

East tops Worthington to stay alive in sections

Clarke records 13 strikeouts in win

By Denny Weller
Special to The Free Press

NORTH MANKATO — After not recording an out in Saturday's Section 2AAA winner's bracket final against Mankato West, Mankato East senior right-hander Madie Clarke seized the moment Tuesday afternoon at a steamy Caswell Park.

Clarke allowed only one earned run as the No. 2-seeded Cougars (19-5) advanced to Thursday's 5 p.m. championship round with a convincing 7-4 triumph over Worthington. Clarke scattered six hits while fanning 13 and walking only one.

"Madie has been so consistent all year for us and she held West score-

less through nine innings of that last regular season game," East coach Joe Madson said. "She was pretty amped up (Saturday) and sometimes that can go against you. This was a super bounce back for her and gave us the innings we needed to get a win."

After Clarke recorded two strikeouts in working a 1-2-3 first frame, the Cougars tallied a run in their first at bat when sophomore center fielder Sydney Jacobs

bounced a single through the hole and eventually scored on senior third baseman Tayler Swalve's single into right field. Swalve and Jacobs led a nine-hit attack with two hits apiece with Jacobs scoring three times.

"We started off strong and kept fighting as a team," Jacobs said. "Our pitcher helped a lot and then we kept hitting. We just had to clear our mind after Saturday and this was the only game in my mind right

now. This lineup can do it all. We can hit, we can bunt and we can run. ... We know it's going to be tough against West, we just have to play our game and start out strong."

East expanded its lead to 4-0 in the third inning off Trojans' right-hander Haley Grimmus, who entered the contest with 264 strikeouts in 136 innings pitched. No. 9 hitter Maddie Beaty, who scored twice and was on base all three of her at bats,

drew a walk and scored when Jacobs rocketed a triple over the left-fielder's head. Swalve and freshman shortstop Destiny Reasner followed with RBI singles.

"We were really excited coming into this game," Swalve said. "We wanted to go out and have some fun while scoring some runs. We really focused on coming out and jumping on them with our bats. We

Please see **SOFTBALL**, Page A7

BRIEFS

MoonDogs fall to Bismarck late

MANKATO — Bismarck scored a pair of runs in the top of the ninth to down the Mankato MoonDogs 3-1 in a Northwoods League game Tuesday at ISG Field.

Matthew Higgins went 2 for 4 with a double and a run scored for the MoonDogs. Preston Clifford also had two hits.

Ivran Romero surrendered one earned run over six innings for Mankato. Peyton Jones took the loss.

The MoonDogs host Bismarck again at 6:35 p.m. Wednesday.

The Free Press

Mystics hold on to beat Lynx 85-81

WASHINGTON — Tina Charles scored 31 points and the Washington Mystics held off the Minnesota Lynx for an 85-81 win on Tuesday night.

Charles had four points in the final minute for the Mystics (3-5), a wide-open layup off a midcourt inbound play at 22.3 seconds and a pair of free throws with 6.4 seconds left.

Myisha Hines-Allen added 19 points, Ariel Atkins scored 17, and Natasha Cloud had 11 points, eight assists and a career-high six steals.

Washington took the lead for good on a run of 12 straight points capped by Charles' three-point play and Hines-Allen's 11-foot jumper to make it 59-48. The Mystics extended to their largest lead at 68-50 late in the third quarter.

Napheesa Collier had 22 points and nine rebounds for the Lynx (3-5). Sylvia Fowles scored 15 points, and Layshia Clarendon had 14 points, seven rebounds and six assists.

Denver's Jokic wins NBA MVP Award

DENVER — Nikola Jokic was selected with the 41st draft pick when he entered the NBA seven years ago.

Now, by overwhelming consensus, he's No. 1.

The Nuggets' big man was revealed Tuesday as the NBA's Most Valuable Player for 2020-21, making him by far the lowest draft pick ever to win the award. "The Joker" now has his name etched alongside the greatest players in league history, which surely seemed unlikely when he was that unheralded prospect out of Sombor, Serbia in 2014.

Jokic was the runaway winner, getting 91 of the 101 first-place ballots cast — 100 of them from a global panel of sportswriters and broadcasters who cover the league, the other being an aggregate first-place ballot compiled from fan voting.

That fan vote went to 2011 NBA MVP Derrick Rose of the New York Knicks.

The Associated Press

From winner's bracket to fight to

STAY ALIVE



Photos by John Cross, special to The Free Press

Mankato West's Buck Wiebers dives safely back to first base as he is struck by an errant pickoff throw in the fourth inning of Tuesday's Section 2AAA playoff game against Marshall. The Tigers won 6-2 at Johnson Park in New Ulm.

