

News

2024 Baseball State Tournament: Class AAAA Championship

POSTED: SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 2024 - 6:19 PM

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A walk-off wild pitch clinched back-to-back Class AAAA baseball championships for No. 3 seed East Ridge.

The Raptors won the state title in comeback fashion, scoring two runs in the final two innings, for a 3-2 walk-off win over No. 5 seed Mounds View on Saturday, June 22 at Target Field. The championship is the third baseball title for East Ridge since 2019.

Down a run, Raptors senior Will Preimesberger drew a leadoff walk in the sixth inning. Pinch-runner sophomore Adrian Thompson advanced to second and third via stolen base and a passed ball. He scored the tying run on a sacrifice fly to right field from sophomore Bennett Skinner.

East Ridge (21-6) scored in nearly the same way in the bottom of the seventh inning. Senior Benjamin Rudser led off the inning with a walk before pinch-runner senior Caden Stern stole second base and advanced to third on a passed ball. With a full count to senior Colton Widen, Stern ran home on a wild pitch to score the championship-winning run. His teammates immediately mobbed him at home plate.

"Those little things had to happen for us to find a way to score," said Raptors coach Brian Sprout. "Being in the right spot to begin with, stealing a base, taking extra bases, that's what put us there. Combine that, and that's what did it."

Mounds View (20-9) had the lead for most of the game, jumping out to a 2-0 lead in the top of the first inning. Senior Hayden Sperbeck and senior Tyler Guerin started with singles and moved to second and third base after a sac bunt. Junior Isaac Beseman hit a groundball to second base, but the ball trickled off the fielder's glove. Both runners came home on the error.

East Ridge didn't waste any time responding. The Raptors loaded the bases with a pair of singles and a walk. Junior Luke Ryerse drove in a run with a sacrifice fly to right field, making it a 2-1 game.

The game included a two-hour, three-minute rain delay. Play was halted with two outs in the top of the fourth inning as rain fell and heavy rain continued. Play resumed at 4:17 p.m. Both starting pitchers returned to the mound.

Raptors starter, senior Max Arlich, settled in before and after the delay, retiring 16 consecutive batters after the two unearned runs came across the plate. Mustangs sophomore Jack Glancey led off the seventh inning with a double, but he was thrown out trying to advance to third base on a flyball to left field.

"That changed everything completely," Arlich said. "It gave me even more confidence than I already had. That just goes to my awesome teammates."

Arlich didn't allow an earned run and allowed just four hits while striking out five and walking none in his seven innings of work.

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The Minnesota State High School League's Clay Target State Tournament was held on Friday, June 21 at the Minneapolis Gun Club in Prior Lake.



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