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Eagles down Hopkins for second win at sections

by Jason Olson jason.olson@ecm-inc.com May 24, 2019 Updated 9 hrs ago

Kopischke fans 28 batters in wins over Park, Hopkins

Section softball tourneys are quickly winding down ahead of the June 6-7 state tournament.

Kennedy received the No. 2 seed in Section 6-4A and remained on the winner's side of the double-elimination bracket following a 4-3 win over Hopkins on May 23.

It was the second, one-run win of sections for the Eagles who coach Jim Leicht said they are more comfortable than most teams clinging to a slim lead.



Kennedy junior pitcher Courtney Kopischke struck out 28 batters in two games to begin play in Section 6-4A.

(Sun Newspapers staff photo by John Sherman)



Kennedy freshman Taylor David, left, high-fives coach Jim Leicht after the May 23 section win over Hopkins at Pamela Park in Edina.

(Sun Current staff photo by Jason Olson)

“We’re used to Courtney [Kopischke] pitching very well,” Leicht said. “And so we’re very comfortable in one-run games because that’s what we are always in. If we can put runs on the board, Courtney will keep us in any game, no doubt about it.”

Kennedy opened sections with a 1-0 win over No. 7 St. Louis Park in eight innings on May 20.

Senior Bella Fiero provided the decisive swing to score eighth-grader Katelyn MacDonald.



Kennedy senior second baseman Alana Miller is in position to collect a grounder during the Eagles 4-3 win over Hopkins on May 23.

(Sun Newspapers staff photo by Jason Olson)

Junior pitcher Courtney Kopischke was in outstanding form in the three-hit shutout. She struck out 13 Orioles batters in the emphatic start to sections.

Third-seeded Hopkins proved to put up more of a fight by scoring twice in the first inning but Kopischke found her groove to get out of a few jams on the base paths with 15 strikeouts.

She had 28 strikeouts in two section games with just one hit batter, Hopkins' pitcher Signe Dohse to lead off the game.

"Usually the first inning is a learning experience," Kopischke said. "To get a feel for what the rest of the game is going to be like from the batters and how the ump is going to call the game.

“If we get a couple runs on the board, I feel we settle down and get really confident and play our best game when we know we are in a good position.”



Kennedy eighth grader Ava Bruins provides a consistent backstop for pitcher Courtney Kopischke.

(Sun Newspapers staff photo by John Sherman)



Kennedy junior Courtney Kopischke connects on what turned into the Eagles winning run on Thursday.

by Jason Olson jason.olson@ecm-inc.com

She gave up three hits in a rebound game after the Royals blanked Kennedy in Hopkins 7-0 on May 16.

The Eagles lost three key contributors in that game due to various illnesses and injuries.

“It’s always harder to beat a team a second time out, we learned a few of their tenancies, how they like to pitch and when they like to bunt so it was a completely different game for us,” Leicht said of the rematch. “We had to be more aggressive on first-pitches, we knew we needed to get in the back

of the batter's box and be way more aggressive at the plate. She's not going to walk a lot."

Kennedy responded with a 3-run bottom of the second inning as senior Sammie Ohm dropped the opening pitch over the head of the Royals first baseman, close to the foul line. She moved up to second base on a hard hit single from junior Cordella Ruch before coming home on a base hit to left field off the bat of senior Alana Miller.

The rally continued as Ruch scored from third base as the Hopkins catcher tried to throw Miller out at second base on a steal attempt.

Freshman Ellie Baker was rewarded for fighting off pitch after pitch against Royals eighth-grade pitcher Signe Dohse. She ended up bringing home Miler on a ground out to the right side of the infield for the first out of the inning.

Eagles sophomore Gabby Brown followed up the hit parade with a long-drive base hit to the center field but was stranded on the bases as Kennedy took a 3-2 lead.

The Eagles made it 4-2 in the fifth inning as freshman right fielder Brinna Kopischke launched a tough fly ball to left field with two outs. The ball glanced off the fielder's glove to allow McDonald, who was pinch running for Courtney Kopischke, to score from third base.

Leicht and the coaching staff emphasized the importance of every run in sections, because of what is at stake to extend the season.

"It's team-first, sacrificing to bunt and move the batter over, that's your job because we were getting a little over-swinging at pitches trying to hit it too hard," he said. "You have to believe that if you get on first base the next person is going to hit you over to second. You don't need to hit the triple in



Kennedy's Katelyn MacDonald looks to make it to third base during a 4-3 win over Hopkins during Section 6-4A play Thursday in Edina.

(Sun Current staff photo by Jason Olson)

order to score.”

They’ve worked on small-ball situational hitting including hitting behind runners where if a runner is in scoring position, the idea is to hit toward right field to force the defense to take the out at first or try to make a play at third or home.

“Even if you get an out, it’s a productive at-bat,” he said.

If the weather cooperates and if necessary, a Section 6-4A final will be played at 3 p.m. Thursday, May 30 at Pamela Park. The last game between the two teams without two losses was May 28.

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