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Kennedy sisters share the field

by Jason Olson jason.olson@ecm-inc.com Jun 20, 2018

Cassie, Courtney and Brinna Kopischke helped Kennedy softball continue to build

Kennedy sophomore pitcher Courtney Kopischke hates pasta salad.

When two of your sisters (Brinna and Cassie Kopischke) are on the field alongside you, the side conversations can and do take twists and turns to help get through the inning and back into the dugout as soon as possible.



The Kopischke sisters made up a third of the Kennedy softball lineup this season. They are pictured from left: Brinna, eighth grade; Cassie, senior; and Courtney, sophomore for the 2018 spring season. Courtney was the staff ace piling up 177 strikeouts in 100 1/3 innings with seven complete games in 13 starts.

(Photo by Mark Trockman-trockstock.com)

This spring marked the first regular season the trio played varsity games together on a regular basis.

Cassie, a senior captain and first baseman, has played alongside Courtney on the varsity team for four seasons while Brinna, an eighth-grader moved primarily to varsity this season.

Brinna and Courtney played together on teams over the years but this was the first season all three were together as their father, Mike Kopischke, is the Kennedy junior varsity coach.

The three sisters play for Minnesota Vortex and As club softball program.

The bond between the sisters is strong on the off the field. On the field, a simple look signals frustration or confidence.

“Oh yeah,” Cassie said through a laugh at the other two. “Courtney and I have that look, quite often.”

Courtney explained: “(Cassie) can tell when I’m having a bad day or good day.”

Cassie responds: “She’ll just turn around and give me this nasty look, it’s actually hilarious.”

The previous day, Courtney took an 8-7 loss against Benilde-St. Margaret’s in eight innings despite 12 strikeouts and four walks.

“It was actually a weird day,” Courtney said. “I actually had pasta salad on my mind and I hate pasta salad so I was talking to (Cassie) about how much I hate it.”

The weird factor might be explained in playing 12 games in 14 days.

When asked what they like most about softball, they all like winning.

“I love striking people out and watched third strikes are my favorite,” Brinna said and Courtney echoed the strong feelings about strikeouts and piling them up. She had 32 strikeouts in three section games giving her 177 strikeouts on 100 1/3 innings with a 1.20 ERA in 13 starts.



Not only was Courtney Kopischke a standout pitcher but she also was the Eagles lead off batter, hitting .360 with four doubles, seven RBIs and seven walks in 50 plate appearances.

(Photo by Mark Trockman-trockstock.com)

"I just like the satisfaction of when you work on something and it comes together," Cassie said. "That's probably my favorite part. Especially when I'm working on my swing and it comes together for a game and it's fun just being part of a team because you get really close as a team and its fun to see what you can accomplish as a team together."

Rivalry

Of course, the sibling rivalry is strong between the three as they all like the challenge of going against one another either at the plate on in the pitching circle.

Cassie said it's a challenge to step into the batter's box against Courtney. "I tend to get into my head, a little bit too much," she said, while Eagles coach Jim Leicht leaned in to hear the response. "I don't always do quite as well as I'd like cause I'm in my head and she's giving me looks as she pitches and the catcher's asking me."

They've all played different sports over the years and have even been in three different states at one point with softball, making the opportunity to play on the same field and share the dugout that more special.

The consensus from all three is that they enjoy playing for their dad.

"It's good," Courtney said. "I really like my dad as a coach."

Brinna added, "He knows how to push us individually, not too hard, he knows what we need to work on so it's helpful."



Senior Cassie Kopischke plans to play softball at the University of Northwestern next season. She hit .333 this season driving in a team-high 11 RBIs.

(Photo by Mark Trockman-trockstock.com)

Courtney explained: "He can push me a little harder than Brinna because she works a little differently. But then he can do other things for Brinna that he cannot do for me."

Senior bond

Being a senior and all of the feelings that come along with a final season of high school softball set in for Cassie, who plans to play softball at the University of Northwestern in St. Paul.

"It's hard to explain, playing with a sibling on the same team because, I don't know, there's this bond I have on the field with Courtney and Brinna, that I haven't had with anyone else because they're my sisters so yeah, that's going to be hard not playing with them anymore," Cassie said.

That connection between the three means that when its time for softball, the real-life arguments and drama of day-to-day life end and the focus on softball begins.

"I have special connections with my catchers but it's different with Cassie because we can be fighting three minutes before the game and then during the game that doesn't matter," Courtney said. Coach Leicht confirmed, "Yeah, that's completely true."

Shared memories from the season are many including standing next to each other during team introductions. "It all just happened that we lined up together, so that was fun," Cassie said.

Cassie said: "And that just happened. And then my mom said that she could see all three of us – Brinna was in left field, I was at first base and Courtney was pitching and it was a straight shot she could see all of us."

Courtney and Cassie need to uphold an opening day tradition that began three seasons ago with Cassie giving Courtney a piggyback ride ahead of their first varsity game together. Next spring that means Brinna and Courtney will be in Kennedy blue and gold at the other Eagles, Northwestern's mascot, softball game to support Cassie.

"We've got to keep that tradition going," Cassie said of the tradition which began when Courtney was a seventh-grader on the varsity team. "So we kept that tradition."

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