

Mighty memorable playoff run for Mustangs

Drive capped with narrow title loss to Irish

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Two big wins and an even bigger moral victory.

That's what Milton District's baseball team enjoyed this past week, in the most memorable playoff drive since its Blue Jay Cup championship run of 1996.

Things couldn't have been any more eventful for this spring's Mustangs, who with home-field advantage Monday and Tuesday dismantled cross-town rival Bishop Reding 12-1 and upset Burlington's M.M. Robinson 6-5 — with a sixth-inning, two-run blast by Ryan Bauer — to reach the Halton final for the first time in a decade.

And while not victorious in the regional championship at Burlington's Nelson Stadium Wednesday afternoon, a 2-0 loss to the powerhouse defending champion Notre Dame Fighting Irish was more than many expected from the underdog Mustangs.

After all, Notre Dame had steamrolled through everyone this season, averaged about nine runs a game and laid waste to Nelson (9-0) and Iroquois Ridge (12-2) in quarterfinal and semifinal play after a perfect regular season.

Providing the Irish with their only legitimate test to date offered a 'nothing-to-sneeze-at' consolation for the Mustangs, who gave up just four hits and a walk to their heavily-favoured and offensively-potent championship rivals.

"This is one of the best games I've ever played in and I'm just happy to have been here," said starting pitcher Chris Shadlock, who kept Notre Dame scoreless through the first four innings

with only one hit and a walk against him.

Added skipper Ted Anderson, "We played well against these guys, but it just shows you how costly one bad inning can be."

The MD coach was referring to his team's brief lapse in the bottom of the sixth that gave the Irish the opening they needed to break a scoreless stalemate and reclaim their regional crown.

Given new life after his pop-up foul was dropped, Notre Dame outfielder Mark Surya belted a single to centre fielder to ignite a three-hit, two-run surge that proved to be the difference.

Mustangs catcher Brandon Banaschewski would provide short-lived hope for a comeback with their only hit of the game — a lead-off single to shallow left field — before the Irish delivered their second double play of the afternoon and managed a routine ground out to put the finishing touches on their Milton adversaries.

Working the mound for the third time in as many days, Shadlock and reliever Scott McTrach matched counterparts Kyle Bolton and Josh Robinson nearly throw-for-throw in a topnotch pitching duel, while MD was flawless in the field. Defensive efforts were highlighted with a couple of huge snags by centre fielder Jason Brooks.

In one of the most decisive measures of pay-back seen in local baseball circles in recent memory, the Mustangs avenged last year's quarterfinal loss to Bishop Reding Monday with a 10-run outburst in the third inning that allowed them to mercy the Royals in the minimum five frames.

Jon Jeysman had two RBI triples in the lopsided affair.



HE'S IN THERE:
Mustang Jon Jeysman slides safely into third base — as Bishop Reding's Brian Hunter can't come up with the ball — during Milton District's 12-1 quarterfinal romp of its crosstown rival at Brian Best Park Monday afternoon.

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