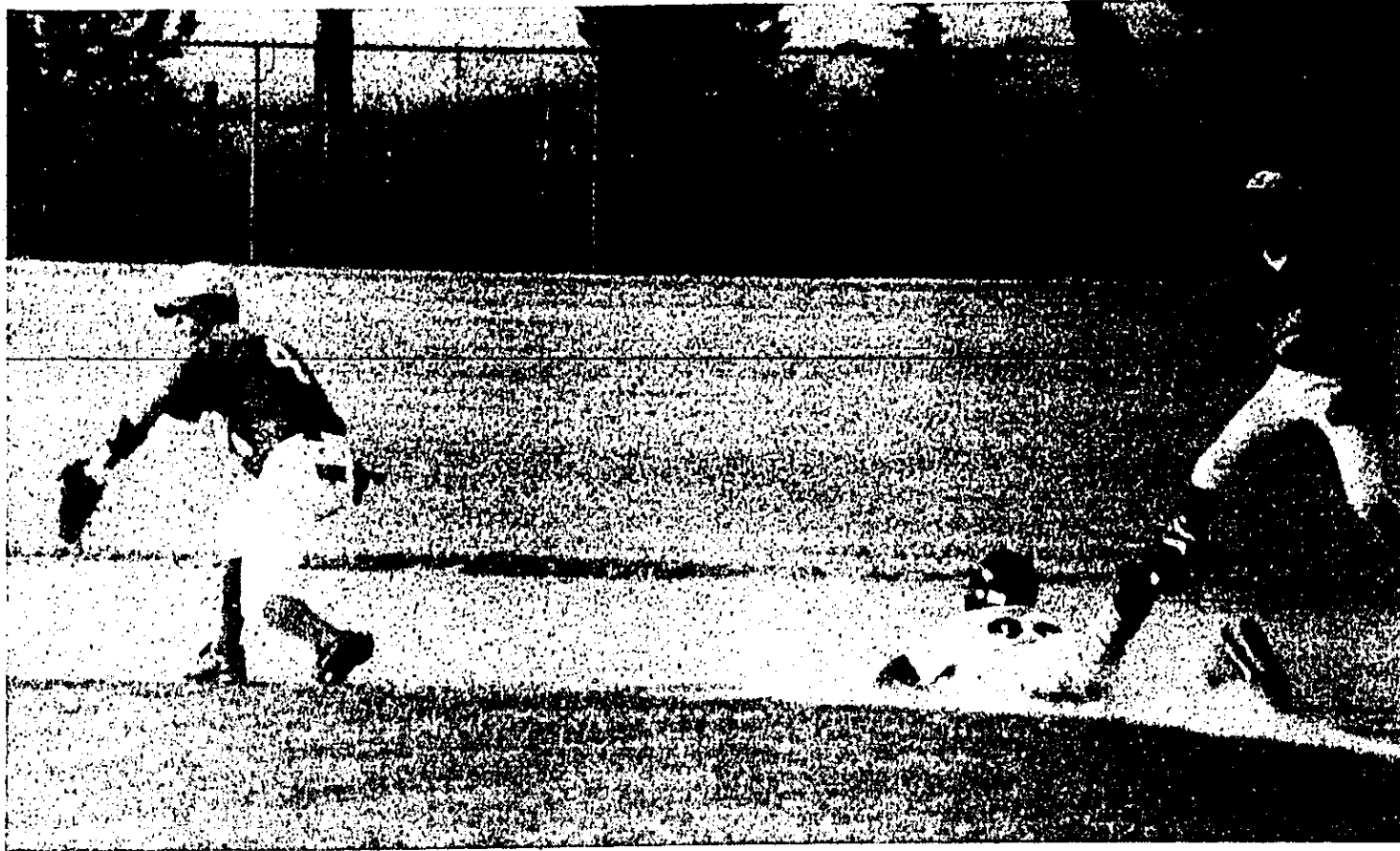


'Best Game' Sends Cats To State



Second baseman Brian Dinkel reaches for a throw as SS Lucas Powell backs him up



MHS baseballers celebrate after receiving the Regional Championship trophy from Mulvane Mayor Jim Ford, right

It only took the Mulvane High School baseball Wildcats an hour or two to go from one extreme to the other. Luckily, it was from worst to best!

Manhattan, here we come. That's the Wildcat chant today as the MHS baseballers prepare for the Class 4A State Baseball Championship Friday and Saturday, May 28-29. But it didn't come without a price. The Cats had to make Coach Zeké Rash the maddest man in the world, then the happiest! All in the same night. Heck, all in the same hour!

