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Persistence pays off with trip to state Final Four

Lady Mt'neers mount comeback to advance to state Final Four

By Rodger Wheeler

When you get to this stage of the state softball tournament, you are guaranteed a win is not going to be a walk in the park, and the Mt. Vernon Lady Mt'neers found that out on Saturday, May 10, at home against a Galena squad they had drubbed 15-0 earlier in the season. But the green and white delighted a large crowd of supporters in the bottom of the sixth inning with a 6-run rally to steal a win and advance to its first-ever Final Four in softball, defeating Galena, 7-3.

With the softball program in just its second year since its return, the Final Four feat is quite noteworthy. Adding to the rarity of it all, this is the inaugural year for the Missouri High School Athletic Association to offer a spring softball Final Four.

Galena jumped out on top with a single run in the top of the second inning. The Lady Bears added two more runs in the third inning to take a 3-0 lead.

The Lady Mt'neers answered with one run of their own in the bottom of the fourth inning when Maddi Brown led off the inning with a single to left field. Brown then proceeded to steal second base and advance to third on a passed ball and then score on a wild pitch.

Mt. Vernon's defense wouldn't allow another run to the Lady Bears and the inspired defensive play sparked the Lady Mt'neers offense.

"I was a little worried at the beginning when we had trouble catching up with their pitcher. She was a little faster than some of the previous pitching we have seen," said Brown. "I still had confidence and it all came together for us in the sixth inning. Our bats woke up and we were able to plate some runs."

The bats waking up is an understatement, as Mt. Vernon put together a 6-run inning that included five hits, including a double from Brown. Four singles followed Brown's double, as Chelsea Snyder, Kaitlyn Foulk, Hailea Schubert and Lexi Farmer each reached base and scored.

"We continued to go up to the plate and battle every pitch," said Mt. Vernon head coach Matt Schubert, "And in the sixth we were able to put together a string of hits and were fortunate that they made a few mistakes to go along with it."

Brown then returned to the mound for the final inning and, with the help of her defense, turning a double-play, the Lady Mt'neers were able to celebrate on the field their first-ever quarterfinal win.

"It was a total team effort," Brown said. "I couldn't be more proud."

Coach Schubert agreed. "I am extremely proud of the way the girls have worked throughout the season to improve and are being rewarded for that work."

Brown led Mt. Vernon offensively with a double and single and one RBI. Foulk added a single and an RBI.

"Maddi (Brown) was great in the circle," said Schubert, "And our defense was excellent again."

The Lady Mt'neers (20-3) will play Crest Ridge (20-1) at 7 p.m. Friday, May 16, at Three Rivers Community College in Poplar Bluff. A win puts them into the state championship game at 1 p.m., on Saturday, May 17. A loss in the semifinal game would mean a third place contest beginning at 11 a.m. on Saturday.

"Crest Ridge will be tough," Schubert commented. "They have good team speed and play solid defense behind their pitcher. It will take great effort by our team to give ourselves a chance to win. We are going to go and have a good time and play the best we can."



Photos by Ryan Squibb

Top, The Lady Mt'neers and their coaches celebrate immediately after advancing to the state Final Four with a 7-3 win over Galena. Above, Morgan Hull puts the tag on the Galena baserunner at first base Saturday.

Mt. Vernon Mt'neers bid farewell to alma mater



Photo by Samantha Dyson

GIRLS CHEER ON CLASSMATES AT GRADUATION MAY 9 - While classmates received their diplomas at graduation Friday, May 9, seniors Mercedie Livingston, Shivani Patel, Celia Licon and McKenzie Varnell cheer them on.

Produce farm a dream come true

By James McNary

Fruits and veggies and other edibles will soon be cropping up at Ray's Farm to Market, a new produce farm just south of Mt. Vernon on Mo. 39 just north of Route FF. Tomatoes and strawberries should be available in May, weather-permitting.

Owned by local financial planner Jessie Cox, the Ray's Farm to Market LLC is named after Ray Pannell, her former fiancé who died from cancer in 2010. Cox said Pannell had always dreamed of having a

produce farm, but passed away before he could see it come to fruition. She and Pannell had purchased the property where the farm is located in about 2008.

Cox said that while the eventual plan is to offer mostly berries, the stand will offer a variety of produce, including harder-to-find produce like leeks and shallots. Cox said most of the produce will be grown on site, and others will be locally-sourced, however possible.

"While we're not certified or-

ganic, we do use organic practices," Cox adds.

The site will also feature a circle drive so customers don't have to back-in or back-out.

The site includes about 16.5 acres and a 30x72 foot hoop-house, with 1.5 acres in truck crops now, and another half-acre under a cover crop. Cox said three more acres may eventually be planted for produce. The produce rows are under plastic mulch laid down by David Brown of Brown's Berry Farm.

Other May crops should in-

clude kale, chard, greens and radishes. Later in the season, blueberries, blackberries, corn, collards, Swiss chard, dannon radishes and other greens should be available. Pick-your-own herbs will also be available.

Cox does have an agricultural background, growing up on a farm west of Mt. Vernon, but spent most of her career as a financial planner in the St. Louis area. She moved back to Mt. Vernon in 2005 to be closer to family, and now has an office on the square.

"Produce farm"
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Photo by James McNary

Shown is the hoop-house interior, where tomatoes are currently being raised.

Armed Forces Day: An American tradition — sort of

By Shawnya Wethington

Waving flags, cheering crowds, celebrations honoring American heroes — that's the patriotic vision inspiring Armed Forces Day. However, the reality is something less spectacular; since it is not a national holiday, Armed Forces Day often gets overlooked, overshadowed by the more popular Memorial Day and Veteran's Day.

Originally, the day was created as a way for American citizens to learn about the armed forces by showing the role of the military in civilian life, according to the United States Department of Defense website. It was also a chance to show off state-of-the-art equipment to those whom the military tries to protect.

President Harry S. Truman pushed for the development of Armed Forces Day, which was first announced by then Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson on Saturday, Aug. 31, 1949.

The first Armed Forces Day was May 20, 1950, with the theme "Teamed for Defense." This came on the tails of the unification of all the armed forces under the National Military Establishment in 1947, which was renamed the Department of Defense in 1949.

Previously, the Army, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard and Navy were separate departments. The idea was to develop a day to honor all the newly unified military branches, so the branches were asked to stop sponsoring their individual days of appreciation and promote Armed Forces Day.

Parades, open houses, receptions and air shows marked the inaugural Armed Forces Day celebration, and 33,000 people participated in the festivities in New York City alone.

"Armed Forces"
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