

# Lady Eagles fall to Pratt in final game

By Kevin Bottrell

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It wasn't the best day for softball, but even with freezing drizzle, overcast skies and cold temperatures, the Class 4A regional semi-finals and finals went ahead Wednesday evening at the Colby Recreation Fields.

## Semi-Finals: Colby vs. Russell

Sklyer Mengal started the semi-final game on the mound for Colby. After retiring the Lady Broncos with one runner on, Colby kicked things off offensively with a lead-off home run from Caitlyn Wark.

Tera Raymond walked and Kenzie Curry hit a standup double to bring her home, making the score 2-0. Curry would get to third on a wild pitch. Bailey Koerperich walked and stole second to put two runners in scoring position. Brittany Bange hit a grounder to the shortstop, but first baseman missed the tag. Curry scored on the play, making the score 3-0. Koerperich later scored on a missed throw to third, putting Colby up 4-0.

Madison Gawith struck out for the inning's first out. Sklyer Mengal hit a single, putting runners at the corners. Mengal tried to steal second, but was caught between two Russell infielders. Bange dashed home from third base, the throw home overshot, allowing Mengal to round second and try to get to third, but she was thrown out by the catcher.

With two outs, no runners and the score at 5-0, Karly Kriss hit a single to center field and stole second. Haileigh Shull struck out to end the inning.

Mengel gave up Russell's only run of the game in the top of the second on a single that got past shortstop Raymond. A strikeout and a catch by first baseman Kriss against the fence in foul territory got Colby out of the inning.

The Lady Eagles were back at the top of the batting order in the bottom of the second. Wark made another lead-off hit, this time a standup double off the fence. Raymond hit a sacrifice fly that got Wark to third. A single from Curry brought her home to make the score 6-1.

Koerperich hit into a fielders choice, with Russell throwing Curry out at second. Bange hit a pop fly to end the inning.

Three straight fly balls quickly ended the top of third inning for Russell. The Lady Eagles took over with a hard-hit single by Gawith over the Russell pitcher's head. Mengal made a successful bunt and Kriss hit a single to center field to load up the bases for Shull, who hit a grand slam to right field.

With the score at 10-1, Wark hit her second double of the inning to center field. Raymond grounded out to the first baseman, moving Wark over to third. Curry hit right to the Russell second baseman. Wark, scrambling back to third, was thrown out by a hair for a double play.

The Lady Eagles retired Russell in order in the top of the fourth, but went down in order themselves in the bottom of the inning.

Curry came in to relieve Mengal in the top of the fifth, and promptly struck out two batters. A third grounded out to end Russell's last chance to catch up.

With one out and Kriss and Shull on base, Wark - for her fourth straight hit of the game - hit a 3-run home run, winning the game for the Lady Eagles at 13-1.

## Finals: Colby vs. Pratt

The championship game was a night and day change for Colby compared to the semi-finals. The Pratt Lady Greenbacks had won the early game against Hugoton 10-2 after seven innings to secure their spot in the championship game.

With a trip to state on the line, the first seven innings were a pitching duel between Kenzie Curry and Pratt pitcher Brittnee Hill. Hill put away the Lady Eagles in order in the first two innings, with Curry doing the same except for one infield hit in the first.

Shull made the Lady Eagles' first base hit in the third, but was left on base when Wark popped out. Koerperich made another base hit in the fourth, but was also left on base. Curry continued to get her customary strikeouts, 7 in

the first four innings.

The two pitchers also duelled on offense. Hill batted in Pratt's first run in the fifth inning with a two-out single, bringing home a runner to make it 1-0. Colby was unable to answer in the top of sixth with three straight strikeouts, but the team was able to hold Pratt in place in the bottom half of the inning. Curry got into trouble when, with runners at the corners, she hit a batter to load the bases. However, she got a grounded right back at her and made the throw to first to end the inning.

Things looked on course for a 1-0 shutout going into the top of the seventh. The Lady Eagles had

one more chance to score, and they didn't disappoint. Curry hit a lead-off home run to center field to tie the ballgame at 1. Colby couldn't pull ahead, however. Koerperich hit a single, that turned into a double on an error, but she was left on base.

Curry got into trouble again in the bottom half of the inning. With the bases loaded, a Pratt runner came home on a wild pitch to end the game at 2-1.

Curry ended up with 9 strikeouts in the game to Hill's 12.

Colby finished at 19-4 for the season. Pratt will go on to play in the Class 4A state tournament next week in Salina.



Colby right fielder Madison Gawith - dressed up for cold weather - caught a fly ball in Wednesday's regional semi-final game against Russell.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

The Lady Eagles congratulated freshman Haileigh Shull as she crossed home plate after hitting a grand slam in Colby's 13-1 win over Russell on Wednesday.

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