

'Lake Colby' can't stop K-18 from state bid

By R.B. Headley
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This was not a "weekend at the lake" that Colby K-18 coaches or players had been dreaming about. Yet when dawn arrived Saturday morning, the soggy reality was their West Regional host baseball diamond appeared better suited for another Northwest Kansas Mud Bog.

"It was 'Lake Colby' between second and third base," Colby coach Brian Quagliano explained about the reported almost inch-and-a-half rain which drenched Colby Friday night. "It was a mess."

A mess that only brought the best out of Colby again. Work began immediately even though one more cloudburst would have completely wiped out the effort.

"Yeah, it (the field) couldn't take much more. Any more would have probably made it unplayable," Quagliano said.

Most know youth baseball would never survive without good moms, so Mother Nature finally cooperated and delivered some mid-morning blazing sunshine.



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
Colby's Austin Hart, left, celebrates with assistant coach Ted Hart after K-18 completed its West Regional Sunday afternoon. Austin Hart's strong hitting powered K-18 all weekend.

Colby players brought their rakes rather than bats and joined in the field work around 11 a.m. Together, they pursued a goal of getting this state-qualifying tournament started at 2 p.m.

They failed only if someone is far too obsessed with clocks.

"We missed our deadline by five minutes," Quagliano said. "I can't say enough about everyone who helped out. We've got a good bunch of people on this team."

A statement that carried deep into Saturday evening. Colby's scheduled 3 p.m. contest against WaKeeney didn't begin until almost 9 p.m. as it was the fourth and final first-round game.

Once again, the early outlook was not good. Underdog WaKeeney held Jayhawk league champ Colby to just one run into the third inning.

"We started so slow. We were nervous, knowing we had to win this first game (to make state)," Quagliano said. "We had to get it going."

Sure enough, Colby's good players did get it going with a four-run third.

Pitcher Casey Quagliano then threw his fourth consecutive scoreless frame, and WaKeeney would not bat again this season.

That's because Colby tallied another 10 runs to complete a 15-0 mercy rule victory.

Cleanup hitter Austin Hart's



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
Colby K-18 was steps ahead of Oakley throughout Sunday's West Regional finale as Rex Branum steals second while the throw bounces wide. Colby crushed Oakley and WaKeeney while claiming a state tournament with its third-place regional finish.

sharp hit through the second baseman scored two runs, and Hudson Stramel's two-RBI hit made it 9-0.

Brady Holzmeister promptly singled home another pair followed by a Casey Quagliano two-

RBI double into deep left field.

Ben Matchell then singled in the state-clinching 15th Colby run.

Colby to start state against Concordia

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Believe it or not, Colby K-18 will actually try to copy rival Goodland's tournament game-plan:

Take the No. 3 seed and turn it into a championship.

Goodland achieved that goal at last weekend's K-18 West Regional in Colby by knocking off three higher seeds, including its 17-7 semifinal win over Colby Sunday morning.

Yet one loss won't change the Colby 15-and-under team's goal one bit.

"Oh yeah, we still want to win state," coach Brian Quagliano confirmed.

Colby begins state tourney play Saturday night against East No. 2 seed Concordia F&A. First pitch is set for 6:30 p.m.

Both teams were league champions during the regular season. Colby went 17-3 against Jayhawk

foes, while Concordia finished 14-0 in the Republican Valley & City of Concordia League.

However, familiar Osborne knocked off F&A for the K-18 East Regional title. Osborne also defeated Colby during last year's state tournament.

Though complete official state pairings had not been released Monday morning, West No. 4 seed Oakley will likely face Osborne in another first-round game.

West No. 1 Goodland takes on either the Belleville Bandits or Twin Lakes League champion Beloit Red. Bellevue and Beloit played the East Regional third-place game.

West No. 2 Victoria gets either Belleville or Beloit to complete the single-elimination first round on Friday and Saturday at Lucas.

Winners advance into Sunday's state Final Four. The third-place and state championships will be played on Tuesday.

More details will appear in the *Free Press* later this week.



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
A Norton batter hustles for an infield hit, but his team fell short in Saturday's closest K-18 West Regional game against Oakley. Goodland was the only lower seed to win this weekend.

Jayhawk sends trio to Lucas

Oakley's tough 5-2 win over Norton Saturday afternoon assured the Jayhawk League of three K-18 state tournament teams.

West Region champ Goodland, Colby and Oakley all advance into state play at Lucas starting on Friday. All three clinched their spots with regional victories Saturday.

- Oakley 5, Norton 2
- Victoria 17, Atwood 2
- Goodland 13, Ellis 0
- Colby 15, WaKeeney 0
- Sunday's regional semifinals**
- Goodland 17, Colby 7
- Victoria 17, Oakley 7
- Sunday's third-place game**
- Colby 16, Oakley 5
- Sunday's regional final**
- Goodland 6, Victoria 3

Sluggers open zone against Goodland

The Colby Sluggers begin their zone tournament and quest to make state against Goodland at 5 p.m. on Wednesday.

Official pairings were obtained Monday morning. Whoever wins Wednesday's opener would advance into a 5 p.m. semifinal on

Thursday.

The most likely opponent would be top-seeded Ellis. Thursday's winner then would play a first championship game at 7 p.m. on Friday. This is a double-elimination tourney, so a possible second final would be Saturday.



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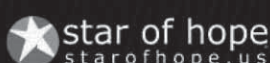
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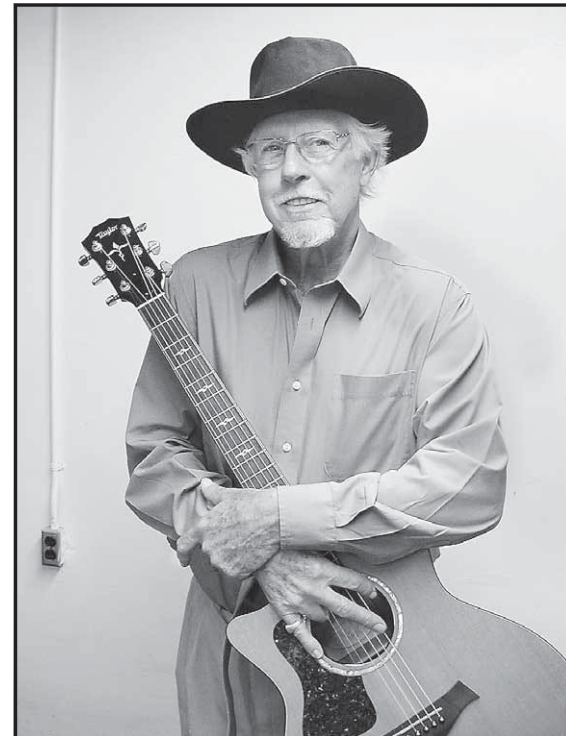
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