

Koolbeck helps J-Hawks 'kiss' Wash goodbye

Written by Tom Fruehling
Saturday, 13 July 2013 22:26

On the back of her left hand, right at eye level when she's at bat, Jefferson's Maddie Koolbeck has big, bold letters that spell "KISS."

"It stands for 'Keep It Simple, Stupid'," she said, explaining that her big brother Jake, an assistant coach at Clear Creek Amana, suggested it early in the year when she was struggling at the plate.

"I've had an up-and-down season," noted the senior first baseman, her .342 batting average notwithstanding. "The problem is I think too much. I sometimes overthink things instead of just going up there and hitting the ball."

Koolbeck broke out of her perceived slump in a big way in the fifth inning Saturday night as the 10th-ranked J-Hawks belted Washington, 11-0, in five innings in the Class 5A regional semifinals at Larry Niemeyer Field.

Jefferson (30-11) will visit top-ranked Muscatine in the regional finals Tuesday night. The winner will advance to the state tournament.

With two outs and the bases loaded, Koolbeck drilled a screaming double to the fence in right-center to bring home three runs and push Jefferson's lead to 11-0.

Meanwhile on the mound, new-found ace Alyssa Olson used a similar simple strategy.

"I was just out there going for outs," the sophomore phenom said. "I try to pitch it either high or low, and the ball kind of has a mind of its own. It moves the way it wants to."

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Her resulting no-hitter was never in question. Out of 17 batters she faced, Olson struck out 14. She walked one, hit another and allowed one weak groundout to second baseman Kaitlyn Davidson.

“Really, I wasn’t trying for a no-hitter or trying to strike everybody out,” she said with her ever-winsome grin. “We knew Washington wouldn’t be an easy win. They’ve been winning games lately. I just knew I had to pitch tight.”

Other than a smattering of foul balls, few of the Warriors were able to hit Olson's deceptive rise ball.

“She’s a great young pitcher,” said Coach Fanaye Wooldrik of Washington (14-25). “She pitches with a great deal of confidence.

“We just could not hit her. Maybe if we would have gotten a couple of hits early, we could have gained some confidence.”

Olson acknowledged that her task was made easier when her teammates scored early and scored more later.

Jefferson banged out 12 hits, including consecutive second-inning doubles by Erin Kuba and Katelyn Holub and a first-inning triple by Amber Grimm. With four hits on the night, Grimm started the scoring parade by knocking in Dani Stromert right off the bat.

The J-Hawks scored twice more in the second and exploded for five runs in the fourth.

They sent 11 batters to the plate in the fourth inning. Along with two walks and a hit batter, they had singles from Holub, Hannah Towns, Davidson and Grimm.

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"We got great pitching and great hitting tonight," said Jefferson Coach Brian Erbe. "And we got key hits when we needed them with runners in scoring position.

"That's what we've been stressing all year. That and good defense, although we didn't need much of that tonight."

The J-Hawks will face a formidable opponent at Muscatine on Tuesday.

"We'll be playing them like we've got nothing to lose," said the confident Koolbeck. "We figure we'll have to beat the No.1 sometime, so it might as well be early."

JEFFERSON (11): Stromert, cf, 2 2 2 2, Davidson, 2b, 4 1 1 1, Grimm, lf, 4 2 4 2, Hansen, c, 4 0 0 0, Koolbeck, 1b, 3 0 1 4, Kuba, 3b, 2 1 1 1, Waite, ph, 1 0 0 0, Holub, ss, 2 1 2 1, Towns, rf, 3 2 1 0, Stauffer, dh, 2 2 0 0, Olson, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 27 11 12 11.

WASHINGTON (0): Lenten, 3b, 2 0 0 0, K.Peterson, ss-p, 2 0 0 0, Bruner, p-ss, 1 0 0 0, D.Riley, dh, 2 0 0 0, Schroeder, cf, 0 0 0 0, A.Riley, c, 2 0 0 0, Jonas, 1b, 2 0 0 0, Oler, 2b, 1 0 0 0, Arrington, rf, 2 0 0 0, C.Peterson, lf, 1 0 0 0. Totals 15 0 0 0.

Jefferson 120 53 - 11 12 0
Washington 000 00 - 0 0 1

Olson and Hansen. Bruner, K.Peterson (4) and A.Riley. W-Olson. L-Bruner. 2B-Koolbeck, Kuba, Holub. 3B-Grimm. SB-Grimm.