

Marquette's Solid Six-Inning Effort Overwhelmed by Gillespie's Late Surge

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – Tim Fahnestock thought his Marquette Explorers played a really good baseball game; for six innings at least.

The Gillespie Miners were in town at Lloyd Hopkins Field Monday afternoon and had a narrow 1-0 lead after six innings of play. They blew the game wide open in the seventh and went on to win 9-0.

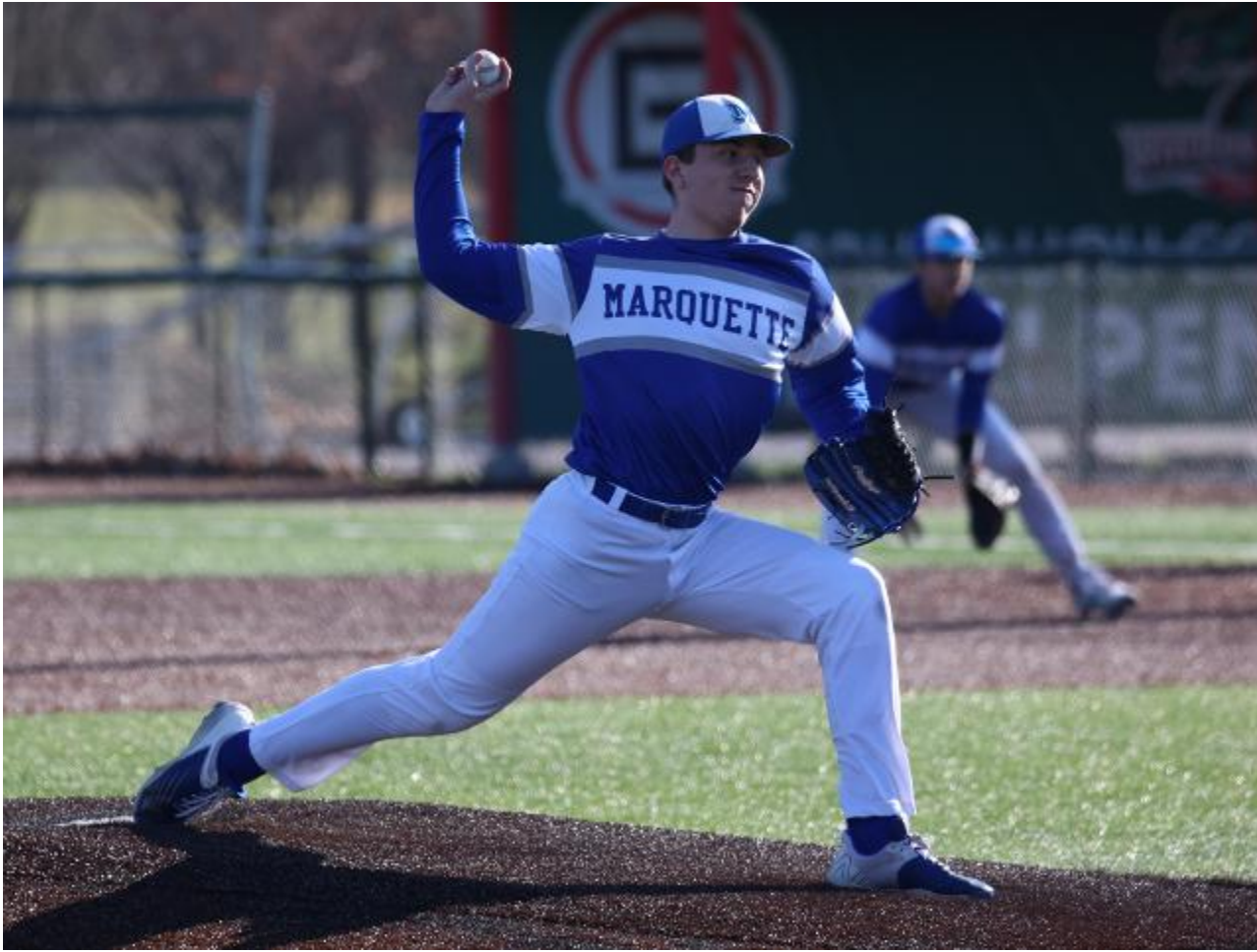
After four scoreless innings, Gillespie broke the tie in the top of the fifth. Jesse Berry hit a lead-off single and then Dawson Lancaster was walked. With men on first and second with only one out, Fahnestock came out to talk to his starting pitcher Andrew Zacha.

