

# Girls Zero Out The Competition

Zero is the most powerful number.

Especially if it applies to "them." If "they" get zero, you can't lose.

The Mulvane High School softball girls applied that philosophy to their play in the Augusta Class 4A Regional last week and wound up going to Salina.

The No. 4 seeded Wildcats marched away from the Augusta 4A Regional Wednesday night, May 19, and packed their bags for Salina and the Kansas Class 4A State Softball Tournament. The Cats swept through the regional field, taking their first regional championship since 1998, to qualify for the elite field of eight.

"We were totally focused out there and we dominated what was supposed to be one of the toughest regionals," observed Mulvane High School softball coach, Charlie Mason. "We've been pitching and defense all year long and now we're starting to hit the ball better. What a time to do it!"

The Wildcats dominated, alright, like never before. Never before has the Cat pitching staff hurled three straight shutouts in three critical regional games. Never before until now, that is.

Playing for the State championship, it has a nice ring to it. Coach Mason's Wildcats, now 16-7, will open their drive for the No. 1 rating at 7 p.m. Friday, May 28, playing an opening round game against No. 4 seeded Girard (17-6) at Burke Complex.

The other 1st round games will find No. 8 Clay Center (13-10) meeting No. 1 seeded Wichita Collegiate (16-1) at 5 p.m. and No. 7 Kansas City Ward (13-10) playing No. 2 Spring Hill (19-4) also at 5. Colby (13-10), the No. 6 seed, will tangle with No. 3 Lansing (17-6), also at 7.

As fate would have it, Girard is the only team returning from the field of the 2003 4A State tournament. The Trojans have finished 3rd the last two State tournaments.

The Cats were the masters of the field at Augusta, though. The Cats breezed past Chaparral, 4-0, in the regional championship game Wednesday night. Earlier in the day, El Dorado became a victim by a 3-0 count.

Mulvane opened the tournament Tuesday night, May 18, by taking care of the host Orioles, 4-0, behind another Duncan shutout.

"You have to start with the accolades with Shayna (Duncan) and Stephanie

(Tatum)," said Mason. "They were outstanding. Shayna threw two shutouts and Stephanie had the one in between. Stephanie was incredible. She gives up a double to the lead-off batter in the semifinals and doesn't give up a hit the rest of the way. Those two girls have been carrying us all season long."

In the title game, Duncan held Chappy to only three hits and struck out two. The key statistic, though was this: no walks. The big senior put the ball in play and the MHS defense did the rest.

The Wildcat bats came to life, too. Tara Roberts went 2-for-3 and Whitney Phillips went 2-for-3 with two runs scored.

Those two teamed up to produce two runs in the 3rd for a 2-0 Mulvane lead. Both singled. Katelyn Carson singled and delivered one run. The other came in when Tatum blasted a single.

Sara McKnight scored in the 4th inning after Amy Phillips singled. McKnight reached on a fielder's choice. Roberts singled again and Carson was hit by a pitch to fill the bases. Ashley McKenzie's single squibbed through and McKnight scored for a 3-0 lead. Mulvane made it 4-0 in the 6th when Whitney Phillips reached on a single, took 2nd on an error and scored when Jordan Cox-Iverson delivered a big base hit.

Tatum stole the show in the semifinal victory over El Dorado. She had El Dorado off-balance and the Mulvane defense did the rest, playing an error-less game. Tatum improved her record to 8-2 as she struck out five. She also issued four walks.

The Wildcats didn't take long to get things moving in the right direction. Abby Sorensen scored in the opening frame. She walked and stole second, then trotted home when Duncan hit a booming double.

Roberts' hot bat continued to sizzle in 2nd inning. With two out, Roberts connected on a double, then scored when Devon Redford ripped a single. That made it 2-0.

The Wildcats added one more insurance run in the 6th inning. McKnight cracked a double and went to 3rd on a wild pitch. Roberts followed with an RBI single.

"We went up against some pretty good hitting teams but we shut them down," said Mason. "And our hitting came through. We got 10 hits in each game. We seemed to come up with the key hit when we needed it. Ashley McKenzie had a really big hit for us in the championship game and Sara McKnight had a couple of hits for us.

"Defensively, Abby and Tara had a fantastic regional," declared Mason. "Tara had a great regional both with her glove and at the plate but her glove has saved us more

than once. As far as Sorensen goes, if there's a better second baseman in the league, I don't know who it is."

The defensive play was something to behold. The Cats had only two errors in the 21 innings of the regional. "The interesting thing about that is both errors came in the same inning but our pitching kept them from scoring," noted Mason. "I was a little surprised with the three shutouts. After all, Augusta just came from beating Maize and I watched El Dorado put up 11 runs against the No. 1 seed, Douglass. So for them to not get a run, yeah, that's quite an accomplishment."

The trip to the State Championship is the third for the Cats under Mason's direction. The Wildcats qualified in 1996 for the first time and then again in 1998 but both times, Mulvane was knocked out in the opening round.

"I've been really pleased with these girls," said Mason. "They started out like a house a fire, then stumbled and people started having their doubts. They came back together and have it going again. Now, they are one of the best eight teams in the state of Kansas, and maybe we can be the best."

## Class 4A State Softball Tournament At Burke Complex-Salina FRIDAY, MAY 28

- Game 1 — No. 8 Clay Center (13-10) vs. No. 1 seeded Wichita Collegiate (16-1), 5 p.m.
- Game 2 — No. 7 Kansas City Ward (13-10) vs. No. 2 Spring Hill (19-4), 5
- Game 3 — No. 5 Mulvane (16-7) vs. No. 4 Girard (17-6), 7
- Game 4 — No. 6 Colby (13-10) vs. No. 3 Lansing (17-6), 7

## SATURDAY, MAY 29

- Game 5 (Semifinal)—winners of games 1 and 3, 10 a.m.
- Game 6 (Semifinal)—winners of games 2 and 4, 10
- Game 7 (Third Place)—losers of games 5 and 6, 12 noon
- Game 8 (Championship)—winners of games 5 and 6, 1 p.m.

## Augusta 4A Regional Softball Results CHAMPIONSHIP

Mulvane	002 101 0—4 10
Chaparral	000 000 0—0 3
Shayna Duncan and Katelyn Carson; Ashley Podschun and Rachel Dunn	

## SEMIFINALS

El Dorado	000 000 0—0 1
Mulvane	110 001 x—3 10
Blake Rehholz and Janet Rowland, Stephanie Tatum and Katelyn Carson	

Chaparral 3, Wellington 2

## FIRST ROUND

Mulvane 4, Augusta 0
El Dorado 11, Douglass 4
Wellington 8, Clearwater 7
Chaparral 3, Rose Hill 2