

### **Feb. 23: Colts Freshman Defeat Grand Prairie in Season Opener 12-6**

On the strength of a relentless offense led by shortstop Kelsie Dancer's double and inside-the-park home run, the Colts overcame a shaky defensive start to pound out a 12-6 victory. Tyler Rice who earned the opening day start, pitched well, but the Colts found themselves in a 2-0 hole going into the bottom of the 2nd. The subsequent 5-run rally was started by third baseman Clayton Johnson "taking one for the team," featured a sacrifice bunt by catcher Chris Burnett, and a key two-out two-run hit by center-fielder Austin McKinney, prior to Kelsie's blast over the center-fielder's head. Grand Prairie tied the game in the third, and after the Colts grabbed a slim 6-5 lead in the bottom of the 3rd, looked to take control of the game in the 4th. They loaded the bases with none out off reliever Nathan Rowe. Nathan, the winning pitcher, aided by sterling Colts defense did not allow the tying run to score. Clayton fired a strike to Chris for a force at home, and left-fielder Gavin Hawbaker (who scored the go-ahead run in the previous frame) made an acrobatic catch in left to shutdown the threat. The Colts proceeded to bust the game open with a sixth-run fourth inning. One of the key plays was a safety squeeze bunt by Clayton, that resulted in first baseman Lawrence Brandt, who was on third after his second single of the game, getting trapped in a run-down. When the dust had settled, Lawrence and second baseman Duane Hughes (who reached on a hit) had scored, and Clayton was on third. About his tricky escape, Lawrence was heard to say, "I knew I was going to be safe when the throw glanced off my helmet." By the time the Gophers got another chance to bat, they were in a deep hole, trailing 12-5. Jeremy Cook pitched the fifth and last inning, allowing a harmless run. A last gasp rally by Grand Prairie was snuffed out by defensive replacement Garrett "Home School" Burk, who made a nice catch in right field, subbing for Jordan Miller, to preserve the victory.