

SB Wildcats Going To 4A State

It was just like *deja vu*: Mulvane and Rose Hill going down to the wire for a regional softball title. But it was more. It was like a reverse *deja vu*, something Yogi Berra could only understand or love: Mulvane 6, Rose Hill 5.

You don't have to understand it to believe it. The Mulvane High School Wildcats put up back-to-back last inning comebacks together to walk away with their first-ever trip to the Class 4A State Softball Tournament Wednesday night in the Mulvane 4A Regional Tournament. The Cats rallied to take out No. 2-seeded Haven, 5-4, in the opening game, then staged another miracle comeback to topple top-seeded Rose Hill, 6-5, for the school's first-ever regional softball championship.

The Cats, now 10-13, will meet No. 1 seeded Clay Center (21-1) in the first round of the 4A state meet at 5 p.m. Friday, May 24, at CiCo Park in Manhattan.

"It's a lifetime experience," said Cat coach Charlie Mason, who also coached the MHS boys basketball team to the 4A state championship in 1984. "We felt like we had an excellent chance to go and knew it would get down to Rose Hill and us. To my knowledge, that's the first time we've ever beaten Rose Hill, too."

What a time to do it, too. But for Mason, the game had an eerie twist. Two years ago, the Rose Hill led Mulvane the whole game

only to see the Cats score in the 7th to go ahead. RH then scored in the bottom of the seventh to win it.

Deja vu in reverse. Mulvane jumped ahead early, then the Rockets scored four in the top of the final inning to take the lead. The Cats came through with two in the bottom of the thrilling inning to win the ticket to Manhattan.

"The thing you can say about the tourney was that it was truly a team effort," said Mason. "The list is endless as far as big plays goes. The infield played great defense. Lindsay Kendrick had a good regional. You can't say enough about Valeri Larson. She was the difference in the game against Haven. And Jamie Wilson coming in and getting the last two outs and Ashley Wirth doing the same thing in the championship game. That's pressure pitching."

What a spot for the freshman Wirth's varsity debut. She got the last two RH outs with two runners on and four runs in in the 7th inning.

Lindsay Kendrick started the title game by singling and later scored when Shelley Richards tapped to second. The Cats gave starter Wilson a 4-0 cushion when they tacked in three more in the fourth. Valeri Larson and NiChelle Bruce both singled before Lee Cates ripped one over the right-fielder's head. She toured the sacks before the ball returned.

The top-seeded Rockets, the only team in the regional field with a winning record, finally tagged the Cat starter for a run in the sixth, then took a 5-4 lead in the top of the seventh inning with three more runs before the frosh Wirth came in to stop the bleeding, but by that time, RH had the upper

hand, 5-4. It looked more like another heart-breaker instead of Mulvane's first trip to the softball state tourney.

Crissy Carpenter ignited the sudden death rally with a single and stole second, and after that, things started to unravel for the Rockets. Wilson reached base on a dropped ball at first base and Kendrick lined a single to tie the game up. Wilson made it to third and Kendrick took second on a wild pitch and Janelle Wenke popped a sacrifice fly—just deep enough—to right field and Wilson scurried home and was engulfed by teammates in a frenzy.

"This is an incredible bunch as far as attitude is concerned, they don't let anything get to them, any of them," noted Mason. "They play two tough ball games and come back in

both of them. They responded to the call."

The Cats started the the regional like it was going to be short and sweet. They fell behind No. 2 seeded Haven, 2-0, in the second inning, then tied it at 3s in the sixth before winning it without an out in the bottom of the last inning. What a stunner!

The Wildcats' best offense came in the two-run sixth when Kendrick started things with a single and scored when Janelle Wenke singled. Wenke was brought to the plate on Larson's line double to right. Larson also had an RBI triple in the 4th frame.

The Haven Wildcats punched across another run in the seventh and had the bases loaded with one out when Wilson relieved starter Susan Wenger and snuffed out the rally with a great job of pitching.

That set the stage for the first drama of the night. Lee Cates started the 7th by walking but she was cut down at third base on an infield grounder by Crissy Carpenter. Carpenter toured the bases on a couple of Haven errors to knot the score. Wilson reached on a fielder's choice. Both Kendrick

and Jessica Sheridan reached on fielder's choices and pinch runner Sabrina Foy raced home beating the throw on a play at the plate.

At Manhattan, Mason said he plans to go with senior Susan Wenger, "then go from there," meaning more than likely all three of Mulvane's pitchers could see the hill. "Clay Center's only lost once and this is the first year their high school has had a softball program," said the Cat coach. "They've been real strong with their summer program, though. We just have to keep playing great defense and get some hits."

Mulvane 4A Regional Softball Results

CHAMPIONSHIP

Rose Hill 000 001 4—5 6
 Mulvane 100 300 2—6 5
 Wendi Howard and Jill Graham; Jamie Wilson, Susan Wenger 6, Ashley Wirths 7, and Shelley Richards.
 HR—Lee Cates (M)

SEMIFINALS

Haven 020 001 1—4 4
 Mulvane 000 102 2—5 5
 Terille Matzek and Amy Campbell; Susan Wenger, Jamie Wilson 7, and Shelley Richards.

Rose Hill 4, Wellington 2

Class 4A State Softball Pairings

At CiCo Park - Manhattan

FRIDAY, MAY 24

Game 1 — Clay Center (21-1) vs. Mulvane (10-13), 5 p.m.

Game 2 — Santa Fe Trail (20-2) vs. Holton (12-10), 5

Game 3 — Pratt (20-2) vs. Paola (15-5), 7

Game 4 — Kansas City Piper (16-4) vs. Labette County (15-5), 7

SATURDAY, MAY 25

Game 5 — winner of game 1 vs. winner of game 4, 11 a.m.

Game 6 — winner of game 2 vs. winner of game 3, 11

Game 7 (Third Place)—losers of game 5 and 6, 3 p.m.

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

Mulvane Sports



MHS softball girls celebrate first ever regional title victory - on to state