

The Berkshire Eagle

Wahconah, in 11 innings, wins Division II state softball title

By Christopher James, Berkshire Eagle Staff

Posted: 06/18/2011 10:26:08 PM EDT

[Tweet](#)

Updated: 06/19/2011 07:28:51 AM EDT

Sudany June 19, 2011

WORCESTER -- It always seems to go awry for Wahconah.

The most magnificent seasons come apart at the worst times; Sara Hamilton has two runner-up medals in soccer to prove it. So when pitcher Sam Burgner smashed her glove against the dirt after her throwing error cost the Warriors a run -- and the lead -- in the third inning of the MIAA Division II softball championship game against Burlington, it served as a reminder that Wahconah had been here before.

Warriors coach Dustin Belcher quickly came to the circle and told his star no, this one was *different* because she'd been here before.

"He just said that my composure has been well all year and that I've been in these situations before," Burgner said. "And not to lose it now because I've worked so hard within the last two years and there's no reason why one little play should cause the downfall of this game. He basically just set me straight and helped me get my head back in the game. Sometimes you need that."

Burgner and Wahconah responded, riding out those dark innings to win, 4-3, in the 11th off an RBI single from Shannon Lussier that drove Hamilton home. The Warriors used all the poise they'd gained from postseason disappointments to earn the county's first state title in softball on Worcester State University's Rockwood Field.

It was sweet for Hamilton, who had played in state tournaments in three sports. This was her first state crown.

"I have two

of these already from soccer and they're both red," Hamilton said, pointing to the medal around her neck. "Finally I got my blue one. It matches my uniform. I'm so happy and I'm so glad that we could add to the history of Wahconah.

"One of our sayings this year was 'Make it a tradition,' because we won Western Mass. last year. So we won Western Mass. and then we added to the tradition of Wahconah. I think it's awesome."

Hamilton earned that medal, finishing with three hits, including a double, and scoring twice. She led off the 11th inning with a single to right. She took second base on an error before Huban moved her over to third, reaching on another error. Finally, Lussier, just a sophomore, got the hit that brought Hamilton home, hands raised in the air.

"I didn't want the seniors to have their last game be a loss," Lussier said. "It's fantastic. I never thought that would be me at the beginning of the season."

Hamilton's winning run came after a roller coaster ride of a state final. The Warriors (24-1) took a 1-0 lead in the first inning before Burgner, tiring from pitching her third game in four days, started to struggle. The Red Devils (23-3) put runners on in five consecutive innings, including the fifth when RBI hits from Stacey Bezreh and Jillian Mazure gave Burlington a 3-1 lead.

But then, Burgner came alive. Boosted by a triple from Gabby Lavinio and a two-run single from Lauryn Huban that tied the game the very next inning, Burgner didn't allow a hit over the last five

**Send flowers
for any occasion**

Bouquets

from **\$19⁹⁹**_{+s/h}

ProFlowers
Offer ONLY available at:
proflowers.com/happy
or call 1.877.804.1133



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

The Berkshire Eagle

as the Red Devils had only one baserunner, on an error in the 10th.

"I think she got stronger as the game went on," Burlington coach Kristen Mahoney said. "The good thing is we put the ball in play a lot. [Burgner's] been known to dominate teams. ... We put the ball in play and they had to make the plays and they did."

Burlington seemed to have momentum in the middle of the game, stranding seven baserunners in the fourth through sixth innings. That's right when Burgner got hot.

The senior said she was inspired by her teammates, feeling like she owed them after they tied the game. So she locked up with Burlington pitcher Courtney Lanfranchi, matching her inning for inning. Lanfranchi ended up with 12 strikeouts, while Burgner had three of her six after the sixth inning. Burgner retired 16 of the last 17 batters she faced.

"It was very uncharacteristic to see her get flustered the way she did," Belcher said of his pitcher's early outburst. "I came right out and just said, 'It's not like we haven't been here before.' We had and you just got to handle it. My hat goes off to her. She's a true Warrior. She led us all year and when it counted the most, she came through."

Burgner posed for pictures after the game, smiling and soaking in the moment. Just this year she's been to a Western Mass. final in volleyball and a state semifinal in basketball. Like Hamilton, though, this was the first time she'd had a season end in triumph.

"It's kind of surreal right now," Burgner said. "I don't think it's, like, here."

Wahconah 4, Burlington 3

Wahconah 100 002 000 01--4 9 3

Burlington 001 020 000 00--3 6 4

Sam Burgner and Gabby Lavinio; Courtney Lanfranchi and Jillian Mazure. 2B -- Burlington 1 (Mazure); Wahconah 1 (Sara Hamilton). 3B -- Wahconah 3 (Kelcie Yarmey 2, Lavinio).

Get a FREE ADT-Monitored Home Security System.*

(With \$99 customer installation and purchase of ADT alarm monitoring services. See important terms and conditions below.)

Call Now! 1-877-835-8373



*\$99.00 Customer Installation Charge. 36-Month Monitoring Agreement required at \$35.99 per month (\$1,295.64).
 Form of payment must be by credit card or electronic charge to your checking or savings account. Offer applies to homeowners only. Local permit fees may be required. Satisfactory credit history required. Certain restrictions apply. Offer valid for new Security Choice - An ADT Authorized Dealer customers only and not on purchases from ADT Security Services, Inc. Other rate plans available. Cannot be combined with any other offer. **\$100 VISA® Gift Card Offer: \$100 VISA Gift Card is provided by Security Choice and is not sponsored by ADT Security Services. Requires mail-in redemption. Call 1-888-407-2338 for complete restrictions and redemption requirements.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™