AUBURN, N.Y. – Cortland rallied for four runs to tie the game in the bottom of the ninth and won the game on a Ricky Piovesan (East Norwich/St. Dominic) sacrifice fly in the 10th inning as the Red Dragons defeated Rhode Island College, 9-8, in the opening game of the NCAA Division III regional in Auburn. Cortland (36-7-1), ranked fourth nationally in Division III, will play on Friday at 3:30 p.m. versus the loser of Thursday night's Ithaca-Centenary contest. RIC (19-20) will face the loser of Thursday's Skidmore-Pitt.-Bradford in the six-team double-elimination regional.

Rhode Island scored seven runs in the top of the sixth to take a 7-1 lead. The Red Dragons rallied with a run in the seventh and two in the eighth, but the Anchormen added a run in the ninth to lead 8-4. In the bottom of the ninth, Zach Tacelli (Latham/Shaker) led off with a walk and went to second on a passed ball. With one out, Will Groff (Queensbury) doubled to left center to drive in Tacelli. Jimmy Basnight (East Norwich/St. Dominic) followed with a walk. Matt Brannon entered in relief and Steve Newman (Henrietta/Rush-Henrietta) hit a ball to third. The third baseman dove, then tried to tag Groff running past him. He was unable to do so, then threw wild to first. Groff and Basnight both scored and Newman went to third on the play. Travis Robinson (Ilion) then hit a sacrifice fly to left to drive in the tying run.

Justin Mattes (Queensbury), who entered the game in the ninth, retired the side in order in the top of the 10th and earned the win. In the bottom of the 10th, Adam Sidebottom (Lockport/Starpoint) led off with a triple to deep left field. Brannon got the next batter to pop up in the infield, but Piovesan hit a fly ball to center and Sidebottom easily scored the winning run.

Cortland took a 1-0 lead in the second when Pat D’Auria (Upper Nyack/Nyack) walked with one out, advanced to second on a wild pitch and scored on Tacelli’s two-out single up the middle.

The Red Dragons got a run back in the seventh on a wild pitch and two in the eighth on a Newman RBI groundout and a Robinson RBI single. Nick McPartland (Beacon) entered the game in relief in the sixth after the first seven batters reached base. He kept the Red Dragons within striking distance, allowing two hits and no runs and striking out two in three innings. Rhode Island picked up a run in the ninth on Brannon’s sacrifice fly.

Groff, who entered the game as a pinch hitter, finished 2-for-2 with a double and RBI. Newman was 2-for-5 with an RBI. Connell was 2-for-5 with three RBI and Brannon drove in two runs for the Anchormen. Wade Briggs started for RIC and allowed five hits and four runs, three earned, in seven and two-three innings. He fanned five and walked three.

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Rhode Island College: Wade Briggs, Eric Fama (8), Matt Brannon (9) (L, 2-3) and Tim Henault (Anchormen: 19-20)
Cortland: Mike Burnett, Nick McPartland (6), Ken Hartling (9), Justin Mattes (9) (W, 3-1) and Shawn Ensel (Red Dragons: 36-7-1, ranked 4th in Div. III)

2B - Jim Connell (RIC), Andy Mead (C), Will Groff (C)
3B - Adam Sidebottom (C)