

Yegge ejected as Hawks split with Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

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Joe Yegge may set a record this year for turning the Cedar Rapids Prairie softball team into a Top 10 program so quickly.

If he's not careful, he may also set a record for being ejected the most times in a single campaign.

Yegge got tossed for the second time Thursday, but it didn't stop Prairie from splitting a Mississippi Valley Conference showdown with Xavier at Bob Erusha Field.

The Hawks rallied for an 8-6 victory in the first game after Yegge was ejected for arguing with an umpire. He returned for the nightcap, but Xavier collected a 4-3 victory after Prairie had rallied to tie the game at 3-3.

Yegge was ejected several weeks ago when Prairie played in the Iowa City West tournament. Now he's been ejected twice, which means he faces a multiple-date suspension from the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union.

Yegge, in his first year as Prairie's head coach, declined comment after the doubleheader. "I'm not doing interviews," he said as he headed toward the bus.

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Prairie jumped into the IGHSAU rankings Thursday in the No.10 spot in Class 5A. The Hawks have come a long way since last season, when they finished 8-28.



Prairie is 16-8 overall and 12-6 in the Valley Division of the Mississippi Valley Conference as it wages a tight battle with Xavier in the division. The Saints, ranked No.7 in Class 4A, are in first place in the Valley Division at 18-6 overall and 13-5 in the league.

Xavier leads Prairie by one game for the division title with eight games left in the MVC race.

Yegge told his players about their shiny new ranking after the twinbill.

"It's very exciting. It's been a great year for us," said Prairie senior Katie Kuch, who pitched a complete game and got the victory in Game 1.

Kuch wasn't sure how long it's been since Prairie made the rankings.

"Probably a long time ago," she said. "Not while I was here, I know that."

The Hawks credit Yegge for turning things around this season.

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"He's taught us so much this year," said Aly O'Brian, who has caught every inning of every game this season. "He's really big on fundamentals, defensively and hitting. That's what we do in practice and it's really paid off for us."

Yegge is also the successful softball coach at Kirkwood Community College, which won 50 straight games this season and reached the semifinals of the national tournament. He lives in the Prairie school district and answered the call when several parents of Prairie softball players asked him to apply for the vacant job.



"He's taught us toughness," said Kuch. "Stay focused, but also have fun while you're succeeding, like we have been."

"It's just been really fun to play under him. He's really instilled a new mentality throughout the whole program. And we all believe in each other. It's been a great feeling to come out and succeed like we have been."

Yegge received a warning from home-plate umpire Tom Topping in the second inning of the opener for complaining about a pitch that was called a ball. He was ejected by field umpire Ed Murphy in the fourth inning when he complained about a play at first base when his team was on defense.

"Admit you were wrong!" he yelled at Murphy as he left the field.

Under IGHS AU rules, Yegge was allowed to coach the Hawks in the second game. His suspension will not begin until the IGHS AU receives reports from school officials and the

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umpires on Friday.

Assistant coach Lynnette Stecklein ran the Hawks in Yegge's absence in the first game, just as she did when the Hawks split a doubleheader with Jefferson when Yegge was serving his first suspension.

Prairie fell behind 6-0 in the first game, but a three-run double by Natalie Rumer helped it pull within 6-4 in the fifth inning. The Hawks scored four runs in the top of the seventh to take an 8-6 lead on RBIs by Amanda Stecklein, Brittney Lash and Mallory Jones.

Halle Lueck hit a big double in the seventh inning to help set the stage. Lash collected the game-winning RBI when her double to right-center made it 7-6. Xavier committed six errors in the first game to hinder its cause.

Xavier took an early 3-0 lead in the nightcap, but Prairie rallied again and pulled into a 3-3 tie in the top of the fifth inning. The Saints gained a 4-3 edge in the bottom of the fifth when Allison Schwach walked, advanced to second on a wild pitch, moved to third on a sacrifice bunt by Sydney Galligan and scored on a perfect squeeze bunt by Jenna Schulte.

Jacey Wiebold pitched a complete game to get the victory for Xavier in the nightcap.

GAME 1

PRAIRIE (8): Lash, cf, 5 0 2 1, Jones, ss, 3 1 1 1, Carter, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Pipolo, pr, 0 1 0 0, Gudenkauf, 1b, 4 1 0 0, Rumer, dp, 4 1 2 3, Thumann, pr, 0 1 0 0, Usher, rf, 4 0 1 1, Wahlert, pr, 0 0 0 0, Lueck, lf, 3 1 1 0, O'Brian, c, 3 0 0 0, Moenk, cr, 0 1 0 0, Stecklein, 2b, 3 1 1 1, Kuch, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 33 8 9 7.

XAVIER (6): Schwach, 2b, 4 1 1 0, Galligan, lf, 4 2 2 0, Schulte, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Drahozal, p, 3 0 1 1, Bastian, cr, 0 1 0 0, Feltes, 3b, 4 1 0 0, Breitbach, rf, 4 0 2 2, Miller, c, 3 0 0 0, Deutmeyer,

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ss, 3 0 2 0, Colston, cf, 3 1 1 0. Totals 31 6 9 3.

Prairie 000 040 4 - 8 9 3

Xavier 004 200 0 - 6 9 6

Kuch and O'Brian. Drahozal and Miller. W - Kuch. L - Drahozal. 2B - Lash, Rumer, Lueck, Deutmeyer. SB - Galligan.

GAME 2

PRAIRIE (3): Lash, cf, 4 1 2 0, Jones, ss, 4 1 3 0, Carter, p/3b, 2 0 1 0, Pipolo, cr, 0 1 0 0, Gudenkauf, 1b, 4 0 0 1, Thumann, pr, 0 0 0 0, Rumer, dp, 4 0 0 0, Usher, 3b/rf, 2 0 0 1, Lueck, lf, 4 0 1 1, O'Brian, c, 3 0 0 0, Stecklein, 2b, 3 0 1 0, Wahlert, rf, 0 0 0 0, Stevenson, p, 0 0 0 0, Kuch, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 30 3 8 3.

XAVIER (4): Schwach, 2b, 2 2 1 0, Galligan, lf, 3 0 0 0, Schulte, 1b, 3 1 2 2, Drahozal, dp, 2 0 1 1, Helms, pr, 0 0 0 0, Feltes, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Breitbach, rf, 3 0 0 0, Miller, c, 3 0 1 0, Bastian, cr, 0 1 0 0, Deutmeyer, ss, 2 0 0 0, Colston, cf, 3 0 1 0, Wiebold, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 24 4 6 3.

Prairie 000 030 0 - 3 8 0

Xavier 210 010 x - 4 6 1

Carter, Stevenson (5), Kuch (5) and O'Brian. Wiebold and Miller. W - Wiebold. L - Stevenson. 2B - Schulte, Miller. SB - Helms.