

Vikes State Diamond Champs in 1976

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It was the bottom of the seventh inning and the Leipsic Vikings were only three outs away from their first state championship in any sport Saturday at the Ohio State University varsity baseball diamond.

Leipsic had scored their sixth and final run in the top of the inning and they were ahead of Cuyahoga Heights, 6-3, going into the last of the stanza.

Leipsic head coach Ted Miller was pacing from his usual third base position to the dugout and back, clapping his hands and shouting bits of information and advice to his infield players. Then the first pitch by Leipsic's Denny Maag was sent sailing for some 350 feet to center field by second baseman Andy Harsh. It was Harsh's fourth straight hit of the game. It looked as if it was gone for a homer, but it bounced on one hop and hit the fence for a double. Cuyahoga Heights's next batter, first baseman Jeff Piasecki, also took Maag's first pitch and sent a one hopper against the fence in right center field for a triple that scored Harsh to bring them within two runs of Leipsic with no outs.

By this time Coach Miller could be heard shouting to his infield "Forget those base runners, they mean nothing to us. Come on Denny (Maag), get those strikes across - all we need are three outs to wrap this up."

Maag, undoubtedly shook up by the two quick hits, slowed down his wind up and, after a conference with Coach Miller, got himself into trouble as he walked the third batter, right fielder Paul Foote.

Cuyahoga right fielder Carl Casavechia hit into an infield out, but Piasecki scored the fifth run to bring the warriors as close as 5-6 on the play. Warrior catcher Dave Schubert grounded into a force play for the second out and with the bleacher capacity crowd in pin dropping silence, Maag, delivered a 3-2 pitch to Warrior pitcher Kevin Domsalski who popped out to Leipsic's Ruben Gonzales to give the Vikings their first state title in any sport 6-5.

Fans jumped, hollered and scrambled on top of the Leipsic dugout to proclaim their victory, while on the infield the Leipsic players picked each other up and hugged and kissed like a class reunion.

Coach Miller and pitcher Maag were muffled and smothered by all of the teammates and it was five minutes or better before the pandemonium settled down.

Coach Miller later commented still in a daze, "Isn't it crazy? Here I am 27 years old and crying like a baby!" He wasn't the only one having happy victory tears. All the players let out their inner feelings, and winning pitcher Maag was seen among comforting players who were telling him "Denny, it's all over, you did it. How does it feel to be the best Class A pitcher in the state of Ohio?"

Phrases of similar consolation were exchanged among the five or six hundred fans, and the trophy presentations followed with Coach Miller addressing all people present. Miller exhausted and shaking from the tense last moments of the game, said over the loud speaker, "All of you fans have helped us all year, and I just want to say we have a great bunch on this baseball team. You helped to make us No. 1. Thank you."

Leipsic jumped on Cuyahoga starting pitcher Kevin Domsalski for three runs on two hits and an error in the first inning, and they scored single runs in each of the fifth, sixth and seventh innings.

Domsalski struck out Leipsic's lead off batter, Tracy Place, in the first inning. Ruben Gonzales was safe on an error, followed by a walk to Denny Maag. A single by Duane Niese loaded the bases for a walk to Roger Meyer that sent the first run home. Meyer's brother, Bruce, was

safe on a shortstop error that allowed the other two runs to score for a 3-0 lead before seventh and eighth batters struck out and grounded out to end the inning.

Leipsic's fourth run, in the fifth inning, was by Maag who walked, stole the next two bases, and scored on a sacrifice fly to Duane Niese.

In the sixth, when Leipsic saw seven batters step up to home plate, Ron Christman was hit by a pitch, took second on a double steal, and came home on a wild pitch. Center fielder Roger Meyer scored what proved to be the winning run in the top of the seventh for Leipsic. He singled and stole second, eventually scoring on an error. Six Vikings were at bat in that inning.

Cuyahoga tagged Maag for a total of 13 hits, getting a piece of the ball in each inning, but the rest of the Leipsic team did their work in keeping the Warriors to five runs in the game.

Cuyahoga rallied for three runs in the third inning. Gregg Vanek reached first on an error by Gonzales. Chris Young doubled as he hit the fence in left field to put runners at second and third. A two-run double by Andy Harsh put Cuyahoga on the scoreboard, but he was tagged out at third when he tried to get all he could out of the hit. After a strike out by Jeff Piasecki, relief pitcher Paul Foote singled and made second on a balk by Maag. Carl Casavechia singled, but a ground out by Schubert put the Warriors down before they could threaten any more.

Cuyahoga had two hits in the fifth and left a runner on as they went down in that inning, and they left two runners on in a two-hit sixth inning before collecting their fourth and fifth runs in the bottom of the seventh.

Maag went the distance, striking out 11 and walking only two while giving up 13 hits. The victory gave Maag his tenth win in as many games this year. Domsalski's record fell to 6-3 with the loss. He sent 14 Leipsic batters back to the dugout with strike outs, and gave up three hits in the six innings he was on the mound.

Cuyahoga relief pitcher, Foote, took over for the final inning. He gave up the final run on one, hit, struck out two and walked one.

Getting hits for Leipsic were Niese, 1-3, with run-scoring single in the first; Bruce Meyer, 1-4, with a single in the seventh; Ron Christman, 1-3 with a single in the seventh; and right fielder Duane Tooman, 1-3 with a 370 foot base hit in the bottom of the second. Tooman, the day before, hit a solo homer that gave Leipsic their eventual victory run as they edged Chillicothe Flaget, 3-2, in the semi final game. He also hit a 400 footer in foul territory in the same game.

Andy Harsh led the Cuyahoga batting with two doubles and two singles in four trips to the plate. Vanek Piasecki and Schubert were 2-4 for the Warriors. Piasecki had a double in the fifth and a run scoring triple in the seventh.

Aiding the Vikings cause were nine stolen bases, two each by Roger Meyer, Denny Maag, and Ron Christman and one each for Gonzales, Tooman and Bruce Meyer.

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Cuyahoga Heights	000	000	2	5	13	3

Denny Maag and Bruce Meyer; Kevin Domsalski, Paul Foote (7) and Dave Schubert.