

BASEBALL

Freshman Ricketts saves day for Roaders

Young reliever slams door on Cougars' threat

■ **Brunswick 7, Catoclin 4**

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THURMONT — Brunswick right-hander Jared Ricketts didn't exactly enter the game the way he thought he would.

Ricketts had been warming up for the bottom of the seventh against rival Catoclin but didn't go in at the start of the frame to protect a four-run lead. Instead, he strolled to the mound with the bases loaded, no outs and the tying run at the plate with the middle of the Cougars' order due up.

Yet, the moment wasn't too much for the freshman.

Ricketts fanned the first batter he faced, induced a long sacrifice fly and froze the final batter to earn his second save and help the Roaders hold on for a 7-4 road win Friday afternoon.

"The kid wants to pitch," Brunswick head coach Roger Dawson said. "He's not intimidated. He's proved to me he can do it. He went right out there, mixed the curveball and a good fastball and got us out of a jam."

It's Ricketts' second late-inning ap-

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pearance this week, as he's quickly become one of the team's more reliable relievers.

He didn't expect to earn that trust so quickly as a ninth-grader, maybe pitching a handful of times at most. But Ricketts keeps delivering and now holds two wins and two saves this season.

"Probably just the coaches having confidence in me being able to go out there and do that," Ricketts said. "Especially as a freshman, to go out and pitch with the bases loaded in the middle of the lineup against one of our rivals, pretty special."

He said he's "gotten pretty lucky" to be in that position so early, but he's also earned the trust in his longtime head coach.

"He's gutsy, and he could be a future arm in our program," Dawson said. "Let's get him in the fire right now."

There's few bigger fires to put out than the one Ricketts fought Friday. He battled the blaze well, even if it briefly looked like Catoctin (3-11) had tied the

contest with one out.

Cougars senior first baseman Ethan Burkhart turned on the second pitch he saw from Ricketts, blasting it deep down the left field line. The crowd rose from its seats, peering into the left field corner to see if the ball would clear the fence. Ricketts said he thought it had enough to get out.

But Roaders sophomore left fielder Owen Nugent tracked the ball and ran it down a stride shy of the 325-foot sign on the left field line. Burkhart just missed a game-tying grand slam and settled for a sacrifice fly, his second of the day.

"I want nothing more than it to come down to the seventh inning," Catoctin head coach Will Delawter said. "At the end of the day, he missed it by maybe 5 or 10 feet, but those are the situations come playoff time, you hope we're just better prepared for."

A young Cougars squad is still learning to handle those high-stakes, late-game moments, while Brunswick (9-4) won its fourth straight game by three runs or less.

Roaders senior designated hitter

Justin Ricketts broke a 2-2 tie in the fifth inning by pulling a two-run double into the left field corner. Four pitches later, senior Connor Carrillo lined an RBI single in a pinch-hit appearance.

"It's different guys each night, but when you get them there, you've gotta score, and we've been able to do that here lately," Dawson said.

Sophomore right-hander Logan Lowery stood among the biggest contributors Friday, helping himself with two hits, including a double, and two RBIs.

Both came on the first pitch of the at bat.

"I'm just looking to attack early on whatever it is," Lowery said.

That supported six sold innings on the mound following a tweak in his mechanics. Lowery scattered three runs on six hits and two walks while striking out four.

Catoctin senior center fielder Mason Ferrell had two hits, including a third-inning RBI single, and senior catcher Zach Williams cranked an RBI double to left field in the sixth.