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Jimmy Karfis quickly makes mark on Glenbrook North baseball team

By HEATHER RULE
PIONEER PRESS | JUN 14, 2016



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Glenbrook North's Jimmy Karfis, left, used his speed to help him in the outfield, at the plate and on the basepaths. Karfis is pictured in a Thursday, April 21, game at Highland Park. (Mark Kodiak Ukena / Pioneer Press)

The baseball game was at a critical juncture: Tie game, bottom of the sixth, two outs and a runner on second.

Glenbrook North sophomore Jimmy Karfis was up to bat. He already had two strikeouts that day versus Loyola. But he drove a slider up the middle for an RBI single.

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The Spartans won 6-5 on Friday, May 6, in Northbrook.

"That was the most significant moment," Karfis said. "I just felt like after that my confidence level was built very high... I just felt like I was meant to be there."

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Karfis joined the varsity team just before Central Suburban play started in April. It was nerve-wracking at first, he said, but then coach Dom Savino had a talk with him.

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" 'Don't worry about how you perform, I just want to see how you can respond,' " said Karfis, quoting his coach's words. "I felt more confident after he talked to me."

The left fielder's main strength is speed, he said. He recalled a game where he threw out a batter who tried to stretch a single into a double.

"This one guy hit a nice shot, one bounce and it was rolling toward the fence," Karfis said. "And I was able to cut it off right away."

Karfis plays with no fear and possesses great speed, Savino said.

"Jimmy only knows one speed — full speed," Savino said.

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That quickness came in handy at the plate and on the bases, too. He beat out a lot of ground balls for infield hits.

Karfis had the confidence to step up to the plate and just play his game, he said. He finished the season with a .292 batting average (.372 conference), .426 on-base percentage (.508 conference), 17 RBIs, 23 runs and four stolen bases.

"My strength really was just pulling the ball," Karfis said.

Savino said Karfis is an outstanding competitor and a difference-maker for the program.

"Jimmy became a much more disciplined hitter as the year progressed," Savino said. "We loved his aggressiveness to begin with. As he became a more selective hitter, he became a more productive hitter."

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At 5-foot-7 and 165 pounds, Karfis one of the smaller — "if not the smallest," Karfis said — guys on the field, so he describes himself as a singles and doubles hitter, though his coach said he has exceptional power.

With the baseball season over after Glenbrook North lost to Prospect 3-0 in the Class 4A regional finals on Monday, May 30, Karfis will focus on football next. However, he wants to contribute as an outfielder and pitcher next year. Karfis has an outstanding breaking ball, Savino said. Karfis will lift weights to get stronger, focusing on his lower body so he can use more of his legs for pitching.

"My main focus is just to lift and just constantly keep doing the same thing I've been doing all year," Karfis said.

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He also can help the Spartans by assisting teammates who debut on varsity next season.

"We already know the expectations of being a varsity player," Karfis said. "I'll just be there pretty much for moral support."

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