

OZARK, Mo. - The Mount Mercy baseball team came within two outs of earning a trip to the NAIA national tournament Monday.

The Mustangs held a 3-1 lead over Clarke University with two outs in the bottom of the ninth, needing a victory in the losers bracket final of the Heart of America Conference tournament to automatically qualify for nationals.

Unfortunately for Mount Mercy, the Pride rallied for two runs in the bottom of the ninth inning to tie the game 3-3 and force extra innings. Clarke broke the deadlock by scoring in the bottom of the 12th for a 4-3 verdict.

Baker blasted Clarke, 16-3, in the first championship game to win the conference tournament. Baker and Clarke now advance to the NAIA tournament as the conference tournament champion and runnerup, while Mount Mercy finishes one win short at 29-23.

Mount Mercy compiled a 4-2 record in the tournament and staved off three straight elimination games.

Mount Mercy pitcher Tanner Lohaus gave his team every opportunity to defeat Clarke. He tossed eight strong innings, allowing one run on two hits with eight strikeouts and two walks.

Mount Mercy out-hit Clarke, 16-6, but the Mustangs could not get clutch hits when they needed them and left 14 runners on base.

Owen Oreskovich went 4-for-6 for Mount Mercy. Tito Berdecia was 3-for-6 with two doubles. Evan Jackson and Nick Sueppel had two hits.

Mount Mercy 010 000 011 000 - 3 16 0
Clarke 000 001 002 001 - 4 6 2

Lohaus, Trouten (9), Barnes (10) and Day. Lopez, Kirman (4) and Mettica. W - Kirman. L - Barnes. 2B - Berdecia, Candaroma. 3B - Faur.