

## Niemeyer not happy with J-Hawks' sweep

Written by Tom Fruehling  
Tuesday, 03 July 2012 22:53

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It's clear that Jefferson softball Coach Larry Niemeyer is back at full steam after finding fault with his team following a doubleheader sweep at home Tuesday night to finish the regular season at 35-5.

"This team tonight," he said, "did not resemble a team that is hungry for the state tournament.

"We have two more games to play to make it to state. If we play like we did tonight, we're not going to win them."

In beating Dubuque Wahlert (15-24) by scores of 10-3 and 4-3, the Class 5A fourth-ranked J-Hawks ended up 25-1 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Their only league blemish came in an early season loss to Iowa City West.

But Niemeyer, on the bench again after a six-day hospital stay with stomach problems, admitted he was "not a happy camper" going into Saturday's regional semifinal game against either Cedar Falls or Waterloo West. Those teams play a first round game Thursday.

The first game against Wahlert, which Jefferson led 8-0 after five innings, was "all right," the coach said.

It was the second one that left him miffed.

Despite getting their only hit of the game on a solo home run, the Golden Eagles led 3-1 going into the bottom of the sixth.

It took a lead-off single by Carson Burgart, a walk to Maddie Koolbeck and a clutch double by Rachel Sedlacek to tie the game.

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Then, in the bottom of the eighth, Burgart again came through with a bloop hit over shortstop and scored the winning run from third on a wild pitch.

"That second game, we were all swinging too much on first pitches," said Burgart, one of the Jeff "six pack" honored on senior night. "As hot as it was, we should have shown more discipline and made their pitcher throw more. We struggled a bit, but we didn't want to lose on senior night."

What with the J-Hawks making three uncharacteristic errors in the game and an inordinate number of infield pop outs, Burgart acknowledged it wasn't a pretty win.

"But maybe it's good we got it out of our system," she said. "Our goal all year has not just been to make it to state, but to win state."

Based on what he saw on his first game back in the dugout, Niemeyer said his team still has work to do.

"I was very disappointed with our effort, especially in the second game," he said. "There wasn't any spark out there. At this time of the year, you've got to come out ready to play every game.

"But we'll be ready the next game. I promise you that."

Sedlacek, another of the six seniors who have played on the varsity for five years, said the same thing, even though she won't be in the lineup on Saturday. Her older sister Michelle is getting married Saturday night in Chicago, and Rachel is the maid of honor.

"It's been planned a long time," she said. "And I knew it would be during postseason. It'll be tough missing the game, but the team will be all right without me."

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In addition to knocking in the trying runs in the nightcap Tuesday, Sedlacek had a hot bat in the opener. She scored two of the first three runs and brought home two more in a three-run fourth inning with a long double to deep center.

"I'd been struggling at the plate," she said, "so it felt good to get back on track and hit some nice line drives.

"When I got the double to left in the second game, I was just trying to put the ball in play. But it worked out."

While she'll miss the next game, Sedlaeck said she's confident her teammates will move on to next Tuesday's regional final, with Davenport West the likely opponent on the J-Hawks' home diamond.

"Despite what Mr. Niemeyer told us after the game tonight," she said, "our team is very hungry and ready for the state tournament."