

Tough Seventh Significant in Opening Loss for Mustangs

The KHS Varsity Baseball Team opened its season with nationally-ranked Klein Collins at Andy Wells Field on February 20. After a nip and tuck battle for six innings, Klein Collins drew away with a six-run seventh inning that left the Mustangs wondering what might have been in an 8-1 loss.

Pitchers Jack Finnegan of Kingwood and Cory Geisler of Klein Collins both held the opposing offenses at bay for the first two innings.

In the third inning, Finnegan retired the first two Collins batters. Collins' shortstop C.J. Hinojosa singled to center. Hinojosa then drew an errant pick-off throw from Finnegan and came around to score from first on the play when the Mustangs failed to properly recover the errant throw and prevent him from scoring. Finnegan retired Austin Dean on a fly ball to center to end the inning.

In the bottom of the third, Geisler hit designated-hitter Jacob Perez with a pitch and walked Frankie Silha. Both runners moved up on a daring double steal. Unfortunately, Geisler settled down and struck out the side to thwart the Mustangs' rally.

Finnegan mowed down the Tigers in order in the fourth inning. The Mustangs ended the inning with an unusual double play when the Tiger's Jake Jarvis was forced at second and Nash was called out because Jarvis interfered with the Mustangs' opportunity to turn a double play.

Kingwood scored in the fourth when Bryant Bennett reached first on a walk and stole second base. Miles Widner then hit a slow roller to the shortstop that he beat out. When the Tigers' first sacker was unable to handle the throw, Bennett sped around third to score the Mustangs' first run of the season. Geisler then retired Case Brittain and Jacob Perez to end the inning.

In the top of the fifth inning, Finnegan struck out Nash to open the inning. Finnegan then walked the Tigers' right-fielder Bickham and Geisler. During Geisler's at bat, Bickham had stolen a base and moved up to third. The Mustangs then picked off Geisler when he improvidently attempted to advance to second when Finnegan stepped off the pitcher's plate and faked towards third. The Mustangs executed the rundown of Geisler perfectly and prevented the runner at third from scoring. Finnegan then struck the Tigers' second baseman to close out the inning.

In the bottom half of the fifth inning, Geisler gave way on the mound to Otto. Cordell Castleberry single sharply with one out. After Castleberry moved up on a passed ball, Reed Robinson executed a perfect bunt single down the third base line that advanced Castleberry to third. Teddy Turner was retired on third-strike foul bunt, and Hunter Jones struck out to end the threat.

In the sixth inning, C.J. Hinojosa led off with a homerun over the left field wall. At that point, Castleberry came in to relieve Finnegan. After Dean reached base on a dropped pop fly in the infield, Castleberry struck out Jarvis, Stelling and Bickham using a knee-buckling curve ball to end the inning.

In their half of the sixth inning, the Mustangs tried to rally after one out when Widner was hit by a pitch, and courtesy runner Logan Kirbo stole second. Kirbo was then retired when Brittain grounded to

short and Hinojosa elected to get the lead runner at third. The inning ended on a very close play at first when Perez grounded to third and Jarvis' throw was high but saved by Dean.

In the top of the seventh, Geisler walked and the Tigers' second sacker, Austin Finnegan, laid down a bunt single. Castleberry jammed Hinojosa to get an infield fly. Dean walked to load the bases. Jarvis singled to left to drive in one run. Robert Blalock then replaced Castleberry on the mound. Finnegan scored on a passed ball. Stelling drove in Dean and Jarvis on a single to right. Nash walked, and Helms doubled to drive in Stelling and Nash. Bickham grounded out to Blalock and Finnegan grounded out to Silha to end the long half inning.

In the Mustangs' last at bat, Castleberry singled sharply off Jarvis after one out. Dennis Walters drew a walk. Teddy Turner then ripped a liner to right that was caught by Bickham. Bickham quickly relayed his throw to Hinojosa who then gunned down Castleberry at third to end the game.