

Baseball Wildcats Play Two Splits

One more series, one more split, and Mulvane High School baseball coach David Katzenmeier is sure of one thing.

"We're not ready yet," said Katzenmeier. "It's a combination of we're not playing defense yet and we're not throwing strikes. We just need to keep working and get better. We're just not where I want to be right now. We're an average or below average team, but we can get better."

The Wildcats were one inning away from a doubleheader sweep Monday, April 5, against Circle. The games were played at the Mulvane sports complex because the Thunderbird diamonds were under water. Mulvane lost the first game, 10-8, when the T-Birds wiped out a 6-0 lead by scoring 10 runs in the fourth inning. Mulvane came back in the nightcap for a 6-4 winner.

"Offensively, we did a better job than we did last Thursday, but we left a lot of runners on base," confessed Katzenmeier. "In the first game, we could have had 10 or 12 runs in the first few innings but we had trouble driving people in when they were on base. That comes back to haunt you."

Mulvane left 12 runners stranded in the first game. That was enough to give Circle hope, and the T-Birds broke through for all 10 of their runs in a fourth inning uprising.

Steve Nelson, Jeremy Kendrick and Larry Dixon had two hits apiece for the Wildcats in the first game. Tim Richardson, Robert Glaser and Kendrick scored two times each.

Mulvane gained the split by coming from behind, 4-0, with six in the third to give junior righthander Jamie Belden his first win. In that rally, Joel Phipps and Nelson both walked with one out. After a fly out, Kendrick reached on a walk and Dixon drove in two with a double to centerfield. Belden reached on an error and Chad Nichols and Schaan Buford had RBI hits to drive in two more runs.

The Cats opened their season Thursday, April 1, by splitting a doubleheader with Chisholm Trail League foe Nickerson. Playing at the Mulvane sports complex, the Wildcats edged the Panthers, 6-5, in the first game but were smothered, 12-1, in the nightcap.

"It was a good doubleheader for us," said Katzenmeier. "The kids did a real good job in the first game, especially Robert (Glaser), who pitched the entire game. For a first time out, he did well. Robert got stronger it seemed as the game went on, and he got a little better command of his curve ball. He was getting it over the plate later in the game and that helped his fastball."

Although the Wildcats had only four hits in the first game and three more in the second, Katzenmeier felt the series was a good one, especially starting the year. "We were hitting the ball and scoring and with the chill in the air and considering it was our first game, it wasn't too bad," noted Katzenmeier. "We're going to have to get what runs we can when we can. I do think the kids played real good defense, especially in the first game."

Mulvane bolted out the door with two runs in the opening inning, but the Panthers came back with five in the second to take a

FIRST GAME.

Mulvane	150 000 2-8 10
Circle	000 (10)00 x-10 10

Robert Glaser and Joel Phipps; Hadley and Miller.

SECOND GAME

Mulvane	006 000 0-6 5
Circle	040 000 0-4 7

Jamie Belden and Joel Phipps; Bills, Bodkin 3, and Miller.

FIRST GAME

Nickerson	050 000 0-5 5
Mulvane	230 100 x-6 4

Ralston and Henderson; Robert Glaser and Joel Phipps.

SECOND GAME

Nickerson	301 042 2-12 9
Mulvane	000 100 0-1 3

Neher and Henderson; Jeff Belden and Joel Phipps.

5-2 advantage. Mulvane added three more in the bottom of the second to tie the game, then scored the winner in the 4th inning as the senior righthander Glaser blanked Nickerson over the last five innings, finishing with a five-hitter.

Mulvane took the early lead with two runs in the first when Nelson and Richardson both walked. After a passed ball, Nelson trotted home when Glaser reached on a fielder's choice with everybody being safe. Dixon was hit by a pitch to fill the bases and Richardson finally scored when Buford grounded out.

The Cats made the most of two of their hits in the second inning, tying the contest at 5-5 with three more runs. Lead-off walks to Nichols and Daniel Myears started the rally. One run scored on Nelson's double to right-centerfield and a second scored when Richardson's blooped fell in. After an out, Dixon grounded out and Nelson scampered home.

Mulvane scored the eventual winning run in the fourth when Richardson walked with two out. Glaser's single moved him to third and Dixon's double down the line in left plated the run.

Glaser worked out of a jam in the sixth inning when two Panthers reached base but that was the last shot for Nickerson as he put them down one-two-three in the last frame. "He gained strength and confidence as he went," added Katzenmeier. "It was a good win for Robert both mentally and physically."

Nickerson took advantage of some shoddy fielding by the Cats in the nightcap to escape with the split. Mulvane's only run of the game came in the fourth after Nickerson had built up a 4-0 lead. The Panthers then sewed up the outcome with four more in the fifth.

"Defensively, we kicked it around in the second game, and there were some other plays that we should have made," said Katzenmeier. "Jamie Belden didn't get any support in the field and he didn't get any support at the plate because they threw one of the top pitchers in the league. That kind of hurt our run production."

The junior Belden reflected the time of year it was, too, as he had difficulty getting his breaking pitch in the strike zone. "We broke down defensively but Jamie also had trouble getting his off-speed pitch in the strike zone," said the Cat coach. "Coach (Bill) Cowan and I were talking about that. Jamie came out all pumped up, which is good, but they just sit back and waited on the fast ball. He'll get the off-speed in and when he does, he'll be okay."