

State – One More Win



AJ Schillinger hit a grand slam & hit for the cycle with a combined 5 hits, 8 rbi in the two playoff games

Firebirds persevere over Huskies, advance to finals

Nobody expected the road to a state championship would be easy, and the **Firebirds** needed a come-from-behind victory in a playoff elimination game Thursday to defeat **Horizon 8 – 6** and advance to the 5A-II championship game.

The defending state champion **Huskies** had no intention of giving up their title without a fight, and took control in **Game 1** with an eight-run sixth inning rally to win **18 – 11** and force a playoff elimination game.

The two top-ranked regional rivals, whose campuses are a mere five miles apart, were matched-up five times in the last 17 days, and every game was a back-and-forth battle to the end.

Horizon took an early lead in Game 1 until **AJ Schillinger's** third inning grand slam tied the game. **Chaparral** added three more runs in the inning to take an **8 – 5** lead on an rbi triple by **Kyle Toth** & a 2-run blast by **Chance Adams**, his first varsity HR. **Nick Diamond** hit a solo shot earlier in the game, giving the **2011 Firebirds** a total of 40 HRs this season, a new team record.

Horizon tied the game in the fourth with a 3-run shot by **Zach Stierstorfer**, only to have **Chaparral** retake the lead with 3 runs of their own making the score **11 – 8** after four innings.

Horizon cut the lead with 2 runs in the fifth inning before taking the lead for good with their sixth inning rally. The **Huskies** scored in every inning but the seventh with 17 hits in the game.

After a 45 minute break to allow each team (and the fans) a chance to catch their breath, **Horizon** picked up where they left off with three hits in the first to take a **1 – 0** lead. **Luke Messer**, who pitched the final 3 innings to earn the win in Game 1, continued on the mound for the **Huskies** and held the **Firebirds** to 5 hits over four more innings. **Adam Charnin-Aker** was also effective allowing only four hits through the first four innings.

Chaparral got on the board in the fourth with three straight hits by **Nick DeRegis**, **Colby Targun**, & **AJ Schillinger**. The **Firebirds** took their first lead of the game when pinch-hitter **Eric Brossart** drove in **Targun** to take a **2 -1** lead.

Firebird Flash



But **Horizon** answered again in the fifth, bringing eleven batters to the plate to score five runs on five hits. Offensive leaders **Luke Messer, Johnny Rubino, Ryan Hand, Jordon Dunatov & Nick Valenza** once again contributed to the rally as the **Huskies** took a **6 – 2** lead.

Horizon made a pitching change, and the top of the **Chaparral's** batting order came through, scoring two runs on hits by **Jordie Hein, Nick DeRegis, Colby Targun & AJ Schillinger** to cut the lead to **6 – 4**.

You could cut the tension in the air – every fan was on the edge of their seat, and every player on the rail cheering their teammates on every single pitch. The momentum was shifting, and **Firebirds hurler Peter Lenstrohm** stepped on the mound with determined intensity and quickly struck out the side in the sixth to keep the game close.

Playing their fifth game in seven days, **Horizon's** pitching was starting to run thin. **Coach Kibler** went to ace **Nick Valenza**, who pitched seven innings on Thursday, three on Saturday, and five on Tuesday, to try to get the final six outs for the **Huskies**.

But **Chaparral** would not be denied – **Eric Brossart**, who remained in the game as DH, hit a lead-off single that started a five-hit rally. **Joey Bielek** singled & scored; **Jordie Hein** tripled & scored; **Nick DeRegis** singled & scored; and **AJ Schillinger** added another rbi with a triple as the **Firebirds** scored four runs to take an **8 – 6** lead.

Lenstrohm was pumped up, throwing his fastball right past the **Huskie** hitters to get two strikeouts in the final three outs to secure the win.

Congratulations Firebirds on a spectacular win!

Special thanks to **Coach Messina, Ford, Brennan & Anderson** for your hard work & efforts.

And finally - hats off to the **2011 Horizon Varsity baseball team** for your competitive spirit and never-say-die attitude.

You are a worthy opponent that brought out the best in both teams in an epic three-week series.

One more win for a title!

Go Firebirds!



Peter Lenstrohm shut down the Huskies in the final innings to win Game 2