

# Canova Gangs Up On Crofton

Donahue, Gassman Hold Bluejays To Four Hits In 4-2 Win

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SIOUX FALLS — In what could have easily been a title game matchup, the Crofton Bluejays were sent packing earlier than most assumed.

Canova, a perennial Class B contender, defeated Crofton 4-2 in Wednesday night's second round matchup at the S.D. State Class B Amateur Baseball Tournament at Sioux Falls Stadium.

Crofton manager Carl Schieffer put it simply later, when asked about facing a team of Canova's caliber so early in the tournament.

"That may have been the state championship game right there," he said. "Canova's a great team and they showed it."

The Bluejays (20-3), who were looking for a fourth straight title game appearance, were limited to four hits, only one in the first five innings.

On the other side, Canova (22-8) scored two of its runs on balls that went past the Crofton right fielder — one on a double over his head and the other a double that went past a dive.

Those two plays eventually loomed large by the time the dust had settled.

"Every inning, they pressured us on defense," Crofton left fielder Aaron Losing said. "They got a lot of guys on, but Rand did a nice job stranding most of them."

"There were just two balls that, if we get a step in either direction, it's a whole different game."

It wasn't, due in large part to Canova pitcher Jared Donahue.

The left-handed throwing state amateur legend who was coming off shoulder surgery, has had a knack for big performances on the state's biggest stage.

Among his accolades: He earned MVP honors in leading Canova to the 2009 title and two years later, struck out 18 batters in a win for Winner-Colome.

Against Crofton, he allowed three hits in eight innings, with four walks and seven strikeouts.

"He did pretty good for not pitching much this season," Losing said. "He's got a lot of experience in these big games. He was hittable, but he made some good pitches at the right time."

Crofton's first run came on an RBI single by Aaron Losing in the first inning, scoring the first of two walks drawn by the Bluejays.

Canova was held scoreless until the fourth, when



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Crofton's Alex Mueller, left, throws to first base after forcing out Canova's Tucker Gassman in their Wednesday night second round game at the S.D. State Class B Amateur Baseball Tournament at Sioux Falls Stadium. Canova ended Crofton's season with a 4-2 decision.

## Softer Schedule Should Help Cornhuskers In Big Ten

BY ERIC OLSON  
AP Sports Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's initiation to the Big Ten is over and the Cornhuskers, with an assist from the schedule, may be set up to make hay.

Coach Bo Pelini starts his sixth season in Lincoln with one of the nation's most dynamic offenses and a young defense that will benefit from playing its first five games at home.

After having to cope with rigorous conference schedules their first two years in the Big Ten, the Huskers are set up for success. UCLA is the only real non-conference test. Big Ten favorite Ohio State and three-time defending champion Wisconsin aren't on the regular-season schedule, replaced by Illinois and Purdue.

It probably will be November before anyone knows how good the Huskers are, after they play Northwestern at home and Michigan and Penn State on the road.

"It would be really great to go out as a champion," senior offensive lineman Jeremiah Sirles said. "That's the expectation we have, to win the Big Ten championship. That's what we came out with last year and that's what we're coming out with this year. Win them all the way. That's the way we've set out, to be perfect."

The Huskers open Aug. 31 at home against Wyoming.

Five things to watch as the Huskers bid for their first conference championship since 1999:

**1. MARTINEZ MAGIC:** Taylor Martinez already has started a quarterback school-record 39 games and has helped lead Nebraska to 29 wins. All that's missing is a championship. Martinez needs 2,409 yards passing and 142 yards rushing to join Colin Kaepernick as the only other player in FBS history to reach career marks of 9,000/3,000. Martinez's speed and elusiveness are his calling cards, but he's an improving passer. His accuracy went from 56 percent to 62 percent.

