

Carter lifts No. 4 Eagles after Yegge tossed

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Gabi Carter and the Kirkwood Eagles kept their calm Sunday after Coach Joe Yegge was ejected during the second game of their doubleheader against Iowa Central.

The Eagles rallied from a 2-0 deficit and trimmed the Tritons, 3-2, in eight innings on Carter's two-out single that drove in Taylor Nearad with the winning run with Yegge watching through a window in nearby Johnson Hall.

Kirkwood won the first game, 8-0, and clinched the outright ICCAC Conference title with a 27-1 record.

Yegge was tossed in the second inning of the nightcap after arguing a bang-bang play at first base. Iowa Central took a 2-0 lead in the fourth inning on a two-run homer, but Kirkwood tied the game in the bottom of the sixth and grabbed the victory when Carter lashed a base hit inside the third-base line with runners at first and second.

Carter liked coming to the plate in the game-winning situation.

"It's definitely an energy rush, to be honest," said Carter, a Cedar Rapids Prairie grad. "I just knew I had to get the ball down on the ground because I'd been hitting everything in the air."

The Eagles have a bunch of freshmen in starring roles this season, including Carter, but they remained calm with assistant coaches Jenny Nelson and Kristen Winter running the club in Yegge's absence.

"It was definitely interesting," said Carter. "Him being my high school coach, I've seen him ejected before. I just had to try my best to keep everyone calm by doing whatever I could."

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Yegge has to serve an automatic one-game suspension for being ejected. Kirkwood is scheduled to play a doubleheader at Indian Hills Tuesday and Yegge said he might stay home and skip both games.

Kirkwood will host the NJCAA Division II regional tournament this coming Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The fourth-ranked Eagles are 49-4 overall and riding a 25-game winning streak.

The conference title is Yegge's seventh crown in nine years at Kirkwood.

"It's awesome," he said after the doubleheader. "We had some distractions during the year, but they stuck to the grindstone and they did it.

"That's the nice thing about them. They keep their composure pretty well and nothing really rattles them."

Nicky Simpson (24-2) tossed a four-hit shutout for Kirkwood in the first game Sunday. Nearad went 3-for-3 with a double, home run and five RBIs. She also made a sensational leaping catch at the fence in center field to rob an Iowa Central batter of extra bases.

Carter went 2-for-3 in the opener with a home run and three RBIs. Teagan Toft had two hits.

Lexi Kinnaird (21-2) tossed a complete game in the nightcap for Kirkwood. Nearad was 2-for-4 with an RBI. Lexi Ferrari and Morgan Frost also had two hits. Frost also made several excellent catches in left field.

Nearad leads the nation in all three Triple Crown departments with a .626 batting average, 24 home runs and 109 RBIs. Carter is also enjoying a sensational campaign with a .488 batting average, 20 homers and 80 RBIs.

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Carter is tied for second in the nation in home runs and is third in RBIs.

"I'm definitely proud of what I've accomplished," she said. "I couldn't do anything without my team. They put me in situations where I can produce. I owe it all to them."

The Eagles clinched a tie for the conference title on Saturday and won it outright on Sunday.

"It's an awesome feeling," said Carter. "I had no doubt in my mind that this team could do it. We can do anything we want right now and that's a good feeling."

Iowa Central fell to 32-20 overall and 14-14 in the league.