

BRUINS DOMINATE DIAMOND



ABOVE: Grayson Guillory pitches in Game 3 of the state championship series on Saturday, May 19, at Trustmark Park in Pearl. The Bruins won 5-1 to take home the state championship trophy.

TOP: Catcher Andrew Sanli takes a swing in Game 2 of the state championship series on Friday, May 18, at Trustmark Park in Pearl. The Bruins lost the game 8-5, but bounced back to win Game 3, the championship series and the state title.

Photos by Sydney Shoemaker/The Bear Facts

St. Joe wins two of three games over East Union to take state title

from staff reports

PEARL – The St. Joe Bruins won their first baseball state championship in 41 years at Trustmark Park on May 19 behind the incredible pitching performance of senior Grayson Guillory.

Guillory tossed a complete game against the East Union Urchins, giving up one run in the 5-1 victory. Guillory went two-for-two at the plate and drove in a run.

“I had faith in my whole team, and they backed me up on defense,” Guillory said. “All I did was pound the zone . . . and we got it done.”

In just four years, Coach Gerard McCall has completely turned around the culture of St. Joe baseball. McCall elevated an initially mediocre program to three South State Championship appearances and now one state championship.

“When I got here, no one thought I could do it,” McCall said. “It means a lot that those guys believed in us, believed

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in our coaching staff.”

ROUGH START

Game 3 began shaky for the Bruins.

In the top of the first inning, East Union had its best player, Joel Wilkinson, on second base. Wilkinson attempted to score on a hit from Josh Basil.

As Wilkinson reached home plate, he made contact with Bruin catcher Andrew Sanli – knocking off Sanli’s mask and glove. The umpire counted the run, but ejected Wilkinson from the game for malicious contact with the catcher.

“I think the ruling was correct,” McCall said after the game. “I hate it for the kid. It’s just one of those unfortunate plays.”

Guillory managed to strand the remaining runner on base to end the inning with East Union on top 1-0. And then the Bruins started to build momentum.



GERARD MCCALL
head coach

BRUINS’ BIG INNING

By the bottom of the third inning, the Bruins still trailed East Union 1-0. Third baseman Joe Pearson led off the inning and reached first base on an error by Urchins’

shortstop Ethan Hitt.

Guillory and Trey Frierson bunted for hits to load the bases. When Josh Bailey had a ground ball out, Pearson scored and tied the game. Next, Guillory scored on a fielder’s choice, hit by Wyatt Buck. Lastly, Andrew Sanli delivered a clutch two-out hit to score Frierson from third. That put the Bruins ahead 3-1.

The Urchins came back with a punch of their own. East Union had the bases loaded with one out. Guillory managed to get one batter to roll over a ground ball, and the Bruins got the force play at home. The next batter popped up in foul territory and third baseman Pearson caught it for the final out of the inning. Miraculously, Guillory managed to escape and not give up a run.

Guillory continued to dominate the East Union lineup in the top halves of the innings. In the bottom of the fourth, the Bruins added two more runs, stretching their lead to 5-1.

The last major obstacle for the Bruins came in the top of the sixth inning. East Union had men on first and second with one out. Guillory got East Union’s Jake Wood to hit a ground ball to third base; Pearson stepped on third and threw across the diamond for a double play to end the inning.

THREE OUTS AWAY

The Bruins entered the top of the seventh just a half inning away from a state championship.

Guillory got Thomas Gentry, the first batter of the inning, out on a ground ball to Brady Johnson at shortstop. Guillory walked the next batter, but got the second out on a force play at second on a ground ball from Ethan Hitt.

One more out remained for the Bruins to be state champions. Pinch hitter Kye Roberts came to the plate – East Union’s last chance. With an 0-2 count, Roberts popped up to the right fielder, where Collin Ledbetter caught the final out.

“I knew that ball was coming to me before Grayson (Guillory) threw the pitch,” he said. “When I saw that it was right to me, I was already freaking out before it was even in my glove.”

From there, it was chaotic celebration as the team stormed the field. Sanli tackled Guillory on the mound.

“I immediately ran up to Grayson (Guillory) and jumped on him,” Sanli said. “The team all came out and jumped on me. It was incredible. I couldn’t believe we finally won a championship.”



ANDREW SANLI
Bruin catcher

FORTY-ONE YEARS AGO...

The St. Joe Bruins won its first baseball championship since 1977. A lot has changed in the four decades that have passed. Here is a look into what life was like in 1977.

- A gallon of regular gasoline cost an average 62 cents.
- Jimmy Carter was President.
- A 12-ounce can of Coca-Cola cost a dime.
- A new 1977 Chevy Camaro listed for \$9,250.
- A dozen eggs set you back 82 cents.
- Jackson State alumnus Walter Payton was the NFL’s MVP.
- Elvis Presley died suddenly at age 42.
- “Laverne & Shirley” was the No. 1 show on television.
- “Star Wars” was the No. 1 movie of the year.
- Fleetwood Mac’s “Rumors” was Billboard’s Album of the Year.
- Punk rock appeared on the scene with The Ramones, The Clash and Elvis Costello.