



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

chirping at me. Then he threw it again over the middle and I took it."

Just six days before, Lerie had the winning RBI single in the eighth inning to lift the Blue Devils past Colonia, 12-11.

"It felt pretty good, especially since they walked Matt [McIntyre] and I felt a little disrespected because someone gets intentionally walked to let you hit. It was a big spot and I was really glad that I could come up big," Lerie said.

Vall-Llobera, who also drilled a hard smash to third that allowed Blue Devils Mike Charlton and McIntyre to score in the fourth inning, has been on a hard-hitting streak recently, so it would be just a matter of time until one cleared the fence.

"I am not just hitting line drives gap-to-gap. I hit one in a scrimmage but there hasn't been one all season. It was the first time

I got good air under it and it felt good," Vall-Llobera said.

The Cougars took a 1-0 lead in the first on three walks to load the bases and an RBI sacrifice fly to right by Pat Connolly to bring home Jamie Shriner. Westfield quickly answered with two. Lerie, who walked and strutted to second on a balk, scored on Wagner's RBI double to leftfield. Vall-Llobera's

grounder resulted in a throwing error and Wagner scoring.

The Cougars tagged Hoffman for three runs on four hits with the help of some passed balls in the third to take a 4-2 lead. Mike Murphy (2-for-4) singled, Connolly walked and Mike McGee (2-for-4, 2 runs, 2 RBI) slapped an RBI single to right. Connor Katz (2-for-4, 2 RBI) hopped an RBI single past second then McGee's courtesy runner Jack Jarosz scored on DiClerico's single.

Back came the Blue Devils with a run in the third. Vall-Llobera walked, Matt Manning (2-for-3) singled and Knapp knocked an RBI single past first. After the Blue Devils took a 5-4 lead in the fourth, scoring was silent until the sixth when they added Vall-Llobera's big blast.

The Cougars were still alive and began the seventh with back-to-back singles by Mike

Meola and Tyler Szczech. Connolly added an RBI groundout and McGee followed with an RBI double to center. Katz lined an RBI single to center then Carlone struck out the next two batters.

"When you play Westfield, they are a solid ball club and it is always going to be a tough game," Coach McCaffery said.

Westfield received the first seed for the Union County Tournament and Cranford received the eighth seed, so the two rivals stand a very big chance to see each other again very early in the tournament.

"I know that we play a game on Saturday [April 28] against Summit. The county tournament is one game at a time and if you lose that game, you don't worry

about the next opponent. Here at Cranford we don't worry about any future opponents. We worry about the next day, which will be practice on Friday. After practice on Friday, we will get ready to take on Summit, which could be a difficult game, then we will see from there," Coach McCaffery said.

"It's a good team. Every time we play them it's a fun game. Every time it goes down to the wire," Vall-Llobera said.

"We saw them three times last year also. We know [Gordon] Graceffo is going to be good. He's one of the best pitchers if not the best pitcher in the county but we got somebody good over there too with Cory [Hiltz]. It will be a great one. I think it should be one that everyone comes to see," Lerie expressed.

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