



T-R/Jim Celuch

DOVER'S MIKE SUDDUTH (11) DIVES BACK SAFELY TO FIRST BASE
Taking attempted pickoff throw Thursday is Whitehall's Brent Grubs

Last-gasp Whitehall rally thwarts Dover in regional

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ZANESVILLE — A long, bases-loaded double will be remembered as the hit which decided the Class AA regional baseball semifinal game at Municipal Stadium here Thursday.

But it was really a little infield dribbler which did in the Dover Tornadoes, who dropped a heartbreaker to Columbus Whitehall by a 9-8 count.

Here's the situation: Dover had scored three times in the bottom of the sixth to take an 8-5 lead into the seventh and final inning. But Whitehall promptly loaded the bases on a bloop single and two walks.

Exit Steve Cox from the mound, replaced by Steve Johnson. It looked like Johnson was about to pull a Houdini act when he struck out the first two batters he faced, but then speedy Todd Cline nudged a slow roller to the left of the mound.

Dover shortstop Jeff Mason could do nothing but hold on to the ball as everybody was safe, one run scoring to make it 8-6.

THE BASES were still loaded with two out when the next Ram hitter, Tom Mitterski, ripped

into Johnson's first offering and slammed the ball to the fence in right-center. Three runs scored, and Whitehall suddenly owned a 9-8 advantage.

The stunned Tornadoes hardly knew what hit them, but they had one more shot at Ram reliever Brian Jones.

Sid Beitzel got things rolling with a lead-off walk and stole second to put the tying run in scoring position. After the next two batters were retired, Mason and Brian Poland kept things alive by drawing walks to load the bases.

That brought Greg Lutz to the plate. In his previous at-bat in the sixth, the senior second baseman had delivered a tie-breaking single with two out. Lightning was not to strike twice, however, as Lutz rapped a grounder to the hole at short.

Whitehall shortstop Steve Beck had only one play, and he executed it perfectly by throwing to second to nip the sliding Poland for the final out.

"WE GAVE it everything we had. I know that sounds trite, but we never quit," said Dover mentor Dave Contini.

"This is a tough one to lose, especially after the way we came back," he added.

The Tornadoes had a big hill to climb from the outset after Whitehall scored four times in the second inning, driving a wild Paul Monaco from the mound in favor of Cox.

Sacrifice flies by Mason in the second and Johnson in the fourth closed the gap to 4-2 before the Rams added an unearned run in the fifth. Dover rightfielder Jeff Auman saved a second run that inning by throwing a Whitehall runner out at the plate.

The Tornadoes pulled even in the bottom of the fifth. A single by Poland and a walk to Lutz set the stage for a two-run triple by Mike Sudduth to make it 5-4. Sudduth then scored the tying run on Monaco's sacrifice fly.

DOVER APPEARED to take command in the sixth, scoring three unearned runs after a two-out infield error opened the door. A Lutz single to right put the Tornadoes on top 6-5, and then Cox lined another single to right for two more runs.

But then came the fateful seventh. Cox, who had hurled two-hit ball for five innings after placing Monaco with the bases loaded and nobody out in the second, simply couldn't find the plate in the final frame.

"Steve wasn't expecting to pitch that much today," noted Contini. **"But he's a tough kid and he hung in there as long as he could. He was still strong in the seventh; he just lost his control."**

"Whitehall is a good-hitting ball club, and they got the big hit they needed in the last inning. All in all, it was two pretty evenly-matched teams."

THE MOUND decision went to Jones, who relieved Ram starter Calvin Green with two out and two on in the sixth. Jones walked four and struck out one in his 1½ innings of work.

Johnson was tagged with the loss as he was responsible for putting the winning run on base — Cline, with his slow roller to no man's land.

Dover ends its season with a 12-8 record while Whitehall will carry a 14-6 mark into Saturday's championship game against a good Hebron Lakewood squad. Lakewood (27-1) beat Steubenville 4-3 in yesterday's other semifinal clash.



Steve Johnson (5) gives the 'glad hand' to Dover teammate Mike Sudduth after the latter scored the tying run in fifth inning.