

Big fifth inning leads Curley to first A Conference baseball title since 2001

BEL AIR – A breakout fifth-inning and a strong six-inning pitching performance by senior Paul Nixon led Archbishop Curley to an 8 -3 victory over Gilman at Harford Community College May 21 that clinched the Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association A Conference title for the Friars.

A week of torrential rain disrupted the double-elimination tournament, in which top-seeded and top-ranked Curley did not lose.

The Friars jumped on top in the bottom of the first inning with a leadoff home run from junior Tyler Locklear. Fans set off confetti poppers, which blew onto the field. (As Curley players cleaned up the mess, Conventual Franciscan Father Matthew Foley Tweeted that it was keeping with the Franciscan example of caring for the planet).

Derrick Booker, the Friars' No. 9 hitter, tied it at 2-2 with a solo home run in the third inning. Curley went ahead to stay with two runs in the fourth, Jalen March plating the go-ahead run with a single.

Nixon, who allowed six hits over six innings, helped his own cause with a leadoff single in the Friars' four-run fifth. Gavin Evans belted a two-run triple; Nick Richardson plated a run with a double and Derrick Booker added an RBI single.

Richardson, better known as a soccer standout who is headed to the University of Maryland, came on in relief in the seventh inning, and ended a two-on threat with a strikeout.

“It’s amazing,” said Nixon, a four-year varsity player. “It’s amazing. It’s going to be my greatest memory (at Curley.)”

The championship was a long time coming for Curley coach Brooks Norris, a senior standout in 2001, when the Friars last won a baseball title.

“It’s an unbelievable feeling, finally getting it done,’ Norris said. “It took longer than we wanted...(they’re a) special group of kids.”

The Curley associate head coach is Tim Norris, father of Brooks, who led the Friars to a Maryland Scholastic Association A Conference crown in 1978, and went on to play in the Orioles’ farm system. Both father and son, among the generation named for Oriole third baseman Brooks Robinson, played for the late Al Frank.

From varsity to frosh-soph, the Curley coaching staff includes six other alumni.

“They’re a good ball club,” said Gilman coach Larry Sheets, himself once a Baltimore Oriole. “They were better than us. They beat us four times this year. Tip your hat to them.”

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