

BASEBALL

Mott ends Stevenson tourney run

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The rug was finally pulled underneath Livonia Stevenson's magic carpet ride through the Division I state baseball tournament — compliments of Warren Mott.

In the state quarterfinals Tuesday at windy Carleton Airport, Mott rallied from a 5-2 deficit to end the Spartans' banner season with a 7-5 triumph.

Stevenson, coming off its first regional title in school history, wound up 23-10 on the season. Mott, meanwhile, advances Friday to Battle Creek to face Mount Pleasant with a 20-14 record. The Marauders have five times, but never to a semifinal until now.

Catcher Darryl Sage's 2-run double in the bottom of the sixth inning provided the game-tying and game-winning run for the Marauders.

Sage hit an 0-2 Billy Rabe pitch and deposited it into the left field gap, scoring Linara Ford and Nick Thurman.

Relief pitcher Scott Schlaff, the team's ace with a 10-2 record, shut down the Spartans over the final five innings on one hit after Stevenson opened the

game with a pair of homers in the first.

Stevenson, however, tried to pull off another trademark come-from-behind win by leading the bases in the top of the seventh.

With one out, Aaron Marx drew a walk off the junior right-hander. Both Greg Dumont and Billy Rabe then reached base on successive bobbles by the Mott third baseman.

But Schlaff closed out the victory with a strikeout and a groundout back to the mound against a pair of Spartan pinch hitters.

Schlaff, 10-2 on the season with a 1.59 earned run average, came on for starter Matt Stauch after the 6-foot-4 lefty couldn't get an out in third inning.

"The kid (Schlaff) came in and threw hard, we couldn't get anything going against him," Stevenson coach Harv Weingard said. "But in the seventh we were in the same exact position we had been all year. We were able to get a rally going and the kids believed they could still win the game because we've been 19-2 in games decided by two runs or less."

The Spartans started out hot with the bat appeared to be well on their way to Battle Creek when outfielder Bill Marsack

cleared the center field wall for a lead-off homer.

Dumont, the designated hitter, then cracked a two-run homer following a walk to Marx to make it 3-0.

Mott answered in the bottom half of the inning an RBI double from Thurman, the powerful left-handed first baseman.

The Marauders cut the lead to 3-2 in the second on Richie Koch's solo homer.

"We knew it was a launching pad here with the wind blowing out," said Mott coach Shawn Maloney, brother of recently named University of Michigan coach Rich Maloney. "With our lineup, we felt we were never out of it."

"We have a lot of home run hitters. Thurman alone has nine homers and 52 RBI, and he's drawn 35 walks."

But singles by Brian Shekell and Jason Christopoulos to open the third, followed by a Mott error, resulted in two more runs for the Spartans off Stauch in the third to increase their lead to 5-2.

But Stevenson left Marx stranded at third with no outs as Schlaff came on to get a pair of groundouts and a strikeout to end the inning.

Rice ends year with loss to Clarkston

BY KEN ABRAMCZYK
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Ask Clarkston coach Phil Price about the Wolves' progress this season, and he remembers Clarkston's 11-10 loss against West Bloomfield in April.

"We had about 10 errors in that game," Price said. "But in the games since then, we've played sound, fundamental baseball."

"You can see the kids maturing. I'll tell you what, if we don't beat ourselves, our kids can beat anybody."

They aren't just beating anybody, they are beating everybody in the state Division 1 playoffs. On Saturday, Clarkston won its first regional championship since 1976, defeating Walled Lake Western, 8-2, and Birmingham Brother Rice, 4-1, for the Royal Oak Kimball Region at Memorial Park in Royal Oak.

Clarkston (23-12) received stellar pitching performances from Bobby Slaughter and Ben Munce, who received early offensive cushions from the Clarkston batters.

Second baseman Chase Morris delivered two sacrifice bunts in the opener, while left fielder

Derek Ranek and catcher Ryan Weiss delivered big hits in the first inning with doubles to create a 4-1 lead.

Clarkston added to that lead in the fifth inning. Sam Palace ripped a ground ball off the glove of Western's second baseman, then Morris laid down a nice sacrifice bunt. Palace advanced to third on a wild pitch, then Ranek hit a ground ball to third base. Palace's slide beat the catcher's tag.

Ranek scored from first base on a hit-and-run. First baseman Aaron Powell smacked the ball through a hole on the right side of the infield created by the second baseman moving to cover the bag. Powell moved to second after Western misplayed the ball.

Weiss was hit by a pitch. Clarkston moved runners to second and third on a double, then Palace scored on a passed ball to give the Wolves a 7-1 lead.

"We did all the little things right," Price said. "Chase Morris had two sacrifice bunts, then he ran hard into right field (from his second base position) to get the ball and throw a guy out at second."

Price also commended his pitcher Bobby Slaughter. "He was always around the plate," Price said. "He has a nice rhythm to keep them off balance."

Clarkston's Ben Munce took the mound in the regional championship against Brother Rice junior Matt Petry. Earlier Saturday, Rice beat University of Detroit Jesuit, 7-2, to advance to the championship.

Rice ended the season at 29-8. Rice coach Bob Riker said Clarkston got the clutch hits, and the Warriors did not. "We're not going to win many games with only two hits," Riker said. "We just couldn't get it done with a clutch hit."

Riker said Munce kept his batters off balance. "He was a little bit wild which helped us, but they just had more hits than we did," Riker said.

"(Clarkston) is a good team, they've earned the victory and they were the better team today," Riker said. "That's the nice thing about baseball. You can think you're the better team, but it's always the better team that wins at the end of the game. That's the nice thing about sports."

Fire takes Shootout title



Metro Hockey champs: The Farmington Hills Fire Midget AA hockey team won the Metro Hockey League Spring Shootout. The team was presented the Eli Wyatt Cup after defeating the Novi Ice Cats in the championship game, 6-4. Fire center Joe Dugan was named the MVP of the game, having scored a natural hat trick in the first two periods. John Hoal added two third-period goals, and Brandon Mishowski collected three assists plus the clinching goal on an empty-netter. The Fire also won the Spring Shootout Blake Conference title with a 10-1 record. The other Fire players are Brandon Anton, Cory Baltazar, Junior Connors, Zach Carroll, Bruce Henderson, Sam Hoyt, Brian Louwers, Craig Baudry, Jamie Deane, Ben Laurin, Dan Restum, Jim Restum, Steve Streicher, Brennan Booms and Mike Layne. Head coach John Restum was assisted by Jim Restum, Joel Layne and John Louwers. The team was managed by Jan Carroll.

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