

Wildcats improve despite regional loss



Louisburg senior Mitchell Caldwell slides into home Monday during the Class 4A regional semifinal game at Spring Hill High School. The Wildcats fell to Spring Hill 9-6 to end their season with an 10-11 record.

SPRING HILL – The Louisburg baseball team had Spring Hill right where it wanted.

The Wildcats had just taken a two-run lead Monday in the semifinals of the Class 4A regional tournament at Spring Hill High School and witnessed one of Spring Hill's starters get ejected. Louisburg had all the momentum on its side.

In the sixth inning, however, everything changed.

The Broncos scored five runs in the top of the inning, and despite a late rally by the Louisburg, the Wildcats saw their season come to an end with a 9-6 loss in a back-and-forth affair.

"I think if we go out and get a quick three outs in the sixth that the outcome probably would have been different," Louisburg coach Jeff Lohse said. "We all feel that we let one get away from us. We were sitting pretty good up 6-4 going into the sixth, but just didn't get the job done."

Despite the loss, the Wildcats still put together a strong

season. Louisburg finished the season with 10 wins – doubling its season total from a year ago.

Louisburg ended the year with a 10-11 record and had several highs on the year, including a sweep of then-ranked De Soto.

“Going from a five-win season last year to a 10-win season this year was huge,” Lohse said. “I still feel that we left three to four more wins out there, but that is the nature of the game. I am very proud of our team and how they represented themselves, their families and our program.”



Grant Harding dives back to first base Monday during Louisburg's regional semifinal game against Spring Hill.

Louisburg, the No. 2 seed, trailed early as No. 3 Spring Hill scored two in the top of the first inning but the Wildcats answered right back. Grant Harding singled home Cole Kramer and Lucas Smith got an RBI on a sacrifice fly to score Austin Henderson to tie it. Smith then came around to score on a Spring Hill error to take a 3-2 lead.

The Broncos scored two runs in the top of the third, but the Wildcats tied it with a run in the third when Colton Smith singled home Harding. Louisburg added two more in the bottom of the fifth.

Colton Smith and Lucas Smith hit back-to-back doubles that scored Colton and then Lucas scored on a sacrifice fly from Alex Dunn.

Pitching became a problem in the sixth inning for Louisburg as it issued four walks in the inning and committed three errors that led to five runs for the Broncos as they took a 9-6 lead.

Louisburg put together one last rally in the bottom of the seventh. Harding reached on an error to lead off the inning and then Lucas Smith and Dunn both walked to load the bases with just one out.

Spring Hill held on as it got a strikeout and coaxed a fly ball to end the Wildcats' season.

"I didn't feel we were out of it being down three going into the bottom of the seventh," Lohse said. "We gave ourselves a chance getting the bases loaded and one out. Giving up a big inning has been our nemesis all year. It was very unfortunate to have that happen in a big regional game."

Sophomore pitcher Dalton Stone kept the Wildcats in it as he allowed just two earned runs in five innings to go along with six strikeouts. Sam Guetterman entered the sixth inning but gave up a hit and walked three. Kramer came in and pitched the final two innings of the game to help limit the damage.

"Dalton did a fantastic job for us," Lohse said. "He has really matured on the mound and has a very bright future ahead of him. His pitch count was getting up there otherwise we would have let him go six. I have all the confidence in the world in Sam Guetterman and I wouldn't hesitate to make the same move again."