

Cat Hitting Struggles In Boys BB Openers

Hitting practice became a heightened priority this week during the Mulvane High School baseball practices and MHS head baseball coach Ramon Wiseman is hoping everybody can start taking a laid back approach.

That's as in staying back.

The Mulvane High School baseballers opened their 2002 season Thursday, March 28, with a doubleheader loss to Valley Center. The problem was the Wildcat bats wouldn't work. VC blanked the Cats, 7-0, in the first game, then the Hornets shelled four Mulvane pitchers in the nightcap with a 13-3 rout.

"I was pretty disappointed in our hitting in the first game," admitted Wiseman. "We came out of it a little in the second game, getting 10 hits, but we fell behind so quickly that we kept playing for a big inning and it never happened. After that series, I think we pinpointed the hitting problem. For some reason, everybody wanted to lean forward in the batter's box. When you get your weight up front, you start popping things up. By Saturday's practices, we were hitting a lot better, but that doesn't do us much good in the Valley Center games. Hopefully, we have it fixed and the kids will come back swinging Thursday against Goddard."

The Hornets, who had already played a pair of games, were ready for the Cats, breaking in front, 4-0, in the first inning of the first game to put the Wildcats on the defensive. A two-run homer ended that rally but Mulvane never recovered from the poor start.

"I think we had a lot of first-game jitters and when our hitting wasn't where it needed to be, everybody got anxious, which is why they all leaned toward the pitcher instead of back like they were supposed to.

"Valley is a good hitting team and I think we learned a lot just watching them. That's where we started noticing they all had their weight back and we had our weight forward."

And when everything else starts going, the confidence and concentration starts going too, which caused the Cat fielding to suffer,

especially in the second game. "We played pretty good defense in the first game but it was terrible in the second game. We had four or five doubleplay opportunities and didn't get any of them. That just kills a pitcher."

Mulvane was hitless in the opener until Jimmie High's lead-off single in the 3rd inning but that's as far as High got. Luke Gunter walked and Jon Rogers singled with none out in the 5th inning to give the Cats a good scoring opportunity but even a single by Dan MacKay one out later wasn't enough to break into the scoring column. Mulvane's only other hit came in the 6th when Jake Myers doubled and Andrew Brusco walked with one out, but the next two batters went out quietly.

Mulvane's bats were much more active in the nightcap. VC out-hit the Cats, 13-10. Freshman William Fagan and Jake Myers each went 2-for-4 with one run scored. Mulvane scored twice in the opening inning. Fagan singled, Austin Higinbotham doubled him home. Jake Myers blasted a triple but Higinbotham was thrown out at the plate. Myers scored moments later when Ryan Tatum singled.

The only other Cat score came in the 6th when Rogers doubled and scored when High singled. Pete Myers walked to keep the rally going with no outs, but the next three batters struck out and that was the end of the Mulvane offensive hopes.

Mulvane's top pitcher, Higinbotham, started game No. 2 but left after two innings when he became ill.

FIRST GAME

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| Valley Center | 402 010 0—7 7 |
| Mulvane | 000 000 0—0 3 |

Chad Wilmott, Ben Gray 5, and Ross Wilson; Jake Myers, Logan Sorensen 6, and Ryan Tatum.
HR—Matt Opliger (VC).

SECOND GAME

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| Valley Center | 322 210 3—13 11 |
| Mulvane | 200 001 0—3 10 |

Michael Campbell, Todd Wheeler 5, and Ross Wilson; Austin Higinbotham, Logan Sorensen 3, Jon Rogers 4, Pat Myers 5, and Ryan Tatum.
HR—Jared Simon (VC).