

We're Goin' To State! Wildcat SB Breeze To Regional Championship

It's not the greatest feeling, but it's the first step to getting there.

The Mulvane High School girls walked through the Douglass Class 4A Softball

Regional Tuesday, May 19, setting the stage for "getting there."

A 9-2 victory over Clearwater in the regional championship game qualified

Coach Charlie Mason's Wildcat girls for a run at the Class 4A State Championship, which will be on the line Friday and Saturday, May 29-30, at Twin Oaks Complex in Manhattan.

The trail to State started earlier in the day Tuesday when the No. 1 seeded Cats run-ruled Wellington, 12-2, in a semifinal game. Clearwater thumped Douglass, 7-2, in its semifinal.

In the first round games Monday, May 18, Wellington topped Rose Hill, 2-0, and Clearwater edged past Augusta, 3-0.

Earning the regional championship puts the Wildcats (16-6) in the eight-school 4A field at Manhattan. Pairings won't be announced until this weekend after all eight regionals are completed.

"This is the thing we've been shooting for all year," said Mason. "It's not the pinnacle yet but we're getting there. We want to go up there (to Manhattan) and do more than play one game. It's another step in the right direction for our program. We have gotten close a number of times in the last few years and we want to do more than just get there."

This will be the second trip to the state tournament in the last three years for the MHS softballers. Two years ago, the Cats went to state only to get knocked out in the first game by No. 1 seeded Clay Center by a 3-0 count. And this was the fifth time in the last five years that the Wildcats had played for the regional title.

"We played extremely well in both games," noted Mason, who is hoping to snag one of the top four seeds at State. "We played like we have all year long. The girls are playing solid defense for the most part. We're getting excellent pitching from Shelley Richards and Kassie Hargrove. And the third ingredient, hitting, has been getting stronger as the season progresses."

Mulvane whacked 13 hits against Clearwater and had another 14 in the semifinal against the Crusaders.

"When all three areas of the game are coming together, good things happen," added Mason. "And good things are happening to us."

One of those good things was to get the No. 1 seed at Douglass, which allowed Mulvane to watch the first round and go into the semifinals Tuesday well-rested. "The girls were ready and rested," said Mason. "We just went out there and took care of business." Indeed, they had little trouble in raising their record to 16-6. All six losses have been to Class 5A schools this season.

The coin flip deciding the home team in the championship game was the only thing that went against the Cats but they quickly went about their business. After Clearwater had taken a 2-1 lead after one frame, Mulvane got things rolling in the third when Jessica Sheridan singled and Lindsay Kendrick reached on an error. Shelley Richards hit into a fielder's choice with Sheridan being thrown out at third but Cara Ashlock landed a solid blow, a double to score two runs. Freshman Danielle Vanderhoof singled for another run and scored when Ashley Wirths bounced a single through the infield, giving the Cats a 5-2 lead they never relinquished.

Mulvane put the game away when Ashlock banged a bases-loaded, two-out single that cleared the sacks in the sixth inning. She finished with five RBIs and a 2-for-3 night at the plate.

That was more than enough for Hargrove, who boosted her record to 8-2. She scattered six hits and didn't walk a batter. In addition, her battery mate, Richards, threw out three Clearwater runners on the bases.

"Hargrove has been tough since she

earned a starting spot," said Mason. "She didn't hurt herself and our defense played great ball behind her."

The Wildcats eliminated Wellington by beating the Crusaders for the third time this season. Sheridan went 3-for-4 with two runs scored, Richards went 4-for-4 with three runs scored, Vanderhoof was 3-for-3 with two runs and two RBIs and Ashlock went 2-for-4 with three runs and two RBIs. Wirths also had two RBIs.

"We jumped on them early and kind of broke the game open with four runs in the third," pointed out Mason.

That's when Richards singled to start things. After Ashlock reached on an error, Vanderhoof singled for an RBI. After a run scored an error, Sabrina Foy's single drove another run to the plate ahead of a walk to Jackie McColpin. Sheridan then singled to plate the final tally and give Mulvane a 7-2 lead.

The Wildcats ended it with two runs in the 5th when McColpin and Sheridan singled, then rode singles by Richards and Ashlock to the plate.

Richards was tough on the hill, spacing only four singles. More importantly, she walked only one batter as she raised her record to 6-3.

"If we continue doing the things we've been doing, we'll be making some noise at Manhattan," said Mason. "We have our pitchers going, our hitting going and our fielding going. We may go up there and face

some great pitching, but we face some of the best right here in our league game-in and game-out."

Mulvane Sports

Douglass 4A Regional Softball Tournament

CHAMPIONSHIP

Mulvane	104 103 0-9	13
Clearwater	200 000 0-2	6
Biby, Wilson 3, Rikki Hall 6, and Bloomer, Kassie Hargrove and Shelley Richards.		

SEMIFINAL

Wellington	020 00-2	4
Mulvane	304 32-12	14
Mocker and Yunker, Shelley Richards and Danielle Vanderhoof.		

Clearwater 7, Douglass 2

FIRST ROUND

Wellington 2, Rose Hill 0
Clearwater 3, Augusta 0

Regular Season Games

FIRST GAME

Mulvane	001 320 0-6	11
Maize	110 016 x-9	
Shelley Richards and Danielle Vanderhoof; Frasco and Reed.		

HR - Stuverson (Mz)

SECOND GAME

Mulvane	000 000 0-0	4
Maize	100 000 x-1	6
Kassie Hargrove, Ashley Wirths 6, and Shelley Richards.		