

Lady Dragons fall to eventual state champs

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Holyoke came out fighting, and played that way the whole game in first round of the 3A State Softball tournament at the Aurora Sports Complex, said a proud coach Ashley Clayton.

The Dragons lost that first-round contest 1-11 in six innings to the Valley Vikings, the eventual state champions.

The first two innings of play in the Friday, Oct. 22 ball game were fast and tight, with both teams putting up only three batters each inning.

Dragon Ashley Campbell got a first-inning hit, but was caught in a pickle between second and third base for Holyoke's third out.

Valley's first batter of the second inning hit a double, but the Dragons rallied for a double play with batter number two, and also put out batter number three to keep the game scoreless as the third inning began.



Chandler Gerk snags a fly ball while teammate Alyssa Killin tries to stay out of the way during state tournament action in Aurora.□□

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—Enterprise photo

Valley put out Holyoke's three batters in the top of the third to retire the side and launch their scoring effort in the bottom of the inning.

Valley's first batter hit a double, then advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt by a teammate. The next batter made it to first when Hayley Hutton hit a three-run homer to put the Vikings ahead 3-0.

At the top of Holyoke's batting order, Makenzie Ault kept the Dragons right in the game, kicking off the fourth inning with a blistering triple. She was able to score on a timely single by Marci Vasa.



Makenzie Ault slides into third base after her triple against Valley Friday, Oct. 22. —Enterprise photo

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The game was still in reach as the Dragons took the field for the bottom of the fourth, down 1-3.

Viking Ashley Ray led the way on Valley's six-run inning with a solo home run to start the action. By the time the fourth inning was over, Valley was on top 9-1.

In the bottom of the sixth, Hutton led off with a solo home run and when Valley scored its second run of the inning, the game was called for the 10-run rule. Valley claimed the 11-1 victory.



Laura Gerck grabs a pop fly from her shortstop position in Holyoke's 1-11 state tournament loss to Valley.☐☐
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Coach Clayton said the leadership the senior class brought to this year's softball team was extraordinary and will be difficult to replace.

"The younger kids didn't have any option but to come along with the seniors on this amazing journey," added Clayton.

"The camaraderie the girls have built is a special thing they will take away from this season," said coach Clayton.

"The girls set their minds on what they wanted to do with this softball season and by staying focused and working together, they were able to make their dreams come true," she added.

Holyoke softball made history for its first-ever HHS appearance at the state tournament, and that is something to be proud of.

Campbell pitched for the Dragon state tournament game, striking out two players and walking three.

Ault hit a triple, Campbell a double and a single and Vasa a single with an RBI for Holyoke's batting stats in Friday's ball game. Vasa also had a stolen base.

Valley had 13 hits and one error in the first-round ball game, while Holyoke committed three errors.

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Valley wins championship

Valley, who went into the tournament as the #7 seed, upset #1 Berthoud 9-5 in the championship Saturday.

First-round ball game results from Friday action follow:

Berthoud 20, Rifle 0
Florence 15, Lyons 5
Limon 8, Brush 5
Platte Valley 13, Basalt 3
Rocky Ford 9, Lutheran 0
Platte Canyon 16, Strasburg 13
Valley 11, Holyoke 1
Holy Family 9, Burlington 3

Quarter-final action Friday found the following results:

Berthoud 11, Florence 0
Platte Valley 4, Limon 1
Rocky Ford 15, Platte Canyon 4
Valley 11, Holy Family 1

Berthoud edged Platte Valley 7-6 in the Saturday semis, while Valley defeated Rocky Ford 8-3.

Valley made it clear to the top with a 9-5 upset of Berthoud to claim 3A state champion honors.