

Record

@ DSM East W 15-1	vs Southeast Polk W 10-9
@ DSM East W 19-1	vs Southeast Polk W 11-1
@ Fort Dodge W 5-1	@ Ankeny Centennial W 9-6
@ Fort Dodge W 12-1	@ Ankeny Centennial W 6-1
vs DSM North W 21-0	@ DSM Lincoln W 16-1
vs DSM North W 15-0	@ DSM Lincoln W 10-0
vs Ankeny Centennial W 4-3	vs Sioux City North (Substate
vs Ankeny Centennial W 8-1	Semi-Final) W 10-0
@ Waukee L 3-12	vs Sioux City East (Substate Final)
@ Waukee W 18-0	W 6-5 (8 Innings)
vs Urbandale L 11-13	vs Cedar Falls (State Quarterfinal)
vs Urbandale W 16-1	W 11-7
@ Ankeny L 4-5	vs Urbandale (State Semi-Final)
@ Ankeny W 5-0	W 3-1
vs Valley W 2-1	vs Ankeny (State Championship)
vs Valley W 10-0	W 11-8

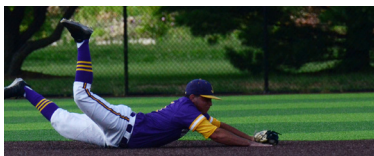
Graduate Jacob "Doc" Draeger ponders his next pitch during the state semi-final game against the Urbandale Jayhawks. He was a driving factor in the 3-1 victory. One of the most consistent pitchers all year, the DMACC commit led the team in strikeouts (39) ERA (0.51) and was perfect in the win column with a 5-0 record. He earned multiple honors including First Team All State, First Team All District and Second Team CIML All Conference.

Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



Laying out for the ball is graduate Parker Shupe in a 8-1 victory over Ankeny Centennial. When stealing, the Kirkwood commit converted a team-high 18 stolen bases out of 19 attempts (95%). Shupe placed third on the team in batting average (.416) and runs scored (30) and second for 32 hits and 21 singles. He earned First Team CIML All Conference, First Team All District, and First Team All State.

Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



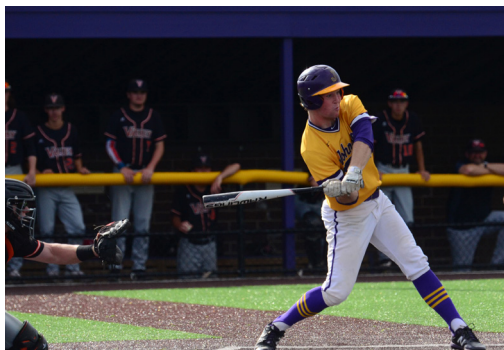
Junior Gabe Swansen awaits the ball coming from home plate as Valley's Oliver Parizek slides into second base. Swansen, the 4A preseason's top-ranked second baseman finished where he was projected earning First Team All State honors, First Team CIML All Conference, First Team All District and a spot on the 2020 Elite Team. He had an incredible Junior campaign as he led the state (with teammate Ben Wilmes) in runs scored (44), Class 4A in RBIs (34) and finished fourth in Class 4A for total bases (60.0). Teamwise, he led in hits (33) home runs (4) batting average (.434) and slugging percentage (0.789). The junior is slated to play for the red and black of Nebraska.

Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



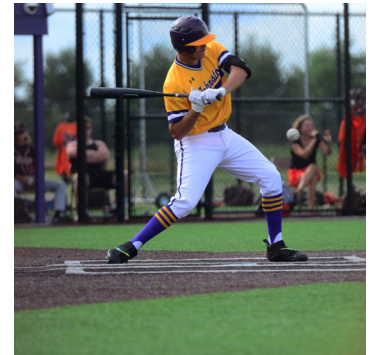
Stuck in the middle of a rundown is Jake Thilges. The graduate had a phenomenal year earning First Team CIML All Conference, Second Team All District, Second Team All State and a spot on the 2020 Elite Team. He recorded 29 hits, 28 RBIs and a 0.408 batting average. Also incredible on the base path, he stole 12 bags. He is committed to play baseball at DMACC.

Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



As the Valley bench awaits the pitch, one of Johnston's most reliable hitters (.391), graduate Caden Steck begins his swing in a 2-1 victory in which he later walked off. After his Junior year Steck won the job out in left field and did not disappoint. He recorded 27 hits along with two home runs (both being grand slams) and finished second in slugging percentage (0.652) and on base percentage (.580). He earned Second Team CIML All Conference, Second Team All District, and Second Team All State honors.

Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



Junior Jacob Wolver nears contact with the ball in a regular season victory over the Valley Tigers. Wolver was boosted into a big role, filling in for graduate Peyton Williams at first base. The Junior recorded 23 hits, 26 RBIs and 3 home runs. He dominated on the mound going 4-0 and only giving up two runs in six appearances striking out 24 guys and posting a 0.55 ERA. He earned Second Team CIML All Conference, Second Team All District and Third Team All State honors. Wolver will continue his baseball career at Grand View University.

Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti

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Job # 3292 School Johnston High School

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dragons beat more than COVID-19 warriors beat more

Team wins another state title

“When you guys play together, I truly believe not a single team can beat you.” After the Dragon’s 3-1 victory over the Urbandale Jayhawks in the state semi-final, coach Logan Little said it perfectly.

