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Second-baseman Ryan Haynes applies the tag on a pickoff throw from her sister Reagan at first base on an Estherville-Lincoln Central player in last week’s Class 3A regional for the Algona Bulldogs. Photo by Mindi Spear

# E-LC edges Bulldogs in 12 innings in regional final

By Greg Grabianowski  
Sports Editor

ESTHERVILLE—Seven innings of softball was not enough to determine a regional champion on Tuesday, July 15 as the Algona Bulldogs and Estherville-Lincoln Central Midgettes battled deep into the night before the Midgettes finally came out on top.

The red-and-white scored the tying and winning runs after there were two outs and nobody on base with Haylee Stokes delivering the game-winning walk-off single.

Twice in the contest, No. 15 Algona had the No. 9 Midgettes down to their final out in extra innings with no one on base, once in the eighth with Algona leading 1-0 and again in the 12th with the Bulldogs leading 2-1.

Both times, the home team came up big to extend their season, claim the Class 2A Region No. 6 title and advance to the state softball tournament.

“What a hard-fought game, it is a tough one to swallow,” said Algona head coach Todd VanOtterloo. “I am really proud of the girls. They battled hard all 12 innings. Yager is a heck of a pitcher and we earned a total of eight hits against her.

“Our girls put the ball in play when we needed to and we came up just one out short tonight. We had our opportunities but they made one more play than us. Allison was tremendous tonight. She did a great job



Algona pitcher Allison Trunkhill struck out 10 and allowed just three runs in 11.2 innings of work against ninth-ranked Estherville-Lincoln Central last week in Estherville. Photo by Mindi Spear

of hitting her spots and changed speeds very well.”

Right from the start, a pitcher’s duel developed between Algona junior Allison Trunkhill and E-LC’s Rylee Yager. Yager was lights out to start the game, retiring the first 11 red-and-black batters, seven by way of strikeouts, including the first five batters of the game.

Reagan Haynes finally broke up the perfect game with a two-out single in the fourth stanza before Maya Lentz coaxed a base-on-balls but Yager extinguished the scoring threat by getting Ryan Haynes on a foul out to first base.

Not to be outdone, Trunkhill matched zeros on the scoreboard with Yager for the first seven innings as the contest moved into extra innings.

The best scoring opportunity for the red-and-white in the first seven innings came in the first stanza as the Midgettes put two runners on with one out before Trunkhill retired the final two of the frame.

After that early threat, the Bulldog right-hander never allowed more than one base-runner to reach in a single inning until the eighth, twirling 1-2-3 innings in the second, fifth and sixth frames.

Algona had a golden opportunity to score in the fifth inning with nobody out. Lainey Venteicher laced a single to left field and Emma Spear reached on an error.

Both runners advanced 60 feet on an infield groundout but Yager struck out Bella Jo Dunning and retired Kaitlyn Burns on a fielder’s choice to end the threat.

The red-and-black finally broke through in the eighth inning with two outs. Trunkhill legged out an infield single and Reagan Haynes reached on an E-LC error.

Lentz then delivered a crucial opposite field single to right field as Charli Dodds, courtesy running for Trunkhill raced home with the game’s first run.

The Bulldogs had a chance to end the game in the bottom of the frame and punch their first state tourney ticket since 2020 as Trunkhill retired the first two batters of the stanza, each on one pitch.

With the home team down to their final out, Cara Schiltz ripped a single off Trunkhill’s glove and Yager lined a triple to the gap in center field as Schiltz sprinted home to dead-lock the game at 1-1.

In the chalked circle, Yager dialed back in, not letting an Algona runner past first base in the ninth, tenth and eleventh innings. Burns singled in the 10th frame but was thrown out at second base trying to steal.

After Trunkhill set the side down in the ninth and tenth stanzas, the red-and-white had a chance to win the game in the 11th. With one out, Yager beat out an apparent infield single but was called out when she was ruled to be out of the batter’s box when she made contact with the softball.

The Midgettes then proceeded to load the bases with two outs but Trunkhill fanned Grace Nath to send the contest into the 12th frame.

With one out in the top of the 12th, Kayla Buscher reached on an error. She advanced 60



The dust flies as Algona catcher Reagan Haynes squeezes a third strike against Estherville-Lincoln Central last Tuesday in Estherville in the regional final. Photo by Mindi Spear

feet when a pickoff throw by the catcher deflected off the first baseman’s glove and Buscher hustled to second base.

An infield single by Burns put runners on the corners with two outs. Then a dribbler by Trunkhill resulted in the fifth E-LC error of the evening as Burns running to second briefly blocked the view of the second baseman, who could not come up with the ball cleanly as Buscher trotted home to give Algona a 2-1 advantage.

In the bottom of the inning, Trunkhill retired the first two batters as the red-and-black was one out away from a state tournament berth.

The Bulldog junior right-hander then walked two straight batters and Yager made her pay as she ripped a single to left center-field to tie the game at 2-2.

Strokes then slapped a solid single to right-field to chase in the winning run and give the Midgettes their fourth state tourney berth in the last five years and 12th overall in the program’s history.

Reagan Haynes and Venteicher led Algona at the plate with a pair of singles while teammates Burns, Trunkhill, Lentz and Spear each contributed one single. Dodds and Buscher scored the red-and-black’s runs in the contest.

Trunkhill was the tough luck loser in the circle despite pitching well. She gave up three earned runs on nine hits while fanning 10 batters, walked four and hit a batter.

Yager was just as sharp as she allowed two runs, one was earned, on eight hits while striking out 18 Bulldogs and issued two base-on-balls.

Algona concluded a nice season with an overall record of 20-7 as E-LC advanced to the Class 3A state softball tournament with a season mark of 23-7.

With the loss, the softball careers of four Bulldog seniors came to an end as Ryan Haynes, Kaitlyn Burns, Lainey Venteicher and Kayla Buscher wore the red-and-black softball uniform for the final time.

“These four seniors are the main reasons we have won 20 games this season,” said Coach VanOtter-

loo. “They have been in the softball program for five years and played in two regional finals. They have gotten better every year they participated.

“They all four had great seasons at the plate and in the field for us and they will be missed next summer. They have really provided leadership to help their younger teammates along. I am so proud of them and honored to have the opportunity to be their coach.”

Algona	000	000	010	001	2	8	1
E-LC	000	000	010	002	3	9	5

  

Algona (2)	AB	R	H	RBI
Kaitlyn Burns, cf	6	0	1	0
Allison Trunkhill, p	6	0	1	0
Charli Dodds, cr	0	1	0	0
Reagan Haynes, c	5	0	2	0
Taylor VanOtterloo, cr	0	0	0	0
Maya Lentz, ss	5	0	1	1
Ryan Haynes, 2b	5	0	0	0
Lainey Venteicher, lf	5	0	2	0
Emma Spear, dp	5	0	1	0
Gabby Venteicher, cf	0	0	0	0
Kayla Buscher, 1b	5	1	0	0
Bella Jo Dunning, 3b	5	0	0	0
Algona Totals	47	2	8	1

  

E-LC (3)				
Cara Schiltz, cf	5	2	2	0
Rylee Yager, p	6	0	3	2
Haylee Stokes, rf	4	0	1	1
Hillary Ruschy, c	5	0	1	0
Kacie Brechwald, 1b	4	0	2	0
Jasmine Smith, pr	0	0	0	0
Grace Nath, 3b	5	0	0	0
Arianna Beekman, ss	5	0	0	0
Kyleigh Schneider, dp	2	0	0	0
Suri Shatto, 2b	3	0	0	0
Addison Hoege, rf	4	1	0	0
E-LC Totals	43	3	9	3