

[MIAA baseball: Pioneer reaches fourth straight Div. 5 Final Four following 8-1 win over Greenfield](#)

By Thomas Johnston, Staff Writer, The Greenfield Recorder Published: 06-08-2025 9:32 PM

NORTHFIELD — The Pioneer baseball team has made a habit of reaching the MIAA Division 5 Final Four.

The Panthers reached the state semifinals each of the last three years, but if top-seeded Pioneer wanted to reach the Final Four for a fourth year in row it would have to get past local rival Greenfield in the quarterfinals on Sunday.

The Panthers did just that.

Pioneer broke open a 2-0 lead in the second inning, tacked four runs on in the third and Ben Werner did the rest on the mound as the senior limited the No. 8 Green Wave to just one run to lead the Panthers back to the semis via an 8-1 victory.

“If you asked any of us four years ago if we’d be in the Final Four four straight times with four different seedings — some being underdogs, some being the higher seed — I don’t think anyone would have said we could do that,” Pioneer coach Kevin Luippold said. “The way we’ve played and executed on the field has been what’s gotten us there each time including this year.”

The unbeaten Panthers (24-0) will face No. 4 Hopedale in the semis at a date and time to be determined. The Blue Raiders knocked off Ware, 6-1, in the quarterfinals Sunday.

The loss marked the end of the season for Greenfield (15-8), which has made runs to the quarterfinals each of the last three years.

“We hurt ourselves out there,” Green Wave coach Tom Suchanek said. “They hit the ball which they’ve done each time against us. They played good defense and Ben pitched a good game.

“We lost four starters from last year,” Suchanek added. “I’ll take what we did this season.”

Alex McClelland blasted a triple in the first but Pioneer was unable to get him home to take the opening lead of the game. Greenfield followed with a pair of base runners in the top of the second after Luca Siano and Arthur Fitzpatrick both singled but Werner produced a flyout to get out of the jam.

Green Wave pitcher Logan Moore looked like he was going to be able to keep the game scoreless following a pair of outs but a miscommunication on a ball blooped into shallow center allowed Brody Welcome to reach first on the error. Werner drew a walk and Jackson Glazier followed by blasting a double to score the two baserunners and give Pioneer a 2-0 lead.

Greenfield got one back in the third. Chase Zraunig reached on a fielder's choice and after Caleb Thomas beat out a throw in the infield, Moore singled to bring in Zraunig and cut the lead to 2-1. Greenfield loaded the bases after Urijah Jenness walked but Werner got a groundout to end the inning.

The Panthers took command in the bottom of the frame. Jackson Campbell walked, McClelland singled and Ethan Quinn was hit by a pitch to load the bases, with a catcher interference call bringing in Campbell.

Evan Tsipenyuk grounded into the infield but McClelland used his speed to beat the throw home to make it a 4-1 game. Welcome grounded into a double play that brought Quinn home and Werner beat Jenness to the bag following a grounder to first and suddenly Pioneer held a 6-1 lead going into the fourth.

Braeden Tsipenyuk opened the fourth with a double and McClelland stayed hot by bashing a double to put him a home run away from the cycle while driving in Tsipenyuk to make it a 7-1 game.

"I have been looking for that pitch for a while now," McClelland said. "I finally got three I could handle."

McClelland added a second single in the sixth and scored on a wild pitch to close out the scoring.

Werner went the distance for the Panthers, striking out four and scattering five hits.

"Another great game from Ben," Luippold said. "He couldn't find the zone as much as he would like liked today but he held his composure which is what you want to see this time of year. He executed when he had to and that's all you can ask."

Pioneer enters the semifinals playing as well as it has all year, confident it can break through and reach the state finals after falling in the semis each of the last three years.

"We're feeling really confident," Luippold said. "The emotion of this being the last game these seniors will play on this field will carry over. No matter what happens we only have one game left or two games left. We have to leave it all out there on the field and I'm very confident they will do that."

McClelland, who was part of the unbeaten Pioneer basketball team that won a state title, agreed. "We broke the Final Four curse in basketball," McClelland said. "Now we have to break it in baseball. I haven't been upset at all since soccer. We just have to stay hot. Everyone has to hit like we have been. We have to fix some things but we're hitting it well right now."

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