

Outlaws fall in 4A quarterfinals

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

Sisters didn't get the results they were hoping for in their home game against Philomath in the 4A quarterfinals on Friday, May 26. The Outlaws rallied in the fifth to go up 5-4, but the Warriors battled back and scored the game-winning run on a walk in the eighth inning. The loss knocked the Outlaws out of the playoffs.

Philomath jumped out quick and scored three runs in the first, and tacked on another run in the second to take an early lead. The Warriors held the Outlaws scoreless the first four innings.

In the fifth, the Outlaws fired up and the game changed. Jake Larson got on base with a single, and Christopher Luz followed with a bunt single down the first-base line. Alec Gannon was hit by a pitch and loaded the bases.

Zach Morgan took the plate, connected with a fast-ball and hit a monster shot straight away to left field 50 feet over the fence to tie it up at 4-4.

"The grand-slam felt great," said Morgan. "It was easily the biggest hit of my life. It was in a huge spot in

which we had nothing going offensively up until this point. But it wasn't just the homerun that got us back in the game. It was Jake, Christopher, and Alec all getting on base to load the bases for me. If these guys don't do their job to get on base, then we're not talking about a game-tying grand slam. It was a total team effort.

"I was just fortunate that the Philomath pitcher made a mistake and gave me a fastball up and in. That's exactly what I was looking for, and there was no way I was missing it. I was so excited running around the bases. A part of me wanted to go slow down and enjoy the moment because I knew it was huge, but I also just wanted to get back to my friends at home plate and share the moment with them."

When Morgan connected and the crowd knew it was a homer, there was sheer elation from the bench and the shouting home crowd.

Hodges said, "There was energy, confidence, and a change in momentum in that one swing. The enthusiasm I saw from the kids was incredible."

But the inning wasn't over. Ryan Funk was hit by a pitch and took first base, and Jett

Mingus followed with a line drive down the third-base line for a hit. Ryan Cook drove in Funk with a line drive go-ahead run that put the Outlaws on top 5-4.

In the top of the sixth, with two outs, the Outlaws walked Philomath's lead-off batter, and the Warriors followed up with two singles, which drove in a run and tied it up at 5-5.

"That was tough," said Hodges. "There was no one on base with two outs and they scored."

Sisters had runners at second and third with two outs in the bottom of the sixth, but unfortunately couldn't score a run. The final out came with a hit straight to the second baseman, who made the play.

Regulation play ended in a 5-5 tie and the game went into extra innings.

In the top of the eighth, it was almost the same scenario as the sixth. The Outlaws put out two batters, with no one on base. They proceeded to walk three batters in a row, and then walked in a player on a hit pitch. The Warriors didn't even swing the bat to score the winning run.

Sisters left 11 runners stranded on base.

"We had opportunities to



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Ryan Cook stretches for a game-saving catch versus Cascade Christian. The Outlaws would later lose to Philomath in a heartbreaker.

score," said Hodges. "You just can't leave runners on base in that kind of a game. It comes back to haunt you."

The Outlaws were put in a difficult pitching situation and were forced to go deep into their pitching rotation. Starter Jett Mingus had to be taken out in the sixth due his 109 pitch count, and two of the Outlaws who are usually in the rotation were unable to pitch due to injury and illness. The result was Hodges having to call on guys who don't normally throw and ask them to pitch in a very tough situation.

"The loss is hard to deal with," said Morgan. "We knew our team was pretty good and we had a chance to do something special. So, to

lose a heart-breaker like this is a hard pill to swallow. In addition to losing, it's the last time I got to play with the seniors. We have all played together for almost 10 years, so to have it end like this was really sad."

Hodges stated, "I'm really proud of the guys and the fact they held their heads high. They played till the final pitch."

Two days earlier in the first round of playoffs, Morgan pitched a 5-0 shutout against Cascade Christian, a team that scored 195 runs this year.

Zach did an incredible job on the mound and only threw 72 pitches in seven innings. He threw strikes, didn't walk

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