

Sports

Hardcastle’s big night lifts Oak Hill to victory

By Sean Douglas

Most people know Oak Hill senior Aidan Hardcastle for his prowess on the wrestling mat. He is, after all, the only two-time semi-state champion in the illustrious history of Oak Hill wrestling.

Turns out, he is a pretty good baseball player, too. Behind a three-hit, six-RBI performance from Hardcastle, Oak Hill recorded its second CIC victory of the season in dominant fashion, defeating Mississinewa 14-4 in a five-inning, run-rule affair.

Hardcastle set the tone in the first inning, hitting a grand slam to deep center field, and finished a triple short of the cycle in a 3-for-3 night at the dish.

“He’s a competitor,” Oak Hill Head Coach Shane Edwards said of Hardcastle. “He wants to win, and guys will follow him. He is a grinder and a team guy.”

Hardcastle followed his grand slam with an RBI sin-



Aidan Hardcastle collected six RBI, including a first-inning grand slam, in Oak Hill’s run-rule triumph over Mississinewa on Tuesday. **Photo by Sean Douglas**

gle in the second inning, before capping off his monstrous offensive night with a double in the fourth frame.

“I’ve been seeing the ball really well lately,” Hardcastle said. “At Western I went

0-for-3, but all of it was solid contact. I knew if I came in with the same approach, I’d do well. It was a great day.”

As a team, Oak Hill combined for 11 hits, scoring at least three runs in four of the five innings and taking advantage of five Mississinewa errors. Along with Hardcastle’s offensive outburst, Evan Pearce finished 2-for-3 with three RBI, while Sam Stefanatos drove in a pair of runs on two singles.

“We are putting together some quality at-bats,” Edwards said. “We are getting fortunate with some balls to drop, but we are squaring balls up and being confident.”

Of Oak Hill’s 14 runs, seven came with two outs, and the Golden Eagles collected a plethora of timely hits with runners in scoring positions throughout the evening.

“We were finding ways to get on base, even with two outs,” Edwards said. “When

everybody is hitting, you just trust the guy behind you to find a way to get on.”

Furthermore, Oak Hill’s defense, a liability at times earlier this season, was much improved against the Indians. After committing five errors against Eastbrook in its first conference contest, the Golden Eagles committed just one against Mississinewa.

“Our defense is starting to pick it up,” Edwards said. “That’s where you are seeing a little bit of difference in our play – our defense is making plays. Defensively, we are coming along.”

After a shaky second inning in which he gave up three runs on three hits, Tyler Rennaker found his groove, allowing just one hit and one run in the final three frames to improve to 4-0 on the season.

In a complete-game performance, Rennaker allowed four hits while striking out one.

“Mississinewa is a good

team and a good hitting team,” Edwards said. “With the wind blowing like this, to only give up four, that’s tremendous.”

After Hardcastle gave the Golden Eagles a 4-0 lead, the Indians battled back with three runs in the second inning. Landry Rock, who finished with two of Mississinewa’s four hits, crushed a towering two-run shot to left-center field, before Holden Brown scored Carson Campbell with an RBI single.

However, that was as close as the Indians would get. Oak Hill responded with four more runs in the bottom of the second inning and controlled the contest the rest of the way.

“That’s something we have to work through,” Mississinewa Head Coach Mike Scott said. “We have to learn how to grind out at bats. We have to learn how to grind out situations. We have to learn how to hit back after we’ve been hit and stand tall in those mo-

ments.”

After Pearce hit a two-run single to start the second frame, Stefanatos and Hardcastle followed with back-to-back RBI singles, increasing Oak Hill’s lead to 8-3.

Stefanatos and Hardcastle recorded back-to-back RBI hits again in the fourth frame, before Hardcastle scored on an error to make it 11-3.

Mississinewa got one run back in the top of the fifth, but Oak Hill closed out the contest in the bottom of the fifth frame with three more runs. Pearce plated Mark Sevier with another RBI single before scoring on a bases-loaded walk, and Keegan Deaton ended it with a sacrifice fly to center field.

