach Brett Harmeier. "He has done all of the big games for us. He pitched really well. Sometimes it is hard for those bats to show up in those games, but he has pitched against some really good teams all year long. He pitched another one today. We just could not scratch enough runs for him."

The Hatchets made one last threat in the seventh and did score a run after Rhett Rincker singled, went to second on a sacrifice by Ben Bridges to third on a ground out and scored on a two-out balk. Chaney walked and stole second before Thomas reached his pitch count limit. Braden Phillips came in to relieve him and got the fly ball to short right field for the victory.

"I assumed Tanner would go all of the way," said Phillips. "I was walking to the top of the seventh to go and hit and my dad (coach Phillips) saw me and said, 'Go and warm-up. You are not four sure going in, but in case Tanner gets in trouble or runs out of pitches, you are going in.' Getting the save was nice seeing that Arcola had not won a regional championship in 39 years. We have been working our butts off since January and we all deserve this win and we all deserve to feel the feeling of actually having good baseball in Arcola."

Thomas said of his pitching and the Hatchets, "I knew going into this game that they were going to put the ball in play. They are know for how good they hit and defense. I knew I had to throw off-speed. When I had runners on the



THE 2023 ARCOLA BASEBALL TEAM won the first regional in 39 years beating Windsor/Stewardson-Strasburg 3-2. Pictured front row, left to right, Tyson Lewis, Brody Drake, Austin Kutz, Tanner Thomas, Jayden Henson-Stice, Gerardo Alanis, and Hunter Drake. Back row, assistant coach Jeff Thomas, Brandon Lyons, DJ Stevens, Brevyn Whisman, Braden Phillips, Braden Shonkwiler, Anthony Garza, Jackson Griffith, Caiden Helmuth and head coach Mike Phillips. Submitted photo.

focus was my stuff and really focusing on my pitching rather than throwing hard and just chucking it down the plate. I focused on my slider and change-up and everything was working today. I always like to throw outside pitches and then hit it inside. It is just a mind game."

Hameier was impressed with Thomas.

"He threw a heck of a game," said Hameier. "We knew what we were coming into. He threw a lot of strikes (116 pitches, 71 strikes) and had us off-balance. He did his job. It is a shame he didn't get to finish it because he pitched a really good game."

Coach Phillips was happy with the defense.

"Defensively, I thought we played really well," said Phillips. "DJ made some good plays at shortstop and Caiden Helmuth made a couple at third. I could not be more proud of this team. They have worked hard all season and have been rewarded with a championship."

Arcola 3, Meridian 1

Arcola made the most of its four hits, scoring two runs in the first on a single to right by

Whisman, scoring Thomas, who singled. After two ground outs Whisman was on third when Phillips, who came from the track sectional, also in Tuscola, where he qualified for state in the triple jump, singled to left as Whisman scored.

Phillips got to Ervin Park at 6:10 or so and in time to warm-up some. As for the hit he said, "I was looking fastball and he gave it to me and I hit it. Right when I hit it I thought it was a base hit as it went over the shortstop. That was pretty big."

Whisman earned the win allowing five hits and one run with two walks and nine strikeouts. Thomas earned the save, going two innings with one walk and five strikeouts and no hits. He struck out the side in the sixth when the Hawks had the bases loaded.

"We hoped that Brevyn would deal like he did and he pitched a really good game," said Thomas. "He started running out of pitches and it got to the point where there was a runner on first and second and no outs. So, Mike (Phillips) told me to prepare to go in that inning just in case something happened. It took me a second to get warmed up

and the adrenaline helped as my fastball felt pretty good. I kind of stuck with that fastball because I didn't have enough time to work on my other pitches in the bullpen."

Arcola's third run was when Thomas doubled to center to start the fifth and went to third on a ground out and scored on a wild pitch.

1984

The 1984 team finished 10-7 under Byron Bradford, but cruised through the Class A regional at Arcola. The Purple Riders beat Chrisman to win the regional, 16-3, as the Purple Riders hit seven home runs, including three by winning pitcher Bryan Cook. Other home runs were by Warren Arthur, Jeff Edwards and J. R. Hoskinson. Daniel Mendoza and Kyle Gibson had two hits each as Arcola had 20 hits in the game and Cook allowed seven hits.

The regional tournament began with a 9-6 win over Jamaica (now Salt Fork) and an 11-5 triumph over Villa Grove.

The season ended in the Monticello Sectional semifinals in a 4-3 loss to Newton, who scored two runs in the bottom of the sixth for the vic-

tory. Newton lost in the sectional championship.

The Purple Riders won eight of its last 12 games.

Members of the team were Edwards, Chico Kirkham, Mendoza, Bart Shields, Bruce Miller, Brian Perkins, Mike Tabb, Kim VanGundy, Arthur, Cook, Mark Otto, Gibson, Shawn Mallady and Hoskinson.

Class IA Regional championship at Tuscola

Arcola 102 000 0-3-4-2
Windsor/S-S 000 100 0-2-4-2

Winning pitcher: Tanner Thomas 6 innings, 3 hits, 2 runs, 1 earned, 3 walks, 11 strikeouts. Save: Braden Phillips inning, 0 hits, 0 runs, 0 walks, 0 strikeouts

Losing pitcher: Jordan Wittenberg 7 innings, 4 hits, 3 runs, 0 walks, 10 strikeouts
ARCOLA: Thomas 1-for-3, run, home run, 2 RBIs; Brevyn Whisman 1-for-2, run; Jackson Griffith 1-for-3, double, RBI; Austin Kutz 1-for-2, run

WINDSOR/STEWARTSON-STRASBURG: Carter Chaney 2-for-2, double, stolen base; Jordan Wittenberg run; Connor Manhart 1-for-3, RBI; Rhett Rincker 1-for-3, run

Meridian 000 000 1-1-5-1
Arcola 200 010 x-3-4-0

Winning pitcher: Whisman 5 innings, 5 hits, 1 run, 2 walks, 9 strikeouts. Save: Thomas 2 innings, 0 hits, 0 runs, 1 walk, 5 strikeouts

ARCOLA: Thomas 2-for-3, double, stolen base, 2 runs; Whisman 1-for-2, run, RBI; Jayden Henson-Stice RBI; Phillips 1-for-3, stolen base, RBI



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