

Chiefs slug past Benton 9-6

NATCHITOCHES, La. - The Natchitoches Central Chiefs had 15 hits as they knocked off the Benton Tigers, 9-6, Thursday night for 'Senior Night' at NCHS in district 1-5A baseball action.

The Chiefs (24-6, 11-3 in 1-5A) honored 12 seniors prior to the game including Brock Laird, Ross Lindsey, Laden Rawls, Adam Guillet, Harper Marcotte, Titus Williams, Dillon Braxton, Kaiden Vallery, Yancy Spillman Jr., Kyron Payne, Andrew Odom and Rees Williams.

The Tigers (29-3, 14-1 in 1-5A) took the lead immediately in their half of the first as Cole Snell doubled to center field to score a run. Snell would later score in the inning on a squeeze bunt play by Kade Bryant to make it 2-0.

The lead didn't last long as NCHS quickly responded in their half of the first. With one out, Odom smacked a double to right field to score Laird and Vallery to tie the game at 2-2. The Chiefs loaded the bases later in the inning. Sophomore Kaden Kuykendoll worked a seven-pitch at bat before reaching on an error by the pitcher to score a run as NCHS took the lead 3-2.

The Chiefs got two more runs in the second as Odom came through again with an RBI infield single to third base with two outs to score Braxton. Williams then singled home Odom to push it to 5-2.

Benton tied the game at 5-5 with single runs in the third, fourth and fifth innings. But the Chiefs had an answer in their half of the fifth.

They loaded the bases with one out for Kuykendoll who this time grounded a single to left to give NCHS the lead 6-5. Moments later, Spillman scored on a pass ball followed by an RBI single by Braxton scoring Jace Hale as the Chiefs led 8-5.

The Tigers scored an unearned run in the sixth on a hit-by-pitch and error by NCHS as Benton trimmed the Chiefs' lead to 8-6.

Benton put the tying run in scoring position with runners at second and third and two outs in the sixth inning. Senior pitcher Harper Marcotte had to bow his neck and make a pitch. The Chiefs' left-hander, on his 108th pitch of the game, got the hitter to strike out on a 3-2 pitch to preserve the 8-6 lead for NCHS to end the threat.

NCHS added an insurance run in the sixth as Laird led the inning off with a double and moved to third after a flyout. Williams drove in Laird on a sacrifice fly to center pushing it to 9-6.

In the seventh, Lindsey took over on the mound for the Chiefs and struck out the side to clinch the win for NCHS.

Marcotte's braveheart effort resulted in six innings pitched, four hits, six runs, three earned run, two walks and four strikeouts. He threw 64 of his 108 pitches for strikes. Braxton, Williams and Laird led the Chiefs' 15-hit attack with three each while Odom had two.

The nine runs were the most given up this season by Benton with their previous high being six against Parkway March 13.

With the win, NCHS (ranked 13th in the Division I non-select power ratings) has won 12 of their last 13 games while the Tigers (ranked 4th in DI-non-select) are 18-2 in their last 20.

Next up, the Chiefs will play Friday at 3:30 p.m. at Parkway