

Parker's blast sparks Duncan, Argylls to sectional title

- [Rob Hunt](#)

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Madison-Grant celebrates its second straight softball sectional championship after an 8-0 win over Eastern at Oak Hill on Thursday night.
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CONVERSE — While Katie Duncan was dominating the opposition Thursday, Madison-Grant needed a spark to get the offense going in a scoreless contest.

Senior Chelsea Parker provided enough of a spark to engulf most of Grant County in flames when she stepped to the plate in the fifth inning.

Parker's long two-run homer opened the scoring and started a five-run inning that was all the run support Duncan needed as the Argylls blanked Eastern 8-0 at Oak Hill for their second straight Sectional 39 championship.

It was the 10th softball sectional championship for the Madison-Grant program and the second in as many seasons for coach Travis Havens, who took over prior to the 2020 spring cancellation.

“It’s a really good feeling,” Havens said. “We’ve got a lot of good kids who put a lot of time and effort into softball, and to see them reap some of the benefits of all that effort is rewarding.”

Duncan retired 10 of the first 11 batters she faced — only one reaching on a hit by pitch — before surrendering her first hit of the game, a lined single to center by Eastern starting pitcher Macy Coan. Coan moved to second when the ball was erred in center and to third on a grounder, but she was the last Comets runner to reach third until the seventh inning.

“Winning last year and going to regional, I was really motivated to come out here and get it done and get back there again,” Duncan said. “I was throwing all of my pitches. They were all working really well. I had a great game tonight.”

Coan — who leads all 2A pitchers in the state in strikeouts — only fanned one Argylls batter in her seven innings, and it was just a matter of time before the M-G contact at the plate started to pay dividends.

That started with a fifth-inning leadoff single by freshman Carley Holliday, the fourth hit of the day for the Argylls (23-5). That brought Parker — who had laid down a sacrifice bunt in a similar situation in the second inning — to the plate.

“She was swinging away the whole time, and she smoked it,” Havens said.

“He just gave me the go,” Parker said. “That first at-bat, she was my speed and I felt really confident going into that next at-bat. The thing looked like a beach ball. It was a perfect pitch.”

Parker launched the 2-1 offering from Coan well beyond the centerfield fence for a 2-0 lead and launched the Argylls bench into hysterics at the same time.

“I feel like we were a little flat to that point,” Parker said. “We just needed something to spark the fire, and I feel like that was it.”

The hot hitting became contagious as freshman Johnna Hiatt followed with a single and was bunted over to second. Chelsea Bowland singled her home, Daya Greene followed with a base hit before Anzlee Thomas capped the rally with a line drive two-run single to right and a 5-0 lead.

While that was more than Duncan needed, M-G added on in the sixth thanks largely to the generosity of Eastern (20-6).

Holliday reached for the third time — this time on a two-base throwing error — before Parker struck out but reached on a wild pitch. Hiatt and Demie Havens each reached on fielder’s choice grounders where no runners were retired with Holliday scoring on the Havens grounder. Bowland then delivered the only hit of the inning, a two-run single to center, and the Argylls had the 8-0 lead.

After giving up a leadoff single in the seventh — the only Comets leadoff batter to reach — to Marly Coan, Duncan retired the next three batters on comebackers to the circle, setting off an exuberant celebration in the center of the diamond.

“I have all the confidence in the world in (my teammates). I love them. They are my rock,” Duncan said. “Daya talks to me every pitch. I hear everyone on the field. I depend on them the most. I’m not really a strikeout pitcher, so having a great defense behind me like I do is amazing as a pitcher.”

The Argylls will await their regional opponent and destination, which is scheduled to be determined Friday when Elwood and Frankton play their postponed Sectional 40 championship at Lapel. No matter the outcome, Havens and company know they will face a familiar and formidable opponent.

“We’ve played them both, and obviously we know them both fairly well,” he said. “We’ll have our hands full with either one of them.”

Contact **Rob Hunt** at

rob.hunt@heraldbulletin.com