

Olson gives J-Hawks some muscle

Written by Cindy Petersen
Tuesday, 03 June 2014 22:01



The mouthful of braces have come out. The wispy thin arms from last year are now guns with bulging biceps.

What looked then to be a frail frame is now solidly broad-shouldered.

Jefferson junior softball pitcher Alyssa Olson, who came out of nowhere a year ago to make first-team all-state, is all grown up.

She's much more muscular. And while once it was mostly the motion of her rising fastball that fooled hitters, she's added momentum to blow the ball past batters.

The crafty right-hander raised her record to 4-0 Tuesday night as the Class 5A fifth-ranked J-Hawks (7-0) scored twice in the sixth inning and topped ninth-ranked Prairie (4-1) at Larry Niemeyer Field, 3-1.

The second game of the scheduled doubleheader was halted in the first inning by lightning and will be resumed Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. In case of rain, it will be reset to next Monday at 5 p.m.

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Olson's five-hit, nine-strikeout showing against the visiting Hawks was not without controversy.

Her very first pitch of the game was changed from a strike to a ball when the infield umpire called an illegal pitch. An apparent strikeout was then reversed to a base on balls.

The Jefferson pep band that opened the game with the National Anthem hadn't even broken ranks before J-Hawk Coach Brian Erbe was on the field arguing.

When lucky leadoff hitter Mallory Jones scored all the way from her perch at first on a booming double to left-center by Gabi Carter, Erbe screamed at the umps.

"That one's on you," he bellowed. "She shouldn't have even been on base."



Olson calmly explained afterward that the same two umpires last year also called her out several times for illegal pitches.

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"I guess they say I don't keep my foot planted when I throw," she said. "I don't know. They're the only ones who've ever called it.

"I just tried to shut it out and go about my business."

She came back to strike out the side in the second inning and allowed only two Prairie runners to reach as far as second base the rest of the way.

Olson credits her off-season club coach Jake Koolbeck with helping her pick up her game this season.

"We worked a lot on strength and endurance," she noted. "I feel a lot stronger this year, and I think I'm throwing harder."

Erbe, who didn't want to discuss the pitching dispute, said his staff ace is displaying the same demeanor she exhibited in her breakout season of a year ago.

"She keeps her composure in the face of adversity," he said.

While Olson was stifling the Prairie Hawks, Jefferson couldn't muster much punch against stand-out freshman hurler Natalie Halvorson.

Slugger Maddie Hansen knocked in a run in the first on a crisp single to left. But the J-Hawks didn't get another hit (and just one walk) until the sixth inning.

Slick freshman second baseman Avery Guy opened the sixth with a sharp single to center and senior Katelyn Holub reached first on a bobbled bunt attempt. The two advanced on a misplayed rundown, and Hansen again came

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through with a two-run single to center.

“That’s who you want at the plate with runners on,” Erbe said. “She led the state in RBIs last year. She’s a clutch hitter.”