Mulvane won the Mulvane Class 4A Regional Thursday night, May 19, by playing their best ball of the campaign as they lambasted Nickerson, 14-7, in a championship game runaway.

But just a few hours earlier, the Cats huffed and puffed before barely surviving against a first-year program. Attica-Chaparral gave the Wildcats all they had before Mulvane finished strong in an 8-5 semifinal. Nickerson trounced No. 1 seeded Haven, 10-3, in an earlier semifinal.

The three regional victories gave the Wildcats a 10-13 record going into a first round game Friday, May 28, at Eisenhower Field in Manhattan, which is located in the far northeast section of Manhattan off of U.S. 24.

Mulvane Class 4A Regional Baseball Tournament CHAMPIONSHIP

Nickerson 310 020 1-7 3
Mulvane 219 000 x-14 11
Daniel Rush, Seth Misunas 3, and Josh Barkley, Brian Dinkel, Garrett Hennes 6, and Jeremiah Webb
HR—Josh Barkley (N); Garrett Hennes, Derek Boyer (M)

SEMIFINALS

Mulvane 300 031 1-8 10
Attica/Chaparral 400 010 0-5 6
Josh Sears, Luke Scott 2, Derek Boyer 4, Garrett Hennes 5, and Jeremiah Webb; David Dieker, Eddy Spears 6, and Josh Wiley
HR—Josh Wiley (A)

Nickerson 10, Haven 3
FIRST ROUND
Mulvane 6, Wellington 5
Nickerson 10, Clearwater 0

Mulvane has been there before but the improbable Wildcats had to scratch and claw all the way. "You know, against Attica, we played as poorly as we have played all year for whatever reason," said Rash. "We had no momentum, nothing going at all against Attica. We weren't mentally sharp. We were physically dragging, but we got a spark when we got the lead in the 4th inning and it was just enough to hang on. Then, against Nickerson, we fall behind when they score three runs in the first inning. How bad can something look?"

"I was almost in depression and I think the kids were too, so I let them have it before the game. I think they were irritated with the way they had played, too. The kids have been a comeback team all year long. They have character and a lot of heart. That's what we bring to the table."

That was enough against the Panthers. Mulvane bounced back with four runs in the bottom of the 1st, then blew the doors plum off with a nine-run third and senior Brian Dinkel, a seldom-used righthander, did the rest as he rescued the pitching staff with five solid innings of four-hit ball. Ace Garrett Hennes finished up with two good innings.

"Brian Dinkel really did a fantastic job for us," said Rash. "He's has a little arm trouble when you use him a lot so we didn't until we needed him. This was one of those 'have to' deals. He was rusty at first but settled back and did a great job. And Garrett had a great tournament, giving up only one earned run in three appearances. We needed to have him step up and he did."

The 3rd inning explosion was the game and senior Derek Boyer provided the hitting spark. He started that inning with a triple

Kansas 4A State State Baseball Pairings

Played at Eisenhower Field-Manhattan
FRIDAY, MAY 28

Game 1 — No. 4 seed Wamego (14-5) vs. No. 5 Louisburg (11-6), 11 a.m.

Game 2 — No. 1 Kansas City Ward (20-3) vs. No. 8 Mulvane (10-13), 1:30 p.m.

Game 3 — No. 3 Augusta (18-5) vs. No. 6 Parsons (12-9), 4

Game 4 — No. 2 Pratt (18-5) vs. No. 7 Topeka Hayden (10-9), 6:30

SATURDAY, MAY 29

Game 5 — winners of games 1 and 2, 10 a.m.

Game 6 — winners of games 3 and 4, 12:30 p.m.

Game 7 — losers of games 5 and 6, 3

Game 8 (Championship)—winners of games 5 and 6, 5:30

MULVANE Sports

and scored on Eric Tatum's hit, then ended the inning, too, when he clubbed a two-run homer off the scoreboard in left. Brian McCoplin, Lucas Powell, Randy Johnson and Hennes all had RBI hits in the frame.

For the championship game, Powell finished with a 3-for-5 game, Dinkel went 2-for-4 with three runs scored, Luke Scott went 3-for-4 with two runs scored and Hennes went 2-for-3 with two runs scored.

The Wildcats fell behind second-seeded Attica (5-8), which is in its first year of organized BB, in the very first inning but came back for the lead with three runs in the 5th for a 6-4 lead. Hennes relieved Boyer and snuffed out the Bulldog offense. Johnson and Scott keyed the Cat offense, each going 2-for-4 with two runs scored and Hennes went 2-for-3, as did Tatum.