

Kirkwood signs 11 new softball players

Written by Jim Ecker

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Joe Yegge digs the long ball, but he also likes softball players who can run.

The Kirkwood coach thinks he may have sacrificed a little power to get more speed in his new recruiting class of high school seniors for the 2015 campaign, but that's OK with him.

Kirkwood led all Division II junior colleges in the country last season with 104 home runs on its way to the semifinals of the national tournament and a 57-5 record. Yegge thinks there are power hitters in the new class, but perhaps not as many.

"I think this class coming in is a lot more athletic than some of the classes we've had in the past," he said. "We've had a lot of power come in the last couple of years, but this class, they're more athletic. More speed."

It might be more of a combination of power AND speed in the future, but Yegge likes the new class he's put together. "We may lose a little bit on power, but otherwise I think we're pretty good," he said. "Pretty talented."

Kirkwood has signed:

- Jasmine Ragusi, catcher, Rock Island, Ill.
- Mallory Neubauer, shortstop/outfielder, Clear Creek-Amana
- Riley Ogden, outfielder, Solon
- Kerrigan Riley, shortstop, Springville
- Nikki Tennant, third baseman, Waukee
- Nicky Simpson, pitcher, BCLUW
- Allie Mengler, pitcher, Walcott
- Payton Mercer, outfielder/catcher, Carlisle
- Hannah Cole, pitcher, West Delaware
- Selena Larson, third baseman, Moline, Ill.

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- Lauren Kubovec, catcher, Cedar Rapids Kennedy

Kubovec will be joining the Eagles on a scholarship provided by the Cedar Rapids Softball Hall of Fame.

Yegge thinks Mengler, the pitcher from Walcott, has a chance to develop into one of the top hurlers in the country after excelling on travel teams.

"She has really good stuff," he said. "Great movement on her pitches. She has great command in the zone. She changes speeds, moves it up and down."

Kirkwood is scheduled to open the 2014 season Feb. 15 at an indoor tournament hosted by St. Ambrose University.