

Haunted At Manhattan

MANHATTAN—It wasn't Halloween, but the Mulvane High School baseball team was haunted Friday, May 28, in the first round of the of the Kansas Class 4A State Baseball Tournament here at Norvell Field.

Haunted by missed opportunities early in the game. Haunted by the bad luck of the past. And finally, haunted by the long ball.

The Wildcats were seeded 8th in the field of eight and drew No. 1 seeded Kansas City Bishop Ward in the opening game Friday and it also turned out to be the only game for Coach Zeke Rash's Cats as the Cyclones blew up a storm in a 9-1 game. The Cyclones marched through the 4A field in a breeze to put their mark on the school's 5th State championship, including the second State title in a row.

Ward (23-3) slaughtered Topeka Hayden, 18-0, for the title after trouncing Wamego, 12-5, in a semifinal. Hayden dumped Augusta, 6-5, in the other semifinal. Augusta rebounded in the game for third place to rout Wamego, 14-1.

The Wildcats had their chances early before the Ward lefthander, Frank Jaksa, got himself together in the late innings. But they couldn't score, which usually comes back to haunt a team.

"And it did," said Rash. "We missed opportunities early in the game and probably should have been ahead going into the third or fourth inning when they blew it open with five runs. It could have been a whole new ball game if we would have taken advantage of those opportunities. It definitely came back to haunt us. Especially in a state tournament game, you have to take advantage of everything you get and we didn't. We didn't execute when it counted and they did. It's as simple as that."

The underdog Cats had their No. 1 pitcher, Garrett Hennes, on the hill against the strong hitting Cyclones, who came into the year with over 50 home runs in the line-up. A walk got Hennes in trouble in the very first inning and it led to Ward going out to a 1-0 lead. However, the Cats came back in the bottom of the 1st when Randy Johnson and Brian Dinkel both walked and moved to second and third on a wild pitch with one out. Luke Scott's fly ball was deep enough but Johnson got caught up the base path and was held up after going back to tag up.

"We should have answered there but we didn't execute," admitted Rash.

Mulvane had another golden opportunity to take the lead in the second inning when Derek Boyer started the frame by walking. Eric Tatum bunted him over and was safe when the Ward throw brought the first baseman off the bag. No outs. First and second Jeremiah Webb tried to bunt the runners over but he lined the bunt back to the mound and Jaksa doubled Boyer off at second. End of threat.

And again in the third, lead-off hitter

Class 4A State Baseball Tournament

CHAMPIONSHIP

Kansas City Ward 18, Topeka Hayden 0

THIRD PLACE

Augusta 14, Wamego 1

SEMIFINALS

Kansas City Ward 12, Wamego 5

Topeka Hayden 6, Augusta 5

FIRST ROUND

Kansas City Ward 102 500 1-9 11

Mulvane 000 000 1-1 4

Frank Jaksa and David Janes; Garrett Hennes, Derek Boyer 4, and Jeremiah Webb.

HR—Matt Rebout (W).

Wamego 6, Louisburg 5

Augusta 8, Parsons 3

Topeka Hayden 7, Pratt 2

Lucas Powell reached on a walk but was promptly picked off by the Cyclone lefty. Johnson followed by being called out on a hotly disputed near swing that was called a swing and Dinkel was thrown out at first when it appeared he had beaten the throw by a split-second.

