

Fowler makes it back to spark J-Hawks

Written by Tom Fruehling
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Jefferson's Savannah Fowler is finally getting to savor her senior softball season.

She's been on the team since the eighth grade, but this was to be her first year as a starter. The last two she was used exclusively as a fleet-footed pinch runner.

But in the third game of the season she was smacked on the left side of the face by a thrown ball as she was beating out a hit at first base. The spindly, spunky outfielder still finished both games of the doubleheader before going to the hospital to find her jaw was broken in two places.

Her mouth has been wired shut until she returned to the lineup this past weekend.

And on the J-Hawks' Senior Night Thursday she collected a hit in each game and drove in a run to help Jefferson (30-5, 21-3 MVC) sweep Kennedy, 5-0 and 7-0.

"It means a lot to get Savannah back in the starting lineup," said Coach Brian Erbe. "She gives us maturity and leadership, and she's been a real inspiration. In her first year as a starter she gets hurt right away on a fluke play.

"But she never missed a practice. She worked really hard to get back. And she was always on the bench cheering her teammates."

For her part, Fowler said there was never a question that she'd be back to finish what has been a busy career at Jefferson. In addition to softball, she carried a 180 average in two years on the

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bowling team, was a member of the pom squad for two years and manager on the football team.

An honor student with a grade point average of 3.95, she'll enroll at Loras College this fall to major in physical therapy.

"I'm still a little rusty," she said after Thursday's twinbill. "But I was determined to come back. It was kind of hard to be sitting all those games.

"I stayed right there, though, supporting my teammates."

And now that she's returned, according to J-Hawk star slugger Maddie Hansen, "She brings a lot of quickness and a lot of energy."

Heading into the postseason, said Erbe, "Savannah really solidifies our team."

With their wins, Class 5A sixth-ranked Jefferson is assured of a division co-championship and could claim it outright by splitting with Iowa City West on Monday.

As usual, the J-Hawks got two strong pitching performances against a young Kennedy squad (23-13, 14-10 MVC) that boasts a team batting average of .368 and has four starters batting .400 or better.

Jefferson flame-thrower Alyssa Olson (15-4) held the Cougars to just one walk (the game's first batter) and no hits for six of the game's seven innings. Her blemish was in the fourth inning, when Kennedy struck three singles. No one scored, though, because rifle-armed catcher Hansen picked one runner off from second and another from first.

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“That’s definitely my favorite thing to do,” said Hansen, who also was perfect at the plate with four walks, two doubles and a single in the doubleheader. “But it’s the first time I’ve done it twice in one inning.”

In the nightcap, J-Hawk hurler Alissa Good (13-1) scattered five harmless hits and did not allow a runner past second base.

Jefferson broke the game open with six runs in the fifth inning. While batting around, the J-Hawks managed only three hits but were aided by a pair of Kennedy errors.

Fowler knocked in the last run by slapping a hard shot to third that was too hot to handle.

“It felt good,” she said, “to finally get an RBI. It’s great to be back.”