

Saint Viator overcomes sixth-inning collapse, wins Class 3A State title

By Michael O'Brien, Chicago Sun-Times (June 10, 2017)

It was a game that St. Viator probably should have lost. The Lions completely collapsed in the sixth inning allowing Marian to score seven runs and tie the score at eight.

St. Viator gave up four hits, four walks, two errors and two wild pitches.

Senior Brett DeSelm did his best to channel a Jason Heyward-type moment in the dugout after the damage was done.

“We came back into the dugout and I told everybody that we are the best hitting team in the state, lets go show them,” DeSelm said.

The Lions (25-15) delivered. Junior Michael Wittich ripped a two-run double to left center and St. Viator beat the Spartans 10-8 to win the Class 3A state title on Saturday at Slammers Stadium.

“I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t doubting we’d win in the sixth,” St. Viator senior Cole Kmet said. “After they tied it I wondered if we could do this. But we were able to come back. Michael came up clutch, he’s been big for us all postseason. It shows how much perseverance we have as a team. From the weight room up until now it all prepared us for that moment.”

DeSelm pitched the final inning and a third to earn the win. He was 3-for-4 with four RBI.

“When we huddled up after they tied it we all agreed that it is time,” DeSelm said. “It is the state championship. There is no reason not to give it your all right now. We came back and hit, that is all you can do.”

Wittich was 2-for-4 with three RBI and Hunter Johnson and Casey Kmet each had two hits.

“When you win a state championship it is pretty sweet,” Cole Kmet said. “It’s amazing, I can’t believe we got this done and made history for our school.”

Cole Kmet was 1-for-2 with an RBI and admitted it was frustrating watching his team falter in the sixth and not being able to come in and pitch due to the IHSA's new pitch count rules.

"I did throw a lot [yesterday], my arm is shot," Cole Kmet said. "But if it was last year I would have tried."

Marian Catholic (24-16) beat the Lions twice during the regular season. It's the first baseball state title for St. Viator, which finished second in 1965 and fourth last season.

"It was nice to come down here and get fourth last year," DeSelm said. "But at the end of the day we knew we wanted to come back for more, we wanted to get the trophy, the real trophy."

