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Eagles fastpitch rally falls short of stopping skid

by Jason Olson jason.olson@ecm-inc.com May 14, 2018

Benilde-St. Margaret's wins in extra innings

Kennedy softball used Benilde-St. Margaret's pitching to break out of a hitting slump to score seven runs on 13 hits but the Red Knights scored the final run in extra innings for an 8-7 Metro West Conference win on Wednesday, May 9.

The Eagles (5-8) were limited to five runs total over the previous six games leading up to the conference rematch played at Kelly Fields.

Granted, four of the games were doubleheader sweeps against state-ranked Chanhassen (10-, 14-3 on May 4) and Chaska (10-2, 7-0 on May 7), while St. Louis Park (2-0 on May 2) and Orono (10-0 on May 5) shutout the Eagles which started the season 5-1 before losing six straight games.

On Wednesday, the Red Knights scored four times in the first inning and added two more runs in the fourth inning before Kennedy started its comeback scoring once in the fifth inning before a big six-run rally to take a 7-6 lead into the bottom of the bottom half of the inning.

"It was a good comeback (Wednesday), I like the effort but we need to get into the games earlier and not give them two to three innings of no runs and they're just picking us away that has been the program," Eagles coach Jim Leicht said.



Kennedy freshman Amber Converse has stepped in a starting role as catcher after injuries ended the season two other catchers. She had one hit in her only at-bat against Benilde-St. Margaret's on Wednesday.

(Photo by Mark Trockman-trockstock.com)



Senior Ayiana Leicht picked up two hits against Washburn and South earlier this season.

(Photo by Mark Trockman-trockstock.com)

The rally was a result of making adjustments to the pitcher and stringing hits together to build the momentum that resulted in batting around the order.

“It’s the one thing, they made the adjustments to the pitcher they needed to make,” Leicht said.

Megan Fobbe went 3-for-4 to lead the Eagles as Sammie Ohm, Brinna Kopischke and Cassie Kopischke each went 2-for-4. Ohm scored twice and Brinna Kopischke drove in two runs.

Sophomore pitcher Courtney Kopischke struck out 12 to reach double-digits for the fifth time in 11 games. Over 58 1/3 innings she has allowed just 13 earned runs on 36 hits and 10 walks. She has a 1.56 ERA with five quality starts and 103 strikeouts ahead of the April 11 game against Richfield.

Against Park, Courtney Kopischke was locked in a pitcher’s duel against Orioles Annabelle Schutte as the two combined to strike out 23 batters and collectively gave up six hits. Senior Ayania Leicht, Ellie Baker and Brinna Kopischke collected the hits against Schutte. Courtney Kopischke drew two walks.

Over his seasons with the Eagles, Leicht said it typically takes the team a handful of games to adjust to the elements, playing in the dirt again and figuring out the little nuances that can, ultimately, go a long way in extending the season beyond the first game or two in sections.

“We figure out what we need to work on in those games,” he said as the late start to the outdoor fastpitch season hindered that natural progression, decreasing the practices as well. “With playing so many doubleheaders this is our second practice in two weeks and we started just two weeks ago (as of May 11).”

Injuries

Catchers are known for being some of the toughest players on the field, being able to brush off bumps and bruises and return to the game despite whatever the ailment.

Coming into the season, Kennedy coach Jim Leicht noted a competition for the starting role between eighth grader Chasity Anderson and seventh-grader Ava Bruins.

Anderson tore her ACL earlier in the season while Bruins' season came to an end after breaking her ankle against Benilde-St. Margaret's.

Freshman Amber Converse and eighth-grader Ava Morabito are sharing catching duties now.

All-Conference second baseman Alana Miller was lost for the season after a recurrence of issues related to a concussion sustained during the winter dome ball season. "Got cleared, came back," Leicht said. "Had symptoms, cleared again, played in her first game, played five innings came up to me, said 'I don't feel right.' So she's out for the rest of the year."

Kennedy closed out the regular season playing seven-of-eight games at Kelly Fields before the Section 6AAAA tournament begins May 21.

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Kennedy senior Cassidy Kopischke takes a swing during pregame warmups. She leads the team with 11 RBIs on 12-of-39 hitting through 13 games.

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