

# Argylls top Anderson for first Madison County title

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Madison-Grant senior Nick Evans delivers a pitch in the Argylls' 11-8 win at Anderson Saturday night in the Nick Muller Memorial Madison County tournament championship game.

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Madison-Grant's Chad Harbert dives safely into third base during the Argylls' 11-8 win at Anderson in the Madison County championship Saturday night.

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Madison-Grant sophomore Maddox Beckley takes a cut against Anderson in the Madison County championship game Saturday night. Beckley drove in three runs and earned the save on the mound in the Argylls' 11-8 win.

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Madison-Grant's Seth Lugar rounds third base on his way to scoring a run in the Argylls 11-8 win over Anderson Saturday night.

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ANDERSON — The upperclassmen on Madison-Grant's baseball team have personified perseverance and determination during their careers in Fairmount.

Now as leaders and combined with a talented group of first-year varsity players, the Argylls are tasting sweet success from the fruits of their labor.

Success was also historic for M-G Saturday night on Anderson's Memorial Field.

Behind a gutsy starting pitching performance from senior Nick Evans and an opportunistic offense, the Argylls topped high-scoring and previously unbeaten Anderson, 11-8, to win the Nick Muller Memorial Tournament and Madison County championship for the first time in program history.

"It means so much. We've worked so hard in the offseason, that's where it starts," said Evans, who has been a starter for the Argylls since his first day as a freshman. "The coaches have tried so hard to get us out here and they've really put together a team and a program.

"We help each other up. There really hasn't been any letdowns. Everybody is doing their part and giving it their all. It's awesome to see."

Evans exemplified perseverance and determination in his 5 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings on the mound for M-G. He limited the Indians, who had been averaging more than 10 runs and 10 hits per game in starting the season 7-0, to just seven hits and two walks while striking out 11 in his 112-pitch performance.

Before Evans threw his first pitch, however, he and the Argylls had already put Anderson in a hole.

Freshman Teagan Yeagy led off the top of the first with an infield single, senior Cole Hasty followed with a walk, Evans drove in a run with a single and junior Mason Richards walked to load the bases.

Sophomore Maddox Beckley lined a single into center field with one out, and freshman Braiden Ross followed with a sacrifice fly to left, and M-G took the field to play defense in the first with a 4-0 lead.

Argyll coach Scott Haley sensed his team was ready when it convened for batting practice Saturday afternoon at the school before departing for Anderson.

“We met at the school today at 3:45 and hit a couple rounds in the cage and off the tee. They were ready,” Haley said. “I told them they could dress casual for BP but over half of them had their uniforms on ready to go. That’s a good sign.

“They came out and just jumped all over (Anderson),” he continued. “To get a four run lead puts your opponents in a deficit, but give them credit. They battled back the whole game. They hit the ball and kept making plays.”

Beckley’s sacrifice fly in the third inning scored courtesy runner and senior Jace Gilman to increase the M-G lead to 5-0, but Anderson had a swift and strong answer in its half of the inning.

After Evans faced only six batters through the first two innings, the Indians sent 10 to the plate in the third, picked up its first five hits of the game and scored five runs to tie the score up at 5-5.

Undaunted, the Argylls answered with even more authority in the fourth, scoring six runs on five hits to reassume control. Hasty sent a double into the left center gap, the only extra-base hit in the contest for either team, to score two runs while junior Chad Harbert added an RBI single to help M-G move in front, 11-5.

Anderson took advantage of a pair of M-G errors and two hits to score three times in the fifth inning to complete the scoring on the night.

Evans struck out the final two Anderson batters he faced in the fifth and the first two in the sixth before issuing his second walk of the game and ending his performance on the night.

“What a bulldog. He did not want to come out,” said Haley, who made a couple trips to the mound before ultimately opting to go with Beckley to try and get the final four outs for M-G. “I asked him after the fifth inning, I said ‘I want you to be honest with me, how do you feel?’ He said, ‘I feel better than I did in the first inning.’ I said, ‘Can you get us through one more,’ and he said, ‘I can do it, coach,’ and he did.

“He was reaching that pitch-count limit so we had to get him out of there and we had confidence in Maddox to do the job.”

Haley admitted most trips to the mound with Evans pitching result in a discussion about the senior wanting to keep the ball in his hands, but that was not the case for the final time on Saturday.

“He didn’t really have to say anything. I knew it was time to take me out,” Evans said. “I was getting a little bit winded and I trusted Maddox. He came in and closed it out.”

Indeed, Beckley ended the sixth inning with a strikeout, then after issuing a lead-off walk in the seventh, retired the final three Anderson hitters with another strikeout, a fly out to left and a pop-up to second base.

Beckley had just 1 2/3 varsity innings in two appearances prior to Saturday, but handled the late-game pressure like a seasoned veteran.

“Always following that kid is hard, he’s a great pitcher,” said Beckley of Evans. “I knew I had to come in and throw strikes and get him out of there.”

After Yeagy secured the final out of the game, the Argylls' dugout quickly emptied and the team celebrated its first Madison County championship en masse in the middle of the diamond.

"It's crazy," Beckley said. "Especially coming up in this program. We went a couple of seasons without very many wins and we're staring off hot this year."

Madison-Grant had just nine wins total through the freshman and sophomore seasons of its seniors. The Argylls are now 5-1 and won four-straight games, the last two against quality 4A programs in Anderson and Pendleton Heights.

The Argylls will carry momentum into Central Indiana Conference play which starts Thursday against Frankton in Fairmount. Madison-Grant will also have a chance to win a second county title when it hosts the Grant Four on May 1.

"I don't think anybody expected us to be here, let alone win it," Haley said. "It's huge momentum. It gives these kids confidence and they'll just build off of it. ... They won't lax on me."