Oak Hill (11-3, 2-0 CIC) will head to Alexandria on Thursday for another conference showdown against the Tigers, while Mississinewa (5-7, 0-2 CIC) will square off against Frankton.

RV Taylor records dominant double header sweep of Grace

By Sean Douglas

RV Taylor ended its four-game losing streak in resounding fashion, dominating Grace in a pair of road victories. The Trojans shut out the Lancers in game one, 7-0, before using a 14-run fourth inning in game two to come away with a 17-1, run-rule triumph.

With the two victories, Taylor increased its winning streak over Grace to 16 games, its second-longest win streak over any Crossroads League opponent.

The Trojans were lethal at the plate, combining for 33 hits, four doubles, three triples, two home runs, and 24 runs batted in in 66



Aleyah Rastetter finished 5-for-7 with three runs scored and two triples in Taylor’s doubleheader sweep of Grace.

apiece.

West started the scoring in game one, plating Clay in the second inning with an RBI single, before Mihalic hit her team-leading eighth home run of the season to give the Trojans a 2-0 advantage.

Rastetter blew the contest open in the fifth frame with a three-run triple, and Wilson followed with a two-run double to put the Trojans firmly in control.

Evans (16-4) recorded her 11th complete game performance and her fourth complete game victory of

2021, allowing just four hits and two walks while striking out 11. The Fairmount, Indiana native recorded double-digit strikeouts for the ninth time in her junior campaign, and her 16 victories are the second-most for a Trojan pitcher in a single season.

With her win against the Lancers, Evans needs just two more to tie Hannah Robbins, who recorded 18 victories in both 2014 and 2017.

With game two tied at 1-1, the Trojans’ offense ex-

ploded in the fourth inning, collecting 14 runs before a single out was recorded on 13 hits. The Trojans sent 19 batters to the dish in the frame, with the first 18 reaching base safely.

Whitman added two more runs in the top of the fifth on her fourth-home run of the season, putting the finishing touches on what was an offensive clinic for the Trojans.

Kanai (14-7) was solid over four innings of work, allowing only five hits while striking out three in her 14th win.

Trojans drop second straight road double header in pair of losses to Cougars

By Sean Douglas

RV Taylor suffered another road setback on Tuesday, ending its season series with Mount Vernon Nazarene with a pair of defeats. The Trojans squandered a two-run lead in an eventual 9-5 loss in game one, before dropping a 6-3 decision in the nightcap.

With the losses, Taylor’s losing streak against MVNU reached five games. Additionally, it is the first time that the Cougars have recorded a season sweep of the Trojans dating back to the 2010 season.

After falling behind 3-0 in the opener, the Trojans briefly took the lead in the fourth, scoring all five of their runs in the frame. However, the Cougars responded with six unanswered runs, including three in the sixth inning, to secure the victory. After recording five hits in their five-run fourth inning, the Trojans were held to just two more knocks the rest of the way.

Taylor grabbed an early advantage in game two on an RBI single from Aleyah

Rastetter, but the Cougars answered with five runs in the bottom half of the first inning, taking a lead they would not relinquish.

Ashton Whitman and Lauren Kanai recorded RBI singles in the sixth inning to cut MVNU’s lead to three, but Taylor was unable to get any closer.

Kristin Mihalic put together a strong evening at the plate, batting .714 (5-of-7) with a double and a run batted in, while Whitman finished 2-for-5 with her first collegiate triple and a pair of RBIs. Taylor Wilson collected two hits, an RBI, and a pair of runs scored, while Rastetter, Kara Tucker, and Emma West recorded two knocks apiece.

With her three strikeouts in the opener, Maddi Evans etched her name in the TU record books once again, becoming the first Trojan pitcher in program history to eclipse 200 strikeouts in a single season.

Jessica Doctor was stout in relief for the Trojans in game two, allowing no runs and just four hits while striking out two in 3.2 innings of work.