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VALL-LLOBERA RAPS 3-RUN HOMER, LERIE 2B; McGEE 2B, 1B; CONNOLLY 2 RBI; KATZ 2 RBI

Blue Devils Go Long in Sixth, Survive Cougar Comeback, 8-7

By DAVID B. CORBIN

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Three insurance runs in the bottom of the sixth inning appeared to be enough security for the Westfield High School baseball team in its second showdown with the Cranford Cougars at Bob Brewster, Sr. Field in Westfield on April 26. But the 8-4 lead was barely enough as the Cougars, came storming back in the top of the seventh with three runs of their own and had a runner on first with one out until relief

pitcher Mike Carlone struck out the final two batters for an 8-7 victory.

Both starting pitchers did experience control difficulties. Cougar pitcher Kevin Donovan, who pitched into the sixth inning until he was relieved by Jack McAleavey, walked six batters — one intentionally —, hit a batter and allowed nine hits, while striking out four. Blue Devil starter Tyler Hoffman pitched four innings, walked four batters, hit one batter, struck out three and allowed four hits and four runs.

Dan Russo tossed the scoreless fifth and sixth innings, yielding just a double to Jake DeClerico and walking none, while striking out two.

"Their first threw a good game. Unfortunately when we were pitching the ball, we threw a couple of walks. You can't do that to a Westfield baseball team. They capitalized on the walks. We gave them too many chances and unfortunately it cost us the ball game," Cougar Head Coach Dennis McCaffery said.

The insurance gathering sixth inning began with the Blue Devils clinging to a 5-4 lead. Jake Lerie, one of "The Two Jakes", slashed a leadoff double to right

field. Chris Wagner reached safely on a throwing error then Jake Vall-Llobera stepped up and bashed a three-run home run over the right field fence. With no one out, McEleavey got Mike Knapp to hit into a second-to-first double play then struck out the next batter.

As to his double, Lerie described, "He was working me away the entire day. I was ahead in the count. He kept throwing me fastballs when he was behind. It was 2-0 and he just left one a little middle away. I dropped back on it and drove it to right field and the big man [Vall-Llobera] did the rest."

As to his home run, Vall-Llobera recalled, "He threw me the same pitch twice in a row. The first time it got a little inside on me and I fouled it off. I was a little out in front of it and I could hear the dugout my friends over on the sidelines

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