

Eagle fielding miscue gives Austin victory

By GARY MARTIN

Depth perception is everything when you're playing an outfield position in baseball. Just a slight miscalculation on the flight of the ball can mean the difference between an out and a runner in scoring position.

Center fielder Marcus Chandler of Willowridge discovered this truth the hard way. Chandler misjudged a Troy Holt drive, allowing the ball to drop behind him. The miscue brought in the tying and winning runs as the Austin Bulldogs edged the Eagles 5-4 last night at Austin High.

Holt's two-out blast scored Adam Fields and Nick Waligura as the Bulldogs capped a rally from a 4-1 deficit. Fields had reached on a walk and Waligura doubled in the left-center gap to set up the fielding mistake.

After an error led to three Eagle runs, Austin got one back in the bottom of the first courtesy of a solo home run by Chris Sheffield. The crushing drive over the left field fence was the first of the season for Sheffield.

Willowridge tallied its last run in the third when Arturo Robles walked, stole second, and scored on a throwing error by shortstop Jacob Gobar. A great defensive throw by center fielder Waligura on a fly ball nailed Jaime Vasquez attempting to advance to third.

Austin pitcher Adam Fields then settled down after the third inning, allowing only three hits the rest of the way to get the victory.

The Bulldog comeback continued with two runs in the bottom of the third. Chad Haynes and Waligura walked to start the rally. After Hayes was forced at third on a Holt sacrifice-bunt attempt, Sheffield singled to left to load the bases.

New Eagle pitcher William Rice hit John Warmke to force home Waligura and losing pitcher Vasquez came back to the mound. Steven Ramirez welcomed the pitcher back with a beautifully laid suicide squeeze to score the onrushing Holt and bring Austin back to within one, 4-3.

Austin threatened to score again in the fifth. Warmke and Ramirez laced one-out singles to right and Gobar walked to load the bases. But Jessie Larson grounded to first where Rashad Washington started a spectacular first-to-home-to-first double play and end the threat.

The Eagles mounted one last serious threat in the sixth when Vasquez and Rene Robles singled to start the inning. But catcher Chad Haynes picked Robles off first. Fields then struck out Raul Leyva and coaxed Washington to ground out to put a cap on the rally.

The victory solidified Austin's grip on seventh place in district 20-5A play at 5-9 and ran its season slate to 8-15. Last-place Willowridge falls to 1-13 in district and 7-18 overall.

Willowridge 301 000 0-4 5 0
Austin 102 200 x-5 7 2
WP-Adam Fields. LP-Jaime Vasquez.