The Wildcats started getting that haunted feeling

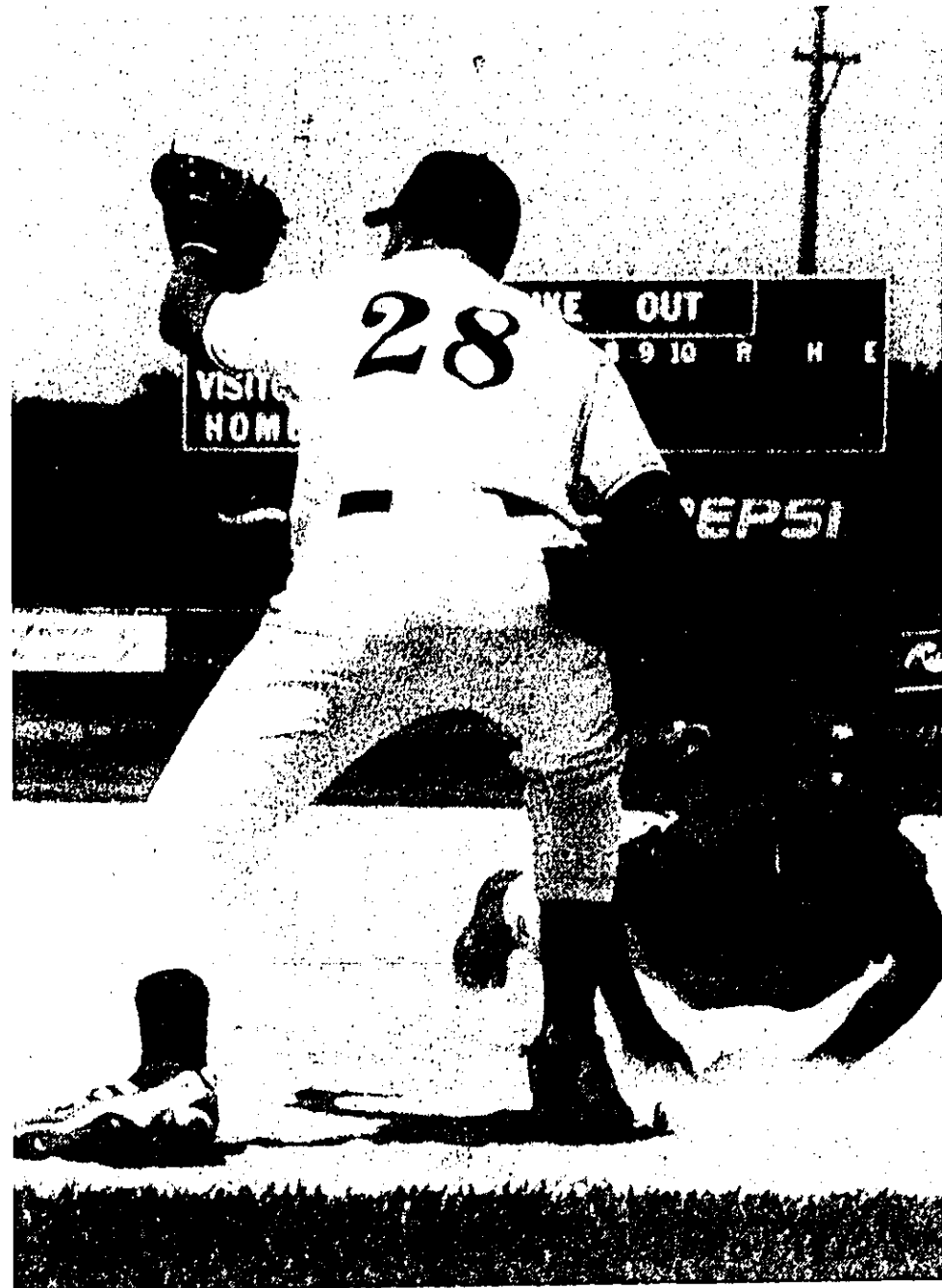
Rash remembers the bad luck that has dogged the last three MHS appearances at the State level. That includes 1992, 1993 and now 1999, all resulting in first-round losses. One year, the Wildcats could have advanced but their first-game starting pitcher, Jarrod Oldridge, pulled a muscle in warm-ups and wasn't the powerhouse he had been during the season. In another first-round loss, the Cats squandered a big lead and lost in the last inning.

"Three times in the 1990's I guess is not too bad," said Rash. "Our defense was pretty solid against Ward and Hennes did a nice job but I think he got tired after three innings because he hasn't had as much work this year because of injuries. Derek Boyer came in and did a great job, I thought."

Boyer relieved Hennes in the 4th after a two-run homer by Matt Rebout, his 17th of the season, made it 8-0. He struck out the side in the 5th and gave up only one run in the 7th.

Meanwhile, the Mulvane offensive machine struggled as Jaksa started getting his command back. He had a no-hitter going until Webb drilled a hit to right-center in the 5th inning. Mulvane finally broke the shutout spell in the last inning when Boyer singled to left and Eric Tatum ripped a single to center. Webb reached on a fielder's choice before Jared Rice's infield dribbler went for a hit, scoring Boyer from third.

"We played them respectably," said Rash, whose Cats finished the campaign at 10-14. "They just had some good hitters. The No. 3 and 4 hitters were the most impressive hitters I've seen this year. I thought we contained them most of the way but we missed our chances. I did think that we showed we deserved to be there, though."



Cat Lucas Powell dives back to first base, but was picked off in the first round at State