**2. HANG ON TO THAT BALL:** Considering Nebraska was 108th nationally in turnover margin last year, it was nothing short of amazing the Huskers had the eighth most-productive offense. The Huskers committed 35 turnovers — only Idaho had more — and just two players in the nation had more than Martinez's 20. Over the past three seasons, Nebraska is 18-1 in games in which it is plus-turnovers and 11-11 when it is even or minus-turnovers. "It's an astounding stat," running back Ameer Abdullah said. "You hear that and see how

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## Diamonds Drop Irene

BY NICK ROBINSON  
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*EDITOR'S NOTE: This game finished after presstime on Tuesday evening. The story first appeared online at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).*

SIOUX FALLS — The Larchwood Diamonds took advantage of early mistakes by Irene and never looked back, defeating the Cardinals 11-0 in seven innings on Tuesday at Sioux Falls Stadium to advance to the quarterfinals of the South Dakota State Class B Amateur Baseball Tournament.

"We came out real sharp tonight," Larchwood manager Chris Underberg said. "We were ready to go and fired up from the get-go."

To start the contest off, Larchwood starting pitcher Kyle Jensen sent a message to the Irene Cardinals with three straight strike-outs.

"During the beginning of the game I wouldn't say all my stuff was there, but I was feeling it," Jensen said. "My off-speed was there all night. Towards the end of the night I was in the zone, though."

In the second inning, Larchwood capitalized on a

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## Kent State Kicks Off 'Comic Strip' Campaign

BY TOM WITHERS  
AP Sports Writer

KENT, Ohio (AP) — Dri Archer has cartoonish speed. The Road Runner might not be able to outrun Kent State's do-it-all running back.

So perhaps it's fitting that the school has kicked off a unique Heisman Trophy campaign to promote the lightning-fast Archer that includes a comic strip depicting him as a college football superhero.

"The Archer" debuted Wednesday and will run on a weekly basis throughout the Golden Flashes' season. It's part of Kent State's push to bring attention to the 5-foot-8, 175-pound Archer who is only small in stature. Everything about his game is huge.

Last season, the senior rushed for 1,429 yards, scored 16 rushing touchdowns and averaged an eye-popping 9 yards every time he carried the ball. Beyond that, he had 39 receptions, 4 TD catches, averaged 34.7 yards on kickoff returns and took three back all the way for scores.

He was among the nation's leaders in all-purpose yards at 184 per game, and few of his TD scampers were of the did-he-really-just-do-that variety.

Archer's comic strip is being drawn by Chuck Ayers, a Kent State alum known for illustrating the "Funky Winkerbean" and "Crankshaft" cartoons. Ayers was approached by the school's athletic department to assist in promoting Archer and he was

happy to help a fellow Golden Flash.

"It definitely was the Kent State connection that made me want to be a part of this project," Ayers told The Associated Press. "Cartooning is what I do so being asked to draw these promotional strips felt like a perfect fit."

The comic strip made its debut on a Twitter account (@Dri4Heisman) and will be printed in some area newspapers. Along with the strip, the school has constructed a "Dri4Heisman" website and Facebook page.

Each week, Ayers will be sent a storyboard by members of Kent State's communications staff who will focus on their "superhero" taking down the mascot of the upcoming opponent.

Ayers admitted he's not a "rabid sports fan" but he has passionately followed Kent State's football program since graduating in 1971. There were some lean years in the decades in between for the Golden Flashes, who won 11 games last season and made their first bowl game in 40 years.

Ayers went to a couple home games last season, when he marveled at Archer's on-field exploits.

"I'm hoping I'll get a chance to meet him sometime," Ayers said. "The real attention being attracted to KSU is coming from Dri. He's an amazing player and great fun to watch. The strips are just a little bit of a different way of telling his story. Combining his talents with the efforts of an old alumnus is pretty cool."

## Torre Gives Committee Instant Replay Proposal

Deal To Expand Review On Table

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. (AP) — Major League Baseball Executive Vice President Joe Torre has given his instant replay proposal to the executive committee to consider as baseball's brass huddled for two days of meetings.

Commissioner Bud Selig was to address the media on Thursday morning to discuss what is on the table.

