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Legion Baseball: Cranston Unable to Capitalize Early, Falls to Maine in a Pitcher's Duel

The bats were quiet as Cranston couldn't come up with any run support for Pacific.

By [Mike Petrarca](#) [Email the author](#) August 15, 2011

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Junior Legion Regional Champions Westbrook, Maine Credit [Mike Petrarca](#)

Usually when a team squanders early scoring chances against a good pitcher they tend to pay for it in the end. And the story was no different in New Bedford, Mass., for the Junior Legion regional finals, which featured Cranston facing off against Westbrook from Maine.

Cranston came out poised to start the scoring early with a leadoff double from Nick Ferry, followed up by a single to right from Steve Bucci which sent Ferry to third. But Maine pitcher Mike Rioux stayed composed and got a groundout to the third baseman which put Bucci into scoring position but didn't allow a run to score. Rioux then got nasty and struck out Friday's hero, Cranston cleanup hitter Joe Nicolace. Tyler Donahay followed with a ground out to second to end the threat.

In the bottom half of the first, Cranston pitcher Taylor Pacific came out strong. He mixed his pitches well and retired the side in order with two strikeouts, getting his offense back on the field to have another chance at drawing first blood.

Cranston would get the first run of the game with an RBI groundout from Koye Idoui in the top of the second. But Maine would answer back in the bottom half of the inning. Keenan Lowe singled to start the inning, and scored on a sac fly from Cody Champagne to tie the game.

Both pitchers settled down in the third retiring both sides in order. Cranston pitcher Taylor Pacific did so in dazzling fashion, striking out the side in the third.

The bats came alive for Maine in the bottom half of the fourth. And once again it was Keenan Lowe in the middle of the action with another single and a stolen base. But the big hit came from catcher Kyle Heath, who scorched one to left to bring in two runs and give Maine its first lead of the game, one which they would not surrender. Heath then advanced to third on the failed pickoff attempt by Taylor Pacific. He then scored on a single from Derek Bouchard. Bouchard was stranded but the damage had been done. Maine had taken a commanding 4-1 lead.

Pacific retired the last six batters he faced on his way to a six-inning complete game in which he gave up four runs on six hits with seven strikeouts.

"I thought Taylor did a great job. He held a great team to four runs and we just didn't hit the ball today," Cranston coach Nick Ruggieri said after the game.

As Coach Ruggieri pointed out, the meat of the Cranston batting order, hitters three through five, were a combined 0 for 9 on the afternoon.

Cranston wasn't able to capitalize on their scoring chance in the first and Mike Rioux didn't afford them any more major scoring opportunities. He scattered two hits over the last three innings and Westbrook, Maine won the Junior Legion Regional Championship.

Maine coach Andy Culombe commented on his pitcher after the game. "He throws hard, he's got a good curveball, and you've got to give it to him he battles out there."

Culombe also commented on his star first baseman Keenan Lowe, who went 2 for 3 in the game with two runs scored and two stolen bases. "Keenan is a big part of our offense, our defense, and our pitching staff. He really steps up as a leader and the kids feed off of him."

The Cranston team was in high spirits after the game as they were proud of the hard work they put into getting all the way to the regional finals. "I'm proud of these kids. They take a lot of time out of their summer to come and play and they all gave maximum effort this season. They're a great group of kids," said Nick Ruggieri.

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