



T-R/Kimberly Barth

Dover pitcher Paul Monaco (L) fires to the plate during Saturday's Class AA sectional championship triumph over Ridgewood. In the picture at right, Jeff

Mason of the Tornadoes slides safely into second base as Ridgewood's Troy Luke lunges to make the tag.

Dover in district after beating Ridgewood

By MARK MASSARO
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WARSAW — Although the tournament trail is uphill all the way, Dover coach Dave Contini felt like his Tornadoes had gotten over the hump Saturday in the River View Class AA sectional championship.

A year ago, heavily-favored Dover squeaked out a 4-2 win over a mediocre Coshocton club before going on to the regional finals.

Saturday, the Tornadoes (10-4-1) needed Steve Cox's clutch two-run double in the top of the seventh inning to muster a 4-2 decision over Ridgewood (7-7). Dover advances against John Glenn Wednesday in the district, also held at River View.

"IT SEEMS like this is the toughest game to get out of," Contini said afterward. "Ridgewood gave us a good game."

Extra innings was a possibility as strong as the gusting winds with the score tied 2-2 going

into the seventh. Dover's Paul Monaco was working on an eventual four-hitter, and Ridgewood's Randy Norman had surrendered just two hits in the previous three innings.

But the Tornadoes got things rolling in the top of the seventh when Greg Lutz and Sid Beitzel took base on a fielder's choice and a single, respectively.

Then Cox showed his flair for the dramatic. With two out and the count at two strikes, the muscular senior belted a double into left-center field to drive in Lutz and Beitzel for the winning margin.

"I finally hit one," said Cox, who brought a healthy .512 batting average into the game. "I've been getting some cheap hits this year."

"I knew we'd comeback," he said of Dover's 2-1 deficit. "That's what we've been doing all year. I think we can make it to the regionals again."

"HE'S DONE that several times this year... get a key hit with two out," Contini said of Cox,

who also had a single and an RBI sacrifice fly. "He's a real leader on and off the field."

Cox's key hit made a winner of Monaco (5-2, 2.50 ERA). Monaco struck out 12, walked four and allowed just one earned run — a home run to dead center field by Ron Roberts.

"That's the strongest I've thrown for a while," said the junior right-hander. "I like to mix it up, and my curveball was working really well."

"Paul had a nice game," Contini said. "He was mixing up his pitches well. We work on that constantly. (Catcher) Brian Poland does a good job remembering what the different batters do."

MONACO HELPED himself with a solo home run over the right field fence that tied the score at 2-2 in the sixth inning.

"It was a fast ball," he said of his sixth homer this season. "He got it up there and I got good wood on it... or aluminum bat."

Contini was impressed with Norman, who gave up 10 hits, struck out five and walked two.

"He was moving the ball around the plate pretty well... keeping us off balance," he said. "He didn't change speed that much, but worked inside and outside."

"The only thing we were missing was team hitting," Contini added. "Against other teams, we've come out and scored runs early. We didn't do that today."

They almost did. The Tornadoes loaded the bases in the first inning with two out before Norman struck out Jeff Auman to end the threat. Dover took a 1-0 lead in the third when Cox drove in Mike Sudduth, who had singled and stole second, with a sacrifice fly to shallow center field.

RIDGEWOOD TIED it in the bottom of the third when Todd King scored on the only error of the game. Charlie Stiteler, who went 3-for-3, singled to right and Auman threw wildly to third base in an attempt to throw out King, who was walked with two out.

Roberts' home run in the fourth gave Ridgewood a 2-1 lead.

"I thought we played real well," said Generals' coach Don Harrison. "We haven't had a lot of hits all year. We have to get people on base, move them around with a sacrifice or steal and then hope for a hit."