

Yegge's barbs help Eagles keep winning

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 09 May 2013 21:11 - Last Updated Thursday, 09 May 2013 21:59

Kirkwood softball coach Joe Yegge barked at his players. He snapped at them. He chewed their butts, as one of them put it.

The more he barked, the better they played.

Kirkwood won both of its games in the NJCAA district softball tournament Thursday and is now one victory away from qualifying for the Division II national meet.

The third-ranked Eagles, riding a 47-game winning streak, defeated Dakota County Tech of Minnesota, 8-1, and stomped Dawson Community College of Montana, 13-2, in five innings on a cool, damp afternoon at the Kirkwood field.

The Eagles (54-3) need one more victory Friday against Dawson (20-13) to advance to the national tournament.

All that yelling seemed to work.

"If he doesn't chew our butts, then there's something wrong," said catcher Krysta Tutsch, who has been a rock behind the plate all year. "If he isn't saying anything, there's something wrong."

The Eagles try not to take it personally.

"The motto that we probably use is: Listen to the message, not the tone or how he says it," said slugging third baseman Hayley Krack. "We understand, that's just him. It works."

Kirkwood slugged seven home runs Thursday, raising their season total to 99 and matching the

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school record set a year ago. The Eagles lead the nation in home runs, one of many reasons they have not lost a game since March 18.

Kirkwood got off to relatively slow starts in both games Thursday, which led to the yelling.

Kirkwood freshman Amber Logemann, who leads the nation in strikeouts and earned run average, allowed a run in the top of the first inning against Dakota County Tech on two walks and an RBI single. It's one of the few times that's happened all year.

And against Dawson, freshman Sam Belz - who has not lost a game all season - was touched for a two-run homer in the top of the first inning for an early 2-0 deficit.

Yegge, sensing danger, began barking at some of his players, but picked his spots.

"My style of coaching is to make them tough," he explained. "They take a little bit of a chewing and they know how to respond to it.

"Our girls are mentally tough. There's a few I can jump on to get them going and there's a few I can't, and I'll just avoid them."

Tutsch and Krack were two of his favorite targets Thursday. Both players said they've learned to deal with the coach's comments.

"In one ear and out the other," said Tutsch. "That's how I do it."

Neither player appeared to blink.

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"It gets you going, obviously," said Krack. "It's been proved many, many times that getting on me works. I just have to learn to motivate myself without having him say something.

"Some people think he's a little intense," Krack said with a grin, "but if he doesn't do that there's something wrong. I don't mind it."

Yegge tries to push the right buttons.

"I have to snap at Hayley to get her going," he said. "I know that. Hayley knows that.

"I snap at Hayley and Hayley looks at me like I'm the ball, and that's when she pounds it. It's part of what gets her fired up.

"There are a few I won't snap at. Hayley and Krysta, they can take it. They can see my face on the ball and hit it."

Logemann recovered from her choppy start against Dakota County and finished with a three-hitter and 11 strikeouts.

Kirkwood shortstop Leah Duffe, who hit a walkoff home run in the bottom of the eighth inning to defeat DMACC in the regional tournament, delivered a clutch two-run homer in the bottom of the third inning to give the Eagles a 2-1 lead against Dakota County. That opened the floodgates.

Kayla Tatge, who leads the nation with 25 homers, socked a solo shot to make it 3-1. Lauren Smith belted a solo homer to make it 4-1.

Kristen Winter blasted a three-run homer to make it 8-1 in the fourth inning and the Eagles

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were out of danger against the visitors from Minnesota. The loss eliminated Dakota County Tech from the double-elimination tournament. It lost the day's first game to Dawson, 5-1.

Shy Saladino replaced Belz on the mound in the third inning against Dawson and pitched three shutout innings for the victory in the 13-2 triumph.

Winter, Smith and Tutsch hit home runs in the second game as the Eagles caught up and quickly moved way ahead. Smith drove in four runs, Kelsie Campbell drove in three runs and Hannah McInerney delivered a two-run, pinch-hit single.

Kirkwood needs one victory on Friday to book its trip to the national tournament. Dawson (20-13) would have to defeat the Eagles twice in one day to keep that from happening.

The Eagles are anxious to celebrate.

"I feel awesome. I feel great," Tutsch said after the two victories. "I didn't think in a million years I would be here, but I am. It feels awesome and I love it. I love every second of it."

The Eagles have not lost a game in seven weeks.

"We feel unstoppable right now," said Krack.

"We can still play better," said Yegge.

GAME 1

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DAKOTA COUNTY TECH (1): Orrell, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Tiedeman, 2b, 2 1 0 0, Rohr, ss, 3 0 0 0, Palfi, p, 2 0 1 0, Athey, c, 3 0 2 1, Tuma, dp, 3 0 0 0, Harrity, rf, 3 0 0 0, Lavalley, lf, 2 0 0 0, Frandrup, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Hall, cf, 0 0 0 0. Totals 24 1 3 1.

KIRKWOOD (8): Duffe, ss, 3 1 2 3, Winter, 2b, 4 1 1 3, Tatge, rf, 3 1 1 1, Krack, 3b, 3 0 2 0, Boehm, pr, 0 0 0 0, Smith, dp, 3 1 1 1, Sales, lf, 3 1 0 0, Campbell, 1b, 3 1 0 0, Crist, cf, 2 2 1 0, Logemann, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 27 8 8 8.

Dakota County 100 000 0 - 1 3 2
Kirkwood 003 500 x - 8 8 0

Palfi and Athey. Logemann and Tutsch. W - Logemann. L - Palfi. HR - Duffe, Winter, Tatge, Smith. SB - Duffe, Boehm, Sales.

GAME 2

KIRKWOOD (13): Duffe, ss, 4 0 0 0, Compton, ph, 1 0 0 0, Winter, 2b, 4 3 3 1, Tatge, rf, 3 3 2 0, Krack, 3b, 3 1 1 1, Smith, dp, 4 1 2 4, Tutsch, c, 1 3 1 1, Sales, lf, 4 2 3 1, Campbell, 1b, 2 0 1 3, Weber, ph, 1 0 0 0, Crist, cf, 3 0 1 0, McInerney, ph, 1 0 1 2, Belz, p, 0 0 0 0, Saladino, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 31 13 15 13.

DAWSON (2): Murray, lf, 3 1 1 0, Taylor, ss/p, 2 0 0 0, Mitchell, 2b, 3 1 3 2, Aiken, p/ss, 2 0 0 0, Nedens, 1b, 2 0 0 0, Wallace, dp, 2 0 0 0, Jackson, c, 2 0 1 0, Robinson, cf, 2 0 0 0, Lake, rf, 2 0 1 0, Miller, 3b, 0 0 0 0. Totals 20 2 6 2.

Kirkwood 012 55 - 13 15 0
Dawson 200 00 - 2 6 1

Belz, Saladino (3) and Tutsch. Aiken, Taylor (5) and Jackson. W - Saladino. L - Aiken. 2B - Krack, Campbell. HR - Winter, Smith, Tutsch.

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