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## Ferro steps up for Kings

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RACINE - Meet Joe Ferro, the Kenosha Kings jack-of-all-trades.

Ferro, the team's talented shortstop and center fielder, pitched eight dominating innings in the biggest game of the season in leading the Kings to a 5-1 victory over Racine Kiwanis in the opener of the best-of-three Frank Langsdorf Baseball League of Southeastern Wisconsin championship series Tuesday at Horlick Field.

Kenosha, the defending Langsdorf League champion, can clinch its second straight title with a win over Racine 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Simmons Field. A potential third game is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Simmons Field.

"This one was big," said Ferro, who served as the starting shortstop for Carthage last season as a 27-year-old sophomore. "You always want to get the first one out of the way and take away some of the pressure."

Ferro was brilliant on the mound. The crafty right-hander took a one-hitter into the eight inning - a bloop RBI-single in the third inning - and kept the Racine hitters off-balance the entire night. Ferro (3-1) went eight innings and allowed three hits and one run (unearned) with three walks and six strikeouts.

While he might not necessarily be the Kings' most talented starting pitcher, Ferro has earned the confidence of Kings' manager Tim Pulizzano.

"He shows up to every game and plays his heart out," Pulizzano said. "I had other guys that could've started, but but he earned it. He always keeps us in the game. If you pitch to contact in this league and keep the ball down, there aren't many guys here that are going to hurt you. That's what he does."

Ferro served seven years in the United States Navy after high school - including 3½ years overseas - before playing one year at the College of Lake County and last season at Carthage.

The top-seeded Kings took a 2-0 lead with a pair of unearned runs in the third inning on two dropped fly balls. Racine scored its lone run in the third inning when Anthony Porcaro drew a two-out walk, advanced to second on a failed pick-off play and scored on a blooper to right field by UW-Parkside shortstop Michael Pena.

Kenosha (30-25) broke it open in the seventh inning with a two-out, three-run rally highlighted by a three-run home run from Paul Pulera. The speedy lead-off hitter turned on a pitch and drove it over the 331-foot mark down the left-field line in giving the Kings a commanding 5-1 lead. The home run traveled an estimated 350 feet.

"What a shocker by Pulera," Pulizzano said. "That might be the first time I've seen him hit a ball over an outfielder's head. That was a big one. That put us in a position where we could make some changes and get better defensively in the field."

Pulera went 1-for-4 with two RBI and one run scored, while Mark Cibrario and Billy Johnson each went 2-for-4.

Racine Kiwanis, which advanced to the championship series as the No. 4 seed, mustered only three singles. Kings' reliever Mike O'Leary replaced Ferro in the ninth and pitched a perfect inning.

"I really have to give all the credit to my catcher Billy Johnson," Ferro said. "I'm just throwing to the glove. He's a great catcher behind the dish and my defense played really well behind me too."

Ferro threw 109 pitches. The former Romeoville (Ill.) standout said he might convince Carthage coach Augie Schmidt to let him pitch a few innings next season.

"I've never stepped foot on the mound at Carthage," Ferro said. "But that might be a little different this year."

The Kings' Randy Johnson (4-5) will start Thursday's game and will have his brother Billy Johnson behind the plate.

"We're ready to go," Pulizzano said. "I have one of my aces on the mound. (Randy Johnson) should attack these guys pretty well. Him and Billy make a nice combination."



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