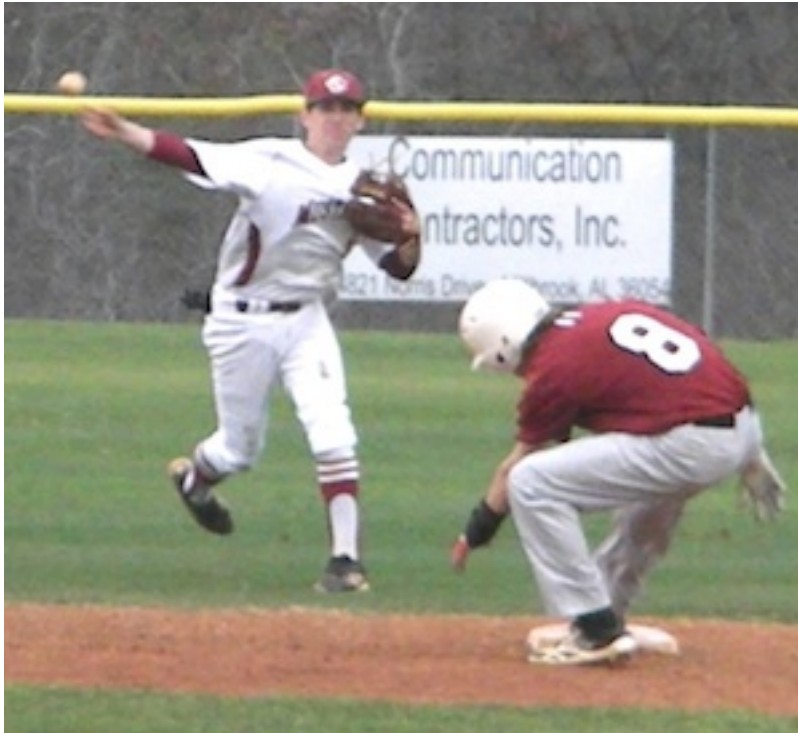


Mustangs and Lions battle in key area games

Written by News Desk

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SEHS shortstop Noah Eller guns down a runner at first base in the first game of the series.

Photo: Art Parker

By ART PARKER

It was the first real important week in the baseball season for the Stanhope Elmore Mustangs. Unfortunately it did not come out the way the Mustangs wanted. Fortunately, the final result is not all bad and it is just like last year about this time.

The Mustangs played Prattville on Tuesday and Friday of last week with the first game being at home. Pitching for the Loins was excellent and their bats were effective as well. The Mustangs took it on the chin in an 11-1 loss. Only Dylan Sexton and Tyler Matthews could muster hits for the Mustangs.

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Last Friday the two teams faced off in Prattville for a doubleheader. At stake in the 3-game series is a potential playoff berth. The first two games between the teams are mandatory area games and the third is a tie breaker, if needed, between the teams when the final area winner and runner up are determined.

In a must win situation the Mustangs came alive in the second game and started off fast. The Mustangs had a big 4 run first inning courtesy of bases loaded doubles by Blaine Milam and Chance Kessinger.

Prattville came back and tied the game 4-4 after two complete innings. In the top of the third inning, Kessinger did it again. Another bases loaded double plated a pair of runs for the Mustangs which resulted in a 6-4 lead. But the third inning was costly for Stanhope. In a space of 5 minutes coach Scott Johnson lost two thirds of his outfield to injuries. First, Matt Wickham pulled a hamstring beating out a ground ball to first base. Wickham's injury happened a step before he reached first base in time. The next batter, Tyler Matthews, was hit by a pitch on his left wrist. He too left the game with swelling and Johnson's line-up card was instantly turned upside down. But the Mustangs only gave up one more run. Andrew Casey wound up going the distance for the Mustangs and struck out 4, the final pair of strikeouts coming in the bottom of the seventh inning to complete a 6-5 victory.

Unfortunately for the Mustangs, they dropped the tie breaker game (second game of the doubleheader) 7-3. That means if the two teams are otherwise tied for a playoff position then Prattville will get the nod. The Mustangs had a great chance to win the tie breaker but with 2 outs in the fifth inning and trailing only 2-1, Mustangs errors opened the door for the Lions and when the inning concluded Prattville had a 5-1 lead. Dylan Sexton, Tanner, Anderson and Daniel Crews accounted for the Mustangs RBIs.

"We are in the same position we were in last year. We have a win and a loss in area play and we have to face Wetumpka and Thompson. As far as our injuries are concerned we are probably fine. We got a couple of weeks before the other area games. Wickham and Matthews should be back by then," Johnson said. "I think our pitching is better than last year and we are not walking as many opposing batters. We are hitting the ball fairly good but our defense still has some issues. If we can avoid making errors we should be a playoff team."