

By Jason Pugh – THE TIMES
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Layton Tromba figured the best way to slow Haughton's high-powered offense was to go back to basics.

He executed that plan to near perfection Tuesday night, holding the Bucs to two hits and two unearned runs in Airline's 8-2 nondistrict victory.

"He was very efficient and it was good to see," Airline coach Toby Todd said. "He wasn't quite on Friday in his last start so it was good to see him attack and throw a lot of strikes."



Tromba (7-0) did not need to throw many pitches — 79 total — but he did fill up the strike zone. The Southeastern Louisiana signee went to only one three-ball count on the night while striking out four.

His only trouble came in the first when consecutive errors led to Josh Walker's two-out, two-run single that put Haughton up 2-0 after a half-inning.

After escaping that jam, Tromba retired 19 of the game's final 20 hitters in his most effective start since dealing with a shoulderblade injury in his right shoulder.

"It kinda affected pitching for a couple of weeks," Tromba said. "It's good now. It felt good (Tuesday)."

It felt even better after Airline (20-4) backed him up with five runs in the home half of the first.

Like Haughton (19-5) did in the first half inning, the Vikings took advantage of two errors in the inning.

John Pope's two-run single with two outs was the Vikings' only hit in the inning and capped the outburst off Walker (2-2), who needed 45 pitches to record two outs.

"We gave up seven unearned runs," Haughton coach Glenn Maynor said. "We gave up five unearned runs in the first and two unearned in the fourth and lost by six.

"They're a good team. When you give them extra outs, they're tough."

They were even tougher with Tromba back in his groove.

Armed with a five-run lead, Tromba kept his approach simple and turned in one of his best outings of the season.

"Back to the basics," said Tromba, who mixed fastballs, curve balls and his change-up with an occasional slider. "You've just got to keep the ball down and change speeds against them. They're a good hitting team."

Neither team swung the bats very well Tuesday.

Four Haughton pitchers held Airline to five hits and each team committed three errors.

The only earned run in the game came in the second inning when Tromba led off with a single off relief pitcher Hunter Bland's inner thigh.

Bland hit the ground before eventually walking off without assistance.

After Cole Hesson (2-for-2) drew a walk from reliever Matthew Anthony, courtesy runner Tyler Porter scored on the second of back-to-back groundouts to second.

Tromba continued the trend of productive Airline outs in the fourth, driving in Lance Jones with a sacrifice fly.

Jones led off the inning by reaching on a three-base error.

"That was one of the challenges we talked about as a team (Monday) and (Tuesday), coming off an emotional weekend, two hard-fought games," Todd said. "Haughton had a whole lot of wins on the table. (Tromba) really hit spots (Tuesday) night and he really pitched."