

SAINTS HOME IN A THRILLER

Saints were outthit by Hawks but took the points to earn the right to meet Eagles in the grand final in preliminary final action of the Sunraysia Baseball League A Grade competition.

Saints and Hawks did battle with the victor going on to the grand final and the loser packing their bags for the season. Both sides were at full strength and a close battle was promised.

Saints began with Dean Fairlie on the mound. Hawks' Matt Smith doubled and then scored to open the scoring run. Saints were facing Smith and Glenn Wallace led off with a hit. He was picked off but a poor run down and then Chris Prevedello's base hit leveled the scores for Saints.

Smith, Trent Cross and Michael Wade all hit safely in the top of the third dig for Hawks but Saints knuckled down and stopped Hawks from scoring. Wallace picked up his second hit in the bottom of the dig but he was left stranded on base.

Hawks then took the lead in the fourth dig in unusual circumstances. Arnold reached on an error and Lynch hit safely. Probert then bunted and another error saw Hawks load the bases. Prevedello struck out Williams but a wild throw back to the pitcher during the at-bat allowed Hawks to sneak a run home from third base.

Saints took advantage of a Hawks' fielding error in the bottom of the inning to level the scores. Hawks then took the lead in the fifth dig. Wade walked and both Dom Moras and Lynch hit well to help add three runs for Hawks as they snuck ahead.

Saints responded with runs of their own as Drew Hosking, Wallace and Prevedello all batted well to see three runs cross the plate to once again tie the scores up after five completed innings.

Andrew Fairlie replaced his brother on the mound in the top of the sixth innings. He shut down Hawks in the sixth and seventh digs and was in a good groove. Smith shut down Saints in the sixth dig and as replaced by Trent Cross in the seventh innings.

Saints edged ahead in the seventh dig as Cross walked Wallace and with two out Andrew Fairlie hit safely to push the go-ahead run across the plate. Saints now lead 6-5 and it was up to Hawks to peg back that lead.

Hawks were struggling to come to terms with Fairlie's pitching and they went in order in the eighth dig. Saints were also shut down and it came down to the last innings.

Hawks needed to score to keep the game alive. Fairlie struck out Moras and Arnold but walked Lynch and when Tony Probert hit safely the tying run was at second base, although with two out. Fairlie knuckled down and struck out the last Hawks hitter to preserve the Saints 6-5 win and move them into the grand final next week.

In B Grade Eagles thumped Saints to go through to the grand final with a 19-2 win. Roger Taylor, Jason Alderton and Zac Schurr played well for Eagles with Brad Gowers and Ethan Gray doing well for Saints.

In C Grade Wanderers Two defeated club mates Wanderers One 11-5. Marcus Jeanes, Brett Bertalli and Brad Lever played well for Wanderers Two with Colin Clifford, Josh Williams and Hayden Petersen playing well for Wanderers Two.

RESULTS

A GRADE

SAINTS: - 1 0 0 1 3 0 1 0 X—6

HAWKS: - 1 0 0 1 3 0 0 0—5

SAFE HITS: - Saints—G Wallace 3; C Prevedello 2; A Fairlie 1.

Hawks—N Lynch 3; M Smith 2; T Cross, M Wade, D Moras, B Arnold and T Probert 1.

B GRADE

EAGLES: - 1 1 2 1 1 2 2—19

SAINTS: - 1 1 0 0 0 0—2

SAFE HITS: - Eagles—J Alderton 4; Z Schurr, J Austin and T Cooksley 3; S Scott, C Minette and J McGregor 2; R Taylor and T Pay 1.

Saints—B Gowers 2; D Russell, J Reid, R Ilsley, P Shadwick and E Gray 1.

C GRADE

WANDERERS TWO: - 5 0 5 0 1—11

WANDERERS ONE: - 0 0 2 0 3—5

SAFE HITS: - Wanderers Two—R Witte, B Lever, M Jeanes and B Bertalli 2; C Ashcroft and K Morrison 1.

Wanderers One—Colin Clifford 2; Clayton Clifford, M Withnell, P Gee, A Thomas, H Petersen and J Williams 1.

GRAND FINAL DRAW

A GRADE

Eagles vs. Saints

B GRADE

Wanderers vs. Eagles

C GRADE

Eagles vs. Wanderers Two