

State Champs

C2 GREELEY (Colo.) TRIBUNE

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Reds shut out Crusaders

Pitcher dazzles batters with vicious curveball

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DENVER — The Eaton High School baseball coaching staff sat behind home plate Friday afternoon, calculating the pluses and minuses of Denver Christian's lineup.

The conclusions are as follows:

■ **The pluses:** The Crusaders are an extremely good hitting team, especially through the middle of the order.

■ **The minuses:** Unless it's a breaking pitch they're looking at. It may be the only way to slow them down.

One day later, facing the Crusaders for the Class 3A State Baseball Championship at All-City Stadium, the Reds put their plan in motion via a 12-0 state title victory over Denver Christian.

Lee Griffith's overhand motion, that is.

Griffith, sitting down the left-field line after the Reds' semifinal victory over Denver Lutheran, noticed the same thing.

Saturday afternoon, Griffith had the Crusaders flailing away at the knuckle-curveball, a trademark pitch for Eaton pitchers.

"If it's thrown right, not many kids can hit it," Danley said. "And even if they do, it doesn't do much."

The Crusaders hardly touched it.

Griffith finished the day facing 17 batters, striking out nine.

"I didn't throw many fastballs, especially in the first three innings," he said.

Danley wouldn't allow it.

Calling the pitches from the Reds' third-base dugout, Danley remembers only three fastballs the first time through the Denver Christian lineup.

"We threw a couple, just to let them know that we had a fastball if we needed it," Danley said.

It was hardly needed as the Crusaders had just three hits, all singles.

The only two times they advanced runners to third was via a wild pitch and a passed ball.

"The big story today is Lee Griffith," Danley said. "The best thing about this whole day is how he pitched."

"What he did was unbelievable ... to hold a team like that down."

Despite Griffith stating that the intensity increased as the game went on, he never showed it.

He struck out at least one batter in every inning.

Three times, the Crusaders were left standing still, watching the knuckle-curveball float right past them.

"You don't throw fastballs to a team that hits that good," Danley said. "Our plan was to keep them off-balance with breaking pitches and to keep the score close."

"It worked ... certainly bet-



Eaton's Eric Kelly, center, is mauled by his teammates while celebrating his two-run homer against Denver Christian during the Class 3A State Baseball Championship game. The Reds shut out the Crusaders, 12-0, for the state title Saturday.



Eaton's Branden Trujillo smashes a hit into the outfield for a single while playing against Denver Christian Class 3A State Baseball Championship game at Denver All-City Stadium.



Eaton pitcher Lee Griffith points to the ball after making a Denver Christian batter pop up for the out. Griffith pitched the entire game for the Reds and did not allow any runs to score.

PHOTOS BY JIM RYDBOM / jrydbom@greeleytrib.com

ter than I even thought it would."

■ **THE SECOND TIME AROUND ...** This was the second time the Reds and Crusaders have met this season. Denver Christian traveled to Eaton last month and recorded a 7-4 victory, one of only three losses on the season for the Reds.

■ **DIFFERENT LINEUPS ...** While the Reds' roster looks even better for the future with only six seniors leaving the program, Denver Christian featured 12 seniors, including starting pitcher Andy Draayer.

■ **STICKING TO HIS GUN ...** Despite giving up 12 runs on 10 hits to the Reds, Denver Christian head coach Bill Postma refused to say that his pitching is a bit thin.

"I don't believe that, especially when it comes down to one game," Postma said. "And



Tateyama

titles, and have been in the Final Four nine straight times.

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we've ridden AD (Draayer) all year long. We have a lot of confidence in him.

"Eaton just hit the ball real well today."

THE REDS TRADITION

Jim Danley has definitely built a Class 3A baseball dynasty at Eaton High School.

After winning the Class 3A state title Saturday afternoon for the second straight season, the media joked with Danley that his team will have to face Class 4A and 5A competition in future state tournament appearances.

The Reds have won five state titles, and have been in the Final Four nine straight times.

Danley, in 30 seasons as the Reds' head coach, is 506-133-1.

STATE TITLES

- 1994 — Eaton 3, Olathe 1
 - 1995 — Eaton 2, Salida 0
 - 1998 — Eaton 3, Lamar 1
 - 2001 — Eaton 3, Lamar 2, 15 innings
 - 2002 — Eaton 12, Denver Christian 0
- ### STATE RUNNER-UP FINISHES
- 1983 — Valley 7, Eaton 6
 - 1991 — Brush 13, Eaton 2
 - 1993 — Kent Denver 10, Eaton 5
 - 1996 — Denver Christian 3, Eaton 1
 - 1999 — Lamar 10, Eaton 2
 - 2000 — La Junta 7, Eaton 6

■ **FINAL TOUCH ...** The praise for Eaton first baseman Eric Kelly didn't stop at Danley. Postma delivered a compliment on Kelly's three-run home

run in the third that gave the Reds a 9-0 lead.

"That really put an exclamation point on the situation," Postma said. "That was big."

HOW THEY SCORED

DENVER — The Eaton Reds scored early and often Saturday afternoon in their 12-0, five-inning victory over Denver Christian at All-City Stadium.

The Reds put up numbers in every inning except the first, and kept the Crusaders from ever mounting a threat.

The Reds, who had 10 hits on the day, even scored three runs via bases loaded walks.

The following is a play-by-play of all five innings of Eaton's title — its second straight in five straight Class 3A state baseball championship game appearances.

