

Lions and Cougars split in softball

Written by Tom Fruehling

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In a softball battle between buddies Monday night, it came out even.

Linn-Mar pitcher Alexis Kelsey had scouted best friend Ashley Hamilton's Kennedy team last week and said she knew exactly how to throw to them.

"They weren't hitting the outside pitch," Kelsey said after tossing a three-hitter in a 7-0 romp over the Cougars in the first game of a doubleheader Monday at Linn-Mar.

Hamilton, though, had two of those hits. And she came back with three more in the nightcap to lead Kennedy to a 3-1 payback win.

Kelsey, a hard-throwing right-handed sophomore who says she'd rather hit than pitch, said she and Hamilton have been pals since playing together in their younger days on Jefferson's Blue Devils feeder team.

"I went to see her play at Mount Vernon," she said. "So I went with my curveball, and it was working all night."

She struck out seven and gave up three harmless singles, including the pair by Hamilton.

Meanwhile, Kelsey was a terror at the plate. She walked in first inning but was replaced by courtesy runner Sara Strauel as the Lions jumped ahead early with three runs. Madison Rentschler and Kelsey Duggan had the run-scoring hits.

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In the next inning, Kelsey banged a triple to bring home two more runs. Later, she tagged a long foul to left that bounced off the top of the fence and then laced a double to left.

She added two singles in the second game and knocked in the Lions' only run off Kennedy pitcher Taylor Sohn.

The one thing Kelsey didn't do was handcuff Hamilton.

"She's been hitting off of me since she was eight or nine," the Linn-Mar ace said.

A slick-fielding shortstop in addition to being a dangerous left-handed swinger, Hamilton is a precocious eighth grader.

"She's a very mature player," said Kennedy Coach Katie Bova, "who makes everything look easy. She's very natural."

Hitting at around .400 the whole season, Hamilton was the lead-off batter until Bova moved her to the third slot.

"She was getting on base, but nobody was moving her around," the coach explained. "She's been very good getting runs in. She's been consistently solid all year."

Bova said she was encouraged that her team (12-21, 7-15 MVC0 bounced back after a rocky first few innings in the opener.

"We settled down, and our defense stepped up. And we got a real good game out of Sohn."

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Linn-Mar Coach Mike Shipley said he was particularly pleased with his team's defensive performance.

"We played 14 innings of errorless ball," he said. "And I thought both of our pitchers (Kelsey and Maddy Ryan) threw very well."

The Cougars scored once in the fourth after Hamilton led off with a triple and was brought home by Erin Coker's bloop single to center.

They scored again in the fifth when Lauren Kubovec's double followed a single from Tianna Drahn.

Drahn scored again in the seventh, coming home from second on Hamilton's single to center.

"I thought we executed real well all night," said Shipley of his Lions (11-21, 8-14). "The difference in the second game was that we hit the ball right at them.

"They got the big hits, and we didn't."

GAME 1

KENNEDY (0): Drahn, 3 0 0 0, Kubovec, 3 0 1 0, Hamilton, 3 0 2 0, Rathjens, 1 0 0 0, McKinnon, 3 0 0 0, Coker, 3 0 0 0, Harberts, 3 0 0 0, Steinke, 3 0 0 0, Sohn, 2 0 0 0. Totals 24 0 3 0.

LINN-MAR (7): K.Ollinger, 3 1 2 1, E.Ollinger, 3 1 1 1, Kelsey, 3 0 2 2, Strauel, 0 1 0 0, Ryan, 4 1 0 0, Rentschler, 4 1 1 1, Duggan, 3 0 1 1, Lincoln, 3 0 0 0, Yearling, 3 1 1 0, Swanson, 2 1 2 0. Totals 28 7 10 6.

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Kennedy 000 000 0 - 0 3 1
Linn-Mar 322 000 x - 7 10 0

W-Kelsey. L-Crist. 2B-Kelsey, Swanson. 3B-Kelsey. SB-K.Ollinger.

GAME 2

KENNEDY (3): Drahm, 3 2 1 0, Kubovec, 4 0 2 1, Hamilton, 4 1 3 1, Rathjens, 3 0 0 0, McKinnon, 3 0 0 0, Coker, 2 0 1 1, Harberts, 2 0 0 0, Steinke, 3 0 0 0, Sohn, 2 0 0 0. Totals 26 3 7 3.

LINN-MAR (1): K.Ollinger, 4 0 0 0, E.Ollinger, 4 1 1 0, Kelsey, 3 0 2 1, Ryan, 3 0 0 0, Rentschler, 4 0 0 0, Lincoln, 2 0 0 0, Yearling, 2 0 2 0, Swanson, 3 0 0 0, Duggan, 2 0 1 0, Bodensteiner, 1 0 0 0, Clausen, 1 0 1 0. Totals 29 1 7 1.

Kennedy 000 110 1 - 3 7 3
Linn-Mar 100 000 0 - 1 7 0

W-Sohn. L-Ryan. 2B-Kubovec. 3B-Hamilton. SB-Rathjens, E.Ollinger.