

Big first inning gives Celts convincing win



Kaylee Schwab drives a hard ground ball down the third base line in McNary's 13-3 win over West Albany. Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

McNary softball coach Kevin Wise admitted that his team didn't give their best performance against West Albany.

For a team that didn't play their best, the Celtics put together another dominant performance on Wednesday, April 28.

Shaylee Custer went 3-for-3 with a double while Taylor Ebbs and Kate Ronning each had two hits and three RBIs as the Celtics got their fourth straight run-rule victory, defeating previously unbeaten West Albany 13-3.

"I think the dominance comes from just relying on each other. It is never just one person," Ronning said. "It comes from a lot of teamwork."

"These girls are to the point now where they just don't want to beat people. They want to hand it to them,"

Wise added. "We don't want to play around. We want to 10-run teams. That is the mentality we have."

The Celtics wasted no time getting the bats going, scoring seven runs in the bottom of the first inning. Ebbs got the frame started with an opposite-field double to left field and advanced to third on a wild pitch. After Abbi Covalt reached on a free pass, Ebbs was able to score when a throw to second base to try and catch Covalt stealing sailed into the outfield.

West Albany got two outs in the frame with the Celtics just pushing one run across, but a rally by the bottom half of the order kept the inning going.

After Covalt scored on a wild pitch, Kaylee Schwab and Lacey Vasas hit back-to-back singles to keep the threat going. Freshman third baseman Ali Martinez soon followed with a two-run

single up the middle to put McNary on top 4-0.

"It was so big to get that energy right at the beginning. One of our biggest goals for the game was jumping on them early," Ronning said.

An RBI infield-single from KJ Custer made it 5-0 and brought back up the top of the order. The next batter, Ebbs, came up with her second hit of the inning, a two-run single up the middle to extend the Celtics lead to 7-0.

"We talked about coming out and getting on them early and they did it. They executed, and it set the tone," Wise said. "It is hard to come back from seven down."

Vasas got the start in the circle and was nearly perfect through two innings. But in the top of the third, after giving up a two-out double, she surrendered an unearned run when Ronning,

the shortstop, and right fielder Shaylee Custer, collided on a pop fly, allowing the ball to fall to the grass.

Despite having a 7-1 lead, the Celtics came back to the dugout determined to atone for their error.

"When someone got down or made a mistake, someone else stepped up and picked them right back up. That is what makes a difference," Wise said. "I have had teams in the past where they deflate if they make a mistake. These girls are like 'okay, that sucked, we are going to get it back.'"

A one-out triple by Custer put the Celtics in business in the bottom of the third, which was followed by an RBI-double of the center field wall by her sister, KJ.

"KJ in any other lineup is not a nine-hitter. But it works really well for us because she is so fast. It is like we have another leadoff batter in the nine-hole," Wise said.

McNary went up 9-1 later in the frame thanks to an infield single by Ronning, allowing KJ Custer to score from third.

Schwab led off the bottom of the fourth with a single to left field and got to third on an error. After a sacrifice fly to right field by Vasas, back-to-back singles and a free pass left the bases loaded for Ebbs, who delivered an RBI-groundout to put the lead at 11-1.

Moments later, Covalt got hit with a pitch to allow the Celtics to pack the bags once again, and Ronning took advantage with a two-out, two-run double to right field.

West Albany was able to string together a threat in the top of the fifth thanks to an error, a walk and a bunt single. With the bases loaded and two outs, Vasas surrendered a double that scored two runs.

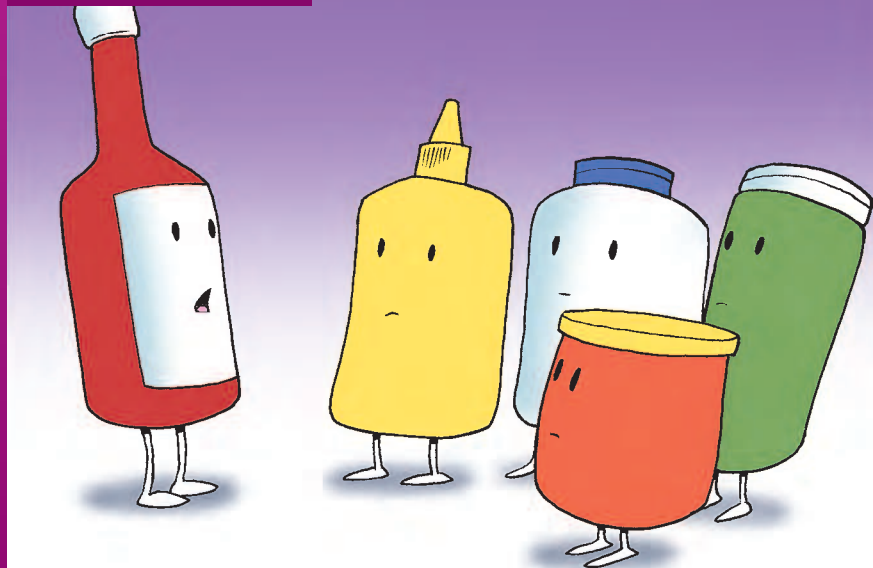
West Albany head coach Ryan Borde, who was coaching third base, sent the runner from first to try to

Caption It!

By STEVE BREEN

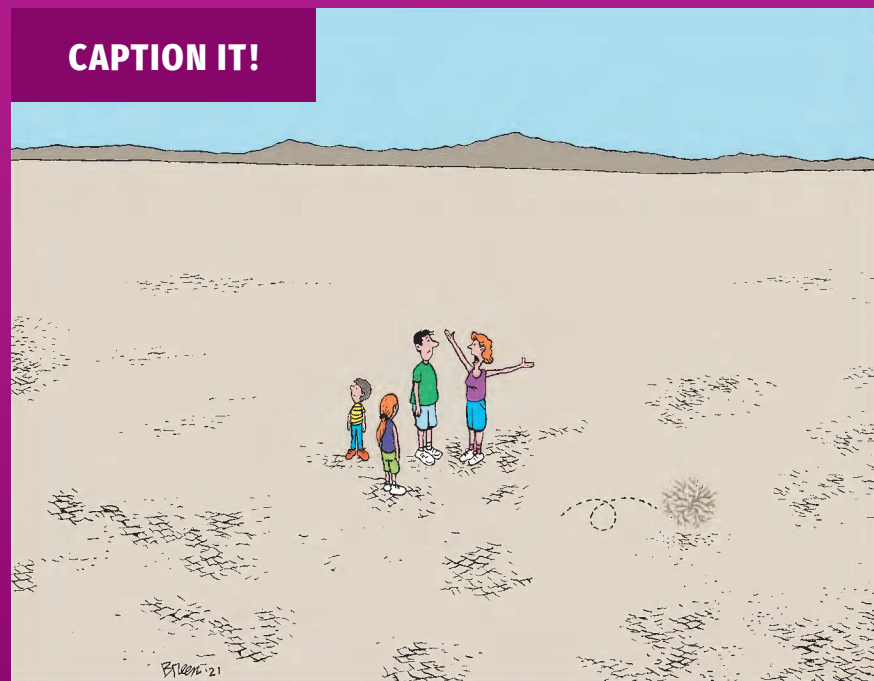
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