

Tornadoes claim second straight district title

By DAVE WHITMER
Sports Editor

WARSAW — Coach Ron Shrider of the John Glenn Little Muskies decided to throw down a challenge to Dover's Mike Sudduth in the fifth inning of Monday's Class AA district baseball championship game.

With two out and Dover runners on second and third, Shrider ordered Greg Lutz intentionally walked to bring Sudduth to the plate. It wasn't bad strategy, since Sudduth was 0-for-2 in the game while Lutz had tripled in the first inning.

This time, however, Sudduth connected on the third pitch from Muskie hurler Dave Adams and drilled a grand-slam home run over the fence to the right of center. That broke a scoreless tie and sent the Tornadoes on their way to a 10-2 victory.

It marks Dover's second consecutive district title. The Tornadoes (11-5-1) will meet the winner of Friday's Westerville district clash between Marion Elgin (12-2) and Columbus Whitehall (11-6) in the regional semifinals next Thursday at 4:30 at Zanesville's Municipal Stadium.

"WHEN THEY walked Lutz I was thinking that a home run would be the best thing I could do," Sudduth said.

"The first pitch was a fast ball and the second was a curve, so I thought I'd get a fast ball again and I had it timed up perfectly. I lost it when it got up in the air and didn't see it go over the fence, but I was sure happy."

It was the second roundtripper of the season for Sudduth and one

of two Dover homers in the game. Steve Johnson capped the victory with a three-run shot in the seventh.

Adams had held the Tornadoes to just one hit through the first four innings. Jeff Auman led off the fifth with a solid double to left-center, but he was thrown out at third on an attempted sacrifice bunt by Jeff Mason.

Johnson followed with a ground-rule double over the left field fence to leave Tornado runners at second and third. After Jeff Fickes popped up for the second out, Lutz was given the free ticket to first and Sudduth did the rest.

DOVER MENTOR Dave Contini was concerned about his club's lack of hitting up to that point.

"We lost to Wooster on Tuesday and didn't hit worth beans," he noted. "We told the kids tonight to just go up there and make contact and get some singles... the home runs will come."

The Tornadoes ended the game with nine base hits — all off Adams, who went the distance despite being hit hard by a pitch on his throwing arm while batting in the first inning. The junior right-hander struck out 10 and walked five.

"We knew Adams was a good pitcher. He's the one that got them through their sectional," Contini said.

But Dover right-hander Paul Monaco, also a junior, was superior on this cold, windy day. He struck out 14 Muskie batters and walked only one in a six-hit performance.

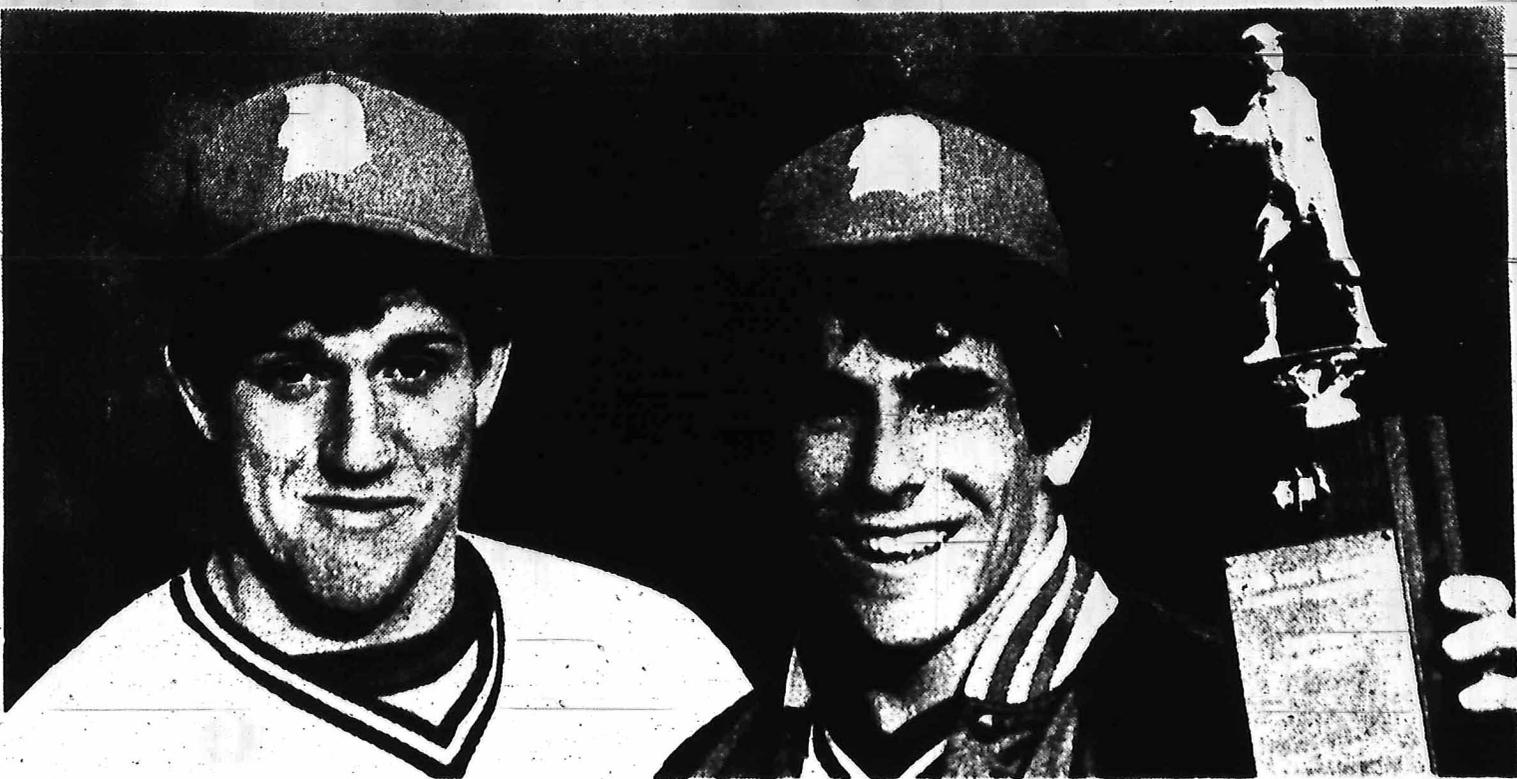
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T-R/Jim Celuch

PAUL MONACO BEATS THROW TO SECOND BASE DURING DISTRICT TITLE GAME WEDNESDAY

Dover junior advanced on wild pitch before ball got to John Glenn second baseman Dave Cunningham



DOVER'S STEVE COX (L) AND MIKE SUDDUTH SHOW OFF TROPHY

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Dover heads to district again

Adams accounted for the first John Glenn run with a long homer to left in the bottom of the fifth, while the other Muskie run in the sixth was unearned thanks to two Dover errors.

ALSO DRIVING in runs for the winners were Sid Beitzel with a single for two RBIs and Lutz with a single for one, both in the sixth inning.

The defensive gem of the game was turned in by Johnson, the senior third baseman, who made a diving stop of a hard grounder by John Glenn's Travis Gregor in the fourth inning. Johnson got up and fired to first baseman Steve Cox in time for the out, Cox making a good scoop of a low throw.

Contini said the Tornados were determined to successfully defend their district crown.

"We talked at the end of last year and at the beginning of this season that we'd like to head back that way again," he said. "The kids believed they could do it, and that's the key."

The Tornados were stopped one win away from a state tournament ticket a year ago, falling in the regional finals. They would like to clear that hurdle this time.