

Mustangs eye spot at nationals

Written by Metro Sports Report
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OZARK, Mo. - Believe it or not, the Mount Mercy baseball team is one victory away from reaching the NAIA national tournament.

The Mustangs scored two runs in the bottom of the ninth inning Sunday to clip 17th-ranked Central Methodist University, 2-1, in an elimination game at the Heart of America Conference tournament at US Baseball Park.

Mount Mercy (29-22) will face Clarke University (27-20) in the losers bracket finals Monday at 10 a.m., with the winner advancing to the conference finals against Baker at 1:30 p.m. Monday and clinching a spot in the national tournament.

The Heart of America Conference gets two spots in the national tournament this year, and the two berths go to the conference tournament champion and the tournament runnerup.

Mount Mercy has won three straight elimination games at the tournament and Sunday's game was a doozy. The Mustangs trailed, 1-0, heading into the bottom of the ninth and scored two runs without a base hit.

Corbin Day was hit by a pitch with one out and Austin Hilipre came in to run for Day. Chili Moseley reached on a walk and Evan Jackson was hit by a pitch, loading the bases with one out.

Nick Sueppel hit into a fielder's choice for the second out, but Hilipre scored to tie the game 1-1. Central Methodist claimed Jackson interfered with their fielder who was trying to turn a double play to end the game, but the umpires ruled otherwise.

If the umpires had ruled in CMU's favor, the Mustangs would have lost the game 1-0 on the

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double play. Instead, the game was tied with runners at first and third with two outs.

Moseley then scored the game-winning run on a short passed ball on a bang-bang play at the plate for the 2-1 victory.

Mount Mercy had to win a play-in game at the tournament Wednesday to reach the quarterfinals as the No. 7 seed. The Mustangs lost to Central Methodist, 5-4, in extra inning in the quarterfinals, but since then the Mustangs have won three straight elimination games against Peru State, MidAmerica Nazarene and Central Methodist to reach the Final 3.

Mount Mercy has a 4-1 record at the tournament and would have to win three more games to capture the title, but a victory over Clarke in the losers bracket finals will get them to nationals.

Dylan Campbell (8-4) pitched a sensational game for Mount Mercy Sunday. He pitched all nine innings, allowing just one unearned run on four hits. Campbell also tossed seven shutout innings on Wednesday, which means he's allowed one unearned run in 16 innings at the tournament.

Jackson and Collin Shrader had two hits for the Mustangs Sunday.

Central Methodist 000 010 000 - 1 4 0

Mount Mercy □ □ □ □ **000 000 002 - 2 7 1**

Pena, Gray (4), Malan (6), Moore (8), Martinez (9) and McCay. Campbell and Day. W - Campbell (8-4). L - Martinez. SB - Oreskovich, Olutunde. SH - Day, Jackson.