"I thought it was very thoughtful and well-done," Selig said Wednesday evening. "We'll discuss it in more detail tomorrow. We haven't even discussed it."

MLB is looking at a vast expansion of video review for the 2014 season and is examining whether all calls other than balls and strikes should be subject to instant replay.

Torre said at the All-Star Game in New York last month that he was fairly confi-

dent a new system would be in place for next season.

Video review has been in place for umpires on home runs since August 2008.

"You know me, I'm always encouraged," Torre said Wednesday.

Selig initially wanted to add trap plays and fair-or-foul calls down the lines for 2013, then decided to proceed cautiously, and the change was put off while more radical options were studied.

Torre has said all options were being considered, including an NFL-type system that would give managers the ability to challenge calls.

The replay subcommittee also includes former St. Louis Cardinals manager Tony La Russa and Atlanta Braves President John Schuerholz.

Umpires have come under increased scrutiny following several missed calls this season.

After initially failing to

award Oakland's Adam Rosales a tying home run in the ninth inning at Cleveland on May 8, Angel Hernandez's umpiring crew reviewed video and still didn't change it to a homer even though replays clearly showed the ball went over the fence.

The next day umpire Fieldin Culbreth's crew allowed Houston manager Bo Porter to improperly switch relievers in the middle of an inning, leading to a two-game suspension for the crew chief.

An admitted blown call cost the Red Sox the potential tying run in a loss last month at Fenway Park.

Boston manager John Farrell told reporters afterward that with better technology baseball could get more "out or safe" calls correct.

Trailing by a run in the eighth inning of a 2-1 loss to Tampa Bay, pinch-runner Daniel Nava was called out by home plate umpire Jerry

Meals attempting to score on a fly ball. After watching the replay, Meals later admitted to a pool reporter that he was "wrong on my decision."

Replays of the game at Fenway showed that Nava slid into the top portion of the plate before Rays catcher Jose Molina came across to make the tag. Farrell and Nava argued, and Farrell was ejected.

Shortly after the game ended, Meals said: "What I saw was Molina blocked the plate and Nava's foot lifted. But in the replays, you could clearly see Nava's foot got under for a split second and then lifted, so I was wrong on my decision. From the angle I had, I did not see his foot get under Molina's shin guard."

Farrell said he just wants to see the calls made correctly and understands that the lengthening of games is something that MLB wants to avoid.



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Tabor shortstop Jason Humpal fields the ball after it ricochets off second base in Wednesday night's second round game with the Parkston Mudcats at the State Class B Amateur Baseball Tournament at Sioux Falls Stadium. The game was not complete at presstime. The story is available online at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

## Veteran Selected As NASCAR Race's Honorary Starter

BROOKLYN, Mich. (AP) — A U.S. Army veteran and Purple Heart recipient from Ohio has been selected as the honorary starter for the Pure Michigan 400 NASCAR race after his hope of honoring his 6-year-old son on race day resonated with voters in an online contest, organizers said Wednesday.

David Balestrino Jr. of Youngstown won the contest on the Pure Michigan Facebook page, getting hundreds of votes for his entry on why he wanted to

honor Brady by waving the green flag Sunday at Michigan International Speedway. Pure Michigan is the state's tourism campaign.

"While serving in Iraq I missed the entire first year of Brady's life," Balestrino said in a statement. "That was the most difficult thing I ever had to go through." With the honor, he said, he hopes he "can make everyone who has served or is still serving proud."

Balestrino served as a combat engineer from 2003-2009 and received a Pur-

ple Heart during service in Iraq. For the contest, people submitted entries of 50 words or less explaining why they should be selected as honorary starter. His entry got more than 800 votes.

As honorary starter, Balestrino will get a pace car ride from NASCAR's official pace car driver and attend the NASCAR Sprint Cup drivers' meeting. TV personality and Traverse City native Carter Oosterhouse is Pure Michigan 400 grand marshal of the event.