

Prairie's young hurlers stop Lions

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 26 June 2014 22:32 -



Shelby Frederick has not attended any classes at Cedar Rapids Prairie yet and barely knows her way around the school.

The eighth grader certainly knows her way around a softball field, however.

Frederick tossed a one-hitter Thursday night as the 10th-ranked Prairie Hawks blanked Linn-Mar, 8-0, in a game that was stopped in the top of the seventh inning after Linn-Mar shortstop Katie Sommer was injured on a freak play.

Natalie Halvorson, just a ninth grader at Prairie, also pitched a strong game as the Hawks took the opener, 7-2.

Frederick will be a freshman at Prairie this fall, but graduated eighth graders are eligible for high school softball and she's making the most of her early opportunity.

"It feels great," she said. "We all fit together. It feels good to be relied on by the other players."

Prairie had Amanda Pipolo on first base with nobody out in the top of the seventh inning of the nightcap when Halle Lueck hit what appeared to be a single to left field, but the field umpire called Pipolo out for leaving the bag too soon and it was a "deal ball," which meant the play did not count.

Sommer knew it was a dead ball but the Linn-Mar left fielder, not hearing the umpire's call, fired

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the ball to the infield and hit Sommer in the forehead, knocking the all-state shortstop to the ground in tears.

Sommer did not see the ball coming and was still crying 10 minutes after the accident while she was being treated on the field. She was helped into a motorized cart that was driven onto the field and taken for further treatment.

The umpires conferred with Linn-Mar Coach John Begley and it was decided to end the game at that point with Linn-Mar players visibly upset by Sommer's injury.

"It was just a fluke deal," said Begley. "Nobody did anything on purpose.

"It was a dead ball. The outfielder didn't know it. Katie knew and thought the play was dead. Nobody did anything intentional. It's just softball."

Sommer is an all-state shortstop who transferred to Linn-Mar from Dubuque Senior for the 2013-14 school year. Begley was not sure of her medical condition after the game Thursday night.

Frederick (10-4) and Halvorson (10-5) give Prairie an incredibly young 1-2 punch in the circle, especially for a club that's ranked No.10 in Class 5A with a 20-9 overall mark.

Coach Joe Yegge likes the future of Prairie softball with those two kids throwing the ball for the next few years under the tutelage of pitching coach Kylee Knop.

"I told the two of them at the beginning of the year after we won our first couple of games, if they just keep working and keep buying into what Kylee is doing and attack the zone and throw strikes, they're probably going to be somebody people are talking about for years to come at Prairie," said Yegge.

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"They're young, but Shelby threw an outstanding game. That's the best game she's thrown, by far."

Frederick has been pitching since the third grade and likes having the ball in her hand.

"I kind of like being in control and if I make a mistake, it's on me," she said. "I don't know, pitching just came natural to me."

Natalie Rumer belted a long home run to get Prairie going in the opener. Mallory Jones hit an inside-the-park home run with two runners on base in the nightcap to help the Hawks finish the sweep.

Prairie raised its records to 20-9 overall and 15-5 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Linn-Mar fell to 18-11 and 13-7.

Game 1

Prairie 010 150 0 - 7 9 2
Linn-Mar 000 002 0 - 2 5 7

W - Halvorson. L - Ryan.

Game 2

Prairie 014 003 - 8 8 0
Linn-Mar 000 000 - 0 1 4

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W - Frederick. L - Ryan.