

BLUE RAIDERS SPORTS REPORT WEEK OF APR 5 TO 10

BY LARRY ETTER

The Middletown girls' softball team started off the week with an exciting come-from-behind victory over Harrisburg on Monday, but suffered a pair of losses in two other games later in the week. On the boys side, the Blue Raiders slipped to 0-4 with a pair of defeats before rallying to their first win of the season on Saturday. With the season heating up, both squads are looking to produce winning efforts as spring moves forward.

SOFTBALL

On Monday at home the Lady Raiders hosted visiting Harrisburg and found themselves on the short end of a 5-0 score after 4 ½ innings of play. But the Raiders rallied for 3 runs in the bottom of the fifth frame and then roared back with a 3-run seventh to pull out an exciting 6-5 victory over the Cougars.

Harrisburg pitcher Riley Dilliard had held the home team batters hitless in the first, second and third innings before Christine Miller broke up the no-hitter with a single in the bottom of the fourth. Prior to that hit, Dilliard had recorded 5 strikeouts while yielding 3 walks and a hit batsman. Miller, Middletown's starting pitcher was also tossing a good game and gave up just a single run in the top of the fourth.

But the Cougars bats came alive in the top of the fifth and used two walks and three straight hits to take a 3-0 lead. A bases loaded walk and another single lifted Harrisburg to a 5-0 advantage before the Raiders rallied in the home half of the frame. Serena Gurm led off with a walk and was replaced by courtesy runner Amiyah Humes who advanced on a pair of passed balls. With one out, Humes scored on Carly Dupes' sacrifice fly. A pair of infield singles by Sara Dintiman and Luvi Balliet put runners on base. A passed ball and an infield error with Delayni Landis at bat forced in two runs as the home team pulled to within two, 5-3.

Dupes, in relief of Miller, gave up a leadoff bloop single and another hit with one out but was able to get out of the sixth without yielding another run to the Cougars. The Raiders had one runner on base via a Mehliia Rinesmith walk in the home half

but could not score. In the top of the seventh a double play and a ground out kept the Cougars from scoring. And that led to the winning rally by the home team.

Dupes led off by beating out an infield hit on a close play at first and then stole second with Dintiman at bat. Dintiman's bloop single on a 1-0 pitch drove in Dupes for the first run. Balliet's single knocked in Dintiman to tie the score at 5-5. Balliet went to second on a throw home and stole third following a strikeout. Following another strikeout by Dilliard the game could have gone to extra innings. But Rinesmith came through in the clutch by lofting a bloop single to right center to drive in Balliet from third for the game winner.

LOSS TO EAST PENNSBORO

The Blue Raiders could not find any success against East Pennsboro on Wednesday, however, and suffered a crushing 15-0 defeat at the hands of the Panthers. East Pennsboro pitcher Jackie Capers pitched a no-hit shutout and the Cougars punched out 12 hits in a 4-inning, 12-0, win in a mid-week game.

RAIDERS LOSE HIGH-SCORING GAME TO RED LAND

On Friday at home the Lady Raiders hosted Red Land and got off to a good start with a 3-0 lead in the first inning. Dintiman's one-out double knocked in Dupes for one run and Balliet two-run home run ball over the center field fence gave the Raiders their 3-0 lead. But the Patriots, after scoring one run in the second, picked up three more in the third to ease ahead, and then collected 3 runs in the fourth and 9 in the fifth to charge out to a commanding 16-3 lead. Needing runs to keep their chances alive, the Raiders recorded 5 runs in the bottom of the fifth to make it a 16-8 game. But the Patriots locked up the 18-8 win with a pair of scores in the sixth to deny the home team pursuit of a win.

Dintiman had 3 hits, 3 RBIs and scored two runs, Balliet went 2 for 3 with 4 RBIs and Allie Cleland went 1 for 3 with a run batted in to lead the Middletown offense. In all the Middletown team scored 8 runs on 9 hits in the loss. Red Land scored 18 runs on 18 hits in the win.

BASEBALL

Harrisburg 5, Middletown 3

Harrisburg could be one of the rising baseball teams in the Mid Penn this year and the Cougars' 5-3 win over Middletown last Monday was a bit of a surprise. But Harrisburg pitcher Na'Jir Glenn was on his game, throwing 5 innings and recording 9 strikeouts while holding the Raiders to just 3 hits to earn the decision.

The Cougars, trailing 3-2 late in the game, scored 3 runs in the bottom of the sixth inning and held off the visitors in the top of the seventh to claim their second win of the new season. The Raiders scored two runs in the top of the third and one more in the top of the fourth to take a slim lead but could not keep it as the Cougars rallied late.

Gavin Hickoff pitched 4 innings with 4 strikeouts and Cam Wegert went two innings with a pair of K's in the loss. Wegert and Jayden Benner had hits for the Raiders. Unfortunately, the defense committed 3 errors in the setback.

East Pennsboro 14, Middletown 0

As luck would have it, the Blue Raiders had to face East Pennsboro ace pitcher Michael Morales in Enola on Wednesday and the result was not surprising. Morales pitched 3 innings and struck out 9 batters while giving up just one hit, a single by Jonah Troup. The Panthers scored 1 run in the first, but exploded for 8 in the second to put the Blue Raiders into a deep hole. Another 5 runs in the fourth ended the game early because of the 10-run rule.

Middletown 12, Annville-Cleona 10

The Blue Raiders finally got that elusive first victory they needed in a high-scoring, 12-10 win over host Annville-Cleona on Saturday. After scoring 5 runs in the first inning and 1 in the fourth to take a 6-1 lead, the Middletown nine watched that lead evaporate as the Dutchmen rallied. A.C. collected a single run in the bottom of the fourth, 2 in the fifth and three scores in the bottom of the sixth to take a 7-6 lead into the final inning.

But the Blue Raiders responded by erupting for 6 big runs in the top of the seventh, which turned out to be just enough to offset three late scores by the Dutchmen in the home half of the final frame. Jonah Troup led the Raiders with 3 hits and Nick Crognale had a pair of RBIs in the win. Hickoff threw 5 complete innings and Mike Tuffy pitched the final two, earning the win.

The Blue Raiders scored their 12 runs on 13 hits while the Dutchmen recorded 10 runs on 10 hits.