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Stadium High pitcher Jordyn Kurtz earned a victory in extra innings with 12 strike-outs, including two in the seventh inning with Wilson runners in scoring position.

## First round to Stadium in Narrows rivalry

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The best rivalry games can often be spotted by the crowds.

With sun and blue skies over the Wilson High School fastpitch diamond Friday, friends and family filled the grandstands, sidelines and spilled out around the outfield fences for a sneak preview of the likely future matchup for the Narrows League title.

Tacoma rivals Wilson and Stadium didn't disappoint.

Behind senior pitcher Jordyn Kurtz's 12 strikeouts and smart hitting by two Tigers freshmen new to the rivalry, Bay Division leader Stadium (8-0) remained undefeated by scoring a 4-1 victory in nine innings.

Wilson, the leader in the Bridge Division, fell to 6-1 for the season.

While Kurtz turned on her competitive juices in the pitcher's circle, striking out back-to-back batters with runners in scoring position and nobody out in the bottom of the seventh inning to help force extra innings, freshmen Heidi Wells and Katelin Sisk stepped up in the top of the ninth.

With the international tiebreaker rule in effect, both teams started the eighth and ninth innings with the previous inning's final batter on second base. After neither team capitalized in the eighth, sophomore Devynne Nelons headed to second with Sisk leading off in the Stadium ninth.

"I knew I had to come up and hit the ball and drive the runner in," Sisk said. "I just did what I had to do."

The Stadium first baseman hit a single to left and advanced to second when the throw home skipped past catcher Anthea Aasen, allowing Nelons to score the go-ahead run. With Sisk on second, second baseman Wells stepped into the batter's box.

"When I saw (Sisk) get that hit, I said I've got to do this for the team," Wells said. "I know how important it is to beat Wilson on their home field, and I know how into it (seniors) Jordyn (Kurtz) and Sarah (Glennon) were. I just got mentally into it."

After Sisk stole third, Wells laid down a bunt and raced down the line to first, only to find that Wilson pitcher Kellie Ruth had looked Sisk back to third rather than throwing to first. After Wells advanced to second on another sacrifice bunt, both freshmen scored on a bobbled ball hit to the shortstop by left fielder Anna Dudley.

"When I heard how much of a rivalry this was, I knew it was going to be a tough game and we were going to have to work as a team to beat them," Wells said.

Until the late-game theatrics, it had shaped up as a pitchers' duel between Kurtz (7-0) and Ruth (4-1), although Stadium eked out to a 1-0 lead in the second when Sisk scored on a single by Dudley.

Wilson tried to answer in the bottom of the second, but outfielder Erin Cross was stranded at third after she led off with a double.

In the bottom of the sixth, the Rams finally pushed across a run to tie the game after senior Britney Dinelt led off with a double. A sacrifice bunt by Courtney Cabrera advanced Dinelt to third and she scored on a sacrifice fly by Cross.

Sisk, the only Stadium batter to have more than one hit, went 2-for-4 and scored twice. Cross was 2-for-2 for the Rams, who had eight hits off Kurtz. She was pitching her third game in three days.

"They're going to win their division, we're going to win ours and we'll play them again for the league title," Wilson coach Ron Ballmer said.

"It's a good experience to be in a good game."

Despite the close loss and sharing their coach's attitude, the Wilson players took the game in stride, knowing they will likely have another opportunity to play Stadium.

"It's always important to come out and show (Stadium) what we have, and I think we did," Ruth said. "We played an excellent game. They won when it counted and someone had to lose. ... I'd rather play in a close game than a blowout any time. You get to work on things you'll see in the playoffs."

League playoffs are scheduled for the weekend of May 9 at South End Recreation Area, where the Class 4A and 3A state tournaments also will be held May 23-24.