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All-Marion final set for Big Sun

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR-BANNER**

OCALA - The finals of the Big Sun Challenge will have a major Marion County feel to it.

Karl vonRodenstein threw a complete game five-hitter to lead Vanguard past Belleview, 3-1, which gave the Knights a 3-0 record in Pool B and put them into tonight's final against rival Forest at 7.

The Wildcats clinched Pool A with a 3-0 record by defeating Flagler Palm Coast, 14-9.

"Any time that you can get to the finals of a tournament, you know that you have played some pretty good baseball to get there," Vanguard coach Ed McPadden said. "It's exciting to have two local teams in the finals. It should be a lot of fun."

The matchup between Forest and Vanguard will be the second All-Marion Big Sun Challenge final in the seven-year history of the event.

The Knights fell to Trinity Catholic in the finals in 2005 in the only other All-Marion final.

Vanguard is making its third consecutive trip to the title game, having lost to the Celtics and Springfield Rutherford in its previous two trips.

Either the Knights or Wildcats will join Trinity Catholic's 2005 team and Dunnellon's 2004 squad as the only Marion County teams to win the event.

The meeting will be the second this season between the county rivals.

Vanguard defeated Forest earlier this season at home. Tonight's game will not count in the Class 5A-District 4 standings.

The April 13 matchup between the Knights and Wildcats at Forest will have a direct effect on which team is seeded No. 2 through No. 4 for the 5A-4 district tournament, which will be held in late April at Gainesville High School.

On Wednesday, vonRodenstein (3-4) didn't allow an earned run and walked just one and fanned four to give the Knights their third consecutive win.

"Karl did a nice job," McPadden said. "He had good command of his change-up and did a nice job of locating his fastball."

The Knights (12-5) scored three times in the first inning without hitting the ball out of the infield.

Three walks, a hit batter and an RBI infield single by Eric Grabe keyed things for Vanguard against Belleview starter Nick Radomski.

The Rattlers (9-8) got their only run in the third inning on a fielder's choice by Radomski.

Belleview finished the tournament with only five runs on 12 hits in its three tournament games.

A double play in the top of the seventh that erased a leadoff single by Frank DeJulio helped Vanguard keep the Rattlers at bay.

Vanguard, which left nine runners on base, managed only three hits against Radomski and relief pitcher Cody Geyman, but took advantage of nine walks.

Matt Wright finished with three walks and scored one run for the Knights, while Joe Jones drew a bases-loaded walk to force in Andy Paul, who finished 1-for-3.

Grabe and Johnny Schaub had the other hits for Vanguard. J.R. Rekully drew two walks and scored one run for the Knights.

Josh Sartorious led Belleview with two hits. Michael Phipps and Jake Silvola-Finch also had hits for the Rattlers.

Radomski took the loss by allowing three runs on three hits and walking six. Geyman threw three innings of hitless relief and walked three.

FOREST 14, FLAGLER PALM COAST 9. The Wildcats (10-7) sent 16 batters to the plate in the third inning and used nine walks in the frame to score 10 times in upsetting the Bulldogs, the No. 11 team in Class 6A.

Forest drew 13 walks from four FPC pitchers overall, three of which were with the bases loaded in the third.

"We were very patient," Wildcats coach Wayne Yancey said. "I think that is our biggest

strength as a team.

"We put some things together and had some guys come up big for us in key situations."

Blake Spires continued his hot play for Forest by going 2-for-5 with five RBIs, which included a three-run homer in the third inning. Spires is now 3-for-10 with two homers and seven RBIs in the tournament.

Mario Urdaneta (1-for-2, two runs scored, RBI), B.J. Robinson (1-for-5, one run scored, RBI), Justin Grant (1-for-3, two runs scored, RBI), Gary Merians (one run scored, RBI), Tres Ramirez (2-for-3, RBI, one run scored) and Tyler Carpenter (RBI) also played key roles in the Forest attack.

J.T. Thomas (1-2) went 4¹/₃ innings to get the win, before being replaced by Spires, who allowed the Bulldogs two earned runs on two hits over the final 2¹/₃ innings.

Spires fanned Matt Noble with the bases loaded and two outs in the fifth inning to end a threat by FPC after it had scored three times in the frame and pulled to within 14-9.

The Bulldogs (15-4) scored in each of the first five innings, but Spires retired six of the last eight hitters he faced to keep them at bay.

Jeffery Lemon went 3-for-5 with five RBIs to lead FPC. David Robinson was 1-for-3 with three runs scored and Mark Jones was 1-for-3 with two runs scored for the Bulldogs.

FPC scored twice in the first, but saw the Wildcats respond with three runs of their own in their half of the frame.

Forest scored once in the second and the Bulldogs tallied single runs in the second and third innings, but Forest's 10-run outburst in the third enabled it to go up 14-4.

Robinson (6-for-12), Ramirez (5-for-11), Merians (3-for-10) and Carpenter (3-for-8) have been the leaders at the plate in Forest's three tournament games.

BOZEMAN 3, DUNNELLON 2. Dustin Duncan's three-run homer in the first inning was enough for the Bucks (9-6), ranked No. 10 in Class 2A, to hold off the Tigers (8-9).

Ronnie Smith went the distance and scattered three hits and allowed one earned run to get the win for Bozeman.

Smith allowed an unearned run in the first, then allowed a solo homer by Austin Grybko to start the seventh inning, but retired the final three hitters he faced.

Derek Milam didn't allow another run after the Duncan homer, but took the loss for the Tigers. He allowed five hits and struck out nine in seven innings.

Bozeman finished the event 1-2 and Dunnellon ended 0-3 in Pool A.

PORT ST. LUCIE 13, TREASURE COAST 3. The Jaguars (14-4) ended Pool B with a 2-1 record in their five-inning win over the Titans (4-12), who finished 1-2 in the tournament.

TRINITY CATHOLIC 8, NORTH MARION 1. At Trinity Catholic, Jordan Landry handcuffed North Marion on two hits and one walk as the Celtics improved to 12-4 with a non-district win over the Colts.

Landry improved to 3-0 in going the distance, striking out four. Leading the attack were Mitchell Chauncey with a solo home run and a double, Jonathan Bartlett with two hits and two runs batted in, and Matt Staub and Robert Willis with two hits and an RBI apiece.

Ryan Elwood took the loss for North Marion, surrendering six runs in three innings.

Trinity Catholic next hosts Wildwood in a district game at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

CHOCTAW 10, WEST PORT 7. At Crestview, West Port relief pitcher Justin Drier surrendered five runs in three innings to absorb the loss as the Wolf Pack, now 4-12, lost in the Northwest Florida Power Aid Classic.

West Port's 11-hit attack was led by Jeff Hayes with three hits, a run scored and a stolen base. Russell Serna and Brian Adams each had a hit and an RBI, with Serna adding a pair of runs scored.

West Port plays Southside (Ark.) in the tournament's second round at 1 p.m. today at Crestview.