

No State

'The Call' Helps Put Wildcats On Sidelines

It will go down in Mulvane baseball annals as "the call." To overcome it, would have been the "Mother of All Comebacks." But in the end, the Mulvane High School baseballers simply dug themselves in too deep of a hole in the first inning.

The promise of regional baseball turned into the sorrow of a 10-0 deficit for the Wildcats as they were turned back by Augusta, 10-8, in the Augusta Class 4A Regional Baseball championship game Wednesday, May 21.

So, instead of Coach Zeke Rash's Cats making a trip to the 4A State Baseball Championship in Manhattan this weekend, it will be Augusta's Orioles carrying the banner for the Chisholm Trail League. The Wildcats finished their season at 14-8.

Mulvane made its way into the title game as expected by throttling Rose Hill, 12-6, in the semifinals. And Augusta kept its hot streak going by edging No. 1 seeded Neodesha, 3-2 to advance.

Augusta (13-10), with the No. 8 seed, will meet No. 1 seeded Nickerson (22-1) at 4 p.m. Friday, May 30, in first round action at Manhattan. Other first-round games will find Gardner (22-1) playing perennially-tough Topeka Hayden (14-9) in the 11 a.m. state tournament opener, Parsons (19-3) meeting Scott City (16-6) at 1:20 p.m. and Clay Center (17-5) tangling with Kansas City Ward (17-6) in the 6:30 game at Eisenhower Field.

The regional finals proved to be maddening for Mulvane in more ways than one. The Cats out-hit Augusta, 10-5, and played pretty solid defense, committing only three errors, but it was left to a combination of wild pitching by MHS starter Brian Minks and poor judgement by the regional officiating crew that allowed the Orioles to prevail.

"I'm not going to say the officials cost us the ball game," said Rash, who was thrown out of the game in the fourth-inning after a highly-questionable call by the

Augusta 4A Regional Tournament Results

CHAMPIONSHIP

Mulvane 010 111 4 8 10
Augusta 262 000 x 10 5
Brian Minks, Chad Gerwick 2, and Matt Phipps,
Stephenson and Carey.

SEMIFINALS

Rose Hill 000 150 0 6 7
Mulvane 027 030 x 12 9
Greg Richards, Jeff Nichol 3, Jeff Kemnitz 3, Devin
Rutledge 6, and Billy Christensen; Ryan Rogers, Pete
Myers 5, and Matt Phipps.
HR—Nick Krueger (RH); Justin Horton, Mike
Johnson (M).

Augusta 3, Neodesha 2

FIRST ROUND

Augusta 8, Haven 3
Rose Hill 13, Clearwater 3

umpiring crew. "It was a bad break. We had plenty of chances to pull through. In the last inning, I thought we were going to overcome it, but we didn't get it done."

The importance of the fateful fourth was

set up the senior righthander Minks, who gave up two runs in the first inning. He walked the first man up and hit the second. Both scored. It got worse in the second before junior Chad Gerwick went in in relief. Two walks and another hit batsman filled the bases, followed by a bunt single. Another walk finished Minks off. Gerwick finally extinguished the uprising but not before six runs had scored, giving the Orioles an 8-1 lead.

In the fourth, Gerwick started things by walking and Lucas Powell was hit. Pete Myers walked to fill the bases before Bryce Schumacher singled to make it 10-2. With the bases loaded, Matt Phipps popped up to short center and the Augusta shortstop made a diving attempt at the catch but the ball seemed to roll loose. All runners advanced.

However, one umpire called it a catch.

After that, it's a blur. After a 20-minute discussion, the umpiring crew called Phipps out by a caught ball and called Powell out

because he left third base too soon on his way home. That call came without an official appeal of the runner leaving third by Augusta. What actually happened is that the promising big inning was short-circuited. Instead of a 10-3 game, the bases filled and no outs, the Wildcats ended up with no runs scoring, two outs and runners at first and second.

"Our runners saw the ball loose on the ground," said Rash. "That's why they ran. And one official said he saw the ball loose but the crew didn't want to over-rule the official closest to the play." Instead, the crew made the wrong call at the wrong time for the Cats.

"I'm not going to say it didn't hurt our chances because it did," said Rash. "It could have been a big, big inning. It's just too bad we put ourselves in that spot to have to rely on the umpires. It was a great effort from our kids. They have given a great effort all season long. But that fourth inning was just a nightmare. Heck, the second inning was a nightmare, too."

Mulvane chipped away with another run in the fifth, and one in the sixth, then made their final run in the last inning when Zach Wayman doubled and Mike Johnson walked. Darrin Erbert also walked to fill the bases. Lucas Powell singled in one run, Schumacher walked to force in another and Phipps singled to make it 10-8 before the rally ended.

Gerwick finished the game, giving up

only three hits.

In Mulvane's first regional game, it was the Cats jumping out to a big lead, thanks to a seven-run third inning that gave starter Ryan Rogers a 9-0 cushion.

Phipps' brought in two runners (Myers and Schumacher) when his ball was errored by the Rose Hill starting pitcher in the second. In the third, Erbert and Gerwick walked, and both scored when Minks lined a base hit. Schumacher's single scored a run and he came in on Phipps' base hit. Justin Horton singled in one run and scored himself on a balk moments later and the final run was scored by Todd Fagan, who singled and scored on a passed ball.

"We played real well against Rose Hill," said Rash. "Defensively, we executed. We didn't have any errors and our pitching was real solid. Rose Hill hit the ball and scored some runs but we came back and deflated them with some big hits in the 5th after they made it interesting. Justin Horton had a home run, then Mike Johnson hit a towering homer. He hit it a ton."

Horton, making his first varsity start, slammed a one-out homer over the left-field fence and Fagan kept things going by walking before Johnson connecting on his long homer to left-center.

Rogers and Myers did the rest, holding the Rockets to seven hits, only three of them coming in innings other than the 5th.