Scarlets struggle with bats at Section 2AAA tournament

By Chad Courrier
ccourrier@mankatofreepress.com

The Mankato West bats never got going.

The Scarlets totaled six runs and seven hits in two games and were fighting to stay alive in the Section 2AAA baseball tournament late Tuesday night at Johnson Park.

The day began with West hoping to advance to Friday's championship game with a chance to qualify for the state tournament.

West lost 6-2 to Marshall in the winners' bracket final, then led 4-3 against Hutchinson after five innings later Tuesday.

Against Hutchinson, the Scarlets had a single in the second and third innings but couldn't push anything across.

In the fourth, Jacob Maes led off with a hard single to left, and Nic Cook walked. An infield error loaded the bases with one out.

A high chopper to the mound was thrown home for the force, but the ball popped out of the catcher's glove for a run-scoring error as courtesy runner Buck Wiebers crossed the plate.

However, the Scarlets left the bases loaded, despite taking the first lead of the two games.

Louis Magers started and didn't allow a hit through four innings, but Hutchinson got two two-out hits to take a 3-1 lead in the top of the fifth.

West got those runs back in



Marshall's Jaden Pearcy is tagged out at home by Mankato West catcher Jacob Maes in the fifth inning of a Section 2AAA semifinal at Johnson Park in New Ulm on Tuesday.

the next at-bat. Hayden Mellen's two-out single — West's first RBI of the day — scored a run, and an infield error tied the game at 3. Ryan Haley was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded to bring in the go-ahead run.

In the winners' bracket final ear-

lier Tuesday, Marshall ended West's 12-game winning streak, banging 12 hits in a 6-2 victory.

Marshall's first batter roped a triple to deep center, leading to the first run. Marshall added two more

Please see **BASEBALL**, Page A7

Yankees top Twins

Bullpen, errors doom Twins

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Gary Sánchez and Miguel Andújar homered, DJ LeMahieu had two hits and an RBI, and the New York Yankees beat the Minnesota Twins 8-4 Tuesday night to end a four-game skid.

Aaron Judge drove in two runs for New York, which had lost eight of its previous 10 and won despite going 2 for 15 with runners in scoring position and stranding 11.

Jonathan Loaisiga (5-2) pitched 1 ¹/₃ perfect innings in relief of Yankees starter Jordan Montgomery.

Taylor Rogers (2-3) allowed two runs on three hits in the eighth for Minnesota.

The 95-degree temperature at first pitch was the second-hottest for a game at Target Field, only eclipsed by a 97-degree start on July 16, 2012.

New York took advantage of several Minnesota mistakes.

Tyler Wade scored the go-ahead run on LeMahieu's fielder's choice in the eighth as second baseman Jorge Polanco's throw was wide of the plate for an error. The Twins committed four errors in the game.

Judge was walked with the bases loaded in the fifth and another run scored on a wild pitch. Judge earned another RBI as he beat a throw on an attempted double play and an error was charged to shortstop Andrelton Simmons after a review showed he didn't touch the base on the turn.

Trainer's room

Twins: OF Byron Buxton (right hip strain) began a rehab assignment with Triple-A St. Paul. Buxton was the designated hitter and will play in the outfield on Wednesday. ... RHP Kenta Maeda (adductor strain, general arm soreness) is scheduled for a rehab start at Triple-A on Wednesday and is expected to throw about 50 to 55 pitches.

Yankees ace Cole at center of talk of sticky pitch aids

His spin rates decline as MLB prepares crackdown

By Dave Campbell
The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The pitches Gerrit Cole threw in his last start weren't rotating as much, and the New York Yankees ace said

the spin rate dropoff was due to mechanical flaws — sidestepping a recent accusation that he cut back on tacky substances amid a Major League Baseball crackdown.

"I attribute it to just not

being as good or as sharp as I wanted to be. It's as simple as that," Cole said Tuesday before the Yankees began a three-game series at Minnesota.

Twins third baseman Josh Donaldson, as part of wide-

ranging comments last week about the presence of pitcher-friendly sticky stuff, casually wondered aloud whether Cole was suddenly trying to hide usage of grip aids — typically a mix of rosin and sunscreen — to avoid being caught.

According to MLB

Statcast data on the website Baseball Savant, Cole had a 125 rotations per minute decrease in his four-seam fastball last week when he allowed five runs in five innings in a loss to Tampa Bay. Cole, not quite

Please see **COLE**, Page A7

