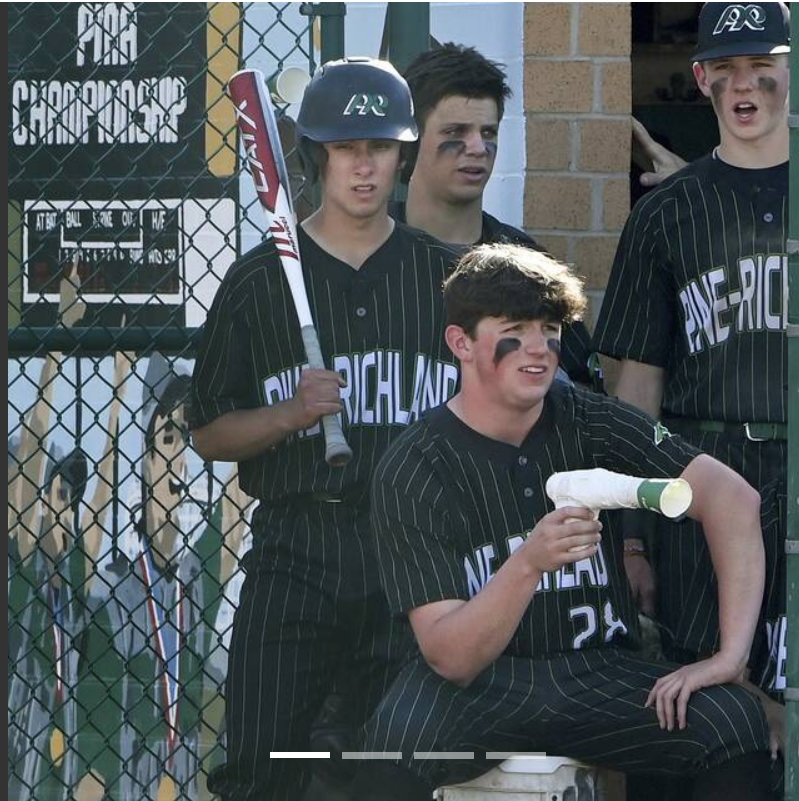


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Pine-Richland's Avery Brown passes time in the Rams dugout with a homemade radar gun during their game against Seneca Valley on Thursday, April 20, 2023, in Pine.

Pine-Richland baseball embraces the grind, thrives in tight games

By Jerin Steele April 30, 2023



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The [Pine-Richland](#) baseball team doesn't mind playing in tight games.

In fact, the Rams thrive on grinding out wins.

They proved that in taking two out of three games against previously unbeaten [Seneca Valley](#) during a series April 17-20.



“We got it done and did what we needed to do to win. That’s a tribute to these boys. They got bunts down, got hits, made big pitches and got big outs in the field.”

The series victory solidified the Rams’ playoff position and gives them a shot to win or share a Section 1-6A title for a second consecutive year. They have a three-game set against section leader [North Allegheny](#) the first week of May to close out section play.

The Rams executed fundamental plays to score runs in the rubber match, coming off a 4-0 loss in Game 2 in which they were limited to three hits and committed errors leading to all four of [Seneca Valley](#)’s runs being unearned.

In the third inning, Peyton Ford busted down the line for an infield single, Anthony Mengine drew a walk, and Tanner Cunningham laid down a perfect bunt and reached to load the bases. Owen Henne put the ball in play and recorded an RBI on a fielder’s choice, and Joey Perry hit a sacrifice fly to left.

Ford was the center of an insurance run in the fifth. He led off the inning with a double down the left field line and then moved to third on a successful sacrifice bunt by Mengine. Cunningham drove Ford in with a sacrifice fly to deep left.

The sequence was a good example of the fundamental baseball the Rams want to play.

“The boys have to buy into that,” Wolfe said. “They understood we were going to try to win a low-scoring, grind-it-out game. We knew how good their pitcher, Zyler Freedman, was and we knew how good they are as a team. We know we’re not going to 10-run anybody. They’re too good. We like having to grind out wins. That’s how we won the first game, and that’s how we won the (series).”

Ford was the Rams’ kick starter at the bottom of the order, a role he has played for two seasons.

“I just want to get on base,” Ford said. “If I can do that, it flips the order around and it’s a momentum shift. You can say this or that about the nine hole, but ultimately to me, it’s a second leadoff.”

The other element to a successful series was the pitching staff.

Sophomore Keegan Diehl pitched 5.1 innings with nine strikeouts in Game 1 and fellow sophomore Sam Heckert shut the door over the final 1.2 innings.

Tristan Farrar was solid in Game 2 but took an unlucky loss with the four unearned runs.

For Game 3, the Rams turned to their most experienced pitcher, Jacob McGuire, who didn’t allow an d run over 6.2 innings. McGuire hit the pitch-count limit, and Sam Grana came on to get the final



"We knew that they struggled early on with off-speed pitches, so pitching them backwards is what really helped me," McGuire said. "The changeup worked early, and I was able to go to the fastball later in the count and get some weak contact."

Needless to say, taking two of three from a previously unbeaten opponent gave the Rams a shot of confidence as the postseason nears.

It was also nice to play well in front of a large crowd, including a robust student section.

"After the (second) game, we just said to scratch that and we're going into this next game with all of our fans here, so let's give them a show," Ford said. "We just wanted to make sure everyone that came here left happy. It was a good day for Pine-Richland."

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