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Huscher comes through to give Sachems walkoff win

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High School

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Div. 3 Baseball

LOWELL — In the bottom of the seventh inning in yesterday's Division 3 state final, Middleboro senior shortstop Kevin Huscher approached the plate with his team down one run to Hopedale and the bases loaded.

Both teams' fans stood in anticipation at what Huscher would do with Blue Raiders closer Ian Strom's pitch. Huscher did not hear any of the buzz.

"It was totally surreal, honestly," said Huscher. "My whole body was numb."

Huscher hit a hard grounder through for a base hit, just out of reach of any Hopedale infielder. Taylor Frazier scored the tying run, and Brandon Lavelle followed, beating the throw to the plate to give the Sachems (20-5) the walkoff 4-3 victory.

"He came up with the fastball, and I just put a level swing on it right up the middle," said Huscher, who ended the day 3-for-4.

"It was the best feeling I've ever had in my life. It was the biggest hit of my career."

Middleboro notched the game's first run in the bottom of the second, with Andrew Card scoring on a Cody Braga hit.

Hopedale (21-4), hoping to send retiring 24-year coach Joe Small out with a championship, mounted a strong fourth inning to take a 2-1 lead. A Chris Embree hit scored Strom to tie the game at 1. Nicholas Holmes followed with a hit that bounced over the shoulder of Middleboro's Neil Perry and scored Embree.

In the bottom of the sixth, Card singled to right, allowing Huscher to tie the game at 2. Hopedale had runners at first and third in the top of the seventh when Cole DeDonato's hit brought Kevin Lynch home to put the Blue Raiders ahead, 3-2.

Card was 3-for-3 with a run scored and a RBI for the Sachems. Embree was 2-for-3 with a run scored and a RBI for the Blue Raiders.

The Sachems dedicated their title to late Middleboro teacher and soccer coach James Braga, who passed away in an car accident in March, donning memorial patches on their jerseys. The impact of their first run coming off the bat of his

grandson was not lost on the Sachems.

“You saw us all through the game, hitting the letters on our chest, saying, ‘Come on, Jimmy, help us out here,’” said Sachems coach Bill Lawrence.

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