The decision was made to leave him in and try and get out of the jam.

Unfortunately for the Explorers, Tristen Wargo rocketed a double to score Berry and move Lancaster to third. It was enough to take the 1-0 lead.

Zacha got the next two batters and finished his five-inning performance with six strikeouts.

“First of all, Drew pitched his tail off, he did a great job,” coach Fahnestock said. “We thought he could go deep for us. He’s been working. He came in and did everything we asked him to.”



Jack Pruitt took over on the mound, hoping to close out the final two innings. He went three-up, three-down in the sixth to keep his team in it.

The Explorers had their best chance to score in the bottom half of that frame after Will Fahnestock got things going with a leadoff single.

He got bumped over to second after Mytai Taylor’s sacrifice bunt. Mikey Wilson struck out and then Fahnestock was swapped out with a pinch runner, Chris Henkins.

After that series of events, Wargo came in to pitch for Gillespie. He gave up a quality hit up the middle to Tyler Roth. Pushing his luck, coach Fahnestock waved Henkins through and sent him home, but Gillespie had a great relay from the shortstop to tag him out at home and get out of the inning,

Pruitt returned out on the mound for the seventh and immediately found himself in a pickle.

Berry and Jaydon Baker hit back-to-back singles and were replaced by pinch runners, Owen Pau for Berry and Owen Schweppe for Baker.

Lancaster laid down a sacrifice bunt to move them a base ahead before Wargo got hit by a pitch to load the bases with one out. Brody Shaw ran for the pitcher.

With three pinch runners on, Luke Schuckenbrock hit a two-RBI single scoring Pau and Schwepee, making it a 3-0 ballgame.

Jack Kaylor singled to load the bases again before Bryce Hohnsbehn sent everyone station to station, scoring Shaw to make it 4-0.

In came Cohen Green to replace Pruitt and try to limit the damage. But the damage was not limited.

Instead, Bryce Buhs hit a grand slam out to center to make it 8-0. Right after that, Berry sent a ball sailing over the wall in left field to make it 9-0.



“It’s kind of a bummer because it was a really good baseball game up until that point,” Fahnestock said.

Long-time Gillespie head coach Jeremy Smith didn't mind having to wait around for his teams' bats to come alive.

"A few more gray hairs for me, but other than that, it's all good," he joked.

"We were late the first couple of innings, and I think it was just nerves and not seeing much live pitching these first couple of weeks of practice," Smith added.

This was Gillespie's second season-opening win against Marquette. Last season, the Miners won 10-4.

That was the first of a 32-game win streak, one that ended in the IHSA Class 2A Pleasant Plains Sectional final after a 5-0 loss to Quincy Notre Dame. QND later took third in the state tournament.

Smith was pleased with this year's opener, especially what he got from his pitchers.

"We talked about trying to minimize the number of pitches our guys throw these first couple of weeks. So, we're going to be mixing and matching, getting some guys some looks, and it worked out for us tonight," he said.

Daniel Wolber started on the bump for the Miners and went 4 1/3 innings. He struck out the side in the first inning and ended up with five Ks.

Schuckenbrock took over and finished the fourth inning with a couple of strikeouts. He struck out two more in the fifth and another in the sixth before being replaced by Wargo.

Wargo pitched a one, two, three inning in the seventh, leaving Alton with a 1-0 record.

Fahnestock still felt alright after the game.

"These guys fought," he said about his team. "I thought we played well for six innings against . That's a good team."

This was the first of a five-game workweek for Marquette.

The Explorers take on Alton in the annual Jack Warren Memorial Game on Wednesday, March 13 before heading to Waterloo to take on the defending IHSA Class 1A state champions Gibault Catholic on Friday, then wrapping things up at home on Saturday against Hillsboro.

Marquette always loves a good challenge though.

“A lot of people go out and play fluff,” Fahnestock said.

“We got Alton on Wednesday, that’s going to be a tough game, and then we’ve got Gibault on Friday. So, we open tough and that’s good. Gives you a good measuring stick.”