

Lance Gibson gets it Done

Senior strikes out 14 and hits game-winner in Patrician's season-saving victory over Southern

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — Senior Lance Gibson carried the Patrician Academy baseball team to their most important win of the year, a 2-1 victory over Southern Academy in Butler on Tuesday. The noteworthy win moved PA into a second place tie in area play and, coupled with Southern's loss to Marengo on Friday, guaranteed the Saints a spot in the upcoming playoffs.

With pitcher Barry Meeks still only able to bat while nursing a sore elbow, Gibson got the start in the crucial contest against Southern. Southern countered with their ace Jason Fondren, who had out-duced Meeks 1-0 earlier in the year with a 15 strikeout performance.

Gibson matched the flame-throwing Fondren pitch-for-pitch (Fondren, according to Southern's coaches, has been clocked in the high-80's). Both pitchers went the distance in the hard-fought game, with Gibson allowing just three hits while striking out 14 and Fondren giving up six hits with 11 strikeouts.

Southern actually took a 1-0 lead in the second inning before Patrician rallied to tie it in the bottom of the fifth. Then with the game tied in the last inning, Lance Gibson would stroll to the

plate with the bases loaded and poke a game-winning single through Southern's drawn-in infield. The hit was Gibson's third of the day and plated the run that saved Patrician's season. If the Saints would have lost the game, their four-year streak of making their playoffs was over. B.J. Bonner and Robert Anderson each had two hits in the big win over Southern.

The Saints then made short work of South Choctaw in a 13-1 five-inning game on Thursday in Toxey. Starting pitcher Mikell Bonner picked up his fifth win of the year after allowing just three hits with six strikeouts. Lance Gibson had another good day at the plate going 3-for-3 with four RBI, while B.J. Bonner had another two hit game for the Saints.

On Friday Patrician destroyed Marion 27-1 to move to 16-7 on the year and 3-2 in area play. The Saints played area opponent Marengo in Butler after press time on Tuesday. Regardless of the outcome of the game, however, Patrician will enter the playoffs as the area runner-up and Marengo as the area champ.

PA is slated to travel to either Jackson or Escambia when the two-out-of-three sub-state portion of the state tournament gets underway on Friday, April 27th.



Choctaw Sun photos by Colin Merritt

Patrician's Tony Randolph (above) scores the tying run in the fifth after stealing third and coming home on a wild-throw. Lance Gibson (right) would then win the game for the Saints with a single in the bottom of the seventh. Gibson, who had three hits in the game, picked up the win on the mound as well, throwing a complete game two-hitter with 14 strikeouts. The win, coupled with Southern's subsequent loss to Marengo on Friday, put Patrician into the playoffs as area runner-up, regardless of the outcome against area leader Marengo on Tuesday after press time. The Saints will travel to face Jackson or Escambia when sub-state starts this Friday (4/27).



Rebels invade Playoffs



The South Choctaw Lady Rebels finished first in area play after waxing Central Christian on the road on Friday. The win, coupled with a nother easy victory over Warrior on Monday, improved SCA's record to 9-11 overall. Now ace pitcher Trystan Mosley (photo) and the rest of the Rebels will wait to find out their seeding for the May 4th-5th Class 1A state tournament in Montgomery.

Choctaw Sun photo by Colin Merritt



Rebel left-hander Wade Chadwick (photo) unleashes a pitch in SCA's 6-5 defeat to Sumter in Toxey on Monday. The costly loss dropped the Rebels into the runner-up spot in the area, forcing them into a first-round match with highly regarded Coosa Valley on the road this Friday (4/27) when the sub-state portion of the playoffs start.

Choctaw Sun photo by Marcus Gates

Tigers tangle with Geneva in Playoffs

Choctaw County travels to fourth-ranked Geneva after press time on Tuesday for Class 3A state playoffs

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — Choctaw County's reward for finishing second in 3A Area 5 is a first-round playoff match-up with the state's No. 4-ranked Geneva High School. (The Tigers actually traveled to Geneva County on Tuesday after press time. Look for coverage in next week's Sun!)

The Geneva Bulldogs finished with a 24-6 overall record and a 7-1 area mark after beating Headland in their last regular season game to claim the Area 3 crown. Choctaw County (10-12) took second in Area 5 behind Greensboro after finishing area play with a 3-3 mark and winning a tie-breaker (highest winning percentage in non-area games) over Francis Marion.

Despite Geneva's high ranking, their coach, Jake Kirkland, is entering the first-round game against Choctaw County with the same approach he has taken every game this season.

"We don't know much about Choctaw," admitted Kirkland, who is in his first year at the helm of a Bulldogs squad that finished .500 last year while playing in Class 4A. "Basically, if we take care of what we do then we should come out alright. We treat this game no different from any other game - we want to win."

Kirkland's confidence is based in the fact that his roster is stacked with nine seniors. Players like shortstop and leading

home run hitter Thomas Parish (.462, 6 HR, 4 triples, 42 RBI), catcher Dustin Roney, who sports the teams highest batting average at .487, and power-hitting pitchers like Ryan Strickland (.466, 5 HR, 11 doubles, 33 RBI) and Lance Dixon (.424, 5 HR, 11 doubles, 52 runs) all have the experience and talent to lead Geneva to a long playoff run.

Maybe the main reason Geneva is a contender, however, is an eight-man deep pitching staff brimming with talent. Ace left-handers Strickland (7-1, 2.91 ERA, 54 K's) and Dixon (5-2, 1.71 ERA, 42 K's), team with fellow lefty Chuck Holmes (5-0, 4.20 ERA, 22 K's, 4 Saves) to form the meat of a pitching staff that makes the Bulldogs so formidable.

According to Coach Kirkland, senior Lance Dixon will get the start against Choctaw County. Dixon is coming off a brilliant performance in Geneva's 7-0 area-clinching win over Headland in which he allowed just five hits.

Despite Geneva's impressive resumes, however, Choctaw County's coach Bill McFarland thinks his Tigers stand a good chance against the Bulldogs, especially considering that the first-round is just one-game.

"If we had them in a three-game series, then it would be a big advantage for them," McFarland said. "But with the one-game format, anything can happen."

At Press Time!!

The Choctaw Sun learned just before press time Tuesday afternoon that the Choctaw County baseball team was trailing Geneva 7-0 in the fifth inning of their first-round playoff match-up. Also, the PA Lady Saints were behind 2-1 late in their game against Marengo.

Check out next week's Sun for complete coverage!

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