FIRST INNING

Denver Christian: Bret Rothermich singled to left field. Brad Jansen struck out swinging. Tyler VanEps grounded into double play — ss to 1B. Rothermich out on the play. 0 runs, 1 hit, 0 errors, 0 LOB.

Eaton: Tyler Garretson walked. Branden Trujillo flied out to lf. Tyler Tatemaya flied out to cf. Eric Kelly singled to the right side; Garretson advances to second. Drew Maulsby flied out to rf. 0 runs, 1 hit, 0 errors, 2 LOB.

SECOND INNING

Denver Christian: Ryan Velgersdyk walked. Andy Draayer struck out swinging. Velgersdyk advances to second on a passed ball. Tyler Henry struck out looking. Matt VanMeer hit by pitch. Kevin Ribbens struck out swinging. 0 runs, 0 hit, 0 errors, 2 LOB.

Eaton: Dylan Ramer walked. Ramer advances to second on a passed ball. Chris Swain walked. Tyler Krause reaches on a fielder's choice to second base; Swain out 2B to ss. Ramer advanced to third. Josh Noblitt popped up to ss. Garretson singled up the middle, RBI; Krause advanced to second; Ramer scored. Trujillo walked; Garretson advanced to second; Krause advanced to third. Tatemaya flied out to cf. 1 run, 1 hit, 0 errors, 3 LOB.

THIRD INNING

Denver Christian: Brian Swalley struck out swinging. Rothermich popped up to ss. Jansen singled through the left side. VanEps grounded out to 3B. 0 runs, 1 hit, 0 errors, 1 LOB.

Eaton: Kelly doubled to center field. Maulsby reached on fielding error by 2B; Kelly advanced to third. Ramer flied out to cf, SF, RBI; Kelly scored. Swain singled to left field, Maulsby advanced to second. Krause reached on a fielder's choice; Swain advanced to second on a fielding error by 2B, assist by ss; Maulsby advanced to third. Noblitt flied out to lf, SF, RBI; Maulsby scored, unearned. Garretson walked; Krause advanced to second; Swain advanced to third. Trujillo singled through the left side, 2 RBI; Garretson advanced to second; Krause scored, unearned; Swain scored unearned. Jansen to rf. VanEps to pitcher, Draayer to cf; Ian Mader to ss for Jason Whitlow. Tatemaya singled to left field, RBI; Trujillo advanced to second; Garretson scored, unearned. Kelly homered to right center, 3 RBI, unearned; Tatemaya scored, unearned; Trujillo scored, unearned. Maulsby doubled to right field. Ramer flied out to cf. 8 runs, 6 hits, 2 errors, 1 LOB.

FOURTH INNING

Denver Christian: Velgersdyk walked. Draayer flied out to rf. Velgersdyk advanced to second on a wild pitch. Henry singled through the left side; Velgersdyk advanced to third. VerMeer struck out looking. Ribbens struck out swinging. 0 run, 1 hit, 0 errors, 2 LOB.

Eaton: Swain singled to short-stop. Krause walked; Swain advanced to second. Noblitt singled to right center; Krause advanced to second; Swain advanced to third. Garretson walked, RBI; Noblitt advanced to second; Krause to third; Swain scored. VanEps to ss. Weitzel to pitch for Mader. Trujillo walked, RBI; Garretson advanced to second; Noblitt advanced to third; Krause scored. Tatemaya walked, RBI; Trujillo advanced to second; Garretson advanced to third; Noblitt scored. Derek Peters to pitch for Weitzel. Kelly grounded into double play, 2B to c to 1B; Tatemaya advanced to second; Trujillo advanced to third; Garretson out on the play. Maulsby walked. Ramer struck out looking. 3 runs, 2 hits, 0 errors, 3 LOB.

FIFTH INNING

Denver Christian: Swalley walked. Rothermich struck out swinging. Jansen struck out looking. VanEps flied out to cf. 0 runs, 0 hit, 0 errors, 1 LOB.

— Samuel G. Mustari

Senior goes out with second state title



Tateyama

DENVER — Tyler Tateyama figures four times is enough — for now anyway.

Tateyama, the fleet-footed left-fielder for the Eaton Reds baseball team, ended his career Saturday afternoon in a dog pile at the pitcher's mound at All-City Stadium.

It's become a familiar scene for Tateyama and the Reds, who recorded their second straight title in a 12-0 victory over Denver Christian.

"This is the fourth time for me to be involved in this game, and it never gets old," Tateyama said. "You can always get up for these games."

In 1999, Tateyama had his first and only experience of losing a state title as the Reds lost to Lamar, 10-2.

Two years ago, as a sophomore, Tateyama and the Reds lost to La Junta, 7-6, but they reversed their fortunes last season when they went 15 innings in a 3-2 victory

over La Junta.

For the finale, Tateyama played a key role in the Reds' victory over Denver Christian, going 1-for-3 with a run scored and a pair of RBI.

"We knew we'd have to play great because Denver Christian is a great team," Tateyama said. "I think we all had a few doubts because we lost to them earlier in the year.

"But we did what you have to do to win, and that's put the ball in play and have your pitcher throw strikes. That's really all it takes."

Next up for Tateyama is today's graduation at Eaton High School.

"I'll take it easy tonight, and then graduate tomorrow (today)," he said. "A state title one day and graduation the next. ... It doesn't get much better than that."

— Samuel G. Mustari