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Milligan College's Tyler Walker focuses on the target while letting go with a pitch.

Milligan rallies in ninth

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MILLIGAN COLLEGE — In its final home AAC series of the season, Milligan College faced a rubber match against Bryan College Saturday afternoon after a Friday split. And on a day when the Buffaloes' bats were as cold as the blustering wind, the day looked bleak with Milligan trailing 5-2 heading into the bottom of the ninth.

But the Buffs rewarded its freezing fans with a stomach punch to the Lions.

Powered by a two-run blast by Bart Roark and run-scoring hits by Wesley Jones and Luke Kirk, Milligan rallied for a 6-5 win at Anglin Field by erupting on offense with its final breath.

"We waited until the last inning, but fortunately it was enough to get the job done," said Milligan coach Nathan Meade.

"It was big just for our confidence and momentum going forward to come out and get two out of three against a good club," said Meade, who lost 2-1 and won 14-10 in the Friday doubleheader. "These are two quality victories."

Bryan starter Kemonte Keesee (8 IP, 5 H) had been giving the Buffs (20-22, 10-8) fits and looked to finish the deal in the ninth, but Cory Hilton led off with a liner to right to setup Roark's two-run blast. The bomb went out deep right over the softball infield and ended Keesee's impressive outing while cutting the lead to 5-4.

Josh Harris came in to try to save the game for Bryan (23-20, 5-10), but gave designated hitter Tyler Hutson a base when he threw a ball a little bit too inside

then walked Ryan White.

After an infield fly, Jones came to the plate down 5-4 with two outs and two on and came up huge.

On a 1-1 count, Jones got a dribbler through short to plate courtesy runner Cody Hyder to tie up the game at 5-5.

"They had been throwing me curve balls all day, so I was expecting if I got an even count or up in the count to look for off speed," said Jones. "And they threw me a curve ball."

That gave Kirk the chance for the walk-off and he came through in the clutch with a single to right. Ryan White, who reached on balls, beat the throw home from second and celebration ensued.

"It felt great to get the hit and to come up in that spot," said Kirk. "But our guys battled back. Bart's home run there gave us a spark and we just pretty much built on that and carried it over to get the win."

Bryan jumped on the Buffs with early offense in the first. Tyler Latham (5-for-5) reached with a single through short and after stealing second J. D. Davis (2-for-5) brought him home with a double squeezed down the third base line.

Josh King (2-for-4) brought Davis home, but then got caught in a run-down while leaning too far off first.

The Buffs responded when Kirk led off with a walk and Dustin Ford (2-for-3) hit a deep single to center to put men on the corners with no outs.

A fielder's choice got Kirk in but Milligan's offense stalled there with a pair of grounders and trailed 2-1 after one.

The Lions tacked on two more in the second with two-out offense

when a sharp grounder got Shane Clawson on. From the nine-spot Billy Veal hit one to the short right fence and the wind carried it just over for a two-run homer and 4-1 lead.

Milligan kept getting early base runners, but kept killing itself hitting into double plays. Three straight innings the Lions turned a double play to end or limit the threat.

"Those are momentum swingers," Meade said. "On the defensive side any time you get a double play that's a huge energy boost."

In the bottom of the third, Jones led off with a walk, a bobbled ball at short allowed Kirk to reach, and Ford loaded the bags with no outs with an infield hit.

But the Buffs could only get one in when a double play traded two outs for a single score and Milligan trailed 4-2 at the end of three.

Bryan again got some two-out offense in the top of the fifth when Latham smacked a double to left and Davis plated him by pulling another ball into left field to extend the lead to 5-2.

Milligan's starter Shawn Robinson made it through six while giving up nine hits and five runs while striking out four and walking none. Relief pitcher Tyler Walker (1 H, 0 R) did a good job in two innings of work, and J. J. Bergamin picked up the unsuspecting win by pitching a one-hit ninth.

"It's a tough loss," said Bryan coach Taylor Hasty. "It comes down to little things. You have to be really good down the stretch, especially against a scrappy team like Milligan. They're going to keep battling and keep coming."