

Mengler shines for Eagles as Yegge wins 400th

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 26 March 2016 19:14 - Last Updated Saturday, 26 March 2016 19:31



Allie Mengler was an unexpected hero for the Kirkwood softball team Saturday and helped Coach Joe Yegge collect his 400th victory with the Eagles.

Mengler became the emergency starting pitcher in the second game of the doubleheader against DMACC and tossed a four-hit shutout against the fourth-ranked Bears in a clutch 10-0 victory.

DMACC blanked the sixth-ranked Eagles in the first game, 6-0, in the showdown of top-10 teams.

Nicky Simpson, one of Kirkwood's top pitchers, was warming up for the nightcap when a throw from the bullpen catcher hit her squarely in the mouth and knocked out two of her front teeth, sending her to the hospital for treatment.

Mengler, who had pitched only 7 1/3 innings all season, stepped into the void and handcuffed DMACC with pinpoint control despite not having much time to mentally prepare for the game.

"It was definitely weird," she said. "I've never been in that situation before."



Simpson returned to the Kirkwood field after the mishap and was holding an ice bag to her puffy mouth after the double-header.

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"She looked away for a split second and got hit by the ball. It was definitely scary," said Mengler.

Mengler, a sophomore from Walcott, knows all about injuries and a trip to the hospital. She had shoulder surgery after the 2015 campaign at Kirkwood and was only cleared to play less than two months ago.

Mengler did not play high school softball during her years at Davenport West, but she starred on travel teams and was ready for her big assignment Saturday with the Eagles trying to avoid a sweep in a conference twin-bill.

Yegge said Mengler was "calm and collected" in the contest, which ended after 4 1/2 innings due to the mercy rule.

"She did awesome," he said. "It's good to see her get that. It's a good confidence boost."

Mengler saw DMACC batters collect 13 hits in the first game, many of them on line drives against Kirkwood ace Lexi Kinnaird. Then it was her turn, suddenly, to try and keep them quiet.

"It was a little intimidating," she allowed, "but I knew that I had a good defense to back me up.

"I came in knowing they were a good team and I knew I had to hit all my spots and just try to work their weaknesses and work my strengths."

The Eagles took a 4-0 lead in the third inning, then batted around in the fourth inning and scored six runs for their 10-0 advantage, with Carter and Mercer both hitting their home runs.

Morgan Frost made an excellent running catch in left field for the final out of the game.

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The victory gave Yegge a 400-91 record in nine years at Kirkwood. The split left the Eagles at 25-4 overall and 3-1 in the conference. DMACC left town at 18-3 overall and 3-1 in the league as well.

Payton Mercer went 2-for-3 with a two-run homer and four RBIs for Kirkwood in the second game. Cedar Rapids Prairie grad Gabi Carter also socked a two-run homer and was 2-for-3.

Carter leads all players at the NJCAA Division II level with 52 RBIs this season. She's belted 11 home runs and is hitting a robust .522 despite playing a new position as a freshman.

Carter was a third-baseman at Prairie, but she switched to shortstop after Miranda Kaste of Muscatine broke her leg last fall.

"It's a lot different," said Carter. "It's the first time I've ever played there, so it's been an adjustment, that's for sure."

Carter played for Yegge at Prairie before joining him at Kirkwood this season.

"She's been awesome," he said. "Batting well over .500, leading the nation in RBIs. She's probably doing better than I thought she would."

Kenzie Ihle tamed the potent Kirkwood bats with a six-hit shutout and 14 strikeouts in the opener. Ihle has an 11-0 record with 92 strikeouts in 57 innings. She has allowed only four earned runs for a 0.49 ERA.

Kirkwood catcher Maddie Hansen, a Cedar Rapids Jefferson grad, confirmed Saturday that she has committed to Ball State for next season. Hansen is having a strong freshman campaign for the Eagles with seven home runs, 39

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BIs and a .414 batting average.

Game 1

DMACC █ █ █ 000 013 2 - 6 14 0

Kirkwood █ 000 000 0 - 0 6 2

W - Ihle (11-0). L- Kinnaird (12-2).

Game 2

DMACC █ █ █ 000 00 - 0 4 2

Kirkwood █ 013 6x - 10 11 0

W - Mengler (1-0). L - Sicard (5-2).