

In Opening Split

No 'Break' For Wildcat Defense

The defense didn't go on Spring Break—most of the way. It helped carry the Mulvane High School baseballers to a season-opening doubleheader split Saturday, March 26, at Nickerson.

The two Chisholm Trail League teams battled to a basic tie, the Wildcats from Mulvane grabbing a 5-3 lead in the first game before Nickerson's Panthers poked past the Cats, 4-1, in the second game.

The game had been rescheduled from March 31st to the Saturday of Mulvane's spring break so both ends of the doubleheader could be played without the worry of darkness. Nickerson doesn't have lights.

"We came out and played really pretty good for a first game," said Mulvane High coach Dave Katzenmeier. "Considering it was our first game and we have a pretty young team, we came out playing aggressive baseball, and we did my favorite thing—good defense—for the most part."

And when that defense faded a bit, that's when Katzenmeier's Wildcats got in trouble. A couple of errors in the first inning of the second game kept the Cats from a possible sweep, allowing the Panthers to score two unearned runs to take a 4-0 lead against Mulvane's top pitcher, Jamie Belden.

"Overall, we played good defense," said Katzenmeier. "I can't complain. Shay Vangas made a diving catch in leftfield in the first game and Jesse Smith made several good defensive plays in centerfield. We were solid for 13 of the 14 innings. It was too bad we had the one inning. It was kind of contagious. One player makes a bobble and it gets going."

FIRST GAME

| | |
|-----------|----------------|
| Mulvane | 300 020 0—5 12 |
| Nickerson | 001 200 0—3 4 |

Scott Sanchez, Casey Myers 4, and Chad Nulik; Mickulcky and Henderson.

SECOND GAME

| | |
|-----------|---------------|
| Mulvane | 000 001 0—1 3 |
| Nickerson | 400 000 x—4 7 |

Jamie Belden and Chad Nulik; Thoede and Sheppard.

The Wildcats kicked off the campaign with a flying start at Nickerson. Shawn Erbert started the game with a base hit, the first of four consecutive hits for the Cats. Smith followed with a base hit. Tom Nienke singled for a run and Jay Schlegel slapped a double for another score. Schlegel came in to score on Casey Myers' two-out double.

Mulvane fell into a tie when Nickerson squeezed out one run in the third and two more in the fourth, but MHS won the game in the fifth with a pair of runs. Erbert started that rally with a walk and Smith kept things going with a single. With runners at first and third, Nienke, who had three hits during the opener, plated Erbert with a single. Schlegel loaded the bases with a base hit before Myers grounded out as one run scored.

Scott Sanchez, a junior, and Myers, also a junior, did the rest with some nifty pitching. Sanchez only fanned one but gave up only two hits and walked two before Myers rescued him with the bases loaded in the fourth with the bases full and one run in.

In the second game, Belden pitched well but settled for the loss. He scattered seven hits, walked one and struck out one as he went the distance. Four of those hits came

in the last five innings of work.

"Jamie pitched a good game but we couldn't get them put out in the first inning," said Katzenmeier. "He deserved a better deal but we'll get it the next time.

"Overall, the effort was there," added the Wildcat mentor. "The way the kids came out in that first game, I was happily surprised and very pleased. The kids were aggressive at the plate and played good defense. Scott threw a good ball game and Casey came in and finished it with a great job."

Schlegel and Nienke had three hits each in the first game to be the MHS standouts at the plate. For the nightcap, the Cats were held to only three hits, singles by Smith, Schlegel and Myers.

Mulvane's lone tally came in the sixth inning in Mulvane's only good rally of the game. Chad Nulik walked to led things off. Erbert reached on an error and Smith singled to fill the bases as Mulvane tried to wipe out a 4-0 lead and give Belden the comeback win. Nienke hit a sacrifice fly to center which scored Nulik but Schlegel and Vangas couldn't plate the runners.

The Wildcats will be idle until Monday, April 4, when the varsity entertains Circle for its home opener of the year. The doubleheader will be at the Mulvane sports complex and starts at 4 p.m. The junior varsity baseballers this season will be playing on the same days as the varsity but will be in the opposite location. If the varsity is home, the jayvee is on the road. Jayvee games begin at 4:30 p.m.