Johnston started the year ranked sixth, and many said they had no shot. “The chip on our shoulder we all had, you know throughout the hallways we heard people saying, oh, we lost Peyton [Williams], Cade [Moss], [Andrew] Nord, all those guys, and you know we didn’t just hear that from other schools, it was from our own,” graduate Caden Steck said.

The sting of last year’s crushing defeat to rival Urbandale in the title game, after being top-ranked all season, still hurt.

“For years we had news stations come out to practice and write articles about us,” coach Michael Barta said. “I would say this year it was much different, I think some definitely took it personally, and they should have.”

The COVID-19 pandemic closed the school after spring break and spring sports were cancelled. On June 1, Gov. Kim Reynolds gave the green light for summer sports to begin.

The team did not know if Barta would be alongside them. “I’d say the biggest thing for us, our biggest motivation was Barta and his daughter,” Steck said. Barta’s daughter, Bridget, was diagnosed with the rare, incurable disease, Sanfilippo also known as children’s Alzheimer’s. “For him to be there every day for hours and hours, risking his own family’s health just to coach us, we definitely took that to heart,” Steck said.

The season started on June 15 with an abbreviated schedule of 22 games instead of the regular 40+. They started off the season with sweeps of DSM East, Fort Dodge, DSM North and Ankeny Centennial, setting them up with an 8-0 record. They suffered their first loss vs Waukee 12-3 in a doubleheader, but bounced back in the second game 18-0.

Their next two series vs Urbandale and Ankeny did not go as they had hoped, as they went 2-2 through the four game stretch. However, they dismantled the Jayhawks 16-1 and beat Ankeny 5-0, after a masterful performance by graduate Jacob “Doc” Draeger who threw a shutout and 13 strikeouts.

Before the postseason, the Dragons finished on a nine-game win streak which included a comeback over S.E. Polk in which they trailed 9-2 in the bottom of the seventh. After batting through the line up, Steck came up with one out and down by one run. He hit it to the third baseman bringing in graduate Jack Hutchison and junior Conner Canny.

Johnston started the postseason with a second round victory over Sioux City North, then faced fourth-ranked Sioux City East. Trailing 2-1 in a jam, graduate Nick Crandell got them out of the inning without giving up a run. In the bottom of the third with bases loaded, graduate Parker Shupe launched a rocket to deep right field and cleared the bases giving Johnston a 5-2 advantage. Seven innings was not enough to decide this game as East tied the score at 6 a piece. With the bases loaded junior Jacob Wolver laid down a beautiful bunt, scoring Steck and sending the Dragons back to state for the fifth straight year, and the seventh appearance out of Barta’s nine year tender.

In the first round at state, Johnston started the tournament with an 11-7 victory over Cedar Falls, setting up a date with the Urbandale Jayhawks. Dominant pitching was the story of the semi-final game, nine strikeouts for Draeger and five for Wilmes. Between the two of them, they allowed one run and led the Dragons to another state title appearance.

The Dragons faced CIML rival Ankeny, who they had split the regular season doubleheader with. After the fourth, they were down four. “When we had that one bad inning in the championship game, and we saw the fire in Barta’s eyes, we just matched it,” Steck said.

They flipped a switch and went to work. Shupe bunted and advanced to second on an overthrow. With bases loaded, Wolver smacked a ball to left, sending Shupe home and closed the gap to three runs. Bases still loaded with two outs, sophomore Spencer Campadilli stepped up to home plate for the biggest at bat of his life. 2-1 count, he hit a line drive to left bringing in another two runs.

After giving up a run in the top of the sixth, Wilmes started off the bottom half of the inning with a single to left field. After a missile hit by junior Gabe Swansen, Johnston closed the gap to one run. Bases loaded for Wolver, he did not strand the opportunity as he got a ball to drop in right field tying the game at eight a piece. “Throughout the whole lineup we were a wolfpack, we weren’t gonna just roll over and we wouldn’t go down easy,” graduate Jake Thilges said. After two suicide bunts by Hutchison and junior Kaiden Dinh, the team drove in five runs and gained an 11-8 advantage going into the final inning. With two outs and a 2-0 count, Wolver threw the ball across home plate. Ankeny hit it to Wilmes at short. Wilmes scooped it up, shoveled it to Swansen at second to win the championship.

“The amount of adversity we have all been through is unmatched, from losing in the title game (last year), to everyone doubting us, so being down in that championship game it was nothing compared to what we had been through,” graduate Jackson Stewart said.



Breaking down the huddle one last time, players celebrate the state win and overcoming not only the competition, but the challenges that COVID-19 brought. Finishing with a 24-3 record Johnston capped off the 2020 season winning the third state title under coach Michael Barta and the first since 2017. Photo by: Savannah Dennis



Standout junior Ben Wilmes launches the ball to first basemen, and fellow junior Jacob Wolver in the state title game. Wilmes was named to First Team All State, sharing first place in the state for runs scored (44) with teammate Gabe Swansen. He was second on the team in hits (32) and first in singles (24) and on base percentage (.602). The ultimate utility player, he rotated through shortstop, catcher and pitcher. The University of Iowa commit was responsible for sending 55 players to the dugout from the shortstop position and retiring 25 people from the mound. Other honors included First Team CIML All Conference and First Team All District. Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti

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