



3A state baseball: Marvin Ridge rallies from 2-0 deficit, wins title

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RALEIGH -- The Charles B. Aycock players all stood stoically along the third-base line, their long hat brims pulled down low over longer faces.

They stood there, one by one, waiting to receive their runner-up medals after falling to Marvin Ridge, 6-3, in Game 2 of the N.C. High School Athletic Association Class 3-A championship series played at Doak Field on the N.C. State campus.

The Mavericks (29-5 overall) became the only team to beat the Golden Falcons (23-6) twice this season. The first loss came 24 hours earlier as Aycock played for its second state title since 2012 and fourth overall in program history.

Jake Naughton got the start for the Golden Falcons and threw 6 1/3 innings. The allowed six runs on seven hits and walked two. Kyle Davis provided 2/3 innings of no-hit, no-strikeout relief.

Naughton started the fourth inning with a lead-off triple and scored on Chandler Matthews' RBI ground to second base. Ashton McGee crossed on Bobby Hampton's RBI double in the fifth inning to put the Golden Falcons in front 2-0.

The lead wouldn't last long, though

Marvin Ridge tagged Naughton for three runs in the bottom of the 5th.

Designated hitter Connor Paul and third baseman Jake Boyce connected on back-to-back singles. Left fielder Alex Leshock and Jason Curtis each reached on RBI fielder's choice plays.

Max Wotell broke the 2-2 tie with an RBI single to left.

Failing to make the easy plays haunted the Golden Falcons in the best-of-three series.

"All it takes in high school sometimes is to put the ball in play," CBA head coach Charles Davis said. "and they did. We failed to make plays."

Despite only scoring twice, Aycock had plenty of chances. The Golden Falcons stranded runners on second and third with one out in the top of the first inning, and then again in the third.

"We failed to put the ball in play with runners on second and third," he added. "When you put three or four runs on a team early in the game, you can relax and play a little bit better."

The Mavericks added three sixth-inning runs.

Aycock threatened in the top of the seventh and scored once with the bases loaded. But the rally ended and the Mavericks celebrated with the customary dogpile on the pitcher's mound.

It was Marvin Ridge's first state title in program history.

"I tip my hat to them, but our guys were just a little bit better than they were today," Marvin Ridge head coach Mark Mennitt said. "And that's what it comes down to. That's the sad reality of the state tournament, that's why it's so hard. You have to run through a six-game gauntlet, and then try and beat a team that's done the same."

Despite ultimately coming up short, both Davis and his players talked about how proud they are of this team. The core of the team that's played together since middle school may have ended their playoff run on a loss, but the experience together was anything but.

"They're a great group of guys who really get along well together," Davis said. "When you leave it all on the field like I felt our guys did today -- yes, it hurts -- I think they'll look back on this in a couple of

days and realize they had a great year."

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