

TSSAA SPRING FLING XXVI



Covington defeated Pigeon Forge Tuesday and Nolensville Wednesday in Murfreesboro on their quest to a state title. Photo by David Perry

Chargers one win away from state title game

By **JEFF IRELAND**
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If members of the Covington baseball team were having any unpleasant flashbacks from last year's state tournament experience, it didn't show Tuesday afternoon at Blackman High School in Murfreesboro.

Playing on the same field as last year when the Chargers went two and out, Covington jumped on Pigeon Forge early, withstood a late rally and moved on in the Class AA state tournament with a 6-3 win.

The team was clearly happy to get the win, but there was no wild celebration. Interim head coach Chris Messer described his team's attitude as "blue collar."

"I think their attitude is one down, two to go," said Messer. "I thought they came out focused. I don't think

there was any kind of hangover or anything from last year."

Things got dicey in the top of the seventh.

Pigeon Forge hit back-to-back homers with two outs to trim Covington's once comfortable lead to 6-3 and a walk put the game-tying run on deck. But Christian Delashmit relieved Drake Whitmer, struck out the only batter he faced and Covington (31-7) moved on.

"I thought all our pitchers threw well," Messer said, adding that Whitmer had some tough strike-ball calls. "He had to go over the middle of the plate with us way ahead, but I thought Drake and all the pitchers did exactly what we expected."

Ty Warmath started on the mound for Covington and pitched very well, striking out six and allowing two hits and two walks over 4.1 innings.

Carter Davis pitched 1.2 scoreless innings before Whitmer relieved him in the sixth and ran into trouble.

Warmath was pulled before throwing 75 pitches and would be available to throw again Friday if the Chargers make it that far.

Covington had just five hits, but it was enough.

Brock Lomax singled in Weston Martin and Austin Baskin, both of whom reached on errors, in the first inning. Three more Pigeon Forge errors in the second led to another run and 3-0 Charger lead.

Landon Myers drew a bases-loaded walk in the fourth to make the score 4-0 and Martin drove in the fifth run on a ground ball. An RBI-single by Davis in the sixth made the score 6-0.

"I'd call it a controlled joy," Messer said when asked about his team's

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Chargers will play Thursday at 2 p.m. and are one win away from the state title game on Friday.

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mood heading into tomorrow's key game. "I think the guys are just thinking about winning and giving ourselves a chance Friday."

The Chargers took on Nolensville Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. at Blackman, winning 12-4.

They are now one win away from the state title game on Friday. For more information on Thursday's game, see covingtonleader.com.

SOFTBALL



Leah Beasley makes a throw to first during sectional action Saturday. Photo by Lisa Norman

Southside stops Lady Chargers

By **STEVE HOLT**
Special to The Leader

The Lady Chargers saw their season come to an end on Saturday night in a 4-0 loss to the Jackson South Side Lady Hawks.

Covington (30-10) ran into senior pitcher Kayla Beaver, a signee with D-1 Central Arkansas. She allowed singles to Brinley Cousar, Kalynn Howard, Brooke Johnson and McKenzie Richardson while walking two and striking out six. It was the fifth straight season Covington lost in the sectional round.

"We had a couple of opportunities," said head coach Justus Cousar, "but we did not take advantage and put the hits together."

Leah Beasley took the loss for the Lady Chargers, going five innings giving up three runs on seven hits with a walk and four strikeouts. Lauren Vickery closed the final two innings. She surrendered a run on two hits with a walk and two strikeouts.

Tennessee signee Jessie Willingham provided all the firepower that the Lady Hawks needed on offense. She was stranded at third after a first-inning triple. An RBI single in her next at bat with a runner at second gave South Side a 1-0 lead.

Willingham added insurance on her next trip to the plate, popping a two-run homer for a 3-0 South Side lead. Cousar chose to intentionally walk her with a runner aboard on her

last trip to the plate.

"The thing is," Cousar said, "her defense is better than her offense."

Cousar said he is optimistic about the future.

"This has been a good year. We are headed in the right direction. Seven of nine starters return next season. We lose Brooke Johnson but have experienced pitching coming back with Leah Beasley and Lauren Vickery. I am proud of what we accomplished and proud of the team. Our fans and parents have been so supportive and are appreciated more than we can put into words. We have to take the next step and win that elusive sectional game."

BASEBALL, SOFTBALL

Both Tipton Rosemark teams stopped in sub-state

By **JEFF IRELAND**
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There was a white board in the Tipton-Rosemark Academy softball dugout during yesterday's sub-state best-of-three series with five team goals listed on it.

Three of them - qualify for sub-state, win region and host sub-state - had check marks next to them. The others - win sub-state and state champs - had empty boxes next to them.

Those final two boxes remained empty after Friendship Christian beat TRA 4-1 yesterday afternoon to finish off a two-game sweep, advance to the state tournament and end Rosemark's season at 33-11-1. Friendship beat TRA 4-0 in the first game that started Wednesday and had to be finished Thursday because of weather.

The story of both games was Friendship's pitching, which held TRA to three hits in each game.

"We just didn't execute at the plate," TRA head coach Johnie Sanfratello. "Those were probably two of the best pitchers we've seen all year. Unfortunately we had to see them when we had to see them. We just didn't hit the ball ... Our pitching was good enough to get the win. Like I told the girls, it really doesn't matter who's pitching if you don't score any runs."

The big blow from Friendship (35-8) came off the bat of Bayley West, who hit a two-out, three-run homer in the bottom of the third to put her team ahead 4-0. Kyleigh Pitzer took care of the rest, striking out seven and allowing just three hits and a walk over seven innings.

Rosemark rallied in the top of the fifth when Lexie Williams doubled in a run to put runners on second and third, but Pitzer worked out of the jam.

Singles by Kayla Clement and Myah Wright accounted for TRA's other two hits.

Emily West started in the circle and took the loss. She allowed four runs on four hits in 2.2 innings. Charli Rice relieved her in third inning, striking out four, walking two and allowing three hits.