

Sweet redemption for Cedarcrest's Cook

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YAKIMA, Wash. — Given that his heat reaches into the 90s and considering that Washington State University has him signed up for a college career, Travis Cook's visit to Yakima this weekend for the All-State Baseball Series is certainly a just reward.

But when the pitcher from Cedarcrest High was in town two weeks ago, he was desperately seeking a reward of a far different magnitude. So much so that he wouldn't consider the possibility of not attaining it.



Cedarcrest High School pitcher Travis Cook hits during a practice with his team at Davis High School in Yakima, Wash. on Thursday, May 28, 2009.

Cook was making his last high school start, but the weight of the day was so much heavier than that.

"I wasn't planning on losing that game," he said. "It had to be different this time. I was either going the distance and getting us through, or throwing my arm off."

Understandable resolve for a kid who had twice thrown six-hit complete games in the Class 2A state semifinals only to come up short in both.

When Cedarcrest fought its way back here a third straight time, Cook had no doubt what his role should be. Even if the shot at redemption carried with it a huge risk.

"I've always had a dream of pitching in a championship game," he said. "But after what happened the last two years, I wanted the ball for the semis. Both times it was me out there, and this time I definitely wanted to get us through it."

Cook was not only due, he was dominant. His four-hit complete game included eight strikeouts against hard-hitting Othello, and the offense finally gave him run support in a 12-1 rout at Yakima County Stadium.

The next day Cook hit two doubles and drove in four runs in a 10-6 victory over Selah for the title. As a result, Cook and teammate Cameron Padron will play for their coach, Scott Goldsberry, on Team Rainier — one of four 18-player squads — this weekend in the annual four-game series at Parker Field.

“It’ll be a lot of fun for us,” Cook said. “A perfect way to go out.”

Two weeks ago, the prospects for such a finish hinged not only on Cook’s fiery determination but on his recovery from a shoulder strain. In Cedarcrest’s previous five games he pitched only two innings.

“I was just trying to get it rested and 100-percent healthy,” he said. “When we got to Yakima it was warm and I knew I was ready. I throw better when it’s hot, and I told myself in pre-game this is it — it’s time to get passed this.”

Cook was cruising along until the fifth inning when a blister tore the skin off the top of his index finger. That had never happened before but he didn’t panic. Nor did he leave the game.

“I think it was the heat and the seams of the ball,” Cook said. “I just tried to ignore it. It’s actually good because I have a nice callous there now.”

Looking back, Cook is now willing to acknowledge all that was on the line for him. To pitch every inning of three consecutive state semifinal games and possibly finish 0-for-3 — how’s that rate for some emotional baggage?

“I felt the pressure, sure, but I tried to be positive,” he said. “We were there again with another chance. Trust me, we wanted that chance.”

He also knew it wasn’t entirely up to him. Last year Cook was stellar, but East Valley’s Kevin Komstadius struck out 13 and threw a three-hitter against the Red Wolves. Two years ago he was just as good, but Selah’s Jake Fife and Derek Welton combined on a 3-0 shutout.

“After losing (in the semis) twice it brought us closer together as a team,” Cook said. “Everybody knew we had to win, and we looked at the pressure has a benefit. We all felt it was our year.”