

No. 7 Eagles rally at district tourney

Written by Metro Sports Report

Thursday, 16 May 2019 04:47 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 May 2019 04:52



GLENDIVE, Mont. - The Kirkwood softball team has been living dangerously in postseason tournaments this year, but so far the Eagles are still alive and kicking.

The seventh-ranked Eagles rallied to split two games with 18th-ranked Dawson on Wednesday and will face the Bucs again on Thursday in the championship game of the district tournament in Montana.

Kirkwood (49-15) and Dawson (43-4) will tangle on Dawson's home field Thursday at 1 p.m., with the winner claiming a spot in the NJCAA Division II national championships.

Dawson blanked the Eagles, 1-0, in the first game Wednesday in the best-of-3 district tournament. The Bucs then held a 3-2 lead over the Eagles after three innings of the second game, putting Kirkwood on the verge of elimination, but Kirkwood's bats came alive and the Eagles soared to a 12-3 victory to force Game 3.

Kirkwood also had to rally in the regional tournament against NIACC last weekend after losing to NIACC in the winners bracket final, then whipping NIACC twice in the championship round.

Dawson scored in the top of the first inning of the first game Wednesday for a 1-0 lead, and that turned out to be all the scoring in the ballgame as Kirkwood collected only five hits. Kirkwood pitcher Erin Hocker, playing in her home state of Montana, allowed one run on seven hits and was the tough-luck loser.

Bradee Bouman pitched the first four innings of the second game for the Eagles and left with a 5-3 lead after Kirkwood erupted for three runs in the top of the fourth. Hocker relieved Bouman and tossed the final three innings, allowing no runs on one hit for her second save.

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The Kirkwood offense erupted just in time with three runs in the fourth inning, four runs in the fifth, and three more runs in the sixth inning for their 12-3 advantage.

Sydney Albaugh went 3-for-5 in Game 2 and drove in three runs. Shelby Hulsebus was 3-for-4, scored three times and had two stolen bases. Jayme Finn was 3-for-5 with a homer and scored twice. London Jackson belted her 21st homer and drove in three runs. Jessi Butler hit a two-run homer. Rachel Stewart scored three runs and Lauren Kuch had two hits.

GAME 1

Dawson 100 000 0 - 1 7 x

Kirkwood 000 000 0 - 0 5 0

Hocker and Butler. L - Hocker (26-9). 2B - Stewart. SB - Hulsebus.

GAME 2

Kirkwood 110 343 0 - 12 15 2

Dawson 012 000 0 - 3 5 x

Bouman, Hocker (5) and Barthelman, Butler (5). W - Bouman (21-6). S - Hocker (2). 2B - Finn. HR - Jackson, Finn, Butler. RBI - Hulsebus, Jackson 3, Albaugh 3, Finn, Butler 2.