

# Tigers close in on state with win

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Greg Schulz pitched a five-hit shutout and Carroll went on to post a 4-0 district final win over 3A fifth-ranked Harlan Monday night.

The victory lifts the Tigers (23-9) into Wednesday night's 7 p.m. sub-state final in Carroll against Creston (18-14), a 12-0 six-inning winner over Atlantic Monday.

Carroll will be looking for the

school's first state tournament appearance. The last time the Tigers came close to a state berth was in 1992 when they won the district title over Atlantic, 11-0, but then lost to Council Bluffs St. Albert in the sub-state game, also 11-0.

Carroll (23-9) struck for four runs in the bottom of the sixth inning after a striking defensive play in field. With one out and runners at first and second, Kyle Christensen got under a fly ball in right field and gunned the catch to third basemen Kyle Semprini, who tagged out Todd Schwartz to end the inning.

"I knew I could make it, I just didn't think they would run," Christensen said of the play. "I just got under it and got a running start. I saw him running out of the corner of my eye and I was like, 'I have to gear into this one and I about overthrew it'."

Semprini, who stands 6-foot-4 pulled down the throw, made the tag, and the Tigers roared to the plate.

Carroll got a lead off single from Semprini, when his hit bounced over starting pitcher Mark Blum. Addison Patrick raced to first when his sacrifice bunt was bobbled for an error at first. Both runners moved to second and third on Ben Gossett's sacrifice for the first out.

Harlan then loaded the bases with an intentional walk to

Chase Steinkamp, who had singled in the fourth. Matt Fleshner sent a 0-2 pitch to center to score Semprini for the first run. Patrick then raced home on a throwing error after a busted squeeze attempt and Marc Hempstead cracked a two-run single up the middle.

"With (Greg) Schulz pitching, if we can score one run, everybody on the team thinks we can win," Hempstead said.

Heading into the top of the seventh with a 4-0 cushion, Schulz said he felt pretty good about the outcome.

"They are one of the best teams we've faced all year and I always hate playing Harlan because they always have a chance of coming back," Schulz said. "But I was feeling pretty good and you just have to have confidence that your defense will make the plays and you're going to come out of it with a win."

Schulz gave up a lead off double to Neil Gross and then walked Zach Kaufman to put runners at first and second with no outs. But again the Tiger defense came up big. Semprini caught a line drive by Adam Leinen and turned the double play when he caught Gross off second. Gossett picked up Brett Gubbels roller for the game's final out.

"That was a heck of a ballgame," Carroll coach Dirk Troutman said. "Two very good teams - two very, very good pitchers going after each other. And

defenses that made plays."

Carroll's defensive efforts were eye-catching. Gossett tagged out Mark Blum for the final out of the first inning after Schulz caught him off of first. Centerfielder Addison Patrick made a diving catch for the final out in the second inning to leave two Harlan runners stranded. Shortstop Chase Steinkamp threw out the lead runner at third in the third.

"You have to give all the credit to Schulz and Carroll," Harlan coach Steve Daeges said. "They played loose. One word describes us is 'tight.' I thought maybe we tried too hard."

Harlan, seeking its fifth straight trip to the state tournament, finished at 27-6. The Cyclones most recent state title was in 2003.

Kyle Semprini will take the mound for Carroll Wednesday.

"If we take care of us, we feel like we're in pretty good shape," Troutman said of the sub-state match-up. "

Game Statistics  
Carroll vs. Harlan

	R	H	E				
Harlan	0	0	0	0	0	5	2
Carroll	0	0	0	4	0	4	1
LOB — C: 3; H: 5							
Doubles — Gross (H)							
Carroll RBIs — Fleshner,							
Hempstead (2)							
Carroll multiple hitters —							
None							
	IP	H	BB	SO	R	ER	
Schulz (9-0)	7	5	1	5	0		0
Blum .....	6	4	1	2	4		3