

# C-J Sports

## Mooney rocks Newman, Hilton to capture Class AA crown

10 runs, 13 hits provide Cardinals' second title in past three seasons

By Richard A. Kiley

The 1987 Section 5 Class AA girls' softball championship game between Hilton and Cardinal Mooney featured a classic match-up of pitching versus hitting.

Then again, so did the 1986 sectional final between the same two teams, and the 1985 title game as well.

For the second time in three years, the Mooney hitters won out.

Joette Abbey's No. 2-seeded squad roared out to a stunning 5-0 lead, stumbled a bit and then came on strong to defeat the defending champions, 10-6, before a chilled crowd of approximately 750 last Friday, June 5, at McAvoy Park in Irondequoit.

The Class AA championship game ended well after midnight on Saturday morning, as a persistent rain delayed the first game between Addison and Pembroke. The grounds crew then had to ready the field for the second title game, which began two hours after its originally scheduled time.

For Mooney (18-1), the win avenged last June's heartrending 1-0, 10-inning loss to Coach Jim Buck's Hilton squad. The Cardinal victory was also extra sweet, since it broke Bridgette Newman's winning streak at 40 games. Newman's last loss came as a sophomore two years ago against Mooney (who else?) in the 1985 title game. The Cardinals chased the Hilton ace early and went on to an easy 17-2 romp.

The win for Mooney also broke a three-game losing streak to Hilton (23-1). In addition to last year's championship-game loss, in which the top-seeded Cadets scored an unearned run in the bottom of the 10th inning to win the game, Abbey's team also dropped two regular season games. (Mooney lost 5-1 during the 1986 regular season, and 10-3 earlier this season.)

This year's finale looked like it was going to be a blowout as the Cards batted around in the top of the first inning against Newman,



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Mooney's Marybeth Prognio, who was named MVP of the tournament, was all smiles after her team's 10-6 win over Hilton. The win avenged the Cardinals' 1-0, 10-inning loss in last year's finale.

to stake an early 5-0 lead.

"We said, 'Let's get them at the beginning of the game,' and we did," said Cathy Nietopski, who along with her sister, Theresa, has played a major role in Mooney's success in recent years. "Once we get going, it's hard to stop us."

The Cardinals illustrated that well by batting around in the top of the first inning. Mooney's first run came on a bases-loaded RBI walk by Lori Padulo, who was the defensive star in last year's title game.

Padulo was followed by Julie Kolb, who laced a triple between leftfielder Tracey Bartholomew and centerfielder Kris Berback, to clear the bases and give Mooney a startling 4-0 cushion.

Tracy Schmidt then pulled a three-and-one pitch by Newman down the line to score Kolb. Bartholomew did well to hold Schmidt to a long single, as the Hilton leftfielder dove toward the line to keep the ball from getting past her.

Newman got out of the inning by striking out Lisa Serio and inducing Cathy Nietopski to pop out to third.

Hilton got one of those runs back off of Mooney pitcher Noelle Feeney, as Jill Heise's pop fly dropped between three Cardinal fielders and scored Leanne Henner, pulling the Cadets to within four, 5-1.

Mooney added to its lead in the top of the second after Theresa Nietopski was hit by a pitch, and scored on Cheryl Lennox's double to give the Cards a 6-1 advantage.

Buck's squad would not wilt, however, scoring two runs of its own in the bottom of the second inning.

With one out, Jenny Loughlin walked and scored on Bartholomew's double, to close the margin to four, 6-2.

Bartholomew scored, making it 6-3 after Kolb misplayed a line shot by Kris Berback.

Newman then proceeded to shut the Cards down in the third and fourth innings, and it seemed to awaken the relatively quiet Cadet bats.

With runners on second and third, pinch-hitter Kim Merritt's grounder was booted by

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## Crusaders couldn't deliver knockout punch in loss to Wilson

By Richard A. Kiley

In boxing, the saying goes that, in order to take the belt from the champion, you must score a knockout. The same adage might apply in other sports as well.

Last Tuesday, June 2, the Elmira Notre Dame softball team failed to knock out defending state Class C champion Wilson, when the diocesan high school club had the chance.

Wayne Coburn's Crusaders jumped out to a quick 3-0 lead over Wilson, but let the state champs off the hook by allowing them to climb back into the game with four runs in the second inning. Notre Dame (14-7) eventually fell, 11-6, in one of four Far West Regionals played at McAvoy Park in Irondequoit.

