

## Split leaves J-Hawks in limbo

Written by Tom Fruehling  
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Jefferson had to win two games Monday night to guarantee a share of an MVC division softball title.

The J-Hawks fell one short. They beat Iowa City West, 2-0, in their first game, but lost the nightcap, 2-1, at Larry Niemeyer Field.

So now their fate is in the hands of Dubuque Senior.

Senior beat Dubuque Wahlert Monday, 8-0, but its second game with the Golden Eagles was rained out. The Rams have a doubleheader at Waterloo East Tuesday and will make up their game with Wahlert Wednesday. If they win all three, they claim the Mississippi Division championship. With two wins, they tie the J-Hawks.

Although Jefferson holds a half-game advantage in the standings over Senior, the Rams lead the division with a .783 winning percentage to the J-Hawks' .769.

"We knew what we had to do," said Jefferson Coach Brian Erbe. "We just didn't get it done."

The J-Hawks tallied twice in the first inning of the opener and held on behind another strong pitching job by sophomore Alyssa Olson.

Second game senior hurler Brooke Stauffer worked valiantly all seven innings, managing to get out of one scrape after another.

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But the J-Hawk bats were mostly silent, eking out but four hits in the loss.

"We really didn't hit the ball well in either game," Erbe said. "And in the second game, we didn't take advantage of the scoring opportunities we did have early on. That cost us."

West rocked Stauffer for eight hits in the first three innings of the nightcap but parlayed them into only two runs.

The Women of Troy collected three singles and a double in the third inning alone. But one runner was tagged out by Jefferson catcher Maddie Hansen in a rundown, while another was picked off first base by Maddie Koolbeck.

Meanwhile, Jefferson (29-11, 20-6 MVC) scored its only run in the third without any hits.

Leadoff hitter Dani Stromert walked, moved on with a bunt from Kaitlyn Davidson and an error, and came home on a sacrifice fly to right by Hansen.

The J-Hawks' aggressive baserunning came back to bite them in the fourth.

Freshman Erin Kuba led off with a single to center. With two outs, she tried to score the tying run from second on a grounder deep in the hole behind second. She was tagged out on a close play at the plate.

"That maybe was a call I shouldn't have made," said Erbe, who was coaching at third.

Stromert opened the fifth with a single, but was stranded at third, and Jefferson didn't threaten again.

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Stauffer pitched a gutsy game, despite giving up 11 hits and walking three. The normally air-tight Jefferson defense also had three errors, including a slow roller that went between Stauffer's legs. Three West runners were caught in rundowns, however, and one was tagged out at the plate.

The Women of Troy (20-19, 16-10 MVC) stranded 11 runners on base.

"I thought Brooke pitched well," Erbe said. "She struggled at first, but she kept us in the game. We just couldn't score runs."

One of seven players honored on Senior Night, Stauffer was disconsolate afterward.

"I really wanted us to win the conference tonight," she said. "But we just didn't have the hitting or the defense to win it.

"We still think we'll make it to state and now have to get ready to play Washington on Saturday."

In Monday's first game, Olson allowed just four hits and struck out six.

Hansen, who had two of Jefferson's seven hits, knocked in the first run with a single to right. Koolbeck followed a run-scoring double.