

## **Drahozal stars as Saints sweep Hawks**

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Pity the softball team that plays Xavier after the Saints have had a few days off.

“We hadn’t played a game since last Wednesday, and we were just anxious to go out and get at it,” Xavier all-stater Erin Drahozal said Tuesday night after her usual stellar performance in a 9-3 and 7-2 sweep of Prairie on the Hawks home field.

She was so itchy to see action that she showed up Monday night to watch Prairie take two from Kennedy. The scouting mission obviously paid off.

On the mound in the opener against Prairie, she had one bad pitch that led to a long three-run homer to left by the normally light-hitting Amanda Stecklein. Otherwise, Drahozal (11-2) pretty much bamboozled the Hawks, especially power hitters Gabi Carter and Natalie Rumer.

And at the plate in the two games, she was 5-for-6 with two home runs and four runs batted in. Her solo shot in the first game grazed the out-stretched glove of Prairie left fielder Kristin Wahlert as it sailed over the fence.

A four-bagger in the nightcap popped out of Wahlert’s mitt and over the fence. “I had a little help,” Drahozal admitted. “But they’re both home runs on paper.”

The pair of homers gives her seven for the year along with 31 RBIs. She’s flirting with a .500 batting average and has yet to strike out.

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Ironically, she popped out in the fourth inning of the opener when the Saints broke open a scoreless tie with six runs after two outs.

Morgan Breitbach started the onslaught with a double. Then, with the bases loaded, Hayley Deutmeyer struck out but reached base on a passed ball. Three straight hits by Steph Wehr, Hannah Helms and Courtney Colston brought in the rest of the runs.

Stecklein's shot in the bottom of the inning gave Prairie some life, but nXavier (20-2 overall, 15-1 MVC) rallied for three more the next time at bat.

Saints No.2 hurler Kylie Oldridge raised her record to 8-0 by limiting the Hawks (18-9, 13-5 MVC) to single runs in the first and fourth innings. She got all the scoring she needed when the Saints again exploded for six runs in the fourth inning.

Besides Drahozal's homer, Xavier got hits in the inning from Deutmeyer, Wehr, Kailee Becker and Allison Schwach.

Even with her Class 4A fifth-ranked team leading the conference, Saints Coach Nikki Price said she was relived with the doubleheader wins.

"They're a young team but very solid," she said of Prairie. "If not for a few miscues, the games tonight could have been flipped.

"We've still got a lot of tough games ahead of us. We just need to keep getting better."