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High school softball

Argylls advance, Eagles fall in sectional semifinals

By SCOTT HUNT shunt@chronicle-tribune.com

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Madison-Grant freshman Carley Holliday trots home to score a run in the Argylls' 17-2 win over Blackford in a Class 2A section 39 semifinal Wednesday at Oak Hill.

Scott Hunt / shunt@chronicle-tribune.com

Madison-Grant advanced while Oak Hill endured a heartbreaking defeat in the semifinal games of Class 2A softball sectional 39 Wednesday night at Oak Hill.

The 2A 15th-ranked Argylls continued their torrid assault at the plate, picking up 18 total hits and scoring seven runs in the fourth and six more in the fifth of a 17-2 win over Central Indiana Conference-rival Blackford in the opening game.

The night cap was much more competitive and saw the Golden Eagles battle No. 13 Eastern until the final out of the Comets' 6-5 win.

Eastern scored single runs in the top of each of the first three frames to build a 3-0 lead. Oak Hill struggled early on with the precision pitching done by Comet junior Macy Coan, who struck out seven batters and allowed only two hits in three innings.

Both of Oak Hill's hits came off the bat of junior catcher Alexa Myers. Her second single of the game made the Comets' pay for a pair of errors in the third by driving in two runs and trimming the Eagles' deficit to 3-2.

Freshman Karsyn Wiley pitched a perfect fourth inning for Oak Hill and the Eagles tied the game with a little bit of small ball.

Sophomore Alivia Shaw drew a lead-off walk, was sacrificed to second by junior Maxy Pittman, and scored on a throwing error after senior Mia Edwards' infield single to make it 3-3. The inning ended with Eastern's centerfielder taking a potential two-run homer away from senior Treniti Thurman.

Wiley sat down the Comets in order again in the fifth inning and Coan worked out of a two-out, two-on situation to keep the score tied.

Macy Coan led off the top of the sixth with a double, advanced to third on Oak Hill's only error of the game, then both runners scored on a double by Marly Coan to put Eastern up 5-3.

Kassidy Fritch had an inside-the-park home run with one-out in the seventh to give Eastern a bit more breathing room and it turned out to be the winning run.

Senior Nikki Alston started Oak Hill's rally with a one out single, then with two outs Myers, freshman Madison Archer and sophomore Taylor Holloway had successive singles. Archer and Holloway each drove in a run to pull the Golden Eagles within 6-5.

Shaw worked a walk to load the bases, but Pittman's pop up between the pitcher's circle and second baseman was snared by Coan, who made an over-the-shoulder catch to preserve the Comets' win.

"One of the big things we talked about is to win these ball games you've got to be locked in and focused on every pitch coming to you and every pitch when you're behind our pitcher and I thought we did," said Oak Hill coach Ben Johnson. "I've got freshmen, I've got seniors and I thought those girls and everyone in between locked in and were ready to ball tonight. It was beautiful."

"Coan is a stud," he added.

Even though she struck out seven batters in the first three innings, Coan finished the game with 10. Oak Hill collected nine hits, all singles, off the Comets' ace.

Myers had three hits and reached base on an error in her fourth at bat. Archer and Edwards added two hits apiece while Holloway and Alston had one apiece. Thurman and Shaw were both walked two times.

Wiley gave up nine hits and four earned runs. She struck out five and walked only one.

Though many tears were shed in the Oak Hill postgame huddle, Johnson beamed with pride by the effort. The most difficult part of the night was saying goodbye to the trio of seniors, Alston, Thurman and Edwards.

"It was 8-0 early in the year when we went to Eastern. We had one hit, we had one walk. To watch the improvement was special," Johnson said. "We are a head up, positive team. We believe in accountability when we're not meeting our standards we are positive team and that was a lot of positivity. Our girls battled, put the bat on the ball, we did so many right things. The defense played really well Karsyn is a bull dog in that circle and she's going to come right at you."

"Those seniors were a part of that (2019) semi-state team," he added. "That group laid the foundation and these seniors have kept it going. I told the seniors thank you for keeping our tradition going and for handing it down to these girls. You've got three great examples of talent, of effort, of leadership, now you girls pick that up. ... Young girls keep our tradition going."

Despite the lopsided final score, Madison-Grant led Blackford just 4-2 through the first two innings. But the Bruins scored both their runs in the bottom of the first before junior Katie Duncan and the Argylls' defense shut them down over the final four frames.

The M-G got the bats going and removed any potential drama.

"It seemed like maybe we were a little flat, but ultimately we got going," said M-G coach Travis Havens. "We had solid pitching again and our defense was pretty good.

"We just started hitting the ball. We do have kids throughout the lineup that can hit the ball. Even though we started a little bit late we did get it going. Anytime you can win in five innings, it's a good thing."

Junior Daya Greene had three hits with a double and collected four RBI. Junior Elizabeth Lee also had three hits with two doubles and drove in five runs. Duncan had a pair of doubles, seniors Chelsea Bowland and Gracey Fox also had doubles.

Bowland finished with two hits and two RBI and senior Anzlee Thomas had two hits and drove in one. Freshman Johnna Hiatt and Fox also had RBI.

Madison-Grant and Eastern met at 7 p.m. Thursday for the sectional championship. M-G topped the Comets 11-1 in their first game of the season on April 6.

Scott Hunt