

Mighty Reds claim fourth straight championship

Dusty Dominguez throws five innings of relief. Eaton's record over a four-year span is 92-10.

By Irv Moss
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Pueblo — When it's state championship time, it's time for Eaton High School's Dusty Dominguez to become Mr. May.

Dominguez put his personal touch on an 8-5 victory Saturday over La Junta at Hobbs Field as the Reds won their fourth straight Class 3A state baseball championship at the Runyon Sports Complex.

Dominguez, who opened the

game in right field, pitched the final five innings for the victory. He delivered a two-run double in the fourth inning to help the Reds to a 7-5 lead.

But it was on the mound where the Eaton senior was Mr. May. He allowed just one run, one hit and struck out seven, including the game's final out, to touch off a celebration after La Junta's Thomas Baird waved at the third strike.

Dominguez's glove went airborne almost before Baird had finished his swing, and Eaton's record in the past four years improved to 92-10.

"I knew it was a good pitch and he (Baird) wasn't going to touch it," Dominguez said. "I think this was the best of the

championships, because I'm a senior, and I ended the game with a strikeout."

Winning games in the state playoffs isn't new to the slim right-hander. He was the winning pitcher in the semifinals and finals last year, and he matched the twin victories again this year. He also played third base in last year's playoffs.

As a sophomore, he pitched in relief in the playoffs. He was on the squad as a freshman, but didn't play.

Outfielder Garrett Walker, the only other senior on Eaton's team, played in the past two state playoffs, but didn't rate the performances.

"Both state titles were amazing," Walker said.

The Reds went right to work Saturday, scoring four runs in the first inning. La Junta starter Jonathan Apodaca surrendered a leadoff single to Travis Anderson and consecutive doubles to Brett Myatt and Josh Noblitt, quickly falling behind 3-0.

Noblitt was the Reds starting pitcher and almost got out of a bases-loaded jam in the second inning. His throwing error on a slow roller by outfielder Gabe Fernandez allowed three runs to score on a play that should have been the final out.

The Tigers opened the third inning with singles by Apodaca and David Thompson before Eaton coach Jim Danley brought in Dominguez, who hit Baird with a pitch, surrendered

a sacrifice fly to Bryce Wadleigh before striking out Aaron Salas and Brandon Salazar to end the threat.

"Dusty Dominguez was the best part of this championship," Danley said. "He probably was a little tired, but he got better as the game went on."

Tempers flared some throughout. La Junta's Sean Gleason was hit by pitches in the second and fourth innings, causing some jawing. A collision at first base in the bottom of the seventh between Apodaca and Eaton's Shane Dyer resulted in Dyer dislocating his left elbow. Apodaca was called out for running inside of the base path.

"They (Eaton) played a great game," La Junta coach Jeremy

Hunter said. "It got a little heated, but the play at first base wasn't intentional. They questioned whether we were playing a clean game and I took that a little personal."

Eaton 410 210 0-8 11 2
La Junta 031 100 0-5 6 0

Eaton — Anderson cf 4-1-1-0, Myatt 3b 3-2-2-1, Noblitt p-ss 4-1-3-2, Dominguez rf-p 4-0-1-2, Walker lf 3-0-0-0, Dyer ss-lb 4-1-1-0, Trujillo rf 0-0-0-0, Hungenberg 1b-rf 3-0-2-2, Nation 2b 4-0-0-0, Carlson c 0-0-0-0, Monfort dh 2-0-1-1, Stout dh 1-0-0-0. Totals 32-8-11-8.

La Junta — Gleason ss-p 2-2-0-0, Fernandez lf 3-0-0-0, Guerrero cf 4-0-0-0, Apodaca p-ss 4-1-3-1, Thompson rf 4-0-1-0, Baird lb 3-0-0-0, Wadleigh c 2-0-0-1, Salas 3b 3-1-1-0, Salazar 2b 2-1-1-0. Totals 27-5-7-2.

E — Noblitt, Carlson. LOB — Eaton 6. La Junta 7. 2B Myatt, Noblitt 2, Dominguez, Hungenberg. SB — Myatt, Gleason, Apodaca. HBP — Hungenberg (by Apodaca), Gleason 2 (by Noblitt and Dominguez), Baird (by Dominguez).

Batteries — Noblitt, Dominguez (3) and Carlson; Apodaca, Gleason 5 and Wadleigh. W — Dominguez. L — Apodaca. WP — Dominguez.

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