And much like the champion boxer who usually gets points from the judges for simply being the champion, Wilson High got the calls against Notre Dame — all of them.

The most critical one for second-year coach Coburn and his team — which also fell to Wilson in one of last year's Far West regionals — came in the bottom of the sixth inning.

The controversial inning began innocently, when Natalie Kozlowski and Tina Maloney both failed to reach base. The Crusaders appeared to be staging a dangerous two-out rally, however, when Lisa Boulas singled and Lisa Johnston walked, giving Notre Dame runners at first and second base.

Then came the call that knocked the wind right out of the challengers.

Kim Sheehan's hard ground ball up the middle was deflected by Wilson pitcher Mollie Streeter to second baseman Kim Winters. Winters quickly flipped the ball to shortstop Amy Neumann, who appeared to be bobbling the ball as Johnston slid into second base.

The umpire saw things differently, however. He called Johnston — who also appeared to arrive at second base well before the flip from Winters to Neumann — out on the play.

The play ended the inning, as well as the Crusader threat to score and any hopes of a come-from-behind win.

"Lisa Johnston is my fastest player on the team; to get her at second base on a ball deflected by the pitcher . . . well, let's just say I found the play hard to believe," said Coburn, who had a pretty good view of the action from his coaching position at third base.

The Crusader coach added that he thought the ball was clearly in the air as Johnston slid into second. "And she (Neumann) was fumbling it, too," Coburn said.

On deck for ND was Stacey McMail, who, in earning All-Sullivan Trail Conference honors this season, led the Crusaders in triples and home runs while batting .463.

In leading off the Crusader seventh, McMail swatted a triple and eventually scored, to account for her team's sixth run.

"She may have tripled because there was less pressure — who knows?" said a dejected

Coburn. "All I know is that she was my big hitter" all year."

Coburn also knew that his team left too many on base against the state champs, and made a few costly fielding mistakes as well.

"The last three innings, we just left too many stranded," Coburn said. "We left nine kids on base."

In all, the Crusaders uncharacteristically left 16 runners on base.

Notre Dame set the pace of the game early by scoring three runs on just one base hit in its first at-bat.

"We put a lot of pressure on them; we hit a couple of balls to their shortstop and got her to hurry her throws," said Coburn, who frequently used his team's speed this season to force opposing teams to make mistakes. "We have a lot of speed. We like to force the game"



Michael N. Aydogan

Lisa Johnston of Notre Dame, right, receives some encouraging words from teammate Mare Hardiman during the Crusaders' 11-6 loss to Wilson.

Like a true champion, though, Wilson rallied for four runs in the top of the second inning. Paula Maynard, who had two runs batted in for the day, led off the four-run second with a long triple past Johnston in left field, and scored on Maureen Mahar's single to centerfield, making it 3-1.

Mahar later scored on Kim Winters' first of two RBIs, to pull Wilson to within one run at 3-2.

An error kept the inning going for Wilson, which scored two more runs on Streeter's fly ball to right field, taking its first lead at 4-3.

"Every mistake we made cost us," said Coburn, referring to the error that kept the Wilson rally alive. "We could have been out of that inning."

Coburn watched his club knot the contest at 4-4 in the bottom of the third. Johnston began the inning by popping out to third, but was followed by a walk to Sheehan. The Crusader catcher eventually scored when McMail tried to stretch her single into a double. Although she was unsuccessful at reaching second safely, McMail did tie up the Wilson infield long enough to allow Sheehan to score from third base.

The state champions then proceeded to bust the game open with four runs in its half of the fourth inning.

After Missy Zabel grounded out, Neumann reached on an infield single and both Winters and Leanne Zipp walked. Neumann scored to give Wilson High a 5-4 lead, and Monica Wheeler plated Winters with a single, to up the lead to 6-4.

After Meg Thompson singled home another run, Wilson High added one more, opening up an 8-4 lead after three and a half innings.

"That was the big inning," said Coburn. "Their seven, eight and nine hitters really came through for them."

On the contrary, Notre Dame's bottom third of the order didn't. That had a lot to do with the 16 Crusaders left stranded.

"You always expect the top of the order to get hits, but you need production from the bot-

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