



Mulvane's Stephanie Tatum puts a late tag on a Buhler runner sliding back into 1st

Cats, Crusaders Split

Pitching Stout In SB Openers

A year ago, Mulvane started the high school softball season with towering hopes that came crashing down in the first games of the year.

With a veteran squad returning last year, the Cats had hoped to get off on the right foot but a trip to Buhler was some sour medicine.

It was different this year. The Wildcats had another big returning class but Buhler was coming to the Mulvane sports complex. The two Chisholm Trail League teams battled to a split in the two game series Monday evening, March 31, at the complex.

The Crusaders held on late in the opener, winning 4-3, but the Wildcats came back in the nightcap and registered a convincing 6-1 verdict.

"Both games were pretty outstanding games for the first time out," said Mulvane High School SB coach Charlie Mason. "We could have won both of them. I would have liked to win both of them, but we came up just short in the first game. I wasn't dejected, though, because we played good ball. We out hit Buhler in both games and our two pitchers (junior Shayna Duncan and senior Dani Phillips) pitched some great ball. The only thing that kept us from sweeping is having a runner thrown out at the plate in the first game."

Buhler made much of its team back from last year, just as the Cats did. Coach Mason has eight starters returning, again giving the 2003 Wildcats some pretty lofty hopes. "Buhler had a lot of girls back, too, but we really didn't know what to expect because they didn't have a jayvee team last year," noted Mason. "When you look at it, we had our chances in the first game and we played fine defense, but they had some good arms in the outfield and a good catcher."

The Cats and Duncan started slowly. The Crusaders bounced out to a 2-0 lead in the opening inning of the year and added two more in the 4th inning. Mulvane came back with a single run in the 3rd when senior Hannah Benvin sliced a triple down the rightfield line and scored when Melissa Doerfer grounded out.

The Wildcats also scored in the 4th when Phillips singled, Kayla Linnebur singled, Katelyn Carson singled and Sara McKnight drove Linnebur home with a base rap. Mulvane's bid for another run in the 5th died at the plate when Stephanie Tatum singled, stole second, went to 3rd on Doerfer's ground out and tried to score on Sara Clasen's fly to center but was gunned down at the plate.

The Cats tried to make Duncan a winner in the last inning, too when McKnight singled and Benvin reached on a fielder's choice. Doerfer singled just before pinch runner Morgan Stoll scored on a passed ball. Doerfer died on 3rd base.

Duncan pitched well, though, giving up only four hits and fanning eight Crusaders. It was a job Phillips nearly matched in the nightcap. She struck out seven and gave up only six hits to win it.

Mulvane bats rang out with 11 hits with Abby Sorensen slapping three singles, Phillips nailing a double and single and Tatum going 2-for-3.

"In the second game, Dani comes back after not pitching last year and throws a good ball game and our defense helped us a lot, too," stressed Mason. "We made a couple of big plays and got out of some innings, plus we hit the ball well. On defense, we had only one error in the first game and two in the second game and those were really errors of judgement more than anything else. I think we're way ahead of where we were at this time last year."

In the nightcap, after the Crusaders had broken on top with a solo run in the first

FIRST GAME

Buhler	200	2000	—4	4
Mulvane	001	100	1—3	10

Robinson and Rayl; Shayna Duncan and Katelyn Carson

SECOND GAME

Buhler	100	000	0—1	6
Mulvane	032	100	3—6	11

Sara Unruh, Robinson 3, and Rayl, Dani Phillips and Katelyn Carson

inning, Mulvane broke out with a nice second inning. McKnight slapped a single and Duncan reached on an error that scored McKnight. Tatum hit a run-scoring single and scored herself when Sorensen had a base hit.

And the Cat girls answered with two more in the next frame. Phillips and Linnebur singled and McKnight loaded the bases when she walked. Catcher Katelyn Carson singled to drive in one run and the second scored when Duncan laid down a sacrifice bunt with Linnebur scoring.

The only other scoring in the game came in the 4th as Mulvane made it 6-1. Sorensen led off with a single and came around on two errors.

"I would have liked to win them both but it was a good way to start," admitted Mason, last year's Buhler sweep still being fresh in his mind. "We needed to play. We played well on defense plus getting 22 hits in the doubleheader is pretty good. I can't complain about that."

"Now, all we have to do is build on this and go from here," said Mason. "We still have to attack the ball and be more aggressive and we need to work on being more consistent."

The Wildcats will play again today (April 3). They will meet Andale for a doubleheader beginning at 4 p.m. The games will be played in Colwich.