

Bellport High School

The Box Score

The home team Road Warriors came back to win this one by a score of 8-4 over Southampton. Long Island can thank a 6-run eighth inning in part for their come from behind win. Jake Liberatore finished 2-5 with a home run to pace the Road Warriors. Breakers starter Connor Stephens did his part in holding his team's lead for most of the game, but the bullpen did not have as much luck. Long Island crosses the .500 mark as they get to 5-4, while Southampton has now won just once in their first ten games.

More Than the Box Score

It was a tale of two halves really for Liberatore, a rising sophomore from Stetson. He made a throwing error in the midst of a two run second inning and was noticeably frustrated with his effort. From that point on Liberatore became a different player. It seemed as if a fire was lit under him and a real sense of passion and competitiveness began to show through. He homered for his team's first run on a 2-strike high fastball. Later in the sixth inning, Liberatore hustled out an infield single to short that had no business being a base hit. The second basemen seemed determined to prove that his early error would not define the rest of his game. The

resilience he showed in this one rubbed off on the rest of his team as they rallied back from a 4-0 deficit.

Star Arms

Starter Connor Stephens' effort in this game will likely go unnoticed due to the final score, but he was dominant. He only allowed 2 runs (1 earned) through 5.1 innings pitched. Stephens was primarily a fastball pitcher although he did feature a curveball and a seldom used changeup. His ability to really stride directly towards the catcher's mitt paired with his unique arm motion is what forced the Long Island hitters to struggle to dissect which pitch was coming. However, the Western Kentucky product doesn't generate much arm speed or whip at all. If Stephens could find a way to get that right arm moving faster his fastball would increase in velocity and his off-speed pitches could pick up greater bite and break.

It was pretty much the exact opposite game from the Road Warriors mound. While the starter struggled in this one, the bullpen could not have been better. James Cardinale picked up the win and allowed just 3 baserunners in 5.1 innings of relief. He did it with a mix of pitches. As a true 3 pitch pitcher, Cardinale preferred his changeup over his fastball and also had a big breaking curveball. The Hofstra lefthander used every pitch in every count and his unpredictability was vital to his success in this one. Also, Cardinale's funky delivery seemingly made it hard for hitters to pick up the ball with all of the arms and legs flying at them. He made 6'6" Robbie Holmes uncomfortable when he was able to retire the lefty in just 3 pitches going in order: changeup, curveball, fastball.

Battery Mate

Connor Stephens could not have had the success he had today without the help of his catcher, Kyle Lagrutta. On the defensive side, of the ball Lagrutta was everything a pitcher could ask for. He had a real quick release and strong throwing arm which allowed him to catch 1 of 2 attempted base stealers. Lagrutta was also adept in stealing strikes on the corners of the zone. The rising sophomore maintains a real soft glove and catches the ball deep. Doing this, along with positioning himself in the right place, allows umpires to see very little movement and call some pitches off the plate as strikes. It's cool to see that a player from St Thomas Aquinas College can have a big impact on a game that featured high Division 1 players.