

Knights lose in semifinals



McQuaid Jesuit's Mike Kehoe attempts to scoop the ball while under pressure from two Fairport players. The Knights, making their first-ever appearance in the Section 5 Class A lacrosse semifinals, were defeated by the host Red Raiders, 19-7, on June 1. McQuaid kept the game close early, forging a 3-3 tie after one quarter. Fairport then roared to a 9-4 lead at halftime and 15-6 after three periods. The Knights finished 10-8.

Mike Latona

Shutout sends AQ into Final Four

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Baseball teams that average two runs per game normally have as much chance of winning a championship as Jose Canseco does of pitching a shutout.

Yet Aquinas Institute's strong pitching has offset the club's sub-par hitting in its first two Section 5 Class AAA playoff rounds. As a result, the Little Irish have reached the Final Four for the first time in eight years.

AQ used a four-hitter by Sam DiGaetano to sneak past Brockport, 1-0, in a Class AAA quarterfinal game played on Friday, June 4, at Bishop Kearney. The victory came on the heels of a 3-2 opening-round home win over East on June 1, and it vaulted Aquinas, seeded No. 5 in the tournament, into a semifinal matchup with top-seeded Webster.

The Webster contest was scheduled for June 8, with the winner advancing to the championship game this coming Monday, June 14, against either No. 2 Fairport or No. 3 Hilton.

DiGaetano struck out eight batters against No. 13 Brockport as the Little Irish upped their season record to 19-7. The key to the shutout, said Coach Rich Pillitter, was DiGaetano's ability to come through in the clutch.

"He didn't have his best velocity, but he got three tough outs with men on base," Pillitter commented.

AQ manufactured what turned out to be the winning run in the bottom of the fourth inning. Jeremy Giordano singled, was sacrificed to second base by DiGaetano, and came home on a single by Jim Miner.

Jim Miner's brother, Ron, helped preserve the win with a nice running seventh-inning grab in center field while the Blue Devils had men on second and first.

"It was a well-played game by both teams. Brockport turned three double plays against us," Pillitter noted.

In the first-round win over No. 12 East, Aquinas survived a near-upset by scoring twice in the second inning and once in the fourth. Ken Keilman was the winning pitcher.

Also reaching its sectional Final Four was Elmira Notre Dame. However, the

Crusaders' title hopes were dashed in the semifinals as they suffered a 10-5 loss to No. 1 Lansing in the Section 4 Class D playoffs. The game was played on June 3 at Lansing.

ND (10-9), seeded No. 4, dominated the early action before Lansing scored six third-inning runs to take a 7-5 lead.

That defeat was preceded by a 5-2 home victory over No. 5 Candor in quarterfinal action on June 1. Will Cain pitched a two-hitter that day with 15 strikeouts, and Shaun Bennett socked a three-run homer while Joel Stephens contributed a solo shot.

In Geneva, a tremendous streak has come to an end. DeSales, which had won five consecutive sectional titles, was eliminated in the Section 5 Class D first round on June 1. The ninth-seeded Saints were defeated by No. 8 Whitesville, 8-4, in a game played at Cohocton.

DeSales (6-9) scored three runs in the top of the first, but Whitesville parlayed a five-run third inning into a four-run victory. Pete Mooney led the Saints by going 3-for-3.

Incredibly, you'd have to go all the way back to 1987 for the Saints' previous sectional playoff loss.

"When you think about it, it's almost impossible," second-year Head Coach Pete French said of the streak.

McQuaid Jesuit and Bishop Kearney joined DeSales as diocesan teams that exited from sectionals in the first round.

Brockport dealt McQuaid (16-7), which entered the Section 5 Class AAA tournament as the No. 4 seed, a 6-4 upset loss. The game was played on June 1 at McQuaid.

The Knights made it close at the end, when, trailing by four runs with two outs in the seventh, Matt Glavin drilled a two-run triple.

During the regular season, McQuaid had tied Aquinas for the City-Catholic League championship with a 10-2 league record.

Kearney, meanwhile, went down to a 5-3 home loss against Wayne in a Section 5 Class BB first-rounder on June 1. The Kings (9-13) were seeded eighth and the Eagles were No. 9.

The game's key inning came in the sixth, when Wayne produced four runs.

Runners reach state meet Championships are this weekend

Since they both enjoy covering large distances, it seems fitting that Dan Lesser and Stephanie Nearpass are the only diocesan track and field athletes making the 250-mile trek to this weekend's state championships in Kingston.

Lesser, a junior at McQuaid Jesuit, earned a spot in the boys' 3,200-meter run at the state meet. He qualified by placing first in that event during the Section 5 Meet of Champions, held on June 5 at the State University of New York College at Brockport.

Lesser's time was 9 minutes, 35.8 seconds, easily outdistancing second-place finisher Chris Ashfield of Pittsford (9:48.2).

The win marked Lesser's second victory at a major meet in as many weekends. He also took the top spot in the 3,200 at the Section 5 Class AA meet, held May 29 at Pittsford Mendon High School.

Nearpass, a sophomore from Geneva DeSales, will compete at the states in the girls' 3,000 meters. She placed third at the Meet of Champions with a time of 10:45.1, while Honeoye Falls-Lima's Wendy Bensley took first in 10:36.3. Although Nearpass did not finish first, she still became eligible for states because she came in under a predetermined qualifying time.

One weekend prior to the Meet of Champions, Nearpass won the Section 5 Class D title — and also broke the previous sectional record by 14 seconds — with an identical 10:45.1 clocking in the Class D championships at Hornell High School.

Although they did not qualify for states, several other diocesan athletes placed among the top three at the June 5 Meet of Champions. They included Our Lady of Mercy's Christine DeMott, third in the girls' 400 run; McQuaid's Eric Garsin, third in the boys' 1,600; Aquinas Institute's Joe Hayes, third in the boys' discus; and the McQuaid 3,200 relay which finished second.

— Mike Latona

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