

Judge keeps up winning ways

Unfamiliar territory: Bulldogs continue to move closer to what would be a historic state crown

By Andrew Aragon
The Salt Lake Tribune

OGDEN - Stunned by gas prices and the unseasonably hot weather?

They seem normal compared to what's happening with Judge Memorial's baseball team.

With their 6-5 win in eight innings over Uintah on Thursday, the Bulldogs advanced to the winners' bracket final of the Class 3-A baseball tournament. Judge athletic director Dan Del Porto estimates that it's been at least 50 years since the Bulldogs have made it this far in a baseball tournament.

"Everyone should be shocked, but not us," said Judge right fielder Eddie Bratke. "We knew we could do it. We didn't know if we were going to do it, but we knew we could."

As they always say, it takes some luck to win a state tournament, and the Bulldogs got their share of breaks against the Utes. Judge's Tanner Preston scored the game-winning run on a wild pitch. It was the second run the Bulldogs scored off a wild pitch in the game - the first came after a strikeout in the second inning.

"Sometimes it pays to be a little lucky," coach Jeff Myaer said.

A "little" lucky is probably the best way of describing the Bulldogs' victory, because they came through with enough clutch plays to win. Judge trailed by one and was down to its last out in the seventh. With a runner on third, the game fell into Bratke's hands. After he gave Myaer a wild handshake, he settled into the batter's box and delivered a first-pitch opposite-field single to tie the game.

"When I was in the on-deck circle I was hoping we would score one run, then I'd have a chance to win it," Bratke said. "To be in that do-or-die situation was nerve-wracking."

Judge pitcher Joe Pond also was in a do-or-die situation, but his lasted for four innings. Pond entered in the fifth and was given the task of shutting down a red-hot Utes' offense. Pond got in trouble a couple of times, but kept Uintah off the scoreboard.

"He's been throwing like a champion lately," said Bratke.

As unlikely as it seemed before the tournament started, a state championship is now a realistic possibility for Judge, Region 10's fourth seed.

"We're catching fire at the right time," Pond said. "If we keep the sticks going, there's no telling how far we can go."



Judge players celebrate at home plate after scoring the winning run in the bottom of the eighth inning to beat Uintah. (Steve Griffin/The Salt Lake Tribune)