

J-Hawks sweep Lions on emotional day

Written by Mike Condon

Wednesday, 18 June 2014 08:11

It was a long, emotional day Tuesday for the Jefferson softball players and coaches.

They spent the early part of the day helping clean up storm damage in the neighborhood near their hallowed diamond where many of those very neighbors have spent countless hours following the J-Hawks over the years.

Then Jefferson faced the prospect of going on the road for a doubleheader against a strong Linn-Mar team at night. And when the key moments presented themselves, the J-Hawks showed the same resolve they had earlier in the day with parts of their neighborhood in ruins.

Erin Kuba broke a 1-1 tie with a two-out single in the fifth inning of the opener and Jefferson tacked on eight more runs to win 10-1.

The nightcap belonged to junior catcher Maddie Hansen. Her bases-clearing double capped a five-run sixth inning as Jefferson (16-4, 11-3 MVC) rallied to gain the sweep with a 5-2 victory.

"I couldn't be any prouder of these kids," said J-Hawks Coach Brian Erbe. "They worked their tails off this morning. We normally practice on a game day, but we didn't today because our neighborhood needed our help getting back on their feet after the storms (Monday night)."

From a pure softball standpoint, Erbe would have liked to have his players home resting on a warm afternoon.

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"When you look at the big picture, what the Jefferson community and our neighborhood does for us, the two ballgames were important, but it wasn't as important as helping," he said.

"Some of those people have had kids go through Jefferson and stayed in that neighborhood and put up with us for six, seven months out of the year with all the games. It was something we all felt we had to do."

The J-Hawks played without second baseman Avery Guy, who suffered a concussion in a game last week. They started slowly in both games, before coming on late in each game.

Kuba and Hansen each had three hits in the opener. Jefferson finished with 15 hits, 12 coming in the final three innings.

"Linn-Mar is a much-improved team this year," said Hansen, who led the state in RBIs last summer as a sophomore. "These were two hard games."

The Lions (15-6, 11-5) kept the pressure on Jefferson, but didn't have enough to finish out in either game.

"We have six losses, but we have been right there in every one of them," said Linn-Mar Coach John Begley. "We just have to figure out a way to close out games."

Linn-Mar battled to a 2-0 lead in the nightcap on an RBI single from Elison Ollinger and an aggressive dash to the plate by Katie Sommer after Jefferson's Olivia Erickson had made a diving catch of a Kristie Sommer liner at second base.

In the top of the fifth, the Lions intentionally passed Hansen to load the bases and got out of the jam when Kuba flied to right. They didn't have that option in the sixth. The J-Hawks had already tied the game at 2-2 and Hansen stepped in with the bases loaded and two outs.

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"I wanted to be at the plate," she said. "I knew they couldn't walk me this time. I knew I had to come through for my team."

And come through she did, just missing a grand slam when her long fly ball hit off the left-field fence, clearing the bases.

"No disrespect to anybody else on our team, but Maddie is the one we want to have up in those situations," Erbe said. "In any other park, her hit would have been a grand slam. She really came through for us."

Hansen's clutch hit made a winner out of Alissa Good, who moved her record to 7-0 with a strong outing after J-Hawk ace Alyssa Olson got the win in the opener.

"This was a long day, but it was a good day," Hansen said. "Helping those who needed it in the morning, then coming out here and getting two big wins made it a special day."

Game 1

Jefferson 100 051 3 - 10 15 0

Linn-Mar 010 000 0 - 1 6 3

Alyssa Olson and Maddie Hansen. Maddy Ryan, Elison Ollinger (6) and Christina Lincoln. W - Olson. L - Ryan.

Game 2

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Jefferson 000 005 0 - 5 9 3

Linn-Mar 000 110 0 - 2 4 0

Alissa Good and Hansen. Ryan, Morgan Braughton (6) and Lincoln. W - Good. L - Ryan